Inclusion, Diversity and Decolonisation in the Modern Language Curriculum

Christine Schallmoser
Senior Lecturer in German Language Education & Language Director
Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures & King's Language Centre

GUIDELINES
for Language
Modules

KING'S
College
LONDON

King's College London

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The following guidelines are based on the outcome of the project 'Inclusion, Diversity and Decolonisation in the Modern Language Curriculum', funded by King's Race Equity & Inclusive Education Fund.

The project examined the language curricula in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at King's through the lens of inclusion and decolonisation. To date, decolonising initiatives in our language programmes have been led by academics. By contrast, this project placed emphasis on student-staff collaboration and allowed our students to share their perspectives and influence future curriculum design in the department and beyond.

Student collaborators, employed as UG Research Assistants, helped develop interview questions. After training, they conducted qualitative interviews with current BA languages students or recent graduates exploring representation and inclusion in both course content and modes of assessment.

Between November 2022 and February 2023, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted and transcribed by our student collaborators. A qualitative text analysis based on Kuckartz (2013) was conducted and the most frequently emerging themes that are also relevant to language tutors beyond the department are presented in the following guidelines.

To promote student voice, the recommendations are represented by direct quotes from participants. Furthermore, links to useful resources and toolkits are provided alongside each recommendation. While some of the resources focus on teaching English as a second language, the ideas can be useful and transferred to teaching other languages.

AIM

For these guidelines to be used by all colleagues involved in language teaching, so as to make sure we "form a united front with regards to" decolonizing our curriculum and making it more inclusive by putting in "the extra effort". (Participant 7)

THANKS

Many thanks to our UG Research Assistants Georgia Botros, Isabelle Chen, Aarabi Ganendiran, Maya Orr and Barbara Teixeira, to all the students who shared their opinions, and to my supportive staff collaborators Dr Raquel Fernández-Sánchez, Dr Alexandra Lourenço Dias and Dr Soizick Solman.

1. INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN TEACHING DELIVERY

While there is clearly a wide range of areas for continued development and enhancements in language teaching, the most frequently mentioned recommendations by interview participants will be included below.
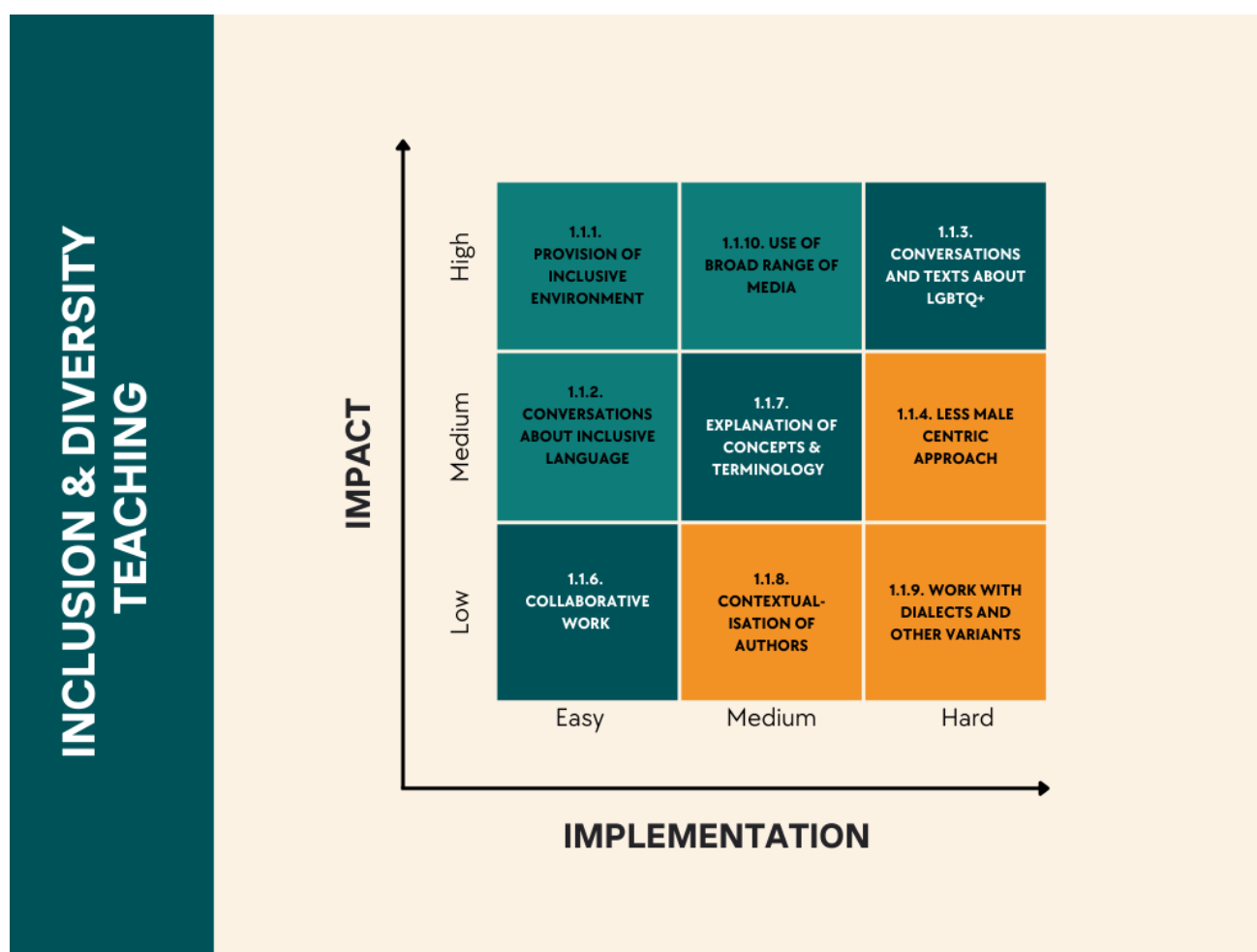
1.1. Provision of inclusive environment

