



University of  
**Strathclyde**  
Humanities &  
Social Sciences

# Local Language Encounters

Joanna McPake, School of Education

[joanna.mcpake@strath.ac.uk](mailto:joanna.mcpake@strath.ac.uk)

# OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION

1. Introducing L3 as a 'radical space' in the primary curriculum
2. Connecting these possibilities to recent developments in second language acquisition (SLA) theory:
3. Learning the lessons from three experimental local language projects:
4. Conclusions

# 1. L3 AS A 'RADICAL SPACE'

L3 as a 'radical space' to do things differently:

- make use of local language resources
- incorporate language learning into interdisciplinary learning projects

## Education Scotland, 2019

“Allowing primary schools to choose their L3 gives scope for schools to deliver a language which suits their local circumstances and allows them to capitalise on available resources.” (p. 3)

“An additional language introduced as part of an interdisciplinary (IDL) project over a number of weeks. If this option is chosen, a different L3 may be delivered each year, to fit in with themes being introduced elsewhere in the curriculum.” (p. 5)

# ‘LOCAL’ LANGUAGES

- The languages spoken in the families of children attending the school – and in use in local communities associated with the school
- Languages in use among businesses bring international clientele to the area served by the school

## Top ten ‘main home languages’ other than English in 2020

Polish: 17,371	Mandarin: 2,228
Urdu: 6,635	Romanian: 2,040
Scots: 6,270	Spanish: 1,623
Arabic: 5,043	Russian: 1,368
Panjabi: 3,572	Lithuanian: 1,155

In total 168 other languages were listed, and 9.5% of the school population were reported to have a language other than English as their ‘main home language’

Scottish Government (2021). *Pupils in Scotland 2020*, Supplementary Statistics, Table 1.14.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>

# LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNING IN IDL PROJECTS

- Including local languages in ‘real world’ problem-solving work provides challenging opportunities to learn and use them
- May lead to ‘appropriation’ (Castellotti, 2017): where learners identify their own language needs and find ways of meeting these

## 1+2 Approach (2012)

“The use of a planned interdisciplinary approach and aspects of citizenship and international education would be one way of introducing the L3 language. Increasing use of planned interdisciplinary learning (one of the four contexts for learning within CfE) can facilitate learning about aspects of other countries across the curriculum. In primary schools for example, projects about other countries can involve aspects of language, geography, history, environmental studies and the expressive arts, together with health and wellbeing. The other country can become a focus for learning across the school. Similarly, a focus on Scotland can be a pathway to Gaelic and Scots.” (p. 16)

# LINKING THE L3 ‘RADICAL SPACE’ TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SLA

The ‘radical space’ opened by policy and guidance for teaching L3s in Scottish primary schools creates

- new opportunities for learning local languages
- in collaboration with communities associated with the school
- through interdisciplinary projects which link curricular learning to the world beyond the school.

These developments have the potential to build on recent developments in second language acquisition:

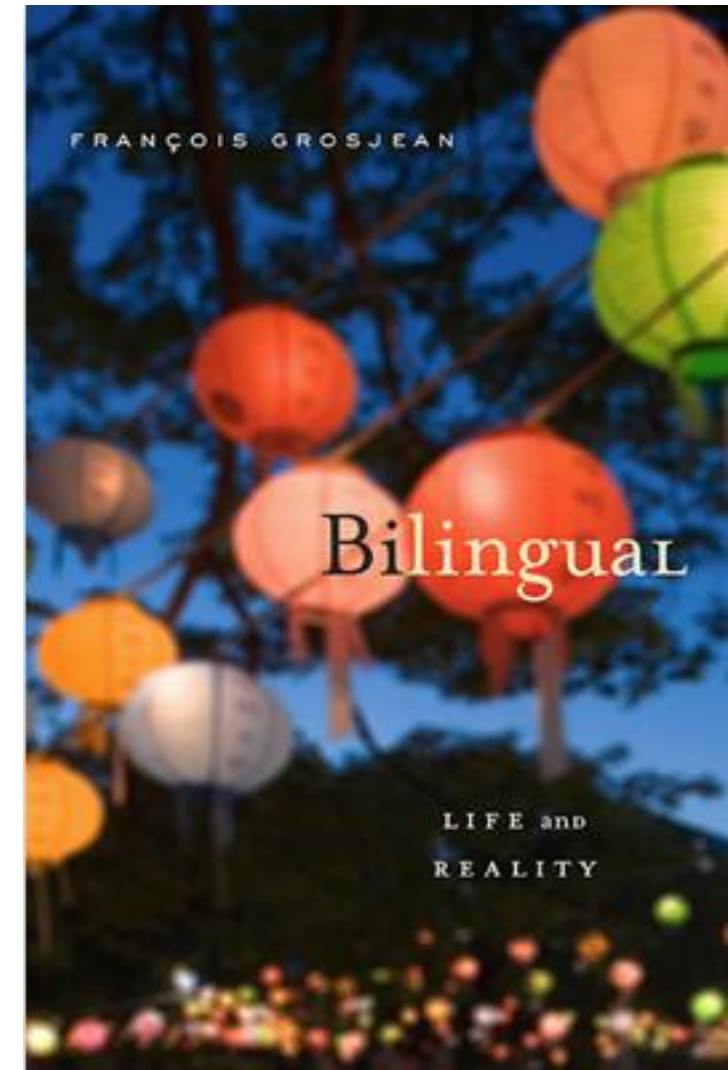
1. *bilingualism as an everyday phenomenon* – leading to bilingualism as a goal for all
2. *ecological models* placing the language learner at the centre but always in interaction with others – leading pedagogical innovations to create and sustain ‘regular recurring contexts of use’
3. *language learning ‘in the wild’* – understanding how and why people are learning new languages outside the classroom



