



The power of languages



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

UK Research
and Innovation

'Learning another language is like an oyster because it might take a while for it to open, but when it does you find a pearl inside'

Participant in *LinguaMania, Creative Multilingualism*

Welcome

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects from archaeology and the creative and performing arts, to design, heritage and languages. The research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides economic, social and cultural benefits to the UK, but contributes to the culture and welfare of societies around the globe.

Here, Professor Edward Harcourt, Director of Research, Strategy and Innovation for AHRC introduces the Open World Research Initiative on Modern Languages (OWRI).

'We live in a world today where 'global English' is on the rise and the uptake of modern languages nationally is in decline.

'Yet the UK is a linguistically diverse society, one where we don't have to travel to find a use for modern languages, including sign languages.

'Broadening this knowledge of linguistic and cultural diversity among the public, key stakeholders and policymakers is vital to develop effective policy that reflects and promotes a multilingual society based on a mutual respect for cultural diversity.

'This is why the Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) exists. Established in 2016 by AHRC, the project has received a £16 million investment over four years to demonstrate the value and strategic importance of languages at local, national and global levels.

'OWRI is methodologically innovative, ambitious and interdisciplinary. It is carried out by four lead programmes, and involves collaboration between 17 UK Universities working with over 75 non-academic partners across the globe. The ultimate aim of the programme is to reinvigorate research in modern languages.

'Throughout this publication, we have highlighted the positive impact of OWRI research to date, along with its successful public engagement and policy activities. Together, it indicates the further potential of OWRI to help facilitate the belief that language learning can contribute to enhanced intercultural understanding, our economy, health and wellbeing, social cohesion and education.'



Edward Harcourt
AHRC Director of Research

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What's on?
Get involved!

From shaping a national strategy for modern languages to addressing the modern languages crisis, the Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) consists of four programmes that are working with key bodies and organisations to place languages at the heart of UK society, policy and culture...

Transforming modern languages research in the UK

Unlocking language motivation in education with creativity

Creative Multilingualism

Led by Professor Katrin Kohl at the University of Oxford, the *Creative Multilingualism* programme investigates the interconnection between linguistic diversity and creativity, with the aim of making modern languages more visible, valued and vibrant.

The research is being conducted in the context of an unprecedented crisis in language learning in UK schools, which is in turn undermining the health of modern language departments in universities. The crisis has many causes, but the bigger picture is globalisation. While the rise of English has reduced the incentive for learning another language among Anglophone learners, globalisation has also increased the UK's linguistic diversity. Many UK schools now teach pupils with some 50-100 languages between them. *Creative Multilingualism* proceeds from the premise that this diversity is a tremendous national asset, and that we should all tap into our natural talent for learning and using different languages, dialects and

varieties – because languages are not just useful for practical transactions. They give us a vital medium for creative thought, expression and interaction with others. This makes language learning lastingly rewarding and it can strengthen modern languages across educational sectors.

Within its research this programme asks, how does multilingualism stimulate creativity? What kinds of creativity are involved in multilingualism? How do these different kinds of creativity manifest themselves in multilingual processes? Through seven strands, the programme aims to present linguistic diversity as a valuable resource for individuals to unlock their creative potential. Research outputs include a range of conferences, exhibitions, events, workshops, discussions and concerts. Highlights include *Slanguages*, an exhibition that explores languages in the creative economies, a series of multilingual poetry workshops and *LinguaMania*, a language-based community activity event.

Learn more at www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk



About Katrin Kohl: Principal Investigator for the *Creative Multilingualism* programme, and lead of its *Metaphor* strand, Katrin is a Professor of German Literature within the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, University of Oxford and a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford.



*We are Children of the World,
a multilingual concert, Creative
Multilingualism*

From monolingual to multilingual - how everyone benefits

*Multilingualism: Empowering Individuals,
Transforming Societies (MEITS)*

Led by Professor Wendy Ayres-Bennett at the University of Cambridge, *MEITS* seeks to transform the health of the discipline of Modern Languages in the UK, attitudes towards multilingualism, and language policy at home and abroad. 'MEITS' key research question', explains Wendy, 'is to explore how multilingualism can benefit the individual, enrich culture, enhance communities and foster social cohesion. However, it is equally important to consider the extent to which multilingualism potentially disadvantages individuals, dilutes culture, divides communities and fragments societies. *MEITS* is particularly interested in looking at how government policy deals with these issues.'

The *MEITS* programme includes six research strands that together aim to create transformative synergies across a range of disciplines (literary,

film and cultural studies, linguistics, history of ideas, education, and cognitive neuroscience), through a blending of research methodologies, through collaboration with international partners (Universities of Bergen, Girona, Peking and the Chinese University of Hong Kong) and, crucially, through the co-creation of research with non-HE partners in the cultural sector, education, publishing, the voluntary sector, business, and government.

Outcomes of *MEITS'* research include a variety of community projects, especially the creation of a pop-up museum of languages in Autumn 2019, and policy initiatives – such as campaigning for a Chief Government Linguist – to highlight the importance of languages across a range of government departments and vital policy issues.

Learn more at www.meits.org



About Wendy Ayres-Bennett: Principal Investigator for the *MEITS* programme, Wendy is Professor of French Philology and Linguistics at the University of Cambridge and specialises in the history of French and the history of linguistic thought. Her research interests include standardisation and codification, linguistic ideology and policy, variation and change.

‘We aim to create new knowledge about multilingualism, and the opportunities it presents to individuals and to wider society’

Professor Wendy Ayres-Bennett

Multilingualism: Empowering Individuals, Transforming Societies

The value of languages



CULTURAL AWARENESS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Across interlinked strands, our research demonstrates the importance of cultural insight and sensitivity in a changing Europe



SOCIAL COHESION

Through researching questions of identity, diversity and social cohesion, we explore how languages can bring communities together



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We are providing evidence for the benefits of speaking more than one language on cognition and wellbeing throughout the lifespan



EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

We are examining how to improve motivation and achievement in language learning in schools and beyond



ECONOMIC IMPACT AND EMPLOYABILITY

Across the project, we highlight the skills linguists bring to business, trade and the economy



Rethinking how we experience, practise, teach and research languages

Language Acts and Worldmaking

Led by Professor Catherine Boyle at King's College London, the *Languages Acts and Worldmaking* programme examines how we learn languages, teach languages, and engage with our own culture and the cultures of others through languages. The project investigates these issues across six research strands.

