

Association for Language Learning

Decolonise MFL Curriculum Special Interest Groups

## SECONDARY SIG UPDATE

## LANGUAGES WORLD 2023

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Lisa Panford, Co-Founder & Chair

Thank you for this opportunity to share an update of the Decolonise MFL Curriculum Special Interest Group with colleagues at Languages World 2023.


This group which was founded in 2021 is a space that is dedicated to explore the issues of race and racism and how it shows up within our subject.

Our half termly meetings continue to be an exciting forum to discuss recent policy developments, share excellent practice, and mobilise advancements in our subject with members hailing from all over the UK who are practitioners in schools, university academics, educational publishing and awarding bodies professionals. WE are incredibly fortunate that meetings are so well attended and that wonderful colleagues continue to give their time freely to engage in this complex work.

# Capturing our story so far...

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**The Curriculum Journal** 

## Making spaces for collaborative action and learning: Reflections on teacher-led decolonising initiatives from a professional learning network in England

Terra Glowach<sup>1</sup> | Rafael Mitchell<sup>2</sup> | Tryphosa Bennett<sup>3</sup> | Lydia Donaldson<sup>4</sup> | Jo Jefferson<sup>5</sup> | Lisa Panford<sup>6</sup> | Amy Saleh<sup>7</sup> | Kate Smee<sup>8</sup> | Bathsheba Wells-Dion<sup>9</sup> | Evie Hennings<sup>7</sup>

**Abstract**  
This article draws on the experiences of teachers and teacher educators within the 'Bristol Decolonising Network', an informal professional learning network based in South West England, to share examples of teacher-led decolonising/antiracist initiatives. The seven vignettes presented cover a range of subject areas across the English Secondary school curriculum, with varying rationales, foci, forms and intended outcomes. For this Special Issue, we look across these cases to consider links between teacher-led decolonising and antiracist initiatives and professional learning. We suggest that professional learning is both a condition for, and outcome of, teachers' engagement in such work; and that extending collaboration beyond hierarchical and institutional boundaries is a key enabler for progress on this agenda.

**Keywords:** Collaborative action and learning; Decolonisation; Professional learning; Teacher-led decolonisation; Teacher-led decolonising initiatives

**A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE ALL DECOLONISE SECONDARY MFL CURRICULUM SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG)**

What does an anti-racist, decolonised MFL curriculum look like?  
Molina Irvine & Lisa Panford

This conference version at Language World 2021 (see below) attracted much interest in collaborative and teacher-led decolonising approaches to secondary MFL curricula, and it seemed clear that the authors and other practitioners based in English contexts had an appetite for exploring the issues of race and racism in secondary MFL. Some teachers said that they wanted support to be able to make the necessary advance reports to address the structural inequalities present in our schools and reflected and reinforced through our subject.

Although decolonising the curriculum is an area of focus at the moment in my school, we are not given any time or resources to do the work, conversations around race in our subject are uncomfortable and awkward.

I want support from colleagues with aligned values to co-develop the notion that my decolonised lessons are seen as a benefit because they do not have any value in assessments or with Ofsted.

Teacher of Languages and Head of Year

One of ALL aims is to provide information and professional development to language teachers, to serve the wider community. In commitment to social equity and justice, the ALL Decolonise Secondary MFL Curriculum Special Interest Group (SIG) was launched in April 2020. Our group aims to facilitate dialogue between MFL practitioners in schools, universities and educational publishing and assessment services, in order to facilitate pedagogical advancements in decolonised curricula for the positive practical impact on our students in the secondary classroom, as expressed here:

Members meet once per half term (online and after school) because we subscribe to the value of creating space for collaborative approaches that are respectful and engaging, and we are excited about sharing with colleagues with such wide-ranging expertise!

SIG members have shared meetings providing opportunity for reflection on the issues in their own professional contexts.

My involvement in the SIG has given me insight into the workings of language teaching and education in UK schools, and ongoing plans to decolonise and diversify the curriculum of secondary level. I have gained the support to continue my work in all learning under institutional decolonising language education in universities.

Dr Joseph Ford, Lecturer

All networking and cultural partnerships with colleagues with aligned values across sectors throughout the whole teaching and learning experience.

I am getting so much from networking.

[Language-Today-A-year-in-the-life-of..pdf \(all-languages.org.uk\)](https://www.languages.org.uk/language-today-a-year-in-the-life-of..pdf)

[Making spaces for collaborative action and learning: Reflections on teacher-led decolonising initiatives from a professional learning network in England \(wiley.com\)](https://www.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cour.186)

There have been a number of important developments since my last update at Languages World 2022 and we have sought to capture some of the opportunities and challenges we have encountered in order to promote and strengthen the foundations of our development in future. You can read about some of our activities in Languages Today article available on the website and also in the collaborative journal article linked here.


