Greek-Cypriot Teachers' Use of Translanguaging Spaces in Elementary Preparatory Classrooms in a Post-lockdown Era

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Abstract

Due to COVID-19, the sense of teaching space has a more fluid meaning than ever before, especially for language minority learners. A diversity sample of nineteen elementary teachers who teach Greek as an additional language, participated in walking interviews to identify the current situation in preparatory classrooms in Cyprus, after the lockdown phases. This multiple-case study reports on whether teachers enabled translanguaging spaces to evolve by reporting on a collage of collective knowledge, generated by both participants and their respective spaces via walking interviews, photographs, and field notes. The together spaces reported in this paper, using Rowe's (2018) six principles for designing and creating instructional spaces to support translanguaging, contribute to the re(configuration) of translanguaging teaching and learning spaces in official educational contexts.

1 Introduction and literature review

In a post-lockdown era, educators must seek to understand the role of place, to truly meet the learning needs of their learners. Donovan (2016) refers to place as a narrative instead of a physical construct, that shapes both identity and culture, and offers an understanding of experience. This realization enables educators to better connect learners with their environments, which eventually may lead to school and learning experiences that more aptly fit to learners' needs and preferences. Sense of place has long been considered and used in environmental studies, geography, and literature, but little is known about how this conceptual framework can be used in the language learning field (for a thorough review, visit Erfani (2022)). Drawing from place-based learning (Sobel, 2004), in terms of how learners interact with people, places and activities, this study uses sense of space as an overarching construct exploring people and place relationships, and focused mainly on whether teachers allow students to learn outside the classroom (either physically or metaphorically), as was expected during the lockdowns. More specifically, it is set to explore whether teachers enable translanguaging spaces to empower language minority learners to take charge of their own language

learning and to connect it across different contexts.

1.1 Translanguaging pedagogy

A major multilingual population density, which is constantly increasing, can be found across the globe. This density creates complex social formations as described earlier by Busch (2014), which require educational practices with less traditional affiliations. In the backdrop of a pandemic, this complexity has increased, and translanguaging seems to present, more than ever, a sound pedagogy that moves beyond the established ones.

Translanguaging has been described by the renowned Ofelia García as 'multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds' (2009, p. 45). Referring to translanguage pedagogy in particular, García explains how 'the linguistic code no longer holds the first order as it is involved in a dance with the entire repertoire of multimodal resources that carry particular socio-historical associations' (2019, p. 4). By allowing educational contexts to include experiences where multilingual learners can exploit and understand new concepts by employing their full linguistic repertoire, translanguaging pedagogy has opened possibilities for teaching practices.

There are several terms associated with translanguage in the international literature. Perhaps the most important distinction to be made in this paper, however, is between translanguage, plurilingualism and translingualism. Despite the fundamental similarities between these three terms, there are significant differences that ought to be first discussed (De Los Ríos, 2022; García & Otheguy, 2020). Plurilingualism does not view bilingual speakers' linguistic performances as unitary, leaving the concept of named languages intact (García & Otheguy, 2020), affecting the nature of pedagogy promoted. More specifically, via plurilingualism the use of various linguistic varieties may only be viewed as a way to learn an additional language, while translanguage, due to the promotion of a 'multilingual ecology' views students' full linguistic and semiotic repertoire as means to express themselves and embrace their identities to build their language agency as learners (García & Otheguy, 2020). These terms, translanguage and translingualism are often used interchangeably. This is mainly because both acknowledge linguistic diversity and encourage the use of multiple languages or varieties. While translanguaging encompasses both spoken and written communication, as these are mainly met in educational and sociolinguistic contexts, translingualism seems to focus more on accommodating linguistic dynamic interactions between languages, communities, and an overall cosmopolitan context (Canagarajah, 2013). Despite their differences, all provide bilingual or multilingual students with educational experiences that minimize the risks of failure (García & Otheguy, 2020; Smythe, 2023). Due to the points discussed here, translanguage pedagogy is used in this paper.

Researchers in the field argue that translanguaging as a teaching perspective perceives learners' native languages as useful tools (Baker, 2011; Tsiplakou, 2016), instead of a hindrance to learning (Tsiplakou, 2022). This, therefore, enables learners to make links between their experiences outside the classroom with those within (Conteh, 2018) and helps them develop their linguistic and literacy skills (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Rowe, 2018; Wei, 2011a). Additionally, it encourages mutual appreciation and respect between various languages and cultures (García et al., 2011), and values bi/multilingual identity performance, enhancing students' motivation, and confidence (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Tsokalidou, 2017). Moreover, it can broaden teaching horizons since it facilitates co-teaching between beginner and proficient learners in the mainstream classroom (Baker, 2011), thereby contributing to inclusion (García, 2009).

