Open Centre for Languages and Cultures

Distinguished Speaker Series, 12-Dec-2022

Professor Alison Phipps:

Languages for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue and Peace

Edited transcript

Mirjam Hauck – Director of The Open Centre for Languages and Cultures

Welcome to the fifth and last event in our *Distinguished Speakers* series. When I say ours, I mean the *Open Centre for Languages and Cultures* at the Open University. We have the great pleasure of having Professor Alison Phipps with us today for the talk and Dr Laura Puente Martin for the introduction of our short course in *The Languages of Crisis*.

Alison Phipps sis the *UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts* at the University of Glasgow and Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies. She has held various prestigious positions as visiting professor at Otago University and Auckland University in New Zealand, and as a thinker in residence at the University of South Australia. She's also the principal investigator for two large AHRC grants: *Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State*, and *Cultures of Sustainable and Inclusive Peace (CUSP)*.

You have a unique talent, Alison, in helping our scholarly minds to explore places where they would not necessarily go on their own. You are currently the Co-Director of the *Global Challenge Research Fund South Migration Hub* and ambassador for *The Scottish Refugee Council*. You're an academic, and activist, an educator, and published poet. And most of all, you are a good friend, and a warm colleague. It is an incredible honour to have you as a speaker in our series.

Over to you. Thank you

Alison Phipps

Thank you so very much Mirjam and herzlichen Dank for that really warm welcome. It is as always, a pleasure to be amongst the most open of open colleagues at the Open University and in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics. I was so sorry when the date of this lecture was pushed and pushed again due to all kinds of different things that have been happening in our country, all out of our control. But I'm really pleased that on this beautiful day up here in Scotland, where I'm looking out to the Campsie Fells, which are dusted with snow, and watching children skating on an icy football pitch opposite my house. I'm just a few 100 yards away from the river Clyde, that site of so much turmoil and unrest, so much goodness, and so much badness, so much war-mongering, and so much peace-making that I can be with you to think about and think with you on this really important new course that you have - the short course on languages in conflict and crises - but also to be with you to share with you from some of my own research experience and recent thinking about the

place of language and languages in in conflict and crisis. And also, because we know conflict and crisis in the yearning for and the work for what we might call the world of nonviolence or a world of peace.

I've entitled this talk with you *Languages for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue and Peace* and That is, as a way of really acknowledging the work that I'm presently doing with UNESCO. I'm entering a stage in my life and career where I think many of the things I've been working on are beginning to be best articulated as long, involved reports with many recommendations, executive summarise, tables and hyperlinks. As someone who tends towards the poetic, I found the transition into this kind of work a little tricky at times. But I do think it's important and it's an important way of speaking and translating work, which has happened often in base communities, with and alongside people who have experienced the worst of conflict, into those corridors of power, those places where decisions are made, and those places where normative frameworks are crafted in language, and crafted in law, in articles, in instruments, in frameworks, in models, in order to try and bring large numbers of people into better ways of developing work. This has been a particular focus of my work recently with UNESCO, where I've been one of the authors of the *[Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue and Peace](#)*. I'm going to speak a bit more about that later in the presentation.

But to start with, I want to give you a brief story. And in my practical experience of peace-making, we can't do any work of enabling peace without having recourse to language as a means of storytelling. And often within that recourse to language, having a place within a story to tell tales of how language hasn't worked, or hasn't necessarily enabled us to properly understand one another, and has led both to conflict but also to humour. So the story I want to tell you is of Dra al-Jaafari, who was the first democratically elected prime minister of Iraq after the second Iraq War, the second Gulf War, and Dr al-Jaafari was invited by the Iraqi refugee community to come and speak to the people in Glasgow, who had claimed asylum or been granted refugee status and were living and working in Glasgow. He came and he addressed a packed lecture theatre, and he did so in Arabic and through the means of a wonderful translator. That translator took time over two hours to both give an account of the difficult situation facing the post-conflict, post-war Iraq, the vision of politics, and politics working towards peace within a difficult liberal peace-making framework that was tentative and problematic. And to address the concerns of those members of the Iraqi diaspora living and working in Glasgow.

