

Institution: University of Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 26) Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: From National to Transnational: Transforming the Discipline of Modern Languages and the Study of Cultures		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005 - 2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Charles Burdett	Professor of Italian	09/1997 - 08/2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Professor Burdett's research has played a significant role in pioneering a new conception of modern languages. His research places transnational flows of language, people, and culture at the centre of modern languages, providing a common disciplinary framework for a field traditionally delimited by national borders and characterised by fragmentation. Burdett's research has played an important role in: a) providing a blueprint for curriculum design in modern languages, seen in the transnational book series by Liverpool University Press; b) informing modern language policy and debate, leading to the largest investment in modern languages research from a major UK research council; c) enhancing public understanding of language, culture, and identity through museum collaborations and workshops; d) inspiring and coproducing new forms of artistic expression in relation to language and culture; and e) challenging discourses of populist nationalism and monolingual bias.

2. Underpinning research

The field of modern languages is historically fragmented, with disparate methodologies, an artificial separation between language and culture, and divisions between different language areas. Through his research, Burdett has critiqued the traditional conception of modern languages, revealing its roots in a Herderian paradigm of romantic nationalism. In place of this model, Burdett and members of the *Transnationalizing Modern Languages* (TML) project re-envisioned modern languages as 'an expert mode of enquiry whose founding research question is how languages and cultures operate and interact across diverse axes of connection, which may flex according to historical, geographical, economic, political or cultural conditions' [3.5]. This vision has not only transformed modern languages as a field, but also proposes a fresh way of thinking about language, identity, and culture in a post-national age.

In 2007, Burdett first developed his contribution to the transnational paradigm in his work on travel writing [3.1], especially in the context of Italian colonialism in North and East Africa and its legacy [3.2, 3.3, 3.6], and the representation of Islam in Italian literature and culture [3.4]. In this context, Burdett worked on a framework for modern languages attuned to legacies of colonialism, to practices of human mobility and to modes of cultural exchange, showing how Italian language, culture, and identity was reforged at national and imperial boundaries. This approach was an essential part of the rethinking of modern languages as a whole in the *Transnationalizing Modern Languages* (TML) project. Burdett was PI on this GBP1.8 million AHRC-funded project (2014-17), which brought together an international team of researchers and practitioners, including Jenny Burns (Warwick), Derek Duncan (St Andrews), Loredana Polezzi (Cardiff) and Margaret Hills de Zarate (QMU). The project took Italian studies as a case study for a transnational approach to modern languages. This research revealed the interactions that have defined shifting notions of Italianness over the last 150 years, within and beyond the borders of Italy [3.5, 3.6, 3.7].

Impact case study (REF3)

The TML model places language at the heart of enquiry but moves away from notions of an ideal native speaker, instead acknowledging multilingualism and translanguaging. It insists on the importance of spatiality and temporality but refuses to be bounded by political borders or national histories. It recognises the agency and subjectivity of individuals, emphasizing the performativity of national (and other) identities [3.7]. These fundamentals underpin the Liverpool University Press book series, *Transnational Modern Languages*, which so far includes volumes on the transnational in German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish Studies (with a volume on French Studies due for release in June 2021).

The success of the TML project led to two further AHRC awards: A Global Challenges Research Fund grant that allowed the team to refine the TML model in collaboration with Namibian partners to explore the impact of multilingualism and multilingual education there; and funding in support of a TML exhibition at cultural institutes in the US, Australia, and Ethiopia.

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Burdett C (2007), *Journeys Through Fascism: Italian Travel Writing Between the Wars*, Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books [Issued in paperback in 2010]
www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qcjgg
- 3.2 Burdett C (2010). Italian Fascism, Messianic Eschatology and the Representation of Libya, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11.1, pp.3-27
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14690764.2010.499664>
- 3.3 Burdett C (2011). Nomos, Identity and Otherness: Ciro Poggiali's *Diario AOI* and the Representation of the Italian Colonial World, *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 79, pp.329-349 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246211000109>
- 3.4 Burdett C (2016), *Italy, Islam and the Islamic World: Representations and Reflections from 9/11 to the Arab Uprisings*, Italian Modernities, ed. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- 3.5 Burdett C (2016). 'Let's talk about wider cultural dialogue', *Times Higher Education Supplement* <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/comment/lets-talk-about-wider-cultural-dialogue>
- 3.6 Burdett C (2018). Transnational Time: Reading Post-War Representations of the Italian Presence in East Africa, *Italian Studies*, 73.3, pp. 274-288
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00751634.2018.1487108>
- 3.7 Burdett C (2018). Moving from a National to a Transnational Curriculum: The Case of Italian Studies, *Language, Society and Policy*, <http://www.meits.org/policy-papers/paper/moving-from-a-national-to-a-transnational-curriculum-the-case-of-italian-st>

