

# EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND PLURILINGUALISM/CULTURALISM

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## Target audience

- Pre-service teachers
  - Primary teachers
  - Secondary teachers\_
  - Third level language lecturers
- In-service teachers
  - Primary teachers
  - Secondary teachers
  - Third level language lecturers

## Itinerary

- Identity exploration
- Dealing with intercultural and plurilingual communication

## Abstract:

The materials encourage reflection on the wide range of possibilities which exist for the practitioner who engages in plurilingual and pluricultural education. Initially, participants are invited to consider, on one hand, her/his inner and personal diversity in order to establish an awareness of the separate and multiple identities within and around us, and on the other hand, her/his connectedness to the world. Awareness of the separateness between various identities coupled with the realisation of being *of* the world reveals the existence of dynamic and creative ‘in-between’ spaces (Bhabha 1994). In support of the claim, artistic expressions of ‘in-between’ spaces are provided with the purpose of motivating teachers to consider these spaces as a potentially fertile terrain for plurilingual and pluricultural creative expression.

## Rationale

The materials presented here attempt to make explicit the connection between plurilingualism and creativity in support of Skutnabb-Kangas’s assertion that:

‘plurilingualism enhances creativity. High-level Plurilinguals as a group do better than corresponding monolinguals on tests measuring several aspects of ‘intelligence’, creativity, divergent thinking, cognitive flexibility, etc.’.(2002, p.14).

To this effect, in order to make the connection, and based on Bhabha’s observation mentioned in the abstract above, the teachers are encouraged to locate liminal spaces that will enable creativity to occur.

The learning experience also recognizes that:

‘There is... a third essential layer to culture, namely the imagination. Discourse communities are characterised not only by facts and artefacts, but by common dreams, fulfilled and unfulfilled imaginings. These imaginings are mediated through the language, that over the life of the community reflects shapes, and is a metaphor for its cultural reality... language is intrinsically linked not only to the culture that is and the culture that was, but also to the culture of the imagination that governs people’s decisions and actions far more than we may think’. (Kramsch 1998, p. 8).

Thus, examples drawn from the artistic world of literature, visual arts and music from Ireland and elsewhere are included with the dual purpose of illustrating the link between culture and imagination, as well as stimulating reflection and action on the part of participants. Ten activities are proposed and focus on

- locating ‘in-between’ spaces and exploring the nature of these spaces – restlessness, the search for meaning, ambiguity, misunderstandings;
- considering the question of identity – threat to identity, the use of symbols, the phenomena of interpretation and translation;
- using ‘in-between’ spaces to initiate dialogue and create meaning;

and finally,

- discovering creative and practical ways of making use of these spaces in our own environment. An outline of the activities and the materials used appears in Table 1.

### **Personal and social dimensions**

- Observing the linguistic and cultural diversity of contexts and individuals;
- Observing how educators can influence the attitudes of learners towards languages, those who speak them, their culture, as well as their motivation and curiosity with regard to languages;
- recognising the linguistic and cultural complexity of individual and collective identities;
- having a global vision of the exercise of one’s profession (professionalism) as consisting of different dimensions;

- knowing oneself as a language educator by thinking about one's own abilities, knowledge, images and registers with regard to language communication and didactics;
- having confidence in one's professional ability to develop educational approaches in which taking account of linguistic and cultural diversity is a reality;
- being capable of setting up self-training projects that take account of linguistic and cultural diversity.

### **Professional dimensions**

- reflecting on the new roles and functions of the language teacher as educator;
- finding and communicating purposes in the pursuit of a new linguistic and cultural education;
- observing, analysing and making use of – in didactic terms – the diversity that exists in one's teaching environment (individual and collective repertoires).
- Creating, experimenting with and evaluating educational projects ultimately aimed at developing plurilingual and pluricultural skills;
- Creating synergetic effects between the teaching of different languages and cultures by co-operating with teachers of other languages and other subject;

<b>TABLE 1</b> <b>Title of activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Portfolio to include:</b>
<b>1. ‘ In-between’ spaces.</b>	120’	Locating an inner space where multiple identities coexist	Text by Homi K. Bhabha	Poster showing how selfhood is shaped.	Summaries and conclusion of the discussions
<b>2. When ‘in-between’ spaces and restlessness are painted.</b>	60’	Creating a visual awareness of these ‘in-between’ spaces as well as restlessness.	Variety of art works by Goulding, Lawlor, Gunning and Lalor.	Choice of a particular work of art with particular attention paid to one’s own reasons for choosing the piece and to the reasons of others who may have chosen the same piece.	Chosen art piece + one’s own reasons for choosing the piece as well as additional comments from those who may have chosen the same piece.
<b>3. When ‘in-between’ spaces and restlessness are mentioned.</b>	90’	Increasing the awareness of inner and ‘in-between’ spaces to enable the conscious assembly of multiple identities	Variety of quotations from Nafisi, Hoffman, Boland, Joyce, Maalouf.	Mosaic of the sub-group’s identities	Photo of the sub-group’s mosaic and comments on the mosaic
<b>4. Looking for meaning</b>	90’	Looking at inner speech, plurilingual inner speech, multivocality and cacophony.	Reflect on quotations by Vygotsky, Joyce, Nafisi.	A plurilingual inner speech type utterance. A cacophonous activity.	Groups’ productions of utterance.
<b>Title of activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Portfolio to include:</b>
<b>5. When identity is threatened</b>	60’	The question of identity only arises when one of our identities is threatened. Looking at humour, jokes based on stereotypes.	Reflect on quotations by Maalouf, Hoffman	Poster with examples of humour, identification of stereotypes	Copy of sub-group’s poster + 1 poster from another group.