That is why it is important that schools and educators, in particular, construct *translanguaging spaces* in which learners are given agency via multiple opportunities to be linguistically creative and critical (García, 2019; Wei, 2011a), especially during the newly arrived phases (Smythe, 2023). These translanguaging spaces are shaped by multiple linguistic repertoires that should not be regarded as stable and geographically fixed, but as fluid and flexible (Busch, 2014; Tsiplakou, 2022). Thus, it is not surprising that translanguage's relation to place and time is vital for encapsulating

languaging as a process.

Despite previous acknowledgement of translanguage's educational merit, other non-educational factors hinder its applicability as a pedagogy around the world. An important factor is that language learning and, more specifically, language is a sociopolitical construct that has little, if anything, to do with each person's languaging (De Los Reyes, 2019; García, 2019; Wei & Lin, 2019). Historically, schools have been considered key institutions for the implementation of language policies which aim at the enforcement of a unitary language and at the homogenization of linguistically diverse populations (Busch, 2014) or more strongly put as "effective institutions of social erasure and control" (García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 18). To accomplish this, schools are usually based in a "monolingual habitus" and adopt an intense formalized language regime prioritizing standardized languages, despite learners' complex translocal repertoire (Gogolin, 2013, p.38). Furthermore, in the past, mixing linguistic varieties was considered inferior or an inadequate practice (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) often demonstrated by children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and thus perceived as a practice that potentially promotes an incomplete form of written or spoken language expression (Μητσιάκη et al., 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that many school educators tend to operate essentially with a monolingual orientation and are often less enthusiastic or even reject the use of translanguaging (Childs, 2016; Heugh, 2015; Probyn, 2009, 2015).

Despite a meticulous neglect or even rejection of translanguaging pedagogy by educational institutions worldwide, translanguaging has attracted a great deal of research interest in various educational settings, including nursery (García, 2011; Hofslundsengen et al., 2020; Sanders-Smith & Dávila, 2019), primary (Childs, 2016; Zapata & Laman, 2016), secondary (De Los Ríos, 2022; García et al., 2012; Hedman & Fisher, 2022) and tertiary education (Fallas Escobar, 2019; Prada, 2019). Nevertheless, due to the ordinarily, unwelcoming treatment translanguaging pedagogy receives from teachers and schools, these studies are usually situated in informal educational settings (García & Wei, 2015). Such examples are studies conducted in after schools (García et al., 2013; Jang, 2022b), complementary programs (Blackledge & Creese, 2010) or generally less-structured learning settings (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Wei, 2014) that can easily challenge monolingual regimes with sparse exceptions in trilingual countries such as the Netherlands and Luxembourg (Duarte, 2018).

Studies that have investigated translanguage practices reported that these were academically oriented and included meaning negotiations, as they were extracted from a private digital online social network (Jang, 2022a). Others reported the relationship between translanguage practices and the execution of agency as language learners in translingual, after-school writing programs (Jang, 2022b). There are also reports of the role of translanguage practices in reconstructing students' transnational identity via data collected from a classroom action research project, and a WhatsApp group chat (Moustaoui Srhir et al., 2019). Additionally, translanguage practices were found to serve to disrupt dominant language ideologies, and challenge anti-immigrant sentiments, as shown in the podcast project reported by De Los Roses's work (2022). The relatively recent discussion in this gap of knowledge could not be fully addressed during the COVID-19 pandemic since it altered the actual nature of fieldwork. This entailed a shift from the usual face-to-face classroom interactions to online spaces and gave impetus to studies which investigated pedagogical translanguaging in online classes. The only reported research as a body of work in an official educational context that did not seem to purposefully challenge the monolingual regime of its field was the one conducted by Smythe (2023), which reported data on teenagers' translanguage practices in two public schools in New Zealand and France, but made no reference to teachers' practices.

Several studies on translanguage practices implemented by/with young learners have also been conducted in Cyprus, where this study was conducted. According to these studies, Russian-speaking students and their parents engage in translanguage practices in their private lives much more freely and willingly (Karpava et al., 2019), owing this fluidity to religious and economic relations of Russia to the island. On the other hand, Turkish-speaking students seemed to be silenced and unarticulated in the education sphere (Charalambous et al., 2020), most probably due to the political and contested context of Cyprus. Overall, it has been reported that the Cyprus educational system offers programs

that are exclusively oriented towards learning Greek, which lack the characteristics of bilingual education and plurilingual instruction (Nicolaou et al., 2016). Cases reported in which Cypriot students testified to experience themselves as bidialectal and multilingual learners, implementing translanguage practices, emerged through specific research initiatives. Among these studies is that conducted by Stavrou et al. (2021) including Greek-speaking students as part of an international digital storytelling project, and another conducted by Neokleous (2022) in multilingual EAL classrooms.