Grant information

Burdett C (PI), [Italy and the Islamic World: Culture, Identity and Representation \(2001-2011\)](#), AHRC AH/I027355/1, 2012, GBP29,952

Burdett C (PI), [Transnationalizing Modern Languages: Mobility, Identity and Translation in Modern Italian Cultures](#), AHRC AH/L007061/1, 2014-2017, GBP1.49 million

Burdett C (PI), [TML: Global Challenges](#), AHRC AH/P00900X/1, 2016-2017, GBP187,526

Burdett C (PI), [TML: Exhibitions for Impact](#), AHRC AH/P013848/1, 2017, GBP23,863

4. Details of the impact

Since 2014, Burdett's research on Italy and the Islamic World [3.4] and the *Transnationalizing Modern Languages* (TML) project have impacted educational institutions, UK research funding bodies, cultural institutions, artists and the wider public.

A. Shaped curriculum design in modern languages within secondary and tertiary education in the UK and internationally

The TML project offers a more robust methodological basis for modern languages, providing a clearer disciplinary identity and tightening the connections between language and culture teaching. In response to the TML project, Modern Language departments across the world have adapted their curriculum to foreground the transnational. For example:

Higher Education

- Cardiff University, UK: 'We revised our curriculum in 2018 and shifted the focus so that our programmes would concentrate on the 'transnational'. Instead of thinking about languages as something specific to a country or region, transnational teaching looks at languages and cultures and how they sit in the wider world. Our new curriculum has been cited as innovative best practice in the sector by the University Council of Modern Languages' [5.2].
- Monash University, Australia: '[the TML project] has influenced my approach to the current internal review of the European Languages offering at Monash, in particular through a stronger focus on broader European and global perspectives, postcolonial issues, and multilingualism; as well as a stronger attention on how global challenges and changes are reflected in specific local communities' – Senior Lecturer in Italian Studies and Chair of a review into European Languages curricula [5.2].
- California State University, US: 'In my own case, since being involved in the project, attending conferences where the team presented their ideas and reading about them, I have substantially revised my syllabi. For example, my Italian Women Writers class this semester includes women writers from across language traditions as it seeks to underscore the issues that women shared over time and space. I have also included women from the Italian diaspora, or women closely involved in Italian history, such as the Brazilian, Anita Garibaldi, who fought alongside her husband in Latin American revolutions as well as in Italy' – Director of the Clorinda Donato Center for Global Romance Languages and Translation Studies [5.2].

One major outcome of the TML project is the *Transnational Modern Languages* book series published with Liverpool University Press (LUP) [5.1]. The series, underpinned by TML research, explores the transnational approach in different language areas (five have been published already: German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish; French is forthcoming in 2021). Each volume offers a reconceptualisation of that particular field in the light of the transnational approach through a series of case studies. These are crossover volumes: they include new academic research but are also designed to be accessible to undergraduate students, modelling the possibilities of the transnational approach as a distinctive framework for modern languages. The series will be anchored by a *Handbook* (forthcoming 2021), which offers a conceptual vocabulary for modern languages in the light of the transnational turn. The series has sold 425 copies (hardback, paperback and e-sales) up to 31 December 2020 [5.1].

- Anonymous peer review of *Transnational Italian Studies*: 'A bold, needed step forward in rethinking Italian Studies... There is no other volume like this, and it is going to have a profound impact in the teaching of Italian Studies' [5.1]
- Anonymous peer review of *Transnational Russian Studies*: 'The volume is brilliantly conceived and the quality of the chapters is universally high... a very sophisticated and ... very accessible discussion of the issues involved with the... transnational' [5.1]
- LUP states that the series is one of the most ambitious attempts to move the discipline forward, with promising sales in the UK and the US [5.1].

