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TO EDUCATION (MEinART)**

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UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY

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**PROJECT PAPER 1
ON THE FINDINGS OF WP4**

Experiences, challenges and potential of implementing a participatory approach to designing educational material for and with refugee women in Greece

Roula Kitsiou, Sofia Tsioli, George Androulakis, and Inaam Alibrahim

Introduction: The Glocal Social Context

In this chapter we have adopted the term *reception crisis* (Spyropoulou & Christopoulos, 2016), since we do not refer to a *new* phenomenon, but to the intensity of the migration flows. Based on a global perspective of migration the refugees flows have placed many European countries in an *in transit* condition. After the EU-Turkey Refugee Agreement, Greece became an *in limbo* country trapping refugees locally, preventing them from being reunited with their families and hindering European mobility in general. The glocal social context is consequently characterized by both local and global considerations about the phenomenon of migration. The prolonged forced residency of refugees leads to the reproduction of current inappropriate reception practices and structures, racist attitudes and increasing xenophobia (Cabot, 2014).

In 2015, approximately 856,723 people arrived in Greece, whereas in 2016, because of the EU-Turkey Agreement, 173,450 people entered the country (UNHCR 2016 as mentioned in Kourachanis, 2018: 4). Regarding the contexts that are of specific interest for this paper, approximately 3,996 refugees arrived in Lesbos in May 2016, and 5,673 people arrived in February 2017. Concerning Athens, up to May 2016, 5,187 people resided in camps, while in February 2017 there were 5,166 people.

Refugee women's absence from public spaces results in their limited access to information,

while their care responsibilities (see project PRESS research data in Daskalaki *et al.*, 2017) leave them often unable to participate in information sharing activities and sessions. It is indisputable that refugee women face particular challenges related to their gender, their roles and their positions both in their society of origin and in the host society (see for example Jabbar, 2010). Traditional practices in their countries of origin may have been already harmful for women, they may have already experienced exclusion from meaningful participation in community structures, or they may have been victims of sex- and gender-based violence or destitution (UNHCR, 2011).

Kramsch (2018) taking into consideration the intense social pace, points out the necessity of a critical approach targeted towards the human agent, i.e. which takes into consideration individuals' feelings and human relations, that seem to be threatened by the rapid changes and mobility. Drawing from this perspective and applying it to the field of education, we may then perceive educators as cultural workers (Giroux, 2001) with an increased responsibility to act in a way which inspires their students to struggle for their rights. In this sense, education and more specifically language education plays a crucial role in creating women-friendly spaces and in awareness raising of women's rights, options, and ways to struggle for access to new paths of professional, family, social and personal life.

The present chapter adopts an inclusive framework of approaching language education and aims at describing how a group of women with multiple languages, cultures, religious traditions, ages, life and professional experiences, as well as educational and professional background, has worked and interacted in the digital workplace of Skype and through e-mail (computer-mediated collaboration), in order to create educational material for second language education of women with a refugee background. Taking into account the special conditions of transit and limbo as the context of the whole action, they opted for empowerment and intercultural awareness raising through dialogic and reflexive practices, as well as valuing women's identities through integrating non-west perspectives in the final product of the educational material. The authors of this paper have been involved in various stages and sub-teams of the project, as well as in the research that is presented here (see Figures 14.1 & 14.2).

The Project PRESS

Project PRESS' aim was the provision of education for different target-groups with a refugee background that had newly arrived in Greece. It was an initiative of the Hellenic Open University and was implemented from June 2016 to December 2017. It included a series of educational interventions, most of which concerned language education for children, adolescents and adults with a refugee background, in an emergency situation context (see Hos, 2016). In order to design and implement meaningful and appropriate actions for the target groups involved, the project included ethnographic interdisciplinary field research using mostly qualitative research tools, such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, language portraits and discussions with refugees along with questionnaires (see Daskalaki *et al.*, 2017). This was the first stage of the project.

More specifically, the PRESS research team was composed of sociolinguists and social anthropologists (see Figure 14.1) who observed, recorded and reported the situation in the Greek context identifying current needs and future aspirations of various refugee groups residing in refugee camps in three geographical sites in Greece (Lesvos, Attica and Thessaloniki) during the first phase of the project. The interdisciplinary ethnographic research carried out from October 2016 to May 2017 resulted in data that were analysed in discussions in which researchers coming from different disciplines were involved, and consequently used by other teams of the project during the second phase, in order to design and implement educational interventions for the linguistic and cultural education and integration of refugees of various age groups.