<b>6. Ambiguity, misunderstandings and/or multiple perspectives?</b>	90'	Looking at calligraphy, dealing with ambiguity, experiences of misunderstandings	Reflect on quotations by Khatibi, A. and Sijelmassi, Nafisi, Hoffman.	Calligraphy of invented word/ utterance (see activity 4)	Summary of discussions + copy of calligraphic production
<b>7. Symbols, interpretation and translation</b>	90'	Looking at a picture displaying a symbol, the way in which symbols can be used, interpreted, and the difficulty of translating words which represent beliefs, values, norms.	Quotations by Nafisi, Hoffman, Joyce + picture by Rachel Parry		
<b>Title of activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Portfolio to include:</b>
<b>8. How can 'in-between' spaces be used to initiate dialogue?</b>	90'	Curiosity, democracy, fun with language, meals	Quotations by Nafisi, Nabokov, Hoffman, Joyce + picture by Angie Shanahan	Record fun words	Tape + list of suggestions under the headings curiosity and democracy.

<b>9. When ‘in-between’ spaces become meaningful</b>	90’	Patterns, connectors, stories with universal teachings... Awareness of being OF the world.	Quotations by O’Searcaigh, Parry, Boydell, Maalouf, Vygotsky, Hoffman	Exchange and record wider group’s views	Include views.
<b>10. In practical terms...</b>	90’	Looking at personal, social and professional dimensions	Use page 1 (quotations + personal, social and professional dimensions)	Reflections on personal, social and professional dimensions. Plan for pluricultural activities in the school	Plan and comments

## Worksheet 1 - 'In-between' spaces

Materials required: flipchart paper and markers.

Timing: 120'

Objective: to create the awareness of 'in-between' spaces that exist within society and within individuals' multiple identities – e.g. parent, teacher, son, daughter, sister, *etc.*



Read an excerpt of Homi K. Bhabha's introduction to *The Location of Culture* in Appendix A.



In groups of three:

Can you give examples of such 'spaces' in your physical environment (e.g. a stairwell in a block of flats; the movement is up and down and its location is in between) and state why you chose these spaces. Are you comfortable in such spaces? State why.

Can you explain what is meant by 'in-between' spaces in the text; make a list of the movements associated with such spaces.

Why do you think words like *disorientation*, *disturbance*, *restless* are mentioned in this analysis? Do you agree with this choice of words? Justify your answers.

How could these negative connotations associated with the words *disorientation*, *disturbance*, *restless* lead to positive outcomes and changes? Give precise examples.

Can you give precise examples of the move away from 'class' and 'gender' as primary conceptual and organisational categories in your own environment?

How would you define your sense of selfhood or multiple identities 'singularly and communally' (at home, at work, in college, abroad, as a language learner, a language teacher, etc.). Be specific.

To what extent do these identities contribute to defining the society you live in? Give examples.

Write and draw a poster to illustrate your reflections.



### Whole class activity

The posters should be posted around the classroom and students or teachers should walk around, observe similarities and differences between the groups and take note of these.

The original groups of three should reconvene and draw up some conclusions (what surprised them most in the final display of posters, things they have learned, new awareness...) and share their views with the other groups in a plenary session.

The summaries and conclusions should be included in a portfolio.

**Note:** while this activity marks the beginning of an exploratory journey undertaken by tutor and trainee alike, it would be useful to conduct a preliminary activity such as *My circles of identity* in order to establish trust and cooperation between members of the group. The physical and intellectual awareness of ‘in-between’ spaces between identities is crucial to the understanding of how creative expression can emerge. This activity also suggests that the emergence of links between multiple identities is the result of an active exploration of these liminal spaces. This disposition of the mind is akin to the traveller’s movements: through, up and down and to-and-fro.



## Worksheet 2 When in-between spaces and restlessness are painted

Timing: 60'

Materials: flipchart paper to record and compare group observations

Objective: to further explore the manner in which 'in-between' spaces can be expressed.



In groups of 3:

Study the pictures below and their authors' comments. Discuss them with your group.

Choose one picture and say how your choice could serve to illustrate the discussions which took place in Worksheets 1.

Include the picture and your comments in your portfolio.



Whole class activity

Share your reasons for choosing a particular picture with the whole group and pay particular attention to the reasons outlined by somebody else who has chosen the same picture as you.

Add other people's views to your initial reasons for choosing the picture into your portfolio

Tim Goulding

Tender fractures X 2004, acrylic on canvas, diptych



*I make paintings that hover on the boundaries of abstraction and realism. I want them to work within their own four walls, whilst retaining a resonance of the world outside, to make something that looks as if it came about by natural causes, that has an air of inevitability and rightness. Something that exudes a buttery or gritty poetry, that makes you discover it, as you might an individual pebble on the beach, shining in its own quiet way.*



Niamh Lawlor *Speaker Holes* 2004, video, 5mins

*I am interested in art as communication. As with a conversation, my work endeavours to open inquiry or occasionally disturb the familiar, and so restore a sense of expectation in the gaze of the viewer. Through travel, my work is conscious of a vocabulary of cultural signifiers, beyond which it searches for a more human vocabulary that is common to all.*

*My work ranges from site specific installations to process-based projects, sometimes in collaboration with others. The media is varied and open. Ideas of control continue to underline my work, often directly related to the 'body', encompassing social, cultural and religious conditioning. Via social and issue-based work, my subjective approach aims to offer the viewer a welcome sense of connection. *Speaker Holes* presents a concept – as does much of my work – to be creatively completed by its audience.*



Stephen Gunning *Window Cleaner* 2001, video, 2:30 min.

