creative
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GOES DIGITAL
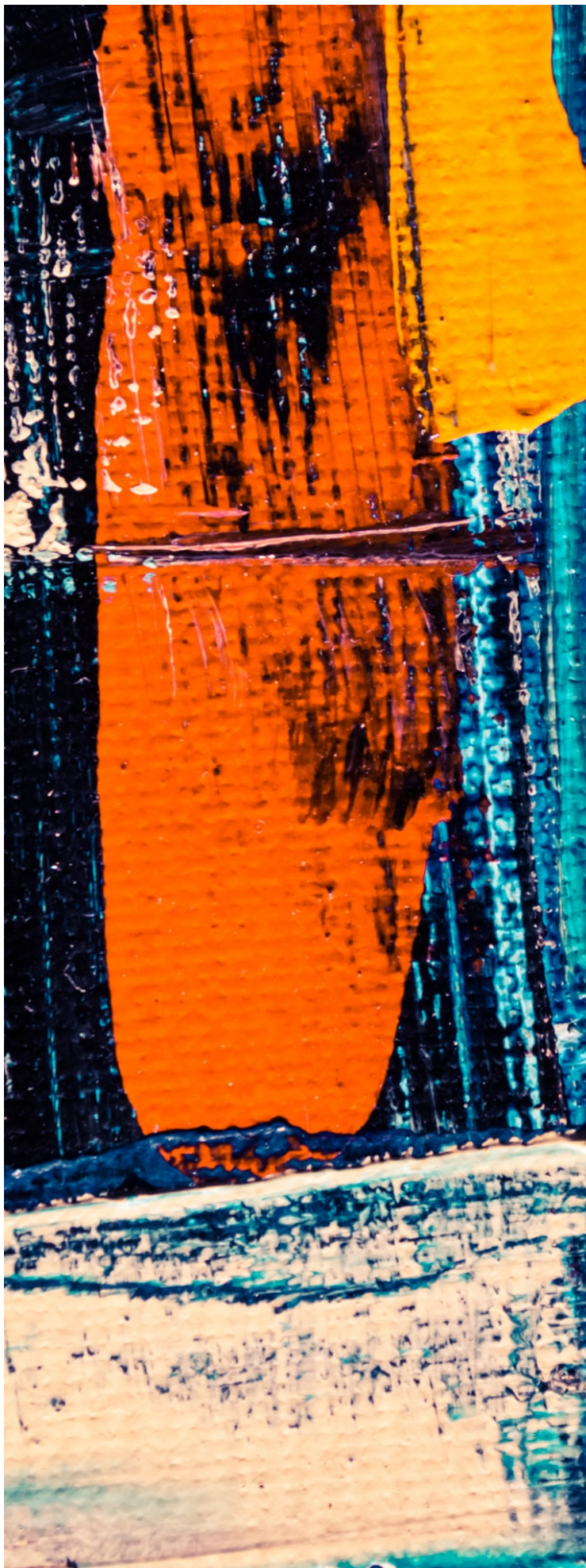

ONLINE
ENGAGEMENT
WITH RESEARCH

creative
multilingualism

Responding to Covid-19

In March 2020, Creative Multilingualism went fully online in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and national lockdown in the UK. It was with great sadness that we said goodbye to the buzz of live events, the excitement of get-togethers with language enthusiasts, and the wonderful surprises that come with discussing research ideas over a cup of coffee or chilling out with a drink.

The sudden restrictions posed significant logistical challenges for the team over the final four months of the four-year project, as fast decisions had to be taken. Should in-person events be cancelled, postponed or migrated to virtual spaces? Quickly, creative thinking was put to work reconfiguring planned activities in new formats. And we discovered that we were actually rather well equipped to find alternative ways of engaging our audiences that could even bring significant advantages. Plays became online animations, film premieres became vlogs, and collaborative performances were recorded remotely and reassembled in post-production.

Creative Multilingualism Goes Digital takes stock at the end of the momentous year 2020. It offers insights into the transformation processes, and reflections on why the Creative Multilingualism team was well-positioned to undertake them. The rich and diverse work commissioned and produced during the final months of funding – a period overlapping with the first national lockdown – is a testament to the robustness of the expertise and resources the project had developed over the previous three-and-a-half years, and the imaginative energy of our partners and collaborators.

Above all, *Creative Multilingualism Goes Digital* demonstrates the infinitely transferable potential of creativity with languages.

December 2020

Public Engagement Online

Public engagement events organised by Creative Multilingualism continued to have a lasting effect during lockdown owing to the online resources we had created as a legacy. For example, the film of the Multilingual Concert *We Are Children of the World* (2018) has to date been viewed 3,900 times, encouraging schools to engage with the online resources for classroom work and performances.[1] In June 2019, the event inspired Young Norfolk Arts to put on their own *Creative Multilingualism* concert in a new format, and for the June 2020 festival they adapted the concept further to create a *My Language* virtual exhibition. The Director explained that this in turn opened up new potential for extended engagement and geographical reach: "We are keen for this project to run into the summer holidays and beyond, and also to have a reach outside the County's borders."

[1] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/projects/we-are-children-world-teaching-resources.

The general guidance shared in *Public Engagement with Research: a Toolkit for Modern Languages Researchers*[2] also applies to coordinating online events: being clear about your objectives, knowing your audience, making the event accessible and suitable for different personalities, linking activities with research outcomes and making the invisible visible. While online events don't need to consider physical locations or venues, they do need to ensure that the content is accessible and engaging for participants.

The Public Engagement Toolkit also provides advice on the following:

- how to work collaboratively with partners in the public and education sectors;
- how to promote the event effectively to mailing lists and on social media;
- branding events; and
- securing a legacy for the project and encouraging continued engagement from the target audiences.

"If you inspire and engage people at your public engagement event, they may be interested in hearing more about your work and taking part in future events."
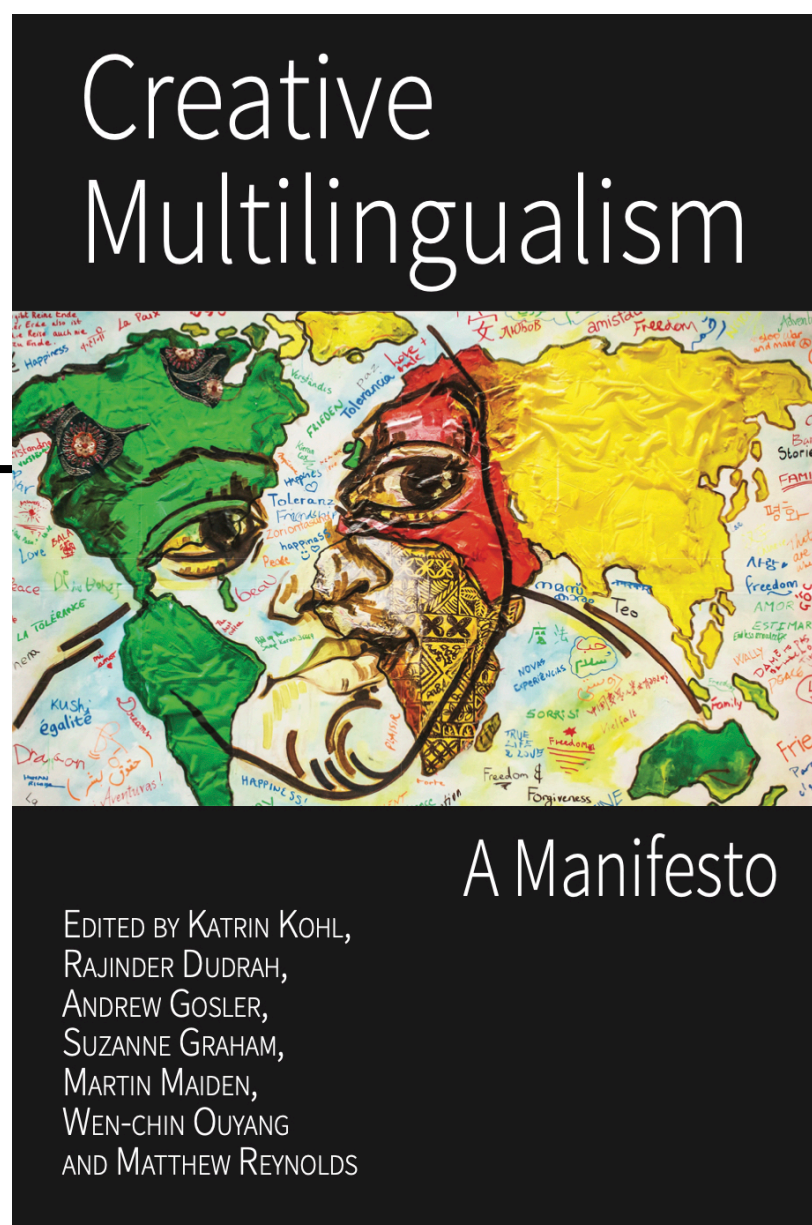

