
WORKSHOP PROPOSAL

Tracing Tides & Transitions

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

By Anna Fuchs



Overview

As more people study, work, and live across languages and cultures, questions of belonging increasingly become questions of language. Language does more than describe who we are, as it shapes how we remember, belong, and understand ourselves. For people who have moved between countries, languages, cultures, or stages of life, some experiences seem to exist between words. *Tracing Tides & Transitions* is a creative writing workshop that uses poetry as a practice of observation, reflection, and close attention to language. Through guided writing exercises, multilingual exploration, and concise poetic forms, participants investigate how language influences identity and how different languages can hold different versions of the self.

No previous experience of poetry is required. The workshop welcomes anyone curious about language, whether they speak one language or several.

The Idea

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. The dictionary translated the word just fine. My memory did not. That small gap between words became the starting point for this workshop.

Rather than asking participants simply to "express themselves", the workshop invites them to notice. The workshop moves deliberately from expansive writing towards increasingly concise forms, allowing participants to discover which words remain meaningful 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.

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

The workshop progresses from open exploration towards increasingly refined writing. Participants begin by collecting words associated with identity before moving into free writing in whichever language or languages 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.

Throughout the workshop, sharing remains entirely optional, and feedback is structured around curiosity and 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.

Suitable Audiences

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)

Many organisations already offer intercultural communication training, which focuses on communicating effectively across differences. This workshop sits alongside that work rather than duplicating it: 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. 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 language and writing.

Formats

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

Educational Approach

The workshop draws on research in multilingualism, expressive writing, and poetry pedagogy while remaining firmly rooted in artistic practice. Rather than treating multilingualism as a challenge to overcome, 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 Appendix B for supporting research.

The workshop is not a therapeutic intervention. It offers a carefully facilitated creative space in which participants experiment with language through writing, reflection, and attentive listening. Sharing is always voluntary, and information about local wellbeing services can be provided where appropriate.

Facilitator



Anna Fuchs is a multilingual poet and interdisciplinary artist 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 experience of moving between languages and cultures.

Her debut poetry collection, *Tracing Ripples* (Herodot Verlag, 2026), was presented at the Leipzig Book Fair and traces a movement from self to encounter to landscape. She has performed at the Sprachspiel Biennale (Vienna), Kietzpoeten Berlin, and poetry events in Ho Chi Minh City, Berlin, and London. She facilitates an international weekly writing group connecting participants across multiple continents, taught biweekly language and conversation-phonetics courses at Goethe Institute Vietnam, and was awarded a scholarship to study with Andrea Grill at Vienna's Schule für Dichtung. She studied Social Sciences at University College London.

Logistics

- A room suitable for writing and discussion
- Pens and paper (or participants' own notebooks)
- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Access to a nearby outdoor space for a short reflective walk (where possible)
- Group size of approximately 10–15 participants

Contact

For bookings, programme discussions, or bespoke versions of the workshop, please contact:

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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

Dutton, J., & Rushton, K. (2021). Using the translanguaging space to facilitate poetic representation of language and identity. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(1), 105–133.

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Guo, L. (2023). The delayed, durable effect of expressive writing on depression, anxiety and stress: A meta-analytic review of studies with long-term follow-ups. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(1), 272–297. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12408>

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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Ramírez-Esparza, N., Gosling, S. D., Benet-Martínez, V., Potter, J. P., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2006). Do bilinguals have two personalities? A special case of cultural frame switching. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(2), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.09.001>

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Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 66(1), 174–184. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.66.1.174>