

ANALYTICAL CHAPTER 1

Dear all,

Thank you for the opportunity to share a working chapter from my PhD thesis! This is a 1st draft, quite rudimentary, written largely in the past two weeks as I've settled into KU. The sections here cover the first ethnographic vignette and an elaboration on the key concept of advice encounters as sites of linguistic *bricolage*. I am particularly interested in if this line of argument is conveyed clearly and makes sense; and how well you feel the linguistic elements of this chapter are explained and their relevance to social anthropological thought more broadly (it is linguistic *anthropology*, after all). There are more questions at the end. Any feedback, critical or otherwise, is greatly appreciated!

Context:

This thesis is based on a 14-month ethnography of a local migrant-advice service, Welcome Ways, in the seaside town of Great Yarmouth, UK.¹ Situated on the east-coast of England, Great Yarmouth was a fishing town and then a seasonal tourism town, something it tries to maintain despite being threatened by cheaper holidays abroad. It has a history of being one of the UK's "left behind" towns, with high levels of socio-economic deprivation. It also has a unique history with migration: reliant on migrant-labour for seasonal tourism, hospitality and agriculture, on the one hand, but with a history of anti-migration politics on the other. Hit particularly hard by austerity and a hostile environment toward immigration, migrant communities in Great Yarmouth are heavily reliant on advice actors in their daily lives. Welcome Ways was, until it shut-down due to unrenowned funding towards the end of my fieldwork, one of two advice services that specifically targeted the town's migrant communities. The thesis follows encounters between migrant-clients and advice actors at Welcome Ways as the latter help the former to navigate access to public resources like housing, employment, benefits, education and citizenship.² This chapter expands on the notion that advice encounters have the potential to be sites of "linguistic *bricolage*", a concept set up in earlier chapters and explained more below.

¹ Welcome Ways is a pseudonym, as are names of all individuals in this document.

² "Clients" was the term used by Welcome Ways advisers, as well as most other advice services in the UK. While in some cases the transactional implications of this term become relevant, it is often used casually as does not mean to implicate any unconscious relationship between advisers and those they help. "Advice actors", however, is a term that is significantly opened-up in my literature review – the main takeaway being that, within austerity contexts, far more people are pulled into the role of giving advice than formal advice services (family, friends, activist groups, arts and cultural groups).

Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the potential for advice encounters to be sites of linguistic *bricolage*, where migrant-clients, their friends and family, and advisers combine their linguistic repertoires to co-construct meaningful advice. Through a series of ethnographic vignettes, I argue that, while this kind of engagement can be successful, it is complicated by the evaluative and affective realities of navigating public resource bureaucracies. Advice encounters are never neutral: who gets to speak and which repertoires are valued (socially, politically, morally) is unevenly distributed (Bakhtin, 1980; Blommaert, 2010). Nor are they governed by “rational” linguistic strategy: navigating public resources bureaucracies demands and is driven by significant emotional work, related to experiences of waiting, uncertainty, and exclusion (Cabot, 2012; Geoffrion and Cretton, 2021).

The first vignette centres around interactions between an older Ukrainian couple, Andrii and Halyna, myself and two visiting advisers at Welcome Ways. Their case spans two weeks, at a time in which local advice services bore the brunt of supporting the UK’s transition to digital eVisas. What begins as a positive and productive example of advice as linguistic *bricolage* is complicated when it runs up against an inconsistent and uncertain immigration bureaucracy. As Andrii and Halyna’s case becomes more serious, the uneven nature of language and power in such encounters is highlighted. Tensions between the embodied, emotionally charged registers navigating immigration bureaucracy expressed by Andrii and Halyna and, conversely, the disembodied valuations of the Home Office further demonstrate the affective dimension of such encounters.

