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Biosketch

David Tual is Professor of Language Education and the Director of the Centre for Languages and Inter-Communication (CLIC) at the University of Cambridge's Engineering Department. Building on over two decades of experience in language education, David has developed an expertise in language for specific purposes, curriculum development and innovative teaching methods.

David's scholarship is primarily situated at the intersection of language learning and engineering education, promoting global communication skills essential for future engineers.

Title

Beyond English, Between Worlds: Reimagining the Role of Language Centres in Higher Education

Abstract

Over the past decade, the role of language centres has evolved in response to changing expectations from students, academic disciplines and institutions. This evolution is perhaps particularly visible when a language centre is embedded within an engineering department, where language learning is inseparable from disciplinary practice and professional development.

This plenary reflects on how such a context has shaped the development of approaches that move beyond language teaching towards supporting students as communicators, collaborators and reflective professionals. Through examples including project-based learning, communication embedded in disciplinary contexts and reflective portfolios, it considers both the opportunities and the tensions that arise from working at the intersection of languages and disciplines.

Rather than proposing a definitive model, the talk offers a reflective perspective on the changing identity and positioning of language centres and invites discussion about how language professionals might embrace a more hybrid role in preparing students for increasingly complex, multilingual and interdisciplinary environments.