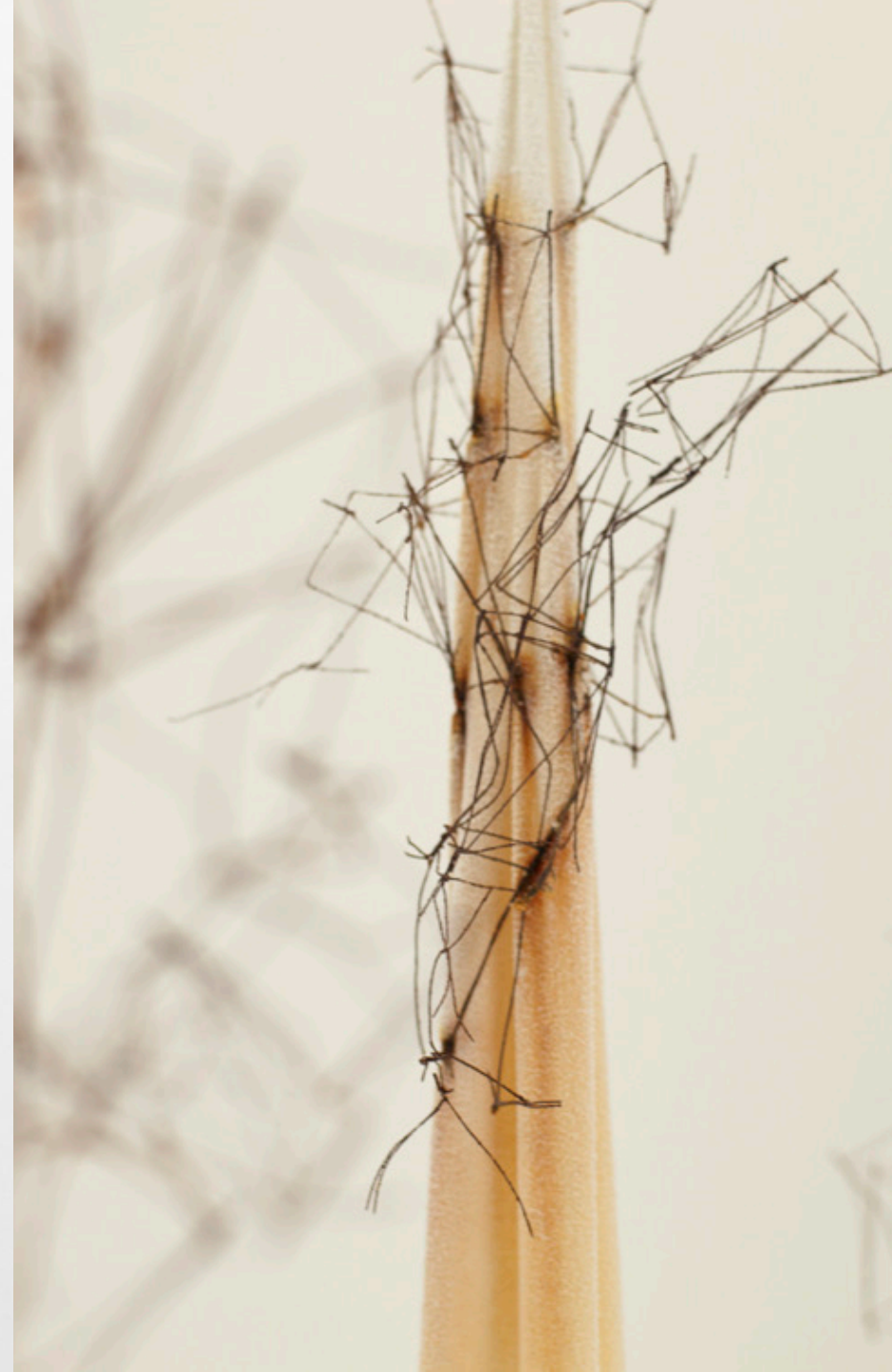




Embodied Interculturality

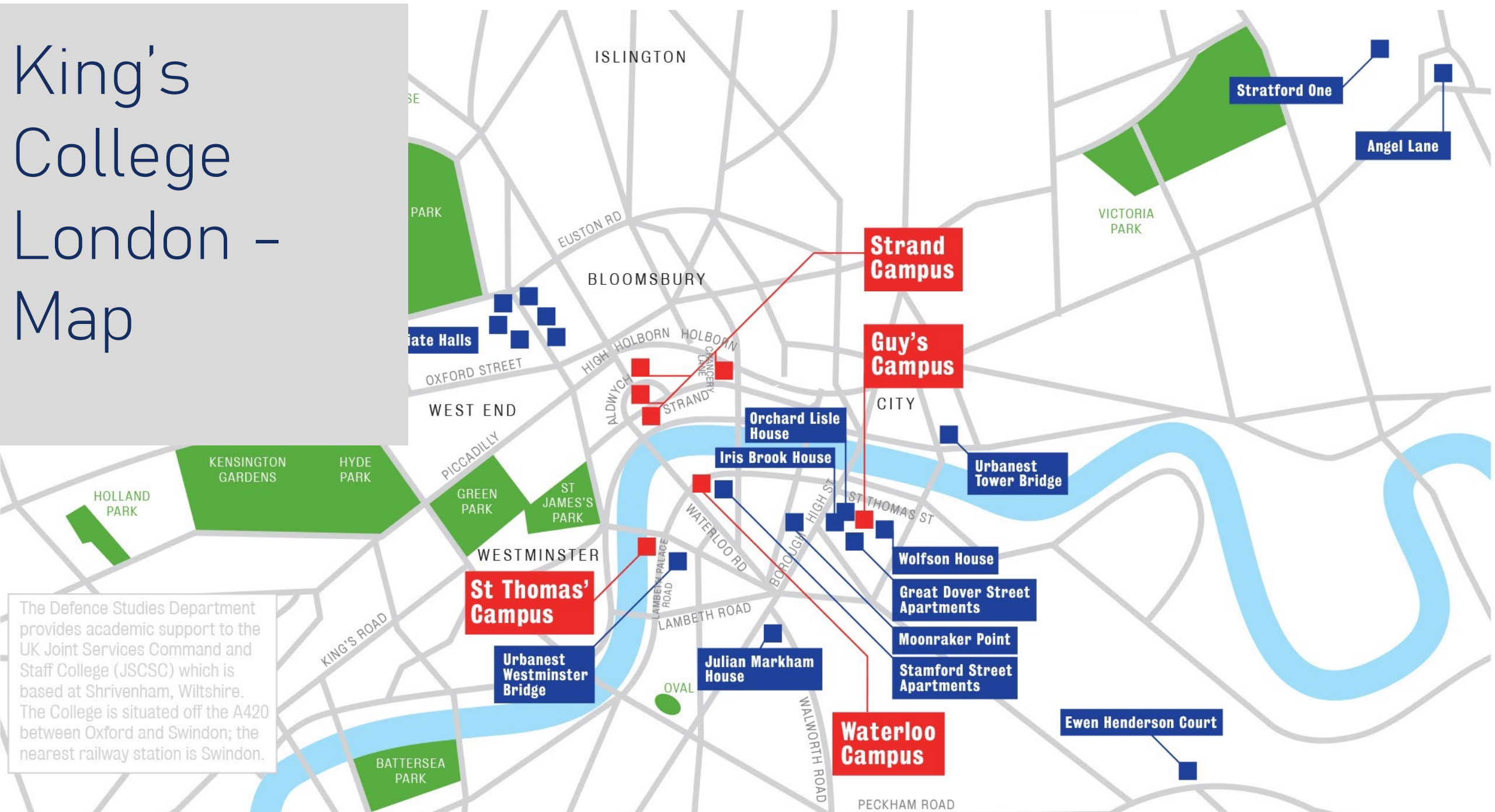
Donata Puntil
donata.puntil@kcl.ac.uk

24TH MAY 2022
YORK LANGUAGE TEACHING FORUM





King's College London - Map



The Defence Studies Department provides academic support to the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC) which is based at Shrivenham, Wiltshire. The College is situated off the A420 between Oxford and Swindon; the nearest railway station is Swindon.