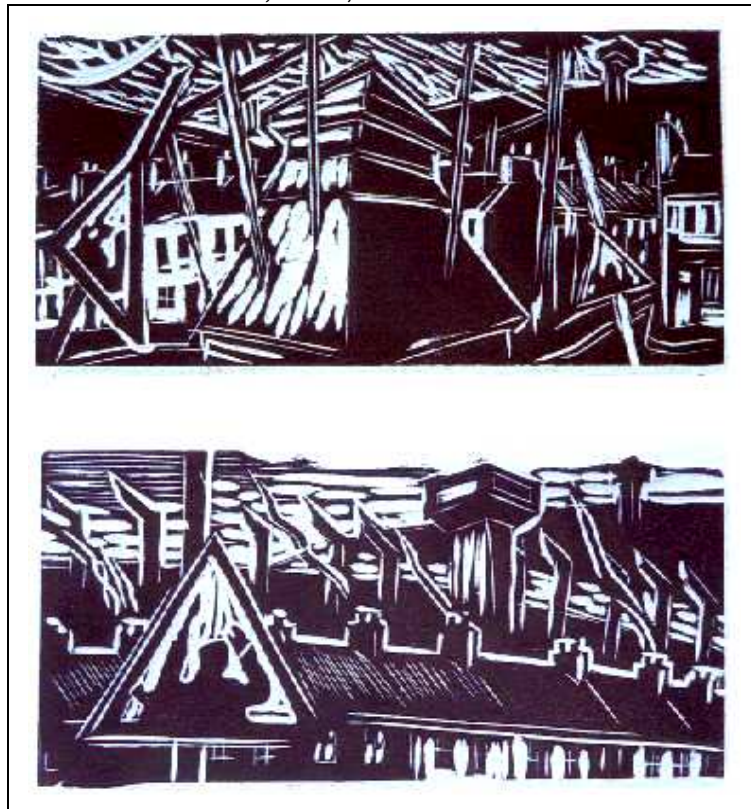
*My work revolves around social issues such as the individual's relationship with society. A large proportion of my work deals with how we inhabit urban situations. My work embraces video, sound and installation. I feel the creation of installations is a way to interrogate specific questions within a constructed physical environment, often comprising various media.*



Brian Lalor *Fir Bolg* 1999, etching and aquatint

*Although not a political artist political themes recur in my work. Fir Bolg belongs to an intensely political series of works, related specifically to events in Northern Ireland, but which continue to have international resonances wherever conflicts of ideology or struggles of national identity are taking place. My interest here is in the phenomena of oppression and the language of conflict. Borderlands are frequently the source of intense manifestations of alienation (as in the Berlin wall), and have provided an abundance of imagery imbued with violence.*

*Borderlands I and II, 1997, woodcuts.*



**Note:** participants, through discussion, become aware of how others' perceptions and, perhaps worldviews, can enrich their appreciation of objects or situations in general.

### Worksheet 3 - When in-between spaces and restlessness are mentioned

Timing: 90'

Materials: flipchart paper to record participants' views. Paper (coloured, magazines), scissors, glue for mosaic. Camera to photograph group mosaic. Photograph to go into portfolio.

Objective: to gain a physical/visual awareness of 'in-between' spaces.



Read the excerpts which appear in Appendix B.



In groups of three:

Make a list of all the words used to describe an 'in-between' space.

Make a list of all the words which are synonymous with 'pieces'.

Make a list of words which suggest restlessness.

Make a list of the words which suggest re-construction or assembly.

(Find French speakers to help you understand Maalouf's comment)

Can you suggest the manner in which most of the authors achieve the re-construction or the re-shaping of the selfhood in its multiple dimensions?

What does consciousness mean? How can consciousness make you more able to re-construct, to understand, to become creative?

Make a list of the elements which constitute your selfhood (see Worksheet 1) transpose these elements into the fragments of a mosaic. Compose the mosaic of your group. Use scissors, glue, colour, paper and cardboard as a base.

Rely on your consciousness of the way in which some fragments within the group may be shared by several people (e.g. trainee, parent, daughter, etc.), or may be connected to other elements which characterise the group (teachers of Italian, French, German, etc.) Remain aware that some fragments may have no connection to other elements and negotiate the space for them.



Whole class activity

Post up the mosaic for others to see and look at others' productions.

Choose one mosaic which is not yours. What can you see?

Does the final outcome reflect harmony? Chaos? Recurring patterns? Make notes and exchange views with the authors of the mosaic. Do they agree with you? Did they see the same things? Different things? Did you miss something?

Make notes of other participants' comments on your mosaic and record your own views. Place a photograph of your mosaic and notes in your portfolio.

**Note:** this activity engages the participants physically and visually into awareness of the self as well as of others and progresses from the individual to the sub-group to the class as a whole. The production of the mosaic emphasises the space between elements of the selfhood and their connectedness to others through the development of a pattern. The exercise also serves to generate and establish group dynamics by negotiating, doing, making, listening, noticing and saying.

## Worksheet 4 - Looking for meaning

Timing: 90'

Materials: flipchart paper for participants to record and share their work.

Objective: to sensitize the participant to the idea that meaning is not singular, nor fixed, particularly in plurilingual and pluricultural environments.



In groups of 3

### Inner speech

Vygotsky's explanation of the syntax of inner speech below shows how meaning is processed in the minds of individuals.

'The way in which senses of words combine and unite... an influx of sense. The senses of different words flow into one another – literally "influence" one another – so that the earlier ones are contained in, and modify the later ones'.

(Vygotsky p.246-7)

Vygotsky's words suggest that meaning is not fixed and that it is constantly reshaped. Do you agree with this view? Justify your answer.

### Plurilingual inner speech

Should individuals be plurilingual and pluricultural, the influence of one word on another is likely to produce interesting and amusing outcomes. Read a passage from James Joyce's *Finnegan's wake* (Appendix C) and show how language(s) and cultural references are used. Explain how this passage illustrates Vygotsky's description of inner speech. Does this passage carry any meaning for you? What was your initial reaction to it? What is the purpose of producing such texts? What is the purpose of including this text in this course?

Can you try to produce an 'inner speech' type utterance where the languages and/or cultural references of your group are used?

