A Qualitative Exploration of the Experiences of Parents, who speak English as an Additional Language, and School Staff in their Communication Together.

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Declaration

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Newcastle University for the award of Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology. I declare that it is my own work and I have correctly acknowledged the work of others where appropriate. This thesis has also not been previously submitted or assessed for any other qualification.

Priya Dyson
May 2022

Overarching Abstract

This thesis is centred on the participation of parents, who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL), within the school community. It aims to explore the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together, with a view to understanding the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in promoting communication between the two groups. The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 is a Systematic Literature Review, which aims to answer the question: how does EAL affect parental participation and the development of home-school relations? The chapter used thematic synthesis to consider several qualitative studies, focusing on parents from the UK and USA. Chapter 1 identified a gap in UK literature, noting that communication is a central theme in understanding how EAL affects parental participation and the development of home-school relations. Chapter 2 provides a methodological and ethical critique of the ensuing research, considering my philosophical positioning and the relevance of this to the methodology, method and subsequently, the findings. Following on from Chapter 1, Chapter 3 explores the communication experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents. To understand participants' experiences, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyse the data collected from semi-structured interviews, finding variation in individual factors affecting communication, but a consensus that trust and respect were fundamental. A key aim of the empirical study was to identify a role for EPs, which includes practical next steps for relevant change within the profession. Therefore, the interview findings were shared in a focus group of EPs to uncover their experiences of communication alongside parents, who speak EAL, and school staff; as well as investigating their perceived role in promoting communication between the two groups. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was used to generate themes from the focus group data. The themes provide suggestions of changes to EP practice, such as providing parents with choices around who interprets and an increased presence at community events; themes were identified at individual, group and systemic levels of EP working. Finally, Chapter 4 offers a reflective synthesis of my professional and academic learning acquired throughout the research process. The chapter discusses some of the challenges I have experienced, including decisions relating to terminology. Additionally, Chapter 4 considers my dual researcher-practitioner role and the implications of this for future research and practice.

"Development will never succeed, and 'experts' and
communities will fail to achieve their full humanity
unless an open, respectful dialogue is achieved
between different points of view"
(Freire, 1972, p. 77)

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Chapter 1: A Systematic Literature Review

How Does EAL Affect Parental Participation in the Development of Home-School Relations?[1]

Abstract

Research suggests that parental participation and the subsequent development of home-school relations are associated with positive outcomes for children, young people and their families. There are a number of studies that outline the stages or types of involvement that are attributed to successful participation and the forementioned outcomes. However, there is limited evidence of the application of these findings to bilingual parents or those who are learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) and may require additional adjustments to participate. Chapter 1 is comprised of a Systematic Literature Review, which aims to answer the question: How does EAL affect parental participation and the development of home-school relations? The chapter identifies five qualitative research papers from the UK and USA, which answer the review question; these are analysed using Thematic Synthesis. Through analysis, five themes are established: communication, parents, teachers, school and school systems and social and cultural factors. The themes are presented in a model, highlighting the centrality of communication to parental participation and the development of home-school relations. The findings are also discussed with relevance to Educational Psychology and possible implications for the profession and future research.

[1] I have written Chapter 1 for submission to the International Journal of Language Education

Introduction

English as an Additional Language

Between 2011 and 2021, the population of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language (EAL) in England increased from 16.8% to 19.2%. This upward trend is also mirrored in the USA, where the number of pupils speaking EAL increased from 3.8 million in 2008 to 5 million in 2018 (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). With increasing ethnolinguistic diversity, it is understandable that the use of language in education, when learning is conducted through the medium of spoken instruction, is becoming of particular interest to researchers and educators alike. EAL refers to an individual speaking English in addition to an alternative first or home language. Importantly, the term EAL refers to both (i) new arrivals to a country where English is the dominant language and who may speak some or no English at all, and (ii) second or third generation ethnic minority pupils who may speak, and be fully fluent, in English but use a different language at home, reflecting their cultural heritage (Strand et al., 2015). To avoid essentialising, I will mainly refer to 'parents' in this paper, when discussing those who speak EAL; when referring to English-speaking parents, I will state this explicitly. The use of the term 'parents' and decisions around terminology are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Home-School Relations

Bioecological models of human development, such as that proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994), highlight the connections between home and school contexts. The significance of interactions between home and school are also emphasised in UK government legislation, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and psychological literature, highlighting the importance of empowering parents to support their children (Department for Education, 2014; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Unicef, 1989). Nonetheless, while educators and families have a shared aspiration that children will be well-educated and cared for, their sometimes seemingly disparate underlying values and beliefs can impact the development of home-school relations (Rosenthal & Sawyers, 1996). Home-school relations can be likened to a community partnership, whereby parents and school staff collaborate in planning, co-ordinating and implanting activities at home and in school, to build alliances with one another and to promote social, personal and academic outcomes for the children involved (Bryan & Henry, 2008).

In essence, home-school relations promote social capital, which refers to the beneficial resources that can be gained by accessing specific social networks (Bourdieu, 1986) (i.e. forging home-school relations). Through the emergence of trust and co-operation within these networks or relations, it is assumed that parents will be provided additional social or

intellectual resources (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Horvat et al., 2016), empowering them to participate and promoting outcomes for their child. However, social capital should be considered critically as it perpetuates a view that exclusive access to networks or relations is protected by those considered to have power - in this case, English-speaking school staff. It is my view that through developing home-school relations, parents and school staff form a partnership that is mutually beneficial, and so perhaps, social capital is more fluid than Bourdieu (1986) initially suggested.

Parental Participation

Epstein and Dauber (1991) propose a model of parental involvement, which assumes a home-school relationship (Figure 1). The model demonstrates the levels at which parents can participate, holding both parents and teachers accountable for parental participation and the development of a home-school relationship. The top of the pyramid refers to community collaboration, which may bolster social capital for both school staff and parents. Through exposure to diverse community groups, school staff may broaden their networks and, therefore, deepen their understanding and awareness of culture and language. Equally, for parents, becoming members of the school community may enable them to experience benefits, such as an increased sense of belonging and emotional connection, which is associated with improved emotional wellbeing and collaboration (Sarason, 1974).

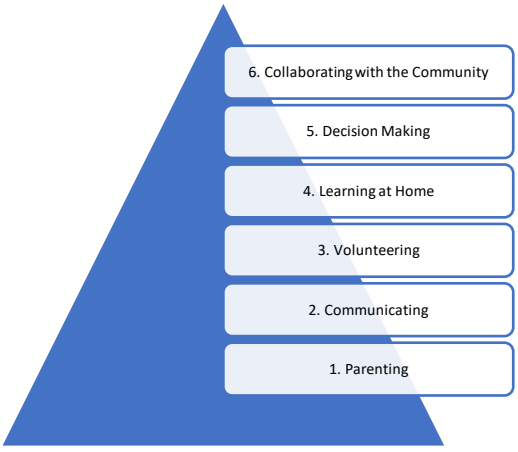

Figure 1. An Adaptation of The Epstein Model of Parental Involvement. Adapted from (Epstein & Dauber, 1991)

Moreover, the levels of participation at the top of the pyramid can be likened to the shift in parental agency described by Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) continuum. Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) continuum details that involvement is the relationship between parent and school staff, but engagement refers to the relationship between the parent and a child's learning, increasing parental agency. In this review, parental participation encompasses

parental involvement, engagement and agency, which are often used interchangeably in the literature. Neither Epstein's model (Epstein & Dauber, 1991) nor Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) continuum specify differences between types of participation for parents who speak English or EAL. Yet, there seems to be a disparity between what is perceived as parental participation and what actually happens in the home (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008), whereby good participation does not have the same meaning for all parents and teachers. The literature suggests that the criteria to determine 'good' parental participation aligns with white, middle-class values (Gillanders et al., 2012; Lim, 2012). This is not to say that bilingual parents cannot be white or middle class, but such criteria may other some parents who speak EAL, implying they are somehow deficient (Chen, 2013). In reality, many parents have a desire to be involved in their child's education but lack the resources or skills (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000), such as an ability to communicate in the teacher's language. Thus, the most encouraging outcomes for students are identified when teachers seek to form partnerships with parents and families (Smith et al., 2014).

Rationale and Aims of the Current Review

The review rationale is based on personal practice experiences, where I have identified some parents appearing disempowered and detached from the school community because they speak EAL. Additionally, there has been no systematic or comprehensive literature review of high-quality empirical research into the role of EAL in parental participation and the development of home-school relations. Thus, the present review aims to address this research gap, by discussing how EAL may be a contributory factor to parental participation and subsequent home-school relations. Using existing research in the respective areas, I explore the nuances of ethnolinguistic diversity in education, to identify ways to promote home-school relations and, therefore, better outcomes for children from bilingual families. Finally, I reflect on the implications of the findings for future research and Educational Psychologists' (EP) practice.

Method

Scoping Literature

I began by scoping the literature, which involved casual searching and reference harvesting. This initial exploration of databases and subsequent literature enabled me to focus my area of interest and identify key search terms, which were relevant to my review question and are defined in the introduction.

Search Strategy

Following the initial scoping period, I systematically searched six databases: Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), British Education Index, Child Development and Adolescent Studies, Psycinfo and Scopus. Searching took place between July and August 2020. The initial search strategy was developed in ERIC and then applied to the other five databases. The search terms were derived from the review question, preliminary literature searches, ERIC's thesaurus function and my own professional experience (Table 1). For example, I was aware that UK contexts refer to EAL, whereas the USA use the term English as a Second Language (ESL), when describing a person who speaks a language other than or in addition to English. Additional filters were applied to the searches to find only peer-reviewed journals, journals written in English and those published between 2010 and 2020. Further adjustments, though minimal, were applied to the search strategy when searching subsequent databases to account for differences or availability of database-specific subject-headings.

Table 1. Search Terms

English As an Additional Language	"English as an Additional Language" OR "English language learners" OR eal OR ell OR esl OR "English as a second language" OR "second language learning" OR "English as a foreign language" OR English (second language) OR "limited English speaking" OR "non English speaking"
	AND
Parent Participation	parent* involvement or parent* engagement or parent* participation
	AND
Home-School Relations	"home school partnerships" OR "home school relations" OR "home school relationships" OR "home school communication" OR home school co-operation" OR "parent school partnerships" OR "parent school relations" OR "parent school communication" OR "family school relationship" OR "parent school relationships"

For this review, I chose to stop searching when the same references were found with no new results (Levy & Ellis, 2006). Further reference harvesting and hand-searching ensured all relevant papers were included, counting those that had been found in the initial scoping searches. Following my decision to end searching, I imported all references into Endnote desktop software and removed any duplicates before screening.

Screening

Wanden-Berghe and Sanz-Valero (2012) acknowledge that although conducting an exhaustive and, therefore, inclusive search is beneficial, it may lead to irrelevant articles being found. To rule out any irrelevant papers and to promote specificity, I developed a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 2) based on the research question (Kitchenham et al., 2016). From my initial reading, I was aware that there was an abundance of research relating to parent involvement, but less with a focus on parents who speak EAL. Similarly, there was a breadth of research that investigated the impact of parent involvement on attainment or facilitators and barriers to attainment for children who speak EAL, but not on home-school relations. Thus, I provided a robust rationale for each criterion to ensure I could justify the relevance of each paper to my review question and the subsequent screening process.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Reason	Exclusion Criteria	Reason
English Language	To be accessible for the researcher	**Parents of Children from specific subgroups (e.g. gifted or SEND)**	In order to make the research specific to the general population of families speaking EAL
Peer reviewed	To ensure papers are of a high quality	**Papers that focus on academic achievement or attainment or parent interventions or programmes**	To ensure the focus of the research is relevant to home-school relations
2010-2020	To ensure relevance to the current educational climate. Also, for the UK context, the Equality act was introduced in 2010, which has particular relevance for parents from ethnic minority backgrounds and for whom EAL		
UK, USA or Australia (From western speaking countries – socio-	Similarity of cultural settings for analysis and comparison		

politically speaking)			
Qualitative research	Appropriate for answering the review question and the focus of the review		
Empirical Research	In order to allow my own interpretation during the synthesis stage		

The first stage of screening involved assessing the relevance of the papers (according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria), based on their abstracts and titles (Torgerson, 2003). Although it was relatively simple to discard papers that used a quantitative method of analysis or were conducted in countries that did not speak English, others were more difficult. For example, it was sometimes unclear from the abstracts and titles whether a paper focused on home-school relations or parent participation. There were also several papers that explored the experiences of ethnic minority parents in developing home-school relations, but it was not apparent whether they spoke EAL. Essentially, the subjectiveness of my inclusion and exclusion criteria made it difficult to ascertain the relevance of some papers from the abstract and titles only, requiring a second stage of screening (Torgerson, 2003). The second stage involved reading the papers in full and making a judgement on whether they met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Following this screening stage, I arrived at five papers, which I deemed relevant to my review question and suitable for a qualitative synthesis. A Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta Analyses (PRISMA) flowchart (Moher et al., 2009; 2006) illustrates the number of studies at each stage of the review, summarising the searching process (Figure 2).

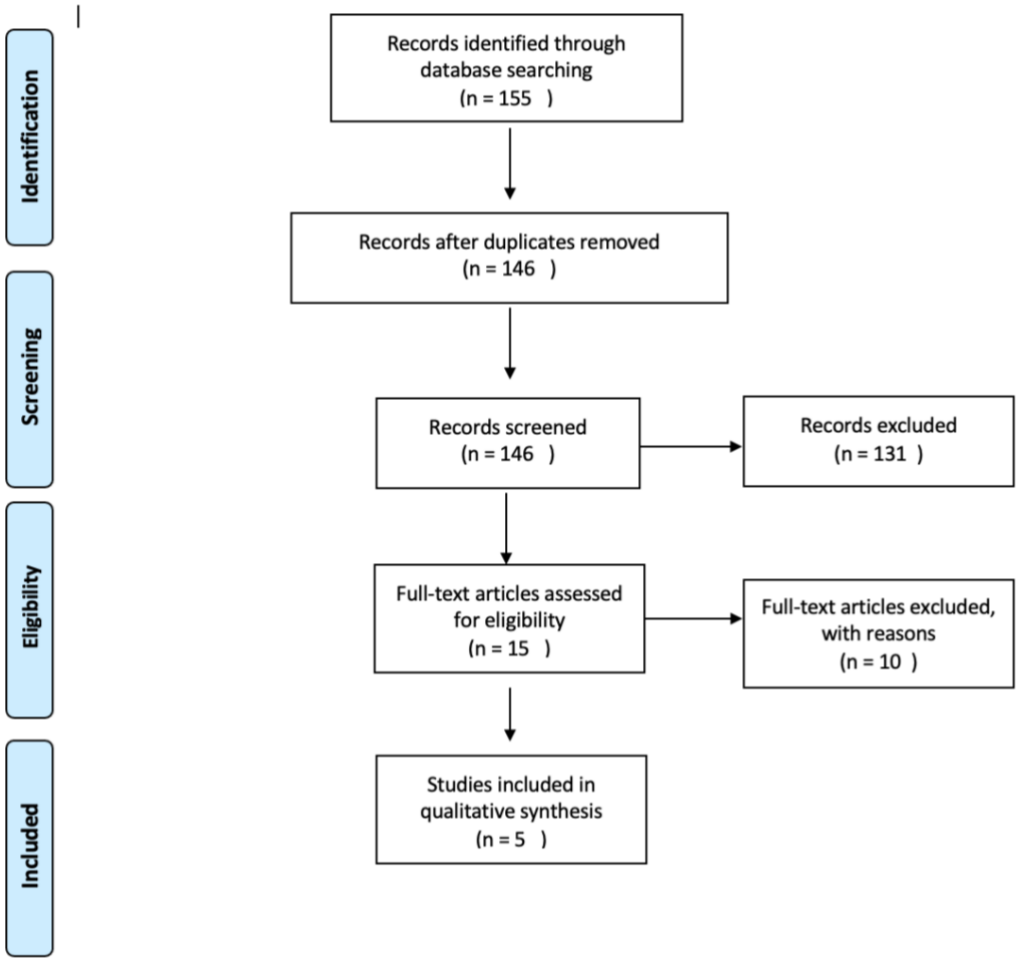

Figure 2. PRISMA Flowchart

Data Classification

Porter (2006) argues that there is no one agreed way to rigorously quality assess qualitative research. Moreover, Dixon-woods, et al. (2004) state that "...some of the most important qualities of qualitative research can be the hardest to measure " (p.224). I agreed with Dixon-woods et al.'s (2004) assertion, believing it was epistemologically incoherent to attempt to assess the validity of parent and teacher experiences, which are described in the final five papers. Instead, I followed an approach described by Thomas and Harden (2008), which suggests excluding papers that do not provide a reliable answer to one's review question. The inclusion and exclusion criteria I developed ensured that the papers were judged and screened as Thomas and Harden (2008) advise. Moreover, all the papers were from peer-reviewed journals, which led me to assume they had undergone some degree of quality assessment prior to publication.

Qualitative Analysis

I analysed the data using Thomas and Harden's (2008) Thematic Synthesis (TS), which emulates thematic analysis used in primary studies. Although similar to meta-ethnography, Thomas and Harden (2008) cite a key difference, whereby TS may be more appropriate when a specific review question is being addressed, as is the case here. There are three iterative stages involved in TS (Table 3) (Booth, 2016; Thomas & Harden, 2008). A visual representation of the process is shown in Figure 3, and the findings are discussed below.

Table 3. Stages of Thematic Synthesis

Stage of Analysis	Description of process involved with each stage
1. Line-by-Line Coding	Coding was inductive and increased as each paper was read (Thomas & Harden, 2008). This stage of the process involved line-by-line coding of the findings sections of each paper; the final set comprised 77 codes, examples of which include 'children translating' and 'teacher inexperience'.
2. Identifying Descriptive Themes	The second stage involved identifying and grouping related codes into broader descriptive themes (see Appendix A). For this stage of the process, I regularly referred to the papers, to ensure coherence and context of the codes to the views within which they were expressed. There were 14 descriptive themes created in total, which related to individual-, school- and systemic-level factors.
3. Generating Analytic Themes	Thomas and Harden (2008) describe the final stage as "going beyond" (p.3) the data to develop new understanding, which some may argue is the defining feature of TS. Generating analytic themes involved identifying and plotting links between the descriptive themes to answer the research question and understand how EAL affects parental participation in the development of home-school relations.

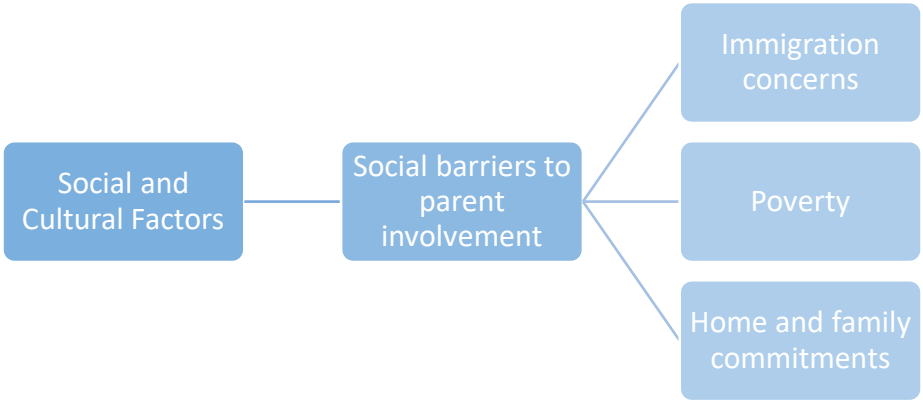

Figure 3. A Visual Representation of how Codes become Descriptive and Analytic Themes

Findings

Study Characteristics

Table 4 details the characteristics of the studies from the final five papers, which ranged in date from 2013 – 2019. Of the five studies, three of the papers were from America and sampled LatinX individuals, and two were from the UK: one sampling Eastern European families and the other sampling Pakistani families. Although not directly stated, four of the studies focused largely on parents who had recently moved to America or the UK, centring on issues relating to immigration and settlement. However, Ashraf (2019) refers to cultural and community issues, which could be suggestive of a more established community group. Nonetheless, all the studies' samples are heterogenous with individuals from a range of families within school communities. Hamilton (2013) and Soutullo et al. (2016) were not known to the sample they were researching, though the researchers of the remaining three papers were known to participants.

