



DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA I DE GERMANÍSTICA

**Linguistic Capital and Housing Precarity: A
Sociolinguistic Study of Non-EU Students Navigating
the Dublin Rental Market**

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Statement of Intellectual Honesty

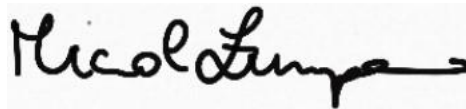
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Micol Zumpano', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the social and institutional processes that shape access to housing for non-EU students in Dublin's rental market. It argues that housing access is structured primarily by legal status, institutional expectations, and the conditions created by Ireland's housing crisis, rather than by financial capability alone. Within this context, English language proficiency is argued to function not merely as a neutral communicative resource but as a sociolinguistic proxy through which broader mechanisms of gatekeeping and tenant selection are enacted. The study shows how these processes contribute to the construction of an enregistered "ideal tenant", a figure rooted in documentary compliance, unrestricted employment, and legal permanence. Drawing on an interpretivist qualitative framework grounded in institutional ethnography, the study combines semi-structured interviews with fifteen non-EU students holding a Stamp 2 permission and one local real estate professional, with digital platform analysis, field observations, and policy review. The findings suggest that gatekeeping occurs before any substantive assessment of applicant's financial circumstances, emerging during first-contact interactions through written and spoken communication. These interactional processes contribute to a two-stage pattern of exclusion: first, systematic barriers to formal rental market, where institutional requirements remain structurally inaccessible to many Stamp 2 students; and second, subsequent displacement into informal housing arrangements characterised by overcrowding, rental scams, and arbitrary evictions.

Keywords: Linguistic capital, housing precarity, profiling, enregisterment, Stamp 2 permission, Dublin rental market, institutional ethnography.

1 Introduction: Background and Rationale of the Study

Dublin's rental market is currently defined by a deep and prolonged structural crisis, driven by a chronic shortage of housing and sustained demand from a rapidly growing population, including international students. For non-EU students arriving in Ireland to study English, this crisis is further intensified by the constraints of the Stamp 2 permission, a legal status that limits access to employment and reduce financial security. As a result, many are required to navigate one of Europe's most competitive rental markets without the institutional safeguards available to domestic or EU students. This precarious situation emerges from the intersection of three structural conditions: the severe shortage in Irish housing supply, Ireland's status as a global hub for adult English Language Education (ELE), and the regulatory constraints of the Stamp 2 student permission. Together, these factors create conditions in which access to housing becomes particularly unequal for non-EU students. Despite these challenges, thousands of non-EU students continue to choose Ireland each year as a destination for English language immersion. Understanding why students undertake this migration despite such structural constraints is therefore essential to contextualising the housing experiences examined in this study.

1.1 The Political Economy of English and the Choice of Immersion

To understand contemporary patterns of international language migration, it is necessary to examine why students choose costly transnational programmes over local learning opportunities. Earlier applied linguistics largely explained this decision through Gardner and Lambert's (1972) distinction between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. While the former emphasises the desire to connect and assimilate into a new community, the latter frames language learning as a means of achieving educational, professional, and economic goals.

Contemporary sociolinguistic scholarship reconceptualises transnational migration through the lens of globalization, political economy, and linguistic capitalism (Heller, 2010). The decision to study abroad is therefore seen as a resource-heavy strategy aimed at converting linguistic capital into socioeconomic advancement and transnational mobility (Piller, 2016). Within this framework, English is understood as a commodified and mobile resource students seek to accumulate in the form of linguistic capital. Students invest in language acquisition with the expectation that such investment will lead to increased fluency, employability, geographical and institutional mobility (Bourdieu, 1991).

While English functions as a globally valued form of linguistic capital, students must decide where this capital can be acquired most effectively. Their destination is shaped not only by educational aspirations but also by the opportunities and constraints created by national immigration regimes and education markets. The following subsection examines why Ireland, and Dublin in particular, has emerged as a major destination within the global English Language Education (ELE) market.

1.2 Ireland in the Global English Language Market

The global marketplace of English Language Education (ELE) is a competitive site historically dominated by countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Yet, as these countries implement stricter student visa policies, enrolment limits, and higher fees, Ireland and Malta have experienced a substantial increase in new arrivals (Bonard Education, 2025).

Market research indicates that Ireland's popularity appears to be driven by two principal factors: more affordable tuition fees that are relatively lower than its competitors, and a more accessible regulatory system that allows students to enter the local workforce (Bonard Education, 2025; Gutema et al., 2024).

The scale of Ireland's English Language Education (ELE) sector is remarkable for its international adult language-learning market. In 2024 alone, the sector accommodated 128,761 international students, generating over €792 million for the Irish economy (English Education Ireland, 2024) and over 60,402 international students in the first half of 2025 alone (English Education Ireland, 2025).

Geographically, Dublin serves as the principal hub of this industry, concentrating the majority of accredited language schools and attracting a massive number of non-EU students – most notably from Latin American countries such as Brazil and Mexico – who enrol in extended, months-long courses (English Education Ireland, 2024, 2025). While Dublin has become a leading destination within the global English Language Education market, students' experiences extend beyond educational opportunities. Upon arrival, they must navigate a housing system characterised by persistent structural shortages and increasing market pressures. The following subsection examines the housing context within which these students pursue their educational trajectories.

1.3 The Field: Housing Precarity and Market Imperfection

The housing environment encountered by non-EU students upon arrival in Dublin is characterised by severe, long-standing structural undersupply rather than mere competitiveness. This structural crisis can be traced back to the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent collapse of the residential construction sector. Since then, government policies have prioritised private sector solutions over the development of public housing (Kitchin et al., 2015; Lima, 2018; Waldron, 2023).

The consequences of this neoliberal policy are mapped clearly in the Rent Index published by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), which charts relentless quarter-to-quarter increases and

inflation pressure manifesting more brutally within the Dublin metropolitan area, where average new rents for an apartment sit at €2,307 per month (Residential Tenancies Board & Economic and Social Research Institute, 2026). Recent empirical evidence provides insight into the vulnerabilities this scarcity inflicts upon international students. A survey of over 500 students in 2025 – mostly from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) – revealed that more than one-third were living without any written lease agreement and a notable minority had fallen victim to rental scams, with most of these crimes remaining unreported to authorities (Hearne & Domingues Pereira, 2025).

The same study revealed that all reported cases in which students were offered housing in exchange for sexual acts involved non-native English speakers. While existing socio-economic research in Ireland has established patterns of discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, or non-Irish names (Grotti et al., 2018; Gusciute et al., 2022), this study brings a sociolinguistic perspective; examining the specific interactional mechanisms through which English proficiency itself comes to function as a sorting criterion at the point of first contact. Yet, market conditions represent only part of the picture. Students' housing experiences are also shaped by the institutional conditions associated with their legal status. The following subsection examines the legal and institutional framework governing non-EU students in Ireland.

1.4 Institutional Precarity: Legal Status and Institutional Barriers

Compounding the challenges associated with Dublin's hyper-competitive housing market, international students face a secondary mechanism of state-enforced precarity: the Stamp 2 permission. Unlike an entry visa, which authorises travel to Ireland, the Stamp 2 permission is an immigration permission granted upon registration with the Irish Immigration authorities. It authorises full-time study at an approved educational institution and permits residence in the State for the duration of the student's course,

subject to a maximum of seven years (Department of Justice, 2026b). For English language tracks, this period is capped via a strict limit of three consecutive 25-week programs. To legally extend their stay beyond these language cycles, non-EU nationals are required to enrol in higher-level academic programs listed on the Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP; Department of Justice, 2026a). Furthermore, throughout the entire duration of their stay, these students must maintain a classroom attendance rate of at least 85% and continuously demonstrate academic improvement. Crucially, they are legally permitted to engage in casual employment for a maximum of 20 hours a week during the school term, which increases to 40 hours a week during standardised summer and winter holiday periods.

However, actualising these limited employment rights is strictly contingent upon navigating a structural paradox immediately upon arrival. Under Irish immigration regulations, these students must provide a verifiable proof of local address to register their stay and obtain their physical Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card. This requirement creates a bureaucratic loop, as proof of address is also strictly mandatory to acquire a Personal Public Service Number (PPSN), which is a mandatory tax identifier required to secure legal employment (Citizens Information, 2026). Consequently, non-EU students are forced into an immediate, high-stakes race to secure formal tenancy within an urban landscape defined by an acute housing crisis (the socio-economic dimensions of which are outlined in Subsection 1.3).

Without an address, students cannot obtain a PPSN and are automatically subject to an “Emergency Tax” regime, which aggressively taxes their earnings at the higher rate of 40% alongside a flat 8% Universal Social Charge (USC) from week five onwards (Revenue, 2026). This state-enforced financial cycle may substantially limit their ability to compete in the rental market, particularly upon initial arrival.

Additionally, this lack of address restricts basic daily practices, as residential address is required to open local bank accounts, access internet contracts or purchase contract SIM cards. In addition, Stamp 2 permission holders are not eligible for public services, state benefits, or social housing. Finally, their duration of stay in Ireland is not reckonable toward the residency requirements needed to apply for naturalisation or citizenship (Department of Justice, 2026b).

Consequently, the Stamp 2 permission regime contributed to a condition of structural precarity by requiring strict regulatory adherence and financial independence while simultaneously restricting access to employment opportunities, public services, and long-term residency pathways. Against this backdrop, the present study explores the experiences of non-EU students in Dublin's rental market.

1.5 Aim of the Study and Research Questions

Given the intersection of severe housing shortage, immigration rules and the commercialisation of English Language Education (ELE), this study aims to explore the social and institutional processes that shape access to Dublin's rental market for non-EU international students. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which English language proficiency may function as a sociolinguistic resource through which broader mechanisms of gatekeeping, profiling, and institutional selection are enacted.

Drawing on a sociolinguistic perspective, the study examines the role of spoken and written language within housing interactions, how gatekeepers construct expectations of prospective tenants, and how non-EU students navigate these institutional processes while seeking accommodation within Dublin's hyper-competitive housing market. To address this objective, the study is guided by the following research questions:

Main research question:

What social and institutional processes shape access to housing in Dublin's rental market for non-EU students, and how does English language proficiency function within these processes?

Sub-questions:

1. How do housing gatekeepers construct the profile of the "ideal tenant", and how are linguistic expectations integrated with structural requirements to shape access to housing?
2. How do non-EU students experience and navigate these institutional processes, and what communicative and social strategies do they employ to overcome barriers to formal tenancy?
3. In what ways does exclusion from the formal market displace non-EU students into informal housing networks, and what socio-economic vulnerabilities arise within these informal housing arrangements?

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section reviews the scholarly literature that informs the present study and establishes the theoretical ground through which the empirical data will be analysed. Navigating access to accommodation within Dublin’s rental market involves structural processes that extend far beyond financial eligibility. Securing housing is shaped by overlapping hierarchies of legal status, linguistic competence, racial and social categorisation. Consequently, unpacking such mechanisms requires an analytical framework that situates everyday linguistic practices within broader social, political and economic structures.

To achieve this, the theoretical narrative is organised sequentially around five interrelated bodies of scholarship, mirroring the structural trajectory of non-EU student applicants. First, research on the political economy of mobility and globalisation illustrates a framework for understanding how non-EU students are positioned within global hierarchies of mobility, capital and legal status prior to their arrival in Ireland, demonstrating how linguistic assets are accumulated globally but unequal in their geographical returns. Second, Bourdieu’s (1991) framework of field, capital and symbolic power – combined with Lewin’s (1947) gatekeeping foundations and Roberts’ (2013) concept of institutional “linguistic penalty” – conceptualises the rental market as a competitive social space where access to resources is mediated by non-financial forms of capital. Third, scholarship on language ideology, enregisterment and indexicality explains how these market asymmetries operate interactionally, this body of research unpacks how specific linguistic features acquire social meaning and how a socially constructed persona of the “ideal tenant” is naturalised as a form of common-sense legitimacy. Fourth, the framework of profiling allows us to observe how abstract ideologies manifest as concrete practices of selection and exclusion, particularly during

initial point of contact between applicants and gatekeepers. Finally, research on agency and resistance provides a lens on how marginalised applicants actively negotiate, perform, and adapt their identity in response to these systemic barriers, revealing how their resistance strategies often inadvertently displace them into precarious, informal housing markets.

Collectively, these frameworks suggest that language should not be understood solely as a communicative resource. Rather, within a hyper-scarce infrastructure of Dublin's housing sector, linguistic practices may function as a primary socio-legal index through which systemic inequalities surface and become visible and dictate institutional outcomes.

2.1 The Political Economy of Mobility, Globalisation and Linguistic Capital

Contemporary mobility is closely intertwined with broader processes of globalisation, such as the commercialisation of international higher education, the expansion of transnational labour markets, and the emergence of global linguistic capitalism (Heller, 2010). Together, these developments have intensified the international circulation of people, goods and knowledge, creating what Blommaert (2010) and Sheller and Urry (2006) describe as new landscapes of opportunity, within which physical mobility may be firmly connected to social advancement. However, while mobility itself may constitute a form of capital, access to mobility is unequally distributed and rewarded. As Urry (2007) argues, the ability to cross borders is dictated by legal, economic and social resources, meaning that physical mobility does not guarantee access to social mobility.