King's College – Strand Campus



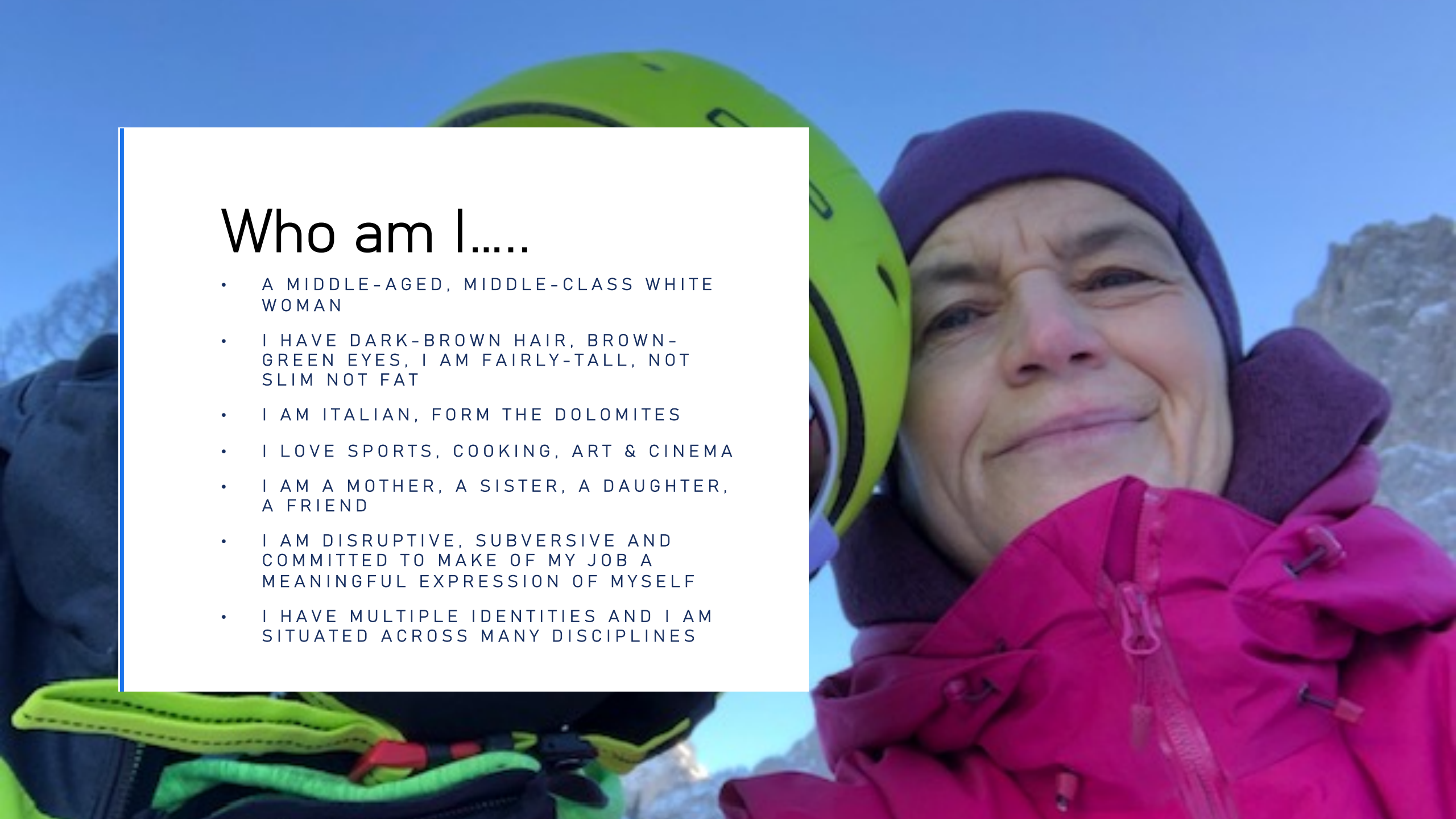
A portrait of a woman with short, wavy brown hair, wearing a beige turtleneck sweater under a light-colored cardigan. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred bookshelf.

Who am I.....

- PROGRAMME DIRECTOR AT THE MODERN LANGUAGE CENTRE – KING'S COLLEGE LONDON
- SENIOR LECTURER IN LANGUAGE & INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION
- CULTURAL COMPETENCY @ KING'S:
[HTTPS://WWW.KCL.AC.UK/CULTURAL-COMPETENCY](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural-competency)
- RESEARCHER IN NARRATIVE INQUIRY & AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
- PSYCHOANALYTICAL PSYCHOTHERAPIST
- [HTTPS://WWW.KCL.AC.UK/PEOPLE/DONATA-PUNTILI](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/donata-puntili)

Who am I.....

- A MIDDLE-AGED, MIDDLE-CLASS WHITE WOMAN
- I HAVE DARK-BROWN HAIR, BROWN-GREEN EYES, I AM FAIRLY-TALL, NOT SLIM NOT FAT
- I AM ITALIAN, FROM THE DOLOMITES
- I LOVE SPORTS, COOKING, ART & CINEMA
- I AM A MOTHER, A SISTER, A DAUGHTER, A FRIEND
- I AM DISRUPTIVE, SUBVERSIVE AND COMMITTED TO MAKE OF MY JOB A MEANINGFUL EXPRESSION OF MYSELF
- I HAVE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND I AM SITUATED ACROSS MANY DISCIPLINES





Aims & Objectives

- To discuss the importance of objects and materiality in intercultural encounters
- To look at Posthuman & New Materialism Theories
- To do some practical exercises
- To critically discuss the presented content

Puntil, Donata • 1m

Embodied Interculturality

What do you associate with the notion of Embodied Interculturality?

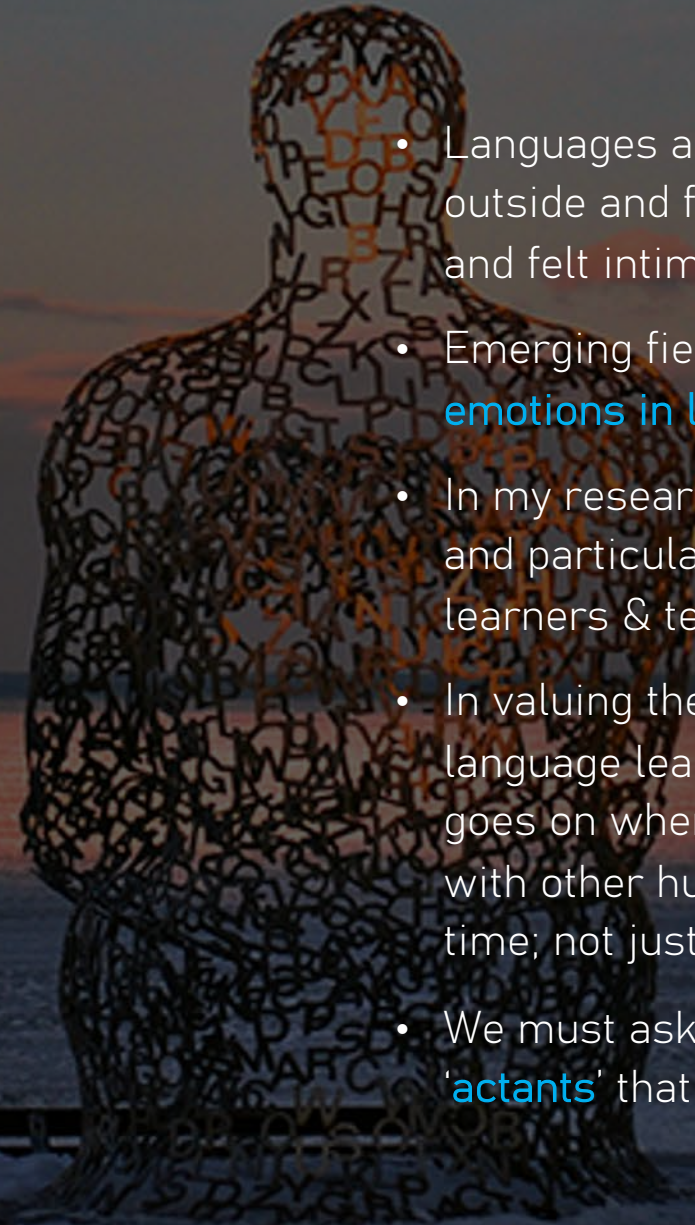
Let's do some thinking together

- Click on the following Padlet to post your ideas about [Embodied Interculturality](https://kings.padlet.org/donatapuntil/vomsj5bsdiw66e0o):

