

# Cross-Language Dynamics

Cross-Language Dynamics **OWRI**

## Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Communities

Project summary and outcomes



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council

# Cross-Language Dynamics

## CROSS-LANGUAGE DYNAMICS: RESHAPING COMMUNITIES

Cross-Language Dynamics is a multi-disciplinary programme led by the University of Manchester in partnership with Durham University and the School of Advanced Study, University of London and several additional external partners. The project is funded by the AHRC and is part of the Open World Research Initiative.

More information can be found at  
[http://projects.alc.manchester.ac.uk/  
cross-language-dynamics](http://projects.alc.manchester.ac.uk/cross-language-dynamics)



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## CONTENTS

FOREWORDS	4
ABOUT THE PROJECT	7
THE THREE STRANDS	8-9
PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS	10-31
<i>Supporting and fostering diversity in UK cities</i>	10
<i>Language and cultural diplomacy</i>	14
<i>Modern linguists supporting schools</i>	19
<i>Modern linguists supporting creative industries</i>	22
<i>Modern languages and international conflict</i>	26
<i>Modern languages and digital humanities</i>	29
PROJECT LEGACY	32

## FOREWORD

By Professor Stephen Hutchings  
Principal Investigator



*There are many ways of studying communities. One of the most fruitful and important is to consider them through the prism of language. Many communities, including nations, tend to rely on a shared language of communication, but how does globalisation affect this reliance? What happens when more than one language is involved – when communities are constructed across language boundaries? Conversely, what is the nature of communities which share a single language, but which span multiple national boundaries? It is this agenda which informed the work of ‘Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community’ (CLDRC), one of four major projects generously funded by the AHRC as part of its four-year ‘Open-World Research Initiative’ (OWRI) targeting cutting-edge modern languages research.*



*CLDRC is a large consortium of 12 UK universities with partners throughout the world and including multiple non-academic stakeholders from the worlds of policymaking and government, local service provision, think tanks, libraries, schools, cultural institutions and the voluntary sector. It is structured around three main strands, each of which focuses on a particular kind of language community formation involving a specific form of cross-language dynamic. The Multilingual Community Strand specialises in urban communities within single nations but characterised by linguistic diversity. The Transnational Community Strand considers communities sharing a single language but spread across multiple nations. The Translingual Community Strand examines single communities formed through cultural creativity, or with the help of translators, across several language boundaries.*

*The consortium has considerable interdisciplinary spread (it allowed modern linguists to collaborate with political scientists, anthropologists, composers, geographers, film specialists, film makers and many others). Combined with its geographical reach and its many non-academic partnerships, this enabled it to address issues of enormous relevance to politics, the arts, health, education, international conflict and community cohesion. It also meant that we contributed to a rethinking of the place of modern languages within the humanities as a whole, of the university as a community, and of its role in the wider community it serves. Above all, CLDRC strives to demonstrate the compelling significance and value of language learning and of linguistic expertise, at a time when modern languages as a discipline is under great pressure. This report presents a summary of our project and its main achievements, many of which are ongoing.*



## FOREWORD

**By The Rt Revd Nicholas Baines**  
**Bishop of Leeds**  
**Advisory Board member**



*At the same time as foreign language learning is in rapid decline in English schools, the need for it becomes ever more pronounced. An insular neglect of this discipline might perhaps be rooted in a lazy assumption that English is the world's lingua franca – so why bother doing something as hard as learning German or Spanish or Russian? This is shortsighted.*

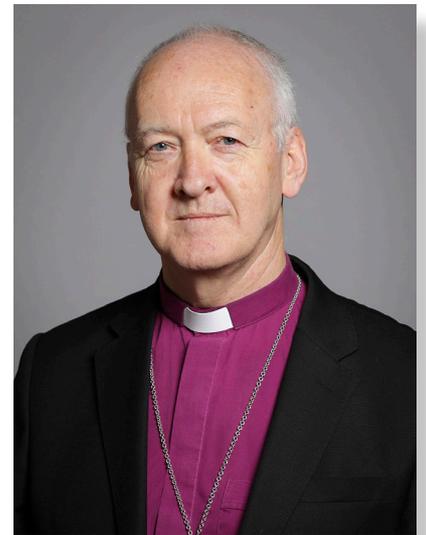
*Language goes deep. As the late German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt observed, you can't understand your own culture if you don't look at it through the lens of another – and you can't do that without learning something of the language. Charlemagne is reputed to have said that to have a second language is to possess a second soul.*

*But, languages are also essential to business and commerce, to the arts and culture, to understanding the politics of those with whom we deal. They cannot be an optional extra. This, I think, demonstrates the priority they should have throughout our education system, a priority sadly lacking today.*

*This is why the Cross-Language Dynamics project is so important. It recognises the interplay between language and everything else we hold dear in a good society. This goes beyond mere communication of words to a deeper understanding of people and communities. The range and depth of creative research – academic and social – within the remit of the project has been remarkable, drawing in children, musicians and artists among other disciplines.*

*The learnings from the project will prove to be significant, not just for those who sponsored it, but for wider society itself as the case for effective and enthusiastic language learning grows slowly in the current desert. This demands political, social, business and academic weight if our children are not to suffer from an avoidable neglect that will leave them disadvantaged in the wider world. We might even start by recognising the range of languages already spoken by children for whom English is not their first language.*

*As the aim of this project is to re-conceptualise the relationship between language and community for the benefit of a more open world, it is both timely and vital, and I commend it highly.*





## ABOUT THE PROJECT

This multi-disciplinary programme aims to develop new Modern Languages research paradigms capable of re-conceptualizing the relationship between language and community for the benefit of a more open world. It identifies 3 intersecting community configurations attributing different roles to language, and attracting distinct methodologies: the multilingual (urban communities whose identity is shaped by language diversity), the transnational (sharing a single language but dispersed across nation states) and the translangual (formed through cultural creativity across language boundaries). In each case, it investigates ties and disjunctions between language and nationhood, and the dynamic of top-down institutional and grassroots networking dimensions of community-building. Tackling these issues across all 3 configurations, each corresponding to a research strand, it aims to recast Modern Languages agendas, reshape adjacent disciplinary priorities, offer insights to policy-makers, and invest the civic university with new purpose.



Our main languages represent some of the world's largest language communities. They have the capacity to traverse the strands: Arabic, Chinese, German, Russian, and Spanish are at once community languages, the glue binding transnational networks, and a medium through which language communities embrace translangual values. Related cross-cutting patterns characterise a number of international cities which provide nodal points for our three research strands.

## KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The project addresses questions of whether and how the languages we speak define the communities we align with, and how language community boundaries may be made more porous. Key among them are:

- *How are communities defined or constrained by language and what can Modern Languages approaches contribute to deepening our understanding of 'community' itself?*
- *What is language's role in globalisation's reordering of relationships between nationhood and other forms of belonging (religion; kinship groups; communities of practice)?*
- *How should we understand tensions between ways in which language communities are systematised externally, and revitalised and rendered porous from within?*
- *How can language open communities by maximising connectivity, whilst preserving their integrity?*
- *How can non-linguistic forms foster a sense of community?*

## THE THREE STRANDS

### Multilingual Communities Strand

The **Multilingual Strand** is led by Professor Yaron Matras, The University of Manchester.