This tension is particularly relevant in the context of international language education. From a neoliberal perspective, individuals are encouraged to self-invest in forms of human capital. Within this framework, English language proficiency is often portrayed as a key prerequisite for global professional and institutional participation

(Heller, 2010; Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Lippi-Green, 2012; Allan, 2013; Piller, 2016). Yet, scholars have questioned whether such investment results in equal return for all individuals. While English is often framed as a pathway to opportunities, Martín Rojo and Del Percio (2019) argue that the ideological logic associated with linguistic investments is highly unequal and often hidden behind discourses of individual responsibility.

Although students may accumulate linguistic, educational and economic resources before migrating, the value of such assets is not fixed and may be subject to local reassessment. This dynamic is reflected in the experiences of the non-EU students in this study: despite arriving with advanced academic degrees, professional credentials, and functional language skills from their home countries, their existing capital undergoes substantial institutional devaluation upon entering Dublin's housing market. Blommaert (2003) theorises this dynamic through the concept of scales, stating that linguistic and cultural resources derive their value from the local and institutional contexts in which they are evaluated. This lens helps explain why migration does not only involve geographical movement but also movement across systems of valuation.

Bourdieu's (1991) framework on social, linguistic and cultural capital provides a particularly useful lens through which to understand these processes. For the scholar, linguistic capital is conceptualised not merely as a neutral communicative resource but also as a symbolic good whose value is theorised as being determined by its alignment with the dominant norms of the social field in which it circulates. In the context of this study, housing access is mediated by the intersection of these capitals: an applicant's cultural capital (such as institutional credentials) and social capital (such as local networks) must be validated through dominant linguistic performances to achieve legitimacy. Consequently, access to opportunities may depend not only on the resources

an individual possesses but also on whether these resources are recognised as legitimate by institutional authorities.

This tension is particularly evident in contexts of migration. Moyer (2018) highlights how migrants frequently encounter a structural mismatch between the economic and linguistic investments that migrants make prior to arrival and the misrecognition they face in the host country — a gap that this study seeks to examine empirically within the specific context of the Dublin housing market.

2.2 The Rental Market as a Field: Gatekeeping, Capital and Structural Precarity

The Dublin private housing market provides the empirical field where broader inequalities associated with mobility, legal status and access to resources manifest and are locally enacted. Ireland has faced a severe and sustained housing crisis, documented by Grotti et al. (2018) and Russell et al. (2021), characterised by an acute housing supply deficit, particularly in the Dublin metropolitan area. Analytically, this structural context is crucial, as scarcity does not simply translate into competition; it may also reinforce power asymmetries by increasing the discretionary authority of those who control access to housing.

To understand this dynamic, the study draws on Lewin's (1947) foundational framework on gatekeeping, which defines gatekeepers as individuals or institutions exercising discretionary powers over the flow of scarce resources. In Dublin's rental market, property owners and agents act as primary gatekeepers regulating access to housing, a resource that is both essential and scarce. While traditional models conceptualise this control as primarily administrative, critical sociolinguistics reconceptualises these interactions as asymmetrical gatekeeping encounters through which social inequalities are actively reproduced, as gatekeepers evaluate candidates

against hidden institutional rules and highly ritualised communicative expectations (Roberts, 2013). Notably, these exclusionary decisions often precede any point of contact and are based on requirements that remain unacknowledged. As a consequence, gatekeeping is used in this study not simply as a metaphor but as the analytical framework through which to examine how selection and exclusion may function in housing encounters.

While Lewin's (1947) and Roberts' (2013) frameworks explain who controls access to resources, Bourdieu's (1991) framework on field and capital offers a complementary lens for understanding the criteria through which applicants are evaluated. According to the scholar, a social field is a structured space governed by its own rules, hierarchies, and forms of legitimacy. The housing market may be conceptualised as such a field where access to accommodation is not only governed by economic resources but also on the recognition of social, cultural and symbolic forms of capital.

Grounded in this perspective, the evaluation of a prospective tenant may involve considerations beyond formal financial criteria. From a neoliberal market perspective, property owners and agents prioritise the absolute minimisation of financial and legal risk, actively sorting applicants based on indicators of long-term stability, high productivity, and administrative compliance. In this context, criteria for deciding to rent out a property favour individuals with unrestricted full-time employment, substantial financial reserves, and long-term legal permanence.

Research on the Irish rental market provides empirical evidence that such sorting processes may already influence access to housing. Gusciute et al. (2022) documented that applicants with non-Irish sounding names were significantly less likely to be invited to viewings than applicants with Irish-sounding names, showing how

ethnic and racial profiling may function as an implicit gatekeeping mechanism that goes beyond financial eligibility. By the same token, Grotti et al. (2018) documented persistent ethnic and racial disparities in the private rental sector, highlighting greater risks of overcrowding and discrimination faced by ethnic minority groups. Cumulatively, the findings suggest that access to housing is shaped not only by applicants' material resources but also by assumptions of belonging, trustworthiness, and desirability.

Nevertheless, access to housing is not only influenced by ethnic or racial categorisation. Legal status may also play a role in how applicants are positioned within the rental market. To explore this dimension, this study draws on Blommaert's (2015) concept of *chronotope*. Chronotopes refer to the interconnected spatio-temporal frameworks through which social identities become meaningful and legible. Rather than merely constraining mobility, chronotopic configurations actively influence how an individual is perceived within institutional settings and regulate the forms of belonging accessible to them.

Blommaert and De Fina (2017) state that the identity available to an individual is dictated by their chronotopic position meaning that an individual's social legitimacy and rights are tightly bound to the temporal duration and geographic legitimacy of their stay. Consequently, individuals who occupy a state of temporal precarity may be assigned an identity of impermanence that directly shapes how they are perceived and evaluated by institutional actors. Based on this perspective, legal status may function as a socially meaningful marker through which institutional actors assess future trajectories, stability and belonging.

Within this framework, the Stamp 2 permission is understood as more than an administrative category. It constitutes a chronotopic position that may shape how non-

EU students perceive their own place in Ireland and how they are evaluated by institutional gatekeepers. This perspective also allows for legal status to be examined alongside other dimensions of social categorisation, including ethnicity, nationality, linguistic resources.

Accommodation is a critical site of analysis, as secure access to it is a fundamental prerequisite for participation in education, employment, and everyday social life. Unlike many bureaucratic encounters, access to housing is often determined through fast-paced contact assessments based on minimal information exchange. Accordingly, these gatekeeping encounters are a particularly useful context for examining how language, social categorisation, and informal institutional gatekeeping practices may intersect.

Yet, these frameworks explain who holds decisional power over housing, not how evaluations are performed in interaction. The following subsection turns to language ideology, indexicality and enregisterment to address this question.

2.3 Language Ideology, Indexicality, Enregisterment and the Construction of the “Ideal Tenant”

To examine how these evaluations are put into practice, the present study draws on the concepts of language ideology, indexicality and enregisterment, which provide a sociolinguistic framework through which linguistic resources acquire social meaning and may shape housing outcomes.

Language ideologies represent the cultural beliefs and assumptions through which linguistic forms are linked to particular social values, identities and forms of legitimacy (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of *doxa*, Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) argue that evaluations of language often function as form of “common-sense”, shaping assumptions about who speaks correctly, whose

accent is deemed intelligible, and whose communication style is institutionally appropriate. Based on this perspective, linguistic variation may not only be a matter of communication but may also give rise to broader judgements on competence, credibility and social worth.

Crucially, language ideology research suggests that these evaluations often present themselves as natural rather than socially constructed. Kroskrity (2004) argues that language ideologies serve to naturalise the very inequalities from which they emerge: accent- or register-based discrimination does not appear as a social judgment, but as an objective assessment of communicative ability. Similarly, Gal and Irvine's (1995) foundational work on linguistic boundaries — later explained by Irvine and Gal (2000) — introduces the concept of iconisation to explain how linguistic differences come to appear as a natural expression of social differences. Specifically, iconisation involves the ideological binding of linguistic features to a group's social or psychological essence; a communicative variant (such as an accent or a grammatical structure) ceases to be viewed as a mere behaviour but is instead treated as an iconic sign of an individual's inherent attribute, such as perceived reliability, legal permanence, or social status. Consequently, discriminatory practices may become less visible when framed as judgments about communication rather than social categorisation.

This naturalisation of judgment is intertwined with broader questions on linguistic legitimacy. Bonfiglio (2010) and Heller and McElhinny (2017) state that the legitimacy attributed to standard language varieties might not necessarily derive from their communicative effectiveness but rather from historical processes through which varieties associated with socially dominant racial and class groups have acquired symbolic authority. Likewise, Coupland and Bishop (2007) show that standard-accented

speakers are rated significantly higher in prestige compared to non-standard speakers across institutional contexts.

Contemporary sociolinguistic scholarship has highlighted how linguistic evaluations are intrinsically bound to processes of racialisation. While language ideology explains how linguistic differences come to index different social meanings, Rosa and Flores (2017) argue that listeners rarely evaluate the actual linguistic output produced. Instead, linguistic forms are attributed to pre-existing racialised expectations of identity, meaning that language is always tied to broader assumptions of nationality, competence and foreignness. An analogous dynamic is reported by Piller (2016), who shows how language may function as a socially acceptable proxy for racial and ethnic exclusion, masking structural inequalities simply as individual communicative failings.

Applied to the Dublin rental market, these perspectives imply that the screening of potential tenants encompasses more than mere financial eligibility and formal bureaucratic requirements. Rather, gatekeeping may be informed by implicit ideological assumptions about what a reliable, desirable tenant should sound and write like. Accordingly, the present study examines whether participants perceive linguistic differences as influencing their housing experiences and whether dominant linguistic norms may contribute to a differential evaluation of non-EU students.

While language ideology accounts for the social meanings attached to linguistic differences, the concept of indexicality explains how those associations are mobilised during interactions. Silverstein (2003) argues that linguistic features, such as register, accent, lexical choice, and interactional style are not merely communicative tools but may come to index social categories such as class, ethnicity, education, employability, financial stability and reliability. Crucially, these indexical associations are not only

linguistic forms, but emerge through socially and ideologically mediated processes (Agha, 2003; Silverstein, 2003).

This argument builds upon earlier work in language attitude research. Studies by Lambert et al. (1960) and Giles (1970) found that listeners often associate social characteristics to specific accents, making accent the primary vector for differential speaker evaluation. Extending this analysis, Agha (2006) argues that semiotic encounters – regardless of their duration – could activate indexical chains: a brief phone call or written message could suffice to trigger a cascade of social categorisation that labels the speaker or writer to a recognizable social type. Through this interactional mechanism symbolic capital can become observable in practice. Rather than consciously assessing social hierarchies, a gatekeeper may react to a subtle linguistic marker that indexes specific social identities and corresponding capital.

In the housing context, this process may result in the gatekeeping decision being made before any relevant financial, legal or administrative information has been exchanged.

Over time, these indexical associations may become stabilised through enregisterment, a process where a particular way of speaking is associated with a socially defined persona that carries particular social values (Agha, 1998, 2003). According to Johnstone (2016), the production of a valued persona necessarily implies a stigmatised counterpart. When applied to the housing market, this theoretical lens allows us to understand the “ideal tenant” not merely as an administrative category, but as a socially recognised persona characterised by particular linguistic, social, and institutional traits. Beyond formal criteria such as employment status and income, this “ideal” persona may involve assumptions about trustworthiness, stability, cultural proximity, communicative competence, and belonging. Alternatively, its stigmatised

counterpart may be perceived as risky, precarious, unreliable or culturally foreign and therefore as a less desirable applicant. Crucially, these evaluations rarely require explicit articulation. Instead, they emerge through the interpretation of linguistic and social cues enregistered within wider hierarchies of social values.

The concept of “ideal tenant” thus offers an analytical lens on how linguistic, social, and legal hierarchies intersect within housing encounters. How these assumptions translate into actions of selection and exclusion is examined in the following subsection through the concept of profiling.

2.4 Profiling in the Rental Encounter: Language, Ethnicity and Intersecting Markers

This section examines profiling not as a passive mechanism, but as an active strategy through which applicants are assessed before any substantive interaction takes place. Profiling thus bridges the sociolinguistic processes discussed above and the practical realities of gatekeeping.

Baugh’s (2003) concept of linguistic profiling refers to the process through which a person’s linguistic and paralinguistic cues present in a phone call, email or any other form of communication become associated with particular social identities. While the term emphasises language, Baugh’s framework acknowledges that what is being profiled is rarely linguistic skills; rather, language functions as a proxy through which listeners infer broader social characteristics such as ethnicity, nationality, class background, and social belonging. Linguistic profiling is therefore particularly relevant to this study as it highlights how the social meanings discussed in the previous section may operate in housing encounters.