THE PROJECT 'PRESS' Interdisciplinary team
Scientific coordinator: G. Androulakis (sociolinguist)
PROJECT structure: Axis 1: Fieldwork Research on the Communication, Language, and Educational Needs and Expectations of Refugees (ethnographic interdisciplinary research: anthropological & sociolinguistic research) Axis 2: Linguistic, Cultural and Social Integration of Children and Adults Axis 3: Awareness Raising, Support Services and Long-term Educational Empowerment
Coordinators/ Main researchers: A. Apostolidou, (anthropologist), I. Daskalaki (anthropologist), S. Tsioli (applied linguist)

Figure 14.1 Project PRESS structure and interdisciplinary coordinating team

The focus in this chapter is on the Action: *Informal-Non Formal Education with women* of Axis 2, which aimed at refugees' linguistic and cultural integration, and education through non-formal and informal learning interventions. It was implemented in two Greek geographical regions (Lesvos and Attica) using a participatory and interdisciplinary approach and included three cycles of development-implementation-feedback-reflection-review. The following work-teams collaborated: (a) the educational material development team, the focus of this paper; (b) the team of the educational actions implementation; (c) the women-participants in Attica and Lesvos; (d) the scientific consultant of the action, e) the Coordination Team, and (f) the Scientific Coordinator of the Project. These teams consisted of multilingual team members including people with a refugee or migrant background (see Figure 14.2).

Axis 2: Linguistic, Cultural and Social Integration of Children and Adults Action “Informal-Non Formal Education with Women” <u>Educational material development team “Languages without borders”:</u> <u>Profiles of the team members as research participants in the present study</u> Inaam Alibrahim (coded as IA) (art educator, MA student-Language Education for Refugees and Migrants): Age group: 30-40 years old, refugee background (Syria), Arabic-first language, Greek-second language, English- foreign language. During the implementation of the project she lived in Athens (Greece). She was also member of the implementation team. Mary Margaroni (coded as MM) (anthropologist, Greek and German language educator, theatre studies among others): Age group: 40-50 years old, migrant background (Greece), Greek-first language, French-second language, English, Dutch-foreign languages. During the implementation of the project she lived in Liège (Belgium) and Thessaloniki (Greece). Iro-Maria Pantelouka (coded as IP) (teacher, MA student-Modern Learning Environments & Development of Educational Materials): Age group: 20-30 years old, non-migrant background, Greek-first language, English-second language. During the implementation of the project she lived in Volos (Greece). Leila Moghaddan (coded as LM) (BA in international relations, interpreter in Farsi): Age group: 30-40 years old, migrant background (Iran), Farsi-first language, Arabic-school language, English, Greek-second languages. During the implementation of the project she lived in Athens (Greece). Sofia Tsioli (applied linguist): Scientific coordinator of Axis 2 and Action 18. She was involved in all the stages and sub-teams of the project. <u>Action implementation – facilitators:</u> I. Alibrahim (art educator), K. Korozis (Greek language teacher), M. Mogli (English language teacher), T.-K. Tsintoni (Greek language teacher) <u>External Scientific Consultant:</u> R. Tsokalidou (sociolinguist) <u>Researchers of the present study:</u> R. Kitsiou (main researcher), S. Tsioli (researcher)

Figure 14.2 Participants in Action “Informal-Non Formal Education with women”

“Languages without Borders” Team and Material

Focusing on the educational material development team, in this section we present and discuss (a) the team’s constructed identity; (b) the principles and methodological approaches employed and (c) the educational material rationale and elements. More specifically, we draw on data mainly collected through four distant (via Skype) semi-structured interviews (duration 40-50 minutes each) that were conducted in Greek with the four members of the educational material team by two of this paper’s authors (see Figure 14.2). Recorded data was analysed using a qualitative approach.

In addition, since one of the researchers participated in all the stages of the action, she could shed light -through reflective thoughts and comments- on aspects of the interview data not visible to an out-group researcher. All the data extracts included in this paper are parts of the four research participants’ answers and have been translated into English. Table 14.1 presents the subsequent and concurrent phases of fieldwork, development of educational material, educational interventions, reflection and review of the material.