Afterwards, Dr al-Jaafari had asked for the opportunity to meet with scholars working with refugees and with the diaspora at the University of Glasgow, who were the hosts. And so myself and two other colleagues had the opportunity to meet with him in a closed room amongst many bodyguards, and in an atmosphere that was thick with tension, hope and expectation, Dr al-Jaafari spoke to us through his interpreter. During the course of that conversation, when we shared our hopes, our concerns, our fears, I had recourse to the phrase, 'a hermeneutic of suspicion', and I wanted to speak with him about the need for care when interpreting the things people say or the interpretations that people place, and for us always to be able to bring a critical lens to bear on what was brought to us even in contexts where we are hopeful for peace. The translator struggled to understand what a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' was, and how to translate it, but Dr al-Jaafari understood the English and turned to his translator and told him what a hermeneutic of suspicion was. Now I have sufficient Arabic to understand what those words were and my first response was of

incredulity and not a little anger in my experience of someone using an interpreter, when it was not required, or not required for exact understanding. But my second understanding was that here was a man who was presiding over one of the most violent contexts in the world, and a man who was insisting on a full understanding and full expression of what needed to be said in his own Arabic terms and then to slow it down through an interpreter.

I think it was through that lesson, that lesson of shock and bewilderment of understanding and realisation that I came to see the vital role that languages can play through translation in the work of peace-making at really quite an advanced level. Because languages, slow things down. Languages slow things down in order to care; in order to care for all of those present; in order to care about and for the work of understanding; in order to care for the work that needs to be taken; in order to take a very careful next step. Without slowing things down, that next step might be into a void, or might be into danger, or might be into a place where we really should not tread.

Over the last 10 years, I've been particularly engaged in work that has been looking at intercultural dialogue and peace using both languages and the arts. In many ways, I see the arts as language, and languages as arts, as both joined together as a full part of what we termed freedoms of expression, but what are, I think, part of our ability as human beings to make sense of the world. And the more I've worked in contexts which are intercultural and multilingual, the more I've realised that actually enabling those contexts to be as multilingual as possible, has been particularly important. That the work done in places where things are opaque, where they are incoherent, where we are bewildered, where we're struggling to make sense of things, to find the gist of things, where we're mired in surprise or shock because something has been said or something has happened that we don't readily understand and can't order into a normal and normative frameworks. Where we are required to exercise a patience that in our normal fluency we are not required to offer. When we may have to wait quite a long time before meaning arrives, or where we might have to hear things several times over, through several different media, of languages or even of arts. That all of these are really vital to the work, the slow, difficult, careful work of speaking into conflict, and out of conflict, and into peace.

The peace-building that I've done over the last year has often been with women and women's groups, and with girls in particular and that's been the focus of the *Cultures of Sustainable and Inclusive Peac*e project that I'm leading at the moment, where we're looking at Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Sustainable Development Goal 16 - so women and women and girls - and then also looking at institutions for peace and looking at the meso-level, looking at those language schools, those language classes, those cafés that are a worktime, usually offered by women like my mother, a retired English teacher who just loves to be part of offering hospitality and offering a place of speech and learning. Looking at places where women and girls can come together to be part of a cultural work, of leading maybe dance projects, or crafting projects, leading projects which are working with cooking or gardening. All of these things where language just flows and works really quite naturally and without necessarily the focus being on the learning of a language but more the using of it in a space that is felt to be gentle and generative. And in this work of really three decades worth of peace-building work. I've worked with young people, with refugees, with indigenous people, with women and girls with international students, and artists in an arts environment, environmental contexts, and a lot with the media. Always turning to languages, but increasingly understanding the work as needing to be held and framed

within contexts which anthropologists would understand as being ritualised or ceremonialised, as having recourse to normative frameworks, sometimes through legal framing, sometimes through framings which might be weird and wonderful and strange, and where we might even say, 'here be dragons', but which are part of wrapping cultural work in the necessary strength of framework and structure to allow peace-building work to happen. It's also occurred in a lot of policy forums and research contexts, and always has had recourse to multilingual work.