Language attitudes research (Lambert et al., 1960; Giles, 1970) established that listeners rate standard-variety speakers as more intelligent, reliable, and socially

desirable. Similarly, Fuertes et al. (2012) found that speakers associated with standard accents might be rated significantly higher than those associated with non-standard accents. Chakraborty (2017) argues that ethnocentrism assumptions about language may result in favouring certain familiar ways of speaking over alternative linguistic practices that are consequently perceived as less favourable. Such biases might lack conscious awareness, thus resulting in being easily perpetuated.

The rapidity of these responses further highlights their significance. Tajfel (1981) argues that language might act as a primary source for social categorisation, operating rapidly and unconsciously, while Purnell et al. (1999) documented that listeners can make social inferences from phonological markers in a matter of milliseconds. Within institutional contexts, such processes are especially consequential precisely because initial evaluation occurs before any prior interaction has taken place. Raymond (2018), for instance, argues that in telephone encounters, the immediate recognisability of accent or dialect divergence may influence the outcome of the interaction well before any substantive information is mentioned.

This dynamic directly mirrors a parallel tradition of institutional gatekeeping research. Erickson and Shultz (1982) demonstrated that candidates whose communicative style and social background most closely aligned with institutional expectations are often evaluated more favourably than those whose interactional practices diverge from dominant norms. Correspondingly, Gumperz (1982) shows how differences in contextualisation cues often can lead gatekeepers to misinterpret migrant speakers, producing disadvantages that are often rationalised as legitimate professional judgments instead of being recognised as bias. Likewise, Roberts (2013) argues institutional encounters are sites where the burden of communication is unequally placed. This process, which Roberts (2013) describes as a form of “linguistic penalty”,

actively drives social exclusion while simultaneously obscuring how institutional norms produce unequal outcomes.

Drawing on Goffman's (1983) concept of interaction order and self-presentation, Roberts (2013) further argues that in institutional encounters, individuals are screened not only for how they communicate but also for how they perform socially recognisable identities. Individuals who fail to perform such interactional expectations may be excluded through what Goffman (1983) originally termed, and Roberts (2013) elaborates as a "quiet sorting process", where failure is attributed to individual shortcomings rather than to the biased norms that govern the encounter.

Within the rental sector, profiling seems to function through the interaction of social categories, such as race, ethnicity, and legal permission status, rather than language alone. Massey and Lundy (2001) pioneered this intersectional approach, showing that profiling might rely on overlapping "indexical markers" that trigger rapid categorisation. Notably, their studies found that minority speakers, particularly Black applicants, were significantly more likely to face discrimination and be rejected than white speakers, regardless of their usage of standard linguistic varieties. This finding supports the argument that what is being screened is not mere linguistic competence, but the ethnic and social identities that linguistic features come to index. Similarly, Craft et al. (2020) documented the mechanisms through which language plays a role in generating meaning and producing discriminatory outcomes across several institutional spheres such as housing, employment and education. Likewise, Lippi-Green (2012) further states that rejecting an individual's accent may simultaneously mean rejecting their broader identity, allowing linguistic bias to become a socially legitimate vehicle for broader forms of social exclusion.

Research conducted across different national contexts has also demonstrated this dynamic. Squires and Chadwick (2006) identify a similar profiling process in the home insurance sector, while Zentella (2014) documents sociolinguistic gatekeeping across public and institutional spaces experienced by Latina/o speakers in the United States. Wright (2023) states that linguistic profiling continues to influence social outcomes, despite anti-discrimination laws, whereas Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) highlight that stigma around non-standard speakers' profiles may reinforce social distance between the speakers and the listeners, ultimately enforcing social exclusion.

In the European context, the intersection of linguistic performances with institutional legitimacy and social belongings remains a central focus of research. Blommaert (2009) underlines how national power is tied to linguistic prestige, resulting in linguistic forms becoming proxies for reliability and credibility. This dynamic is clearly exemplified by Du Bois (2019) whose study of the German rental market found that callers with Turkish names and neutral accents received significantly fewer invitations for house viewings than German or American-accented voices, and this disparity was documented more in prestigious neighbourhoods. These findings suggest that what is being evaluated in housing encounters may involve a broader process of social categorisation where language functions as one marker among several intersecting indicators of identity.

Recent research suggests that these processes are extending beyond spoken interaction. Baugh (2023) documented that profiling may occur also through digital and written communication, noting how name orthography, email register and writing style are now also adopted as profiling cues through which social identity is inferred. This shift is critical for understanding the Dublin housing market, where initial gatekeeping

and inquiry are overwhelmingly digital, where first impressions are often formed through written communication alone.

Collectively, these studies suggest that profiling is rarely based on a single characteristic. Instead, it relies on an interaction of different social markers, including language, ethnicity, nationality, legal status, and cultural alignment. The following subsection examines how individuals respond to such constraints.

2.5 Constrained Agency, Resistance and Informal Navigation

The existence of exclusionary institutional mechanisms does not render the applicant passive; rather, it sets the stage for a constant interplay between institutional gatekeeping and the active, often creative, navigation of these very constraints. Against this background, the final conceptual thread of this section addresses how students act, adapt and negotiate their position within the Dublin rental market.

The study adopts Ahearn's (2001) definition of agency as a starting point, understanding agency not as unconstrained freedom of an individual, rather a socially situated capacity shaped by an individual's specific social, institutional and cultural environment in which the actor is embedded. This framework provides a useful lens through which to examine how non-EU students negotiate housing access within the institutional conditions shaping their accommodation trajectories.

Bourdieu (1991) similarly conceptualises agency as conditioned by individuals' position in the social hierarchy and the capital they hold, thereby shaping what they can realistically access within a given social field. From this perspective, opportunities are not accessible to all actors equally, but are influenced by the existing distribution of economic, social, cultural and linguistic capital. These constraints become particularly relevant in neoliberal contexts. Martín Rojo and Del Percio (2019) and Allan (2013) argue that individuals are simultaneously positioned as responsible for their own

mobility while also potentially remaining unaware of the material and structural barriers that limit their power. For non-EU students navigating the rental market such a dynamic may encourage housing struggles to be interpreted as personal failures rather than through the lens of broader structural conditions.

Peirce's (1995) concept of investment provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals respond to these conditions, suggesting that linguistic and institutional participation could be a socially situated act, driven by individuals' social identity and their relationship to power structures. From this perspective, decisions about language use, self-presentation and participation in institutional encounters are not random choices, but strategic investments made in anticipation of future returns. Applying this perspective to the housing market, applicants may actively adjust how they present themselves in order to maximise their chances of securing accommodation.

Building on this perspective, Goffman's (1959) concept on impression management describes how individuals strategically project an identity they perceive aligns with the expectations of a given audience. Individuals therefore might deploy particular social norms and linguistic registers, while strategically choosing to disclose or avoid sharing particular identity markers to curate a particular type of persona designed to meet the implicit expectations of the institutional gatekeepers. Rather than being read as deception, these practices may be understood as attempts to navigate institutional spaces structured by unequal power relations. By utilising Goffman's paradigm of impression management (1959), this study aims to examine how non-EU students negotiate the expectations associated with the "ideal tenant".

Furthermore, research on linguistic discrimination indicates that individuals may develop active responses to structural exclusion. Dovchin (2022) outlines that migrants

might seek out creative and adaptive strategies beyond standard norms, thus reclaiming agency within the strict linguistic orders, including the use of translingual resources to reframe their social positioning. By the same token, García and Wei (2014) demonstrate that multilingual speakers deploy their full linguistic repertoires – not merely their dominant-language competences – to navigate systemic barriers of institutional exclusion. These perspectives challenge approaches to language that consider linguistic variation as a deficit and emphasise the role of multilingualism as a resource and an expression of strategic competence.

Nevertheless, the broader structural implications of these adaptive strategies should not be taken for granted. Blommaert (2010) and Dovchin (2022) caution that adaptive practices may simply displace exclusion into different spheres, therefore potentially resulting in new forms of vulnerability and precarity. In the context of housing, alternative pathways to accommodation may involve an increased exposure to informal markets, risks of scams or evictions, reduced legal protections, and dependence on social media networks that are also stratified by class and national origin.

Finally, the concept of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) offers an important analytical lens to challenge any simplistic, single-axis explanations of this migrant population's experiences. Superdiversity illustrates how contemporary migration experiences are shaped by a complex intersection of variables - legal status, national and ethnic background, linguistic repertoires, human capital, class position, and migration trajectories and cannot be captured by any single analytical category. Applied to this study, this perspective establishes that non-EU students are far from being a homogeneous group. Examining housing access thus requires unmasking shared structural constraints while simultaneously capturing how individuals experience and respond to them.

Collectively, the theoretical perspectives presented in this section provide a comprehensive analytical tool to examine how language, legal status, mobility and social categorisation shape access to housing. The following section outlines the methodological approach adopted to examine these dynamics among non-EU students navigating Dublin's rental market.

3 Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework and research design implemented in this study to examine how language, identity, and socio-legal status intersect to shape access to the rental market for non-EU students in Dublin. Adopting an interpretivist approach rooted in institutional ethnography, this study moves beyond purely experiential descriptions to interrogate the broader institutional relations and gatekeeping practices that govern housing precarity. This section is organised as follows. First, it describes the qualitative, ethnographically grounded research design and justifies the use of institutional ethnography. Second, it details the selection criteria and recruitment strategies for the participants introducing the profiles of fifteen Stamp 2 student participants and one real estate professional included in the sample. Third, it outlines the data collection instruments, focusing on the design of semi-structured interviews, and details the iterative procedures utilised for data analysis. Finally, it addresses methods for ensuring analytical validity through triangulation and concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, researcher positionality and the study's limitations.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, ethnographically grounded approach, based on an interpretivist-constructivist perspective, which views social reality as shaped through institutional practices and discourse (Mason, 2002). Within this critical framework, language is conceptualised not merely as a communicative resource but also as a symbolic and economic resource through which mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and social differentiation are produced and negotiated (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller et al., 2018).

Building on this framework, the study draws on institutional ethnography as a methodological approach to examine how non-EU students' experiences are shaped by institutional processes. Institutional ethnography proved to be particularly appropriate for this study as it moved beyond mere experiential descriptions to interrogate the institutional relations that actively organise those experiences (Smith, 2005). Rather than treating participants' accounts as isolated personal experiences, institutional ethnography begins from people's everyday lived experiences and traces how these experiences are coordinated through wider institutional processes. This approach was considered particularly appropriate as the present study aimed to examine the institutional relations that shape those experiences.

From this perspective, housing precarity is not simply understood as a consequence of individual circumstances but as embedded within interconnected institutional processes, including migration regulations, rental market practices, documentary requirements, and gatekeeping mechanisms. Institutional ethnography therefore provides a framework through which participants' narratives can be interpreted and analysed in relation to the broader social organisation of housing access.

The choice of this methodological orientation aligns with the aim of this study. Rather than asking how participants experience housing exclusion, it also examines how those experiences are socially organised, interpreted, and negotiated within the institutional context of Dublin's rental market. By doing so, the study seeks to connect participants' lived experiences with the wider institutional structures that shape access to housing.

To further complement this perspective, the study also draws on Blommaert and Dong's (2010) ethnographic approach to situated meaning-making. Their study argues that social meanings do not exist independently from one another but emerge from

specific interactional and institutional contexts. Accordingly, the study considers both the structural organisation of housing access and the interactional processes through which participants interpret, negotiate and respond to institutional expectations.

3.2 Selection of Participants

The study involved fifteen non-EU international students and one real estate professional working within Dublin's rental market.

Eligibility criteria for student participants included current or previous enrolment in English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes and possession of a Stamp 2 permission, while the inclusion criterion for the real estate agent participant consisted of active involvement in the Dublin rental market through a role directly engaged in mediating access to accommodation.

The student cohort comprised participants from Brazil, Turkey, and Mexico, reflecting three of the principal national groups enrolled in Ireland's English Language Teaching sector (English Education Ireland, 2024, 2025) and Brian (pseudonym), an independent Irish agent operating in both residential lettings and property sales. While non-EU students' narratives constitute the primary analytical focus of this study, Brian's account provides an institutional perspective through which participants' narratives can be contextualised and interpreted.

Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling (Patton, 2014). Student recruitment was conducted via digital outreach (WhatsApp, Instagram, and email) as well as the researcher's professional network from prior teaching experience in Dublin. This recruitment strategy facilitated access to participants with direct experience of the phenomenon under examination while also allowing subsequent participants to be identified through existing social networks.

The real estate professional was recruited through purposive institutional sampling. Brian was identified through a targeted Google search for Dublin-based real estate agencies and was the only professional who agreed to participate after being contacted by phone and email. Although this limited uptake is consistent with the widely documented difficulty in securing the participation of market intermediaries in qualitative housing research, within institutional ethnography, a single well-positioned institutional actor can illuminate the selection criteria and institutional logics that coordinate everyday experiences (Smith, 2005).