Regarding data collection methods, Petrone (2016), Ashraf (2019), Hamilton (2013) and Snell (2018) used semi-structured interviews, though Soutullo et al. (2016) used focus groups. In addition to interviews, Snell (2018) used focus groups and Hamilton (2013) used postal questionnaires. Four of the studies sampled parents of children in school; Ashraf (2019) and Hamilton (2013) also collected data from teachers and other educational professionals or community practitioners. Unlike the other studies, Soutullo et al. (2016) only explored teachers' perspectives. Alongside parents, Petrone (2016) interviewed recent graduates, who still had siblings in elementary or middle school. The author explains that the decision to interview graduates was because of the language barriers faced by parents, which, though not evident in other samples, reflects the findings of many of the other studies. Aside from the exception of interviewing recent graduates in Petrone's (2016)

paper, all studies collected data from early years settings and primary schools or the American equivalent (Pre-Kindergarten – Elementary). Finally, all the studies, except Hamilton (2013), allowed parents to be interviewed in their preferred language. Hamilton (2013) conducted interviews in English and without the presence of an interpreter. In the studies where participants could choose their preferred interview language, most chose to speak in their home language.

Table 4. Study Characteristics

Source Paper	Petrone (2016)	Hamilton (2013)	Soutullo, et al. (2016)	Ashraf (2019)	Snell (2018)
Article Title	A squandered resource: the divestment of Mexican parental involvement in a new gateway state	Fostering effective and sustainable home-school relations with migrant worker parents: a new story to tell?	Discouraging partnerships? Teachers' perspectives in immigration-related barriers to family-school collaboration	Pakistani parents and their children's school: parent involvement at the foundation stage	Parent-school engagement in a public elementary school in southern Arizona: immigrant and refugee parent perspectives
Sample	9 parents with children who had attended school in Mexico and the U.S 3 students who had attended school in Mexico and the U.S.	9 Eastern European parents participated in the main study (7 were Polish and 2 were Lithuanian). Participants in the wider research involved: 40 children; 37 teachers; 8 EAL teachers; and 6 community practitioners (2 health visitors, a priest, a police diversity liaison officer, a community cohesion officer, and an inclusion/EAL advisor).	The sample consisted of 18 school teachers from a range of ethnic backgrounds.	12 sets of parents, the Foundation Stage co-ordinator, 2 class teachers, a day care co-ordinator, a bilingual keyworker and 2 bilingual teaching assistants.	16 parents or caregivers
Data Collection	Interviews (all but 1 in Spanish)	Interviews (in English without interpreters) and	Focus group interviews	Interviews in the language of the participant's choice, and.	Focus groups and interviews (conducted in the

Source Paper	Petrone (2016)	Hamilton (2013)	Soutullo, et al. (2016)	Ashraf (2019)	Snell (2018)
		Postal questionnaires		Observations of the parents in class.	participant's preferred language). Informal interviews were also conducted with a number of teachers.
Setting	Schools in a North Carolina, which is a new gateway state. This means the area does not have a longstanding history of immigration into the area.	Schools in a Local Authority in North Wales.	A large, multicultural, urban school in the U.S.	A primary school in the South of England, where 25% of the pupils were of Pakistani-heritage.	An elementary (primary) school in southern Arizona.
Focus of Study	'...the goal of this research is to explore the participants' perspectives and experiences in a new gateway state in the Southeastern U.S. It is my hope that the following qualitative data reveal the regional challenges schools and non-English-speaking families face when trying to foster stronger parental	'this paper considers factors which remain the key to enabling migrant worker parents to establish and sustain effective links with their child's school'.	'this study uses Epstein's (2011) model of family-school partnerships to examine the ways in which elementary teachers…conceptualise immigration-related barriers to family-school partnerships'.	The focus of this study is informed by '...the difficulties faced by many people of ethnic minority origin with regard to engagement with and performance in the English educational system and the emphasis currently being placed on the value of parental involvement in their children's education'.	'...to understand the perspectives, expectations, and funds of knowledge of linguistic minority families. To promote more equitable relationships and mutual communication'.

Source Paper	Petrone (2016)	Hamilton (2013)	Soutullo, et al. (2016)	Ashraf (2019)	Snell (2018)
	engagement practices'.				
Theoretical Orientation	This study is grounded in Nodding's theory of care (1984, 2005) and Valenzuela's concept of subtractive schooling (1999).	The study used a qualitative-interpretative research paradigm. It analysed the findings using a narrative approach to reflect the social reality of the participants who were involved.	This study drew of Epstein's (2011) model of parental involvement as a framework for understanding barriers to family-school collaboration.	No explicit presupposed theoretical framework.	The study used a qualitative approach and drew upon the Funds of Knowledge framework.
Findings	Findings indicated that parents felt more involved in Mexican schools than the U.S schools. They cited the lack of dialogue between parents and teachers was a lack of responsiveness from schools, which was indicative of their lack of care. The onus for parental involvement was placed solely on the parents rather than the schools.	Findings found that factors which affected home-school relationships and relate to language barriers, include: diversity in language, community acceptance and changing roles and family structures. Therefore, the authors suggest that in order to establish meaningful home-school relations with migrant parents, teachers should adopt a respectful,	The findings indicated that significant barriers to family-school collaboration relate to language and culture, lack of family resources, and specific issues around undocumented parents and citizenship.	The findings showed that all participants understood the value of parental involvement. However, parents perceived school as not wanting them to be involved and school were generally not positive about parental lack of involvement, which they perceived as a lack of commitment.	Qualitative data from parents suggest they have great respect for their children's teachers. They saw themselves as responsible for teaching children manners and respect, though this did not match with teachers' expectation for parents to support more academically.

Source Paper	Petrone (2016)	Hamilton (2013)	Soutullo, et al. (2016)	Ashraf (2019)	Snell (2018)
		collaborative and reflective approach.			

Analytic Themes

In answering the review question, 'How does EAL affect parental participation in the development of home-school relations?', five analytic themes were generated: communication, parents, teachers, school and school systems and social and cultural factors. Each theme consists of sub-sections to better describe the data within that theme (Nowell et al., 2017). Arguably, some of the sub-headings are applicable to more than one of the themes or are interrelated with other themes, reflecting the interpretative nature of qualitative synthesis. Any theme interactions are discussed throughout and presented in Figure 4.

Communication

An overarching factor, reported across all papers, was communication; this is arguably the cornerstone of all relationships, appearing to be foundational throughout the subsequent themes. This section discusses how language and communication are often incorrectly interchanged and how home-school communication is influenced by formative early interactions.

Home-School Communication

In four of the five papers (Hamilton, 2013; Petrone, 2016; Snell, 2018; Soutullo et al., 2016) parents reported noticing a difference in the level of communication in their host country compared to their home country. For example, in Petrone's (2016) study, several parents described a "shared responsibility between parents and teachers in Mexico" (p.76), which was founded on "…consistent communication between parents and teachers" (p.76). Conversely, in the USA, the same parents reported not being able to make themselves heard due to a communication barrier. The parents voiced concerns that they would not be able to communicate with their child's school if there was an emergency or vital information needed to be shared (Petrone, 2016). Although parents deemed these specific situations troubling, they remained disempowered to change them, with school not offering a means of parents sharing these worries with them. Parent disempowerment contradicts the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) in America (relevant at the time of paper publication). The act stated that to receive relevant funding, schools must have a parent involvement policy to engage and sustain parent activity, which includes open channels of communication (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012). Yet, in Petrone's (2016) and Snell's (2018) papers, parents cited that they received little to no communication in Spanish and only one parent reported that school had provided an interpreter; the other parents were often unaware that this service even existed to them.

Initial Interactions

Hamilton (2013) highlights the importance of the initial communication and interaction between parents and teachers, which often sets the tone for subsequent communication and relations. Therefore, if there is a language barrier between parents and teachers this can be problematic, leading to exclusionary practices for those parents who do not speak English. A teacher in Hamilton's (2013) study described a discomfort communicating with parents, who had limited English, referring to it as fruitless and something she would avoid in future. The teacher also explained that these particular parents subsequently avoided communication too.

In Ashraf's (2019) study, "Several parents said that they would be able to help much more if they had better communication with teachers" (p.712). Similarly, "Parents who were not able to make themselves heard in English had little hope of communicating with teachers" (Snell, 2018, p. 80). Both quotes indicate an apparent absence of communication when there is a language difference between parents and teachers, impacting the potential for parental participation. Petrone (2016) contends that an absence of communication can lead to assumptions that involvement in school is an English-speaking only endeavour and a lack of involvement, therefore, is a "Hispanic thing" (p.85). Poza et al. (2014) argue that cultural homogeneity attributions ignore the agency that parents demonstrate in responding to challenges such as language or communication barriers.

Despite the perceived challenges, a teacher in Hamilton's (2013) paper referred to the use of hand gestures to support interaction, demonstrating that communication extends beyond spoken words. Indeed, a language barrier may be inevitable, but a communication barrier is seemingly surmountable. I opine that to prevent formative encounters becoming detrimental, teachers should be better equipped to provide practical and relational adjustments to communicate with parents. By doing so, parents and teachers speaking the same language is not a pre-requisite for parental participation and home-school relations, which is relevant to the next theme.

Summary

This section has emphasised how communication enables both home and school to learn from one another: school gain insight into the child from the parents and in turn, families learn from schools' practices with their children (Christenson, 2004; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Essentially, communication should be bi-directional (Christenson, 2004; Epstein & Sanders, 2006), and attention should be given to initial interactions to ensure the subsequent development of partnerships.

Teachers

Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs

Despite Snell's (2018) interviews indicating that parents want teachers to know that they have a desire to be involved and are willing to help, Petrone (2016) found that "Teachers…are more likely to view Mexican parents as not placing as much importance on education as their English-speaking counterparts" (p.84). The misconception that parents are disinterested could reflect practitioner-based discourse and allegiance to white middle-class values, which potentially sets teachers apart from the EAL-speaking families with whom they work (Hamilton, 2013). Alternatively, it may be that teachers' conceptualisations of difference as deficits may also be problematic (Soutullo et al., 2016). Hamilton's (2013) contention about the narratives surrounding parents is exemplified in Ashraf's (2019) interviews. Ashraf (2019) found that parents and teachers alike agreed that parents' confidence and discomfort were often a barrier to involvement. However, Ashraf (2019) noted a disparity in perceptions of unwelcomeness, suggesting a potential misunderstanding between teachers and parents around how involvement is conceptualised, which could be detrimental for parents who lack confidence.

Hamilton (2013) explains Ashraf's (2019) findings, stating that teachers who lack confidence or are inexperienced in working with culturally and linguistically diverse families might inadvertently appear uneasy. Teacher inexperience, therefore, could lead parents to feel uncomfortable, subsequently impeding home-school relations (Hamilton, 2013). Teacher unease or inexperience may also be illuminated by a diverted focus on performance indicators and increased pressures to improve academic standards across major subject areas (Smith, 2013). To demonstrate, increased pressures on teachers may leave them less time to focus on developing relations with EAL-speaking families. The paradox, however, is that investing in building home-school relations with parents may promote parental participation, which could subsequently increase academic standards for all students. Nevertheless, Hamilton (2013) acknowledged that engagement with parents requires creative and innovative efforts, which pressured teachers may not prioritise.

School and School Systems

It is suggested that little consideration is given to minority parents' life experiences, interest or circumstances; instead, involvement is centred on schoolcentric practices, which seemingly exclude minority parents (Gillanders et al., 2012). Exclusive schoolcentric practices were suggested across all papers, particularly those involving LatinX parents, and this was largely linked to school policies and whole-school involvement. Epstein and

Sanders (2006) contend that parent involvement at a whole-school or systems-level is associated with increased agency and decision-making. Relevantly, this section discusses involvement in the whole-school community through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and parent volunteering.

Parent-Teacher Associations

The headteacher in Hamilton's (2013) study described an incident where Polish parents had joined a PTA meeting and were met with such significant hostility that they did not return. This finding was echoed by a teacher in Soutullo et al.'s (2016) paper, "…the biggest part of our population is Haitian, most-a lot of the language is Creole. Do any of the [PTA] moms speak Creole? No, they are all white" (p.233). It appears that structures such as the PTA are inherently exclusive to English-speaking parents and though school recognise this, they do not perceive it as their duty to rectify it. If exclusively English-speaking parents in a PTA are leading systemic discussions around developments in school, then it seems plausible that progressions to involve EAL-speaking families may not be prioritised. Soutullo et al. (2016) conclude that the lack of initiative for EAL-speaking parents to be involved in PTAs was perceived by parents as perpetuating an unwelcoming school environment, a facet of which was the school's lack of cultural responsiveness.

School Community

The finding that EAL-speaking parents are often excluded from PTAs is akin to Egilsson et al.'s (2021) assertion that language challenges affect the social networks with which parents can engage, impacting their sense of belonging within the school community. Consequently, parents may be more inclined to seek out other parents with the same language and culture, providing them with a protection against displacement and community marginalisation (Hamilton, 2013). Nonetheless, it is conceivable that the formation of exclusive EAL-speaking parent groups within existing school communities could be misinterpreted as a lack of involvement or interest in the wider school community, hampering home-school relations.

A parent in Hamilton's (2013) study said "One English mum tries to speak to us. Most don't. But it is hard for them when we are all talking in Polish. I can see this is difficult" (p.307). The difficulty conversing when there is a language barrier was echoed by a teacher in the same study; they suggested that communication took longer and trust was harder to build. These findings indicate the difficulty that the language barrier poses; however, it does not state impossibility. Similar to Hamilton (2013), Ashraf (2019) explained how parents rely on a community 'grapevine' to share information, which they do not receive from school. This finding highlights the importance for parents to develop a sense of belonging and the

reliance that they have on community structures, akin to empowerment theory. Rappaport (1981) describes empowerment theory as an individual's use of community resources to promote personal development, autonomy and self-determination. Despite the proposed gains, second-hand sharing of information and, therefore, misinformation risks further disengagement of parents from the wider school community.

Wider-School Involvement

Regarding parent volunteering, Snell (2018) explained that Mexican parents are eager to be involved in 'fiesta' or school parties and cultural celebrations, which Epstein (1995) suggests are a lower-level of involvement with less autonomy than PTAs. Involvement at these events requires less communication with school staff than parent-teacher meetings, which parents are reportedly less likely to attend (Snell, 2018). Parent involvement at events that require less communication may be indicative of some of the hostility and unwelcomeness parents described (Ashraf, 2019; Hamilton, 2013). In three papers (Ashraf, 2019; Petrone, 2016; Snell, 2018), classroom volunteering is discussed. When asked what they would like school to know, one participant in Snell's (2018) paper said "…let them know that we are always available to help the school, even if there are problems with the children…"(p.127). This quote indicates a willingness to be involved and to help, despite the school's exclusionary volunteer policy that was detailed by other participants. Snell (2018) states that parents without the appropriate citizenship documentation could not volunteer in school, restricting many parents from being involved. One teacher in the paper recognised "I don't think they [parents] feel needed" (Snell, 2018, p. 235). Another teacher suggested encouraging parent volunteers to register, when they are present for their child's first day of school. However, they recognised the reality of this provision was unlikely.

The points raised by the teachers in Snell's (2018) study demonstrate a recognition of the difficulties faced by parents when trying to be involved, which seemingly stem from systemic barriers within school. The comments also suggest a lack of responsiveness to resolve this issue. However, the deterring volunteer policy detailed by Snell (2018) was not universal to the other papers. A teacher in Ashraf's (2019) study described the benefits of parent involvement through volunteering, such as learning what happens in the classroom and promoting similar learning at home. Likewise, in Petrone's (2016) study, where parents had volunteered, some had gone on to gain jobs in school, highlighting the potential for parent involvement to be sustained and potentially quell assumptions that teachers may hold about parents.

Summary

All the papers found that parents are willing to be involved and schools recognise the benefits and barriers of involvement. Nonetheless, existing exclusionary policies, marginalise parents with characteristics associated with EAL (such as document status), preventing and deterring their involvement. Even where these practices are not in existence, there are other barriers to parents at a systems level, which prevent them participating in decision-making, potentially creating a hierarchy amongst the parent community and preventing change occurring. Additional systemic barriers within society are discussed in the next theme.

Social and Cultural Factors

Social and cultural factors identified across all five papers included migration, settlement and integration, poverty and Socioeconomic Status (SES) and perceptions of a new education system.

Migration, Settlement and Integration

Four papers discussed the challenges of migration and settlement into a new country. Snell (2018) and Hamilton (2013) explain that moving to a new country provides challenges for parents, who may struggle to find work that pays a living wage, experience poor quality housing and overcrowding, whilst managing the emotional aspects of displacement and establishing a new life. Parents adjusting to migration may suffer from psychological and emotional difficulties, rendering them "temporarily dysfunctional" (Hamilton, 2013, p. 312). Understandably, while experiencing such difficulties, parents may not be able to prioritise building home-school relations or participating in the way school might anticipate.

The heterogeneity of different cultural experiences may explain the difference in findings from families in Hamilton's (2013) and Ashraf's (2019) papers compared to the LatinX families in the three remaining papers. To demonstrate, Snell (2018) acknowledged that, in Arizona, where their research was conducted, there is a lot of anti-immigrant rhetoric, which was not addressed by participants in the interviews. Snell (2018) queried whether this was due to the perceived otherness between the parents and researcher, who is white and English-speaking. Indeed, it could be argued that the absence of community hostility in discussion is not an accurate reflection of parent experience. Conversely, in Hamilton's (2013) study, which sampled Eastern European families, one participant openly said "Intolerance about the Polish community happens daily. Sometimes it gets quite ugly. There is a lot of anger about jobs and housing" (p.310). Other participants in the same study, commented that intolerance is augmented when many families move into an area, compared

to when one family joins an existing community. For an individual family joining an existing community, perhaps they provide less of a threat to the allocation of resources. Alternatively, it may be that families joining an existing community feel a greater pressure to acculturate (Berry, 2008; Ogbu, 1995), rather than to overtly demonstrate their own cultural and ethnic practices, such as speaking a home language. Acculturation refers to a cultural change as a result of exposure to individuals from a majority group (Sam & Berry, 2016). Consequently, single family settlement and subsequent acculturation may lead to families being more widely accepted by the existing community. Acceptance within the existing community could extend to school, influencing a parents likeliness to develop home-school relations.

Pakistani participants in Ashraf's (2019) study had a different experience of integration to that described by Hamilton (2013). Parents appeared to be part of a more established community group and did not report issues of migration and settlement, nor was there significant evidence of acculturation through English-language learning (Ashraf, 2019), for example. Ironically, teachers in Ashraf's (2019) study gave examples of parental participation, though continued to describe the Pakistani parents as 'hard to reach'. If teachers view a lack of acculturation as synonymous with a lack of involvement, or as a cultural trait, even when there are parents who are actively involved (Ashraf, 2019), it raises the question of whether teacher assumptions and attitudes are an underpinning barrier to building relations with families.