Secondary level:

- The TML team worked with teachers and pupils at Castlebrae Community High School and Drummond Community High School in Edinburgh. Pupils investigated the transnational connections between language, culture, and heritage in their own families and local area, and produced artistic projects showcasing these connections. The project embedded awareness of language and cultural identity in a cross-curricular setting beyond the modern languages classroom [5.3].

Beyond modern languages:

- The TML team collaborated with the Phoenix Project at Cardiff University and the University of Namibia (UNAM), promoting awareness of multilingualism and translingual practices in education and the media in Namibia. Both a Senior Lecturer and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNAM report that the project resulted in the creation of 'resources for schools and the medical sector' as well as the development of 'intensive awareness-raising instruction on working and teaching in multilingual environments for medical professionals'. The work carried out by TML on the centrality of translation in

multilingual contexts and on its links with forms of social and geographic mobility was mobilised to create resources for schools and the medical sector. Training aimed at health professionals will be embedded into Higher Education curricula as well as Continuing Professional Development, via the training programme run by UNAM across Namibia's regional centres [5.4].

B. Contributed to and informed modern language policy and debate in the UK and beyond

It is widely recognised that the UK suffers from a shortage of language skills, and this shortage has negative consequences for trade and the economy, as well as cultural understanding. Enrolments in modern languages have fallen sharply, both at A Level, and in Higher Education. TML is, in part, a response to these trends, and has helped spearhead initiatives to invigorate modern languages across the UK and beyond. The TML Policy Report [5.5], '*Transnationalizing Modern Languages: Reframing Language Education for a Global Future*' was launched at the British Academy (BA) in November 2018 and subsequently presented to MPs by the AHRC Lead in Modern Languages. It has subsequently influenced modern language policies and debates in the UK and internationally:

- Lead Fellow of Languages at BA: '[TML] informed the vision of how languages should operate in UK society' – 'Languages in the UK' Policy Framework, March 2019 [5.6]
- TML played a central role in the conceptualisation of the Salzburg Global Seminar's 'Statement for a Multilingual World', disseminated internationally in 40 languages in 2018, and supported by the British Council, Microsoft, and UNESCO among others [5.7]. For example, the statement's Call To Action reads 'We call on [stakeholders] to help: Develop language policies, practices and technologies that support cohesive and dynamic societies with positive attitudes to multilingualism and plurilingualism.' In 2020, the statement was reproduced by UNESCO in their '*Approaches to Language in Education for Migrants and Refugees in the Asia-Pacific Region*' policy report [5.7]
- TML influenced and is cited in 'Towards a National Languages Strategy: Education and Skills' [5.6], co-authored by the BA, AHRC, Association of School and College Leaders, the British Council and Universities UK (July 2020).

TML has also influenced the UK funding body's investment in modern languages research:

- TML inspired AHRC's GBP16 million Open World Research Initiative (OWRI). In 2015, AHRC's Director of Research stated that the TML project 'played a significant role in the development of thinking around [OWRI]... a key investment by AHRC in seeking to sustain the UK's research capabilities in modern languages.' The OWRI initiative energised modern languages research, funding four major research projects that have transformed attitudes towards languages and language-learning in the UK, including policy impacts in areas as diverse as education, arts policy, and security [5.8].

C. Enhanced public understanding of transnationalism and cultural identities through museum collaborations and workshops

In 2016, the TML team collaborated with artists and curators to create the exhibition '*Beyond Borders: Transnational Italy*'. The exhibition positioned Italy and Italian culture in a transnational perspective, providing audiences with new ways to think about language, culture, and national identity more broadly.

- The exhibition appeared at the British School at Rome (Oct-Nov 2016) and the Italian Cultural Institute in London (Dec 16-Jan 17).
- Smaller exhibitions appeared at the Calandra Institute, New York (March 2018), the Italian Museum, Melbourne (May 2017), and the Italian Cultural Institute, Addis Ababa (Oct 2017).
- One attendee stated that 'as a speaker of Italian, and learner of Spanish and Portuguese, I've struggled to keep these in separate containers in my mind. Now I will embrace the connections without worrying about language interference' [5.9].

