

Slanguages

Languages in the Creative Economy

Rethinking Modern Languages from the ground up

The Creative Multilingualism programme directs the spotlight on the value of linguistic diversity, and uses creativity as the focus for rethinking that value. In particular we are interested in the following questions:

- How does multilingualism stimulate creativity?
- What kinds of creativity are involved in multilingualism?
- How do these different kinds of creativity manifest themselves in multilingual processes?

Research for the programme is being undertaken across 7 strands.

Responding to the Modern Foreign Languages crisis

The research is being conducted in the context of an unprecedented crisis in language learning in UK schools, which is in turn undermining the health of Modern Languages departments in universities. The crisis has many causes, but the bigger picture is globalisation and the gradual rise of English. Native English speakers can now travel anywhere in the world and rely on getting by fairly comfortably with the global lingua franca in the main tourist centres. And the internet gives us the illusion that the world now speaks English. So the most obvious incentive for learning another language has disappeared over the last few decades.

Meanwhile - and somewhat paradoxically - school syllabuses for Modern Foreign Languages have focused more and more exclusively on the practical language skills, excluding those dimensions of language learning that go beyond their functional use.

Our research proceeds from the premise that there is more to languages than their practical benefits for communicative transactions. This is not just 'added' value. Languages are our key medium for self-expression, and as such they are at the heart of individual and collective cultural identity. That gives them immense creative potential which is fundamental to our lives as human beings and an invaluable resource in its own right, while also being inextricably connected with practical use.

This Slanguages exhibition is presented as one of the outcomes of the Creative Multilingualism project. Creative Multilingualism is a four-year research programme investigating the interconnection between linguistic diversity and creativity.

Produced and designed by:



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Strand 4. Languages in the Creative Economy

The Slanguages exhibition has been devised under Strand 4 - Languages in the Creative Economy which is being led by Professor Rajinder Dudrah from Birmingham City University, together with co-researchers Professors Julie Curtis from Wolfson College and Philip Bullock from Wadham College, University of Oxford.

This strand investigates interaction between languages in the performing arts and the types of creativity this generates. Multilingual performance fosters creativity that is responsive to cultural contexts and audiences.

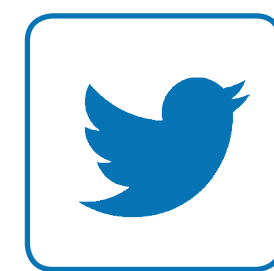
Our ‘Slanguages’ exhibition features the work, archives and ephemera related to three Birmingham-based artists who use different languages in their musical and artistic performances. The exhibition features RTKAL (aka Joshua Holness) a grime artist, Rinkoo Barpaga an urban sign language and deaf comedian and film maker, and Lekan Babalola a percussionist and musician. All use different forms of language in their work.

Based on research undertaken by the project team, the exhibition features how these artist work with multi-languages, different popular cultures and British urban street styles in the formation of their music and related artwork. The exhibition also illustrates how multi-lingual languages and performance are used and taken up by different artists in their creative work in the UKs creative industries.

“Slanguages” as a term refers to a form of slang. Our exhibition draws attention to the way languages are used, re-worked, played around with, and sometimes truncated and translated in the socio-cultural contexts of the artists’ identities and in the impact of their work.



You can download a QR code reader on to your mobile phone and use it to access more information about some of the words you will find around the exhibition.



‘Please do share your thoughts about our exhibition on social media. Our exhibition hashtag is #SLANGUAGES and our Twitter handles are: @thedr5 @creativelangs @punchrecords @nickdrewdesign



Rinkoo Barpaga



RTKAL



Lekan Babalola



People - Languages in the Creative Economy

Rajinder Dudrah

Professor of Cultural Studies and Creative Industries

School of Media, Birmingham City University

I grew up in the multicultural area of Aston, Birmingham and attended Aston Manor secondary school where I enjoyed taking French class for the first three years of my schooling. I was upset when I couldn't take it further for GCSE in the fourth and fifth year of my studies. For the class to formally run as an assessed group, we required a minimum of eight to ten students to opt for it, and unfortunately there were only six of us. I had to take a GCSE in Craft, Design and Technology instead (which I mostly enjoyed). Perhaps unwittingly, one of my favourite lines of French to this day is 'Je ne parle pas Français'. Informally, I then took an everyday interest in the diverse spoken languages around me where I grew up in inner city Birmingham, including mostly English combined with snatches of Punjabi, Caribbean patois, and Hindi and Urdu. After my A levels studying English Literature and Geography, I went to university to read Cultural Studies (film, media, cultural theory and literature) at undergraduate and then postgraduate level. Researching my PhD in Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, I examined the production and uses of the popular cultures of Bollywood films, British bhangra music and the non-terrestrial Zee TV channel amongst young British Asians. This included an exploration of how diasporic South Asian languages form part of the lexicon of these popular cultures.

In developing this research, I will be examining how languages work in and through the creative arts and performances of film, popular music, TV, radio, and new media and their associated creative industries, both in terms of communication and aesthetics. I'm especially interested in the diasporic, creole and hybrid uses of languages in urban multicultural contexts and how the mixed use of everyday languages is supported and promoted by those working in the creative economies. In addition to English, I'm a fluent speaker of Punjabi and Hindi, and I have a working knowledge of Urdu.

As part of the *Creative Multilingualism* programme, I'm leading Strand 4 on 'Languages in the Creative Economy', collaborating with Julie Curtis and Philip Bullock and our numerous creative partners. Working with Punch Records, Birmingham will enable me to find out how aspiring Black British and British Asian artists incorporate languages and dialects from English, African and Caribbean patois, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu in popular music. Perhaps I'll also get to learn French now.

Selected publications

'Reading *The Stuart Hall Project*', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 12, Issue 3 (2015), 383-40.

Ed. with Elke Mader and Bernhard Fuchs, *Shah Rukh Khan and Global Bollywood*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

'Representing Heterosexual Romance, Whiteness and Place in the film *Notting Hill*', *Media Education Journal*, 57 (2015), 3-9.

'The Retro Noughties: 1970s Hindi Films in 2000s Bollywood Cinema', in Priya Joshi & Rajinder Dudrah (eds), *The 1970s and its Legacies in India's Cinemas* (London: Routledge, 2014), 101-119.

Bollywood Travels: Culture, Diaspora and Border Crossings in Popular Hindi Cinema (London: Routledge, 2012).

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External links

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