Conducting multilingual classroom research with refugee children in Cyprus: critically reflecting on methodological decisions

5 Conducting Multilingual Classroom Research with Refugee Children in Cyprus: Critically Reflecting on Methodological Decisions

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Research within language education and migration that draws on multilingual frameworks requires the researcher to become part of the research process and to work with participants to fully understand their views in order to represent them (Drury, 2007; Due *et al*., 2016). However, a problem arises when the researcher does not share the same language as the participants. What happens, for example, in research examining the experiences of bilingual children in formal schooling where the researcher is a speaker of English, the participants are speakers of Pahari and the researcher needs to conduct fieldwork, including interviews and analysis of multilingual data sets (Drury, 2007)? The problem becomes more apparent when the participants are marginalised refugee children from war-torn areas of the world. It is important that education researchers take theoretically and methodologically informed decisions in politically charged and linguistically and culturally diverse contexts when examining issues of language and participation, as such choices can work towards an inclusive research practice that does not exclude minority and vulnerable groups of people. Although the aforementioned studies implicitly provide guidance for conducting multilingual classroom research, they do not explicitly explain how their own theoretical positions can shape their methodological decisions and the impact of these in redressing power relations between researcher and participants.

In this chapter, I present the methodological decisions, informed by a repertoire approach towards multilingualism (Blommaert & Backus,

Holmes, P. D., Reynolds, J., & Ganassin, S. (Eds.). (2022). The politics of researching multilingually. Channel View Publications.
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2013; Busch, 2015), that I took as a classroom researcher during my PhD study, examining the linguistic and multicultural practices of seven refugee children in one primary school in Cyprus in 2017. I take a post-reflective perspective (Holmes, 2014) and discuss how my methodological decisions about collecting and representing data allowed me to create opportunities for linguistic equity and the authenticity of refugee children's voices.

The following research questions guide this chapter. In addressing these, the aim is to widen the discussion regarding the future of multilingual classroom research, especially in the context of migration:

(1) How does a repertoire view of language allow researchers working in the field of multilingual classroom research with refugees to take informed methodological decisions that ensure the authentic capture and representation of refugee children's voices and balance power relations with them?
(2) What are the implications of these decisions for developing an inclusive research practice for researchers working in multilingual settings?

The chapter begins with an overview of the repertoire approach, the theoretical position that I take towards multilingualism, and its affordances for scholars conducting research with refugee children who do not share the majority's language resources. I discuss an additional dimension of multilingual classroom research: research with children. I then present the aim and context of the PhD study from which the data for this chapter have been extracted, followed by a description of the methodology that was deployed (post-reflective account). The methodological decisions pertaining to collecting and representing data when conducting research with refugee children are then discussed. Finally, I argue for the implementation of an inclusive research practice that can inform researchers working in multilingual settings.

A Repertoire Approach to Multilingualism

Recently, researchers in language and education have taken a social turn in the field, moving beyond essentialist views of languages as discrete and bounded entities that people acquire in a linear way, to acknowledge how language and language practices are understood as social constructions relating to people's everyday practices and beliefs (Creese & Blackledge, 2011; Garcia & Li, 2014; Jørgensen, 2008). A social turn problematises monolingual assumptions about learning and suggests that people's learning practices are not context free, meaning that their interactions are shaped by the sociocultural context in which they operate.

Departing from such views, Blommaert and Backus's (2013) theorisation of language and language learning takes into account the increased

linguistic and cultural diversity in educational settings as a result of global mobility and migration, offering a repertoire approach to multilingualism. They contend that a repertoire approach takes into account learners' life experiences and does not expect them to have developed full linguistic competence in the languages they come into contact with in order to be considered as emergent multilinguals. They are against traditional testing models as they consider them to be linear ways of examining language knowledge that fail to capture the multilingual complexity of individuals. This means that people do not learn languages in a straightforward way, but rather their incomplete competence in different languages reflects their disrupted life trajectories.

Blommaert and Backus (2013: 15) understand that 'repertoires are individual, biographically organised complexes of resources, and they follow the rhythms of actual lives'. These resources, absorbed during the different phases of people's lives, become part of their broader repertoire. For example, when refugee children first arrive in a resettlement country, they should be expected to draw on a number of resources to communicate and make meaning because, in many cases, during their migratory trajectories, they may have acquired some knowledge of different languages. In line with Blommaert and Backus's (2013) biographical dimension on repertoire, Busch (2015) also sees people's languages and other semiotic tools as resources they can draw upon to make meaning. She emphasises that people should be able to experience them holistically, as it is important for their life trajectories to not be rejected. For Busch (2015, 2016), human communication is multimodal, and other modes than the linguistic are included in people's repertoires, such as gestures and images. This is important, especially in cases where the linguistic mode is not the strongest for supporting human communication.