And all of this has been happening over the last 10 to 15 years in a context where, to follow Deleuze and Guattari, we might say that fascism is desired, and that that is what has to be explained. Well, certainly in my work, I see hearts break daily, families separated from one another, people hearing and receiving news of deaths by drowning in the Mediterranean in particular, where over 40,000 people have lost their lives. But also increasingly within the Channel context. And then across the global South, where 85% of migration takes place where the public space is fraught, and where speech is hasty, and purist and often newly essentialising and redolent with angry discourse, which is quick to blame. Where a slowing down, like Dr al-Jaafari recognised, is really necessary and which I also think was well expressed by both Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Dr Rowan Williams in their recent [Reith Lectures](#), where we see war and violence proliferating and in taking new forms. And where in very normative terms the great hopes for peace, through justice and through reduction of inequality in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have really, as we take stock, been seen to be regressing on nearly all fronts, except perhaps one, which interestingly appears to be in the area of access to education for women and girls. But otherwise, we're going backwards.

So that the place where we stand to teach, the place where we stand to learn, the place where we stand to speak of languages and conflict, and languages in crisis, is, as the poet David Wagoner has said, a place which we still have to call home, but which we need to treat as a powerful stranger. Because it's no longer framed particularly in high income contexts. It's no longer framed as a place that is bound as easily as it was, by the great *entente cordiale,* by the work of peace that led the European Union to be granted the Nobel Peace Prize. But those areas of global compact and global accord are fracturing and fragmenting, and that reaches deeply into our institutions, into the culture wars that we experience in the present, and into many of the local and small communities that we are part of right down into our families where discourse can often be difficult, where even sitting at table might be hard.

The place where we learn and teach about languages and conflict, and languages and climate crisis, in my experience is complex, complicated. It's also normal. And it's language. And when I say 'normal', I mean that the work of conflict, the work with conflict, is normal and is every day. Conflict is something that happens to us all the time in all moments. Maybe for you today, your first conflict was the idea that you actually had to get out of bed this morning, or scrape ice off a window. But the conflicts that we come up against which breed stories, small stories, medium-sized stories, and the big stories that are the epic tales, that have accompanied us through history, stories, and also words, old words and new words about how we make room for change in our lives, that then can mean that we are enabling conflict to be transformed into something approaching an imaginative idea of peace. And it's a time when we need careful concepts. And really, I think this centrally for

me is the ground of my work in this place of trying to research and learn and teach for non-violence. And it's been true in all contexts of semantic and seismic shifts in history.

I've put up an image there of the Berlin Wall and I'm thinking here of Raymond Williams, his work on structures of feeling, which he wrote about in that amazing book, back in the 1980s, called *Marxism and Literature*, where he talks about the way that in a time of crisis or a time of major change, new coinages, new words, new phrases come about. In 1989 in German, it was the word 'Wahnsinn' or 'die Wende', which eventually came to be the terms that settled enough for us to speak about collectively and understand what we were talking about. Even if the content was not yet something we could speak of with ease. This is certainly true of the pandemic or COVID-19 where those terms have to do so much work and heavy lifting for the grief that we've experienced and for all that has been lost in the last three to four years, as well as some of the ambiguities of what's been experienced. Other phrases which have settled out of conflict, phrases like '9/11', just a simple date. Phrases within the UK at the moment where we struggle with what we're speaking about as nations of England and Scotland and Britain and Wales, and Northern Ireland. When we speak of the refugee crisis, which is really a crisis of hospitality, where we have phrases which we need to place under constant erasure and revision in order to try and find better things to do with language. When we look at the ways that the ideas of Cartesian Dualism of, '*I* think therefore, *I* am', the individualisms, which have dominated the rich world contexts, particularly of what we laughingly call the *Global North* - so often it's not the North it's a scattering of countries in certain privileged and colonially settled geographical contexts, - where we speak of individualism, but where actually there is a resurgent, quiet development of a philosophy called *Ubuntu,* again, grabbing at and taking a different term from a different language in context, to try and express something about the collective the commons, a people made by other people, a porosity of spirit and humanity.

