BOOKLET OF ABSTRACTS

arranged alphabetically into sections



2026

Plenary speaker

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"English is a Compass that Guides Me": Exploring Dominant Language Constellations (DLCs) in English Language Teaching

English language teaching (ELT) is increasingly situated within multilingual societies in which learners draw on diverse linguistic resources for communication. However, this multilingual reality is not always reflected in ELT classroom practices. While research highlights the potential benefits of multilingual approaches to language teaching, such approaches are not yet widespread across ELT contexts (Hopendorf, 2025).

This talk explores the potential of Dominant Language Constellations (DLCs) as a starting point for developing multilingual approaches in ELT (Ibrahim, 2022). A Dominant Language Constellation (DLC) refers to the group of languages that are most important and useful to an individual in their everyday life. DLCs are particularly useful for educational purposes as they lend themselves to visualisation and modelling (Aronin & Gabryś-Barker, 2025).

Drawing on work with student teachers in Austria, the talk examines how the DLC models created by participants represent the dynamic relationships between the languages in their linguistic repertoires. The talk considers how creating and discussing DLC models can promote multilingual awareness and help student teacher navigate the tension between traditional target-language immersion in ELT and approaches that recognise learners' full linguistic repertoires as a resource. Finally, it discusses how DLC activities can help bridge the gap between multilingualism research and classroom practice, paving the way for approaches to ELT that better reflect multilingual communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

Aronin, L., & Gabryś-Barker, D. (2025). A new perspective on multilingualism and multilingual practices: Dominant Language Constellation approach. In M.A. Christison & A. Krulatz (Eds.), *Promoting multilingual practices for linguistically diverse learners in global contexts* (pp. 3–27). Routledge.

Hopfendorf, L. (2025). Living the idea that all languages are equal?–Teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in the ELT classroom: An interview study with English teachers in Germany and Finland. *PraxisForschungLehrer* innenBildung: Zeitschrift für Schul-und Professionsentwicklung (PFLB)*, *7*(2), 15–41.

Ibrahim, N. C. (2022). Visual and artefactual approaches in engaging teachers with multilingualism: Creating DLCs in pre-service teacher education. *Languages*, *7*(2), 152.

LITERATURE
AND
CULTURAL STUDIES

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Rewriting Joyce's *Dubliners* for the 21st Century: Donal Ryan's "Eveline" and Andrew Fox's "After the Race"

This paper aims to compare two of James Joyce's stories of adolescence, "Eveline" and "After the Race," from *Dubliners* (1914) with their rewritings by Donal Ryan and Andrew Fox in the collection *Dubliners 100: Fifteen New Stories Inspired by the Original* (2014). Besides situating their versions of the stories in the early twenty-first century, both Ryan and Fox make significant changes to the source texts on the level of characters and even spatial setting. While Joyce's "Eveline" is named after its female protagonist, a young woman from Dublin who considers leaving Ireland with a sailor named Frank, Ryan's Evelyn is a man named after Evelyn Waugh, who helps a young woman called Hope to apply for asylum in Ireland. Whereas Joyce's story centres on Eveline's dilemma whether to leave Dublin or stay there, Ryan's one, part of which takes place in Galway, reflects the recent influx of immigrants to Ireland. Joyce's "After the Race" focuses on a group of young men, a Frenchman, a Canadian, a Hungarian and an Irishman, participating in a Dublin automobile race and enjoying the night after the event. Changing the spatial setting even more than Ryan, Fox moves the story's location to New York, replacing the motor race by a charity run in Central Park, and Joyce's occasional political references with mentions of twenty-first century business practices. The presentation will thus attempt to examine what the rewritings reveal about contemporary Ireland and the Irish diaspora at the time of globalization.

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Entangled in Unknown Lands: Migration in W.G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* and Binyavanga Wainaina's *One Day I Will Write About This Place*

This paper explores the entanglement of past, landscape, and self in W.G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* and Binyavanga Wainaina's *One Day I Will Write About This Place*, ultimately questioning the conventional understandings of the migrant category. Sebald's novel re(de)constructs the lives of four emigrants through fragmented narratives, photographs, and eroding traces of memory. Different but at moments same, Wainaina's memoir follows his life shaped by movement across Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa, where belonging emerges unstable: as shifting relations between the cultural hive that is Africa, its echoing colonisation, and Wainaina's own family history. I argue that Sebald and Wainaina present migration and movement from one land to another as a relational condition in which self, place, and past emerge entangled and vertigo-like. The analysis draws mostly on Karen Barad's concept of entanglement, which rejects the idea of independently existing entities and instead understands beings, objects, spaces, and histories as emerging through their relations. For Barad, entities do not precede their encounters; they are constituted through intra-actions, the dynamic processes through which boundaries, meanings, and identities materialise. Reading Sebald and Wainaina through this framework singles out their narratives' dizzying quality, resulting in (hopefully) reader's own entanglement with the stories. Finally, I propose that the person moving through foreign lands in these novels (the migrant) appears not as a coherent identity but as an ongoing spatiotemporal entanglement.

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In Between American Dream and Limbo: Growing Up as Second-Generation Immigrants in Malaka Gharib's and Deb JJ Lee's Graphic Memoirs

The paper discusses two young adult graphic novels whose protagonists are second-generation immigrants growing up in the United States: Malaka Gharib's *I Was Their American Dream* (2019) and Debb JJ Lee's *In Limbo* (2023). By combining the text and the image in a unique graphic narrative space, the two works tell and show both different and similar stories of the formative spaces that shape the identity of a young adult protagonist. Coping with anger, loneliness, otherness, cultural stereotypes, or even depression, Malaka and Deb, the two fictional reflections of their authors, try to live up to the expectations of their respective families and their American teenage counterparts. The panels, gutters, and bleeds within the two-dimensional geography of these two graphic memoirs point to the space in between two (or more) cultures, between childhood and adulthood, between familial and societal expectations, and holding fast to one's own beliefs. Grounded in comics studies and cultural and identity-based approaches, the paper identifies how the mechanics of sequential art (e.g., colors, shades, shapes, focalisation, panel architecture, etc.) in combination with the words on the page create the space of movement towards self-identification and growth in the multicultural milieu of the United States. (Project "Zpátky za vědOU, Reg. No. CZ.02.01.01/00/24_037/0013844" within the Programme OP JAK).

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Connecting without Equating: Narrative Parallelism and Historically Situated Trauma in Alan Gratz's *Refugee*

Alan Gratz's *Refugee* (2017) brings together three stories of forced displacement separated by geography and historical context: Josef, a Jewish boy fleeing Nazi Germany in 1939; Isabel, escaping Cuba in 1994; and Mahmoud, fleeing the Syrian war in 2015. Through its alternating structure, recurring motifs, and parallel narrative situations, the novel repeatedly brings these experiences into proximity, encouraging readers to recognize continuities in refugee suffering across time. Yet the historical causes, forms of violence, degrees of agency, and outcomes of the three journeys remain markedly different. This paper examines the tension between these two impulses: the construction of a shared refugee experience and the preservation of historically situated trauma. Drawing on Michelle Balaev's pluralistic approach to trauma, which emphasizes the cultural and historical contexts in which traumatic experience occurs, the analysis considers how Gratz's narrative form creates connections among distinct histories without making them fully equivalent. Particular attention is paid to the novel's alternating narrative structure, repeated language and imagery, and structural parallels across the three protagonists' journeys. This paper argues that *Refugee* neither simply universalizes displacement nor keeps its three historical narratives separate. Instead, its narrative design produces a productive but ethically complex tension between similarity and difference. By bringing distant histories into narrative proximity while retaining significant historical asymmetries, the novel raises a broader question about the representation of trauma in children's literature: how can stories establish continuity between experiences of displacement without reducing historically specific forms of suffering to a universal refugee narrative?

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New Writing at the Turn of the Millennium: Individualism and Indifference in debbie tucker green's *dirty butterfly*

The presentation concentrates on new writing at the turn of the millennium and on debbie tucker green's emergence as an unquestionably important and prolific Black British woman playwright who heralded a new era in British theatre. It examines tucker green's early work, especially her professional debut *dirty butterfly* (2003), arguing that it is not only the in-yer-face legacy and Black aesthetics that deserve attention but also the interrogation of postfeminist discourses that reductively associate second-wave feminism with backlash narratives, outdated victimhood tropes and feminine powerlessness. *dirty butterfly* confronts gendered violence, injustice and marginalisation, suggesting that the emphasis on individualism, self-advancement and progress leads to the disregard and normalisation of serious social dysfunction. The presentation aims to highlight that the play is implicitly political as it suggests that the problems which feminism tried to solve are still prevalent yet ignored and unaddressed in postfeminist times.