When it comes to research methodology, and especially the ways in which linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children negotiate meaning, Busch (2010, 2016) refers to the use of language portraits. These are tools used mostly during interviews, where children are asked to add into their silhouette portrait the different languages they know or wish to know using different colours. Busch (2016) describes this method as multimodal and creative, claiming that it can be used for people to reflect on their life experiences. In relation to the choice of language to be used during fieldwork with multilingual learners, Busch (2016: 6) argues that researchers should be open to codeswitching practices (flexible alternation between languages), as these can 'influence the ways in which something is told'. Such an understanding highlights the importance of researchers acknowledging children's linguistic potentials, while also reflecting on their own, and drawing on both to create the appropriate conditions for children to be able to express themselves in full.

It is important to understand the affordances that a repertoire approach has to offer, especially when examining language practices in

classroom contexts where the researcher does not share a language(s) with the participants. This is crucial when the participants are vulnerable children who may have experienced trauma in their lives (Hart, 2014), and thus unequal power positions between researcher and participants become more apparent. A repertoire approach involves moving beyond a fixed categorisation of language use and places emphasis on how people's life trajectories can be reflected through the use of their multiple resources. It can facilitate researchers' work when collecting and presenting multilingual data from marginalised groups of children, whose voices are often muted. In the following section, I discuss an additional dimension that framed my theoretical position: balancing power relations with children for an authentic representation of their voices.

Classroom Research and Unequal Power Relations

Research that involves children requires extra attention, as children participate in a society dominated by adults (Mayall, 2008; Punch, 2002). Punch (2002) argues that researchers tend to treat children differently in studies than adults because they do not see them as equal. Hence, what is of concern is whether adults impose their views on children or whether they allow them to be active members of the society who can fully express their views. This concern is heightened when the children involved belong to a vulnerable group, such as refugees. According to Hart (2014), these children belong to a vulnerable group, as most of them suffer from trauma caused by their own or their parents' experiences of violence. The children who were part of this study can be described as vulnerable for a number of reasons. First, they are children who participated in an adult-dominated context; second, they were forced to flee because of ongoing crises in their countries, and thus were vulnerable in their legal and political status; and third, they did not belong to the new community's majority population and evidently did not speak the majority's language.

In their classroom research, Due *et al.* (2016) examined the ways in which refugee and migrant children in Australia participated in class and learnt the language of instruction of their host country. Despite the study being insightful into the experiences of these children and the complexities and opportunities that primary school teachers can come across when teaching in multilingual settings, it does not discuss researchers' methodological choices around issues of data collection and representation, or the ways in which these choices can contribute to including or excluding children's voices from the research process. Drury's (2007) reflective stance towards the important role of bilingual classroom assistants when conducting multilingual research with children foregrounds how researchers can provide rich insights by drawing on an emic perspective (including people that belong to the studied community) to guide data collection and analysis. However, she does not offer suggestions for how researchers can

conduct multilingual research without this kind of support. This study seeks to address this gap.

Bakhtin's (1986) concept of dialogic speech allows researchers to understand the capture and representation of authentic voice. For Bakhtin, the production of speech is not an isolated process, but a dialogic one that situates speakers' voices in a given sociocultural context. Thus, speech that is produced in a dialogic manner with the self or with others can be described as an authentic expression of the mind. However, it is important to consider James's (2007: 269) suggestion that researchers need to try 'to understand where they are coming from and why the positions from which children speak may be subject to change and variation in and through time'. In other words, only when researchers take a critical stance towards their methodological decisions and understand that power relations can shape the production of children's speech will they be able to represent children's voices more authentically and ethically (Spyrou, 2011).

Christensen and James (2008: 1) add that when researchers conduct 'research with rather than on children', the children will then be seen as active participants who can affect and be affected by their social environment. This is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that children should have the right to control their cultural identity, language and values. In order to do so, they should be able to communicate their views freely, which means drawing on their dominant language. As Pinter (2011: 214) argues, 'children's stronger language (L1) should be used in research instruments'. It is then up to researchers to reflect on how their own status and position (connected to characteristics such as their cultural and linguistic background, gender and social class), and the position of (particularly marginalised) participants, can shape and become shaped by their methodological decisions. My understanding of reflexivity stems from Byrd-Clark and Dervin (2014: 2), who take a reflexive turn in research practice in the fields of language and education and define it as an 'ongoing dialogical process that is continually evolving'. This kind of reflexivity presupposes following an emic perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017), involving understanding children's views and perceptions through their own lens. In other words, researchers should show 'a continual sensitivity to [children's] emotions, interests, and considerations in the varied situations of their lives' (Christensen & Prout, 2002: 493). Prior to examining how I operationalised this in my own research, I introduce the study for which I obtained the data for this chapter.