In the early hopeful days of the abbey government in Ethiopia, when Abiy was awarded a Nobel Prize, the term *medemer* was used a term meaning unity, a term which has quickly turned and dissolved into ashes. I experienced work in in a research project where we were looking at the possibility of medemer in the Horn of Africa as a unifying context as the war and what will eventually probably be termed a genocide in the Tigray region began to be enacted. So some of the words that come to be are very ephemeral placeholders, difficult, powerful, contexts used by powerful people, maybe out of hope, but which then disintegrate. And in this context, we also have phrases like 'non-violence', or like 'peace, all of which have particular histories underpinning them, which aren't easy and which need careful critical interrogation in the courses that we offer in universities today. It's a conflict for me in this time, is a place, which needs to be taken care of, and needs creativity. It needs words which are old as well as new but certainly placed under critical power. It needs an acoustic that is one we can hear one which isn't deadened, and by what Simone Weil has called 'words of the middle range'. She speaks brilliantly in her work *Gravity and Grace* and in her essay *Human Personality* of words which will just not endure, placed under erasure, words which aren't strong enough to hold the work of peace, the work of translation, words, which can't sustain the slow pace which is needed. She speaks also of words, which we might need to put in cold storage or in the attic for a while. I think following the work, particularly of thinkers like Foucault, in the postmodern and post structuralist era, there are words like 'ideology', which we put in the attic for a while as scholars, but have begun to

take down and dust down to see if there's any work that they can still do for us conceptually.

We need to be careful in a context where words can make peace and war. And that's particularly true in the fraught space of what we term 'white privilege', in the fraught space of what we term 'Black Lives Matters', in the fraught space of what we term 'Me Too', where so much violence has been perpetuated, that what we say must be carefully wrapped and carefully used, and maybe not even spoken of in English, but given a chance to breathe in other languages and other words, because English has been such a perpetuator of so much that has been violent. And sometimes what we need are the words that are unadorned that might be spoken by the poet. Heidegger has said that it is the work of poets to unconceal being, and to speak the words of the future, that words be stripped back or laid bare. Or that means might be found again in the rubble once we're sifting through to see what's left, when it's very hard to speak of anything. And I think maybe this is something that Adorno was speaking of when he said that after Auschwitz there can be no poetry. That there was too much rubble and too much horror, for us to be able to speak of anything in a future that might be poetic. Which brings me from the poetic to the policy and to UNESCO and to the mission that binds the work that I do as UNESCO Chair for Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow.

In the preamble to the UNESCO mission, the speakers, the writers of that mission, spoke of wars being made in the minds of people and that in the minds of people we need the defences of peace to be constructed. This is work that binds the work that I'm presently engaged in and that I want to bring to your attention through the work we've been doing for enabling intercultural dialogue and peace. Intercultural dialogue is very much where languages have their situation in the work of intercultural dialogue in UNESCO. The work of intercultural dialogue has been looking at what is it that enables intercultural dialogue to exist. Working with the *Institute for Economics and Peace*, they've been really looking very carefully and methodically and using quite a lot of metrics to look at the critical and systemic work that can be done, to see what kinds of systems might be produced that enable intercultural dialogue to flourish. Now, unsurprisingly, the enabling environment characteristics that have been identified, tend to be most present where there are the greatest number of resources available. In 89% of current conflicts that are occurring in the world, these occur in contexts where communication between groups is low, where there's little respect of mother language or ethnicity. We can see that for 1.5 billion of those living in countries with low levels of intercultural communication systems between groups, global challenges, like absolute poverty and terrorism and forced displacement, are more prevalent. But we can also see that there are a couple of areas where, regardless of how resource poor an area is, there are things that can still be undertaken. And that's very much where my own work has been located in recent years. The strong leadership and organisational systems and the opportunity for freedom of expression in another language and through the arts can both counterbalance the challenges that are faced in weaker economies, in other words, the work that you are doing in the Open Centre for Languages and Cultures sits right at the heart of the work that is needed for sustaining and enabling intercultural peace. There are a whole range of different characteristics of leadership and freedom of expression, that are present in the UNESCO work looking at what might be possible for the work to be restored and to be possible that can enable peace and enable intercultural dialogue. But in particular, imagination, the ability to think imaginatively, and