The programme's research strand on Multilingual Communities addresses the growing linguistic diversity of urban communities around the globe and its implications for the structure of language and communication, identity, and policy. Drawing



on the example of Manchester, we are modelling a holistic approach to the analysis of language practices at individual, community and institutional levels in a multilingual global city. Particular focus is given to interpreter and translation provisions in public institutions, the role of community initiatives in the maintenance of language in transnational diaspora communities, and the mapping and marking of languages in public space.



### Translingual Communities Strand

The **Translingual Strand** is led by Catherine Davies, Professor of Hispanic and Latin American Studies at the Institute of Modern Languages Research, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

The strand focuses on translingual communities, questioning language's importance in community formation. Translingual communities transcend



perceived language barriers by negotiating across and between languages and by maximising the community-creating potential of translinguaging, translation, multimodal communication and non-verbal or semi-verbal forms (music, visual culture, internet).

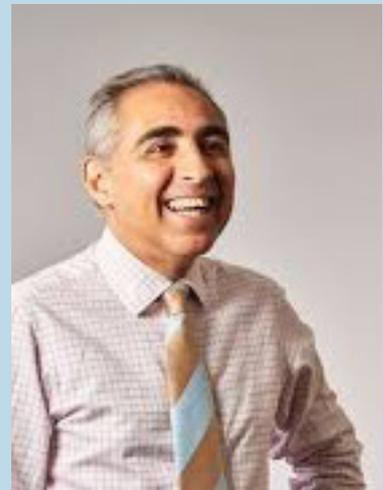


The Translingual Strand consists of four subprojects targeting: the cross-language dimension of minority literatures in Europe; the historical relationship between the languages of 'empire', modernity and community-formation in the developing world; translation networks; and opera's capacity for audience building across language boundaries.

## Transnational Communities Strand

The **Transnational Strand** is coordinated from Durham University and co-led by Andy Byford, Professor of Russian, and Anoush Ehteshami, Professor of International Relations.

It focuses on the dynamics of political, social and cultural interaction across a wide variety of examples of communities that share a single language, but are dispersed across multiple states and cultures. The Transnational Strand is structured around seven subprojects covering various aspects of language-community relationships in post-Soviet Russian-speaking space; the 'Arab World'; Spanish-speaking island cultures; and early 20th century China. The Transnational Strand concentrates especially, but by no means exclusively, on Russian-, Arabic-, Spanish- and Chinese-speaking transnational communities. We explore:



(a) the consequences of the fact that, while language remains an unusually stable basis for identity-formation, it is becoming dislocated from sources of political power and cultural legitimacy;

(b) the effects of this on personal identities and networks, collective memories and ideologies, institutional structures and practices;

(c) the impact of the formation of transnational publics rooted in particular languages on contemporary statehood, nationhood, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and cultural practices; and

(d) the effect of evolving forms of mobility and connectivity on the formation of different types of transnational language-based communities.



## SUPPORTING AND FOSTERING DIVERSITY IN UK CITIES

Global cities around the world are linguistically diverse: people move into cities from a variety of regions and countries and bring with them their languages. This creates challenges and opportunities: Public services need to take language into consideration in order to ensure equal access and, while local culture is enriched, an effort is needed to ensure understanding and mutual respect among population groups. A diverse city is attractive to visitors, workers, students, and investors. Some of the activities the Cross-Language Dynamics project has developed and supported around celebrating linguistic diversity and addressing the needs it creates are detailed in this section.



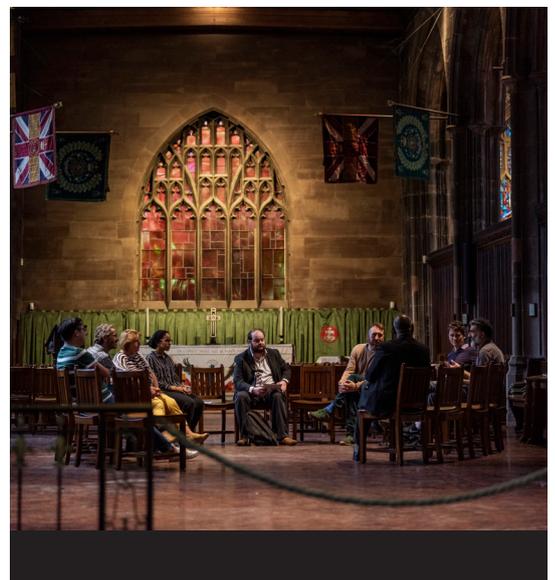
### MANCHESTER MUSEUM PARTNERSHIP

A joint programme between Cross Language Dynamics' Multilingual Strand at The University of Manchester and Manchester Museum was launched in February 2020 with an event titled 'How do you say "Our Kid" in Kurdish?' and other questions'. It was an evening of activities for adults and children, including opportunities to explore the city's languages through games, crafts, films, Q&A sessions and performances. This partnership features a portfolio of outreach activities involving schools and community groups, workshops and public events, multilingual tours and creating the country's first multilingual digital signage system to interpret exhibits, piloted as part of the new South Asia Gallery. This work aims to put language diversity firmly and permanently on the agenda of cultural institutions.

### CELEBRATING FAITH AND LANGUAGE DIVERSITY WITH MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL

In June 2019, an event was held at Manchester Cathedral to celebrate the bridges that language can help to build across communities, faiths and cultures. A key element of the event was six workshops on themes related to languages in Manchester, which provided an open forum to ask questions and share experiences. Also included at the event were choir and dance performances, multilingual prayers and readings from a range of religions.

The event was co-hosted by The University of Manchester, Manchester Cathedral, We Stand Together and Faith Network for Manchester. Participants included The Manchester Deaf Centre, Burnage Academy, Manchester Museum and local musicians and performers.



## MAPPING MANCHESTER'S LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

The rapid dynamics of population change in global cities means that local institutions need to carefully monitor data in order to be able to assess language needs and identify language skills. Such data monitoring is key to effective management of resources for language provisions, and to harnessing the cultural and skills potential.

### LinguaSnapp

The remarkable language diversity of Manchester has been highlighted by a wide-ranging new research partnership between The University of Manchester and Manchester City Council, after the council's library service won funding from the Engaging Libraries Programme. Manchester residents were invited to contribute to new research around public signage in the city and share their experience of multilingualism.

The programme, which is run by The Carnegie UK Trust, the Wellcome Trust, and the Wolfson Foundation, brings vital research projects at universities into the heart of local communities, using libraries to encourage and share learning.

The Manchester initiative used an app, LinguaSnapp, to build up a multilingual landscape map of the city, finding hotspots where more than one language is in common use through photographs of public signage taken by the community. The project engaged the public through workshops, debates, art activities and exhibitions, and a website documented residents' experiences of language use in the family and across generations.