3.3 Participant Profiles

The student cohort consists of fifteen non-EU international students aged between 25 and 38 years, including nine men and six women. Their length of residence in Dublin at the time of data collection varied from recent arrivals to long-term residents, capturing a broad spectrum of experiences with the local housing market and varying degrees of familiarity with its institutional and interactional dynamics.

Importantly, all student participants held a Stamp 2 permission at the time they attended English language courses, providing a common institutional framework within which differences in housing experiences could be examined without the confounding influence of divergent immigration permissions.

Brian (pseudonym), the real estate professional, was a 65-year-old Irish property agent with over forty years' experience in residential lettings and property sales. His interview was intended to offer an institutional perspective on the criteria, expectations, and decision-making processes that shape access to accommodation. Table 1 summarises participants' demographic characteristics, English language learning trajectories, length of residence in Dublin, and legal status. These characteristics provide essential contextual information for interpreting the findings presented in Section 4,

particularly when examining how legal status, migration trajectories, and linguistic resources intersect in participants' housing experiences.

Table 1. *Demographic Details and Participants' Legal Status*

Name	Approximate Age	Gender	Country of Origin / Nationality:	English Language Course Enrolment:	Length of Residence in Dublin (at time of interview):	Permission status when enrolled in English language courses:
Frank	26	Male	Brazil/Brazilian	1 English course	9 months	Stamp 2
Ellie	26	Female	Brazil/Brazilian	3 English courses	4 years and 8 months	Stamp 2
Jack	29	Male	Brazil/Brazilian	3 English courses	3 years	Stamp 2
Mark	25	Male	Brazil/Brazilian	2 English courses	4 years	Stamp 2
Hank	26	Male	Turkey/Turkish-Kurdish	3 English courses	4 years and 6 months	Stamp 2
George	31	Male	Mexico/Mexican	2 English courses	1 year and 5 months	Stamp 2
Ally	25	Female	Mexico/Mexican	3 English courses	2 years	Stamp 2
Maria	30	Female	Brazil/Brazilian	1 English course	5 years	Stamp 2
Lucas	30	Male	Brazil/Brazilian	2 English courses	1 year and 6 months	Stamp 2
Alex	30	Male	Mexico/Mexican	3 English courses	1 year and 6 months	Stamp 2
Philip	38	Male	Brazil/Brazilian-Italian ¹	1 English course	9 months	Stamp 2
John	27	Male	Brazil/Brazilian-Italian ²	2 English courses	5 years	Stamp 2
Katie	30	Female	Mexico/Mexican	2 English courses	9 months	Stamp 2
Susan	29	Female	Brazil/Brazilian	3 English courses	5 years and 2 months	Stamp 2
Monica	35	Female	Turkey/Turkish	2 English courses	4 years	Stamp 2

3.4 Data and Data Collection Methods

Empirical data were collected via semi-structured online interviews, supported by contextual field notes from the researcher's prior professional teaching experience in Dublin. To accommodate logistical constraints and geographical relocations, interviews

¹ The Italian nationality was acquired after entering Ireland as a Stamp 2 permission holder.

² The Italian nationality was acquired after entering Ireland as a Stamp 2 permission holder.

were conducted via Google Meet with video and audio enabled to preserve interactional dynamics. While initially projected to last between 45 and 60 minutes, as stated during recruitment (*see Appendix I*), the sessions spontaneously extended to between 60 and 120 minutes to accommodate detailed participants narratives'. This resulted in a total of approximately 20 to 24 hours of recorded material, conducted between April and June 2026. The entirety of the recorded interviews was initially processed using the advanced AI transcription tool, Turboscribe, to generate a complete preliminary written baseline. Subsequently, a selective refinement approach was adopted: only the sections of the transcripts directly relevant to the analysis were manually refined, cross-checked against the audio, and thoroughly reviewed verbatim by the researcher.

3.5 Interview Design

The interview guide included semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, designed to elicit participants' narratives of their localised trajectories (Codó, 2008), while leaving space for narrative digressions (Blommaert & Dong, 2010).

The interviews were organised to elicit data around four thematic domains explicitly designed to address the study's research questions (RQs) and derived from the theoretical framework developed in Section 2, namely: socio-demographic migration and educational paths, experiences of the housing search, institutional rights awareness, and the role of language in negotiating access to accommodation. These prompts explored how students conceptualised market expectations, deployed identity management, and navigated the structural boundaries of formal tenancy.

A separate interview guide was developed for the real estate professional. Rather than exploring personal housing experiences, the interview focuses on formal and informal applicant screening criteria, property owner's expectations, and the perceived role of written and spoken communication in the rental process. This design provided an

institutional perspective that complemented the experiences reported by the student participants.

3.6 Complementary Data Sources

To contextualise and strengthen the interview findings, the study drew on three complementary data sources. First, field notes and observations were used as a reflexive resource to support the interpretation of participants' accounts. Second, digital housing platforms, including [Daft.ie](https://www.daft.ie), [Rent.ie](https://www.rent.ie), and informal Facebook groups were analysed to identify the institutional expectations embedded in rental advertisements and housing interactions, thereby providing additional insight into how the "ideal tenant" may be constructed. Third, policy documents and legislative sources were examined, including Residential Tenancies Act provisions, Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) regulations, and Stamp 2 permission conditions. These documents provided the institutional context necessary to interpret participants' experiences within the broader legal and regulatory framework that shape housing access within the Dublin rental market.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data were analysed through an iterative and predominantly inductive process, informed by the theoretical framework developed in Section 2. Interview transcripts were first read recursively to establish initial open coding for recurring patterns, including linguistic profiling, gatekeeping, documentation deficits, impression management, and informal market displacement. These interactional codes were subsequently grouped into broader analytical themes through constant comparison across participants' accounts. Throughout the analytical process, themes were continuously compared with the theoretical concepts discussed in Section 2, particularly those relating to linguistic

capital, gatekeeping, language ideology, profiling, chronotopes, and constrained agency. The analysis moved recursively between participants' narratives and the conceptual framework, allowing empirical patterns to inform theoretical interpretation while using theory to contextualise and deepen the analysis of the findings.

3.8 Triangulation

Analytical validity was ensured by triangulating the student interviews with digital market listings, policy documents, and field observations. Comparing written ads with participants' accounts helped trace structural gaps and ideological alignments within gatekeeping practices. In addition, the real estate professional's account was included to provide an institutional perspective through which participants' accounts could be compared and contextualised.

3.9 Ethical Considerations, Researcher's Positionality, and Limitations of the Research Design

All data were anonymised using pseudonyms, stored securely, and restricted to the researcher and the supervisor. In addition, all participants were informed of the objectives of the study and were asked to sign an informed consent form, stating whether they agreed to being recorded and acknowledge their right to stop, pause, or withdraw at any time without consequences.

The researcher's positionality as a former English language teacher in Dublin was acknowledged and required a continuous reflexive approach. While it facilitated building a climate of trust, this background may have introduced the potential for interpretative bias. To address this subjectivity, a detailed fieldwork diary was kept, which allowed for the continuous tracking of personal biases and interactional impressions during the research process (Bourdieu, 2004; Blommaert & Dong, 2010).

Several structural limitations should be acknowledged. First, recruitment of housing professionals proved challenging, yielding only one real estate participant. While this single account offers an important window into professional rationales, it cannot represent the diverse institutional practice of corporate firms or independent property owners (Smith, 2005).

Second, the study focused on non-EU students holding a Stamp 2 permission in Dublin. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as situated within this particular institutional, legal and socio-economic setting.

Finally, as a qualitative study based on participants' accounts, the findings are intended to provide an in-depth understanding of lived experiences while recognising that some retrospective accounts may involve subjective interpretation of past events. Given the scope and time constraints of a master's thesis, it was not possible to include a wider range of institutional actors or migrants groups. Future research could build on these findings by incorporating additional stakeholder perspectives and exploring the experiences of other migrant populations within the Irish housing market.

4 Analysis and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the empirical findings that emerged from fifteen non-EU students holding a Stamp 2 permission and one real estate professional operating in the Dublin rental market. Grounded in the sociolinguistic frameworks outlined in Section 2, the analysis traces the rental trajectory across four sequential sections: from the initial construction of the “ideal tenant” and the mechanisms of sociolinguistic profiling, to the non-EU student participants’ adaptive strategies and subsequent displacement into alternative, informal spaces under structural constraints.

4.1 Introduction to Analysis

This analysis examines the interactional and sociolinguistic processes that govern structural gatekeeping, profiling, and social categorisation within the Dublin rental market. While housing scarcity forms the backdrop to these trajectories, the findings suggest that access to housing cannot be explained by supply deficits alone. Instead, access appears to be regulated through a complex intersection of both formal and informal eligibility criteria, including legal status, employment history, ethnicity, nationality, linguistic resources, and perceived tenant suitability. English proficiency emerged not simply as a communicative tool; rather, it appears to function as a proxy – a linguistic resource through which gatekeepers assess, categorise, and, at times, exclude potential tenants from housing opportunities.

To illustrate how language may obscure these underlying structural inequalities, this section is organised chronologically into four interconnected thematic blocks. Section 4.2 examines how the profile of an “ideal tenant” is ideologically enregistered by gatekeepers to minimise financial and administrative risks, and how non-EU students interpret these baseline expectations. Section 4.3 examines how everyday communicative encounters function as a primary profiling mechanism, offering

empirical evidence of how gatekeepers utilise interactional cues to infer broader social identities and institutional legitimacy. Section 4.4 analyses non-EU student participants' tactical impression management, focusing on the constrained agency and identity work they employ to align with market expectations. Section 4.5 tracks the alternative pathway students navigate upon formal market exclusion, exploring informal markets, ethnolinguistic enclaves, and their inherent vulnerabilities.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that housing access is a dynamic process of inclusion and exclusion, and real-time negotiation is shaped by intersecting linguistic, legal, economic, and social factors.

4.2 Constructing the “Ideal Tenant”

This section examines the discursive and practical construction of the “ideal tenant” within the Dublin rental market. Rather than viewing housing as a purely commercial transaction based solely on financial exchange, the following analysis explores how access to housing is experienced and negotiated as a highly regulated process of institutional screening. By juxtaposing the lived experiences of non-EU student participants with the institutional logic articulated by a real estate professional, this section examines the asymmetrical power dynamic that governs the initial contact encounters. Specifically, the analysis focuses on how the extensive administrative demands of the market transform the housing search into a performative selection process resembling an employment interview. In addition, it explores how housing gatekeepers mobilise a culturally enregistered persona of suitability to minimise financial risks and eliminate anticipated interactional friction.

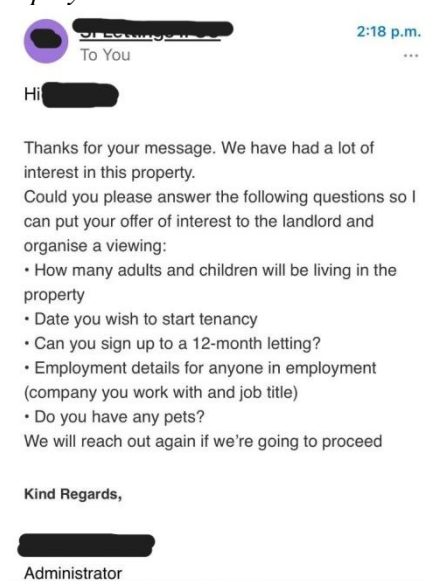
4.2.1 Housing as Institutional Selection

A recurring theme across participants' interviews was that access to housing was perceived less as a simple market transaction and more as an institutional selection process. Participants described housing applications as resembling employment applications, highlighting the extensive paperwork required along the careful self-presentation and impression management expected in written communication to secure a house viewing.

Monica described the rental process as follows: "it's pretty much like you are applying for a job". Elsewhere in the interview, she elaborated: "You need to write a cover letter, you need to provide your finances well because they get impressed." This account suggests access to housing extends beyond financial eligibility. Applicants are required to assemble a portfolio of evidence demonstrating stability, employability, and social desirability. Participants reported being asked to provide proof of legal residence, employment contracts, bank statements, local Irish tenancy references, and personal introductions. These findings align with Erickson and Shultz's (1982) work on institutional gatekeeping, which suggests that access to resources is often mediated through selection criteria that assess applicants against implicit institutional expectations rather than purely objective criteria. A similar dynamic appears to operate in the Dublin rental market, where applicants are screened through multiple forms of evidence that index suitability and low risk. Housing access therefore emerges as an institutional encounter in which success depends on participants' ability to navigate selection procedures rather than on the mere possession of economic resources. This institutional filtering is also reflected in digital gatekeeping inquiries sent to prospective tenants immediately upon first contact. A clear example was shared by one of the

participants, Alex: in these initial exchanges, details regarding corporate employment and job titles were explicitly requested as preliminary screening criteria (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Email Request for Employment Details*



4.2.2 The Enregistered “Ideal Tenant”

While the previous section demonstrated that access to housing is structured as an institutional selection process, participants’ accounts further suggest that this process is guided by an implicit image of the “ideal tenant” against which applicants are evaluated. Rather than solely relying on formal eligibility criteria, housing providers appear to evaluate applicants according to implicit expectations concerning trustworthiness, stability, employment, communicative competence, and anticipated risk. Brian’s account as the only institutional participant in this study, provides valuable insight into how these expectations are articulated from the perspective of a market intermediary.