The second vignette paints a different picture of advice encounters. Unlike Andrii and Halyna, Nadia, a Ukrainian refugee and frequent visitor to Welcome Ways, rejects engaging in co-constructed advice instead chooses to “go it alone”. Specifically, this vignette follows Nadia over the course of multiple weeks as she seeks help with her energy bills and surrounding debt. Nadia’s approach - collecting little bits of knowledge from multiple different advice actors across multiple but brief encounters – in many ways resembles Lévi-Strauss’ (1972) original heuristic of the *bricoleur*, where a collective pool

of resources is funnelled through an individual. Individual strategies for navigating public resource bureaucracy have also been observed in other ethnographies (cf. Tuckett, 2018; Coutin, 2025), who have the potential to both challenge and reproduce existing inequalities. Important here, however, is that the figure of the individual that “goes it alone” is a morally ambiguous one. Nadia’s (un)willingness to engage with advice encounters co-constructively is indexical of broader, moral evaluations about advice and entitlement to public resources. In austere contexts like the UK, the very act of doing talk together has its own linguistic ideology whose value is open to being contested.

eVisas: Andrii and Halyna

In March 2024, as part of a move to fully digitise its immigration system, the UK Government asked approximately 4 million holders of Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) to transition to an eVisa by the end of the year (Home office, 2026). BRPs would not be renewed beyond their expiry date of 31 December 2024; holders would not lose their immigration status, but would need an eVisa to prove it in order to work, rent, study, access benefits, and travel to-and-from the UK. This move also implicated the Home Office with *processing* all eVisa applications within the same timeframe – something that was met with scepticism by those working with the UK’s immigration regime. How could 4 million BRP holders be adequately notified, apply and processed in such a short amount of time? There was also particular concern for elderly and vulnerable groups, who may not be fully aware of the process and/or lack the (digital) literacy skills to apply on their own (Kennedy, 2024; Ozkul and Godin, 2025).

The transition did, in fact, face numerous delays and extensions. In November 2024, the Home Office conceded to allowing expired BRPs to be used for travel until early-2025. At the time of writing, there are still 200,000 people who are yet to transition to an eVisa (Home Office, 2026). Throughout the digitisation process, migrant advice services have been at the forefront of supporting migrants with applying for eVisas and troubleshooting. The work of larger organisations (Migrant Help, Citizens Advice) benefitted from partial financial support from the Home Office. Local actors like Welcome Ways, however,

supported migrants without this funding, and often despite technical and bureaucratic incompetencies within the Home Office. The case of Andrii and Halyna, an older Ukrainian couple who had been living in the UK for ten years, comes at a particularly busy period in the winter of 2024, when the initial deadline for eVisas was fast-approaching. Andrii, Halyna, myself and others at the table work together, pooling our linguistic and cultural repertoires toward a meaningful solution; a framing which works initially, but is later challenged by the inconsistencies with processing their applications and the emotional charge that comes with it.

Fieldnotes [20/11/2025]

After a successful English Conversation Practice, we are joined at the table by Andrii and Halyna, an older Ukrainian couple, who have come for help applying for their eVisas. Camille is busy helping three new faces to the conversation practice sign-up for formal ESOL classes, so I offer to help Andrii and Halyna with their eVisas. Halyna explains that they tried to complete the applications themselves, using their phones, at home but struggled with the biometric and face scans. This seems to be a common speedbump for people applying; despite become quite seasoned at helping with eVisa applications at this point, it's still taken countless attempts for myself and Camille to appease the biometric scans in past cases. Halyna adds that, hand covered over her face in shame, in so many unsuccessful attempts, they have also locked themselves out of the eVisa app on their phones. The experience of being locked out - seemingly banned - from her application without deliberately doing anything wrong clearly caused her a lot of stress.

So, using my own laptop, which is not only quicker than using Andrii and Halyna's phones but avoids the awkwardness of tampering with them out of view, I take them through their applications one by one. The process is tedious and repetitive: multiple verification codes sent between my laptop to their phones, only to be read back to me again; leading them around the library in an attempt to find a suitable photo background (Halyna found this particularly difficult because she used a walking frame); and multiple tries at the biometric and face scans. Both were happy to comply with my instructions, but their limited English made it difficult to explain *why* we had to do each task over and over again. Battling the technology added significant time to the applications; with two applications,

we were done in about 45mins. After a collective sigh of relief and an enthusiastic handshake from Andrii, I assured them that they could come back next week if they had any more issues.