Travelling Concepts asks how the global languages of Spanish and Portuguese have connected and separated communities across time and place. The strand explores how our research can re-energise the Modern Languages curriculum in schools and universities.

Translation Acts thinks about how we use the stage to imagine new worlds, and proposes creativity and playfulness as central to creating agency in language learners. It engages with

international theatre practices and traditions to put these questions into action.

Digital Mediations examines the role of digital culture and technology in transforming modern languages research and learning, and asks how data-driven research can bring about new insights that benefit our multilingual society.

Loaded Meanings investigates how new words enter a language and how they affect speakers' perceptions of the world around them. The strand is developing materials that can be used to stimulate learners' interest in how we create new words in our language.

Diasporic Identities is concerned with how language teachers construct their personal and professional identities and how language teaching mediates between languages and cultures. This strand asks what changes are required to develop



About Catherine Boyle: Director, *Language Acts and Worldmaking* and lead for its *Translation Acts* strand, Catherine is a Professor of Latin American Cultural Studies at King's College London. She is a translator of Latin American theatre and poetry, and has published widely on Latin American culture, theatre and performance and on women's writing and gender. She was a co-founder of the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, and Principal Investigator on the theatre translation project www.outofthewings.org

and expand language provision within and beyond institutional structures.

Language Transitions targets transitions between language learning stages, and explores how we can make those transitions fluid, rather than a series of obstacles for language learners. Through this strand we ask how we can combine our research with curiosity, playfulness and creativity to open up language learning and intercultural potential.

The research activity of *Language Acts and Worldmaking* was exemplified in its first conference, *Languages Memory* (June 2018), which explored the ways in which languages are experienced, practised, taught and researched, with panels and workshops covering the history of language learning and language policy, travelling concepts, language in translation and performance, classroom practice, linguistics and digital culture.

Learn more at www.languageacts.org



Language Acts and Worldmaking, *Languages Memory*

Impacting language policy and identity in global communities

Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community

Led by Professor Stephen Hutchings at the University of Manchester, the consortium aims, in his words, 'to reconceptualise the relationship between modern languages and community for the benefit of a more open world'. It is structured around three research strands whose focus is as follows:

Multilingual Communities looks at the growing linguistic diversity of urban communities around the globe and its implications for the structure of language and communication, identity, and policy. Among the many policy outcomes of this strand is a partnership with the city of Manchester's local authorities and local cultural institutions to draft strategies to engage with the city's diverse language communities.

Transnational Communities investigates the dynamics of political, social and cultural interaction across communities that share a single language, but are dispersed across multiple states and cultures. One of the key, early outputs of this strand has been an award-winning play addressing the experiences of cancer sufferers across the Arabic-speaking world and performed in Beirut.

Translingual Communities covers the formation of communities across language boundaries through translation and forms of non-linguistic or semi-linguistic cultural creativity such as music. This is leading to, for example, an operatic re-tracing of the mythical journey of Daedalus and Icarus with a libretto in multiple languages and exploring contemporary attitudes to migrant language practices.

Learn more at: www.projects.alc.manchester.ac.uk/cross-language-dynamics/



About Stephen Hutchings: Principal Investigator of the *Cross-Language Dynamics* programme, Stephen is a Professor of Russian Studies at the University of Manchester. He is a Fellow of The Academy of Social Sciences, a former President of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies, the Associate Editor of the Russian Journal of Communication and an editorial board member of Europe-Asia Studies and Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media.

女 ЛЮБОВ

Verständnis

pa.z.

love + hate

FRIEDEN Tolerancia

Kieran Cox

Happiness

Toleranz

Friendship

Zoriontasuna

happiness

Peace

beau

Add up the Snap Kieran 36669

mamã

魔法

NOVAS EXPERIÊNCIAS

SORRISI

TRUE LIFE & LOVE

Freedom

Freedom &

Forgiveness

HAPPINESS! JOY

DÉPAYSEMENT Communication

Comaissance

Freedom



From her Belfast base, language academic Janice, talks about her daily motivation, the best part of her work, and why languages matter.

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Professor Janice Carruthers

A LIFE IN A DAY

I'm responsible for...

As Leadership Fellow for modern languages with the AHRC, I help to shape and promote the research agenda in modern languages, and work very closely with the OWRI projects. I also run a three-year funded project on language policy entitled *Foreign, Indigenous and Community Languages in the Devolved Regions of the UK: Policy and Practice for Growth*. As a former Head of Modern Languages in Queen's Belfast, part of my job there has always been advocacy for the subject.

My typical day...

One of the things I like most about my work is that there is no such thing as a typical day! I could be at my office at Queen's by 9am for reading, writing, supervising research projects; or on a 7am flight to

London, Glasgow, Cambridge or Paris to meet with other researchers or to speak at an event. Whether it is the Society for French Studies or for Italian Studies, the Arabic Mapping Group or the British Academy Languages Advisory Group, we gather either for a research-focused event, or to address some of the challenges around promoting the value of languages. To relax, I sing once a month in a chamber choir and do the odd concert. Music is a language too: skills in intonation, pitch and tone are common to music and languages.

I got the job...

It wasn't necessarily the plan to go home to Belfast after completing my degree in Modern Languages at Cambridge. I just found myself quickly and unexpectedly being confronted with a job offer from Queen's. In some ways it was too early for me



‘At a personal level, when visiting a part of the world where I can speak the language, I feel I can connect in a completely different way, with a perspective that is partly ‘internal’ because language is the primary route into another culture’

because I was at the beginning of my PhD thesis in Cambridge. On the other hand it was a permanent job in a great university, in a city I love, so I knew I had to take it. I soon met my husband Mícheál at Queen’s, where he’s a professor in Irish, and we had Méabh, and Eoghan who are both teenagers now. In 2016 I saw the AHRC’s call for a Leadership Fellow in Modern Languages and applied for it because strong advocacy for languages is absolutely crucial at the moment.

I’d like to learn...

...To speak a couple of other languages – especially Italian and Irish. Italian in order to acquire another Romance language and to learn more about Italian culture; and Irish because it is so fundamental to my own sense of place. My husband is from the West of Ireland and he speaks Irish to our children; I’m envious that they can learn the language so naturally. In Belfast, there are over 70 languages spoken. The mayor of Belfast has just launched a new five-year ‘Language Strategy’ to help our city become more inclusive. It’s a step in the right direction.