TML engaged with local communities in the UK, Argentina, Australia, and Italy, focusing on how migration is experienced and on its legacy for subsequent generations. TML held workshops in

the West Midlands (2015-16) on multilingual creative writing, engaging with community languages including Arabic, Croatian, Italian, Somali, and Yoruba [5.9].

D. Inspired and coproduced new forms of artistic expression

TML highlighted how creative work encourages greater awareness of the linguistic and cultural practices which are embedded in everyday life, revealing how human identities and subjectivities are increasingly bound up with language and culture. TML collaborated with creative practitioners through workshops and exhibitions [5.9], inspiring new forms of artistic expression.

- One poet wrote: “working together with TML for the last three years [2014-2017] is a constant growing experience for me as a writer in a multilingual environment” [5.10]
- Luci Callipari-Marcuzzo, a multidisciplinary artist in Australia created a new live-art performance for the *Beyond Borders* exhibition. For Luci, this was a springboard to global audiences and further commissions, including the *Italianità: Artists of the Italian Diaspora Reflect on History and Identity* exhibition, Italian American Museum, Los Angeles [5.10]
- Mario Badagliacca, a photographer and TML artist-in-residence, received several invitations following his participation in the exhibitions, including Columbus University, Ohio, the University of Colorado, and a solo exhibition at Johns Hopkins Hall (2017). LUP has commissioned a photographic book, *Italy is Out* (forthcoming 2021) [5.10].

E. Challenging populist nationalism and monolingual bias

The TML project coincided with, on the one hand, a moment of increased globalisation and mobility, and, on the other, a counter-current of insular nationalism, signalled in the UK by Brexit, and elsewhere by the rise of populist leaders with nationalist platforms (e.g., Trump in the US; Orbán in Hungary). The transnational paradigm provides an alternative both to the liberal internationalism of the 1990s, which dismissed the national altogether, and to the insularity of the post-2008 recession age, which would build walls between peoples. Ultimately, TML alters our understanding of the relationship between language, nation, and culture, putting paid to the populist vision of countries as discrete, ethnonational entities, a vision that modern languages have sometimes unwittingly served. In its place, TML emphasises how language, culture and people are forever transgressing national borders. Dethroning monolingualism and monoculturalism, TML shows how human beings create culture and forge identities across linguistic, cultural, and national borders. This vision is at the heart of all TML activity: it is laid out in the book series [5.1], it informs the approach to policy [5.5-5.7] and it is brought to life through educational activity [5.2, 5.3] and creative practice [5.9, 5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 [Transnational Modern Languages book series site](#) [Accessed 24/2/21]; sales Jan-Dec 2020; peer review feedback (2019); letter of support, LUP (April 2020)
- 5.2 Supporting statements from Cardiff University, Monash University, California State University (2020); [Cardiff University Undergraduate Degree Programmes](#) (see p.6)
- 5.3 [TML: Reshaping the Discipline for the 21st Century event at The British Academy](#) (2016), the morning session audio introduces the teachers at 20:00 [Accessed 29/01/21]
- 5.4 Supporting statement from the University of Namibia (Extract from *Translating Cultures Theme Final Report*, University of Liverpool and AHRC, September 2019)
- 5.5 University of Bristol TML Policy Report (2018)
- 5.6 British Academy (BA) supporting statement, Lead Fellow of Languages (2019); BA policy document (2019), [Languages in the UK: A call for action](#) [Accessed 29/01/21]; BA policy document (2020), [Towards a National Languages Strategy](#) [Accessed 29/01/21]
- 5.7 Salzburg Global Seminar *Statement for a Multilingual World* policy document (2018); Email on UNESCO policy report (July 2020)
- 5.8 Supporting statement from AHRC Director of Research (2015); UKRI webpage: [How OWRI Influences Policymakers](#) [Accessed 29/01/21]
- 5.9 TML webpage: [Beyond Borders: Transnational Italy Exhibition](#) [Accessed 29/01/21]; Exhibition visitor feedback (2016-2017); [TML Events and Workshops](#) [Accessed 29/01/21]
- 5.10 Artists' feedback (2017-2018); [Italy is Out Artistic Project](#) [Accessed 29/01/21]