PHASE	Subsequent and concurrent processes					
	DES: Design, DEV: Development, I: Implementation, REF: Reflection, RES: Research, REV: Review					
Fieldwork Research June 2016- May 2017	RES 06/2016- 09/2016	RES 09/2016- 01/2017	RES 01/2017- 04/2017	RES 05/2017		
Action Cycle A September 2017- May 2017		DES 09/2016- 01/2017	DEV 01/2017- 04/2017	I 05/2017		
Action Cycle B May 2017- July 2017				REF DEV 05/2017	DE I 06/2017- 07/2017	
Action Cycle C July 2017-					REF → DEV 07/2017	DEV&I 07/2017- 08/2017

August 2017						
Final Product August 2017-September 2017						REF → REV 08/2017 09/2017

Table 14.1 Subsequent and concurrent processes

The educational material development team

All the members of the *Languages without Borders* team are women of different ages, educational and professional backgrounds, and personal life status. This has resulted in building a multifaceted women's identity team profile integrating aspects of motherhood, (forced) migration, conventional and digital literacy skills and mindset, arts- and language-based shared vision for social change, activism, intercultural curiosity and empathy, love for teamwork, lifelong learning, and serving the educational rights of underprivileged groups. All four of them are determined, active and open-minded women pursuing better conditions for living and for raising their children.

Their linguistic repertoires include Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Greek and “bits of other languages” (Blommaert & Backus, 2013: 22), such as Dutch or German. The working language of their collaboration was Greek (mediation language). Maintaining or continuing to expand these personal linguistic repertoires in refugee and migration contexts or resettlement circles was reported as one of their main concerns for their well-being mainly for their personal lives:

it is a great concern [...] not to lose, right, this contact with language and this *possibility of expression*, that I consider *very very important*, not only as expression but also as a *fundamental* let's say *part of my own identity*. [language identities] [anxiety about first language maintenance as a Greek migrant in Europe]

(MM, Greek migrant woman).

This personal need seems to be further transformed into an empathetic stance towards language learning and language maintenance or sustainability as complementary options for relocating between different countries, places, cultures and languages. In addition, previous experience from working with groups with a refugee or migrant background indicates an increased

understanding of their needs and culturally appropriate approaches so as to connect with them in language experiences that they have the opportunity to co-shape; ‘she [referring to another member of the team with a refugee background] has amazing ideas and she comes in *IMMEDIATE contact with refugee population* and she is *the only one* who we trust regarding if something is *culturally sensitive*’ (IP, Greek non-migrant woman).

The team’s constructed identity can be summarized in the following extract: ‘each one offers something that *the other one lacks* within the team’ (MM, Greek migrant woman), whereas their team spirit is reflected in the material they have collaboratively developed:

It has *a united soul* [...] you will see that it is, as if it is one person that has created it but with many cultures and many cultural elements and languages.

(IA, Syrian refugee woman)

Finally, the team’s *soul* is multimodally represented in the painting “Ballet Dancers” by Colin Ju (see Figure 14.3), that depicts -according to MM- African women dancing. It has been included in the educational material and symbolizes, according to one of the team’s members, a medium of their in-group communication through art. After the interviews were completed we asked all of the participants to choose a photo, picture, item, song, lyric etc. that symbolized their experiences from participating in this action. One of them shared the following painting explaining that it was one of the team’s favourite pictures that they finally unanimously chose to include in the material.

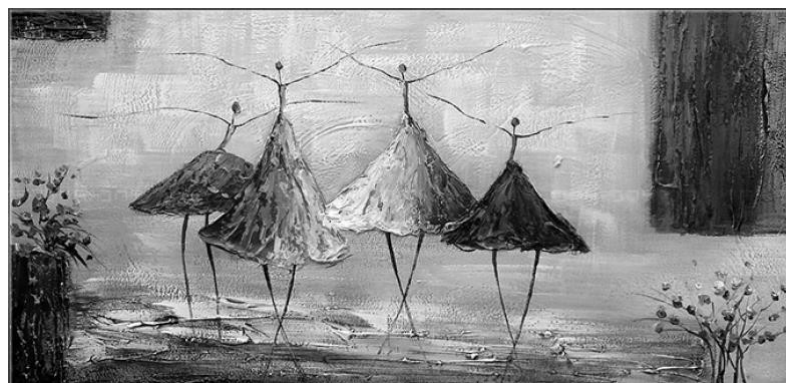


Figure 14.3: Painting representing “Language without Borders” team-portrait Colin Ju “Ballet Dancers ”

<https://www.artworkcanvas.com/pages/about-colin-ju>

Principles and methodological decisions

In this section we refer to the most important principles that were adopted in order to make informed methodological decisions. The educational interventions aimed to develop a *space* of (linguistic) well-being for women (see Frimberger, 2016). In other words, the main concern of the educational action was women's empowerment developing their linguistic and social capabilities focusing on the Greek and English languages, through approaches that legitimize different linguistic-cultural features of women's repertoires. The creation of educational material which *allows* equal access to all women of refugee background and respects their multiple identities was a significant challenge during the attempt we describe here. Alternative approaches -other than the existing dominant approaches adopted for the Greek context- were necessary for creating meaningful and bottom-up-like sets of educational resources that could be useful for the here-and-now communicative and language needs of refugee women.