*"Many of the Manchester residents who enjoy using our citywide network of libraries speak multiple languages, making them the ideal places to help pursue this important research into language diversity"*



**Neil McInnes MBE**  
Head of Libraries,  
Galleries and Culture  
at Manchester City  
Council

### Multilingual Manchester Data Tool

The Data Mapping Tool offers a map visualisation of selected datasets by language. Its purpose is to give stakeholders (with support from Cross-Language Dynamics) a picture of the use of different languages in the city, which can then feed into the assessment and understanding of the city's language needs and provision.

The datasets were collected by a variety of institutions and public service providers and shared with us for the purpose of documentation and analysis. It is part of The University of Manchester Social Responsibility Strategy, which promises to support research that makes a difference to society and to tackle and understand problems relating to equality and diversity, sustainability, ethics and social justice.

The Data Tool is open source and can be found [here](#).

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROVISIONS IN MANCHESTER

At The University of Manchester, Cross-Language Dynamics has studied the experience of local communities in accessing English language classes and public service interpreting and translation. Due to a 60% reduction in public funding since 2009/10, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes now have a waiting list of over 1000 people.

City provisions for new arrivals who do not speak English as their first language were reviewed by project researchers. Along with a team of student assistants, these researchers surveyed advanced learners of English to find out about their needs and aspirations, and to identify ways to improve provisions.

[Access the report in full.](#)

In addition, student volunteers from The University of Manchester have been running weekly English conversation groups at local community centres. These are designed to complement, rather than replace, formal English language provision.

## RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT WORK WITH LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

Research and engagement activities focusing on London's Latin American communities and groups were led by Dr María Soledad Montañez, based at the Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London, in Cross-Language Dynamics' Translingual Strand. Activities included the Cartonera and Zine projects (highlighted below), a survey of language use, a series of workshops on mental health and wellbeing, the production of materials in community languages and translation training for members of the community.



Cross-Language Dynamics' Cartonera Community Engagement Project, delivered in partnership with the Latin American Youth Forum, explored notions of community, identity and language through a series of workshops, from creative writing to book making. Participants produced texts (e.g. about their experience of being a Latin American in London) which were then made into bilingual cartonera books.

Find out more about [the Cartonera project.](#)



This Zine was produced by the participants of the Sin Fronteras creative leadership programme, a unique collaborative project between the Latin American Women's Rights Service and the Cross-Language Dynamics project, in partnership with Southwark Council. Through a series of creative workshops, Latin American young women and girls in Southwark reflected on their own diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and their capabilities and skills as young Latin American women.

## A MULTILINGUAL READING SCHEME FOR SHEFFIELD

This Cross-Language Dynamics-funded project established a pilot multilingual reading scheme for the city of Sheffield, researching its use and impact in Sheffield's language communities. Building on previous research highlighting the lack of access to resources among multilingual families, as well as the lack of 'status' afforded to family languages in public spaces, the project created resources and guidelines which could easily be adapted to other locations. Following a collaboration between Dr Sabine Little in the School of Education (University of Sheffield), and Sheffield Central Libraries, a multilingual children's library was introduced to Sheffield. The reading scheme was specifically aimed at multilingual children from heritage language backgrounds using the library's multilingual resources. A number of workshops targeted specific language communities to encourage engagement and proved to be very popular.



## UK RUSSIAN SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

'Global Russian' is a new phenomenon of post-communist Russian cosmopolitanism, which embraces the transnational mobility of people, capital, language and culture. Russian spaces and networks have become increasingly prominent on the British multicultural and multilingual map – from dedicated art auction houses, costume balls and festivals to hundreds of schools, societies, restaurants, clubs, and internet sites.

The project, led by Professor Lara Ryazanova-Clarke (University of Edinburgh), aims to identify how 'global Russians' interact with the local cultural and social life in the UK. By examining the apparently high level of Russian cultural engagement in the UK, the project findings deepened our understanding of 'community' itself. The data is collected through extensive ethnographic fieldwork focusing on Russian-speaking cultural, educational, business and leisure domains in England and Scotland. By exploring the way in which 'global Russians' engage with the UK's local cultural and social life, and vice versa, the project provides insight into 'transnational Britain' itself, contributing new understandings into what 'community' might mean in this context.



## LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community project focuses on the language-community relationship. Within this framework we consider entire nations as communities, exploring how language helps form, sustain, and sometimes disrupt, fragment or transcend them. We define 'cultural diplomacy' as the promotion of ideas, values and cultural achievements to strengthen international relationships, increase socio-cultural cooperation and advance national interests and reputations. Cultural diplomats, however, have autonomy from the states they serve; they address communities at levels other than the national, aware that one-to-one correspondence between unified national communities and single languages is rare. The project highlights language's role in enhancing, transforming or even challenging the cultural diplomacy practices of nation states, including the UK, and these complexities are explored in several dimensions.

### THE EXPERIENCE OF CONFLICT: A TRANSNATIONAL LANGUAGE?

'Lebanon: The Youth Roll' is a participatory arts project exploring the multiple and often competing ways in which the legacy of Lebanon's civil war continues to impact Lebanese society today. It offers a vivid example of how UK cultural diplomats can enhance the UK's reputation for mediating and bridge-building in major international conflict zones by promoting values of linguistic diversity and inter-community cohesion.

"What's distinctive about [this work is that] we're not just looking for dissemination, engagement of policy partners. We're looking for Civil Society Organisations to be knowledge creation partners"

(Global research Manager,  
British Council)

The Cross-Language Dynamics project funded researchers at the University of Leeds, in partnership with the British Council in Lebanon and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), to explore how digital media, specifically filmmaking, can be used to investigate the plurality of conflict landscapes in Lebanon.

The team was particularly interested in the ways in which young people might co-create new narratives through creative practices that can challenge dominant discourse of war and silence. This was enriched by linguistic hybridity amongst the young people and the role this played in generating new societal narratives that engaged with the nation's difficult past. The ultimate aim was to support increased social cohesion and stronger civil society.

Read more about ['Lebanon: The Youth Roll'](#).



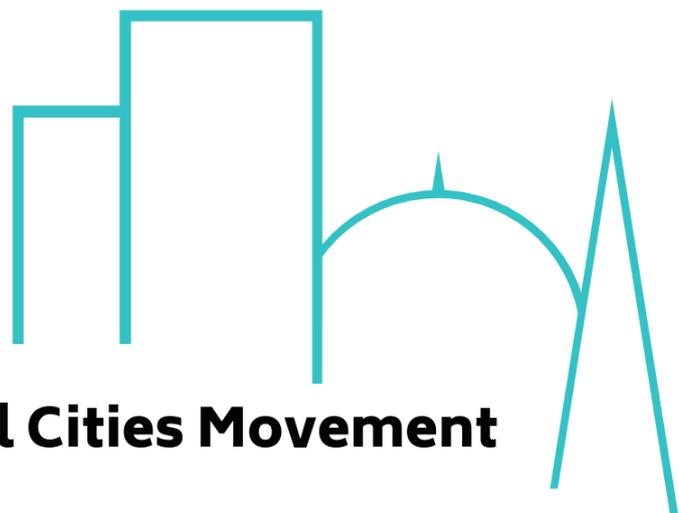


## MULTILINGUAL CITIES - SHARED COMMITMENTS TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

This project has interrogated and pushed the boundaries of cultural diplomacy through language-focused initiatives that circumvent the role of governments in building ties with other nations. The Multilingual Communities Strand has counterparts in other global cities conducting similar activities including working with local public services, mapping the cities' linguistic landscapes and celebrating language diversity.