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Ways of Seeing the Countryside: John Clare and Samuel Palmer

This paper explores the affinities between the poetry of John Clare and the visionary landscape paintings of Samuel Palmer, two figures who, although working in different media and social circumstances, articulated a similar reimagining of the English countryside in the early nineteenth century. Clare, the "peasant poet" of Northamptonshire, is often read as a documentary voice of rural life amid enclosure and agricultural modernization. Palmer, a central member of the Shoreham circle, produced luminous pastoral scenes in the 1820s and 1830s that depict the countryside as an almost sacramental environment. The paper proposes that Clare's poems and Palmer's paintings share a mode of rural perception in which precise observation coexists with visionary transformation. Fields, orchards, and hedgerows appear as sites of labour as well as spaces saturated with memory, spiritual intensity, and imaginative possibility. Clare's poetry renders the local environment through an almost microscopic attentiveness to detail: birds' nests hidden in grass, the textures of meadow plants, the rhythms of rural work. Yet this precision opens into moments of heightened perception in which the landscape appears animated by a quiet radiance. Palmer's paintings—particularly the Shoreham works with their golden moons and glowing harvest scenes—pursue a parallel strategy. Although drawing on the real terrain of Kent, his compositions transform agricultural spaces into visionary pastoral worlds. Both artists inhabit a tension between empirical locality and imaginative transfiguration. The paper investigates how this shared aesthetic emerges from a moment of profound rural change.

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Misery Memoirs: Testimony of Trauma or Publishing Fraud?

Misery literature is a relatively new genre, at least in terms of its scope and popularity, which has recently turned into a phenomenal fad. This is particularly true of its non-fictional subgenre, misery memoirs, also referred to as misery porn, their common denominator often being the commodification of traumatic experience, whether genuine or blatantly fabricated. The present article attempts to address the problem, with the primary focus on the account(s) of memoirs focusing on the institutions called Magdalene laundries, which became a shameful part of Irish history. Apart from considering the phenomenon as such, this article also pinpoints the problem of authentication, because while sifting the false from the genuine it is important to be aware that the motivation behind questioning accounts of abuse may also be fraudulent.

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Jewish Oasis in the Desert of Tennessee: Tova Mirvis' *The Ladies of Auxiliary*

Jewish American fiction is commonly associated with the urban environments of major East Coast and Northern cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. In this respect, Tova Mirvis's debut novel *The Ladies Auxiliary* (1999) offers a distinctive perspective by portraying Jewish life in the American South. Set in the city of Memphis, the novel focuses on a small Orthodox Jewish community through the experiences of its women. Mirvis depicts the seemingly harmonious atmosphere of the "Jerusalem of the South," which is disrupted by the arrival of Batsheva, a newcomer whose modern feminist views inevitably lead to conflicts with the community's traditional values. Her attempts to reform established customs and gender roles in this "Jewish oasis in the desert of Tennessee" are met with suspicion and rejection, exposing tensions within the close-knit community. Similarly to the fiction of Allegra Goodman and Rebecca Goldstein, Mirvis's novel explores the difficulties of reconciling Jewish feminism with Orthodox Judaism. This paper examines the novel's treatment of gender and religion, focusing on the community's hostile response to change and its perception of Batsheva as a threat to communal cohesion. It argues that *The Ladies Auxiliary* presents an exploration of the conflict between tradition and novelty, collective identity and individual autonomy, while offering an interesting psychological portrait of a conservative community confronting disruptive external influences.

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"Those are picturebook horses": Horses in Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*

Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* revolves around the vanishing cowboy life in the Southwest of the United States and Mexico in the middle of the 20th century. Especially its first and last instalment, *All the Pretty Horses* (1992) and *Cities of the Plain* (1998), extensively thematize horses and their relationship with humans, engaging with themes such as domestication and commodification. Since large portions of *All the Pretty Horses* are focalized through the naïve sixteen-years-old protagonist, John Grady Cole, acknowledging Cole's idealism is crucial for understanding the book's portrayal of the horse. Partially stripped of the idealistic focal layer of Cole's younger self, *Cities of the Plain* contain scenes that echo, mirror, and distort the romanticized passages from *All the Pretty Horses*. Focusing on both thematization and representation, this paper demonstrates that McCarthy's horse portrayal is a sophisticated mosaic of various perspectives, voices, and modes that create tension between a realistic and mythologizing rendering of the animal.

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Maori Cultures and Identities in Witi Ihimaera's "We'll Always Have Paris"

This paper offers a comparative analysis of the works of Māori author Witi Ihimaera, focusing on his representations of Indigenous identity formation within diasporic and postcolonial contexts. The paper explores how Indigenous identities are constructed in the context of cultural tradition, displacement, and the influence of global media, advanced technologies, and popular culture. By situating these narratives within Bill Ashcroft's theoretical framework of the "transnation", the paper argues that both authors depict Indigenous identities as fluid, hybrid, and continually redefined. The analysis focuses on ways in which Ihimaera depicts both local traditions and global modernities, giving a complicated process of the formation of Māori identity in the contemporary world.

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A Woman of Many Colors: Dolly Parton's Cross-over Music and Vision

From feminists to Maga supporters, from queer activists to bible-bangers, everyone seems to be in mourning over the recent death of American country singer-songwriter Dolly Parton. At a time of extreme societal division and animosity, perhaps the worst since the Civil War, this Tennessee native was practically unique in that she was beloved by practically everyone in the United States (and beyond) regardless of their political or religious beliefs. How did she achieve this? What was her superpower? This paper will explore the career of this remarkable woman. The focus will be primarily on her music, but will also include her visual image, her philanthropy, her acting, her contributions to literacy and her charming wit and down-to-earth wisdom. There will also be an analysis of certain key songs in her vast repertoire of recordings, spanning a period of almost sixty years.

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America as a Usable Modernity: Berty Ženatý's *Země pruhů a hvězd* and the Interwar Czech Imagination

Berty Ženatý's two-volume *Země pruhů a hvězd* (*The Land of Stripes and Stars*, 1927) occupies a distinctive position between travel writing, reportage, and expatriate observation. An engineer who had lived and worked in the United States for approximately a decade, Ženatý presented American society with the authority of long-term practical experience rather than that of a temporary visitor. This paper argues that *Země pruhů a hvězd* constructs the United States as a form of "usable modernity" for interwar Czechoslovakia. Across observations of work, education, universities, family life, technology, social mobility, and everyday habits, Ženatý translates abstract values such as efficiency, democracy, practicality, and individual initiative into concrete social practices. America thus becomes not merely an object of description, but an implicit standard against which Czechoslovak institutions and habits can be measured. Placing Ženatý within the broader interwar Czech debate over the United States, the paper examines how his markedly optimistic account differs from more critical representations of American capitalism and mass culture. His emphasis on productivity, technological progress, education, and social mobility produces a selective and often idealized image of American society. The paper suggests that Ženatý's later association with the Baťa organization and his continued interest in American domestic efficiency reveal the practical dimension of this cultural mediation. Read through Anglophone and American Studies, *Země pruhů a hvězd* complicates simple models of "Americanization" by showing how American modernity was actively selected, interpreted, and repurposed in Central Europe.

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False Pearls, Contested Value: Women and Relational Autonomy in Sophie Treadwell's *A String of Pearls*

This paper examines women's agency in Sophie Treadwell's *A String of Pearls* (1950) through its central object: a necklace whose material value proves false, while its relational and symbolic significance persists. Drawing on feminist theories of relational autonomy and Jennifer Nedelsky's understanding of autonomy as constituted through relationships, I argue that Treadwell challenges self-sufficiency as the measure of female freedom. The characters of disabled Edith and young Katharine remain embedded in bodily, emotional, and economic dependencies, yet the play distinguishes such dependence from paternalistic control. Judith Butler's work further illuminates Katharine's insistence that her uncle Langley cannot "degrade" her, exposing the instability of normative judgments concerning female sexuality, dependence, and respectability. The pearls function as a contested female inheritance. Langley reads them as evidence of sexual shame, while Edith and Katharine transform them into memory, protection, and potential mobility. Their eventual exposure as imitations unsettles the assumed connection between authenticity, market value, and human worth. The principal comparison is Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*, where materially genuine property generates exploitation, dispossession, and failed female solidarity. Edith's redistribution of resources contrasts with Regina's accumulation of power, while Katharine's inheritance differs from Birdie's dispossession. Brief comparisons with *The Glass Menagerie* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* further contrast Treadwell's circulating pearls with Laura's static glass collection and Mary Tyrone's retreat into memory. Treadwell ultimately locates autonomy in the relationships through which women transmit resources, recognition, and resistance.