[2] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/public-engagement-research-toolkit-modern-languages-researchers.

Launching the Creative Multilingualism Manifesto

Creative Multilingualism: A Manifesto was published on 20 May 2020 by Open Book Publishers.[3] It is available as a printed book, e-book, or in freely downloadable form under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. This allows readers to share, copy, distribute and transmit the work; to adapt the work; and to make commercial use of the work providing attribution is made to the authors. This CC licence also allows the content to be freely translated:

Creative Multilingualism

A Manifesto

Edited by Katrin Kohl,
Rajinder Dudrah,
Andrew Gosler,
Suzanne Graham,
Martin Maiden,
Wen-chin Ouyang
and Matthew Reynolds

"The Creative Commons licence (CC BY) permits translation without special permission so long as the original authors are appropriately credited. We would be delighted if our collaborative project inspired many other researchers to take up our ideas in their own linguistic environment."

(Introduction)

Edited by the leads of the seven research strands, *Creative Multilingualism: A Manifesto* presents four years of collaborative research on multilingualism across disciplines, from the humanities through to the social and natural sciences. Structured around ten manifesto statements, it consists of ten chapters that each make a distinctive contribution to the field of modern languages.

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[3] Katrin Kohl, Rajinder Dudrah et al. (eds.), *Creative Multilingualism. A Manifesto* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020), https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/creative-multilingualism-manifesto.

To mark the launch of the *Manifesto* online, the Creative Multilingualism team produced a film introduction, hosted on the project's YouTube channel and promoted by its Twitter account. The video has been viewed over 300 times, garnering positive feedback from viewers. As one viewer commented:

> *"I am very heartened to see such an upbeat, joyful approach to the cultural richness of languages and working, playing, creating with them."*

Our decision to publish the book with Open Book Publishers proved beneficial not just because it gave the book and its individual chapters unlimited geographical reach.

We have also benefited from their continually updated metrics reports. These give us an exciting ongoing insight into where the book is being read. In the seven months since its publication, the *Manifesto* has been downloaded or accessed online over 2500 times, and additionally, individual chapters have been downloaded over 450 times.[4]

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[4] Metrics report for *Creative Multilingualism: A Manifesto:* https://reports.openbookpublishers.com/public/report/10.11647/obp.0206.


"We see people not as inherently monolingual with some people exceptionally being multilingual. Research is rather showing that historically and across the world, multilingualism is the norm."

(Katrin Kohl)

Geographical data about downloads and online views made available by Open Book Publishers provides a valuable insight into the project's truly global reach. *Creative Multilingualism: A Manifesto* has been accessed online or downloaded in 76 countries to date:
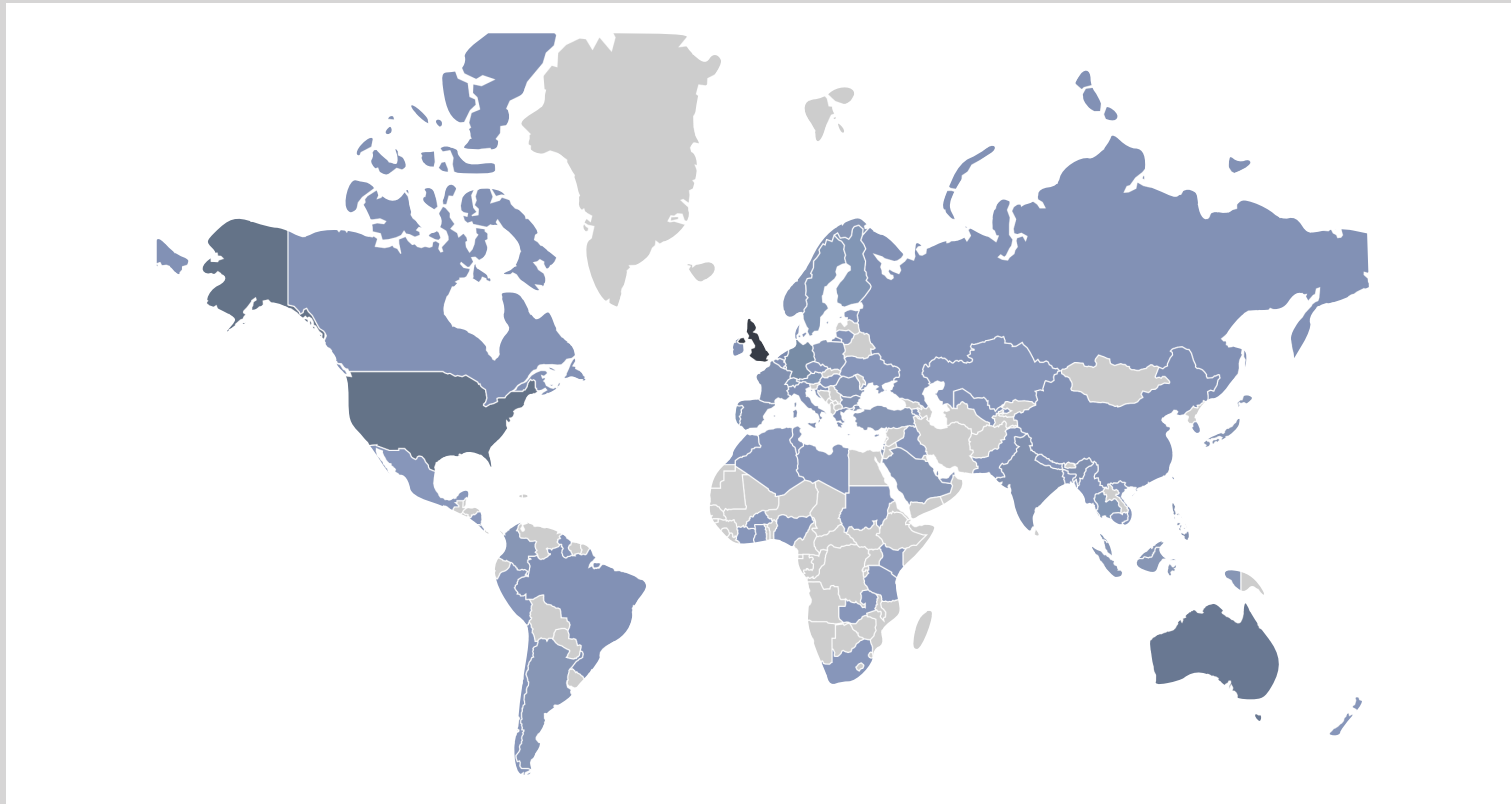
United Kingdom (656), United States of America (260), Australia (212), Germany (96), Netherlands (60), India (51), France (43), Spain (32), Russia (24), Italy (23), China (22), Ireland (18), Canada (18), Belgium (17), Brazil (17), Greece (17), Austria (17), Thailand (14), Switzerland (14), Sweden, (12), Finland (12), Portugal (12), Israel (10), Turkey (12), Indonesia (9), Poland (9), Japan (8), Malaysia (8), Norway (8), Denmark (6), Romania (6), Saudi Arabia (6), Argentina (5), Bulgaria (5), Columbia (5), Mexico (5), Pakistan (5), Zimbabwe (5), Croatia (4), Morocco (4), Myanmar (4), Nepal (4), Nigeria (4), Ukraine (4), Croatia (4), Armenia (3), Hungary (3), Kenya (3), Luxembourg (3), Peru (3), South Africa (3), Sudan (3), Zambia (3), Chile (2), Iraq (2), Kazakhstan (2), Lithuania (2), New Zealand (2), South Korea (2), Tanzania (2), UAE (2), Uzbekistan (2), Vietnam (2), Algeria (1), Burkina Faso (1), Cambodia (1), Costa Rica (1), Côte d'Ivoire (1), Cyprus (1), Czechia (1), Estonia (1), Ghana (1), Guyana (1), Libya (1), Nicaragua (1), Palestinian Territories (1).

