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

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Overview

- Focus of presentation

- My PhD study

- Repertoire approach to multilingualism

- Collecting multilingual data

- Presenting multilingual data

- Moving forward

Focus of presentation

R.Q

How a repertoire approach allowed me to take informed methodological decisions that can ensure linguistic equity and authenticity when **collecting and representing** refugee children's voices with whom I did not share the same linguistic resources

Post-reflective account

Revisited my data since having done my PhD and critically reflected on them (Holmes, 2014)

Importance

People in BAAL and other PhD and early career researchers conduct research with multilingual participants or in multilingual settings →Theoretical positions can inform their research practice and allow them to make multilingualism visible in research practice

My PhD study

Aim

Examining the linguistic and multicultural practices of refugee primary school children in one school in Cyprus

When

 2017

Where

PhD done in a British university (Anglophone community)

Methods of data collection

Classroom observations: recordings and fieldnotes

Interviews

Collection of physical artifacts

Participants

Seven refugee children

Two classroom teachers

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, English, Arabic
Mahan	Yemen-Arabic	5	10	Muslim	Greek, Cypriot, English, , Arabic
Mahmud	Iran-Farsi	5	10	Muslim and Christian	Greek, Cypriot, English, Farsi,
Noore	Somalia-Arabic	6	11	Muslim	Greek, Cypriot, English, Arabic,
Maya	Iraq-Arabic	6	12	Muslim	Greek, Cypriot, English, Arabic
Taraf	Syria-Arabic	6	11	Christian	Greek, Cypriot, English, Arabic
Amin	Egypt-Arabic	6	12	Christian	Greek, Cypriot, English, Arabic

Repertoire approach on multilingualism

- Original version 'speech communities' (Gumperz, 1964): Moving beyond monolingual ideologies of the idealised 'native speakers' concept /'one language only one language at a time' which still dominates practice and policy (Li, 2018) but fails to capture the multilingual complexity of individuals

- 'Repertoires are individual, biographically organised complexes of resources, and they follow the rhythms of actual lives' (Blommaert and Backus, 2013: 15)

- Takes into account the increased linguistic and cultural diversity in educational settings as a result of global mobility and migration and holds that people draw on a full range of linguistic and non-linguistic resources to make meaning (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Busch, 2015)

Challenge: Collecting multilingual data

What about the **research design**: How do you do fieldwork when you are a 'lone researcher' and you don't share the entire linguistic repertoire of the participants?

-Do I add another authoritative figure during interviews with children to translate word by word their thoughts?

-Do I only use Greek and prevent children from fully expressing their ideas?

Flexible incorporation of children's available resources during interviews

Three examples of interactional data

- Use of Arabic
- Use of English
- Use of multimodal posters

Key

<u>Underlined</u>	Originally produced in Arabic
Italicised	Originally produced in English
Bold	Originally produced in Cypriot