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Home, Violence and Belonging in Mary Beckett's "A Belfast Woman" and Anne Devlin's "Naming the Names"

This paper proposes a comparative reading of Mary Beckett's "A Belfast Woman" and Anne Devlin's "Naming the Names," focusing on the relationship between political violence and women's experience of belonging during the Northern Irish conflict. It asks how attachment to home and community shapes the protagonists' choices, and how these attachments become entangled with memory, political loyalty and moral responsibility. Both stories place women's personal relationships within communities divided by sectarian conflict. Beckett's story appears to present belonging as an enduring attachment to Belfast, sustained across displacement through family and communal memory. Devlin's story, by contrast, explores the point at which personal attachment and political commitment may lead to complicity in violence. Rather than treating belonging simply as a source of identity and security, the paper will examine its potentially conflicting demands and the limits it places on individual action. The analysis will draw primarily on Marco Antonsich's distinction between place-belongingness and the politics of belonging, together with Maurice Halbwachs's account of the social frameworks of memory. Through close attention to narrative voice, representations of place, memory and silence, the paper aims to show how Beckett and Devlin challenge the idea of belonging as a stable or purely voluntary identity. Their stories instead suggest that belonging may function simultaneously as emotional attachment, social inheritance and political obligation.

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"But the Author Said!" (Un)reliability in First-person Narration from a Speech Act Perspective

This paper problematizes the truism that first-person narrators report facts accurately if reliable and inaccurately if not through analysis of authorial epitexts and first-person narration. Sidestepping the rhetorical/constructivist debate on identifying unreliability, scholarship doesn't explain a reliable narrator being overridden by an authorial epitext (Tolkien's revision of the Ring's properties) or, conversely, an unreliable narrator later being paratextually verified (Anne Rice's interviews confirming Lestat's account). The declaration view of fictional truth (Bergman and Franzén 2022) offers a possible route: fictional statements are the author's declarative speech acts (Searle 1995; 2010) yielding institutional "real facts about fiction." This can profitably be employed in explaining author's epitexts determining fictional content. However, they underspecify how the author's voice is signaled in first-person narration, and therefore how and if a declaration transpires there. This leaves their account incomplete for explaining paratexts' effect on first-person narration's factuality. For a solution, the paper integrates the declaration view with Ryan's model of fictional communication (1991), assigning declarations to the flesh-and-blood author (actual world) and assertions to the narrator (fictional world). It further argues that only third-person narration (signaling the author pragmatically) and author's epitexts count as successful declarations. Consequently, the paper postulates two grades of fictional facts: declared facts (third-person narration/epitexts) and non-declared facts (first-person narration). Crucially, non-declared facts can be overridden by a declaration. As such, this paper doesn't make a hard commitment to either rhetorics or constructivism. What it does is resolve existing accounts' limitations by explaining how first-person narration is vulnerable to authorial override.

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Of Rabbit Holes and Primrose Paths: A Geopoetic Re-reading of *Watership Down*

The proposed paper reconsiders Richard Adams' 1972 novel *Watership Down*, habitually considered a children's animal adventure book, as a literary precursor of the present-day Anthropocene fiction genre. The story of the rabbits' quest for a new habitat (after their original one was destroyed by human housing development) features a complex combination of human and animal perspectives in a unique, generically hybrid narrative. Alongside other themes, Adams's text addresses ecocritical issues worth exploring, and thus, leaving aside the more traditional, mythological or geopolitical readings, this paper attempts to discuss selected passages of the novel along Kenneth White's geopoetic principles and related theories. We shall look at how the text (and subsequently each of its two film and TV adaptations from 1978 and 2018) succeeds in mediating the "microcosm" of the rabbit existence and the animal view of that particular bit of Hampshire landscape, which became the setting of the novel.

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Meaning in the Making: AI Translation as Close Reading by Other Means

This paper examines AI-generated translations not as preliminary drafts or objects of error analysis, but as critical countertexts that render interpretive choices visible. Drawing on ongoing research in a university translation seminar, it explores how comparison among alternative Czech versions informs students' readings and subsequent translations of two formally contrasting poems: Walter de la Mare's "The Listeners" and John Masefield's "Cargoes." Their juxtaposition provides a compact comparative corpus for examining how different poetic structures invite, resist, or destabilise computational interpretation. In "The Listeners," the analysis centres on narrative withholding, agency, deixis, atmosphere, and the preservation or resolution of ambiguity. In "Cargoes," it shifts to prosodic and phonetic patterning, lexical accumulation, culturally stratified imagery, and the changing relation between sound and representation across its three maritime tableaux. Rather than asking which output most faithfully reproduces the source, the paper maps divergences among AI versions and human responses as evidence of competing processes of meaning-making. It argues that comparative analysis can turn the variability, normalisation, and occasional misreadings of machine translation into a heuristic form of close reading. The critical value of AI translation lies less in its capacity to produce an autonomous reading than in its ability to expose interpretive assumptions and provoke their reasoned reconstruction.

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The Garden is not the Real World. Machines are the Real World: An Ecofeminist Reading of Louise Glück's *The Wild Iris*

Louise Glück's Pulitzer Prize-winning collection, *The Wild Iris* (1992), presents plants not merely as background scenery, but as creators with a voice. Through its polyphonic structure, which brings together the voices of the poet-gardener, a god-like figure, and the natural world, the collection challenges conventional hierarchies between humans and nature and foregrounds their interconnectedness and interdependence. As Morris (2006) observes, Glück "goes beyond the normal bounds of social constraint that ordinarily demarcate the realms of the human, the natural, and the divine" (201). Drawing on ecocritical and ecofeminist theory, this paper examines the three distinct voices in *The Wild Iris* and explores their interactions destabilizing anthropocentric perspectives. Particular attention is paid to the poetic agency granted to plants and the garden, which emerge as active participants rather than passive objects of human observation or use. In this polyphonic theatre, Glück creates, in Wyman's (2020) words, a "poetic space where women, similarly to wild plants, can outgrow stereotypical conventions" (137). The paper thus demonstrates the reimagining of the relationship between humans and the non-human world in *The Wild Iris* by granting agency to nature and challenging anthropocentric and patriarchal hierarchies.

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Cold War Cartographies: Reimagining Community across Imperialist and Socialist Afterlives in Tuan Andrew Nguyen and Kvet Nguyen

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Cold War geopolitical matrix redefined global mobility through two divergent yet entangled forces: Western capitalist imperialism and state socialist internationalism. While both functioned as overarching political projects, their interventions radically disrupted the Westphalian order of the bounded nation-state and territorialized citizenship. This paper examines how contemporary visual art reconceptualizes Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities," detaching belonging from state-centric nationalism to forge transnational, relational solidarities. Focusing on the work of Vietnamese American artist Tuan Andrew Nguyen and Slovak-Vietnamese artist Kvet Nguyen's exhibition *Till the Water Meets the Shore*, I argue that art provides a counter-cartography to twentieth-century displacement. Where Tuan Andrew Nguyen confronts the material and psychic debris of American militarism and refugee flight across the Pacific, Kvet Nguyen interrogates the archives of Vietnamese labor and educational migration under Czechoslovak socialist treaties. In both contexts, official state doctrines failed to contain the lived, fragmented realities of displaced subjects. Through aesthetic reconstitution—whether converting unexploded ordnance into resonant Buddhist bells or transforming bureaucratic state records into poetic, fabulated counter-histories—both artists establish diasporic public spheres. They demonstrate how imperialist violence and socialist internationalist pacts created dispersed, hybrid subjects whose allegiances cannot be circumscribed by singular national borders. Importantly, Nguyen and Nguyen reveal the vital role of art in cultivating imagined communities rooted not in sovereign territories, but in shared legacies of trauma, memory, and cross-border kinship. (project KEGA No. 063UK-4/2026: "Creative Connections: Art, Language, and Practical Proficiency – Innovation and Digitalization of Teaching Professional English for Students of Art and Related Fields," funded by the Cultural and Educational Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic).