Poverty and Socio-Economic Status

All the papers made reference to the association between EAL, poverty and SES, which Soutullo et al. (2016) contend can be moderated by the development of home-school partnerships. Hamilton (2013) reported that many parents had been forced to take lower paid jobs in the UK than in Poland, due to difficulties converting qualifications, resulting in highly skilled employees in underpaid jobs. A teacher in the study also acknowledged that "parents seem to be working all hours" (Hamilton, 2013, p. 312), recognising that this has a negative impact on relationship building. Long working hours were not unique to Hamilton's (2013) study. Referring to one father, Petrone (2016) stated that "…as the only English speaker in the family and the primary money maker, he [parent] often did not have the time to be as involved in his daughter's education as he would have liked" (p.82). Both these papers highlight that the working commitments of parents may be a physical barrier to involvement, whereby they are not able to be present as much as they desire. Without an understanding of the challenges faced by parents in acquiring and maintaining work, teachers may adhere to a deficit model that blames parents because of their employment situation (Snell, 2018).

Cultural Perceptions of Education

In Hamilton (2013) and Ashraf's (2019) studies, parents compared their experiences of teaching and learning, citing more play-based approaches in the UK compared to didactic teaching methods in their home countries. These views were seemingly pragmatic and evaluative, though could be conceived by teaching staff as critical. Overcoming perceived criticism may provide an additional challenge for teachers when building relations with parents. To demonstrate, a parent in Hamilton's (2013) study shared that "In Poland children do more work. There should be more homework, more English and lessons need to be harder" (p.307). Similarly, teachers in Ashraf's (2019) study noted that parents did not understand 'learning through play'.

In Snell's (2018) paper, a teacher highlighted how differing cultural attributions of teachers could be problematic: "...some cultures view teachers as professionals...but when it comes to academics, it needs to be more of a partnership" (p.130). This teacher's view suggests an understanding, which could be viewed as a frustration by others, decreasing their willingness to involve parents or make connections with them. Concurrent with parent interviews in all papers, Ashraf (2019) highlighted that the mismatch in role perceptions was perceived by teachers as a lack of commitment from parents, exacerbating any existing gaps between the two groups. The social factors that impact parents and the relations they build with school staff are seemingly nuanced, requiring clear and consistent communication, as well as a willingness to understand one another.

Parents

Gratitude

Despite some disparities between opinions on teaching methods, all parents appeared eager to share their gratitude and appreciation for their child's teacher. However, it was unclear in the papers how these feelings were expressed to teaching staff. Snell (2018) reported that "parents spoke extremely highly of their children's teachers, for whom they respect" (p.125). Moreover, when asked what they valued most about their children's school, the first answer was usually "the teachers" (Snell, 2018, p. 125). Aside from parents' gratitude, they did not disclose any other positive feelings or emotions. Arguably, an overwhelming sense of gratitude coupled with fear, as discussed below, could be indicative of the power dynamic between parents and teachers, underscoring the challenges faced by parents in developing home-school relations.

Fear

Parents in three of the five papers (Ashraf, 2019; Hamilton, 2013; Petrone, 2016), all acknowledged fearing interactions with school, namely because of the language barrier. This fear is exemplified in a teacher quote from Hamilton's (2013) paper, "her [pupil] parents wouldn't come anywhere near in the fear of being approached" (p.306). The use of the term 'anywhere near' could indicate the strength of the parents' fear and the degree to which they evaded teacher interaction. Fear was similarly addressed by Soutullo et al. (2016), who found that teachers perceived parents' fears of deportation as detrimental to their alacrity to build relations with school. Findings of parent fear may be associated with earlier discussions of the significance of initial interactions with teachers. Additional emotions that were shared by parents in almost all the studies were uncertainty and a lack of confidence, which are also mentioned under the 'communication' theme. Undoubtedly, these feelings are not unique to EAL-speaking parents, however, they are attributed to frequently associated factors, such as language and cultural barriers and misunderstandings. The attribution of such feelings to a language or cultural barrier could create a hierarchy within the school community between teachers who speak the dominant language (English) and those who do not, othering the EAL-speaking parents and creating a cyclical effect where parents remain uninvolved and disconnected from their child's teacher.

Summary

This theme has highlighted that parents are appreciative of teacher efforts, though remain unsure of their role in home-school relations, which can lead to apprehension and withdrawal.

A Summary of the Findings

Following the identification of the themes, I propose a diagram to detail the interactions between them (Figure 4). The diagram illustrates that communication between parents and teachers is central to parental participation and home-school relations, though a motivation to interact with the other is required from both parties, hence the cyclic depiction. Parents' and teachers' communication is influenced by individual factors, such as confidence and previous experience engaging with the other, though communication diminishes those limiting factors. Social and cultural factors and school and school systems are presented around the other themes, akin to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic model, which highlights that surrounding systems (or factors) interact with and, therefore, influence the more central themes. For example, if the school's restrictive volunteer policy prevents a parent from volunteering and participating in the classroom, then their opportunities to communicate with their child's teacher, and, therefore, build relations are limited.

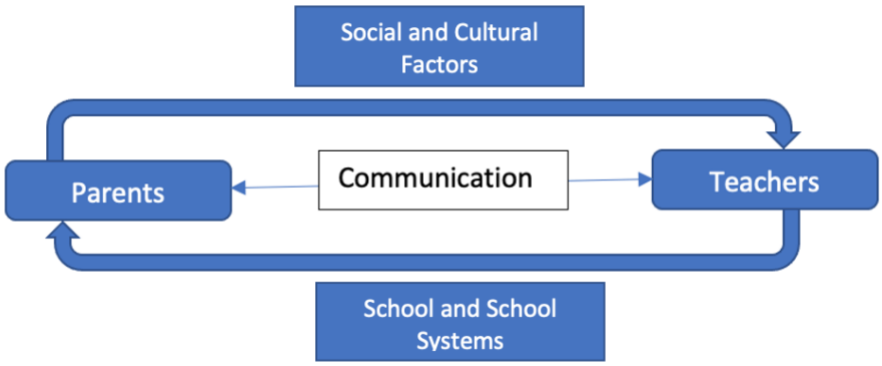

Figure 4. A Diagram to Outline the Interaction between the Analytic Themes

Limitations of this Review

Limitations of this review relate to the interpretative nature of the analysis, whereby it is not possible to make generalisations from the findings to other EAL-speaking parents or teachers. As a lone researcher, the findings are also based solely on my interpretation, which may be influenced by my worldview. Additionally, most studies were conducted in the USA; therefore, caution and criticality should be demonstrated when considering the implications for UK-based EPs as the USA has different systems for education, immigration and citizenship.

Further, the search parameters and some of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used in this review could be considered limiting. For example, only peer-reviewed studies were included, which could mean relevant research studies in books or grey literature could have been missed. The search parameters could also have been widened to include studies written in languages other than English.

Implications for Practice and Research

The findings highlight that there is work to be undertaken in relation to school policies and developing teacher confidence, in order to make schools more welcoming environments for parents and to empower teachers to initiate and sustain home-school relations. As EPs, therefore, there is scope for systemic working to develop relational school policies that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the school and wider community. EPs could provide training on cultural responsiveness, drawing on skills used in consultation to promote effective and supportive communication, which enables parents to participate across all levels of involvement outlined by the Epstein model (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

The review highlighted that positive and effective communication is a significant facilitative and foundational factor for parental participation and home-school relations when parents have EAL. Therefore, future research could consider the experiences of parents and teachers when communicating with one another, to explore, identify and propose good practice and ways to promote communication between these two groups.

Conclusion

I identified five analytic themes when answering the review question: How does EAL affect parental participation in the development of home-school relations? The review has highlighted that an absence of communication can lead parents to feel unwelcome and uncomfortable, impacting their levels of participation. Moreover, communication is paramount for cultural sensitivity and more importantly, responsiveness. For teachers to understand the complexities and challenges faced by parents, but also the strengths and relevance of their cultures, communication is key. Equally, communication enables parents to collaborate with teachers around learning, and to better understand their pressures, reflecting reciprocity and respect. Thus, home-school relations are forged on schools aiming to understand, appreciate and incorporate home beliefs, goals and cultural practices into the school community, and families seeking to understand and support the school's expectations (Souto-Manning, 2010); both of which requires communication. Finally, teachers should be encouraged to have an appreciation of the value of ethnolinguistic diversity by recognising their own subjectivities and assumptions (Martin & Pirbhai-Illich, 2016).

Chapter 2: A Methodological and Ethical Critique of the Research

Introduction

This chapter provides a methodological and ethical critique of relevant research designs and methods that have been employed throughout my empirical research (Chapter 3). I consider and reflect on my researcher positionality, which is influenced by my worldview and research motivations. Additionally, I discuss how my epistemological and ontological perspectives have supported decision-making in relation to the methodology, ethics and subsequent thesis findings.

Worldviews in Research

According to Grix (2002), research enquiries emerge from a person's view of the world, which is guided by their epistemological and ontological viewpoint (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Willig, 2013). Thus, an understanding of a researcher's espoused philosophical perspectives allows the reader to better understand their research approach, including their methodology and methods, which in turn link to the findings (Gough et al., 2012). Concurrent with Williams et al. (2017), who assert that educational psychology research should "identify and make transparent the epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions" (p.9), it is important that I am aware of my own worldview in relation to this study. Below, I outline my evolving understanding of the world, relevant to these perspectives and my research.

Research Motivations

My interest in this area stems from anecdotal evidence during doctoral training which found that parents, who speak EAL (including Romanian), have limited opportunities to communicate with school staff and subsequently participate in their child's education. The SEND Code of Practice (CoP) (2015) and the Equality Act (2010) outline adjustments that must be made to support parents to participate in decision-making processes. However, there seems to be a lack of incentive to ensure this happens, as well as an absence in awareness of how views can be heard and communication can be promoted (Schneider & Arnot, 2018a, 2018b). Whilst conducting this research, Brexit and Covid-19 occurred, shifting the socio-political context. Simultaneously, changes to immigration bills and legislation have been proposed, which have been linked to increased xenophobia, racism and hostility towards those who settle in the UK (Kromczyk et al., 2021; Pickup et al., 2021). The repercussions of these recent changes alongside increasing population diversity relate to Social Justice (SJ), which further motivated my research interest.

Research Paradigm

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of parents and school staff in their communication together, with a view to understanding whether there was a role for EPs in promoting this. I believed an interpretative research paradigm would be most appropriate, based on its claim to "understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 19); in this case, how school staff and parents make sense of their experiences communicating together. Interpretivism denotes an alternative to positivism, characterised by the view that the subjects of the social sciences are distinct from subjects within the natural sciences (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, interpretivism is characterised by a "concern for the individual" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 19), reflecting this research's aim of giving a voice to those who may have been marginalised and using this to challenge communication inequalities within education.

Axiology

Axiology refers to the researcher's values and beliefs (Cohen et al., 2018), including their personal and professional ethics, which underpin their approach to research; my axiology is centred on SJ. SJ is broadly defined as endorsing full and equal participation for individuals from all social groups, by removing power differentials, challenging oppression and discrimination, and promoting and respecting diversity (Adams & Bell, 2016; Schulze et al., 2019; Winter, 2019). Fraser (1997) conceptualises SJ through the distinction between two forms of injustice: cultural and economic. The economic domain relates to economic deprivation, marginalisation and exploitation; for example, a parent's lack of resources to participate due to the economic challenges of migration. Cultural injustice refers to the subjection of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals to practices and communications that may be unfamiliar or hostile, non-recognition (a lack of participation within systems and decision-making) and disrespect. Both of these injustices were identified in Chapter 1. To overcome the former, redistribution of goods and resources is required through policy changes, such as the reallocation of funding to promote access to interpreter services (Fraser, 1997, 2008). Cultural injustice require a politics of recognition, which is either affirmative, where preferred language and identity is reclaimed, or transformative, whereby the distinct categories (e.g. EAL-speaking or English-speaking) are deconstructed to eradicate misrecognition (Fraser, 1997; Power, 2012). This research focuses on recognition, by exploring parents' perspectives and working towards understanding how communication can elevate parents' voices within school systems. By illuminating injustices from a range of perspectives, I hope to encourage change individually and systemically, through the adoption of a 'communication-for-all' approach (Danermark & Gellerstedt, 2004).

Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of the world (Bryman, 2016; Willig, 2013), including the assumptions of social reality (Grix, 2002). Scotland (2012) states that an interpretive paradigm is coherent with a relativist ontology, which subscribes to the view that there is no such thing as "pure experience" (Willig, 2013, p. 11). A relativist ontology is concerned with viewing the world through the eyes of each individual, recognising that cultural, historical and linguistic resources may be used to construct differences in experience, but claiming there are no universal criteria to arbitrate them (Baghramian, 2004; Willig, 2013). At the opposing end of the continuum from relativism, is the belief that reality and our interpretations of it are independent of one another; this is more towards where I position myself, reflecting a realist ontology. This position indicates that the data collected in research allows us to understand how things really are (Willig, 2013). From this perspective, I am critical of objectivity, which states that reality exists separate to and uninfluenced by our knowledge of it, whilst remaining aware that our perceptions of reality are shaped by social, cultural and political entities that we construct over time (Bryman, 2016; DeForge & Shaw, 2012; Willig, 2013). A more realist view of reality seems particularly relevant to an EP research context, which itself has evolved because of historical and societal shifts, leading to the emergence of structures such as Local Authority (LA) systems and EP Services (EPSs), which are perceived and experienced by individuals (DeForge & Shaw, 2012; Scott, 2005).

Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with questions of 'what is' (Bryman, 2016) and how we can know about knowledge (Grix, 2010). Early in the research process, I positioned myself as a social constructionist, believing that there were many constructions of reality, which are created through interactions with others (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1999). Indeed, knowledge is the product of social processes. More specifically, social constructionism contends that knowledge is constructed in social and historical contexts, whereby language allows for the creation of reality and meaning-making (MacKay et al., 2016); thus, all views are deemed relevant within their own contexts. Despite holding the belief that all views are relevant, I did not align with the view that knowledge of the social world is entirely interpretive; I wanted to maintain an awareness that individual thinking was not free from the influence of social, political and institutional structures and practices. Accordingly, I considered a less radical constructionist epistemology, acknowledging that an objective reality exists, but also recognising that socio-political contexts and agendas influence individual interpretations, resulting in multiple definitions of reality (Elder-Vass, 2012; Taylor, 2018) and aligning with my understanding of SJ. Consequently, it seems that both my ontological and

epistemological views align with the critical realist perspective, which is discussed below and reflects how I approached this thesis.

Critical Realism

The critical realist perspective comprises an objective ontology, recognising that objects in the world exist, known and unbeknown to the researcher (Scott, 2005). The epistemology of critical realism can be both objective and subjective. It recognises that the researcher may never have direct access to reality, instead, allowing for social interpretations of it, whilst conceding that knowledge is fallible (Scott, 2005; Willig, 2013). I believe a critical realist stance is appropriate for this research as not all participants will experience communication in the same way and their perspectives of this will be entirely their own. I recognise that the data collection process will not allow me direct access to participants' realities but interpretation and an acknowledgement of history and culture, will help me to make sense of their experiences. Finally, critical realism aligns with SJ (Scotland, 2012), allowing a holistic perspective of communication to be gained by considering injustices across domains (Danermark & Gellerstedt, 2004; Fraser, 1997). Moreover, it aims to address issues of marginalisation (Scotland, 2012), aligning with this research's main aim, which is to hear the voices of those who speak EAL in the hope of promoting linguistic diversity and transformative change.

To summarise, I espouse an interpretive research paradigm, which aligns with a critical realist epistemology and ontology. In the next sections, I consider the methodology and methods, before discussing relevant ethical issues.

Methodology

Methodology describes the approach taken to explore a research area and methodological decisions reflect the researcher's epistemological and ontological positioning (Etherington, 2004; Willig, 2013). In line with the research purpose and paradigm, I adopted a qualitative methodology. This decision reflects the idea that "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 41). Thus, it provides an opportunity for the use of interpretation to explore and better understand the meaning individuals attribute to a particular phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018); in this case, communication processes in school.

Following this, I explored a range of methodological approaches (Table 5), considering their compatibility with my research purpose and questions, as well as my worldview. My decision to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is discussed next.

Table 5. A Comparison of Methodological Approaches

Methodology/Type of Analysis	**Epistemological Underpinning**	**Type of Research Issue Commonly Used to Approach**	**Focus of Data Collection/Analysis**	**Compatibility with this Research**
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009)	Critical realist underpinnings and based on phenomenology and hermeneutics	To describe the essence of a lived phenomenon	Meaning-making of individuals who have shared the same experience	High
Narrative Analysis (Murray, 2000)	Data is interpreted from a critical realist or social constructionist perspective	To tell stories of individual experiences	Exploring the life of an individual	Medium
Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965)	Unspecified	Grounding a theory in the view of participants, often in an under-researched area	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Low
Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Unspecified	Any qualitative research where the focus is on examining meaning or patterns	Identifying patterns in meaning across data to derive themes	Medium

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is concerned with how individuals make sense of the world in which they exist (Willig, 2013). Like critical realism, IPA acknowledges the existence of reality and is interested in understanding how individual's make sense of this (Forrester & Sullivan, 2019). It is understood that the extent to which the researcher can understand this world is influenced by their own experiences and ideas (Forrester & Sullivan, 2019). Essentially, it allows the researcher to use in depth exploration of a participant's experiences and story to make meaning, interpreting what it is like to be that individual in a particular context (Smith, 2015). IPA stems from the belief that individuals are experts of their own experiences and lives; thus, they are in the best position to share these stories and views with the researcher (Smith, 2009).

IPA has three main theoretical underpinnings: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Phenomenology refers to understanding what it is like to be a particular human, in terms of what is important to them and what constitutes their world (Smith et al., 2009). Hermeneutics relates to the process of interpretation. A hermeneutic cycle in IPA recognises the researcher's role in making sense of the participant's sense-making and so, the research intuitively probes the apparent meanings through reading to construe a deeper interpretation. Essentially, the researcher has a collaborative and active role in the process while determining meaning from the participants discussions (Smith, 2004; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). In this research, my sense-making was partly based on the interpreter's interpretation of the participant's story, adding another dimension to the hermeneutic cycle. Reflexivity is an important aspect of this process and is discussed further in Chapter 4. Finally, an idiographic method of inquiry is committed to thoroughness; it is also committed to understanding how particular phenomena have given rise to particular perspectives in particular contexts (Smith et al., 2009).

Method

Smith et al. (2009) assert that data collection in IPA should allow participants to "…speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length" (p.56). Although I briefly considered focus groups, I believed semi-structured interviews would enable me to focus on the richness of each participant's story, gaining depth and exploring the meaning of their experiences in line with phenomenological and ideographic principles. Moreover, this method would allow me to be flexible in my line of questioning, using probes to explore further if necessary.

The interviews would be conducted in a room in school that was familiar to all participants. The parent interviews would be conducted with an interpreter from the LA, who was not known to any of the participants. The familiarity of the environment is intended to create a 'conversational' atmosphere in the hope of encouraging participants to speak openly and in their own words (Smith et al., 2009).

Analysis

The analysis in IPA is iterative and inductive (Smith et al., 2009), meaning it is data-driven so interpretations are derived from the data rather than deductively, which is theory-driven. In order to interpret individual's experiences, it is important for the researcher to fully immerse themselves in the data, focusing on one case (transcript) before moving on to the next; cases are only considered alongside one another in the final stage of analysis.