<https://kings.padlet.org/donatapuntil/vomsj5bsdiw66e0o>

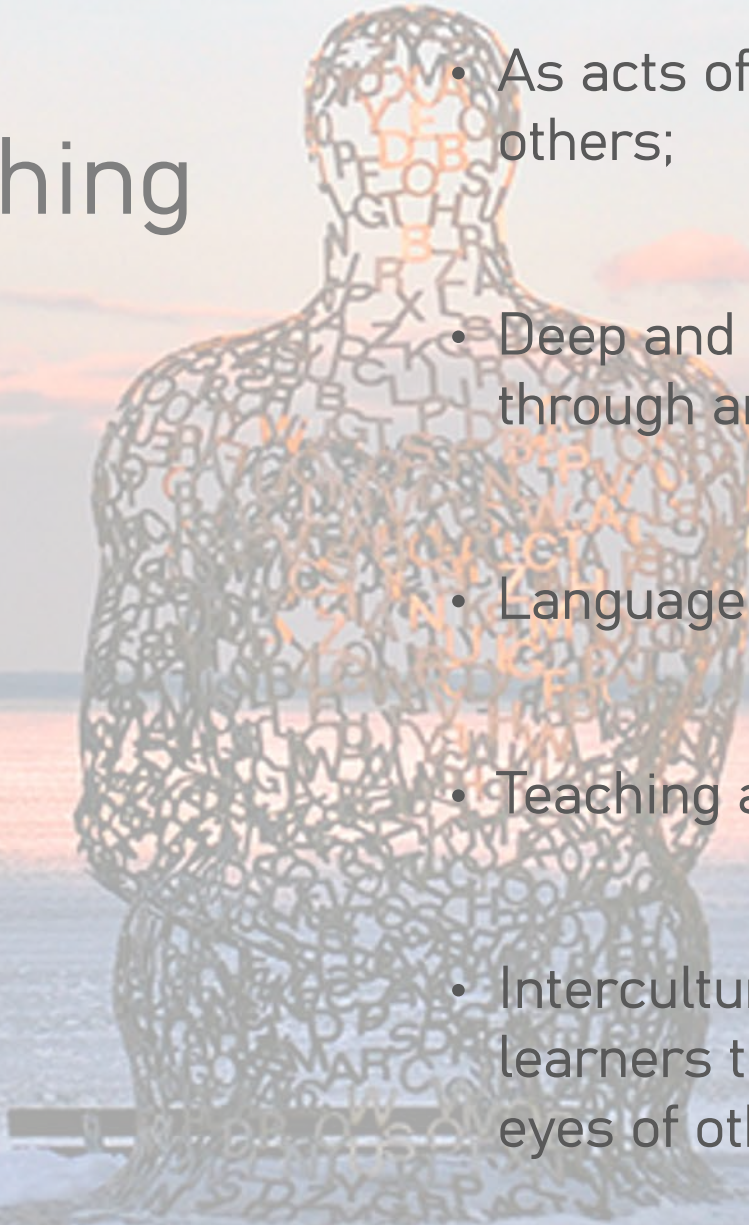
Languages & Intercultural Education

- Languages are not only learned to satisfy certain outside and formal standards. They are also thought of and felt intimately in idiosyncratic and personal ways;
- Emerging field of research that deals with **identity and emotions in language learning & teaching**;
- In my research & teaching I deal with these intimate and particular worlds and **itineraries** of language learners & teachers;
- In valuing the more **private** and even secret aspects of language learning we may be compelled to study what goes on when we are not socializing in a language with other human beings. When we are doing 'alone' time; not just language learning & teaching;
- We must ask, are there any other things, or even **'actants'** that influence the way we live languages?



Language Teaching & Researching

- As acts of care, of encounters with others;
- Deep and transformational learning through and with language/s;
- Language Learning as embodied:
- Teaching as an act of response-ability;
- Intercultural Education to empower learners to see the world through the eyes of others and to develop empathy



Posthumanism

- Decentering the human
- Relational enquiry
- Focus on intra-actions
- Multiple agents
- Vibrant matter
- Minor & marginal stories
- Not only language & discourse
- Embodied Narratives
- Feminist Studies
- Post-colonial Studies
- Post-structuralism
- Post-qualitative Methodologies
- Art-based Methodologies
- Auto-ethnography
- Writing as Inquiry
- Alternative Narratives

Posthumanism


"The posthuman subject is materialist and vitalist, embodied and inter-related...
such a subject is polymorphous and relational"

(R.Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 2014, p.192)

Posthumanism

"to learn to think-for-yourself-through-thinking-with-others"

(K.Murris, *The Posthuman Child*, 2016, Xiii)



Materiality of Languages

- What can we learn from the **materiality** of language learners/teachers' lives?
- What can we learn from the **meaningful objects** language learners/teachers surround themselves with?
- What **meaningful practices** do language learners/teachers engage with such objects?
- And how do such practices tell us about the way **we embody and feel languages**?



New Materialism

The vital materialism embodied in objects, stories, bodies and artefacts, as Bennett (2010:93) describes it:

*"affirms a figure of **matter as an active principle**, as a universe of lively materiality that is always in various stages of congealment and diffusion, active and creative, as a flow of continuous becoming."*



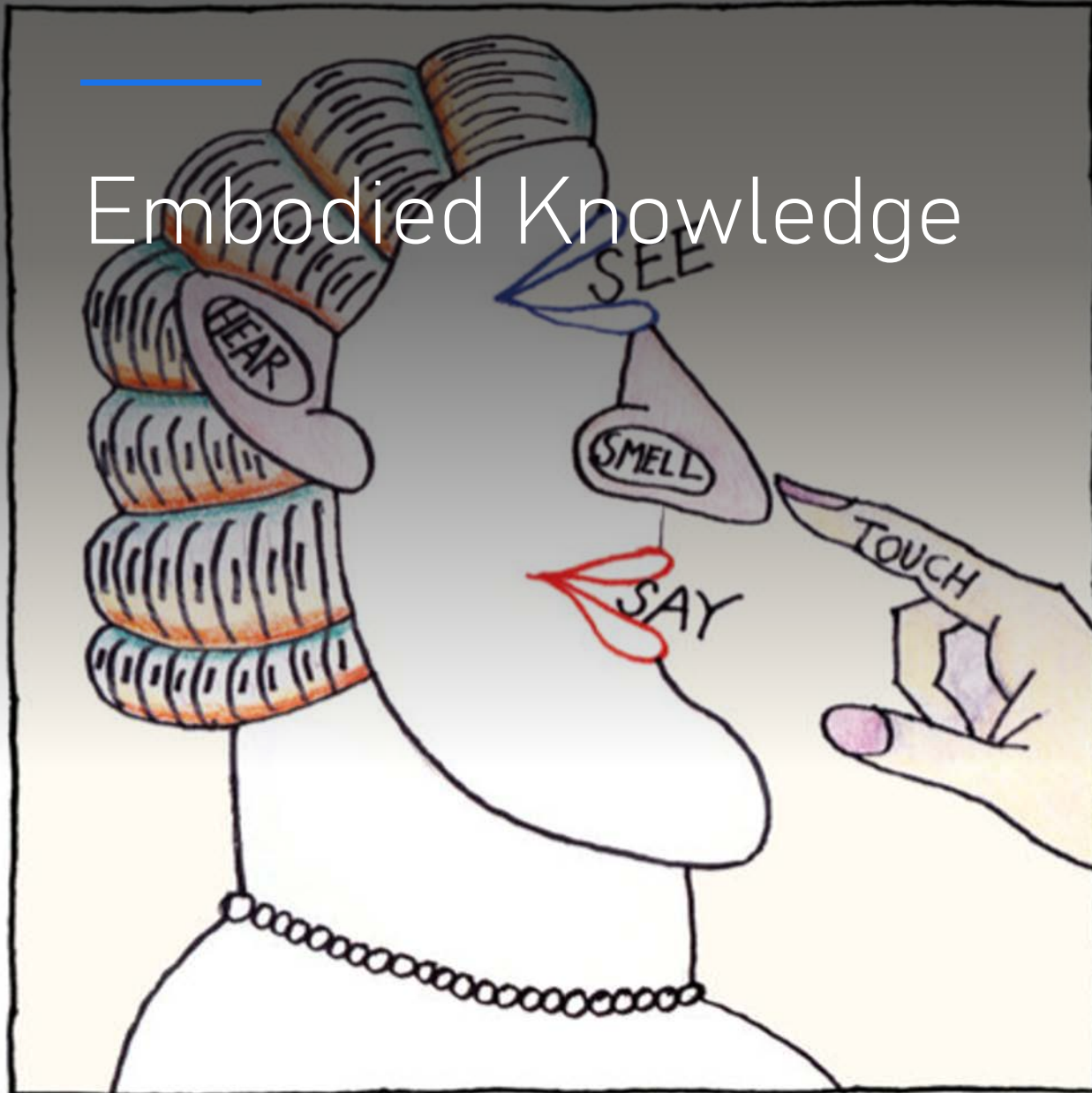
New Materialism

According to New Materialism philosophy, it is 'matter' as well as human beings that shape social and political modes of understanding;

Meaning is not only made by participating in a set of social practices but is also impacted by how the **body experiences** this;

New materialism places **the lived reality of the body** as a central concern when exploring the operation of social and political processes.