The PhD Study: A Classroom Ethnography on Children's Linguistic and Multicultural Practices

The data for this chapter come from the classroom ethnography study (Watson-Gegeo, 1997) that I conducted in 2017 as part of doctoral research at a British university. The study examined the linguistic and

multicultural practices of seven refugee children in a Cypriot primary school, drawing on sociocultural theory on second language learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). My fieldwork lasted for eight weeks and included classroom observations (which I undertook through recordings and fieldnotes), semi-structured interviews with refugee and non-refugee children and teachers, and the collection of physical artefacts, including children's multimodal posters during interviews, school documents and displays. The classroom recordings were selective, meaning that I randomly recorded 12 full days of lessons. I followed a discourse analysis approach (Cameron, 2001) to analyse the data. After transcribing all the interactional data following conversation analysis conventions (for the classroom recordings only) to ensure a fine-grained analysis (Preece, 2018), I selected the data that addressed my research questions by bringing my theoretical lens to the discussion.

The child-participants were learning Standard Modern Greek, or Greek (Cyprus's standard language of instruction), but their repertoires also included Modern Standard Arabic and different varieties of Arabic based on the children's home regions, Greek, Cypriot (a variant of Greek and Cyprus's local dialect) and English. As teachers reported, some children had learnt some English during their previous experiences of displacement, and they were also offered English lessons at the Refugee Reception Centre where they were residing, as well as at school.

Table 5.1 summarises the seven children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The information comes from the school's official documents and from conversations I had with both the children and the school's interpreter. It should be noted that Arabic presents a diglossic dichotomy, where standard and colloquial varieties coexist in the community. Modern Standard Arabic is of high status and is an official language used across the Arabic-speaking world, but different speech communities have their own regional colloquial varieties – for example, Egyptian Arabic (Holmes, 2013). Modern Standard Arabic and other local varieties used by

Table 5.1 Refugee children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds

Name	Country-home language	School year	Age	Parental religion	Languages included in their repertoire
Ayuf	Somalia-Arabic	5	10	Muslim	Greek, Cypriot, Arabic, English
Mahan	Yemen-Arabic	5	10	Muslim	Greek, Cypriot, Arabic, English
Mahmud	Iran-Farsi	5	10	Muslim and Christian	Greek, Cypriot, Farsi, English
Noore	Somalia-Arabic	6	11	Muslim	Greek, Cypriot, Arabic, English
Maya	Iraq-Arabic	6	12	Muslim	Greek, Cypriot, Arabic, English
Taraf	Syria-Arabic	6	11	Christian	Greek, Cypriot, Arabic, English
Amin	Egypt-Arabic	6	12	Christian	Greek, Cypriot, Arabic, English

participants are not separated in the table as I was not able to differentiate them and this was beyond the scope of the PhD.

All children except Mahmud (who came from a Farsi-speaking family) were users of Arabic. All children also had a basic knowledge of English while also starting to become emergent multilinguals, including Greek and Cypriot as part of their repertoire. Apart from the two classroom teachers, the refugee children were receiving support from a Syrian-Cypriot interpreter, Ms Mysha, who spoke Greek and Arabic and supported the children's learning of Greek, being present during most of the teaching time. Ms Mysha was not a speaker of Farsi, but she was able to support Mahmud by drawing on the similarities between Arabic and Farsi. The children were newly arrived refugees (most of them had been at the school for only four months), were being accommodated in Year 5 and 6 mainstream classrooms and followed the Cypriot curriculum. They were classified either as asylum seekers (waiting for their refugee status to be determined) or as refugees (their status had been granted).

A Post-Reflective Account of my Methodological Decisions

The methodology followed for this chapter is qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017), using a post-reflective account (Holmes, 2014) to understand how a repertoire approach allowed me to develop and adapt methods that fully captured and represented refugee children's authentic voices while balancing power relations between them and me, the adult researcher. A post-reflective account allows researchers to revisit and critically reflect on their data and methodologies from past projects (Holmes, 2014). I revisited my transcribed data extracts across the whole research process, focusing on the language choices I took during data elicitation and representation. I followed a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify the extracts that addressed the research questions and typified the initial concepts that guided this chapter ('power relations' and 'authentic voices'). For data elicitation, I focus on analysing the interviews, rather than transcripts of the classroom recordings (which were prioritised in the PhD analysis), to identify ways in which I balanced the power relations between me and the children while at the same time allowing their available repertoires to be fully expressed. I chose this because interviews require an immediate interaction between the researcher and the children, and the lack of overlap in linguistic repertoires makes power relations more apparent compared to classroom recordings. For data representation, I focus on all data extracts (interviews and classroom recordings), also looking at how my methodological decisions allowed the children's voices to be fully represented and their languages to be seen as equally important to the other languages used in the study.

