Language in Nottingham and the region: celebrating language as intangible cultural heritage

Project Aims

Nottingham has a diverse population with a wide range of cultures and languages represented within its local communities. This project views language as a type of cultural heritage which should be preserved and protected. Language heritage can take many forms, including multilingualism resulting from migration or educational experience, local dialect, or specialist regional languages (e.g. miners' "pit-talk").

Language heritage plays a crucial role in the identities of both individuals and communities, linked to feelings of belonging and well-being. However, unlike physical forms of cultural heritage, such as historical buildings and artworks, language heritage lacks structured frameworks to ensure that it is safeguarded and revitalised for future generations.

This research project approaches language as a form of "intangible cultural heritage" which should be acknowledged, celebrated, and promoted, just like other forms of cultural heritage, with a particular focus on the language heritages of the city of Nottingham. Recognising that language is a vehicle for social inclusion and integral to our identity, the project will yield an understanding of how language as intangible cultural heritage is currently understood within cultural sector work.

This research project will work with ChalleNGe, the Cultural Education Partnership for Nottingham, to explore possible approaches to supporting and celebrating language heritages in the activities of key stakeholders. These will include local schools, community organisations and cultural, arts and education organisation. This project will involve working with teachers to understand how Nottinghamshire schools celebrate language(s), with local community organisations to explore how language(s) are viewed and understood in the region, and with cultural organisations to ascertain how language(s) can be used as a tool to support the inclusion, participation, and engagement of local residents.

This project has been co-created and is supported by researchers from Nottingham Trent University, the University of Nottingham, and partners at ChalleNGe Nottingham. The successful candidate will be enrolled at Nottingham Trent University.

Project Aims

1. Identify and map the range of stakeholders and stakeholder groups in the city and region to whom language heritage is significant.
2. Examine, through mapping and case studies, how local organisations reach their target audiences and evaluate existing activity about forging partnerships to advocate for the protection of language as heritage.
3. Develop, test, and evaluate possible approaches to supporting and celebrating language heritages, including multilingualism, in the activities of key stakeholder groups, including local schools, community organisations, and cultural, arts and education organisations.

Supervisory Team

1. Lead Academic Supervisor: Prof. Natalie Braber, NTU
2. Academic Co-Supervisor: Prof. Nicola McLelland, UoN
3. Community Supervisor: Cathy Mahmood, ChalleNGe Nottingham

Key Details

Host University:	Nottingham Trent University
School / department:	School of Arts and Humanities
Start date:	03 April 2024
Financial offer:	Tuition fees covered in full (worth approx. £15k across full PhD programme). Monthly stipend based on £18,622 per annum, pro rata, tax free.
Working hours	Full-time (minimum 37.5 hrs per week), or part-time (minimum 20hrs per week).
Working Style:	Primarily in-person at host university. Flexible working supported. Working pattern to be agreed between successful candidate and lead supervisor.

Competencies

Co(l)laboratory Core Competencies		
Category	**Competency**	**Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)**
Comprehension and evaluation	Strong understanding of the project and its subject matter.	A / I
	Analytical, researcher mindset with keen attention to detail.	A / I
	Communicate complex concepts with clarity and precision.	A / I
	Able to identify connections, patterns, gaps, and irregularities in information/data.	I
	Able to interpret data/information confidently with logic and empathy to derive meaning.	I
Social and emotional	Demonstrable experience of responding effectively changing contexts, information and demands.	A
	Ability to persevere in the face of challenges/failures and to remain constructive in developing solutions.	A
	Demonstrable passion for learning with clear drive and curiosity to undertake this specific research project.	A / I
	Willingness to immerse oneself in the research subject matter and make a contribute to new knowledge through a PhD.	A / I
	Strong desire to make a positive community impact through the research.	A / I
	Willingness to think deeply about complex concepts and engage with academic ideas and theory.	A / I
Preparedness and potential for success	Experience of working, collaborating and communicating effectively with different stakeholders.	A
	High level of self-motivation and ability to work with minimal guidance.	A / I
	Strong organisational and time-management skills with the ability to balance and prioritise multiple tasks.	A / I
	Ability to identify potential challenges and complexities and thoughtfully consider possible solutions.	A / I
	Able to identify the technical, personal, or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop these.	A / I
Community Context	Genuine desire to undertake community-engaged research over more traditional approaches to research.	A
	Understand the impact of and need for the inclusion of diverse experiences and points of view in research.	A / I
	Appreciation/understanding of the importance of community insight and experience in the generation of new knowledge.	A / I
	Awareness/understanding of the broader societal context related to the subject matter of the project.	A / I

Project Specific Competencies			
Essential	**Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)**	**Desirable**	**Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)**
Experience in a relevant a relevant setting such as languages education, literacy education, linguistics, community arts engagement, or another area relevant to the project.	A / I	Experience working with diverse groups of people in community or professional settings.	A / I
Appreciation of the value of language to people and communities.	A / I	Experience of techniques such as survey design and evaluation, focus groups, ethnographic approaches to research, or similar.	A / I
Understanding of the concept of cultural heritage and its societal relevance.	A / I	Experience in analysing and interpreting quantitative data.	A / I

References for Further Reading

- Bialostocka, O. 2017. 'Inhabiting a language: Linguistic interactions as a living repository for intangible cultural heritage.' International Journal of Intangible History 12: 18-26.
- Braber, N and V. Howard. 2023. Safeguarding language as intangible cultural heritage. International Journal of Intangible Cultural Heritage 18. 146-158.
- Braber, N. and J. Robinson. 2018. East Midlands English. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Harrison, Rodney. 2010. 'What is heritage?' In R. Harrison (ed.) Understanding the Politics of Heritage. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.5-42.
- Sarma, Rashmirekha. 2015. 'Disappearing dialect: the Idu-Mishmi language of Arunachal Pradesh (India).' International Journal of Intangible Heritage 10, 61-72.
- Sönmez, Margaret J.-M., Wellington Gahtan, Maja, Cannata, Nadia. 2020. Museums of Language and the Display of Intangible Cultural Heritage. London: Routledge.