

<b>Institution:</b> Newcastle University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 23 Education		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improved Education for Roma Pupils and Families Through Translanguaging as an Inclusive Pedagogy		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2005 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Heather Jane Smith	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Senior Lecturer	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2004-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Roma pupils and their families face persistent social and educational disadvantages and exclusion across Europe. This research led to an improved education for Roma pupils leading to significant improvements in attendance and achievement. This was achieved through changes to teachers' understanding of Roma languages and heritage, which supported a critical unlearning of tenacious prejudice towards Roma. Parents' involvement as co-participants in the research was emancipatory. It transformed their self-perception as language experts, leading to new ways of working with schools, thereby benefitting their children's learning. Tools emanating from the research project have impacted on educational professionals' attitudes and practices for inclusion of Roma pupils across Europe, including in the prevention of harmful discrimination.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Research by Heather Smith (HS) on the teaching of anti-racist pedagogical approaches and linguistic inclusion in the preparation of teachers over the last 15 years has led to insights into the most effective practices in overcoming teacher prejudices within a framework of white supremacy and structural racism [PUBS1, 2 and 3]. Previous research led to conceptual advancement of inclusive and developmental pedagogies for pupils who live and learn in more than one language [PUB4]. Research expertise in multilingual teacher education was also provided by Leena Robertson (project Co-PI) from Middlesex University. Partners in France, led by Nathalie Auger and in Finland, led by Fred Dervin provided expertise in intercultural education. The research team also worked closely with Nicu Gal, founder of the People to People foundation in Romania.</p> <p>ROMtels (Roma Translanguaging Enquiry Learning Space: G1) was led by HS as PI and supported by an award from the competitive Erasmus+ European strategic partnerships scheme. Translanguaging is both a theory of language in use and, of concern here, a pedagogical practice which enables pupils to draw on any (or all) of their languages in the pursuit of learning in order to most effectively advance that learning: translanguaging-to-learn. The initial project took place in England, France, Romania and Finland, beginning in 2 primary schools in Newcastle (90 staff members altogether and approximately 1,200 mostly bilingual pupils). This was followed by work in a middle and primary school in Sète, France, a primary school in Järvenpää, Finland and a pro-Roma school in Tinca (a small village outside the town of Oradea, Romania), for Roma pupils who are not accepted into most state schools. Because of differences in how ethnicity is captured across Europe and the tendency for some families not to self-identify as Roma to avoid discrimination, it was not possible to definitively calculate the number of Roma children in the researched schools, but in School 1 in Newcastle, where the research team were more confident of the figures, in 2015/16, 108/658 (16.53%) of pupils in the school were identified as Roma, and in 2016/2017, that figure had increased to 124/703 (17.63%).</p> <p>The ROMtels research corroborated evidence primarily from North America that translanguaging can be an inclusive pedagogy which supports multilingual pupils' learning [PUB5, Imp3]. ROMtels is unique, however, in its working to adapt translanguaging to the specific and urgent need to improve Roma education, and in using technology to support translanguaging-to-learn in Romani dialects with no official name and no standardised written form [PUB6]. The collaborative approach to working with parents and teachers adopted in the project, which the team termed a "languages for dignity" approach, required parents to become involved in the</p>		

production of *prestigious* pedagogical resources, drawing on their funds of knowledge in translanguaging. It required teachers to understand this parental capital and collaborate in combining it with their pedagogical capital to produce meaningful, longstanding, reciprocal and trusting relationships in the co-production of classroom resources which support *all* children's learning. The project produced high quality and, in England, high status innovative technological resources for translanguaging-to-learn in curriculum subjects such as art, history and science. When pupils translanguage-to-learn, they become identified by fellow pupils and their teachers as plurilingual. In turn, this can impact on their self-construction as expert learners and in pride in *all* of their languages.

From this original research, the project extrapolated a lucid practice model of: successful approaches to a translanguaging pedagogy for contexts across Europe; and a "languages for dignity" approach for inclusive practices in schools and other institutions, which highlights the inappropriate nature of schools' often simplistic language surveys for engaging with communities such as Roma. To share the research findings and tools developed, 3 handbooks were written (in English, French, Finnish, Romanian and now Spanish), with an accompanying series of videos for teacher training; 19 conference presentations; 5 technology guides; software package for digital tools and apps with 2 configuration wizards; and digital packages of material and videos for 4 enquiries. All of this is freely downloadable from the project website (<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/romtels>). The research has also developed a cutting-edge conceptual model of translanguaging as a learning process [Pub 5]. Reflections on the project led to wider understandings of Romani language use and the need for careful use of translanguaging for those communities living in the most vulnerable circumstances [Pub 6].