Reflecting on the characteristics that distinguish successful applicants, Brian explained:

Because all I'd be looking for is the least line of resistance. When I rent a property, I want no hassle. You know, I don't want someone to do my head in afterwards. I don't have the time or the patience for it. So you look at the least line of resistance, I suppose, you know. (Brian)

Rather than presenting tenant selection as a purely financial assessment, Brian frames his decisions in terms of minimising uncertainty and avoiding potential complications. The phrase “the least line of resistance” reframes selection as a defensive strategy within a hyper-scarce market. This formulation suggests that applicants are not necessarily the wealthiest or most qualified applicants but are rather filtered against anticipated friction, conflict, or administrative inconvenience. Brian’s account therefore suggests that institutional decision-making is structured around minimising perceived liabilities rather than objective financial considerations. Instead, applicants are screened according to a broader set of socially recognisable characteristics through which trustworthiness, stability, and low maintenance are inferred. These expectations do not appear as explicit criteria but rather as implicit assumptions about what constitutes a desirable tenant.

This pattern aligns with Agha’s (2003, 2006) concept of enregisterment, whereby particular social attributes become socially recognised as desirable and are repeatedly associated with specific institutional identities. Within the Dublin rental market, the “ideal tenant” can be understood not as a neutral category but as an institutionally recognisable persona through which applicants are evaluated.

Monica’s account further illustrates how participants themselves recognised these implicit expectations. While reflecting on the characteristics perceived to increase applicants’ chances of securing accommodation, she explained that property providers primarily screen for “trustable people”, suggesting that trust itself appeared to function as a core interactional filter. Although Monica speaks from the position of an applicant, her reflection closely mirrors Brian’s institutional perspective.

Through the repeated circulation of this persona within the housing market, these specific features become naturalised. As Johnstone (2016) argues, the production

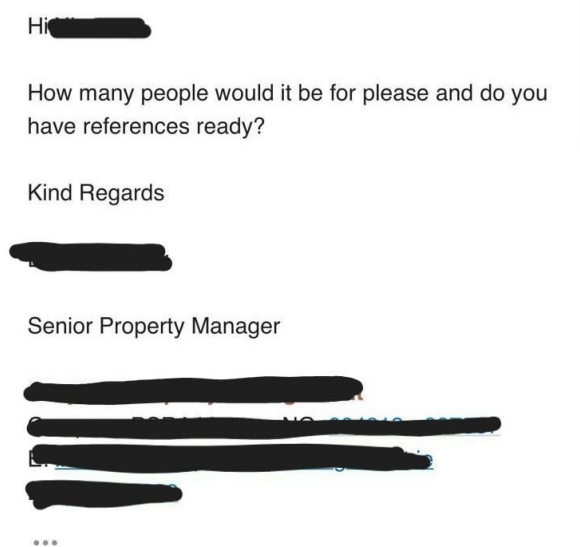
of a valued persona simultaneously implies its counterpart; the absence of characteristics ideologically assigned to a desirable tenant therefore implies a risk of exclusion, regardless of an applicant's actual objective ability to pay rent.

Faced with this implicit filtering, non-EU student participants actively engaged in strategic identity work to align themselves with these behavioural expectations. Within this process of impression management, interactional resources played a key role. For instance, Lucas reported that his entire friend group relied on his profile to contact property providers and agents due to his interactional confidence in English: "My English was better, so usually I was the one sending the messages." (Lucas) Lucas observed that managing his communicative presentation in this manner increased the likelihood of being taken seriously and receiving responses. Furthermore, he strategically highlighted his engineering degree during initial contact to signal credibility and institutional legitimacy. Applying Bourdieu's (1991) framework, these strategies suggest that access to housing is shaped by the possession and recognition of multiple forms of capital. While economic capital remains a necessary prerequisite, applicants are simultaneously screened on the basis of social, cultural, and linguistic capital.

The structural disadvantage confronting these non-EU participants is particularly acute upon arrival, as they enter the Irish rental market with a severe deficit in localised social capital: specifically, the lack of prior local Irish tenancy references. A real estate professional interviewed for this study provided direct confirmation of this institutional barrier, explicitly stating that local references constitute vital filtering data utilised by gatekeepers to minimise market risk: "Previous landlord references. Always a great thing. And a phone number. Because guys do ring. If you have past experience or past landlord stuff, send that on." This gatekeeping requirement is not only articulated in

spoken interviews but is systematically embedded within the initial, mediated textual encounters that regulate market access. For instance, digital communications from corporate property agencies illustrate how the immediate extraction of references functions as a primary interactional filter. As shown in Figure 2, corporate gatekeepers routinely condition further interaction on the immediate availability of these local credentials:

Figure 2. *Email Request for Landlord References*



Hi [redacted]

How many people would it be for please and do you have references ready?

Kind Regards

[redacted signature]

Senior Property Manager

[redacted contact info]

[redacted contact info]

[redacted contact info]

[redacted contact info]

...

Consequently, this institutional demand for local documentation systematically encourages gatekeepers to prioritise applicants who already possess a verifiable history within the Irish housing market. Facing this immediate disadvantage, non-EU student participants often strategically adapted their interactional delivery to mirror the enregistered expectations attached to the “ideal tenant” profile. The section below explores this interactional calibration in greater detail, examining how specific communicative encounters operate as an important mechanism of profiling and social categorisation.

4.3 Language, Profiling and Gatekeeping

While the previous section focused on how market access is shaped by adherence to the implicit profile of the “ideal tenant”, participants’ narratives also highlight the decisive

role that sociolinguistic resources play in how applicants are evaluated against these expectations. Throughout the dataset, participants frequently described instances in which communicative delivery, accent, nationality, and legal status appeared to be evaluated synthetically. Rather than being assessed independently, these indexical factors were often perceived as part of a broader process of social categorisation through which applicants were profiled and sorted. Consequently, everyday language practices emerged not as a neutral tool for communication, but as an important gatekeeping mechanism through which material access to housing could be facilitated, delayed, or systematically denied.

4.3.1 Profiling on First Contact

Across the interviews, a structural pattern of curated and highly mediated first-contact interactions emerged, occurring almost exclusively through virtual channels rather than in person. For the majority of participants, initial communication was established via asynchronous written formats (emails and text messages) or brief telephone exchanges, creating a situation in which high-stakes gatekeeping decisions were made on the basis of very limited interactional information. Frank offers valuable insight into how property providers behave at first contact, describing their unwillingness to engage with applicants perceived as linguistically non-standard:

I think it's because they didn't like the people, a lot of immigrants going there, which had no English. So they didn't have like the patience to talk with you, basically. And just to not explain, I'm not gonna give my house to you. They just hang up and that's it. (Frank)

This account is analytically revealing because it suggests that exclusion may occur prior to the exchange of any substantive administrative or financial information. It also illustrates how gatekeepers make rapid and discretionary decisions on the basis of perceived conversational burden and an ideological unwillingness to engage with non-native interactional styles. Drawing on the pioneering work of Purnell et al. (1999) and

Baugh's (2003) framework on linguistic profiling, this exchange illustrates how listeners utilise acoustic and phonetic cues to make immediate social inferences, assigning speakers to macro-social categories within the opening seconds of interaction, long before any objective tenant eligibility can be verified.

A similar pattern emerged in Hank's account, who described how phone-mediated contact with property providers quickly generated interactional pressure and communicative impatience: "They'll try to rush to get rid of you. And they're impatient. And they're like, oh, you want to get this or not? Like, come on." (Hank) Rather than revealing overt discrimination, which would typically manifest as direct verbal refusal based on national origin, these accounts capture a more subtle mode of covert gatekeeping. Within this dynamic, communication itself becomes a site for the exercise of unilateral power, where structural inequalities are naturalised and reproduced under the guise of conversational efficiency and time management. Importantly, this interactional pressure and withholding of patience are not restricted to digital or telephonic thresholds; they also extend to face-to-face encounters. Lucas experienced this physical erasure firsthand during a hyper-competitive house viewing, where the real estate agent's pre-determined categorisation rendered the interaction largely a mere formality:

Normally when the landlord scheduled a visit, there were a lot of people. Like a huge queue of people waiting to visit the house as well. I felt one woman who was Asian. She didn't pay a lot of attention to us. I think she chose someone else and she had to do the visit anyway. She wasn't paying a lot of attention to what we were trying to say. And she just ended the visit quickly. So she was in a rush, no patience. (Lucas)

Here, the agent's refusal to invest interactional time or pay attention to what the applicants were trying to say suggests that non-standard speakers are granted less spatial and temporal opportunity to demonstrate their suitability. These findings corroborate Raymond's (2018) observations that housing access is fundamentally negotiated during

initial interactional moments – defined as the micro-sequential turns of speech during real-time talk where participants negotiate relational alignment and project institutional credibility. Specifically in telephone encounters, where communication is crucial to securing a positive outcome, these brief openings act as immediate evaluative thresholds. Structural exclusion is interactionally enacted when gatekeepers cut conversations short or withhold conversational cooperation.

The perspective of the real estate provider offers further analytical insight into how institutional gatekeeping translates systemic sociolinguistic biases into a matter of transactional convenience. Reflecting on his interactions with non-native speakers, Brian stated: “People don't have time for someone who's half English. And don't have patience for them.” (Brian) This explicit framing suggests that gatekeeping legitimises the immediate filtering of accented applicants by framing it as a matter of mere transactional efficiency, effectively denying prospective tenants the interactional space required to demonstrate their institutional suitability. Elsewhere in the interview, he advises applicants to delegate the communicative labour to someone with “proper English”, a strategic recommendation that implicitly treats accented or non-standard English speakers as a communicative liability rather than a normative feature of transnational migration.

The distinction Brian draws between “half English “ and “proper English” does not indicate any objective, measurable level of competence, rather, it reflects a deeply evaluative judgment about interactional legitimacy and social belonging. This distinction determines who counts as a fully credible speaker and, by extension, a fully credible tenant. This finding aligns with Rosa and Flores’ (2017) account of raciolinguistic ideology, in which perceived linguistic deficiency is treated not as an objective assessment of competence, but as a racialised perception that positions certain

marginalised subjects as perpetually inadequate regardless of their actual communicative proficiency.

The analytical force of the “half English” versus “proper English” distinction lies precisely in its structural indirectness: by filtering applicants through a linguistic category rather than a named racial or ethnic one, gatekeepers can articulate systemic exclusion as a rational, colour-blind judgment regarding functional communicative competences. However, the ideological nature of this linguistic sorting becomes clear when juxtaposed with Brian’s subsequent statements.

When asked whether his digital screening practices are shaped by any applicant’s background, he initially denied any biases before immediately naming the specific social groups he systematically excludes: “And colour or race doesn't matter to me. I don't take gypsies. I don't take tinkers. I don't take itinerants. And people say, you can't say that, but you don't.” (Brian) This sequence is analytically relevant less for what it reveals about individual prejudice, but for the explicit discursive work it performs. Brian asserts that colour and race are irrelevant to him, yet he named three ethnonyms associated with the Irish Traveller and Roma communities, while acknowledging the social unacceptability of stating such exclusions openly “you can’t say that, but you don’t”. Crucially, while ethnic exclusion is recognised as something that must remain unstated in professional discourse, linguistic profiling (“no half English”) is treated as a completely legitimate, statable criterion. When interpreted together, these two moments suggest that the “half English” versus “proper English” distinction does not operate in isolation from categorical exclusion on grounds of race or ethnicity; rather, it serves as a socially acceptable proxy that allows for exclusionary judgments to be enacted without triggering the same reflexive awareness of social impropriety. This aligns with what Rosa and Flores (2017) argue on raciolinguistic ideologies, where racialised hierarchies

are reproduced under the guise of a seemingly neutral assessment of language, effectively displacing stigmatised social categories onto linguistic ones that have not yet been afforded the same legal protection. Based on this context, Brian's linguistic framing of "half English" performs an exclusionary social work while remaining discursively deniable.

4.3.2 Language as a proxy for Ethno-National Identity and Social Categorisation

Consistent with these theoretical insights, non-EU student participants rarely experienced linguistic profiling as operating independently of other social markers. Rather, they described an intersection in which phonetic, structural, and nominal markers are used by gatekeepers to infer macro-social origins (e.g. distinguishing local Irish citizens from non-EU migrants) and to project assumptions about social class. Ally shared her view on the stereotypes she believed shaped property providers' perceptions of Latin American tenants: "I don't know why people think that Latin people is a little bit controversial, problematic people. We need to put all these things like convince the people that you are fine." (Ally) The participant's emphasis on needing to "convince" property providers indicates a strong awareness that interactions are never neutral; they are heavily mediated by pre-existing ideological scripts attached to specific national and ethnic groups. Sociolinguistic features appear to function as indexical cues that trigger broader assumptions about accountability, reliability, and social desirability.