Include this utterance in your portfolio and share it with the wider group. Include other groups' productions in your portfolio.



Whole class activity

### **Multivocality or cacophony?**

Azar Nafisi, who was expelled from the University of Tehran for refusing to wear a veil, explores forbidden Western literary works in the 90's, in Iran, with seven young women and former students, during weekly clandestine meetings in her apartment in Tehran.

Read her critique of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and show how this remark may be pointed at monolithic or dictatorial societies. Explain its relevance to plurilingual and pluricultural societies (Appendix C).

Form pairs and agree on a secret word in any language of your choice.

One of the two partners should agree to go to the centre of the room/ yard and be blindfolded. The other partner will walk around the central blindfolded group until a signal is given by the tutor to freeze and to shout the secret word again and again until the blindfolded partners locate their partner by the sound of the secret word alone.

Swap places with your partner, agree on a different secret word and repeat the activity.

Did you enjoy this activity? Yes – No; state why.

Would you conduct such an activity with a plurilingual group of pupils?

How would you ensure that a group of people, pupils, develop multivocality as opposed to cacophony or silence in a classroom? Summarise the views expressed and include them in the portfolio.

**Note:** participants are asked to consider inner speech as a means of acquiring and creating meaning. In a plurilingual and pluricultural context, inner speech can become a creative form of expression. Through the creative expression of plurilingualism, participants also become aware of multiple voices and the need and importance to accommodate these meaningfully.

## Worksheet 5 - When an identity is threatened

Timing: 60'

Materials: flipchart paper to record and display participants' work. Camera to photograph the work to be included in the portfolio.

Objective: to show how humour is often part of plurilingual and pluricultural experiences.



Whole group activity

Read Amin Maalouf's and Eva Hoffman's views on threatened identities (Appendix D). Do you agree with them?

Why do Maalouf and Hoffman refer to 'complexité souriante' and 'delicious comedy' when people talk about other cultures that are threatening or 'bothering' them? What form does this 'delicious comedy' often take?

Do you have examples of such humorous manifestations? Could these manifestations be perceived to be 'politically incorrect'? Why?



In groups of 3

Make a poster to illustrate your point with concrete examples of humour and identity-related topics in one column on the left and identify the political incorrectness in another column on the right of the poster.



Whole class activity

Share this poster with the wider group.

Include a copy of this poster in your portfolio and choose another one from the wider group.

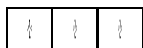
**Note:** while humour is very welcome in many situations, certain forms of humour can also contribute to freezing meaning into a single interpretation or a single understanding of others, thereby establishing stereotypes.



Timing: 90'

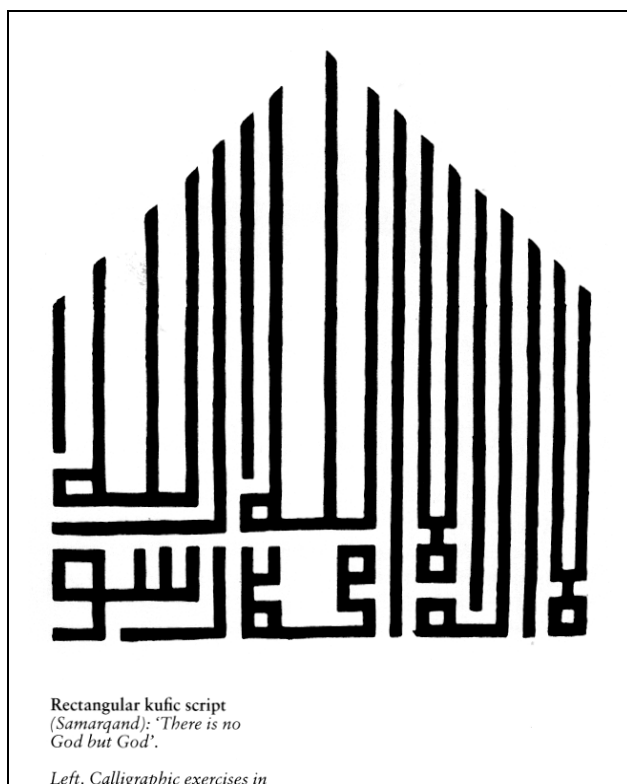
Materials: flipchart paper to make a calligraphy of the invented word in Worksheet 4. Camera to photograph the work to be included in the portfolio.

Objective: to further reflect on the notion of multiple meanings.



In groups of 3

The picture below represents a particular form of Islamic calligraphy ( Kufic script). Read the particular understanding Muslims have of the written word (Appendix E). Is this understanding of the written word very different from yours? In what way?



How would you relate this account of Islamic calligraphy to Hoffman's and Nafisi's statements in Appendix E?

Do you believe that one should accept **ambiguity** as a necessary step towards better understanding in plurilingual and pluricultural environments?

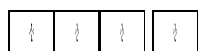
Read Hoffman's account of **misunderstandings**. What is the significance of her reference to the narrowness of the bridge?

Did you ever experience misunderstandings? Can you tell a story about such a situation?

Do you think it is important to be aware of individuals' multiple dimensions?

How could such dimensions be revealed in the classroom? Make concrete suggestions.

Following the explanations on calligraphy in Appendix E, design a poster in calligraphic style displaying the invented word or utterance devised in Worksheet 4.



Whole class activity

Summarise what has emerged from your discussions based on the activities of this worksheet. Share the poster and the summary with the larger group. Include a copy of the poster and the summary in your portfolio.

**Note:** this worksheet is a visual and practical application of Worksheet 4. It touches on the fluidity of meaning and the more challenging aspects of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism such as ambiguity and misunderstanding.