Even though previous studies in the field are multifaceted, the documentation of teachers' translanguaging practices in *young, migrant, preparatory classes in bidialectal communities, which are conducted during the official school day in the after-lockdown era* is rare in scholarly publications. This research explores processes of change and uncertainty as these developed after the Pandemic's outbreak, based on firsthand accounts of real-life experiences of teachers of Greek as an Additional Language (GAL) in established programs (preparatory classes).

1.1   Context

The empirical research this contribution draws upon was carried out in eight (n=8) public, elementary schools located in the two largest towns of Cyprus. The linguistic landscape of Cyprus is quite complex. Despite having two official languages (Greek and Turkish), the political partition of 1974 caused due to intercommunal violence and conflict, established Standard Modern Greek as the official language of instruction for the Republic of Cyprus, the internationally recognized political entity (Selvi & Silman‑Karanfil, 2022). Turkish was introduced once again in Greek Cypriot education as a "foreign language" and a "measure for building trust" between the island's communities in 2003. Cyprus is also a community that is characterized with diglossia (Ferguson, 1959) or bidialectism (Yiakoumetti, 2006), since Standard Modern Greek (SMG, the official linguistic variety) is concurrently spoken with the Greek Cypriot dialect (GCD, the unofficial linguistic variety) and these varieties are used in different contexts and for different purposes. Research has demonstrated that GCD is indeed used in school contexts despite being less acceptable (Ioannidou, 2009). Since the 90s several other linguistic actors have influenced the sociolinguistic landscape of the country, as the Ministry's statistics show that 20.74% of the learners in elementary schools currently use another family language than SMG (MOESY, 2023). This percentage does not include students from recognized minorities such as Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins who may or may not speak SMG. The range of countries from which these learners come include Syria, Romania, Bulgaria, and Georgia (MOESY, 2023) although there are students from other countries too. The Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus (PIC) has translated numerous forms and documents in seven languages (English, Arab, Bulgarian, French, Georgian, Romanian, Russian, and Ukrainian), implying that these are the most common languages spoken among migrant learners (PIC, 2022).

Regardless of the government's educational interest in the multifaced migrants' linguistic repertoire and background, teachers participating in this study did not appear knowledgeable about their learners' linguistic backgrounds. Most teachers referred to learners' family language, as this was found in the school registry, which inevitably led to a casual assignment of each child to a single language category. PIC is strongly suggesting the distribution of background questionnaires to all learners' families (PIC, 2022) as a means to increase in-service teachers' awareness of their learners' complex linguistic and cultural background.

Part of the Ministry's coordinating effort to better address the learning and language needs of migrant learners, preparatory classes - within the regular school timetable - are offered for two consecutive years (European Commission, 2019). Grouping in these classrooms occurs in two ways; (i) horizontally, based on learners' level of Greek proficiency, and (ii) vertically, assigning learners of different grades, ages, abilities, and interests to the same class.

Particularly interesting is also the fact that these classes are usually offered in various spaces. Some schools have specific classrooms allocated for these types of classes while others use other rooms such as computer labs, warehouses, office spaces, household economic classrooms, art, and

music classrooms. Very rarely, teachers of preparatory classes teach outside the classroom. It should also be mentioned that in the past, having specific classrooms, whether a GAL room, another lab or a subject-specific room was not a typical practice.

Acknowledging multiple shortcomings found in the organization and design of preparatory classes, several developments have been made to improve the quality of education offered. Firstly, the amount of teaching hours and school units provided for these classes are increasing every year, and a new curriculum for Greek as a SL was designed and published in 2020 for CEFR levels A1 to B1 (MOESY, 2023; PIC, 2022). It should be mentioned that the new curriculum promotes plurilingual and intercultural education, while also considering migrant learners' backgrounds and the bilectalism which characterizes Cyprus (Mitsiaki et al., 2021). Additionally, new textbooks and new diagnostic, formative and summative assessment tools have also been developed in alignment with the new curriculum and are in the process of validation.