This process of pre-interactional profiling is further exemplified through name-based screening. Reflecting on the systemic barriers observed among her colleagues, Maria stated:

Names that doesn't sound Irish or European. And I know that because I worked in the nursing home and now in the hospital with a lot of Indian nurses and families that come as health care professionals. It's hard for them as well from their background to get just to view places. Just for the name. (Maria)

Maria's account is particularly relevant and significant for two main reasons. First, it provides further evidence that name-based profiling as a real gatekeeping mechanism operating prior to any linguistic or interactional contact, a finding consistent with Gusciute et al.'s (2022) field experiment documenting lower callback rates for non-Irish surnames in the private rental market. Second, Maria observes this phenomenon among highly skilled, legally stable, and economically secure Indian healthcare professionals whose market exclusion cannot be attributed to a communicative limitations or insecure legal residency status. This finding illustrates Silverstein's (2003) concept of indexicality, whereby specific formal markers, such as orthographic or nominal features on an application, are ideologically linked to wider social meanings, instantly placing applicants into stigmatised categories. In this context, the non-Western name functions as an index of ethno-national alterity, activating assumptions of social undesirability that completely bypass financial or professional eligibility.

Aware of the value the housing market assigns to specific sociolinguistic resources, non-EU student participants actively deployed strategies to manage their interactional vulnerabilities. To mitigate the risks of linguistic profiling, several interviewees reported delegating the entirety of the communicative labour to individuals perceived as possessing greater institutional legitimacy as they had been in the country for longer than them. Hank explains this strategic allocation of linguistic capital:

I gave to the friend that who wanted to rent the house for us, which is he had good English and lived here for four or five years, I think. He also was the one who had the reference letter and financial letter and everything. He talked to them. I never talked to them. (Hank)

By removing himself completely from the vocal and text-based interactions, Hank strategically deployed his friend's linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) to bypass the interactional thresholds established by gatekeepers. Crucially, these findings highlight that first-contact interactions are critical social sites where applicants are

evaluated not only on objective financial criteria, but on what their discursive presentation is perceived to index. Within Dublin's hyper-scarce rental market, everyday communicative encounters serve as a powerful proxy through which deeper social inequalities are routinely enacted and maintained.

4.4 Performing the “Ideal Tenant”: Adaptation, Impression Management and Constrained Agency

While the previous section outlined how prospective tenants may be profiled through linguistic or social categorisation, the dataset simultaneously revealed the nuanced communicative strategies applicants deploy to manage these evaluative expectations. Across the dataset, non-EU students displayed acute awareness of the criteria against which they were being screened. Consequently, they described adapting the information they disclosed, emphasising particular aspects of their identities such as concealing student status and employment restrictions, foregrounding professional credentials, and emphasising financial stability, familial support or long-term employment. Far from passively receiving gatekeeping practices, these individuals actively engaged in continuous forms of identity work to shape a discursive profile that would maximise their chances of securing accommodation.

This interactional calibration frequently involves the performance of stability and institutional credibility, whereby applicants seek to align themselves with the market's standard of a legitimate, low-risk tenant. Ellie described coordinating her written housing applications with her mother to project a responsible and mature family picture:

When I was writing I wanted to make them know that we were looking for something, we were family so we were going to take care of it. And even my mom she had a profile, her profile, so she would say hi my name is xxx, I'm a mother, my daughter is living here with me. So she would send sometimes the message first and then I would send after her just to make sure we are both trying. So to make

them know that there is a responsible person, because when I arrived here I was only 22 years old, sometimes they want a person that would take more care or would be more responsible with life in general. (Ellie)

Similarly, Lucas foregrounded his engineering background as a primary credibility marker to build institutional trust when communicating with housing providers: “They used to trust more when I say that I had a degree and everything, even if I didn't have English.” (Lucas) Although the interactional resources mobilised differ, both participants drew on forms of social and symbolic capital to strengthen their credibility in the eyes of gatekeepers. Through Goffman’s (1959) concept of impression management, these strategies can be understood as deliberate performances calibrated to construct a tenant identity that would signal responsibility, reliability, and low risk. In Bourdieusian terms, applicants strategically deployed their available capital to meet the implicit expectations of the market’s evaluative audience; attempting to compensate for the structural positioning they perceived as disadvantaging their applications.

This dynamic is rendered with particular clarity by Maria’s account, a Brazilian physiotherapist working at a local hospital. Navigating the Dublin rental market, she articulates with striking directness the performative labour the housing search requires, defined here as a conscious, strategic expenditure of both behavioural and sociolinguistic effort to enact a specific, idealised persona during interactional encounters: “ I would compare the experience to like a job interview. You need to show your best self, you need to kind of sell yourself like I'm clean, I don't smoke, I only drink on weekends, just a glass of wine. So you kind of have to sell yourself.” (Maria) The metaphor of “selling oneself” frames identity-matching not as transparent communication, but as a calculated performance directed at an evaluative audience. When asked to elaborate on the role of linguistic resources in this performance, Maria explicitly links this management to targeted register choices, noting that: “It requires a

certain vocabulary and a certain ability, especially inside the Irish community, to be able to present yourself and show that you're a polite person, that you won't cause any trouble to them, that you can fit in that community.” This reflection expands the notion of performative labour, highlighting how non-EU applicants do not merely attempt to manage demographic or lifestyle information; they also deploy specific pragmatic and lexical resources to index alignment and low-risk status. In Goffman’s (1959) terms, Maria is actively managing the impressions she projects, recognising that acquiring an appropriate sociolinguistic register is part of projecting an image of politeness and trustworthiness that gatekeepers expect to hear. Language, therefore, functions as a constitutive element through which institutional alignment is interactionally staged.

Another analytically significant sociolinguistic finding concerns the management of indexical meanings. Across the dataset, participants showed strong awareness of the social implications attached to particular categories, especially the label “student”. Jack explains:

If I say to them, I am a student, they will be aware that my visa is not a work visa, it is a student visa, and my wage isn't the same of a person who works full time. If I say to them, I am a student, they will completely understand my status in the country, what kind of job, part-time or full-time, I have. (Jack)

A similar logic emerged in Lucas’ account: “When you say that you just can work 20 hours, the landlord can think, how can he afford the house, which is very expensive, just working 20 hours. So I try to avoid that information.” (Lucas) Read together, these narratives indicate that participants were not simply concealing information, they were actively managing the ideological associations attached to their legal status. In Silverstein’s (2003) terms, both student status and the 20-hour employment restriction operate as indexical cues that may lead gatekeepers to infer a broader package of social meanings, namely limited income, temporary residence and financial precarity. Non-EU student participants’ strategies therefore reveal an acute awareness of how legal

categories become translated into housing evaluations. What students manage, then, is not their identity per se, rather the indexical fields surrounding their institutional status.

This interactional re-indexing is illustrated by John's narrative regarding his acquisition of Italian citizenship: "I should say I'm Italian because it's more attractive for them being Italian than being Brazilian." (John) This strategic choice explicitly centers on the difference of presenting oneself as a European citizen as opposed to a non-European passport holder. Within the Dublin housing market, an EU status functions as an immediate index of administrative stability, permanent legal residency, and unconstrained labour rights, thereby bypassing the structural profiling and barriers traditionally encountered by non-EU applicants.

John's positioning offers a striking empirical window into how participants consciously navigate the indexical hierarchy constructed by the market. Specifically, it illustrates a strong awareness that national identities carry different social values within the housing market. The same participant describes using his Irish girlfriend's profile when looking for an accommodation and shares: "She's Irish. I'm Italian. So two Europeans with full-time jobs, for them like we did it probably for the agency was really quick to decide." (John) John strategically foregrounded both his newly acquired Italian citizenship and his partner's Irish nationality recognising both as structural assets. As Peirce (1995) argues, such decisions are not casual but driven by a deep understanding of the relationship between social identity and access to institutional resources. Here, nationality itself becomes a form of legal and cultural capital to be actively deployed rather than concealed, illustrating how applicants internalise and reproduce the very hierarchies that could exclude them from the market.

However, not all participants felt equally able or comfortable performing the communicative role assigned to them by the market. Alex stated that he avoided

telephone interactions with gatekeepers due to his limited confidence in English: “To do a call, like to do a formal call to the owners. I couldn't because I didn't know enough English. I couldn't know how to speak properly.” (Alex) This account illustrates a crucial dimension of constrained agency. While some participants actively managed how they presented themselves, others withdrew entirely from specific communicative channels as they perceived they lacked the linguistic resources required to participate effectively. These findings align with Ahearn’s (2001) conceptualisation of agency as socially situated: individuals make choices based on the linguistic and social resources available to them and the conditions under which they can act. As previously mentioned in Subsection 4.3.2, Ally also reported the necessity to actively counter the structural stereotypes attached to her nationality:

I don't know why people think that Latin people is a little bit controversial, problematic people. And that's why we want to put like we are, we are not drinker, we are not smoker, and we are friendly, we are responsible, everything. We need to put all these things like convince the people that you are fine, you are a good person for them. (Ally)

The participant’s use of the verb “convince” is analytically telling: the housing encounter is not a neutral act of self-presentation, but a performance management staged against a pre-existing social type. By listing the descriptors such as “not drinker, not smoker, friendly, responsible”, the participant is not describing herself freely but actively working to dismantle the negative evaluations associated with particular social categories. This illustrates what Agha’s (2003, 2006) framework on enregisterment theorises, which links a specific package of circulating stereotypes to social groups prior to interaction.

While many accounts show how participants exercise agency within tight constraints, others reveal instances where exercising such agency was foreclosed entirely due to immediate communicative disparities. Crucially, this inaction should not be interpreted as passivity; instead, it can be understood as another dimension of social

positioning – a forced compliance with the market’s demands. To further illustrate this, George describes an interaction in which he struggled to understand native speakers because of the speed of the interaction: “When I called to the bank, difficult. It was difficult because they talk a lot and fast.” (George)

Similarly, Jack reported an equivalent experience with an Irish property owner: “In the first few words that he said, I didn't understand anything.” (Jack) Together, these accounts highlight that conversational gatekeeping within the housing market is not primarily concerned with grammatical accuracy, but with the applicant’s ability to make themselves instantly understood to minimise interactional burden on the gatekeeper. Brian’s account corroborates this directly, stating that applicants should have “Good English” to communicate when applying for an accommodation, framing this as a practical necessity given the volume of enquiries he manages. Within this gatekeeping logic, “Good English” operates not as an objective metric of language competence, but as an ideological construct demanding conversational conformity to facilitate rapid corporate and market efficiency.

Collectively, these findings suggest that participants were not simply adapting their language but actively managing the social meanings attached to their identities. Through selective disclosure, strategic management of the self, and the mobilisation of available capital, they sought to align themselves with the institutional expectations associated with the “ideal tenant”. Yet, these strategies did not eliminate structural inequalities. Instead, they reveal a key tension within constrained agency: as Ahearn (2001) argues, individuals creatively navigate social structures while also remaining shaped by the restrictions surrounding them.

4.5 Navigating Beyond the Formal Market: Informal Networks, Vulnerabilities and Precarity

This section examines the structural displacement of non-EU student participants from formal and regulated housing channels into informal and unregulated, parallel rental markets in Dublin. The analysis demonstrates how the systemic barriers and communicative gatekeeping encountered during initial contact establish an initial threshold of absolute exclusion for Stamp 2 permission holders. Building on this, this section explores how repeated formal rejection led many participants to rely on informal social networks, such as digital platforms and ethnolinguistic enclaves, as their primary, yet deeply precarious, channels for securing housing. Finally, it addresses the severe consequences of this informal dependency, specifically focusing on physical overcrowding, the strategic non-exercise of tenancy rights due to fear of eviction, and exposure to unregulated subletting scams and predatory economic practices.

4.5.1 Gatekeeping Thresholds and Digital Exclusion

A recurring pattern across the data is that non-EU students experienced the formal housing market as structurally inaccessible. Participants reported repeatedly encountering barriers linked to legal status, employment restrictions, salary thresholds, and the institutional demand for local tenancy references. These documentation requirements effectively excluded them from housing opportunities within the regulated sector. Jack's account captures these barriers clearly: "If you are a foreigner, you need to have a visa work, you need to have a payslip for, for example, three months, and your salary needs to have, for example, €2,000, something like this, to be qualified to apply for the vacancy." (Jack) This account illustrates how access to accommodation is filtered by multiple eligibility criteria operating simultaneously. Applying Blommaert

and De Fina's (2017) concept of chronotopic identities, students on a Stamp 2 permission who have recently arrived in Ireland to study English occupy a socio-spatial position structurally incompatible with these requirements. Restricted to 20 hours of legal employment during term time and lacking local rental histories, they are often unable to provide the substantial, locally grounded evidence the formal market demands.