This process required reflecting upon my own position as a doctoral researcher who did not belong to the children's communities and who had

no knowledge of Arabic, but spoke English and the language the children were expected to learn – Greek – in their new learning environment, and how this knowledge, or lack of it, could create further gaps between me and the children. There was an unequal power relation between Greek and Arabic in the research, as I, the researcher, spoke Greek, which has status in the Cypriot community to which I belong. Even though a Cypriot classroom is not a monolingual setting because of the use of both Greek and Cypriot, the refugee children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds were unfamiliar to their peers and teachers, putting the children in a marginalised position. Greek was the language they were learning, and Cypriot was being learnt through socialising with their Cypriot peers. The children's knowledge of English can be described, according to Blommaert and Backus (2013), as 'minor': They had limited knowledge but could draw on it to engage in communicative practices.

Regarding the power relations that exist between researcher and participants in children's studies (Mayall, 2008; Punch, 2002), I found myself following Mayall's (2008) standpoint on eliminating the researcher's authoritative voice by acknowledging my lack of knowledge of childhood experiences. I considered and positioned myself as an adult who lacked knowledge of the children's reality, including knowledge of Arabic and migratory trajectories. I not only internally recognised this lack of knowledge, but I also explicitly expressed it. For example, throughout the fieldwork, I spent time with the children, not only for research purposes but because we built a relationship, and I asked them to teach me how to pronounce and write different words in Arabic as I wanted to understand their world. This standpoint and acknowledgement allowed me to conduct research 'with' the participants, rather than imposing my knowledge and status on them (Christensen & James, 2008; James, 2007; Punch, 2002).

Next, I present the ways in which the language choices I made throughout my research allowed the children's voices to be authentically captured and represented. The decisions are discussed under two themes: the flexible incorporation of children's available resources and multilingual data presentation.

Flexible Incorporation of Children's Available Resources

Here, I focus on data collection and specifically how I created opportunities for capturing children's authentic views by allowing them to capitalise on their available resources, including Arabic, Farsi, English, Greek and other semiotic resources during interviews. Since I did not speak Arabic or Farsi, I could have included the school interpreter, Ms Mysha, in the interviews to overcome the linguistic boundary. However, my aim was to 'work with participants' (Christensen & James, 2008) and adding another authoritative figure could have discouraged the children from

voicing their real views, which would have negatively impacted on the quality of the spoken interaction, thereby inhibiting their voice (Mayall, 2008; Pinter, 2011). The children trusted Ms Mysha and would often go to her with their worries, so perhaps her presence would have resulted in richer data sets. However, Temple (1997) reminds us that interpreters can bring their own views when interpreting participants' ideas and I wanted to avoid this. Also, the presence of someone providing simultaneous translations could have affected the power dynamic between the children and consequently that of the interview, so I decided against this. However, this gave rise to a different issue: due to my lack of Arabic, I relied on Greek to conduct the children. The following three subsections discuss how the children's views were not muted despite their limited knowledge of Greek, as the interviews were conducted in a multilingual manner.

The aim was for all interviews to be conducted in groups, but due to the school's scheduled curriculum activities, there were three individual and seven group interviews.

All data are presented in the original languages used during the data collection (Greek, Cypriot, Arabic, English, Farsi), with English translations. A discussion of how multilingual data was transcribed and translated is provided in the 'multilingual data presentation' section. Transcription conventions are provided in Appendix 5.1.

Arabic as the dominant resource

Extracts 1 and 2 illustrate how my decision to group refugee children together instead of having an interpreter supported them to draw on their shared linguistic resources, enabling them to dominate the discussion and gain a sense of empowerment (e.g. taking control over their responses).

Extract 1 comes from an interview I conducted with Maya and Noore, where I initiated a conversation around the practices they followed when learning Greek in class. I chose to pair them together not only because they were friends and the same gender but also because Noore had been at the school for 18 months, whereas Maya had been attending for only four, and thus a collaboration between them would be beneficial.