Embodied Knowledge

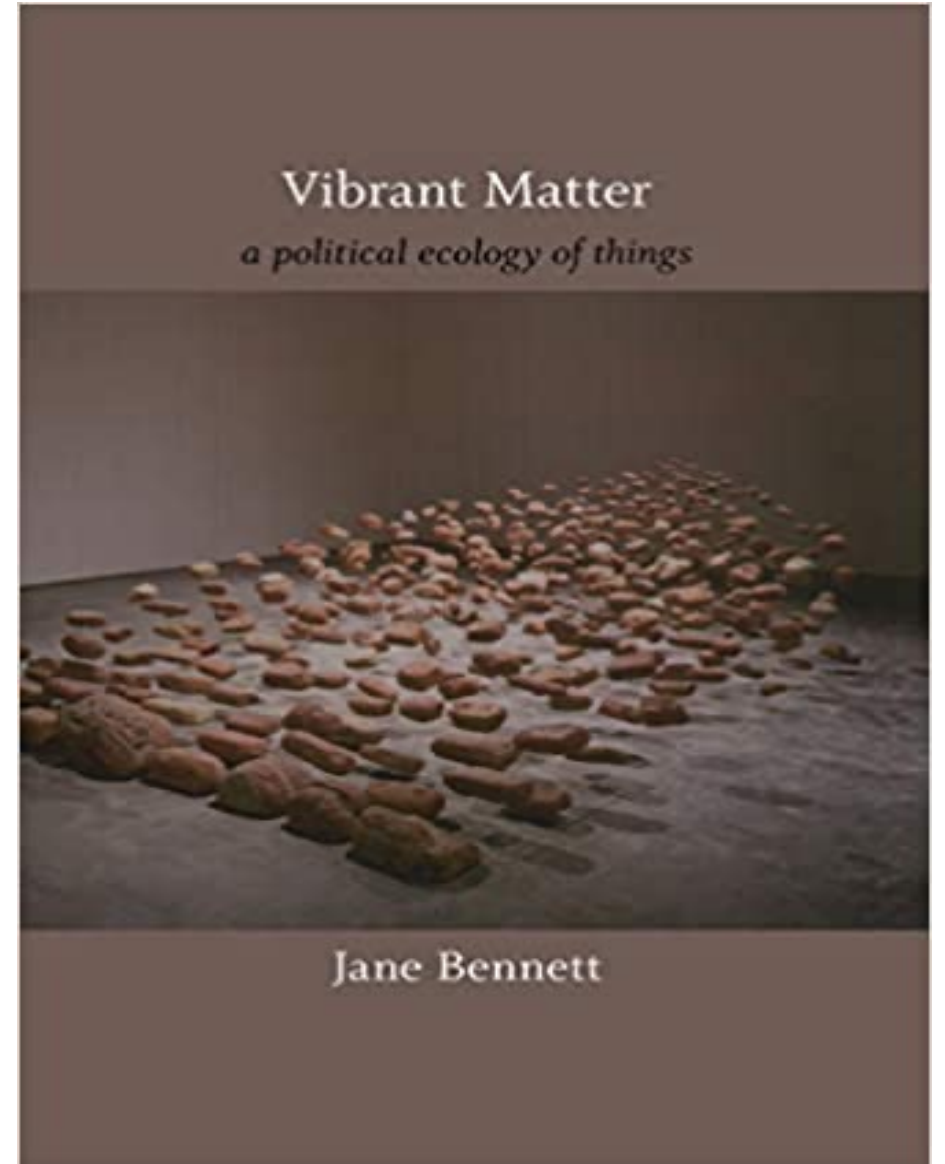


In her book 'Carnal knowledge', Schobchak (2004) shows how our experience does not always emerge from our thoughts, but rather, we can also make sense of our surroundings and our identities through **our senses**; whether these are visual, tactile or olfactory...so that our experience is an irreducible collaboration between our thoughts and our senses;

'the lived body as, at once, both an objective subject and a subjective object: a sentient, sensual, and sensible ensemble of materialized capacities and agency that literally and figurally makes sense of, and to, both ourselves and others' (p.2).

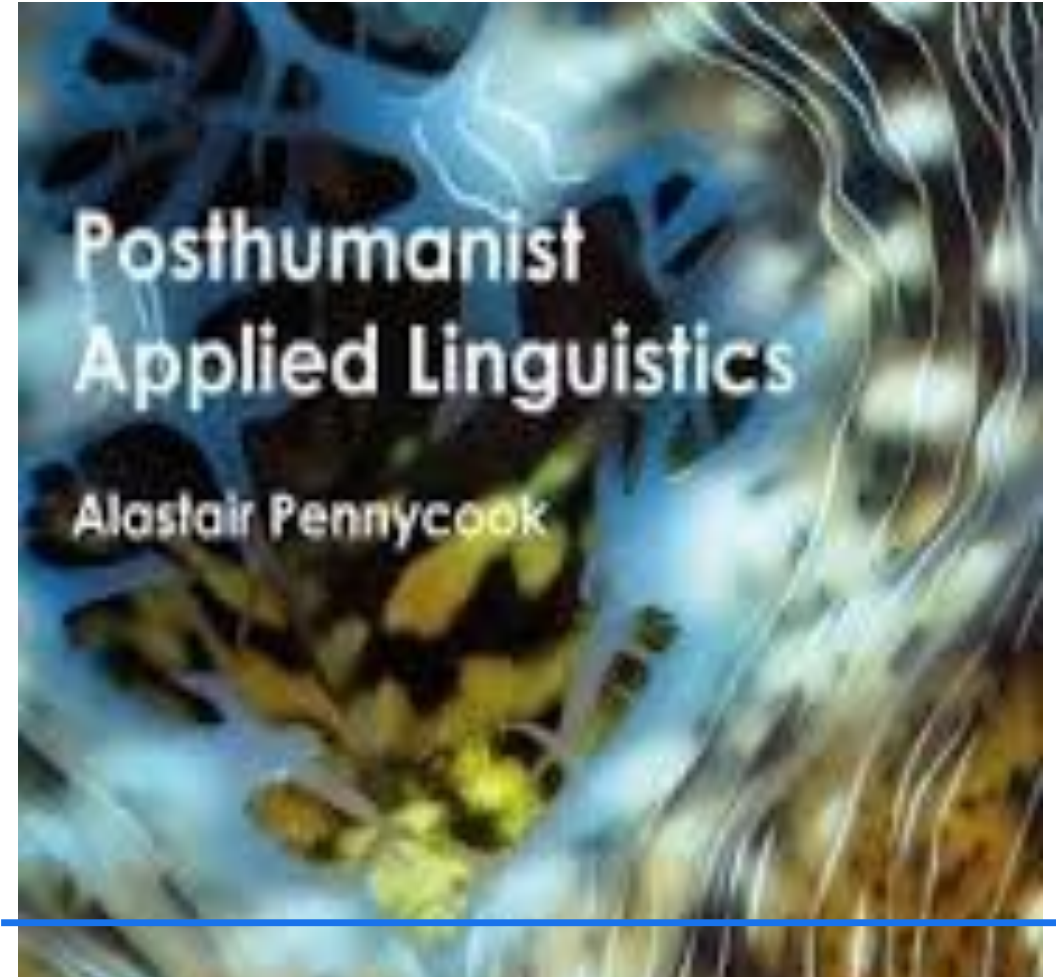
World-making

- In my research, I argue that this throws new light on the experience of the language learner/teacher by **making objects and sensual experiences with languages and cultures** as much as the abstract system of signs that we call language as a relational exercise with our **intimate objects** such as clothes, objects, books, photos etc.;
- So that it is through the objects we cherish that we also **make sense of our cultures, our languages and our multilingual makeup**.



World-making

- My current research project *Language Teachers' Narratives: Invisible Stories* deals with these ideas. It explores the processes of world-making that language teachers engage with and the meaningful relationships they establish with their cherished **objects** in becoming language educators.



Values of objects

We often think of **objects** as useful or aesthetic, as necessities or vain indulgences. We are on less familiar ground when we consider objects as **companions** to our emotional lives or provocations to thought; as **agents** in our becoming and in our intercultural encounters.





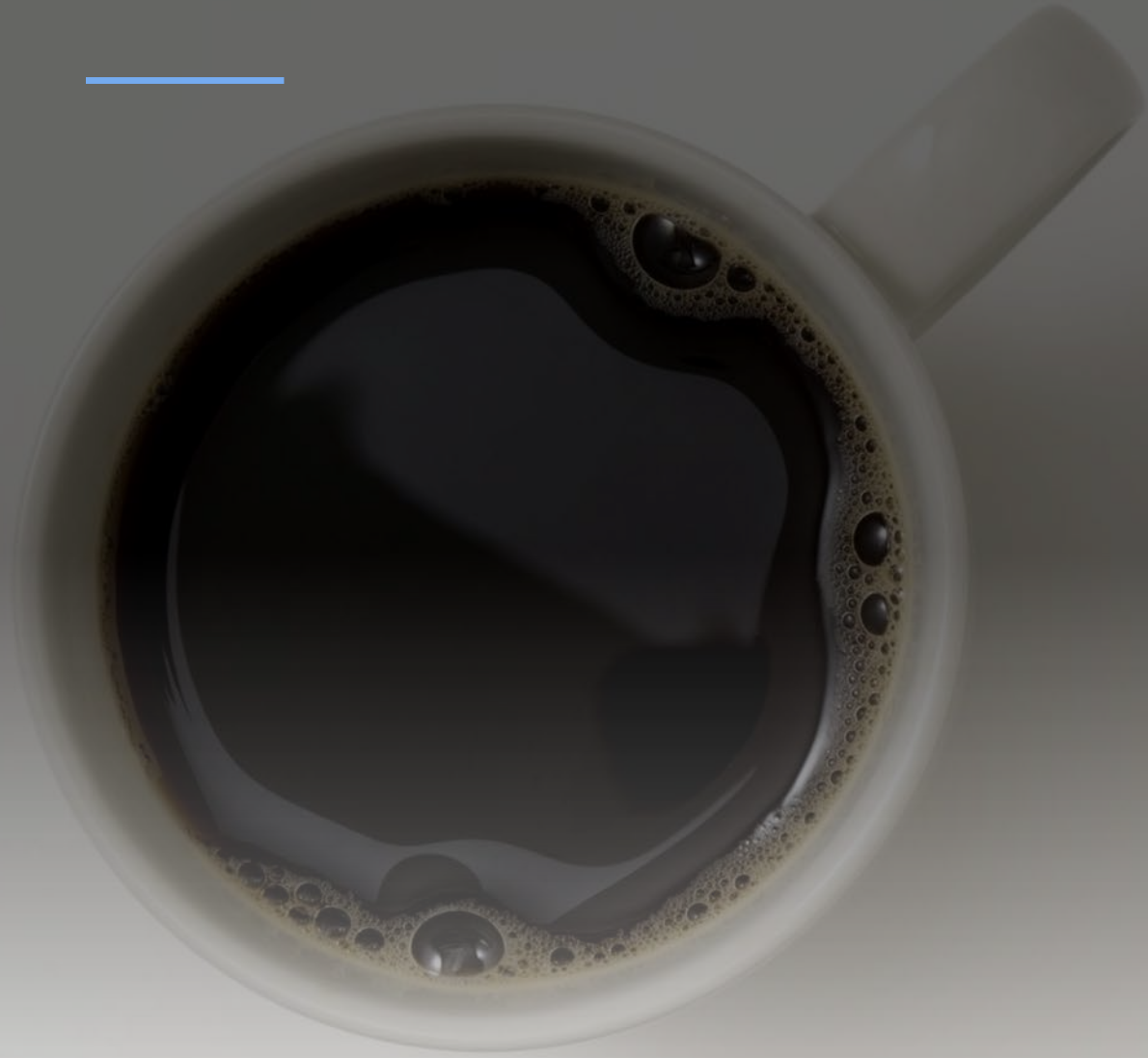
Activity 1

My dear object.....

