

Institution: King's College London		
Unit of Assessment: 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: Language Acts and Worldmaking		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000–2020		
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:
Catherine Boyle	Professor of Latin American Cultural Studies	From 1990
AbdoolKarim Vakil	Lecturer in Portuguese History	From 1992
Julian Weiss	Professor of Medieval and Early Modern Spanish Literature	From 2001
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Funded as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) Open World Research Initiative (OWRI), Language Acts and Worldmaking (2016–2020) responds to the perceived crisis in modern languages education, the symptoms of which are falling enrolments, narrowly utilitarian attitudes, and disconnection between educational and public sectors and cultural communities. Within the Language Acts consortium (King's, Queen Mary University of London, Westminster and the Open University) and the national OWRI project as a whole, King's research made a distinctive contribution. We demonstrated language's socially transformative and creative potential in culturally diverse modern Britain by: (a) developing an innovative and inclusive global curriculum for language teaching in a 21st-century multicultural university; (b) building and funding new links between previously disconnected agents and audiences, thereby influencing cultural programming and broadening repertoires; and (c) raising public awareness and informing policymaking around Islamophobia. Our beneficiaries have been educators, creative practitioners, local communities and policy groups.

2. Underpinning research

Worldmaking: the materialities of language

Our research into Spanish-language theatre and into the global legacies of Iberian cultures has decentred traditional conceptions of Modern Languages as a discipline routinely structured around national literatures and languages, and altered narrowly instrumentalist perceptions of language study. Eschewing nation-framed disciplinary perspectives, we use Iberian Studies as a workshop for comparative, transnational research that emphasises diasporic identities, historical postcolonial thinking, modern decolonial movements and the entangled histories of Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities. The research is unique to the two King's-led strands of the collaborative AHRC-funded Language Acts and Worldmaking project: Strand 1, Translation Acts (CI, Catherine Boyle [PI for whole project]), and Strand 2, Travelling Concepts (Chief Investigator Julian Weiss, AbdoolKarim Vakil). Although operating on different axes – with Strand 1 centring on socially situated translation and performance, and Strand 2 on the history and modern legacies of Jewish and Muslim Iberia – the strands intersect in their conceptual premises and methodological approaches. Both are rooted in a materialist approach to language as a worldmaking force, and in a shared exploration of what happens when ideas, values and beliefs move through languages and communities, in different times and places, linking local identities to different visions of 'the world', revealing the 'global' to always be contingent, never absolute. Shared methodologies emerge out of the synergy between research, public engagement, teaching practice and innovative curriculum design. Research findings intersect in showing, through a range of case studies, how language generates across social identities and subjectivities a sense of place, a sense of belonging and a sense of being – which simultaneously empowers and limits.

Strand 1: Translation Acts: performing worldmaking (Boyle)

Translation Acts grew organically from the earlier AHRC-funded Out of the Wings [1]. This project (2008–12) used practice-based research with theatre practitioners to develop new approaches to the theory and practice of translation for the stage, while also dismantling previously entrenched distinctions between academic research and theatre practice. Boyle's subsequent research builds on this work on the socially situated nature of translation and performance to demonstrate how words move dynamically through individuals and communities and across time and space, to create new worlds on stage. 'A feminist translates' [2] reflects on teaching and translation as performative acts that bring Spanish Golden Age plays to life while also mobilising feminist ways of being in the world. Boyle has continued to develop the Out of the Wings database of translations and critical resources [1] throughout the assessment period, and it underpins impact by posing fundamental questions about authorship and ownership that are germane to the work of theatre practitioners, educators and local communities: whose right is it to read, interpret and retell the stories and histories that make our worlds? And how can theatre practitioners expand their repertoires, extend their networks and make their productions more meaningful for local audiences, especially from the Latin American diaspora?

Strand 2: Travelling Concepts: words in action (Weiss, Vakil)

The four publications of Weiss and Vakil exemplify the objectives and distinctiveness of the Travelling Concepts strand. Weiss is the first to examine how the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus – one of the most influential historians of all time – was read by Christians, Jews and crypto-Jews within the Iberian empires from 1492 onwards [3, 4]. Weiss's findings have spurred changes in curriculum design and helped artists and community-based researchers (Caroline Bergvall, Carlos Yebra López, see [C.1]) by opening new perspectives on the ways in which Christian Spain negotiated its ambiguous relationship with its Jewish past and illustrated how exiled Sephardic (= Iberian) Jews and crypto-Jews redefined both their relationship to Spain and Portugal and their own diasporic Jewish identity. Grounded in the new field of Critical Muslim Studies, Vakil's book [5] and article [6] share with Weiss's research a direct engagement with questions of race, ethnicity, migration and diaspora, as well as an impact on curriculum design. The article [6] underpins decolonisation initiatives in established curricula (see [A]) by innovatively foregrounding the linguistic polyphony of Lusophone rap and other popular art forms in its postcolonial critique of Eurocentric constructions of the 'Portuguese World'. The book [5], including Vakil's two contributions, has in turn enriched policy debate over the definition and significance of Islamophobia at government level (see [D]) by reorienting understandings of Islamophobia beyond a commonplace focus on the west towards a global perspective, and arguing for the continuing relevance and critical purchase of Islamophobia in struggles for justice.