### 3. References to the research

*These articles are all printed in journals which require a rigorous process of blind peer-review.*

[Pub1] Smith HJ. Emotional responses to documentary viewing and the potential for transformative teaching. *Teaching Education* 2013, **25**(2), 217-238. [doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2012.762351](https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2012.762351)

[Pub 2] Smith HJ, Lander V. Collusion or collision: effects of teacher ethnicity in the teaching of critical whiteness. *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 2012, **15**(3), 331-351. [doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2011.585340](https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2011.585340). The Journal REE is the leading journal for education research in race and racism, edited by Professor David Gillborn.

[Pub3] Smith HJ. Britishness as racist nativism: a case of the unnamed 'other'. *Journal of Education for Teaching* 2016, **42**(3), 298-313. [doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2016.1184461](https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2016.1184461). This article was by invitation for a special edition and was in the top 10 downloads of JET in 2016. Along with the other articles in this special edition, we were invited to publish this as a book by Routledge: Smith HJ. Britishness as racist nativism: a case of the unnamed 'other'. In: Lander, V, ed. *Fundamental British Values*. 2017).

[Pub 4] Smith HJ. The social and private worlds of speech: Speech for inter- and intramental activity. *Modern Language Journal* 2007, **91**(3), 341-356. [doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00584.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00584.x) This article was cited in a state of the art journal article on Vygotskian private and inner speech theory and second language learning (SLL), by the leading researcher in private speech studies in SLL from North America, Maria de Guerrero: "Going Covert: Inner and Private Speech in Language Learning" (2018) *Language Teaching* **51**(1).

[Pub 5] Smith HJ, Robertson L. **Sociocultural Theory and Translanguaging to Learn: Proposed Conceptual Integration.** *Language and Sociocultural Theory* 2020, **6**(2). [doi.org/10.1558/lst.36955](https://doi.org/10.1558/lst.36955). This journal is a new specialist journal edited by Professor James Lantolf, the leading scholar in Vygotskian Second Language Learning Theory.

[Pub 6] Smith HJ, Robertson L, Auger N, Wysocki L. **Translanguaging as a political act with Roma: carving a path between pluralism and collectivism for transformation.** *Journal for critical education policy studies* 2020, **18**(1), 98-135. <http://www.jceps.com/archives/8217>

[G1] ROMtels (Roma Enquiry Translanguaging Enquiry Space), Erasmus+, EUR247,869.33 (09–2014). September 2014–February 2017, Principal Investigator: Heather Smith.

#### 4. Details of the impact

This research has demonstrated impact of substantive transformative significance on pupils, parents and schools, improving the learning outcomes and attendance for Roma pupils, vastly improved relations between families and schools, and positive changes in teacher attitudes towards Roma communities. Its international reach beyond the original project to teachers, schools and teacher educators, [text removed for publication] and an Advisor for Inclusive Practice with the Valencian Autonomous Government in Spain, has influenced and shaped policies and practices in Roma education and translanguaging. This led to ROMtels being shortlisted in the Times Higher Education Awards 2020 as Research Project of the Year (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences).

6,781 users have visited the ROMtels website since it launched in July 2015. These users made a total of 8,939 visits to the overall website, with a total of 23,343 individual webpage views, coming from at least 114 countries with the UK, US, France and China being the top 4 locations. The website now appears as links in websites of professional organisations; for example, ACERT (Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers); EAL research email list, Newcastle City Council Services to Schools, and in the European Commission school education gateway [Imp1]. It is listed too in the Roma support group website [Imp1]. It also features prominently on a blog on translanguaging by Dr Anna Mendoza, Hong Kong University [Imp1].

##### **Impact on pupils: improved learning experience, attendance and achievement**

Impact on pupils' learning and attendance during the original project was substantial. The video recordings of pupils in Newcastle and Sète [Imp3a] demonstrate pupils translanguaging-to-learn during joint problem solving to; reason, speculate, justify, clarify, convince, recount/recall and support peers. Pupils in France reported feeling safe and accepted by teachers, and pupils across the project spoke of their pride in speaking Romani [Imp2]. In one of the videos from Newcastle [Imp3b] a Roma pupil hearing her language in the enquiry space for the first time, can be heard saying, "Miss that's my English! I know that language!" thereby publicly naming her language in the only way she knew how, delighted that she was able to do so.