5 minutes

- Think of **an object** that is very dear to you;
- **Write down** some thoughts about this object;
- **Imagine** having a conversation with the object;
- **Write down** a short dialogue with the object, or a letter, an e-mail with the object.....

"Dear scarf, I am so happy I found you again while I was putting some order in my wardrobe, I thought I had lost you. You keep me warm, I travelled with you to some distant places, you came with me everywhere, you are part of me, I am so glad we found each other again. You have been given to me by a very special person who meant a lot to me.....we are now re-connected....."



Break time

My research.....

*Language Teachers'
Invisible stories*



auto/biographical narratives

objects

photos

cartographies

creative workshop

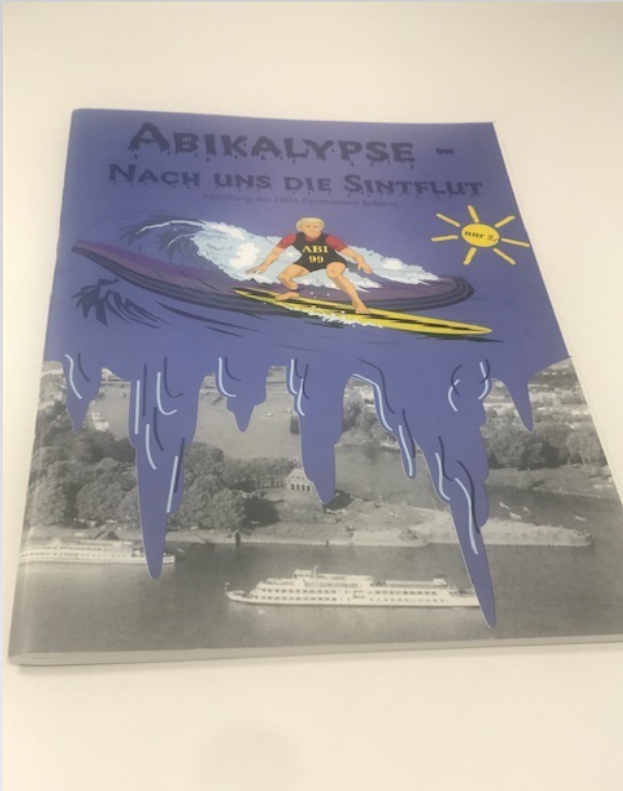
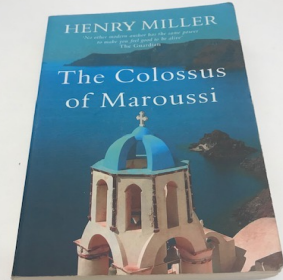
diffraction/thinking together