Through IPA, researchers consider how each participant experiences a particular phenomenon from their perspective. Whilst doing this, they may refer to the data to critically consider questions, such as: "what is the person trying to achieve here? Is anything meaningful being said here, which was not intended? Do I have a sense of something going on here that the person himself or herself is perhaps less aware of?" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 8). The consideration of such critical questions indicates the depth of interpretation, reflecting the hermeneutic cycle that is characteristic of IPA.

Ethics

There is an "intrinsic and fundamental relationship between ethics and quality within practitioner research" (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007, p. 204). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) contend that conducting ethical research involves taking a reflexive stance, which includes a critical awareness of how one's worldview may influence the research process (Berger, 2015). Reflexivity allows me to recognise my role in constructing and interpreting the presented phenomenon as a critical realist, supporting ideas of quality and validity within qualitative research. This research has been granted ethical approval by Newcastle University's ethics committee. Moreover, in designing the research project, I adhered to the British Psychological Society's relevant codes of ethics (2014, 2021) and the Health and Care Professionals Council Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2018), which include considerations of respect, dignity and autonomy for participants, as well as confidentiality. In addition to these considerations, I gave particular attention to addressing issues relating to power and consent, which are discussed below.

Power

The Code of Human Research Ethics outlines the need for sensitivity in addressing the power dynamic between the researcher and participant (British Psychological Society, 2014). In this project, power played a dual role, whereby the school may have positioned me in the role of expert, and parents, who did not speak English, may have perceived me in a similar way. Akbar and Woods (2019) acknowledge that the uncertainty of the EP role within some cultural contexts can mean they are perceived as an authority or government figure. As I could not ascertain participants' preconceptions of the EP role, I sought to minimise any negative or powerful connotations through the building of rapport. This initial rapport building was extended to the interpreter, who was unknown to me or the participants, to minimise any tensions prior to the interviews (British Psychological Society, 2017b). Additionally, I endeavoured to create a relaxed atmosphere, conducive to IPA through conversational and informal discussions between the participant and me (as well as the interpreter) before beginning the interviews.

Informed Consent

All participants completed a written consent form prior to participation; for parents, this was translated into Romanian. A bilingual staff member was available in school to ensure parents could read and understand the consent form. Guillemin & Gillam (2004) advocate a broad understanding of consent, so I also gained verbal consent before each interview in case parents were unable to read or wanted to ask questions before agreeing. Likewise, I provided all participants with a written and verbal debrief; this extended to the interpreter too.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a methodological and ethical critique of the research presented in Chapter 3. It details my decision to adopt an interpretive research paradigm, which is linked to my philosophical stance, methodology and method. Moreover, I have outlined the ethical and reflexive considerations that have been taken during the decision-making processes, focusing on issues of power and consent within the research.

Chapter 3: Empirical Research

How do School Staff and Romanian-Speaking Parents Experience Their Communication Together, and Is there a Role for Educational Psychologists to Promote this?[2]

Abstract

There is a growing body of research into the experiences of bilingual families, but few studies focus specifically on communication or the Educational Psychologist's (EP's) role within this. This chapter builds on the findings of Chapter 1, reporting an empirical research project that used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together. Participants shared their views on communication, which were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), allowing in-depth and detailed exploration of the meaning they attribute to communication. Through IPA, three master themes (and ten superordinate themes) were established: variation in individual experiences and support, ambiguity and making connections. Implications for the Educational Psychology profession were identified through a focus group of EPs who provided feedback on the interview findings, sharing their own experiences of working with bilingual families and their perceived role in promoting communication between parents and school staff. Implications are detailed across three levels of EP working (individual, group and systemic). They include the significance of parents' voice within school systems, increased training for EPs and schools around communication and joint working with interpreter services, as well as the need for EPs to have a presence at community-based events.

[2] I have written Chapter 3 for submission to the European Journal of Psychology of Education

Introduction

This empirical study aims to explore the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together. Additionally, it considers the views of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in relation to their perceived role in promoting communication and subsequent relations between these two groups. In this introduction, terminology is initially explored, then relevant background literature is considered, leading to a rationale for the present project.

Terminology

Within this research, parents, who speak Romanian or are bilingual, which means they are recognised as speaking English as an Additional Language (EAL) by the UK mainstream education system (Wardman, 2013) will be referred to as 'parents'; where parents speak English as a first language or where school staff are bilingual, this will be made explicit. The use of the term 'EAL' throughout this project is not to suggest that those who speak EAL are a homogeneous group nor does it assume that individuals should be classified by their level of English proficiency alone.

Background

Linguistic Diversity

Costley (2014) asserts that support for bilingual families in the last 60 years within the UK education system has been inconsistent and the subsequent underachievement of linguistically diverse children is an issue of Social Justice (SJ). The Swann Report (1985) and the Calderdale Education Authority Review (1986) were amongst the first official guidance produced around supporting families, who spoke EAL, in education; both focused on assimilation and there has been limited guidance since this (Costley, 2014; Foley et al., 2013). Although the Equality Act (2010) recognises linguistic diversity as a protected characteristic, in 2021, Ofsted abolished its national lead for EAL without consultation, which was condemned by the National Association for Language Development In the Curriculum. Ofsted's position seemingly aligns with other legislation that fails to specifically mention EAL or advocate for equitable access to education for linguistically diverse families (Department for Education, 2011, 2015).

The Romanian Community in the UK

After Romania joined the European Union in 2007, the main reason for the relocation of people from Romania to the UK was for economic gain (Romocea, 2014); these people are often referred to as labour migrants, moving for financial betterment (Cohen, 2008; Romocea, 2014). However, there is often a reported disconnect between their vision and the

reality upon arrival (Romocea, 2014), with many lacking the language for conversational English (Romocea, 2014). Similar to Romanian people, Roma people often see migration from Romania to the UK as an opportunity for social mobility (Beluschi-Fabeni et al., 2018; Grill, 2012, 2018). Historically, the Roma population is one of the most marginalised groups in Europe. Stemming from the rise of nationalism in the 16th century, Roma people have faced continuing oppression and intolerance based on their ethnicity and culture, including in Romania and the UK (Lee et al., 2014). In the UK, the negative reception towards both the Roma and Romanian people may have been exacerbated by Brexit, which is reported to have increased anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia (Fox, 2018; Patel & Connelly, 2019).

Parent Communication

Like the legislation discussed in the background section, The SEND Code of Practice (CoP) (2015) does not refer to linguistic diversity. One of the key principles in the CoP states, "parents should have clear information about the impact of the support and interventions provided, enabling them to be involved in planning next steps" (Department for Education, 2015, p. 87). Yet, there is no specific guidance on adjustments that should be made to enable parents' views to be communicated. In 2011, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, which was introduced to promote learning and achievement for bilingual pupils, was mainstreamed into general school funding. Thus, schools are no longer required to prioritise spending on resources such as interpreters for parents to access relevant communications. In consideration of these apparent gaps in the legislation, there is an abundance of empirical research that indicates the importance of parent-teacher communication for improved academic outcomes, overall development and psychological factors, such as a sense of belonging and improved wellbeing (Dixon et al., 2020; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Schneider & Arnot, 2018a, 2018b). Consequently, it seems that enabling communication between parents and school staff relates to issues of equity and SJ.

Educational Psychologists' Role

The core aim of the EP role is to promote equity and inclusion through the application of psychological skills, knowledge and understanding to benefit *all* Children, Young People (CYP) and families (British Psychological Society, 2019). Moreover, the BPS Practice Guidelines (2017a) advocate that EPs should avoid adopting a 'one size fits all' approach in response to working with ethnically, culturally or linguistically diverse families. Instead, a more linguistically inclusive approach should be considered across the recognised five areas of EP working: Training, Assessment, Consultation, Intervention and Research (Scottish

Executive, 2002), which includes working at an individual level with parents and CYP, as well as at a group and systemic level with schools.

Rationale and Research Aims

Chapter 1 indicated that communication difficulties were a significant factor in the prevalence of parent participation and the development of subsequent home-school relations. In consideration of the impact of parent-school communication on positive outcomes for CYP, it seems that without increased awareness and understanding of linguistic diversity, necessary adjustments will not be present for communications to occur. Additionally, Chapter 1 indicated a gap in the UK research into parents' experiences of communication, and the role of the EP in relation to this. Thus, this research seeks to understand the experiences of parents and school staff in their communication together, and to explore the EP's role in promoting such communication, by answering the following questions (Table 6).

Table 6. Research Questions and Aims

Research Questions	- What are the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together? - How do EPs perceive their role in promoting communication between parents, who speak EAL, and school staff?
Research Aims	- To explore the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together. - To explore EPs' experiences of communication between parents, who speak EAL, and school staff. - To identify how EPs perceive their role in relation to promoting communication between parents, who speak EAL, and school staff. - To propose recommendations that can be included in a toolkit for EPs to use and apply in practice.

Method

This section outlines the research method, including sampling, data collection and analysis.

Sample

Smith et al. (2009) suggest that IPA is most appropriate for small samples to enable exploration and understanding of individual experience (Noon, 2018). Six participants (three

school staff and three Romanian-speaking parents) were recruited from a primary school, Highcliffe (a pseudonym), in South Yorkshire. Demographic information is provided in Table 7 and pseudonyms are used throughout for anonymity. A combination of sampling techniques was used to recruit participants. Purposeful sampling involved school's Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Co-ordinators (SENDCOs) disseminating information (Appendices B and C) and consent forms (Appendix D) to potential participants; these were translated into a range of languages for parents. However, recruitment through SENDCos was only successful for staff at Highcliffe School, where the Romanian-speaking learning mentor also recruited three Romanian-speaking parents, using a snowballing technique (Acharya et al., 2013). The learning mentor also directed me to additional staff members who may be willing to participate.

Table 7. Parent Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Demographic Information
Parent 1: Ana	Ana is of mixed Romanian and Roma heritage. She has two children: one is at Highcliffe School and the other is in nursery. Ana moved to the area over 10 years ago and her son was the first Romanian child to attend Highcliffe School; he has attended since reception. Ana did not mention any current employment. At home, the two children speak English and Romanian to one another, but speak Romanian only to their parents as neither Ana nor her husband speak English. Ana said her main reason for communicating with school staff is when there is a problem, and her main form of communication is through Miriam (see school staff 1, below).
Parent 2: Elena	Elena is Romanian and has two children: one is at Highcliffe School and the other is 21 months old. The family moved to the area from Romania in November 2020; at the time of the interview, they had been in England for less than a year. Elena's husband speaks English and moved to the UK first to find employment, before encouraging his family to join him. Elena and her husband both work in a local supermarket warehouse, which she stated is lower paid than their previous roles in Romania. The family speak Romanian at home, but Elena's eldest daughter is learning English. Elena communicates directly with the class teacher or via her husband; they communicate about a range of topics from friendship issues to academic progress.
Parent 3: Valentina	Valentina is of Roma heritage and moved to England with her family in 2020; at the time of the interview, the family had been in England for less

	than a year. Valentina has two children: one is at Highcliffe School and one is at a secondary school in the area. The children both attended school in Romania prior to moving to England. Both children are learning English, but they speak Romanian at home and with one another, as neither Valentina nor her husband speak English. Valentina has limited communication with school, unless there is a problem, and this is usually initiated by school staff. All communication between Valentina and school occurs via Miriam.
School Staff 1: Miriam	Miriam is Romanian; she is bilingual and speaks Romanian as her first language. Currently, she works as Highcliffe School's learning mentor and has an unofficial role in supporting families who speak EAL. Previously, Miriam was a bilingual classroom assistant, which consisted primarily of supporting children who were new to English. Miriam worked as a classroom assistant for six years before becoming a learning mentor. In Romania, Miriam worked in various educational and social care roles. As a learning mentor, Miriam is responsible for promoting attendance and supporting children and young people who are struggling to engage in class. However, Miriam is also the first point of contact for parents who speak a second language.
School Staff 2: Dan	Dan is not bilingual and speaks English as a first language. He is a Newly Qualified Teacher working in Key Stage 2. This is his first year of teaching, but he previously worked as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant at Highcliffe School. Elena's daughter is in Dan's year 4 class. Prior to working at Highcliffe School, he completed a number of university placements in different school settings; he also worked with children and young people in community initiatives, such as the Scouts. Dan's main communication with parents relates to the progress of children in his class and this tends to occur during arrival at school and collection time at the end of the day.
School Staff 3: Lisa	Lisa is the school SENDCo, but also works as a class teacher in year 3. She has worked in schools for 13 years. Lisa is not bilingual and speaks English as a first language, but she has previously learnt second languages and spent time working abroad, teaching English and working with bilingual speakers. As school SENDCo, Lisa is responsible for supporting children with SEND in school; this involves liaising with families

	around statutory processes and understanding of their children's needs and how school can support them.

Table 8. Contextual Information about the Interpreter

Interpreter	Contextual Information
Cristina	Cristina moved from Moldova to South Yorkshire several years ago, citing that it was 'not as nice' as she had expected. She works part-time as an interpreter for the Local Authority (LA), while her husband is a GP. They moved to the UK so he could pursue a career in medicine. Cristina mainly interprets meetings for education and social care; she has never been involved in research. Cristina believed the Roma community in Moldova was quite affluent and though she had had no personal interactions with the community, her friends' experiences had been negative.

Data Collection

An interview schedule (Appendices E and F) was developed to provide a flexible structure to guide each interview, consisting of three key questions that were designed to be curious, thoughtful and accepting (Howitt, 2016). The interviews were semi-structured, which is the most widely adopted method of data collection for IPA (Reid et al., 2005).

The interviews were carried out in a quiet room in school that provides a food bank facility for families. The participant, interpreter and I sat facing one another and the interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes; they were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by a transcribing service associated with Newcastle University. The parent interviews were conducted with the support of a Romanian-speaking interpreter, who I asked to translate verbatim. In consideration of the marginalisation of Roma people, it was important to gain context to the interpreter's role in working with Roma families (Table 8), to ensure her interpretations were translated and analysed with this in mind. After the interviews, all participants were issued a debrief form (Appendix G), which was translated into the relevant

language and read by the interpreter, if required. Further reflections on the data collection process can be found in Chapter 4 and Appendix H.

Data Analysis

The key stages of IPA were adapted from Smith et al. (2009) (Table 9). The analysis involved shifting the focus from each individual experience to developing a shared understanding by moving from descriptive analysis to a more interpretative one. Although Table 9 suggests the process of analysis was linear, it was in fact iterative, inductive and grounded in the data, reflecting the hermeneutic cycle that is associated with IPA and discussed in Chapter 2 (Smith et al., 2009). By analysing the data in this way, it enabled me to stay close to the participants experience, promoting validity in the process (Noon, 2018).

Table 9. Stages of IPA Analysis

Stage	Process
1. Reading and Re-Reading	During this initial stage, I referred back to notes and reflections I had made during the interviews to immerse myself in each individual experience. I listened to the recordings several times, whilst studying the corresponding transcripts. For each interview, I noted any thoughts or feelings that occurred during this stage.
2. Exploratory Commenting	Exploratory commenting involved becoming more familiar with the transcript, focusing on three areas, outlined by (Smith et al., 2009): Descriptive – this focused on the content of what the participant said and the subject of the experience they described. It consisted of noting key people, places or objects. Linguistic – this stage of commenting explored the way the participant used language. Conceptual – this stage was interrogative and enabled me to engage with the transcript by asking questions of the data of the meaning of some of the participants concerns in this context.
3. Developing Emergent Themes	The aim of this stage was to consolidate what was uncovered in the previous stage by mapping connections between the exploratory comments in discrete parts of the

	transcript. This process generated emergent themes. An example of stages two and three can be seen in Appendix I.
4. Searching for Connections Across the Themes	This stage involved organising the emergent themes using several processes to develop a structure to the analysis. I wrote out each emergent theme in chronological order and then moved the themes around to create related clusters. To develop related clusters, I also used methods of abstraction and subsumption, whereby similar themes are brought together to create superordinate themes and associated subordinate themes. During this stage, repetitive emergent themes were combined to avoid duplication
5. Moving to the Next Case	Steps one to four were repeated for each participant's transcript. Steps were taken to ensure that the analysis of subsequent transcripts was not influenced by the previous ones. The aim of an open and exploratory approach to each new transcript was to support validity and ensure I stayed true to the participant's narrative; however, I acknowledge that it is likely each participant's analysis influenced the next to some extent.
6. Identifying Patterns Across Cases	The aim of this stage was to identify patterns across all the cases. I wrote the superordinate themes onto different coloured notecards to enable the development of master themes to be reflective and creative, whilst allowing me to make meaningful and physical connections between the cases (Appendix J). Master themes connected participants experiences to varying degrees, providing a broad description of the associated superordinate themes and linking the experiences of both parents and staff. I relabelled and reconfigured superordinate themes in order to group them. Following Smith et al. (2009), superordinate themes were discarded if they were not prevalent across one third of cases or if they did not illuminate other themes (Fade, 2004). This stage resulted in a number of master themes and associated superordinate and subordinate themes, which can be seen in Appendix K.

Ethics

All participants provided written and verbal consent prior to the interviews. To provide verbal consent, I talked through the previously signed consent form, reminding participants that their data would be anonymous and confidential, and about their right to withdraw. I was also informed in writing by the LA's Language Support Service, who provided the interpreter, that confidentiality and anonymity was a role requirement for all interpreters. Specific ethical considerations are discussed further in Chapter 2.

Findings and Discussion

Three master themes and ten superordinate themes were established through IPA; these are discussed here relevant to Chapter 1's findings and wider psychological literature. Explanations of differing types of themes and their development are outlined in the method section. Here, I detail participants' communication experiences, while offering an interpretative account of what these may mean. I use relevant subheadings, which are italicised, to indicate how superordinate themes are related and unified by the master theme, illustrating where accounts converge and diverge.

Variation in individual Experiences and Support

Staff Attitudes

All parents commented on the attitudes of staff, though their views of these were disparate: Elena described a positive attitude from her interactions with Dan, whilst Ana and Valentina described feeling othered. Othering relates to prejudice or exclusion based on group features, such as a different language; often, propagating discrimination and marginalisation (Powell & Menendian, 2014; Udah & Singh, 2019). Nevertheless, all parents commented on Miriam's supportive attitude to communication. Parents' views of Miriam are typified by her genuine empathy for their experiences, which can also be seen by Davila (2018), who noted identity and relational connections between bilingual staff and families.

> *'I am bilingual, my English is not my first language, so I think I understand better how difficult is when you need to support somebody who doesn't speak English.' (Miriam)*

Staff attitudes towards parents could also be influenced by their own views, assumptions or biases about Romanian-speaking parents. Dan believed that his understanding around communication developed from a familiarity working with Romanian-speaking parents in school. It could be argued that all staff working at Highcliffe School would have a similar

attitude, though this did not align with parents' experiences. Lisa believed that the effect of accumulating personal life experience may impact individual staff's understanding and subsequent attitude in this area and a young staff team may, therefore, make this difficult.

> *'...[we have] quite young teachers, so if they've not travelled and they've not had that kind of life experience they might know about it [bilingual communication] in theory but I don't think they'd really get it in terms of fully...' (Lisa)*

Othering and a negative attitude towards Romanian-speaking families could also be inferred by the focus on problem-based communication. Ana and Valentina acknowledged that they received little feedback on their child's educational progress but recognised an increase in communication when there was a problem, such as fighting. Consequently, Ana questioned cultural attributions of negative behaviours. It could be argued that limiting communication solely to problems could impact a parent's likelihood of engaging or their desire to initiate communication for fear of more bad news. Indeed, Conus and Fahrni (2019) found that when communicating with ethnic minority parents "no news is good news" (p.241). Moreover, Ebbens (2011) found that parents valued contact with school to communicate positive news, citing the benefits of a small gesture, such as a phone call to share a success.