This actually means that educators-facilitators were strongly encouraged to adapt and transform the material deciding together with their students what would be useful for them each time. Therefore, this data-driven material is perceived more as a set of resources to be used creatively and to be used in specific spatiotemporal contexts, rather than stable, linear material that needs to be used in predetermined ways. In addition, educator-facilitators were asked to deliver daily reports that included students' feedback about the content and format of the material, which was consequently taken into consideration by the material development team in different phases of reviewing it. Therefore, the final product was again informed by women refugees' perspectives, as in the initial stage of the ethnographic fieldwork that informed the open syllabus.

Specifically, the design's conceptualization was research-driven (see Section 1 and 2), and had the following main orientations: participatory methodology, translanguaging, critical pedagogy, task-based learning, and arts-based approach.

(a) *A participatory methodology* was employed so as to take into account current language and educational needs and expectations, previous diversified language and educational experiences (see for example Hall, 1981), as well as the gender experience, as negotiated by women with several

ethnic backgrounds. The participation of refugee women was active throughout the educational action (development of the educational material, implementation of the educational interventions, feedback, reflexive dialogues and revision of the educational material and interventions). In sum, ninety-one women and two men participated in the construction and realization of the courses in Attica and Lesvos. More specifically, eleven women assumed the roles of facilitators (3), material developers (4) and scientific consultants (4), whereas two men served as facilitator and consultant respectively, and 80 women of refugee background with diverse linguistic and cultural *routes*, experiences and desires, who were mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Erythruria, participated in and co-constructed the intervention.

(b) *Translanguaging*, which often appears in linguistically and culturally superdiverse (Vertovec, 2007) environments (see for example García, 2009; Li, 2016 and Sanchez and Espinet, Chapter 8, this volume), was employed as a critical theoretical framework to explore and empower women in the process of using and expanding their linguistic resources across registers, dialects, and conventional languages (see the following section), in order to question the repetitive monolingual approach.

(c) *Critical pedagogy* was a guiding notion in the project as one of its principles requires challenging the dominant perspectives of ones sociocultural context and personal stereotypes, reviewing ones worldview, enhancing ones repertoires and resources in order to develop ways to struggle for ones rights, for social justice and for societal transformation (see for example Freire, 2001).

(d) A *task-based learning and teaching (TBLT) methodology* was adopted, as the emphasis was on realizing successful communicative events and not on language accuracy or defining levels of language proficiency (see Van den Branden, Van Gorp, & Verhelst, 2007).

(e) An *arts-based approach* was used as a means of expanding the restricted perception of artistic expression from a supplementary tool for linguistic codes -as the dominant codes of communication- to a means of equal importance in the communicative arena through a social semiotic perspective (see for example, Frimberger, 2016).

Furthermore, another important parameter of the material's design and philosophy is its interdisciplinarity. It calls for approaching language through the lens of other disciplines; this means that using the material requires the presence of professionals from other disciplines, such as nurses, doctors, lawyers, and social workers, who -collaborating with the facilitators involved in language teaching- will participate in interventions with topics such as women's health, women's political and social rights, violence, etc.

Another crucial aspect of this Action's design is the concept of *space*. Educational interventions have been developed and implemented through a multi-level use of *space*. The writers took into account the *space* where the Action's interventions were implemented, the *spaces* where women were staying and the *spaces* where they spent their everyday lives and where they accomplish most of their communicative events. This means that the material includes activities that may be realized within a classroom, in non-conventional classroom-alternative spaces transformed into *classrooms*, such as in the case of realising a class in the forest within a camp in order to talk about women health issues- or in real everyday communication conditions, such as in a shop or walking around the city.

Finally, a highly innovative element of this material is that it includes 'bi-dimensional objectives' (see Tsioli, 2017), i.e. there are educational objectives and learning outcomes with regard to facilitators. Practically, this means that facilitators acquire a learning position in the educational process taking part in the same communicative conditions, sharing feelings of language uncertainty and exploring new linguistic and cultural routes, and investing their identities in the process as well (See also Galligani & Simon, this volume, for similar accounts of co-learning).

As reported by the developers of the material, the following extract summarizes the most important aspects of the material and its philosophy:

It is not linear [...] male, female facilitators in collaboration with and agreeing with the female participants co-decide, right, what they will use from that [...] various parts of the material relate to how to fight for their rights [...] it is an awakening material. [...] it is cultural awareness, pointing out aspects of a woman's identity [...].