Finally, an integral part of these classes' organization lies in the pool of teachers who either teach or supervise them. Until 2020-21, these classes were traditionally assigned to permanent teachers who rarely had any experience in teaching GAL or any previous specialized studies (European Commission, 2019). During the school year 2021-22 when this study was conducted, teachers who were assigned to these classes had three different types of employment, either by: (i) hourly wage, (ii) one-year contract, or (iii) permanency. The greatest majority of teachers involved in these classes had no previous teaching experience or specialized studies in how to teach GAL, which is why PIC organized numerous training sessions as part of the overall teachers' professional development network (i.e. PIC, 2021), as well as afternoon optional training sessions, and more (PIC, 2022).

2 Methods

2.1 The study

In this paper, it is reported on how elementary school teachers teach GAL in the post-lockdown era and how they help migrant learners interact with their environment, utilizing their linguistic and semiotic repertoire to meet their learning needs.

2.2 Sampling

Since this is a qualitative, multiple-case study, purposeful sampling was utilized to allow the researcher to carefully select the participants (Creswell, 2019). To identify the teachers for this study, the following criteria were applied: (i) teach in preparatory classes, (ii) teach in public elementary schools; and (iii) teach in schools that were part of the DRASE+ program (a co-funded program by MOESY and the European Union Social Fund). Nineteen teachers with versatile theoretical backgrounds and teaching experience were chosen (see Table 1) to ensure a balanced socio-economic distribution not aiming at the generalizability of the findings but rather in obtaining purposefully selected data to comprehend the situation fully and deeply (for more details on participants' profiles, see Appendix A).

Table 1. Participants' profile

Participants of the study		
Educational profile	Bachelor's degree	3
	Master's degree (Other)	12
	Master's degree (Bilingualism/TESOL)	2
	Master's degree (New Technologies)	2
Teaching experience	1-5 years	7
	6-10 years	6
	11< years	6

Teaching experience in preparatory classes	First year	13
	2 or 3 years	3
	4 or 5 years	3
Employment type	Hourly wage employee	10
	One-year contract employee	7
	Permanent employee	2

2.3 Data collection

Data collection occurred between February and May 2022, despite multiple delays caused due to the late commencement of the preparatory classes in late November 2021, and the various measures applied to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 virus. The elementary data for this study came from three different tools: walking interviews, photographs, and field notes.

Walking interviews explore the connection between self and place by examining what people say but also where they say it (Evans & Jones, 2011). Walking interviews are receiving a lot of attention in the social sciences, environmental education, and health science (Kinney, 2017; Lynch & Mannion, 2016), but its application in place-based and place-responsive outdoor and indoor education is sparse. In this particular research, the type of walking interview that was employed was the go-along walking interview, which combines interviews with participant observation while it reduces power imbalance and encourages spontaneous conversation (Kinney, 2017). The walking interviews were arranged so that the teachers could take the researcher to the exact places where they had mainly taken their learners for regular outdoor and indoor educational experiences. During the interviews, the researcher asked open-ended and ad hoc questions, listened and observed participants, while examining if and whether qualities of the place featured in this unfolding process (Lynch & Mannion, 2016). The walking interviews were about 20 to 30 minutes long and audio-recorded throughout (the interview protocol is provided in Appendix B and was used as part of a wider study). Interviews and initial transcriptions were conducted in GCD and SMG and then translated into English. Transcriptions were then sent back to the participants for a thorough overview to confirm the credibility of the project (Anfara et al., 2002; Tracy, 2010).

Beside walking interviews, this study also used photographs, to gain an understanding of how teachers processed students' linguistic plurality, educational material and space while planning or enacting their teaching. Photographs in this research were mainly used as a tool that could potentially allow access to deeper insights of the participants' experiences. As has been argued by Cleland and MacLeod (2021, p. 230) photography as a qualitative tool can be viewed as a 'silent voice, another language to communicate with and understand others, and a way of accessing complexities which may not be captured by text or oral language'. For this reason, photographs were considered parallel to teachers' verbal commentary as a way for triangulation to increase the confirmability of the project (Anfara et al., 2002; Tracy, 2010). During the data collection, the researcher asked the teacher's permission to take pictures and if that was not possible at the time, the teacher was asked to take pictures of those places. No permission was given to take pictures in outdoor areas.

Field notes were the third tool used for this project. They were produced from memory soon after each walking interview. The researcher kept field notes of the participants' comments that were not recorded as well as other researcher's observations related to the space and surroundings where each teacher was found. More specifically, in the course of writing down field notes, the researcher documented first impressions, personal experiences, as well as key events and incidents as these were experienced by the main actors of the field and which were considered important by them (Emerson et al., 2011).

Before the official commencement of the data collection, during the pilot phase, it became evident that the smartphone, which was the only device used for data collection in this study, allowed multiple recordings even in outdoor areas.