"[T]he attitude and behavior of my module conveners, I think they've always been absolutely inclusive and absolutely respectful of any differences we might have; anyone with a learning disability felt comfortable in saying that and speaking about that […] so, I think that that's important so that we also go beyond the stigma that disability might be something bad that should be hidden from and one should be ashamed of." (Participant 11)

Inclusive Classrooms: How can we make our MFL classrooms and lessons more inclusive? (Oxford Education Blog)

How to create an inclusive classroom environment (Cambridge, World of better learning blog)

1.2. Conversations about inclusive language

"[W]e got into talking about how you would use the third gender pronoun, they/them, in French, because everything in the French language […] is gendered, and because it's also in France, it's a really new concept, so no one quite knows […], so we asked her [the tutor] and she kind of put aside our work for the day and like spent an hour on that and it was so wonderful because she kind of taught us about […] the way that they navigate gendered language, the problem with the political side of it and, and it was so lovely to hear because she kind of realised that that was more important in the moment, and we revisited the work we had to do later." (Participant 7)

Toolkit: Using inclusive language in education (UCL)

Pearson subject update: Gender-neutral language and inclusivity in the MFL classroom

1.3. Conversations and texts about LGBTQ+

"I remember this text that was written by a Muslim lesbian woman and the extract that we were supposed to translate […] talked about how, for example, to her the holding hands with her partner in the park might be unconceivable and so hard because of religious reasons and cultural ones and so she, kind of, thought of love and how love can be, can be seen and experienced differently because of different factors. So, this bit, like this extract, I think was maybe the most powerful that I remember of, if I think of my, of my educational experience within the […] language modules." (Participant 11)

Toolkit: Understanding LGBTQ+ Identity: A Toolkit for Educators (PBS LearningMedia)

Recognising and including LGBTQ+ identities in language teaching (UCL)

1.4. Conversations about feminism and less male centric approach

"[W]e also, there was a week where we were discussing, like, sort of feminism and equality of, like, genders and stuff because we were discussing the 'desaparecidos', the, the Argentinian dictatorship." (Participant 17)

Critical Feminist Pedagogy in English Language Education: An Action Research Project on the Implementation of Feminist Views in a German Secondary School (Granger & Gerlach, *tesol QUARTERLY*, 2023)

Implementing Feminist Language Pedagogy: Development of Students' Critical Consciousness and L2 Writing (Cannizzo, *Critical Language Pedagogy*, 2021)

Inclusion beyond English (Cameron, language: a feminist guide, blog)