## Worksheet 7 - Symbols, interpretation and translation

Timing: 90'

Materials: flipchart for participants to record and share their observations

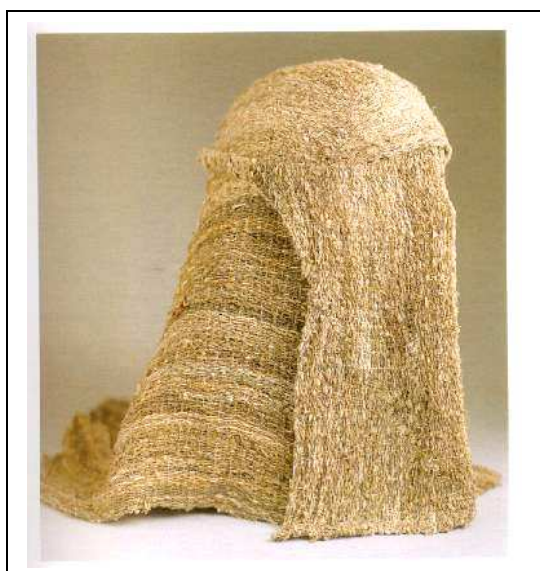
Objective: to become aware that the acquisition of meaning is the result of an individual's or a society's interpretation.

To accept that translation of meaning and experience is not always possible within plurilingual and pluricultural contexts.



In groups of 3

Observe the picture below and the artist's explanation. Note her use of materials and the multiple interpretations of the veil as a symbol. Could you add more interpretations?



Rachel Parry *The Veil* 2001, spun and woven spiders' webs, wool and silk over a papier mâché form.

*The Veil, about healing disconnection between men and women, is made of spun and woven spiders' webs. As well as being a traditional healing remedy for binding wounds, spiders' webs were the subject of my father's work. Veils significant in various cultures, represent such things as humility, psychic protection and erotic power.*

### Interpretation

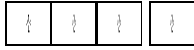
Study Nafisi's remarks about her mother in Iran (Appendix F) and discuss the way in which cultural symbols can be appropriated, interpreted and manipulated to change and perhaps distort the public's view of such symbols. Give precise examples from your own culture.

### Translation

Sometimes it is very difficult to translate a word because it is bound to the culture that created it. Read Hoffmann's account in Appendix F. Why does the author refer to the 'audience' of the language? Why not a more abstract word such as 'culture'? Do you think it is an important distinction to make? Justify your answer.

Give as many examples as possible, in as many languages as possible of such words with the 'audiences' or cultural dimensions they represent. Show how these words often relate to the norms, values and beliefs of a particular culture. You may like to refer to Joyce's text in Appendix B as a starting point. The words Joyce chose are *home, Christ, ale, master*. Show how these words touch on differences in the beliefs, values and norms as perceived by the Irish author.

Make a poster or a recording of these words with their cultural dimensions.



### Whole class activity

Share these findings with the wider group and include your own group's findings as well as your notes on the wider group's observations in your portfolio.


**Note:** reflection on interpretation and translation heightens one's awareness of the need for respect of others and acceptance of the untranslatability of others' experience into our own experience, our own world. This worksheet can lead to debates on policies of *integration* versus *assimilation* in Europe or America for example.

## Worksheet 8 - How can 'in-between' spaces be used to initiate dialogue?

Timing: 90'

Materials: flipchart paper for participants to record and share their work. One tape recorder and (ideally) cassettes for each participant to record her/his voice and word.

Objective: to explore ways of creating opportunities for dialogue.

-  In groups of 3

### Curiosity:

Do you think curiosity can play a role in pluricultural and plurilingual environments? If so, do you believe it is easy to be curious about others? Justify your answer.

Asar Nafisi quotes Vladimir Nabokov who states:

‘Curiosity is insubordination in its purest form’.

Do you agree with Nabokov? Why would curiosity be associated with insubordination? Give examples.

How would you use curiosity in plurilingual and pluricultural environments? Be specific and make a list of your ideas under the heading **Curiosity** and include these in your portfolio.

### Democracy:

Study Hoffman’s remarks in Appendix G.

Through her discussions with peers and teachers, literary analysis becomes the entry point into her new world.

Can you think of other structures in society, in general, and in your environment, in particular, which may enable an outsider to be welcomed on equal terms?

Can you think of democratic opportunities in a school and in a classroom environment which could become entry points into new worlds?

Make a list of these under the heading **Democracy** and include these in your portfolio.

### Fun with language

Appendix G has a collection of words created for fun and as a connection between individuals or between individuals and other worlds. Discover these words and create a special word(s) for your group. You can use as many languages as you wish. State why you have chosen this word(s) and its meaning(s) for the group. Record the word(s) and its meaning(s) on a cassette and make sure that each voice in the group is recorded separately (there should be at least 3 voices in each group). Include the tape in your portfolio.

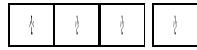
How would you relate this artist’s work to dialogue, curiosity, democracy and fun? Be specific.

Angie Shanahan

*Portrait for a Longing* 2004, oil on board



*This painting is a combination of still-life and figurative genres, a formulation of my own narrative through our food culture – not as we knew it 20 years ago, but now, in a vibrant multicultural Ireland with the influence of travel and TV cookery programmes, with reference to appetite, conviviality and potential consumption*



Whole class activity: play the tape for the wider group.

**Note:** having explored the idea of untranslatability (see Worksheet 7), participants will become aware that dialogue is nevertheless possible in ‘in-between’ spaces that exist within our immediate and ordinary environment.

## Worksheet 9 - When 'in-between' spaces become meaningful

Timing: 90'

Materials: flipchart paper and colours

Objective: to explore how communication between individuals within plurilingual and pluricultural environments can emerge creatively.

**'Pattern is the soil of significance' (Hoffman 1991/1994, p.278).**



In groups of 3

Read Cathal O' Searcaigh's poem in Appendix H. Discuss the pattern that emerges from the poem.

Make a list of all forms of patterns (layering, collage, patchwork, plating...) and represent these patterns visually on a poster – use colour.