Participants were informed of the project's objectives and research methods. An ethical vetting was approved by the Educational Research and Assessment Centre of the Ministry (research code:

164226) and informed consents were collected by all participants.

2.4   Data analysis

Data analysis was based on preset themes, as these emerged in all three data sets. Despite the fact that many scholars, such as García and Wei (2015) suggested multiple categorizations for teachers' translanguaging practices, the researcher chose the six principles for designing and creating instructional spaces as preset themes (see Table 2) to support translanguaging, as suggested by Rowe (2018). This decision was based on both the purpose of the study as well as the nature of data obtained. Data presented teachers' practices, and how these manifested in the space, with or without previous knowledge of translanguaging pedagogy.

Table 2. Data analysis: Themes adapted by Rowe (2018)

Teachers valuing migrant learners' languages and cultures
Teachers modeling translanguaging
Teachers inviting two-way translation
Composing dual-language texts
Teachers providing authentic opportunities for multilingual communication
Connecting learners with bilingual or multilingual audiences

3   Results

3.1   Teachers valuing migrant learners' languages and cultures

In response to whether teachers seemed to *value migrant learners' languages and cultures*, data showed a range of behaviours, stances, and exploitation of spaces. Some teachers, like T2, used examples where they asked students to model translanguaging for everyday expressions, stressing the importance in valuing the learners' family language, acknowledging them as experts in their mother tongue.

> *T2…I generally aim to have a friendly relationship with my learners, especially the younger ones, for example, I will ask Vlad, 'how do we say hi in Russian'? 'How do we say hi in Arabic'? We have this type of communication, they also like it. I will talk in Greek because this is what I teach them, but I'm not absolute about not wanting to hear them speak in their language and that I only want to hear them speak Greek. I respect their language, the same way I wish they will come to respect mine, which eventually I will have to teach them…*

Not all participants expressed similar attitudes. For example, T19 role played the following discussion that she would typically have with one of her students, using a very disappointing tone of voice and a facial expression indicating great frustration. In this extract, T19 uses examples of students' use of their mother tongue inside the classrooms that were not appropriate for that setting.

> *T19…Syriac has a ringside seat in our class, they use it to curse each other, to bother one another; we have lots of issues with this… 'You need to stop talking! talk in Greek!' … 'But Ma'am are we going to stop using our language?', 'You can use it during the break, as much as you want. Inside the classroom, we use Greek!'*

Others, like T8, used class walls and display areas to hang flags from learners' countries of origin, proudly presenting the multicultural and multilingual group of students to the researcher. The caption underneath the flags translated into 'The flags of our countries'.

Fig. 1. T8's display area

3.2 Teachers modeling translanguaging

In respect to *whether teachers were modeling translanguaging*, participants' attitudes, practices, and places indicated various forms of positioning on the matter. Some participants despite initially being quite opposed to the idea of using other linguistic varieties during teaching, acknowledged English as a useful tool for communication, especially when used for translating keywords, such as T17:

> *R: During your teaching, do you use Greek? Do you use any other language?*
> *T17: Greek, because if you don't use the language they're obliged to learn, they won't learn it [...] but I'll go to a learner and say in English 'this is summer' ('this is summer' was said in English), for example.*

Only few mentioned that they would try to learn some words or phrases in their learners' family languages, like T18, who happily explained how she would employ some of her knowledge in other languages throughout their classroom conversations:

> *T18…for example, I'll say to the Romanian boy 'Ce faci, esti bine?' [...], to the girl, I'll say 'merhaba', or 'salamalekum', you know... things like that [...], and they like it!*

There were also participants who would refer to their use of SMG as more helpful and would explicitly lessen the use of the GCD to a linguistic variety that was not encouraged to be used inside the classroom for educational purposes. T11, one of the teachers, who had taught in Greek diaspora schools, mentioned the following while showing me some of the coursebooks found on the class-room shelves:

T11…I use SMG because it helps them more with Greek and Maths than the use of the dialect. I certainly use some words in GCD, but it is to a great extent not part of the educational context.

Besides what teachers had said during their interviews, no educational materials were found inside or outside the classrooms in languages other than SMG. What was captured by the researcher via photographs and while walking along with the study's participants around the school premises was monolingual educational material in SMG. In Figure 2, one of Aesop's fables, 'the hare and the tortoise' is at the top of the pile from T4's classroom. In Figure 3, monolingual board, and card games, are shown as they were found on T11's shelves.

