

**An inclusive approach to languages in Scottish schools:
changing perspectives on language learning and use in linguistically diverse classrooms**

Wednesday, 22nd January 2020
1530-1700hrs

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This event is for Scottish teachers, teacher educators and researchers concerned with the *1+2 Approach* to learning and teaching languages, in the context of increasingly multilingual classrooms in Scottish schools. Dr Malika Pedley will talk about her recent research on the impact of bilingual creative writing projects, such as *Mother Tongue, Other Tongue*, on pupils' attitudes, experiences and identities, as learners and users of different languages, and how work of this kind can help to develop an inclusive approach for language learning.

Scotland's *1+2 Approach*¹ proposes an inclusive orientation to provision for languages learned and in use in Scottish schools. However, to date, there has been limited consideration of initiatives with the potential to take this proposition forward. The research presented here reviews the impact of the *Mother Tongue Other Tongue* poetry competition (MTOT)², which encouraged primary and secondary pupils to share a poem in a language other than English, considering gains for participating pupils and the implications for future inclusive initiatives.

The MTOT competition, run by SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages, offered pupils the opportunity to produce a bilingual piece of work, composed of a poem written in a language in use outside school (*Mother Tongue* category) or learnt at school (*Other Tongue* category), accompanied by a commentary in English. In my research³, conducted in 2015-2016, these productions, along with group interviews conducted with participating pupils, were analysed to understand how these experiences changed pupils' views on (1) the languages of the poems; (2) their own ability to use, understand and interpret different languages; and (3) their local multilingual environments. Through a study of this creative project which celebrated equally 36 different languages – including Polish, Urdu, Gaelic, French and Scots – the goal of the research was to understand how such work could contribute to more inclusive provision for languages, promoting language learning and building on existing linguistic diversity in Scottish schools.

¹ Scottish Government (2012). *Language Learning in Scotland : A 1+2 Approach*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/language-learning-scotland-12-approach/>

² MTOT page on SCILT's website (viewed on 12.12.19) : <https://www.scilt.org.uk/MTOT/tabid/5841/Default.aspx>

³ PEDLEY, M. (2018). *Approche inclusive des langues en situation minoritaire: le cas de l'Écosse*. (An inclusive approach to minority languages: the case of Scotland.) Doctoral thesis, Université Bordeaux Montaigne.

Results demonstrate that participating pupils experienced MTOT as a rite of passage⁴, moving from the marginalisation of other languages and their speakers to greater awareness of their own plurilingual identities and the building of a new community – a *plurilingual* community – composed of the participants who used or were learning one or more of the thirty-six languages featured in that year’s competition. By engaging with the languages of the poems and connecting these to their experiences of learning and using different languages at school, pupils became aware of their multilingual environments and made connections across languages. While teachers came to accept that they were not always experts and to trust their pupils’ creativity, participating pupils became more responsible learners and actors, and spread positive messages about multilingualism to their peers.

This research showed that supporting children’s creative experiences of translanguaging can enhance awareness of multilingualism in their own environment, and increase their confidence in their own plurilingual competences⁵ and in their potential to become successful language learners and users. It raises challenging questions about how to build on the success of MTOT and similar projects so that the inclusive promise of the 1+2 Approach can be realised.

The deadline date to register is 21st January 2020. Click [here](#) to register your place now.

⁴ TURNER, V. (1995 [1969]). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Transaction Publishers : London.

⁵ COUNCIL OF EUROPE (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages : Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge University Press : Cambridge.