[Multilingual Melbourne](#) and [Multilingual Graz](#) are two such projects which have worked collaboratively with colleagues in Manchester.

Participants at a conference on University Public Engagement with Urban Multilingualism (held in Manchester in February 2019) agreed on the value of a broader initiative connecting practical and academic work around multilingualism. The call for a 'Multilingual Cities Movement' proposes sharing expertise, linking academics and practitioners and ensuring that multilingualism and language diversity are properly valued, developed and understood. These shared commitments to linguistic diversity can create transnational inter-community relationships, new progressive images of Britain and new modes of cooperation between and within major global cities.



**Call for a Multilingual Cities Movement**

## THE INTERNATIONAL REACH OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

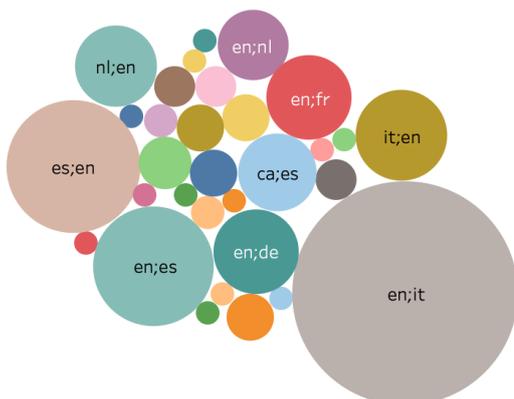
Project researchers at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, have collaborated with the Royal Opera House, a primary tool of UK cultural diplomacy, by analysing Twitter responses to screenings of ROH operas and ballets broadcast in cinemas across the world. Given the multilingual audiences for these screenings, the researchers focused on whether and how people tweet in languages other than English and across multiple languages, helping the ROH better understand the international impact of its productions.

Just over 6000 original tweets were collected across 5 opera and ballet broadcasts in the 2017-18 season, with 15 languages present across the dataset. English remained the overwhelmingly dominant language, which was expected not just due to the dominance of English on Twitter, but also given that the Royal Opera House relies on English for its own social media communications (although subtitles were provided in up to 8 languages for the broadcasts).

More specifically our analysis revealed a significant number of instances of Twitter users switching from their primary language to English in order to participate in this English-led conversation. Nevertheless, the analysis of content in other languages revealed audiences where there is major potential for the Royal Opera House to significantly deepen and further their engagements, and illustrated that significant audiences will remain neglected if UK-based organisations operating on the global stage rely solely on English. The analysis of tweets where users moved across multiple languages in the same tweet also pointed to instances of deterritorialised language use, with Italian in particular used alongside English to express affiliation to a global opera-viewing community and demonstrating the receptiveness of the Royal Opera House’s English-speaking audiences to forms of multilingual engagement.

Spanish was the second most used language with 351 tweets solely or primarily in Spanish, followed by Italian (103), Catalan (57), Dutch (40), French (33), German (30) and Portuguese (10). A small number of tweets were in Japanese (4), Russian (3), Croatian (2), Basque (1), Welsh (1) and Czech (1). 268 tweets used more than one language within the same tweet, and this was primarily made up of English-language tweets that used a few words connected to the languages and cultural contexts of the performances.

Multilingual tweets



The order of languages in the label indicates the more dominant language in the tweet

The findings highlighted the opportunities for the Royal Opera House to incorporate greater attention to language choice in their own social media strategies, given the centrality of language in relation to the organisation’s reach and to the types of relationships they are able to foster with their global audiences. Beyond this specific case study, the researchers also see this work as a model for the ways languages researchers can help organisations better understand and engage with both existing and potential multilingual audiences online. While recent global events have placed major constraints on the activities of cultural organisations in the UK, online performances and exhibitions do have the potential to reach much wider global audiences. Our research indicates, however, that the development of multilingual social media strategies could add greater reach and depth to these organisations’ digitally mediated forms of global audience engagement.

## WORKSHOPS: 'EXPLORING THEATRE TRANSLATION' IN BUENOS AIRES AND ONLINE; 'PLAYING WITH PROSE' IN LONDON AND ONLINE

Collaborations between artists and cultural institutions offer one of the best means of fostering trust and improving relations at the cross-national level. A major role in this activity is played by translators whose linguistic expertise and sensitivity to subtle intercultural differences help bring the rich cultural heritages of other nations to the attention of audiences. One of our project's formal partners was the Argentinian Association of Translators and Interpreters who worked with us on an initiative involving actors, translators and dramatists from both Britain and Argentina. The key figure in the initiative was British actor, Jack Tarlton, and here he gives a personal account of what the collaboration meant to him.



JACK TARLTON  
ACTOR AND  
WORKSHOP LEADER



*This year (2020) has seen everything change for theatre and teaching. With the support of the Open World Research Initiative and the Institute of Modern Languages Research however, I was able to adapt my way of working, enlarging the inclusivity of two projects that explored different aspects of culture across diverse societies.*

*November 2019 saw myself, playwright John Donnelly and Professor Catherine Boyle of Kings College, London in Buenos Aires to work with the Argentine Association of Translators and Interpreters at the Cultural Centro Paco Urondo for Exploring Theatre Translation. We were there to guide a group through the specific challenges and opportunities offered by translating for the stage. They included student translators, established actors and some with no previous experience of working within a theatre environment. All embraced our multidisciplinary approach though as we explored John's plays, with the week culminating in a staged reading of *The Porter*. It proved that something very special can happen when a large group of people gather in the same space to share new ways of working and to explore the cultural specificities and similarities of different nationalities.*

*With the second part of the project due to happen in mid July 2020 – when we were to bring an Argentine playwright and director to London – it became clear that this would not be possible. We instead created a series of blog posts from the creative team reflecting on our week in Buenos Aires, culminating in the online publication of *The Porter* in English and Spanish. We were pleased to discover that people from across the world had signed up for these, and to be able to 'meet' them all at an online Q&A that followed the publication.*

*Keen to look to the future we also launched *Poor Connection*, in which ten new short Argentine plays were translated by groups in Britain, Argentina and Venezuela. Most*

of the translators had never worked together before but thanks to the project being online they were able to create new English versions in a matter of days. Excerpts of each of them were then performed by a group of actors on Zoom from England, Scotland and Spain to a large international audience. This work will continue with each



of the plays getting a full rehearsed reading online. By interacting with so many people, we were able to capture the spirit of reaching out and learning that drove much of the work in Buenos Aires, and will allow us to seed material that will continue to grow until it is safe for us to be in the same space once again.

The final work that I carried out just before lockdown in the UK was the two-day workshop *Playing with Prose*, drawing on my experience of helping to create a number of plays adapted from novels. The workshop in mid-March saw the students write and perform their own short plays, and with the blessing of the original authors we then published these online.