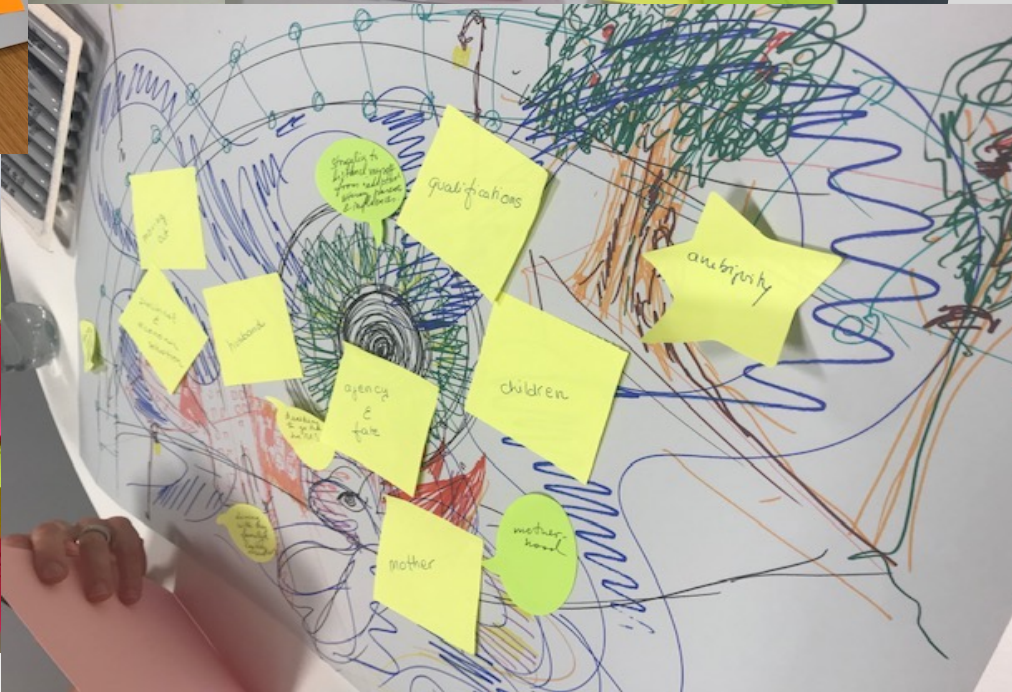
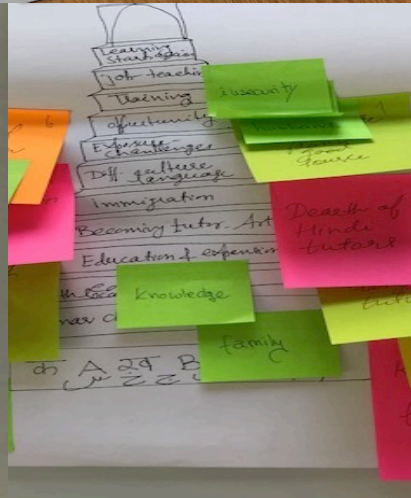
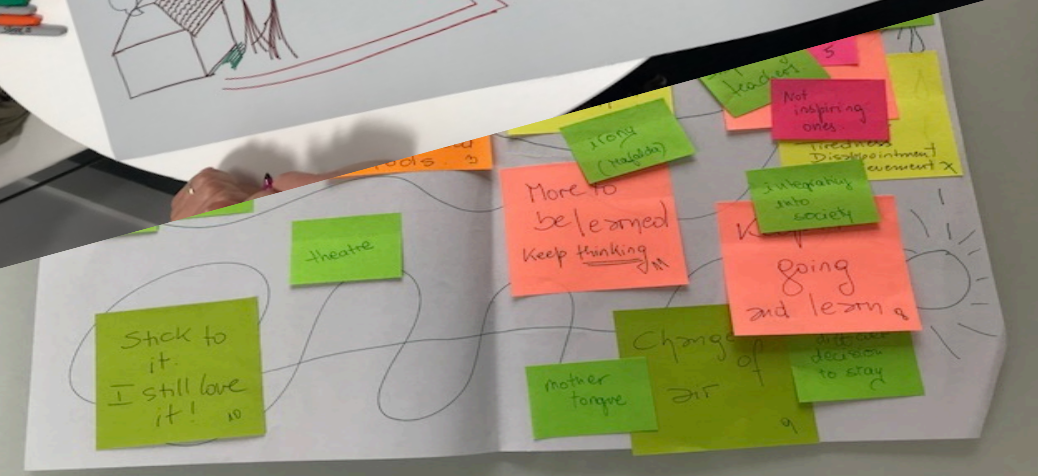
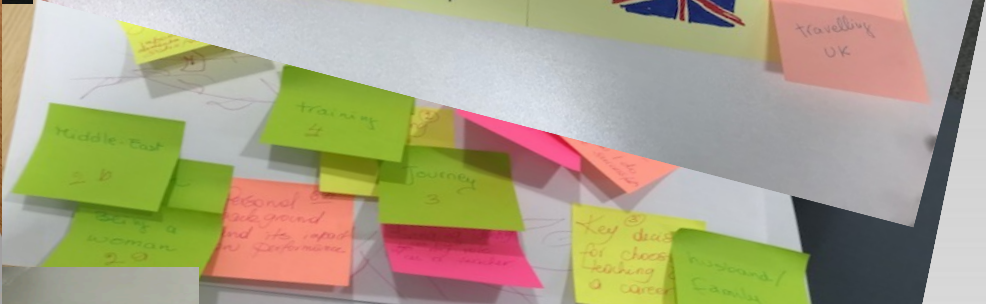
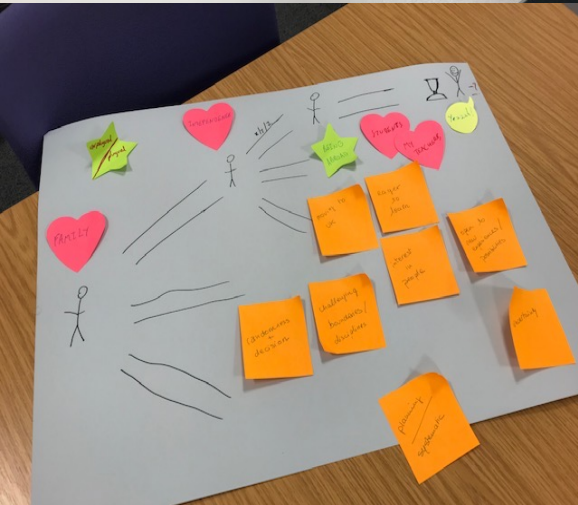
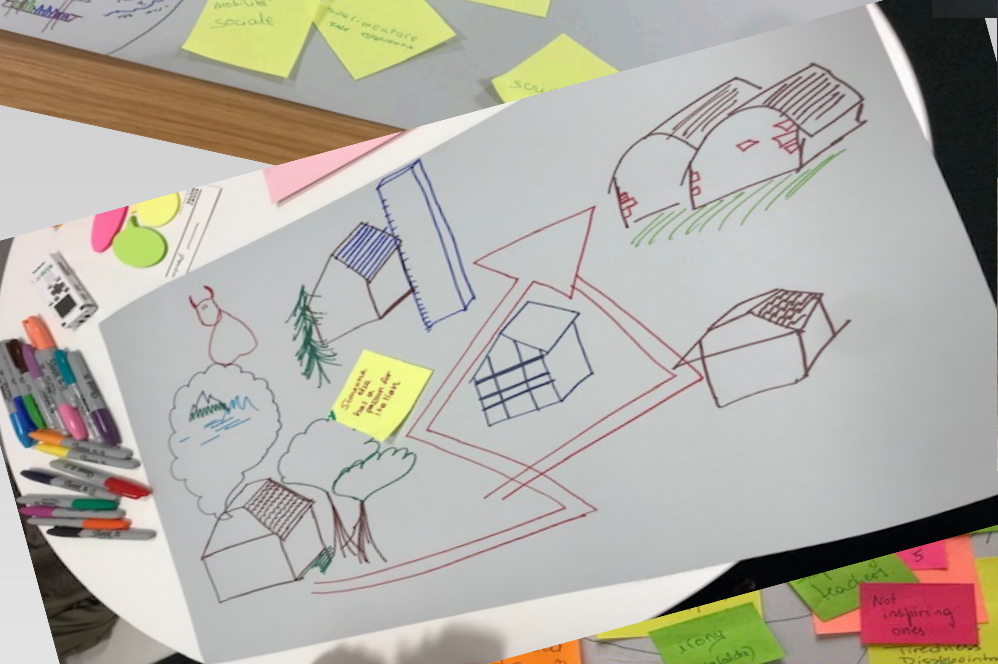
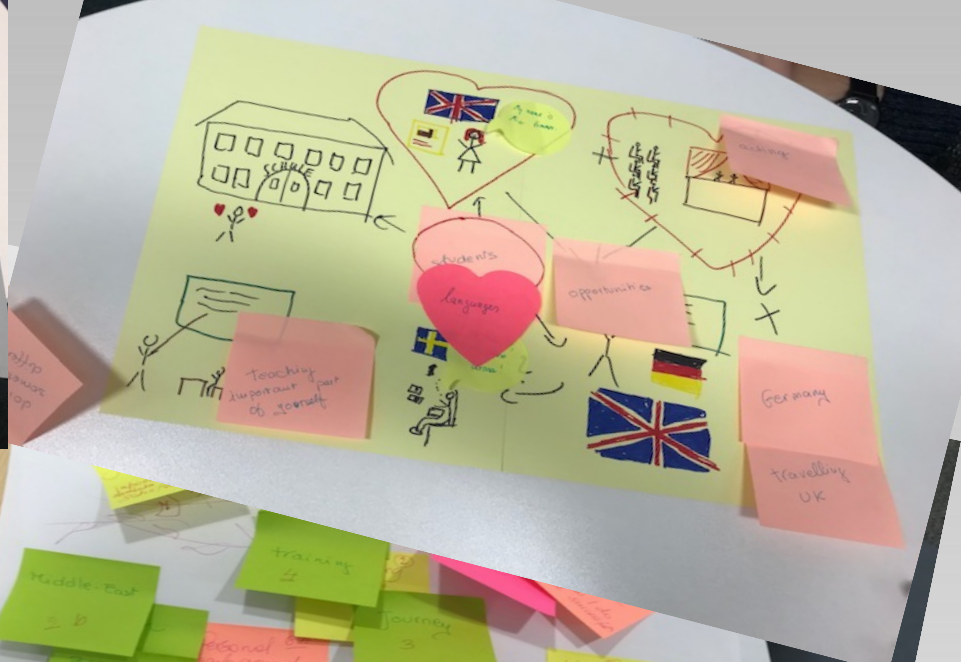
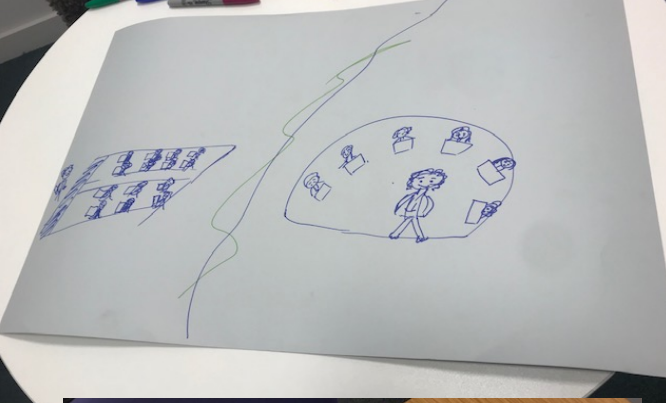
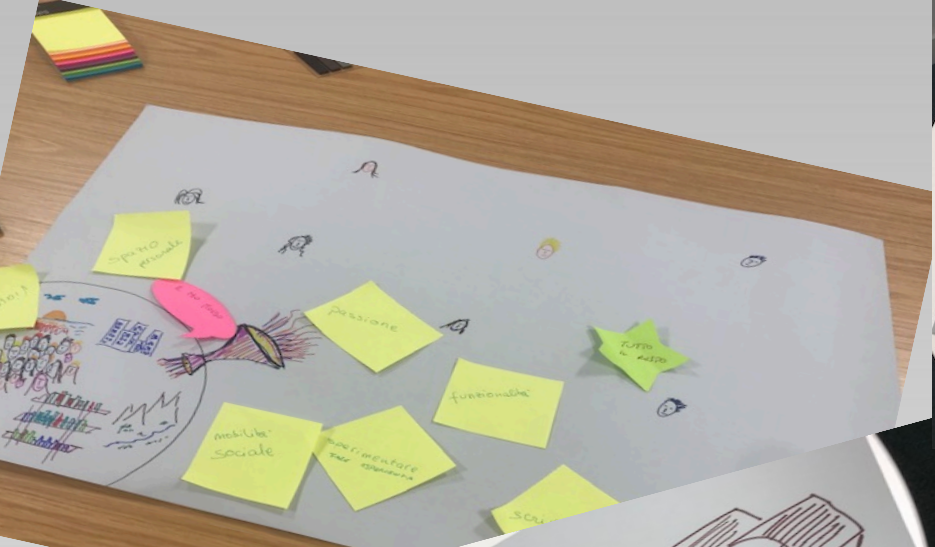
conversations