Fig. 2. T4's educational material

Fig. 3. T11's educational material

3.3   Teachers inviting two-way translation

Two-way translation was a practice that was either tolerated or purposefully used by the study's participants. However, all participants acknowledged it as a usual practice. T17 indicates a moment of two-way translation tolerance at a sentence level:

> *T17…I have a learner who speaks only in English, he is afraid to speak in Greek, even though I insist and speak to him in Greek, he tends to say everything he wants in English to make sure that what he wanted to say was indeed correct […] for example, he would say 'can I go to the bathroom?', (and the teacher would reply) 'In Greek?', (the learner would then say in Greek) 'Ma'am, may I go to the toilet?' […] he would also write everything I say in Arabic […], he can write in his language, in English and now he wishes to learn to write in Greek.*

Some participants acknowledged two-way translation as a useful teaching method, like T3, who seemed to acknowledge that this practice could evolve as a learning curve for all learners involved:

> *T3…If I have (a class) that speaks only Russian…I will try to have a learner who speaks English in that same class, who knows a bit of English, a bit of Russian as to translate something to me […] and I believe that they both win […] to understand something is one thing, but to be able to explain it you must be at the top of the ladder of comprehension…*

During the walking interviews, the researcher did not observe two-way translation being employed by teachers while talking to students in the schoolyard or inside classrooms.

3.4   Composing dual-language texts

Focusing on *whether teachers were allowing the composition of dual-language texts*, data revealed that this was not truly an option. Many teachers, when asked whether learners write in their L1s, immediately thought that the researcher was referring to learners' common confusion of Latin and Greek letters (i.e., use of e instead of ε). Some of the participating teachers also rushed to show

me their students' coursebooks, in which this confusion was evident. However, there were two participants who had quite a different view on the matter. While showing me around her class, T8 opened one of her desk's drawers and took out a diary:

> T8… *this is their diary, it's their secret diary. We write in here, they write to me about whatever they want, even in this one, I told them they can write as they wish, and I'll translate it …they don't use their mother tongue, at least not the young ones, nor the older ones […] I believe they're not very fluent in their language because I told them, use it and I'll translate it, but they won't.*

Another relatively unique practice was that mentioned by T10, who despite not initiating it, she allowed it:

> T10… *I have a learner who doesn't speak Greek at all… she has a notebook and on one page she writes in Polish, whatever we say, and on the other page, she writes in Greek. This was her idea, and it helped her a lot, she learned how to read faster, ok obviously there are words she doesn't know, and she is still shy when it comes to talking […] but this also helped another child who arrived in the middle of the school year from Bulgaria. She writes in Bulgarian, in English, and some words in Greek…I don't know whether it helps them educationally, but from my experience, it builds their confidence, and assists them in continuing to write sentences.*

3.5 *Connecting learners with bilingual or multilingual audiences and providing authentic opportunities for multilingual communication*

Ultimately, in relation to *connecting learners with bilingual or multilingual audiences* and *providing opportunities for multilingual communication*, data were rather scarce. No mention of a teacher initiative to provide opportunities for multilingual communication with multilingual audiences was recorded. Thus, the only relevant use of translanguaging that was possible to further explore was whether multilingual communication was achieved via classroom displays and those found in outdoor areas. During the collection phase, the researcher visited several classes wherein she did not encounter any work by students written in a fluid use of various linguistic and semiotic resources on display. This was observed even though all teachers seemed to appreciate the benefits of displaying children's work. This is evident in the following extracts:

> T15. …*they really like it yes; they feel like it is their assignment, you put it on display, and they will rush to finish it… it's a motive for them to finish a project so that they then put it on display.*

> T4. …*we created these display signs together, for example, they know that they'll create something today to put it on display, mostly art… […] um, yes, they like it, we'll draw fruit, we'll be extra careful and make them look really beautiful, you know…*

Very few teachers explicitly talked about using spaces outside the classroom for learning purposes; however, there was no reference to whether an invitation or any form of communication was established with the wider community. Most teachers revealed how they were not certain whether they were allowed to take children outdoors, while others also stressed that the implementation of measures taken due to Covid-19 did not allow activity in outdoor spaces:

> T6…*we don't even know if we are allowed to take students out of the classroom context, and we didn't want to take that responsibility either…Once again, I believe this is a guidance issue…we had zero guidance. Meaning, I would love to take those five students of mine outside,*

especially now that the weather is much warmer and go sit underneath a tree and write about the weather, the seasons, about the trees and leaves, but I don't even know if I'm allowed to do so or what sort of problems it may cause…

T15…before Covid-19 we had lots of freedom to move around, now we are obliged to remain in a specific space with a certain number of students, you can't move around as freely, you must avoid allowing children to have close contact. It's very weird, we used to have this freedom to go outdoors or even out of the school so that the lesson would become less theoretical and more active…

Finally, it was recorded via fieldnotes that even though all outdoor areas of schools had quotes exhibited that directly or indirectly referred to embracing the diversity of students, they were all written in Greek.