I was then asked by IMLR to rework the workshop to be held remotely over Zoom in May. Unsure that the spontaneity and discussion that was so important to

the workshop could be captured online I was gladdened to discover that people were signing up from across Europe and East Asia, enlarging and enriching the possibilities of the response to the source material. Reasoning that two full days on Zoom would be tiring I spread the workshop out over a week, allowing for more time for personal reflection. I was then able to pair the students up – who were at times communicating across different time zones – with a short story to adapt. And I was able to bring in five actors to perform the plays and who approached the work with a respect and liveliness that the students found inspiring. When the workshop was held once more in August I was joined by participants from North and South America as well as across Britain and Europe. There were actors, playwrights, TV writers, academics and those just starting out in the creative arts, all with very diverse backgrounds and at different stages in life.

What has remained constant throughout all of this has been the desire to communicate. Despite being unable to meet in person during the past six months, I have taught and learned from people of different nationalities and first languages. It has reaffirmed my belief in the power of the story, whether it is a play, a novel or a short story, to unite us all.

Read more about [Exploring Theatre Translation](#)

and [Playing with Prose](#)

(Buenos Aires workshop images by Lucila Cordone. In memoriam.)



## MODERN LINGUISTS SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

One of the distinctive features of the AHRC's Open World Research Initiative was its emphasis on the need for researchers to work closely with schools which are an essential component of the ecosystem supporting language teaching at all levels and ultimately in sustaining Modern Languages research. Since the project has a special focus on language and community building, we saw this need as central to our mission. For example, in treating Modern Languages teachers and researchers as part of a single community, we have devoted considerable attention to developing new, cutting-edge materials for the teaching of languages, and giving students the chance to promote the value of language learning to school pupils. We have vigorously challenged conventional hierarchies that place 'modern' languages over the 'community' languages we hear around us in our ethnically diverse cities. We have supported the supplementary schools which offer children the opportunity to practice the languages they inherit from their parents, and to involve children of all backgrounds in identifying and celebrating the linguistic diversity visible throughout our urban landscapes. In the section below you can read more about this work.

### PROMOTING LINGUISTIC AWARENESS IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

Can the process through which one begins to develop the understanding of 'another language' help young people become more tolerant of those who 'speak differently'?

To answer this question, a team of language tutors and student ambassadors from Durham University's School of Modern Languages and Cultures, led by Dr Marcela Cazzoli, ran a programme of outreach activities in schools in the North East of England, in collaboration with and with the support of Durham County Council. The student ambassadors received training from St John's School & Sixth Form College and Durham County Council.

The project's aim was to promote in young people active engagement and greater interest in languages other than their own, contributing to their understanding and empathy beyond the world in which they are directly embedded.

Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 from two local schools (Greenfield Community College and St John's School & Sixth Form College) took part in a fun and stimulating code-breaking activity focusing on decoding texts in languages that do not form part of their curriculum. These were supplemented by further activities, including presentations and discussions of language and culture, difference and sameness. The aims were firstly, to increase interest in languages as vital to seeing the world in a new way, and secondly, to develop an awareness, understanding and embracing of diversity.





## NEW APPROACHES TO TRANSMEDIA AND PEDAGOGY

Researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University have created language-teaching materials based on a mix of cultural artefacts (i.e. short films, video games, etc.) to broaden visual, translingual and transcultural competences, creativity and storytelling skills. The project evaluated current practices in teacher training, curriculum requirements and teacher training needs regarding the use of visual and media culture in language teaching in UK secondary schools and higher education.

The project drew upon a mix of methods: surveys and interviews, class observations, INSETs and language workshops in schools and HEIs in order to establish methodologies for language teaching and learning using digital storytelling without verbal elements and produce research-based pedagogical strategies and related teaching materials using film and other visual artefacts.

A series of activities, aimed at developing the training of language teachers in secondary schools and other educational institution, will promote visual literacy, critical thinking and creativity. By enhancing intercultural understanding beyond language, they will foster of a sense of global citizenship both in learners and teachers.

## SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL SUPPORT PLATFORM

Supplementary schools are community-run, independent organisations that teach elements of language and culture to children, alongside their regular education. Across the UK, thousands of children attend supplementary schools in evenings and at weekends. They play an important role both in the maintenance of community languages and in the identity of immigrant children growing up in the UK.



Researchers in Manchester have been working with local supplementary schools to learn more about their work, to highlight their important role in the multilingual city, and to address common logistical issues. A study based on qualitative interviews conducted with members of staff and pupils of 25 community-run supplementary schools across Manchester explored demographics, structure of the day, curriculum, and student attitudes to language and learning, as well as the challenges facing these schools, many of which rely on volunteers.

In February 2017, the team launched the Supplementary School Support Platform to provide support in addressing many of the common issues raised by the schools. A series of events and discussions offered networking with a wide range of organisations, and the opportunity for staff to share experiences and showcase their work.

The platform also facilitated teacher training and, importantly, the creation of curriculum enrichment sessions. These lively, interactive events were delivered by researchers from across The University of Manchester in the language taught at the school – including Arabic, Chinese, Polish and Greek – enabling pupils to learn about topics in their heritage language.

## MODERN LINGUISTS SUPPORTING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Our researchers were driven by a commitment to promoting the value of language learning as a tool enabling people to better appreciate communities other than their own. They saw the creative industries as a key partner in this enterprise. Collaborations with film makers, composers and playwrights facilitated the development of innovative artistic themes and modes of expression leading to the identification of fresh audiences. The benefits were reciprocal, and, for their part, artists helped modern linguists realise exciting new ways of learning languages.

### FILM PROJECTS

In collaboration with the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester

*"Before working on this project, I never looked at the relationship between language diversity and the impact it has on courts and the law - and therefore directly on people's lives. It's an exciting and very complex environment to look at the language-community relationship."*

**Almut Dieden,**  
film maker

*"During the making of the film I learned a lot about the protagonists' relationships with their languages, communities and the identity-politics surrounding them."*

**Jan-Holger Hennies,**  
film maker



Applications were invited from students and recent graduates of the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology (GCVA) at The University of Manchester for the production of short films that connect to the research themes of 'Cross-Language Dynamics'. In total, the programme has awarded over £20,000 to former MA students of the GCVA to support the production of 11 films.

Additional grants from the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council (ESRC) Festival of Social Science allowed the project to host two highly successful mini-festivals based on several of these films at Cornerhouse, Manchester's former, iconic arthouse cinema venue.

All completed films can be viewed online at:

<http://projects.alc.manchester.ac.uk/cross-language-dynamics/film-projects/>



## PERFORMING CANCER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Vital to the impact of Modern Languages research is its ability to intervene in the cultures that it studies. As part of her research on cultures of cancer in the Arab World, Dr Abir Hamdar (Durham) wrote and co-produced a play titled 'I am waiting for you' (بصرا لوفصرو), based on interviews that she had carried out with cancer patients and oncologists at the American University of Beirut Medical Centre (AUBMC), especially its Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI).