The best part of my job...

...Is working with others who share a passion for languages – researchers, teachers, students, business people, policymakers and others. This could involve participation in a conference in my own research area of French Linguistics; or a

policy event around languages with civil servants and academics co-organised with *MEITS*; or a meeting with the UK University Heads of Schools of Languages to talk about issues of concern. I also love days spent at my desk working on research publications (these days are hard to find!). And I get to meet inspirational people in the ‘languages community’ such as Linda Ervine, who has broken the mould in setting up Turas in East Belfast, where Irish language classes are thriving in the Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist community.

My motivation...

At a personal level, when visiting a part of the world where I can speak the language, I feel I can connect in a completely different way, with a perspective that is partly ‘internal’ because language is the primary route into another culture. My greatest connection will probably always be to France where it all began when I was 14. For three years running, I spent every July living with a French family, then their daughter Catherine would spend every August with us. My research is directly on the French language itself (looking, for example, at the way French is used by different groups of speakers or in different media or contexts), so for me, there is also a fascination with how language works. French and (my much less fluent) German have allowed me to connect culturally in Switzerland, Germany and Canada too.

My vision...

In the bigger picture, both at home and abroad, communication and understanding are vital for international relations, business and stability. I see languages as central to achieving these goals. With the policy work I'm involved in and the research programmes across the OWRI initiative, we are trying to make sure that all languages, including those the newcomer communities bring, are valued across society. Our children need the intercultural skills gained from learning languages for their future as they will grow up in multilingual communities and a globalised economy. In Scotland there is a '1-plus-2' language policy [based on mother tongue plus an entitlement to learn two additional languages from primary onwards]. Wales is 'bilingual-plus-1', with English and Welsh taught to all, alongside access to learning a foreign language. These are excellent initiatives. I would like to see all parts of the UK achieve a step change in how languages are valued and promoted.

Professor Janice Carruthers: My CV

2017 to 2020

AHRC Leadership Fellow in modern languages and Deputy Principal Investigator for *MEITS*

2011 to 2016

Head of the School of Modern Languages, Queen's University Belfast

1989 to present

Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Professor in French Linguistics, Queen's University Belfast

1989 to 1993

PhD in French Linguistics, Cambridge University

1988

MPhil in Linguistics, Cambridge University

1987

BA Modern and Medieval Languages (French and German), Cambridge University

For more details:

www.modernlanguagesleadershipfellow.com

IS MONOLINGUALISM MAKING US ILL?



Recent collaborative research involving the *MEITS*' team indicates that learning a language can delay the onset of dementia by up to five years, which no medicine today can compete with. Here, *MEITS*' Principal Investigator Wendy Ayres-Bennett and strand lead Dr Thomas Bak introduce the benefits of a **Healthy Linguistic Diet** and why the UK's monolingual misconceptions are impacting the health of our society.

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The Healthy Linguistic Diet (HLD) is an approach to health and wellbeing that has the potential to impact the lives of every individual the world over, as well as addressing one of the UK's biggest societal issues - the spiralling cost of caring for our aging population.

Developed as part of the *MEITS* project together with his colleague Dr Dina Mehmedbegovic (UCL), HLD is a concept based 'on an analogy between physical and mental health,' explains Dr Thomas Bak. 'Regular physical activity and a healthy diet are important factors in maintaining physical health. In the same way, the learning of languages and their regular use provide essential mental exercise leading to better brain health.'

But it's not just about improving memory, says Dr Bak. More significantly, *MEITS* researchers, working together with colleagues in India, have discovered that learning a language 'increases the cognitive reserve (the brain's ability to compensate, in part,

The cost of dementia

- The Alzheimer's Society estimates that dementia affects 1 in 6 people over the age of 80 and 850,000 people have dementia in the UK.
- Numbers are forecast to reach over 1 million by 2025 and 2 million by 2051.
- Dementia costs the UK £26.3bn a year, enough to pay the annual energy bill for every household in the country.

for emerging pathological changes), resulting in a later onset of dementia and an improved cognitive outcome after a stroke.'

Principal Investigator of *MEITS* Wendy Ayres-Bennett, says that at a time when dementia is described by WHO as a 'public health priority', the HLD approach has the potential to positively

‘The encouraging and supporting of lifelong learning of languages should be seen as part of a healthy lifestyle, as much as physical activity and a healthy, balanced, versatile diet’

impact both the individual and society at large. ‘The collaborative *MEITS* research has proved that learning languages can help delay the onset of dementia by up to four to five years. This provides society with a better option for treating dementia than any drug that is available at the moment.’

‘Although the idea of multilingualism delaying the onset of dementia might at first seem surprising, the evidence of current research in neurology, psychology and neuroscience suggests the positive effects of multilingualism and language learning on cognition’, says Dr Bak. ‘The main problem with people accepting it lies not so much in lack of evidence as in persistent prejudices and misconceptions about language and multilingualism’.

Tackling this head on is vital. ‘Replacing negative messages that languages are a burden or a problem and replacing them with affirmative messages is vital’, says Dr Bak. He advocates that ‘a multilingual environment, and the encouraging and supporting of lifelong learning of languages should be seen as part of a healthy lifestyle, as

much as physical activity and a healthy, balanced, versatile diet’.

MEITS’ vision is to incorporate HLD into public policy so that it may benefit the entire population and not just older adults. Pioneering HLD as part of the ongoing Healthy Schools Initiative is a key target. ‘This would ensure schools focus on healthy eating and lifestyle,’ says Dr Bak. ‘As well as using every opportunity to spread the message that it is good for you to eat fruit and vegetables every day, schools should also say: “It is good for you to speak, read and write in different languages”.’

If dementia treatment included NHS-funded language classes for all, the impact of the disease could be lessened, as Lingo Flamingo, a social initiative in Scotland is already finding. Based on *MEITS*’ research, it offers therapeutic language-based classes for older people, including those diagnosed with dementia and has also recently successfully piloted mixed classes with young (20-30 years) and older (55-75 years) participants. It evidences for all age groups an improvement in learners’ ability to concentrate.