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Home: Impossible. Social Criticism in Marilynne Robinson's *Jack*

Marilynne Robinson has been celebrated for writing novels which are domestic, philosophical and theological, and which explore themes such as consciousness, absence, belonging, or loss. Yet she is also a keen social critic, especially in some of her essays and public speeches, and her social commentary has all but waned in the Trump era. In this paper I am going to focus on Robinson's social criticism in her fiction, particularly with respect to the theme of racial equality, which has been a long standing interest in her thought. Considering Robinson's latest novel *Jack* (2020) and the novel's context within the Gilead tetralogy, the paper will trace the social critique implied by the story of the forbidden love between its two main protagonists in the segregated postwar society of St. Louis. I will argue that this criticism comes poignantly through the novel's recurring upheaval of the home spaces which the characters inhabit and attempt to create; any sites of such heterotopia are invaded and upset by the sheer force of structural prejudice, or indifference.

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Youth Disengagement in Britain: Discursive Constructions of Young People Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)

This paper examines how British political discourse constructs the phenomenon of young people classified as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). Although the NEET category originated as a statistical tool for identifying young people at risk of labour-market exclusion, it has become an important object of political debate, attracting competing interpretations of responsibility, disadvantage, and social policy. Drawing on a corpus of political speeches, policy papers, and politicians' social media communications, the paper investigates the narratives through which political actors explain youth disengagement and justify particular policies to address it. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the paper identifies two broad explanatory frameworks within the corpus. The first emphasizes individual factors such as personal responsibility, aspiration, and behavioural choices, framing the NEET status primarily as the outcome of individual circumstances and decisions. The second highlights structural factors, including social and spatial inequality, educational disadvantage, and labour market conditions, presenting NEET status as a consequence of systemic forces. The analysis explores how these competing explanations shape representations of young people, define the role of the state, and inform policy proposals. By examining the assumptions embedded in these competing narratives, the paper contributes to broader debates on social exclusion, welfare policy, and the political construction of youth disadvantage in contemporary Britain.

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No City Required: Fuzzy Sets and Modernity in Twenty-First-Century Urban Fantasy

Urban fantasy has long resisted a stable definition: no single founding text anchors it, and its boundaries with paranormal romance and detective fiction remain porous. This paper argues that this instability is not a problem to be solved but the genre's defining feature, best modelled through Brian Attebery's account of fantasy as a fuzzy set organized around family resemblance rather than necessary and sufficient conditions. Building on Stefan Ekman's recent reframing of urban fantasy as a genre of the modern rather than (just) of the urban, and Helen Young's observation that the city functions as a symbol of modernity's characteristic problems – isolation, fragmentation, alienation – this paper contends that urban fantasy's coherence derives from a shared engagement with modernity, not from a shared urban setting. Patricia Briggs's Mercy Thompson series, beginning with *Moon Called* (2006), offers a productive test case. Set not in a metropolis but in the small industrial Tri-Cities of eastern Washington, with a protagonist defined by manual industrial labour rather than detective work or bureaucratic magic, the series demonstrates that modernity's institutional structures – industrialism, stratified visibility, contested legal personhood – can organize a text as "urban fantasy" without an urban backdrop. The series' handling of supernatural disclosure and its position on the boundary with paranormal romance further illustrates why fuzzy-set genre theory succeeds where definitional hard edges fail.

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Epistemic Extraction, Body Reasoning, and the Limits of Noir in Tochi Onyebuchi's *Harmattan Season*

Set in a fictional, hyper-segregated West African metropolis, Tochi Onyebuchi's *Harmattan Season* (2025) transforms contemporary postcolonial noir, reframes urban crime, and presents the metropolis as a structural legacy of the empire. The paper connects the city's architectural layout – which is built on wartime mass graves, and reduces the native body to a literal harvestable commodity – to V. Y. Mudimbe's critique of the colonizing structure and Oyeronke Oyewumi's concept of body-reasoning. As native organ extractions are manufactured into terror bombs, the indigenous resistance weaponizes this bodily hollowing to trigger an ancestral ability to fly and disrupt the colonial space. Native population's attempt to reclaim sovereignty through self-sacrifice likewise exposes how the city's urban modernity depends on capitalistic real estate. Moreover, by using Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, the paper evaluates the protagonist Boubacar's double identity as a deux-fois detective, and further debates the inherent collapse of the classic hardboiled detective trope. The paper analyzes Boubacar's attempt to act as a mediator between the settler and native zones as he investigates a series of murdered indigenous dugulenw found floating in public spaces. *Harmattan Season* uses speculative noir not to solve crimes within the law, but to demonstrate that decolonization requires a physical rupture of the extractive architecture of the empire.

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De/Reframing Masculinities: Upside Down of Masculinities in *Stranger Things*

Set within the nostalgic aesthetics of 1980s American popular culture, *Stranger Things* (2016–2025) draws on genres traditionally associated with heroic virility, physical strength, emotional restraint, and clearly defined gender roles. This paper uses the series' central concept of the Upside Down as a way of reading its representations of masculinity. As a distorted version of the familiar world, the Upside Down offers a useful model for considering how established masculine codes are reproduced, inverted, and reframed throughout the series. The paper focuses on characters who, in different ways, move outside conventional models of masculinity. Will Byers' sensitivity and queerness, Mike Wheeler and Dustin Henderson's emotionally expressive friendships, and Steve Harrington's gradual shift from high-school jock to caregiver suggest forms of masculinity based on vulnerability, friendship, and care. Jim Hopper, by contrast, initially represents a more familiar model of the emotionally closed masculine protector, although this position is repeatedly challenged by grief, attachment, and his relationships with others. Vecna makes this picture more complicated. His difference and alienation also place him outside normative social and masculine structures, but his position is hardly liberating. He turns isolation into a sense of superiority and rejects dependence on others in favour of control and domination. Being outside the normative frame, the series suggests, does not in itself produce a progressive or dissident masculinity. Reading these different masculinities through the logic of the Upside Down makes it possible to see masculinity in *Stranger Things* not as a simple opposition between traditional and alternative models, but as a shifting field in which established gender codes can be challenged, reworked, or turned into something more destructive.

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Riding America's Contradictions: Motorcycles and their Communities in Literature and Film

From the horse of the Western to the motorcycle of the twentieth century, American literature and film have invested vehicles with fantasies of mobility, freedom, and displacement from social order. This paper examines the motorcycle as a floating signifier, a mechanization of the Western horse whose meanings have shifted according to the communities that claim it. From films like *The Wild One* (1953) and *Easy Rider* (1969) to literature, Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels* and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Pirsig, the motorcycle serves as a symbol through which otherness and instability in American society is imagined, performed, and commodified. Yet the motorcycle's association with counterculture cannot be separated from its simultaneous histories of militarism, fascism, racialized masculinity, and exclusion. Its adoption by motorcycle gangs across the United States, disaffected working-class identities, and neo-Nazi and far-right movements complicates its familiar status as an emblem of freedom. The appropriation of Native American imagery within biker mythology further reveals how fantasies of frontier individualism depend upon the selective reuse of racial and colonial identities. In contemporary American culture, the motorcycle consequently occupies an ideological space shared by anarchists, libertarians, countercultural communities, the contemporary American right, and those who claim not to know or care how to label themselves. Instead of viewing the motorcycle as inherently countercultural, this paper argues that its cultural power comes from its ideological mobility, as a symbolic machine onto which competing visions of America and its perceived freedom can be projected.

LINGUISTICS
AND
TEACHING/LEARNING ENGLISH

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Authentic Materials in Curricular Documents: Preparing Grammar-school Students for the English Final Exam

Czech curricular documents place growing emphasis on key competencies, critical thinking, and socio-cultural awareness in foreign language education, with the Czech Framework Educational Programme for Secondary Schools (RVP G) requiring graduates to reach CEFR level B1-B2 in their first foreign language. Both the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and national competency frameworks for language teachers explicitly recommend the use of authentic materials — original texts and resources not created for didactic purposes — as a means of grounding instruction in real-world communicative contexts. Despite this emphasis, it remains unclear how, and to what extent, authentic materials are actually anchored within the curricular documents. This paper presents findings from the curricular-analysis as a part of a broader qualitative research project investigating the use of authentic materials in preparing Czech grammar school students for the English-language final examination. Using qualitative content analysis, School Educational Programmes (ŠVP) from a purposively selected sample of grammar schools in the Olomouc region and neighbouring areas were examined to identify how authentic materials are defined, referenced, and positioned in relation to key competencies and expected learning outcomes for English. The analysis distinguishes between authentic, semi-authentic, primary, and secondary materials, and considers the relative weight given to textual versus visual and audio-visual sources. The paper discusses the extent to which curricular documents provide concrete guidance for authentic-material use, identifies gaps between framework-level recommendations and school-level specification, and situates these findings within the wider project, which will subsequently examine textbook content and teachers' perspectives through semi-structured interviews.