Hamdar's play was first performed at the Madina Theatre in Beirut, Lebanon, in July 2017. Between 2017 and 2020, the play has been re-performed at various venues in Lebanon, including working hospitals, with patients and staff as audience (another first in the region), often to mark World Cancer Day (4 February). In recognition of the importance of the arts in health, in September 2019, Hamdar was appointed Creative Consultant to NKBCI, with the job to facilitate and support the delivery of the Institute's Arts-in-Health programme.

In October 2020, Hamdar's project was placed on the shortlist for the AHRC/Wellcome Trust Medical Humanities Award in the Best International Research category (outcome pending). Hamdar's work demonstrates new possibilities for Modern Languages research to productively extend into, contribute to, and benefit from, other, disciplinary territories, such as the creative arts and medical humanities.

The film of Wasafuli al-Sabr (I am Waiting for You) by Paloma Yáñez Serrano and Benjamin Llorens Rocamora was recorded at the World premiere at Nuha al-Radi Hall in Madina Theater in July 2017, Beirut, Lebanon. The film can be found online at:

<http://projects.alc.manchester.ac.uk/cross-language-dynamics/i-am-waiting-for-you/>

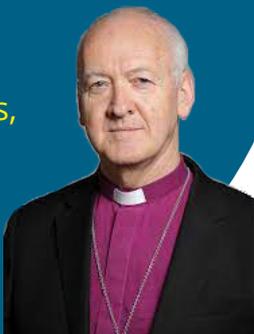


## HENNY PENNY: A TRANSLINGUAL OPERA PROJECT

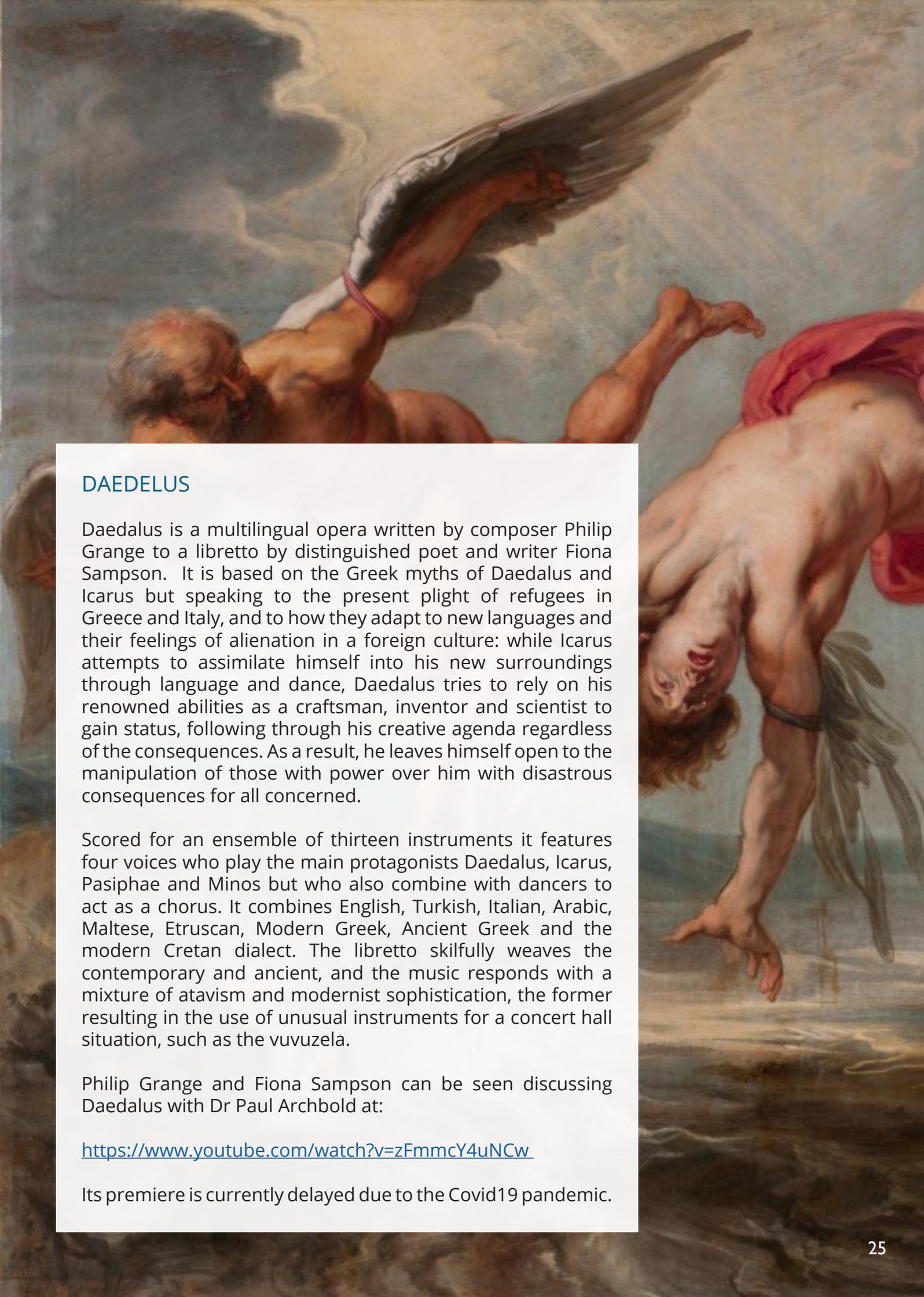
Henny Penny is a participatory children's opera for primary schools, which combines music and foreign language learning through opera. It was developed by composer Julian Philips and writer Stephen Plaice, using funding from the Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community project. It offers primary school children an immersive experience in music and modern languages within an operatic context and was developed as a creative response to both the rise of linguaphobia in the context of Brexit and the reduction in Modern Language and music provision within UK education contexts. The opera explores synergies between opera-in-education and Modern Languages learning, allowing children a formative experience in both. Through an engagement with languages and the cultures they represent, Henny Penny enriches participants' understanding of the world. Henny Penny broadens out from English to parallel linguistic versions in French (Cocotte Chocotte), German (Hennig Pfennig), Spanish (Pollita Chiquita) and Italian, the deployment of each version contingent on a school's educational context.

"Henny Penny's combination of composition as research ... and progressive educational theory was most striking in its impactful application to language learning."

Nick Baines,  
Bishop of  
Leeds



When the Covid-19 pandemic, delayed the planned roll out into schools, the team at Guildhall School of Music and Drama use this time to create a set of digital resources to enrich the planned workshops with schools. These supporting resources include a [four-minute animation of Cocotte's aria](#).

A detail from Raphael's fresco 'The Fall of Icarus' showing two winged figures falling from the sky. The figure on the left is Daedalus, an older man with a beard, looking down. The figure on the right is Icarus, a younger man, falling upside down with a look of shock and pain. The background is a cloudy sky.