3. References to the research**Funded research**

1. 'Out of the Wings' [, AHRC-funded project]. (www.outofthewings.org), 'Spanish and Spanish American Theatre in Translation. A Virtual Environment for Research and Practice, 2008–2012, providing Spanish-language plays in context for English-speaking practitioners and researchers.

Peer-reviewed outputs

2. Boyle, C. (2015). A feminist translates. *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 67(1), 146–166.
3. Weiss, J. (2016). Flavius Josephus, 1492. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 23, 180–195.
4. Weiss, J. (2019). La muerte y (re)nacimiento del autor: Flavio Josefo, 1492–1687. In P. Ruiz Perez (Ed.). *Autor en construcción: Sujeto e institución literaria en la modernidad hispánica (siglos XVI-XIX)*. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, pp.38–70.
5. Vakil, A. & Sayyid, S. (2010). *Thinking Through Islamophobia*. London: Hurst/New York: Columbia University. Vakil's chapters: Is the Islam in Islamophobia the Same as the Islam in Anti-Islam; or, When is it Islamophobia Time? (pp.23–43); Who's Afraid of Islamophobia? (pp.271–278).
6. Vakil, A. (2012). Mundo Pretuguês: Colonial and Postcolonial Diasporic Dis/articulations. In M. Cahen and E. Morier-Genoud (Eds.), *Imperial Migrations: Colonial Communities and Diaspora in the Portuguese World*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan, pp.286–296.

Indicators of quality

Output 1: Major AHRC grant; outputs 2–6 peer-reviewed; outputs 3–4 basis for award of Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2020–22).

4. Details of the impact**1. Transforming modern languages into a global curriculum for a multicultural university**

As part of its OWRI legacy objectives, the AHRC challenged researchers to promote Modern Languages curriculum change by broadening the Europe-centric outlook and by promoting the social, political and cultural power of language. Unlike other OWRI projects, the university consortium that comprised Language Acts and Worldmaking situated its language research within a specific, yet broad and diverse, geo-cultural terrain: the Iberian world and its contact zones, spanning Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, from the Middle Ages to the present. Within our consortium, King's-led research showed that this Iberian terrain can be understood only by adopting a polycentric approach that avoids centre/periphery models and diffusionist narratives of global expansion still dominant in English and other Modern Languages fields. By interweaving Hispanic and Lusophone histories and cultures, by highlighting the present legacies of Iberia's Jewish and Muslim pasts (Weiss, Vakil), by foregrounding Latin-American diasporic and transatlantic identities (Boyle), we incorporated previously marginalised minority voices and helped undergraduates understand the dynamics of cultural exchange, historical and contemporary. We did this by restructuring our undergraduate programmes, previously organised by independent period and regional pathways, into a more interlinked approach to the Iberian world. We created an innovative first-year core module, Global Iberias, taken by up to 90 students each year in all programmes with a Spanish/Portuguese element. Spanning the multiple languages, geographies, ethnicities, races and religions of the historical Iberian worlds, it changed the agenda for research-led teaching of Modern Languages, as well as other disciplines, within King's and beyond. *"It has been a huge inspiration for the work of King's Decolonizing Working Group. By challenging the assumptions of a monolingual Anglophone curriculum and by emphasising the global inter-connectedness of European development, cultures and languages, Global Iberias has inspired the student-led revision of modules in the department of European and International Studies"* (Lucia Pradella, Department of European and International Studies, King's [A.1]). Within the Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy, it also *"inspired inter-departmental work on the making of the world economy"* (Pradella). The influence has also reached beyond King's. Via local, national and international staff/student workshops, it has impacted curricular debates in Portugal and Lusophone Africa. In 2017, we hosted the first of two international workshops on Global Iberias: a textbook workshop, attended by 27 scholars from different disciplines within King's, Warwick, University College London, Queen Mary University of London, Bristol, Southampton, New York University, Lisbon and Coimbra. Our discussions of curricular change and pedagogic practice supported the new educational agendas of the University of Lisbon. Sérgio Campos Matos, from Lisbon's History Department, was impressed by the *"stimulating and innovative"* nature of our project, particularly its *"diversity of integrated perspectives"*, breaking down nationalist disciplinary frontiers [A.2]. In 2018, in partnership with University Development and Innovation-Africa, we hosted Global Iberias, Lusophone African Perspectives, and Partnerships in Teaching, Curriculum Development & Knowledge Exchange. This two-day workshop included researchers from 10 universities in the UK, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau and led to a new Lusophone African research network to share ideas about ways to incorporate into their curriculum Lusophone African cultures as a challenge to narratives and understandings of language and history. Nicolás Manuel (Department of English and Literature, Agostinho Neto University, Luanda) reported how Global Iberias provided an exemplary model for curricular change at his institution, integrating *"both indigenous and western epistemologies"*, and fostering interdisciplinary and international collaboration [A.3].

2. Expanding networks and repertoires of knowledge

Our research into the work that language does in the world has extended the reach of our networks by putting scholars, cultural practitioners, community groups and policymakers into creative dialogue. Translation Acts research on Latin American theatre [1, 2] had a transformative effect on two community theatres. Their members drew inspiration from the key insight into the interdependence between performance and translation, conceived as inseparable elements in a

collaborative creative process that helps participants find a voice that is at once local and ‘theirs’ and also ‘authored’ by broader cultural experiences that flow into and from the wider world. Research into the situatedness of translation/performance brought a deeper understanding of the manifold nature of ‘belonging’, which was complemented by our enrichment of community repertoires. Our financial support, networking opportunities, ideas and practice-based research inspired Global Voices Theatre to organise two festivals that allowed Global Arab Female Voices and Global Queer Voices to be heard. Across both events, Global Voices Theatre engaged with 11 new texts by international writers from 11 different countries, working with 10 directors, 18 performers and reached 112 audience members. Global Voices Theatre now forms a three-fold partnership between Language Acts and the Roundhouse Theatre. According to their artistic director, Lora Krasteva, our research and financial support gave them “*courage and confidence*” to develop their very first Arts Council application and “*provided us with new connections and networks*” [B.1]. Translation Acts also inspired the Untold Collectiv, a new collective of Latin American theatre practitioners who learned from our Barrio project at the Southwark Playhouse (2019). Barrio narrated the stories of the traders in the Elephant & Castle as it undergoes demolition, and the telling of this Latinx project in public influenced the Untold Collectiv’s curation of the Latin American season at The Actors Centre (January 2020), the UK’s leading organisation supporting actors throughout their professional careers [B.2]. Boyle’s feminist research agenda also impacted the Sin Fronteras Youth Group, which supports educational opportunities for Latin American women aged 14–21, as Translation Acts developed the Empowering Young Latin American Women project. This new partnership links our performance-based research with pedagogic practice, and, according to the coordinator Tamyra Bustamante, it “*offered LAYWAG the opportunity to access academic resources, knowledge and university experience which they seldom have the opportunity to experience due to structural barriers*” [B.3]. Our lectures enabled the young women “*to deconstruct the Eurocentric focused mainstream curriculum and explore the stories of female Latin American current and historical figures leading social and political change*” and to examine history in ways that were new to them and inspired their confidence and creativity.

Boyle’s research into translation for the stage [1, 2] was deemed “*invaluable*” by the partners of the new dramaturgy network Poor Connection / Conexión Inestable, a collaboration between Language Acts, the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), running since 2019 [B.4]. This ongoing collaborative project draws on our practice-based research into translation in performance. It led to one international drama festival (2020) and the design for a diploma in theatre translation at UBA. The online festival entailed writing and producing 30 new plays, translating 10 (from Spanish to English), and mentoring 30 emerging translators from over six different countries. It reached an international audience of over 500 and expanded the repertoire of performance translations. M. L. Ramos (Argentinian lead) states that the innovative methodology of Out of the Wings [1], which puts academics, translators, playwrights, actors and directors into creative dialogue, constituted a “*new conceptual model, enriching her perspective*” on dramaturgy across languages [B.4]. For J. R. Torillo (UNAM), Boyle’s methods of turning translation research into dramatic practice was transformative: her model of collaborative and reflective creativity changed her understanding of the process whereby words, written in one language, time and place, are translated into performed speech, uttered in another language, here and now. The focus on the present utterance enabled the original Covid-cancelled festival to be rethought as it moved online to become about the experience and representability of the crisis itself.