Extract 1

1	Researcher	Τι τάξη επίεννες στο Ιράκ Μάγια μου; What year **were you** at Iraq my dear Maya?
2	Maya	Ε πέμπτη και τέλειωσε έκτη ναι εγώ ((person-verb disagreement)) شو أنا المفروض صف شو اسمه ؟ Eh year five and I finish year six yes I ((person-verb disagreement)) <u>what I am supposed to be in grade, what's it called?</u>

3	Researcher	Τα Ελληνικά είναι εύκολα ή δύσκολα;
		Is Greek easy or hard?
4	Maya	Εύκολα
		Easy
5	Researcher	Μπράβο, πώς μαθαίνεις τι κάμνεις για να μάθεις Ελληνικά;
		Bravo, how do you **learn what do you do** to learn Greek?
6	Maya	شو؟
		What?
7	Researcher	Τι κάμνεις;
		What do you do?
8	Noore	شو بتعملي عشان تدرسي يوناني؟
		What do you do to learn Greek?
9	Maya	بتعلم الأحرف
		I learn the letters
10	Noore	Να μάθει τις λέξεις να διαβάζει
		To learn the words to read

In this extract, we observe Maya taking control over her response by drawing on her available linguistic resources, Arabic and Greek, to provide her answers and maintain the communication with me (Line 2). Even though I was not able to understand the second half of Maya's response, where she asked Noore to explain the question I posed, I did not interrupt the flow of our conversation and posed a follow-up question (Line 3), to which Maya responded (Line 4). In Line 5, I posed another question, but Maya did not understand it and used Arabic to express this (Line 6). I used Cypriot to repeat part of the question (Line 7), and Noore then took the role of translator to explain the question to Maya using Arabic (Line 8). Maya responded, also drawing on Arabic (Line 9), which allowed Noore to transfer Maya's response to me in Greek (Line 10). The extract highlights the importance of researchers being open to codeswitching practices when conducting interviews with multilingual learners; acknowledging participants' linguistic potential leads to the use of their dominant language (Busch, 2016; Pinter, 2011). In this case, both the researcher and children were able to flexibly utilise their linguistic resources to engage with each other, which led to the collection of rich interactional data, which was the aim of the PhD study. In using Arabic, the children also exercised their right to speak and expressed their views (United Nations, 1989); their linguistic trajectories and identities were not discarded

(Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Busch, 2015), but rather were used in a meaningful way.

Pairing together a more advanced learner with a less advanced one allowed Maya, the weaker one, to feel secure without worrying about being judged for her linguistic skills while also allowing Noore to play the role of facilitator. However, this definitely creates critical concerns as to whether the child who translates is happy with this arrangement and whether it is ethical to put this pressure on one child. These are questions of great importance, to which there is no easy answer. I approached this issue by considering that children experience this kind of linguistic brokering in their everyday lives, thus they may not have experienced the interview as anything unusual. By having an adult translator, I would have lifted the weight off Noore's shoulders, but the opportunity to engage with the children directly and allow them to experience their repertoires as a whole with their peers would have been missed.

The next extract highlights even more the importance of incorporating children's dominant language into interviews. By doing so, they can share their thoughts with each other and, hence, their authentic voices and views surface. In Extract 2, I asked Maya and Noore to talk about their lives at the reception centre and Noore shared with me – using Greek, through which she could provide only a limited response – a traumatic moment that her and her family experienced. In what follows, Maya requests an explanation of what happened in a concerned manner.

Extract 2

1	Maya	شو صار يا نور؟ احكيلي شو صار من زمان لالكم؟
		What happened, Noore? tell me what happened a long time ago to you?
2	Noore	كسرولنا الباب
		They broke down our door
3	Maya	ليش؟
		Why?
4	Noore	مشان مشكلة بين فلسطينيين مع صوماليين
		Because of a problem between Palestinians and Somalis
5	Researcher	Είπετέ το κάποιου υπεύθυνου τζαμέ ;
		Did you report that to any administrator **there**?
6	Noore	Ε ναι
		Eh yes

Noore explains to Maya using Arabic what happened at the reception centre (Line 2), after Maya's worried request (Line 1). The two girls had the opportunity to share personal experiences and show empathy towards each other through their dominant language, which gave them a sense of agency (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). Even though I did not understand what the children were saying, I allowed the conversation to carry on, and I then asked a follow-up question so as to become part of the conversation (Line 5). Such pedagogic practice, pairing participants together during interviews and allowing for their language – Arabic – to dominate the conversation in a Greek-dominated setting minimises pressure and reduces the gap that exists in the power dynamics between adults and children (Pinter, 2011). This is particularly the case when dealing with vulnerable children whose languages do not have the same status within the host community.

English as a shared resource

The second language used between me and the children during the interviews was English, which was a shared resource between us, and so the use of it allowed the interview to run smoothly. The following extract comes from an interview I had with Mahmud, where we discuss his linguistic repertoire.

Extract 3

1	Researcher	Άρα πόσες γλώσσες μιλάς; Τι γλώσσα μιλάς στην Κοιλάδα; Language at Kilada
		So how many languages do you speak? What language do you speak at Kilada? *Language at Kilada*
2	Mahmud	School
		School
3	Researcher	School language? Αραβικά, Ελληνικά ή Αγγλικά;
		School language? Arabic, Greek or English?
4	Mahmud	Φαρσικά
		Farsi

I began by incorporating English into the conversation in an attempt to maintain communication (Line 1) and, interestingly, this allowed Mahmud to mobilise his available linguistic resources and illustrate his multilingual identity by successfully responding to my initiation, providing a response in English (Line 2). This allowed me to incorporate a flexible use of Greek and English to carry on with my questions (Line 3).