Fieldnotes [27/11/2024]

Camille is not in today, so it's up to me to head up the English Conversation Practice and advice hour. Fortunately, I am joined by regular visiting advisers Julia and Susan from Norfolk's People from Abroad Team (PfAT). They have been absent for the past couple of weeks but are here today with their own business coordinating the arrival of a new Afghan family to Great Yarmouth. They have been absent for the past few weeks, but I'm extremely grateful that they're here today, more so after the session is over. Andrii and Halyna return, explaining that the former's eVisa is showing some strange inconsistencies. For one, Andrii's surname is spelt slightly wrong: an extra "a" at the end. More pressingly, however, is that the picture we took of him last week has been replaced with that of a young Indian man. Alarmed and worried that Andrii has somehow been hacked, I pull in one of the PfAT advisers, Julia, for help.

After briefing her on the issue, Julia spends some time navigating the Home Office website or a number to call. When she finally does ("why can't we just get a telephone number? Ah, here we are-" [Fieldnotes 27/11/24]), the tone of the call is framed by both the potential seriousness and immediate absurdity of Andrii's issue. After explaining the problem and being put on hold to some bitty hip-hop that only adds to the dissonance, the Home Office representative redirects us to another line – one that was not available to us at first – and an email address. Frustrated by these options, Julia tries them anyway. The new line offers nothing but the same email address, so we opt for the latter. Andrii must now wait up to 10-days for a response from the Home Office – a wait completely unbecoming the severity of his issue. I quick search also reveals that other experiences of eVisa applications being processed with the wrong information, suggesting technical incompetence on behalf of whatever outsourced party is in charge of the processing.

The prospect of no clear solution without waiting takes Halyna close to tears. She discloses that her and Andrii need to travel to Slovakia soon for a "dentists" appointment

(although we think this is a mistranslation for doctor's appointment; she has a history of specialist operations). She is deeply worried that this means they will not be able to travel. Consulting with one another, myself, Julia and a returning Susan (who's phone calls to the arriving Afghan family have backgrounded our own conversations) advise that changes in the eVisa deadline means they will be able to travel with an expired BRP card. In this moment, motivated to find a solution, Halyna and Andrii suggest speaking with the neighbouring Citizens Advice for help. Julia and Susan are quick to shut this down. Involving anyone else now would cause "all kinds of chaos":

Julia: It's going to cause all sorts of chaos ... So just wait for the Home Office to contact you first. Don't go to Citizens Advice.

Halyna: No, no, no.

Julia: No, no, no. Because we've submitted the request for the Home Office to investigate. And if anybody else submits a request, it will confuse the Home Office, and they are confused enough already ... So, we need, it's going to be hard, but we need to sit tight and wait for the Home Office to reply.

This coincides with our attempt to console with Halyna, clarifying who is to blame and why this is happening:

Julia: Halyna, I'm so sorry. I wish I could be able to ... I wish I could be able to ... The Home Office is very big and there's lots of departments. And they don't talk to each other. And they deal with thousands and thousands and thousands of people ... [Julia turns to me] I wish the Home Office understood the ramifications of their cockups; I really do.

Andrii and Halyna are encouraged to come back next week if they receive an update from the Home Office. Andrii, cutting through the sombre tone, offers another enthusiastic handshake, thanks us for our help, and leaves with Halyna. Emotionally exhausted, wishing we could have done more, and an hour after Welcome Ways was supposed to end, I begin to write today's report for Camille to read next week.

