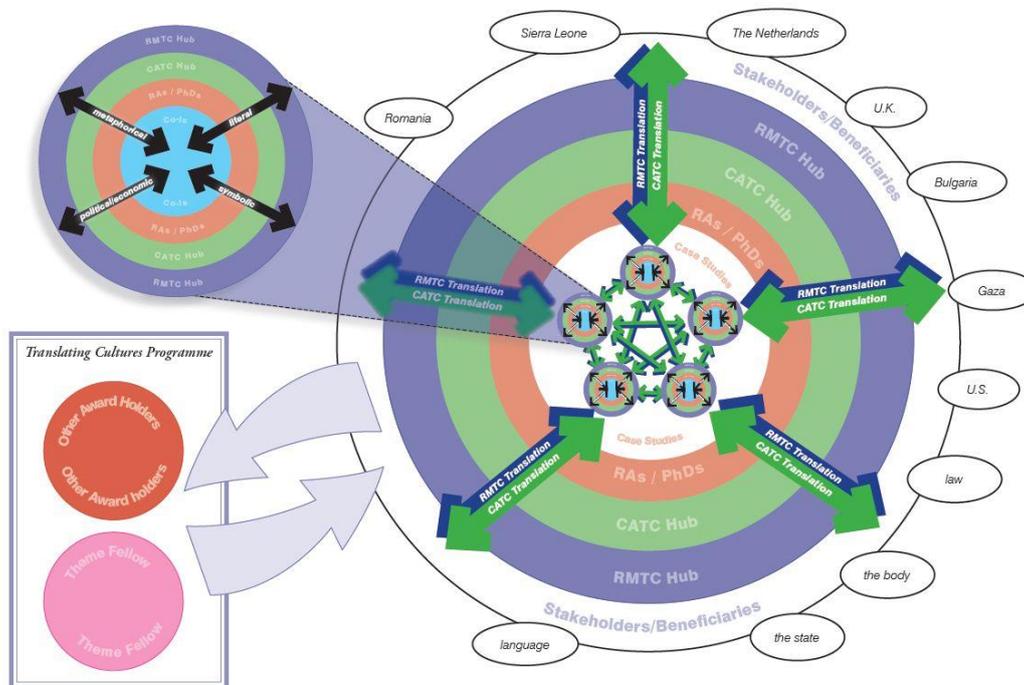


# Creative Interthinking: Interthinking Creatively

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In this paper, we first recreate parts of a performance (using dialogue, mime, music, and poetry) developed collaboratively by creative artists and applied linguists. The performance was staged within a complex (multi-sited/-modal/-lingual/-disciplinary) project, *Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State*. This project researches interpretation, translation and multilingual practices in contexts where language use is marked by institutional, psychological and political 'pain' and 'pressure'. Second, we extend Littleton and Mercer's (2013) 'interthinking' to reflect on the performance and consider its deepening of our individual and collective project understandings. As framed by this understanding of 'performance-as-interthinking', we reflect on our collaborative creative spaces and processes (i.e. on our multimodal creative interthinking) and how these enabled new, more embodied, insights into the previously un(der)-articulated, and incompletely understood complexities and focus of the project.

The interdisciplinary Researching Multilingually project uses both arts-based research practices and more conventional research methods to explore what it means to language and be language especially in contexts of pain and pressure.



It involves a Creative Arts hub and an Applied Linguistics hub (i.e. the hubs to which we belong) as well as five main case studies as follows:

Translating the Emotional Impact of Sexual and Gender-Based Trauma	Uganda & Glasgow	Global Mental Health
Translating Vulnerability and Silence into the Legal Process	Netherlands & Scotland	Law
Working and Researching Multilingually at State (and EU) Borders	Bulgaria & Romania	Anthropology
Multilingual Ecologies in the American Southwest Borderlands	Arizona	Critical Multilingual Studies
Arabic as a Foreign Language for International Learners	Gaza	Education

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In this complex project design, collaborative and creative processes are key. For a symposium half-way through the project, in contrast to the expected academic process of papers and discussion, the members of the two hubs decided to collaborate creatively. In practical terms, this involved the eight hub members:

- a) reflecting on the things in the project that were intriguing us at this point, reflections transformed into 'hotspots' of curiosity and emerging insight which were shared in advance;
- b) meeting together face-to-face in a creative arts workshop setting and listening to each other's hotspots and then deciding to narrow the focus on some of the 'hotspots', including ...

#### **Drawing on one's linguistic resources – Taken for granted**

One of the arguments we make in the RM-ly project is that multilingual researchers need to draw on their linguistic resources when doing research multilingually. I think this is easier said than done, and more exploration is needed to identify the challenges to "drawing on one's own linguistic resources", especially for researchers whose research training was/has been in English, and/or operate in English-medium research circles. Although I find it easy to speak ... in Arabic, I would find it challenging to write an academic piece in the same language. Being multilingual doesn't mean that you have the complete competence or confidence to produce research multilingually.

- c) developing metaphors (e.g. the 'well') and using mime to engage with the chosen hotspot;
- d) developing a script for a performance capturing the fruits of this metaphor and mime-work as well as work on other researcher insights/hotspots;
- e) giving a 20-minute performance performance (using dialogue, mime, music, and poetry) at the symposium, an event primarily involving project colleagues.<sup>2</sup>

During and after this creative-collaborative process, we were struck by the transformation of the simple image 'drawing on' into a deeper, more embodied understanding of the relationships researchers have with their linguistic resources. Similar deepening was felt for other hotspot-generated aspects of researching multilingually. Our reflections on these emerging ways of collaborative and creative working, and transformations resulting from them, have been framed by several theoretical frames which interlink for us. Littleton & Mercer's (2013) concept of *interthinking* has been particularly fruitful as a way of capturing the work that goes on in collaborative discussion amongst groups. Interaction between individuals achieves more than social exchange and the concept of interthinking helps to explain the process whereby "people are able to think creatively and productively together" (p.1). Talk is central to the concept of interthinking but, following the thinking of new materialists (e.g. Lather 2009; Law 2004), we wanted to take into account language's fundamental interdependency with other material factors (e.g. the speakers' bodies, the environment) and recognise the "bodily entanglement of language" (McLure, 2013, p.664). New materialists suggest that we need to think about our researcher subjectivity from a position of material 'entanglement' (ibid) rather than from a 'dis-entangled' stance of neutral observation; a position that precludes conventional research designs.

Our presentation here at ICQI 2016 is a first attempt to 're-entangle' and represent our interthinking process through performance.

#### **References**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://vimeo.com/166473378>