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From Focus to Theme: Reassessing the Function of It-clefts

It-clefts are traditionally defined as grammatical constructions used to focus a clausal constituent, that is, to bring a particular element into prominence. However, numerous studies have identified it-clefts in which the highlighted constituent is not the most informative part of the construction. This observation has led some linguists to distinguish between prototypical and non-prototypical (or marked) it-clefts, while others have argued that non-prototypical cases should not be treated as clefts at all. This presentation challenges the need for such a distinction. I argue that the primary function of it-clefts is not constituent focusing but rather the marking of the proposition's theme (or topic) through the specificational relationship between the main and subordinate clauses. The analysis draws on a corpus of it-clefts extracted from academic research articles, with particular attention to constructions featuring an anaphoric element or a temporal adverbial as the highlighted constituent. The findings suggest that rather than functioning exclusively as focus-marking devices, it-clefts allow speakers and writers to manage the distribution of given and new information in a variety of ways. This flexibility helps explain why it-clefts traditionally classified as non-prototypical do not have to be treated as a separate category. Moreover, I will demonstrate that it-clefts may also serve a text-organising function by supporting thematic continuity and guiding the reader through the text.

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Critical Issues in English Language Teacher Education

Teacher-training frameworks, including those designed specifically for language teachers, emphasize the development of key competencies across curriculum areas. However, certain aspects of teacher education are perceived by trainees as more demanding. Drawing on Nohavová et al. (2021), these are referred to as critical issues, i.e., elements that are particularly challenging or even failing for a variety of reasons. To explore these challenges, a research project conducted at the Faculty of Education, University of South Bohemia (2022–2024), examined the experiences of language-teacher trainees and their educators in Czechia. In this paper, we focus exclusively on English-language teacher education. A questionnaire distributed among Czech teacher-training institutions received responses from 232 final-year Master's students preparing to teach English and from 37 ELT educators. In the first part of the survey, three open-ended questions asked teacher trainers and their trainees to identify areas of English-language teacher education that they perceived as critical, i.e., causing severe problems. In the second part of the questionnaire, participants rated—on a 1–5 Likert scale—areas of English-language teacher-education courses: ELT methodology and teaching practice, literature and culture, and linguistics and language competence. The selection of areas to be rated was based on competence-based models of language-teacher education, both national and international. Findings showed that the highest number of critical issues reported by student teachers related to methodology and teaching practice, whereas their educators identified students' knowledge of linguistic subjects and their language competence as the most critical.

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The Future of English Language Teaching in Czech Primary Schools: Rethinking Teacher Preparation for Early Language Education

Recent debate on English language teaching in primary education has reopened discussion about the aims, timing, and quality of early language learning. While there is common agreement that young children possess unique developmental advantages for acquiring a foreign language, the challenge lies in transferring current research into effective classroom practice. This paper discusses why the early years represent a particularly favourable period for developing pronunciation, prosody, listening skills, and intuitive grammatical awareness, while emphasising that these benefits can only be achieved through developmentally appropriate methodology. The presentation examines key principles of effective early language teaching, including oral language acquisition, meaningful interaction, storytelling, movement, rhythm, play, and rich language exposure. It also considers the professional competencies teachers need to create learning environments that respect children's cognitive and emotional development. Drawing on more than two decades of experience in teacher education, international professional development, and classroom practice, the presentation combines current research with practical methodological examples. It argues that an early start and high-quality teaching are complementary rather than competing priorities. The future of English language education depends not only on curriculum design, but also on recognising children's developmental potential and equipping teachers with the specialised knowledge and methodological support needed to transform that potential into meaningful and lasting language learning.

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Syntactic Complexity of Academic Theses: A (Non-)native English Speaker Perspective

The present study is focused on investigating the syntactic complexity of academic theses, namely M. A. theses of native English-speaking and non-native English-speaking (Slovak L1 and Czech L1) students of English. It is based on a comparison of 30 theses from each group of authors. Each sub-corpus was equally distributed among theses on linguistic, literary, and ELT topics. The aims of the research were to determine whether there are significant differences in syntactic complexity between M.A. theses written by authors with different L1 backgrounds (English L1 vs. Slovak L1 vs. Czech L1) and to determine whether the significance of the effect of the author type is affected by the discipline of the theses (linguistics/literature/ELT). The syntactic complexity analysis was performed on authentic samples of M.A. theses, using a syntactic complexity-processing software tool TAASSC (Kyle, 2016), employing the methodology of corpus linguistics. The incidence of the analyzed syntactic structures was investigated using quantitative research methodology. The characteristic features of the individual groups of theses were determined via comparative analysis. The significance of the determined differences was tested using statistical tests. The research revealed significant differences in the syntactic complexity of the analyzed theses along a spectrum of global, clausal, as well as phrasal complexity measures. The syntactic characteristics of the individual groups of theses were also compared with the characteristics related to different stages of academic writing development provided by Biber et al. (2011). The findings of the study have implications for academic writing instruction at universities.

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Language as a Marker of Cultural Identity in Askold Melnyczuk's *Ambassador of the Dead*

This paper examines language as a marker of cultural identity in Askold Melnyczuk's novel *Ambassador of the Dead*, focusing on the linguistic construction of Ukrainian American identity. Against the background of migration, assimilation, and cultural memory, the novel provides valuable material for exploring the relationship between language use and ethnic belonging in a multicultural environment. The study focuses on code-switching, bilingualism, lexical choices, culturally specific expressions, personal names, and other linguistic markers of community belonging. Particular attention is given to the ways in which Ukrainian linguistic elements are incorporated into predominantly English-language discourse and to the functions they perform in signalling ethnic affiliation, preserving cultural memory, and negotiating identity across generations. Employing a qualitative sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic approach, the paper investigates how linguistic choices reflect the speakers' positioning between Ukrainian heritage and American cultural and linguistic environments. It argues that multilingual practices in the novel are not merely stylistic features but function as strategies of identity construction. They reveal different degrees of cultural attachment, assimilation, and hybridisation and illustrate how language can become a symbolic space in which individual and collective identities are negotiated. The analysis demonstrates that Melnyczuk's representation of multilingual discourse provides insight into the relationship between language, migration, memory, and ethnic belonging. The study thus contributes to sociolinguistic discussions of language and identity while showing how literary discourse can serve as valuable material for examining linguistic manifestations of multicultural experience.

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Managing Linguistic Asymmetry: Explicitness and Specification in Czech and Slavic Learner English

Research on cross-linguistic influence has traditionally focused on transfer-related difficulties arising from differences between learners' first language and the target language. This study adopts a complementary perspective by examining how learners respond to such differences through explicitness and specification in their written discourse. The analysis is based on a learner corpus of reflective essays produced by Czech, Slovak, Russian, and Ukrainian learners of English. Using qualitative corpus analysis, the study investigates how learners discuss linguistic differences between English and their first language, with particular attention to explanation, reformulation, clarification, and explicit signalling of logical relationships. The findings reveal three interconnected tendencies. First, learners consistently interpret language-learning difficulties through linguistic asymmetries, particularly in relation to word order, article use, and pronunciation. Second, they frequently employ explicit discourse markers and explanatory structures to make causal and logical relationships transparent. Third, they regularly use specification and clarification strategies by defining concepts, providing examples, and elaborating linguistic explanations. The study argues that learner writing reflects not only language use but also learners' metalinguistic awareness and their active negotiation of differences between linguistic systems. By focusing on explicitness and specification, the paper offers a learner-centred perspective on second-language production and contributes to current research in learner corpora and cross-linguistic influence.