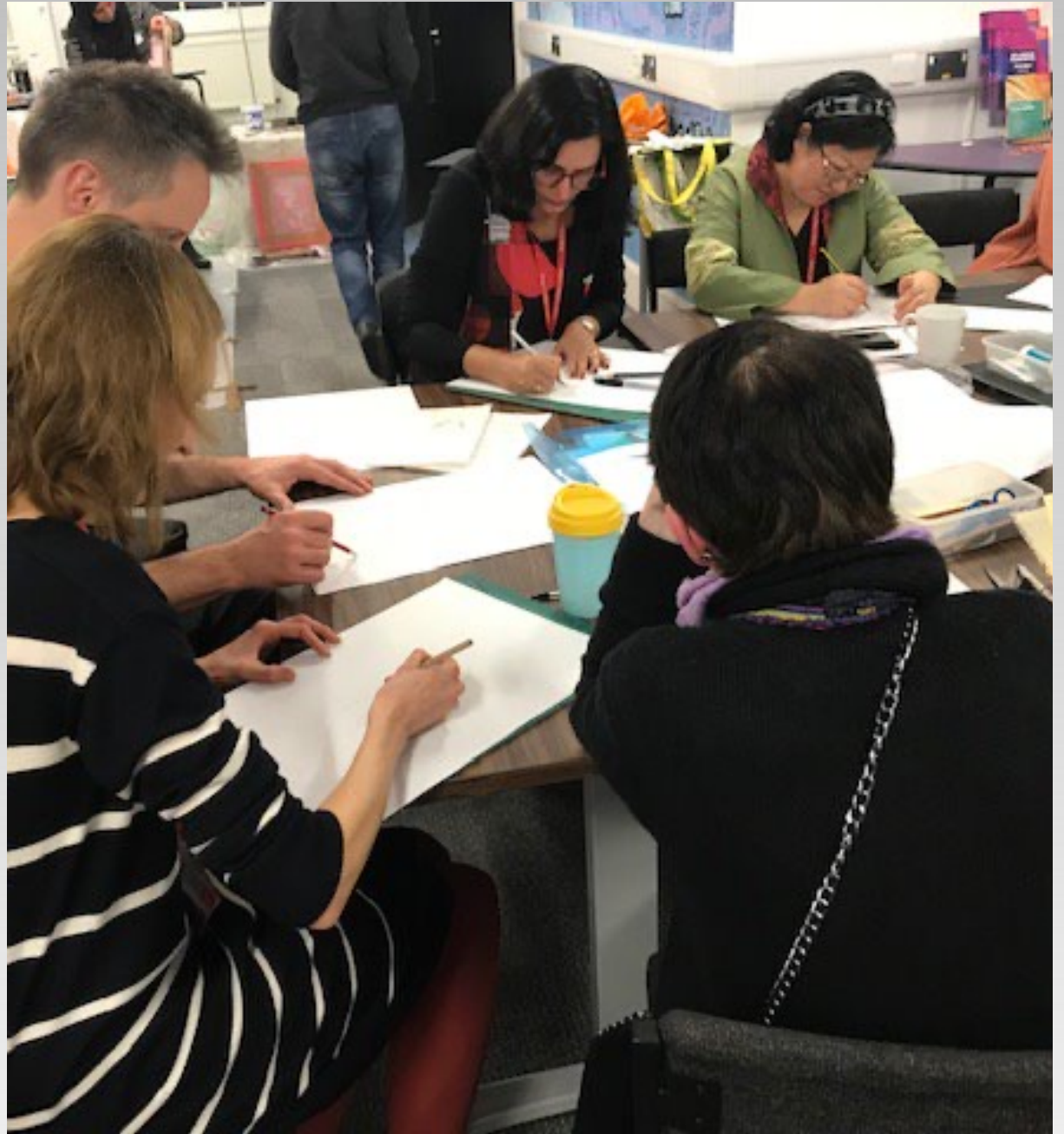
myself

10 teachers/co-researchers

poems







*I am a chameleon
I move in between countries
I move in between languages
I am looking for my identity*

Who am I??

I dance

I dance with words

I dance with my children

I play with them the games

The games of languaging

The games of being a mother

What is a mother?

I changed my skin

Many times

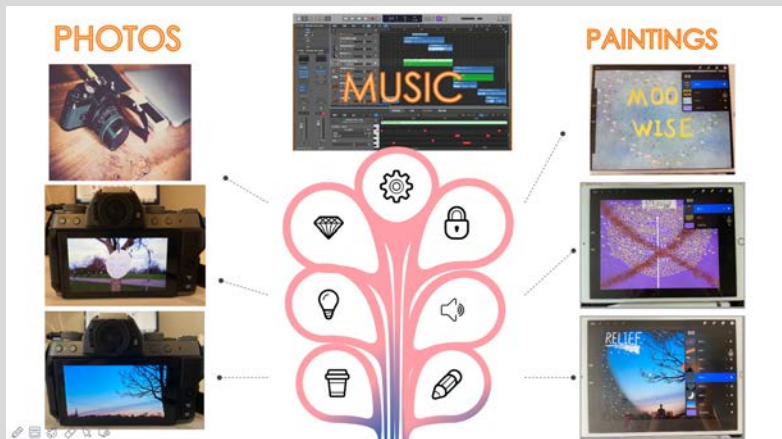
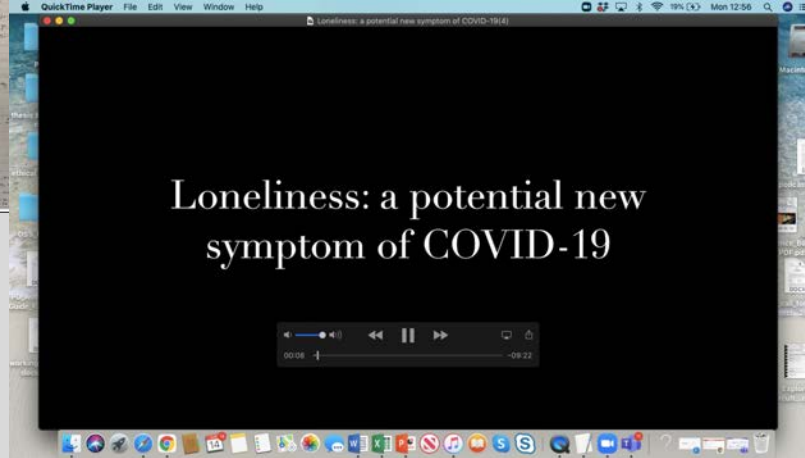
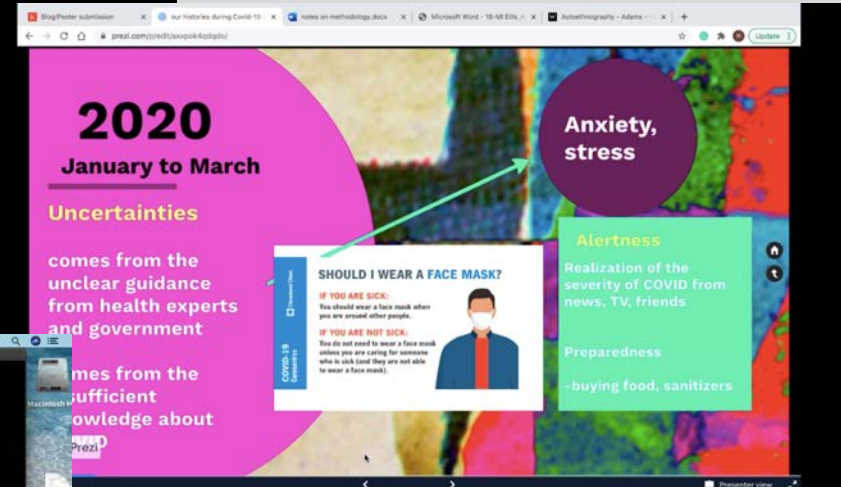
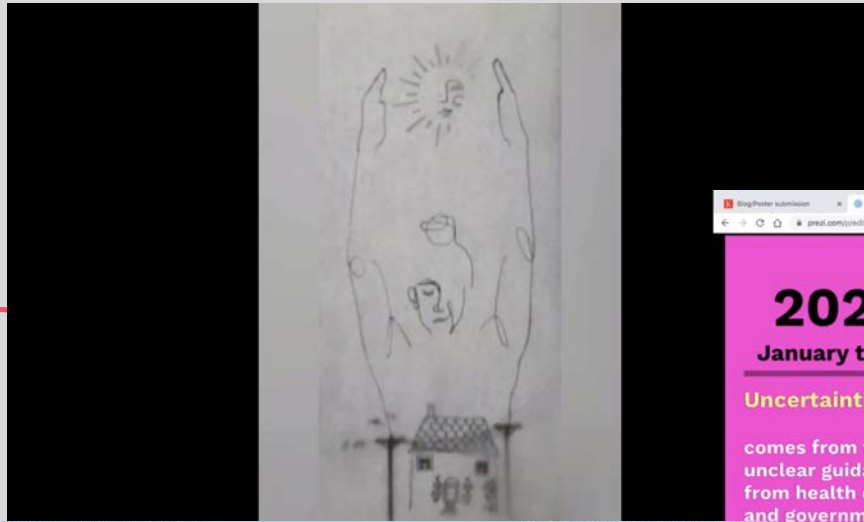
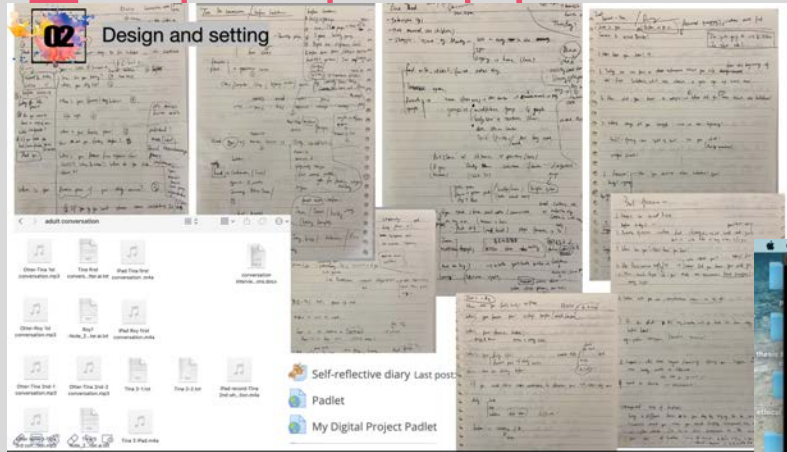
Not being me

Being me

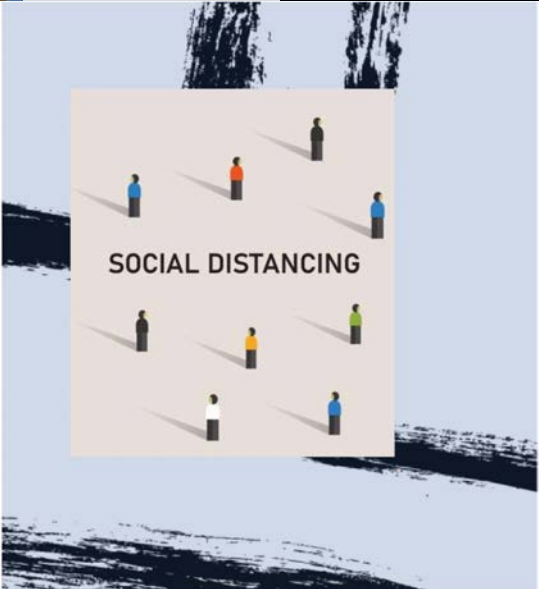


My teaching.....