practice imagination, and to do it in multipolar ways. To do it courageously and through risk-taking. The one thing that is common across language learning programmes is the ability of people to take risks and step outside of their own language environment, and to do it in a way that builds communities. Language learning can never be an individual activity. It always requires a certain degree of bravery, which I think is often sadly unchampioned, but which is part of the ability to set yourself into the humble place of trying something out and having a go at working and saying things in other languages, in other places. It's about the characteristics that also characterise hospitality, not as an uncritical 'come-all-ye-everything-can-work', but as a careful, worked out, practical set of ways of ensuring that people are entering into a hospitality of language and a hospitality of place. Leaders in these contexts will often be characterised by joy and loyalty and love and celebration, and legends and stories might grow around their work, and the commonality of what they're up to. In my own work, what I've seen is that when we make room for the arts of expression and the arts of joy, then we can see a whole range of work that takes us from conflict resolution – i.e. a framework where we think we can come up with one solution - to something that is dynamic and conflict-transformational, that will build something that will end something destructive and build something desired, multipolar, relational, embedded in systems in which relationships that can work, and be part of an economy of dynamic capacity, of a transformational capacity. Such a capacity will often work within multiple timeframes, we'll be able to think historically, within the present, but also imagine a future. Will be able to pose the enemy energies of a conflict as a dynamic and as a dilemma, but will also be able to embrace complexity, and that in particular, is an important part of what multilingualism and multilingual capacities allow: they allow us to have many points of contact.

In our work with migration in recent years, we've ceased speaking of migration, but instead have looked at all the different ways in which migration is conceptualised in different languages and in different spaces. That has allowed us to see that migration isn't understood as migration. It's actually something that is a highly storied, complex, multiply identifiable space. Once we start to tell stories about what that looks like, it changes radically what it is that we are doing. I can offer you a lot of different examples of what this looks like, but I want to end with the work we were doing recently in Harare, which I've just returned from with *Literature Festival* and with outreach programmes. The title of the Harare programme was, *We Are Joy*, and I find it really interesting that at the moment within the arts and humanities and social sciences, we are having recourse to theological concepts that need a lot of work and excavating, words like 'joy' and words like 'healing'. They're being used in the arts, but they're also being used in social movements, and within movements for change as an ontological declaration in the face of epistemic injustice and historical trauma. Joy is counterproof, joy is defiance, joy is resistance, and joy is an old and new language for peace work. It celebrates a liveliness, and a possibility of life in places of death and abjection. So, it fascinates me that in one of the poorest countries in the world, in a place of enormous gender-based violence, and particularly femicide, that joy would be the declaration and the method for the work that we've been involved in and that we're seeing across a range of different contexts.

I think what I've really come to understand is that this work is slow and need programmes like your own at The Open University, that build up gradually, piece by piece and pronouncement by pronouncement, course by course, lesson by lesson, assignment, by assignment, promise by promise, poem by poem. It's not given abruptly, the new world that

we long for, but rather like the new self in psychotherapy, it's given slowly, but surely. It's given through metaphors and movement, and it needs courtesy and also the ceremony, the normative ceremonies of our institutions, our frameworks our graduations our celebrations, but also of the kinds of ceremonies that we find in indigenous cultures and remade by refugees in the indigeneity of their lands. Language, says Pádraig Ó Tuama, the poet, needs courtesy to guide it, precision won't do for healing, he says, because there is no word big enough for the hell that is survived. So here is a complicated place that we stand in. Here is perhaps joy, but it is also sorrow. And words are a way to survive a life to turn an experience that you would rather not have had into something where you can and are perhaps sacramentalizing it, wrapping something new around it, something not said or made previously, that says, 'We care for this. We care for this enough to make something new and different with it.' And that, my friends is poetic work, language work and can in the arts of peacebuilding, be slow, careful, quiet, peace-building work.