4   Discussion

This article reports on whether the participating teachers were enabling translanguaging spaces in a post-lockdown era. In this study first-hand accounts were collected from elementary school teachers who teach GAL in preparatory classrooms.

Findings retrieved from the three datasets indicated that there was a local educational tradition, where "learners were expected to learn languages as parallel systems instead of understanding languaging as an integrated process" (Childs, 2016, p.35). Data relating to the extent to which teachers modeled translanguage practices indicated this conservatism. Specifically, findings revealed that teachers would use English (along with SMG) in various levels for educational purposes. Others would use their learners' L1 for everyday expressions, at a phrasal, clause or even word level, mainly to create a more friendly atmosphere. Very few mentioned the use of GCD along with SMG, but this use, according to teachers, was not used for educational purposes. Even though teachers did model translanguaging, each of them tunneled to different linguistic repertoires at different levels and performed different functions. A teacher's decision to use different sections of his or her linguistic repertoire did not appear to be influenced by his or her level of proficiency in those varieties, but rather of their ideological perceptions (Tsiplakou, 2023). Meaning that these practices indirectly refer to teachers' views of these varieties' 'appropriateness' in education (Flores & Rosa, 2015), indirectly indicating their opinion on which varieties were considered educationally relevant and which varieties were not.

Data on two-way translations and compositions of dual-language texts presented examples of students' initiatives, revealing their hybrid use of multiple linguistic resources in various modalities (primarily written and orally) and at different levels (sentence, clause, phrase) (Wei, 2011). While navigating with new learning, students use their existing linguistic resources instinctively and without proper instruction in their oral speech, mainly for clarification purposes (see section 4.3 extract with T17) or in writing, for their personal notes (see section 4.4 extract with T10). It seems that learners' find these practices to be helpful, which is in accordance with previous studies' findings (Jang, 2022a; Smythe, 2023). Thus, is could be argued that these practices, as Smythe (2023) points out, promotes the need to re-frame educational success. Thus, success should not only be defined in terms of learning outcomes, but also in terms of effective learning processes, which are aligned with learning and teaching 21st century skills, such as creativity, flexibility and more.

Some of the participants of this study viewed learners' L1 as useful learning resources instead of barriers. Findings presented teachers encouraging students to use two-way translation with other students with whom they shared the same L1 (see section 4.3., extract with T3) to explain oral and written instructions. This practice acknowledged these young learners as experts in their L1 (Duarte, 2018) and presented them as recognized, useful and important teaching assistants. Moreover, teachers advised students to use multiple linguistic resources in their personal diary (see section 4.4., extract with T8) or allowed students to use their fluid linguistic resources for keeping notes (see

section 4.4., extract with T10). This study highlights that not only did these teachers not feel threatened by these resources, since learners were using linguistic varieties that the teachers were not familiar with, but they also recognized them as important linguistic and cognitive resources. This is not surprising, since it has been reported elsewhere that teachers' linguistic background does not prevent them from acknowledging their learners' linguistic funds, and specifically their L1s, as legitimized and significant to learning (Bonacina-Pugh, 2013; Ollerhead, 2019). Interestingly, the cases reported in this study were recorded without any teacher training, contrary to the studies mentioned earlier, such as Ollerhead (2019). However, even though teachers had an instinctively positive stance towards their learners' L1 educational potential, their limited knowledge on how to best exploit these linguistic and semiotic funds did not allow for these practices to be used to the fullest (see T8's response on her learners' refusal to use fluid linguistic resources in their diary).

The non-existent provision of authentic opportunities for multilingual communication, the lack of students' connections with bilingual or multilingual audiences, and the absence of multilingual educational material, both within and outside the classrooms, reveals that teachers' views on learners' linguistic repertoires could be further developed. It has been argued that exploiting learners' linguistic repertoires requires a lot of preparation and *intentional* thinking (De Los Ríos, 2022). This realisation calls for more consistent teacher training. The participants of this study reported numerous times that training was indeed offered; however, it was offered with COVID-19 as a backdrop (for example they reported sacrificing training time to substitute for other teachers who were reported as Covid-19 cases). In addition, training sessions organised by PIC typically include much information, such as theories, pedagogical approaches, and practices (PIC, 2021). This intense training program is required, since a relatively new pool of teachers is assigned to teach in preparatory classes every year, who have minimum or no previous theoretical or empirical knowledge on how to teach GAL (Mitsiaki et al., 2021). This realisation calls for a more permanent pool of teachers of GAL in which the Ministry can longtermly invest upon.