> *"...when kids are shouting at each other, maybe saying some silly words or fighting, the teacher would tell her, tell mum" (Valentina)*

Staff attitudes leading to feelings of being othered was not exclusive to teaching staff. During the interview process, I observed a parent being mocked by the office staff for her difficulty in answering questions relating to COVID-19, despite no adjustments being made to account for her level of English; this was corroborated by Ana. Incidentally, Ana was significantly more explicit in her descriptions of staff attitudes compared to Valentina, providing examples and associated feelings of being othered. This difference in description could be linked to individual factors, such as the parent's length of time in the country, prior experiences of education or society more widely, which may dictate their perceptions of staff attitudes and their pertinence to their interview.

> *"Office is quite ignoring them, when they see they don't speak English..." (Ana)*

Conversely, Elena's positive perception of Dan could be based on his effort to communicate directly with her. As the only Romanian parent, Elena's previous educational experience may have influenced what she values in a partnership with staff, compared to the other parents. Equally, Dan's attitude and Elena's subsequent view of this could be associated with her husband speaking English, eliminating the challenges of a language barrier.

> *"...the class teacher [Dan] would come personally to mum, come outside and tell her and explain her, she'd understand everything, so everything is pretty clear. Because class teacher wants mum to know the direct information from him, from his point of view..." (Elena)*

Dan acknowledged that not all staff have the same open-minded attitude to communication that he described. He recognised that some staff may evade responsibility for communicating with Romanian-speaking families, reflecting the attitudes described by Ana and Valentina. Of the parents, perhaps, Elena's experience was more positive because it was based on communication with Dan, highlighting a match in their experience of communicating together.

> *"...because some teachers are probably more, a bit more standoffish, they don't want to talk to the [Romanian] families,..." (Dan)*

Accountability

Lisa emphasised the value of Miriam's role in supporting staff to communicate with parents. However, Elena's positive experience communicating with Dan, who was unfamiliar with Miriam's bilingual role, supports the argument that staff may feel less accountable for families when she is present. This could also be inferred from Ana's belief that teachers 'reject' her in Miriam's absence, providing less information and support; therefore, demonstrating less accountability. This contrast in experiences could indicate that the length of time in role is associated with a reliance on Miriam, impacting the likelihood of relationships forming between parents and teachers independent of her. It could be suggested that the active, though unofficial, role of Miriam in promoting communication between staff and parents has a paradoxical effect on accountability. To demonstrate, some staff may relinquish their responsibility to communicate, utilising Miriam instead.

> *"...Miriam will be there and because she [the teacher] will not feel comfortable rejecting in front of her, she'd probably, the teacher would do better." (Ana)*

"We all go through Miriam, so no. It's the population school we're luckiest with because we have Miriam..." (Lisa)

Despite Dan's recognition that not all staff accept accountability for the Romanian-speaking families they work with, both Miriam and Lisa acknowledged that communication efforts are a universal responsibility. The recognition that all staff are accountable could reflect demand characteristics, whereby given my Trainee EP role within school, Miriam and Lisa may have wanted to portray the staff in a light they believed would satisfy me (McCambridge et al., 2012), evidenced by Lisa's quote.

"I do a lot [for Romanian families] now..."(Lisa)

Recognising the need for a top-down approach, Miriam commented that ethnolinguistic inclusion comes from the leadership team, and she believed issues that affect this would be heard. Research suggests that bilingual staff can sometimes be perceived as having secondary status within a team (Baker, 2014; Bourne, 2001; Davila, 2018), making it difficult for their voice to be reflected in policy or decision-making. Although it was not within the remit of this study, it would be interesting to ascertain which initiatives suggested by bilingual staff have been received by the leadership team and applied to practice, demonstrating accountability to both bilingual staff and parents.

"...the school is open because that is seen by the senior leadership and normally they take action on that." (Miriam)

Confidence

Linking to Chapter 1, confidence was referred to across both groups. Elena appeared the most confident in her communication with staff, possibly due to her husband's English fluency and subsequent lead communicative role. Ashraf (2019) and Hamilton (2013) report that confidence in communication can be developed through positive initial interactions. The office staff, whom I observed during my interviews, provide a gatekeeping role to the wider team. Thus, a negative initial interaction on entry to the school could affect parents' confidence and hamper subsequent communication efforts. Dan highlighted that he tries to speak to parents at the school gate, as a first point of contact. He also suggested that regular interactions increase confidence for both groups, promoting reciprocity. Communication at the school gate illuminates the importance of the initial interaction

described in Chapter 1, which was echoed by parents who reported most of their communication occurred at school arrival or departure times.

> *"...they're [parents] not quite sure how to phrase things or how to ask, because I think it's a confidence thing..."(Dan)*

Ambiguity

Satisfaction

Parents frequently interpreted questions on communication as relating to their general satisfaction, describing two measures of this: how happy their child was and whether they were able to speak English. Learning English was identified by Hamilton (2013) as a priority for Eastern European parents, perhaps to increase their opportunities of entering the job market.

Aspirations of entry into the labour market are arguably indicative of perceptions of cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to experiences and knowledge that may enable individuals to become globally conscious, enriching their educational opportunities and subsequent societal success (Bourdieu, 1977; Moskal, 2016). However, for children and families moving to the UK and learning English, Moskal (2016) contends that their cultural capital may not be acknowledged or valued by school staff due to it differing from the dominant group or linguistic code (Richards, 2020). In 2019, Ofsted began considering cultural capital as part of their Education Inspection Framework; however, they provide no guidance on how this should be conceptualised for an increasingly diverse classroom population or as part of daily teaching practice

> *"He [Valentina's son] started speaking English, so he starts, he's picking up really quick, so she's happy. Though she can't tell for sure because there is no communication. " (Valentina)*

It is plausible that there was a difference between parent and staff measures of satisfaction (Gillanders et al., 2012; Lim, 2012), highlighting a mismatch in how one another's roles were understood, which is arguably widened if there are communication barriers. Moreover, if parents are seemingly satisfied based on measures distinct from performance indicators, it may further diminish teachers' responsibility to pursue communication for promoting attainment and progression (Priestley et al., 2012).

> *"...just expectations of what you get from school, I think they're quite often based on what theirs [parents'] was and so for families who can't read and write you know, just them coming to school's fine." (Lisa)*

The UK Education System

All parents acknowledged the difference between the UK and Romanian education systems. Elena and Valentina, who had moved to the UK in the last 12 months, cited the challenges of adjusting to a new education system, similar to Chapter 1 (Hamilton, 2013; Snell, 2018). Valentina reported that the education system is better in the UK, though she has never received any academic feedback, which provides validity for the potential disparity in satisfaction measures.

> *"And she feels the difference is significant between the education there [in Romania] and here, it is better here." (Valentina)*

Elena was the only parent to receive academic feedback from her child's teacher, but her quote about confusion suggests a difficulty in how this information is understood. Sime and Sheridan (2014) highlight that drawing on cultural capital through communication empowers parents to support their children's learning, which Chapter 1 suggested may strengthen parent-teacher relations. Perhaps, Elena's confusion encouraged her to communicate with Dan, though differing education levels may influence a parents' confidence in expressing their confusion to staff.

> *"Because there are different ways of doing maths here in primary school, in comparison to Romania, we're very confused, I have been really, really confused when my child was at school." (Elena)*

Methods of Communication

Hamilton (2013) illuminates the importance of the quality of the information shared, stating that communication should not only be diverse in its nature but that the method of exchange should be considered too. Both Lisa and Miriam reported use of the 'SayHi' app and Miriam as a support for communication. However, Dan, who was the only full-time teacher interviewed and arguably had the most frequent contact with parents, reported using only his initiative to adapt his communication. This finding reflects research that finds many school staff have a lack of understanding around the provision or need for interpreters (Schneider & Arnot, 2018b). Alternatively, inconsistency in methods of communication could suggest school's uncertainty around the best practice with parents. Creative attempts to

communicate could promote reciprocal interactions (Schneider & Arnot, 2018a), using gesture and rewording as Dan described. Moreover, these approaches are a move away from linear communication, which could reinforce a power dynamic and any existing difficulties between staff and parents (Harris & Nelson, 2007).

> *"Generally, they [the parents] are very positive with it and they do seem to understand, lots of nods and head shakes if they don't understand and just rewording things to make it a bit more basic for them seems to help them more." (Dan)*

Further disparities in methods of communication can be seen in staff perceptions of how parents typically communicate. To demonstrate, Miriam described an open-door policy, which is evident in parents' positive perceptions of her. However, Lisa believed that parents often relied on word-of-mouth, similar to the grapevine structure described by Ashraf (2019) in Chapter 1. Likewise, Dan noted that he was unsure whether parents knew how best to share information with school, perhaps demonstrated by Valentina's reliance on external systems to communicate if Miriam was unavailable. Ultimately, parents' uncertainty around the systems in place to communicate important information with school, raises the question of who is hard to reach and for whom (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

> *"I don't know if they [the parents] always do because I've had to tell them sometimes if they want to they can go to the office and then they've gone "oh what, I can go?", they didn't realise..." (Dan)*

Making Connections

The importance of Building Relationships

All staff suggested that building relationships with parents was fundamental for open communication; Miriam highlighted that this required trust and respect. Nonetheless, Chapter 1 indicated that building relationships came with additional challenges when there was a language barrier (Hamilton, 2013), as illustrated by Miriam.

> *"...I think first of all is to build that relationship even with the family doesn't speak English..."(Miriam)*

Day (2013) contends that communication efforts have significant value in the development of positive relationships. Elena and Dan spoke positively of their interactions based on one another's efforts to communicate. Further, Dan believed that communication efforts were

positively received and promoted reciprocity, generating social capital, which is the result of attributing value to others' perceived efforts in parent-teacher communications (Stevens & Patel, 2015).

> *"...I'm still trying to articulate what I need to say to them [parents] and they seem to respect that and then they try a little bit more..." (Dan)*

Edwards et al. (2005) illuminates the complex interplay of power in the interpreter and client relationship. This assertion was echoed by Lisa, who suggested that communication using an external interpreter was sometimes redundant if parents lacked trust or comfort in sharing sensitive information. Consequently, Highcliffe School now rely exclusively on Miriam or informal community figures to communicate with families, recognising that communication is more effective when there is a consistent and trusted figure. Relevant to this research, it could be suggested that parents' willingness to participate and openness during the interviews reflected their trusting relationship with Miriam, who supported the recruitment process; this was also evident in some of the research in Chapter 1 (Petrone, 2016; Snell, 2018).

> *"...so where there's been translation has only really worked where there's been a consistent person to build up that relationship." (Lisa)*

Wraparound Support for Engagement

Miriam and Lisa suggested that school can offer a lifeline for parents who are new to the UK, providing a food bank and delivering support with health and social care provision, which are seemingly separate to school but ultimately enable parents to ensure attendance. Likewise, all parents alluded to school providing a community hub that was strengthened by Miriam's championing and committed role. The notion of a community hub can be emphasised by Sarason's (1974) theory of community psychology, which asserts that an individual's sense of community belonging is increased when they perceive their needs as being met.

> *"So I spent the whole two, three days from 8 o' clock till 3 o' clock, I didn't say I need a lunch, I need a break, because they [the parents] are worrying saying what is going to happen if." (Miriam)*

Arguably, if parents are unable to meet their children's basic needs through the provision of food and shelter, for example, then it is reasonable to assume that they will be unable to prioritise discussions around attendance or other school-based issues that may be communicated (Griffin & Tyrrell, 2013). Indeed, it seems that schools and parents are

sometimes communicating at cross-purposes, which can lead to frustration and misunderstandings, further inhibiting future interactions.

> *"...so, there's a thread coming in so if families need help with their status, help with their Disability Living Allowance, help with food or clothes or like I did, a guy'd got dismissed from his job so I helped him translate..." (Lisa)*

Maslow (1943) highlights the need for deficiency needs to be met before growth needs can be considered or achieved, which seems relevant to parents' focus on meeting their children's physiological needs before prioritising communication. To motivate parents to communicate for the purpose of working to school's agenda and achieving growth needs (Maslow, 1943), communication should promote understanding of the wider needs of parents, which includes supporting deficiency needs to be met. Ultimately, if parents perceive school as supporting them through the provision of a community hub, then it seems likely that trust will be developed, which has been identified as essential for communication.

Belonging

> *"...one of the parent was assaulting her [Ana] with a knife saying and telling her that she needs to go back to Romania..." (Ana)*

Visser (2020) asserts that belonging is dynamic and situational, characterised by a process of seeking but also being granted belonging. The transition within this process could suggest that the dominant group have a gatekeeping role in granting belonging. Perhaps, the absence of an awareness of belonging by staff illuminates a power differential that is reinforced by inherent bias, limiting communication adjustments for Romanian-speaking parents. Arguably, the parents in this study fluctuate between a state of seeking belonging, which is lesser or greater in intensity, though in reference to the school community, it does not appear to be consistently granted. To demonstrate, Ana described a violent racist attack by another parent, which occurred within school. Ana's nonchalance in discussing the incident could signify the extent of the racism faced by Eastern European immigrants in the UK, and notably the Roma community, on a regular basis (Orosz et al., 2018). Indeed, the school community is a microcosm of wider society.

> *"...here [school] there is a danger of being racism." (Ana)*

Although this was the only incident of its kind referred to during the interviews, it was not mentioned by school staff or known to the EPS, potentially illuminating the lack of school's

understanding into the impact of this on Ana and other parents. Akin to Chapter 1, Elena also alluded to community hostilities, though she was more cautious in doing so. Perhaps, Elena's reluctance to discuss racism could indicate her seeking belonging. Her hesitancy may also reflect an attempt to distance herself from the Roma community, comparable to wider social segregation of the Roma within Romania and longstanding persecution of the population (Orosz et al., 2018). In comparing Ana and Elena's experiences relative to belonging, it may also be helpful to consider that Ana was the only parent to migrate before Brexit, which involved a populist 'leave' campaign (Clarke et al., 2017), "…driven, in large part, by fears over immigration" (Schwartz et al., 2021, p. 1160). Hence, Ana may have noticed an increase in hostility reflected by the political shift, different to Elena and Valentina.

A Parent Champion

> *"When they [parents] normally come and approach me I'm not saying I can't help you and that's it..." (Miriam)*

Both Miriam and Lisa frequently referred to Miriam's role, though the parents provided detailed examples of her unique and significant role championing them.

> *"...they'd [parents] come to the office and ask to speak to her [Miriam] because she's the only person who'd sort anything for them." (Ana)*

Valentina made specific reference to Miriam providing support outside of school, stating that her son would not have gained a place at secondary school without her. Valentina's experience underscores Miriam's commitment to championing parents by supporting wide-reaching issues that affect Romanian-speaking families. It is important to highlight how her commitment to parents' whole experience supports their communication with school more generally, which was not identified by Chapter 1. Hopkins and Schutz (2019) found that bilingual school staff often had a dual role in promoting cultural understanding and awareness amongst the staff team, whilst taking on an unofficial leadership role in parental engagement. Hopkins and Schutz's (2019) finding is evidenced by Miriam exemplifying her dual role, using the phrase 'we' to represent her role in school and within the parent community, whilst encouraging parents to understand the system to which they are expected to conform.

> *"...but we explain what happen if you bring the child to school, what happen if he doesn't bring and you put in the balance would you like to, you know, receive a fine or bring the, because it's not, in the end we need to explain*

that it's not my rules, it's not me who is sending the fine, that's the government, that's the rules. We need to follow the rules." (Miriam)

Summary

To conclude, variation in experience and support underpinned the subsequent master themes, demonstrating the significance of staff's previous experiences in their competence and confidence communicating. Consequently, varying staff experiences influenced parents' perceptions of attitudes to communication. Miriam's role was unique and though staff's reliance on her differed, parents were unanimous in their positive view of her support. Miriam demonstrated understanding of the vast needs of Romanian families, without support for which influences their capacity to engage and communicate, akin to the findings of Chapter 1. The most significant matching of experiences can be seen between Miriam and the parents, likely because of her personal empathy for their situations, highlighted by research into bilingual staff. However, there was also a match in experience between Elena and Dan, illuminating individual factors that may have enabled their supportive relationship, while positively influencing Elena's confidence in future communications. Overall, there is seemingly an association between communication efforts and the strength of the relationship between parent and staff member.

Miriam also provides a community hub for parents that can be utilised as a point of engagement. Nonetheless, it seems there is a gap between the systemic level discussions of what school can offer and what happens on the ground at an individual level; these disparities could be attributed to the differing roles of participants in school. Similarly, experiential differences in the parent group could be attributed to culture, personal school experience or length of time in the UK, amongst other factors. Like Chapter 1, building relationships is paramount to communication and this occurs through the development of trust and initiative from both groups. Finally, while school may provide a community hub in terms of resources, there was an absence of belonging within the wider school community. This absence was evidenced by accounts of racism and hostility, illuminating a need for holistic understanding of parents' nuanced experiences relevant to their communication.

Implications for Educational Psychologists

The Focus Group

To identify implications for the EP profession, a virtual focus group of six EPs was conducted during an LA Continuous Professional Development (CPD) day. The focus group consisted of a presentation (Appendix L), detailing the interview findings, and investigating the EPs'

relevant experiences and perceived role in promoting communication. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022) identified four themes: being the bridge, parent voice, working holistically and top-down awareness (Table 10).

Table 10. Stages of Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Stage	Description
Becoming Familiar with the Data	This phase involved listening to the audio recording and reading the transcript multiple times to immerse myself in the data. During this phase and the following phases, I made notes of any emerging thoughts or reflections to maintain an awareness of my own subjectivity throughout the process.
Coding	The process of coding is unforced and developing. It refers to the allocation of tags throughout the data that have meaning or relevance to the data set. For this research, codes related to EPs' experiences of working with school staff and families, what is and is not working well and what they perceive their role to be. An inductive approach to coding was taken, allowing codes to be derived from the data set. Themes were semantic and latent, reflecting shared meaning around a key concept; where codes may be single-faceted, themes are multi-faceted (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2022)
Generating Initial Themes	The tentative generation of themes known as 'candidate themes' refers to an initial clustering of codes. To cluster codes, I transferred them from the data onto notecards, which allowed me to identify broad ideas around a number of concepts. Any codes that did not appear to cluster were discarded and revisited in the following phase, when themes were reviewed. The use of notecards enabled me to physically engage with the codes and themes, providing a space for re-organisation and re-orientation of the clusters. To develop candidate themes, I asked myself the following questions about the provision themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 85): o Does this provisional theme capture something meaningful?

	○ Is it coherent, with a central idea that meshes the data and codes together? ○ Does it have clear boundaries?
Developing and Reviewing Themes	This phase ensures the themes have validity, returning to the data set to verify that the candidate themes and clusters of codes reflect the data, and that participants' voice is not lost. This phase promotes the development of richness within the themes.
Refining, Defining and Naming Themes	In this phase, the themes are consolidated and checked in relation to one another as well as to the data set. During this phase some themes were re-named, allowing them to now include codes that were previously discarded. I considered the following questions (Braun & Clarke, 2022) before naming the themes to ensure each contributed to the overall narrative: ○ What is this theme's central organising concept? ○ What is the boundary of the theme? ○ What is unique and specific to each theme? ○ What does each theme contribute to the overall analysis?
Writing Up	Writing up refers to the final stage of analysis and involved detailing the findings alongside pertinent literature and relevant to the research question. This phase of the process can be seen in the next section.