About Dr Thomas Bak: Dr Bak is the leader of the *MEITS* strand *Multilingualism and Cognition: Implications for Motivation, Health and Wellbeing*. He is a Reader in Psychology at the University of Edinburgh, clinical research fellow in the Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences and Co-Director of Bilingualism Matters. He is also the president of the World Federation of Neurology, Research Group on Aphasia, Dementia and Cognitive Disorders (WFN RG ADCD).

‘The results of *MEITS*’ Isle of Skye study showed that it is the activity of practising, not necessarily the levels of language proficiency reached, that mattered’



While Dr Bak concedes, ‘languages are not a panacea’ for dementia, the research indicates that a clear shift in our society from a monolingual into a multilingual mindset has the ability to enhance community cohesion and impact the long-term health and wellbeing of our nation. But for any chance of success, it is vital that institutions in the UK instill a lifelong commitment to learning languages that starts at school age and continues long into retirement.

Learn more at:

www.healthylinguisticdiet.com

We are Children of the World,
a multilingual concert, *Creative*
Multilingualism



***MEITS*’ Wendy Ayres-Bennett addresses five common misconceptions about language learning in the UK**

MYTH 1: Languages can only be learnt by the young

FACT: You’re never too old to benefit from learning a language. Whilst learning a new language may become more difficult in older age, the positive effects of it increase. The team led by Dr Thomas Bak conducted a series of studies in a Gaelic College Sabhal Mor Ostaig on the Isle of Skye, with participants ranging in age from 18 to 78 years. The results published in 2016 demonstrated that all groups improved their attention after just one week’s language course, with the older participants benefitting in fact slightly more. This improvement persisted after nine months in those who practised the language five or more hours a week.

MYTH 2: Learning another language is only beneficial if you become fluent

FACT: Learning languages is like a form of mental gymnastics regardless of fluency. Agility is really important for brain function. Language learning and switching between languages provides mental training and involves different parts of the brain. The results of our Isle of Skye study showed that it is the activity of practising, not necessarily the levels of language proficiency reached, that mattered.

MYTH 3: The UK is a monolingual country

FACT: That is the impression. Yet, this is clearly not the case, either legally or in practice. First,

Weekly English conversation session led by *Multilingual Manchester* student volunteers at a local community centre, where students help people practise speaking English and learn more about the experiences of the city's newly arrived communities

‘Our work with schools suggests that many children who speak more than one language understand the value of having access to two languages and cultures and the community benefits that brings’



there are the indigenous languages of the UK: the Celtic languages, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Irish, and Cornish, as well as Scots and Ulster Scots. Second, there are many speakers of community languages in the UK. Immigrant populations have, for several generations now, formed a key part of the UK's linguistic diversity, to the point where, according to the 2011 Census, which certainly underestimated the UK's multilingualism because of the way the language question was asked, 7.7 per cent of the population of England and Wales do not have either English or Welsh as their main language. In inner London, over 50 per cent of school children classify as multilingual, using 233 different languages. And nearly one in five children starting primary school in the UK has a language other than English as their mother tongue.

MYTH 4: Migrant community languages are of little benefit to Brits

FACT: The languages of migrant communities are a great resource. Our work with schools suggests that many children who speak more than one language understand the value of having access to two languages and cultures and the community benefits that brings. In addition, the Department for Education found that children with English as an additional language (EAL) outperformed non-EAL in a number of subjects at GCSE in 2017. Wider research indicates that bilingual children can provide excellent learning support for their peers learning new languages. *MEITS'* education

strand is working with seven schools in London and East Anglia to inform pupils of the benefits of multilingualism and to encourage them to think of themselves as having a multilingual identity. It is hoped this will lead to enhanced motivation and proficiency in language learning.

MYTH 5: Languages are for the elite

FACT: Multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception in many parts of the world. This is true even for those with low levels of school education or who are illiterate. Research by Dr Bak and his Indian colleague, Professor Suvarna Alladi in Hyderabad, India demonstrates that the benefits of bilingualism are even more pronounced among illiterate bilinguals, who developed dementia six years later than illiterate monolinguals.

Language Acts & Worldmaking

Languages are more than just a means to communicate with the world – they are a path to a deeper, broader and more nuanced understanding of history, culture and society.

Global Iberias is an ambitious attempt to rethink an introductory course for students of Spanish and Portuguese which is informed by – and responds frontally to – the challenges of our times, institutionally and in society. The goals of Global Iberias are at the heart of Language Acts and Worldmaking and inform our approach to curriculum change in Modern Language teaching at university.

The project aims to address the transition from school to university and help move students' understanding of modern language study on from narrower linguistic competence towards a thicker, more socially and historically grounded conception of language as world making.

When students arrive at university their understanding can be focused around a very 'instrumental' appreciation of language.

Through *Global Iberias* we try to help them build up a critical literacy; a means of using language as a way of thinking about the world, the way things are

and how they came to be. We want students to look at the world and ask questions about what they see, what they don't see, and why. Questions about the imbalances of power that have shaped society and culture globally. Questions about what counts as knowledge and who produces it, cultural authority and who holds it. Questions about whose voices are heard, whose lives are remembered, and whose deaths are forgotten.

This is important because ours is an age of populist political narratives, which frame exclusionary senses of national community through both

Through *Global Iberias* we try to help them build up a critical literacy; a means of using language as a way of thinking about the world.



Mezquita de Córdoba

foundational fictions and divisive solidarities of “Us” and “Them”, pitting the “left behind” victims of globalisation against the “cosmopolitan”, liberal elites, on the one hand, and the “welfare draining” immigrant, refugee and asylum seeking “outsiders”, on the other.

Most students who come to these languages bring with them culturally inherited understanding of the expansion of European civilization around the world and how that shaped global history. But this understanding is shaped by imperial and colonial views built up to justify it. *Global Iberias* provides an environment to critically challenge these assumptions.

We hope that by bridging the gap between school and university more effectively we can help students become more intellectually ambitious, thoughtful learners that actively question some of the assumptions we all live with.

This in turn will have an impact in the world. Students aren’t just students. They are part of the world: they go online, they consume news media, they interact with others. We want to help them go from seeing the news in a decontextualised form and move towards developing a more nuanced understanding through their knowledge of language.