Involving Everyone: Advice encounters as sites of linguistic *bricolage*

No one knows *all* of a language. Blommaert (2010), writing on the collaborative nature of linguistic encounters, argues that individuals only ever possess partial competence,

knowing some of a language but not all, being familiar with registers within a language that relate to specific identities but not others. This is particularly evident, he argues, within settings of linguistic and cultural super-diversity, such as within contemporary migrant communities within which exists a variety of nationalities, languages, socio-economic statuses, and generations. In these settings, navigating life through talk is done through truncated repertoires, made up of ‘... highly specific “bits” of language and literacy varieties ... that reflects the fragmented and highly diverse life-trajectories and environments of such people’ (2010:8). Partial competence is not a shortcoming; it is merely a reflection of our biographical and social realities. But it does point to the fact that, when faced with difficult encounters, language work is collaborative. People pool their individual linguistic and cultural repertoires to translate or assist in communication.

Migrant advice encounters, like the ones between Andrii and Halyna, I argue, represent such a setting, where collaborative language work happens. Reflecting on the vignette above, this section presents migrant-advice encounters as potential sites of linguistic *bricolage*, where those involved combine their linguistic and cultural repertoires to co-construct meaningful advice and navigating access to public resources. As a result of the austere conditions within which contemporary landscapes of migrant-advice have emerged, I argue this kind of collaborative engagement is not only significant for clients asking for advice, but also for advice actors giving it. I consider how engagement with the repertoires of everyone at the table, including friends and family, and even gatekeepers of public resources themselves, are important in constructing meaningful advice encounters. It is through collaborative interaction, interacting *with* public resource bureaucracy rather than allowing to act-upon (Tuckett, 2018:58), and dialogical engagement between clients, advisers and bureaucratic processes (Cabot, 2014:113-114) that registers of entitlement and deservingness can be deployed for those in need of help.

For Andrii and Halyna, as well as many other visitors to Welcome Ways who considered themselves to have a less-than-ideal level of communicative competence in English, their collaborative work, to construct what they considered an “acceptable” level of English, to ask for advice in the first place cannot be ignored. Welcome Ways provided advice exclusively in English and, when no external means of translation were available

(when, say, a visiting adviser happened to speak multiple languages), relied on the use of translation apps like Google Translate to bridge the gap. Although the use of these apps was received with little complaint, and sometimes instigated, by clients, lengthy encounters were clunky and wrought with technical issues. Throughout our interactions with Andrii and Halyna, however, they worked together, combining their individual repertoires of English in order to narrate their struggles with their eVisa applications. This kind of collaborative work, at the level of “big” language (i.e., “English”, as opposed to “Ukrainian”), is reminiscent of the examples originally given by Blommaert (2010) when discussing “truncated speech” – the conceptual predecessor to linguistic *bricolage* here. The repertoires of migrant communities, he argues, are developed through their social-biographical realities. The situational varieties of a language people have access to are a reflection of one is exposed to and engages with language in everyday life. So, in the case of a Ukrainian couple living in migrant-populated neighbourhoods of Great Yarmouth, their English repertoires may reflect that which they have learnt in formal ESOL classes, but also places where English is not the lingua franca: Portuguese-owned shops and cafes, internationally-run money transfer shops, local churches run by Greek and Nigerian pastors, and so on. These realities, Blommaert (2010:106) argues, appear “fragmented” or “incomplete”, but when talk is taken as a collaborative practice, they have the potential to create diversely multilingual repertoires that reflect equally diverse landscapes.

Calling upon family and friends to assist in difficult communicative tasks was also present in other advice encounters at Welcome Ways. Elena, a Romanian woman who visited Welcome Ways on multiple occasions for help acquiring basic goods (sanitary products, white goods, food vouchers), regularly visited alongside her son, Stefan. Alone, Elena was able to describe to us the kinds of goods she needed, however, to understand the details of *why* she needed them, she called on Stefan to fill in the gaps. Similarly, those who chose to stay after Welcome Ways’ free English Conversational Practice sessions before advising began would often jump in to help clients, many of whom were classmates or friends, when the latter was struggling to explain in English. The role of family and friends accompanying clients to advice encounters as “language brokers” (Lindquist, 2015) is well documented in ethnographic literature. Beyond contributing

their own linguistic repertoires to co-construct means of asking for and understanding advice, their presence also provides clients with important moral support, confirmation, and a sense of “voice” (Buck and Smith, 2014; Ghandchi, 2022). There is, of course, an additional affective layer to navigating advice encounters as a couple. Co-construction like that of Andrii and Halyna is a means of what Odasso (2021) describes as ‘wielding ... intimacy to stay legal’, that is a strategic move to navigate everyday bureaucracy, but also inevitably involves expressions of joint agency and emotional connection. The role of affect in advice encounters is discussed later.