Mahmud's answer (Line 4) indicates that he responded to the English part of my question, referring to the school language. This flexible incorporation allowed for the interview to carry on in a timely manner and for Mahmud's voice to be represented, despite my not sharing his dominant language. He used his 'minimal knowledge' of English, which reflects a moment of his trajectory (Blommaert & Backus, 2013), to engage in conversation with me and gain control over his response.

The use of English as a lingua franca when conducting multilingual interviews with groups of adults was found in Ganassin and Holmes' (2013) study, where the scholars reported that, despite English not being the participants' main linguistic preference, it was used intermittently to support communication. Similarly, in my research, despite English not being my dominant language or that of the children, I found its incorporation useful in terms of balancing power relations between us. I was able to participate and carry on my conversation with the children without having Greek as the main resource, which was a language that carried a connotation of high status within the school setting, while implicitly putting English on an equal footing to Greek.

Mobilising multimodal resources

Drawing on a repertoire approach that views human communication as multimodal (Busch, 2015, 2016), I acknowledged that in multilingual contexts where there is a need to achieve communication, but the linguistic is not the strongest mode to use, other modes become more apparent.

Accordingly, another practice that I undertook to overcome linguistic boundaries and balance power relations when conducting interviews with children was the production of multilingual posters. This practice was inspired by Busch's (2010) 'language portraits' activity and was adapted to fit my study's goals. During the interviews, I asked the children to draw themselves, friends and/or family members and to write down any explanatory information they wished in the different languages in which they were able to communicate.

In the following poster (Figure 5.1), Mahmud responds to my questions regarding his linguistic repertoire (see Extract 3) by portraying his multilingual identity in a way that reflects his knowledge of his home language, Farsi, and the language he is in the process of learning, Greek.

During our discussions, Mahmud responded in Greek in a monosyllabic way; however, when he wanted to explain his ideas, he added details to the posters in two languages. Specifically, to answer the question about who his friends were, he drew his four friends at the bottom of the page and wrote their Greek names using Farsi. Above these four names Mahmud wrote the names of other friends of his and those of some of his family members using Greek, providing the translation in Farsi next to