Part of this involves promoting a greater awareness of the huge range of study being undertaken; the

notion that our department simply focuses on Spanish and Portuguese is a misnomer. All kinds of languages are in the mix. Medieval Iberia was Sefarad and al-Andalus. Hebrew and Arabic, and various combinations of the languages and scripts of Jews, Christians and Muslims made up the cultural, political, philosophical and literary worlds of what we now call Spain, as well as the memories and heritage of the Andalusi and Sephardic diasporas. One Romance language—Castilian—became ‘Spanish’ and, like Portuguese, served as an imperial language, transformed in the contact zones of trade and conquest, violence and wonder. And the process continues today: the languages of migrants and minorities is an important part of how Spanish and Portuguese are developing – in Spain and Portugal, no less than in South America, or in Lusophone Africa, or among Latino/a communities in the US.

At a time when the discourse of a clash of civilizations has been re-grounded anew in scaremongering and dog whistle politics over a Hispanic “challenge” to America and a Muslim “challenge” to European societies, al-Andalus and Medieval Iberia have gained new and hotly polemic topicality, championed and contested as exemplary model or hoodwinking myth.

If the meaning is in the usage, then the study of Modern Languages is about helping students to learn how to read and map the world anew.

Multilingual Poetry in Schools

Nowhere is the UK's multilingualism more evident than in our school playgrounds, with over 100 languages being spoken in some schools. But this language diversity isn't as visible and valued as it should be.

The *Creative Multilingualism project* is encouraging children to discover their language skills and the joys and benefits of the languages spoken in their classroom.

For example, the *Prismatic Translation* strand of the project has teamed up with a poetry club in local secondary school Oxford Spires Academy. Strand lead Professor Matthew Reynolds and writer Kate Clanchy invited poets and writers from across the globe to lead workshops in languages spoken by the pupils, including Swahili, Arabic, Portuguese and Polish.

As one workshop assistant noted: "It was moving to witness their sudden realisation that Polish could be a viable and valuable medium of creative expression, and not just a hidden, superfluous or even vaguely embarrassing language."

Poems emerging from these workshops have been printed in pamphlets, tweeted and re-tweeted, and have won national awards.

Lament for Syria by 13-year old Amineh Abou Kerech won the Betjeman Poetry Prize in 2017. The poem inspired Welsh composer Karl Jenkins, and his musical setting was premiered by the BBC National Chorus of Wales in October 2018.

Prismatic Translation is exploring the conceptual and creative consequences of working with translation not as a process of achieving correct alignments between standardised languages, but as creative

re-making of language using a range of linguistic resources.

Matthew Reynolds explains that "translation is part of the creativity of languages. Moving back and forth between one language and another (even one you don't know well, or are just starting to learn) can help you come up with new forms of expression, and new ideas."

شعر عن الام

امي الغالية العزيرة، لما كنت اذهب إلى البيت و الحنين كان
يسبقوني، ام احبك.
انت التي ربيتيني و تعبتني علي، امي الغالية

The word Ummī – My Mother

My beloved mother.
When I go to my house, the pain of missing her
Arrives before me.

Mohammed Assaf (12)

The UK's Creative Industries are booming – accounting for 5.4% of the UK economy – and the vibrant diversity of languages spoken in theatre, music, stand-up comedy and the visual arts are a key part of their success.

Slanguages

Languages in the Creative Economy

Slanguages, led by Professor Rajinder Dudrah of Birmingham City University, shines a spotlight on the energizing contribution made by UK languages and dialects to the creative industries. These languages range from Arabic, Russian, Polish and Yoruba to different forms of patois, pidgin and sign language.

Slanguages forms part of *Creative Multilingualism's* research into the ways in which the interaction between languages in the performing arts generates creativity.

The researchers are working to create exhibitions and concerts, theatre events and rap performances

with a wide range of partners, including Punch Records, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and Sputnik Theatre Company, London.

Collaborative research is identifying the significance of linguistic diversity for the creative aims of the artists, and investigating the creative processes involved in negotiating the interaction between different languages in the performance. A further focus of the research is the role of languages and creativity in foregrounding, negotiating, and/or downplaying cultural difference.

A touring exhibition of *Slanguages* features the work, archives and ephemera of four Birmingham-based artists who use different languages in their work. A collaboration with Lady Sanity and Stanza Divan is experimenting with the translation of *Oxygen* – a Russian play by Ivan Viripaev – into hip hop theatre. And deaf stand-up comedian and film maker Rinkoo Barpaga is participating in research on the use of 'Urban Sign Language' among ethnic minorities.

Follow #*Slanguages* on Twitter to stay up to date with upcoming events or find out more in the Projects section of the *Creative Multilingualism* website: www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk.



How languages changed my

In a preview of their forthcoming book, **How Languages Changed My Life**, **MEITS** programme leader **Wendy Ayres-Bennett** together with linguist **Heather Martin** discover the real difference learning a language has made to the lives of sportspeople, entrepreneurs, reporters, MPs, and more...

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THE ENTREPRENEUR



Paul Hughes

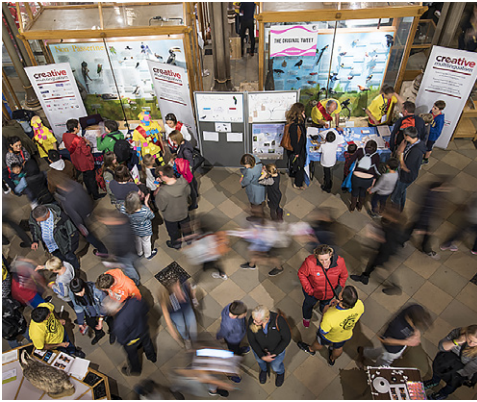
'It's like living life in four dimensions'

Former RAF linguist turned forensic scientist and entrepreneur, Paul Hughes, 49, says learning French, Russian and Arabic set him up for life after a rocky start in the Valley...

'It was the worst feeling ever the day I had to tell my father I'd failed all three of my A Levels.

'The shock was all the greater because I'd been the scholar of the family. I come from Pontypridd in the Rhondda Valley, which is coal country, and most of my forebears had been miners. My father had a few O Levels but I was the first to break the magic barrier of five, with a French CSE as an added bonus.

'I loved French, I used to tune in to long-wave radio in my bedroom just to listen to the sound of it. But it wasn't cool to like French, or to shine academically. When I was growing up it was: *We don't go to university, that's for posh people*. So you didn't think much of yourself.



