



Panel + Q&A: Turning cultural curiosity into critical intercultural learning moments

***Áine McAllister, Emma Brooks, Fotini Diamantidaki,
Milene Oliveira, Wei Jin, Zeinab El-Khateeb,
Zozan Balci***



Sub-panel 1: Creative and Participatory Methodologies for Intercultural Learning through Language Education

How can creative and participatory approaches amplify intercultural learning through language education?

Speakers:

Zozan Balci

Say Our Names: Intercultural creativity through storytelling and documentary

Áine McAllister

Collaborative poetic autoethnography as translanguaging intercultural pedagogy



Intercultural creativity through storytelling and documentary

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Learning and institutional belonging starts with a name

- A name is often the first point of contact between ourselves and others
- Names are also our first introduction to another person's linguistic and cultural world
- How we engage with names in schools and institutions can affirm belonging or reproduce exclusion - small acts of recognition can create meaningful moments of intercultural connection



Say Our Names: Where Intercultural Learning Begins

Having perceived “tricky foreign” names mispronounced, shortened, ‘butchered’ anglicised, or avoided altogether.

It is acceptable to butcher ‘Zozan’, but not Rachel.

Why?

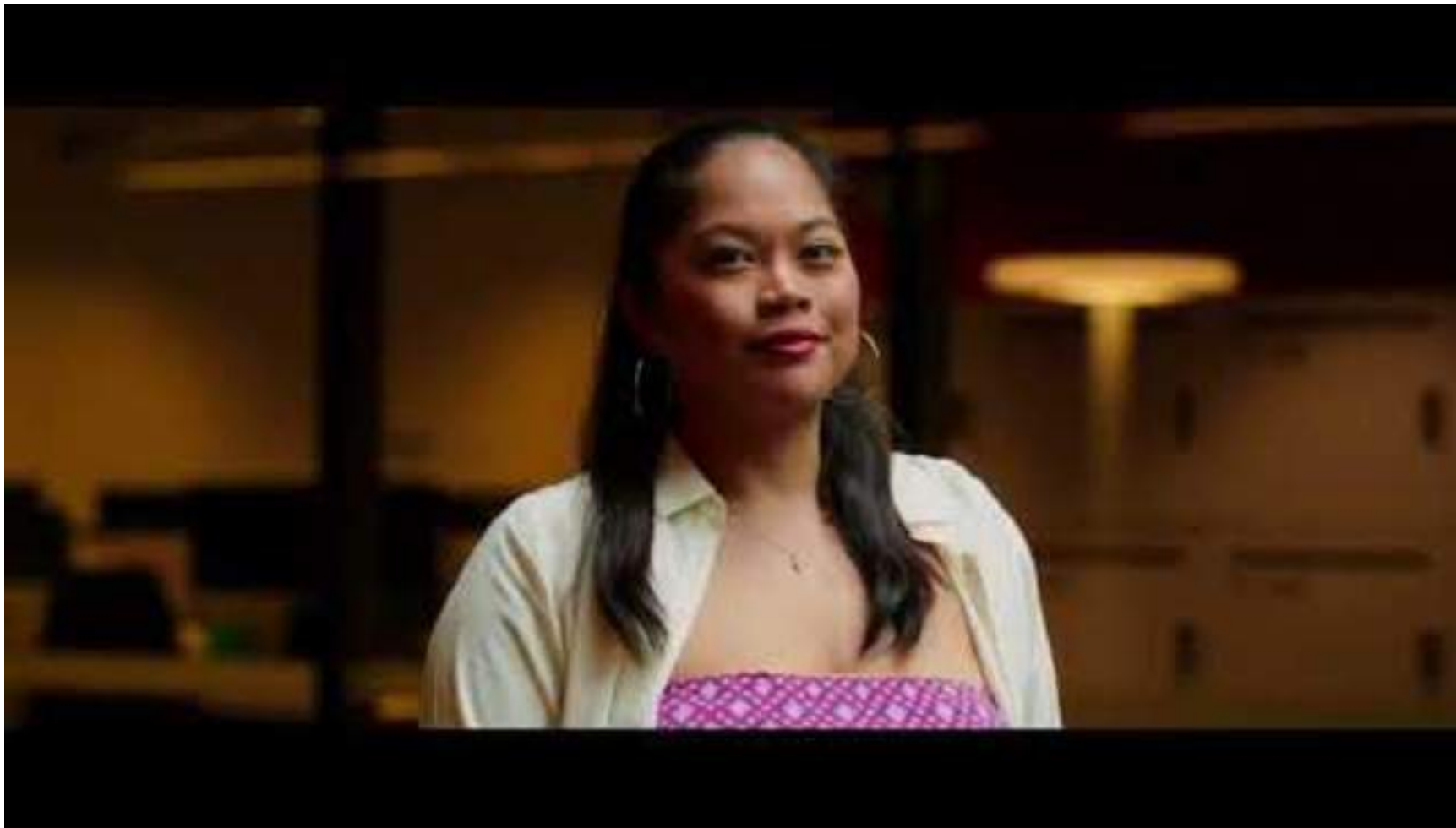
Not because Zozan is harder to say, but because some names are treated as ‘normal’, while others are marked as foreign.