## DAEDELUS

Daedalus is a multilingual opera written by composer Philip Grange to a libretto by distinguished poet and writer Fiona Sampson. It is based on the Greek myths of Daedalus and Icarus but speaking to the present plight of refugees in Greece and Italy, and to how they adapt to new languages and their feelings of alienation in a foreign culture: while Icarus attempts to assimilate himself into his new surroundings through language and dance, Daedalus tries to rely on his renowned abilities as a craftsman, inventor and scientist to gain status, following through his creative agenda regardless of the consequences. As a result, he leaves himself open to the manipulation of those with power over him with disastrous consequences for all concerned.

Scored for an ensemble of thirteen instruments it features four voices who play the main protagonists Daedalus, Icarus, Pasiphae and Minos but who also combine with dancers to act as a chorus. It combines English, Turkish, Italian, Arabic, Maltese, Etruscan, Modern Greek, Ancient Greek and the modern Cretan dialect. The libretto skilfully weaves the contemporary and ancient, and the music responds with a mixture of atavism and modernist sophistication, the former resulting in the use of unusual instruments for a concert hall situation, such as the vuvuzela.

Philip Grange and Fiona Sampson can be seen discussing Daedalus with Dr Paul Archbold at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFmmcY4uNCw>

Its premiere is currently delayed due to the Covid19 pandemic.

## MODERN LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

Language and conflict are never far apart. Language issues frequently lurk at the roots of conflicts. Tensions driving the current 'frozen conflict' in mainly Russian-speaking Eastern Ukraine were prompted in part by changes that established Ukrainian as the country's primary language. Misunderstandings of the precise meanings of the Arabic words 'jihad' and 'fatwa' have helped stoke widespread western resentment against the Islamic faith. Language has, however, also been central to the ways in which modern warfare has been conducted, with the role of military translators, bilingual double agents and multilingual codebreakers celebrated in films like *Quo Vadis, Aida?* (2020), *The Imitation Game* (2014), and numerous James Bond films. At the same time, sensitivity to linguistic and cultural difference is invariably key to bridging the chasm between warring parties; this, too, finds expression in popular culture, as evidenced in most imaginative form by the film, *Arrival* (2016) in which a top linguist collaborates with military commanders to learn the alien language of an extra-terrestrial space crew, perceived initially as hostile but ultimately recognised as seeking to share its transformative knowledge with earth-dwellers.

Military conflict is often associated with rivalries between nation states which are, of course, 'imagined communities' in which language has a binding function. Yet wars are increasingly being waged by communities at substate and supra-state levels (conflicts in post-Soviet space and across the Arabic-speaking world are cases in point); here, too, language is critical to the identities around which such communities coalesce. Researchers who specialise in understanding these issues can make important contributions to policy making and the expertise that Cross-Language Dynamics has in the Arabic-speaking and Russophone worlds has vividly demonstrated this.

### TRANSNATIONAL LANGUAGE, TRANSIENT IDENTITIES AND THE CRISIS OF THE STATE IN THE ARAB REGION

The project, based at Durham University's School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), and directed by Professor Anoush Ehteshami, traces the complexities of socio-cultural change at times of political upheaval, focusing on the most active and popular currents in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region - namely those which are loosely termed 'political Islam', and which rely in part on the status of Arabic as the region's dominant, transnational language.



The team are collaborating with the FCDO and both UK foreign policy think-tanks, such as the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the Royal United Services Institute, and partners in the MENA region, notably the Center for Strategic Studies the University of Jordan in Amman and the Berghof Foundation in Beirut, Lebanon.

The two main aims of the project are:

- to understand the place of IS (Daesh), as an example of radical Islamist currents, in Arab politics;
- to capture the responses to IS at social and state levels in the Arabic-speaking region, differentiating how those responses are articulated within the various Arabic dialects.

The project studies the intellectual roots and political origins of IS in order to see what the rise of this group can tell us about the evolving nature and character of political Islam in the region more generally. In particular it:

- scrutinises the IS's own narrative, paying close attention to its linguistic and discursive features, to better understand its self-declared place in the spectrum of Jihadi movements in the region;
- examines Islamist responses to the IS and its behaviour; and
- considers the various state-level responses to IS, looking at the narratives that such key states as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan and others have used to delegitimise IS while also legitimising their own policies to their often-sceptical domestic audiences and regional rivals.



state and social responses to IS in the MENA region. The team also co-authored a major volume on IS arising from the research project which has appeared in a prestigious Routledge series.

Dr Juline Beaujouan, who worked as a PhD student on the project, described it as *'a wonderful opportunity to widen my academic and professional horizons through policy-relevant research and interactions with research centres in the UK and the MENA. Coupling my multilingual analysis of IS' discourse over the three years of this Caliphate - I relied on my proficiency in Arabic as well as my status as a native speaker of French, a language used by IS in parts of North Africa - with my colleagues' historical approach of Political Islam and its most violent form, Salafi-jihad, was key to uncover the key characteristics, motivations and weaknesses of the group's agenda. Doing so, our research provided a contextualised and nuanced approach to violent Islamism and offered some keys to reinforce the resilience of states and populations to this phenomenon in the MENA region and beyond.'*



## BROADCASTING RUSSIA

Professor Stephen Hutchings of The University of Manchester has investigated the media's role in shaping and reflecting the post-Soviet Russian-speaking community. The project examined two major global media events centring on the post-Soviet space - Eurovision 2017 in Kiev and the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. Some of the key issues considered by the project were: language and nationhood in the context of Russian as a lingua franca; post-Soviet cultural affinities, conflicts and collective memory; the transnational negotiation of socio-cultural and political values; tensions between ethnic and post-imperial identities and common news agendas (including 'information war' narratives). The overarching framework for the analysis reflected the principle that the national and the transnational mutually constitute one another



# EUROVISION

## SONG CONTEST

### KYIV 2017

**CELEBRATE  
DIVERSITY**

in a process that is ongoing, performative and perpetually self-renewing, and that language is key to that process.

A vivid example was provided by the 2017 Eurovision Song Contest final held in Ukraine which proved controversial owing to the banning of Russia's disabled entrant for a prior performance in Crimea, illegally annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014. However, research carried out by Hutchings and Dr Vitaly Kazakov showed that Russian state television narratives gained only limited traction in Russophone Twitter responses to the scandal. Instead, the researchers discovered a complex media ecology in which disputes among Russian-speaking tweeters did not map neatly onto the territorial and ideological boundaries of the 'information war' between Russia and its western neighbours. Sharp confrontation gave way to ambivalent mutual parodies and uneasy expressions of shared Russophone identity.

As a follow-up to research on Eurovision 2017, work is currently also being carried out on the Russian speaking community's reactions to the cancellation of Eurovision 2020 in light of the COVID-19 crisis. This includes the collection of Tweets around a series of 'virtual' events that have been organised in compensation. There are plans for a collaboration with the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), centring on the role of state and sub-state actors in the circulation disinformation generated by pandemics.

## MODERN LANGUAGES AND DIGITAL HUMANITIES

The unique contributions that Modern Languages can make to the development of Digital Humanities is a cross-cutting OWRI theme, which has been led by the Language Acts project (Kings College London) and the Cross-Language Dynamics team.