Educational material structure and elements

The educational material (see the cover in Figure 14.4) is designed to be used with/for women with a refugee background, local women, teachers and facilitators who are involved in the language education of women with a refugee background experiencing emergency conditions. To this end, an open syllabus was developed, based on themes that emerged from the ethnographic interdisciplinary (sociolinguistic and anthropological) fieldwork research (Daskalaki *et al.*, 2017) as well as from the data that emerged from the participatory approach adopted. The topic areas refer to women's identities, needs and interests.

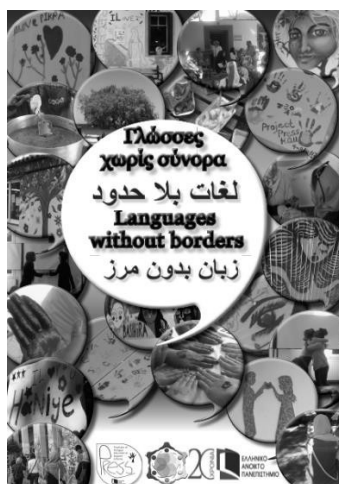


Figure 14.4: “Languages without Borders” Educational Material Cover

The educational material includes 3 main themes (*Communication*, *Everyday Life*, and *Human Rights*), and fourteen tasks with sub-tasks. For example, concerning the themes *Communication* and *Human Rights*, they include the following tasks respectively:

- Task: I share elements of culture (cultural repertoires): hairstyle or make-up.

Sub-task: I buy materials and I create my own natural cosmetics.

- Task: I struggle for my rights as a woman.

Sub-task: I create and I publish a video for the protection of women's rights in social media.

Multimodality is employed using authentic resources (photos, videos, letters, forms, etc.). Four basic working languages are used (Arabic, English, Farsi, and Greek) in a context of translanguaging; not in a mode of translation, but in a complementary, translingual way (Canagarajah, 2018). For example, linguistic features of *conventional* languages occupy their unique space within the spatial limits of the page and can be understood only in a complementary way with the other ones (See Figures 14.5a & 14.5b). For example, in the following task of social awareness raising (Picture 3a) the digital article about gathering food supplies for refugees is presented in this activity using Greek for the activity's wording and the article's title (Figures 14.5a.1 & 14.5a.2), English (Figure 14.5a.3) and Arabic (Figure 14.5a.4) complementarily for the article's content, and Greek (Figure 14.5a.5) and Farsi (Figure 14.5a.6) for citizens' quotes within the article.

Using the metaphor of *complementary* and *substitute goods* from the field of economics, we may refer to the translation of a language to another one as *substitute goods*, whereas translanguaging involves languages as *complementary goods*. In this way we support that languages in practice can cooperate in a complementary and inclusive way; they *need* each other in order to shape meaning, which is then transferred to students with supplementary repertoires who *need* each other. They are encouraged to work together towards collaborative meaning-making in order to be able to address the requirements of activities such as the activity shown in Figure 14.5a.

To sum up, the project has attempted to (a) bring to the surface and value the linguistic-cultural features of women's repertoires; (b) address the themes of the tasks through a multidimensional framework that reflects the various cultures encountered in the specific educational interventions, and (c) encourage the facilitators to use and engage with other linguistic codes and dialects breaking down hierarchies in the participant-facilitator interaction. The translanguaging framework seems to promote the subjective and collective well-being of women participants encouraging a sense of security for women participants to express themselves within their group overcoming their fear of a personal inability to carry out a linguistic task.

1

Βλέπω το παρακάτω βίντεο. Διαβάζω το πολυγλωσσικό κείμενο που ακολουθεί. Αναζητώ συνεργασία από άτομα που μπορούν να με βοηθήσουν γλωσσικά και συζητάμε το περιεχόμενό τους. Ποιοι είναι οι πρωταγωνιστές της ιστορίας; Τι κάνουν; Πώς βλέπω εγώ αυτή την ενέργεια;

2

3

4

5

6

با کمک هم سخنران از وب سایت (<http://www.vrisko.gr/en/pharmacy-duties>) استفاده میکنم تا نزدیکترین داروخانه را پیدا کنیم. از لیست لغات داروهای ضروری برای درمان سرماخوردگی را پیدا میکنم.