Public engagement with
languages, *Creative*
Multilingualism

'It wasn't like that at my primary school. I adored it. The teachers gave me freedom to exercise my entrepreneurial spirit. They let me set things up, like a chess club, and the school's first newspaper. I was dyslexic, but it wasn't diagnosed until my daughter was having trouble with her reading. Turned out she had mild dyslexia but I was off the scale. Which explained a lot of things.

'The truth is failing those A Levels fired me up to succeed. I had my fair share of *hwyl* to drive me on. *Hwyl* defines the Valley spirit: motivation and passion mixed in with a healthy dose of grit. I'm not a Welsh speaker, though my mother is, but you can't be Welsh and not know about *hwyl* and of course, *cwtch*, which is one of those untranslatable words that expresses the safety and security of a warm embrace.

'After that I did a short stint as a labourer then landed a position with the Burton Group. I learned about people and the art of conversation: two parts listening to one part talking, which is why we have two ears and only one mouth.

'Cardiff was ethnically diverse and I was equally at ease with people from all places and backgrounds. After a while retail started to feel like groundhog day. I wanted to do something of significance. It's a characteristic multilingual people have in common, in my view, a degree of social awareness, an awareness of others.

'So I tried joining the Royal Air Force for the second time, and went with cap in hand to the recruitment office. They said: I remember you like languages. You don't have any qualifications, but we could send you off for a language aptitude test. We're short of listeners in the field. I hustled over to the RAF base and did the test to train as a Communications Systems Analyst (Voice). Got top marks. Which took me, for one, totally by surprise. It was like all my dreams coming true. I was headed for Berlin, the adventure was on.

'Until I failed the progress tests twice. Suddenly Berlin was receding fast. Then finally I cracked it. Learning Russian, I needed a quiet environment and a different approach. I discovered flashcards to get those words into the 'Snap-chat' part of my brain. After the first Gulf War I learnt Arabic and was initially deployed to an Army Regiment in Cyprus as an Arabic interpreter before going on to serve as a weapons inspector all over the Middle East.

'All that language training has rewired my brain. I can learn more quickly, spot things more quickly, make decisions more quickly. I'm operating simultaneously on as many levels as I have languages, my synapses are working overtime. I once had an MRI scan to look at the effect of multilingualism on the brain. You could see the hippocampus lighting up when I was exposed to Arabic, and then, when it was another language that I didn't know, my brain went nuts, trying to make sense of all those new signals.

‘Languages are right there in the DNA. You just need to unlock it. But whatever you end up doing, being able to speak other languages means you’ll do it quicker and better. That I guarantee’

‘For me, language learning is a multi-sensory thing. When I see a cube of sugar on the table I see it and hear it and taste it in four languages, in four different cultures, in four different cuisines. It’s like I’m living life in four dimensions.

‘When I left the RAF I went into mentoring and set up my own forensic science company. I’m a capitalist who likes to give back, especially when I see young people grappling with the kinds of challenges I faced myself. I still practise my Arabic every day. I start each morning with a new word and listen to the radio, just like I did with French when I was 10 years old. Oh, and I married a French teacher too.

‘Languages are right there in the DNA. You just need to unlock it. But whatever you end up doing, being able to speak other languages means you’ll do it quicker and better. That I guarantee.’

THE REPORTER



Carrie Gracie

‘Speaking Chinese makes my foreignness invisible’

‘I’ve spent many years tracking one village in southwest China. It’s called White Horse Village and it’s a place with its own strong dialect, coloured by thousands of years of rice farming. Sometimes Chinese producers on the BBC crew would ask me what one of the locals was saying because my ear was more attuned not just to the dialect but also to the agricultural metaphors. Maybe to a way of thought too. Now, when I go back, they say: “Look, it’s Carrie (凱瑞).” They welcome me almost like one of the family. That feels special.’

Manchester’s linguistic landscape, featuring signs in Chinese



THE POLITICIAN



Stephen Kinnock, Labour MP

'Languages go right to the root of me'

'Languages haven't just changed my life, they've shaped it.

'From studying at the College of Europe, to marrying a Dane, to living in Russia, I've always been a bit of a rolling stone. I've always wanted to travel and see the world. Now, as a politician I want to reach out and listen. Languages are a major part of that.

'When I was appointed to the British Council's Russian office they packed me off for deep immersion in St Petersburg. It was a dream come true, just when I thought my language-learning days were over. I relished the mental effort required to crack the first codes you have to break to get into a language. It was like lifting heavy weights with the brain.'

THE EDITOR



Natalie Simpson

'Languages give me a sense of belonging'

'Even though I was born and raised in Cumbria, in a small village that could never be described as multicultural, I have been interested in other cultures for as long as I can remember. I am fluent in Irish, have an advanced knowledge of Welsh and Manx Gaelic, can read Scottish Gaelic and speak it fairly well.

'In 2012, I had the honour of translating Julia Donaldson's *The Gruffalo* into Manx Gaelic. It was a challenge to preserve the rhyming couplets, which you can still see in the spelling even if you don't quite know what they sound like, for example in those famous opening lines: *Hie lugh veg son shooyl stiagh dy down ayns ny keylljyn, / Honnick shynnagh yn lugh as ren eh shliee e veillyn (A mouse took a stroll through the deep dark wood. /*

A fox saw the mouse and the mouse looked good).

'The idea first came to me when I watched the Scottish Gaelic dramatisation of the book on BBC Alba. I thought, "It's in Gaelic, so why not Manx?" I translated the text and then got in touch with Adrian Cain, the Manx Language Officer, who put the wheels into motion. Manx is undergoing a major renaissance, with Manx-medium pre-schools and a primary school and lots of adult classes, and the book has proven very popular. I've even met people from England, the US and Canada who have bought copies. So I'm calling that a bestseller, in its genre.

'No one else in my family has any real interest in languages. But there is something about languages that captures my imagination. I want to discover these new horizons. Cumbria will always be my home, but as a language-learner, I can experience a sense of belonging in communities other than my own.'



Tim Vickery

'Curiosity is key to football, languages and life'

'My language skills have changed my life massively. Now, one of the best things about coming home to England is not being a celebrity, not being stopped all day every day each time I step out on the street. I'm on Brazilian TV every week. I can do a two-and-a-half-hour chat show and the Portuguese just flows.

