

# BACKGROUND

In the UK, the process of learning a language through KS3, and KS4 is "to 'communicate personal and factual information that goes beyond their immediate needs and interests'<sup>1</sup>". Students are expected to develop an awareness of the culture and identity<sup>2</sup> of the countries and communities where the language is spoken.

I wanted to explore how languages became standardised and why "heritage" languages must be "allowed" into a curriculum, instead of being "normal"

How have languages become homogenised?  
Has the formalisation of languages in HE embedded this?

How are languages seen in the UK system and what is highlighted as acceptable? How can we reframe the value of different languages?

# DISCUSSION

## "HERITAGE" & "COMMUNITY" LANGUAGES?

Languages are not only a means of communication but a tool for cultural expression and identity.<sup>4</sup>

Decolonising the Curriculum is emotional. It requires an awareness of the otherness in ourselves and how we are reflected in the other and universality of rights and feelings.

- Heritage languages are a sociopolitically minority and/ or minoritised language?<sup>5</sup>
- Community languages present an active and dynamic connection between the language and its speakers?<sup>6</sup>
- What can we do to change the curriculum? How can we reframe the issue of decolonising?
- What happens next? How can students continue to use their critical eye to decolonise MLAC beyond the classroom? What can the institution do to change perceptions at other universities too?

There must be active student engagement but also support in skills development once learnt.

Embedding the inclusion of different languages provides different perspectives on topics, encourages critical thinking and initiates debates on issues that are important to marginalised groups.

## SCOPE OF RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

MFL has been criticised for being inherently colonial and elitist. French, Spanish and German were prioritised due to their historical "world power" status from colonial empires. An alternative is to examine power dynamics behind the Hispanophone, Francophone and German-speaking worlds.

I looked at the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the Council of Europe to understand what their "standards" were.

I looked at other UK Universities to see what they thought about "decolonising MFL".

## DECOLONISING MLAC

# "SAME MOTHERLAND DIFFERENT MOTHER TONGUES"

**'WE ARE FACED WITH THE BIZARRE SCENARIO OF SCHOOLS SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFORMING FLUENT SPEAKERS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES INTO MONOLINGUAL ENGLISH SPEAKERS, AT THE SAME TIME AS THEY STRUGGLE, LARGELY UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO TRANSFORM ENGLISH MONOLINGUAL STUDENTS INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKERS'<sup>3</sup>**



SCAN ME!

It was difficult to account for multiple intersections within countries. It was also challenging to define terminology such as a "language," "dialect" and "slang".

Initially, I created a resource for academics, "Same Mother-land, Different Mother-Tongues". It presents a 2-day workshop to challenge perceptions of "proper" and traditional languages. The topics include:

**HISTORICAL ACTIVITY, DIALECT LISTENING ACTIVITY, SLANG SUBCULTURES, CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, (DE)COLONIAL LINGUISTICS AND INDIGENOUS LANGAUGES**

# QUESTIONS?

Whilst researching, I came across 'regional', 'official' and 'national' languages. There are 'community', 'heritage' and 'minority' languages.

How can we reframe the value of different languages to include community languages?

How do we celebrate diversity in languages? How do we bridge the gap between culture and languages?

How have education systems framed "heritage" languages? And what is the perception given to languages that we speak in the every day?

How can we challenge hegemonic perceptions of "proper" and "formal" versions of spoken language? Why are mainland accents taught?

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Involve current students, and invite them to culture days to change their perception of standardised languages. Instead, we must expand "cultural" studies visually and raise awareness of the verbal experiences of "heritage" and "community" languages. This is required to shift from a Eurocentric representation for the inclusivity of all cultures. Then good practice must be shared.

The lack of time and budgets means that decolonising efforts feel tokenistic and offer reductive perspectives. Therefore decolonising must be on department agendas. Training should be given to enable ongoing dialogue.

Exploring what is not "official" or not "dominant", but culturally familiar, "heritage", or "community" languages

Useful frameworks include; McDuff's Inclusive Curriculum Framework. However, this work should not be limited to internal systems. The department must do more to create spaces for research papers, blogs, decolonising projects to be displayed outward.

Decolonising is to change systems, Perhaps most radically, marking criterias must be changed to adapt to variations in languages. Formal systems need to accept that languages are not homogenous.

Active and intentional approaches to decolonising must be taken. With student work outwardly displayed on websites/ blogs. Resources must be made available.

References:  
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 5 Montrul, S., (2023). Heritage Languages: Language Acquired, Language Lost, Language Regained. Annual Review of Linguistics, 8(1), 399-418.