the antipyretic (medicine against the fever)	مضاد حوری	to παυσίπονο
medicine against the vomiting	خافضی حرارۃ	مسکن
to αντιμεττω	مسکن آم	ضد تب تب بر
the salve for the eyes	چرب خشکی، آنتیبیوتیک	to σηρόν
to αντιπυρετικό	مضاد لاجستلاب	antibiotics
the syrup	اسیرین	to κολλύριο
		ضد استراق

لغات بلا حدود
Γλώσσες χωρίς σύνορα

21 Languages without borders
زبان بدون مرز

لغات بلا حدود
Γλώσσες χωρίς σύνορα

6 Languages without borders
زبان بدون مرز

Figure 14.5a Translingual activities **Figure 14.5b** Translingual activities

Working Together: Participatory Approaches in/for (Digital) Translingual Spaces

Working in the field of inclusive teaching and learning as researchers and practitioners requires being open, flexible and always ready to adopt alternative methodological approaches, if it is to benefit the students. Based on experiences from this action, we realise that this can be very challenging and thought-provoking, especially when trying to integrate different voices in one common final product in a respectful and critical manner, such as in the case of the *Language without Borders* educational material. Being culturally different and working together was identified by research participants as the most important asset of the team. In this section we refer to some of the most important challenges faced by the educational material developers, the four women involved, trying to collaborate through computer-mediated communication for the needs of this project. Specifically, we discuss the challenges and potential of working together with refugee or migrant women in order to apply participatory, interdisciplinary methods and innovative aspects of TBLT in conventional and unconventional spaces of non-formal and informal learning.

Challenges and potential of participatory approaches

Applying translingual practices

One key methodological decision cross-cutting all the actions of project PRESS was adopting a translanguaging framework, as mentioned before. This decision resulted from the fieldwork data which reflected the fluid and complex linguistic and communicative needs of refugee target-groups (see Daskalaki, Tsioli *et al.*, 2017). Employing this principle though as a main guideline in a theoretical mode for the teams who would implement the actions of the project was not enough. Each group had to negotiate and use its own practices and repertoires, so as to decide and (re)arrange languages or linguistic features in a continuum of substitutive or complementary techniques in order to apply translanguaging.

One of the most important challenges the developers of *Languages without Borders* had to face, was how to integrate languages in a translingual and not translational mode. In many cases they felt they had to write everything in Greek first, and then translate it into other languages. This mainly occurred at the beginning of their cooperation, since Greek was their mediation language. Not every team member was familiar with the concepts of translanguaging and translingual practices and the transition from theory to practice requires negotiation and imagination. In addition, the monolingual mindset that is implicitly preserved through national linguistic policies and is reproduced in everyday lives of citizens, clearly affected their choices at the beginning. It was only after systematic cooperation that they managed to question stereotypical beliefs and started re-imagining the page as a palette of many linguistic and spatial possibilities.

It would have been more balanced and creative, as reported by the Arabic-speaking developer (see the data extract below), to use Arabic or Farsi as an initial resource of ideas and then translate these ideas into Greek, so as to offer additional ways to think about the worlds of women. It was difficult to avoid imposing the *Greek way of thinking* (if such a thing exists), especially with regard to matters of socio-political current affairs (see for example the digital article topic in Picture 3a). In this case, Greek was functioning as a restraining factor for translanguaging in the sense that in using the Greek language the material developers focused only on what had happened in Greece instead of focussing on what had happened across all the involved countries, such as in Iran and in Syria, in the here(s)-and-now(s).

Using Greek as a mediation language to transfer ideas originating in Arabic or Farsi seemed to function as a filter that reshaped the initial idea and preserved the power relations of that moment while bringing those linguistic and cultural features into contact with one another. On the contrary, using English also as a mediation language that was a second, third or foreign language to all of the women involved, would have perhaps questioned the dominance of the Greek way of thinking. More specifically, according to the researchers' perspective, the Greek language was related to the specific socio-political load that dominated other ideas at the time, whereas English while functioning as a second language or mediation language for them as well was used in a *decontextualized mode*, in a socio-politically indifferent way at the current time of their cooperation. This could possibly facilitate the practice of maintaining some distance from the initial thought and idea that originates from different contexts that were intended to be represented in the material, so as to integrate snapshots of women's lives and practices creatively integrating multiple perspectives.

it is *first written in Greek* and then in other languages. Ideally it should be written from the start in *Arabic* [...] first a reference is made in something 'Greek' and then in something 'Arabic' 'Farsi' [...] if there was *communication in English* maybe it would not have been the same thing.

