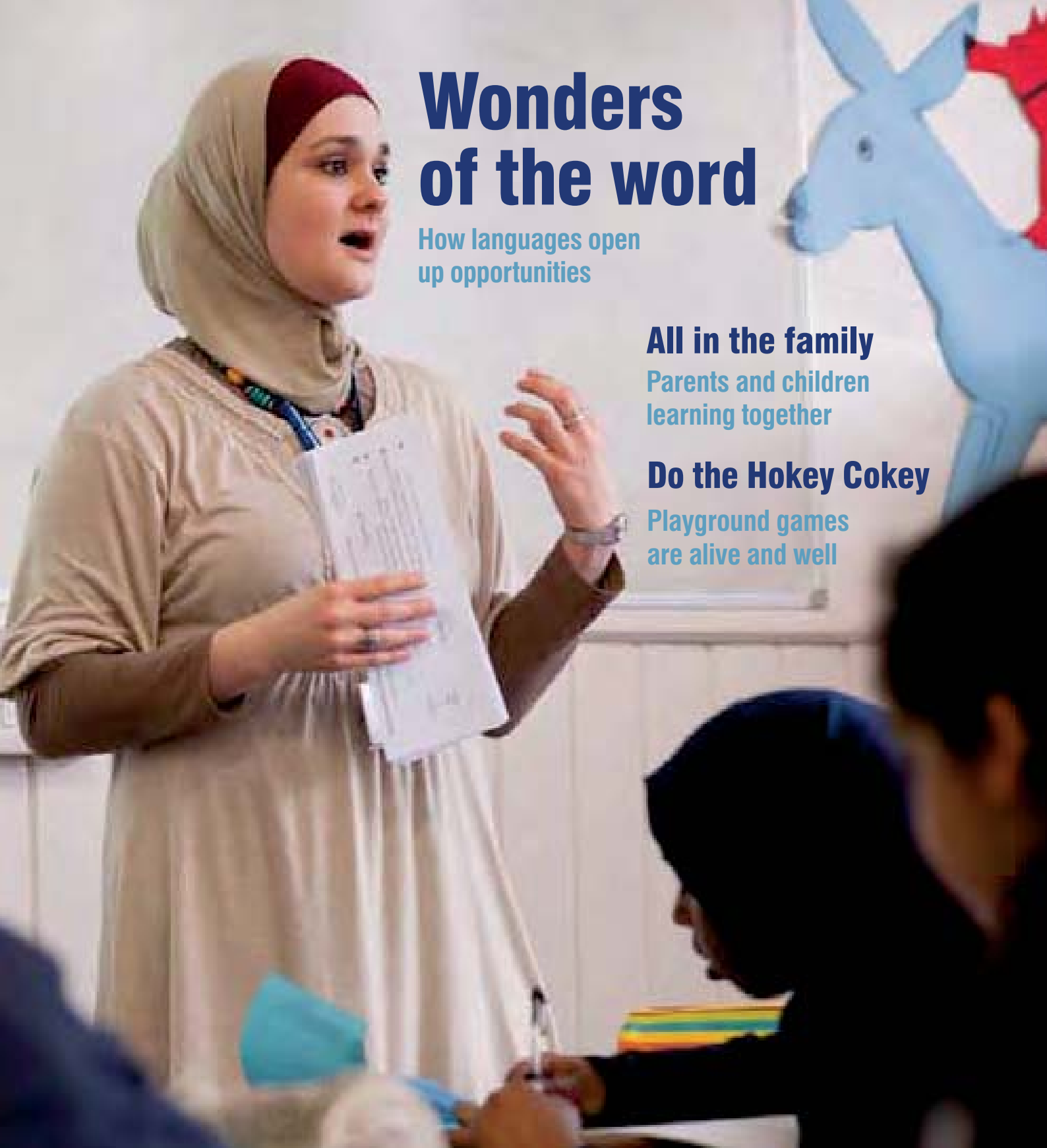


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# InstEd

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A woman wearing a beige hijab and a light-colored long-sleeved top is standing in a classroom, holding a stack of papers and gesturing with her right hand as if speaking. In the foreground, the back of a student's head wearing a dark blue hijab is visible. To the right, a large blue paper cutout of a donkey is mounted on the wall.

## Wonders of the word

How languages open  
up opportunities

### All in the family

Parents and children  
learning together

### Do the Hokey Cokey

Playground games  
are alive and well

# The art of teaching Arabic

Community languages come to life through poetry, dance, drama and design. **James Russell** visits one of four schools that are showing the way

**“W**E have five senses, and individuals learn in different ways – for some people it’s visual, for others it may be through sound. I think it’s important to use as many of the senses as possible in the process of teaching and learning,” says Luma Hameed, Arabic and German teacher at Sarah Bonnell School in Stratford, East London.