'When I covered the 2018 World Cup it was mainly in social terms. Contrary to popular opinion, the Brazilians can't just enjoy the ride. The World Cup is them parading themselves in front of the planet, and when they're winners, everyone envying them. But they're very intolerant with not winning.

'My favourite Portuguese word is *chafariz*, which means fountain. Say it aloud and you're hearing the water. But there are two Portuguese words that

for me are absolutely vital. Any English speaker would know them, but without really knowing what they mean. The first is social, which corresponds roughly to “proper”, or “correct”, or “formal”. You might speak of a *camisa social* (a smart shirt) or an *ambiente social*. The connotations of the word are completely class-based. And it’s the same with *popular*, at the other end of the scale. It has nothing to do with popularity, but means rather “of the people”, belonging to ordinary, everyday folk. It isn’t necessarily derogatory. A sign saying *preço popular*, for example, indicates that something is affordable to everyone.

‘There are two main parts to learning a language, and I would say they’re the two main parts to being human: you’ve got to want to listen and you’ve got to want to talk.

‘Sometimes people ask me how I know all the things I know about South American football. The answer is very simple. Curiosity. Reading, listening, talking: curiosity is the key word - for football, for languages, and for life.’

‘There are two main parts to learning a language, and I would say they’re the two main parts to being human: you’ve got to want to listen and you’ve got to want to talk’

The OWRI *Cross-Language Dynamics* programme is supporting the development of a new city narrative in Manchester, one that promotes the benefits of embracing and harnessing language diversity, and other cities around the world are taking note



M A P P I N G M U L T I L I N G U A L M A N C H E S T E R

Multilingual Manchester's interactive exhibition on language diversity



In Manchester over 50 per cent of young people speak a language other than English in their homes; more than 200 languages are spoken by the city's residents; and more than 50 languages appear on signs in the city's public spaces.

The city also boasts what is probably one of the world's most comprehensive models of interpreting and translation in the health sector, where Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) responds annually to some 50,000 interpreting requests in over 100 different languages.

According to the Manchester Investment and Development Agency MIDAS, language skills are among the top five factors that attract investors



Activity from *Multilingual Manchester*'s interactive exhibition on language diversity, inviting members of the public to contribute their language skills to a 'Language Map' of the city

to the city. The city council pledges to protect and celebrate diversity and says in its mission statement: 'Our diverse population with its vast array of languages and cultures is increasingly attractive to those businesses seeking to operate in the global marketplace.'

Public service diversity planning

Yet, still, practitioners in areas such as education and speech and language therapy often struggle to convey the value of bilingualism to clients, especially parents, but also to colleagues. And managers in key public services such as the police and the NHS are searching for good practice models to plan provisions that reach out to populations of various backgrounds.

Multilingual Manchester (MLM), which was established in 2009 at the University of Manchester and now forms the core of the Multilingual Communities strand of the *Cross-Language Dynamics* programme, is drawing on the example of Manchester to evidence how important it is to appreciate and to engage with languages in a global city.

Supporting public service strategies

To do this, MLM has developed an innovative model of co-production that brings together researchers, students and local stakeholders to create impact-led reports for councils, community-engaging events, and other outputs

such as videos and digital resources that the city can use to meet its diversity goals.

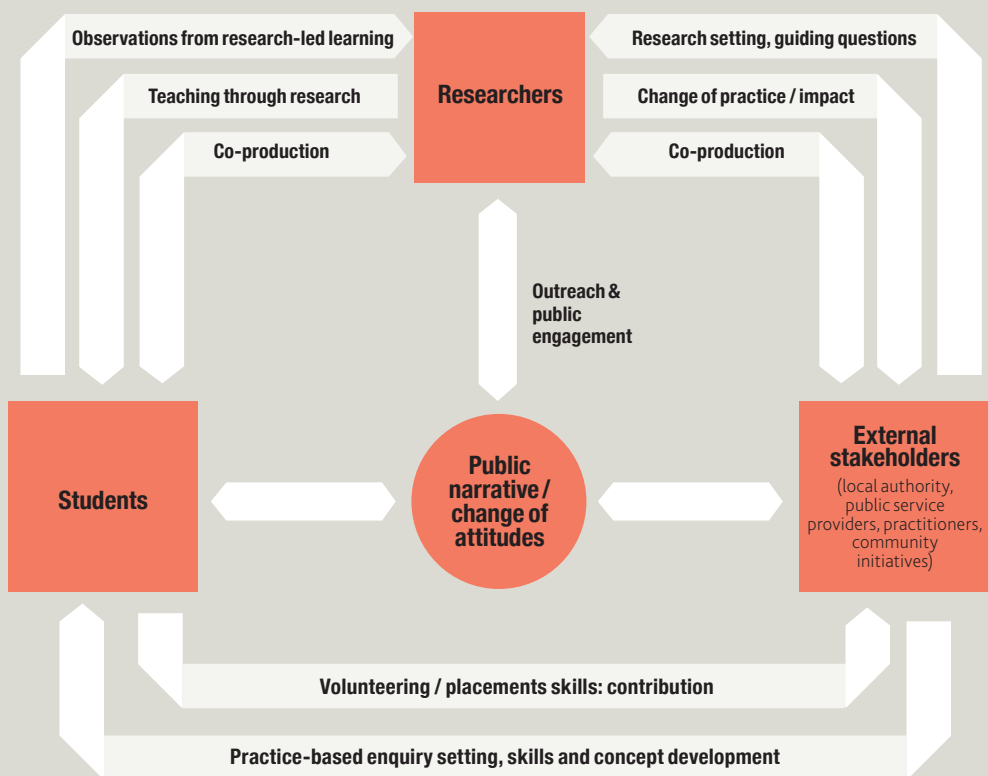
This includes the development of the world's largest online archive of reports on multilingualism in any city, and the largest online compilation of research authored by undergraduates. Students also engage directly with local stakeholders as part of a scheme that recruits over one hundred active volunteers every year for work in a variety of host institutions. Volunteers organise events and exhibitions, support English conversation sessions, run focus groups, and more.