5 Conclusion

This is a study that investigated the relationship between translanguaging and place in an era characterised as the post-lockdown normalization. It has been extensively argued that both teachers can help migrant learners develop their linguistic and literacy skills, by allowing languages and cultures to remain inside and not outside of the classroom (García & Wei, 2014; Heugh, 2015; Jang, 2022a; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2015; Probyn, 2015). Despite limited access to training, promising indications were reported where the 'treasures' (del Carmen Salazar, 2013, p. 121) of migrant learners' language and culture were not forced to remain outside of the school and the classroom. The study examined teaching practices such as two-way translation for instructional explanations among students with the same L1, the creation of dual-language text for note-keeping and personal use, as well as teachers modeling translanguage in the classroom as a method of providing further explanations or creating a pleasant environment.

In terms of migrant learners' education, this post-lockdown era offers an opportunity to reconfigure place and time, literally and metaphorically. However, it should be mentioned that one of the main limitations of this study was that no data were collected from actual teaching instances. Thus, no spontaneous use of translanguage practices (in the sense of pedagogical and spontaneous distinction proposed by Cenoz, 2017) was able to be recorded and investigated. Also, due to the Pandemic, the participants in this study were relatively few, despite the initial research design aiming to reach a larger number of participants. However, this is a study that can contribute to the discussion of how translanguaging can be used and exploited as a powerful pedagogical tool (García & Wei, 2015) in formal educational settings, where no inherent challenge of the monolingual regime was put into place. In addition, it has offered an example of how walking interviews can be used as a research tool in the field of applied linguistics. Future studies could investigate translanguaging as a pedagogical concept in traditionally 'monolingual' mainstream classrooms and investigate whether they are now, in this post lock-down era, considered and used as open spaces of potentialities and whether

teachers' practices and knowledge-how accredit translocal communicative repertoires "as a legitimate way of expression and meaning making" (Busch, 2011, p.1).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teachers' expanded profile

Partic-ipants' code	Gender	School	Teaching experience in prepara-tory classes	Town of occupation	Type of employ-ment[i]	Teaching experi-ence (in general)	Studies
T1	W	Seaside school	1	North town	Hourly wage	1	Master (other)
T2	W	Seaside school	1	North town	Hourly wage	1	Bachelor
T3	W	Seaside school	1	North town	One-year contract	12	Master (other)
T4	M	Old town school	2	North town	One-year contract	13	Master (in Diglossia)
T5	W	Old town school	5	North town	Hourly wage	8	Master (TESOL)
T6	W	Old school	3	North town	Hourly wage	3	Master (other)
T7	W	Old school	1	North town	One-year contract	9	Master (other)
T8	W	New school	1	North town	One-year contract	14	Master (New Technol-ogies)
T9	W	South school	1	South town	Hourly wage	17	Master (other)
T10	W	South school	1	South town	Hourly wage	4	Master (other)
T11	W	South school	1	South town	One-year contract	10	Master (other)
T12	W	Typical school	4	North town	Permanent	23	Bachelor
T13	W	Typical school	1	North town	Permanent	27	Master (other)
T14	W	No internet school	1	North town	One-year contract	1	Bachelor
T15	W	No internet school	3	North town	Hourly wage	9	Master (other)
T16	W	Second oldest school	1	North town	One-year contract	5	Master (other)
T17	W	Second oldest school	1	North town	Hourly wage	3	Master x 2 (One in New Technologies)
T18	W	Second oldest school	4	North town	Hourly wage	4	Master (other)
T19	W	Second oldest school	1	North town	Hourly wage	4	Master (other)

Appendix B: Interview protocol used for the larger study

1. How do you prepare for your lessons in preparatory classes? How do you usually start and finish your lessons?
2. Which linguistic varieties do you use during your teaching of GAL and why?
3. Which spaces do you use while teaching GAL during preparatory classes and why?
4. Which (written) educational materials do you use while teaching GAL in preparatory classes and why?
5. Which digital resources (products, apps etc.) do you use while teaching GAL in preparatory classes and why?
6. What teaching practices do you employ while teaching GAL in preparatory classes and why?
7. What teaching practices do you employ while teaching vocabulary and grammar in preparatory classes and why?
8. Has the whole Pandemic experience changed you as a teacher? If yes, how?
9. Comments/final thoughts.