Participants consistently described formal housing platforms – most notably the primary national real estate website, Daft.ie – as inaccessible networks where receiving a response was rare or impossible. Jack stated: “I never met someone that, oh, I got accommodation through the Daft, never.” (Jack) To further exemplify this systemic sorting, Mark described what drove him to use informal markets: “Every single one, every single option besides the school thing. Schools doesn't really help them much, all the options, every single website I could find.” (Mark) These accounts indicate that formal housing markets were experienced not as merely competitive among standard, structurally eligible applicants, but as largely closed off to non-EU students entirely. This pattern is further reinforced by Brian, the property provider, who explained that experienced agents often rely on a private list of previously vetted applicants: “If you're a long-time agent, you have a list of people that are looking for property that you've spoken to before, and you probably go to them before you go on the open market.” (Brian) Brian's account adds a further layer to this pattern of exclusion. Not only do public listings require paperwork that Stamp 2 students struggle to provide given the structural circumstances, but desirable properties may never even reach the open market at all. Applicants therefore navigate a space shaped by a double filtering process: exclusion through private pre-selection and exclusion through formal eligibility requirements.

Taken together, these findings suggest that non-EU students are not simply competing within a competitive and scarce housing market but attempting to access a space whose entry criteria are structurally misaligned with their legal and economic position. Formal housing channels thus become not merely competitive spaces, but gatekeeping mechanisms through which Stamp 2 permission holders are systematically disadvantaged.

4.5.2 Forced Displacement: Foreclosure of Choice and Informal Counter-Networks

Data indicate that repeated exclusion from formal markets led many participants to rely on informal networks for accommodation, subjecting them to unregulated forms of tenure, financial exploitation, and predatory housing arrangements. Digitally mediated spaces such as Facebook Groups, WhatsApp channels, and Instagram pages, alongside language-school networks, and personal referrals, emerged as the primary channels through which housing opportunities circulated. Mark noted that Facebook, particularly the national community groups, was his main housing resource: “That's the only reason why I still have Facebook.”(Mark)

Similarly, George found two of his three accommodations through Facebook groups and the third through a workplace contact, while Katie relied entirely on Spanish-language networks to find accommodation. Frank’s experience exemplifies a pattern that recurs across several interviews, namely that access depending on local personal connections: “A colleague of the class was moving. So he said, oh, I have a bed in a room. Do you want? And then I was like, it's everything that I need. So I don't have another choice.” (Frank) What makes this account analytically important is the use of the phrase “I don’t have another choice”. Informal housing was in fact often described not as a preferred option but as an emergency response to limited or

unavailable alternatives. From this perspective, access to housing relies on social proximity, timing, and network membership rather than formal eligibility criteria.

This systemic foreclosure of choice stands in stark contrast to the narratives of participants who managed to transition out of the Stamp 2 permission. Maria, reflecting on the structural shift brought by legal stability, explicitly contextualizes the evolution of her residential agency:

In the beginning you kind of don't have much of an option, you were just accepting and paying what you had to pay to leave here. Now I kind of have this luxury of like I want to choose the place where I'm living, I want to be close to work, I want to be close to my friends, I want to have access to parks and like restaurants stuff like that. It wasn't the case in the beginning. (Maria)

Maria's framing of basic urban and lifestyle preferences as a "luxury" emphasises how deeply compressed a non-EU student's spatial agency is during the initial arrival. The capacity to actively choose between different housing arrangements based on the quality of life, rather than merely submitting to sub-standard informal spaces out of necessity, is not a matter of individual or linguistic competence; rather, it is a structural privilege directly tied to one's legal status. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) concept of social capital, it becomes clear that participants frequently relied on relationships, community ties, and informal information channels to compensate for the absence of resources recognised by the formal housing market. Crucially, these alternative spaces were often organised around shared linguistic and national backgrounds. Here, García and Wei's (2014) concept of translanguaging helps explain how multilingual students mobilise their available linguistic repertoires to access resources beyond English-dominant institutional channels. Informal housing networks therefore functioned as an alternative space in which participants mobilised alternative social and linguistic resources to mitigate their systemic exclusion.

4.5.3 Compressed Living Standards and Physical Overcrowding

While informal networks provided access to housing, they also frequently resulted in highly precarious living conditions. Across interviews, participants described severe overcrowding, shared sleep arrangements, and dependence on informal tenancy structures. Katie reported living with thirteen other flatmates while sharing four bathrooms with only one functioning shower. Ally described sharing a bed with another person while each paid €500 monthly, and George recounted sharing a king-size bed with another tenant in a three-person room. The most extreme example came from Philip, who recalled the experience of his best friend: “They lived in a house, a big house with three or four big rooms, but 30 people, 30 people in one house with three, four rooms.” (Philip) These accounts illustrate that informal housing often operates through a logic of density rather than quality. They highlight how accommodation becomes interactionally accessible only because their living standards are compressed to levels that would rarely be tolerated within the formal sector.

Blommaert (2010) and Dovchin (2022) offer a useful framework for interpreting these findings, as they caution that structural exclusion from formal markets does not simply leave participants without housing – it redirects them into a market that profits from the very precarity and exclusion the formal market produces. Access is therefore achieved but at the cost of privacy, stability and housing quality. Informal housing practices, then, do not resolve housing insecurity so much as transform its form into a precarity characterised by overcrowding and dependence on informal arrangements.

4.5.4 Rights Without Protection: Legal Precarity and Forced Silence

A further finding concerns participants’ awareness of legal rights and their limited ability to exercise those rights even when they are aware of them. Several accounts described being aware of legal rights but declining to use them, for fear of losing

accommodation altogether. Jack described an instance where his flatmates withheld from the property owner the fact that they were living without hot water: “We can’t complain much because the risk that he asked the apartment with the excuse to refurbish is high.” (Jack) When asked about his knowledge of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB), he explained: “We refused to do it because, okay, if you do this, we don’t have another place to go.” (Jack) The word “refused” is analytically significant, as it frames inaction as a strategic decision rather than pure ignorance – echoing, once again, Ahearn’s (2001) framework of constrained agency. The participant and his flatmates were aware of the rights they could have exercised but judged the risks of doing so as outweighing the potential benefits. This acute vulnerability is reflected on two distinct structural consequences: immediate, arbitrary displacement on one hand, and chronic residential immobility on the other. Susan describes a particularly stark situation of the former; after months in an accommodation, she was told to leave within a week following a thirty-minute balcony barbecue: “they never say anything about you cannot do. He just was like; you have until the weekend to leave my place. For the barbecue. 30 minutes of barbecue, nobody, just myself.” (Susan) Conversely, Monica’s narrative reveals how the long-term anticipation of such arbitrary gatekeeping produces a form of structural immobility extending beyond individual precarity. Within the informal sector, the constant threat of eviction acts as a powerful psychological barrier to tenant agency. Despite the cramped living conditions of her accommodation, she and her husband refrained from moving from a five-year tenancy started as a Stamp 2 permission holder, because the fear of rejection and re-entering the housing market is greater than the discomfort of staying: “We don’t know what will happen next day”, and adds: “the landlord can decide and say you need to move out and you can’t find a house like this very easy in Ireland.” (Monica) Monica’s account illustrates how informal dependency

does not simply displace subjects; it structurally freezes them in substandard environments. When asked about the RTB, she stated: “I never heard that... Nobody told me.” (Monica) These accounts illustrate two distinct mechanisms producing the same outcome. Some participants were aware of the RTB but felt unable to exercise their rights, while others were never informed of those rights at all. Following Martín Rojo and Del Percio (2019), this systemic silence can be understood as an intersection of legal and communicative precarity, where formal protection exists in theory but is deemed inaccessible in practice due to the applicant’s linguistic and structural vulnerability.

4.5.5 Exploitative Dynamics: Unregulated Sublettings and Scams

The vulnerabilities generated by exclusion from the formal market also exposed participants to predatory dynamics. Multiple participants reported encountering scams – fake listings, fraudulent property owners, and unrecovered upfront deposits linked to unregulated subletting practices. Ally described being scammed and losing a substantial deposit within one week after her arrival: “I pay it, I lost 1,000 euros.” (Ally) Jack explained that warning about scams circulated among migrant communities before arrival: “The first advice that you can get from other people in Ireland: be careful with the scammers on the internet, because there are loads of them.” (Jack) The widespread circulation of these warnings suggests that scams are not isolated incidents but anticipated features of the housing search itself. Hank describes another form of exploitation: “They rent the flat and they rent you the room; they use your hardship against you to make money on you.” (Hank) John recounted a similar situation, in which an intermediary rented a property for €1,700 and sublet it for €2,500 monthly, pocketing the €800 difference. When the agents found out about this fraud, the tenants

were all abruptly evicted without notice or recourse, losing their deposit and accommodation. “The guy just disappeared.” (John)

These accounts highlight how informal housing markets generate opportunities for profit precisely because participants had fewer alternatives. The same absence of documentation and formal oversight that drives participants towards the choice of informal markets also creates the conditions under which exploitation can flourish.

Brian, when questioned on informal arrangements, acknowledged that property owners who decide to operate off the books face no meaningful oversight: “cash markets, it's between themselves!” (Brian) The phrasing “between themselves” is analytically revealing, as it reframes an informal agreement as a private deal between two equal actors. Yet, participants’ accounts suggest that the interactions among tenants and gatekeepers are characterised by deep asymmetries of power. Gatekeepers control access to a resource that is scarce, while students often enter such arrangements under conditions of urgency imposed by the spatio-temporal constraints of the Stamp 2 permission, facing limited alternatives and persistent housing insecurity. From the perspective of Rosa and Flores (2017), Brian’s framing obscures the unequal social positions from which actors enter the institutional space, naturalising a fundamentally unequal relationship as a matter of simple individual choice. In this reading, Brian’s choice of words suggests that responsibility for structural inequality is displaced onto individuals, obscuring the broader housing system that produces these precarious conditions.

5 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine the structural dynamics and exclusionary practices of Dublin's rental market, specifically exploring how its gatekeeping mechanisms intersect with sociolinguistic categorisation to affect non-EU students' access to housing. Drawing on an ethnographic fieldwork based on semi-structured interviews with fifteen non-EU students, one real estate professional, digital platform analysis, field observation and policy review, this thesis offers a sociolinguistic perspective on the mechanisms that create and maintain housing exclusion.

Crucially, the findings indicate that English language proficiency is far from being a neutral communicative barrier in the Dublin rental market. It operates as a sociolinguistic proxy for an institutional profile rooted in documentary compliance, legal permanence and unrestricted employment – a status that Stamp 2 permission holders are structurally unable to achieve, regardless of their actual communication skills. Nonetheless, language itself is not the root cause of such exclusion; rather, it functions as the ideological tool that makes underlying structural inequalities interactionally visible and enactable.

The analysis developed throughout this thesis highlights how this process operates across three interconnected dimensions. First, through the construct of the “ideal tenant” profile which has become enregistered as standard professional logic in the Irish housing market. Consequently, gatekeepers – such as the letting agent interviewed for this study – appear to be rationalising interactional factors (such as non-native accents, foreign-sounding names, Stamp 2 status, employment restrictions, and nationality) as objective risks rather than sites of systemic discrimination. Second, participants navigate these evaluative schemas by deploying an exhausting set of performative strategies that are in line with the theories of agency and capital (Goffman,

1959; Bourdieu, 1991; Ahearn, 2001). These include managing their written self-presentation, delegating communicative tasks to more legitimate speakers, concealing indexical markers of precarity and converting any type of available social or legal capital. Crucially, these adaptive strategies do not challenge the exclusionary logic of the market, but rather reinforce it, demonstrating how deeply internalised these discriminatory evaluative schemas become within the habitus of the market. Third, systematic exclusion from the formal market drives displacement into the informal market, rather than an exit. In this parallel space, lack of required documentation and also processes, strips tenants away from any legal rights or protection. In this context, the informal sector seems to be a structural product of exclusion from the formal one, rather than a separate alternative.

Taken together, these findings provide a critical sociolinguistic analysis that answers the main research question. By applying Silverstein's (2003) higher-order index, English proficiency functions as a surface cue that triggers and immediately legitimises a deeper institutional apparatus rooted in immigration laws, employment restrictions and neoliberal governance (Martín Rojo & Del Percio, 2019). According to the linguistic profiling framework (Purnell et al., 1999; Baugh, 2003, 2023), applicants may therefore be evaluated within the opening moments of interaction, long before any real exchange of objective eligibility has occurred, mediated through textual or phonological markers that index socio-legal precarity rather than communicative capacity.

6 Contributions and Future Research

This final section synthesises the broader theoretical and empirical implications of the study's findings within Dublin's rental market. It starts by outlining the specific contributions this research offers to the existing literature on language, institutional gatekeeping, and migrant precarity, highlighting how socio-legal frameworks intersect with linguistic profiling. Following this evaluation, the section outlines prospective directions for future empirical inquiry, mapping out necessary avenues for comparative demographic research and macro-political policy analysis.