> *"The purpose of Creative Multilingualism is above all to provoke questions, stimulate discussion and allow the value and excitement of languages to be experienced live."* **(Introduction)**

The need imposed by the pandemic to experiment with new formats and different media have sharpened our sense of the many different ways in which languages can be experienced 'live'.
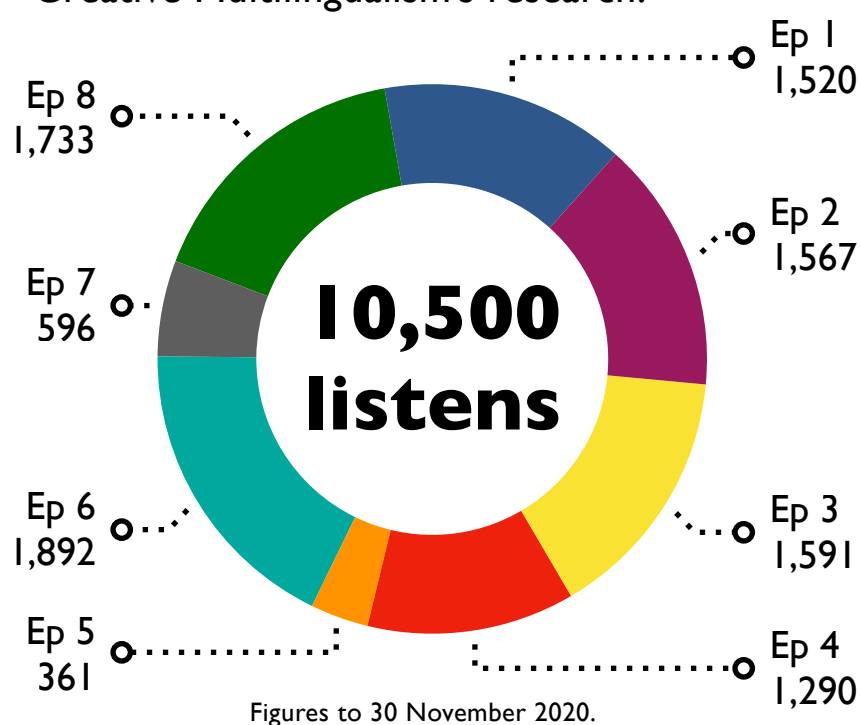
LinguaMania *Podcasts*

LinguaMania is Creative Multilingualism's flagship podcast series, with seven episodes curated by researchers across our seven research strands: Metaphor, Naming, Intelligibility, Creative Economy, World Literatures, Prismatic Translation and Language Learning. A further episode features the Multilingual Performance Project, aimed primarily at teachers and learners. Episodes are available from the University of Oxford Podcasts site or from Apple Podcasts for listening or downloading.[5]

The series took its title from a large-scale public event we organised early on in our research programme, in January 2017: *LinguaMania* in the Ashmolean Museum's 'LiveFriday' series. We filled the museum with over 2000 visitors, who needed no prior knowledge of any particular language or experience of language learning. They were able to participate in a rich array of some 35 language-related activities - tasters in Old Norse, Sign Language or Arabic; translating *Harry Potter* onto a large scroll; constructing metaphors for language learning; figuring out an unknown language under the guidance of a GCHQ language expert; a Samba workshop. The event generated a wonderful atmosphere of vibrancy, proving how enjoyable people find languages when they discover their creative dimensions in unexpected ways.

The podcast format required a very different approach to engaging audience interest, and we had worked on this in the course of 2019 with a BBC producer. We launched the series in February 2020, and it came into its own in the context of the pandemic. During a period when many people were spending a lot of time at home, the *LinguaMania* podcasts provided a dynamic way for researchers, collaborators, students and the general public to engage with Creative Multilingualism's research.

Ep 1 1,520
Ep 2 1,567
Ep 3 1,591
Ep 4 1,290
Ep 5 361
Ep 6 1,892
Ep 7 596
Ep 8 1,733

10,500 listens

Figures to 30 November 2020.

Episode List:

Episode 1: How 'foreign' are 'foreign languages'?
Episode 2: Understanding our natural world: why languages matter
Episode 3: Why should we read translated texts?
Episode 4: How do metaphors shape our world?
Episode 5: Languages are in crisis in our schools – could creativity help save the subject?
Episode 6: Why do we need people to translate when we have machine translation?
Episode 7: The Multilingual Performance Project: celebrating languages through drama
Episode 8: Diversity in the arts: why languages need to be part of the conversation

[5] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/projects/linguamania-podcast

Slanguages Online

The Slanguages project goes to the heart of multilingualism in the UK, and explores how artists draw on their own and other languages in their creative work. It proceeds from the principle that languages are not just useful for practical purposes. They are part of our individual identities and tap into deep forms of creativity.

The project encompasses a wide range of art forms, from exhibitions and music performances through to stand-up comedy, and it is founded on collaborations with many different creative professionals and partners. These include Punch Records, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and Sputnik Theatre Company, London. The artists work with different registers and local varieties of English, with languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Urdu and Yoruba, and with different forms of sign language, patois and pidgin.

Slanguages gains its energy from public performance, and the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had a massive impact on the work of the artists involved. But they had experience of using virtual media, and they were resourceful in responding to new requirements. Here, we look at some of the ways in which they adapted their work to continue communicating with their audiences.

Recording the Impact of Slanguages

In the *Slanguages Impact Podcast*, released on 7 July 2020, Rajinder Dudrah explores the impact of the Slanguages project on local communities, art, performances and research.[6] The podcast was produced for Creative Multilingualism by Georgiou & Tolley/Arts Lab International.

Rajinder interviews seven artists about how languages interact with their work and creative process. While the impact of research is often measured in terms of social, cultural and economic impact, and categories such as impact on physical well-being, he encourages these artists to also think about how Slanguages has contributed to their own development, thinking, creativity, language use and language learning.

The *Slanguages Impact Podcast* also records the effect Covid-19 has had on the many projects Slanguages commissioned in 2020, allowing creatives to articulate the diverse challenges to which they responded. Many used the disruption to undertake further research or to expand the scope of their original work to become more diverse and inclusive.