Having completed this poster, why does Hoffman believe that pattern can lead to meaning. You may also refer to Boydell's view on art below.

Discuss Rachel Parry's views on stories and how they inspire her (Appendix H). Do you know such stories? Would you consider using such stories in your work? How would you develop them in the context of a plurilingual and pluricultural education? Make notes within your own group.

Whole class activity

Exchange these ideas with the wider group. Include the wider group's reflections in your portfolio.

Read Vygotsky's account of a word and Hoffman's account of human beings in Appendix H. Show what they have in common.

Reflect on how the awareness or consciousness of inhabiting a pluricultural and plurilingual world can stimulate creative interaction within that world. You may look back on the artistic productions within this unit (writings, paintings) or listen to the music and songs listed in Appendix H.

Cormac Boydell

*Lascaux Bull* 2004, Irish terracotta



*All things are connected, and in a fragmented world art is a great connector. The making of art presents an opportunity for great intimacy with the physical stuff of this world and with aspects of our mind that are common to us all. It is my wish that my work brings to others some of the happiness that I have in making it.*

At this stage, do you know what it is that artists and plurilingual and pluricultural individuals have in common? (a clue can be found in appendix D)

**Note:** communication happens at many levels and in many ways, between individuals, groups and the world, through words and actions. Connectedness exists precisely because of the disconnectedness that exists around and within us; however, it is dependent on our willingness to make this connections meaningfully.

## Worksheet 10 - In practical terms...

Timing: 90'

Materials: flipchart paper for participants to record and exchange ideas.

Objective: to find ways of applying what has been learned and discovered, in real situations and beyond oneself.



In groups of 3

### Personal and social dimensions:

Return to the rationale of these activities (pp.1 and 2) and reflect on:

- Personal and social dimensions mentioned here; make a note of your comments
- Kramsch's view that 'language is intrinsically linked ... to the culture of the imagination that governs people's decisions and actions...'. What kind of decision or action is likely to emerge out of your awareness of the link between imagination and plurilingual and pluricultural awareness?

As a teacher, reflect on how the 'in-between' or threshold spaces, where the languages and cultures that surround you and your learners, can be shaped into creative entry points into one another's worlds.

### Professional dimension:

Reflect on the professional dimension on pages 3 and 4. Can you illustrate each point with an example? Make notes of these.

How would you justify the pursuit of a plurilingual and pluricultural education in your school to your colleagues, management, pupils, parents?

Would you need to identify 'in-between' or threshold spaces in your work environment?

What would you need to do to create such spaces?

- Organise events – art (portrait painting as a way of discovering another person; patchwork, tapestry, paper weaving to create patterns which are meaningful to the context), music, poetry, drama, dance?
- Story writing, story-telling for the class, for other classes?
- Make a film of a day in a multicultural school?
- Cook with and for others?
- Engage in plurilingual creative writing?
- Create tandem-learning partnerships?
- Conduct surveys? Show this work to others and to whom?
- Any other ideas?

Make suggestions and discuss the best ways to stimulate pluricultural and plurilingual awareness through creative engagement in your own environment.

Draw up a list of ideas and identify the practical steps that have to be taken to bring your ideas to fruition :

- Who should you speak with – the principal, colleagues, pupils?
- Who can help you?
- When would the best time be?
- Should people be contacted outside the school?
- Where can the activity take place?
- Can this activity be integrated in a number of subjects? Which subjects?
- Would your focus be on the process? On the outcome? On both?
- How long will it last?
- Will you need particular materials or can you work with what you have (e.g. people, ideas, language, school space and equipment, objects brought from pupils' homes...)
- What can you do to make the benefits of such an activity explicit and transparent to all?
- What can you do so that people don't forget?
- etc.



Whole group activity

Present your suggestions to the whole group and include the plan in your portfolio.

**Note:** participants should feel empowered to actively explore their plurilingual and pluricultural environment for the purpose of promoting genuine plurilingual and pluricultural communication.

## Appendix A

### Note for teachers:

This is a difficult text which requires concentration on the part of the reader. The individual reader should seek support from the group in order to achieve a shared understanding of the text. The worksheet questions may also help to guide the reader.

### The location of culture

‘In the *fin de siècle*, we find ourselves in a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’: an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* – here and there, on all sides, fort/da, hither and thither, back and forth....

The move away from the singularities of ‘class’ and gender’ as primary conceptual and organisational categories has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit our claim to identity in the modern world.

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. The ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood –singular and communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining society itself.

It is in the emergence of interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest or cultural value are negotiated .

(Homi K. Bhabah 1994, pp.1-2)

#### Reading Lolita in Tehran

‘An absurd fictionality ruled our lives. We tried to live in the open spaces, in the chinks created between that room, which had become our protective cocoon, and the censor’s world of witches and goblins outside. Which of these two worlds was more real and to which did we really belong? We no longer knew the answers. Perhaps one way of finding out the truth was to do what we did: to try to imaginatively articulate these two worlds, and through that process, give shape to our vision and identity’. (Nafisi 2003, p.26)

## Appendix B

### Reading Lolita in Tehran

'In Austen's novels, there are spaces for oppositions that do not need to eliminate one another in order to exist.

There is also space – not just space but a necessity – for self-reflection and self-criticism. Such reflection is the cause for change' (Nafisi 2003, p.268).

### Lost in translation

'... The gap also becomes a chink, a window through which I can observe the world. The apertures of perception have widened because they were once pried apart. Just as the number '2' implies all other numbers, so a bivalent consciousness is necessarily a multivalent consciousness'. (Hoffman 1989, p.272).

'Like everybody, I am the sum of my languages, the language of my family and children, and education and friendship, and love, and the larger changing world – though, perhaps I tend to be more aware than most of the fractures between them, and of the building blocks. The fissures sometimes cause me pain, but in a way, they're how I know I'm alive'. (Hoffman 1989, p.272).