(IA, Syrian refugee woman)

Criticality and cultural sensitivity of the material

Developing educational material to be useful and meaningful for addressing the current needs of refugee women, who live in conditions of *transit* and *limbo*, requires making critical decisions about topics and issues to discuss, which are politically and socially sensitive in nature. From our perspective, education is conceived as a political act and drawing on critical pedagogy principles we need to rethink what may be critical for the lives of the specific target group, in the specific sociohistorical moment and across the socio-political contexts that matter to them. The spiral development of the material in three consequent circles was a crucial element of the process that guided the material developers to design context-based tasks including critical language activities in spaces of their locally defined everyday rout(in)es. This spiral development of the material in

three concentric circles was each time informed by the refugee women's feedback, after their participation in pilot courses. Feedback was sought and mediated by facilitators who reported about it in their diaries and regular (weekly) reports.

But how critical should the material be? The following data extract reveals the tension and difficulty of one of the four women of the team in answering this question:

we weren't sure, namely there were *different perspectives* within the team, we weren't sure up to which point we could go on [...] *to what extent* let's say on the one hand we *respect* the specific characteristics of *a culture*, let's say in the issues, of *children's marriage* or to what extent we could at least with a picture to give a hint so as to be *at the facilitators' disposal* and own will, if they will choose according to their team to work on this issue or to leave it out, because as the material works as a bank they have that choice. [...] *not* to create a material just namby-pamby and *how beautiful and nice everything is* [...] *more daring* material that also addresses some issues that are not so good-looking, [...] *as a voice of support*.

(MM, Greek migrant woman)

This question was not easy for the people involved in the action to answer and many discussions were led in order to make some common decisions that would allow for all the perspectives to be represented within the material. Finding a balance between criticality, awareness raising, call for action, resistance, change, and struggle on the one hand, and cultural sensitivity on the other hand, proved to be a very challenging endeavour for the team, according to the ideological positions, ideas, beliefs and representations of the material developers. Therefore, there was uncertainty sometimes, when there were different perspectives of the team members about important issues.

For example, the issue of early marriage could be both seen as both a specific characteristic of a culture or as an unwanted condition that should be questioned, and as a duty of the educators

to raise awareness on this issue through dialogic and reflexive discussions within a critical pedagogy framework. So, the team members had to ask themselves to what extent their decisions were respectful of a culture or critical of unjust social conditions. In addition, feelings of empathy were also very important in deciding whether to include topics that would perhaps put women participants in a difficult position recalling traumatic scenes they or their loved ones had already experienced. For example, in an educational visit to an art gallery, some of the students felt offended because they saw some paintings that involved nude bodies.

So, it was not about which argument was the strongest within the team, because all perspectives were important in different aspects. The solution was to provide many options in the educational material and to render facilitators, in collaboration with students responsible for deciding what is appropriate in each case, respectfully critical or critically respectful. The following extract is indicative of the issues of concern:

a simple example now that doesn't concern only refugees, but the more general conditions, for example *it is not possible to speak* I believe about *how we cook this food* and that cake and the other one *and not to have pictures* anyway, stimulus *for reflection about ten hundreds of people who do not have food* or we cannot speak about what we wear in a *wedding*, and if the wedding dress is white or gold or I don't know what else, and not to *talk about children's weddings*. [...] but I can understand that this may bring forward negative connotations and to drag let's say into surface *traumata* from people and possibly the facilitators and educators not to have, not to be let's say appropriate to deal with these issues, but for example, *I cannot even imagine that there will be an educational material referring to women* that doesn't even include the *issue of female genital mutilation*, that I know they are very *sensitive*, on the other hand if we want it to be an *awakening material* etc, at least I believe that *there must be a seed*.

(MM, Greek migrant woman)

In designing educational material that promotes critical thinking, critical pedagogy principles and encourages awareness raising of women's rights and options, cultural sensitivity may even seem as a compromise to some of the actors involved. Then, one has to focus on what will be more useful for those women who will attend the courses. How could the material simultaneously work as an awareness-raising medium but also value their cultural baggage? Through a western-oriented perspective some practices may be considered as traditional or *exotic*, such as in the case of clothing, working, birth control, interacting with men, interacting with

women from western contexts. On the other hand, team members were all very careful concerning cultural references to religious issues; if the Arabic- or Farsi-speaking members said, for example, that a given picture implies a religious message, then they would immediately replace the picture with one that was accepted as religiously neutral.