Thank you.

Mirjam Hauck

It's difficult to say anything now. Thank you, Alison.

I would like to say something, Alison, if I may, I think one of the many, many things that struck me while listening to you was that you said, the refugee crisis is really a crisis of hospitality. It shows how powerful the way we frame things is. The message I take away from that is we are eternally in a state of awareness-raising. Awareness-raising through the way we consciously use words, expressions. And, as you say, it's slow, and there is no point of arrival really, anymore, ever. I think that's my main takeaway from your contribution.

Alison Phipps

I find the words of T.S Eliot going through my head quite a lot, '…to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time' [*Little Gidding*]. That it's very much a cyclical process. And I know that in all of our curricula and our essay guidelines and our project charts and Gantt charts, and we're always working in a space, which is, how do I put it, it's linear, it expects us to be linear, but the but I really love the work of John Paul Lederach, where he speaks in his book *When Blood And Bones Cry Out*, which he wrote with his daughter, Angie, and he said he'd increasingly realised it's a circle, and there's nothing so powerful as a circle. Certainly, in the work that I do. I'm constantly having recourse to a circle, and I'm constantly working with objects that are circular, or with forms of music that are circular, or with sitting in a circle and knitting this jumper I'm wearing last year. This was the beginning, in many a peace-making session online, where it was just creating in a circle, and finding that circularity important; that we're aware, 'Ah! Here we are again', but it's a slightly different place.

And maybe just on that reframing, I do think there is a great power in reframing and thinking reframing together. We've just finished a large piece of work that we launched in Brussels last week, which was looking at refugee integration. We've had a strategy for refugee integration in Scotland that has been developed in partnership between the local authorities, who are responsible for service delivery, the Scottish Refugee Council who are

responsible for integration in communities, the Scottish Government, who are responsible, obviously, for the health of the nation under the devolved competencies, and then ourselves in the UNESCO Chair who are responsible for independent thought. We've been looking at how we framed integration, and it's a great strategy we've got. It's based in human rights, and it's been very much focused on human rights criteria, but on service delivery to people. I think what we've realised through the research is that arriving at a place where we can say, 'Yes, this is good'. But we can see that actually saying, refugee protection is one thing, but refugees living lives alongside communities that are thriving and flourishing is a very different thing. Often people are placed into communities that are not thriving and flourishing, and that are very frightened. And that doesn't mean that we're working in an environment where we have enabling environments for intercultural dialogue and peace - we have the opposite. So, we're looking at how we shift our work in Scotland to be about creating an enabling environment for peace and to do that, that needs to be focused not on refugee protection - that's just the first step - but actually on intercultural communicative competence; on a multilingual approach; on respect of mother language education; on development of communities through community development; on community agency; on refugee agency; on a sensitivity that is trauma-informed, both to the trauma of arrival and to the trauma, that is hospitality. And I say that as a person who's had people living with me in my home for fifteen years, who have come, you know, since well before *Homes for Ukraine* was a trendy thing to do and was a funded programme, but actually, you know, very much as a voluntary activity. So, I know that there is, as Derrida says, a certain violence in hospitality: you have to reorder your life; you have to change where you keep things in the fridge; you have to share your bathroom; you have to make room, and that action of making room is where conflict comes from, but also where we tell the stories that build peace, and tell them the possibility, and tell of the change we made to change it. And I think increasingly, it's the arts and humanities, and the social sciences, and applied linguistics that really have the frameworks and the power to think that space, theoretically, but also practically, for how we do that reframing as intercultural dialogue, so Mirjam, thank you for that comment and observation.

Mirjam Hauck

We could go on for many, many, many more hours, I'm sure, but I would like to hand over the virtual mic to Laura, now to introduce *The Language of Crises*. Over to you, Laura, take it away, please.