Embodied Learning



Embodied Learning



Being in touch with life

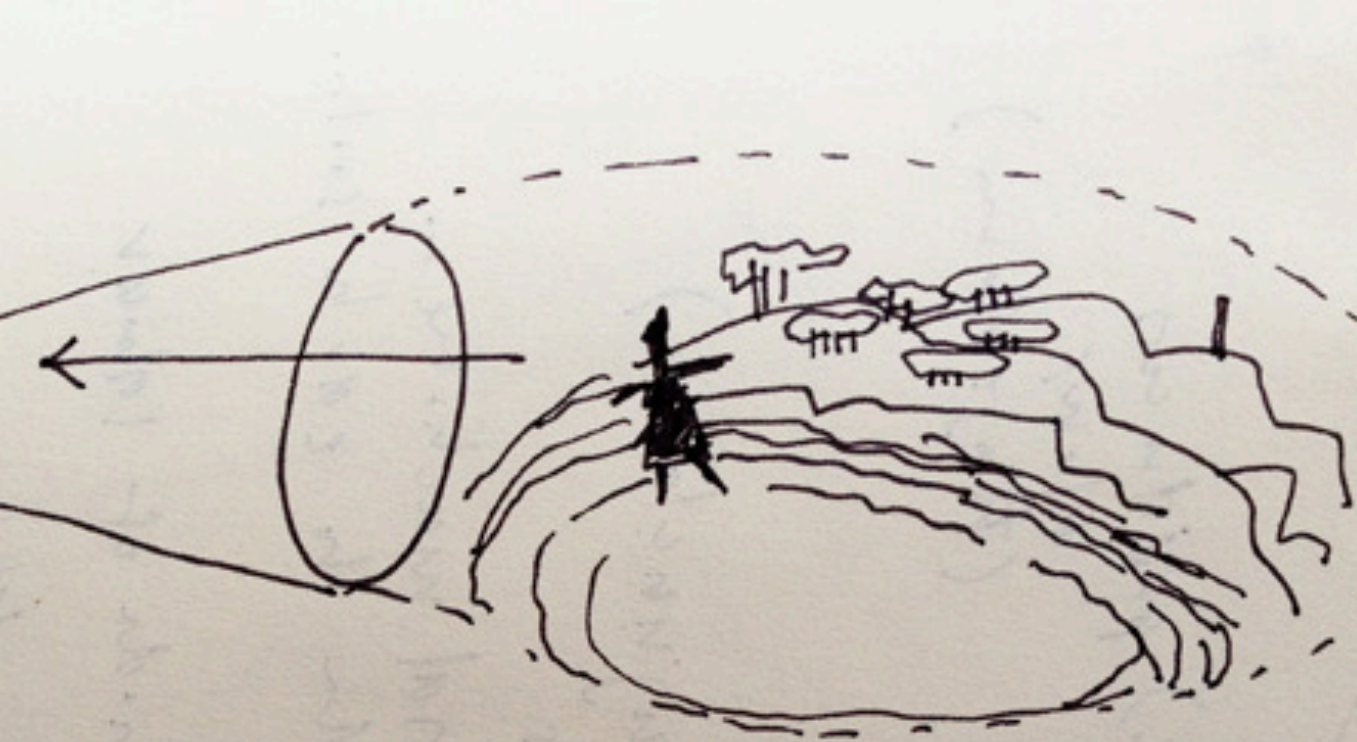
7PCPSIIL Digital Project
Word count: 1296

An illustration of two hands reaching towards each other, with the word "CONNECTION" written in red above them. The hands are rendered in a detailed, shaded style, and the background is a dark, textured grey.



“Thing-power”

- New Materialism philosophy claims a **force and ‘thing-power’** for the objects we surround ourselves with and it maintains that we are not only made and moved by other human beings but our lives are also shaped by organic and non-organic matter;
- **Agency** does not only lie in the human being, but also on things and thing-power. Our badly folded clothes in the wardrobe, our proudly worn jacket or our pristine collection of records may be **saying more about the languages we speak and our cultural make-up** than we are ready to admit;
- *‘meanings and bodies get made’ (D. Haraway 1988).*



our point of view
constructs us...

phenomenological construct

Situated Knowledge

- Our knowing of the world is always **partial/situated**;
- Our perceptions of who we are is always **mediated by the context** in which we live in;
- Our perception of the world is constructed by our surroundings, by **the objects and the human and non-human material world** we come in contact with;
- Our **language/s** shape who we are, our **bodies** too;
- We are in a constant process of **becoming**.....

bell hooks

belonging

a culture of place

Belonging

- What does it mean to call a place home?
- How do we create community?
- How do we belong?
- Belonging a verb, it implies movement....
- Belonging in the body, in the senses through language/s



Nomadic Identity

- We live in permanent processes of **transition, hybridization, and nomadization**;
- We live in a constant flux of **becoming “other”**;
- And these in-between states and stages defy the established modes of theoretical representation, precisely because they are **zigzagging, not linear and process oriented, not concept driven**.

(Braidotti, 2011: 217)

Activity 2

Language identity

5-10 minutes

- Can our 'language' identities be made by **mundane objects** and their thing-power?
- **Thing of 5/10 objects** who define who you are;
- Write or draw them down;
- Write **a mini-autobiography** of you in relation to these objects;
- Think if they are **culturally-bounded**;
- Discussion.....

A photograph of a wardrobe. On the left, there are shelves with folded clothes, including a red garment and a blue denim jacket. On the right, several long-sleeved shirts or blouses are hanging on hangers in various colors: green, blue, purple, yellow, and red. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall tone is slightly muted.


Wardrobe collection

- clothes not as 'metaphor' as a way of describing the experience of the intercultural encounter but as something more concrete and tangible, as 'matter' and 'materiality' that embodies, traces and vitalise our affects, our memories and our identities.



Embodied identities

- Clothes are not only props that display or represent our inner self, but rather, they can be read as the vectors that create our **multiple cultural styles and identities**.
- Clothes as the 'skin' where **identities are embodied** (felt and made sense of) and the place where the inside and the outside of the self meets.



I am...

Objects as memory

- Clothes can be seen and appreciated as bearing the traces of **our cultural past**;
- By focusing on perception over reason, the embodiment of **our cultural memories** in the materiality of clothes gains currency; **body-memory**;
- The construction of **learner's complex identities** is then understood in its biographical dimension;
- Objects and clothes can be seen as a meaningful personally curated collection of culture and memory that involve **meaning-making practices of the self**.



Lived identities

- In order to see clothes as being of consequence in building our identities, we must change the way we look at languages from abstract, static, homogeneous and closed off repertoires to languages that are **'lived' in space and time**;
- **'Lived into'** as Michael Byram has pointed out (Byram, 2020);
- But I would add that clothes are **embodiment** not as a sojourn into another culture from which you return 'untouched' but rather, a journey from which you will return 'marked' and 'inscribed' by another culture.

Language Learning as Intercultural Embodied Experience

- Indeed, language learning is not only thought, learning and acquisition of new knowledge, but also **life, felt and embodied**. As some contemporary linguists have recently put it (Kramsch; Pennycook; Norton; Pavlenko) eloquently puts it, the body may be the point of departure for the construction of '**lived**' and **embodied languages**;
- The construction of learner's complex identities is then understood in its **biographical dimension**;

Some ideas for discussion.....

- What is the difference between learning, speaking, and **'living' languages**?
- What aspects of **'living'** and **'embodying'** languages could be introduced in language education?
- Could the introduction of more **object-based pedagogies** be more conducive to a more 'livable' language education?
- What has this to do with **Intercultural Education**?

Language/Culture as Fluid

- I also want to encourage you to think **beyond a fixed notion of language** as linked to one state or one nation. **Instead, we could think about language as something fluid and dynamic**, as something heterogeneous and complex. Opening up this definition of language allows for the varieties within language, such as different dialects and jargons, to also be considered;
- We can also think of **language/s as made of objects, concrete elements** with which we interact on a daily basis and which are part of who we are;
- Within this perspective, **identity is multiple, multi-layered, complex and fluid**; our subjectivity is formed through these intersections and interactions of difference that cross boundaries and borders. If we are all nomads then, we engage in intercultural encounters in every interaction. Such a viewpoint could invite us to consider how otherness is everywhere and also within us.

Conclusion

- A material view of multilingualism and multiculturalism that focuses on the **meaning-making power of objects** and personal collections provides a new kind of reading of the experience of learning languages;
- Such a vision **gives voice and agency** not only to rational and 'abstract' aspects of language learning but also to the more real, material and affective worlds of language learners;
- A great deal of research in language education has pointed out the **transformative powers of language learning for one's identities** (see the seminal work of Pavlenko, Kramsch and Norton), and how these processes are enacted in the ordinary, the intimate and the embodied;
- I have tried to advance **a perceptual/sensual approach to language learning & intercultural communication** that privileges sensation over reason, the personal and the contingent in the experience of language learning and language education.

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