Implications

The four themes correspond with the three levels of EP working (Figure 5): individual, group and systemic. Being the bridge underpinned all of the themes, indicating the central role of EPs to build relationships with schools to foster linguistically-inclusive practices and to challenge oppressive or unethical decisions in a supportive and relational way (Rumble & Thomas, 2017). By being the bridge, the team agreed they are well-placed to have 'difficult conversations' to support links between parents and schools. This may be particularly relevant where connecting difficulties (i.e. language barriers) have been identified (Schulze et al., 2019), drawing on their relationship with school staff to be explicit in their expectations of how communication should occur.

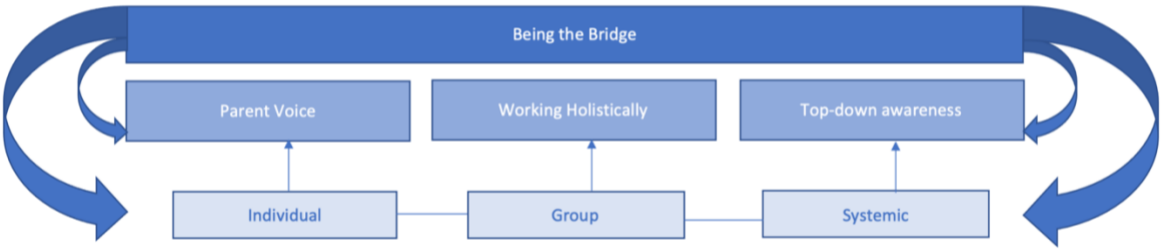

Figure 5. A Visual Representation of the Themes Identified by Educational Psychologists

Individual

Parent voice considered how EPs could ensure parents' views were heard and centralised within all decision-making processes, when working at an individual level. The EPs had all experienced meetings where an interpreter was required but had not been invited; some had experiences of parents not being invited at all because they did not speak English. Disparities in experience of interpreters highlight a need for consistent training within the EP profession around working with such services to promote inclusion (Anderson, 2018). Contrastingly, one EP recalled an incident where an interpreter was invited without consulting the parents and subsequently was not needed. Understanding someone's preferences for when and why an interpreter is required is individual and nuanced (Edwards et al., 2005). It could be argued that making assumptions about parents' communication needs is linked to cultural attributions, depriving parents of their right to choose who is privy to sometimes sensitive discussions. Consequently, several EPs reported a need for more awareness of bias and to challenge assumptions about parent communication. Like Edwards et al. (2005), the EPs agreed that parents preferred a trusted figure to interpret, concluding that a key role for them was to advocate parents' choice and autonomy by asking if and how they would like schools to provide communication support.

Group

Working holistically reflected EPs' group-level working, with the team recognising their role as facilitatory in forging links between school and the community. Gibbs (2018) proposes that increased reciprocal dialogue between the school and community promotes a more inclusive notion of the 'other', which one EP suggested could be achieved through community coffee mornings, dismantling physical barriers between parents and school.

The use of community events could endorse a culture of acceptance and belonging, bolstering parents' confidence in communicating with staff, which was identified as a barrier in Chapters 1 and 3. Moreover, practitioners advocating for SJ often cite community-based

work as a means of promoting collaboration to foster positive change within marginalised groups (Winter, 2019). One EP suggested that their presence at informal events could promote access to EP support, or reduce potential stigma around SEND, which may exist in some communities (Akbar & Woods, 2019). Finally, by making links within the community, schools could also utilise parents' interpreting abilities, generating social and cultural capital (Yosso, 2014) and overcoming any financial barriers school may face in accessing formal interpreting.

Systemic

Top-down awareness refers to the need for EPs to work systemically, with the team recognising that some schools and agencies within the LA prioritise communication using interpreters and translation of material, whereas others did not. The team acknowledged that the systems within the LA are often process-driven rather than people-driven, resulting in financial and temporal constraints on the extent to which EPs can influence how schools communicate with families. They also recognised that the traded interpreter service was unaffordable for many schools, posing a significant barrier to communication. Arguably, communication is a human right; everyone should be allowed to speak and listen in a way they understand, raising the question of whether EPSs should provide interpreters when schools cannot. Like the EPs, O'Bryon & Rogers (2016) reported the main barrier to successfully addressing issues relating to language and culture reflected a school's priorities and access to appropriately trained professionals (e.g. interpreters) (Parker et al., 2020). Hanley et al. (2020) testified that austerity has increased ethical dilemmas around spending priorities in schools. Still, like Chapter 1, one EP illuminated that spending decisions relate to organisational values, citing that schools have choice and autonomy in their spending decisions. This latter idea relates to Fox (2015), who asserts that EPs must act as SJ advocates in enacting the principles of the CoP (2015), highlighting and challenging inequities in educational policies and practice. Perhaps, an inconsistent approach between schools and services is linked to differing interpretations of the CoP (2015) around how parents should participate. Hence, the team agreed they had a systemic role in establishing a top-down approach by developing LA-wide policies relevant to promoting communication. Prilleltensky (2014) suggests that in challenging unjust systems, it is easier to use the language of change rather than change the system itself, which seems relevant here. If an inclusive ethos arises from inclusive policies (Ratheram & Kelly, 2021), then seemingly there is a systemic role for EPs to enact policy changes within their LA based on SEND legislation.

Summary

In discussing the role of EPs in promoting communication, four themes were identified across all levels of EP working. The themes centred on relationship-building, as well as prioritising parent voice. More training was suggested for schools, by drawing on these trusting relationships; this also extended to EP's accessing CPD, which includes engaging in informal discussions within the team around challenging exclusionary practices. Discussions also considered establishing links with communities to better understand the interacting systems around a CYP. Finally, wider changes to the LA ethos were suggested through policy development and a consistent approach to its enactment. Table 11 combines these implications, providing a framework for EPs to consider actioning the agreed points in practice.

Table 11. Implications Table and Related Reflexive Questions for EPs

Level of EP working	**Identified Role for EPs to Promote Communication**	**Reflexive Questions for EPs to Assess their Promotion of Communication**
Individual	Building relationships with parents Providing parents with autonomy around when and how interpreting services are required	• When communicating with linguistically diverse parents, am I acknowledging and using non-verbal communication (e.g. nodding, body position, smiling)? • Am I listening through an accent, allowing for more processing time and considering my pace of delivery? (British Psychological Society, 2017b; Rogers & Lopez, 2002) • Have I/the school asked if the parent would like communication support (e.g. through an interpreter)? • If yes, who would the parent like to provide interpreting (i.e. a familiar figure or someone from an interpreter service)? • Has the parent received language support at all stages of EP involvement to ensure they understand why the EP is involved and their role (i.e. from providing consent to reading a report)?
Group	Forging links with the community Understanding the role of community as a support for linguistically diverse families	• Are there existing events in place within the LA that enable parents to meet informally with professionals? • What links does the EPS have with diverse communities in the area? • Are there structures/services within the LA that allow families the opportunity to ask questions in their preferred language about SEND and the role of the EP? • Have I considered the ecological and sociocultural systems and contexts around the CYP and their family? • Is statutory documentation translated to promote accessibility to EP services?

Systemic	Making policy changes to promote a consistent approach to working with linguistically diverse parents Ensuring EPs and school staff are appropriately trained in understanding how to work with linguistically diverse families, which includes working with interpreters	• Does the EPS offer a means of providing an interpreter to parents where schools are unable to finance this service? • How would I enter into a potentially 'difficult conversation' to challenge exclusionary communication practices? • Where can I seek support within my service and LA around having 'difficult conversations' with schools relevant to linguistic diversity? • Are there ongoing discussions within the EPS around supporting linguistically diverse families and challenging exclusionary practices? • Have I attended or sought training or relevant CPD around linguistic diversity and working with interpreters? • Does the EPS offer training to schools around linguistic diversity and working with interpreters? • Does the LA provide guidance on how the CoP should be enacted to support linguistically diverse families within the area?

Evaluation of the Research

This research contributes to the current understanding around working with bilingual parents in an educational context, offering a new perspective to the notion that parents are 'hard-to-reach'. It adds to existing literature by focusing specifically on communication between parents and school staff, whilst considering the EPs' role in promoting this. There is limited research that seeks to give Romanian-speaking parents a platform to share their experience of communication with school. Thus, the methodology and methods adopted here are a strength, providing insight and understanding to the experiences of groups, which have previously not been heard.

This research identified the significant role of bilingual staff members in parents' experiences of communication. Yet, there was no evidence from any participants that Miriam was involved in planning or pedagogy, instead her interpreting role was entirely informal. This finding may be useful in exploring how parents perceive their voice is heard and operationalised within the classroom, reinforcing the suggestion that bilingual assistants have secondary status despite their in-depth experiential knowledge of EAL provision (Slaughter & Cross, 2021). Future research may further explore the experiences of bilingual staff with a view to promoting recognition of their contributions to linguistically diverse classrooms.

In appraising the sample, participants were predominantly female, which may have particular relevance for the parent group when considering the impact of gender roles within different cultures. Additionally, the school staff who participated may have felt compelled to do so because of my dual role in school as a representative for the EPS, which could have given rise to bias. Likewise, a bilingual staff member supported with the recruitment of parents, which could be likened to a gatekeeping role if she approached particular parents purposefully. Nonetheless, the parents were varied in their openness to the interview process, in some ways dispelling the assumption that they may be volunteer types, for example.

IPA encourages participants to engage in detailed and reflective expression; thus, analysis can favour articulate participants (Gauntlett et al., 2017; Noon, 2018; Smith, 2004). Although some participants were more thorough in their descriptions, steps were taken to avoid biasing these accounts. To demonstrate, through repeated reading and listening to participants' narratives, I immersed myself into their worlds, attuning to the finer details and significant aspects of their accounts, which I then attempted to reflect in the findings. Finally,

Smith et al. (2009) advocate the use of a small sample, which does not support generalisation but provides detailed interpretations of lived experiences. Nonetheless, these experiences may be different to other Romanian parents, as well as other EAL-speaking families. Hence, this research does not claim to be generalisable, but rather, it provides a foundation for future research and a commitment to change existing practices with linguistically diverse families.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together. Additionally, it uncovered relevant EP experiences to identify their role in promoting communication. Findings indicated that participants' experiences and communication motivations were influenced by a range of individual factors. However, establishing connections through empathy, respect and trust were mutually identified and paramount to communication. Although these findings are limited to the participants they sampled, they provide a starting point for the EP profession to better understand and support linguistic diversity, which includes the promotion and recognition of parent voice, increased community-level working and greater consideration of policy adaptations for those who speak EAL.

Chapter 4: A Reflective Synthesis

Introduction

Here, I provide a reflexive account of my professional, personal and academic learning during the completion of this research. I detail instances of critical thinking and challenge that I experienced relating to the terminology. I explore my positioning as both an insider and an outsider within the research based on my personal experiences, beliefs and motivations. Finally, I consider how the research process has influenced my thinking and practice, including any future work or research that it may have inspired.

Reflexivity

Finlay and Gough (2003) contend that there is merit in ensuring transparency around reflexivity within the research journey, with the view that it is present from the conception of the research idea and ongoing throughout all aspects of the process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Reflexivity refers to introspection and a thorough consideration of how my beliefs, motivations and experiences may have influenced my decisions within the process and, therefore, the research itself (Palaganas et al., 2017). Reflection and reflexivity are on opposing ends of the same continuum (Finlay, 2002), whereby reflection allows the researcher to maintain some distance between themselves and the object of reflection, promoting a sense of objectivity. In contrast, reflexivity is "a more immediate, continuing, dynamic, and subjective self-awareness" (Finlay, 2002, p. 533).

Through consideration of my worldview in Chapter 2, I believe that knowledge of the world is based on our understanding of how we experience it, and is influenced by history, culture and society. In undertaking and immersing myself in this research, I recognise that my own values, beliefs and experiences will have guided the decisions I have made from design, to implementation, analysis and evaluation. More specifically, I am from a bilingual family with grandparents who migrated to England, similar to the participants, and this likeness has been a driving force in exploring this research area. I am aware that due to my perceived similarities with the parent participants, perhaps I felt more connected to them than another researcher may have, and in doing so, this might have impacted my qualitative interpretation. It could also be suggested, however, that my closeness to the participants' experiences improved the validity of the research. Nevertheless, in an attempt to maintain reflexive awareness, I kept a journal, noting any decisions, challenges or pertinent emotional or intellectual responses to particular aspects of the research process (Etherington, 2004). In the next section, I discuss the terminology used within the research.

Terminology

In searching for literature in Chapter 1, I used terms such as 'English Language Learner', 'English as a Second Language' and 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL), reflecting the diversity of the term used internationally. I arrived at the latter, which is most commonly used in the UK education system, and is defined as a person who is exposed to a language other than English in their home environment (Department for Education, 2020). Although widely used in education, I have grappled with the essentialist use of the term EAL, in front of nouns or as primary descriptors to group those who speak more than one language. Moreover, the use of the word 'additional' seems to dismiss the significance of the first language, failing to acknowledge the strength in bilingualism. Following peer discussions, I wondered if the term suggests that English has superiority over other languages, which again, I did not feel at ease with. Arguably, English is often the dominant language in most UK schools but this is not to say it is syntactically or semantically superior to other languages, nor should it imply a hierarchy amongst speakers with different proficiencies.

I also deliberated whether the use of the term EAL grouped an array of parents who had nothing more in common than the fact their primary language was not English, ignoring the diversity and cultural nuances within the group. To demonstrate, the participants in Chapter 3 are Romanian-speaking and were defined by school staff as 'EAL', even though some are of Roma heritage, indicating a difference in cultural and ethnic background and only a commonality in language. Unlike bilingual parents, I considered how English speakers are not defined by their language proficiency or of other aspects of their presentation that are developing or emerging, which seems unjust and again, implicit of a language hierarchy. Consequently, throughout my research, I chose to shift the insinuation that 'parents' or 'participants' referred to English-speakers unless otherwise stated, explicitly indicating when individuals spoke English and otherwise referring to them as their primary role within the research, as parents.

Insider, Outsider or Ally

During my analysis, I reflected on my ease at accessing participants based on their openness and willingness to engage with me. A seeming keenness to participate contradicted the narrative discussed in Chapter 1 or that I had experienced from other professionals in practice, which was that bilingual families are hard-to-reach. At the beginning of the parent interviews, I acknowledged my personal motivations to conduct the research and explained that I was not affiliated with the school, in the aim of building rapport and creating a safe space. However, I wonder if by doing this, I was also subtly trying to align myself with the parents based on my perception of myself as an insider. Alternatively, it

may have reflected my belief that bilingual parents do not have equitable access to professionals, services or support and I wanted to counter this. An insider is a researcher who identifies with the participants based on similar characteristics or experiences, whereas an outsider has no perceived commonality with those being investigated (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Grace, 2020). I perceived myself an insider based on the parallels I drew between my familial experiences of migration and bilingualism.

Overall, parents shared their experiences in great detail. Interestingly, the parent who had experienced the greatest adversity was ostensibly the most forthcoming and eager to be heard. Perhaps, her openness was not about my perceived insider positioning but rather a reflection that this was the first time she had been given an opportunity to share her story. In consideration of the wider anti-immigrant rhetoric that is perpetuated by the media and litters public discourse (Fox, 2018; Schwartz et al., 2021), this parent's desire to be a voice for her community is an incredibly powerful reminder of the stories we minimise or dismiss based on our own privileges as professionals, and as people.

By positioning myself an insider initially, I believe I was able to build rapport with the participants in a way that allowed me to then assume a less knowledgeable outsider position to ask questions and be curious, without hampering relations. However, a bilingual staff member supported me with recruiting; paradoxically, parents potentially perceived her as the insider and trusted me by virtue of her recommendation. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) recognise the hyphen as a space in-between the insider-outsider position, and I wonder if that is where I sit. Ultimately, I am not Romanian nor am I bilingual. Perhaps, therefore, my empathy and closeness to the parents reflected how my values align with my understanding of social justice – or simply being human. I have argued that using EAL to categorise parents suggests that those who are bilingual are homogeneous. Yet, by likening my experience to the parents', perhaps, I am conforming to this essentialist view, or maybe this is just based on my perception of myself relative to the professionals I encounter. As I sat in the space between inside-outsider, I noted several parent experiences and beliefs to which I could relate, that may reflect the process of moving to a country with great aspiration, regardless of language or culture. For example, the parents described gratitude for a free education, which should be relished and pursued based on a desire that their children will exceed them and be successful. Although these beliefs provided were familiar due to their formativeness during my own childhood, there were also many stories to which I could not relate, emphasising the uniqueness of lived experience and my position in-between.

Conceivably, the space in-between could also be likened to allyship, where many Educational Psychologists (EPs) may find themselves based on their values and beliefs. Allies are individuals from a majority or privileged group who advocate against oppression, recognising the perpetrator as the target of change rather than the victim (Munin & Speight, 2010). Allyship is described as an intentional process in which one engages in active learning about racism and white privilege to oppose oppression, whilst combatting one's own defensiveness (Gurin et al., 2004; Kivel, 2017). Relevant to this research, allyship may include EPs accessing training to recognise their own privilege and promoting linguistic and ethnic diversity at all levels of working, without deflecting the attention from the voice of the parents.

Finally, I wondered about the interpreter's positioning. Initially, she outlined the distinction between Moldovan and Romanian people, particularly Roma people, prior to the interview. However, as the interviews progressed, I wondered if her positioning shifted as she drew parallels between herself and particular participants, especially those whose stories aligned with her own. Romocea (2014) emphasises the emotional connection that is expressed through a shared language. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the interpreter may have been more emotionally impacted by participants' accounts because of her direct access to them, highlighting her insider positioning and relatively and unknowingly shifting mine. In listening to the participants, I recognised the emotional response of the interpreter compared to my own, deliberating whether the magnitude and depth of feeling was possibly lost in translation.

Following the interviews, I noticed myself holding the parents in mind when working with other families in practice, maintaining an awareness of the stories that are shared and those that are simply implied. Ultimately, this research has provided new meaning around centralising parent voice, highlighting the necessity for adjustments to promote this and a sensitivity towards those interpreting. In the next section, I consider any personal and professional implications.

Next Steps

This research has allowed me the privilege of listening to the stories of several individuals, encouraging me to consider communication from different perspectives. Consequently, I have considered the impact of my personal values and motivations on my role as an EP, and how these may influence how I approach work with children, families and schools. For example, I strongly believe the stories of those who participated will now guide the questions I ask, the support that I seek and the practice I advocate and share with others.

Following the submission of this research, I primarily intend to share the findings with the participants as a recognition of my gratitude for their participation, but also to detail changes that I hope to enact within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). I also hope that by sharing the outcomes of this work with the participating school, there will be opportunities for them to build on what is working and acknowledge and develop other areas of practice to benefit the participants directly. A strong motivation for this research was based upon the belief that all families should have equitable access to education, services and support. Therefore, I intend to use this research as a platform to inform others of how this can be achieved through centralising parent voice and providing support and training to schools to enable them to do this too.

Since beginning my research project, some changes have begun to be enacted within my placement Local Authority (LA). For example, I have been allocated a lead role in developing policy and guidance to challenge offensive and discriminatory language related to the protected characteristics, which includes linguistic diversity. As part of this work, EPs will be supported to engage in 'difficult conversations' with schools, potentially using some of the reflexive questions and prompts detailed in Table 11. This policy and guidance is due to be shared more widely within the LA to detail a uniform approach to how it should be used and shared with schools in the hope of providing a benchmark for how diversity is promoted across services. The aim is to review and reflect on the application of the policy and guidance in subsequent Continuous Professional Development days. Based on the findings of this research, the EPS have also voiced a commitment to asking parents about their preference for an interpreter, and they have agreed to translate their consent forms into the ten most commonly spoken languages in the LA.