Engagement with advice encounters as sites of linguistic *bricolage* are, however, perhaps reflected more so in the specific registers of communication within a language required to ask for advice and navigate public resource bureaucracies. Co-construction, I argue, is not just about engaging with a complete “English” in the abstract, but rather about engaging with a specific set of registers or narratives of English that are valued in advice settings and by the assemblage of gatekeepers in-charge of public resource bureaucracies. They are the ways of asking for advice, giving advice, and communicating with bureaucracy who’s form and meanings that index the “entitlement” or “deservingness” of migrants dependent on public resources. How these repertoires are evaluated and who has access to them is unevenly distributed – a point analysed more in the following section. Here, however, this means that no one person involved in advice encounters has a “complete” repertoire to do what is required of them on their own. Advice encounters, then, emerge as sites where the incomplete-ness of participants’ linguistic and cultural repertoires – that is, migrant-clients and advisers *and* gatekeepers - are brought to the forefront. By engaging with advice encounters as sites of linguistic *bricolage*, piecing together individual repertoires for a more complete picture, is what makes meaningful advice possible.

The emergence of contemporary landscape of advice, as Koch and James (2022), argue, is a direct response to austere (re)configurations of governance, where the role of governing public resources has been scattered (Clarke and Newman, XXXX) among multiple state, private and third-party actors, each with their own intersecting registers of entitlement. Government agencies like the Home Office, previously adopting a paternal relationship, and later a hostile scepticism toward, incoming citizens, have allowed the

outsourcing of processing to private organisations – allowing registers of entitlement indexed by language of economic value and “good business decisions” to take the lead (Mayblin, 2019; Goodfellow, 2019). Unable to navigate these complex bureaucracies on their own, those dependent on public resources for social survival seek the help of advice actors, to mediate, negotiate on their behalf, and (sometimes literally) translate between clients and gatekeepers (ibid.). This was common among visitors to Welcome Ways, who often explained that they had tried to speak with local authorities, the Home Office, employers, landlords, etc. themselves first, before experiencing rejection or uncertainty of outcome, only to be recommended to us by friends or family. Indeed, Andrii and Halyna only visited Welcome Ways after trying and being unable to negotiate setting up an eVisa themselves. In this case, it was clear that, while they were intimately familiar with the systematisation of their immigration status – able to read off their BRP numbers and other immigration details off by heart – what they lacked was the digital registers to navigate the online application process. Digital literacy, particularly among older applicants, has been cited as one of the wider barriers to the eVisa application scheme (Ozkul and Godin, 2025:44). Applicants were required to have an internet connection, be familiar with the website that displayed their immigration status, and a separate application on their phones to be able to set-up an eVisa. Navigating multiple devices at once for a system in which ‘minor problems could become major obstacles’ (ibid.), like failing the biometric scans and locking yourself out, proved daunting for many applicants. The registers required of migrants to create an eVisa, too, much like physical documents, demanded proficiency in classical “bureaucratese”. As Pigg, Erikson and Inglis (2018:167-168) have pointed out, although these registers may appear to be a ‘mundane feature of everyday life’, in situations of verification like that of immigration status, being able to translate one’s biographical reality into the technical, disembodied language of documentation becomes a matter of serious ‘judgement and assessment [that] imply relations, values and structures’.