[6] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/slanguages-impact-podcast.

Slanguages
Languages in the Creative Economy

> *"Currently, with the coronavirus situation, the next exhibition in the project has been postponed, which is a shame, as it is all ready to install now, though we have been looking at adding other local artists and featuring very different ways to tell a story. It was always our intention to add other, new local artists and performers and we wanted to include dance and movement, and coding – a fascinating language in its own right. We are now looking at moving information online to carry the artistic experience further."*
>
> (Nick Drew, Birmingham-based graphic designer working with Punch Records)
>
> *"We were planning to do a live performance of* Fam *in June this year [2020], so have decided to do an online performance, which is very exciting because it allows us to reach out to different groups of people. We still hope to do a live performance at some point and a national tour as well."*
>
> (Noah Birksted-Breen, post-doctoral research associate with Creative Multilingualism and artistic director of the Sputnik Theatre Company)

Hinterland: Identity & History. Georgiou & Tolley.

Darryl Georgiou and Rebekah Tolley-Georgiou (aka Georgiou & Tolley), who produced the *Slanguages Impact Podcast*, also debuted "*Hinterland*" – *Renegotiating the Archive: Sound and Picture Poems* on Creative Multilingualism's blog and SoundCloud account. *Hinterland* is an audio-visual project comprising new contemporary artworks responding to and drawing from Georgiou's personal media archive, Mercia B21. It "re-negotiates the image archive through a contemporary cut, copy and remix approach, to create examples of

'untranslatability', where image, sound and text collide". The wider *Hinterland* project is perhaps the most ambitious of the Slanguages commissions.

"It includes a range of conventional and novel formats, fostering broader participation through democratic and accessible forms of delivery. The 'Hinterland Limited Edition Box Set'— comprised of physical artwork, sound art, and photographic-prints, including Buffet Tariff (Villa Cross Tavern), an archive photograph that explores national culture and British food as historical memory—exemplifies the project's diverse outcomes".

In this way, the Hinterland project creates "cross-platform stories […] interested in where and how things connect, change, and transform".[7]

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[7] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/hinterland-renegotiating-archive-sound-and-picture-poems.

For Georgiou and Tolley, the disruption caused by the limitations of the post-Covid reality prompted changed practices and opened up new audiences:

"We moved from the physical to the virtual, and ultimately our socially-engaged practice became socially-distanced practice. Strangely, it has allowed us to connect with participants in a much more rewarding and direct way and also develop a much larger and more inclusive audience through digital radio broadcasts and content platforms such as MixCloud, much more than we would have done via conventional exhibitions, publications, or talks."[8]

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[8] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/slanguages-impact-podcast.

Slanguages Speaks Up #BlackLivesMatter

In June 2020, following the death of George Floyd, the Slanguages project partnered with Beatfreeks and Don't Settle to co-sponsor two separate commissions for Black Creatives & People of Colour working with languages.

> *"Beatfreeks is an engagement and insight agency with a vital community of young creatives."[9]*
>
> *"Don't Settle empowers young people of colour from Birmingham and the Black Country to change the voice of heritage through the arts, research, and governance."[10]*

Beatfreeks announced the call on Twitter with a virtual shout:

> *"Now more than ever we need to speak up. To shout. To stand up to the system. Whatever way. Standing up together. We are starting by funding work created in light of the #BlackLivesMatter movement for young people aged 16-30 from around the UK."*

At the end of July, to feature the work produced in response to the call for commissions, Beatfreeks and the Slanguages project hosted a week-long #BLMTakeover of social media.

The Slanguages project's co-sponsorship of the call for commissions and subsequent social media take-over builds on Creative Multilingualism's mission to investigate the interconnection between linguistic diversity and creativity by supporting and promoting linguistic, cultural and racial diversity of young creatives working with languages during a period of exceptional adversity for the creative sector.

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[9] https://beatfreeks.com.
[10] https://beatfreeks.com/dont-settle.

Developing Jugni – The Female Firefly *Online*

Jugni is a three-woman play exploring themes of colonial history, race and migration through spoken-word poetry and song. Developed by artists Raveeta Banger, Ashlee Elizabeth-Lolo and Rupinder Kaur, the performance embarks upon inter-generational and multilingual conversations uncovering the lost voices of Black and Asian female journeys in history.

As with many of the works commissioned by Slanguages in 2020, the staging of *Jugni* had to be postponed. Meanwhile Raveeta, Ashlee and Rupinder share their experiences of developing the play in a Creative Multilingualism blog post:[11]

> *"The idea of Jugni or "female firefly" is an exceptionally powerful metaphor for the plight of Asian and Black women throughout time. During our fabulous production meetings, we explored how Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic or BAME women throughout history have been subjected to oppression from a variety of mediums – patriarchy, racism, caste and religion. However, as we untangled these variants, we found a commonplace of expression and healing and freedom from this: language."*
>
> (Raveeta Banger)

Raveeta describes the "spirit of storytelling and sisterhood" at the heart of *Jugni* as a "real solidarity between three creatives".

Rupinder and Ashlee share their responses to the disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic on the *Slanguages Impact Podcast* in July 2020. Rupinder explains that she is using the pandemic as an opportunity "to create an online exhibition" and to build her "skills as a creative curator."

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[11] Raveeta Banger, "Three Jugnis in Conversation", *Creative Multilingualism blog: Exploring Multilingualism* (June 2020): https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/three-jugnis-conversation.

Ashlee contributes the following reflections:[12]

"Covid is obviously a very devastating thing for a lot of artists. I was very worried at first what was going to happen with the project that we were doing with Slanguages at the moment [...] but it actually hasn't changed as much as I thought it was going to. We are still collaborating online, practising via Zoom [...] If anything it [the pandemic] has made it stronger because we are learning more about the process of how we write as a collaborative team. [...] We have had to rise to the occasion, to try to thrive in uncertain conditions and very complicated situations."

(Ashlee Elizabeth-Lolo)

[12] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/slanguages-impact-podcast.

Coming together for a "Multilingual Boliyan"

Slanguages opens up artistic spaces for diverse forms of cross-fertilisation between languages and their associated cultures. Together with Birmingham-based artists Kiran Johal and Steven Sahota, Slanguages commissioned educator and dance artist Jagdis Kumar and the musician Lekan Babalola, a Grammy award-winning Nigerian-born jazz percussionist, to create a "Multilingual Boliyan":[13]

"'Boliyan' or bolis are couplets sung in the Punjabi language [...that] accompany the Punjabi folk music genres of bhangra and giddha and involve singing, clapping to a beat, musical sounds played via South Asian percussion instruments and dancing."

Boliyans are often sung at celebrations, and the "Multilingual Boliyan" recounts the story of a British Indian woman who is planning her wedding to her British Nigerian fiancé.

The languages featured in the work include Punjabi, Yoruba, English and Hindi, coupled with the creativity of the artistic languages of bhangra, giddha, Bollywood, Afrobeats and West African Yoruba music. The meeting of art forms interacts with the story of cultures coming together to engender a new language and sensibility.

[13] On British bhangra music see Rajinder Dudrah, "Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond" (Birmingham: Birmingham City Council, 2007).

In his contribution to the *Slanguages Impact Podcast,* Lekan highlights how the work of Slanguages artists crosses boundaries as they communicate with their audiences:[14]

"We are live musicians: we do compositions at our home in our various studies, but at the same time we take the music out to the people, to workshops with local schools and young people [... in] a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary way."