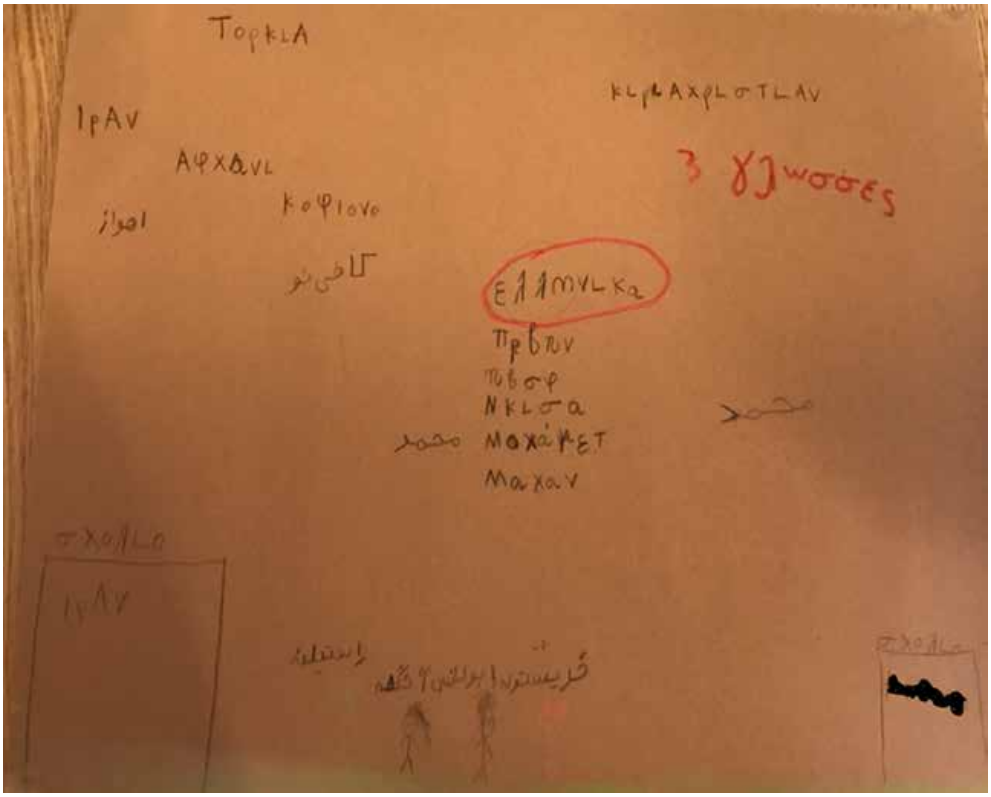

Figure 5.1 Mahmud's multilingual poster

some of them. At the top right (Figure 5.1), he asked the researcher to write that he speaks three languages, hence the Greek sentence '3 γλώσσες' (3 languages). At the top left, he wrote the name of his country (Iran) using Greek, and below that the name of his city (Ahwaz) in Farsi. He also wrote in Greek the word 'Turkey', a country that perhaps he had passed through during his journey. With this visual stimulus as guidance, Mahmud had something to refer to and a sense of control over how he wanted to express himself. Moreover, he gave himself time to think before responding, which empowered him during the interview with an adult that did not share the same language as him (Pinter, 2011). That is, the pressure had been taken off as the focus was transferred from the linguistic to other modes of communication that were also known to me.

Multilingual Data Presentation: Equal Voice Representation

Before I discuss my decision to present my data multilingually, it is necessary to mention that I sought assistance from two Arabic speakers, one from Saudi Arabia and one from Algeria who both belonged to the higher education community, to assist with transcription and translation. I chose to cross-check the translations, as translation is not a neutral process but is related to people's experiences (Temple, 1997), so I wanted to

ensure the children's views were true to their original meaning. While transcribing, I identified the time that each Arabic utterance was produced and made a signpost to enable me to locate it and discuss it during my individual meetings with the two interpreters. In these meetings, the Arabic speakers provided the English meaning, and we also discussed the conversation analysis conventions. Even though I sought assistance from two Arabic speakers for my data, reflecting on this decision, ethical and methodological issues could have been raised as I did not ask for help from a Farsi speaker to translate Mahmud's (few) utterances. The reason was that I did not have access to a Farsi speaker at that time, so in a way Mahmud, and consequently Farsi, did not receive the same attention as Arabic.

For my multilingual data presentation (Extract 4), I have provided the first line in the original language, in plain text to show the equality between the languages, and in the line below, I present the utterances in the English-translated version. In the translations, the Arabic utterances are underlined, the Cypriot ones are in bold, the Greek ones are in normal font and the English ones are in italics. The different formatting shows only where each language starts and finishes.

Regarding directionality of text, Arabic is written from right to left, and the other languages featured in my data are written from left to right. Therefore, when a line of text features only Arabic, the original is written right to left in the transcript, but the English translation is written left to right. When the original text features a mixture of Arabic and (an)other language(s) in the same line, the Arabic phrases are written from right to left, but the phrases in (the) other language(s) are written from left to right in the same line (overall, the line reads from left to right such that the first phrase uttered is on the left), and the English translation is also written from left to right. The conversation analysis symbols also follow left-to-right directionality. Thus, the transcription respects (to the extent possible) both the order in which the phrases were spoken and the writing conventions of both languages.

The following extract comes from a classroom observation, where Taraf and Maya negotiate meaning during a mathematics lesson by drawing on their available linguistic resources.

Extract 4

1	Maya	=عشرين هذول؟=
		=<u>are these twenty?=</u>
2	Taraf	=(xx)عشرة يا أبلة بتزيدي τριανταπεντε(.) ضفنالها عشرة صارت σαρανταπεντε=
		=<u>(xx) oh teacher you add ten</u> thirty-five (.) <u>and you add ten to it it becomes</u> forty-five=

3	Maya	=شو هالـ (.) είναι είναι=
		=<u>what's this</u> (.) it is it is=
4	Taraf	=عشان تعرفي τριανταπέντε علیها اذا زدنا σαρανταπέντε بتعدي الى العشرة (.) خمسة خمسة τριανταπέντε και πεντε σαράντα/
		=<u>so you know</u> thirty-five <u>if we add to it</u> forty-five <u>you count to ten (.) five five</u> thirty-five plus five forty/

Extract 4 presents the children's linguistic practice (codeswitching) that allowed them to make meaning and sustain their interest in the task. We observe Maya requesting assistance from Taraf by drawing on Arabic (Line 1), while Taraf draws on his available linguistic resources, Arabic and Greek (Lines 2 and 4), to respond to her query while implicitly signalling his knowledge of Greek. The multilingual presentation reveals that Taraf is a skilled learner who can reflect upon Maya's request by navigating between two languages.