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# Permission to Speak: Amplifying Marginalised Voices Through Languages

As part of our work to shine a light on the complete and often complicated history behind the growth of languages, we've partnered with leading language educators and leaders through the [Association for Language Learning Decolonise Secondary MFL Special Interest Group](#) to address 'diversifying the MFL curriculum' and to create a new series that aims to illuminate the hidden stories of marginalised people and cultures.



Our group’s collaboration with Pearson for our series ‘Permission to Speak’ has gone from strength to strength. Members of our group have authored and been paid for their contributions which since March 2022 now include...

- resources in French, German and Spanish on:
  - having conversations about race
  - Islamic influence on language and culture
  - historical figures
    - European Day of Languages
    - Climate justice
    - Female painters
    - And the latest, a piece on the endangered Judeo-Spanish language, Ladino.

## Survey

- We would love to hear from you about how you are using these resources as well as how we might improve them in future!
- Please complete this short (4 minute) survey and help us to shape future contributions to the series
- <https://forms.office.com/e/R7KcjKXubf>

(Please read from slide)



INSTITUTE OF  
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## Collaborative Doctoral Award

← Tweet



Fully-funded @LAHPDTP PhD: "Transnationalism, Culture and Race in the Modern Foreign Languages Secondary Classroom"

Project to start Oct 2023, full-time or part-time, a collaboration with @ALL4language and ILCS.

Full details and how to apply below 📌

[ilcs.sas.ac.uk/graduate-study...](https://ilcs.sas.ac.uk/graduate-study...)



- *How can we contribute to a long-term legacy which brings about greater awareness of colonialism and discourses around race and racism among Secondary MFL teachers and pupils?*
- Fully-funded PhD to start Oct 2023;
- Collaboration between Institute for Languages, Cultures and Societies & ALL;

One of the group's key concerns has been how we might contribute to a long-term and meaningful legacy to address the issues of race and racism in our subject. In this vein we have explored and strengthened our partnership with academics at the Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies and are delighted to report that further to a very competitive application process (with particular thanks to Rene and Anna Lise and colleagues at Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls, Ealing for their support with the application) we were awarded a Doctoral Award to support a fully funded PhD to explore 'Transnationalism, Culture and Race in the Modern Foreign Languages Secondary Classroom'. We are very excited to be welcoming our Doctoral student and hope their work will feed into and strengthen the objectives of the SIG.



## Events – Some highlights



Post event  
Developing language learning across the four nations: sharing innovative and creative approaches  
17 Nov 2022



Languages Week Scotland 2023



- April 2022: Show Racism the Red Card campaign *Race & Racism in Languages education* [Voices - Voices \(theredcard.org\)](https://theredcard.org)
- October 2022: Diverse Educators DiverseEd Virtual IX Conference – *Diversifying MFL?* [Our Events Archive | Diverse Educators](#)
- May 2022: AMLUK & UCML Conference Modern Languages & Inclusivity: Sharing ideas and practices
- November 2022: BERA/UCML Conference - Developing language learning across the four nations: sharing innovative and creative approaches
- February 2023: SCILT - Scotland's Diverse Languages Landscape: A Foundation for Peaceful Communities. Key Note: *No justice, no peace in languages education.*

We have been afforded lots of opportunities to promote the work of ALL and our SIG at wide ranging national and local events and conferences, most recently at SCILT's wonderful Conference last month entitled 'Scotland's Diverse Languages Landscape: A Foundation for Peaceful Communities'. We have also shared our work with trainee teachers at the University of Nottingham, UCL and Kings College, London. Not only do these opportunities allow us to share and promote our SIG work, they are incredibly valuable in terms of networking and knowledge exchange – vital if we are to continue to develop our understanding of the issues.

## Finally... Congratulations to the Decolonise Primary MFL SIG!!!!

- *How can we strengthen and enrich narratives around race/racism and decolonising languages education?*

- *Representation of the multi-ethnic diversity of target language countries in resources;*
- *Content relating to target language countries' colonial legacies;*
- *Narratives of People Of Colour in our target language countries;*
- *Critical framework for interrogating MFL subject materials*
- *Critical framework to support students' engagement/critical thinking skills*

If you are interested in joining the ALL Decolonise Secondary MFL Special Interest Group please email: [info@ALL-languages.org.uk](mailto:info@ALL-languages.org.uk)

Secondary SIG members were delighted to learn of the launch of the Primary Decolonise Curriculum SIG and offer our congratulations to the Chairs and our ongoing support to the vital developments in the Primary context.

In terms of next steps for our group: our aims are ongoing and long-term. We would very much like to organise an event in 2023/24 which brings SIG members together – to celebrate our achievements so far, share practice and collectively forge a vision for the shape of our future development....something to work towards!

Please do be in touch if you are interested in becoming a member of the SIG and gentle reminder to share and feedback on our Pearson series!