
WORKSHOP PROPOSAL

Tracing Tides & Transitions

A poetry workshop on language and the many selves we carry across it

By Anna Fuchs



Overview

“When I think of raspberries, I picture bright, uniform fruit on a supermarket shelf. Himbeeren are different: smaller, softer, growing in my mother’s garden in Germany. I only realised the difference after moving from Germany to the UK.”

As more people study, work, and live across languages and cultures, questions of belonging increasingly become questions of language. Language shapes how we make sense of ourselves, and happenings around us. For people who have moved (between countries, or stages of life), some experiences seem to exist between languages.

Tracing Tides & Transitions is a creative writing workshop that invites participants to notice. It moves deliberately from expansive writing towards increasingly concise forms, allowing participants to discover which words remain meaningful to them after repeated acts of selection. Poetry offers a unique way of doing this because it rewards precision, ambiguity, and close attention to language. Whether participants write in English, German, Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish, dialect, or a mixture of languages, every linguistic choice becomes part of the creative process rather than something to overcome. No previous experience of poetry is required.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- develop confidence writing creatively across one or more languages
- explore the relationship between language, memory, and identity
- learn practical poetic techniques including free writing and the *Elfchen* form
- practise editing through poetic compression and close attention to individual words
- produce three original pieces of writing to take away
- engage in optional discussion within a supportive and non-judgemental group environment

Workshop Structure (see Appendix 1 for plan)

Participants begin by collecting words associated with identity before moving into free writing in whichever language(s) feel most natural. They then identify words that carry particular emotional or personal significance and use these to create an *Elfchen*, a concise eleven-word poem whose formal restrictions encourage precision. Following a short reflective walk, participants develop a longer poem in the language that feels most true to themselves. Sharing remains optional, with feedback structured around curious, attentive listening rather than critique. Participants leave with three completed pieces of writing and a self-addressed postcard, which is posted to them one week later as an invitation to revisit the work after the workshop has settled.

Formats

Format	Suitable for
90-minute workshop	Festival events, university orientation programmes, intros to multilingual creative writing
3-hour workshop	Full workshop experience

Format	Suitable for
Half-day / full-day	Creative writing programmes, residencies, language centres
Weekend retreat	Literary festivals, residential retreats, and interdisciplinary arts programmes

Ideal group size: 10–15 participants.

Suitable Audiences

This workshop compliments intercultural communication training, as it addresses the internal experience of holding more than one cultural or linguistic identity at once, rather than the external skill of navigating between them. The workshop has particular relevance for:

- Universities and international student programmes
- Literary festivals and literature houses
- Libraries and adult education providers
- Language centres and intercultural initiatives
- Workplaces and employee networks supporting internationally mobile or multilingual staff (global mobility programmes, DEI functions, employee resource groups)

While especially resonant for people navigating transition (a new country, language, degree, profession, or stage of life) the workshop is open to anyone interested in creative writing. The workshop is not a therapeutic intervention.



Facilitator

Anna Fuchs is a multilingual poet whose work explores language, migration, memory, and place. Born in Germany and having lived across Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy, Vietnam, and Austria, she writes from sustained practice of moving between languages and cultures. Her debut poetry collection, *Tracing Ripples* (Herodot Verlag, 2026), was presented at the Leipzig Book Fair and she has performed at poetry events in Vienna, Berlin, Ho Chi Minh City, and London. She facilitates an international weekly writing group connecting participants across multiple continents, taught language and conversation-phonetics courses at Goethe Institute Vietnam, and was awarded a scholarship to study with Andrea Grill at Vienna's Poetry School. She holds a First Class Honours BSc in Social Sciences from University College London.

Contact annac.fuchs@gmail.com | Web: www.annafuchs.studio | Instagram: [@annafuchswrites](https://www.instagram.com/annafuchswrites)

Appendix A – Sample 3-hour Session Plan

The session moves from introductions to free writing and a first poem, to sharing that always stays optional, through a break, and into a second round of writing and sharing. Throughout, I explore themes of roles and identity, and I actively encourage writing in your own language — whether that means an accent, mixing languages, or stripping back to only a few words. It's as much a practice of connection and community as it is of writing alone.

Time	Segment	What happens
0:00–0:05	Welcome & framing	Why this room, why this exercise. Sharing as voluntary throughout.
0:05–0:10	Wake-up	A quick, playful gesture like giving your arms and face a two-minute “shower” with your own hands tuned to whatever the room's energy needs.
0:10–0:30	Five verbs, five nouns	Each person finds five verbs to describe themselves, and five nouns that come to mind for “identity.” Introductions using only the verbs and we listen for overlaps. We collect the nouns, unsorted, on a board as a word-pool.
0:30–0:37	Free-write I	Seven minutes, whatever comes. In whatever language(s), no grammar rules.
0:37–0:44	Free-write II	Seven minutes on identity. Notice, without force, if a word arrives in a language other than the one you started in and let it stay.
0:44–0:49	Marking the charge	Quickly scan both pieces. Underline whatever moves something in you (not the best-written lines, just the words with a pulse).
0:49–0:54	Elfchen introduced	Five lines, eleven words total. The five verbs and five nouns from the opening are offered back as material.
0:54–1:09	Walk & write	Five minutes walking outside in silence, then ten minutes to write the elfchen (or two).
1:09–1:39	Sharing & feedback	Elfchen read aloud, sharing always optional. Listeners reflect back briefly: what they caught of the context, how they felt, and, at most, one “if this were my poem, I might...” to open possibilities.
1:39–1:49	Break	—
1:49–2:19	The poem in the language of your heart	Three short poems read aloud first (dialect and mixing languages like Gloria Anzaldúa's <i>to live in the borderlands</i>) as sparks. Then: write a poem, in your language, in your form, that doesn't lack anything.
2:19–2:49	Sharing & feedback	Same reflective format as before (context, what struck them, an optional “if this were my poem”).
2:49–3:00	Closing & take-home	Wellbeing and language-centre contacts. A stamped postcard, addressed by each person to themselves, collected and posted a week later. An optional sonnet-on-home extension for anyone who wants to keep writing.

A note on the sonnet: The session doesn't leave room to also build a rhymed sonnet well, so it's offered as a take-home extension: two quatrains rhyming abba abba, then a six-line turn rhyming ced ced, on the theme of identity.

Appendix B – Evidence Space

The workshop draws on research in multilingualism, expressive writing, and poetry pedagogy while remaining firmly rooted in artistic practice. It approaches movement between languages as a creative resource and a way of exploring how identity shifts across different linguistic and cultural contexts. Research suggests that multilingual creative writing can help participants explore experiences that may remain inaccessible within a single language. Studies of expressive writing indicate benefits for longer-term reflection and wellbeing, while emerging evidence suggests that poetry's emphasis on metaphor, ambiguity, and precision may offer distinctive possibilities for creative and personal exploration. See below for supporting research.

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Kassab, A., Jayatunge, R., & Bou Khalil, R. (2026). The therapeutic functions of poetry in mental health: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychiatry Research*, 356, Article 116897.

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