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A Comparative Synthesis of Second Language Acquisition Frameworks and Their Classroom Applications

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has generated diverse theoretical paradigms, each proposing distinct mechanisms for how learners acquire an additional language. However, the translation of these theoretical models into classroom instructional practices sometimes remains inconsistent and fragmented. In our paper, we systematically examine seven major SLA frameworks: Behaviourism, Innatism/Monitor Theory, the Interaction Hypothesis, Sociocultural Theory, Input Processing Theory, Skill Acquisition Theory, and Usage-based Theory, and evaluate their impact on language teaching methodologies. By mapping each paradigm's core acquisition mechanisms to its direct pedagogical application—specifically pairing Behaviourism with the Audiolingual Method, Monitor Theory with the Natural Approach, the Interaction Hypothesis with Task-Based Language Teaching, Sociocultural Theory with collaborative scaffolding, Input Processing with Processing Instruction, Skill Acquisition Theory with Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP), and Usage-based Theory with the Lexical Approach—we highlight how foundational theories dictate classroom practices such as error correction and task design. Additionally, our paper provides a comparative synthesis matrix evaluating the practical affordances and limitations of each approach in contemporary language classrooms. Ultimately, we advocate for a principled, eclectic pedagogical model that synthesises cognitive, social, and structural insights, making explicit the theoretical rationales behind different instructional choices.

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Student-teachers Take Self-assessment from the Curriculum to the Classroom: An International Pilot Project

The Czech curriculum for lower secondary schools includes self-assessment as one of the key skills to be acquired by the pupils by the end of their compulsory school attendance, i.e. by their 9th year of school education. The guidelines for assessment in Austrian schools also refer to the desirability of developing students' ability to self-assess. However, teaching this key skill seems to be challenging for teachers in both settings, who must cope with the amount of required subject content, administration load and other duties and responsibilities. It is therefore important to provide a practical introduction to self-assessment in initial teacher education. This presentation offers an insight into an ambitious pilot project between a Czech and an Austrian university for including the teaching of self-assessment skills in initial teacher education. Under the guidance of their teachers, student-teachers met online and worked on a series of research-based self-assessment development activities. They collaborated in international teams and discussed the role that self-assessment played in their progress as language learners. The student-teachers also reflected on how the assessment practices of teachers they encountered in their prior education stages affected them and whether they were able to implement self-assessment in microteaching/practice teaching. Having taken part in a pilot cooperation project, selected student-teacher and the teacher-researchers give their account of the experience in the presentation.

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Negotiating Terminological Choice in Fitness Discourse

The growing internationalization of fitness has made English terminology increasingly salient in Czech training environments. The choice between English and Czech goes beyond lexical preference as it reflects the immediate demands of communication and the linguistic conventions established within particular communities. This paper examines how football and basketball players negotiate English-Czech terminological choices in workout-related communication, considering both their immediate communicative functions and their potential role in expressing expertise, group affiliation, and identity. The analysis draws on athletes aged 15 to 19 from two Czech sporting communities, football players from FC Baník Ostrava and basketball players from BK Opava, and focuses on English, Czech, and alternating forms used in written training materials, coach-athlete interaction, and peer communication. The observations reveal systematic contextual variation as English appears prominently in written training materials and internationally established training terminology, whereas Czech occurs more frequently in informal interaction. Coaches adapt lexical choices to athletes' familiarity with specific terms while some English expressions appear to have become pragmatically unmarked within the training environment. The comparison further suggests that individual sporting communities may conventionalize the same bilingual resources differently. Terminological choice is, therefore, examined in relation to interlocutor, shared knowledge, communicative purpose, perceived naturalness, and medium. Recurrent choices may simultaneously acquire social meanings, indexing expertise, professionalism, international orientation, and in-group affiliation. The findings suggest that English-Czech variation represents a process of linguistic negotiation through which athletes manage communicative effectiveness while simultaneously signaling membership in communities of practice.

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Uncritical Data Acceptance: Analysing Idiomatic Expressions in the Bridgerton Novels via Artificial Intelligence

At present, tools utilising artificial intelligence (AI) have made it relatively straightforward to analyse idiomatic expressions within literary works in digital formats. However, students at the Faculty of Education of Trnava University in Trnava often accept the generated content uncritically, without questioning the accuracy of the classification suggested by AI. This paper aims to find out what kind of idiomatic expressions are presented in the Bridgerton novels. The research employs methodological and data triangulation, encompassing manual data collection through excerpting, verification via electronic and print dictionaries, classification, comparison, and statistical analysis. While the quantitative analysis focuses on the scope of the identified units, the qualitative method examines their typological representation. The data obtained are subsequently cross-referenced with the findings of a related master's thesis to determine the specific types of idiomatic expressions present in the texts and the translation strategies applied during their transfer from the source language (English) to the target language (Slovak). Ultimately, the paper critically evaluates the error rate of artificial intelligence in classification and emphasises the importance of developing students' critical thinking skills within the process of digital text analysis.

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From Marketing Strategy to the Dissemination of Neologisms and Popular Words in Slovakia

Commercial packaging and advertisements increasingly transfer expressions associated with youth and online communication into public, offline spaces. In Slovak market, Coca-Cola and Lipánek employ youth slang, popular words, neologisms to address primarily Generation Z, presenting friendship and shared offline experiences as alternatives to spending time online. Many expressions on packaging can also be regarded as anglicisms entering Slovak communication. However, because these products are visible to consumers of all ages, their linguistic influence may extend beyond their intended target group. This study investigates whether people from different age groups in Slovakia notice these expressions and whether exposure to them stimulates linguistic curiosity. A questionnaire examined whether respondents recognized the expressions, understood their meanings, could provide Slovak equivalents, used them actively, and were willing to consult a dictionary or another source when encountering unfamiliar items. Preliminary findings from the dataset indicate age-related differences. Among respondents aged 18–25, the average noticing rate was 51.8%, while 18.7% reported looking up unfamiliar expressions. Items such as *besties*, *bro*, *BFF* and *cutie* were widely understood and translated, whereas *zaddy*, *cherrie* and *tapni sa* caused greater difficulty. Younger respondents generally recognized vocabulary already circulating in digital culture, while some older respondents demonstrated greater curiosity about unfamiliar expressions. The study approaches packaging not only as a marketing instrument but also as a site of linguistic dissemination, documenting how vocabulary moves from online to offline environments and from spoken interaction into publicly visible written language.

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Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Digital Competency Portfolio for Students of English Teaching

Students of English teaching often use frameworks like the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) to track their professional growth. However, relying on traditional paper documents or long, monotonous online forms often turns reflection into an overwhelming administrative chore. Furthermore, practical evidence is usually isolated in separate portfolios or hidden in appendices at the very end of large documents, making the review process slow and disconnected from the specific competencies. This static format quickly drains student motivation and limits the possibilities for continuous feedback. This paper presents a custom web application developed for the Department of English at the Faculty of Education, University of South Bohemia, which digitalizes the Foreign Languages Appendix to the Competency Framework for Graduates of Teacher Education (KRAAU). The platform allows students to track their skills and connect theoretical university preparation with their practical experience outside the classroom. The core of the application is a self-reflection module where students can securely upload digital evidence, such as lesson plans or classroom worksheets, directly to specific competency indicators. Additionally, the platform includes a role-based system that enables university supervisors to review these materials and provide targeted, formative comments. By moving the portfolio into a digital environment, the tool simplifies the evaluation process and replaces repetitive paperwork with a more dynamic and accessible space for students of teaching.

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Critical Thinking a Probable Barrier to the Pace of L: A Longitudinal Case Study of a Low-vision Foreign Language Learner with Autism

Verbal individuals with autism who are trying to learn a foreign language probably go through a different path compared to neurotypical individuals. The way they process data may explain the very slow, stepwise approach they use to learn the structure of a new language. The question is how data processing happens, what helps it, and what does not. Is Critical thinking a barrier for young learners with autism to self-regulate and learn a foreign language at the same speed as neurotypical learners? If they are learning at this low speed, what brings a smile of satisfaction to their faces every time they learn a new language item? The individual paths they follow in learning another language make it very difficult to understand and generalize, but this does not mean we shouldn't. This longitudinal case study reports on how critical thinking is helping or maybe being an obstacle to learning English as a foreign language, with regard to the pace of learning for a low vision Persian-speaking autistic boy who was 10 at the start of this study and is now 20. This is a report after almost ten years of teaching English to him. The implications highlight the importance of a tailored curriculum, particularly regarding learning pace and assessment for learners with autism. The results may inform policy-makers in general, and language teachers in particular, while underscoring the need for further research.