Computer-mediated collaboration: Developing meta-working awareness

Working in a distant mode through computer-mediated collaboration was very time-consuming but team members reported having 'gained team-ness' (a term coined for the needs of translating the respective Greek word that means *the quality/property of being, behaving and feeling as a member of a team*, 'ομαδικότητα', and using the morphology of the English word 'togetherness'), i.e. collaborating in a synchronous mode facilitated getting to know each other better and starting to feel a sense of belonging to a team. In general, taking into account the current modes of living and moving, many everyday tasks are realized in a distant mode. Having the opportunity to work in digital spaces removes the restrictions of physical space and the borders of conventionally embodied working experiences providing the actors involved with a palette of digital tools that have a great potential to construct and expand the borders of *conventional* translanguaging spaces that involve physical presence and to transmedia meaning-making (Tagg & Jankowicz-Pytel, 2016) in more complex digital or blended environments.

Additionally, team members tried different models of working until they arrived in their final work plan and working practices as a team. Specifically, at first, they worked individually and met in order to share and present, not negotiate, the outcomes of their personal work; this led to multiple voices and styles in the material that was not particularly student-friendly. Consequently, during the second phase, which was characterized as their 'most democratic phase', they met in a synchronous computer-mediated mode and realized every task together; i.e. they looked for resources together, decided upon wordings, pictures, order of activities, etc. As this practice was extremely time-consuming and they realized that they would not prepare the material on time, they entered the third phase of their collaboration style and method; they prepared some material individually but then decided upon the final shape and content of the activities all together through Skype or e-mail.

Trying out all these processes helped them to develop what they called ‘meta-working’ skills and knowledge. The most important characteristic of their collaboration is that they shared roles and every member’s skills and capabilities were valued. In addition, they all claimed that they learned different things from each other expanding their linguistic and cultural resources and their intercultural communicative skills.

Becoming Together: Language Education as a Dynamic Space of Mutual Empowerment

Participating in this educational experience the four women, as educational material developers and members of a multilingual and multicultural team with a common goal and a shared vision, have tried to address the needs of the refugee women as participants in the educational intervention. In this endeavour they took into consideration the participants’ views and tried to integrate different perspectives including their entire linguistic, cultural, social and spatial repertoires. This experience has expanded their resources and has resulted in the reconstruction of their identities through integrated perspectives. They have reconsidered Greek, Arabic and Farsi culture through dialogic practices, and have had the chance to get involved in educational processes after a long time working in other contexts.

I feel *like a fish* that has returned to its waters.

(IA, Syrian refugee woman)

This is an extract which reflects this woman’s professional self-fulfilment as a member of the team, and her performance of a professional identity in Greece. Moreover, translanguaging facilitated the women’s capabilities to create their own translingual working space as reflected by the educational material as a final product of their practices, beyond the dominance of Greek and English as filters for Farsi or Arabic. In this sense their ‘meta-working’ awareness, a term they coined themselves, includes translingual practices and maybe -going one step further- transmedia meaning-making practices performed in digital spaces of interaction.

Blurring the boundaries among the roles of the teacher-facilitator and the student-participant was an important aspect towards recognising language education as a mutual empowerment space. Translanguaging as applied here facilitated this interchange of roles, where both teachers and

students participate with the potential to exchange and share resources rather than to transfer linguistic or cultural elements in a one-dimensional mode (see our discussion about using languages as complementary and substitute *goods* in Section “Educational material structure and elements”). We conclude that in such participatory approaches it is difficult to discern between who learns and who teaches, who designs and who reviews, who applies, who creates, who researches and reflects. Participants have dynamic roles and alternate between learning, teaching or giving feedback to inform teaching, researching or learning, etc. Mutual educational empowerment occurs in an unforced way and within translingual spaces at various levels, including one or more languages and superficial or deeper levels of translanguaging (see Tsokalidou’s typology of translanguaging, 2017).

This way we may rethink translanguaging as transforming working and learning spaces into spaces of inclusion and mutual empowerment where complementary uses of languages require collaborative meaning-making. Employing translingual practices to design and implement language education may be an act of resistance to dominant ways of doing and experiencing language that helps personal voices emerge in their uniqueness and explore their creative potentiality. Understanding the relationships between conventionality and innovation in these translingual, transcultural and creative practices is complex. At the same time, it is most crucial given the current socio-political context so as to facilitate, in the long term, a form of critical citizenship and the conditions for agency, especially for women.

We have presented the challenges and potential that participatory methodologies can offer in terms of applying translingual practices in a creative and integrated manner that can result in meaningful educational material ‘with a common soul’. There is though still more to explore if we closely examine how women *working* together, also *become* together reconstructing elements of their identities through focusing on aspects of their personal and educational *herstories*, which include a reflection of the operation of agency in their educational lives and the ultimate aim of empowering all the women involved.

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