Laura Puente Martin

Hi. Hello, everyone. Hi. Okay. So well, while I was listening to Allison, I was quite happy that our short course is so much in line with what she has been talking about, where it's all about what Allison has been mentioning.

So my role here today is just to show you what the course looks like what it's got. And the first stop is the homepage of the course. So, it's got the usual VLE [Virtual Learning Experience platform] that we have in the Open University. And as with the rest, of the short courses in the Open Centre for Languages and Cultures, I believe, it's a course that is not

accredited, but you can still gain a badge if you complete the quiz. It's not that difficult, I promise!

So, as Allison has said, this is a huge, huge topic. What did we do? How did we break it into chunks? It's got just five units where we've tried to fit the most important things in.

The first one ties in completely with what Alison has been explaining, because it's about telling the tale, living through a crisis, that narrative that individuals tell themselves as they are going through the crisis, and as they go over the various stages that have presented serious obstacles and challenges. So, we start the course with several examples of narratives in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we also offer an introduction of some key intercultural concepts, such as 'culture', so-called 'reverse cultures', and so on. The second unit deals entirely with language, with those new words that Allison mentioned, coming up as the crisis develops. We look at individual, personal, family discourse in society, but also at how it's used by politicians' discourse and also in public health. And then, in Unit Three, we talk about the response through arts. The fourth unit is all about assessing information and how to establish that something is reliable and something we should go with. And finally, we are very much again on the same area as Alison, we look at specific population groups that find themselves more severely affected by crisis, often because the new crisis comes on top of another crisis that hasn't been resolved, and so on. So we try to cover that as well.

Just to show you the type of activities that you may find, there's plenty of opportunity to engage in discussions with other learners and also with the learning advisors. We start off with that idea of narrative: do you remember when you first learned about the COVID-19? Do you remember some other crisis that perhaps was more local to you, or, specific to your country? For example, learners talked about the Aberfan disaster, which I didn't even know about at the time as an advisor, having been brought up in Spain. It's very interesting how very local things, very national things stay in memory. In Unit Two, as I mentioned, we look at language, but we also start off by looking at the role of humour, how it's interconnected with language and culture and how it helps us to cope with a crisis, helping us to feel together, to feel a bit of power, that we've regained a little bit of power over what's going on. So just an example of a joke that was doing the rounds was a mural that appeared in Dublin showing characters from the film, *Back to the Future*, with Doc saying to Marty, 'Whatever happens, Marty, don't go to 2020!'. So, some examples of words that we used at the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, and even as the vaccines were being developed. You may remember some of these things, we may not be using them as much as we used to, which probably is a good thing, but this process will always happen in crisis. We will always have this concept developing. Some of them might feel more light-hearted, some of them are a lot deeper. There's a lot that has been said over the metaphor of war in the pandemic, and we show how metaphors are also part of the public discourse. What happens when we have a war, what metaphor do they use in the propaganda? We found an example, dating back to the Second World War, another war, another time of crisis. And how the *sakura* metaphor, the metaphor of a cherry blossom that falls down in its prime, in its bloom, was applied to the young lives of the soldiers, they wanted to sacrifice themselves for their country.

In the section that we have about art, we have tried to use a range of artistic expressions. We've got music that we might consider popular, like in this example [a record cover with the title '*Accendi l'arcobaleno'* with an image of seven keyworkers in uniforms the colours of the rainbow], that started the whole thing about the rainbow, and being a symbol of our

support for the health workers and also our gratefulness towards them, and a bit of a symbol of hope. I think people embraced this quite a lot in the country. I can recall many window displays, as we went on our walks. But we also have examples of a well-established artists, more classical artists, such as the *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*. Again, going back to another crisis, and another musical response that feels not perhaps light-hearted, quite the opposite, it is quite a haunting, unsettling piece, which is also important to consider. Then, in terms of another types of type of art, we also saw some examples of murals. Again, something we can easily see in the street. Making a mural is of course a collective effort, it's art that is open to everybody, it's not hidden in a gallery, we don't have to pay to see it, and it has this role in times of crisis.