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Heterogeneity in the EFL Classroom: The Potential of Implementing Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

The growing diversity of university students presents new challenges for English language teaching. Today's EFL classrooms bring together students with different backgrounds, learning preferences, levels of preparedness, disabilities, and study-related needs. This increasing heterogeneity requires teachers to reconsider how language courses are designed and delivered. The presentation introduces Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a practical framework for improving language teaching in higher education. It builds on findings from an unpublished 2024 pilot survey involving students of English and practising teachers, which explored perceptions of special educational needs in EFL contexts and identified barriers affecting learning experiences. The main focus is a new research project examining how UDL principles can support inclusive EFL learning environments. In cooperation with the Support Centre for Students with Special Needs at Palacký University in Olomouc, focus groups will be conducted with students with formally recognised support needs, those reporting difficulties without formal registration and students without declared needs. The aim is to identify barriers and supportive factors related to student engagement, access to materials and opportunities to demonstrate learning. The findings will serve as a basis for a larger questionnaire study and recommendations for university EFL instructors. The presentation aims to open a discussion on the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing UDL and its potential contribution to teaching in heterogeneous classrooms.

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English as a Foreign Language as a Means of Social Interaction: A Qualitative Exploratory Case Study of Two Nonverbal and Minimally Verbal Czech Learners on the Autism Spectrum

A report on how foreign language learning can help young learners with autism become socially engaged. Autistic learners differ greatly in their communication profiles, regulation, motivation, and ways of participating in social interaction. For nonverbal and minimally verbal learners, participation in foreign language learning cannot be evaluated only through spoken production. This report explores how English as a foreign language may serve as a medium of social interaction for two Czech learners on the autism spectrum. It focuses on English-based routines and asks how they can create, or fail to create, opportunities for engagement, initiation, and turn-taking. The report is designed as a qualitative exploratory case study. Data are collected through video recordings, researcher notes, reflective observations, caregiver information, and an orientation test administered at the beginning and end of the research period. The analysis focuses on verbal, minimally verbal, and nonverbal forms of communication, including gaze, gestures, body movement, vocalisation, and participation in shared routines. It also considers interactional behaviours such as refusal, requesting, initiation, and turn-taking. Preliminary results suggest that English-based routines may create opportunities for social interaction when they are simple, predictable, and meaningful for the learner. Although the two learners differed in attendance, communication profiles, and level of engagement, both showed moments of participation within shared routines. These responses were expressed mainly through nonverbal communicative

behaviours, including attention to the activity, body movement, vocalisation, turn-taking, and previously unobserved forms of participation in shared activity. The findings remain exploratory and case-specific, but they indicate that predictable English-based routines, when adapted to learners' individual needs, may be useful in mainstream and special educational settings

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Dative Presentative Constructions in Southern American English: A Nanosyntactic Approach

Certain varieties of Southern American English (SAE) are documented to feature an array of dative constructions (Wood et al. 2015; Wood et al. 2020). The focus here is on the relatively under-researched dative presentatives (1) which share similarities with prepositional datives with for (2) (Wood et al. 2015). This paper provides an analysis of these constructions (1) using the framework of Nanosyntax (Starke 2018, Baunaz and Lander 2018, among others), centered around the phrasal spellout of syntactic structures. The analysis involves applicative heads (Appl) projecting their own phrases (following Pylkkänen 2008) above the VP, which licence the dative argument. Nanosyntax's phrasal spellout then accounts both for the lack of a preposition and for the variation observed in English; SAE varieties contain lexical items (LIs) of the relevant verbs that spell out the whole ApplP (3), while other varieties contain only the VP in the LI (4). Although it is in principle always possible to merge Appl with VP, projecting ApplP and licensing the dative argument, this structure will be spelled out only in the relevant SAE varieties containing the LI in (3). Since Nanosyntax requires that all features in the syntactic structure and their projections be spelled out, such a derivation will not produce any legible output in varieties containing the LI in (4).

(1) Here's you a piece of pizza (Wood et al. 2015, 294)
(2) Here's a piece of pizza for you (Wood et al. 2015, 294)
(3) is <=> [ApplP [VP ...]]
(4) is <=> [VP ...]

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Creating Dialogue without a Response: Gesture and Illocutionary Force in *YouTub*e English-language Tutoring

This study examines the digital genre of English-language tutoring on YouTube, focusing on how tutors use gesture to mark the illocutionary force of utterances that simulate interaction with a non-co-present, asynchronous audience. Communication on YouTube is inherently one-directional, yet tutors frequently construct their explanations as if engaged in live dialogue with viewers, asking questions, issuing invitations, and checking understanding despite receiving no real-time response. The study presents a small-scale qualitative analysis of five videos from popular English-teaching YouTube channels covering comparable topics in language instruction. Gestures are classified according to McNeill's (1992) typology as iconic, metaphoric, deictic, or beat gestures, with additional reference to Kendon's (2004) continuum of gesture–speech relations to account for

tutors whose pedagogical style relies more heavily on pantomime than gesticulation, and are analysed in relation to the speech acts (based on Austin and Searle) they accompany and their illocutionary force. The comparative design makes it possible to establish whether recurrent gesture-speech-act pairings occur across tutors or are primarily presenter-specific. The analysis shows that gesture supports not only propositional content but also the construction of simulated address, responsiveness, and viewer engagement, with specific gesture types recurring systematically alongside particular illocutionary functions across an asynchronous, one-way communicative environment.

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Raising Awareness on the Feed: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of US High School Teacher Influencers on Social Media

The paper compares the discursive strategies of Black and white US-based women high school teacher influencers on Instagram and TikTok, examining how they construct and communicate school-related issues to their audiences through posts, reels, and stories. Building on Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Bou-Franch's framework of Digital Discourse Analysis (2019), particularly its focus on the micro-macro articulation and how identities, ideologies, and communities are constructed through discourse, this study integrates Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal approach (2001) to examine how the discourse is realized through language, visuals, gestures, and platform-specific features. Data comprises 100 posts from 16 popular teacher influencers (8 white, 8 Black) with a minimum of 30,000 followers. The analysis identifies three primary school-related topics: (1) the promotion of teaching approaches and educational activities aimed at improving the classroom experience, (2) the articulation of teacher burnout, social comparison, and the gap between public perceptions of teaching and the realities of the profession, and (3) the negotiation of student behavior, including classroom management challenges and disciplinary issues. The study reveals that both Black and white edu-influencers promote teaching methods and classroom activities, yet this is frequently intertwined with commodification through paid partnerships, affiliate marketing, and self-created digital resources. Across both groups, "Jesus" predominantly appeared first in their user bios, while "teacher" appeared last, oftentimes behind "mother," despite the accounts being ostensibly dedicated to teaching-related content. Furthermore, while both groups feature equality and inclusion posters in their classrooms, Black teacher influencers often link inequality issues to systemic critiques, whereas white teachers tend not to articulate this explicitly.

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Where Is Professional Learning? Exploring an EFL Student Teacher's Longitudinal Trajectory

Professional learning in initial teacher education is often studied through student teachers' reflections and self-reports. However, identifying evidence of learning becomes more complex when longitudinal data include different types of artefacts that make different aspects of professional reasoning and teaching visible. This paper explores this problem through one student

teacher's longitudinal trajectory in EFL teacher education. The exploratory case study draws on naturalistic data produced across the final stage of a BA programme through two teaching practica in a follow-up MA programme. The data include open reflective writing, structured self-evaluation, lesson plans, recorded teaching, video-based reflection and action research. The artefacts were examined chronologically to explore what each source could and could not reveal and what could be observed across the trajectory. Some features, particularly the student's orientation towards pupils, were visible across different stages and artefacts. ELT-specific reasoning and teaching, however, were much more visible in structured and practice-based artefacts than in open reflective writing. Lesson plans, recorded teaching, and retrospective reflection also provided complementary perspectives on the same pedagogical events. The analysis therefore raises a methodological and pedagogical issue for teacher education: differences between artefacts cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence of professional learning, as they may also reflect what particular tasks ask student teachers to articulate or demonstrate. The findings suggest that teacher education programmes need to consider not only what opportunities for professional learning they provide, but also how different programme-embedded tools make student teachers' professional reasoning and teaching visible. Combining evidence across programme stages and different representations of teaching may provide a stronger basis for understanding student teachers' professional learning over time.

