

NAVIGATING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE

In an era of increasing ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity within nations, the capacity to interact positively with diverse cultural, ethnic and religious groups is essential for creating inclusive and cohesive multicultural societies (UNESCO, 2013). This research cluster brings together scholars from the [Monash Intercultural Lab](#), Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting Studies to foster interdisciplinary work that promotes mutual understanding in culturally diverse societies. It encompasses four focus areas:

1. LANGUAGE ECOLOGIES AND INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS

The mediation of difference is a highly complex social process. This research stream explores the quality and character of social and creative practices structuring transcultural and translanguaging encounters and interactions. Through the transversal analytic lenses of the products, practices, perspectives and narratives of diversity, we investigate the mediation and translation of linguistic and cultural differences in micro-, meso- and macro-level constellations. We draw on three concepts: translation as a category of social action; transculturation as a process to depict the epistemological dynamics of cultural transfers and flows; and language ecology as a research field that embraces linguistic contact and sociocultural context. This interdisciplinary approach helps to overcome a normatively charged understanding of diversity and avoids essentialising diversity. Instead, from the perspective of intercultural and translation studies, diversity can be understood as the outcome of a continuous process of negotiation and mediation whereby power relations and modes of social action construct potential differences into socially effective markers within specific socially, culturally, and politically constructed physical and symbolic spaces that change over time. Central to language ecology is [the interplay between the distinctive features of languages and the surrounding environment that shapes speakers and their Community](#); this includes contact with other languages in multilingual speech communities, and the social, cultural, and political forces that prompt change, differentiation and the loss of minority languages. Findings in these areas have the potential to open new horizons for the political and public debates about immigration, integration and the [role language and culture plays in fostering inclusion in \(super\)diverse societies](#).

2. DIGITAL DISCOURSES

With online spaces growing more important and increasingly blurring with offline spaces, studying language online and across offline and online spaces can contribute to the study of multilingualism, diversity and inclusion more generally. Whilst the history of linguistic research on digital discourse goes back to the 1990s, Covid-19 has reiterated the importance of understanding the way social actors integrate their use of language together with other modalities to participate in all areas of social life. In an increasingly interconnected and superdiverse world, participatory digital research with transnational and transcultural communities provides an essential entry point into the complexity of contemporary multilingual communities and networks, and fosters the civic participation of migrants in artistic, cultural and educational projects that promote social cohesion. Examples of current research activities include the [Youth in the City](#) project and research on digital literacies amongst migrants and refugees in Melbourne.

3. EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

The research in this stream focuses on developing teaching and learning strategies that prepare students to navigate differences across cultures. We use the term 'culture' broadly, to encompass linguistic and national differences, and beyond this, more subtle manifestations of culture, such as interdisciplinarity, and workplace culture. Our research brings together a combination of immersive, experiential learning, and theory. It is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on ideas from literary theory, translation and intercultural studies, global studies. Examples of current cross-institutional and transdisciplinary research activities in this field are the two funded Monash Warwick Alliance Education projects: Developing Intercultural Competence using a 3-stage approach, and [Internationalisation of the student learning experience](#).

4. MOBILITY, TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

Research in this stream explores issues relating to mobility, identity, and translation from a variety of literary, cultural, linguistic, sociological, and historical perspectives. Current projects include the role of translation in supporting cultural diplomacy. Studying [the reception of translated literature](#) reveals the extent to which audiences are implicated in processes of meaning-making; processes that are closely associated with the articulation of identity. Other ongoing projects investigate the role of migrant transcultural creative practices in fostering social inclusion; such as the [My Place, My Story](#) initiative, exploring emergent social values and practices of second-generation migrants in multicultural urban spaces, and research on Unequal Englishes amongst Victorian students from rural and urban schools exposed to different kinds of linguistic and ethnic diversity.

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