Andrii and Halyna’s case also demonstrates, however, that the need to engage with advice encounters collaboratively is not restricted to migrant-clients, to “those in need” of advice. Advisers too, are subject to partial competence. Despite adopting a traditional identity of the “expert”, “street-level” adviser – occupying an intermediary space,

between clients on the ground and enough proximity to public resource bureaucracy to “get things done” (Koch and James, 2022) – any formal training at Welcome Ways was a patchwork accumulation of knowledge acquired from our own biographical histories and the experiences we acquired on the job. Camille, our lead and only paid adviser, for example, did so alongside her full-time job as an ESOL teacher. This afforded her knowledge that made her particularly adept at helping clients navigate applications to schooling at the local college and library (both of which she had taught in herself), scheduling exams, and providing formal entry-level-assessments. Migrating to the UK herself 20-years ago, she further drew on her own personal experiences to assist in her work at Welcome Ways:

‘**C:** ... my role is to support migrants with their everyday life queries. So, it can go from applying for an eVisa, to referrals on various courses: from ESOL, to IT, to cooking courses. It can also be just family support or employment support. Housing support, immigration support, I would say that comes more from the professionals than me – so I would refer them to the professionals ... a big part of my role is to signpost to other organisations and professionals.’ [Interview with Camille, 22/01/25]

My own work in Andrii and Halyna’s case, too, involved calling on the help of a more traditional immigration “expert” in the form of Julia (and later, Susan). While I had received training and was familiar with the digital bureaucracy of applying for and monitoring the status of eVisa cases, I was not, unlike my visiting colleagues, experienced with how to talk to the Home Office directly. The at times makeshift arrangement of advisers available to clients at Welcome Ways points to the broader landscape of contemporary migrant advice in the UK and other austere contexts, described by Hall (2021:47) as part of a much larger ‘... quotidian architecture of support’. It is an architecture that includes teachers, individual community brokers seasoned with everyday bureaucracies, like Camille, and an expansive volunteer force, which I was a part during fieldwork; but it also includes libraries, like where Welcome Ways operated from, churches and mosques, local shops, neighbours, arts and cultural groups and others. The primary function of these street-level actors might not be advice, but they are nevertheless burdened with the responsibility in an attempt to “fill in the gaps” left by austerity (Hall, 2021; Benwell, Hopkins and Finlay,

2023). As a consequence of this new assemblage of street-level actors, who are increasingly asked to do “more with less”, advice actors may find themselves engaged in acts of advice outside of their particular technical expertise (Darling, 2022:139). Alternatively, they may start with encounters within their expertise but with quickly become part of wider “problem clusters” (Genn, 1999) that implicate knowledge beyond their own. In this sense, in-depth knowledge of specific registers is less important than knowing how to be flexible and work with others - who to talk to, who to call on to do the talking for you, and how to piece together meaningful advice from multiple sources of expertise.

Meaningful advice, then, is not delivered unilaterally but emerges through encounters between migrant-clients, advisers and gatekeepers of public resources. As Cabot (2014) and others (cf. James, 2014; Tuckett, 2018) have also argued, the advice given and narratives produced in these interactions is made possible through the linguistic contributions of both advisers and their clients. On the one hand, clients are reliant on the repertoires of advisers to navigate bureaucratic registers of entitlement: of eligibility assessments, form-filling, digital bureaucracies, etc. On the other hand, these are only made possible through the narrative contributions of clients, whose ability to provide coherent but emotionally credible accounts of their struggles bridges the necessary gap between policy and practice (Cabot, 2014:83-109). Bridging the gap between policy and practice was similarly aided by contributions of bystanders at the table, other clients or participants in the earlier English-speaking practice who chose to stay around during the advice sessions. Lina, a Lithuanian woman and regular at Welcome Ways, was also present at the table for our encounter with Andrii and Halyna. During the long, frustrating waits whilst Julia was navigating the Home Office’s helplines, I was left alone with Andrii and Halyna to explain what was going on and why. Unable to do so on my own, Lina jumped in to recount her own experiences with everyday bureaucracy:

L: So, I have help from somebody also ... Like for insurance for my car, it’s very expensive! Say you don’t have a garage and sometime later- No not sometime, *one time* later. One time, I don’t know what happened. I got a penalty because they did not tell me everything. It was very expensive. “Why is it expensive”, I asked, £250 per month! But they asked “Do you have a garage?” No, I said.