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ELT in Czechia for Secondary School Students with Hearing Loss in Mainstream Setting

In the Czech Republic, inclusive education has been legally guaranteed since 2016, and deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) learners are entitled to a range of support measures, including the right to education in sign language, individualized accommodations, and modified forms of standardized assessment. While national legislation provides a relatively comprehensive framework for the education of DHH learners, guidance specifically addressing English Language Teaching (ELT) remains limited, focusing primarily on curricular outcomes and adaptations to the school-leaving examination (maturita). This presentation explores the realities of ELT for DHH students in mainstream secondary schools from the perspective of teachers. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with English language teachers who have taught DHH learners, the study examines their experiences, perceived challenges, sources of support, and classroom practices. The findings indicate that teachers often receive information about students' needs in an ad hoc manner and rely heavily on intuition, prior teaching experience, and support from parents, teaching assistants, special education centres, and the students themselves. The presentation discusses concerns associated with teaching DHH learners, including uncertainty about appropriate pedagogical approaches, limited specialist training, and the absence of clear ELT-specific guidelines. It also highlights practical classroom adjustments reported by participants, such as modifications to listening and speaking activities, seating arrangements, pacing, and communication practices. The findings point to a need for more systematic guidance and professional support for language teachers working with DHH learners in inclusive secondary-school settings.

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Rheme Identification in Slovak and Czech with and without English Interference

The paper is a follow-up to previous research into the ability of Slovak and Czech university students of English to identify rhematic subjects in English presentation sentences and manifest their interpretation of the information structure in two ways: by intonation nucleus placement in a short English text read aloud, and in the choice of word order in translation of the text into their mother tongues. The results of the latter showed a surprisingly high proportion of unnatural word order, which may have been attributed to the influence of the English original. To eliminate possible English interference, the current research presents a new set of participants with two different tasks: translation of the English text used in the previous research into Slovak and Czech, and arranging jumbled sentences containing rhematic subjects in a similar, but not identical, Slovak/Czech text. In order to prevent the participants realising the connection between the two texts, the respective tasks will be presented at an interval of two weeks, with half of the participants starting with the translation and the other half following the reverse order. Analysis of the results will show the ability of Slovak and Czech speakers to use word order as the primary indicator of information structure in their native languages, and will assess the extent of English word order interference in translation.

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Multimodal *Yes*, Multimodal *No* and Epistemic Stance in Courtroom Interaction

This talk approaches affirmation and negation – i.e. pragmatic "yes" and pragmatic "no" – as a continuum of behaviours that constitute multimodal constructions. These affirmative and negative actions encompass a broad spectrum of speech acts, ranging from agreement and commitment to denial and contestation, and intersect with four domains of cognitive activity: belief, evaluation, emotion and action (Antas 1991). Integrating verbal and gestural channels, they are central to how communication partners negotiate evaluative stances and position divergent epistemic assessments. Interactional data indicate that affirmative and negative stances form integrated verbo-kinesic constructions associated with a range of meanings. Resulting from cross-modal congruence or incongruence between speech and gesture (including gaze, head nods, headshakes and shoulder shrugs), these meanings can be fruitfully explored through the lens of Schulz von Thun's (2001) four-sides model of communication. Against this background, the paper looks at how varying degrees of confidence, associated with affirmative and negative signals, are communicated during court proceedings. Using data from a high-profile US criminal jury trial, the study brings into special focus expert witnesses' epistemic positioning and their interactions with attorneys. It demonstrates diverse ways in which varying degrees of epistemic commitment are conveyed by medical professionals testifying before jurors, highlighting the importance of considering the overall multimodal message rather than discrete, apparently incongruent, verbal and gestural signals.

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Teaching what One is Still Learning: How In-service Teachers Address their own Stabilised Pronunciation Features

This paper explores the possibility that teachers continue to develop their own English by teaching it to others, and considers this in relation to fossilisation and teacher language awareness (Andrews, 2007). The participants are in-service undergraduate students at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem who already teach English in Czech schools. Their production largely conforms to the sound features of the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000). Some features, however, remain subject to correction. In particular, word stress in word-class pairs and sentence stress with its accompanying intonation contour — features the LFC classifies as non-core, though their status has been contested (Dauer, 2005; Field, 2005). As they rarely impede communication, the teachers tend not to notice them in their own speech. Adopting Holliday's (2006) critique of native-speakerism, we argue that the aim is neither for the teachers to sound native nor for their pupils to become native speakers, but to be comprehensible. We argue, however, that a teacher is not an ordinary interlocutor but a classroom model, and that this role demands more than the communicative minimum. As part of their training, teachers design pronunciation activities for their pupils on the very features they still struggle with. Preparing materials, anticipating pupils' difficulties and modelling target forms supports noticing. Our data suggest their own production of the taught features gradually improves.

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Pre-service English Teachers' Attitudes to English as an International Language

The global spread of English has transformed the contexts in which the language is used and has sparked discussion of what constitutes relevant knowledge and competence in English language education. Research on English as an International Language (EIL) and Global Englishes (GE) has therefore increasingly examined teachers' and pre-service teachers' perceptions of linguistic diversity, language ownership, speaker identity, and communicative competence (Christou et al., 2022; Calvet-Terré & Llurda, 2025). This study investigates these issues among four cohorts (2022-2025) of 67 first-year MA Czech pre-service English teachers enrolled in a university course on Teaching English as an International Language. Drawing on a questionnaire adapted from Dimova (2017), the study examines participants' attitudes towards native-speaker English, EIL, and non-native-speaker English; their perceptions of their own English and linguistic identity; and their views on the cultural content, knowledge, skills, competences, and teaching practices relevant to EIL. Quantitative responses are analysed descriptively and complemented by thematic analysis of open-ended responses, which allows for general attitudinal patterns to be considered alongside participants' individual reasoning. Preliminary findings indicate an overall positive orientation towards EIL and recognition of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity, while revealing more complex attitudes towards different forms of English, language proficiency, identity, and appropriate models for teaching and learning. The study highlights the importance of EIL-informed teacher education in enabling future English teachers to critically examine established assumptions and develop pedagogical approaches responsive and sensitive to communication across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

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From Language Learner to Teacher: Reflections on Emerging Teacher Identity

This paper explores how pre-service English teachers draw on their own language-learning experiences as they begin to construct their professional identities. The study is based on reflective journal entries written by 30 future teachers in an English Didactics course. Each student was asked to complete three entries focusing respectively on their language-learning history, the ways in which this history may shape their future teaching, and their understanding of the teacher's role in today's world. Building on Yuan & Mak (2018), who link reflective learning with the construction of teacher identity, the study uses qualitative thematic analysis to trace the movement from personal experience to pedagogical interpretation and, finally, to broader conceptions of teacher identity. The study pays particular attention to how students either reproduce or critically view practices they experienced as language learners, as well as the values and beliefs they associate with their future role as teachers. Furthermore, it also highlights the potential of self-reflection as a tool in English teacher education, particularly in helping future teachers become more aware of the assumptions they bring from their own experiences as language learners.

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Beyond Feedback: Using Reflective Writing to Support University Students' Development in Presentation Skills

Reflective writing is increasingly recognised as a means of supporting students' metacognitive awareness, self-regulation and agency in learning. In presentation skills courses, however, reflection is often used primarily as a way of evaluating students' performance. This presentation explores how reflective writing can instead be deliberately incorporated into teaching as a tool through which university students learn to monitor their performance, identify areas for development and plan their next steps. The presentation draws on a qualitative analysis of reflective portfolios from an English-language university Presentation Skills course. Throughout the semester, students recorded their presentations and completed a short written reflection after each performance, focusing on their experience, strengths, difficulties and areas for improvement. The portfolios concluded with a final reflection on their development. Rather than treating these texts simply as evidence of students' performance, the analysis examines what reflective writing can reveal about students' developing capacity to evaluate their skills and regulate their subsequent learning. Preliminary findings suggest that, when embedded systematically into the course, reflective writing can help students identify recurring challenges, recognise emerging strengths and translate observations into concrete strategies for future presentations. The reflections also provide the teacher with valuable insight into students' perceived difficulties, learning needs and individual development, potentially informing subsequent teaching and feedback. The presentation therefore considers reflective writing not only as an assessment or reflection activity, but as a didactic tool for supporting student development and informing teaching. It proposes a cycle of performance → reflection → evaluation → goal setting → future action, and discusses practical ways in which teachers can design and use reflective writing to make students' learning visible and support more active ownership of their development.