Researchers also follow up on questions raised by external stakeholders, and contribute to shaping practice. 'This integrated agenda is part of an over-arching ethos of participatory research that is rooted in local action,' says Professor Yaron Matras, founder of *Multilingual Manchester* and leader of the *Cross-Language Dynamics'* Multilingual Communities strand. 'It's a virtuous circle for new research projects, where impact avenues are already in place and there are low-cost pathways to run pilot studies and to test ideas with potential partners.'

Creating city cohesion

By opening up collaboration opportunities with other partner institutions across OWRI and beyond, MLM is able to drive community initiatives that explore ways to motivate families to maintain

‘MLM has developed an innovative model of co-production that brings together stakeholders to create resources that the city can use to meet its diversity goals’



The *Multilingual Manchester* initiative has created a unique model combining cutting-edge research, innovative teaching and extensive engagement with external stakeholders and the general public. Other cities are now starting to replicate this model.

Pupils from Huaxia School, a Chinese supplementary school, performing at Levenshulme Language Day. Levenshulme Language Day is a family-friendly, community event to celebrate language diversity, organised by *Multilingual Manchester* in 2015 and again in 2017



‘In Manchester we have developed a city narrative that sees languages as a way of ensuring access to services, as the foundation of cultural heritage, and as a key resource of skills’

their heritage languages and support schools, cultural institutions such as museums, and the local authority to find ways to celebrate the city’s diversity and turn it into a proud emblem of the city’s cohesion.

One of MLM’s areas of activity is the development of new digital tools to capture language diversity. LinguaSnapp, the University of Manchester’s very first teaching and research app, was developed in 2015 as a way of engaging students and the general public in documenting images of multilingual signs and uploading them to an interactive map. Versions of the app have since been released for Melbourne, Jerusalem, St Petersburg and Hamburg, linking multilingual cities on an international scale.

‘MLM is setting an international standard on how to manage cultural and linguistic diversity, whilst simultaneously celebrating it’, says Professor Stephen Hutchings, Principal Investigator on

the *Cross-Language Dynamics* programme. ‘The vital UK-Russia collaboration is rebuilding trust between our peoples just as diplomatic relations have reached crisis point. It also reminds us that information technology is a force for good as well as a tool of warfare.’ Other aspects of the MLM research and public engagement model are being adopted in Singapore, Moscow, Graz, and Oxford.

Digital data tools for tracking diversity

Accompanying LinguaSnapp are several digital resources on community languages including Arabic, Kurdish and Romani, a repository of interactive educational tools and exhibits on the theme of language diversity, and a data archiving tool that brings together statistical information on languages from a variety of sources covering different sectors of the city such as the languages of school pupils, library holdings in different languages and their uptake, interpreting requests,

Activity from an arts project in a primary school delivered by Multilingual Manchester encouraged pupils to explore the city’s language diversity and learn more about the languages spoken by their classmates



and census data. The tool, still under development, was recently presented to the Office for National Statistics as a way of improving information on languages and is now being considered as a possible method to triangulate data on languages under the new Digital Economy Act.

'Our approach to language highlights its value for everyday activities in the context of local communities', says Professor Matras. 'We have

developed a city narrative that sees languages as a way of ensuring access to services, as the foundation of cultural heritage, and as a key resource of skills; it emphasises that everyone benefits from embracing and harnessing language diversity'.

Keep up to date on MLM projects at:
<http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk>

Stall run by a Polish supplementary school at Levenshulme Language Day, sharing simple phrases in Polish with visitors



Go, see, do, listen, think and celebrate the AHRC's research on language in all its guises with the OWRI what's on guide for 2018-2020

.....

What's on? Get involved!

The book

The Poetry Hub at Oxford Spires Academy has published award-winning works by its workshop students, *Roots and Branches*: Poems in Arabic and from Arabic and *Leaves and Letters*: Poems in Polish and from Polish. Get involved here:

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/projects/multilingual-poetry-schools

The app

Multilingual Manchester Data Tool maps languages used in the city. Part of the *Cross-Language Dynamics* programme. It will help schools, businesses and public services to assess the demand for language skills.

<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/mlm-datatool>

The museum

The Pop-up Museum of Languages will appear in empty high street shops across Cambridge, Nottingham, Edinburgh and Belfast in Autumn 2019. Discover more about the languages we use to communicate everyday around the globe in this interactive, educational discovery centre for multilingualism and language learning that charts

the rarest, the hardest and the completely different, from Chinese tones to words lost and found in translation. www.meits.org

The course

Lingo Flamingo is a social enterprise initiative offering therapeutic language classes throughout Scotland for older adults living with dementia. Based on *MEITS* research, the brain-boosting language workshops help maintain a healthy and active mind and are available to all.

www.lingoflamingo.co.uk

The festival

We are Children of the World (Lin Marsh) is set to perform at the Young Norfolk Arts Festival in 2019. The unique language concert devised by the *Creative Multilingualism* programme, weaves in snatches of songs in Mandarin, Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Polish, Swahili and Portuguese to bring life to the richly varied languages spoken in the UK's schools and communities today. www.ynaf.org.uk

The streetstyle

Slanguages goes on tour starting at Birmingham's BCU Parkside Gallery from November 2018. Part of the *Creative Multilingualism* programme in collaboration with Punch Records, it features three Birmingham-based performance artists inspired by Pidgin, Patois and urban sign languages.

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/projects/slanguages

The mission

Irish Language Classes are free for complete beginners and improvers at the East Belfast Mission. Part of a Turas project designed to help connect Protestant communities and their own complex history with the native Irish language.

www.ebm.org.uk/turas

The music

Daedalus is a multilingual opera for all based on the Greek myths of *Daedalus* and Icarus. It aims to speak directly to the plight of refugees in Greece and Italy today, and the challenges they face in adapting to new languages and feelings of

alienation in a foreign culture. Written by Philip Grange and Fiona Sampson, its UK premiere is planned for Aldeburgh in 2020.

<http://projects.alc.manchester.ac.uk>

The resource

The Multilingual Performance Project by the *Creative Multilingualism* programme offers ideas for teachers to get creative in the language classroom and encourage enthusiasm for learning with short sketches and play readings to full theatre.

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/projects/multilingual-performance-project

We came, we saw! Join in and show you #LoveLanguages by sharing photos taken at our events on your social media feeds.



'Learning another language is like learning to ride a bike, because it takes you places'

Participant in *LinguaMania, Creative Multilingualism*



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