



## Shadow Heroes Research and Development year information

This year our director Gitanjali Patel will be embarking on an exciting research project in Brazil where she will be working with two state secondary schools to test translation as a [critical pedagogical](#) method, and to explore young people's lived experiences of language standardisation. It will provide a rigorous, research-based foundation for our ground-breaking methodology, as well as the next phase of our work. This project will start in January 2023 and end in January 2024, when our normal service will resume.

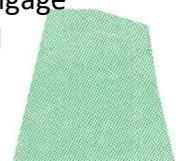
### About the research project

Language plays a key role in processes of minoritisation and is often invisibilised as a tool for discrimination. For example, standard language ideologies promote ideas about the superiority of one language variety over others. Within this belief system, the 'standard' variety is the most correct version, the most pure, and therefore characterises 'non-standard' varieties as inferior or invalid. In England, for example, the National Curriculum insists on teaching Standard English. Language education programmes in French, Spanish and German, for example, are most commonly taught in their standard forms. Standardisation is justified by promises of social cohesion: we will be able to communicate if we all speak the same language. In practice, however, standardisation often undermines local forms of expression and functions as a tool for discrimination. These hierarchies of value are not only established in societies but embodied and reproduced by language users. This research seeks to delve into the embodied experiences of such language hierarchies.

This research builds on seven years of work at Shadow Heroes. During her time in Brazil, Gitanjali will be working with two state secondary schools, one in the north-eastern city Fortaleza, and one in the south-eastern city Rio de Janeiro, testing translation as a critical pedagogy and exploring young people's lived experiences of language standardisation. Brazil is a country that largely sees itself as monolingual, despite the existence of over 200 indigenous languages and minoritised languages such as Japanese and German. Although Portuguese varies vastly across class, racial and regional lines, it is taught in schools in its standardised forms, much like other places in the world. Brazil therefore presents an excellent place to explore lived experiences of language standardisation practices and their effects.

This research has two hypotheses:

- 1) Translation can be a critical pedagogical tool to engage young people in questions around language ideologies and their effects. Translation is a process and a practice embedded in social contexts. It both relies on how we conceptualise language, culture and difference and fosters critical engagement with ideologies of language. Unlike the majority of current literature on translation teaching, this research proposes a translation pedagogy that does not attempt to train translators, nor teach a second language, nor form a part of a literature course. Rather, it presents the case for translation to be a potentially transformative critical pedagogy to engage all students in questions around language and power and, as a result, prompt wider social





change.

2) A more nuanced and dynamic view of language may reveal that the experiences of so-called 'monolingual' young people are comparable, or perhaps even similar, to the experiences of so-called multilingual young people, due to the vast variation that can occur within one named language.

### **How will this research tie into Shadow Heroes work?**

This research feeds directly into the work of Shadow Heroes as it allows us to think more deeply about the experiences of both language users who see themselves as monolingual and those who see themselves as multilingual. It will nuance our workshops which already place a strong emphasis on language ideologies and variation, ethics, subjectivity and positionality. It will thus provide a rigorous, research-based foundation for Shadow Heroes's ground-breaking methodology and the next phase of our work.

If you are a researcher/ practitioner with similar interests, or if you would simply like to learn more, please get in touch: [info@shadowheroes.org](mailto:info@shadowheroes.org)