# BECOMING BILINGUAL

“Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives.”  
(Grosjean, 2010: 4)

- A familiar idea when we think about ‘bilingual learners’ as pupils who speak ‘community languages’ outside school and are learning and using English as the medium of instruction at school. Some are *functional bilinguals* (speaking both languages well) and some are *emergent bilinguals* (beginning to be able to use more than one language).
- What if we think of *all* pupils (even the ‘monolingual’ English speakers) as ‘bilingual learners’ – who *could* use more than one language in their everyday lives (and perhaps already do)?

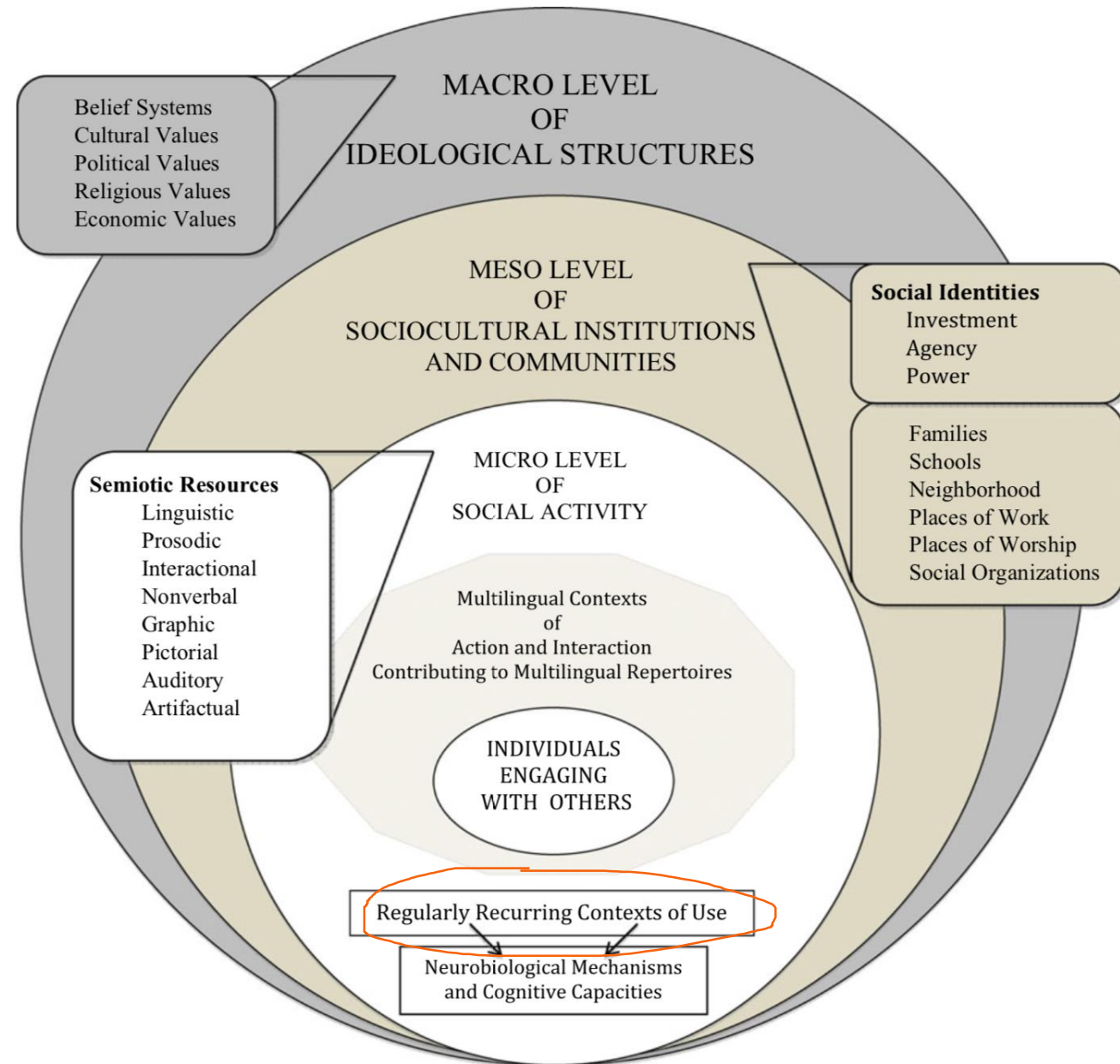


Grosjean, F. (2010). *Bilingual: Life and reality*. Harvard University Press.

# ECOLOGICAL MODEL OF SLA

- Ecological models with the learner at the centre:
  - learning to use a new language
  - using a new language to learn

Atkinson, D. et al. (2016). A trans-disciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world. *Modern Language Journal*, 100: 16-47





# LANGUAGE LEARNING ‘IN THE WILD’



<https://languagelearninginthewild.com>