In terms of attendance, Headteachers reported improvements in Newcastle, Sète and Tinca [Imp2] for the Roma pupils involved in the original project. For example, in Newcastle, Eastern European pupils' attendance rose from an average of 21.4% at or above the national average in 2014/15 to 44.7% in 2016/17 (note figures are given for Eastern European pupils rather than Roma as many parents in the school at the time did not acknowledge their Roma heritage as signalled in section 2). These results are especially important given that Roma pupils consistently underachieve in terms of education outcomes in comparison to other groups across Europe. They also face significant exclusion sometimes as a result of non-attendance at school. In the UK, Roma boys face the highest rate of permanent school exclusion.

In terms of attainment, the Executive Headteacher in Newcastle reported improved pupil attainment and remarkable improvements in phonics screening tests for years 1 and 2 [Imp2]; for example, in 2014 no Eastern European (EE) children completing the screening check in Y2 (either for the first time or as a re-sit) met the required standard. By 2016, 81.3% of EE children met the required standard, which the Head ascribed to working with the project [Imp2]. There is recent evidence that these phonics screening tests can lead to teachers grouping pupils in key stage 1 by phase of phonics learning, which could lead to further exclusionary practices, hence demonstrating the value of such improvements as security against further exclusionary practices for Roma. In Romania, teacher assessments showed an average 20% increase in subject knowledge acquired for each class by age over the whole school (according to class tests) from 2015/16 to 2016/17 [Imp2].

Bowling Park Primary School in Bradford (once named the worst primary school in England as it spent 5 years as a school graded by Ofsted as requiring improvement) started to use the project resources and in particular the handbooks in 2018 to change their practice with multilingual pupils including Roma. Specifically, they introduced a translanguaging pedagogy in which they reported developing "a language rich classroom where children are encouraged to combine home languages and English to allow for deeper, more meaningful learning experiences". Increases in children's achievement in just one year have been staggering [Imp5]: year 1 phonics scores (for the whole school, not just multilingual pupils) increased from 68% at age-related expectation (ARE) in 2017/2018 to 82% in 2018/2019. The year 6 SATs results for

Eastern European pupils including Roma at ARE in 2017/2018 were 59% with an increase to 67% ARE in 2018/2019, which is outstanding considering nationally only 17% of Roma children achieved a combined ARE in the year 6 SATS last year.

#### **Impact on Parents: transformed school relations**

Over the course of the research, the impact on parents and their relationship to and understandings of schooling has been transformative. Parents' self-perception alongside schools' perceptions of the parents and pupils changed from one of deficit to expertise [Pub 6]. Relationships changed. By the time the Translanguaging Enquiry Space (a multilingual virtual-reality-like real space: see Imp3a) opened to the local Roma families in a Newcastle school, 42 parents attended some with their pre-school infants, from all different Roma backgrounds. One of the parents who participated in translating and recording character voices in Roma [Imp3g] became so involved that she presented at the conference for teachers in Newcastle [Imp3c], and at the dissemination event in London [Imp3d]. This mother describes in a video on the project website how she was almost beaten to death as a teenager for attending a mainstream school in Slovak Republic [Imp3e]. The Executive Headteacher of the Newcastle Schools [Imp2] reported "the trust and confidence of this parent group demonstrated towards both federation schools has been steadily improving". His report also shows Roma parents' increased participation (sometimes in Slovak or Romanian and/or Romani) in Tapestry (online learning journal that provides on-going formative assessment evidence) from 52% in 2015/216 to 68% one year later. Videos of parents in France working in school alongside teachers, researchers and pupils further demonstrate transformed relations despite the length of time it takes them to reach the school given that they lived in a squat on the edge of town, far from even a bus stop, making school attendance extremely difficult [Imp3f]. In Romania, parents of the Roma children in the pro-Roma school in Tinca village, who live in conditions akin to developing nations in the global south, volunteered to become classroom assistants in the early years and the school reported an increase of 20% in the number of parents attending home school meetings [Imp2]. This research strongly refutes the normalised representation in education of Roma parents as disinterested in their children's education and as 'hard to reach'. Maintained relationships with the Roma parents in Newcastle has recently resulted in 30 parents and children from across the local Slovak, Czech and Romanian Roma communities visiting the University to learn about university education [Imp3h].