6.1 Contributions

This study contributes to the current literature on language and housing access by anchoring the analysis firmly within the legal parameters of the Stamp 2 permission regime. While existing research on housing discrimination in European contexts has generally framed linguistic exclusion as a consequence of social prejudice, this study indicates that exclusion in Dublin is structurally shaped by the conditions of the Stamp 2 permission. The rental market does not seem to prefer native speakers per se; it appears to privilege a legal and institutional profile from which most non-EU students are structurally excluded. Within this context, language serves as a visible filter through which broader structural inequalities become interactionally meaningful.

These findings also carry broader sociolinguistic implications that extend beyond the housing sector. Participants' experiences of interactional self-silencing, the delegation of communicative labour, performative calibration against stereotyping, and the avoidance of legal recourse can be understood as socially produced adaptations to a field in which both linguistic and legal capital lack institutional value (Bourdieu, 1991). The fact that most participants were unaware of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) is not a coincidence: it highlights the systemic absence of institutional translation

between the legal rights that individuals should exercise and the social realities that are required to use them. This structural gap functions as a secondary, invisible layer of institutional gatekeeping.

6.2 Future Research

The findings and limitations of this study point to several distinct directions for future research. The most pressing gap is access to housing providers. Future research would benefit from recruiting a broader spectrum of market actors (letting agents, independent property owners, corporate property managers, and rental platform operators) to systematically map the institutional logics that govern tenant selection. As this study has demonstrated, gatekeeper discourse provides valuable insight into the structural logic that student narratives can only infer. A comparative analysis on the gatekeeper would allow future research to examine whether the filtering mechanisms reported in this study remain stable across the market, or vary by property type, agency size or geographical area. Institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005) would offer a powerful framework to access corporate selection procedures, email archives, or lettings management practices: the documentary infrastructures where exclusion is normalised and textualised.

Secondly, future research should prioritise populations whose housing access experiences are represented in this study only indirectly through participants' narratives. Both the present findings and previous qualitative research (Grotti et al., 2018; Gusciute et al., 2022) indicate that non-EU residents in Dublin encounter particularly severe forms of racialised filtering. Research centring these communities and examining how name-based, phenotype-based, and language-based discrimination intersect would substantially deepen current understandings of racialised housing exclusion beyond the linguistic profiling framework. Furthermore, comparative research involving European (EU) students and Irish nationals would provide an important baseline for understanding

how legal status, local linguistic capital, and social networks shape access to the same housing market.

Thirdly, the findings concerning the informal housing market indicate that its accessibility, exploitability, and structural dependence on the formal sector warrant longitudinal investigation. While the study documents subletting arrangements, scam networks, overcrowding and the absence of legal recourse across multiple participants, the scope of a master's thesis does not permit an extended analysis of the property owners and the intermediaries involved. Such research would provide a richer understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics underpinning informal housing, including the relationships between sub-tenants, primary tenants, intermediaries and property owners, as well as the role social networks play in determining access to informal accommodation. Crucially, this micro-level analysis should be complemented by macro-level policy research examining how the Irish government structurally addresses the ongoing housing crisis and whether existing legislative frameworks adequately protect temporary migrant populations.

A longitudinal design might allow for a substantial enrichment of the analysis conducted in this study. Participants described trajectories spanning months, and in some cases years, marked by transitions from a Stamp 2 to Stamp 4 permission, from informal to formal housing, and from interactional vulnerability to strategic communicative confidence. Following newly arrived non-EU students over time would provide valuable insight into how chronotopic positioning evolves alongside legal status, linguistic capital, and social networks.

Finally, this study is situated within a particular context in Dublin, characterised by the convergence of a severe housing crisis, a large English Language teaching (ELT) sector, and a distinctive immigration regime. Future comparative research could

examine how non-EU students navigate rental markets across other Irish cities, such as Cork, Galway, Limerick, or Waterford, where housing conditions, local rental markets, and the concentration of English language schools differ from those found in the capital. Such comparison would help determine the extent to which the sociolinguistic gatekeeping mechanisms documented in this thesis reflect dynamics specific to Dublin or are also evident elsewhere in Ireland.

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8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Initial contact message for non-EU students

Hi there!

I hope you're doing great! I'm finishing my Master's in Barcelona and writing my thesis about international students who move to Dublin to study English.

Specifically, I'd like to learn more about how you navigated finding an accommodation in Dublin. For this reason, I would like to ask you to participate in an anonymous online interview (45–60 mins) on Google Meet. Would you be happy to do that?

If you'd like to participate, please let me know and we can find a time that works best for you!

Thank you,

Micol

Appendix 2: Interview questions for non-EU student

TFM

Micol Zumpano

Interview Guide

Linguistic Capital and Housing Precarity: A Sociolinguistic Study of Non-EU Students navigating the Dublin Rental Market.

Research Project Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I have reached out to you because I am conducting research into the Dublin rental market, specifically focusing on language and the housing experiences of international students. I am eager to hear your perspective on the current landscape and any insight you can share regarding the process.

To ensure that I accurately remember what you explain, I would like to record this session. The recordings will only be accessed by the research team and will not be shared publicly. You are free to skip any question or stop the interview at any time. Ready?

Interview questions:

Part 1: Life Background and Language

1. What made you decide to move to Ireland?
2. Where are you from?
3. What languages do you speak?
4. What was your job or studies back home?
5. Are you working in Dublin or have you worked in Dublin before?
6. How would you describe your journey with the English language since you arrived? Have you taken any courses to learn English?
7. When do you use English in your daily life and who do you speak it to?
8. Has your knowledge of English ever limited what you can do in your daily life? Can you share any moments where you have had difficulties?-> have you ever used your phone to translate something?

Part 2: First Encounters with the Dublin Housing Market

9. Were you aware beforehand of the difficult housing situation in Dublin?
10. Can you walk me through the story of your experience in getting an accommodation in Dublin?
 - a. For example, how did you find out about your first accommodation? How about other places where you have lived? What sort of accommodation were they?
 - b. What did you have to pay?
 - c. What neighbourhood of Dublin was it in?
 - d. Did you use any informal network (mouth to mouth, friends, WhatsApp groups), specific digital platforms (Daft.ie, Rent.ie), property agency (Dublin Lettings, Savills Ireland, or your school's housing office?

- e. Did you have to create a profile in order to use the platform? Tell me about your profile. Did you have a picture?
- f. Did you contact the property owner or did they contact you?
- g. In the case you contacted the property owner directly, how did you do it? Through writing or by phone?
- h. When you communicated with property owners, what information did you decide to include and what to leave out? What kind of impression do you think your message or conversation gave?
- i. Did you ever get advice about how to be successful at finding a place to live?

Part 3: Tenant Profile

- 11. What do you think property owners pay attention to when renting a property?
 - a. Does it make a difference if you are a woman or a guy?
 - b. Is it important to have employment?
 - c. Who the guarantor is?
 - d. What your legal status in Ireland is?
 - e. Being able to communicate in English?
 - f. Is ethnic background and nationality important?
 - g. What makes you think these factors are important?
- 12. Did you feel you had to downplay/soften/modulate/hide any aspect of your background when speaking to property owners?
- 13. Can you share a moment where you felt your English let you down during housing search? And one where it helped?

Part 4: Informal Housing Market

- 14. Have you ever found a place to live through informal means (such as friends, friends of friends, or word of mouth)? Which ones?
- 15. Why did you opt for a more informal contact for finding accommodation?
- 16. Were there any benefits or negative aspects of finding accommodation informally?
- 17. Did you feel vulnerable, or that property owners are more arbitrary or can take advantage of you more easily?

Part 5: Renting Conditions

- 18. What documents were you required to submit when signing a lease?
 - a. Age
 - b. Bank account
 - c. PPS number
 - d. Type of Visa and IRP

- e. Passport
 - f. Guarantor (who it is)
 - g. Pay slips from current job
 - h. Job contracts
 - i. Any particular form
 - j. Deposit and upfront payment
19. When things weren't right in your accommodation, what factors influenced how much you felt you could complain or push back?
- a. Can you tell me about a time you contacted the owners about a problem (e.g. repairs, noises)? What was that conversation like?
20. What is your understanding of legal requirements for renters (like the **RTB**)? How did you learn (or not learn) that information?

Part 6: Closing

21. Has anything about your experience of finding housing in Dublin stayed with you—something that changed how you think or feel about living in Dublin?
22. If you could share something about housing with a student support service, what's one thing you'd want them to know?

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your experience with me.

Appendix 3: Interview question for property provider

TFM

Micol Zumpano

Interview Guide

Linguistic Capital and Housing Precarity: A Sociolinguistic Study of Non-EU Students navigating the Dublin Rental Market.

Research Project Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I have reached out to you because I am conducting research into the Dublin rental market, specifically focusing on language and the housing experiences of international students. I am eager to hear your perspective on the current landscape and any insight you can share regarding that process.

To ensure that I accurately remember what you explain, I would like to record this session. The recordings will only be accessed by my supervisor and I and will not be shared publicly. You are free to skip any question or stop the interview at any time. Ready?

Interview questions:

Opening – Background

1. Could you tell me a little about how you got into property rentals and how long you've been working in this area in Dublin?
2. How would you describe your role in renting properties, do you work mainly with property owners, tenants, or both?
3. Do you mainly deal with long-term rentals, short-term, or a mix? What kind of properties do you typically handle?
4. When did you begin working in the real-estate business? Has the Dublin rental market changed significantly since you started working in it? Could you share what you think some of those recent changes are?

The Listing

5. When a property becomes available, what steps do you take next?
6. What information do you typically provide when listing a property, is there anything you always include or leave out? Where do you usually advertise the property?

Receiving Inquiries

7. Once a property is listed, what usually happens next, how do inquiries typically come in?
8. Do you tend to receive more written inquiries or phone calls, and does the format affect how you handle them?
9. When you receive a high volume of inquiries, how do you manage that?

Moving Toward a Viewing

10. At what point do you start deciding who to invite for a viewing?
11. Is there any point where you ask potential tenants for information or documentation before the viewing takes place?

12. Do property owners ever specify what they're looking for in a tenant before viewings are arranged or do you automatically have a sense of what they are looking for? If so, how do you know what to owners want?

The Viewing

13. Could you walk me through what actually takes place in a viewing? From your angle what are you/property owners looking out for?
14. Do you usually conduct viewings individually or with multiple candidates at once?
15. How does the post-viewing work, what is the follow-up process with candidates? Do you discuss with the owner the various applicant options?

Selection and Documentation

16. Once viewings are completed, how does the selection process work , who is involved in making the final decision?
17. At what stage are documents typically requested, before the viewing, after, or once someone is selected, and what is usually required?

Closing

18. If you had to give advice to someone renting out a property for the first time in Dublin, what would you tell them?

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your experience with me.

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Study: *Linguistic Capital and Housing Precarity: A Sociolinguistic Study of Non-EU Students navigating the Dublin Rental Market.*

Researcher

Student: Micol Zumpano, Master student, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, MA Programme: English Studies: Linguistic, Literary and Sociocultural Perspectives,

Research Aim

This study is being undertaken to fulfil the requirements for my MA thesis in the English Department at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The goal of the present study is to understand the role of language in mediating access to housing for non-European students living in Dublin.

Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without explanation and without consequences. If you withdraw, your data will be deleted.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- Answer some brief background questions about your migration trajectory, language history, and work/study situation.
- Take part in a recorded online interview (approximately 60 minutes).
- Discuss your experiences related to your experience living in Dublin

You will not be asked to disclose sensitive legal or financial information, and your identity will remain strictly confidential. This entails the use of pseudonyms, the elimination of any identifying details. Audio recordings will be stored securely and accessed only by the researcher and supervisor, and data will be destroyed or fully anonymised 5 years after the completion of the project. No financial compensation is available for your participation.

Your personal data will be processed exclusively for academic research purposes in accordance with European data protection regulations. Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

Recording and Use of Your Information

Please tick as appropriate:

- ☐ I agree to a recorded online interview.
- ☐ I agree that anonymised quotes from my interview may be used in academic publications.
- ☐ I agree that anonymised excerpts may be used in academic presentations.

Consent

I have read and understood the information provided.

I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Contact information

For further information regarding your rights regarding access, rectification, or deletion of data you may contact me or my supervisor.

Micol Zumpano

Email: micol.zumpano@autonoma.cat

Prof. Melissa Moyer

Email: Melissa.Moyer@uab.cat

Appendix 5: Email for information set

Hello again! Thank you so much for your precious contribution, I really enjoyed talking to you! Would you mind sharing the following information with me?

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Country of Origin / Nationality:
4. English Language Course Enrolment (how many courses you took there):
5. Length of Residence in Dublin (how long have you stayed there for):
6. Legal status/permission there:

Let me know if you have any questions, or problems. Thank you so much again!

Kindest regards,

Micol Zumpano

micol.zumpano@autonoma.cat