# LANGUAGE LEARNING ‘IN THE WILD’

“This, in effect, breaks with a long tradition of teaching language as a decontextualized object in classrooms and instead entails a mutually constitutive relationship between L2 speakers’ everyday practices and the classroom which then comes to be a pedagogically enhanced world in which a view of language as situated and locally contextualized is propagated. This idea of constructing classrooms on the basis of the L2 speakers’ experiences, practices, and actions, making for an essentially usage-driven and user-centered L2 pedagogy, is currently spreading [...] This is a tendency which we would like to further promote, as the ability to competently and adequately accomplish deeds and activities in contexts where the target language is naturally spoken—that is in the wild—is the ultimate goal and purpose of L2 learning.”

Eskildsen, S., & Theodórsdóttir, G. (2017). Constructing L2 learning spaces: ways to achieve learning inside and outside the classroom. *Applied Linguistics*, 38(2), pp. 143-164.

# LEARNING LESSONS FROM THREE LOCAL LANGUAGE PROJECTS

A focus on three local language projects associated with wider initiatives:

1. Mother Tongue Other Tongue Competition (SCILT)
2. Involving parents in L3 teaching (Glasgow City Council)
3. Business Language Champions (SCILT)

These projects

- raised young learners' awareness of languages in use in their families and local communities