In retrospect, my decision to provide a multilingual presentation of the interactional data reflected my theoretical position of envisioning all languages as equal by making visible children's linguistic and cultural trajectories, and also their multilingual reality and practice – that is, the ways in which they use their dominant language to learn the new one during teaching time. If I had decided to present only the translated version of their speech, I would have excluded the refugee children's true voices from the research practice and widened the power gap between us. I tried to ensure equity between the languages observed in the fieldwork and thus to move beyond any hierarchical distinctions between them. Rampton (2006: 395) also reminds us that 'for the reader, having access to data that hasn't been quite so heavily processed by the researcher makes it easier to challenge the analysis'. This means that readers can come to their own conclusions when they receive a less heavily revised and edited version of a translated speech, without the researcher's interpretations being imposed on them. Hence, a multilingual presentation adds trustworthiness in the qualitative research, which is about researchers being transparent with their methodological choices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

The translation in English in the line beneath the original language production cannot be avoided, especially when researchers operate in academic institutions where this is the language of instruction (Ganassin & Holmes, 2013). It also allows the readers of this volume, which is intended for an English-language readership, to engage with the text, to see where each language begins and ends and how different languages come into play in an institutionally monolingual setting.

Towards an Inclusive Research Practice

In this section, I focus on the second research question, which has to do with the implications of my methodological decisions for developing an inclusive research practice for other PhD or early-career researchers to follow when conducting multilingual research. My recommendations can be applied when working with adult participants as well.

My post-reflective analysis suggests that an inclusive research practice does not require multilingual proficiency on the researcher's side, but rather being reflexive about how our own lack of overlap in linguistic repertoires and cultural experiences can include or exclude children's voices from research (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014; Mayall, 2008). Allowing participants' dominant languages to unfold during data collection can narrow the gap between the researcher and the children – especially if the participants belong to a marginalised group – as it will allow them to experience their repertoires coming together as a whole, to gain a sense of agency and control over their ideas. Power relations in language hierarchies can also be balanced. For example, in my study, in some cases, the Arabic language dominated the conversations I had with refugee children within a Greek-speaking setting. Researchers can also employ other resources to move beyond language hierarchies, such as the use of a shared language and the use of multimodal resources, which are common resources that both the researcher and children can draw on.

Finally, the presentation of data in their original language can go some way towards ensuring linguistic equity, while also redressing the power gap that exists between the researcher, who makes the decisions about what is and is not being represented, and the children. It also adds trustworthiness to qualitative research by allowing readers to come to their own interpretations when reading a less glossed document in which researchers have been transparent with their methodological decisions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to critically reflect on the methodological decisions I took when I conducted my PhD research in a classroom setting with refugee children whose language and culture I did not share.

The first research question concerned the ways in which a repertoire approach towards multilingualism can shape researchers' methodological decisions in ensuring the authentic capture and representation of refugee children's voices while balancing power relations with them. I explained how, by taking a repertoire approach and factoring in the children's position in the research, I was able to recognise their and my own multiplicity of resources and the power relations that existed between us, and to be creative with my methodological decisions concerning data collection and

Holmes, P. D., Reynolds, J., & Ganassin, S. (Eds.). (2022). The politics of researching multilingually. Channel View Publications.
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presentation. I argue that this is a powerful approach to adopt, especially when the participants are refugee children, as their voices may be misrepresented if more traditional views of language are applied.

However, my post-reflective analysis also revealed that there are limitations when the researcher does not have command of the participants' dominant languages. For example, my decision not to include the school's interpreter in the interviews might have prevented the children from providing full responses. I also realised that it would have been useful if I had taken Arabic and Farsi courses before starting the fieldwork, to familiarise myself with my participants' languages and cultures. This could have been well received by the research community and would have possibly allowed me to gain richer insights, as I can recall many incidents where I missed opportunities for meaningful interactions with my participants.

Regarding the second research question, which looked at the implications of these decisions for developing an inclusive research practice for researchers working in multilingual settings, my analysis showed that even when researchers lack first-hand experience of the children's world (Mayall, 2008), they can be reflexive and critical towards their research methods to ensure their participants' authentic representation (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014; James, 2007; Spyrou, 2011). At the same time, these empirical examples emphasise the need for more studies to map researchers' decisions and for the development of a more sustained theorisation of the language choices researchers take, as well as how their position as adults can affect the research process, especially when working with marginalised groups.

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Appendix 5.1

Transcription conventions

?	Rising intonation in English
؟	Rising intonation in Arabic
;	Rising intonation in Greek
/	End of an utterance
(.)	Pause of less than one second
=	Latching. Inserted at the end of one speaker's turn and the beginning of the next speaker's adjacent turn, this indicates there is no pause between the turns.
(xx)	Inaudible utterances
(( ))	Researcher's comments
Underlined	Originally produced in Arabic
Italicised	Originally produced in English
Bold	**Originally produced in Cypriot**