### Anna Livia

'Maker of  
Places, remembrances,  
Narrate such fragments for me:

One body. One spirit.  
One place. One name.  
The city where I was born.  
The river that runs through it.  
The nation which eludes me.

Fractions of a life  
It has taken me a lifetime  
To claim'.

(Boland 1994, from Anna Livia in *A Time of Violence*, p.42)

### Portrait of the artist as a young man

'The little word [ a tundish] seemed to have turned a rapier point of his sensitiveness against this courteous and vigilant foe. He felt with a smart of dejection that the man to whom he was speaking was a countryman of Ben Jonson. He thought:

- The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home*, *Christ*, *ale*, *master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language'. (Joyce 1916, p.189)

### About Joyce:

' [Joyce's] living in Europe became a vital and exemplary part of his artistic identity. The sense of needing and finding an alternative space, at one remove, is attractive to many artists and Farrell evokes this magical possibility' (Dunne June 12<sup>th</sup> 2004, *The prose in perspective* The Irish Times)

### A propos d'appartenances multiples:

...des êtres frontaliers, en quelques sorte, traversés par des lignes de fractures ethniques, religieuses ou autres... (Maalouf 1998,p.11)

**Finnegan's wake**

'...so one grand summer evening, after a great morning and his good supper of gammon and spittish, having flabelled his eyes, pilleoled his nostrils, vacticanated his ears and palliumed his throat, he put on his impermeable, seized his impugnable, harped on his crown and stepped out of his immobile De Rure Albo... (Joyce 1939, p.152)

**Reading Lolita in Tehran**

'Austen's ability to create multivocality, such diverse voices in relation and in confrontation within the cohesive structure of the novel is one of the best examples of the democratic aspect of the novel'.  
(Nafisi 2004, p.268)

### **Identités meurtrières**

Là où les gens se sentent menacés dans leur foi, c'est l'appartenance religieuse qui semble résumer leur identité entière. Mais si c'est leur langue maternelle et leur groupe ethnique qui sont menacés, alors ils se battent farouchement contre leurs propres coreligionnaires. Les Turcs et les Kurdes sont également musulmans, mais différents par la langue; leur conflit en est-il moins sanglant?...Tchèques et Slovaques sont également catholiques, cela a-t-il favorisé la vie commune?

Tous ces exemples pour insister sur le fait que s'il existe, à tout moment, parmi les éléments qui constituent l'identité de chacun, une certaine hiérarchie, celle-ci n'est pas immuable, elle change avec le temps et modifie en profondeur les comportements.

... souvent, l'identité que l'on proclame se calque – en négatif – sur celle de l'adversaire. Un Irlandais catholique se différencie des Anglais par la religion d'abord, mais il s'affirmera, face à la monarchie, républicain, et s'il ne connaît pas suffisamment le gaélique, du moins parlera-t-il l'anglais à sa manière ; un dirigeant catholique qui s'exprimerait avec l'accent d'Oxford apparaîtrait presque comme un renégat.

Il y aurait, là encore, des dizaines d'exemples pour illustrer la complexité – parfois souriante, souvent tragique – des mécanismes de l'identité.

(Amin Maalouf 1998, p.19-21)

### **Lost in translation**

'A culture talks most about what most bothers it; the Poles talk compulsively about the Russians... the Americans worry about who they are... Each of course is delicious comedy to the other – the comedy from which so much expatriate writing is made.' (Hoffman 1991/1994, p.264)

## Appendix E

### Calligraphy:

How is this square kufic calligraphy to be read? The reader will immediately note a sign on the right, which introduces the *shahada*, one of the key phrases in Muslim belief: 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet'. Recognising this statement, the reader will next try to discover the arrangement of the letters. This is a work of recognition, which to be done properly, requires the deciphering of a number of rhetorical figures such as an inversion, reversal of characters and their re-arrangement. Reading is thus not a matter of following a single line of text, for here it can in fact be recognised by any permutation of its letters. The calligraphic line requires to be *spelled*, to be re-articulated according to calligraphic requirements... the text is presented first, then withdrawn, like musical variations on a theme. The effect of calligraphy is to disturb the course of the text. It emanates from language and returns to it, coming and going, as it were, at one remove from it. The mind takes pleasure in this paradoxical approach to the written line... one reads only what one *already knows*. But perhaps this is the principle behind all imaginative language in its written form... meaning is a sort of optical illusion, skimming across a celestial prism. Calligraphy alters the lighting effects.... Removing preconceptions and reiterations from the linguistic base and highlighting its symbolism' (Khatibi and Sijelmass 1999/2004, p.90-1).

### Ambiguity

'Because I have learned the relativity of cultural meanings on my skin, I can never take a set of meanings as final.'  
(Hoffman 1989/1991, p.275)

'... when she wanted to explain the concept of ambiguity in a novel, she always used her chair trick. In the next session, I started the class by picking up a chair and placing it in front of me. What do you see I asked the class. A chair. I then placed the chair upside down. Now what do you see? Still a chair. Then I straightened the chair and asked a few students to stand in different places around the room, and asked those both standing and those sitting to describe the same chair'.  
(Nafisi 2004, p. 198-9).

### Misunderstandings

'nevertheless, Lizzy and I set out to understand each other with a will – and we run into misunderstandings with the rude surprise of rams butting into each other in the middle of a narrow bridge'. (Hoffman 1989/1991, p.175)

## Appendix F

### Interpretation

'[The author's grandmother] resented the fact that her veil, which to her was a symbol of her sacred relationship to God, had now become an instrument of power, turning the women who wore them into political signs and symbols.'