The "Multilingual Boliyan" epitomises the engagement with diverse communities. The project had to be indefinitely postponed, but a trace of it is captured in a blog post accompanied by a video recording of a pre-lockdown rehearsal. Here Jagdis and Lekan discuss their creative and performance process, also reflecting on the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.[15]

Like many other creatives, Lekan, Kiran, Steven and Jagdis responded to the restrictions by innovating and migrating to new mediums. While experimenting with Zoom as a substitute for physical interaction, Lekan and his colleagues have also come up with the plan to give cross-cultural music a new platform: a Birmingham Jazz Radio Station.

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[14] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/slanguages-impact-podcast.
[15] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/multilingual-boliyan.

Remembering Yoruba – *Sharing Poetry across Languages*

The poetry project *Remembering Yoruba* was developed over two stages out of an Oxford performance of the 'sacred funk' work *Yoruba Sonnets* in 2019. This work created by Nigerian-born Lekan Babalola and his ensemble in the context of Slanguages formed the basis of a collaboration with East London secondary school Brampton Manor Academy, which has a high proportion of students with Nigerian heritage.

The original plan was for Lekan and his fellow musicians to run a workshop in the school, involving a group of students, and to follow up with a joint performance in Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre in May 2020. This project was intended as a follow-up from the 2019 concert, which contributed to research on metaphor conducted by Creative Multilingualism's Strand 1.[16] When both the workshop and the performance became unviable owing to the pandemic, the musical project had to be abandoned, but an alternative art form came into play: poetry.

Kate Clanchy, who had run many multilingual poetry workshops in schools in collaboration with Creative Multilingualism's Strand 6, "Prismatic Translation", created an online workshop for a group of eight students from the school. She involved the Yoruba-speaking poet Timileyin Amusan, and the students each created a poem and commented on their experience of the writing process.

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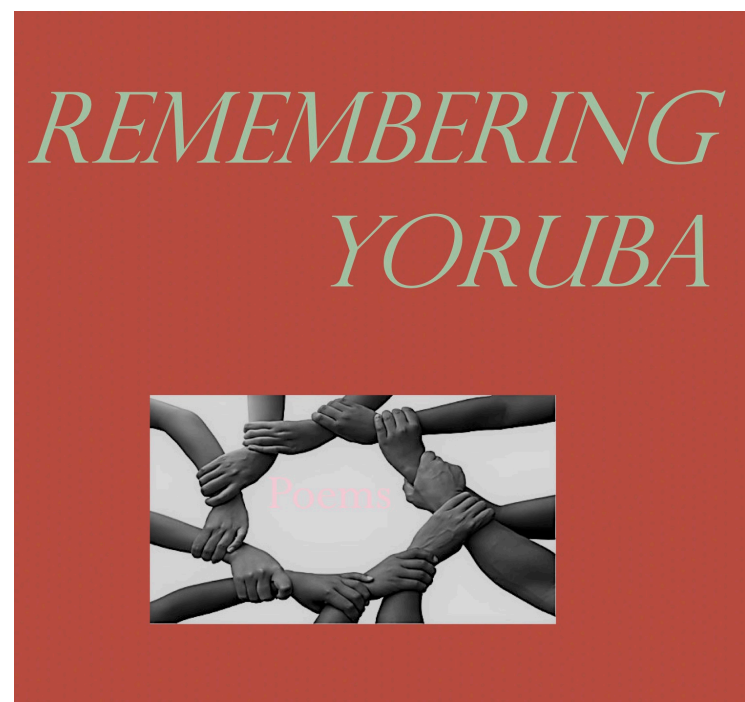
[16] Katrin Kohl et al., 'The Creative Power of Metaphor', in Kohl et al. (2020), pp. 39-42. https://www.openbookpublishers.com/htmlreader/978-1-78374-929-4/ch1.xhtml.

Sho gbo yoruba?
yes ma
Ah ah
small small?
yes ma
small small.

I piece of me that I never known
but without it, I felt lonely
With it, I might be
A stronger tree.

(Adepeju Adelusi, *Remembering Yoruba*)

Remembering Yoruba is available to read and download[17] on Creative Multilingualism's website, and the poets' readings and reflections are hosted on SoundCloud.[18]

The project forms part of Creative Multilingualism's concern to demonstrate and celebrate the creative potential and value that lies in the rich multitude of languages spoken across the UK in homes, schools and workplaces.

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[17] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/remembering-yoruba-sharing-poetry-across-languages.
[18] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/exploring-remembering-yoruba.

Imagine My Reality

In June 2020, Slanguages partnered with Zimbabwean-born artist Laura Nyahue to produce *Imagine My Reality* in response to the theme of National Refugee Week 2020: IMAGINE.[19]

Visual artist Nyahue is CEO, Creative Director and Founder of MAOKWO, an organisation dedicated to representation and inclusion in arts and culture, and the work is designed to offer both an artistic showcase and a conversation in an event that also features the multimedia and visual artist Ryan Christopher, spoken word artist Chrissie Okorie and visual artist Zoey Sibanda. It opens up the perspective of asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and persons of colour as they engage with supremely uncertain times and personal circumstances. Due to the pandemic, the event took place online, with advance ticket bookings being promoted on social media by MAOKWO and Creative Multilingualism.

Laura discusses the development of *Imagine My Reality* in a blog post, exploring the social, racial and gender inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic:[20]

> *"Coronavirus did not apply for a visa, it does not own a passport however it came through borders. Initially, it looked like the virus has brought humanity to the most needed realisation, the realisation that we are all human with red blood running through our veins. We had a common enemy, the virus and we are fighting it together in unity. Two weeks into lockdown, cracks of divides in class, ethnicities, status, privileges come and screamed in our face."*

•

> *"Social distancing was a luxury some of our fellow humans could not afford […] staying at home was wishful thinking for some. Why ? Because they are asylum seekers, migrants with no recourse to public funds and humans who are in limbo and considered stateless."*

The event was designed for an online format and was attended by the local MP Zarah Sultan. MAOKWO's mission is to create a sustainable forum for generating forward-thinking solutions.

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[19] https://www.wearemaokwo.com/.
[20] Laura Nyahue, "Imagine, My Reality", *Creative Multilingualism blog: Exploring Multilingualism* (June 2020): https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/imagine-my-reality.

In My Neighbourhood

The UK's first ever national lockdown in 2020 radically changed the atmosphere of communities and neighbourhoods, stimulating highly diverse responses in many different art forms. Rajinder Dudrah and the Slanguages project engaged with local Birmingham communities in the context of a collaboration with Nasima Lime and Nathaniel Telemaque, members of the Pesolife Collective,

"a visual art/records collective on a quest for […] a way of living that values substantive/artistic endeavours over the accumulation of capital and materialistic riches".[21]

Together, they created *Neighbourhood: A Pesolife & Slanguages Photo-Essay* (published on Creative Multilingualism's blog as well as on the Pesovisuals website), exploring multilingual and multiracial communities during the lockdown.[22]

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[21] https://pesovisuals.com/PESOLIFE.
[22] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/neighbourhood-pesolife-slanguages-photo-essay.

"Endeavour"

"Afat"

"New work-station"

"1924"

The severe restrictions on movement and social interactions gave Nasima and Nathaniel the opportunity to explore their local communities on a granular level, attending to space, memory and language.

"In a post-Covid-19 world our neighbourhoods are at the centre of the new normal."

They reported that a community member interviewed in Stonebridge became "consumed by the entirety of the place, experiencing the sounds, music, languages and cultures she hasn't felt since childhood. Now that we're made to stay at home, she's noticing small things that bring her back to her youth." This sense of recognition was accompanied by new perspectives on familiar people as relationships within communities were reconfigured by the crisis:

"The new normal is surreal. But the community support is very real. The local mosque shares food with those in need. Previous church socials for the local elderly turn into socially distant front door check-ins."

