



The Humanities through the eyes of the School's academics



University of Cyprus
Department of French and
European Studies

María Victoria Soulé

Lecturer
Spanish Language and Culture

soule.maria-victoria@ucy.ac.cy

22894376

Interview

What is the significance of the humanities today?

The humanities remain essential in today's world because they allow us to critically examine the values, narratives, and cultural frameworks that shape societies. At a time when technology and globalization dominate much of public discourse, the humanities provide a lens for questioning assumptions, and preserving historical memory. They foster reflective thinking and help us understand not only where we come from, but also how we can imagine more inclusive and sustainable futures.

The humanities nurture critical citizenship and should encourage dialogue across cultures. They equip individuals with interpretive skills that are crucial for addressing social complexities—from questions of identity and belonging to issues of justice and human rights. They also cultivate creativity, ethical reflection and intercultural awareness, giving us the tools to confront global challenges with sensitivity and responsibility.

What challenges do they face?

The humanities face a number of challenges in the contemporary landscape. First, there is the persistent pressure of utilitarian thinking in education and policymaking, where disciplines are often valued according to their immediate economic returns rather than their broader social impact. This instrumental view tends to marginalize the humanities in favor of other fields.

Second, digital transformations pose both opportunities and difficulties: while new technologies allow for wider dissemination of humanistic knowledge, they also risk reducing complex cultural phenomena into easily consumable fragments. At the same time, the growing spread of misinformation highlights the urgent need for the critical and analytical skills that the humanities cultivate.

A central challenge for the humanities is to make their relevance visible in a world dominated by metrics and market-oriented logic. Another lies in ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, so that research and teaching speak to diverse audiences beyond academia.

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Where is your research focused, and how can we understand our world through your research field?

My research focuses on the intersection of international student mobility—including both study abroad and internationalisation at home—and the development of plurilingual identities through language learning. I am particularly interested in how students navigate their linguistic repertoires across different contexts and how these experiences shape their identities, opportunities, and relationships.

Study abroad has long been seen as a privileged site for language and identity development. My work examines this context critically, showing that it provides both affordances and constraints for students. While mobility can foster encounters with diversity and stimulate reflection on language practices, structural factors such as institutional policies, social networks, or prevailing language ideologies often determine the extent to which students are able to benefit. Plurilingual identity development, therefore, cannot be understood only through individual motivation or agency—it is also shaped by the wider social, cultural, and institutional environment in which students participate.

At the same time, I explore how internationalisation at home creates possibilities for those who do not travel abroad. By incorporating multilingual and multicultural dimensions into local classrooms and campuses, students can engage with difference in ways that are equally transformative. This broader view of internationalisation highlights that mobility is not limited to physical relocation; it can take place in everyday interactions where languages and cultures intersect.

By focusing on plurilingual identities, I move away from viewing languages as separate, compartmentalised systems. Instead, individuals draw on their entire repertoires—whether fluent or partial—to create meaning and connect with others. This perspective helps us understand the world as one where linguistic diversity is not an obstacle but a resource for inclusion, creativity, and intercultural dialogue.



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One important aspect of your research and its significance.

One important aspect of my research is the analysis of how plurilingual identity develops in different contexts, including those of mobility and internationalisation. Instead of treating language learning as the mastery of separate codes, I investigate how students mobilise their full linguistic repertoires—switching between, mixing, or mediating across languages—to position themselves in new social and academic environments. This approach recognises that students do not simply acquire additional languages; they reshape their sense of self and belonging in ways that reflect both personal agency and the influence of structural factors such as institutions, policies, and social networks.

The significance of this lies in its ability to challenge traditional views of language education. By showing that language learning is inseparable from identity, my research highlights the importance of creating educational environments that value linguistic diversity and encourage students to draw on all their languages. This applies not only to students who move abroad, but also to those who remain at their home institutions. Internationalisation at home—through multilingual classrooms, intercultural (virtual) exchanges, or the presence of international peers—can provide equally powerful contexts for students to negotiate their plurilingual identities