Intercultural communication begins with recognising that learning a language also means learning whose languages, sounds and names we consider worth saying.



Steven Pinker: *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*

- **Empathy** helps steer humans away from violence and toward cooperation. It works alongside self-control, moral reasoning, and shared norms.
- Cultural developments like literacy, fiction, journalism, and memoirs **expose us to lives unlike our own**. These stories expand our “circle of empathy” by making distant experiences feel close and real
- But how do we go from ‘a nice story’ to social change in institutions, classrooms, workplaces? In this project, documentary becomes a tool for intercultural learning, creating space for reflection and dialogue



[Say Our Names mini-documentary - trailer](#)



- The project shows that inclusion can begin with everyday small acts: learning to say someone's name requires no special training — only curiosity, care and a willingness to start today.
- It teaches people: We do not need to be experts to create more inclusive spaces and establish social cohesion. We can begin with the person in front of us.



Just as names reveal whose languages and identities are recognised, our broader cultural linguistic repertoires also reflect whose knowledge is considered legitimate in educational spaces.



Collaborative Poetic Autoethnography As Translanguaging Intercultural Pedagogy

Áine McAllister

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Centring the cultural, linguistic and
experiential repertoires of the learners

(Bradley et al 2018; Li 2011, 2018;

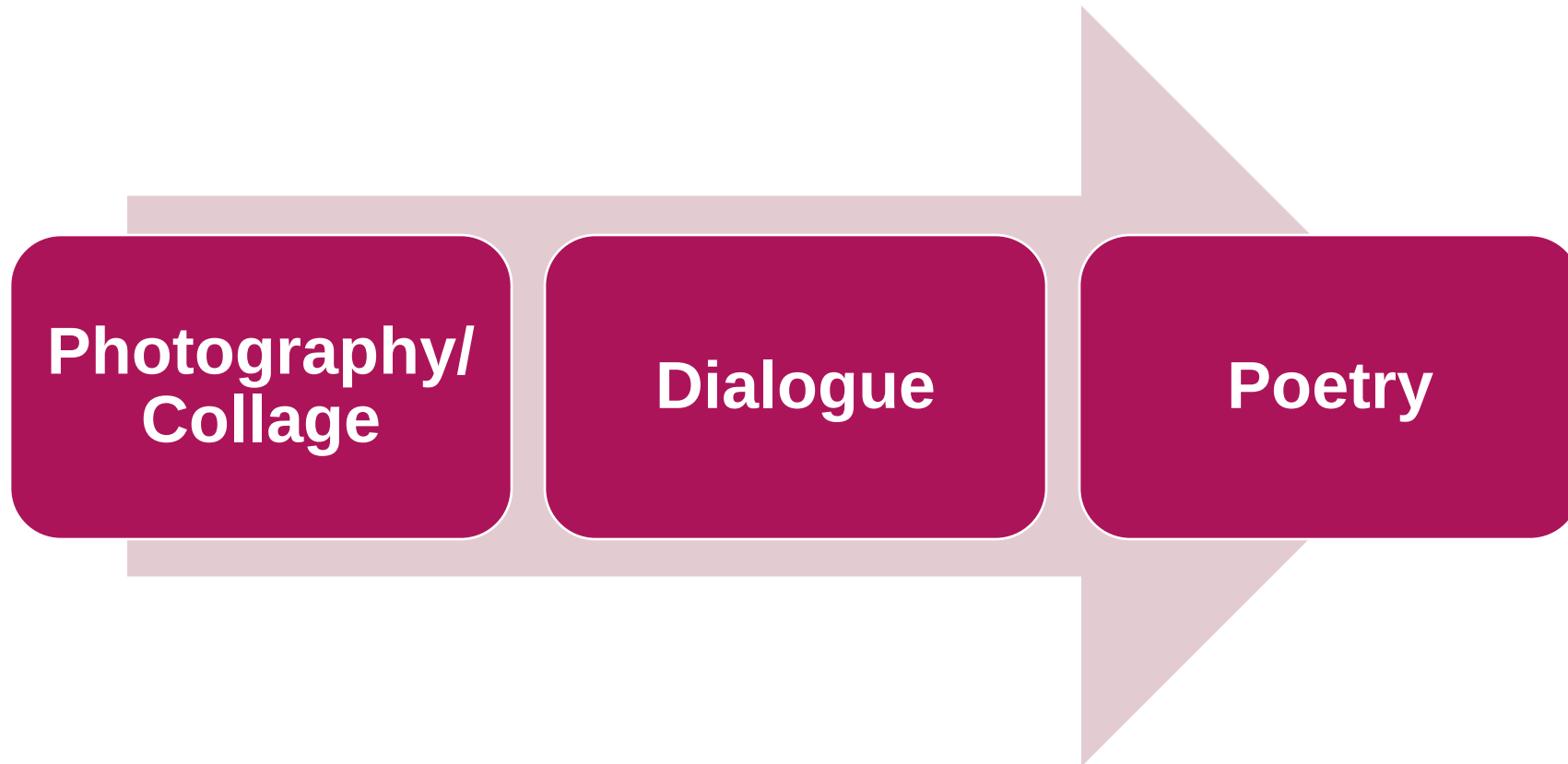
McAllister, 2026)