Our own perspective on Digital Humanities centres on how language-community relationships are transformed by digitisation. The central role in community formation of face-to-face contact and physical space no longer applies when these are of a 'virtual' character. The function of informal speech when it occurs in written social media posts also differs significantly from its spoken form. The ability of digital technology to foster multiple community memberships and identities was another topic of interest to our team, as was the tension between online 'global English' and the rapid emergence of competing languages.

The growing influence of digital technology means that the ability of speakers to communicate, in any given language, now stretch beyond the boundaries of national communities. This has special relevance for diaspora populations. The topic was explored by our Transnational Strand in its work on digital nationalism. Our Multilingual Strand used digital tools to map the linguistic diversity of diasporic urban spaces. The focus of this section, however, is on the work of our Translingual Strand which has examined how digitisation can bring together transnational communities sharing more than one language, like London's Latin American population whose identity is shaped both by Spanish and Portuguese. It has also worked with the British Library to preserve the online activities of the UK's Latin American diaspora as part of its heritage. Finally, it has helped establish a new community of Modern Languages researchers dedicated to exploring how our discipline can advance the Digital Humanities.

### DIGITAL HUMANITIES PROJECT

The Digital Humanities subproject aimed to both increase the visibility of digital texts and materials in languages other than English, and strengthen research networks and dissemination opportunities for Modern Languages researchers who engage with digital culture, media and technologies. This involved establishing the Digital Modern Languages event series and associated journal section of Modern Languages Open with colleagues on the Language Acts & Worldmaking project, both of which will continue beyond the lifetime of these projects to ensure a lasting legacy and infrastructure for supporting digital research in Modern Languages. Dr Naomi Wells (Translingual Strand) also collaborated with the UK Web Archive team at the British Library by drawing on her research on the web presence of Latin Americans in London to ensure multilingual web materials created by the community are archived for the future. An associated community event was hosted at the British Library (in collaboration with the London-based charity Latin Elephant) to inform community members about the UK Web Archive and the opportunities to nominate their own and others' websites for inclusion in the Archive. These community created web materials represent a vital component of the UK's born-digital cultural heritage, and ensuring they are preserved and accessible to community members and researchers in the future can contribute to the ways we value and acknowledge the UK's rich multilingual and multicultural heritage.



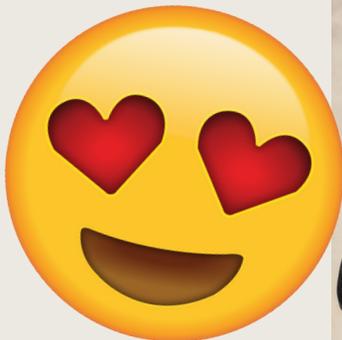
## ONLINE LANGUAGE, BRAZILIAN FOOD, AND FOOD SPACES!

Francielle Carpenedo

Francielle was awarded a School of Advanced Study Doctoral Scholarship in Modern Languages and Digital Humanities, attached to the Cross-Language Dynamics Translingual Strand. She has recently completed her PhD entitled 'Social Media Languages, Authenticities and Affordances: Brazilian Food Discourses in the UK' (2017-2021), supervised by Professors Jane Winters (Digital Humanities, SAS) and Catherine Davies (Latin American Studies, IMLR).



The following is an extract from Francielle's series of blog posts posted in July and August 2020 which can be found at: <https://crosslanguagedynamics.blogs.sas.ac.uk/latin-americans-in-london-and-the-uk/blog/>



*As part of my PhD research, I am studying Brazilian culture and community as translated by online food spaces in the UK. During the course of my research, I have taken the time to understand the different Brazilian restaurants in the UK. I was interested to find out what type of food they served and what kind of presence they had online. In this process, I was curious about the food, themes and ideas that were communicated by them within online spaces such as social media. Did businesses and consumers use Portuguese, English or other languages online? Did they write formally, informally, or use images to express their ideas?*

*The variety of food that restaurants serve can say much about a culture. Across the many Brazilian restaurants, not surprisingly, quite a few serve Feijoada, a staple Brazilian dish made of black beans and pork cuts.*

It was very interesting though, to learn about the variety of places, for instance, Brazilian pizza places, where you can have the beloved 'catupiry' cheese (a Brazilian cream cheese) on top of your pizza or inside the pizza crust. So, I am curious about the meaning places like these may have within UK society. What is published by users and companies online may help us understand Brazilian culture in the UK better, and how useful online spaces may be for companies and people. In this way, where food places use or switch between different languages, I am trying to understand how language is used for different purposes and to address different audiences. I am also intrigued by what types of images and actions (e.g. Posting, commenting, or tagging) are used by social media users, and how this is done. For instance, Portuguese communication may reflect the experiences of Brazilians and how these places make them feel whilst away from their homeland. On the other hand, communication in English may reflect how other people in the UK experience Brazilian culture.



Online food spaces mean that a new space is available, where offline and online life appear to be sewn seamlessly together. An interesting aspect of this new scenario is the web-specific characteristics which may influence how language is used and how people communicate about their experiences. So, exploring these and other possible aspects expressed in online food spaces allows us to learn more about the presence of Brazilian culture in the UK through its culinary diversity. From a multicultural perspective, studying what happens online creates opportunities to highlight the diversity in society, and to value the actions and expressions of a variety of people and entities.





## PROJECT LEGACY

The multiple lasting legacies of Cross-Language Dynamic: Reshaping Communities are too numerous to present here. Among the most important to us are those that we secured together with our key non-academic project partners and collaborating organisations (listed below). They allowed us to ensure that the powerful new narrative for Modern Languages which the four OWRI projects collectively forged is embedding itself across UK society and beyond. Legacies of this sort that our project made a special contribution to securing are:

- (i) promoting local communities as research agents (for example, our language mapping initiatives and the creative workshops with Latin American youth groups)
- (ii) dismantling the community languages/modern languages divide by raising the profile of supplementary schools as part of a wider imperative to foreground the value of multilingualism in all its dimensions – creative, societal, and cognitive
- (iii) achieving local policy impact through extensive collaborations with authorities in Manchester, Durham, and Southwark
- (iv) transforming cultural practices by expanding multilingual audience diversity awareness among our arts institutions (Royal Opera, Tyneside Cinema and Manchester Museum)
- (v) enhancing the soft power, conflict resolution and international security strategies of UK policy makers through research collaborations grounded in linguistic knowledge and intercultural awareness (our work with Chatham House and the Argentinian Association of Translators and Interpreters)
- (vi) injecting innovation and creativity into the teaching of languages in schools (the multilingual schools opera initiative; the establishment of a North-West language teaching materials hub based in South Sefton)
- (vii) facilitating societal cohesion through improved engagement with minority communities (including our work with the British Library to build a multilingual diasporic web archive)

We worked together with a wide range of partners and collaborating organisations, but we would like to express particular thanks to the following:

London Borough of Southwark Council  
Manchester City Council  
The Royal Opera  
Chatham House  
South Sefton Campus, Hugh Baird College  
The Argentinian Association of Translators and Interpreters

Community Southwark  
Durham County Council  
The British Library  
Tyneside Cinema