In the part where we look at how to help people assess whether the information they're receiving is reliable or not, we've got some examples and some activities. One example this my colleague, Renata found these news report where we can assess whether Coronavirus is a 'blow weapon' that China stole from Canada and weaponized it, or whether perhaps the second piece of news is the most reliable one. We go through the various methods you can use to assess, to ascertain, that something is not fake news or is not unreliable information, even if it's not sinister, or whether it's proper and reliable information. We talk about various methods, but The Open University uses the *PROMPT* method where we look at: **p**rovenance, **r**elevance **o**f the activity, **m**ethod, **p**resentation, and **t**imeliness. We break down how you can look at the text, add a piece of information and assess for yourself whether this is fake news or not. And finally, it was difficult to find an example for the last week, the last unit of the of the course, which is all about various groups of people who find themselves in a worse situation than everybody else when a crisis hits, because they are already in crisis and they have been for a long time, which I think is what Allison was talking about in terms of refugees arriving onto areas where people are thriving and refugees arrive into areas where people are not thriving, so it's difficult.

To try to finish on a more optimistic note, I selected the section where we talk about gender. One of the points made is that women find themselves at higher risk in a worse situation due to the climate change crisis. This is affecting them more severely. But within that we selected efforts led by women not to solve everything, obviously, but to try to cope better with what's going on, try to organise themselves, trying to improve situations in a very practical and pragmatic manner. We've tried to highlight during the course, grassroots endeavours to overcome crisis, and often, of course, that may involve language, language use in a range of languages, and also having intercultural skills. But nevertheless, being aware of all these can help us communicate better with others and work towards that that peacebuilding in our very, very tiny capacity, like Alison was saying,

I hope you have enjoyed seeing what the course looks like and we would like, we would love to see you, obviously, in our VLE. Thank you.

Mirjam Hauck

Thank you, Laura. Thank you so much. I know it's very difficult to capture this enormous amount of work in 10 minutes. Alison has sent me a little message through the back channel and said - probably inspired also by what you have now presented – she would like to finish with a poem of hers for all of us if that's okay with everybody. I hand the virtual mic back to you, Alison.

Alison Phipps

Thank you so much. Yeah, just so lovely to see the arts taking their rightful place in the course that you've just presented Laura.

I thought that it might be quite nice on this winter day to offer you a poem about peacebuilding, which is also a poem about gardens. It's called *Heal Time*.

Heal Time

Dawn is violeting
the night sky.
Sleek in their blackCoats
and harsh of song
the rooks have left their
roost.

The stars flee,
setting as surely
as the sun rises.

From the pages
of my books the elders say
the way up is the way down.

Their voices
are lost to the years.
Their words
blackCoated
against a skyWhite page.

Keep falling
To rise.

Go down to
the river
to pray.

Take off your shoes.

To sow seeds,
you must be close to
rotting, blackened husks,

close to the dying
that will be living.

Kneel on the
turned earth

If you would plant
a garden.

But first
for now,
lay down your head.

For it is still war time.

Give yourself to the frailties
of dreamtime.

Healtime.
Then,
Heal time.

And rise, sleek coated
and harsh of song,
like the rooks
black-inking their
words against
the violet
of this day.

Mirjam Hauck

Thank you.

Let's give Alison a sign of our appreciation. Let's use the emoticons that we have, please. Thank you so much. I don't think I can add anything meaningful to this, Alison, just express my gratitude on behalf of all of us here today and that is wonderful to end the year and our speaker series with a poem. Thank you so much.

We'll start again in February 2023. With a talk by Zgu Hua on intercultural communication. We will keep everybody informed. And we look forward to being reunited with all of you. And now I'm going to find that humble place, Alison, that you have talked about.

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Take care of yourselves.

Alison Phipps

Thank you so much for having me. Go well, everybody, take care. Bye bye.

[End of transcript]