Sarah Bonnell is one of four schools involved in a Goldsmiths, University of

London research project which has been investigating the potential for using creative work – stories, dance, drama, artwork and multimedia – in the teaching of community languages, and how it affects pupils’ learning and confidence. The schools – a mainstream primary and secondary school and two community-based complementary schools – are teaching Arabic, Mandarin, Punjabi and Tamil. Sarah Bonnell is a language college where nine languages are offered, and

Arabic classes are currently being taught as part of the Nuffield Foundation-funded project.

Luma (pictured below) finds teaching “using visual methods rather than a textbook is more meaningful”, and it is clear that the students are highly engaged and stimulated.

“Personalising learning is very important,” she says. The approach encourages independent thinking. “The children enjoy and engage better, ultimately learning more.”

In addition, there are many cultural, social – and economic – advantages to studying a language such as Arabic. “Arabic is spoken in 22 countries within





the United Nations, and is one of the world's most widely used languages" Luma points out. "It is more and more in demand by companies worldwide, and many UK companies have links with the Middle East."

Cauthar Tooley (pictured opposite) is the headteacher at Sarah Bonnell, where the majority of pupils come from Muslim backgrounds. "With the current political situation worldwide, it's important to combat Islamophobia, and normalise the language and culture that goes with this religion," she says.

In class, Luma's Year 8 pupils have been asked to design their dream home, using drawings and models. In a follow-up session, they describe their designs in Arabic. Luma is now planning to work with the school's textile department so that students can make traditional British clothes and send them to Sarah Bonnell's link school in Morocco, along with essays about the clothing and how it was made.

The pupils are highly articulate and keenly aware of the benefits of learning

Arabic. One pupil, Nishat, commented that she found it a really useful language to study: "Many of the letters and words are the same as those found in the Qur'an, and as most of us in the class are Muslim, this helps us to understand it."

In the research by Goldsmiths, a number of pupils reported that they remembered new words more easily

### **"The range of languages spoken by our many bilingual students is a precious resource"**

when they met a genuine communication need, rather than appearing in a list to be learnt from a textbook.

Jim Anderson, from Goldsmiths' Department of Educational Studies, adds, "Language learning is an essential part of preparing young people to play their part in an increasingly interconnected and conflicted world." He believes there is a need for greater

diversity in the languages offered in mainstream schools: "The range of languages spoken by our many bilingual students is a precious resource, which should be recognised and supported."

The importance of passing on cultural heritage to the next generation through the teaching of community languages is widely recognised in the capital's schools.

Jim's research found that, creatively taught, community languages can make an important contribution to pupils' language and literacy, cognition, intercultural understanding and personal and social development.

Luma says that it takes quite a shift to adapt to these new methods of teaching. "You get used to standing in front of the whiteboard and giving the pupils instructions. Listen, repeat and write. That is the way we used to learn, and the way we used to teach." But she has found that the shift is yielding positive results. "It's not just that I want to teach them and want them to learn. They want to learn." ■

# Luma's creative ideas for language teaching

## To enhance students' listening and speaking ability:

1. Try a puppet show.
2. Use Voki ([www.voki.com/Voki\\_for\\_education.php](http://www.voki.com/Voki_for_education.php)), a free service that allows you to create personalised speaking avatars.
3. Record students reading a text or video students engaging in role plays and upload your recordings onto the school's managed learning environment (MLE).
4. If you have a partner school's link, create a room on the MLE where students can communicate and exchange opinions and discuss issues using the target language (TL).

## To enhance students' reading and writing ability:

1. Create dual language stories, using the community language and English.
2. Set up an art gallery. Students talk about their dream holiday, for example, then write about it, and then in pairs or small groups, they draw and paint a piece of art that will be displayed with their writing in an art gallery inside the school or classroom.

3. Create a diary with photos. (This could be planned to develop writing in a specific tense).
4. Create leaflets about saving the environment, celebrating the Olympics 2012, or any other topic using either the language only or the language and English.

## Further resources

A free, practical booklet is available from May 2011 from Goldsmiths. It aims to support teachers who wish to bring a creative focus into their teaching approach. It covers how to set up a project, building a positive learning environment, cross-curricular planning, ideas for stories, drama/dance, artwork and e-teaching and learning.

The booklet suggests starting small, perhaps by introducing, working on and then doing creative activities around a poem, song or simple story. [www.gold.ac.uk/clcl/multilingual-learning/creativity/](http://www.gold.ac.uk/clcl/multilingual-learning/creativity/) Further information about this and other Goldsmiths projects related to language and culture are available on the Multilingual Learning website: [www.gold.ac.uk/clcl/multilingual-learning/](http://www.gold.ac.uk/clcl/multilingual-learning/)