(Lina gestures with her hands) Penalty. And afterwards, somebody helped me, a girl helped, because I didn't speak very good English. It's hard.

I ask more about the person who helped Lina with her car insurance. Was it a friend?

L: Friend? Ummm, no from here (points toward the neighbouring Citizens Advice). But I was told to speak [with them] by my friend. Look, this is where we meet [sic] (Lina shows me a picture of herself and her friend on the beach of Great Yarmouth) [Fieldnotes, 22/11/24]

Lina's contribution provided a much-needed respite for those at the table. Moreso, though, her story of encountering the opaque and ineligible decisions of her car insurer presented a means of understanding Andrii and Halyna's current situation in a way that I could not. Specifically, her injection provided what Tuckett (2018:58) has analysed as a means of positioning migrants as interacting *with* rather than be acted on by immigration bureaucracy. By interacting with, she argues, migrants are able to better make sense of and navigate the uncertainty and ambiguities of immigration bureaucracy. Although not dealing with immigration bureaucracy but rather that of private car insurance, Lina's story reframes the characterisation of the ambiguous and unintelligible bureaucratic Other. Ambiguity and unintelligibly is not a result of bureaucracies being above the understanding of those dependent on them, rather, it is the result of deliberate and exclusionary strategy. And a linguistic strategy at that: dependents are told some things and not others, and are told so in a way that deliberately indexes uncertainty (Weiss, 2016) Lina's pulling down of bureaucratic Others to be at the same, interactional level, as her (literally *interacting* with, talking to) recurs later at the end of our encounter, when Julia stresses that "The Home Office is very big and there's lots of departments. And they don't talk to each other. And they deal with thousands and thousands and thousands of people" [Fieldnotes, 22/11/24]. Taken together, these interactions show that advice is not simply a matter of transmitting institutional knowledge, but a collaborative, linguistically mediated practice in which meaning, credibility, and strategy are co-produced, through the contributions of those who might otherwise be bystanders to the advice encounter proper.

In this section, I have argued that advice encounters present the potential to be sites of linguistic *bricolage*. No one at the table – advisers, clients, bystanders, gatekeepers of public resources – has a “complete” repertoire of linguistic and cultural knowledge to navigate access to public resources themselves. Advice encounters, subsequently, are spaces within which participants can combine their repertoires to co-construct meaningful advice. I have demonstrated this through the example of Andrii and Halyna and their interactions with Welcome Ways as we help them with their eVisa applications. However, it is also clear from this case that advice encounters are not neutral spaces. Sites of linguistic *bricolage* are uneven: which repertoires are valued, who has access to them, and, ultimately, how much one is allowed to engage in the co-construction of advice, are stratified along existing inequalities of language and power. In the next section, I look at Andrii and Halyna’s case more critically.

Questions:

- Is the argument that advice encounters are sites of linguistic *bricolage* clear, and does it align with the ethnographic data presented?
- Does the section adequately set-up looking at the uneven distribution of language and power in subsequent sections, or would it benefit from integrating the two?
- Does the front-loading of ethnographic data (i.e., starting with the whole vignettes and referring back) work, or does it affect ease of reading?

Chapter Outline

Introduction

eVisas: Andrii and Halyna, vignette (shared)

- **Involving everyone: Advice encounters as sites of linguistic *bricolage*** – elaborates on the ways in which advice encounters operate as sites of linguistic *bricolage*, pieced together from the repertoires of clients, advisers and gatekeepers (shared)
- **[no title]** – explores the unevenness of these sites, in which repertoires are valued and who has access to them
- **[no title]** – explores the role of affect, the emotional charge of navigating public resource bureaucracy, on engagement with linguistic *bricolage*

Energy bills, housing and debt: Nadia, vignette

- **[no title]** – explores how other migrants chose to “go it alone” and reject advice encounters as sites of linguistic *bricolage*