Through the publication of this project, I hope to extend some of the developments in my LA to services nationally by promoting wider conversations about how communication can be improved between school staff and parents. By extending this research to different communities and within the EP profession, I hope to shift the narrative and understanding around how bilingual families are supported and empowered to communicate.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the evolution of my thinking and subsequent practice and approach to research, following the completion of my thesis. I outlined the critical thinking that was undertaken in relation to the use of the terminology in the literature, as well as my position as an insider-outsider within the research. I strongly believe this process has

shaped the EP that I will become, encouraging me to recognise the influence of my own experiences and core values on research and practice. From completing this thesis, I hope to continue supporting parents to share their stories and elevate their voices through promoting communication and championing linguistic diversity.

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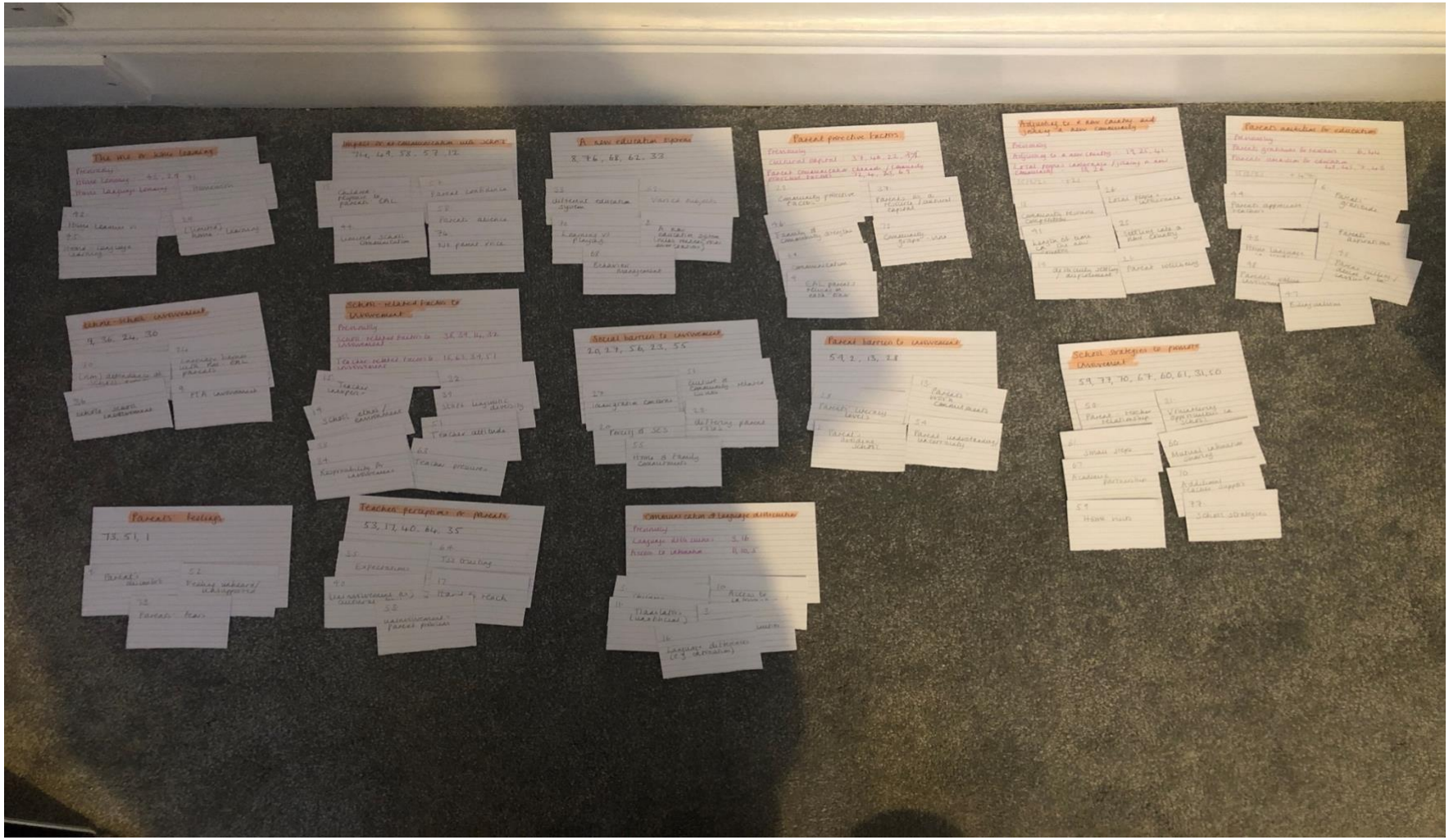
Appendix

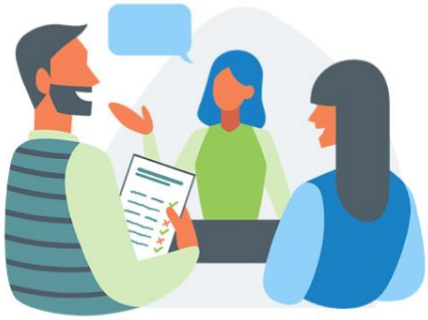
Appendix A: Grouping Codes into Descriptive Themes



Appendix B: Parent Information Sheet

Research on Communication and Home-School Partnerships

My name is Priya Dyson. I am a Trainee Educational Psychology student, working with Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council. I am inviting you to participate in research about how parents who speak English as an Additional Language and teachers communicate together and build partnerships.



Who can participate?

I would like to talk to parents who speak a home language that is different to English. I am keen to hear about your experiences building relationships with school and to understand what matters to you when you communicate with teachers.

How will this research help?

I hope that this information will help me to find out what is helpful for parents who speak English as an Additional Language, so that communication with school is easier.

How can I contribute?

By taking part in this research, you will be involved in a single interview that will be recorded. This interview will either be in person or online, and there will be an interpreter present. The research process is private and all information will be kept confidential – only I will have access to it. No one in your child's school will know or hear what has been discussed. If you change your mind about being part of the research, you can withdraw at any time and all of your information will be deleted.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, please fill in your name, child's name, home language and phone number, and return this form to your school. If you prefer, you can email me directly p.a.dyson2@newcastle.ac.uk

Parent's Name_____

Child's Name _____

Home Language _____

Phone Number _____

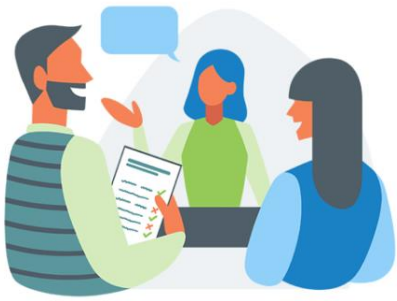
I look forward to hearing from you
Priya Dyson

You can also contact my research supervisor at
David.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk

Appendix C: School Staff Information Sheet

Research on Communication and Home-school partnerships

My name is Priya Dyson. I am a Trainee Educational Psychology student, currently on placement with Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council. I am inviting you to take part in research about how parents who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) and teachers communicate together and build partnerships.



I would like to talk to teachers who have experience of working with parents who speak EAL. I am keen to hear about your experiences building partnerships with parents and to understand what matters to you when communicating together. I hope that this information will help me to find out what is helpful for parents and schools and the role of Educational Psychologists in supporting partnerships between teachers and parents who speak EAL.

By taking part in this research, you will be involved in a single interview that will be recorded. This interview will either be in person or online. The research process is private and all information will be kept confidential – only I will have access to it. No one in your school will know or hear what has been discussed. If you change your mind about being part of the research, you can withdraw at any time and all of your information will be deleted.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, please fill in your name and email address and return to the school office. If you prefer, you can email me directly p.a.dyson2@newcastle.ac.uk

Name _____

Email Address _____

I look forward to hearing from you
Priya Dyson

Newcastle University

You can also contact my research supervisor at David.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk

Appendix D: Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

- ☐ I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet
- ☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and had them answered
- ☐ I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified (except as might be required by law)
- ☐ I agree that data gathered in this study may be stored anonymously and securely, and may be used for future research
- ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason
- ☐ I agree to take part in this study

Participant name ……..

Parent/Teacher ……
(delete as necessary)

Participant signature …….

Newcastle University

Appendix E: Parent Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule – Parent Interviews

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together?

Introduction

- Check pronunciation of name and thank them for their participation
- Introduce myself – explain the role of the EP and provide a personal background to my research interest
- Explain the aims of the research: questions about you, then questions about communication
- Read through the consent form
- Check that the participant is happy to participate – verbal consent
- Sign consent form

START RECORDING

Question	Prompts
Can you tell me about your child? How old is your child? How many siblings? Who lives at home with you? How easy is it for you to get to school? **Can you tell me about the languages you speak at home?** **How long has your child been at school?** **Did they go to school somewhere else? Did you go to school somewhere else?**	*How do you communicate at home?* *Does anyone speak English?* *What was school like there?*

Can you tell me about a time you communicated well with teachers – what happened? Can you tell me about a time you weren't able to communicate well with teachers – what happened?	*Can you tell me a bit more about that?* ***Why were you communicating?*** ***When do you usually communicate?*** ***What did you do? What did the teachers do?*** ***What supported you? What made it more difficult?*** ***What would have made a difference?*** *Is this typical of your communication with…?* *How did you feel when…?* *Was this your first interaction with school?*
Is there anything you would like teachers to know about you or your family? Is there anything you wish teachers knew about how to communicate best with you and your family?	*Can you tell me a bit more about that?* *What is your ideal school – for your children? What is your role in your ideal school?*

Debrief

- Thank participant
- Verbal debrief
- Provide debrief sheet

Appendix F: School Staff Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule – School Staff Interviews

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of school staff and Romanian-speaking parents in their communication together?

Introduction

- Thank them for their participation
- Introduce myself – explain the role of the EP and provide a personal background to my research interest
- Explain the aims of the research: questions about you, then questions about communication
- Read through the consent form
- Check that the participant is happy to participate – verbal consent
- Sign consent form

START RECORDING

Question	Prompts
What is your role in school? How long have you worked in schools? Are you bilingual or a second-language learner? Can you tell me about your experiences of working with bilingual families? Can you tell me about your experiences of working with Romanian-speaking families?	

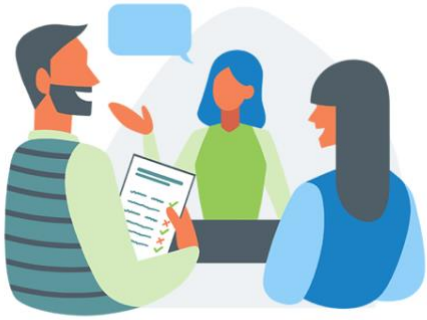
Can you tell me about a time you communicated well with parents – what happened? Can you tell me about a time you weren't able to communicate well with parents – what happened?	*Can you tell me a bit more about that?* ***Why were you communicating?*** ***When do you usually communicate?*** ***What did you do? What did the parents do?*** ***What supported you? What made it more difficult?*** ***What would have made a difference?*** *Is this typical of your communication with…?* *How did you feel when…?* *Was this your first interaction with this parent?*
Is there anything you would like parents to know about you or about school? Is there anything you wish parents knew about how to communicate best with you or with school?	*Can you tell me a bit more about that?* *What is your ideal school?* *What could school do to facilitate that?* *What could parents do to facilitate that?*

Debrief

- Thank participant
- Verbal debrief
- Provide debrief sheet

Appendix G: Debrief Form

Participant Debriefing Form



Thank you for participating as a research participant in the present study, which explores the role of communication in the development of home-school partnerships for bilingual parents.

All participant data will be destroyed upon my completion of the Newcastle University Doctorate of Applied Educational Psychology Programme. If you wish to withdraw your data at any point, please inform me and your data will be destroyed. Any requests to withdraw data after the point of analysis will not be possible, due to complexities identifying data once it has been anonymised.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at p.a.dyson2@newcastle.ac.uk or my supervisor at David.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk

Thank you again for your participation.

Newcastle University

Appendix H: Reflections on the Data Collection Process

4/7/2021 Personal account of the parent interviews

- When we arrived at the school, Miss Miriam said that the parents were expecting to be called by telephone not to come into school in-person. This alarmed me as the interpreter, who I had met on the way into school, was expecting the parents to be there in-person.
- Miriam disappeared to call the parents so the interpreter and I had time to discuss my research and her role.
- She explained that she had moved from Moldova for her husband's aspirations of being a doctor after finishing her own university study. He worked in A&E and now works as a GP in doctor. She said that this area is not 'as nice' as she had expected but she is happy here. When I asked about her experiences of the Roma community, she said that in Moldova, the Roma community were quite affluent, which I was unsure about. She also said that she couldn't make a judgement on the community as she didn't have personal experiences of them, but that her friends had had negative experiences. I was unsure how these beliefs would affect the interpreter's involvement with parents, so I prepared to consider body language, intonation and other non-verbal cues she may show during her interactions.
- I asked the interpreter to translate verbatim. She had printed out the interview questions and carefully studied them before parents arrived. She asked me to speak simply and slowly, putting the questions in their simplest form so she could translate them as she recognised parents may have different levels of literacy.
- When the first parent arrived she did not sign in, so, I was not notified of her arrival. Although the parent's son had been in school for many years, I wondered if she hadn't signed in because she was unaware of the protocol when arriving at school. Nevertheless, I went to ask the front office staff if parent 1 had arrived and found her sat in reception.
- The receptionist asked her to sign in on the computer, offering no help of what to press. She then asked parent 1 to complete a form answering questions about COVID-19. It was clear that parent 1 was unable to read the form so the receptionist started asking the questions aloud, but the parent still didn't understand. For example, the parent answered yes to having a fever and to living with someone who is currently isolating. A second receptionist then began to laugh as the first receptionist appeared exasperated at parent 1. I could feel myself becoming frustrated at the receptionists' behaviour towards the parent, so I began to repeat the questions; this time more slowly and using gesture to indicate 'cough' and 'fever'.
- I was nervous walking parent 1 to the interview room. I introduced the interpreter to the parent as soon as we entered the room. However, my introduction wasn't necessary as the interpreter appeared warm and enthusiastic in her tone, initiating conversation that seemed to settle parent 1.
- Parent 1 shared a lot of personal information and I was quite surprised at her openness and honesty. When I turned the Dictaphone off, she continued talking about her experiences of racism, but neither the interpreter or I tried to stop her. As I gave her the debrief form and explained about her right to withdraw, she pushed

the form away and said she wouldn't change her mind about participating, especially if speaking to me would help her children and family.

- After parent 1 left, the interpreter explained that she had found it hard to translate the level of emotion that was conveyed in the dialogue between her and the parent. She said she had not expected some of parent 1's responses, because her own experience was so different. We reflected jointly on what parent 1 had said after the Dictaphone was turned off. I began to make notes about our reflections, but it was difficult to capture the emotion of what parent 1 had said and how moved the interpreter and I felt.
- Parent 2 was very talkative and the interpreter had to slow her down or ask her to pause so she could translate. Parent 2 looked directly at me and was laughing and seemed very upbeat. She spoke very positively and at great length about her children's achievements.
- After parent 2 left, the interpreter said that she was curious to see what the third parent would be like as we had experienced parents at opposite ends of the spectrum so far.
- After each parent left, the interpreter speculated about their ethnicity and I was intrigued by how she used physical appearance to categorise the parents instead of the content of their discussion.
- Parent 3 was more shy and it took her a while before she reciprocated smiling or made eye contact with me, though the interpreter said she was very open verbally, which made me wonder how communication may be associated with trust. The interpreter also said that parent 3 was very young, she believed she was around 25 years of age.
- The interpreter concluded that she had been surprised by the content of the interviews overall; she believed we had heard a spectrum of experiences. The interpreter also said working with me had been her most interesting interpreting work and she praised the value of undertaking research of this kind. Before leaving, the interpreter asked if she could give me her email address, so I could share my findings with her when I write up my thesis; I agreed, believing her to be a key part of my research process.
- I noticed after the interviews, as we were leaving, the interpreter was keen to say goodbye to Miriam, even though I had sensed she was standoffish in their initial interaction. The interpreter shouted to Miriam and waved to say thank you and goodbye, which was warmer than their initial interaction. I wondered if there was an implicit hierarchy initially between those interpreters who do the role formally and those staff members in school who have an informal dual-role, like Miriam.
- Upon leaving school, I felt really positive about my interview experiences and the openness of the parents. It seemed that parents were keen to be heard based on a history of not having a voice, regardless of what their answer to my questions was. I also felt incredibly fortunate to have been able to work with such an invested, supportive and reflective interpreter; I believe the interviews also opened her eyes to inequalities in the system, affecting people who she perceives are similar to her. Overall, it was a privilege to meet and listen to the parents and I have been reinvigorated to support their right to equitable access to education and empower them to have agency in their children's education.

Appendix I: Stages 2 and 3 of IPA (Exploratory Commenting and Emergent Themes)

Step 3: Emergent Themes	**210629-0018 PARENT 2** **Key:** **Interviewer – Bold** Interpreter (speaking on behalf of interviewee) – Normal	**Step 2: Exploratory Comments** Descriptive Linguistic Conceptual
	So this is Parent 2, okay, so can you tell me a little bit about your children, how old are they?	
Parent gender roles – dominant father Perception of the UK as a promise land Settlement anxiety	She's got two kids, she's got two daughters, 9 years old and a year and 9 months in August, yeah. So they arrived in UK in 2020, in November, so they are new. So her husband speaks English really well, so he is fluent, he's here from August last year, 2020. So even not being able to talk English she just decided she wants to follow her husband and she came here. She was thinking about the feelings, thinking about her child to struggle, just bringing him from a different environment, different country, different educational background. Her husband has convinced her to come here because *[all laugh]* he promised her all the best, that their children will be, they will study at good schools, it will be easier for them, and they will settle really well.	Husband speaks English New arrivals to England (less than a year) Followed her husband here – gender roles Settlement anxiety 'Promised her all the best' Perception of UK as a promise land and easy life
	And has that been your experience?	

Feeling lucky to have the opportunity to settle in the UK	So she, overall she's very happy about the school, about the area, we're happy and lucky to get a place, a good place, they got it from scratch, the house was empty, they are happy about the house, they are happy about the school, they're really happy about the teacher, I think it's a mister, yeah, who is helping and very supportive, he is very patient with her daughter Alicia, yeah, so he's very helpful, so they've got a really nice experience about the school.	'Ummmm' – hesitancy answering this question Fortunate – suggestion that not everyone has this experience
	So what is your husband's job and do you work as well?	
Parent 2's embarrassment that her job is low	Yeah, he works at a warehouse, Asda warehouse, it's lower than he used to do in Romania, because but he just needed to start from…	It's lower – embarrassment about the job? Is that parent 2's perception of me, that she needs to be embarrassed? 'He just needed to start from' – does she feel she needs to explain?
	Yeah.	
	They swapped, they worked together, so she works as well at Asda warehouse, but because of the children they need to swap, so they readjust the shifts. She did try to, she did private nurseries, she doesn't like it, so she wants to wait till the little one is 3 years old to send her to a nursery, before starting the full-time child.	Flexible working commitments because of the children – understanding employer?

