



The Native Scientist Project: Promoting STEM and multilingualism through outreach

Stephanie G. Zihms (1,2), Joana A. Moscoso (2), Patrick Rebuschat (3,4), Ana Catarino (2,5), and Tatiana Correia (2)

(1) University of the West of Scotland, UK (stephanie.zihms@uws.ac.uk), (2) Native Scientist Ltd, UK, (3) Lancaster University, UK, (4) University of Tübingen, (5) Heriot-Watt University, UK

The Native Scientist (Native) project trains and engages international scientists to deliver school workshops that combine science with language education. It brings together scientists and children with a common heritage language, and aims to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), language, and role model interactions. The purpose of this study is to (i) describe Native's workshops and (ii) present results of a first evaluation on the impact of the workshops.

Born from the desire of a group of foreign-born scientists in the United Kingdom (UK) to inspire underachieving, low socio-economic background immigrant children to do better in school and aim higher, the Native project was launched in June 2013 within the London-based Portuguese diaspora. It quickly expanded to other diasporas or cities in the UK and the rest of Europe. In 2014, the project was running in four different languages - French, German, Portuguese and Spanish and two countries – UK and France. Today, the Native project is being delivered in 10 different languages (Arabic, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish) and six different European countries, namely UK, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands and Norway (1).

While most people would agree that prioritizing STEM public engagement at an institutional or governmental level has several positive outcomes, including the fact that it encourages scientists to leave the ivory tower, experts in science communication have criticized that many outreach initiatives preach to the converted, engaging members of the public that are already engaged and having limited capacity to attract ethnic minorities or people from low socio-economic, low-educated backgrounds (2). Having this in mind, the Native project was designed to target immigrant pupils who speak a home language (also referred to as the heritage language) and a school language and have therefore the potential to become bilingual.