(Al-Farisi 2004, p. 102)

### Translation

' In order to transport a single word without distortion, one would have to transport the entire language around it... In order to translate a language, or a text, without changing its meaning, one would have to transport its audience as well'

(Hoffman 1991/1994, p.272-3)

## Appendix G

### Democracy

'I've learned that in a democratic educational system, in a democratic ideology of reading, I am never made to feel that I'm an outsider poaching on others' property. In this country of learning, I'm welcomed on equal terms, as it's through the democratising power of literature that I begin to feel at home in America, even before I understand the literature or America, or the relationship between them, very well'.  
(Hoffman 1989/1994, p.183-4).

### Fun

'...*upsilamba* was one of Nabokov's fanciful creations... I said I associated *upsilamba* with the impossible joy of a suspended leap. Yassi... cried out that she always thought it could be the name of a dance – you know, "C'mon, baby, do the Upsilamba with me"... Manna suggested that *upsilamba* evoked the image of a small silver fish leaping in and out of a moonlit lake... For Azin, it was a sound, a melody. Mahshid described an image of three girls jumping rope and shouting "Upsilamba!" with each leap. For Sanaz, the word was a small African boy's secret magical name. Mitra wasn't sure why the word reminded her of the paradox of a blissful sigh. And to Nassrin it was the magic code that opened the door to a secret cave filled with treasures... [that word] became the code word that opened the secret cave of remembrance (Nafisi 2004, p.21).

Translation by Frank Sewell

Sic Transit

...

We're thatch-roofed

And bungalow mod-conned;

We're Marilyn Monroed

And Poor Old Womaned;

...

We're salmon-shortaged

And microwaifish;

We're Old Wives Taled

And satellite-dished;

...

We're traditional welled

And CD walkmaned;

We're cross-bordered

And station wagoned;

...

We're horsepowered

And Vauxhall Cavaliered;

We're local gossiped

And search engineered;

...

We're barmbracked

And pina colada'd,

We're cheesecaked

And tossed salad;

...

We're set danced

And hockey pokeyed

We're sean nós-ed

And karakoe'd.

...

Oh, we're weaving our futures from our past,

McGeeing our homespun wraps,

Levi-ing our kacks with King Billy's flax<sup>31</sup>

Oh, we're weaving our futures from our past.

'I love words insofar as they correspond to the

CATHAL O' SEARCAIGH

Trasnú

...

Tá muid teach ceanntuách

Agus bungaló *mod conach*;

Tá muid seanbhean bhotach

Agus Marilyn Monroeach;

Tá muid scadán gortach

agus *takeaway microwaveach*;

Tá muid seanscéal báinéach

agus *scoopscéal Sky-ach*;

Tá muid turas an tobaireach

agus *rock'n roll walkmanach*;

Tá muid dún daingeanach

agus *mobile homeach*;

Tá muid carr capallach

agus Vauxhall Cavalier-each;

Tá muid béadán baileach

agus *porn internetach*;

Tá muid bairín breacach

agus *pina colada cheesecakeach*;

Tá muid rince seiteach

agus hócaí pócaí cairiúcaíach.

Tá muid ag fí ár dtodhchaí as ár ndúchas;

ag magee-áil ár mbréidín brocach buí,

ag Levi-áil ár mbrístí de chorda an rí,

Ó, tá muid ag fí ár dtodhchaí as ár ndúchas.

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(Joyce

We're set danced

And hockey pokeyed

We're sean nós-ed

And karakoe'd.

Oh, we're weaving our futures from our past,

McGeeing our homespun wraps,

Levi-ing our kacks with King Billy's flax<sup>31</sup>

Oh, we're weaving our futures from our past.

**Amin Maalouf**

A propos des êtres portant des appartenances multiples:

... ils ont un rôle à jouer pour tisser des liens, dissiper des malentendus, raisonner les uns, tempérer les autres, aplanir, raccommoder... Ils ont pour vocation d'être des traits d'union, des passerelles, des médiateurs entre les diverses communautés, les diverses cultures. Et c'est justement pour cela que leur dilemme est lourd de signification; si ces personnes elles-mêmes ne peuvent assumer leurs appartenances multiples, si elles sont constamment mises en demeure de choisir leur camp, sommées de réintégrer les rangs de leur tribu, alors nous sommes en droit de nous inquiéter sur le fonctionnement du monde.

(Maalouf 1998, p.11)



Rachel Parry

*...he gave his wife a pair of beautiful*  
2003 bronze, copper, silver and fur

*I make things that symbolically denote a special act, rite of passage, or shared human experience. My choice and use of materials are intrinsic to the work. Often the work is about my life and my friends' lives, but I also use imagery from stories, especially mythology and other 'teaching' stories, which have potent universal themes.*

**Hoffman**

' Human beings don't only search for meanings, they are themselves units of meaning, but we can mean something only within the fabric of larger significations'  
(Hoffman 1989/1994, p. 279).

**Vygotsky**

'The word is a thing in our consciousness, as Ludwig Feuerbach put it, that is absolutely impossible for one person, but that becomes a reality for two. The word is a direct expression of the historical nature of human consciousness. Consciousness is reflected in a word as the sun in a drop of water. A word relates to consciousness as a living cell to a whole organism, as an atom relates to the universe. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness.'  
(Vygotsky 1986, p. 256)

## Pluricultural and plurilingual musical expressions

Debussy's *Estampes japonaises*

Yo Yo Ma and Bobby Mc Ferrin *Hush*

Chemical Brothers *Galvanize*

Radio Teleifís Eireann's production of *The Raw Bar* shows the numerous influences which are currently shaping Irish traditional music. The programme even tells of how American tap dancing has its roots in African rhythms and Irish dancing...

### Bibliography

All the pictures featuring in this unit were taken from the *C<sup>2</sup> catalogue, Contemporary Art from Cork, Cork 2005*, European Capital of Culture 2005. Special thanks to the artists who gave permission to reproduce their images and to The Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, Ireland.

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