	Do your children speak English?	
Parent 2 wants children to speak English Differences in school systems between UK and Romania	Yeah, she's very proud of her daughter because she speaks English now better than Romanian language, during these six or seven months since November, and she got, she took her from Year 2 back in Romania, because we go to school a bit differently, we start school when we are 7 years old, and yeah, and here they start five, when they are 5 years old, and even earlier with nursery and the reception. So she had to recap, we had to learn the times tables, she had to learn how to divide and multiply, so these, all this stuff she just did it through these six or seven months.	Keen for children to speak English Learning English is high accolade Differences between the schools in England and Romania Children start at different ages Child has adapted well, learning things that she didn't know because of a different school system
Parent 2's husband supports child's learning because he speaks English Parent 2's involvement associated with teacher investment The strictness of teachers in Romania The importance of studying and being top of the class Parent 2 had difficulty adjusting to the UK education system	She managed to. If there are some difficult words she'll ask her dad. Mr Dan has, he gave them a telephone call saying that, about the development, about the progress of, during pandemic. Mum is working hard with her, she'd always explain, she'd always tell her about how important it is to study, and because if you don't do that kids would probably turn to their computer or to tablet or telephone. So teachers in Romania, and in Moldova in our case, so teachers are really, really strict, they are really strict about education, and about the behaviour, so it is… and also she'd always teach her not to be the last one, so to be the first one, so she's got… because of the bullying, because of the… we also have these issues back in Romania, if	Child has support at home because Father speaks English Parent involvement at home – does this influence how much the teacher invests? Repeating/emphasising really strict – understanding different roles of teachers in UK vs Romania? Importance of being top of the class Children are bullied if they are not top of the class in Romania – understanding of

Parent 2's daughter doesn't want to go back to Romania Parent 2's daughter has developed a network of Romanian friends Establishing a Romanian community network	the child is not one of the best he'll be probably potentially bullied, because of his educational disadvantages, so she'd always tell her that it is really important to learn, she'd always. So yeah, with this perception of how it needs to be, it was really hard for mum to come here and to understand how it works here, the whole system. And that it was really hard for her until she started to have, to find friends, to make friends, to settle, yeah. And yeah, and her child was feeling her agitation beforehand, and now being settled they both feel better, they both feel happier. She's got friends and colleagues in the class, Romanian kids, she's now making friends, lots of friends, she doesn't want to go back to her home, the girl I mean, the child, she just wants to see her cousins and her relatives back in Romania, she loves it here and she's got many friends. At the beginning it was really hard. There's no problem about going to school, so there are no issues, she…	education system in the UK – significance of education Difficulty for mum to adjust to the UK education system Hard for the child to settle Mum's agitation – child was aware of parent's agitation Friends…Romanian kids – community links/network? Doesn't want to go back to Romania – the only alternative is to go back?
	Can you tell me about the schools in Romania?	
Parent 2 encourages children to conform and comply in school Teacher keen to collaborate with parent 2 Teacher shares academic updates with parent 2	Yeah, the school is different. So she's attending some afterschool clubs as well, sports clubs and music clubs. The main, so the main thing that she's now happy about, and quite relaxed, mum, is that she can verbally express herself, she speaks English, and she could, they could understand her, and she understands everything what's going on so	Lots of extracurricular activities in the UK Mum wants daughter to tell her everything that has happened

Parent 2 keen to be accepted by the school community and demonstrate compliance Parent 2's communication with the class teacher around peer issues Parent 2 expectation that non-English children should support one another Parent 2's assumption that non-English speakers will have the same approach on parenting	that's… right, so yeah, there was a problem at the beginning, where kids fight sometimes, pushing each other, so there are issues, so there were a few issues with that. And she'd always come and tell her mum, because she was learning, she was brought up with that understanding that she needs to share these, everything what happens at school with her mother. Yeah, but because usually kids are not saying the whole truth *[all laugh]*, sometimes they are hiding something. They had a conversation with Miss Miriam and with Mr Dan, he explained to them, to their daughter that she needs to speak first to him because if something happens at school he needs to know first what happens, and after that she is okay to say it to, to tell her mum how was her day. So since then they haven't had any issues, he would always report her education, her academical level to her parents. Mum would always tell her every morning she'd tell her, please do not get into troubles, if you see someone playing some strange games or doing something which is not right just try to avoid it, try to not, to interfere, and she'd always tell Miss Miriam that I'm explaining, I'm explaining to my daughter how to behave, what to do, what not to do. And but there were a few boys in the class who would push her, just in the mood, some just do some bad things about it. And but she was very impressed, negatively impressed about it, she would worry about that issue, but this was at the	Mr Dan and Miss Miriam – how is that relationship initiated? Does mum encourage conformity? In groups and out groups? - 'don't interfere' Classroom issues should be reported to parents and class teacher... Teacher trying to instigate collaboration with parents ? Teacher shares academic updates with parents Telling Miss Miriam that she has told Alicia how to behave - is she looking for approval/validation/acceptance? Communicating with class teacher when there were incidents with other peers The boy who was pushing wasn't English – assumptions of children who aren't English?

Parent 2's tolerance and empathy for parent community	beginning, during first three, four months they had. There is still a boy who probably loves her, likes her *[all laugh]*, yeah, he'd make some attempts of pushing, and they were not, yeah, and they were not English, mum has mentioned that they were not English and she didn't understand their way, she didn't perceive their way of thinking, why people from different nationalities coming here do not support their child there and then, would probably fight against each other. Right, so and that boy's mum has got a new-born baby, so she says that maybe she's too busy because she understands she's got two children, she's too busy with the little one, and not giving much attention to his behaviour, so probably that's causing…	Assuming that people who don't speak English will have the same outlook/mindset Expectation that children who aren't English will support each other – role of community networks? Them and us? Tolerance for parent community... trying to understand? Empathy?
	So when you come into school to communicate you come in because you have a problem, or because you want to talk about how your daughters are getting on, is there any other reasons you come into school to talk with the teacher?	
Parent 2's satisfaction with school is measured on child's happiness	No, she's got no issues to discuss because as long as the child is happy, and is making good progress, she hasn't got anything to add to it.	Satisfaction with school is measured on child's happiness
	Do you think if you did have something to discuss you would be supported to communicate with school?	

Parent 2 feels supported by school	Obviously yes, until now, so far she's been listened and heard by the teacher. She's got no issues, she's very satisfied.	'Obviously yes' – suggests a definite sense of support 'Listened and heard' – does this mean parent 2 feels understood?
	So can you tell me about a time you've come into school and you've had to communicate with the teachers and it was good, what was good about it, why was it good?	
Parent 2 values school's advice The creation of a partnership between parents and school Miss Miriam helps to explain incidents in school that may be emotive for parents	Right, so yes, mum is telling us that there was a good experience, a positive experience about sorting out the issues when Alicia would come back home with the dirty jacket, being pushed by some boys on the playground, and she thought that it's a normal thing, it's a natural thing for kids to fight sometimes, to push, or to play to interact in this way. But when it came to a case when somebody's just taken the chair from under, she was just about to sit and somebody took the chair from under her and she fall, and bump her head, then mum thought that it's quite serious, and it's quite important to seek the advice, for advice from the school and just to address this issue. She came and spoke to Miss Miriam and spoke to the teacher, class teacher, and they would explain to her what happened, and they would speak to those boys who were involved in that incident, they'd spend	Positive experience discussing issues with school Important to seek advice from the school... perceived equal partnership with school, valuing their advice What contributes to a perception of an equal partnership? SES? Nationality? Job? Miss Miriam helped parent to understand the incident... reframe the incident - does this make her feel more involved in school?

	some time in the class, thinking about their behaviour. And they did sort it, and Miss Miriam spoke to mum few times afterwards, explaining why kids are fighting, why could be a matter of coming back home with the dirty cardigan or a dirty jacket, because they are fighting and sometimes Alicia would help her friends getting a hat from… somebody would play with someone's hat, and if it's her friends' hat she would interfere and help, and maybe that's when she, the trouble will happen, because they all are now involved in that incident.	
	So what supported you to communicate with school about that incident, you said that Miss Miriam interprets or translates for you, is there anything else that helps you?	
Parent 2's husband speaks English Parent 2's husband has direct contact with the class teacher Class teacher prefers contact with parents rather than through the child Parent 2 perceives the class teacher values her because he makes an effort to speak with her	Except Miss Miriam, her husband speaks English directly to teacher, to the class teacher, so he'd communicate with the class teacher. So when there were a few other incidents in the class with pushing or throwing things, the class teacher would come personally to mum, come outside and tell her and explain her, she'd understand everything, so everything is pretty clear. Because class teacher wants mum to know the direct information from him, from his point of view, not from his… from her child's point of view, and Miss Miriam would tell her as well what has happened in reality, not being	Husband speaks English Husband has direct contact with class teacher Class teacher tries to explain everything even with a language barrier Mr Dan discourages information being transmitted through the child

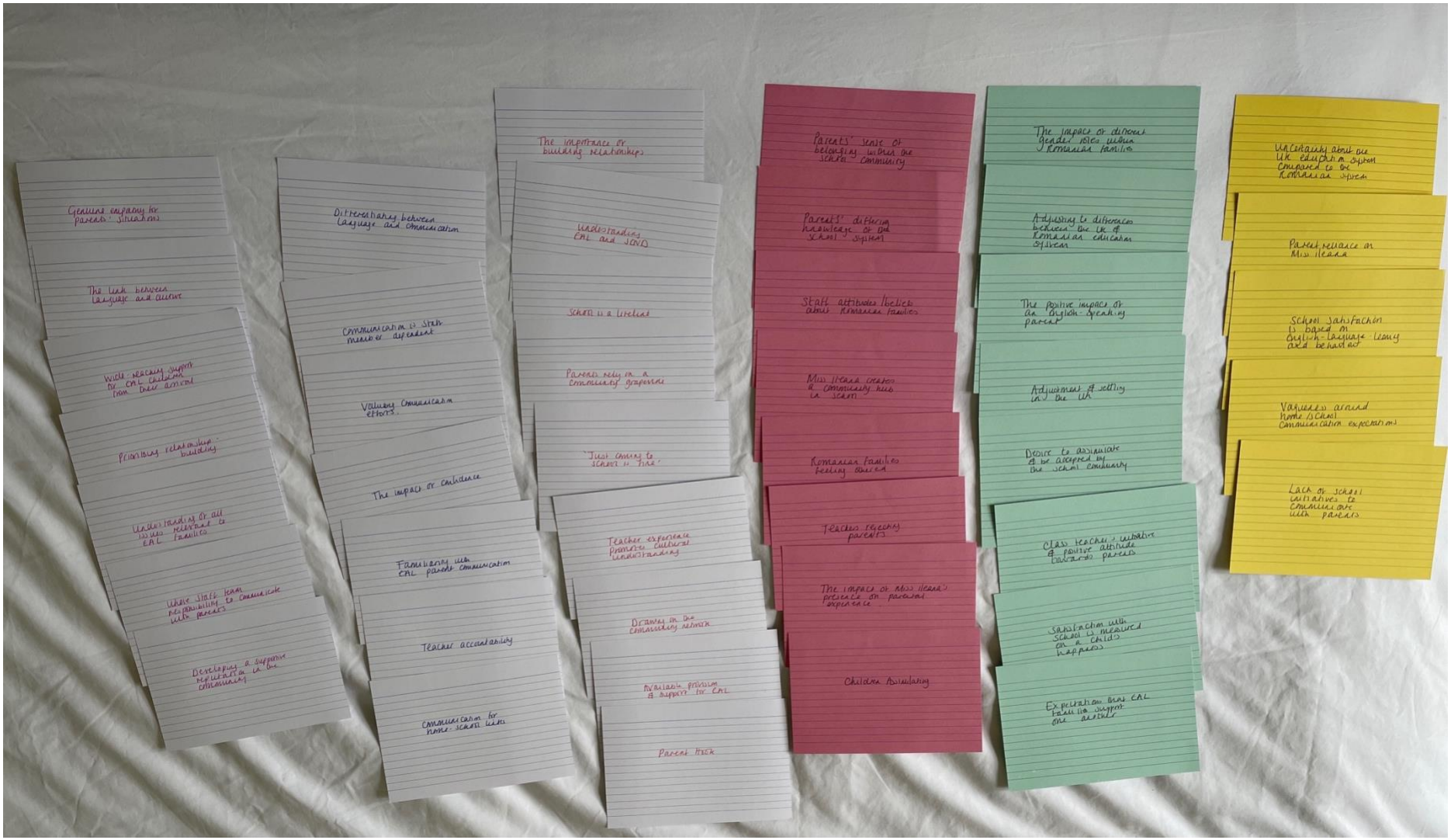
	transferred through the child, and his perception of what was the problem. So they'd speak to her directly, Miss Miriam and the teacher, and it always approach her and tell her.	Class teacher wants Mum to know information from him rather than from Alicia – mum perceives the teacher values her because he makes an effort?
	So this positive experience with Mr Dan, is this the same experience you have with other school staff?	
Parent 2 has limited interactions with non-teaching staff Kindness is important to parent 2 in school staff	There were no cases of interacting on having anything, when she came to register her for school everybody was open and everybody was really kind. She's very satisfied. Yeah, all kids are quite demanding and will choose what to eat and what not to eat, so they are quite tricky and funny about these things, eating. But still she's very happy about the dinners, because it's healthy, and she's happy. Packed lunch, yeah *[all laugh]*, and also if Alicia sees someone coming with a packed lunch she'd ask for a packed lunch as well, yeah, yeah.	Does mum have limited interaction with other members of staff? Or does she perceive those interactions as less significant? Everybody was 'open', 'really kind' – is open and kind what is important and valued by parent 2? Happy with the school dinners
	You said your husband speaks English and Miss Miriam interprets, but are there any times that communication is difficult?	
Gender roles within parent 2's family – father sorts everything	Yeah, her husband speaks very well English, so that there is not, yeah, he's making, he's sorting everything for the family.	'he's [dad] sorting everything' – gender roles within the family

	So is there anything else you would like school to know about you or your family and how you communicate?	
Parent 2's husband advised her how to answer Parent 2's awareness of how she will be perceived by professionals	If it's in regards to her personally we'll stay here till next morning, she'll tell you *[all laugh]*. Her husband gave her an advice, answer questions, do not tell the whole story because it will take long. She's very satisfied, she's very happy with the school, and she has, well she doesn't want to send kids at different schools, so she's very happy.	Parent 2's personality... keen to tell story Her husband advised her how to answer before she came to the interview – gender roles Fear of what is said – how they will be perceived? How I am perceived?
	So if you had an ideal school, the best school, what would it be like for your children, and what would it be like for you?	
Parent 2's gratitude for class teacher Parent 2 distanced herself from Romanian parents who have had a negative experience Parent 2 values studying and being friendly	Yeah, she's really sorry about not being able to see Mr Dan next year, because they… but she's very satisfied, and happy about the system, the educational system, the local system here, and she's happy about the school, she's heard about few issues but she's got nothing to do with them, their particular family, the most important thing is for her to study, to know she is very friendly, her daughter is very friendly, she will find friends everywhere, so yeah. There wasn't a problem, she didn't think about having any issues with her communicating with other kids, so because she is very… unfortunately some of… many kids are not	Fear that other teachers will be different to Mr Dan 'got nothing to do with them' parent hierarchy? The most important thing is study and being friendly – what parent 2 values? Acknowledgement that some kids don't accept friendships – other children's problems not her child's?

	accepting friendships straightaway, so like adults, some of them adults are not accepting are they, yeah, there is connections sometimes. Mum is very happy.	
	Ah, that's good.	
Different UK education system is confusing for parent 2	She's happy about the way of teaching, of the way of teaching maths here at school, she's progressing, mum is progressing as well, she's studying a lot from her *[all laugh]*. Because there are different ways of doing maths here in primary school, in comparison to Romania, we're very confused, I have been really, really confused when my child was at school. In Romania same as is in our country, after 12 o'clock when kids will, they come from school, they eat, they have some rest, and then starting from one o'clock and then until nine o'clock you're doing the homework, because it's really, really strict and massive, massive amount of information they need to work through. So here is absolutely different, after three o'clock you're free, yeah, she's not, she's not in a good way of saying that, she's not bothered about what her child is doing after three o'clock because she's quite busy during this period of time being at school, she's not stressed about it. Ballet, music, and she was very, very tired after school, in Romania, she just… she's got no homework to do so she probably, after this pandemic she probably take her somewhere for	Different education systems in the UK and Romania Different ways of learning in the UK means parents are confused 'really, really strict' – repeated/emphasised They explain everything in school Less stress in England

	some extra classes, yeah, there is none, in comparison to Romanian way of educating kids it's less stressful, yeah, the system is less stressful and they don't need homework because they explain everything in class, during the class.	
	So, is that different to Romania?	
	Yes, it is, yeah.	School is different in the UK to Romania

Appendix J: Identifying Patterns across the Cases



Appendix K: The Connections between Master Themes and Cases

Master Theme	Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Variation in Individual Experiences and Support	Staff Attitudes	Parents being ignored by school staff
		Staff's expectations of Romanian families
		Parent 1 feeling rejected when teachers don't communicate
		Parent 2's teacher keen to collaborate
		The creation of a partnership between parents and school
		Negative teacher attitude towards Romanian parents
		Parent 3 receives no communication from school
	~~Experience promotes understanding~~ (I merged this superordinate theme with staff attitudes during redraft 4/11/21)	Staff 1's personal relevance and empathy with parents situations
		Non-judgemental approach
		Commitment to support
		Teacher experience with linguistic diversity affects teacher communication
		Majority EAL children in class
	Accountability	Accessing external resources and knowledge to support EAL parents
		Whole staff team responsibility to communicate with parents
		Responsive Senior Leadership
		Personalising communication approaches for parents

		Significance of the first parent-teacher interaction
		Importance of teachers having basic phrases
	Confidence	Parent 2's husband has direct contact with the class teacher
		Regular parent communication is associated with teacher confidence
		Teacher communication is associated with parents confidence to communicate
		Parent confidence to communicate
Ambiguous Expectations/Ambiguity	Satisfaction	Parent 2's daughter doesn't want to go back to Romania
		Parent 2's satisfaction with school is measured on child's happiness
		Parent 2 values studying and being friendly
		English language learning is associated with positive school experience
		English language learning as a measure of success
		School satisfaction is based on children's good behaviour
	The UK Education System	Parent misunderstanding of the school structure (e.g. staff roles)
		Lack of understanding of the school system
		New arrivals to England
		Differences in school systems between UK and Romania
		The strictness of teachers in Romania
		Parent 2 had difficulty adjusting to the UK education system

		Different UK education system is confusing for parent 2
	Methods of Communication	Parent 3 sees no reason to communicate with teachers
		Parent 3 does not seek out communication with school staff
		Desire for more communication in Romanian
		Uncertainty about how to promote communication between teachers and schools
		Reliance on intra-community translation support/ community networks
		Parents unaware of school systems for communication
		A gap between empathy and adapting methods
		Provision supports teachers who are unfamiliar supporting EAL families
Making Connections	Building Relationships	Joint accountability for communication (give and take)
		Building trust
		Miriam builds bridges between parents and school
		Open door policy with Miriam
		Understanding individual parent differences
		The importance of having a consistent person to communicate with
		Parents respect teacher effort to communicate
		Teacher 2 values parents showing an interest
		Teachers perceive parents communicating positively
		Parent 2 perceives the class teacher values her because he makes an effort to speak with her

	Wraparound Support for engagement	Understanding of all issues relevant to EAL families
		Wraparound support for parents
		Signposting and Advocacy
		Going above and beyond
		School is a community hub
		School is a lifeline
		Deficiency needs vs Growth needs
	A Parent Champion	Miriam makes a difference
		Miriam enables practical support from the teacher for parent 1 (e.g. with times tables)
		Parent 1 feels more comfortable with Miriam than without her
		Miriam is the bridge between parent 3 and school
		Reliance on Miriam
		Gratitude for Miriam
	Belonging	Going back to Romania
		Xenophobia and racism in the school community
		Danger
		Parent 2 expectation that non-English children should support one another
		Parent 2's tolerance and empathy for parent community

Appendix L: Presentation from the EP Focus Group