صورة بلاغية
Sura
Balaghiyya

очуднення
Ochudnennyya

Hireath

Duchas



"words are often inadequate to express emotions, feelings, and lived realities" (Brown 2017).



"...makes room for meaning to emerge;
in **embodied** ways as well as **emotionally, sensorially, and through the imagination**"

- **Engenders trust**
- **Valorisation of learners own emotional world (McAllister 2026)**
- **Acknowledges languaging beyond word (Li 2011, 2018)**



- **Praxis of love** – acknowledging interconnectedness and uniqueness (McAllister 2026)
- Linguistic differences are a resource for creativity (Bradley et al 2017).
- Uniqueness is valued as a resource - its 'coming to the fore' is facilitated through collaboration (Zhu and Li 2020).



- Intercultural moments (Bolden 2014; Zhu et al 2022) harnessed to deepen and expand meaning making, across languages and the cultures
- Restorative Learning Environment (McAllister 2026)



- Cultivating the Poetic Imagination
(McAllister 2026, forthcoming; Whyte 2012; Zalipour, 2011)
- Inextricability of knowing, being, doing (Bradley et al 2022)
- Insperability of the mind body heart spirit (Anzaldua, 2022; Leggo 2005; Anzaldua 2022; McAllister 2026)

صورة بلاغية

Sura
Balaghiyya



When I was a little girl, in the summertime my father took us to the village, on the steep roads he stopped, he would pluck the thorns from the biggest thistle and give me the seed inside to eat.

I walk, the way comes.
I walk, in the dark of night.

The wind cuts my face like a knife.
I walk, the way comes.
I flow, along the streams
from rivers to ceaseless cascades.

Is anybody out there?
Roar-flowing, the waterfalls; magnificent.
I am not lost.

Asterayî her tim mi re benê nîşanê rayîrî*

I walk, the way comes.
An owl hoots in the darkness.



When I was a little girl, in the summertime my father took us to the village, on the steep roads he stopped, he would pluck the thorns from the biggest thistle and give me the seed inside to eat.

I walk, the paths open.
Flowing water pierces mountains.

A pen in my hand touches time.
Mother again will gather us up in her skirt.
Our safe garden.

She says, ‘Hûs be, enka vinde.’**

Now, I have a way to climb the mountain.

Emina Bulutt, 2024

* *The stars are my companions*

** *Stillness, you have to wait.*



1. The creative 'making' activity can take place before and during dialogue.
2. Engage with surroundings in embodied and sensory ways to access the poetic imagination.
3. Valorise visual forms and making as storytelling.
4. Record the different languages *and* ways of knowing to explore key ideas/topics.
5. Plan the logistics of collaborative recording and sharing this.

6. Make room for paired dialogue and whole class dialogue.
7. New language content taught during whole class dialogue.
8. Whole class collaborative time to reveal and encourage poetics inherent in voices of the students.
9. Listen with an ethnopoetic ear.
10. Design poetry prompts so that students can incorporate key structures and vocabulary that will be assessed along with the vocabulary content they have led.