Use of Arabic

| 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 |

Use of English

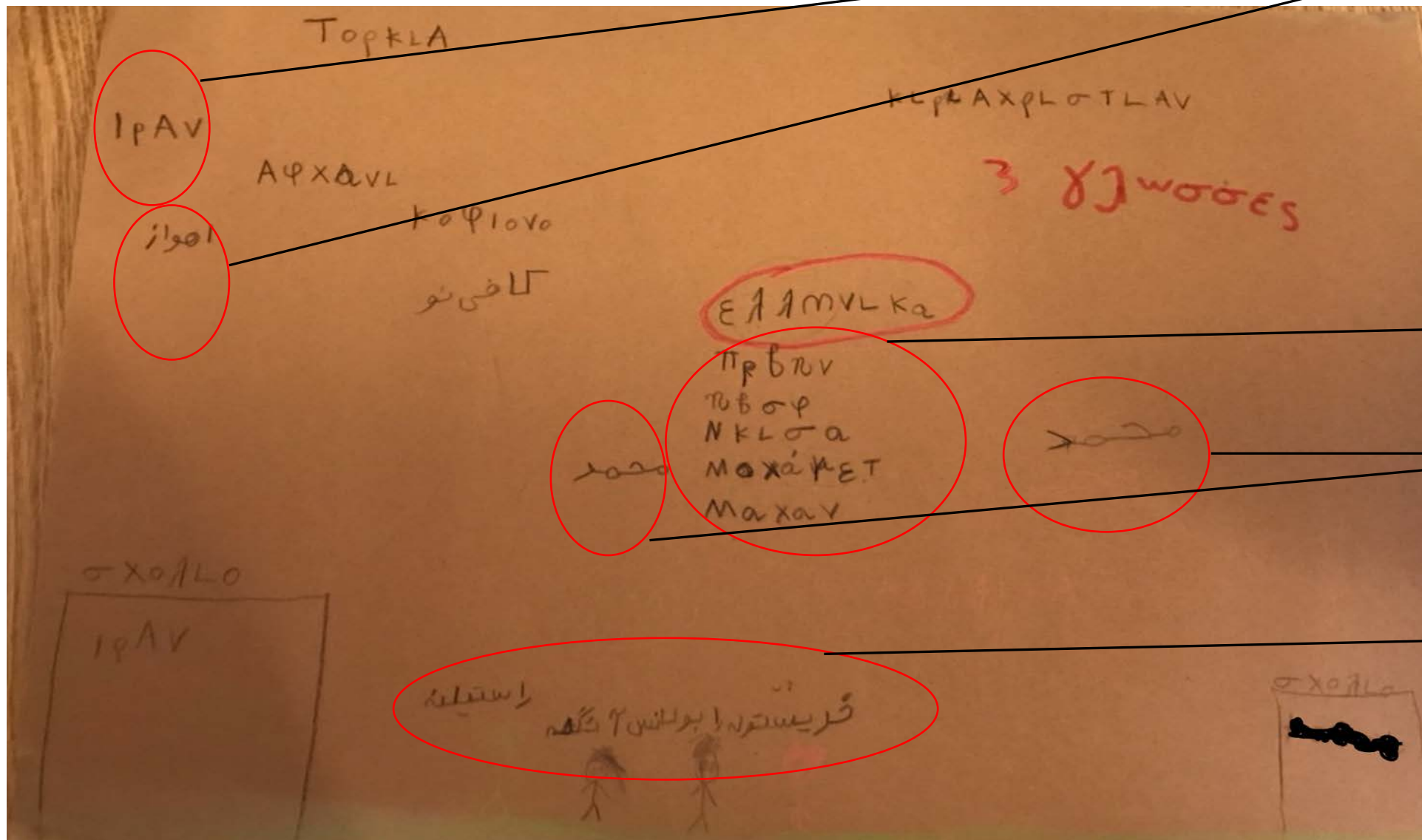| 1 | Researcher | Άρα πόσες γλώσσες μιλάς; Τι γλώσσα μιλάς στην Κοιλάδα; Language at Kilada |
		So how many languages do you speak? What language do you speak at Kilada? *Language at Kilada*
2	Mahmud	School
		School
3	Researcher	School language? Αραβικά, Ελληνικά ή Αγγλικά;
		School language? Arabic,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

Use of multimodal posters

Flexible incorporation of children's available resources

- Acknowledged children's linguistic potentials and allow them to capitalise their available resources (Arabic, Farsi, English, Greek and other semiotic resources) to be able to express themselves in full

-Balanced lack of overlap in linguistic repertoire

-Ensured children's sense of agency

Challenge: Presenting multilingual data

What about **data dissemination?**

-How do I make multilingualism visible in the Anglophone community?

-How do I present a right-to-left language in a left-to-right text in order to respect the writing conventions of all languages?

Presenting multilingual data

1   Maya   =عشرين هذول؟=

                                =are these twenty?=

2   Taraf   =σαρανταπεντε(xx)=ضفنالها عشرة صارت τριανταπεντε(.) يا أبلة بتزيدي عشرة

                                =(xx) oh teacher you add ten thirty-five (.) and you add ten to it it becomes forty- five=

3   Maya   =είναι είναι (.)شو هالـ =

                                =what's this (.) it is it is=

4   Taraf   =σαρανταπέντε اذا زدنا عليها τριανταπέντε عشان تعرفي=
                                خمسة خمسة (.) العشرة بتعدي الى
                                τριανταπέντε και πεντε σαράντα/

                                =so you know thirty-five if we add to it forty-five
                                you count to ten (.) five five
                                thirty-five plus five forty/

Presenting multilingual data

- Ensure all languages are seen as equally important → Moving beyond hierarchical distinctions between them

- Making learners' complex multilingual reality and practice visible: strategic use of languages by the children (Preece, 2020)

-Being transparent when presenting spoken interactions → Children's true voices and life trajectories are not neglected (Blommaert & Backus, 2013)

Moving towards a repertoire approach in research practice in applied linguistics

- *Researching Multilingually Network Project* (Holmes, Fay, Andrews, Attia, 2011), *The Multilingual University project* (Preece, 2014)

- Widen the discussion on the affordances that a repertoire approach has to offer in moving beyond methodological challenges and promoting good practice in research

- Development of an inclusive interdisciplinary research practice → Being reflexive about how our own lack of overlap in linguistic repertoires and cultural experiences can include or exclude participants' voices from research (Byrd-Clark & Dervin, 2014)

Thank you

Ευχαριστώ

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