Translation Acts demonstrated how ‘performed language’ is vital to the survival and self-representation of minority language communities. Similarly, Weiss’s research on Sephardic diasporic identity and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) formed part of the public workshop Language Station: Transhistorical Translations (King’s, June 2019, [C.1]). This collaboration with the international writer/performer Caroline Bergvall featured poets, writers, academics and the Ladino singer Monica Acosta. This was the first time Bergvall had incorporated Judeo-Spanish into her work: she reports how Weiss helped to “*add new insights into the broader historical significance and contemporary value of Ladino in her creative work on Europe’s minority languages*” [C.1]. His research also helped singer Monica Acosta contextualise her own performances “*and her long-buried familial connection*” to Ladino culture. The live Facebook recording had over 1,100 views.

Ladino was also the grounds of our partnership with US scholars we funded in December 2019 – Saved by Digital: Ladino Communities of the XXIc (Senate House, University of London, [C.2]).

Impact case study (REF3)

The event assembled academics, Ladino speakers, and the commercial language app-maker uTalk to discuss how digital media could preserve the shrinking global community of Ladino speakers. C. Yebra López, the organiser, reports that he was inspired by our research on Sephardic and Islamic legacies showcased at the international conference *Al-Andalus in Motion* (co-organised by Travelling Concepts and the Scientific Studies Association, Istanbul 2018). We “*had a vast positive reach, significance and impact on my own research about Jewish and Muslim communities in (contemporary) Spain*”, because it “*enriched*” his understanding of diasporic identities, enabling him to place his community-based Ladino project in a broader historical context. The academic and public reach of his project is demonstrated by reports in the *Journal of Romance Studies*, the *Jewish Telegraph*, Radio Sefarad and uTalk’s webpage. The audiovisual material recorded in London received more than 5,000 visits on his social media platforms.

3. Shaping public perception and informing policy: Islamophobia

Vakil’s public interventions mobilised his research on Islamophobia [5, 6] to benefit schools, the broader public and government policymakers. Via his collaboration with social scientist S. Sayyid (University of Leeds), Vakil forged new links between Modern Languages research and Critical Muslim Studies, breaking down disciplinary barriers and entrenched hierarchies between the west and non-west. Besides academic fora his research was used in student summer schools (e.g. the Granada Critical Muslim Studies Summer School, 2018), and disseminated in public events such as *Understanding Islamophobia: A People’s Definition* (Palestine Expo, Olympia, London, 2019). The public reach of their research was extended by their podcast on the tenth anniversary of their book, *Thinking Through Islamophobia* [5], in light of current opposition to advancing public understanding of Islamophobia as a form of racism that targets Muslims. His co-authored appraisal of the Runnymede Trust’s ‘Reports of Islamophobia 1997-2017’ appeared in *ReOrient (Critical Muslim Studies)* and on the website of UC Berkeley’s Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project (29/11/2017; D.2), where it received over 5,000 hits. The broad reach of his research on Islamophobia is further evidenced by his contribution to the Runnymede Trust’s *Islamophobia A Challenge for Us All: 20 Year Anniversary Reflections*, organised at The Carriageworks, Leeds (09/11/2017) in collaboration with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and others).

Of particular note are Vakil’s insights into the distinction between Islamophobic and anti-Islamic discourse. The distinction shaped his intervention in policy debates. In 2018, Vakil and Sayyid formally submitted a proposed definition of Islamophobia to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (Definition of Islamophobia, APPG on British Muslims closed Meeting of Experts, 23.10.2018, D.1). The aim was to adopt “*a working definition of Islamophobia that can be widely accepted by Muslim communities, political parties, and the Government*”. Their proposal made a material contribution to the definition eventually adopted. In their letter of thanks, Anna Soubry MP and Wes Streeting MP wrote: “*Your contribution has been instrumental to the depth and scope of our deliberations. We have been aided in our examination of the many manifestations of Islamophobia and the various academic disciplines across which its study falls thanks to the rigorous quality of your research. We have been better informed about the state of current scholarship on the subject, in large part due to your valuable contribution to the inquiry. The final report of the APPG has cited your submission, and the primary research on which it is based, in numerous places.*”

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

A. Curriculum impact (programmes, blogs, testimonials): 1. The Decolonizing Project; 2. UDI-Africa; 3. Global Iberias Textbook Workshop.

B. Expanding networks and repertoires, Translation Acts (reports, testimonials): 1. Global Voices; 2. Untold Collectiv; 3. Sin Fronteras; 4. Poor Connection.

C. Expanding networks and repertoires, Travelling Concepts (web pages, report, testimonial, blog, event account, article): 1. Language Stations: Transhistorical Translations, Caroline Bergvall; 2. Saved by the Digital.

D. Shaping public perception and informing policy, Islamophobia (web pages, testimonial): 1. All Party Parliamentary Working Group; 2. UC Berkeley, Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project; 3. Network ReOrient Podcast (Sayyid & Vakil).