1.5. Opportunities to bring own background into classroom

"I definitely liked when we had the session where everybody expressed their feelings about the topic, like I think it's just interesting to hear what other people from different cultures have to say […], like they might have been raised in different areas or like different methods so that's what I really appreciate when everybody is able to share their own perspective on the topic." (Participant 13)

Utilizing Students' Cultural Backgrounds to Enhance English [Language] Learning (EFL Café)

How to Connect ELLs' Background Knowledge to Content (Colorín colorado)

1.6. Collaborative work

"[W]hen we're doing that collaborative effort, that is the most beneficial part of my week, is when we're hearing all these different opinions and different voices and thus going 'Oh God, I hadn't thought of it like that because I don't, that's not my religion, I didn't know that element, I didn't know the meaning of that word.', whatever, so I just think it's so beneficial and I advocate it across the board really." (Participant 7)

How can I make my classroom more collaborative? (British Council, Teaching English)

Collaborative skills in language courses: how to support pupils? (Delforge, *CALL and professionalisation: short papers from EUROCALL 2021*)

Collaborative Writing as a Learning Exercise (Warwick, Digital Pedagogy Library)

1.7. Explanation of concepts and terminology

"[A]nd she [the teacher] made sure that everyone was on the same page […] and so I thought that was really brilliant because it kind of, you know, there's this kind of assumption in society that everyone knows about trans rights and everyone, particularly if you go to university because […] you're surrounded by so many different people, so everyone is on the same page, but that's actually really ignorant because not everyone is, and it's much better to […] check in as opposed to having some people feeling in the dark because they don't wanna speak up." (Participant 7)

Getting started with Key Concepts (Cambridge Assessment, International Education)

Toward an Understanding of the Effects of Terminology on EAP Reading Comprehension for University Students of Two Academic Majors (Chen & Lin, *Hwa Kang English Journal,* 2020)

1.8. Contextualisation of texts and authors

"[W]e do tend to do a little dip into the background of the author first, but I think even slightly more that might be really good to know so that you have an image of the person in mind, so that if they are a white male, you can go 'OK, I'm taking what he says about this element with a pinch of salt' or if it is, you know, a trans female you can go 'OK, so she's going to react to this element slightly differently to how this person' so you, you just need to have that contextualization." (Participant 7)

Reading Text in Context (University of Texas at Austin, Lesson Plans)

Noticing Context: Putting the Text First (English & Media Centre)

1.9. Work with dialects and more variants

"[I]t would be quite interesting to have say different dialects or ways of writing and trying to translate those and see how we would put it into English." (Participant 20)

Teaching About Dialects (Centre for Applied Linguistics)

Linguistic variation in language learning classrooms (Stollhans, *Languages, Society and Policy,* 2020)