For artists, the practical impacts of the pandemic extended to every part of their lives. In the *Slanguages Impact Podcast*, Nathaniel shares his experience of the disruption and particularly highlights the difficulties of finding commissioned work. He had "4-5 different shoots – visual projects – that I wanted to start" but like many, he found that the restrictions on his movements alone were "creatively stagnating".

The Slanguages blog and social media platforms have enabled Creative Multilingualism to amplify Nathaniel and Nasima's artistic responses to their experiences of lockdown and give an insight into the impact of Covid-19 on their work. In October 2020, the Slanguages-commissioned short film *Sounds Like Harlesden*, produced by the Pesolife Collective (Nathan Telemaque, Secaina Hudson and Kalina Blaize), made it onto the shortlist for the Arts and Humanities Research Councils' Research in Film Awards 2020 in the "Inspiration Award" category.[23]

[23] https://ahrc.ukri.org/innovation/research-in-film-awards/the-awards-shortlist/.

SLANGUAGES PRESENTS

Four New Beats

by ROZART

Four New Beats

Handsworth-based artist Rozart was inspired to create four new musical compositions after attending the screening of *Sounds Like Harlesden* in March 2020. The audio-visual essay created by the Pesolife Collective and post-screening discussion in early March 2020 formed the basis for *Four New Beats*.[24]

[24] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/four-new-beats.

- **"Bol (Speak)"** – a track with a "generic bhangra feel to it", combined with trap drums, celebrating "the togetherness of two or more cultures".
- **"Magic"** – through its melody (a Caribbean marimba sound), drums (the British Afro-swing influence of the 808 bass) and a Latino vibe, this track combines three different cultures.
- **"Dil (Heart)"** – a collaboration with Syed Naqvi – uses "eastern sounds through the use of the flute and in conversation with the accompanying beats" to convey the influence of Rozart and Naqvi's eastern identity and inspiration on hip-hop music and to evoke "a transcendental sonic feeling".
- **"Slanguages Summer Swing 2020"** – the most listened-to track, experiments "with multiple drum sounds such as the tabla, which derives from South Asian cultures, sounds such as the hi hat, rim and clicks which are part of American trap music, combined with the kick and snare pattern which adds to the reggaeton vibe".

Four New Beats draws on the concept of Slanguages to celebrate "the togetherness of two or more cultures" in music.

"While attempting to bring into conversation more than a few cultures together, not least during a summer in lockdown due to Covid-19, I have attempted to create a cosmopolitan summer sound that hopefully brings people together to reflect and relate with one another."

Songs and Creativity before and after a Pandemic

Doctoral student and singer Margaret Frainier was inspired by Noah Birksted-Breen and Rajinder Dudrah's development of a hip-hop theatre version of the Russian play *Oxygen* to transform a musical work. She undertook to create a hip-hop version of Franz Schubert's Romantic Lieder cycle *Winterreise (Winter Journey)* in collaboration with Jay L'Booth from Punch Records.

Frainier and L'Booth's innovative collaboration aims to

> *"show that these classical works, far from being inaccessible, endure precisely because they have the ability to be related and translated to people of all ages, backgrounds, and origins."*

Rehearsals and performance of this new translation of *Winterreise* were disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and in a Creative Multilingualism blog post, Margaret writes candidly about the experience of losing the physical dimension of the project that had made it so inspiring:

> *"Where I had been a part of a four-person collaboration, each bringing their own musical skills to the table, I was now nothing more than a voice alone, singing to the echoing walls of a shower stall in an abandoned student house."*

The momentum for this project was lost owing to other pressures taking over, though the two artists hope to revive it when circumstances are more propitious. What is not lost, of course, is the force of the creative idea connecting past and present, across art forms, cultures and languages.

Languages in the Creative Economy during Covid-19

In response to the release of Beatfreek's *Slanguages in the Creative Economy Report* in June 2020, Noah Birksted-Breen wrote the blog post "A language jam? Reasons to embrace multilingualism in the UK cultural industries".[26] The report[27] offers

> *an insight into the working lives, creativity, challenges and contributions of, and the impact made by 10 artists in Birmingham and the West Midlands, who use languages as part of their professional practices.*

Since languages work in interstitial spaces between the self and society, they can be seen as intangible when it comes to defining their value in a creative economy.

Birksted-Breen identifies the challenges associated with reducing creative and linguistic practices and work to their economic value. However, there are concrete actions that national organisations could take to develop a more sophisticated and explicit understanding of the economic impact of languages on the creative economy, and he calls for

> *"policies designed to substantially increase multilingualism across the creative economy [that could] reinvigorate badly-needed conversations around diversity, race, equality, access and progressive societal change, opening the door to fresh faces and fresh ideas".*

[26] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/language-jam-reasons-embrace-multilingualism-uk-cultural-industries.

[27] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/slanguages-creative-economy-report.

Following the cancellation of performances, workshops, festivals and conferences and the closure of exhibition, gallery and performance spaces across the UK – and around the world – in March, initial reports suggest that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the creative sector as well as on the livelihoods and wellbeing of those working within it has been severe and protracted.[28] As documented in earlier sections of this report, this is even more the case for creatives of colour, women, people with disabilities, and those from low-income households. It is thus unsurprising that governmental responses to the pandemic have reignited national conversations about how structural and systemic inequalities disproportionately impact these groups.

Attempting to "account", as Birksted-Breen puts it, for an exact economic value of languages in the creative economy may not help to mitigate these inequities or to actively shape a post-Covid-19 society. However, in accounting for Creative Multilingualism's progressive, inclusive, collaborative praxis, we can discern how such a praxis has prepared us to respond to the crisis of Covid-19 by building communities, forging connections, and discovering a rich diversity of identities.

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[28] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid-19/covid-19-response-reset; https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld13215/cr-ld13215%20-e.pdf; https://www.local.gov.uk/creative-industries-can-play-key-role-covid-19-recovery; https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/the-importance-of-languages-in-global-context-an-international-call-to-action/.

As we explore in *Creative Multilingualism Goes Digital*, the tools, skills and resources developed in the context of the Creative Multilingualism project helped our researchers and creative partners to continue their work productively in a time of crisis. Moreover, these tools, skills and resources have proved well suited to sustaining the creativity of multilingual communities as they recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Creative Multilingualism across the UK - New Perspectives on Modern Languages Research

CREATIVE MULTILINGUALISM: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON MODERN LANGUAGES RESEARCH

Creative Multilingualism is a research programme led by the University of Oxford and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of the Open World Research Initiative.

New Perspectives on Modern Languages Research was planned as a one-day conference designed to bring together researchers who had contributed projects funded in the context of three funding calls launched by Creative Multilingualism. The funding for external projects was built into the AHRC grant awarded to Creative Multilingualism as part of the Open World Research Initiative (OWRI). Distributing the funding via open calls enabled the research team to involve researchers from universities not funded by OWRI, giving them the opportunity to contribute their ideas to Creative Multilingualism while expanding the horizons of the research team.

The conference was due to take place in March 2020, but that plan had to be abandoned when Covid-19 struck. Rather than risk losing the momentum, we decided to implement an online format in which researchers could present their projects in videos and blogs. Unlike the contributions to many online conferences, these were made available to the general public and promoted on social media. They remain accessible on the Creative Multilingualism website in the online showcase "Creative Multilingualism across the UK".[29]

[29] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/creative-multilingualism-across-uk-new-perspectives-modern-languages-research.