AND

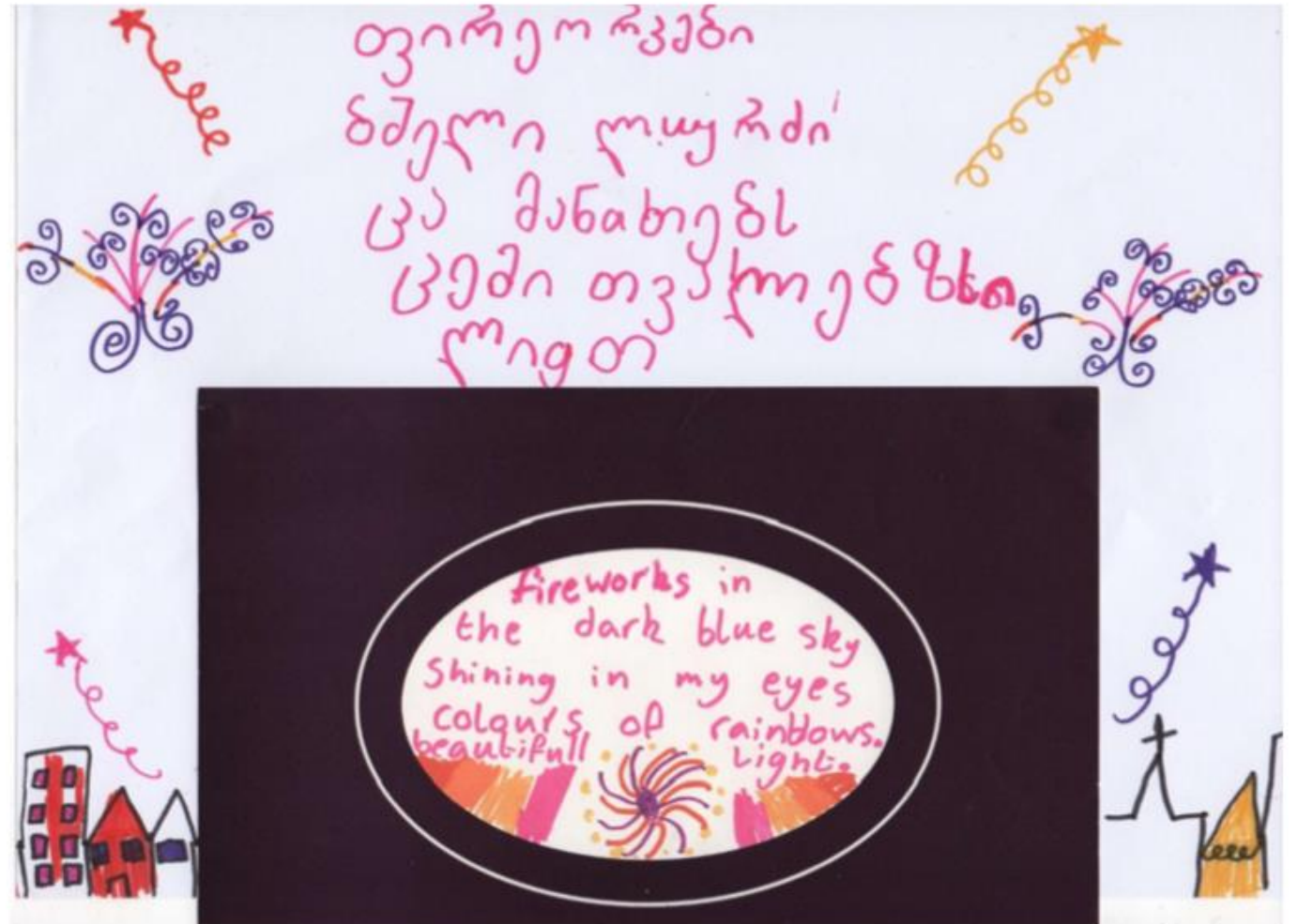
- provided opportunities for practical and creative linguistic encounters

Recent work by McPake, Pedley, Roxburgh and Anderson has focused on the extent to which learners' experiences in these projects are *relevant* and *engaging*, and whether the outcomes can be considered *effective*, linguistically and in broader educational terms.

# MOTHER TONGUE OTHER TONGUE

“I chose this poem because it reminds me of me and my friend’s shooting some fireworks in the dark blue sky. [...] It was harder to write in Georgian because I’ve been here for two years. I’ve forgotten how to write but I can still speak Georgian [...] I enjoyed writing in Georgian. I felt my confidence getting bigger. I liked that.”

(P6 Pupil)



# MOTHER TONGUE OTHER TONGUE

- *Relevance:* strengthening bilingual identities
- *Engaging:* bringing together the work of the classroom and home and community
- *Effective:* developing literacies in both languages and ability to talk about literature

Pedley, M. (2018). *Approche inclusive des langues en situation minoritaire : le cas de l'Écosse*. Thèse de doctorat en linguistique. Université de Bordeaux-Montaigne.





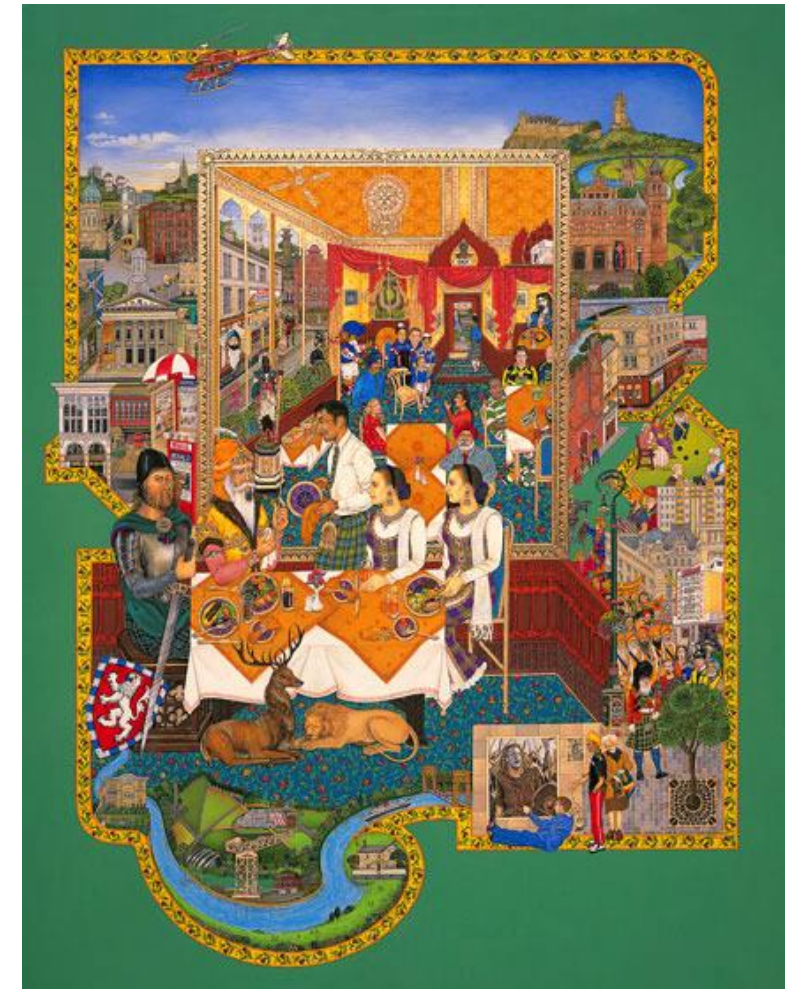
# INVOLVING PARENTS IN L3 TEACHING

Glasgow City Council established an experimental project in which parents were invited to collaborate with primary teachers to teach another language to all the pupils in the class. In several cases, parents took children out of the classroom to visit places in the local area where these languages were used.

- *Relevance*: funds of knowledge and the 'far away nearby' (Solnit, 2013)
- *Engaging*: establishing 'regular recurring opportunities' for language use
- *Effective*: opportunities to practice newly acquired skills, to develop awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and new, convivial, relationships

Anderson, L. (forthcoming ). *Engaging bilingual parents in the teaching and learning of additional languages: An ethnographic case study*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Strathclyde.

The Singh Twins (1999-2000):  
*Mr Singh's India*



# BUSINESS LANGUAGE CHAMPIONS

Pupils learning Mandarin as L3 worked with staff at a local tourist attraction to identify the kinds of resources that would help Mandarin-speaking tourists orient themselves and understand something about the history and cultural significance of the site.

- *Relevance:* developing skills of cultural mediation
- *Engaging:* an interdisciplinary project to solve a 'real world' problem
- *Effective:* linguistically challenging at multiple levels: pronunciation, presentation, literacy



Roxburgh, D. (2021). *An analysis of the promotion of Chinese culture within an L3 language experience at the P5-7 stages in selected Scottish primary schools*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Strathclyde.

# THREE LESSONS

Lessons learned from three experimental local language projects indicate that learners' experiences and outcomes are perceived to be

- *relevant* to learners' growing awareness of themselves as actually or potentially bilingual, in their own local environments
- *engaging*, linking classroom learning to learning 'in the wild', developing 'real-world problem-solving potential of IDL
- *effective*, establishing and sustaining 'regular recurring contexts of use' which support linguistic progression; but also developing metalinguistic, metacognitive, cultural literacies and convivial dimensions of language education

# CONCLUSIONS

1. Need for larger scale evaluation of outcomes. We should:
  - develop definitions of relevance, engagement and effectiveness in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders;
  - test these out using both established measures and new measures which reflect stakeholder perspectives;
  - engage in professional debate about expectations of language education in the primary phase, focusing on immediate and longer-term gains
2. Need for teacher education to support management of L3 projects, to secure these gains and develop sustainable practices. This entails:
  - a very different pedagogical approach from that typically envisaged for primary language learning;
  - addressing the critical questions of how teachers manage the learning of languages they themselves do not (yet) speak;
3. Need to take stock, valuing what we have already achieved by:
  - creating a 'radical space', to marry local languages, IDL and 'real-world' problem-solving;
  - generating relevant, engaging and effective language learning experiences.



Thank You Very Much! Maita Zvenyu! 谢谢! Mòran Taing! Grazie!  
¡Muchas Gracias! !شكریه Dziękuję Bardzo! ძალიან დიდი მადლობა!

Contact me: [joanna.mcpake@strath.ac.uk](mailto:joanna.mcpake@strath.ac.uk)



Times Higher Education University of the Year 2012 & 2019  
Times Higher Education Widening Participation Initiative of the Year 2019  
The University of Strathclyde is rated a QS 5-star institution







# University of Strathclyde

## Humanities & Social Sciences