2. DECOLONISATION IN TEACHING DELIVERY

Again, there is clearly a wide range of areas to continue to develop and improve language teaching. The most frequently mentioned recommendations by interview participants will be included below.
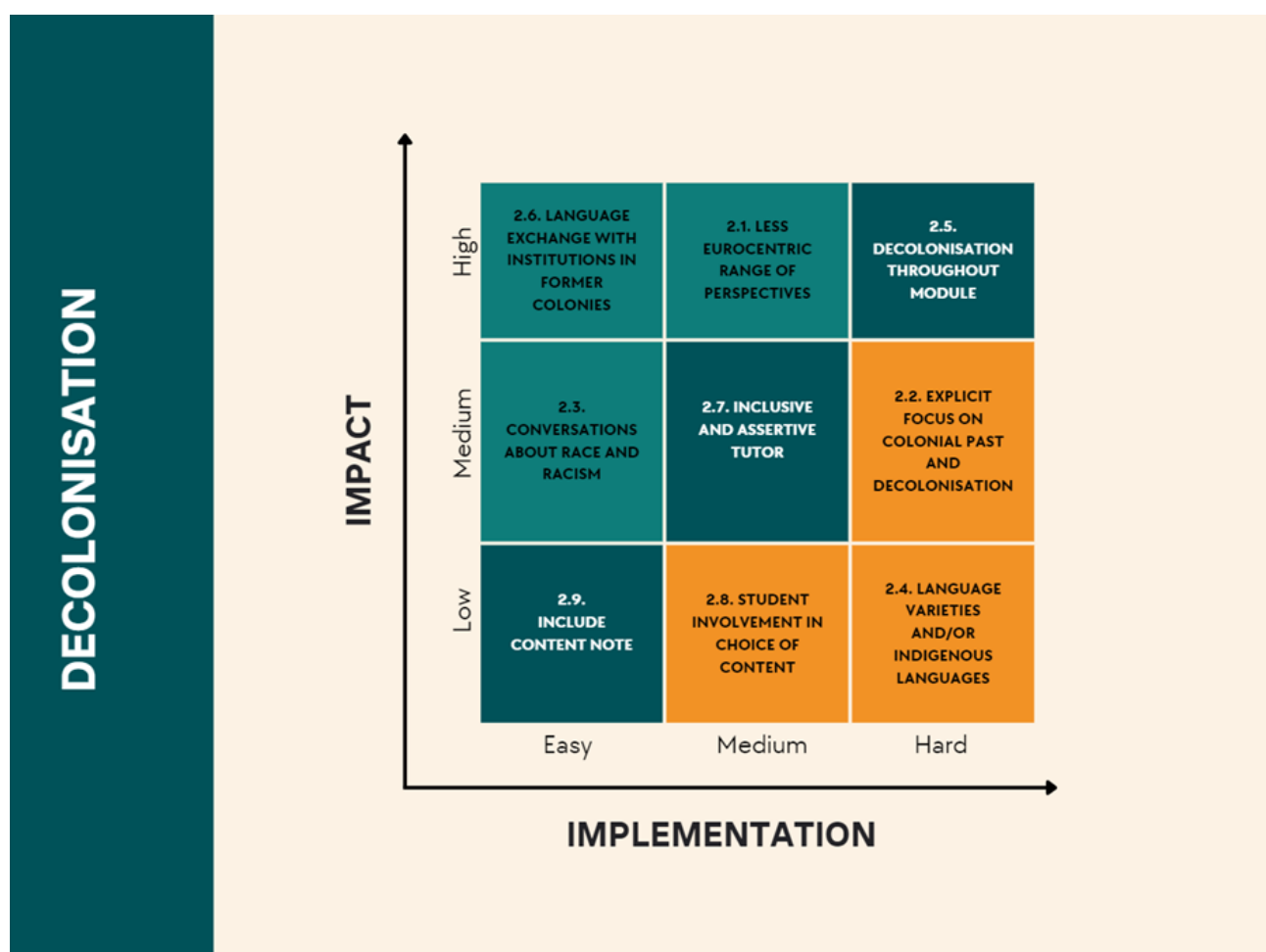
2.1. Less Eurocentric range of perspectives

"[I]n terms of reading lists, […] it remains dominant that it's like Eurocentric and male centered, so I think that's like a huge problem, but that's in King's in general to be honest, I think it's way too Eurocentric and Americanocentric and also like male centric. So I think this is like a main issue." (Participant 8)

"I think […] there was a good piece that we were studying written by […] a refugee, which was really interesting, I'd like to see things like that more, so like to see their point of view rather than just maybe the media or the press point of view which we hear so often." (Participant 20)

ual: Decolonising Reading Lists

Decolonising@Lincoln: Library toolkit

Shattering Ethnocentric and Eurocentric Subjectivities in foreign language teaching: A Critical Intercultural Perspective (Torres Escobar, International Journal for Innovation Education and Research, 2021)

2.2. Explicit focus on colonial past and decolonisation

"I think talking about the colonial past of our country is really important for the decolonisation movement and for the reconciliation of the nation's history. […] I feel like a lot of young people, or even like older, have identity trouble issues due to the fact that we don't talk about the colonial past enough." (Participant 8)

"[I]t was something about […] the idea of having artifacts belonging to, originally belonging to a different country, and being held in museums of another country, and sort of a debate about whether they should be given back or not." (Participant 14)

Decolonising Modern Languages and Cultures. British education: step up and break the chains of colonialism (School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University)

Disruptive Histories. Learning resources. (SOAS)

2.3. Conversations about race and racism

"I think there should definitely be a […] way to include race, diversity, ethnicity into the language. […] I'm interested in learning more about like race in Spain, ethnicity in Spain because when I've interacted with some Spanish people here [in Spain], it has been a bit questionable and I don't really think that race is […] spoken about here, or ethnicity, […] they just don't really talk about it like, so you know that whole thing, like, 'I don't see any colour' sort of thing". (Participant 3)