(Re)Creating the Higher Education Curriculum

Curriculum innovation in Modern Languages was at the centre of a collaborative project developed by the University of Oxford and Cardiff University in spring 2020. The plan was to hold a workshop in Oxford to bring together colleagues from across the UK who had experience of establishing new types of course, engaging with transnational approaches and exploring the decolonisation of the subject.

When the workshop had to be cancelled owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus shifted to the second part of the project: creation of an online 'toolkit' designed to share ideas, examples and best practice with the Modern Languages community in higher education.[30] In lieu of exchanging views and experiences in a live setting, the project team led from Cardiff by Liz Wren-Owens and Rachel Beaney invited colleagues to develop ideas and conversations asynchronously via the EDMODO online platform.

The stimulating virtual interaction with input from a wide range of departments and courses yielded much excellent material for the toolkit. Moreover, the experience of producing and sharing it became part of an endeavour that is still ongoing: approaching course design with the open-minded willingness to adapt formats and ideas to circumstances, constraints and opportunities.

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[30] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/recreating-modern-languages-toolkit.

The Multilingual Performance Project Goes Digital

Live performance is the lifeblood of the Multilingual Performance Project, designed to inject the vibrancy of live drama into the languages classroom. Moreover, the period from March to June 2020 was packed with a programme of workshops and performances in schools and theatres across the country. So how did the project team cope with the restrictions suddenly imposed by the coronavirus?

The Director Daniel Tyler-McTighe comments as follows on the transition from in-person to online workshops in a Creative Multilingualism blog post:

> *"Between March and June 2020, the Multilingual Performance Project team and I have been busily working from our homes to create new digital experiences and resources for teachers looking to introduce some creativity to their language teaching and school life.*
>
> *After workshops planned for Newcastle and London in April couldn't go ahead, they were moved online. Now that they weren't tied to geographic limits, the MPP was able to reach more and more teachers. Workshops kept being filled up, so more were scheduled. In the end, the team led 8 workshops with 135 teachers signing up from all over the UK and as far afield as Sri Lanka, Germany, Spain and the USA."*

creative multilingualism

CREATIVE MULTILINGUALISM

MFL TEACHER WORKSHOP (ONLINE)

4 JUNE 2020
16:00 TO 17:00
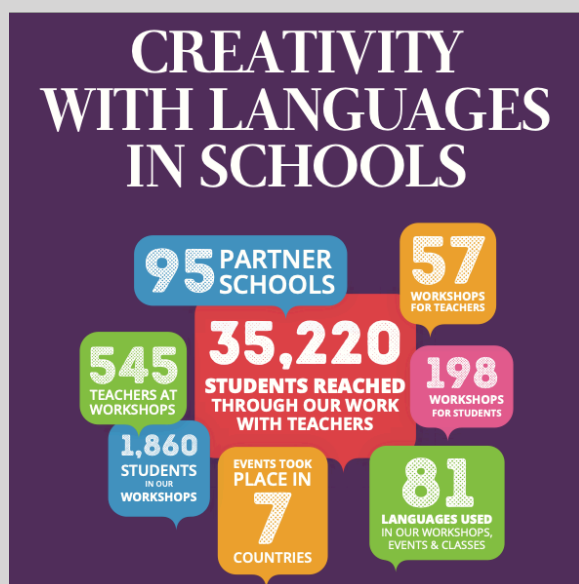
All interested language, drama, and performing arts teachers are welcome.

Book your *free* ticket to receive the link to the Zoom meeting in advance of the workshop.

MULTILINGUAL PERFORMANCE PROJECT

As well as delivering the eight online workshops, the MPP team created three new resource packs to supplement the original *Get Involved!* pack.[31] They are:

•*Stay Involved!* with even more drama and creative exercises for teacher to use and adapt in their classrooms

•*Modern Foreign Languages and Creativity in Primary Schools* for those teachers – especially non-linguists – who are looking to start integrating MFL in their schools.

•*Celebrating Community Languages in Schools* offering ideas for teachers at any level to get creative with the home and heritage languages of their multilingual students.

The need to change the format of delivery also prompted more wide-ranging consideration of channels by which our work could effectively be disseminated, and this in turn led to compilation of the report *Creativity with Languages in Schools*.[32]

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[31] All four downloadable resource packs are available here: https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/mpp.

[32] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/creativity-languages-schools-report.

INTRODUCING MFL ACROSS THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM – AS A HOME-SCHOOLING MUM!

In a blog post for Creative Multilingualism, Holly Bateman shared her experience with Modern Foreign Language teaching and learning during lockdown.[33] Holly, a Birmingham-based theatre practitioner working with the Multilingual Performance Project, made use of her creative practice as a theatre-maker to develop learning activities that are curriculum-friendly, interest-led, and can be adapted by other parents schooling their children from home.

> *"The key concept for my approach was to find a topic into which a modern language can be injected in a way to support the learning, rather than as an entirely separate lesson.*
>
> *Our schedule was based very firmly on the interests and skill set already held by my child, but some of the ideas within it could be applied elsewhere both by other home educators and in the classroom."*

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[33] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/introducing-mfl-across-primary-curriculum-home-schooling-mum.

Teaching Resources

As part of Creative Multilingualism's commitment to promoting language learning and engaging with schools and classrooms, we developed robust teaching resources throughout the lifetime of the project. This meant that a lot of resources were already available online when lockdown started. Creative Multilingualism shared them with teachers and parents interested in creative and multilingual learning activities, promoting them on social media with the popular hashtags #mflteaching and #mfltwitterati:

- a series of short films, commissioned by the Multilingual Performance Project, introducing multilingual drama teaching activities geared towards giving teachers the tools they need to inject more creativity into their language classes;[34]

DANIEL TYLER-MCTIGHE
Director, Multilingual Performance Project

- multilingual poetry teaching guides, created by researchers from the World Literatures strand, showing how to use poetry to discuss different aspects of multilingualism and identity, and encourage pupils to create their own multilingual poems;[35]

- the BirdWords project developed by the *Ethno-ornithology World Atlas* team (Naming strand) to encourage diverse cultural knowledge of birds in multiple languages;[36]

- a series of short films by the Prismatic Translation strand with creative poetry activities for schools to help inspire creative poetry writing, particularly in schools or communities where pupils speak many different languages.[37]

The MPP films and the poetry teaching guides proved particularly popular, with some 9,000 views of the drama activities and some 4,700 of the poetry films.

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[34] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/resources/multilingual-drama-teaching-activities.
[35] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/multilingual-poetry-teaching-guides.
[36] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/birdwords-global-classroom.
[37] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/creative-poetry-activities-schools.

How Languages Help in Your Career

Creative Multilingualism encourages young people to be ambitious and think creatively about the career possibilities languages open up. In order to explore what this means in practice, we produced a series of careers films featuring interviews with a wide range of professionals.[38] The series is aimed at school pupils from year 9 to sixth formers. By showing the wide variety of careers in which languages can be both useful and enriching, the films offer insights into the many pathways opened up by languages – both languages learned at home and languages studied at GCSE, A Level and University.

Since the series launched on 11 June 2020, films in the series have been viewed over 3,631 times. The introductory film *How Languages Help in Your Career* is among the most frequently viewed films on Creative Multilingualism's YouTube channel.
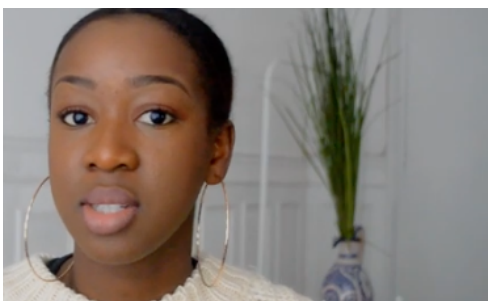

LANGUAGES OPEN DOORS TO LOTS OF DIFFERENT CAREERS

LAW   MUSIC   SPORTS   JOURNALISM   BUSINESS   TEACHER

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[38] https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/careers.
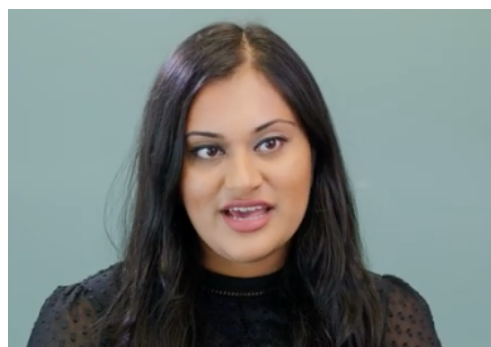
For poet and performer Rupinder Kaur, languages offer unparalleled artistic collaboration and potential.

Captain Oliver Tillard, a regional adviser for the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit of the British Army, explains that learning languages has helped him to understand human terrain.

Samir Singh works for the Arsenal Football Club's community department and runs a languages programme for local schools.

For Birmingham-based rapper RTKal, language has been "the foundation of [his] whole career".

After picking up some Twi while living in Ghana, business consultant Emma Hooper decided to study Yoruba formally.

Rob Wightman, a former journalist who now teaches French and Spanish, says that learning languages is about communicating and making connections.

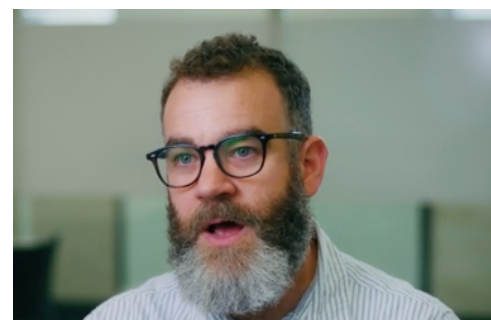Elen Roberts has found that practising law and languages go together.

Documentary producer and director Adam Luria was interested in languages from a young age and knew they would help him keep his options open.

Eve Yeboah is a German vlogger who knows 8 languages. This allows her to explore and share different cultures and perspectives with her viewers.

Learning languages makes us better problem solvers and communicators, according to Leanne Tritton, managing director of ING Media.

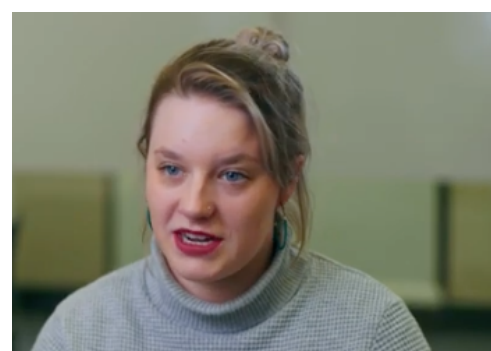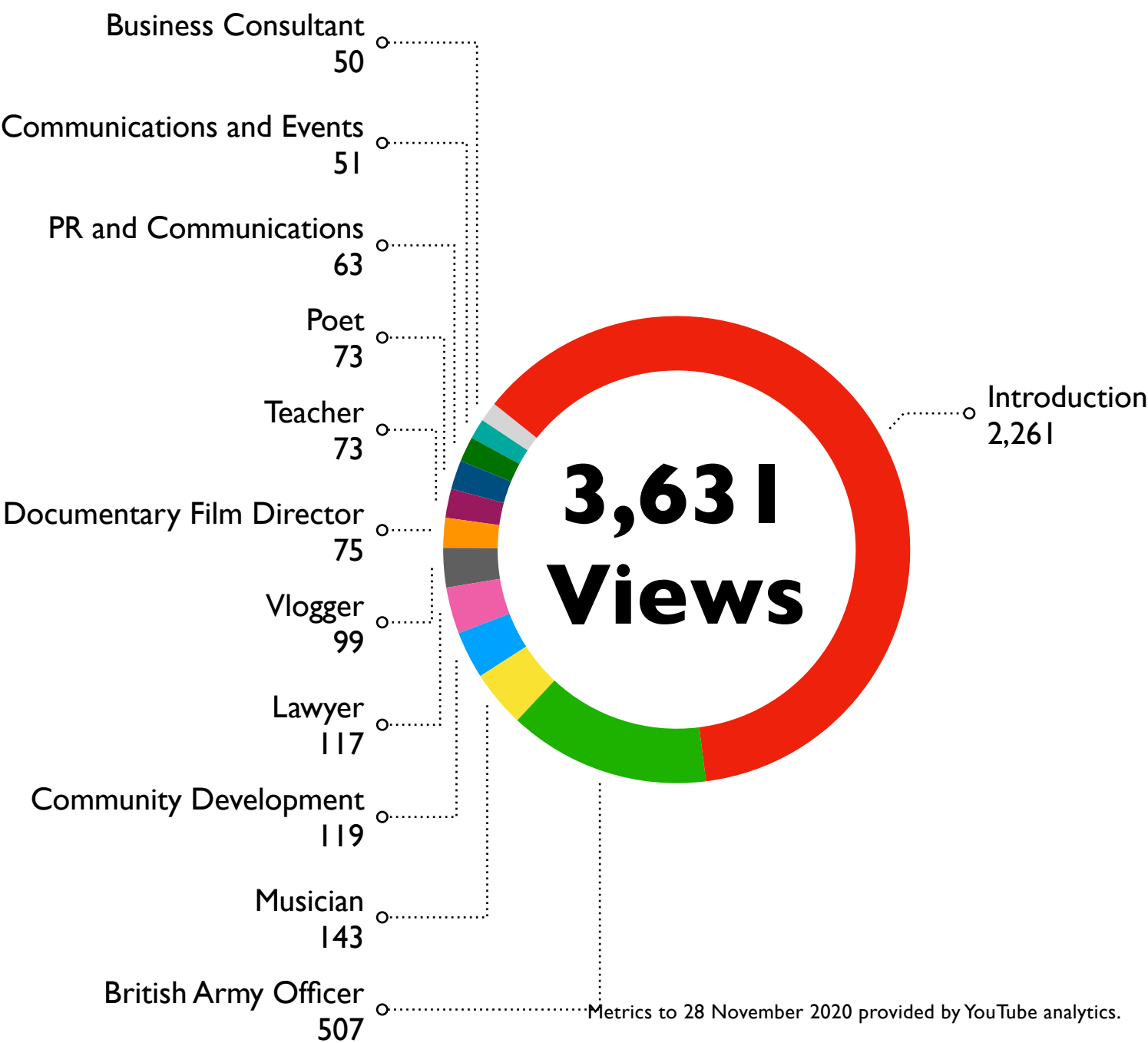Evie Snow works for the Royal College of General Practitioners, and says learning languages makes us adaptable, flexible and resilient.

Careers Film Metrics

Business Consultant
50

Communications and Events
51

PR and Communications
63

Poet
73

Teacher
73

Documentary Film Director
75

Vlogger
99

Lawyer
117

Community Development
119

Musician
143

British Army Officer
507

Introduction
2,261

3,631 Views

Metrics to 28 November 2020 provided by YouTube analytics.

The restrictions introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic increased the potential across Oxford University to disseminate the films online. They were promoted as part of the Oxford Open Day events in July and September, which were held online in 2020. In addition to being featured on social media, the films were posted to the University of Oxford's teacher resources page on the Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach site and circulated to Outreach and Access Officers across the University of Oxford so that they could be shared with teachers and pupils across the UK.

*The Creative Multilingualism research team thanks
all its fantastic partners and collaborators
for their adaptability, resourcefulness
and multilingual creativity online!*