#### **Impact on Teachers/Schools: changed attitudes and practices**

The Executive Headteacher of the 2 Newcastle schools acknowledged the effect upon his staff of participation in the ROMtels research in terms of raising awareness of challenges faced by Roma communities and opportunities for improved practice [Imp2]. Delegates at the dissemination event in London (45 attendees, 34 of whom provided feedback, 100% positive) [Imp7], provided extraordinarily positive feedback demonstrating changed attitudes and ideas for transformed practices including shaping future projects by amending negative language; sharing and informing practices from school to local authority levels, and sharing in the development of a Roma Organisation in Scotland. Following their use of the project resources, the lead teacher of EAL in Bowling Park in Bradford reports that "our approach to teaching all new to English children has changed quite dramatically over the past year with a much greater emphasis on valuing home language. New arrivals are now taught using translanguaging – usually English/ Slovak, English/ Czech, English/ Polish. This has had an excellent impact on learning as the children feel confident to share ideas with the home language speaking teacher whilst continuing to acquire new language." [Imp5] In Romania, feedback provided at the 2 day teacher conference in Oradea (70 attendees, over 90% of whom provided feedback, all of which demonstrated transformed understandings) demonstrated cognitive and emotional disruption of teachers' prejudiced views of Roma and their improved knowledge of translanguaging as an inclusive pedagogy [Imp6]. Responses included, for example: "be a voice against discrimination"; "a factor of changing and recovering of the lost potential"; and "the change is within us". Discussions about what they would now do included comments such as: "explain to our colleagues why it is important to have knowledge about the Roma traditions and language"; "to encourage them to use their language and not to be ashamed of who they are". After the project conference in Romania, 18 teachers registered to learn Romani at the local university, unheard of for non-Roma in Romania. In a follow-up email

to 39 of the 70 attendees 15 responses were received showing a continued engagement with the issues previously developed [Imp6].

**Impact on Teachers/Schools: prevention of harm**

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**Impact in Teacher Education and at Policy level**

The project resources are now in use beyond participants in the original project in training student teachers. For example, following a visit to Barcelona University in 2018 by HS, Isabel Civera found the ROMtels work influential to her own research and in her teaching of student teachers in Spain [Imp9]. In UK, the project handbooks and videos are now being used in teacher training, such as at Leeds Beckett University [Imp 5]. Following engagement in several NALDIC (the National Subject Association for EAL) events and publication in their journal, the research and resources are now also being used in teacher CPD (continuing professional development) by Sheffield City Council EAL New Arrivals Team, which in turn has led to supporting a school in Sheffield with a majority Roma school population [Imp9]. As the senior EMA advisor reports, they have “threaded the research findings from the ROMtels project and the resources into the majority our training which includes our year-long EAL Champion programme for Senior/middle leaders and teachers and our similar TA EAL Specialist programme for teaching assistants. In addition, this work is included in our central CPD courses.” The advisor also reports “On a personal level, I have been inspired by Heather Smith and her work with Roma learners and their families. It has deepened my own knowledge of translanguaging and its empowering effect.” [Imp9] In Valencia, ROMtels handbook 3 was presented at a meeting of the Education Department (Valencian Community Government) as a complementary resource of the new official resources to make Roma culture more visible in schools. An educational inclusion advisor within the Valencian Government, has invited HS to support the linking of ROMtels with the production of resources and training for teachers in including Roma in Valencia, as in the Strategic Plan for the Roma population in the Inclusion and Equality Department (Social Affairs Government). [Imp10].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

Imp1: Evidence of ROMtels featuring in professional websites and blogs.

Imp2: ROMtels impact report published at: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details/#project/2014-1-UK01-KA201-000022>.

Imp3a-h: Video and photographic evidence.

[text removed for publication]

Imp5: Evidence bundle from Bowling Park Primary School.

Imp6: Feedback from delegates at conference in Romania and updated report.

Imp7: Feedback from delegates at London dissemination event.

[text removed for publication]

Imp9: Evidence bundle of ROMtels resources used in (student) teacher training.

Imp10: Emails and website links from Valencian Autonomous Government Educational Inclusion Advisor.