صورة بلاغية

Sura Balaghiyya



Concept under discussion = Resilience

- What is resilience?- "you need to be strong in difficult situations – keep going"
- What word comes to your mind in your own language?
- What does that mean for you? Not a translation of 'resilience'.
- **Kuat** (Indonesian and urdu) – The **power** of **healing**, the power to face challenges, to be strong
- **Agbara**(Yoruba)-what doesn't kill you makes you stronger
- **Sumud** –***Standing in front of the storm*** without breaking down
- **Muqawamat Kawal** - (Pashto): Improve yourself.



Resilience

every day

every day

every day

You

at the end of the day

you have to carry on

you carry these burdens in your heart



Sub-panel 2: Language Learning, Heritage, and Intercultural Education

How can language learning across schools, communities, and outdoor environments foster meaningful engagement with others?

Speakers:

- **Wei Jin**

Learning Beyond the Classroom: A Study Trip on the Mandarin Excellence Programme

- **Emma Brooks**

The Welsh School London: Heritage language education in primary school

- **Zeinab El-Khateeb**

Sustainability, Cultural Awareness, and Outdoor Language Learning



The Welsh School London: heritage language education in primary school

Emma Brooks, UCL IoE

Funded by:



Department
for Education

Delivered by:



Institute of Education

In partnership with:



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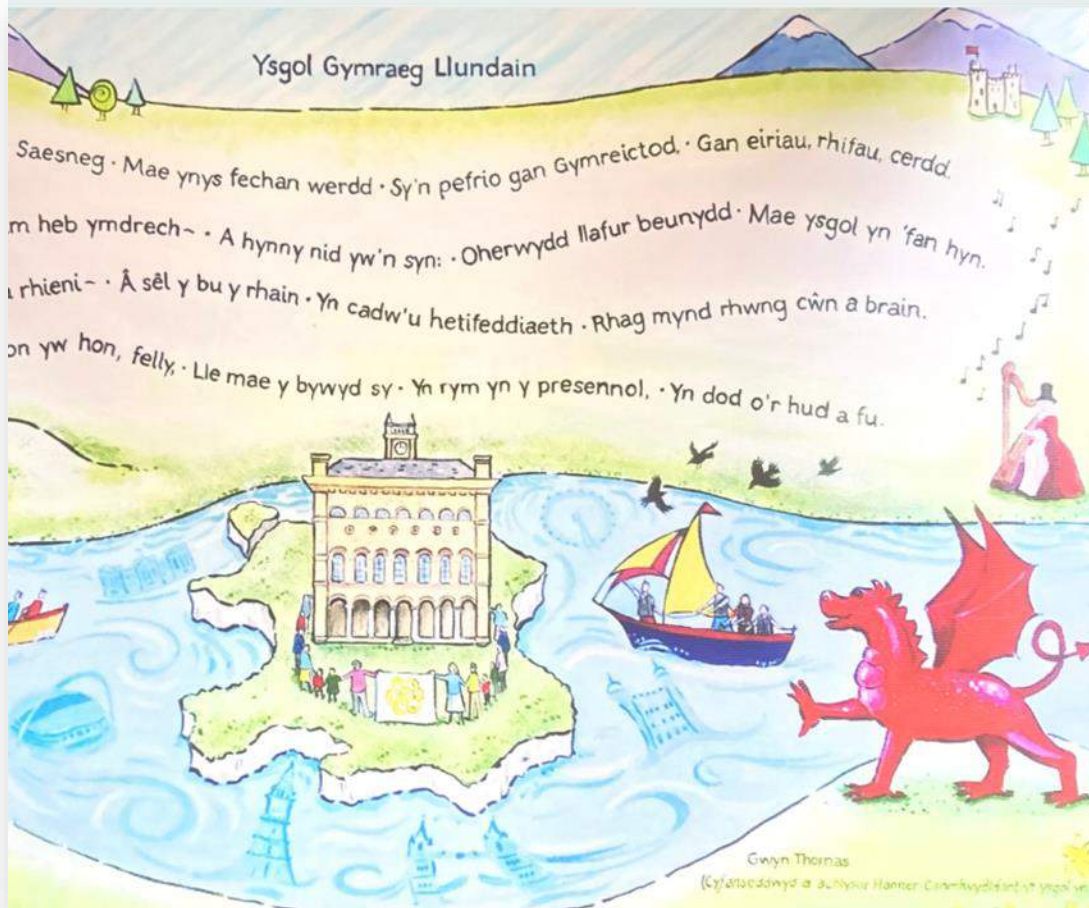
- Welsh medium primary education - established in London in 1958
- Follows Welsh National Curriculum
- Pupils, aged 3-11 (+ creche)
- Small class sizes



Retaining the language



National Consortium
for Languages Education



“The immersion in the language for almost all the time is what made them long-term fluent Welsh speakers.”

“We tried everything... but our child was losing the language. Moving them to YGLI changed everything.”

“We’ve gone from a purely English-speaking home to a truly bilingual one.”

Community ties



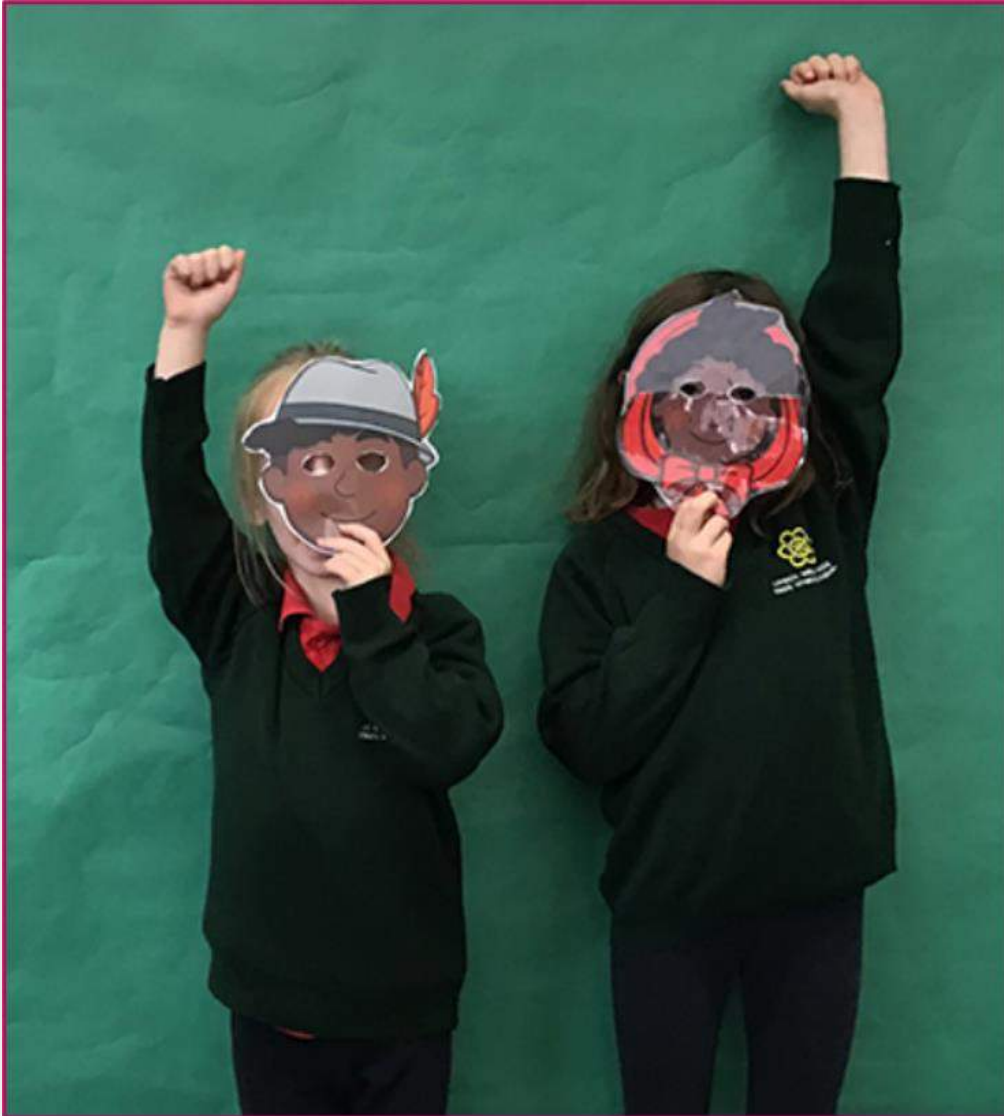
“Because of the school, we got to experience Welsh language, culture and heritage as part of a community rather than in a vacuum.”

“This is my Welsh family in London.”




rhwng 14-30 oed?
cyswllt â Llundain?
Dewch i ail-godi côr
AELWYD LLUNDAIN
i gystadlu yn
Eisteddfod yr Urdd!

“It’s the glue that holds us together — it changed our lives completely.”



"I was able to become a Welsh language tutor and lately to take up lessons in cynganedd and Welsh poetry."

"We go to events at London Welsh Centre... choir concerts... we go to Urdd Eisteddfod every year which we didn't previously."

"Our children see themselves as Welsh – YGL opened up the Welsh culture and language for them in a way I as a mother could not do on my own."

Finally, if you had to sum up what Ysgol Gymraeg Llundain means to you in one sentence, what would you say?

Hiraeth.



Hiraeth (Welsh pronunciation: [\[hɪraɪθ, hiːraɪθ\]](#) Heer-eye-th) (especially in the context of Wales or Welsh culture) deep longing for something, especially one's home:

“I could not put into words the hiraeth that the Welsh feel for the mountains and valleys of their homeland”

(OED, n.d.)



Research plans include co-designed project, working with children and families on the notion of hiraeth.



- Translanguaging (Wei, 2018, 2025; Bradley et al, 2018)
- Creative enquiry (McAllister, 2026, forthcoming)
- (Welsh) language revitalisation (McCarty, 2018; Selleck, 2018)



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Sustainability, Outdoor Learning and cultural understanding in primary Languages Teacher Education



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) contributes to:



Sustainable
Development



Human
Rights



Gender
Equality



Culture of
Peace



Global
Citizenship



Key Literature

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Read more:
UNESCO – Education
for Sustainable
Development

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>



Research Gap / Closing the Gap



1



This initiative addresses an important **research gap** within the existing sustainability research for children.

2



The DfE **Sustainability Strategy** should place greater emphasis on children's learning as a central priority (DfE, 2023).

3



It also offers a case-study evidence demonstrating that **meaningful sustainability practices** can be effectively implemented for second language learning (Davis & Elliott, 2024; Boyd et al., 2017).

4



Nature-based experiences in primary languages classroom support sustained attention, well-being and sensory exploration. (Waite, 2017).





- This initiative developed through collaboration with the **RHS (Royal Horticultural Society)** Campaign for School Gardening, alongside colleagues from primary schools.



- As a teacher educator and the Lead for Primary Languages at the IOE, DEPT of LLD, I worked with these **partnership schools** to model effective pedagogical approaches for PGCE students, supporting them in delivering multilingual learning in French, Spanish, and Mandarin as well as home languages.



- The use of strategies such as repetition, visual scaffolding, and Total Physical Response (TPR) (Asher, 1969) were used to enhance engagement in second language learning for this initiative.



- This collaboration also aligns with the Core Content Framework (DfE, 2019), particularly in relation to **adaptive teaching, subject knowledge development, and professional collaboration.**



**Working together
for impact**

Through meaningful partnerships, we create rich learning experiences that inspire curiosity, build confidence and empower learners to be global citizens.





La chenille qui fait des trous



Curriculum link:

Understanding and responding;
days of the week



Recap *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and
introduce the days of the week in the
chosen language.



The Very Hungry Seed – what does it need to grow?

Pupils prepare a pot with cotton wool and sprinkle the cress seeds.
Children for example used key words such as

"On **Monday**, I sow the seeds" /

"On **Tuesday**, I give water" /

On **Wednesday**, I give warmth" /

On **Thursday**, I see it grow" /

On **Friday** I give light/sun"

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
sow the seeds	give water	give warmth	see it grow	give light/sun



Resources:

Weekly growth log,
days of the week flashcards

lundi

mardi

mercredi

jeudi

vendredi



Vocabulary: Days of the week, grow, water, sun.

Pupils learn days of the week in the chosen language and follow the growth
story sequence. Pupils create a growth diary.

Storytelling; sequencing; listening



Storytelling



Sequencing



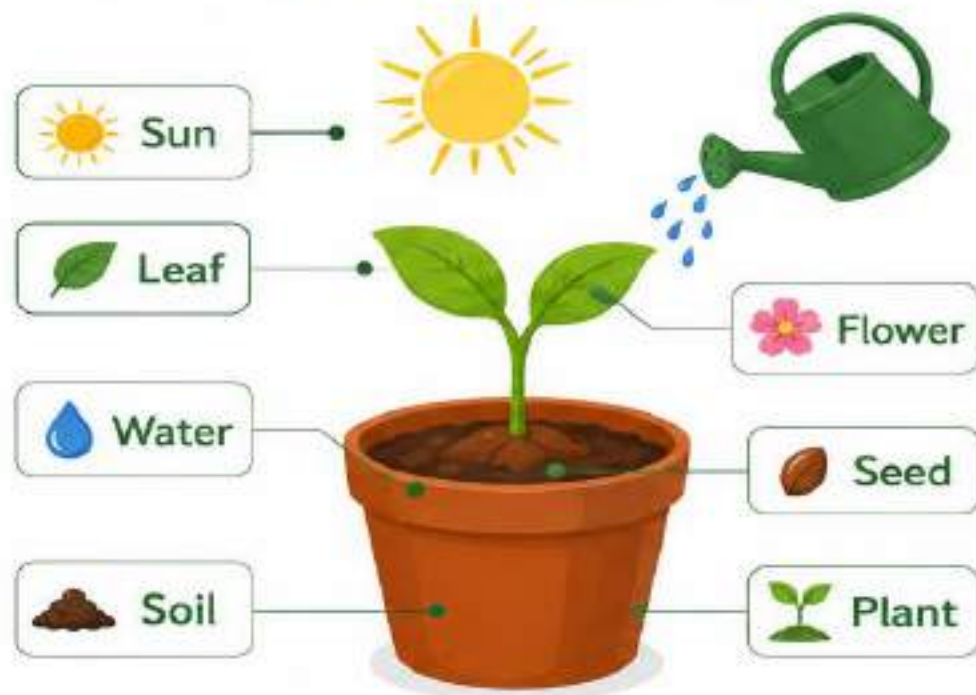
Listening



Growth diary

Multilingual Plant Vocabulary

- Pre-teaching vocabulary is particularly successful effective method to improve children's **speaking and confidence** (Murphy, 2015; Past, 2019).



	English	French	Spanish	Arabic
	Plant	plante	planta	نبات (nabat)
	Seed	graine	semilla	بذرة (buthrah)
	Soil	terre	tierra	تربة (turba)
	Water	eau	agua	ماء (maa)
	Sun	soleil	sol	شمس (shams)
	Leaf	feuille	hoja	ورقة (waraqah)
	Flower	fleur	flor	زهرة (zahrah)



Learning together,
growing together!



Using key vocabulary in different
languages helps children build
understanding, confidence and
a love for learning.



Talk



Think



Learn



Grow

Planting and Growing



Some Reflections from the PGCE PMF regarding their experiences



This initiative had a significant impact on both PGCE students and pupils.



Pupils demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm and confidence in using the target language, supported by hands-on gardening activities.



The use of repetition and storytelling enabled pupils to recall and sequence the days of the week effectively, while also applying vocabulary in meaningful contexts.



The outdoor and experiential nature of the activity contributed to reducing language anxiety, supporting Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis.



Gardening also promoted sustainability awareness, linking language learning to global citizenship and environmental responsibility (UNESCO, 2017).



The students, concluded on how the experience enhanced **their confidence** in delivering cross-curricular activities and highlighted the value of integrating languages with **real-world contexts**.



Thank you for listening and any questions?

GRACIAS
(THANKYOU)

MERCI

Danke!

תודה

Thanks

شكراً

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Sub-panel 3: Digital Collaboration and Virtual Exchange

How can digital collaboration and virtual exchange create new opportunities for intercultural learning?

Speakers:

- **Fotini Diamantidaki**

Translanguaging through collaborative online international learning across secondary schools and universities

- **Milene Oliveira**

Intercultural learning in a virtual exchange project



Digital Collaboration and Virtual Exchange

Assoc. Prof. Fotini Diamantidaki

Dr. Milene Oliveira

International Centre for Intercultural Studies,
Institute of Education
University College London

Funded by:



Delivered by:



In partnership with:



In partnership with:





Translanguaging through collaborative online international learning across secondary schools and universities

Fotini Diamantidaki

This presentation explores how our multisite COIL project promotes intercultural understanding through translanguaging and collaborative activity. MA students and school learners from the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Italy work in transcultural groups over a period of weeks to explore nature, friendship and space through the Topic 'Count on me' and their creations of multimodal artefacts. The project highlights how translanguaging through online collaboration can foster dialogic intercultural learning across school and university contexts.

Intercultural learning in a virtual exchange project

Milene Oliveira

This talk explores intercultural learning as a collaborative process that develops through interaction and participation rather than simply learning about other cultures. Drawing on a study of German and Finnish students in a Zoom mediated game, the talk highlights how digital interaction creates opportunities for participants to build inclusion and learn interculturality through participation in collaborative activities.



- Video-mediated interactions **enable encounters** that were impossible in the past
 - Marshall McLuhan (1964) called media 'the extensions of man' (Hafner and Jones, 2021)
- Process-oriented understanding of **culture**
 - Not national culture but potential virtual-group culture
- **Learning** as a social phenomenon that leans on participation in communities of practice
- Thus, **intercultural learning** as **becoming a member of a (virtual) community**

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is a pedagogical approach that connects students and educators across international contexts through sustained online collaboration.

The COIL project brings together **higher education and school settings** through:

- A structured yet flexible timeline of shared encounters
- Thematic exploration
- **Collaborative practice** through intercultural dialogue and shared inquiry

Through online interaction and collaborative inquiry, participants engage in:

Plurilingual communication

- A **creative process** through translinguaging poems and multimodal artefact creation, across educational and geographical boundaries
- A **transcultural space** where participants negotiate identities, perspectives, meanings, cultural understandings across borders



Intercultural game Megacities

**COIL Intercultural Understanding in School
and University Contexts: Count on me!**

Two Universities: one in Germany
and one in Finland

Collaborative tasks, developing a
joint (fictional) idea on how to
develop an abandoned area

5 Zoom sessions (2 hours each)
over 5 weeks



Finnish student Helmi:

After first session:

“Maybe something I would do in a different way *would be to listen to others more instead of talking*--as I mentioned that I have the experience of Finnish students often being a bit reluctant to get started in teamwork, *I have got used to taking a leading and managing role*”

After final session:

“...it has been interesting *to learn how quickly and easily one can adapt to others' communicative culture in interaction. I have been a lot more outgoing, active and relaxed than usually in university contexts* (be it online or in person).”



Finnish student Sakke:

After first session:

“Currently I feel a bit *overwhelmed* when I would have to *interrupt someone else* while they are speaking.”

After final session:

“The biggest improvement when thinking about my own ways of working in group projects is that I do *not need to be so "afraid" of other people and I just can bring forth my own ideas and opinions more bravely.*”

Translanguaging through collaborative online international learning across secondary schools and universities: Count on me!

MA Students from UCL, Institute of Education, on the module Intercultural Communication in the Foreign Language classroom MA students from the Education University of Hong Kong and two secondary school classes work together and simultaneously online on creating translanguaging poems on the topic of 'Count on me!' in their own curricula rhythms.

A series of input resources in school and at university on friendship, nature and space and we encourage creative expression and interpretation in transcultural groups.

We wish to challenge presuppositions about culture and beyond, whilst discovering new perspectives





Secondary school students:

“I learned that people can understand each other even if they don’t speak the same language.”
(secondary school student in Italy)

“It let me learn a lot of different words from multiple languages” (secondary school student London)

“I can meet new friends on the internet” (video call with our partner school) (secondary school student London)

“I liked the project because it was cool, fun and I could meet other cultures (secondary school student in Italy)

“It was interesting to learn Italian and German because they are kind of new languages for me”
(secondary school London)



'This is perhaps the most significant shift in my own thinking that this process has prompted. The teacher's role, I now understand differently, is less about transmission and more about the design of conditions — creating a space where negotiation, conflict, and unexpected connection can happen, and protecting that space without controlling what emerges from it.' (Student ioe)

'What I want to take forward is not a set of techniques but a disposition: to design for meaning-making rather than coverage, to treat the learner's own cultural position as a resource rather than a variable to be managed, and to remain genuinely curious about what happens in the spaces between modes' (Student IOE)

'A key implication is the need to foreground multimodality not as supplementary input but as constitutive of communication itself, requiring learners to interpret and deploy embodied and semiotic cues alongside language' (Student IOE)

Rather than guiding learners towards predefined “appropriate” behaviours, pedagogy should create conditions in which learners actively negotiate meaning and respond to ambiguity' (Student IOE)

I learned how to work effectively with peers from different backgrounds, navigating time zones, language nuances, and diverse perspectives. The experience enhanced my digital literacy, as we used various online tools to co-create content and solve problems. (Student EduHK)

We hold different ways of thinking and values, and the exchange of ideas has broadened my horizons and broken my inherent stereotypes. (Student EduHK)

We start with 'friendship', while the other interprets 'Count on Me' from the perspective of interdependence between humans and nature'. This difference has taught me to break free from conventional thinking frameworks and approach diverse interpretations more inclusively. (Student EduHK)



How can digital collaboration and virtual exchange create new opportunities for intercultural learning?

- Sharing an understanding of culture as experienced and co-created through mediated learning
- Fostering belonging and helping students develop confidence and voice as part of a team
- Creating space for negotiating meaning actively and responding to ambiguity
- Embracing diversity of interpretations
- Fostering plurilingual expression, experiential learning, and translanguaging
- Making space for multimodality in the classroom, using digital tools as affordances



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