The IoPPN Race Discussions Toolkit: Let's Talk About Race (King's College London)

Permission to Speak: Amplifying Marginalised Voices Through Languages. Talking about race in German, Spanish and French. (Pearson)

Race and language teaching (Von Esch, Motha & Kubota, *Language Teaching*, 2020)

2.4. Focus on language varieties and/or indigenous languages in former colonies and on language use in colonial times

"[M]y lecturer actually has a side project, […] which is like a decolonised, like, dictionary, it's a website of the Portuguese language, […] we produced videos by contacting people in India, Brazil, in Angola, yeah just little pockets of Portuguese everywhere and getting them to contribute. So yeah, there was definitely an incentive towards that and the project was a really good example of that, that I really enjoyed taking part in so yeah, that was good." (Participant 18)

"[T]here's a heavy indigenous population, and I mean […] that's not necessarily related to the core Spanish, but I know from like my own experiences that there are relations between Spanish spoken in these regions like Bolivia and Peru and the indigenous languages". (Participant 5)

Permission to Speak: Amplifying Marginalised Voices Through Languages. Creole languages. (Pearson)

Permission to Speak: Amplifying Marginalised Voices Through Languages. The language that textiles speak. (Pearson)

Reducing Colonial Harm in Language Teaching: A Guide to Critical Self-Reflexive Practices for Language Teachers (Chugani Molina, *CATESOL Journal*, 2022)

2.5. Decolonisation throughout module – holistic approach

"I think my main bit of advice would be to not have it as an afterthought or maybe do, you know, not just do one class looking at how [the language] is spoken in like, […] [a former colony] but to make sure that the module, all of the modules are really diverse from the beginning and yeah, not just an afterthought". (Participant 16)

Conspiring to decolonise language teaching and learning: reflections and reactions from a reading group (Browning et al., *London Review of Education*, 2022)

2.6. Language exchange with institutions in former colonies

"[M]y Portuguese lecturer in final year […] actually set up […] a language exchange, kind of like the modern version of a pen pal, I suppose, with a school in East Timor, […] we would call them, like, each week and I was just like this is insane. This is why I love my language

and King's and the, like, the opportunity because I was just like this, I'm literally sat here […] calling this guy in East Timor and, yeah, speaking Portuguese, […] it was really fun for me just to kind of, yeah, open my eyes and see it, see my Portuguese from a much wider view." (Participant 18)

Virtual Engagement for International Student Exchange. Toolkit (The Association of Commonwealth Universities)

Using Facebook as a Resource for e-Tandem Language Learning in Higher Education (Schallmoser & Resnik, *Curriculum Design and Praxis in Language Teaching*, 2022)

2.7. Inclusive, friendly and assertive tutor

"So, I think the thing that made her [tutor], her actions, stand out was definitely how confident she was, like she didn't really, sort of, shy away from telling people that, why she didn't agree with their opinion, and she was also, sort of, really quite good at being quite inclusive of like letting, for example, when we're talking about something like race, I think it is quite important that people of colour also, well, do have a voice, like quite a clear voice when we're talking about this, and I think she was really mindful of this." (Participant 14)

IncludED: A guide to inclusive teaching (Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of Oxford)

6 keys to creating an assertive and constructive teacher voice. (New Teacher Advocate)

2.8. Student involvement in choice of content

"[I]f we just got access to a wider range of texts, or maybe even had a choice, you know, each week they were like, 'we've got this text by this French author, or we've got a Canadian indigenous francophone speaker, which one would you prefer to write about?' just so there's kind of an element of us having a say in what we study." (Participant 7)

4 Ideas for Building Student Voice and Choice in Language Learning (edutopia)

2.9. Inclusion of content notes

"[W]e've become, kind of, so desensitized to violence against people of colour and violence against women when we're reading about historical sources and via historical sources as well, that we don't really think about the effect that that has on people. [It should be] should offered, you know, made it clear to students […] that they can access support and be warned of certain things ahead of time so that they can prepare themselves for, mentally to just kind of deal with the content that we're studying." (Participant 15)

How to use content notes (Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning)