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Imperiale, Maria Grazia (2018) Developing language education in the Gaza Strip: pedagogies of capability and resistance. PhD thesis.

https://theses.gla.ac.uk/9109/

Developing language education in the Gaza Strip:

Pedagogies of capability and resistance

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

October 2017

Abstract

The importance of language education, and education more generally, in contexts of protracted crisis and emergencies is widely acknowledged as a potent tool for nurturing the wellbeing of individuals. It is also important in fostering development within afflicted societies. Despite this and an increasing interest in the improvement of the quality of education in these contexts (UNHCR, 2017; UNESCO, 2017; UNRWA, 2011), there has been scant scholarly attention given to language education models that emerge from those vulnerable settings, and to how they may differ from competence approaches developed in peace-time and in contexts of free mobility.

Grounded in the theoretical framework of the capabilities approach for a holistic understanding of language education (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000; Crosbie, 2014), and motivated by rare empirical research investigating language pedagogies in contexts of pain and pressure, this study explores and co-constructs a grounded model for language education in the context of the siege of the Gaza Strip (Palestine).

The Gaza Strip has been under siege since 2007, when Israel declared it 'hostile territory'. The siege of Gaza prevents the free circulation of people, goods, and basic materials. As a result, two million people live, many as refugees of long standing, in a condition of 'forced immobility' (Stock, 2016) and worsening living conditions. These have been further affected detrimentally by three military operations in the last decade. The siege affects people's mental and physical wellbeing, and the development of Palestinian society. In addition to the military hegemony, an epistemological hegemony shaped by orientalising tendencies perturbs all narratives about the 'question of Palestine' (Said, 1979; 1980; 1986).

The chosen research methodology involves a cycle of critical participatory action research (CPAR), conducted online. The CPAR consists in the development, delivery, observation, analysis and evaluation of a series of specially designed workshops with 13 pre-service English teachers from the Gaza Strip. The aim of the research design is to investigate localized, critical, and creative language pedagogies. The workshop series focuses on the use of creative methods in language education, specifically on the use of Palestinian 'Arts of Resistance'.

The findings in this thesis demonstrate that: (a) pre-service English teachers value teaching approaches which move beyond competency-driven aims and instead engage with students' dreams, hopes, values, and wellbeing; (b) the capabilities approach offers a lens through which language pedagogy can be framed within contexts of particular vulnerability; (c) participants value the use of Palestinian arts-based methods, as these enable a pedagogical practice which connects politics and aesthetics; and (d) the online network established during the research encounter shaped and was shaped by materiality and in relationality. A synthesis of these findings provides a metaphorical representation of an ecological language education in the context of pain and pressure.

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My heartfelt gratitude goes to the 13 participants who volunteered to take part in this study. I truly feel honoured to have shared the research journey with such brilliant, humorous, steadfast, resilient young women, who taught me about life under siege. It was a real pleasure and honour working with you all.

And the most profound thanks go to my family and to my friends. To the friends of a lifetime that are all spread around the world, your presence is always a gift and our short weekends together visiting each other are always precious moments. To the friends in Glasgow – it has been wonderful to share the PhD journey with you, the pints and the coffees, and my life here.

Thank you, Mum, thanks Francesco, and thanks, Dad – who are next to the three of us from above. Our family is the strongest reference point in my life and the safest harbour to come back to after each journey. Grazie di tutto.

And finally, thank you Yann, for the everyday loving support, for the surprises of these last years and months, and for creating our life priorities together.

And most of all, thank you for our Little One, and the joy ahead.

To those who dare to dream.

To you, Dad, who taught me this.

To you, my Little One,

May you dream big,

And may this world be open to your dreams.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

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Prologue

So much for the play of chance in the minutiae of fieldwork, yet chance determines entire projects too. How many times is an anthropologist asked, Oh! Why did you go to Colombia, or Brazil, or Fiji or the University of Glasgow hospital? And the answer is inevitably crazy and generally a good story, a story of chance.

(Taussig, 2011: 83)

In September 2013 I started my PhD journey at the University of Glasgow, in the School of Education. Having worked and travelled abroad for a couple of years while teaching Italian and English as foreign languages, and having worked as a lecturer of Italian in a famous Italian university for another year, I was ready to quit my job to go back to be a doctoral student. I had a research project in mind which would have reflected my interests in applied linguistics and intercultural education, and in Middle Eastern studies.

I was very excited about my research project since it was inspired by my previous personal teaching experiences in Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East. The familiarity with the needs of people living in the camps, with the material constraints in which teachers operate, and with the socio-cultural discourses on the Middle East informed my research proposal, which focused on intercultural language education with refugees in the Middle East. The aim of the research project was to understand what intercultural language education looks like in conditions of protracted crisis and emergency, specifically with Palestinian refugees who are held in limbo, unable to move forward as citizens of the host countries or to return to Palestine.

The first year of my PhD went smoothly, immersed in the literature review, attending seminars and workshops, and settling down at the University of Glasgow. Finally, in summer 2014, I started the ethical approval process and, after several revisions due to the precarious and potentially at-risk situation in

the Middle East region - affected by the Syrian crisis - I received clearance to carry out my research study in a Middle East country, which I will call Site 1[1].

In September 2014, I flew to Site 1 in order to negotiate access to the schools of an important Institution[2] that provides education for Palestinian refugees. Before starting my doctoral research, I had already been in touch with the Institution and, back then, the Director of Education in Site 1 seemed to be enthusiastic about such a proposal. Having secured ethical approval, and having keen contacts in the field, I therefore thought everything would go smoothly. But it was not to be the case.

The first obstacle I encountered was in negotiating access to the refugee camp in which I wanted to conduct my research project. The camp, in which I had lived previously for extensive periods of time, is controlled by military checkpoints; access to the camp, for foreign visitors, must be approved by the Ministry of Defence of Site 1. In the past, I was always granted access to the camp, but this time – probably due to increasing violence in Syria and a consequent instability in the whole region – the permits were not granted as easily as I was used to.

The story of negotiating access to Site 1 is rather long and frustrating. I will not dwell here on all the challenges, setbacks, efforts and dashed hopes I experienced. They were too many to be recounted in detail. However, summarizing, I spent some days in September 2014 going in and out of the Ministry of Defence of Site 1 in order to get the permit to access the camp. After some interrogations in Arabic with a number of soldiers and generals; after a heated debate with a colonel; after further interrogations and long waits for the colonel that would have been able to 'help me'; after a long not-entirely voluntary 'visit' to the Mukhabarat (the intelligence agency); after another, heated discussion with a general who did not want to return my passport, I eventually met the colonel that would have given me the permit. As my research diary records, however, this resulted in an unpleasant surprise.

> *A small piece of paper was printed in front of me in less than a minute,*
> *while the same threatening Colonel that interrogated me some days*

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[1] I anonymize the country for ethical and for safety reasons; otherwise, the people mentioned in the prologue might be identifiable because of the roles they cover in this specific country.
[2] The Institution is anonymized for ethical reasons.

previously, was posing – again - the very same questions he had already asked me. Why do you go there? How long are you staying? Where will you be staying? With whom? How did you know about the camp? Did you take part in protests in the camp or outside? Do you know any suspicious persons there... etc., etc. Finally, he printed off my permit and gave it to me. I took it, and was about to leave his office when I saw that the permit was valid until the 13th of September.

A one-day permit.

The rationale behind issuing the permit was to conduct my PhD fieldwork, in ONE day. Exhausted, after trying to complain about how on Earth I could have completed my PhD fieldwork in ONE day – all this happening in Arabic - I just took the permit and left. I would have come back soon anyway. (Research diary, 12 September 2014)

When I finally got to the refugee camp, that same evening, hoping to be able to enter, I was stopped by soldiers at a checkpoint, because another colonel needed to verify my identity and my permit.

Time was precious indeed. And mine was being lost in chatting to officers and soldiers, rather than being spent with people that were waiting for me.

That colonel at the checkpoint, after a long and constructive conversation, finally let me in the camp the following morning, so I stayed in the camp something like nine hours in total.

However, he phoned me a few days ago to ask if everything was fine and told me that he personally had just approved a special permit for me to access the camp for the coming five months. (Research diary, 18 September 2014)

Undoubtedly a very challenging process, but the permission to enter the camp for future fieldwork was secured.

Permission to access the Institution: lost in emails.

As all the above was happening, I was also trying to get in touch with the Institution that provides education in several refugee camps. It turned out that

access needed to be secured at the highest level of the Institution, and not only from the headmasters of the schools. The Institution, with which I had already had some contact in the past, has a very complex and intricate structure since it operates in different countries in the Middle East.

Between May 2014 and November 2014, the email correspondence between myself and the Institution was intense: I sent 47 emails, received 21 emails; three emails were sent by my supervisor on my behalf; 40 people in total were involved in the correspondence, based in 4 different countries; and I also had a face-to-face meeting with one of the heads of the Institution in Site 1. This intensive email exchange shows the difficulties in collaboration that I have experienced.

These difficulties were validated by different reasons. By way of example, the first one was given in the email copied below:

> *Dear Maria,*
>
> *We examined your documents. However, I regret to inform you that, due to limited staff capacity on the given dates, [the Institution] staff in [Site 1] will be unable to participate in your study. We would invite you to re-submit this request early next year, at which point [we] may be in a better position to facilitate such research. Alternatively, if you are interested, it may be possible to discuss arranging interviews with Education staff in [Site 2[3]]. (Email communication, 28 August 2014)*

Due to my past experiences with the Institution, and because I knew most of the staff working within the schools in the camp, I persisted, and with some insistence, in trying to get access to Site 1, highlighting the fact that in my request to conduct research with them I had not specified any dates. However, after a face-to-face meeting with the Head of Education of Site 1, and after a long list of emails and of attachments to be provided, I was again informed that conducting research in the camps in Site 1, would not have been possible:

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[3] *Site 2* is another Middle Eastern country in which the *Institution* provides education for Palestinian refugees. I anonymize the country for consistency with the narrative, and for ethical reasons.

> *Dear Maria,*
>
> *I have discussed again the subject with [xxx] who is of the opinion that it would be difficult for her to approve considering that the field will not have a head of Education by then; besides, considering the circumstances [xxx] cannot encourage internationals to conduct activities that need frequent visits to our schools at camps.*
> *Sorry that we cannot help. (Email communication, 22 September 2014).*

The Director of Education of the Institution suggested once again that I could conduct research in another Middle Eastern country, i.e. Site 2. Specifically, I was discouraged to work with teachers, but was invited instead to conduct my research at the headquarters of the Institution. In addition, as part of the conditions to conduct research there, I was told that I needed to send any publishable papers to the press office of the Institution before submitting them to journals.

I tried to negotiate these terms, unsuccessfully. I agreed to conduct research in Site 2, after having been in touch with the Head of Education of that country and with other people in the Institution. However, I did not hear from the Institution any more, despite umpteen chasing attempts.

Access had been denied by way of interrupting communication.

I needed a 'Plan B', as Palestinian refugees are fond of saying.

So, in December 2014, more than a year into my doctorate, the story of my new PhD research project started, and this was inevitably 'a good story, a story of chance' (Taussig, 2011).

Introduction

1. The PhD research takes a new shape

My doctoral research has been funded by the UK-based Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of one of three large grants under the theme *Translating Culture*: the *Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State* (*RM Borders*) research project (PI: Prof Alison Phipps, University of Glasgow). The interdisciplinary *RM Borders* project, which runs from March 2013 until October 2017, has been concerned with analysing what happens to language(s) when used in contexts of duress, of pain and pressure, where different types of borders constrain people's freedoms.

The large grant consisted of a constellation of five case studies which respectively addressed different disciplines in various contexts: global mental health, with child soldiers in Uganda and with unaccompanied minors in Glasgow (Case Study 1); the language used in the court for asylum processes in the UK and in the Netherlands (Case Study 2); an anthropological ethnography of borders with refugees in detention centres at the borders of Europe, i.e. in Romania and in Bulgaria (Case Study 3); the ecology of multilingualism in Arizona, at the borders between the US and Mexico (Case Study 4); and language education in the context of siege of the Gaza Strip, Palestine (Case Study 5). The *RM Borders* project, in addition, involved researchers conducting a meta-research on the practices of researching multilingually, and artists who developed and reflected on art-based research methods.

My doctoral research was envisaged initially as a contribution to the field of applied linguistics and language education with Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. The case of Palestinian refugees is peculiar since the ones that are displaced have no right to return to their country, and there are refugees even within Palestine who live under siege (as in the Gaza Strip) or under military occupation (in the Occupied Palestinian Territories). This is a situation of protracted crisis, ongoing since 1948, when the State of Israel was funded and Palestinians were dispossessed and displaced – either internally or externally. The continuous crisis and the repetitive wars and military operations mean that

the disputed land of Palestine – not recognised as a state – is at the heart of the Middle Eastern instability. On the other hand, Palestinians' capacities of resilience and resistance against such living conditions make their case an interesting one in terms of looking to understand everyday life in difficult circumstances.

A year into the RM Borders project, in summer 2014, the 50-day war in the Gaza Strip erupted, making it a real challenge to continue the collaboration with the Islamic University of Gaza. The buildings of the University were bombed and hence severely damaged. People, in autumn, started to slowly get back to normal life, but with several impediments. The research on language education in the Gaza Strip (Case Study 5) was on hold for some time in order to allow our partners in Gaza to be able to get back to their offices and to the post-war daily routine. Autumn 2014, meanwhile, was when I understood that my doctoral research, as I initially had conceived it, could not be taken any further because of the access denials I had received.

It was at that point that instead of analysing and writing the story of what did not work, and rather than working with externally displaced Palestinian refugees, my supervisors and I decided that I would change course. Instead I began working with our partners in the Gaza Strip (i.e. Palestinians under siege), piloting ways of working and researching language education in a post-war context, whenever possible face-to-face, otherwise remotely.

The new PhD research project developed rapidly, my ethics forms were amended and accepted (Appendices A, B, C) and both myself and our partner in Gaza, Prof Nazmi Al-Masri, were enthusiastic about our reciprocal academic solidarity bond, which would have – hopefully – enriched both of us, and the RM Borders project as well. A 'Plan B' was found.

2. The PhD research project

This research project looks at language education in the context of siege, i.e. in the Gaza Strip (Palestine). It aims at exploring and co-constructing a framework for language education in situations of protracted crisis and emergencies.

It draws upon literature in critical applied linguistics which problematizes language education not as a mere development of language skills and competences in order to suffice the neoliberal market needs, but rather unpacks issues of power, of voice and agency. In English, i.e. in the language of international relationships, people in the Gaza Strip, as well as other oppressed and colonized people, develop counter-narratives and might shape new discourses which impact the public sphere and the international community.

The work of Edward Said offers a seminal conceptualization on the issues of narratives and counter-narratives: specific to the Palestinian context, he argues that the question of Palestine is an embodied example of Orientalising discourses that were created by the West. The question of Palestine is perceived as a conflict between a presence (the Israeli one) and a denial (the Palestinian one) since, as he demonstrated, Palestinian identity is suppressed both militarily, and also epistemologically/ontologically.

Unpacking language education in the Gaza Strip means to explore and to extrapolate through praxis a model which could serve the needs of a population which considers education as the means towards freedom and hope for a better future. As such, language education requires us to move beyond a neutral understanding of teaching methodologies and levels of competences. Fundamentally, it involves engaging at an epistemological and linguistic level on the question of Palestine. As I will argue in this thesis, language education is a holistic undertaking which considers individuals' aspirations and goals towards wellbeing. This thesis aims to develop the applied language education literature through the capabilities approach, i.e. nurturing individuals' capabilities and their valued beings and doings.

Models of competency have been dominant in applied language education for several decades. This research has brought a critical lens to bear on these models. In order to move beyond competency models in applied linguistics, I suggest a shift towards pedagogies of capability as inspired by the capabilities approach. The capabilities approach was developed in the field of welfare economics by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, and consists of a holistic normative approach to frame the wellbeing of individuals. Wellbeing, in the approach, is understood as the possibility of individuals to live the life they value, and have reason to value. In order to do so, individuals should live in

conditions which allow them to be able to act upon what they are able to do and to be (i.e. capabilities) and transform these beings and doings into achieved outcomes (i.e. functionings). The approach is flexible and open to being appropriated and modified according to contextual needs and freedoms. The approach, despite operationalising attempts in educational settings, has received scant attention in language education – and specifically in language education in difficult circumstances.

This research project, therefore, has aimed at unpacking and co-constructing a model for language education in the context of siege in the Gaza Strip. This was done through a cycle of critical participatory action research, in the form of an online workshop series in which 13 pre-service English teachers (graduates from or senior students at the Islamic University of Gaza) took part. The objective of the workshop series was to understand and to develop in collaboration contextualised, critical and creative language pedagogies. Workshops centred around the use of Palestinian Arts of Resistance in English language teaching. The Palestinian Arts of Resistance, acknowledged to be locally developed and of value for the Gazan population, is a movement through which people more generally, as well as established artists, make use of arts in order to protest against injustice and to develop counter-narratives.

In this participatory research inquiry, the following research questions guided the research – and the extent to which the literature could support or contest the findings. As is often the case in research projects of this nature, some of the ways in which the data developed from the participatory methods meant that answers were found to questions which had not been explicitly posed.

My research questions were thus initially formulated as follows:

> *What are the values and goals of language education in the context of the siege of the Gaza Strip?*

> *What capabilities can be identified and how can these be nurtured in the teaching/learning process?*

> *How can Palestinian Arts of Resistance be used in contextualised, creative and critical language pedagogies?*

3. Thesis Overview

Chapter I. The research context: the besieged Gaza Strip

In this chapter I introduce the context of the Gaza Strip. I start with presenting the work developed by Edward Said on Orientalism and showing how his theories can be applied to the question of Palestine specifically. I then discuss the context of the Gaza Strip which has been under siege since 2007: the siege impedes the flow of people and goods into and out of the Strip, causing dreadful living conditions, increasing poverty, generating high rates of unemployment, and creating an overall situation of mental and physical distress. For the two million people trapped in the Strip, in the last decade, three military operations have worsened the overall already-precarious conditions. Palestinians in Gaza try to come to terms with that through using online technologies and virtual mobility which, however, do not improve people's living conditions, but at least soften the feeling of isolation. I finally discuss education in the context of Palestine – which, as the United Nations Relief and Working Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has pointed out, requires improved provision of its quality – it also being a model for the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees). UNRWA has proposed an amelioration of education quality through a shift towards the capabilities approach, which, however, has not found operationalisation yet.

Chapter II. The capabilities approach

In this chapter I discuss the central tenets of the capabilities approach, presenting the work of the main theorists, Sen and Nussbaum. I consider the contribution of both authors, despite their divergences, crucial; I believe that the capabilities theories are beneficial for enriching the understanding of my findings rather than determining their meanings. I also present the critiques that have been levelled at the approach, which admittedly, I found interesting and stimulating. Being aware of the critiques, I believe, gave me a better understanding of the approach itself, and of my own epistemological and ontological positioning.

Chapter III. From competency models to alternative approaches in language education

In this chapter I return to critical applied linguistics and to some of the theories that shaped my understanding of the field. I introduce Byram's intercultural communicative competence model (1997), which was adopted by the Common European Framework of Reference (2001). The European framework was then exported to contexts beyond the one of free mobility in which it was originally conceptualised. I therefore look at theories in critical applied linguistics which problematize educational transfer and linguistic imperialism, arguing for linguistic resistance. Moreover, I introduce theories that, in addition to being critical of the macro-structure, are concerned with the wellbeing of individuals within and outside the classroom – touching upon the concept of languaging, presenting a study that applied the capabilities approach in language education, and discussing the use of creative art-based methods in a wellbeing-focused language pedagogy. Finally, I elaborate my research aim and guiding questions.

Chapter IV. Methodology

This chapter presents the chosen methodology – which was also inspired by decolonizing methodologies – and I describe the research design that was developed accordingly. I introduce the tenets of critical participatory action research and show its compatibility with my research study, reflecting extensively also on ethical concerns. I then present the research design, focusing on the phases of developing, delivering, observing and evaluating the online workshop series.

Chapter V. Mapping the challenges and possibilities of establishing connections online

This chapter is the first discussion chapter. It focuses on the online network that the participants and I established and, drawing on actor-network theory, I describe and map out the challenges and possibilities that emerged out of our online connections. The challenges were mainly material constraints that the participants and I learned to navigate (e.g. interruptions, disconnections,

unclear video- and audio-quality, power-cuts, etc.). Integrating the challenges into our pedagogical praxis, and learning to work within and not against them, transformed us ontologically and epistemologically. It also allowed us to co-create rituals of virtual academic hospitality, which resulted from our relationship-building process.

Chapter VI. Intercultural capabilities: L2 learning and communication, mobility and affiliation.

This chapter is the first of three chapters which focus on the capabilities that emerged in this study. It unpacks intercultural capabilities, which in this research project emerged as intertwined with L2 learning and communication, mobility and affiliation. Due to the context of forced immobility of the Gaza Strip, mobility and affiliation – which in conditions of peace-time and of free movement are grounding principles of intercultural education – are present in terms of aspirations and dreams, since they are not viable options. In this context, they are rather linked respectively to the capacity to aspire and an attitude of intercultural curiosity.

Chapter VII. Emotions and languaging

In the seventh chapter, I present the capability of emotions and of languaging. I reflect upon the needs for participants to share their emotions and to shape these emotions in relationality. Drawing upon Sara Ahmed's sociality of emotions (2004), I posit that emotions were embodied, they shifted and were socially constructed. The process of languaging is an embodied and affective way of being and of knowing in one's own or in a foreign language. Participants expressed and worked through their emotions in class, nurturing their capabilities to *language* their distress, and to *language* for their own wellbeing.

Chapter VIII. Voice and agency, and linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance

The last capability I present is one of voice and agency, which in this specific research context is intersected with acts of linguistic, aesthetic and cultural resistance. I highlight how participants both within and outside our classroom contexts developed everyday practices of resistance as teachers of English, using creative methods and the arts. Drawing on the philosopher Jacques Ranciere, who posits that there is a nexus between politics and aesthetics found in dissensus, I argue that linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance, which unfolds with critical hope, is at the heart of transformative, critical and creative language pedagogies, contextualised under the siege of the Gaza Strip.

Chapter IX. Synthesis of the research findings and critical reflection: from a framework of reference to an ecology of language education in the Gaza Strip

The concluding chapter aims to synthesize the research findings, pulling together the model for language education that I discovered in the research project. I return to the research aim and questions, and conclude with a metaphorical representation of language education under siege: as in a strength-based approach used in global mental health (the Tree of Life), I represent language education as a tree; the roots of which are individuals' values and interactions, the trunk and branches capabilities, and the leaves and fruits goals and values. I conclude by outlining how pedagogies of capability and of resistance water the trunk and nurture its flourishing.

Chapter I. The research context: the besieged Gaza Strip

1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the context of the research study, namely the Gaza Strip, Palestine. Gaza has been under siege since 2007, when Israel declared it 'hostile territory' (Winter, 2015). The siege has had profound consequences on people's mental and physical wellbeing. Three military operations in the last decade have worsened the living conditions in the Strip: Operation Cast Lead in 2008, Operation Pillar of Defence in 2012, and Operation Protective Edge in 2014. These three operations caused severe casualties: in the 50-day war in 2014, 2100 people died and houses and infrastructures were destroyed and damaged. As a result, Gaza is expected to be an 'unliveable place' by 2020. The siege also causes forced immobility, impeding the freedom of movement in and out of the Strip, and has accentuated the crisis of educational, health and welfare services, as several UN reports attest (PCBS, 2016; UNCT, 2012; UNCTDAD, 2015; UNRWA, 2013, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

In addition to the military occupation and the restrictions imposed by the siege, the question of Palestine was also conceptualized by Edward Said (1979, 1980) in terms of epistemological hegemony, since Orientalising dynamics have silenced, questioned and dehumanized the narratives put forward by Palestinian people.

In such a context of pain and pressure, quality education is considered to be a potent tool with which to nurture the wellbeing of individuals, and to contribute to the development of Palestinian society, within a broader search towards social justice and equity. Education contributes to the development of people' hopes, dreams and aspirations, and is envisioned as a peaceful weapon against the military and epistemological hegemony (Abu Lughod, 2000; Abu Lughod, 2011; Nicolai, 2007; Hammond, 2012; Fassetta et al., 2017; Imperiale, 2017; Imperiale et al., forthcoming).

In this chapter I discuss the context of the Gaza Strip as follows. The next and the third sections frame the context theoretically, drawing on the work on Orientalism developed by Edward Said (1979), and applying his theories of epistemological hegemony to the context of Palestine. The fourth section

outlines the specificities of the context of siege in the Gaza Strip, with a focus on how online tools and virtual mobility help circumvent imposed isolation and 'forced immobility' (Stock, 2016; Fassetta et al., 2017). Finally, the last section focuses on education under siege and on the need for quality holistic education for people living in emergencies and crisis as described by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) (UNRWA, 2010, 2011).

2. Orientalism

> *The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later Western empire.*
>
> (Said, 1979: 203)

The context of my research study is located in the 'Orient', in the 'Near East'. The imagined perceptions about the Orient have always been part of the Western tradition. Edward Said, in his pioneering work encompassing the humanities and European and North American literature, explains how this imagined Orient gave birth to a learned field of studies, namely 'Orientalism' (Said, 1979). Because of his innovative combination of literary and cultural studies, and the political commitment underpinning his work within and beyond academia, Edward Said is considered one of the founders of post-colonial studies, thanks to his major work *Orientalism* (1979).

Orientalism, as Said argues, is a field of study which created its own object of study. The 'Orient', as we know it, is a textually-constructed representation developed by Occidental scholars. Representations of the Orient have been filtered by Western consciousness, resulting in a system of knowledge based on 'exteriority' (Said, 1979: 21); Said points out that the system of representation does not rely upon the 'Orient' itself, but rather on representational techniques grounded in the Western classical rational and rhetorical tradition.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Orientalists – i.e. Occidental scholars studying the Orient - approached the Orient through studies on phonology, lexicography, linguistics and geography, restoring and throwing light

on the unknown Semitic past and languages. In the nineteenth century, the Orient was defined by 'its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness' (Said, 1979: 205). These insights derived from a textual approach, that is the scientific and rational study of texts written by earlier explorers, providing a modern and authoritative vocabulary through which the Orient could be described and analysed. Representations, Said argues, operate

> for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual and even economic setting. In other words, representations are formations, or as Roland Barthes has said of all the operations of language, they are deformations (Ibid.: 273).

Textual representations created the 'Orient' by essentialising and silencing it. 'The Orient was therefore, not Europe's interlocutor but its silent Other' (Said, 1985: 93). The West constructed its own identity by direct contrast with the sexual, exotic, savage Other. The Orient needed to be educated because of its intrinsic weaknesses and inferiority (Ibid.: 96).

In the twentieth century, Orientalism undertook a new role in society. In contrast with previous centuries in which explorers, writers and humanists developed narratives about the Orient, in the twentieth century its major contributors were social scientists and scholars of politics and international relationships: they did not explore Semitic languages and literature, and were often not educated in that field. On the contrary, they transformed the textual and contemplative attitude into 'administrative, economic and even military contributions to serve colonial purposes' (Said, 1979: 210). Said writes that 'the Orientalist could be regarded as the special agent of Western power as it attempted policy vis-à-vis the Orient' (Ibid.: 223). During the colonial period, the authority of Orientalists went unquestioned in a celebration of the authors' national systems.

> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said, 1979: 3)

Therefore, according to Said, Orientalism and the Orientalists had major responsibilities in first representing, then constructing the Orient in order to serve colonial powers. These representational dynamics coupled with the unawareness of the responsibilities of those scholars constitute the major flaws of Orientalism, which Said summarized as being both intellectual and human:

> I consider Orientalism's failure to have been a human as much as an intellectual one; for in having to take up a position of irreducible opposition to a region of the world it considered alien to its own, Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as human experience. (Said, 1979: 328)

By failing to engage with the embodied experience, Orientalism misconstrued fixed identities embedded in the literariness of its texts. The process of silencing the human experiences of the inhabitants of the Orient resulted in inadequate 'epistemological critique' and hence in intellectual and epistemological hegemony undertaken by the West (Said, 1985: 102).

Orientalism, as with all Said's publications, has caused many polemics since its publication. It was received as a major pioneering and seminal book, which allowed a connection between cultural studies, philology, literature and political engagement, changing the traditional understanding of Orientalism into that of a much less neutral field, compared to how it was previously regarded. However, on the other hand, the work was also met with dissent, and its subject matter, its methodology and its style have been the objects of severe critiques as demonstrated by Elmarsafy et al. (2013).

A famous rebuttal to Orientalism concerns Said's methodological choice of engaging with texts and literature which could, supposedly, be fictional and a deformation of reality. For instance, Robert Irwin (2006: 309) attacks – and at the same time values Said's eloquence – by describing Orientalism as a 'good novel', which, as such, is 'essentially fictional'. Said's eloquence and his decision to interrogate and analyse literary texts are grounded in the Nietzschean tradition of paying attention to the representational forces which contributed to the constitution of Orientalism, of which metaphors, metonyms and rhetorical devices, in general, were part. Elmarsafy and Bernard (2013: 7) write in this regard that Orientalism makes 'a case for the "literariness" of the

misconstrued Orient, and with it a major claim about the power of the work of art', considering Said's text as a performance in itself. In addition, Said confutes Irwin's argument in his essay *Orientalism reconsidered* (1985), stating that undoubtedly the object of study (i.e. the text), even the fictional ones, is reconstituted in the historical moment when it gets read, having therefore resonance with reality. However, as he further developed in his argument:

> this privilege was rarely allowed the Orient, the Arabs or Islam, which separately or together were supposed by mainstream academic thought to be confined to the fixed status of an object frozen once and for all in time by the gaze of Western percipients. (Said, 2001: 201)

Another interesting debate about Orientalism concerns the power of intellectuals to create and perform narratives which have political impact on society. For instance, Bernard Lewis (1990) insisted on presenting the Western quest for knowledge about the Orient as inspired by pure curiosity. However, in his famous essay *The Roots of Muslim rage. Why so many Muslims deeply resent the West and why their bitterness will not easily be mollified* (1990) he framed the discourses, vocabulary and narratives about the Western-Middle East relationships in terms of 'clashes of civilizations', with profound consequences on the foreign policies of the United States thereafter (Hamdi, 2013).

Lewis framed those relationships, as his title reveals, in terms of rage, anger and hatred: in his essay, the Muslim's rage emanated from the animosity of Muslim society towards modernity, secularism, democracy and Western beliefs in general. Lewis went further by writing an apology for imperialism, which is worth citing in full:

> Slavery is today universally denounced as an offense against humanity, but within living memory it has been practiced and even defended as a necessary institution, established and regulated by divine law. The peculiarity of the peculiar institution, as Americans once called it, lay not in its existence but in its abolition. Westerners were the first to break the consensus of acceptance and to outlaw slavery, first at home, then in the other territories they controlled, and finally wherever in the world they were able to exercise power or influence – in a word, by means of imperialism. Is imperialism then the grievance? Some Western powers,

and in a sense Western civilization as a whole, have certainly been guilty of imperialism, but are we really to believe that in the expansion of Western Europe there was a quality of moral delinquency lacking in such earlier, relatively innocent expansions as those of the Arabs or the Mongols or the Ottomans […] In having practiced sexism, racism, and imperialism, the West was merely following the common practice of mankind through the millennia of recorded history. Where it is distinct from all other civilizations is in having recognized, named, and tried, not entirely without success, to remedy these historic diseases. And that is surely a matter for congratulation, not condemnation. (Lewis, 1990: 53)

Interestingly, Hamdi (2013) analysed one of President Bush's speeches, delivered in 2001, in which the American politician emulated Lewis' arguments. Hamdi stated that ironically, Lewis, despite preaching the impartiality and the apolitical mission of the intellectual whose work was moved by pure curiosity, became himself a major leader of the anti-Arab, anti-Islamic, Zionist discourses.

Undoubtedly, Said's concerns about the power of scholars and their impact on the public spheres were legitimate. His work was devoted to unpack, de-create, reorder and reconstruct the understandings of these dynamics, posing ethical questions of responsibility, especially in regards to the question of Palestine, which, according to him, embeds issues of legitimized epistemological, political and military hegemony.

3. The Question of Palestine

First denial, then blocking, shrinking, silencing, hemming in.

(Said, 1980: 19)

The Western Orientalising discourse finds its concretisation, in very subtle terms, in the Zionist project over Palestine. According to Said, as he wrote in the *Question of Palestine* (1980), Palestine is a Western representation, and it is constructed as a question. The identity of Palestinians, and therefore their presence, has been denied, verified and questioned on a daily basis:

> Most other people take their identity for granted. Not the Palestinian.
> Who is required to show proofs of identity more or less constantly. (Said,
> 1986: 16)

Rashid Khalidi (1997), in his book about the construction of the Palestinian identity, argues that the essence of the Palestinian identity is that it is checked and verified not only at borders, but also in the everyday life, which for many Palestinians is performed at checkpoints.

Since the establishment of the Zionist movement in 1897, Palestinians have not been taken into consideration by Zionists, who adopted the motto 'A land without a people for a people without land'. After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Israeli political discourses were framed around those beliefs. For instance, Golda Meir, Israeli prime minister in 1969, during her famous speech reported that:

> There was no such thing as a Palestinian. It was not as though there was a
> Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their
> country away from them. They did not exist. (The Sunday Times, 15 June
> 1969, cited in McKean Parmenter, 2004 :21)

As Said points out, the struggle between Palestinians and Zionism has been unbalanced since its conception: it was conceived as a struggle 'between a presence and an interpretation' (1980: 8) which exerted political and cultural hegemony over Palestinians, dehumanising and denying their identities and their presence. Those Orientalising discourses transmuted the presence of the Palestinians into an absence (Ibid.: 10) and made military and epistemological hegemony viable.

Echoing the Gramscian theories about hegemony and consent (Gramsci, 1971, 1975), Said explains how the dominant power, that appears based on the cultural consent of the majority, exercises its hegemony; the struggle is unbalanced because the political and cultural hegemony over the Palestinians is maintained and reinforced with the tacit consent of Western governments.

The identification of Zionism with liberal Western ideology made this process viable (Said, 1980). The Zionism-Western coalescence with respect to language and ideology could be articulated as follows: first of all, the contextual

conditions in the aftermath of the Holocaust prevented any sort of Western opposition to Zionism as it would have been perceived inadmissibly anti-Semitic. Secondly, the colonial civilising mission, since its conception, was justified on the grounds of moral achievement and human development both for the West and for Zionist groups. Thirdly, the superiority of the white man in contrast to any undistinguished Other was a common narrative both in Europe and in North America with the consequence that Zionism would have constituted a bridge between the exotic and incomprehensible Arab world and the rational Western democracies (Said, 1979, 1980, 1985, 1986, 2001).

According to Said, the Western media are complicit in perpetuating the political, epistemological and ontological hegemony by disseminating a distorted version of the Palestinian experience which mainly relies on the Israeli interpretation of the exotic, undecipherable Orient:

> What is much worse, in my opinion, is the hypocrisy of the Western (and certainly liberal Zionist) journalism and intellectual discourse, which have barely had anything to say about Zionist terror. (Said, 1980: x)

In summary, the question of Palestine is silenced and distorted, based on an unbalanced struggle between a presence and a denial. The Israeli hegemony is political, epistemological and ontological. Hence, the conflict involves the dehumanisation of the Palestinians. The task of the scholars involved with Palestinians is a major one, as it has political resonance: it includes reflecting on the unsolved incongruences of Palestinian history and human reality, and coming to terms with incompleteness and contradictory ideas. It also means to reflect on the intellectual's own identity and position within and beyond academia (Said, 1979, 1980, 1986).

Said reflected extensively on his position as a Palestinian-American intellectual that writes in exile. His polysemic and multi-layered vision emerged in his book *After the last sky* (1986), which is a juxtaposition of text written by Said and photos taken by Jean Mohr. It is a mixture of unconventional styles, modes, representation, and interplay of languages. Its multimodal style, which works through autobiographical details, images, and written and oral history, reflects the multifaceted complexity of the Palestinian question and identity, as evoked in this distilled extract:

To be sure, no single Palestinian can be said to feel what most other Palestinians feel; Ours has been too various and scattered a fate for that sort of correspondence. But there is no doubt that we do in fact form a community, if at heart a community built on suffering, and exile. How, though, to convey it? [...] certainly it contributes to the problem of writing about and representing the Palestinians generally. The whole point to this book is to engage this difficulty, and deny the habitually simple, even harmful representations of the Palestinians, and to replace them with something more capable of capturing the complex reality of their experience. [...] The multifaceted vision is essential to any representation of us. [...] Everything we write about ourselves, therefore, is an interpretative translation – of our language, our experience, our senses of self and others. But it is only through a recognition of these complexities that we can approach the elusive nature of our identity, or integrate public and private realities, or apprehend that extraordinary variety of individuals and activities called Palestinian. (Said, 1986: 5-7)

It is my view that Said's major achievement has been problematizing fixed and static representational theories, with the ultimate aim of scrambling the Us-Them dichotomy: this being a shared responsibility of academics. In *After the last sky* (1986), in which Said, paradoxically, looked and commented on the Palestinians through the photographs – the lenses – of a European photographer, he acknowledged that Palestinians are not only watched, they are not only passive objects of study, but they are watching as well. His concluding thoughts, I believe, enlighten, overcome, unsettle, and scramble the Othering process:

I would like to think, though, that such a book not only tells the reader about us, but in some ways also reads the reader. I would like to think that we are not just the people seen or looked at in these photographs: We are also looking at our observers. We Palestinians sometimes forget that – [...] – we too are looking, we too are scrutinizing, assessing, judging. We are more than someone's object. We do more than stand passively in front of whoever, for whatever reason, has wanted to look at us. If you cannot finally see this about us, we will not allow ourselves that the failure has been entirely ours. Not anymore. (Said, 1986: 166)

In this reciprocal gazing and critiquing process, knowledge about the Other and the Self is co-constructed. Recognizing and valuing the presence of the interlocutor who is not just the passive silent Other of our scrutiny, enables new narratives to emerge. A recent book edited by Nair-Venugopal (2012) unveils through a variety of examples from different disciplinary fields the more intertwined ways in which 'the West's gaze frames, shapes (but is also shaped by) eastern culture, practices, ideas and artefacts' (Fassetta et al., 2016: 186). In our co-authored review of the book (Fassetta et al., 2016), we warn against the catastrophic and mundane dangers of Othering which result in dehumanizing narratives, in the closure of borders, the buildings of walls and, more drastically, in military operations.

The next section will expand on the context of siege of the Gaza Strip, touching precisely upon, among other things, the building of walls, the closure of borders, and the preventive military operations.

4. Gaza under siege

The Gaza Strip (Palestine) has been under siege since 2007, when Israel, claiming it as an act of self-defence, declared the Strip 'hostile territory' after the election of the Palestinian Hamas Party. Building on Winter (2015), Fassetta et al. (2017: 136) elaborated on the definition of siege, using it as an analytical lens:

> Sieges constitute indirect and spatial forms of violence: they target infrastructure and aim to disrupt the conditions of natural reproduction of biological and social life. When sieges are protracted, as is the case for the Gaza Strip, their harmful effects can also be cumulative.

The effects of the siege on the Gaza Strip are cumulative as it affects mobility, employment, poverty rates, and physical and mental wellbeing. The siege isolates two million people living in the Strip, by sealing the Eretz crossing between Israel and Gaza. In addition to that, since 2013, Egyptian policies have imposed the 'temporary' closure of the Rafah crossing – the only other possible way to access the Strip via land – between Gaza and Egypt. Both the Rafah and Eretz crossings have been permanently closed. Rafah is only open on certain specific dates, which are decided by the Egyptian authorities without any prior

official announcement. These restrictions impede people from moving into and out of the Strip freely (UNRWA, 2017a).

The curtailment of the freedom to move results in 'involuntary immobility' (Carling, 2002) or in 'forced immobility' (Stock, 2016). Carling (2002) refers to 'involuntary immobility' as determined by state policies which are geared towards a closure of borders preventing newcomers from entering the country. Stock's definition of 'forced immobility' refers mainly to migrants' inability to continue their journey so being stuck in long-term transit: this being detrimental to the transnational social relationships, to the individuals' development and their wellbeing (Stock, 2016). In Stock's definition, those trapped in 'forced immobility' are not only migrants in transit, but also asylum seekers, migrants with temporary residence permits, 'voluntary' would-be migrants (Alpes, 2011), and those fleeing conflict and persecution (Stock, 2016: 408). Both Caring's and Stock's definitions could frame an understanding of Palestinians being trapped in the Gaza Strip; however, Stock's term emphasises the coercive nature of the curtailment of the freedom of movement. Hence, in this research and in other work that I have already published, I opted for her definition to describe the enforced hermetism of the Gaza Strip.

Israel not only controls the flow of people into and out of the Strip, but also allowances of fuel, electricity, and goods (including medicines), regulating all the import-export exchanges of the Strip. The siege also comprises a naval blockade aimed at targeting Palestinian fishermen, who are allowed to fish within six miles of the coast, despite an international agreement that should have guaranteed the possibility to fish within 25 miles (Smith, 2015).

Hence, the prolonged siege has impacted every sector in society, ultimately worsening people's physical and mental wellbeing. As a result of the siege, unemployment and the poverty rate have increased dramatically. Tawil Souri and Matar (2016: 3) present some of the statistics in this respect, which are worth citing in full, identifying them as a 'statistical impossibility' to indicate their astonishing numbers:

> More than two thirds of the population is made up of refugees; 70% live in poverty; 20% live in 'deep poverty'; just about everybody has to survive on humanitarian hand-outs; adult unemployment hovers around 50% give

or take a few percentage points; 60% of the population is under the age of 18. This is the Gaza where on a good day there is no electricity 'only' 20 hours a day; where before the latest Israeli military operation, in summer 2014, there was already a shortage of 70,000 homes; where 95% of piped water is below international quality standards; where every child aged 8 or younger has already witnessed three massive wars.

It is not only the siege that has tragically affected the life of Gazans, as these numbers show, but in addition, in the last decade three military operations were carried out by the Israeli government and reported as acts of preventive defence, respectively in 2008, 2012, and 2014. These military operations devastated the living conditions of people in the Strip. The last round of hostility, Operation Protective Edge, which occurred between 7 July 2014 and 26 August 2014, was the deadliest and caused the most devastating consequences since 1967. UNRWA (2017c) reports that

> Besides the massive damage to the enclave's infrastructure – including hospitals, water and electricity networks, and streets – some 12,500 housing units were totally destroyed and around 6,500 homes were severely damaged; over 19,000 housing units were rendered uninhabitable. Around 70 per cent of the affected persons are Palestine refugees.

The BBC reported that 2,100 people were killed during the last 50-day war; among those there were 500 children[4]. UNRWA (2017c) specifies that 500 children were killed, over 3000 were injured, and at least 1000 of them are estimated to have some sort of disabilities for the rest of their lives. In addition, 290,000 people were internally displaced, staying for the duration of the conflict in over 90 schools and in hospitals, which served as shelters. However, schools, hospitals, universities and public services were the target of the military operation: according to UNRWA, 81 schools were damaged, as well as hospitals and higher education institutions like the Islamic University of Gaza (UNRWA, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

As one can clearly guess, the siege creates 'growing dependence on humanitarian apparatuses' (Fassetta et al., 2017: 136). People in the Gaza Strip

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[4]http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28439404

– the number is estimated to reach 80% – depend – and are forced to depend – entirely on humanitarian help and assistance for education, health, shelter, infrastructures, relief and social services, work provision, clothing and all the necessary basic needs.

On the other hand, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip try to combat the siege and occupation by escaping the isolation it imposes through virtual mobility and, undoubtedly, through education (Abu Lughod, 2000; Aouragh, 2011; Fassetta et al., 2017; Imperiale et al., forthcoming).

4.1 Online work to tackle forced immobility

One way for the Gazan inhabitants to tackle forced immobility has been the increasing reliance on the Internet connection, which could potentially enhance the chances of online employment and reduce isolation. As Aouragh (2011b: 52) argues, no technological medium can 'transcend economic gaps', but the Internet facilitates connection amongst Palestinians in the diaspora, those living in the Occupied Territories, and also sympathetic groups worldwide.

For instance, in her research, Aouragh (2011a, 2011b) discusses examples of online work developed by Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank, and in the Gaza Strip and explores the role of the Internet in constructing a national identity remotely. In a subsequent study, Tawil-Souri and Aouragh (2014: 104) discussing the power of '(Internet) resistance', note that 'reports show a systematic increase in household computer ownership from 26.4 percent in 2004 to 49.2 percent in 2009, and an increase in home internet access from 9.2 percent in 2004 to 28.5 percent in 2009 and to 57.7 percent in 2012' (Ibid.: 119).

In higher education, investment into technology and on the Internet has increased since the first organized Palestinian uprising (called the first *Intifada*) in 1987. This has been a priority response to tackle checkpoints, curfews and any sort of curtailment which hindered people's mobility within the Occupied Territories, hence facilitating university students to continue their studies despite Palestinian universities being forced to close (Hammond, 2012).

It must also be noted that Palestinians' chance to escape isolation virtually, depends on offline materialities in terms of technological facilities, and on territorial control and enclaves, and is therefore out of the control of the

Palestinian authorities. The Internet faces territorial limitations, which are compounded by military measures and illegal competition by Israeli providers. Israeli official policy limits what equipment can be installed and defines how and where installation can take place. The Israeli military confiscates equipment and forbids its import (or delays approval of equipment requests), and occasionally destroys machinery and infrastructure during military operations (Tawil-Souri and Aouragh, 2014). Tawil-Souri and Aouragh (2014) call this phenomenon cyber-colonialism, i.e. the control of the internet connection and of its materialities.

However, it is important to note the beneficial power of technology in situations of emergencies and crisis, and in a situation of forced immobility. Technology could be a tool to maximise the breadth of and access to education, also improving its quality, as well as providing a way out of isolation and unemployment (UNESCO, 2017; UNHCR, 2017; Fassetta et al., 2017).

Education, finally, is considered a crucial tool with which to support empowerment and liberation: it is a tool with which to resist both military and epistemological hegemony, to nurture the wellbeing of individuals, and to contribute to the development of Palestinian society (Abu Lughod, 2000; Hammond, 2012). The next section discusses education in Palestine, especially focusing on the approach of UNRWA, the United Nations agency responsible for education of Palestinian refugees, and on its Education Reform Strategy (UNRWA, 2011).

5. Besieged education

> *Palestinians reject the 'closing down' nature of the occupation especially in education because education is always about opening up the future.*
>
> (Hammond, 2012: 82)

Education in the context of chronic crisis and of geographical fragmentation as in Palestine is a complex matter. The Palestinian education system – as it is now – was established after the Oslo peace accords (1993), after which the Palestinian Authority (PA) took control of administration and services which included education. It is worth noting that the PA exercised jurisdiction over 3% of the Palestinian territories (comprising the Occupied Territories and the Gaza

Strip), while Israel continued to occupy and exercise power and rule over three million Palestinians (Abu Lughod, 2000: 81). Under the PA, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) took over the responsibility of developing an education system which would have harmonised education in the Occupied Territories and in the Gaza Strip. The job of the MoEHE, since then, was valuable in achieving progress; however, its impact was severely impaired by the context of chronic violence and occupation (Abu Lughod, 2000; Nicolai, 2007).

Curriculum development was a major task, since the education system, before the Oslo accords, was largely dependent on foreign influence. In 1995 the MoEHE established a formal centre for developing a curriculum that would have reflected the Palestinian context. Teaching materials and textbooks were designed accordingly. The new curriculum and the textbooks instigated a heated debate since Israeli educational experts claimed that it incited hatred against the Jewish state (Nicolai, 2007).

During the second *Intifada* (the second organized Palestinian revolt) in 2000, episodes of everyday violence increased dramatically, and the military occupation over the Palestinian territories grew. In addition, the building of an eight-metre-high defence wall segregated Palestinian villages into enclaves. Nicolai (2007: 22) notes that in such a fragmented space, 'the mere creation of an education system is remarkable'. In her report published by UNESCO, she valued the achievements of the Palestinian education system, and especially in higher education, which in spite of ongoing political and economic instability, remains ahead of the regional average.

On a more critical note, Abu Lughod (2000), who, with Edward Said, was one of the most famous Palestinian scholars and whose work is considered a milestone in Palestine studies, highlighted that, in addition to occupation, other internal issues also had an impact on Palestinian higher education. He listed as determinant factors:

> the occupation itself, the nature of a society that remains somewhat underdeveloped and traditional but hemmed in by a military occupation, and the absence of an independent national authority that is able to

assume responsibility for an effective system of education at all levels. (Abu Lughod, 2000: 86)

The absence of an independent national authority coordinating education provision at all levels must be further explained. For instance, after the PA took over the responsibility of harmonizing Palestinian education, the 1999 Law of Higher Education threw light upon the mission, the procedures and the authority governing the education system. There was a consensus about the mission of education, understood as national integration and the development of Palestinian society. However, a governmental public system was differentiated from a for-profit, private one and other non-profit institutions. In addition, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), since its establishment in 1950, has been responsible for providing primary education to Palestinian refugees.

Palestinian refugees constitute the large majority of Palestinians, both outside and within Palestine, since the definition of Palestinian refugee includes people 'whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict' (UNRWA, 2007: 5). Hence, UNRWA operates both in Palestine, with internally displaced refugees (in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and in the Gaza Strip), and in the neighbouring host countries of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The government, private institutions and UNRWA comply with the different ruling authorities of the host countries, and their different education systems follow the respective curricula.

Nonetheless, those different agencies and institutions share an overarching commitment to the provision of quality education and to the enhancement of access, equity and inclusion. In addition, schools and higher institutions aim to keep children safe, reducing risks of confrontation with Israeli settlers and troops:

> When no place is safe for a child, schools and teachers represent some type of authority, meaning schools are generally seen to be safer than nearly anywhere else. (Nicolai, 2007: 124)

In this way, education contributes to the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals and to the development of society, despite the conditions of

occupation and siege. UNRWA's mission and its Education Reform Strategy, launched in 2011, provide important insights about education in emergencies and under occupation, which will be further explored in the next section.

5.1 UNRWA's mission and the Education Reform Strategy

The generic mission of UNRWA is to 'help Palestine refugees achieve their full potential in human development under the difficult circumstances in which they live' (UNRWA, 2011: 1). The Institution has a humanitarian mandate and is responsible for the provision of services to Palestinian refugees, including education, health and social services.

Concerning education, UNRWA's vision is to provide an education system which:

> develops the full potential of Palestine Refugees to enable them to be confident, innovative, questioning, thoughtful, tolerant and open minded, upholding human values and religious tolerance, proud of their Palestine identity and contributing positively to the development of their society and the global community. (UNRWA, 2011:1)

Being an agency of the United Nations, it shares their beliefs and their goals. For instance, education is considered a potent tool with which to achieve human development. Human development is no longer perceived as national economic development, but rather, as described in the UNRWA *Medium Term Strategy* (2010), it encompasses and aims at fostering human capabilities of conducting a healthy and long life, of being knowledgeable and of living according to decent standards (UNRWA, 2010).

In addition, UNRWA adhered to the United Nations resolution of 9 July 2010, which affirms the human right to education in emergencies for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The resolution points out that the right to education is not only a matter of accessibility and availability, but foremost of quality. UNRWA, alongside UNHCR, UNESCO, UNICEF and INEE (the International Network for Education in Emergencies), demands a higher quality of education for refugees for long-term sustainable economic, social and human development (UNRWA, 2010; UNRWA, 2011).

In 2009, UNRWA and Universalia conducted an evaluation of the current UNRWA education system, the results of which revealed quite clearly the urgent need for education reform:

> The current system of education needs to be of higher quality, greater effectiveness, increased efficiency and enhanced equity. It is not serving its ultimate beneficiaries, the Palestine refugees, as it should. (UNRWA, 2011: viii)

Quality of education was not only perceived as measurable in terms of the three basic values of access, inclusion and equity, as in the Millennium Development Goals, but it included other aspects encompassing schools' facilities and materialities, inclusion, and pedagogical underpinnings.

The UNRWA review interpreted quality education as potentially being better achieved by implementing the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011) – explored in the following chapter – which would best suit the human development approach with which the United Nations complies.

6. Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the research study by illustrating its context. The Gaza Strip, Palestine, has been under siege since 2007. The siege curtails freedom of mobility and impacts on people's mental and physical wellbeing. It is a context of pain, pressure, and of both military and epistemological hegemony.

Within this challenging context, education can play a meaningful role in contributing to the wellbeing of individuals; nurturing people's resilience and hopes for a better future; and allowing the holistic freedom to 'live the life that people have reason to value' (Sen, 1999: 293).

This research project aims to celebrate and nurture people's aspirations in the face of adversity and occupation. By working through intercultural language education, this research aims to re-create, reorder and invent narratives, responding to the call for responsibility within academia that Said advanced (1986).

UNRWA and other United Nations agencies have argued for improved provision of education, which could best serve the Palestinians' needs. In order to fulfil this overarching aim, a pedagogical shift towards the capabilities approach has been suggested.

The next chapter expands on the literature on the capabilities approach, in order to provide a theoretical grounding for education under occupation, and specifically for this research study, for language education under pain, pressure and siege.

Chapter II. The capabilities approach

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the context of the research study, illustrating the context of siege in the Gaza Strip. I concluded by discussing education under siege: several reports from UNRWA, UNHCR and UNESCO argue for improving the quality of education provision for refugees and for people living in situations of protracted crisis and emergencies. Education is envisioned as a means to improve the wellbeing of individuals, and it has a determinant role in advancing changes in society. In societies constrained by occupation and precarious instability and insecurity, it has been argued that a shift towards a more holistic approach in education could benefit both individuals and their society (UNRWA, 2011). UNRWA (2011) has argued for the adoption of the capabilities approach for education with Palestinian refugees.

The capabilities approach (CA), also known as the human development approach, was first conceived of by the economist Amartya Sen in the 1980s in the field of welfare economics and was then further developed by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (Sen, 1980, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1992, 1999, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Nussbaum, 1988, 1992, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2011, 2013).

The CA is a normative and an evaluative framework to assess the wellbeing of individuals with the ultimate aim of pursuing human development, and the flourishing of humanity (Nussbaum, 2011). In order to achieve wellbeing, individuals need to have the real opportunities (*freedoms*) to convert what they are capable of being and doing (*capabilities*) into achieved outcomes, including valued beings and doings (*functionings*) (Sen, 1999). The approach focuses also on tackling socio-economic, cultural, and discursive constraints on individuals, which may impair the realization of their wellbeing.

The CA offers a potential theoretical framework to conceptualize language education in difficult circumstances, with its emphasis on wellbeing. In this chapter, I present the central tenets of the CA, selecting the aspects that are

more salient for this research, namely: the concept of wellbeing; the relationships between freedom, development and agency; the concepts of capabilities and functionings; and Nussbaum's list of capabilities, with a specific focus on the capabilities pertaining to cosmopolitan education. I then explore the application of the CA in educational settings, and I finally engage with the critiques that have been levelled at the CA.

2. Wellbeing beyond utilitarianism and primary goods

The understanding of wellbeing in the capabilities approach as developed by Sen (1999), especially in the field of economics, was a watershed. Sen moved beyond the classification of wellbeing based on utilitarianism and on primary goods: rather, wellbeing should be evaluated in terms of the agency and free choices of individuals 'to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value' (Sen, 1999: 18). The notion of 'reason to value' is important since it implies a reflective process in order to determine and recognize individuals' values (Crosbie, 2014). Development enhances freedoms and includes the amelioration of social, economic, cultural, and political constraints in order to foster human flourishing and the overall quality of life.

Sen's concept of wellbeing counters the doctrine of utilitarianism, which flourished in the late eighteenth century. Utilitarianism conceptualized wellbeing based on utility, identifiable with 'pleasure, happiness and preference-satisfaction' (Alexander, 2008: 28). Public policies and institutions' achievements, under utilitarianism, are evaluated based on the single criterion of utility. Utilitarian ethics, for instance, privileges the individuals' happiness, and the diminution of pain, but without necessarily considering whether such satisfaction is 'reasonably valuable' (Alexander, 2008: 28). As such, utilitarianism does not account for social and material constraints that people encounter.

In contrast, Sen (1999), demanding a more objective approach to wellbeing, put forward a theory which qualifies capabilities as non-violable, and in which society should enable the development and freedoms to allow individuals to pursue their valued beings and doings. Sen is concerned in particular with the evaluation of happiness for people who are deprived, who, nevertheless, come to terms with their living conditions and even get to be content through the

adaptation of preferences. However, this does not mean that the society in which they live enhances real opportunities:

> The utility calculus can be deeply unfair to those who are persistently deprived […] The deprived people tend to come to terms with their deprivation because of the sheer necessity of survival, and they may, as a result, lack the courage to demand radical change and may even adjust their desires and expectations to what they unambitiously see as feasible. The mental metric of pleasure and desire is just too malleable to be a firm guide to deprivation and disadvantage. (Sen, 1999: 62-63)

John Rawls (1971), also concerned with a more objective measurement of wellbeing, suggested its assessment in terms of primary goods. Rawls, in his list of 'primary goods', included basic rights and liberties; freedom of movement and choice of occupation; powers and prerogatives of offices and positions of responsibility; income and wealth; and social bases of self-respect. Those are the goods that a person with 'a capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity to adopt and pursue a conception of the good would want' (Alexander, 2008: 33).

Despite sharing Rawls' objections to utilitarianism, Sen moved beyond the Rawlsian approach in economics, which considers primary goods as indicators of wellbeing. Sen in his critique considered primary goods as *means* to pursue wellbeing, but not as intrinsic *ends* for wellbeing. Sen (1980) argued against the partial blindness of an evaluative framework for equity based on an index of primary goods which does not account for the diverse physical conditions of human beings, which may either favour or cause impediments to people's realization:

> The primary goods approach seems to take little note of the diversity of human being… if people were basically very similar, then an index of primary goods might be a good way of judging advantage. But, in fact, people seem to have very different needs varying with health, longevity, climatic conditions, location, work conditions, temperament, and even body size. So what is involved is not merely ignoring a few hard cases [e.g. handicaps], but overlooking very widespread and real differences.

> Judging advantage purely in terms of primary goods leads to a partially blind morality. (Sen, 1980: 215-216)

In addition, Rawls' theory of social justice is founded on principles of 'reasonableness' (Sen, 1980), i.e. people cooperate because of self-interest. Both Sen and Nussbaum, on the other hand, argue that 'life is more than a set of commercial relations' (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993: 2) and that individuals can be motivated to cooperate and live together due to different motives. These could include both self-interest and, more importantly, sentiments of compassion, benevolence and sympathy, in addition to the sake of social justice.

3. Freedoms, agency and development

As the section above illustrated, in the CA the distinction between means and ends is important: for instance, primary goods, as well as the availability of commodities, services, social institutions and social arrangements are means that enable people's real opportunities to be converted, through agency, into functionings, or achievements.

Freedoms are the real opportunities that individuals have to achieve their wellbeing and their development. Sen (1999) identifies five freedoms to reach development: 1) political freedom, 2) economic facilities, 3) social opportunities, 4) transparency guarantees and 5) protective security. Political freedoms include political entitlements which are related to the concept of democracy in its broadest sense; economic facilities include resources and infrastructures. Social opportunities consist of welfare services, especially education and health. Transparency refers to 'openness' in communication, i.e. 'the freedom to deal with one another under disclosure and lucidity', and protective security has to do with services and arrangements used to generate income such as public employment, unemployment benefits, etc. (Sen, 1999: 38-40).

As Navarro (2000) points out, Sen discusses the intertwining of the five freedoms without establishing a scale for those relationships. Sen's failure to develop a theory that relates freedoms is perceived by Navarro as one of the major flaws of Sen's theorization. He argues that Sen, following the classical economic tradition initiated by Adam Smith, perceives the individual as 'the subject and

the object of the analysis', whereas 'collective agents and subjects such as social classes do not appear, nor does any analysis of what articulates these collective agents such as exploitation or domination' (Navarro, 2000: 665).

However, my understanding of Sen's work is that he leaves scope to address the sources of unfreedoms, which, however, are context-dependent, and therefore not generalizable (White et al., 2016). For instance, some freedoms require a material-economic input, while others may need political arrangements and institutional services such as 'the effective guaranteeing and protections of freedom of thought, political participation, social or cultural practices, social structures, social institutions, public goods, social norms, and traditions and habits' (Robeyns, 2005: 96). The CA, therefore, has a multifaceted understanding of wellbeing, since it encompasses the material, the mental and the social dimension. The CA does not preclude investigations into societal arrangements and proposals to inform public policies, since

> [s]ocietal arrangements, involving many institutions (the state, the market, the legal system, political parties, the media, public interest groups, and public discussion forums, among others) are investigated in terms of their contribution to enhancing and guaranteeing the substantive freedoms of individuals, seen as active agents of change, rather than passive recipients of dispensed benefits. (Sen, 1999: xii-xiii)

In Sen's approach the agency of individuals has a crucial role. He defines agency as 'the ability to act in accordance with one's chosen goals and values as an element of a person's effective power' (Sen, 2002: 289). Agency, as with wellbeing, is therefore a multi-layered concept, which is dependent upon both the individual and the socio-material arrangements that hold people's opportunities in place.

Agency and a self-assessment of wellbeing could be undermined by individuals' adaptive preferences. Both Sen (1985, 1999) and Nussbaum (2006a) are concerned with the human tendency to adapt preferences, especially in extreme circumstances, when the main concern of individuals is to make life bearable, with the potential consequence of lowering aspirations and expectations. Nussbaum's concern is that adaptive preferences hinder self-awareness and may

prevent individuals from recognising their right to choose and to lead a truly human life. Nussbaum (2006a: 73) writes that:

> [People] adjust their preferences to what they think they can achieve, and also to what their society tells them a suitable achievement is for someone like them'.

In doing so, individuals, implicitly, accept the 'legitimacy of the unequal order' (Sen, 1985: 196) becoming complicit in the subjugation of their inalienable right of being considered humans, simply because they cannot envisage a better life and identify what life would be in the absence of those constraints. Whereas Sen conceptualizes adaptive preferences as uniformly negative, Nussbaum (2000) has a more nuanced view that is that there are also more trivial and temporary adaptive preferences which might positively prompt individuals to recognise and accept their own limitations.

Relating Sen's CA to the context of the Gaza Strip, one can clearly see that the siege imposes restrictions on all those levels of freedoms. Sen's approach to wellbeing, development and freedoms, and his attention towards the socio-material constraints, therefore, suits a precarious context where human-made unfreedoms curtail people's development and the development of their own society. Despite the dreadful circumstances, people in the Gaza Strip, as this research study will show, cope with their living conditions and even nurture their agency against the curtailment of their freedoms. If we adopted a utilitarian approach to wellbeing under siege, since people in Gaza even manage to be content and to feel pleasure, that would not account for social and political injustices. If a Rawlsian assessment based on primary goods was to be an indicator of wellbeing, it would be difficult to account for individuals' agency.

Sen's theorization of wellbeing therefore seems to provide scope to address both the unfreedoms, and also the agency and capabilities that individuals possess, value, and nurture. In addition to these concepts, other key tenets of the CA are capabilities and functionings, discussed in the next section.

4. Capabilities and Functionings

A key analytical distinction in the CA is between capabilities and functionings. Sen's conceptualization of capabilities is related to the real opportunities to transform what a person is capable of being and doing into functionings, i.e. into measurable achieved outcomes. The distinction between capabilities and functionings, therefore, is between the potentially realizable and the effectively realized, between opportunities and achievements. In Sen's words

> A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Functionings are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they are different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedoms in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead. (Sen, 1987: 36)

In the initial development of the CA, Sen used 'capability', or 'capability set' in the singular form. A person has one capability or a capability set which is a combination of potential functioning; it is an opportunity set (Roybens, 2003). However, in his later writings, Sen used both capability and capabilities interchangeably. Later on, Nussbaum and many scholars used capabilities in the plural form, to define the specific capabilities that make up the whole capability set. This terminological ambiguity has been now overcome, but worth mentioning since it gives insight into Sen's development of the CA. Because both Sen and Nussbaum used capabilities in its plural form, in this thesis, I adopt this terminology, aware of its nuances.

For instance, Sen does not provide a list of capabilities that would enable individuals to pursue their wellbeing. He posits that governments should not endorse a set of predetermined and fixed capabilities, but should rather facilitate a process of democratic reasoning that would lead to a contextualised development of a capabilities list. Society should be concerned with enabling the conversion of capabilities into functionings, and should also guarantee that individuals are afforded basic capabilities. The basic capabilities are 'being adequately nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality.' (Sen, 1992: 39). The purpose of 'basic capabilities' therefore is 'not so much in ranking living standards, but in deciding on a cut-off point for the purpose of assessing poverty and deprivation' (Sen, 1987: 109).

The process of transforming capabilities into functionings is determined by conversion factors. Conversion factors are categorized into personal, social and environmental factors (Sen, 1987). Personal characteristics include physical condition, intelligence, personal dispositions, and skills, and influence how a person can transform a commodity into a functioning. Social factors include social and public policies, hierarchies, gender, and discrimination. Environmental factors are related to infrastructures, climate, and public goods. The combination of the three factors, compounded with individuals' agency, determines the real opportunities to achieve a certain functioning.

Differing from Sen's deliberately open approach, Martha Nussbaum (2001) developed a list of capabilities to be endorsed by governments. The next section explores her capabilities list.

4.1 Martha Nussbaum's capabilities list

Martha Nussbaum's core contribution to the CA approach – and her main point of divergence from Sen's theories – is the development of a list of ten capabilities, or a set of universal political principles, to be underwritten and endorsed by constitutions. Her provisional list is underpinned by the question, *What does a life worthy of human dignity require?* (Nussbaum, 2011: 32). Human dignity, according to Nussbaum, equalizes individuals and it is therefore the only valid parameter on which a threshold of wellbeing can be established.

> The basic intuitive idea of my version of the capabilities approach is that we begin with a conception of the dignity of the human being, and of a life that is worthy of that dignity – a life that has available in it 'truly human functioning'. (Nussbaum 2006a: 74)

Nussbaum (2011) distinguishes between basic, internal and combined capabilities. Respectively, basic capabilities include individuals' personal states, traits, and dispositions; internal capabilities, fluid and dynamic, are the capabilities that the child develops as he/she grows up; and the combined capabilities are the combination of internal capabilities and the 'social/political/economic conditions in which functioning can actually be chosen' (Nussbaum, 2011: 22).

While I do understand the distinction between internal and combined capabilities – and its value in determining the achievements and the shortcomings of societies – it seems to me that separating basic from internal capabilities may be redundant, since, I would argue that basic capabilities, similarly to internal capabilities, also evolve.

Nussbaum's list of capabilities endorse: 1) life; 2) bodily health; 3) bodily integrity; 4) senses, imagination, and thought; 5) emotions; 6) practical reason; 7) affiliation; 8) other species; 9) play; and 10) control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2011: 33-34). These capabilities are the minimum requirements for individuals to live a life worthy of human dignity. Nussbaum's capabilities support one another, but she identifies two capabilities having an 'architectonic role', since they pervade all the other capabilities: those are practical reason and affiliation. The first constitutes the basis for individuals' capability to choose freely upon reflection, while the latter considers the sociality of human beings. Nussbaum considers those two capabilities as marking the humanity of individuals (Ibid.).

Nussbaum also indicates affiliation and practical reason as two of the three main capabilities for cosmopolitan education and democratic citizenship. She adds a third one, which she calls narrative imagination (2006b). The next section discusses those three capabilities in more detail.

4.2 Three central capabilities for education

Both Sen and Nussbaum acknowledge the central role of education for the 'cultivation of humanity' and for becoming a cosmopolitan citizen. Nussbaum states

> Becoming an educated citizen means learning a lot of facts and mastering techniques of reasoning. But it means something more. It means how to be a human being capable of love and imagination. We may continue to produce narrow citizens who have difficulty understanding people different from themselves, whose imaginations rarely venture beyond their local settings. […] But we have the opportunity to do it better […] that is the cultivation of humanity.
> (Nussbaum, 1997: 14)

In her holistic approach, education is viewed as a meta-capability, i.e. a capability that pervades and enables the development of other capabilities. Her work on education is strictly intertwined with democratic citizenship and interculturality. For her, multicultural education

> acquaints students with some fundamentals about the histories and cultures of the many different groups with whom they share laws and institutions. These should include religious, ethnic, social and gender-based groups. Language learning, history, economics and political science all play a role in pursuing this understanding, in different ways at different levels. (Nussbaum, 2006b: 390)

She argues that multicultural education must combine a pedagogy that fosters critical thinking and 'good textbooks' (Ibid.). For example, in the case of history, 'good textbooks' will account for different narratives, and in addition, will prompt the student to understand why different groups interpret historiographical evidence in different ways, giving voice to opposing narratives. Drawing on the work of the Indian educator, Nobel-prize artist and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, she advocates three main capabilities for human development, based on which educational praxis may flourish. The principles that Tagore outlined and that Nussbaum at a later stage framed as capabilities for the cultivation of democratic citizenship are critical self-examination, affiliation, and narrative imagination.

Critical self-examination is linked to the Socratic capacity to critically examine oneself and one's own traditions: this means to be able to reason logically without accepting all the beliefs, arguments, and traditions that have been imposed through habit. Nussbaum considers Socratic dialogue as a central tool to guide logical critical thinking since it develops not only the individuals' thinking skills, but also the respect towards others, especially in the case of conflicting views.

Affiliation is the ability to perceive oneself as a member of a group, but also as bound to all other human beings, tied to them by recognition, love and compassion. Nussbaum argues that this capability is crucial to understand the differences and the shared human needs and interests that make understanding

between groups and nations possible. Affiliation may foster the development of a multicultural education for a pluralist democracy.

The third capability is narrative imagination. Narrative imagination is a combination of the first two capabilities: it is the ability to take the perspective of others, both consciously and compassionately. It fosters the understanding of others, of the circumstances that shape respective choices, hopes and fears, emotions and wishes, and - by doing so – it helps us understand ourselves too. This capability is cultivated through literature and the arts. Nussbaum adds that 'the arts are also crucial sources of both freedom and community' (Nussbaum, 2006b: 391), giving an example of how putting on a play may disrupt, at least on the stage, societal hierarchies and tradition. Moreover, 'the arts are great sources of joy' (Ibid.: 391) and should therefore be employed to understand others.

Those three capabilities constitute a tripartite model for the development of democratic citizenship through education. This model has been taken forward and ameliorated in educational settings, as further explored in the next section.

5. The capabilities approach in educational settings

In educational settings, the tripartite model of capabilities for democratic citizenship that Nussbaum suggested has been a guiding principle for developing further thinking around the application of the CA for educational policies and curriculum development.

Melanie Walker (2004, 2006, 2007), combining the theories of the capabilities approach and her grounded analysis of data collected both in higher educational settings and in secondary schools in South Africa, developed multi-dimensional lists of capabilities for the respective settings. Her evaluative frameworks argue for including students and teachers' voices into the evaluation of education provision in order to offer a broader perspective on quality education, rather than just assess classroom sizes, facilities, marks, and more broadly numerical indexes.

Another contribution in the field was elaborated by Flores-Crespo (2007) in Mexico. Rather than evaluating capabilities, the scholar developed a list of functionings resulting from feedback questionnaires, combining Sen's freedoms

and Nussbaum's capabilities. His research confirmed that the transformation of capabilities into functionings is dependent upon instrumental freedoms. His resulting framework encompassed four dimensions: namely, philosophical, pedagogical, institutional dimensions, and policy. In the pedagogical and philosophical domains, he turns to Sen's concept of agency and to Nussbaum's capabilities for education. Concerning institutions and policy, he investigated how the curriculum and the school mission shape education. For instance, educational policies that suppress indigenous knowledge favouring Western-based models, might impair the contextual development of people's capabilities in the specific Mexican context.

Other studies, as reviewed by Crosbie (2013) within the European Union and in South Australia, looked at the curriculum and discussed how it could integrate a capability-based framework (Boni and Lozano, 2005). Despite the Australian government's rejection of the proposals of shifting towards a capabilities-based curriculum, those studies show that there is an effort towards the operationalization of the capability approach in educational settings. They also demonstrate that more work is needed in relation to the conceptualization and operationalization of the CA before it can be taken up and adopted at institutional and governmental level.

It is important to point out here that none of the reviewed studies engages with education in vulnerable settings. However, an initial interest in the CA in those settings is perceptible in Hollywood et al. (2012), who, considering the application of the CA into nine cross-country case studies, point out that 'one of the key strengths of the CA is in understanding and identifying the issues faced by vulnerable groups in society' (Ibid: 15).

Despite these studies on the application of the CA in education, one of the critiques that has been levelled at the CA remains its opaqueness in relation to its operationalisation. The following section focuses on this and on other critiques.

6. Critiques of the capabilities approach

This section problematizes some aspects of the capabilities approach. It is articulated around three main points of critique: the first one discusses the

opacity of the CA in relation to its operationalization; the second focuses on the individuality of the approach; and the last one presents the issue of universalism and paternalism levelled at Nussbaum's contribution.

Operationalising the approach

Sen and Nussbaum have been critiqued because of the lack of clarity in respect to how the CA could be implemented, and in which fields. For instance, Sen did not develop a list of capabilities, claiming that these should be determined, examined and evaluated locally. In doing so, he left the empirical application of the CA underspecified. Nussbaum, on the other hand, developed the capabilities list, but it has been argued that her philosophical effort lacks empirical research (Gasper, 2001, 2002; Clark, 2002).

In this respect, it must be noted that empirical research on the application of the CA in different contexts has been conducted by other scholars, who took the work of Sen and Nussbaum further. By way of example, the CA in poverty and developmental studies has been widely applied in order to develop poverty indexes (Sen, 1976; Atkinson, 1987; Clark et al., 1981; Clark, 2002). In addition, mental health research in the UK developed a multi-dimensional instrument that facilitates the measurement of capabilities for mental wellbeing (Simon et al., 2013). In the same field, White (2014) and White et al. (2016) respectively engaged with studies on the bottom-up development of measures of the wellbeing of individuals in India, Zambia, Uganda and other countries from the Global South. White el al. (2016) argued for a real need for global mental health research to engage with the CA, and with macro-structural factors that may inhibit people's physical and mental wellbeing. As demonstrated above, in addition, the CA has also been considered in education – addressing issues of access (Walker, 2004, 2006), of curriculum (Boni and Lozano, 2005), of inclusion (Hedge and MacKenzie, 2012), and of educational policies (Flores-Crespo, 2007).

Individualism

Another major critique levelled at the CA relates to its individualism. For instance, 'capabilities are seen primarily as attributes of people, not of collectivities, such as communities' (Sen, 2011: 244); in addition, the scope of the CA is to evaluate the wellbeing of individuals. However, both Sen and Nussbaum claim that the wellbeing of individuals is strictly intertwined and

dependent on social relations and on the social influence impacting what people have reason to value. In addition, in order to evaluate wellbeing one must take into consideration the social constraints to functionings.

Robeyns (2005) notes a distinction between ethical individualism, comprised in the CA, and ontological individualism: the former establishes individuals as the only units of moral concern while encouraging an analysis of social affairs, as these have an impact on the quality of life of individuals. The latter affirms that only individuals and their belongings (i.e. their properties) exist, and society is not a system, but rather the sum of these. Robeyns therefore argues that the capability approach embraces ethical individualism, but nonetheless is engaged with collectivities, public engagement and bonds between people and their communities.

Paternalism

Nussbaum has been critiqued for her universalistic and paternalistic attitude in respect to the development of the capabilities list, which largely derived from an analysis of Aristotle's writings. It has been contended that it is paternalistic for a middle-class, North American philosopher to develop a universal capabilities list, suitable for all peoples and cultures (Gasper, 2001; Clark, 2002). Nussbaum (2006) maintained that her list is open to revision inspired by ethical and intercultural enquiries. However, as Clark (2002) posited, in her own revision of the list, the core categories have always remained the same. Sen's critique of Nussbaum contends that the development of a list of capabilities should be a public endeavour, in which citizens' voices are listened to, discussed, and debated, resulting in fruitful public reasoning (Robeyns, 2005).

However, I shall also point out my discomfort in relation to Sen's paternalism that, in my view, emerges – covertly - in his essay *Is the Middle East an exception?* (2009). In the essay, despite the fact that he asserts the rejection of the Western/Eastern dichotomy, he praises the media coverage developed in the West as nurturing practical reasoning, Western values, and giving voice to the oppressed and the disadvantaged:

and here, the traditions established in Europe and America over the last three hundred years have indeed made a gigantic difference. The lessons derived from these traditions have been transformational for the world as a whole, from India to Brazil, and from Japan to South Africa, and the need for a free and vigorous media is being rapidly learned across the globe. (Sen, 2009: 335)

In addition, on one hand he problematizes the discourse on democracy in the Middle East, stating that 'the illusion of an inescapably non-democratic destiny of the Middle East is both confused and very seriously misleading - perniciously so - as a way of thinking about either world politics or global justice today' (Ibid: 335). However, on the other hand, he also considers democracy as a Western achievement, and as such, a tool that other societies could and should advocate for:

> it cannot, of course, be doubted that the institutional structure of the contemporary practice of democracy is largely the product of European and American experience over the last few centuries […]. There can be little doubt that there is a major 'Western' achievement here. (Ibid: 323)

The idea of the supremacy of Western democracy and the Western lessons about press freedoms that impacted and benefitted the 'world as a whole' sound, to say the least, Western-oriented, and subtly Orientalizing. As explained in Chapter I, Orientalism is a sophisticated way of relationalizing; it is a way of constructing one's own identity in contrast to someone else's, i.e. by considering the Arabs as uneducated, sensual, savages, the West is able to define itself, in contrast to the Other, as rational, developed and advanced.

It is in this respect that I would argue that, investigating Sen's writing through Said's lenses, by signalling the *mission civilizatrice* of the West as advanced democracies, subtly and covertly, he posits a superior position of the West in contrast to the East. In addition, by praising the Western press in contrast to the press in the Middle East, he is complicit in – as Said (1980) would say – 'silencing' the narratives about the East that emerge in the East.

7. Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the core tenets of the capabilities approach, by drawing on its foundational scholars, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. I understand the CA as a potential theoretical framework that can be adopted in language education in vulnerable settings. This is due to its holistic approach to wellbeing and to the consideration of individuals' capabilities and its conversion into achieved functionings, according to what individuals value, and have reason to value.

The approach, committed to 'human flourishing' and underpinned by social justice aims, provides a sound framework for education interpreted as human development. Going beyond both the utilitarian and the primary goods approaches through which wellbeing has often been measured, the CA argues for a more comprehensive account of people's real freedoms to convert their capabilities into functionings. In doing so, it also addresses the localized, material socio-economic constraints that limit people's freedoms.

Despite Sen and Nussbaum diverging in their understandings of capabilities, by considering both contributions as complementary and interconnected – as other scholars have done before (Crosbie, 2014) – I do not wish to sacrifice theoretical coherence, but I rather hope to expand the breadth of my understanding of the approach itself, on which I build the arguments of this research study.

Some of the critiques that have been moved against the CA resonate with me, such as concerns about the implicit paternalistic and universalist claims. By engaging with such critiques, I consider them stimuli towards a better awareness of the possibilities and of the limitations of the applicability of the CA, to which I hope to be able to contribute with this research study.

My conclusion is that, despite any shortcomings, the approach seems robust enough to suit the needs of language education in a context of precarious conditions of pain and pressure, in which (language) education cannot be evaluated in terms of competency and skills to serve neoliberal and success-driven market-needs. In the next chapter, I explore relevant literature in the field of critical applied linguistics, discussing the shift from competency models of language education to alternative and more holistic paradigms, including the capabilities approach.

Chapter III. From competency models to alternative approaches in language education

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the tenets of the capabilities approach as a theoretical grounding for language education in the context of siege in the Gaza Strip (Palestine). I contended that the capabilities approach provides a robust theoretical framework for language education under siege since it focuses on both the holistic wellbeing of individuals and on the contextualised constraints that hinder the flourishing of people's capabilities.

In the field of applied linguistics, scant attention has been given to the CA, since existing frameworks in language education – e.g. the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) – seem to be preponderantly focused on measurable linguistic and intercultural competence and language skills, driven by success and market needs (Crosbie, 2014).

Some scholars, whose work will be discussed in this chapter (e.g. Phillipson, 1992; Pennicook, 1994; Holliday, 2005; Canagarajah, 2003), drawing on critical theory and post-colonial studies, have argued for the development of *critical* applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2001a, 2001b). They envisaged the politicization of the field of applied linguistics, shifting from the original neutrality of dealing with the technicalities of language teaching (Davies, 2008) towards a more critical understanding of its impact upon society.

Other scholars in the field (Kramsch, 2006; Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004; Levine and Phipps, 2011; Crosbie, 2014; Frimberger, 2016), concerned with the ethical aspects of intercultural language education, have developed alternative paradigms in language education which go beyond competency models, and rather focus on the developing of individual beings and the process of ontological becoming. This chapter presents the shift from competency-based models to, I would argue, those more ethical understandings of language education, to which my professional identity as both a language teacher and as a researcher is aligned.

The chapter is structured as follows. The following section introduces the notion of Intercultural Communicative Competence as developed in the 1990s by Mike Byram, and then taken forward by the CEFR (2001). Then, I explore critical studies in language education which, drawing on critical theory and post-colonial studies, problematized English language politics both at a macro and micro level. In the fourth section I present a literature review of models that complexified the notions of competences and skills, arguing for more holistic underpinnings of language education for wellbeing. I conclude the chapter by outlining the research questions of this study.

2. Intercultural communicative competence

The concept of 'communicative competence' was coined in 1972 by Hymes, and it catalyzed a pedagogical tradition that arose in contrast to mnemonic acquisition of grammatical rules and decontextualised translations. Byram (1997) subsequently developed the notion of 'intercultural communicative competence' (ICC), providing a theoretical framework for the CEFR which has been exported and adopted beyond the European borders (Byram and Parmenter, 2012).

Intercultural communicative competence, enhanced in the communicative language teaching methodology, in its conception fostered a 'democratic spirit of dialogue and interaction' (Kramsch, 2006: 249) by encouraging learners' effective communication and the completion of assigned tasks. Byram's elaboration of ICC (1997) consisted in a multilayered model which includes five *savoirs*:

1) *savoirs*, i.e. knowledge and knowing (of social groups and of societal and individuals' interaction);

 2) *savoir etre*, i.e. attitudes (curiosity and openness) and values;

3) *savoir comprendre*, i.e. skills of interpreting and relating a document and/or an event of another culture;

4) *savoir apprendre*, i.e. the skills of discovery and interaction (the ability to 'operate knowledge', attitudes and skills under the constraint of real-time communication and interaction), and

5) *savoir s'engager*, i.e. critical cultural awareness defined as 'the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries' (Ibid.: 53). The model encompasses three competency dimensions, i.e. linguistic, social-linguistic, and discourse competences.

Byram distinguished between 'intercultural competence' and 'intercultural communicative competence': the former refers to people's 'ability to interact in their own language with the people from another country and culture', while the latter denotes 'the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language' (Ibid.: 70-71).

His comprehensive model was highly positively received, and shaped the vision of linguistic and communicative competence in Europe:

> All human competences contribute in one way or another to the language user's ability to communicate and may be regarded as aspects of communicative competence. (CEFR, 2001: 101)

Nowadays, more than 40 models of ICC have been documented and those have served further studies on the technicalities of teaching and assessing ICC, especially in a transparent manner across countries (Baiutti, forthcoming).

Byram's model (1997) and subsequently the CEFR (2001) are products of the context of peace-time and free mobility of goods and people that characterizes the European Union. It is not surprising, therefore, that an emphasis on cultural diversity, cultural awareness and language proficiency which focused mainly on education and on the occupational domains (CEFR, 2001) gained momentum. In such a context, it is understandable that Byram's model, despite the fact that it touched upon political education as part of developing critical cultural awareness, did not consider the politics of languages and issues of language power.

However, the expansion and exportation of this model of ICC, extended beyond contexts of peace-time and free-mobility, now poses some issues in relation to educational transfer (Tabulawa, 2003; Phillipson, 1992), to appropriate pedagogy (Holliday, 2005) and more broadly to cultural imperialism (Fassetta et al., 2017).

An example that in my opinion represents problematic educational transfer can be found in the UNESCO report entitled *Fostering a culture of intercultural dialogue in the Arab states* (2010). Due to the lack of available resources in Arabic on intercultural dialogue, the report suggested the mapping of those resources, and eventually, as a back-up strategy, the translation and adoption of materials developed by the Council of Europe. In a region affected by political instability, human tragedies, in which millions of people are nowadays living in tents as refugees and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders, the scope of intercultural dialogue is estimated to be broader then performing simulated language tasks within the occupational domain (Imperiale et al., forthcoming).

This unproblematic and uncritical adoption of resources and theoretical insights exported from the Centre[5] to the Periphery does fall under what critical applied linguists have already called 'linguistic imperialism' or 'educational imperialism' (Phillipson, 1992; Canagarajah, 2003). The next section focuses on critical studies in applied linguistics, which consider the cultural politics of English and of English-language teaching, addressing linguistic imperialism in its different forms.

3. Critical applied linguistics: English-language teaching as a tool to foster 'linguistic imperialism'

Moving beyond the neutrality of applied linguistics, some scholars sustained a more critical approach in the field, drawing on critical theory and post-colonial studies (Fairclough, 1989; Tollefson, 1995, 2007; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2007; Holliday, 2005; Canagarajah, 2003, 2005; Canagarajah and Said, 2013).

The term *critical*, as used by those authors and as used in my study, emphasizes the connection between language and broader social constructs such as ideology, politics, discourse. Critical applied linguistics rests on principles of performativity, contextuality and transgression (Pennycook, 2007): a performative (Butler, 1990) understanding of language which goes beyond a framing of identities as static and rather focuses on the contingency of the

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[5] I use the distinction between Centre and Periphery as used by Canagarajah, drawing on Kachru's (1986) circles: the Centre is located within Anglo-Saxon countries belonging to the Global North of the world (the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), whereas the Periphery is constituted by the rest of world, encompassing both developing countries and the countries at the geographical periphery of the Centre.

encounter; a contextualized approach to social and political issues which encourages the development of localized practice and intervention formulated in collaboration with local communities; and a transgressive approach to mainstream thoughts and politics which are shaped in language. Highly influenced by critical literacy and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1976, 1996), Pennycook (2001a) argues that the field needs reflexivity, through which it can problematize practice and aim to the ameliorament of society.

These critical studies, largely focusing on the spread of English, resulted in concepts such as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and in new roles for TESOL practitioners at a micro-analytical level of the classroom (Pennycook, 1994; Holliday, 2005; Canagarajah, 2003, 2013), which will be discussed below.

3.1 Linguistic imperialism

Phillipson's seminal work in critical applied linguistics (1992) is noticeably his conceptualisation of 'linguistic imperialism' of which English Language Teaching (ELT) represents a part. Linguistic imperialism consists of the practices and the ideologies employed in subjugating groups on the basis of language: because of its linguistic capital, English dominates over other languages, and hence is used as a discriminatory tool.

> The dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here structural refers broadly to material properties (for example institutions, financial allocations) and cultural to immaterial or ideological properties (for example attitudes, pedagogic principles). (Phillipson, 1992: 47)

In Phillipson's conceptualization, linguistic imperialism encompasses the economic, the political, the military, the communicative, the cultural and the social (Ibid.: 52-55). It is manifested in two ways, i.e. in 'anglocentricity', and it is also related to language pedagogy, which Phillipson refers to as 'professionalism'. Respectively, anglocentricity in analogy with ethnocentricity is related to the attitude of judging other cultures by the superior position of one's own culture standards, with the consequence of devaluing and misunderstanding the Other. 'Professionalism' refers both to the neutrality of

ELT which 'disconnect[s] culture from structure' (Ibid.: 67) and to the exportation and imposition of ELT models as standards.

The one-way flow of ELT models exported from the Centre to the Periphery, i.e. from the countries in the inner circle to local communities of the outer circles (Kachru, 1986), maintains and reinforces the asymmetrical relationship between norm-providing and norm-dependent countries: this is what Phillipson (1992) calls 'educational imperialism'. A concrete example of 'educational imperialism' is the work of the British Council which, according to Phillipson, is the primary organ of the exportation of ELT and hence of linguistic imperialism. The apolitical mission of the British Council, which often finds concretization in educational aids for developing countries, is motivated by the argument that issues of power relations do not entail language pedagogy.

Despite its contribution, the work of Phillipson presents some drawbacks that are a consequence of his structuralist perspective (Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 2003). Phillipson does not account for the local and the particular, since he describes 'pre-existing, pre-linguistic, and presumably more fundamental structural and cultural inequalities' (Canagarajah, 2003: 41). As a consequence, according to Pennycook (1994: 57), his research does not identify ways in which local communities may appropriate and use both English and also English language pedagogy in order to counter the cultural hegemony. Pennycook, conversely, in addition to discussing the imperialist cultural politics of English, tries to 'come to terms with this pedagogically' and to ponder over a critical pedagogy for teaching English (Pennycook, 1994: 7).

3.2 Pennycook 's 'critical pedagogy' in critical applied linguistics

Pennycook argues that the spread of English has been perceived as 'natural, neutral and beneficial' (Pennycook, 1994: 9): natural, since its expansion is often seen as the outcome of global forces and extra-linguistic factors; neutral since English is considered as an international language, detached from its imperialistic culture; and beneficial, since it ensures international communication, and is the tool through which developmental aid is provided.

He opposes these views by pointing out how English embeds and is related to colonial discourses (Ibid.: 34; Pennycook, 1998); he argues about the complicity

of colonialism, Anglicism and Orientalism through a documentary analysis of the archives of the British Empire, expanding Phillipson's studies. His conclusions, however, open up possibilities for the creation of counter-discourses within the language classroom; language produces realities, and it is not a mere tool through which reality is represented.

> I would suggest that counter-discourses can indeed be formed in English and that one of the principal roles of English teachers is to help this formulation. Thus, as applied linguists and English language teachers we should become political actors engaged in a critical pedagogical project to use English to oppose the dominant discourses of the West and to help the articulation of counter-discourses in English. (Pennycook, 2001b: 87)

Informed by the idea that ELT finds colonial expressions through teaching materials and teaching methodologies (Pennycook, 1998), he insists on the potential of critical pedagogy in ELT, drawing upon Giroux's understanding of teachers as cultural workers (1992), and building on Freire's seminal work on education as the practice of freedom (1994).

Pennycook considers current ELT practices (i.e. communicative language teaching – CLT - and task-based methodologies) as the outcome of a monolingual and a colonial paradigm in language learning, spawned from Western traditions. According to him, the direct method or audio-oral approach has been embedded in CLT and in task-based approaches in language education. These methodologies manifest a tendency to nullify the source language of the learners, privileging only the use of the target language, and this is in line with imperialist and assimilationist traditions interested in suppressing the language of the colonized. In addition, teaching materials are never neutral, and contribute to the expansionism of the globalised language market, enriching countries belonging to the inner circle.

Pennycook suggests that English language education is one of the several ways in which colonized and neo-colonized people can rewrite narratives and political discourses. Inspired by another critical pedagogue, bell hooks (1994), he

provocatively wonders whether language teachers would enable teaching to transgress[6], teaching to be resisted:

> How can we teach English in a way that both acknowledges the colonial and neo-colonial implications of ELT yet also allows for an understanding of the possibilities of change, resistance, and appropriation? Can we teach in order to be resisted? (Pennycook, 2007: 22).

However, in order to demonstrate that 'language use is never independent of cultural politics' (1994: 293), Pennycook does not present examples of empirical work in language pedagogy, but rather draws upon examples taken from literature. Following hooks (1989, 1994), he presents the literature of the colonised and the process of 'writing back' as appropriation of English for opposition and resistance; he describes this form of post-colonial literature as creating aesthetic bridges between the colonial and the post-colonial environments which the colonised writers inhabit (Pennycook, 1994).

Building on the critical approaches of Phillipson and on Pennycook's adoption of critical pedagogy in ELT, Canagarajah elaborated the concept of linguistic resistance (2003).

3.3 Linguistic resistance

Grounded in resistance theories, Canagarajah (2003) discusses English linguistic imperialism and the consequent spread of Western-based ELT practices. He investigates through empirical research resistance strategies that people employ in their everyday life in the Periphery (e.g. in Sri Lanka) in order to solve their linguistic conflicts.

Adding to Pennycook's arguments, Canagarajah's stance on English ownership is crucial to understanding his reasoning: according to him, English is a deterritorialized language, i.e. its identity as a language belonging to the inner circle is not that stable anymore (Canagarajah, 2005). He perceives English as an instrumental lingua franca employed for communication rather than for affective and identificatory purposes (Canagarajah, 2003, 2005). In this way, English does not threaten multilingualism, but would rather serve it, as it is a commonly

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[6] The title of one of the most important books of bell hooks is *Teaching to Transgress* (1994).

owned language. English, as a global language, will facilitate the construction of a plural system within which experts in an English variant would be novices in another one and vice versa, reaching a normalization of plurality (Ibid.).

By perceiving English as owned by every speaker, post-colonial communities and people in the Periphery may adopt English, reconstruct it, and make use of it in the way they consider appropriate to suit their own needs, including using it for talking back and as a resistance strategy. Other forms of resistance, e.g. literature for resistance, have already been adopted by local communities to confront military or cultural hegemony, but Canagarajah perceives those forms of resistance as elitarian (Canagarajah, 2003, 2005). Conversely, because language is owned by all its speakers, resistance through language practices is more equitable and spreadable.

'Linguistic resistance' (Canagarajah, 2003: 59) hence does not only include socio-linguistic analysis, but is and can be enacted in the classrooms of the Periphery, and encompasses both the politics of English and language pedagogies. Canagarajah argues for the appropriation of localized and contextualised methodologies, avoiding educational transfer from the Centre to the Periphery which results in forms of knowledge-dependency that 'has tended to undermine the alternative styles of thinking, learning, and interacting preferred by local communities' (Canagarajah, 2003: 104). He suggests creative and careful processes of pedagogical negotiation (Ibid.: 117), which result in language pedagogies not being unproblematically received, but rather appropriated and transformed.

These insights are crucial to the research context, since, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, the Gaza Strip is a context from which counter-narratives need to emerge. I agree with Canagarajah's view that the language classroom is a space where critical intercultural language education, linked to everyday practices of resistance, can be powerful in re-writing narratives and in developing valuable localized, critical and creative epistemologies. However, as part of this critical understanding, I also consider important the emotional and ethical impact of language education on wellbeing.

The next section explores already developed approaches in language education that move away from competency models and adopt critical approaches, with an

additional focus on wellbeing and on the ontological development of the individuals.

4. From competency-models to a wellbeing-focused language pedagogy

More broadly in higher education, competency models have already been critiqued (Barnett, 1994, 2010). Ronald Barnett (1994) in his early work *Limits of competence* posits that 'operational competence' is fast replacing 'academic competence'. In other words, transferable competences are considered to be more valuable than knowledge. Barnett believes that both operational competence and academic competence are limiting ideologies, and he proposes instead a holistic and less instrumental understanding of higher education, which concerns the development of human beings as critical beings.

Similarly, some approaches in intercultural language education - which will be discussed in-depth in this section - have surpassed competency models in order to emphasize the ontological and epistemological transformation of individuals through language education. In this section I explore the literature on languaging; I then introduce the human ecological approach in language education, which builds on Kramsch's 'symbolic competence' (2006). Then, I discuss a wellbeing-focused language education: I introduce the work of Crosbie (2014), who has combined language education and critical pedagogy under the overarching umbrella of the capabilities approach; and I then present Frimberger's adoption of creative methods in a vulnerable setting, which resulted in a wellbeing-focused language pedagogy which recognizes students' 'plentiness' (Frimberger, 2016).

4.1 Languaging

The concept of languaging was developed during the 1970s in the field of psychology in order to describe a cognitive understanding of language activity (Maturana, 1970; Swain, 2006; Swain and Lapkin, 2011). Swain (2006) theorized it as a process that involves any language activity of mediating complex ideas. The cognitivist approach was enriched by a focus on the embodiment aspect of languaging: Jensen (2014), building on Thibhault (2011), understands languaging as both a neural and a cultural process which engages a whole-body meaning-

making effort. Jensen distinguishes between first-order and second-order languaging: the former involving 'the expressivity and interactivity of human-bodies-in-interaction' (Thibhault, 2011: 2), and the second emerging from cultural dynamics of populations in interaction (Jensen, 2014).

A socio-political dimension of languaging, instead, was emphasized by Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) in intercultural language education. Their view resonates with the notion of agency within the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999): languaging, in their definition, is 'a question of individuals accumulating powers and understandings to enable them to become actively critical social beings' (Phipps and Gonzales, 2004: 73). According to Phipps and Gonzalez, languaging encompasses ontology as it concerns the individual's way of being, and epistemology as it also encapsulates the process of knowing. It concerns 'learning discourses by enabling the enculturation of learners into social practices, using both their own and their other language' (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004: 88).

In their book (2004), the authors also contrastthe intercultural being with the intercultural speaker, or user: whereas frameworks of intercultural communicative competence focus on language users, Phipps with Gonzalez talk about intercultural beings who are enriched and shaped in the process of languaging. Phipps's and Gonzalez's understanding of languaging goes well beyond a limited ideology of linguistic competence as academic or operational competence (Barnett, 1994) and is inspired by a human ecological approach in language education.

4.2 A human ecological approach in language education

The human ecological approach considers the role of the environment and of context in language learning. It considers language education as part of a broader system built upon relationships between humans and the environment that they inhabit. A grounding concept for the approach is Claire Kramsch's conceptualization of 'symbolic competence' (Kramsch, 2006, 2009, 2011; Kramsch and Whiteside, 2008, 2015). In her definition, Kramsch argued that symbolic competence is:

> The ability to manipulate symbolic systems, to interpret signs and their multiple relations to other signs, to use semiotic practices to make and convey meaning, and to position oneself to one's benefit in the symbolic power game. (Kramsch and Whiteside, 2015.)

The semiotic approach that Kramsch advances implies a systemic ecology of the languaging process. For instance, symbolic competence involves the ability of positioning oneself relationally in encounters, and it opens up spaces for transgression and countering the established power both at the macro- and at the micro-level, as in the classroom. Kramsch (2011) understands the applicability of symbolic competence in the classroom as the development of the ability of representing, and changing things with words.

In her later revision of the definition, she states that symbolic competence consists in the ability to manipulate the three dimensions of language as symbolic system: symbolic representation, symbolic action, symbolic power (Kramsch, 2011). This highlights the possibilities of words to, respectively, 'say and reveal about the mind', 'to do and reveal about intentions', and 'to index and reveal about social relations, individual and collective memories, emotions and aspirations' (Ibid. 357). It is therefore a critical consideration of values, relational encounters, and cognitive models that enables a transformative process.

Following a human ecological approach to language teaching, various elements need to be taken into account when looking at and researching the learning process. According to Levine and Phipps (2011), for example, an ethical language pedagogy paradigm ought to move beyond considering language education as a set of knowledge and skills, and would better include the 'five C's': Context, Complexity, Capacity, Compassion and Conflict, which the authors analyse as the components of the human ecological approach. The five Cs have developed out of the relational encounter with the contextual realities in which language learning occurs.

I assert that in using the human ecological approach, the focus on the environment perceived as an interplay of power-dynamics, which can foster or constrain human development, recalls the capabilities approach.

4.3 The capabilities approach in language education

Crosbie (2014) integrated the capabilities approach into her critical participatory action research in a multilingual ESOL classroom in the context of higher education. Her pioneering work opens up a space for a dialogue in the field of applied linguistics, moving from competency models to a holistic capabilities-approach shift.

The focus of Crosbie's doctoral study was students' development of their cosmopolitan and learning identities within a multicultural ESOL language classroom in a higher education institution. Framing her work under the theoretical underpinnings of Sen and Nussbaum's complementary approaches, Crosbie investigated the capabilities in place in her ESOL classroom, enabling a critical space for capabilities' enhancement. By grounding her work within the capabilities approach, and inspired by critical pedagogy and a holistic understanding of languaging she contended for, and validated through her research findings, the promotion of the capabilities approach for cosmopolitan citizenship, and a focus on values and individuals' beings and doings in the context of the classroom.

Her research findings identified twelve capabilities for L2 learning: 1) voice and agency; 2) critical reasoning, reflection and knowledge use; 3) affiliation; 4) identity and ontological being; 5) senses, emotions and imagination; 6) learning dispositions; 7) cosmopolitan citizenship; 8) mobility; 9) L2 literacy and communication; 10) professional development; 11) creativity; and 12) health, wellbeing and bodily integrity (Crosbie, 2014).

In my understanding, in her language classes, Crosbie did not disengage with language skills and intercultural communicative competence, which are components of the capabilities of L2 literacy and communication in particular, but which also subsist within all the other capabilities. Her approach integrates those competences and skills with a more holistic attention to students' values, beings and doings, which is the priority of her educational vision of higher education, and is unfortunately often neglected by neoliberal success-driven demands (Ibid.).

Her research, coupled with the UNRWA suggestion of the adoption of the capabilities approach in order to foster improved provision of quality education for refugees (discussed in Chapter 1), inspired my interest into the capabilities approach being applied to language education in vulnerable settings, and in the context of social injustice with the ultimate aim of developing a wellbeing-focused language pedagogy.

4.4 A wellbeing-focused language pedagogy in vulnerable settings: incorporating creative methods

Within the *Researching Multilingually at Borders* project, pedagogical practices involving art-based teaching methodologies for foreign-language education in multilingual and in vulnerable settings have been largely explored as constituent of a wellbeing-focused language pedagogy (Frimberger, 2016; Frimberger et al., forthcoming; Imperiale, 2017; Fassetta et al., 2017; Imperiale et al., forthcoming). Frimberger (2016), reflecting on her experience of being involved in an ESOL classroom for unaccompanied minors and in a Language Fest in Glasgow, talks about a 'wellbeing focussed language pedagogy'. Building on a rejection of a 'deficit model', she highlights the position of 'plenty' of the young unaccompanied minors she worked with. Her approach on plentiness values individuals' talents and I would add, capabilities, including their often-suppressed first language.

Frimberger's discussion of pedagogical practices focuses on multilingual singing as an example of using art-based methods that enable playfulness and creativity to emerge. Art-based methods in both teaching and research, coupled with the valence of linguistic incompetence (Phipps, 2013) as a resource to forge human relationships, could expand students' 'creative and critical engagement with their social realities and wider world issues affecting their lives' (Frimberger, 2016: 297). Frimberger, valuing her own linguistic incompetence as well as that of her students, removes the distance from 'static notions of competence', celebrating spaces that allow for a plenty approach to emerge:

> [A wellbeing-focused language pedagogy] celebrates students' language practices as powerful forms of embodiment that echo their affective, social and political real life contexts and gives voice to their concrete hopes for the future. Denying static and individualised notions of

competence, a well-being focussed language pedagogy promotes language learning as a situated practice, and in opposition to a deficit-driven educational discourse. (Frimberger, 2016: 296)

Her critique of 'competence' relates to 'neoliberally-defined forms of success' (Ibid.: 291), which result in deficit-driven education, pervading a Western, enlightened model of 'humanity' inspired by abstract concepts of democracy, freedom and human dignity. Conversely, following Todd (2008), Frimberger aspires to an education for humanity, which is embedded and takes up the challenges of the sociality of embodied encounters:

In moving beyond the polarized terms of humanism and anti-humanism, the task at hand is how to think of humanity as a problem, as a question for education, rooted in the difficult relations between actual persons, and not simply as a solution or an abstract justification of it. (Todd, 2008: 3 in Frimberger, 2016: 287).

Interestingly, Sharon Todd, who is quoted by Frimberger, problematizes Nussbaum's universalist and abstract perception of humanity. Despite sharing her commitment to 'flourishing', 'blossoming' and 'nurturing' humanity, Todd warns against simplified and generalized approaches. Frimberger's work, drawing on Todd's critique, favours a situated, contextualized approach of education in praxis, which culminates in developing multilingual teaching practices, of which art-based pedagogies such as songs, drama, development of sculptures, and art and crafts are part.

In her work, Frimberger used the resources that were available and co-constructed art-based teaching methodologies with the language teacher she worked with.A fundamental underpinning to her work was therefore to develop *contextualised* teaching pedagogies.

Contextualised art-based pedagogies in the context of Gaza: a space for using the Palestinian Art of Resistance

Considering the potential of art-based pedagogies as beneficial to let students' positions of 'plenty' to emerge in language encounters and relationships (Frimberger, 2016), and considering the need for developing localised, critical

and creative pedagogies which relate to the context in which those are used, I shall introduce in this section the Palestinian Arts of Resistance.

James Scott, in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), unpacks how subordinate groups perform resistance strategies against the subjugating powers in their everyday life – both in organized and in spontaneous ways. Scott argues that resistance consists of everyday acts often characterised by 'spontaneity, anonymity and lack of formal organization' which 'then become the enabling modes of protest rather than a reflection of the slender political tactics of the popular classes' (Scott, 1990: 151). He points out that subordinate groups create dissonant, and often hidden, cultures, which he calls 'hidden transcripts'; when hidden transcripts become visible and enter the public spaces, become recognized and recognizable forms of protest, they carry political impact (Ibid.: 18-19). When subordinate groups use the arts as a multimodal, multi-genre way of protesting against injustice, they make use of the Art of Resistance (Ibid.).

The use of the Art of Resistance in the Middle East region has been recently explored (Tripp, 2012; Alloul, 2015; Quiquivix, 2014; Sacranie, 2013; Hamdi, 2011; Salih and Richter-Devroe, 2014; Parry, 2010). Charles Tripp (2012), who conducted research on this topic, has presented numerous examples from the Palestinian context. He was interested in the politics of resistance in the Middle East – be it against foreign military powers, internal dictatorships, economic powers or any other subjugating force. He noticed that artistic expression was widely used in spontaneous and anonymous ways, as well as being used by leading intellectuals.

Specific to the context of Palestine, he and other scholars analysed the use of posters, of street-art graffiti – especially the ones that appeared on the wall built by Israel within the Occupied Territories – and of political cartoons as forms of visual resistance (Tripp, 2012; Parry, 2010; Hamdi, 2011). One of the icons of the Palestinian resistance became, for instance, the character created by the cartoonist Naji al-Ali, Handala. Handala is a child who appears in Al-Ali's cartoons with his back turned, eternally 10 years old, often pictured in Palestinian refugee camps. The cartoonist became famous only when Ghassan

Kanafani, one of the most prolific and important Palestinian writers and politicians, published Al-Ali's drawings in a magazine he edited, entitled *Al-Hooryya* (Freedom). Kanafani discovered Al-Ali's drawings on the walls of houses during a visit to a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. Al-Ali's work, from a hidden transcript, therefore became part of the public domain and his 'voice' reached way beyond the checkpoints of that camp (Hamdi, 2011).

A conspicuous branch of the Art of Resistance is the Palestinian literature of resistance. The 'Palestinian literature of resistance' (*Adab al-muqawamah*) started to be addressed as such in the 1960s by Ghassan Kanafani. Isabella Camera d'Afflitto, an Italian scholar and translator, talks about the 'literature of resistance' in terms of 'literature *as* resistance', which she defines as:

> resistance against both the violence of the enemy, and also the internal power dynamics and dogmatisms linked to the 'Palestinian cause', the erasure of memory, censorship and oppressions exercised within the Palestinian society and by its leadership, patriarchal structures and ideological and religious manipulation[7]. (Camera d'Afflitto, 2007: 15)

According to Camera d'Afflitto and to Hamdi (2011), experts in post-colonial literature, this literature belongs to the sub-genre 'bearing witness': it communicates about a past that has been suppressed by the dominant narrative, and it addresses both the victimised and the victimizers.

The Arts of Resistance, to my knowledge, have never been explored in relation to language education, neither in the Palestinian context nor in other contexts I am aware of. I understand the Palestinian Arts of Resistance as a potential contextualised form of art-based pedagogy appropriate to this research context: it bridges my theoretical frameworks linking Orientalism and linguistic resistance, and in addition, it also encompasses Crosbie's capabilities (2014) and art-based pedagogy (Frimberger, 2016).

5. Research questions and summary

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[7] My translation of the original: "alla violenza del nemico, ma anche ai poteri interni e ai dogmatismi legati alla 'causa', alla cancellazione della memoria, alle censure e alle forme di oppressione esercitate in seno alla società palestinese da leader politici, da strutture patriarcali e da strumentalizzazioni ideologiche e religiose" (Camera d'Afflitto, 2007: 15).

This chapter has presented some work in critical applied linguistics, arguing for a paradigm shift from competency models of language education to more holistic approaches. Parts of this chapter have already been published in a book chapter (Imperiale et al., forthcoming) and in a journal article (Imperiale, 2017), and it seems that there is a growing interest in the field in relation to exploring wellbeing-focused language pedagogy, especially in vulnerable settings, in contrast to market-driven understanding of language use.

Considering the literature presented in these first three chapters, I elaborate my research aim and research questions as follows.

The research aim consists of exploring and co-constructing a grounded framework for language education in the context of the pain, pressure and siege of the Gaza Strip (Palestine), avoiding educational transfer and linguistic and cultural imperialism.

In order to achieve this aim, I developed the subsidiary research questions, which I considered as guidelines for my research enquiry.

1. *What are the values and goals of language education in the context of the occupation of the Gaza Strip?*

I considered this as a preliminary and grounding research question, which could shed light on the localized understanding of language pedagogy in a context of siege. This research question problematizes 'neutral' teaching pedagogies and aims at understanding what values underpin the teaching and learning process.

It seemed to me appropriate to envision language pedagogy as inspired by the capabilities approach as the literature presented suggests. Following on from this, the second research question is posed.

2. *What capabilities can be identified in language education in a context of siege? How can they be nurtured?*

This research question spawns from the work of Crosbie (2014), as outlined above. The development of a list of capabilities for language education in vulnerable settings, however, needs to be a participatory endeavour, and needs to emerge in praxis. Reflecting on Crosbie's capabilities, it seems to me that the localized Palestinian Arts of Resistance address the capabilities that she identified, encompassing voice and agency, affiliation, identity and ontological

being, imagination, senses and emotions, creativity and an overarching focus on people's wellbeing.

Hence, my third research question, drawing on Frimberger's use of creative art-based methods in a wellbeing-focused language pedagogy in vulnerable settings (2016), developed as follows.

3. *How can the Palestinian Arts of Resistance be used in language education?*

These research questions are interpreted as guidance throughout the exploratory process of the research study, as expanded in the following chapter. What I considered most important was the overarching aim of the research project, namely, understanding how language education evolves in a difficult context.

In order to explore these questions, the chosen methodology was a cycle of critical participatory action research. I developed a series of online workshops on the topic of 'Using the Palestinian Arts of Resistance in English-language teaching', during which a group of 13 pre-service English teachers who had enrolled at or graduated from the Islamic University of Gaza explored and co-constructed teaching methodologies suitable for the context in which they live. With our praxis, we co-constructed a tentative framework for language education under siege. The next chapter presents the chosen methodology in detail.

Chapter IV. Methodology

1. Introduction

> *Research in itself is a powerful intervention, even if carried*
> *out at a distance, which has traditionally benefited the*
> *researcher and the knowledge base of the dominant group*
> *in society. When undertaking research, either across*
> *cultures or within a minority culture, it is critical that the*
> *researchers recognize the power dynamic which is*
> *embedded in the relationships with their subjects.*
> *Researchers are in receipt of privileged information.*

(Tuhiwai Smith, 2006: 176)

This chapter presents the methodology adopted for the research study, namely a cycle of critical participatory action research (CPAR), and illustrates the research design. The research project has entailed the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of an online teacher-training course entitled 'Using the Palestinian Arts of Resistance in English-language teaching'. The course was optional, uncredited and delivered online to 13 pre-service English teachers from the Gaza Strip.

The online teacher training course consisted of a series of workshops to allow space for co-construction and participation. It explored and developed critical, creative and localized language pedagogies for the context of the siege of Gaza. Inspired by an underlying Freirean approach (1976, 1994, 1886, 1998) and by decolonizing methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2006), the research study was rooted in participation and in praxis, and as such, knowledge was co-produced with the participants.

This chapter is organized as follows. The following section points out the connection between decolonizing methodologies and my research aim and questions. The third section introduces the theoretical underpinnings of CPAR including the participatory paradigm, its central tenets, and the appropriateness of the chosen methodology for the research study. The fourth section presents my ethical stances, and the ethical procedures followed for conducting the

research. In section five I address issues related to researching multilingually. Then, drawing on all the above, in the final section I present the research design I developed: I introduce the teacher-training course and its structure, the participants and the recruitment process, and the different phases of the CPAR cycle, concluding with a section on how data were analysed.

2. Research aims and decolonizing methodologies

The research study draws insights into language education in the contexts of pain and pressure, and specifically in a situation of siege. The scope of the research, in line with decolonizing methodologies as per Tuhiwai Smith (2006), included creating, naming, restoring, networking, negotiating, discovering, envisioning, and sharing. Grounded in the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapters, the main research aim was to explore and to co-construct a grounded framework for language education in the context of the siege of the Gaza Strip.

Therefore, the research study was developed in praxis, following a Freirean approach: it combined theory, practice and critical reflection on practice. The three components of praxis were all necessary since, as Freire posited, practice without theory is pure activism, whereas theory without practice 'becomes simply blah blah blah' (Freire, 1998: 30).

I believe that for researchers working in difficult contexts it is especially important to critically engage with research purposefulness and to recognize the ethical responsibility of conducting research. Tuhiwai Smith (2006) expresses her disdain for the word 'research': it is a disdain for a word associated with the careers of academics who build their fame on the pain of others. She warns against unethical 'abuses' of research with 'colonized' people and minority groups, however unintentional that may be (Ibid.). Investigating research with Maori groups, she problematizes the role of Western academics conducting research with non-Western groups, and demands that research, in the first place, 'should set out to make a positive difference for the researched' (Ibid.: 191), and should also involve locals as researchers themselves. Rodriguez (2017), similarly, warns against the misappropriation of the – currently trendy – word 'decolonizing', and suggests that as academics we must do a better job at

unpacking the logic of power, silences and how we label the experiences of communities.

I consider these insights important in order to develop ethical research. In this research study, I did not work with 'colonized' people, even though Palestinians in Gaza live in a context of siege, pain and pressure, and are oppressed by military and epistemological hegemony (as discussed in Chapter 1). In such a context, the priority of my research study was to – or at least try to – make a positive difference for the participants I was working with. Hence, rather than asking participants what I wanted to know about them, the aim of the research study was to engage in a process of knowledge co-production and radical listening (Siry et al., 2016) to understand what participants wanted me to know about them (Frimberger et al., forthcoming).

Hence, the openness and broadness of my overarching research aim was a deliberate ethical choice, in line with my interpretation of decolonizing and transformative methodologies. Having a research aim without imposing strict and limiting research questions and agendas was a thought-through decision, which Tuhiwai Smith describes as 'strategic positioning':

> The end result cannot be predetermined. The means to the end involves human agency in ways which are complex and contradictory. The notion of strategic positioning as a deliberate practice is partially an attempt to contain the unevenness and unpredictability, under stress, of people engaged in emancipatory struggles. (Tuhiwai Smith, 2006: 186)

My 'strategic positioning' was a way to respond both to participatory paradigms, and also to the uncertainty and instability that characterises the Gaza Strip.

Since the initial conceptualization of the research project, the research aim was supported by the following auxiliary questions – which helped guiding the research process. During the research, this auxiliary guidance was found to be relevant for participants as well. I report the research questions as they were elaborated in their initial conception:

1. *What are the values and goals of foreign-language teaching in the context of the Gaza Strip, Palestine?*

2. *Which capabilities for language education in a context of siege could be identified and how would they be nurtured?*

3. *How could creative methods, specifically the Palestinian Arts of Resistance, be used in foreign-language education in the Gaza Strip?*

Those questions led the development of the research study, which took shape as a cycle of critical participatory action research (Kemmis et al., 2014).

3. Critical participatory action research: more than a methodology

In the literature on research methods and methodologies there is often frequent mention of ontology, epistemology and research paradigms as guiding principles for choosing an appropriate methodology which would serve the 'fit-for-purpose' principle. Following Crotty (1998), I understand ontology as the study of being, and epistemology as a way of knowing, understanding and explaining 'how we know what we know' (Crotty, 1998: 3). According to Crotty, epistemology, ontology and theoretical perspectives often emerge together, and it is not easy to describe them in a succinct and clear way; this is also due to an overall inconsistent use of terminologies.

For instance, in the literature, it is pointed out that participatory research is perceived essentially in terms of a 'participatory paradigm'; CPAR is considered more than a methodology.

3.1 A participatory paradigm

This research study is underpinned by critical paradigms in educational research and by a participatory worldview. The critical educational research paradigm emerges from critical theory and especially draws upon Habermas' critiques of both positivist and interpretative stances as descriptive and normative, which neglect a search for transformation (Cohen et al., 2007). In contrast to the technical cognitive interest of positivism and the practical interest of hermeneutic interpretative paradigms, Habermas (1972) suggests an overarching emancipatory aim of research, which needs to be embedded in praxis.

Considering the purpose of this research enquiry, and the critical and participatory theoretical perspectives, the chosen methodology was identified as critical participatory action research (CPAR). The nature of the enquiry is qualitative, and due to its co-constructive and participatory component, other research methodologies would not have suited its purpose.

The research could also have been framed as a case study because of its potentiality as a pilot study for testing and developing new theoretical underpinnings in language education, in addition to a highly contextualised analysis. However, because of the focus on both praxis and on knowledge co-construction, I opted for framing it as a cycle of critical participatory action research. Moreover, I share the view of scholars operating within participatory methodologies about the emerging participatory worldview paradigm – which does not necessarily underpin a case study (Cohen et al., 2007).

For instance, despite the fact that CPAR is considered as a research methodology, it is important to acknowledge that scholars who developed and adopt CPAR describe it as 'a worldview', a 'philosophy of life' and 'a social practice' (respectively in Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Fals Borda, 2001; Kemmis et al., 2014). All these scholars agree that participatory research should be considered as something more than instrumental techniques for improvement and development.

For instance, Reason and Bradbury (2001) perceive PAR in terms of a 'participatory worldview', in which participation is the catalyst. They describe the main features of participatory action research: namely, it is rooted in participation and democracy; it is committed to human flourishing; it deals with practical issues; and finally, it results in knowledge-in-action in order to 'liberate the human body, mind and spirit in the search for a better, freer world' (Ibid.: 2). According to them, participatory action research is not a question of research methodology, but rather a 'a celebration of the flowering of humanity and of the co-creating cosmos, and as part of a sacred science is an expression of the beauty and joy of active existence' (Ibid.: 11).

Similarly, Fals Borda (2001) develops a recount of participatory (action) research (PR) history and describes how it became a 'philosophy of life' for him and his

colleagues in Latin America, stressing the transformative ontological process of becoming through research-making:

> a vivencia [meaning life-experience] necessary for the achievement of progress and democracy, a complex of attitudes and values that would give meaning to our praxis in the field. [...] PR had to be seen not only as a research methodology but also as a philosophy of life that would convert its practitioners into 'thinking-feeling persons'. (2001: 30)

In his journey in PR, Borda highlights two stages (2001: 29): (1) the need to 'decolonize ourselves', to acknowledge traits implanted by the learning process; and (2) the search for a 'value structure around praxis' embedded in academic rigour, which would have made meaning of this form of research.

Kemmis et al. (2014), building on Fals Borda's work, suggest that critical participatory action research is more than a research methodology, understanding it as a social practice. In contrast with action research, which could be either 'practical' or 'technical' , as concerned respectively with instrumental functions and techniques using participatory contributions, *critical* PAR is conceived to be a 'practice-changing-practice' that aims to change discourse and individuals in the public spheres (Kemmis et al., 2014: 28).

The next section explores the central tenets of critical participatory action research as developed by Kemmis et al. (2014).

3.2 CPAR: central tenets

CPAR is defined by Kemmis et al. (2014) as a social practice, or a practice-changing-practice. It is facilitated by the Habermasian theory of communicative action, which takes place in the public spheres resulting out of the intersubjective space in which the participants and the researcher encounter each other (Habermas, 1984). CPAR aims at analysing and transforming: (1) participants' practices, (2) their understanding of the practices, and (3) the conditions or arrangements in which the practices are conducted.

Communicative action and public spheres

CPAR is based on the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984), and on the opening of public spheres as safe places where the participants engage in conversation, and in democratic participation.

In the footsteps of Habermas, the domain of intersubjectivity replaces the dichotomy of subjective-objective philosophies as encounters occur in the intersubjective-communicative space. Participants commit to genuine conversations based on comprehensibility, truth (in the sense of accuracy), sincerity. Communicative spaces are present in everyday life, and are embedded in the public spheres. Establishing a public sphere means to establish a set of relationships, wherein individuals relate to one another freely, respectfully, openly and purposefully (Habermas, 1984). This relationship and the commitment to these kinds of conversations involve equally the participants and the researcher.

Practice and practice architectures

In their latest work, Kemmis et al. (2014) define practice as

> [A] socially established cooperative human activity in which characteristic arrangements of actions and activities (doings) are comprehensible in terms of arrangements of relevant ideas in characteristic discourses (sayings), and when the people and objects involved are distributed in characteristic arrangements of relationships (relatings), and when this complex of sayings, doings and relatings 'hangs together' in a distinctive human social project. (2014: 52)

To transform practice, therefore, is a social and inevitably political process, as it requires both individual and extra-individual changes. Transforming practice requires transforming one's own doing (what we do), one's own saying (what we think and say), and one's own relating (how we relate to others and to the resources) (Kemmis, 2001, 2009, 2014). It is precisely the combination of individual and extra-individual changes that makes CPRA a transformative, political practice.

Hence, CPAR focuses on three areas: (1) the participants' understandings of their practice – doing, saying, and relating; (2) the conduct and consequences of their practices; and (3) the practices' architectures, that is the cultural-

discursive, material-economic, and socio-political arrangements that either support or constrain the practices held in place.

Practice architectures can be categorised into the following: (1) cultural discursive arrangements, which prefigure participants' sayings; (2) material-economic arrangements, which support the doings; and (3) social-political arrangements, intertwined with individuals' relatings. Providing respectively the language, the material and the social resources, practice architectures enable or hinder practices, and practices' transformations. The practice architectures hold the practice in place in the inter-subjective space (Kemmis et al., 2014).

CPAR, with the tenets described above, presented compatibilities with the research project as will be discussed in the following section.

3.3 Appropriateness of CPAR and research design

As the research project is framed by an intrinsic commitment towards social justice through education, the research process itself should reflect the nature and the social endeavour that underpins the research inquiry (Crosbie, 2014). In addition to an overall political, critical and transformative aim, which underlies both the research project and CPAR, I understand the appropriateness of the chosen research methodology in terms of the following rationales:

(a) there are compatibilities between CPAR and the capabilities approach

(b) the relevance of the research site in this specific research project must be acknowledged and the analysis of the local contextualisation is a determinant component in CPAR

(c) the relationship between knowledge and power is intertwined and embedded in praxis

(d) educational research requires ethical approaches; I consider it to be ethically appropriate to conduct research *with*, and not *on*, people living in precarious and difficult conditions, embedding ethics in praxis.

Firstly, compatibilities between the capability approach (CA) and participatory action research have been identified by scholars conducting educational research (Walker, 2009; Boni and Wlaker, 2016). Walker (2009) points out that

participatory action research is a potent methodology to foster capability formation, and hence to operationalize the capability approach in praxis. One of the major critiques of the CA is its intrinsic vagueness and limited operationalization; Walker argues that the capability approach and CPAR are closely aligned, to the extent that they may be complementary. CPAR embodies practices, which may lead to capability formation in educational contexts and, on the other hand, the CA might offer a normative framework to critical participatory action research. In addition, both CA and CPAR are rooted in participation and aim at human flourishing, social justice and human development. Boni and Walker (2016) developed the Participatory Capability Research Cube framework, which relates participatory action research to the CA. They imagine the three interactive and multidimensional axes of the Cube being: the participatory axis, the knowledge axis, and the public deliberation axis. The participatory axis encompasses the development of the capabilities of all those involved in PAR; the knowledge axis considers knowledge as being transformative and as such it needs to account for the material constraints that hinder the expansion of capabilities; thirdly, the public deliberation axis is the foundation of both the CA and PAR, since it drives several deliberative moments, contributing to a deeper engagement of the participants towards a more justice-oriented society.

Secondly, CPAR focuses on localized practices. It investigates and aims for ameliorating local educational or social issues, at the specific site where research is conducted. CPAR is ecologically sensitive to the sites in which research is carried out: CPAR projects spawn from an analysis of the needs and values of the participants, and of the social arrangements that enable practices (Noffke, 2009; Noffke and Somekh, 2009; Kemmis et al., 2014). Despite the local focus of CPAR, it must be added that Noffke (2009) highlighted the global dimension of critical participatory action research: the local intersects with a broader overarching political aim devoted to human flourishing and 'social justice', which prefigures research as embedded in a global context. The attention to both the local and global dimension makes CPAR a robust methodology for this specific research project, in which the context arrangements are catalysts.

Thirdly, in the literature on participatory action research, the intertwined relationship between knowledge and power is often explored. Gaventa and Cornwall posit that:

> We can also more clearly situate knowledge as one resource in the power field. Knowledge, as much as any resource, determines definitions of what is conceived as important, as possible, for and by whom. Through access to knowledge and participation in its production, use and dissemination, actors can affect the boundaries and indeed the conceptualization of the possible. (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001: 72)

In Gaventa and Cornwall's view, research can be empowering, aiming at social transformation, not only communicating unheard participants' voices, but acknowledging their power to build knowledge and to contribute to transformative actions. Knowledge, reflection and power are produced, explored and countered in praxis (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001, 2009).

Finally, research in vulnerable settings requires ethical approaches, and I understand CPAR as being underpinned by strong ethical principles of participation and emancipation. Much has been written about participation in research, and the ethical necessity of conducting research with participants, and not on research subjects, or worse, on 'objects of investigation' (Freire, 1996: 87). The work of Freire and Fals Borda is relevant in this regard: the authors emphasize the ethical dimension of participation in pedagogical and political action aiming at emancipatory objectives. Freire highlights that through participation, critical awareness of reality and self-awareness are deepened: participation is a starting point for developing 'cultural action of a liberating character' (Ibid.). Fals Borda (1987), drawing on Freire's work, and further developed by Kemmis et al. (2014), affirms that participation is always political, and that educational research is never neutral. Education and educational research are seen as political and transformative practice (Fals Borda, 1987).

CPAR has also some constraints: it is a longitudinal study which requires time in order to be able to monitor its impact, that is if it effectively contributed to changing practice and practice architectures. Since a doctoral thesis is subject to time limitation, I chose to develop an interrupted cycle of critical participatory action research, as will be discussed in section 6 in this chapter. In

addition, there are different interpretations of the degree of participation, some of which suggest that that participants should be involved in the data analysis and that their contribution should also be recognised in terms of ownership (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study, due to safety and ethical concerns towards my participants, I am entirely responsible for the analysis and the interpretation I gave to the research data.

In the next section I expand the discourse on ethics as praxis and I outline the ethical procedures I followed in my research study.

4. Ethics as praxis

The research study is underpinned by what has been described as an 'immanent ethics of responsibility', ethics arising from 'the immanence of the relationship with the other rather than through a Kantian appeal to a transcendental moral signified' (MacDonald and O'Regan, 2012: 10). This study works on the basis that ethics is situated in praxis and in relationships building.

As Frimberger points out (2013), this ethical standpoint is also related to a more general criticism developed by Sarah Ahmed (2000) on the reified representation of the academic 'stranger discourse', challenging 'explanatory models of strangeness' in post-colonial studies. Ahmed argues that ethics is embedded in praxis and is a question of 'how one encounters others as others' (Ahmed, 2000: 138, quoted in Frimberger, 2013: 38).

Similarly, extending the discourse to ethnographic research, Judith Butler in *Giving an account of oneself* (2005) writes that

> The ethical valence of the situation is thus not restricted to the question whether or not my account of myself is adequate, but rather concerns whether, in giving the account I establish a relationship to the one to whom my account is addressed and whether both parties to the interlocution are sustained and altered by the scene of address. (Butler, 2005: 50)

The critical participatory action research I conducted, therefore, was ethical in praxis, grounded in relationships and in co-participation. As Frimberger et al. suggest (forthcoming), rather than considering my research study as an

explanatory model seeking generalizable and replicable findings for language education with vulnerable participants, I acknowledged the precariousness of the encounters and grounded my ethics in immanent praxis.

Pointing out these ethical considerations, in my view, is important especially because of the specificities of this research study, which involved participants who might be othered as vulnerable by institutional ethics committees. What I consider to be an ethical process of conducting research with people living in difficult circumstances was not underpinned by universal moral principles and by institutionalised 'box-ticking' codes of ethical practices, but rather consisted in exploring and developing a safe public sphere in which relationships of trust were not instrumental to obtain research data.

Rooting research in participation and engaging with the messiness of intercultural relationships allowed the opening up of a safe space for the exploration and the development of language pedagogies for wellbeing. The research study was underpinned by the ethical principle of responsibility towards participants (Cohen et al., 2007).

Concerning the institutionalised ethical procedures, before undertaking my research fieldwork, I obtained ethical approval from the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee of the College of Social Sciences, for dealing with human subjects[8]. Participants read the participant information sheet (Appendix D), in which I outlined the purposes of the research project, the consequences for participants should they decided to take part in it, the reasons why they had been selected, and their power to withdraw at any point during the research. Their participation in the research project would have kept their anonymity and confidentiality protected. They signed and I myself counter-signed the consent form (Appendix E), in which they authorized me to record, both in audio and on video, the workshops and all our interactions for research purposes. Participants also authorized me to publish our pictures, where appropriate.

The participant information sheet was provided in English and in Arabic (Appendix I). All the participants spoke fluent English; hence, the Arabic translation was not needed. However, the rationale for providing both versions

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[8] I emphasize the fact that in the formula used by the Ethics Committee, participants are labelled as 'human subjects', which seems to me to be in contradiction with the understanding of ethics as a process of relationship-building in the research encounter.

was twofold: the first point was related to the English-language proficiency of the participants, i.e. the form in Arabic was provided in the eventuality that participants might have preferred to sign a document in their native tongue rather than in foreign one; the second argument instead carries a symbolic value. By showing the participants respect for their own native language, and presenting them with the possibility to work both in English and in Arabic, I complied with my understanding of ethics as relationship-building and hence, encompassing linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur, 2004). (This will be further explored in the following chapter.)

My reflection on the language of the forms that participants would have signed was part of other considerations related to researching multilingually, which are often overlooked and underestimated in research processes, research dissemination and also in research ethics, but are crucial to the research outcomes (Holmes et al., 2013, 2016).

5. Researching multilingually

Multilingual research practices are often undertaken but they are seldom made overt. Holmes et al. (2013) suggest that researchers should be aware of the possibilities and complexities of conducting research that involves more than one language, and should consider and account for the consequences of their multilingual or monolingual methodological choices.

In the research journey I made use of my multilingual repertoires, including multimodality and translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013). I mainly conducted the literature review in English, at times consulting journal articles in Italian, Spanish and French. During the fieldwork, most of the workshops, interviews, focus groups, and email communication with participants occurred in English, being the language in which all of us (i.e. the researcher and the participants) were competent.

In some instances we also used Palestinian Arabic, in which I am able to sustain every-day life conversations at the intermediate level: as Phipps (2013, 2014) suggests, negotiating a language in which the researcher is not fully competent may reduce power imbalances between the researcher and the participants and develop rapports of trust. Exposing my linguistic incompetence to the

participants fostered relationship-building and linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur, 2004): with my broken attempts of interacting with participants in their native tongue, I exposed my linguistic vulnerabilities, acknowledging different areas of both expertise and vulnerability. Participants, in return, spontaneously asked to learn some basic greetings in Italian, my native tongue. In addition, I encouraged participants, especially while doing group work, to use either English or Arabic in the way that was most convenient for them.

Multimodal and translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013) were also part of the researcher and participants' affordances, and as such, contributed to meaning making and research production. Methodologically, multilingual practices did not compromise meaning making and data analysis, since when Arabic was used, my understanding was helped by participants acting as translators when needed. When Arabic exchanges needed to be transcribed, I asked participants to check my transcriptions.

Concerning the research dissemination through publications and conferences, I have always used English, presenting data in their original languages, and providing my translation (checked by participants themselves) when this involved data in Arabic. I also presented my work in Italian at a conference held at the University for Foreigners of Siena and at some workshops I was invited to for volunteers working in Italy with refugees from the Middle East. I also gave a presentation in Spanish at the Cìrculo Cultural Español Antonio Machado (Luxembourg), during my PhD visit at the University of Luxembourg. On those occasions, I used data in the languages that were gathered, providing my own Italian and Spanish translations.

Although those occasions are not quantitatively relevant, they need to be acknowledged as part of a multilingual way of working and researching. It was the participants themselves that pointed this out to me, as when informed about my presentations – and the translations of data in both Italian and Spanish - they showed a great enthusiasm. They highlighted that this choice reached a non-academic and a non-English speaking audience. The participants' enthusiasm made me realize, as Holmes et al. (2013) discuss, that I tended to view multilingual enquiry and working across different languages as the unconscious norm, as a natural process that I was used to. Multilingual inquiry requires the researcher to be aware of both its complexities and possibilities.

Underpinned by the considerations outlined in the sections above, the research design was developed accordingly.

6. Research Design

The object of the CPAR was an experimental, optional and uncredited online teacher-training course involving 13 pre-service English teachers from the Gaza Strip, enrolled at – or recently graduated from – the English Department at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). The experimental online teacher-training course focused on 'Using the Arts of Resistance in English-language teaching', and explored and developed localized, critical and creative approaches in teaching English in the Gaza Strip.

Based on Kemmis et al.'s critical participatory action research planner (2014), I structured the research design by adapting the phases of CPAR, namely planning, action, observation and evaluation, to serve the needs of the project. The cycle of CPAR, illustrated below, involved four phases: (1) a first planning phase, during which I sought access to the Gaza Strip, recruited participants and planned the course informed by their initial doings-sayings-relatings; (2) a (re)planning phase, after access to the Gaza Strip was denied, in which I amended the course in order for it to be delivered online; (3) the merged action-observation phase, in which the teacher-training course was implemented and continuously and constantly observed; and finally, (4) the reflection phase, in which data analysis and the evaluation of the research project was conducted. This also included having gathered reflections with participants on the critical action research project as a whole, on its outcomes, and on the changed practices and the impacts on the practices' architectures.

Pre-Planning: face-to-face course

Access to the Gaza Strip: denied

Reflection: evaluation and knowledge transfer

Planning: development of the online course

Action/Observation: course implementation coupled with ongoing observation.
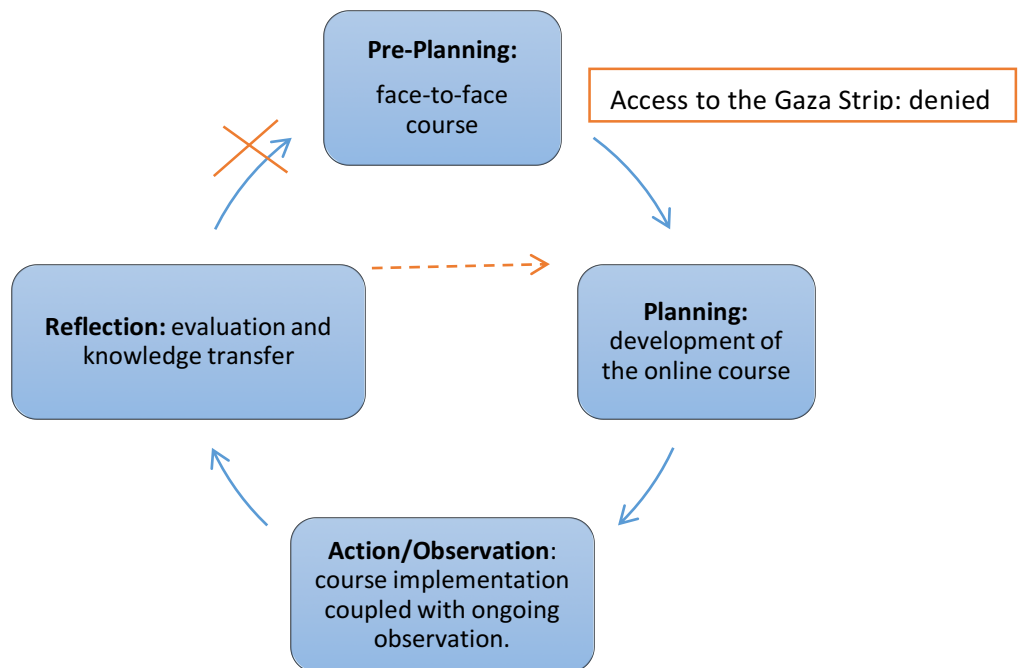
6.1 The planning phases: seeking access and participant recruitment

During the planning phases, in addition to the development of the teacher-training course, access to the Gaza Strip was sought – unsuccessfully – and participants were recruited. In order to attempt to get access to the Gaza Strip, several actors were contacted: the Italian Consulate in Israel, the British Consulate in Israel, the Israeli Embassy in the UK, the Israeli information centre in Scotland, the Israeli Ministry of Defence, the Palestinian Authority Embassy in the UK, and the Egyptian Embassy in the UK.

After extensive email correspondence and several phone calls, access to the Strip was denied. Despite the fact that the Islamic University of Gaza sent me an official invitation as a visiting academic, the Israeli Ministry of Defence, which controls access to the Gaza Strip, informed me during a phone call that the permit to cross the Eretz crossing was only granted to journalists or volunteers working with international NGOs. However, I should have contacted the Palestinian Authority and sought permission from them. The Palestinian Authority - which does not control the Eretz crossing – suggested I contact the Italian Consulate in Jerusalem. The email below was sent to me by the Italian Consulate on the 2 March 2015:

Per entrare in Israele non c'è bisogno di visto

Purtroppo non abbiamo informazioni per quanto riguarda l'ingresso a Gaza, dovrebbe contattare il Ministero della Difesa israeliano.[9]

The Italian consulate, without possessing information concerning access to the Gaza Strip, pointed me towards the Israeli Ministry of Defence, from which, however, I received the same answer: contact the Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, I also contacted the Egyptian authorities; however, due to the temporary closure of the roads within the Sinai Peninsula that lead to the Gaza Strip, and due to the closure of the Rafah crossing, this did not find a positive response.

Access denial was not totally unexpected. Anticipating this option – unlike what happened the year before in Site 1, as written in the Prologue – it was previously agreed with Prof Nazmi al-Masri, the *Researching Multilingually at Borders* Co-I based at the Islamic University of Gaza, that, should it not be possible to travel to Gaza, I would conduct the series of workshops online, via Skype or by using other video-conference software. Therefore, being prepared when the negative reply arrived, I promptly redesigned the teacher-training course considering the online practice architectures and the technological constraints.

While seeking access, I also recruited participants. Identifying and recruiting participants was done in cooperation with the partner university, the Islamic University of Gaza. The qualitative nature of the research study and its chosen methodology required a small group of participants, selected through purposive sampling: the sample's main aim was not to represent the wider population, but rather to possess some characteristics suitable for the research study (Cohen et al., 2007). The online teacher-training course targeted graduate and senior students at the Islamic University of Gaza, either from the Faculty of Education, specifically the English Department, or the Faculty of Arts.

Being a *free* teacher-training course organized in partnership with an international university, which also provided a Certificate of Attendance, the number of applicants was expected to exceed the number of places available, ideally between 10 and 15. The limit was set to 15 participants as a consequence

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[9] There is no visa requirement for entry into Israel. Unfortunately, we don't have information about access to Gaza, you should contact the Israeli Ministry of Defence.' (My translation).

of material arrangements, i.e. the capacity of working computers in the IUG language laboratory is 15. In addition, it seemed appropriate to have a small group in order to enhance the participatory component of the course.

In cooperation with Prof Nazmi al-Masri who, as local academic partner, is the expert on the IUG institutional procedures, I developed the following selection criteria for taking part in the teacher-training course:

(a) graduates must have obtained their degree at the Islamic University of Gaza within a maximum period of three years

(b) undergraduate students must be senior students, i.e. enrolled in their fourth year at the Islamic University of Gaza, English Department, or in the Faculty of Arts

(c) the accumulative average of candidates' academic grades must be at 80% and above

An application form (Appendix G) was devised in order to select participants and to collect initial data about their motivations, their awareness of the use of creative methods in ELT, and their opinions about the use of Arts of Resistance for teaching English. The course was announced on the IUG website: the invitation to participate in the course included a letter of introduction (Appendix F), the teacher training booklet and the application form (Appendix G). Out of a cohort of 29 applicants, 15 participants were selected according to their accumulative average, their motivations, their teaching experiences and the application form as a whole. Two students dropped out before commencing the course, for personal reasons, so the final number of participants reached 13, all young women.

The sample composition was representative of the student population in the English department at IUG, which consists mostly of females and, in addition, as the course was developed in partnership, such a sample allowed me not to interfere with the Islamic University of Gaza rules: in the institution male and female students are allocated different classes, they attend their courses in different buildings, and female teachers cannot teach male students with the exception of within the Continuing Education Department.

6.2 The action/observation phase: the course in a snapshot

The course involved pre-service English teachers in workshops on exploring the use of political cartoons, comics, drama and films for language teaching. All the activities were embedded in the Gaza Strip context: the course referred to *English for Palestine*, which is the textbook adopted in schools in Palestine and in the Gaza Strip, and dealt with authentic material relevant for ELT in Palestine (i.e. the political comic books *Palestine* and *Footnotes in Gaza* by Joe Sacco; the website 'Palestine Remix', etc.).

There were five course aims:

(a) to acquire an introductory subject knowledge on adopting creative methods in language teaching, exploring drama pedagogy and the use of comics and political cartoons in class

(b) to experiment with creative teaching techniques through interactive workshops

(c) to reflect on the teaching materials in use in the Gaza Strip (*English for Palestine, Grades 8-9*) and on how certain units could be supplemented with the inclusion of creative methods

(d) to apply participants' learning in a teaching context

(e) to strengthen and create an active network of pre-service English teachers in the Gaza Strip.

The format of the online workshops was highly interactive, consisting of a combination of input sessions, group work, interactive activities, discussions, peer learning, peer observation, lesson planning, and teaching practices in which the trainees planned, developed and delivered simulated English lessons by teaching to their peers.

The course ran in April and May 2015, for a total of 24 hours of online workshops: it comprised three hours per workshop and two hours of smaller group tutorials in preparation to teaching practices, in addition to independent learning. Participants also attended the 'Language and Art of Resistance' symposium, organized by the Islamic University of Gaza in partnership with the University of Glasgow, University of Manchester and University of Arizona.

The course ran as follows:

Dates	Topics
11 April 2015, 3 hours	Introductory Section
14 April 2015, all day	'Language and Art of Resistance' international Symposium organized at the Islamic University of Gaza, with the University of Glasgow, the University of Manchester and the University of Arizona
18 April 2015, 3 hours	Using political cartoons and comics in ELT
20 April 2015, 3 hours	Using drama pedagogy in ELT
25 April 2015, 3 hours	Using film and videos in ELT
27 April 2015, 3 hours	Recap section and lesson planning in small groups
29 April 2015, 2 hours x 3 groups	Group tutorials
9 May 2015, 3 hours	Teaching practice
11 May 2015, 3 hours	Evaluation and Conclusions

At the end of the course, participants received a Certificate of Attendance (Appendix H), counter-signed by Prof Alison Phipps and Dr Nazmi al-Masri, respectively PI and Co-I in the AHRC *Researching Multilingually at Borders* project.

During the cycle of CPAR, diverse methods for data generation and collection were employed, according to the different stages of the research project. In summary, at the end of the CPAR, I had collected a wide variety of data:

- participants' application forms
- my extensive field notes, taken during the workshops
- my research diary, documenting and reflecting on the whole research project
- an analysis of the *English for Palestine* textbooks

- the teaching materials that I developed in preparation to the workshops

- (not always clear) recordings of the series of workshops (approximately 30 hours, including a test lesson conducted with the assistant engineer)

- (not always clear) recordings of the group tutorials (6 hours)

- teaching materials that the trainees produced during the workshops

- extracts from the trainees' reflective journals, which were sent to me upon trainees' choice

- interactions on the private Facebook group opened by one of the participants

- pictures/videos/songs/'online gifts' sent by the participants

- individual emails and Skype chats with the participants

- follow-up interviews (conducted with 12 participants, for a total of approximately 24 hours) (entirely recorded and transcribed)

- trainees' written assignments from the end of the course

- trainees' evaluations of the course which were gathered through a structured form.

Cohen et al. (2007) warn that one of the challenges of qualitative analysis is the reduction of abundant data into manageable and representative portions of data. They argue that accounting for the specificity of the research context is not enough, and that CPAR does not have a reliable methodology for the interpretation of data (Ibid.). The next section focuses on the data analysis process and on the creative model I followed, found in *bricolage* (Kincheloe and Tobin, 2006, 2015) and in crystallization (Ellingson, 2009).

6.3 Data analysis

In my CPAR, I operated as a *bricoleur* (Kincheleo, 2001; Kincheloe and Tobin, 2006; Tobin and Steinberg, 2015), working through 'crystallization' (Ellingson, 2009) and responding to criteria of 'rhizomatic validity' (Lather, 1993). The metaphor of the researcher as a bricoleur refers to the capability of the handyman who knows which tools to use and is able to combine the use of multiple theories and methods to reach the proposed aim. Kincheleo and Tobin (2006), developing the notion of 'research-as-bricolage', provide a robust theory of methods and methodologies – and highlight how the bricoleur finds nexuses,

nodes, and connections in the liminal spaces where research is held, weaving together formal and informal knowledge, across disciplines and boundaries.

Both Kincheloe and Tobin focus on the transformative process of research making, grounding their views in the postmodern rejection of generalizable truths and representations. In my view, this echoes the validity criteria introduced by Lather (1993) who, following Deleuze and Guattari, talked about a 'rhizomatic validity'. Rhizomatic validity is described as unsettling, locally determined, working against a predefined system or regime, and breaching dominant discourses and representations (Lather, 1993: 686).

Within a social constructionist paradigm, I used different tools and genres for data gathering and data analysing not in order to pursue traditional triangulation, but rather to map the transformative process of making research, without aiming to provide epistemological correctness and infallibility.

Conversely, following 'crystallization' (Ellingson, 2009), I tentatively experimented with a model that allowed a response to the multimodal nature of the data of the research project, going beyond the strict coding system of software for thematic data analysis. Crystallization integrates multiple genres of gathering, generating and analysing data – among which creative methods such as poetry, storytelling, dialogue, music. could be used in order to discover meaning. The term 'crystallization' was coined with a crystal as a metaphor for the data analysis process, as it is multifaceted, necessarily partial, and multidimensional:

> [Crystallization] combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach... Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (Richardson, 1994: 522).

Data analysis in crystallization makes use of sketches, mind-mapping, pictures, poems, etc. and other creative strategies, which are interpreted as mapping tools for meaning-making.

Alternative models for data analysis have already been used in social sciences research. The use of vignettes has been explored in linguistic ethnographic

research (Copland and Creese, 2014). Taussig (2011) in his *book I swear I saw this* introduced his multimodal fieldwork notebook, which comprised notes, captions, drawings, watercolours and newspaper cuttings. Frimberger (2016) adopted visual methods and data poems to analyse 'slippery data' (Law, 2004).

In my data analysis, I coupled thematic analysis with creative approaches as in crystallization. Led by my research questions and adopting the lenses of the capabilities approach, I started my analysis transcribing the follow-up interviews and conducting thematic document analysis of participants' written evaluation forms about the workshop series. This preliminary analysis allowed me to evaluate the process of the action research and to start developing critiques and recommendations for future teacher-training courses on similar topics. In addition, due to the focus on praxis, and to my research purpose, which was to develop a framework for language education under pain and pressure, I undertook an analysis of my field-notes, of the participants' written assignments, of the extracts that they shared from their reflective journals, of my own research journal, and of the workshops themselves (including the teaching materials developed throughout).

The teaching materials developed included in part data consisting of poems, political cartoons, pictures, drawings, objects and artefacts, I turned to 'crystallization' (Ellingson, 2009). During the process of analysis of my copious and varied data, therefore, I used visual thinking mind-maps, drawings and sketches, pictures, creative writing and sentences which might resemble poems.

I found that experimenting both during the data production and during the phase of data analysis was a way in which I responded to the underpinnings of 'immanent ethics in praxis', and also a way in which I engaged with the messiness of multidimensional intercultural research. Rather than sacrificing scientific rigour, crystallisation provided both a rigorous and varied analytical tool that opens up a space for experimental and creative research to emerge in (a clear example of how sketches shaped my thinking and my analysis is presented in Chapter 9).

I found this approach particularly relevant to ethical intercultural research, whose world 'spills out and overflows in unpredictable and messy ways' (Phipps

and Gonzales, 2004: 3) and whose ethics and methods are not neutral (Phipps, 2013, 2014).

7. Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological underpinnings on which the research study was designed. The chosen methodology was a cycle of critical participatory action research as developed by Kemmis et al. (2014). CPAR is envisioned as a social practice, and a practice changing practices' architectures. Rooted in action and participation, it is argued that it is something more than a methodology, resulting in an emergent participatory worldview and paradigm. The research study, qualitative in nature, is underpinned by constructionist epistemology and a relational and ethical ontology. Ethics were embedded in praxis and in the building of immanent relationships.

The research design developed accordingly was a series of online workshops with pre-service English teachers of the Islamic University of Gaza on 'Using the Palestinian Arts of Resistance in English-language teaching'. The series of workshops, framed as a teacher-training course, was experimental and grounded in participation, valuing trainees' expertise, values, skills, and professional and personal backgrounds, hence my preference for addressing it as a 'workshops series' rather than a 'teacher-training course'. The methods employed in the study covered a variety of techniques, according to the phases of the CPAR, adhering to a 'fit-to-purpose' principle. Creative methods were employed during the workshop series, generating 'slippery data' (Law, 2004) which cannot be easily coded or categorized: those included multimodal, multilingual, artistic outputs.

The analysis process therefore reflected the various and copious corpora of data and its multidimensionality. Inspired by 'crystallization' (Ellingson, 2009), and led by the research aim and questions, I used a creative thematic analysis which also made use of visual thinking mind-maps, sketches and drawings, creative writing and (clumsy attempts at) data poems. These latter tools for data analysis, in particular, opened up a space for an enjoyable and rigorous engagement with my data, unfolding the beauty and messiness of intercultural research.

Chapter V. Mapping the challenges and possibilities of establishing connections online

1. Introduction

In this first chapter of discussion on the project's findings, drawing on actor-network theory (Latour, 2005; Law, 2007), I map and describe how relationships – and the research project – were constructed online, considering interactions between human actors, networks, and objects as situated, and as such, not replicable, static, linearly representable, and generalizable.

Actor-network theory (ANT) is a descriptive approach that considers how connections develop, focusing on human and non-human entities that impact on the establishment of relations which are conceptualized both as material and semiotic. Hence, in this study ANT helps an understanding of the roles of both human and non-human actants, such as the technology used (e.g. the Internet, Skype, laptops, a tripod, cameras, online software etc.), how the latter influence human agents' actions, and how human agents, in turn, act upon the materialities of the network.

In this chapter in particular, I do not claim to represent linearity, neither do I use multiple data sources for triangulation purposes. Rather, by using different sources of data, I work as a bricoleur presenting polysemic and multivocal narratives, underpinned by the concept of rhizomatic validity, which does not aim to seek for epistemological truths (Lather, 1993). As such, I map the contextualised process of making this specific research project, without ultimately representing static truths (Frimberger et al., forthcoming) or presuming that participants' and researchers' personal ways of being can be fully known. Conversely, I interpret the research practice as a process of becoming, of relationship-building, and of network-making.

This chapter is structured as follows. In the following section I describe the main technological challenges that the participants and I encountered, which might have prevented fruitful interactions. In the third section, I point out how the participants and I learned to navigate the networks we developed, transforming challenges into normalized ways of working which changed us ontologically and

epistemologically. Finally, in the last section I unpack what I understand as a result of the development of our network and of the establishment of human connections online: from an interrupted, challenging context, the online space in which we operated became the space where we enacted and performed virtual academic hospitality.

2. Challenges of establishing connections

2.1 Actor-network theory

Actor-network theory (ANT) was developed by Latour and in his colleagues in the field of science and technology studies (Callon and Latour, 1981; Latour, 2005, Law, 1992, 1997, 2006, 2007). Briefly, it is a descriptive approach that aims to illustrate how connections between human and non-human entities unfold, and how they also shape new entities in the encounter. Metaphorically, it depicts reality in terms of nodes and networks: networks cannot be described as surfaces delimited by boundaries, but only in terms of intertwined lines. Networks bring together both humans and non-humans, both addressed as 'actants' (Dankert, 2011).

ANT focuses on the constant dynamism that brings actants into the network-development. The word 'actant' is preferred to 'actor' as it acknowledges the 'agency' of non-human entities as active components of the network (Dankert, 2011). It is undeniable that human and non-human entities have different degrees of agency, and this is one of the most common misunderstandings about ANT; ANT does not deny that there is a difference between human intentional agency, and the non-human form, but rather points out the relationships between these entities in shaping and tracing the network.

Without entering into an extensive discussion about ANT, I acknowledge that applying this descriptive theory in relation to the context of Gaza, where clear boundaries separate a land in which you can be from another that cannot be crossed into, may seem contradictory: spatial metaphors that distinguish between confined in-and-out spaces may have been employed. Alternatively, for instance, I could have discussed this chapter drawing on the concept of 'third space' as developed by Bhabha (1994).

However, upon considerable reflection, I have decided that framing this discussion chapter within ANT is appropriate, as I will demonstrate. My intention is to unpack how relationships have developed within our network, of which technology is a main component. By drawing on ANT, I have a clearer reference in terms of mapping the development of dynamic connections and of tracing the network, rather than understanding the space as such. The participants and I did not create a hybrid third space (Bhabha, 1994) which we were moving in and out of, finding ourselves, at times, in a position of 'in-betweeness'. Rather, during every encounter we were engaged in developing nodes of intersections that were constantly shaped and re-shaped both by the materialities available and by our own agency. Hence, my focus is on both relationality and materiality, without considering those as dichotomous components of social ties. More specifically, I am interested in how the technical and material challenges intersected with and impacted on the relationships between the participants and myself, and in how, on the other hand, our relationships acted upon the materialities needed for establishing connections.

In the next sections I describe the challenges that the participants and I encountered in developing relationships, which, undoubtedly, were dependent upon the contextual materialities of working online from a University of Glasgow postgraduate office and from different classrooms at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). Both the University of Glasgow Internet wifi-connection and IUG's one were not completely reliable: as a result, our communication was affected by constant audio- and video-distortions, power-cuts (at the Gaza end), and Internet interruptions and disruptions which hindered the flow of communication and might have prevented a successful completion of the course, had it not been for our determination to carry it on and conclude it. I start by describing the process of meeting participants, whom I came to know through pixelated images and voice distortions; and then I describe the Internet interruptions as the main obstacle to our communication efforts.

2.2 Getting to know pixelated participants

In order to set the scene of the research 'site', of its relationships, and of its materialities, I describe the process of encountering the participants online.

I met the participants online for the first time on 11 April 2015, when the first introductory session of the workshop series took place. Before that, I had been in touch with them individually via email and collectively through an online private interactive board created on the software RealTime Board[10], on which participants were asked to introduce themselves.

Before the first session, I often tried to imagine who was behind the names or nicknames that participants were using on the shared online interactive board. I tried to visualize participants, wondering what the colour of their eyes was, what their voices sounded like, how their names should be pronounced. Catherine Adams (2014) writes about the enigma of the other in an online environment, and equates the moment of scrolling the class roll before a new semester to the one before an online course is launched: both the online class and the face-to-face class are unknown and as such 'may be anticipated with excitement or trepidation, hope or uncertainty, desire or worry' (Adams, 2014: 55). In large online open courses the 'enigma of the other' persists throughout the course as participants interact only through texts. However, in the case of my research project, I was to meet my small group of participants soon, in online 'face-to-screen' sessions (Ibid.).

The fact of 'being on a screen' worried me particularly because, as a language teacher myself, admittedly, I have always held some misgivings towards online education, and have always preferred meeting people in person and working in face-to-face classrooms. Given this, setting up a space for introducing each other before the 'face-to-screen' meeting was important, as participants started to interact, noted some of their expectations, showed their enthusiasm, and tried out the RealTime Board tool providing positive feedback, which was reassuring.

The much anticipated first session, however, proved to be vastly more challenging that I had envisaged: to exemplify, at the end of the first two-hour workshop that had been plagued by technological mishaps, I was so tense, tired and dissatisfied that I burst out in tears. My field notes record this:

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[10] The software allows for private groups to be created and the group members have access to a shared interactive board, on which they can add virtual post-it notes, pictures, audio and video files, text-boxes, drawings etc.

I don't hear and I don't see them. I don't know who is whom because I don't recognize their faces. Pixelated and unclear images. Connection is bad. Facilities are bad too. Nothing is working. This fieldwork could just go so wrong – If the fieldwork will continue. [My notes during the first workshop]

The participants and I spent the first 42 minutes of the two-hour workshop trying to get connected. After a long series of 'I can't hear you. Can you hear me? I can't see you. Let me call you again', the connection seemed to be working, so in the second hour of the workshop we had the time to introduce ourselves. However, due to the poor audio and video quality, the 'enigma of the other' (Adams, 2014) persisted: by the end of the first workshop, I was left with pixelated images of the participants (Figure 1) and with some mapping vignettes that I wrote on the basis of what I was able to hear and see[11].
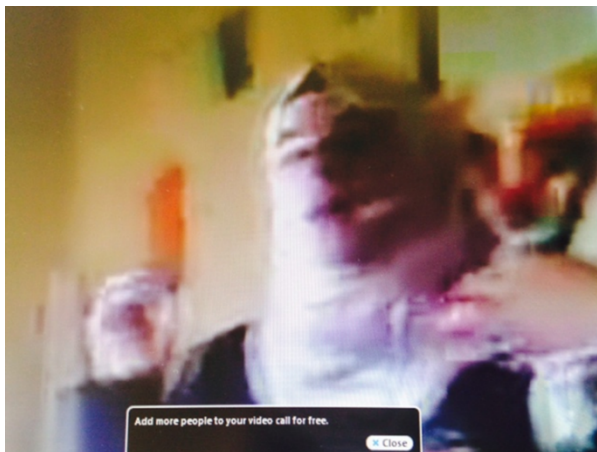
A. is 21 years old. English department, this is her last semester at university. She wants to teach English in UNRWA schools. She doesn't like technology very much. White-ish hijab.

Figure 1: The blurred image of one of the participants.

Y., 22 years old, has a cheeky voice, very acute and always wants to talk. Red hijab. Sits on the right hand side. She says she will send me pictures of them and of the classroom so that I will be able to see them better.

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[11] Note to the reader: at this point of the thesis, I shall just present those few vignettes and blurred images of the participants, hoping that the reader will embark into the journey of getting to know those young women throughout the thesis, in a similar discovery process to the one I experienced myself. The reader of this thesis might also accept my decision not to give pseudonyms to participants. This decision is informed by the importance that participants themselves gave to *naming,* both in terms of pedagogy, and at the ontological level of acknowledging the presence of the unique other, of the unique voice and agency that is behind that particular name/person – as we shall see throughout the thesis – hence my decision to use the initials of participants' names rather than de-personalizing their identities by replacing them with a fictitious pseudonym.

A.W., 21, she introduces herself as an art-lover, and as passionate about English. She said that English is her friend. She teaches English and Arabic to her nephews and nieces.

L., 23, is married and seems very strong in her opinion. She asks me straightaway what I mean by 'Art of Resistance', whether I refer to Kanafani or to the 'normal people'. She calls the technician when Internet stopped working and self-elected herself as helping with 'fixing technology'.

N.M., seems the dreamy one. She is not engaged yet, she jokes, and 'you know, I start to get old, I better find a man soon'. How old are you, I ask. Twenty-one, she says.

R., 22, seems timid. She says that she hopes that this course will help her become a better teacher and a better student of the language because she struggles with 'the language'. In her introduction she avoids to say 'English', but rather calls it 'the language'.

F., 23, is a leader. Red hijab. She decides that she will open a Facebook private group to facilitate communication. Not everyone has Facebook so she ensures that for the girls who do not have internet at home, if communication is required she will find a way to let them know, should she walk herself to their homes.

A.A. and A.A.: they are cousins. One is in love with fashion, the other doesn't care about it. One jokes about getting married. The other doesn't want 'a man'. They both want to emigrate and hope this course will help them find a Masters somewhere 'in the world outside'.

S., 22, almost speaks in verses. She is the one that posted the most on the RealTime Board, and seems very enthusiastic. She smiles all the time.

N.A., loves working in groups. She has a beautiful blue dress and light blue hijab and I could see her dark eyes shining when she came closer to the laptop to introduce herself. Graduated in English, she did a dissertation on Shakespeare.

B., 23, seems shy. She asks the others to help her with English. I try to say a couple of words in Arabic but because of my poor level and voice distortions we don't manage to communicate effectively.

R. has lots of bracelets. She is very curious about why I work with Palestinians and asks me a lot about my personal background, which I disclosed with pleasure. I'm from the north of Italy, not married, don't have kids, have worked in refugee camps (especially Palestinian ones) in the Middle East. I speak Spanish, English, broken Arabic and I improvise in French when needed. Mashallah'[12], she says.

(Extracts from my field notes, first workshop)

The information reported above was more or less what I was able to gather in those two hours. It is interesting to point out how I paid a lot of attention to minor details such as the colour of a participant's scarf, the bracelets one of them wore, etc., which I probably would not have accounted for had we met in a face-to-face classroom setting. The attention I paid to the patterns of scarves and colours, to the jingling of bracelets, to the sounds of voices, is a result of the 'agency' of the non-human actant on our encounter, i.e. the poor technology determined what I paid attention to, as it limited what I could see and hear. Technology changed quite dramatically my expectations of this first meeting, and of how the relations would be. It also changed my approach, as in noticing and valuing little 'things'.

In ANT, Dankert (2011) points out an interesting difference between 'things' and 'objects': objects are stable non-human entities, whereas 'things', in more abstract terms, can change and may be the temporary result of connections. In the vignettes above, laptops and computers, for instance, would be 'objects', whereas the white-ish hijab, or the bracelets, in relationality, were the 'things' through which I could distinguish participants: for example, I knew that the girl in the white hijabs could have been either A. or N., and I could recognize the jingling of R.'s bracelets when she was coming closer to the mic to speak.

However, overall, during that first workshop, despite all my efforts to establish some sort of connection, I was just feeling out of place, on a 'screen', and thought that connections could not be developed. I was extremely discouraged and frustrated. During that day, the frustration became even stronger as I

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[12] The translation would be 'Thanks to God' or 'May God bless you', showing appreciation of what the person has just heard and congratulating the interlocutor.

thought about my original doctoral proposal, in which I was meant to spend time with people that I already knew and with whom I had worked previously, in refugee camps, where there would not have been such a thing as a screen and some thousands of kilometres between myself and the participants.

However, that was only my own perception of the first encounter, and I shall introduce here some of the participants' reflections on that first day. Their narratives are considerably different from my own, as R. reports:

> I think that Skype was a good tool during the lesson because I felt that Miss Grazia was with us as a real teacher even if we cannot always see and hear her. Even we were in Skype, Miss Grazia knew all of us and call every girl with its name. (R., reflective journal, Day 1)

S. composed a poem about that very first encounter:

First session – Setting the scene

Last Sunday, we've experiences an amazing session.
Going across borders, breaking all limitations
And fighting the prolonged-existed obstructions;
No longer we will care about the occupation's interruptions
Crushing the siege, discussing education
With miss Grazia even though via Skype conversations!

Three topics, we discussed.
Paving a way for our ideas to pop up,
Miss Grazia by our level was impressed,
Exceeding her expectations,
Her smile to us was a precious gift.
We look forward to working with you again;
To explore the art of resistance and more knowledge we will gain.

(S., reflective journal, Day 1)

As the extract and the poem demonstrate, participants were enthusiastic after the first face-to-screen meeting. In their reflections – which participants wrote

at the end of each workshop and shared with me only at the end of the workshop series at their own discretion –they pointed out the difficulties we encountered, the feeling of estrangement with technology, and at the same their enthusiasm towards research and the learning encounter.

R. valued Skype as she was able to feel my presence in the classroom, despite the problems we had with establishing the connection. She seemed surprised by the fact that I knew their names, even if we were online: despite the fact that neither myself nor participants exactly knew who was behind the screen – and as such the other remained an enigma – we were aware of each other's presence. Knowing individuals' names acquired the value of acknowledging and valuing each other's unique presence.

S., in verses, stressed the significance of conducting such an online workshop, namely establishing connections beyond borders and interruptions. Her poem is extremely rich in meaning: in her first stanza she focuses on overcoming limitations, interruptions, obstructions, caused overall by the siege, and by the poor technology, whose causes go back to living under siege. Our stubbornness and determination in waiting for 42 minutes until the connection was established was already a success on its own as a proof of resistance against the constraints of the materialities imposed on us. In her second stanza she described the atmosphere in which the encounter took place: she did not focus on the content of the topics discussed as she does not even reveal what these were. However, she focused on the emotions that she perceived; we set the scene for ideas 'to pop up', she felt that I was happily impressed by participants' own knowledge and enthusiasm, and she felt the gratitude for the gift of a smile and for, more broadly, an opportunity to 'gain' knowledge.

Those are just two examples of participants' impressions of the first face-to-screen meeting, which, as shown, differed from my own. I believe that these examples illustrate the need for a multi-vocal mapping of relationality within a network, which leads to a polysemic epistemology: neither mine, nor participants' versions can be taken as 'epistemological guarantees' (Lather, 1993) but offering both perspectives may help understand the development of our network. The process was unsettling, locally understandable, open-ended, constantly changing and exceeding stable schemes.

In the next section I discuss the challenges of the Internet interruptions, and how with the participants we focused on alternative ways of working in order to work through the disruptions, normalizing them as part of our network, rather than working against them.

2.3 Interruptions and power(cuts)

The poor Internet connection caused several disruptions which resulted, as mentioned above, in several 'Can you hear me? I can't hear. Can you repeat? I don't see you. Can you say it again?' exchanges, and in 'Call, failed' appearing several times on the screen. In addition, frequent power-cuts affect the smooth run of electricity in the Gaza Strip. Despite the fact that the Islamic University of Gaza has its own generator, which allows the Internet to keep working, participants would be plunged into the dark at some point during our workshops, and some of the computers would stop working.

The screenshots of the Skype chat below (Figure 2) offer a palpable and a visual representation of what it meant to deal with technology and of the frustration felt whenever the icon 'call failed' appeared, whenever we tried to have a better audio quality by cutting off the video, whenever the tune of the Skype call was ringing and nobody could reply at the other end because 'something doesn't work'.
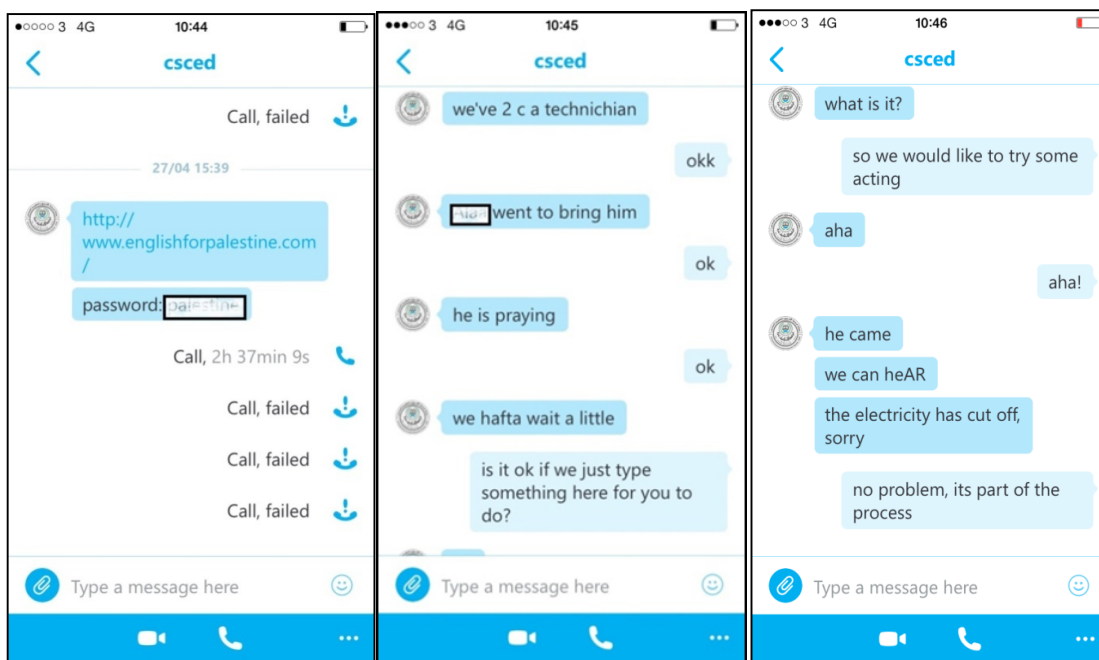
Figure 2: Screenshots of the Skype chat during the third workshop.

For clarity, I trascribe below the chat reported in Figure 2:

Call, 2h 37min 9s.

Call, failed.

Call, failed.

Call, failed.

Participants: we've 2 c a technichian.

Grazia: Okk

Participants: A. went to bring him

Grazia: Ok

Participants: he is praying

Grazia: Ok

Participants: we hafta wait a little

Grazia: Is it ok if we[13] type something here for you to do?

Participants: What is it?

Grazia: So we would like to try some acting.

Participants: Aha.

---

[13] During the third workshop, on drama-pedagogy, a GRAMNET (Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network) artist in residence, who is a poet and a performer, participated in the workshop, giving insights and inviting participants to try out improvising techniques.

Grazia: Aha!

Participants: he came

We can hear.

The electricity has cut off, sorry

Grazia: no problem, its part of the process.

From the conversation above, it seems clear that not only did technological disruptions have an impact on our relationships and on the shape of the workshops, but also that the participants and I tried to come to terms with them by actively and creatively finding ways of working around them. As the workshop series progressed we learned to work *within* the interruptions rather than *against* them, considering them as part of our network.

Working within the interruptions meant, for example, typing on the Skype chat and using mobile apps as WhatsApp or Messenger when the audio quality was poor; after the initial improvised attempts experimented with during the third workshop, for each activity of the workshops that followed I prepared short, clear instructions to be easily and quickly typed. In addition, I had a lesson plan ready for working in asynchronous modality: the day before the 'face-to-screen' meeting, I used to send all the materials needed during the session accompanied by a lesson plan, which were downloaded and saved on a USB stick by one of the participants. Participants at their end, when the connection was interrupted, recorded themselves, took pictures and videos, and a note-taker would send me her notes once the Internet was available.

It is interesting to read how metaphorically I described the technological challenges and the frustration that these caused: in my research journal I repeatedly address them as 'the burden', as included in my notes at the end of the third workshop:

> We are learning to manage the *burden*, which seems to become lighter. Whenever the connection gets lost, L. tries to switch on and off the wifi icon, A. calls the technician, the others continue to work, and S. updates me via phone on Messenger. Interruptions start to be normal.
>
> (My field diary, third workshop)

By quantifying and spatializing interruptions and the frustration as a 'burden', I delineated more clearly the role occupied by technology, giving to the nonphysical a more physical and perceptible entity. Referring to the experientialist work on metaphors conducted by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), in which the authors understand metaphors as both conceptualization and representation of the meaning of everyday life, participants and I conceptualized technology and frustration in terms of 'ontological metaphors' (2003: 23), which allowed us to relate different fields of experiences to one another, shaping our ways of being and knowing.

A participant, in the extract below, with a metaphor similar to my own, quantifies the problems encountered with the Internet connection as 'heavy to work with':

> The main obstacle was the connection. We got angry because we don't want to lose time with you, but you always were soooo patient, Grazia …. The internet connection and power-cuts really are heavy and exhausting to work with, but Alhamdulillah[14] we could work anyway.
>
> (A., evaluation form)

A. highlights that interruptions and power-cuts were 'heavy to work with' but nevertheless became normalized as part of our pedagogical encounter and of our network-building; that required considerable and careful thinking outside of the box, additional preparation for the lessons in order to expect the unexpected, and significant collaboration and determination on both sides.

Similarly to A., other participants pointed out in the evaluation forms of the workshop series, that technological disruptions were the main, and the only, issue of our online course:

> The main challenge was the connection; when it broke down, it made us frustrated and unable to communicate which waste time. The thing that the teacher responded positively and was patient towards it which was reflected on us. When we had a technical problem with voice we tried to fix it by typing things until the technician fixed it. (L., evaluation form)

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[14] The translation would be 'Thanks to God', 'Praise be to God'.

L. and A. highlighted that power-cuts and the Internet disruptions constantly and repeatedly interrupted our communication and this culminated in frustration because of the wasted time we spent in re-establishing connection.

As these sections have demonstrated, in our network-building, or while trying to establish connections, the participants and I faced different challenges concerned with technological issues, often out of our hands. As in ANT, we recognized the 'agency' of non-human entities such as Skype, the Internet etc., and made them serve our needs and purposes, while on the other hand we learned to adapt to those conditions that were imposed onto us by those actants. As a result of this, the relationships between the participants and myself were strengthened by the shared commitments and determination to make 'things' work, and by a constant renegotiation of our network and of its power dynamics. As Latour (2005) points out in his book *Reassembling the social*, paying attention to objects and to nonhuman agents within a network does not obfuscate the power relations between humans. Conversely, it allows unpacking of those relations as part of the social links.

In the next section I describe how we transformed the challenges caused by the interruptions into opportunities. As part of this, I also address how the inevitable power dynamics within our network shifted from me being in control of the situation to the participants' possibility to play with 'my-body-on-the-screen' and with my perceptions. Power relations, as a result of the impact on nonhuman actants on the network, were at times reverted. This carried pedagogical and ontological value both for myself and for the participants.

3. Transforming challenges into possibilities

In the first section I described the challenges that participants and I encountered in the online space, showing the material constraints which hindered and at the same time favoured the establishment of our network. I started to describe how working within and through interruptions and technological issues became a constitutive part of our learning encounter and of our ways of working. In this section, I discuss how this shift became embedded into our pedagogy, and how it transformed us both epistemologically and ontologically.

In terms of pedagogy, first of all, working through the challenges of our online space was an exercise in determination and perseverance; both the participants and myself valued our learning encounters, and wanted to make them happen in spite of the difficult endeavours that this required. The source of our determination was the value that we respectively gave to our learning encounters, both in terms of acquiring educational capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and also in terms of establishing long-lasting relationships. This inspired us to find ways around problems, which became systematic approaches to problem-solving and network development. In Fassetta el (2017), I have reflected on this point elsewhere, discussing a subsequent teacher-training course that, building on my doctoral research project, was developed with the Islamic University of Gaza as part of the *Researching Multilingually at Borders* large-grant:

> Wanting the human connection to happen was, arguably, the most important aspect of the program, one that ensured not only that the course ran according to design and within the time frame agreed despite all the practical challenges, but also that it resulted in lasting relationships between several of the trainers and the trainees, extending beyond the end of the training and beyond the educational setting. It is unlikely that a similar training course, with its huge contextual and linguistic complexities and its recurrent, often severe, technical difficulties, could have been as successful without the unswerving commitment of both trainers and trainees. (Fassetta et al., 2017: 146)

In addition, the network that we established with our interactions and in relationality and, most importantly, with its interruptions and technological disruptions, favoured a shift in power from the leading-educator on the workshop series (myself) to the course attendees (the participants). Participants, during our encounters, had the physical – and not only metaphorical – power to 'move me' around the room, to continue or to interrupt the activities, to negotiate things with me, and to mute me on Skype when needed (in order not to have an echo when they were speaking), as these playful vignettes show:
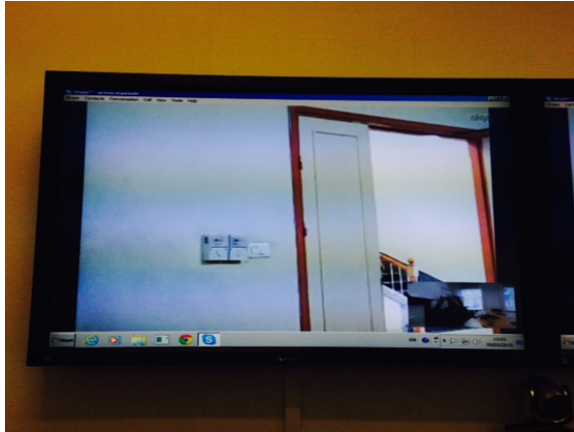
Grazia: Can you bring me back into the classroom? I just can see the door.

L: [laughing] A. just moved the camera. Now you are back. [giggling]. You can see everyone. [giggling].

Grazia: Well... almost!

Figure 3: The camera has been misplaced by mistake during the fourth workshop.

Someone makes the camera - which was held on a tripod - spin around very quickly.

Grazia: Who is moving the camera? You're giving me headache! [laughing]

-A: [laughing, turning the camera around showing her face] guess who? [cheeky smile]

- Grazia: [laughing] I knew it was you. You are giving me headache with all this spinning around so fast

- A: [laughing] ahhaha. You should feel like in the Merry-go-round. [laughing] Ok, [serious facial expression] it's time to do serious work. [giggling]

- Grazia: [laughing] Ohhh finally!

(Transcribed from the recordings of the sixth workshop)

The two vignettes illustrate how participants were in control of my 'body-on-the-screen', and hence of my, in this case, visual perceptions. I consider the playfulness of those moments as a response to the difficulties and the frustration of working in a challenging online environment. Playful encounters, shared laughter and jokes became also part of our pedagogy, as will be shown in the following chapters.

These vignettes also exemplify how relationality and interactions both shaped and were shaped by the materialities of our network. The difficulties related to physical mobility, and the low audio- and video-quality, became manageable in interaction and through our determination to make communication happen.

As a result of this, F. notes that the participants' sense of responsibility increased as they became aware of the power (or 'agency') they had:

> F: we did things much different in this course... like... We were engaged in a task and through achieving the tasks we grow much... and we learned much, we learned more. We, we did things *by ourselves*, so we learned from those things like when you told us you have this task and you have five minutes to do it in pairs or in groups... so, we ourselves, divided ourselves in groups or in pairs and started discussing and then we came up with the results [...]. We felt that *we* are responsible and, like, we have to do this, we need to do this because this is how we are going to learn. It's not because the teacher said that because you *can't* force us to form these groups, but *we* did....But I can't imagine myself doing that at a real class because you have to have some authority, and you have to tell them what to do... to say this girl go there, and you come here and do this, do that... because otherwise they don't do that... but in this course we had the power to do, to do what the teacher asks without her forcing us to do that... [F., interview, her emphasis]

In this rich interview excerpt, F. points out the shift in power relations as a result of our network, and her passage directly points at the link between pedagogy, epistemology and ontology. Interestingly, she uses her voice in the plural as 'we' (the participants), states that they grew and learned during the course. Our online encounters were transformative both for myself and for my participants, both in terms of developing and co-constructing knowledge, and also concerning our ways of being in the world. Our specific network allowed the self-awareness of the agency in which participants could emerge; they were stimulated to develop a sense of autonomy and responsibility which allowed them to 'learn more' as F. points out.

It is important to stress that this was not only a result of the intentional pedagogical approach grounded in critical pedagogy and in participatory work

that I adopted in this course. This was a result of the materialities imposed on us, which caused a needed shift of the power relations; as a solution to my absence, we constructively negotiated the ways of working described above, and each of us was dependent on the others' willingness to construct and create.

At my end, giving up control over what I could hear and see in the classroom, allowing – and even encouraging at times – participants to mute me on Skype, having to rely on their willingness to move the tripod around in order to facilitate my understanding, etc. was not easy. At the beginning it caused some discomfort, probably because I realized that I could not anticipate what was going to happen next and because I felt challenged in having to rely on those young women for my understanding of what was happening in class. After a while, when I got accustomed to that, I understood that it was precisely in those moments that I was practising critical pedagogy: power was re-distributed among the members of the classroom (Freire, 1976, 1994, 1996, 1998; hooks, 1994).

In Freire's well known pedagogy, he encourages teachers in developing dialogic practices with students which could enable a process of freedom and equality building. In order to bring societal changes, in the everyday praxis of the school context, education can be practised as fostering students' agency and freedom (Freire, 1968, 1976, 1994, 1998). bell hooks, adding to Freire's pedagogical principles, aspires to a teaching that enables transgression, a teaching that allows students to resist teachers, in order to enhance awareness building and the developing of students' becoming (hooks, 1994).

Similarly, our encounters were also transformative at the ontological level, since many participants wrote in their evaluation forms about the process of 'becoming' as a result of coping with technologies. Specifically, they valued 'becoming patient' with technology, as the passage below illustrates:

> I really liked the online experience, you know why? Because I learnt how to be patient just like you, Grazia. You never get angry at the stupidity of technology, the cutting of connection and the technical problems. (Y., evaluation form)

Patience, considered to be a value in our localized online context, was a result of our capacity to cope with technological disruptions, and of the technological

disruptions themselves. L., similarly, highlighted that my patient attitude influenced and shaped participants' behaviour:

> The thing that the teacher responded positively and was patient towards it which was reflected on us. (L., evaluation form)

I would like to point out here that during the workshop series, neither myself nor the participants discussed the importance of 'being patient', neither did we discuss coping mechanisms for technology. We found ourselves being involved in the process of making the research happen, without intentionally preaching about ways of coping with technological disruptions. Our behaviour and transformation was a spontaneous coping mechanism that emerged in relationality, far from any didacticism. It emerged in praxis.

Summarizing, in interaction, our ontological becoming was shaped in relationality and materiality, which, as in ANT, are not separate entities but rather constitute a continuous flow. Challenges that initially were sources of discomfort, frustration and vulnerabilities were transformed into opportunities, strengths, and creative and transformational processes. Subjected to this transformative process, our online network changed from being a source of frustration and interruptions to an online network of hospitality. I understand virtual academic hospitality as our willingness to establish human connections. Virtual academic hospitality found its forms and modalities online through rituals that participants and I co-created; those were rituals of virtual shared commensality and of online aneconomic gift-exchanges of words and pictures.

4. Virtual academic hospitality

This section explores the forms of academic hospitality (Phipps and Barnett, 2007) that we developed in our online context. In the first section of this chapter I outlined the challenges that shaped our online interactions; in the second section I explained how those challenges became intrinsic components of our pedagogy and how they shaped our transformative epistemological and ontological becoming. In this third section, I present how technology, from initially being a burden, became the possibility to perform academic hospitality, showing how the relationships between myself and the participants evolved. In doing so, I challenge the postulates about the quintessential characteristic of

hospitality, i.e. the relationship between hospitality and crossing borders, arguing that radical hospitality in times of conflict, when travelling and mobility is not an option, can be still enacted and performed online.

Recent theories of hospitality posit its dependency upon travelling and crossing borders (Phipps and Barnett, 2007): hospitality has been conceptualized as a transition, a passage from the world of the guest to the world of the host, a passage from two separated spaces. It ultimately involves a change of social system challenged by novelty (Boudou, 2012), which is caused by the intrusion of the guest into another social system. The temporary new presence embodied by the guest may provoke hierarchical shifts and transformation as the newly arrived stranger interacts with the members of the host community.

The practice of hospitality posits a double bind dilemma: on one hand it presupposes the sacrality of the stranger to whom everything is genuinely offered, while on the other hand the same stranger is in normal times considered as morally inferior (Boudou, 2012). In addition, it involves openness and uncertainty, encompassing an ontological risk personified in the presence of the guest. The risk of allowing a stranger into the intimate domestic space or even into the community public spaces may even result in a harmful encounter. It is precisely embracing this risk that distinguishes conditional hospitality (welcome with limits) from an unconditional law of hospitality (Derrida, 2000, 2001, 2002).

Unconditional hospitality, as conceptualized by Derrida (2002: 361), represents the possibility to make the impossible work and to give up control:

> To be hospitable is to let oneself be overtaken [surprendre], to be ready to not be ready, if such is possible, to let oneself be overtaken, to not even let oneself be overtaken, to be surprised, in a fashion almost violent, violated and raped [violée], stolen [voleé] [...], precisely where one is not ready to receive – and not only not yet ready but not ready, unprepared in a mode that is not even that of the "not yet".

Our network allowed the unfolding of relationships that are characterised by losing control, by being ready not to be ready, by an overwhelming possibility of transforming limits – the impossibility of visiting one another – into tangible opportunities – possibilities – for virtual academic hospitality.

The materiality of the virtual in academic hospitality is briefly explored by Phipps and Barnett (2007), who discuss forms and modalities in which academic hospitality can be performed. Academic hospitality has to do with academic knowledge exchange events, conferences, academic visiting, etc., i.e. all the practices aimed at bringing together the academic community. As such, it encompasses the material form of hosting colleagues, the epistemological form of welcoming and debating new thoughts and concepts, and the linguistic form of translating knowledge into different languages. These authors posit that as part of the materialities, now, we encounter the virtual: academic hospitality can be performed online, and 'as a virtual practice raises its own challenges and questions that shade into other forms, notably of the linguistic, for this is highly languaged space' (Phipps and Barnett, 2007: 240). Phipps and Barnett suggest that academic hospitality rests upon critical, celebratory conversations – and nevertheless it is dependent upon travelling. Virtual academic hospitality, hence, according to these authors, is not contemplated in the intermingle of materialities and relationality, but rather it sits within the material forms of hospitality.

In the online context in which my research study was conducted, we had to rest upon critical and celebratory conversations that always accompanied our will to relate to ourselves and to others, to be open to the unfamiliar, unknown context of the online network that we found ourselves connected by, and that we shaped and in turn were shaped by. It was precisely in conversations – and within its opposite, i.e. thanks to the interruptions – that we manifested our will to be hospitable, our will to overcome the obstacles imposed by the virtual reality. In order to be hospitable in the virtual environment, without travelling, we co-created rites and rituals, bringing the virtual materialities into account as actants upon our network and relationship building. The participants and I relied upon the rites and rituals we all were familiar with, which often are the essence of hospitality, i.e. commensality and the exchange of gifts, and we translated them into online practices.

4.1 Virtual commensality

Being in an online environment, one of the limits imposed by the physical distance and the virtual materiality, is the impossibility to share real moments

of commensality. According to Boudou (2012), commensality is equivalent to signing the pact of hospitality since it is the public confirmation of welcoming, and in this sense it embodies and phenomenalizes hospitality. Derrida (2000), conversely, argues that hospitality based on invitation is 'welcoming with limits' since it is enacted upon preparation. Only when you are ready not to be ready does hospitality become ontological and epistemological ethics.

Relying on the familiar practices of hospitality through commensality, during the last day of the workshop series, the trainees brought a cake to celebrate the end of our course. That was an intense moment, in which the will to be hospitable and to share celebratory food faced the virtual-material reality and the impossibility and limits of virtual hospitality.

The frustration caused by the impossibility of sharing commensality was mitigated by the happiness of sharing a cup of tea on Skype and by seeing the enthusiasm and gratefulness of having embarked – together – along this research journey.

> Cake time. F. slices the chocolate cake she made. I am overwhelmed by happiness in seeing the joy they [the participants] spread. Music in the background. N. invites me to get a cup of tea, so at least I can share a tea with them. I put my pen down, it is not the time to take notes anymore. I want just to be filled with their laughter and my tea. Everybody is smiling. Tears are coming soon. (My field notes, last workshop)

Many trainees, similarly to my own thoughts, in their evaluation sheets described that moment as one of the happiest moments we shared during the course. A few days later, some of the girls shared the pictures they took during the course. It was only when I received the following picture via email that a sense of bitter-sweetness and frustration became more acute:

Skype made it real, you were with us... but it was a pity that you could not eat the cake with us... ☺ much love to you and I will invite you to my home when you will be in Gaza and will cook for you too much food. <3

(A., personal email)

Figure 4: Picture of empty plates taken during the last workshops.

A. sent me the pictures of the empty plates on which they ate the cake. In that celebratory moment, the impossibility of travelling and crossing borders made itself heard quite firmly. We all laughed then, shared a cup of tea, enjoyed the music that the girls played at their end. Despite the happiness, I wasn't where I was supposed to be though. I should have been with them, laughing, dancing, and sharing food. But somehow, we managed to share a cup of tea, on Skype. (My research diary, 15 May 2015)

After the workshop series, when I conducted follow-up interviews with the trainees, the 'Skype-cup-of-tea' became a ritual of our established online community, and was a source of recurrent conversations similar to this one:

Grazia: How is your tea? [laughing]

A: You put mint?

Grazia: Yeah, fresh mint!

A: And how many spoons of sugar? [...] (Interview with A.)

The impossibility of the possibility of radical hospitality with all its paradoxes (Derrida, 2000) emerges clearly in virtual academic hospitality. Despite the fact that the trainees and I did not share the same food and were not in physical proximity, the will to be hospitable, to share and to be integrated made us

shape our familiar practices of hospitability and transformed what seemed to be impossible into an unusual ritual that I called 'virtual commensality'. Returning to ANT, in this study, virtual academic hospitality was possible as it was enacted throughout our network.

The virtual ritual of the 'Skype-cup-of-tea', with its attempt to share the same substance and the same space, stood on one hand as the possibility to open oneself to the culinary habits of the other, and on the other hand it was sometimes a restful moment in the midst of poignant and difficult conversations. During the follow-up individual interviews I conducted, it involved accessing the intimacy of each other's kitchens, simultaneously, and meeting our respective family members. Some of the trainees during the follow-up interviews met my brother and my flatmate, and accessed my kitchen and living room, as I did with theirs. We reciprocally performed greetings in Arabic and Italian, and translated at times when family members were present, enacting linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur, 2004).

According to Derrida (1997, 2000, 2002), unconditional hospitality can also hypothetically involve a harmful encounter enclosed in the potential risk of uncertainty. In virtual hospitality, the ontological risk of the unknown in virtual hospitality does not encompass violence and physical harm, but in our case was rather manifested in the frustration of experiencing its limits. Both the participants and I wished we were not on Skype, but rather visiting each other's homes. We tried to force the limits of immobility, co-constructing our own ritual of virtual commensality, but nevertheless this involved a certain degree of distress and frustration. Virtual, radical hospitality can also hurt.

4.2 Online gifts

Similarly to the 'impossibility of hospitality' and as part of hospitality itself, Derrida discusses the 'impossibility of the gift' (Derrida, 1992: 7). He states that a gift must be 'aneconomic', meaning that it should be out of the economic circle for it to be a genuine gift: it should overcome the logic of giving and receiving upon calculation.

> Not that it remains foreign to the circle, but it must keep a relation of foreignness to the circle, a relation without relation of familiar

foreignness. It is perhaps in this sense that the gift is the impossible. (Derrida, 1992: 7)

In this sense, the gift should not be measured, neither should it be subject to prior calculation: the gift should transgress its borders, being an event of madness and immeasurable excess. Critiquing the work of Mauss (1954), who explains the economy and reciprocity of the circle of the gift and the counter-gift, Derrida (1992: 14) states that 'at the limit, the gift as gift ought not to appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor'. As with hospitality, he does not believe that impossibility leads to paralysis, but rather opens up possibilities for practising unconditional gratefulness.

After the workshop series the trainees sent me 'gifts' virtually: gifts were aneconomic, did not have monetary value but rather carried profound symbolism. I was gifted pictures, incomplete poetic written texts, and a combination of the two. I sent them pictures of my homes, both of where I grew up in Italy, and other places in which I feel at home in Scotland. I also sent them pictures of green and humid landscapes over the summer, hoping to convey a sense of relief from the heat of the Gaza Strip. I discuss here some of their gifts.

The gift of a poem

During the workshop series the trainees composed numerous poems, some of which were written for the purpose of the course and are presented in the following chapters. Other poems, more personal ones, arrived unexpectedly into my email box:

A Farewell to Grazia

To remember that we will not be to this place anymore
oh, no, it is really so sore
forgive me if I tell you that we will miss you dear
since the real feelings I didn't reveal
make sure that we will not miss you
but the fact is that our heart will be forever with you

Today is not to say Good bye
Today is not to shed tears or cry
Today is to leave you with a smile

when the watch six pm strikes

all will leave and none you will find

but our heart will be waiting there,

listening to the echos of our voices and laughters stored in our minds

[A.W.]

In our highly languaged space, words were the most precious gifts. When borders cannot be crossed, language and images can cross borders and the limits of physical immobility. Words did not only accompany the gift – but were the gift itself. I was gifted with poetic language. The gift, as Derrida wrote (1992), arrived in narratives. The poem that I received in my mail box, was accompanied by a caption that encompassed the ontological nexus between giving-being. The trainee acknowledged her ontological becoming during the workshop series, and her 'new' being found a nexus with her giving:

> In this course I discovered that I am a poet. During this course I wrote 11 poems! I always liked poems but I didn't know I could write so many! Thank you dear. This poem is a gift for you, it is not completed but Insha Allah I will finish it to be splendid. [A.W., personal email]

The legacy of the yet-to-be-completed text seems to be the legacy of expressing the inexpressible feelings of A.W.'s ontological process of becoming. The 'incompleteness' of the yet-to-come gift seems to be a rupture in the circle of gift and counter-gift, of calculation and expectation. It announces its potential development, without putting myself as the recipient in the position of owing, of holding a debt. The gift, in the moment when I received it, at the same time appeared to be both a present and an incomplete-present. The trainee, sending me an incomplete poem, made me wait for something.

Waiting, as she felt our hearts were at the end of the course, suspended between the memories of our past laughter, the yet-to-be future, and the present. This gift – as time – escapes the moment in which it is given. Derrida (1992) writes that a gift gives and demands time. The present of a present is imperceptible as it ceases to be a gift in the moment it is perceived as such. The

incompleteness of this gift, on the other hand, makes the impossibility of a radical gift, possible.

The gift of a photograph

I was also sent pictures of Gaza, in particular of the Gaza beach and the Mediterranean Sea. The beach captured in the pictures was never untouched, rather trainees left their prints on the seashore. Close to the sea, they took pictures in the liminal moments when the waves have not washed the words away, yet. I received pictures with my name, their names next to mine, with the map of Palestine drawn on the seashore.

Figure 5: Picture of the Gaza beach

The relationship between (home)land and language is quite evident. Language is imprinted, precariously, on the soil. The message gets across the Mediterranean, disputed sea, through the online medium and brings me virtually there. My name printed on the land in which the trainees dwell, symbolizes my presence on their land. It symbolizes the impossibility of welcoming me on their beach. Those pictures and the precarity they captured on the shore evoke a sense of radical hospitality – with its characteristic temporality, its unconditional ethics and aesthetics. Photographing that precarity makes the moment eternal. Hospitality is therefore frozen and can be stored in memory.

This section demonstrated that unconditional radical hospitality can be virtually performed. It challenges the presuppositions that hospitality requires physical proximity and travelling. On the other hand, it confirms that hospitality is dependent upon the will of meeting the Other in language, dependent upon the will to establish human connections. Our online relationships, and hence virtual

academic hospitality, were possible because of our willingness to establish human connections, in spite of the fragmentation and interruptions of our network. Materiality and relationality intersected in the network and this at times made us feel frustrated, and in other moments carried an unexpected and overwhelming fulfilment complemented by Skype-cups-of-tea, pictures, joy and unconditional sharing beyond the threshold of the screen.

Hospitality can only take place beyond hospitality, in deciding to let it come, overcoming the hospitality that paralyzes itself on the threshold which it is. It is perhaps in this sense that 'we do not know what hospitality is,' and what hospitality awaits. (Derrida, 2000: 14)

5. Summary

In this chapter I described the process of network-building through the challenges of an interrupted Internet connection and power-cuts. Drawing on actor-network theory I presented a descriptive account of relationality and materiality, considering actors, networks and materialities as temporary and situated. The focus of the chapter was not to provide an overall account of generalizable practices, but rather to consider the process of making the research process and to trace associations and social ties that emerged out of the learning encounter.

In the intertwining of relationality I addressed the challenges the participants and I faced in our interrupted network: when the internet connection was not reliable, when audio-video distortions affected communication, when as an educator I had to rely on others to 'move' a tripod or a laptop in order to maximize my viewpoint. I described our precarious responses to those challenges, which with time became intrinsic components of our pedagogical encounter and a possibility to undertake transformative processes of epistemological and ontological becoming. I finally demonstrated how our willingness to establish human connections (Fassetta et al., 2017) resulted in a persistent and steadfast will to meet, to share, to be hospitable, even though online. I revealed our co-constructed rituals of virtual commensality and online gifts in the forms of words and pictures of our respective lands, as testifying that the willingness to establish relationships was stronger than a poor Internet

connection and technological disruptions – upon which, vice versa, our whole hospitality and gift-exchange practices were dependent.

After having described the establishment of our network and of our online practices, in the next chapters I turn to unpack the capabilities that I discovered during the research encounter.

Chapter VI. Intercultural capabilities: L2 learning and communication, mobility, affiliation.

1. Introduction

The previous chapter contextualised the research and learning encounter within an interrupted and challenging network consisting of human and of non-human actants; despite the challenges, the participants and I developed ways of working within the network that led to establishing relationships and to virtual hospitality. In this chapter, I turn to language education and specifically to the capabilities that emerged in the study.

This chapter is the first of three discussion chapters that focus on the capabilities identified and nurtured in this study. I present three central capabilities for language education in the context of Gaza: (1) intercultural capabilities, which include L2 learning and communication, mobility, and affiliation; (2) emotions and languaging; and (3) voice and agency with its contextualised corollary, namely aesthetic, linguistic and cultural resistance. These capabilities will be the objects of the next three chapters, respectively.

This chapter focuses on what I called, building on Crosbie (2014), 'intercultural capabilities', which include L2 learning and communication, mobility, and affiliation. In the context of this research, these capabilities could not be nurtured via face-to-face intercultural encounters, because of the siege, which impedes mobility. The participants in this study, therefore, valued our learning encounter as an opportunity to use and improve their English proficiency. They linked mobility with their aspirations and the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004). They nurtured affiliation, interpreted as the capability to establish ties with others (Nussbaum, 2011), through the virtual connection. However, due to the fact of living in a situation of 'enforced monolingualism and monoculturalism' (Imperiale et al., forthcoming), participants are exposed to the more static and stereotyped pictures of other cultures that often come from texts. Nonetheless, this chapter demonstrates that they nurtured their intercultural curiosity.

This chapter is laid out as follows: firstly, I illustrate and discuss the intercultural capabilities of L2 learning and communication, mobility and affiliation. Then I demonstrate how those were nurtured by participants during a teaching practice that they developed on the topic 'Weddings around the world'.

2. L2 learning and communication

The conceptualization of 'L2 learning and communication' as a capability builds on the work of Crosbie (2013, 2014). Crosbie illustrated the motivations for learners to engage with a foreign language and analysed how the participants in her study learned how to communicate with others, both strengthening their English language skills and the skills of communicating effectively. In this section, I explore L2 learning and communication and point out that participants, despite the fact that they valued our multilingual practices, showed their interest lay in practising English in order to improve their language skills.

In order to take part in the workshop series, participants were invited to complete an application form for recruiting purposes (as explained in more detail in Chapter IV). The motivations and expectations participants indicated cover the following: in addition to professional development and an interest in contextualised and creative language teaching methodologies, participants expressed their need to improve and practise English 'authentically'.

Participants valued the opportunity to use and practise English with someone who would not have been able to speak Arabic within their educational and professional domains. For instance, participants pointed out that in most of the courses they attended in the English Department at the Islamic University of Gaza the language of instruction was not English (as they instead had expected) and hence this workshop series was an opportunity for them to interact in the foreign-language object of their study:

> We take some important Education subjects but it was in Arabic. And we take some Educational subjects in English but we didn't benefit very much for the language. So, I am eager to listen to this course in English from you. [A., application form]

For instance, from this extract it emerges that A. valued the content of the subjects she undertook as part of her major, as these were 'important'. She added that, despite the fact that in some of the courses the language of instruction was English, she thought that she did not improve her skills. Therefore, she was willing to 'listen' to the workshop series, in English. Her focus on 'listening' attracted my attention as I believe that this could refer to an assumption related to teaching methodologies – which, as I came to understand during this study, in the Gaza Strip privilege an ex cathedra teaching style. This means that the instructor does not involve students but rather presents his/her lecture: in this case students just 'listen'. I deducted that the participant's statement may be related to that, as she was expecting to find herself in a similar teaching pattern.

However, it could have also referred to an assumption related to the English accent: presumably, I might have been a native speaker of English, as another participant highlighted:

> The first thing that motivated me strongly to join this course is that it is given by a native English speaker from Britain. [R., application form]

Both A. and R., as other participants did, implicitly showed that their main interest for attending the workshop series was in using English with a non-Arabic speaker, and possibly with a native speaker. Specifically, R. assumed that I was a native English speaker from the UK, and hence that she would have practised British English with me. The assumption is interesting as it encapsulates different themes: the still-present myth of the native speaker (Davies, 2008), the hierarchy amongst world Englishes and the preference for a British accent (Kachru, 1986; Crystal, 1997; Kachru et al., 2006), and finally, I would also argue, it shows the tension between native and non-native teachers of English and issues related to their legitimization (Cook, 2007; Holliday, 2005; Llurda, 2005).

Admittedly, before starting the course and meeting the participants, reading about their expectations to work with a native speaker – or at least with someone who is proficient in English – made my self-confidence vacillate since I am a non-native English teacher, who admittedly still makes several mistakes in English, and whose Italian accent still sounds rather strong. I experienced what

Llurda addresses in his book about non-native teachers that struggle 'to overcome the threats to their self-confidence posed by the perceived inferiority of non-natives in lieu of native teachers' (Llurda, 2005:1).

However, as soon as the course started, the participants were not disappointed when they discovered that English is not my mother tongue. As time passed, participants valued our different linguistic and cultural repertoires as we drew on them as resources. This allowed us to shift from an implicitly perceived 'deficit paradigm' in which our English competency, as non-native speakers, would have never be high enough, to a paradigm of 'multilingual plenty' that instead values individuals' languages and traditions, also including one's own linguistic incompetence (Frimberger, 2016; Phipps, 2013).

For instance, at the beginning of the workshop series, participants avoided using Arabic, both during their interactions and in their teaching practices, scrupulously following a communicative language teaching methodology. However, after the initial workshops, participants were curious to learn sentences in Italian, and sometimes our shared non-native speakerness levelled out our relations, becoming a source of laughter and awkwardness when all of us were unsure, for example, about the English names of specific herbs and spices, and the names of kitchen utensils. In addition, as will be further explored in Chapter VIII, participants, after the first workshops, started to use Arabic (e.g. Palestinian poems) in their English teaching practices too, abandoning the tendency of nullifying their own native tongue during the English class.

Alongside those multilingual practices, however, being able to use English was a source of value and pride. This emerged particularly when, during follow-up interviews, participants introduced me to their relatives on Skype. By that time, participants were aware of the fact that I could communicate in Palestinian Arabic (both written and oral); notwithstanding this, whenever a relative of their families wished to exchange a few words with me, all the participants would act as interpreters. I understood that they all valued being able to show to their family members that they were fluent speakers of English, so I always let them perform their role.

By way of example: the eight-year old sister of one of the participants wanted to see me on Skype during the follow-up interview, but could not be at home when

the interview took place. She therefore decided to write a message to me in Arabic, which was then translated into English by A., the participant, with the help of her 14-year old brother. As A. disclosed to me, her mother was also involved in this as she corrected the little sister's Arabic spelling mistakes. The whole family gathered around A. while she was translating the message and praised her English skills.

This is my translation (A.)

You're a very kind person. I love you, but I don't know you. However, I have a honor to know you.

(Z.)
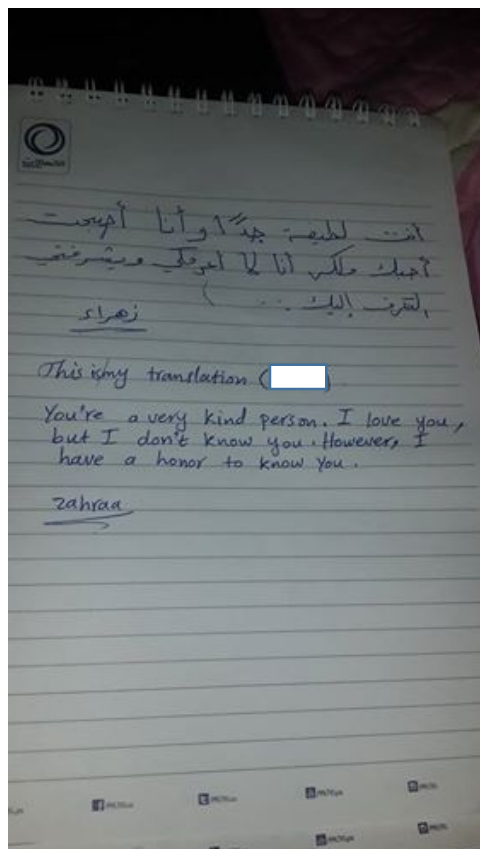
Figure 6: Message from a participant's sister.

This adorable story is just an example of how participants used every chance to practise English, and to show their language proficiency to their families. Therefore, I believe that it must be acknowledged that despite the fact that participants experimented with multilingual practices, they clearly considered the value of improving their English communication skills in authentic speech acts as crucial. English proficiency was important both for the linguistic and cultural capital that English carries, and because of intimate personal reasons related to performing the role of the intercultural mediator between the world outside and inside of the strip. Mastering English also represents having a

tangible opportunity to leave the Strip, in case this would be possible in the future, as the following section on mobility demonstrates.

3. Mobility

This section addresses the capability of 'mobility'. Mobility is at the heart of intercultural language education, as it is one of its goals and is also considered as a prerequisite of frameworks of reference which have been developed in contexts of free movement and peacetime (e.g. CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001). Within the contexts of siege and of forced immobility of the Gaza Strip, as one can clearly imagine, the concept of mobility is of crucial importance.

Hein de Haas (de Haas and Rodriguez, 2010; de Haas 2014) has conceptualized human mobility as a capability. He argued for the adoption of the capabilities approach in migration studies, in order to value the potential of migration both for utilitarian purposes, and, more importantly, for human development. According to de Haas, 'human mobility is the capability to decide where to live and human movement (i.e. migration) is the associated functioning' (de Haas and Rodriguez, 2010: 178). In other words, de Haas differentiated between being able to choose where to stay and move, and the act of movement itself. He argues that both mobility and migration are the results of complex factors of human development: i.e. wealthier countries tend to have better options in terms of choices and of freedom to move. However, while considering macro structural constraints and freedoms, de Haas also stressed the importance of accounting for the role of aspirations in the process of migration (de Haas and Rodriguez, 2010; de Haas, 2014), and for an understanding of the agency behind mobility:

> From a conceptual point of view, there is a need to simultaneously capture movement and non-movement into an agentic definition of mobility. (de Haas, 2014: 25)

In this study, the findings demonstrate that neither mobility as the freedom to choose where to live nor migration as its realised functioning are viable options for the participants. However, the aspirations of both mobility and migration clearly emerged in the study. Mobility in this context can be interpreted as the

capability to aspire (Appadurai, 2004) to be able to move, including both aspiring to reach home and feeling a sense of 'at-homeness' (Lederach and Lederach, 2010), and the freedom to migrate.

In order to illustrate this capability, I draw on an activity that the participants and I co-constructed during the workshop series, in relation to using political cartoons in English-language teaching. During the workshop, participants analysed some political cartoons that illustrate the Palestinian reality, focusing on the symbols, the language, and the potential uses in language teaching.

For one of the groups' activities, participants were invited to draw a cartoon for one of the units of the *English for Palestine* textbook (Grade 9), and to develop an activity around it, focusing on its function within a potential English lesson. The aim of this activity was to stimulate creativity to develop new teaching materials that did not require any additional resources, and to enhance participants' understanding of the semiotics of political cartoons. Out of a cohort of the 16 units of the textbook, three groups out of four chose to address the unit entitled 'Getting to Palestine', and the fourth group instead opted for the unit entitled 'I feel at home already'.

One of the participants in her reflective journal commented on the cartoons she drew with her group:

> The second session was unprecedented one as we were too much interactive and enthusiastic. […] we made our own cartoons (☺ <3) for a unit from ninth grade English book. The name of the lesson we chose was 'Getting to Palestine'. Our group have drawn a picture of a happy foreign tourist, holding his baggage to get to Palestine, while on the other cartoon, we drew a picture of a Palestinian lady, carrying her luggage and crying because she can't break the siege and get in to her country. I am truly saying that I have never been exposed to such experience with teaching before. It is notably mentioned that these cartoon was related to us as Palestinians. Cartoons which was made on the session was too much innovative. I felt really that we, hand in hand, are going to build a flowering future for kids. (F., journal)
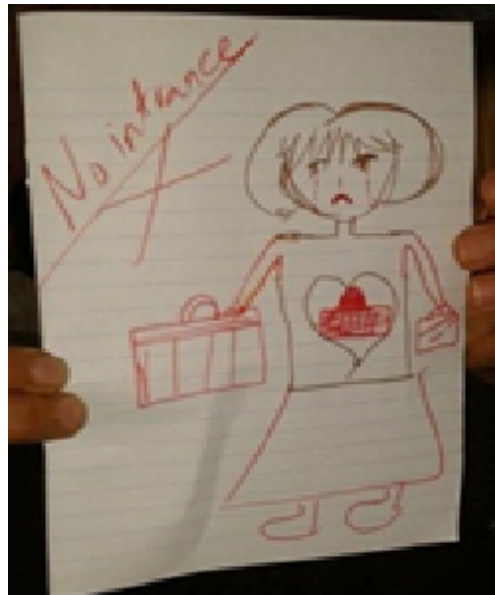
Figure 7: Cartoon A, about 'Getting to Palestine'
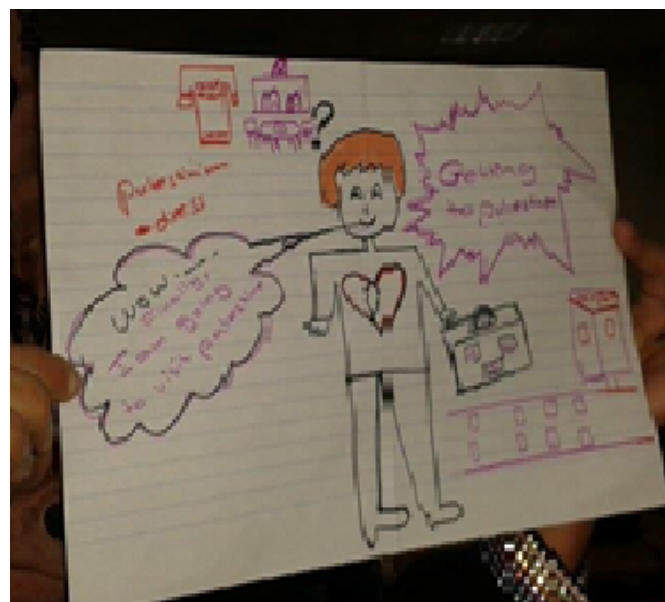
Figure 8: Cartoon B, about 'Getting to Palestine'.

The choice of the subjects of the drawings is interesting as it illustrates participants' understanding of mobility: participants decided to contrast the capability of mobility and its associated functioning of migration for a foreign tourist – a man who successfully manages to get to Palestine – with the aspirations of a Palestinian woman from Gaza who lives in a condition of forced immobility that prevents her from choosing where to live and to travel (including travelling to her homeland).

It is inevitable that one notices the gender chosen in the participants' representations: the foreign tourist is a happy man who is going to Palestine for a business meeting (as the small suitcase suggests). He is travelling there in solidarity with Palestinians (he has a big heart with the Palestinian map, and he thinks 'wow… finally I'm getting to visit Palestine'), as participants explained further during the workshop. Conversely, the Palestinian lady, who wishes to go to Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as symbolised by the Al-Aqsa mosque drawn on her heart, cannot return to her homeland. In this regard, it is important to point out that Palestine in political cartoons is usually represented by an old Palestinian mother. However, the choice of drawing a young girl living under siege might have also been a representation of the participants' own experiences as female graduates who can neither move abroad nor manage to visit Jerusalem and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The group that chose the unit 'I feel at home already' drew a young Palestinian guy wearing a kuffya (the traditional Palestinian scarf),with the map of Palestine imprinted on his heart and enlarged on the top right corner of the drawing (Figure 9). The group added a caption to their drawing: 'East or West, home is the best'. In my notes I describe the group's explanation as follows:

Figure 9: Cartoon about 'I feel at home'

N. while was explaining the cartoon 'East or West, home is the best' had her voice almost broken while saying she just wants to be able to move inside her own country. Not even 'internal mobility' is possible. So Gazans travel in time and in space through pictures, symbols, memory and technology. She explained the meaning of the kuffyya – the traditional Palestinian scarf, once used by the Palestinian fighters during the revolution against the occupation in the 1970s, now symbol of Palestine and of Palestinian solidarity. She asked me if I had one, and was very pleased to hear I have two.

> We also talked about other traditional dresses, Palestinian embroidery and cross-stitching. (My research diary, second workshop)

Paradoxically, the condition of forced immobility emerges also in relation to participants 'feeling at home'. The group members indicated that were they allowed to travel anywhere in the world, they would go to their homeland first, in order to be able to visit Jerusalem and to pray in the Al-Aqsa mosque – as it also emerged with the cartoon discussed above.

Data shows that a sense of self and at-homeness (Lederach and Lederach, 2010) is not lost amongst participants and their community. Instead, it is rather strongly rooted precisely because of the historical forced diaspora and of the contemporary conditions of forced immobility. Despite the traumatic and violent experiences participants suffered from during the recent three wars in Gaza, and the context of pain and pressure in which they live, the data that emerge in this study demonstrate that a sense of home is aspired to, is dreamt about, and is a source of hope and resistance. This conclusion differs from what Lederach and Lederach (2010), scholars in the area of international peacebuilding, claim, i.e. that traumatic events destroy a sense of homeness.

For instance, the capacity to feel at home is nurtured by the maintenance and the awareness of the Palestinian symbols and traditions. N., as shown in the extract above, was pleased by the fact that I knew about the *kuffyya* and the symbolism that it carries. She was pleased to hear that I possess two, one from Gaza, and another one from a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon: seeing these cultural heritage objects in different parts of the world might be perceived as a metaphor of the possibility of mobility.

Mobility, as introduced above, therefore intersects with the 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004). Appadurai defines the capacity to aspire as a 'cultural' capacity: aspirations, outcomes, preferences, and choices in relation to the future are often assigned to the field of economics, whereas culture is often linked to traditions and pastness, and to present practices, but it is rarely concerned with the future. Appadurai discusses that culture, especially for oppressed groups and for the poor, needs to be oriented towards the future. Aspirations are culturally and relationally grounded: according to Appadurai, the

poor will have different aspirations compared to the better-off. In defining the capacity to aspire, Appadurai argues that he aims to complement Sen's capabilities approach and social economic theories of welfare and wellbeing with an anthropological angle, hence dealing with cultural capacities. The use of the term 'capacity' as opposed to 'capability' indicates an 'ethical horizon within which more concrete capabilities can be given meaning, substance, and sustainability' (Ibid.: 82). Appadurai affirms that the capacity to aspire could be translated into the capability 'to debate, enquiry, contest and participate critically', that is to develop one's own voice (Ibid.). Caroline Hart (2016) explores the role of aspirations in relations to the capabilities approach and affirms that 'the capability to aspire' includes both revealed and concealed aspirations, and as such is not limited to the expressions of aspirations. It also involves imagining the future and exercising practical reason.

In this study, the cultural capacity to aspire is intertwined with the faculty of voice, as the following data demonstrate.

During a workshop activity on using videos in ELT, I stimulated participants with a video available on YouTube entitled 'Palestinian dream'. I asked participants to speculate about the content of the video before watching it: most of the participants welcomed the task, giving their opinions on the content of the video which might have dealt with issues related to dreams about mobility, peace, or better future opportunities. I was about to suggest watching the video when A. stood up from her chair and stated:

> About the Palestinian dream, I want to talk about *my* dream like a Palestinian. Ehh... I think that in one minute I will talk about the sufferings of the graduate students who want to complete their studies abroad and ehm… we cannot. [Long pause]. That's it.
>
> (A., her emphasis, fourth workshop)

A.'s voice and her capacity to aspire is clearly manifested in the extract above: firstly, she decided to answer the question I posed in a more personal way, as she openly stated. While the other participants discussed dreams in relation to the video, A. instead decided to present her own dream and aspiration.

Then, when articulating her dream, from using the first personal pronoun I, she switched into 'we', as she felt that she was speaking on behalf of the group of 'graduates' and of Palestinians more in general: they aspire to be able to travel abroad, and to have the freedom to choose where to move. Her aspiration was articulated as hope towards an enactment of the capability of mobility. A.'s voice is legitimised as shared by many other students, as she argued; her aspiration is therefore a cultural aspiration, and not only an individual manifestation of personal voice and agency.

The impossibility of mobility has also an impact on the capability of affiliation and of creating bonds with cultural others, as the next section demonstrates.

4. Affiliation and intercultural curiosity

As expanded in Chapter II, Nussbaum (2011) conceptualizes affiliation as the development of individuals' identities in relation to other human beings. Affiliation within Nussbaum's capabilities list, is defined as

> A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. [...] B) Having the social basis of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. (Nussbaum, 2011: 34)

Nussbaum argues that affiliation, in conjunction with practical reason, pervades and organizes the other capabilities, and it therefore has an 'architectonic role' (Nussbaum, 2011: 39) as both capabilities are always present in relation to human dignity and respect for the individuals as social beings. In intercultural education, affiliation could enhance the self-respect and the respect of others, with no discrimination of gender, race, religion, etc. It is nurtured in immanent intercultural encounters.

Tim Ingold (2000) elaborates on context-based and relational interactions as language-producing and as meaning-making, developing the 'human-being-in-its-environment' ecological approach. Within this approach, Ingold counters the argument of pre-existing, pre-imposed cultures that exist and are transmitted independently of interactions and relationships. The body of cultural knowledge

that is transmitted (e.g. cultural traditions) only finds realization through 'practice and experience' in a specific environment and as such, cultural knowledge is shaped, deciphered and appropriated in the immanency of the encounter within the environment.

Ingold's theories – which I believe integrate Nussbaum's approach well – have profound consequences for language pedagogy, especially for the relation between language and culture. He disregards the idea 'that learning a language is like filling a universal, genetically specified container with particular cultural content' (Ingold, 2000: 398), adding that:

> Of course, people raised in different environments learn to speak in different ways. But these differences, far from being received into the prefabricated compartments of a universal psychology, are immanent in those very fields of relations wherein human beings undergo the organic processes of growth and maturation, and in which their powers of speech are developed and sustained. (Ibid.: 398)

Due to the siege imposed on the Strip, the cultivation of relationships with people abroad and with cultural others is difficult for Gazans. Because of the impossibility of real encounters, sometimes stereotyped representations resulting from a textual attitude affect the capability of affiliation. However, participants have always aimed at fulfilling the intercultural curiosity that they have towards the world outside the Strip.

'Intercultural curiosity' is a concept already developed within the literature on intercultural competence and in the psychology of curiosity. In the intercultural competence literature, the concept of curiosity has been associated with respect, openness and discovery, which respectively are defined as valuing other cultures, as the suspension of judgement, and tolerance of ambiguity (Deardoff, 2009; Bennett, 2009). Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence framework (1997) included 'curiosity' as an attitude for the development of ICC, coupled with openness to suspend disbelief and judgement about other cultures and about one's own.

In the psychology of curiosity, Loewenstein (1994: 75) conceptualises 'curiosity' as a 'a form of cognitively induced deprivation that arises from the perception of a gap in knowledge or understanding'. Building on this, Houghton (2014) explains

that curiosity requires a minimal pre-existing knowledge, the awareness that knowledge-gaps are manageable, and the awareness of the existence of social stereotypes. Students make predictions based on stereotypes and would then be able to verify whether predictions were correct through an open attitude.

In order to illustrate affiliation and intercultural curiosity, I present here an activity that was developed during the third workshop, which focused on drama pedagogy. The workshop was planned and developed in collaboration with a GRAMNet (Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network) artist in residence, who led the workshop as an expert in drama-related activities. During that session, students were encouraged to experience multimodality and drama-pedagogy related activities for language education, e.g. using playful sketches and improvising role-plays.

Participants, for instance – divided into smaller groups – were invited to share some recipes that have value to them, and to mime the procedure of preparing the dish. Participants presented different recipes, mimed the procedures, shared pictures and online recipes with myself and the other workshop leader. Two topics that emerged in the discussion that followed were the untranslatability of some context-specific and culturally-related words, and the strategies adopted to convey and construct meaning when the interlocutors do not share the same cultural background. Instead of perceiving translation as a loss or as having a homogenising effect, participants interpreted it as an opportunity to recognize and appreciate diversity, making sense of different cultural traditions. This is an extract from that activity:
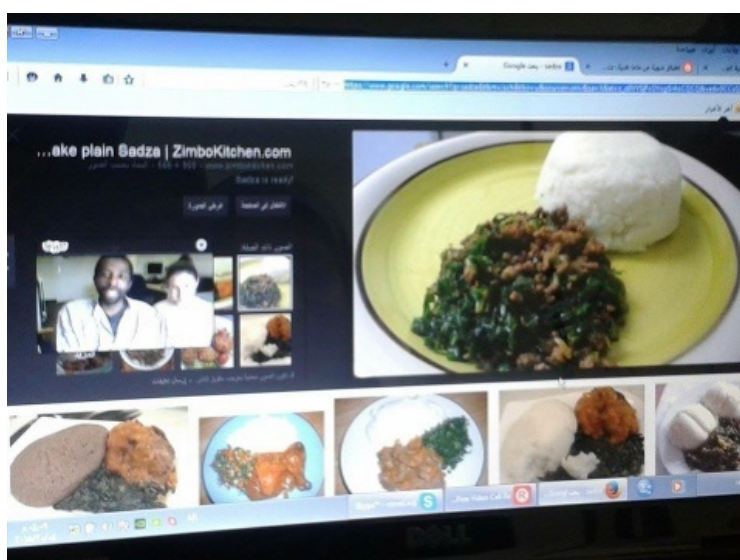
S.: Grazia, do you know how to cook?

Grazia: Of course girls!

A.: Do you know how to cook Palestinian dishes?

Grazia: Only Molokhyya. But the other dish that you mentioned seem delicious...

S.: Ohh... you know how to prepare molokhyya!?! - Girls, Grazia knows to cook molokhyya! –

Grazia: Ah, molokhyya djaja

[A., turning her head to talk to the other students] Wait... ehm, you cook molokhyya like that? (sharing a picture on the screen)

Grazia: No no, mine is more ehm liquid... less thick. [...]

Grazia: Send me the link of your mum's blog, I want to try in the way she does it!

S.: OK! She is great Palestinian chef!

A.: Do you cook Italian food? I love spaghetti but I think we cook it too much... I read it on a food blog that more than 20mins is too much?! Give us the real recipe.

Grazia [laughing]: 20 minutes?! I normally cook it for 10 minutes maximum, depends on the pasta brand.

A.: What?? It is hard!

Grazia: Yes, but I like it al dente. Do you know what al dente means? [...]

A.: Ok, I will try your recipe!

During this brief distilled extract, after the task of describing and miming recipes, participants spontaneously asked me some questions related to my own cooking skills. As the excerpt shows, we used some words belonging to our respective food traditions, and we extensively discussed the procedure of making our respective dishes. The extract shows that we used words in Arabic and in Italian without attempting to translate them, but aware of the others' knowledge of those terms. On the other hand, the level of detail shared about making both *molokhyya* and spaghetti, and the detailed questions that all of us posed showed that we were curious to fill the gaps in our respective knowledge, and that at the same time we were open to the practices of the cultural other.

It also shows that all of us valued the providing of meticulous explanations about something that we are fond of, and that these are probably representations of the ties we share with our respective communities.

In addition, both the participants and I stated that we would like to try at those recipes, trying to expand our culinary affiliation: I asked for a link to a blog, and A. stated that she would have tried cooking a dish of pasta in the way that – as I confirmed – 'Italians do'. Interestingly, A., who had not had contact with any other Italians but me, and who was interested in Italian food, already knew about the difference in the cooking time. However, despite the fact that she had read about this, she was interested in the immanent intercultural encounter, which would have either confirmed or dismissed her thoughts.

This exchange also demonstrates the respect toward others and the reciprocal suspension of judgement and openness that characterized our intercultural encounter. The workshop was very well received by participants, as these extracts show:

> What I liked the most today is talking about one of our recipes. We had much fun describing our recipes, and trying to get the suitable words for them. We do it in passion since this is a thing that we love, it is part of our traditions, talking about a traditional Palestinian dish. (S., reflective journal)

> Using this [the making a recipe] activity would build harmony among them [students] and English language, in particular our students and us have no access to be contact with other people abroad so we can talk about things that we know and we love, but in English. It was fun to hear about Italian recipes too and not in books! (N., reflective journal).

N. and S. emphasized that during the activity they addressed something that they loved and valued. They appreciated the entertainment of the workshop, and as also other participants stated, recognised the value of ludic pedagogies. N. also clearly stated that she appreciated the chance to discuss Italian dishes with me, rather than reading them in recipe books as she had done before. N. interestingly also focuses on the 'harmony' that the embodied intercultural encounter could foster with the object of the study. The participant perceived the relationship with English in terms of an emotional and embodied connection

nurtured in intercultural encounters and facilitated through creative art-based pedagogies. She hoped for a harmonious relationship between herself, her students and English. This excerpt shows an implicit understanding of language as socially, relationally and contextually created *in situ*.

This is what Ingold (2000) referred to in his human-being-in-its-environment approach, which places the human encounter rather than the 'culture type' at the heart of any language- and culture-producing act. I would therefore posit that, pedagogically, the capability of affiliation is at the heart of a capability approach in intercultural education. However, for it to be meaningful, it needs to nurture and develop encounters with cultural others, rather than with other cultures. In the establishment of an intercultural network, the capability of affiliation can be maximised and unpacked in the lived encounters.

After having illustrated and defined what I mean with the intercultural capabilities above, respectively with L2 learning and communication, mobility and affiliation, in the next section I present how those were nurtured by the participants during a teaching practice that they developed in peer-teaching mode, which they titled 'Weddings around the world'.

5. Nurturing intercultural capabilities in class: the teaching practice 'Weddings around the world'

Teaching practices were developed during the second part of the workshop series, after the input sessions had already covered political cartoons, drama-pedagogy and the use of videos in English-language teaching. Participants divided themselves into three small groups, and devised the teaching practices without any predetermined given input apart from the instruction that they could take inspiration from the textbook they use in Gaza, i.e. *English for Palestine (Grade 9)*. The teaching practices were to be delivered to the other participants who would have pretended to be students. A couple of days before the teaching practices took place, I ran small-group tutorials, just in case participants had questions about their own teaching practices.

One group chose to work on 'Wedding traditions around the world', and I will demonstrate in this section that in their lesson they nurtured the intercultural capabilities I described above.

During the tutorial, the participants outlined the reasons for choosing this specific topic: they stated that it develops intercultural competence in a not-intercultural society, as it is in the Gaza Strip:

> A.: each of us will present one custom and the students will come and see the different customs. Each girl will have a stall and the students are going to take a tour around the stalls so they experience life abroad.
>
> R.: yes, to introduce to different customs for intercultural competence.
>
> Grazia: Wow. So you will have different stalls for different countries and will do peer-teaching? Wow! Sounds great! [Participants look at each other and smile proudly].
>
> F.: can we?
>
> Grazia: Of course you can, the lesson is yours! But what do you mean by intercultural competence?
>
> A.: yes, students are going to have a tour – yes, this is the aim of the lesson, to discuss different customs […] to appreciate customs and traditions in other countries.

The participants wanted to create the chance for students to 'experience life abroad' or to experience an intercultural encounter. Therefore, they tried to create an embodied metaphorical 'tour' amongst different stalls representing different wedding traditions. The tour would have allowed for a concrete, sensuous experience of both mobility and of migration in order to nurture students' intercultural competence, as the participants called it.

When I tried to explore what they meant by 'intercultural competence', they emphasized again the chance for students to 'have a tour', which will allow them to acquire knowledge about other cultures and countries. Touristic mobility for sojourners, as in the model of intercultural communicative competence developed by Byram (1997), stands out among the participants'

perceptions of 'intercultural competence'. However, intercultural competence does not seem to consist of *savoirs*, but rather of critical reasoning (the aim of the lesson was 'to discuss') and of appreciative affiliation. Hence, in my understanding of the participants' sayings, and also thanks to the analysis of their doings and relatings during the whole workshop series, I feel confident in arguing that what participants refer the intersection of the intercultural capabilities that I described above.

The participants continued in their discussion, pointing out their concerns about possible negative attitudes among their students with regards to different cultural traditions and the preoccupation towards the risk of misunderstanding and of not being able to develop students' affiliation:

F.: we expect students to reject some of these customs.

Grazia: Reject? I didn't hear properly.

F.: yes we expect students to reject some of these customs. Yes, ehm… they will feel it is a bit strange

R.: yes, maybe they will not accept those customs.

A.: Here in Palestine, it is not an intercultural society. So... ehm... about some different cultures… ehm we don't know.

R.: maybe students will feel about religion or culture, or society that these are too different. […]

A.: One of the customs, for example… it is different, like the bride friends wear the same colors for dresses against the spirits to avoid to take the bride[15]… it is so different… even for us is different to think, you know? So imagine for the students!

G.: [nodding] Yes I understand... So [pause]... what would be a possible solution for this expected problem?

---

[15] With this sentence, A. meant that in one of the traditions that she read about, the bridesmaids wear the same dress. This is believed to be a protection from evil spirits which during the wedding try to kidnap the bride.

A.: We will try to... to... to tell the students that each country has its own traditions that differ from the other countries, and this is the way of life, their traditions...

R.: and tell that maybe for people in other countries it will be strange to hear about our customs too. They are strange for people outside Palestine maybe...

Y. yes, also each country, especially each Arab country has its wedding traditions.

A.: yes, even within the same country; or in different cities... So it is good to respect all.

The participants were concerned about students' suspension of judgement (as in models of intercultural curiosity), and about not being able to convey in an adequate manner traditions within different cultures, as these differ from Palestinian ones. They were concerned also about cognitive flexibility, as they themselves as language teachers find it difficult to understand and appreciate other cultures' weddings traditions: they stated that they had never lived in a multicultural society and they are aware that this has an impact on the development and appreciation of other cultures. In order to address these potential obstacles, participants displayed cultural humility and an appreciation of foreign cultures without falling into the trap of projecting one's own culture into the other one and with an awareness of the risk of social stereotyping.

Stereotypes have been largely defined in intercultural education, and how to manage them through critical cultural awareness has been already explored. There are several definitions of 'stereotype' according to different disciplinary fields, but most of them draw on Allport's definition of a stereotype as 'an exaggerated belief associated with a category' (1954: 191). Houghton (2014) points out that critical cultural awareness may challenge stereotypes since it deepens and evaluates the accuracy and self-awareness of one's beliefs about one's own culture (i.e. self-stereotypes) and other cultures. Byram described critical cultural awareness as 'an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries' (1997: 53). According to Byram and to models of intercultural communicative competence, stereotypes may constitute a barrier

to intercultural communication and hinder the development of intercultural competence.

The participants' teaching practice on 'Wedding traditions around the world' was on the last day of the course: relationships were well established and the atmosphere was very informal and friendly, including lots of joking and laughter. As part of this session, the four participants delivered their peer-to-peer simulated teaching practice on weddings around the world.

As part of the teaching practice, the four teachers prepared a tour among the stalls of different countries and did some games, reading, role-plays and a listening activity. Towards the end of the teaching practice, all the participants gathered together in order to conclude the lesson with a 'wedding' cake that one of the participants had baked. F. – who was one of the teachers – took the lead in cutting the slices of the cake, while she continued with the last pieces of information she wanted to give as part of Scottish wedding traditions.

> F.: Mashi, tayyb… [So, well...] Listen, listen... at the wedding both the bride and the groom cut the cake, then they eat it, right? But in Scotland, they eat only half of the cake.
>
> A.: and they keep the other?
>
> Peers: [laugh]
>
> F.: what do you think they do with the other half? [...]
>
> B.: yes yes, I know... they keep it for the coming baby...
>
> [noises]
>
> S.: they keep it for the first baby then they eat it
>
> F., R., Y.: [applause] Yess!! Well done!! [noises]
>
> F.: They eat half of the cake at the wedding, then they save the other half until the first baby is born.
>
> Peers: [laughing, surprised]. Ohhh [laughing] [noises]
>
> F.: I know, I know… it may sound strange. But... what do you think of it
>
> A.: it's yuck. [laughing]

In this excerpt participants exaggerated, were surprised, joked, giggled, and laughed together at the intercultural oddness they were introduced to. The teacher who was leading the activity was complicit in emphasizing and elaborating on Scottish traditions, justifying herself with the evidence that the piece of information was written in the textbook that students use at school.

However, it is important to point out, that in addition to the laughter, after having had some initial background knowledge about Scotland through their peers (who read about that in the textbook), participants manifested their curiosity, and a combination of increasing stereotypes and intercultural laughter arose. Despite the exaggerated stereotypical subject of the discussion, which caused deliberate comedy moments, participants concluded by agreeing to respect and value other individuals and what each person carries with him/herself, namely cultural heritage and traditions, which are re-constructed through the unfolding of relationships (Ingold, 2000):

F.: Grazia, what about the Scottish mini-skirt? [laughing]

Peers: [laughing] [laughing out loud] yes!!

Someone shouts: The skirt of the men!

A.: the kittle

Grazia: the kilt! [laughing] Girls, it is not a mini-skirt! [laughing]

Peers: [laughing] do they wear it?

Grazia: yes, they do! At the weddings! It is very traditional, and very formal and elegant.

Peers: [laughing]

F.: the Scottish wedding is a bit strange with all these features... [laughing]

F.: I don't know... it is part of the book but it sounds weird... [giggling]

F.: Girls, girls, quiet.

[The classroom is silent]

> F.: We know that not all the customs make sense... other customs in Palestine are strange but this is the heritage and for us are important... the heritage of the country and we are proud of it so it is important to respect others and their heritages of others too.
>
> [Students applaud]
>
> F.: So if we will ever be able to travel we will know... Maybe Grazia will invite us to her wedding in Scotland and we will see different traditions.
>
> R.: We'll eat all your cake, Grazia [laughing].

In the data I presented above, laughter that arose as part of responding to intercultural curiosity, rather than representing a rupture in intercultural relationships, embodied a moment of relief and fun in a context of pain and pressure. Laughter did not harm the development of intercultural relationships, but rather reinforced them by nurturing human connection and by acknowledging respect and value for all the individuals and their cultural traditions.

Phipps (2016: 160) suggests that:

> Far from representing a problem in intercultural relations, as is more usually suggested in the wide anti-stereotypical literature in intercultural studies, the placing of laughter and stereotypes together [here] suggests that these symbols of a culture, however stereotypical and concentrated, have a role to play.

By placing the human encounter at the heart of intercultural language pedagogy, there is no need to demonize intercultural awkwardness and embarrassment, since empathy and respect emerge in the encounter itself.

At the end of the debate, the participants manifested their aspiration to move, and to freely choose where to go. Because of the inter-personal relationships we had established, they already felt the desire to see my own world, and to be part of my own traditions and feasts. This suggests that language proficiency, affiliation, and the capacity to aspire to be able to move can be nurtured in the classroom, even in contexts of forced immobility in which intercultural encounters do not occur on a daily basis.

6. Summary

The capabilities approach 'requires that we do not simply evaluate the functionings – the actual achievements – but the real freedom or opportunities each student has to choose and achieve what she values' (Unterhalter, 2009: 218). By not being product-oriented and only evaluating achievements, the capabilities approach supports the analysis of aspired well-being and envisions language education holistically.

By drawing on the capabilities approach, this chapter has explored a set of intercultural capabilities that emerged in the context of pain and pressure of the Gaza Strip: L2 learning and communication, mobility, and affiliation. These capabilities are contextualised within the condition of forced immobility which prevents Gazans from living in a multicultural society and from having meaningful and real intercultural encounters. However, the participants manifested interest in the intercultural capabilities set. L2 learning and communication consists of the capability of improving and practising language skills – as this was evinced in participants' motivation to attend the workshop series. In addition to the need of mastering English because of the linguistic capital that it carries, the participants were also proud of performing the role of interpreters and intercultural mediators within their own community, as demonstrated during the exchanges I had with their relatives. Mobility was explored in terms of aspirations rather than as a capability that can be converted into achieved functioning. Participants valued and nurtured their cultural capacity to aspire to be able to move freely in and out of the Strip. The capability of affiliation pervades all the other capabilities and has an architectonic role as it consists of the capability to create bonds by way of self-respect and the respect of others. Affiliation occurs online, and is often nurtured through a textual attitude. This may result in having stereotyped representations of cultural others, which can, however, be worked through. The participants demonstrated that, despite the lack of contact with people outside of the Strip, they are interculturally curious and open to understanding, discussing, and respecting cultural others. Culture, as also suggested by Ingold (2000) with his

ecological approach, is not a a set of static *savoirs,* but it rather is transmitted and recreated as part of immanent intercultural encounters.

Chapter VII. Emotions and languaging

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present what I term 'emotions and languaging' as a capability in language education in the post-traumatic landscape of the Gaza Strip, demonstrating how the emotions and languaging intersect.

Emotions, in applied linguistics, have mainly been theorised from a cognitivist approach and the literature addresses affective attachment and its relationship to foreign language learning. An abundant number of studies about the multilingual self and the articulations of emotions in different languages have been carried out (see Pavlenko, 2005, 2006). However, it has been argued that the presence of emotions in class, and specifically as content in foreign language education remains undertheorized in critical applied linguistics (Benesch, 2012). In this chapter, drawing from the affective turn and the sociality of emotions (Ahmed, 2004), I bring together feminist theories of emotions and the concept of languaging – and I show how this was nurtured in class as a capability.

Languaging, as discussed in Chapter III, is the faculty of making meaning using one's own language(s) – including the ones in which the person is less competent. Languaging is an embodied way of being and a way of knowing in order to become a critical social being (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004). Jensen (2014), in addition, points out that emotions are integral components of languaging.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that in the post-war context of the Gaza Strip, participants nurtured their capability of 'languaging distress', and also of 'languaging wellbeing' and that these, inevitably, include emotions. Languaging in this context is not a synonym for 'externalising' emotions as in psychologized approaches, but it rather encompasses the construction of emotions through social interaction. Pedagogically, I show how participants valued and nurtured

the capability to express emotions as well as transform and construct emotions in the classroom, developing a pedagogy that crosses 'engaged pedagogy' (hooks, 1994; Zembylas, 2008, 2009, 2012) with a 'wellbeing-focused language pedagogy' (Frimberger, 2016).

The chapter is structured as follows. The following section introduces relevant additional literature to frame the analysis on emotions as embodied, socially constructed and shifting (Ahmed, 2004). In the third section I discuss the capability of 'languaging distress', which highlights how participants, in language, worked through their distress, which was caused mainly by constant military operations and the siege. Then, I discuss the process of 'languaging wellbeing': participants not only express distress, but also insist on smiling and laughing in the face of despair, both in their sayings and also in their doings and relatings (Kemmis et al., 2014) – shaping their mental wellbeing in interaction. In the last section, by drawing on data from a teaching practice that participants developed and delivered, which was entitled 'Being Happy', I highlight how the capability of languaging and emotions was nurtured in class. Participants developed an engaged pedagogy towards wellbeing that encompasses the 'embodiment of feelings' (Ingold, 2000) and the interaffective dimension of languaging (Jensen, 2014).

2. Adding to the literature

Within the capabilities approach, Nussbaum has written extensively about emotions as cognitions, and about their relationship to language. Nussbaum (2001, 2013) wrote that emotions are value-laden evaluative judgements of importance for people. Emotions unfold without a conscious self-reflective process: they do not require 'elaborate calculation, 'computation, or even reflexive self-awareness' (Nussbaum, 2011: 23), but rather 'something that we may call conscious awareness' (Ibid.: 126). Despite the fact that they are cognitive and evaluative thoughts, emotions are not necessarily linguistically formulable, and that the role of language in shaping emotions has often been 'overestimated' (Nussbaum, 2001: 155). Emotions, rather must be approached through 'a narrative dimension', which belongs to literature and arts with their different symbolic forms:

There are many kinds of cognitive activity or seeing-as in which ideas of salience and importance figure; there are pictorial imaginings, musical imaginings, the kinetic forms of imagining involved in the dance, and others. These are not all reducible to or straightforwardly translatable into linguistic symbolism, nor should we suppose that linguistic representing has pride of place as either the most sophisticated or the most basic mode (Ibid. 127-128).

Emotions also figure as one of the ten capabilities in her list. She defines the capability of emotions as:

Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence ; in general to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development). (Nussbaum, 2011: 33-34)

The phrase 'attachment to things and people outside ourselves' resonates with what Sara Ahmed (2004) has defined as an 'inside-out' model of emotions, which recalls cognitivist and psychologized approaches. The inside-out model presupposes the interiority of emotions and feelings, which are developed 'internally' and refer to – as well as being projected onto – something or someone 'outside' the individuals. In such a model, emotions have been psychologized as subjective expressions, and objectified as transferable through language.

Ahmed (2004) argued for an integration of an 'inside-out' and an 'outside-in' model of emotions: in the 'outside-in' model, on the other hand, emotions are constructed outside of the individuals, and are then interiorized. The presumptions behind both models are twofold: first of all, these imply a world-view in which individuality and sociality are clearly demarcated; and secondly, these models assume a structuralist view of language as a 'conduit', a container to carry and transfer 'mental contents', emotions being part of those contents (Jensen, 2014). In her theorization of emotions – focusing on how emotions work

rather than on what emotions are – Ahmed states that they shift, are embodied and most importantly are socially constructed (Ahmed, 2004).

Jensen (2014), exploring the relationship between emotions and language, similarly to Ahmed, dismantles the conduit metaphor. He points out that understanding and knowledge can be achieved through emotional interactions, and that emotions are not separated from language, 'nor can emotion be regarded as merely a secondary function of language. Instead *emotion and affect are integral parts of languaging behaviour*, or rather languaging is whole body activity including emotion.' (Jensen, 2014: 2, his emphasis). His approach, therefore, is aligned to Ahmed's integrated model and best suits my understanding of emotions and languaging in this research study. In his words

> Emotions are processes of organism-environment interactions. They involve perceptions and assessment of situations in the connected process of transforming those situations. The body states connected with feelings are states of both response and remaking of experience. [...] In short, emotions are both in us and in the world at the same time. They are, in fact, one of the most pervasive ways that we are continually in touch with our environment. (Jensen, 2014: 3)

Jensen's scholarly work on languaging and emotions is of particular relevance for the analysis of the data presented in this chapter. Jensen understands languaging as a first-order and a second-order human behaviour: it involves, respectively, both the individual cognitive-neural level and the socially constructed behaviour shaped by cultural and social norms. In his discussion, languaging is not related to foreign-language learning, but rather to expressivity and interactivity as a whole body meaning-making process. His focus on embodiment and the integration of the cognitive and psychological levels with the socio-cultural and, I would add, political dimension can be extended into the context of foreign language learning.

Working through Jensen's contribution and extending his work into foreign-language education in a context of pain and pressure, in the following sections, I demonstrate that participants developed and nurtured what I have identified as the capability of emotions and languaging.

The next section analyses and discusses 'languaging distress': the participants pointed out that, especially in times of war, they found it helpful to express their distress both as a coping mechanism, and as prompting active actions in order to transform their difficult emotional knowledge into counter-narratives of beauty.

3. Languaging distress: voices are not lost

In situations of intense pain and pressure, of mental distress, and of trauma, it is often posited that language fails and the self needs to find a new coherent way to express the experience and its related feelings and emotions (Scarry, 1985; Helmer, 1992; DeSalvo, 1999; Milner, 2003). Elain Scarry in *Body in Pain* (1985) reflects on the unspeakable dimension of trauma and pain, suggesting that intense pain, as also Phipps (2013b) pointed out, requires others to translate it into words and speech:

> Intense pain is also language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject. Words, self and voice are lost, or nearly lost, through the intense pain. (Scarry, 1985: 35)

Nearly lost, she writes. I interpret that *nearly* as signifying the complexity of expressing and framing ambivalent emotions in distress. That nearly opens up a space to engage with the uncertainty and ambiguities of analysing difficult emotional knowledge that emerges in post-traumatic situations. Scarry, in addition, posits that humans in pain may long for beauty (i.e. creating and sharing something beautiful) as a way through which they can face the trauma and the physical pain they have experienced. Smith (2006: 236), after an interview with Scarry, eloquently summarizes her thoughts on this:

> Being in pain, she [Scarry] says, causes us to be least human because we are least able to express ourselves and share ourselves with others. Inflicting pain is an illegitimate and unjust way of gaining power over other human beings because in essence we obliterate their ability to be human. Recognizing beauty, in contrast, allows us to be most fully human. It inspires us toward two of humanity's greatest traits: towards a desire for justice, as justice like beauty is fair and symmetrical; and

towards acts of creation, as we desire to replicate beauty—to create something of beauty, to express our feeling of the beautiful to someone else, or simply to hold onto the experience of beauty as long as possible, and replicate this moment in all our perceptions.

In global mental health, in psychology and in medical anthropology, careful and increasing attention has been given to cultural and local forms of expressing distress and of framing experiences of trauma, leading to context-sensitive medical interventions. Nichter (1981: 379) coined the term 'idioms of distress' and defined them as 'ways to express distress [that] are culturally constituted in the sense that they initiate particular types of interaction and are associated with culturally pervasive values, norms, generative themes, and health concerns'.

Especially with diasporic populations, and in the context of forced migration, global mental health seems to have developed, and increasingly continues to develop, intercultural approaches to mental wellbeing, in which languaging has a crucial role. It is important to point out that in intercultural studies and in applied linguistics – according to my knowledge, which relies on a systematic literature review I conducted on eight databases – no studies have expanded on idioms of distress, of resilience and of wellbeing.

In this study, participants' voices and language – despite the fact that they witnessed and suffered terrible experiences, including three wars – were not lost. Both during the workshops and in the follow-up interviews, participants pointed out the beneficial impact of expressing oneself and one's own emotions in different forms and contexts as a transforming, action-oriented practice. This extract illustrates a participant's reflection on languaging of distress:

> Our problems came from not expressing our feelings with others. Whether it is sadness, anger... ehm. […] For example sadness will make me more depressed in the future if I didn't express it... and let's see... happiness, when you share your happiness, will make you more happier and, ehm, for your friends too... ehm. So it is very important to express your emotions ehm... what you have. The other point if we make it related to our cause, it is good to show the real us... the real feelings of us to the other world, instead of seeing us as terrorists. No. ehm. But... It is important to see

how we as people are living and having passions and loves as any other person in the world! (S., interview, her emphasis)

The sociality of emotions (Ahmed, 2004) and an integrated model of emotions are clearly revealed in this extract: S. on one hand discusses the possibility of expressing one's own internalized emotions; while on the other hand, she also acknowledges the sociality and relationality of emotions. The participant, in doing so, highlights the ecology of emotions as intermingled interactions between individuality and the environment. For instance, S. explains the importance of sharing feelings with others since the interaction itself is transformative, for both the individual and the interlocutors. She emphasizes that sharing feelings and emotions is important 'and for your friends too' as the narrative will be transformative for both. Her interpretation therefore does not contemplate an emotional communication transfer, but rather a dialogical and social construction of human behaviour that occurs in what Jensen (2014) understands as the act of languaging as an emotional and inter-affective meaning-making process.

The participant makes use of an idiom that was also repeated on other occasions during the workshops. She stated that 'sadness will make me more depressed in the future if I didn't express it... and let's see... happiness, when you share your happiness, will make you more happier and for your friends too'. The idiom could be categorized as an 'idiom of distress', since it is a way through which the participant, drawing upon her contextualised and traditional knowledge, articulates her distress, and aims towards her wellbeing. The idiom embeds cultural values of sharing: the participant's view – which, as she resorted to a cultural traditional expression, may be extended to being the view of the community – perceives expressing feelings as an emotional and relational engagement that builds community, and moves across private and public space.

Following from this, S. also explicitly speaks about the power of emotions as developing public narratives: she suggests that talking about pain and pressure is not a matter of describing facts and events, but it is rather a way to construct difficult knowledge. People, through empathy and narrative imagination, will receive Palestinians' emotional narratives and will recognize Palestinians in Gaza as 'any other person in the world', and not as 'terrorists'. Languaging of distress, therefore, is not only a coping mechanism that participants adopted

during the wars, but it is also a way to develop a public voice about the injustice they had experienced: externalising emotions is therapeutic and action-oriented.

Differing from Scarry's idea of the need to rely on others to articulate linguistically the embodied experience of pain, Judith Butler's understanding of the public disclosure of vulnerabilities seems to reflect S.'s words more accurately. Butler, in *Precarious life* (2004), argues that individuals are constituted politically by social vulnerability, to which we must attend (2004: 29). Not to attend and rather to ban and foreclose that vulnerability is 'to eradicate one of the most important resources from which we must take our bearings and find our way' (Ibid.:30). Hence, Butler, as well as the participant, finds values in disclosing vulnerabilities publicly, as it would be a source of strength and ultimately a way to change public discourses.

S. continues and highlights the tension that languaging of distress carries. Expressing and transforming emotions related to distress, pain and pressure in interaction, could also be a painful process, as this extract notes:

> I usually write when I am sad or about sad things (giggles). That's why I stopped writing (giggles) … because then it makes me more sad ahah. No... well... (repositioning herself on the chair and showing a more serious facial expression) writing about sad things really is a way to escape (pause). I just, ehm, when I am sad the things that I write is good. I mean… the quality (giggles). But I never wrote a poem that talks about anything happy and it is beautiful! […] For example during the wars I wrote but … ehm it wasn't real poems. But short posts on Facebook. And some of them I wrote them in my mobile, just short, short poems or sentences, but unfortunately my mobile ehm... everything was deleted as it was broken (pause with smile). Maybe in the second war I wrote more (giggles)... but I didn't publish them and I lost them all [giggles]... better, buried with the war (pause). And some of them I published on Facebook (giggles). You can read if you want (giggles). (S., interview, her emphasis)

This extract shows the tensions between writing, healing, beauty, and ultimately the interiority and sociality of emotions. In this extract, S. is less coherent

compared to the previous extract: the precarious balance of this poignant excerpt echoes, in my view, Scarry's *nearly.*

The participant, S., understands her writing about sad lived experiences as her own individual way to 'escape' during the wars, but on the other hand, while giggling, she states that instead of healing her, the process of writing 'was making [her] more sad', so she preferred to stop. At this point of the interview she was clearly joking and making an exaggerated statement; however, she pointed out that, while possessing the language(s) to disclose her distress (both English and Arabic, as she stated at another point of the interview), she felt that articulating the traumatic experiences may not have been such a healing practice. Hence, she decided not to articulate her feelings anymore since expressivity had a negative impact on her own wellbeing. Languaging had the power to shape her emotional life.

As a consequence of that, perhaps, the attachment towards both the writing process and the products of her writing is conflictual: during the interview, her non-verbal and silent clues showed sadness for having lost her written thoughts because her mobile got broken. On the other hand, verbally, she expressed 'relief' as her 'short, short poems or sentences' got 'buried with the war'. *Better.*

In respect to the literary quality of her writing, she says that only when she writes about sadness is she satisfied with the artistic and linguistic quality of her work; on the other hand, showing humility, she minimizes the quality of her writing by stating that what she writes is not real poetry but rather 'just short, short poems or sentences'. The participant finds in the literature and the arts – in poetry – a way to express and translate her experience of pain. She longs for beauty, in search of aesthetics to compensate the void of the painful experience of the war or any other sad thoughts.

The participant does not only create something of beauty out of a context of pain and trauma, but also, in doing so, publicly discloses her vulnerability and her feeling of loss, on social media – specifically, on Facebook. While giggling with embarrassment when talking about her 'short, short sentences', S. invited me to read her public Facebook posts and her blog too. By sharing her emotional, difficult knowledge, she aimed to produce a transformative

narrative, which would carry social and political impact. In doing so, I argue, she transforms her emotional burden, orienting it towards wellbeing.

Languaging distress, and languaging wellbeing, I argue, intersect.

4. Languaging wellbeing: smiling and laughing in the face of adversity

In the previous section, I focused on languaging distress as the capability to express distress and transform emotions in interaction. I have also pointed out that languaging distress is intermingled with 'languaging wellbeing', understood as the interactive sharing and shaping of wellbeing. In this section, I illustrate that a particular way of expressing and framing resilience and wellbeing is related to participants' propensity – or I would say, insistence – on smiling and laughing in the face of despair.

Humour is a form of playing with ideas and its facets stretch from 'enjoyment' to 'finding humour under stress', which according to McGhee (1999) is the most sophisticated form of humour. Other scholars acknowledge that there are many aspects of positive and negative humour and laughter. Peterson and Seligman (2004) selected from amongst those facets the potentially 'virtuous' behaviours:

> The domain of humor is vast and varied, and there exists a huge terminology for describing its types. Some forms are clearly mean (e.g. mockery, ridicule, sarcasm), and others on the border (e.g. parody, practical jokes). We exercise our prerogative by focusing on those forms of humor that serve some moral good – by making the condition more bearable by drawing attention to its contradictions, by sustaining good cheer in the face of despair, by building social bonds, and by lubricating social interactions. (Peterson and Seligman, 2004: 530 in Müller and Ruch, 2011: 368)

In this section, I posit that laughter and humour in my data emerged in the ways that Peterson and Seligman (2004) described. Laughter and humour connected and fostered the social bonding between the participants and myself, made some conditions more bearable by laughing in the face of despair, and added a flavour to our social interactions, pointing at the irony and at the incongruences of the human condition. The comic spirit, as suggested by Bergson (2003), has

something to tell us about the art of living: in the context of this study, it is an embodied performance of languaging wellbeing.

In the extract below, a participant, while describing her Master's research on teaching English phonetics, makes use of humour while addressing the days of the war:

> A.: Ah, I was doing my research during the war in 2012! Israeli soldiers came on the mountain, it is a small mountain and started to shoot fire [she moves her laptop to show me her window from which I can see the hill she mentions] You see? ... our home is in front of this land, so during the night we leave our home and sleep. And I have like books… ehm... like this (showing a pile of books with her hands) and every time we escape I just hold them like this (showing she was carrying her books under her arm) and ahhaha… they are not light, eh... I got them from libraries [giggles]
>
> Grazia: So you were carrying them around every night?
>
> A.: [laughing] ahahah yes! All them! They were from library!!
>
> Grazia: and then you brought them back?
>
> A.: yes of course, but I was late [laughing]... it is not good to bring books late [laughing].
>
> Grazia: oh... [laughing] you are incredible. Did you have to pay the fine then (laughing)?
>
> A: [laughing] ahahha, no no, at library they said ok because it was war! [laughing]
>
> (I breathe deeply and smile. A. breathes and smiles and she sits up on the chair.)
>
> A. continued: Anyway, my research […]

The irony described during the interview was intense: while escaping to safety during the attacks of 2012, a 20-year-old was carrying with her a pile of books, every night, in order to protect them. Instead of complaining about the imposed, unjust, difficult conditions of the war, she ironically complained about the

weight of the books, which 'were not light'. Her capability to laugh in the face of despair is strikingly moving.

In addition, in her humorous way of telling that story of distress, she manifests a strong decorum in respect to the value that she attributed to education and learning, even during the wars. The value that A. attributed to the learning resources of the collectivity is inspiring, and the humorous way in which she recounted this story had a powerful effect on me, which makes me feel uncomfortable in even trying to comment on this data.

The participant's comic spirit reminded me of Edward Said's description of the irreducible smile of Palestinian people (Said, 1986), and of the quintessential Palestinian attitude of being able to laugh and smile in the face of despair. In this study, for instance, participants' expression of wellbeing invoked the capability of smiling and laughing in relation (1) to Palestine and to the Palestinian identity, (2) to themselves as both Palestinians and professionals, and (3) to me as their trainer, as shown in the examples below:

(1) Their [other trainees'] lesson showed us how Palestine can smile and find her way despite the pain. (L., reflective journal).

(2) I have learnt the sense of humour from my colleagues and my teacher. Also, I have learnt to be tolerant with technician problems and to smile in the face of adversity. (A.W., evaluation form)

In the course I learned to laugh and smile to live the situation! ^-^ (A.A., evaluation form).

I think I taught my colleagues to smile despite the pain […] (N.A., evaluation form)

The first gate for being a good teacher is smile, so you surely capture others' minds and hearts. […] The smile gave me a card or a key to enter students' hearts. (N., reflective journal)

(3) The first meeting made me happy and excited specially because Grazia's smile looked very lovey and friendly. (R., reflective journal)

> Grazia was always drawing the smile on her face. Her smile was the best incentive to work during the workshops. Even once she was sick but she was always smiling. (S., evaluation form)

> Dear Grazia, first of all, I miss your smile. […] (Y., email)

As those selected examples show, participants insist on the value of smiling and laughing. I understand that being able to smile and laugh is an embodied manifestation of languaging of wellbeing and an evidence of resilience. It seems to me that this is a typical way of framing expressivity and interactivity that is culturally grounded in the Palestinian displaced community, as Said (1986) also claimed.

Concerning the first extract, 'Palestine can smile and find her way despite the pain' builds on the use of the rhetorical device of the personification of Palestine. Palestine is conceived as a feeling 'individual' that 'smiles' and 'finds her way' despite the severe wounds. In Palestinian literature, Palestine is always metaphorically represented as an old woman, often addressed as mother: it is a subject that has feelings and manages to survive. The participants draw on their traditional and cultural metaphorical repertoire in order to language. On the other hand, Palestine is a shared object of the participants' emotions: participants smile 'on behalf of the nation'. Therefore, to say that 'Palestine smiles' is both to allude to a personified identity of the nation, and at the same time to highlights the feelings that Palestine evokes in the participants. This object of feeling, therefore, develops a way of talking and of languaging about that which bonds together past and present scattered communities.

In regards to participants' smiles (quotations in point 2) and to my act of smiling (quotations in point 3), I show that participants do not only refer to the art of smiling of Palestinians, but also value and emphasize other people's smiles. The Self and Other become attuned in the act of smiling or laughing – producing a dialogical interactive and inter-affective system that potentially breaks the dichotomy between the Self and the Other. As Jensen (2014: 7) points out

> Adaptive flexible behavior is all about adjusting, attuning, directing, opposing or contrasting behavior within a human-environment-system, or human-human-environment-system. Or put in another way, emotions can be seen as the glue of dialogical systems.

The insistence on smiling and laughing in the different ways that have been shown above is embedded in the way participants articulated, framed and externalised wellbeing, and at the same time distress, by focusing on smiling as a reaction to despair. Laughing and smiling can be conceptualized as full, embodied, emotional languaging behaviour, grounded in interaction and in the inter-subjective space. The capability of smiling and laughing, I would say, testifies to and signifies the capability of 'languaging wellbeing'.

The capabilities of languaging distress and wellbeing do not only emerge in participants' expressions, but they were also nurtured pedagogically in the context of the workshop series. The next section illustrates how participants engaged with emotions and with difficult knowledge, bringing them up during a teaching practice, that they entitled 'Being Happy!'.

5. Nurturing the capabilities of emotions and languaging in the classroom: the teaching practice "Being happy!" and a critical engaged pedagogy of wellbeing

During the workshop series, emotions and languaging were always present in the context of the classroom. When language pedagogy occurs under duress and distress, a wellbeing focus needs to take precedence over linguistic competence and skills (Frimberger, 2016). It is beyond my expertise to discuss post-traumatic-disorder interventions through language pedagogy. However, it is important to point out that, as it emerged in the research study, participants envisioned language pedagogy as a possibility for manifesting, constructing and valuing emotions, feelings and affectivity. It is worth pointing out that during the workshop series I have never raised the topic of integrating emotions into pedagogical praxis; however, as this section shows, participants incorporated these into their teaching practices. Participants, aiming to teach something meaningful, always contextualized their efforts and linked their teaching experience to the context outside the classroom. Context was not perceived as a backdrop, but rather, conversely, it shaped the classroom interactions, as this section shows.

The critical feminist pedagogue bell hooks, inspired by Freire and by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, developed what she called 'engaged pedagogy' (hooks, 1994) in line with critical pedagogy (Freire, 1976,

1996). However, as she states, 'engaged pedagogy' is more demanding than the Freirean critical pedagogy, since engaged pedagogy 'emphasizes wellbeing' (hooks, 1994: 15). Drawing on the philosophy of Thich Nhat Hanh, hooks embraces a view of pedagogy that engages with wholeness and aims towards wellbeing, encompassing the mind, the body and the spirit. hooks does not consider the teacher as a healer but believes in the healing purpose of education:

> I do not think that they [students] want therapy from me. They do want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit. They do want knowledge that is meaningful. (Ibid.: 19)

Elaborating on the values of 'engaged pedagogy', the pedagogue Zembylas (2009, 2011, 2012) questioned the role of Freirean critical pedagogy in post-traumatic contexts of conflicts, occupation and Apartheid. Zembylas posited that a dichotomous perspective on victims and oppressors, and an emphasis on static representations, do not offer much to conflict resolution, and transformational change:

> a conception of critical pedagogy that is merely grounded in negative dialectics and counter-affirmation – that is, an emphasis on universalizing tenets about emancipatory forces and oppressive processes, ideologies, and identities – has little value in posttraumatic societies. (Zembylas, 2012: 181)

Conversely, building on hooks' engaged pedagogy, and drawing on Judith Butler's understanding of vulnerability, Zembylas proposes a pedagogy grounded in: a) the value of pedagogic discomfort; b) the value of mutual vulnerabilities; and c) the value of compassion and strategic empathy (Zembylas, 2012: 183). He argues against a 'healing of past wounds' approach, which might hide the relationship between trauma and power, resulting in dismissing or diminishing students' agency. Similarly, Jansen (2009: 258) suggests that pedagogy in post-conflict areas should consider 'the people there, the bodies in the classroom, who carry knowledge within themselves that must be engaged, interrupted, and transformed'.

In this study, emotional and difficult knowledge was conceived to be a meaningful topic, in order to aim towards wellbeing. A group of four participants

decided to develop a teaching practice on the topic of emotions, and to entitle that 'Be happy!'. In this excerpt, the four trainees point out the various reasons behind the choice of the topic of their lesson:

Grazia: why did you choose this lesson?

S.: it is important to give them [the students] words to express their feelings to the world. For examples, ehm… they learn words to express our message to the world.

N.: Yes but also by this lesson we aim to attach the feelings with art of resistance and our Palestine cause… ehm… and also with the feelings we want to develop the communication skills of the students by expressing their feelings easily.

Grazia: why do you want students to be able to express their feelings?

A.: when you express your feelings, you express your mood, you express your hearts, you express, ehm… how you will deal with the other people, for example if I see that people around me have problems – if they are sad sometimes you can't hold the sad by yourself. You cannot hold it yourself…

N.: also you want to change your mood and other people can help you with that.

S.: ehm according… there is a proverb… when you express your happiness it doubles and when you express your sadness it minimizes.

N.: you express ourselves… and our minds and the cause… it is important. If I want to send you a message for our cause… so, how can I do this if I don't know the language to express our feelings and understanding to each other?

This extract confirms the discussion that I developed in the sections of this chapter. It shows that participants view emotions, language and language education as intersecting and tied together. They attach to language the power to voice distress, wellbeing and resilience and at the same time they hope to create empathetic understanding in the interlocutor.

As part of their teaching practice, participants developed a 45-minute lesson on emotions, using creative methodologies, which enhanced a process of affective languaging including whole-body meaning-making and affective engagement. They adapted a lesson taken from the *English for Palestine Grade 9* textbook. In that specific period, the textbook covers terms related to feelings and emotions, e.g. happy, unhappy, sad, depressed, cheerful, to feel, mood, negative, positive, angry, to express, ignore, and dramatic. The *English for Palestine* textbook presents the following activities: (1) a warm-up activity in which students prompted by two drawings answer the questions: 'What can make your friends unhappy'? and 'How can you help your friends when they are unhappy?'; (2) a 'listen and repeat' activity of a list of words related to feelings; and (3) a listening comprehension on a dialogue about friendship.

The four trainees readapted the lesson entirely. Firstly, to introduce the new vocabulary the trainees prepared a game which involved miming words related to feelings. Secondly, instead of a listening comprehension, they opted for a role-play in which students had to enact a conversation between a parent and a daughter who got a bad grade at school: in the role-play, the daughter has to show her parent the bad mark and they improvise a dialogue working through different emotions, e.g. anger, fear, disappointment, etc. To conclude the lesson, the trainees linked the teaching practice to the context of Palestine and Gaza: one of them recited a poem that she wrote for the class and she finally assigned the homework.

Working through performances, drama pedagogy, and poems, participants enabled the classroom to be a safe space for languaging of distress and of wellbeing. In the next paragraphs, I draw on the miming game and on the poem in order to expand on these pedagogical insights further into the role of emotions in critical language education for wellbeing.

5.1 The miming game: 'the embodiment of feelings'

The trainees prepared cards, which were distributed to the 'students', i.e. to their peers who were simulating to be students. Each card contained one of the following words: happy, cheerful, depressed, sad, unhappy, angry, hungry, frightened, mood, hopefully, badly, to feel, to express.

Students in turn had to mime the word that was written on the card making other students guess it. Students were engaged in the game and so were the four trainees. The following extracts taken from that activity clearly demonstrates the attention given to languaging as an inter-affective and whole-body meaning making activity:

> R. picks a card from A.'s hands [the trainee's hands]. She covers the card with her hands, reads it and smiles. She folds the card, and smiles again.
>
> A.: Yalla [come on], R.! Do that.
>
> A. points at the card and R. smiles while looking at her classmates.
>
> Peers are silent. R. smiles again with her lips closed. A student shouts 'happy'.
>
> A.: No! But you are close.
>
> Peers laugh.
>
> A.: come on, R., do it!
>
> R. giggles. Another student says again 'happy'.
>
> A.: Make it! Do cheerful! [giggling] A. puts her hand on her mouth saying 'oh no!' realizing that she disclosed the word written on the card.
>
> Peers laugh and someone says 'it is difficult word!'
>
> Everybody laughs out loud.
>
> A.: this is real cheerful! Now we are doing *real* cheerful!

The teacher A. at the beginning insisted the student 'did' cheerful, to perform it, and to convey the meaning of the word through a whole-body meaning-making exercise. When R. timidly smiled at the beginning, the teacher was not satisfied by her performance and repeatedly encouraged her 'to do cheerful!'. It was only when the emotion was embodied, when the class spontaneously burst out laughing that the teacher pointed out it was 'real cheerful'.

It is interesting how from a miming exercise, the bodies present in class attuned to a moment of laughter which was the one that the teacher revealed to be the real one: in this example of playful activity, participants engaged with a holistic,

bodily meaning-making process. The activity was not only about learning vocabulary, but rather it was an exercise that incorporated the embodiment of feelings and bodily attunement to the environment and the people who inhabit it.

Pedagogically, the trainee pointed out students were performing the word, in a real context. The trainee, in a follow-up interview about the teaching practice, acknowledged that 'it was good for students to laugh, so they also remember the word and they laugh for real', stressing that there is a need in the context of Gaza, to shape positive emotions within the context of the classroom.

This recalls Tim Ingold's view on education of attention as the 'embodiment of feelings' (Ingold, 2000). He refers to the paradigm of embodiment, which encompasses a relational model, in contrast to a genealogical model: culture is relationally developed, transmitted and recreated in immanent interactions. According to Ingold, 'language celebrates an embodied knowledge of the world that is already shared thanks to people's mutual involvement in the tasks of habitation' (Ibid.: 147).

The playfulness and entertainment of the classroom exercise also recalls the 'engaged pedagogy' of hooks (1994) and her focus on embodiment and fun. According to the pedagogue, the classroom should be critical and fun at the same time, in the search towards wellbeing, as I outlined above. It is important to stress that, although in applied linguistics a relaxed and welcoming environment in the classroom has been advocated in order to reduce the affective filter in language learning, hooks here does not interpret playfulness and fun as cognitively instrumental, but rather focuses on the wellbeing of students – and especially of those who have a difficult past. Similarly, the trainees developed playful activities to nurture students' holistic wellbeing.

After the miming game, the trainees then related the fictionalised exercise to real life, putting 'engaged pedagogy' into praxis. They developed a role-play, and after that, one of the trainees performed a poem that she wrote for the teaching practice.

5.2 The poem 'Being happy': engaged pedagogy for wellbeing

Through the activity portrayed above, I demonstrate that emotions and languaging occur in immanent bodily sensations and embodied feelings, and that languaging can be 'the embodiment of feelings' (Ingold, 2000). The trainees, highly committed to a healing education, fully enacted 'engaged pedagogy'. According to hooks, an empowering education cannot happen 'if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks' (hooks, 1994: 21).

The trainees did take risks. In the last activity of their teaching practice, one of the trainees exposed her feelings to her students through this poem, which she had written.

Be Happy!

While we were answering our first final exam in 2008,
Frightening bombs have started, and begun a terrible fate.

Everyone thought of the other, but in this fog, how they can see
Some of the students fainted and others set on their knees
Some went to their homes running
To reach their families, they thought hopefully

We did not know where to go
It was all of a sudden
We did not know what to do
All of us were frightened
How come the children face all these problems?
No one in the world can stand all these bombings!

What mood left for us to feel? What is our expression?
What would it be rather than sadness and depression.

[S.]

The trainee beautifully shared her feelings in relation to the war that occurred in 2008, when she was only 14 years old. In sharing this poem, she works through the troubled/difficult knowledge that she shares with her students: in doing so, she builds 'emotional affinities' with her students who shared the same life

experience (Zembylas, 2012). She exposed her feelings of loss, the frustration caused by injustice, and her demands about children's rights, working through the emotional power of her troubled knowledge.

Working through emotions and feelings (as embodied, shifting, and socially constructed and reconstructed), and languagings of distress and of wellbeing, the trainees built on this capability and developed an engaged language pedagogy for wellbeing. The engaged pedagogy that they developed incorporates the principles outlined by Zembylas (2012), as shown previously, i.e. pedagogical discomfort, mutual vulnerabilities and compassion and strategic empathy. S., through her poem, caused some pedagogical discomfort since after the students had been laughing throughout the whole class, she decided to change the emotional environment by echoing painful memories; secondly, while doing so, she disclosed her vulnerabilities, by sharing her own experience. Thirdly, she generated a poignant contemplating silence in class and prompted compassionate reaction and empathy.

Through poetry and narrative, she created something beautiful, which allowed her to language her distress. The sharing of troubled knowledge, followed by an eloquent and poignant silence, was then interrupted and transformed:

After the trainee recited her poem 'Being Happy', everybody went silent for 6 seconds. Students then started applauding.

S.: For the homework, write about your feelings during the war. (smiling)

There was another short pause; students looked at the teacher with little awkward smiles and astonishment.

F.: (raising her hand) Miss, but (giggling)… which war? (laughing)

S.: (laughing; everybody else laughs)… oh any, you can choose… 2008, 2012, 2014… (laughing)

F.: (giggling) OK, I take 2012!

A.: (laughing) No, I wanted 2012!!

Everybody laughs out loud. (Final workshop)

Such an unexpected moment of authentic and shared laughter interrupted the lesson and brought a new intersubjective state into being. Emotions were relationally and socially reconstructed rapidly in the act of attuning to laughter, and students in doing so nurtured their capability of languaging of distress and wellbeing.

6. Summary

This chapter explored the capability of emotions and languaging in language education in the post-traumatic context of the Gaza Strip.

Firstly, diverging from Nussbaum's conceptualization of the capability of emotion, I presented additional literature drawing from feminist theories on the sociality of emotions (Ahmed, 2004), in order to frame the analysis of the capability as it emerged in this study. I pointed out that languaging and emotions intersect: emotions are not only externalised and expressed, but are also shaped in interaction and through language.

I emphasized that participants did not lose their voices as a result of the difficult and traumatic moments that they experienced during the wars, but rather valued the expression of their emotions and feelings as a coping mechanism which allowed them to shape their wellbeing in difficult circumstances. They also highlighted that by producing emotional narratives and by disclosing their feelings, they aimed to create empathy in their readers who live outside of the Strip. I called this 'languaging distress', understanding it also as a way to express distressful experiences.

Languaging distress also influenced the shaping of wellbeing in interaction, and I therefore argued that in the context of the Gaza Strip this is also interrelated with 'languaging wellbeing'. As part of this capability, I highlighted how participants expressed and shaped their wellbeing: they obstinately insisted on smiling and laughing in the face of despair. Humorous moments frequently occurred during the research project, and I understood the value that these moments carry as a way of languaging wellbeing.

The participants not only expressed and shaped their emotions in their sayings, but also in their doings in the classroom, as language teachers. I therefore posited that 'emotions and languaging' is a capability that can be nurtured in

language education. Shared vulnerabilities, the embodiment of feelings and a relation between the classroom and the real life environment are the ingredients of the engaged language pedagogy that participants developed. This sort of pedagogy, exemplified in the teaching practice 'Being Happy' which I described and analysed, works through the emotional, difficult knowledge, focusing on students' and teachers' mutual growing, and their emotional and embodied wellbeing. This pedagogy needs to interrupt, to create discomfort, to unsettle both the teacher and the students engaged in a mutual growing process.

Chapter VIII. The capability of voice and agency and its corollary, linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance

1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the capability of voice and agency which, in this study, intersects with acts of aesthetic, linguistic and cultural resistance. I suggest that 'voice and agency' is a meta-capability that pervades the other capabilities in language education, whereas linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance is more contextually grounded.

For the analysis in this chapter, I draw on cultural resistance studies, post-colonial studies, critical applied linguistics, and on the theories of the philosopher Jacques Rancière. I argue that the participants have constructed counter-narratives breaking the frames of a system of representation through the system that Rancière (2004, 2010) calls 'the aesthetic regime of art'. The rupture establishes a new perception of the world by shaking hegemonies and hierarchies, and in doing so entails a process of transformation and awareness of individuals as political subjectivities.

Participants manifested their voice and agency and their acts of resistance by constructing alternative epistemologies both textually, through creative pieces that belong within the tradition of Palestinian Arts of Resistance, and with their everyday acts as language teachers. By analysing both these dimensions, resistance is explored as performed at different levels: resistance against established aesthetic norms of classic Palestinian Arts of Resistance (Tripp, 2012 ; Salih and Richter-Devroe, 2014); linguistic resistance against English-language teaching pedagogies developed in the centre (Canagarajah, 2003); and resistance against a 'banking' system of education (Freire, 1976, 1996; Giroux, 1992).

The chapter is structured as follows: firstly, I point out how the capability of voice and agency underpinned the workshop series and emerged also in the previous chapters; secondly, I turn to linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance by presenting the relevant literature and analysing participants' everyday acts of resistance as language teachers; and finally, analysing a teaching practice that a

group of four participants developed and taught in peer-to-peer teaching-mode entitled 'The world and its countries... in the Palestinian way', I demonstrate how participants nurtured this capability in the context of the classroom. In the last section, I explore the values and goals of language education in the Gaza Strip, which are related to building critical hope and peaceful resistance.

2. Voice and agency

In the model that Crosbie (2014) developed, which integrates the capabilities approach into language education, she unpacks voice and agency as a capability drawing on Barnett (2007) and Sen (1999) respectively. Briefly, in Barnett's view 'voice' is conceptualized as developing individual self-expression and as finding a position in the world. Sen refers to agency as acting and bringing change in relation to one's own values and objectives (Sen 1999: 19).

In the previous chapters, although I presented and discussed other capabilities, I have already mentioned 'voice and agency' as emerging in the findings: for instance, in Chapter V, I demonstrated that participants and I acted upon the challenges encountered in establishing connections, and in these acts we found possibilities for transformational processes of ontological becoming. In doing so, we nurtured our capability of agency and as a result we shaped the network in which we operated. In the same chapter, I discussed also how participants, in order to strengthen the Internet connection, were entitled to mute me on Skype, and that they had 'the power to do things by themselves', acting according to their own sense of responsibility, their values and their goals, as a participant stated.

In Chapter VI, I introduced the topic of voice in relation to the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004), to mobility. During a workshop, in the activity related to the video about the 'Palestinian dream', I showed how a participant, revealing her own dream, resisted answering my initial question about the content of the video, and decided to discuss her own dream instead. Her dream was to be able to travel outside the Gaza Strip. While nurturing her capacity to aspire, she also developed her voice, i.e. the faculty to neglect, contest, or critically think (Appadurai, 2004), and also to be silent, when she decided to interrupt the disclosure of her own dream.

In Chapter VII, voice was embedded into languaging. Languaging includes both voicing one's own emotional knowledge, and constructing emotions in interaction with others, both privately and in public social media. Participants manifested their willingness to unpack emotions and to bring them to the surface in order to create narratives which could convey empathetic understanding to others outside the Strip. They nurtured their capability of emotions and languaging in class, by integrating the difficult knowledge deriving from their lived experiences.

Therefore, I believe that voice and agency underpinned the capabilities discussed in the previous chapters, and hence, that it is a meta-capability in language education. It pervades and enables the other capabilities, having what Nussbaum (2011) called an 'architectonic role'. In other words, it forms the foundations for nurturing the other capabilities, and it is at the heart of language education. In the context of the Gaza Strip, however – and specifically in this study – voice and agency develops contextually into another capability, which I understand as being its corollary: aesthetic, linguistic and cultural resistance. The next section discusses some of the literature which I drew upon in order to unpack this capability.

3. Linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance

In the post-war context and under siege and forced immobility, coping with the detrimental conditions of everyday life could be framed in terms of resilience. Chandler (2012: 217) defines resilience as 'the capacity to positively or successfully adapt to external problems or threats'. However, in the context of Palestine, resilience and resistance are strictly intertwined, and Palestinians themselves prefer to point at resistance (Ryan, 2015), since they not only adapt to their living conditions, aiming at survival, but rather find ways to protest against the conditions in which they live, through violent uprisings, artistic work, or in language.

In the Palestinian context, everyday peaceful practices of resistance are locally expressed in the concept of *sumoud*, which could be translated as the 'perplexity, sadness, resilience and weary endurance' (Shehadeh, 2015: 76) and is specific to the Palestinian habitus after decades of occupation, after a forced diaspora, and family separations. Ryan (2015) defines sumoud as 'resilient

resistance', which primarily consists of rejoicing in Palestinian culture, traditions, and in life in general, despite the harsh living conditions, and not within those conditions. In this thesis, linguistic, cultural and aesthetic practices of resistance could also be contextually described as the practice of sumoud.

In the literature on applied linguistics, as I already presented in Chapter III, linguistic resistance consists of the appropriation of both English, to write counter-narratives and alternative epistemologies (Pennycook, 1994, 1998; hooks, 1994), and of critical, creative and localized English pedagogies, to counter English imperialism (Canagarajah, 2003, 2013). Language, as owned by each speaker, is an egalitarian tool in which resistance can take place.

In relation to aesthetic and cultural resistance, I turn to the work of the philosopher Jacques Rancière, who wrote extensively about the Aesthetic Regime of Art and the relation between politics and aesthetics (Rancière, 2004, 2010). The aesthetic regime of art is a system that provokes a rupture amongst the given orders of norms and representation (i.e. the system of representation), shaking hegemonies and hierarchies and allowing heterogeneities and subjectivities to be valued and to emerge. Rancière interprets 'aesthetic acts' as configurations of experience that create new modes of perception and induce novel forms of 'political subjectivity' (Rancière, 2004: 9). The aesthetic regime of art, as intersection between aesthetic and politics, is therefore grounded in 'dissensus' (Rancière, 2010).

Dissensus – as the opposite of consensus – is at the heart of the aesthetic-political nexus: politics started when people in the domains of the domestic and invisible 'territory of work and reproduction' started to manifest their voice and 'dissensual commonsense' (Rancière, 2010: 139). Similarly, this aesthetics creates new configurations and sensory experiences in unanticipated ways, breaking with predetermined regimes (Rancière, 2010).

Drawing a parallel with Rancière's theories on politics and aesthetics, I argue that linguistic and cultural resistance practices embody dissensus, much in the same way in which aesthetics and politics are related: within an aesthetic regime of art, linguistic and cultural resistance can be interpreted as art which reconfigures what is visible and what is invisible and what is speakable and unspeakable. The participants in this study, with both their textual-artistic

productions and their everyday resistance practices, developed their individual political subjectivities and produced counter-narratives which carry political meaning, as the next sections will show.

4. Everyday acts of resistance: 'the art of the beautiful and the art of living'

Rancière discusses the aestheticization of the common experience. He argues that 'aesthetic experience will bear the edifice of the art of the beautiful and of the art of living […] the aesthetic experience is effective inasmuch as it is the experience of that *and*. It grounds the autonomy of art, to the extent that it connects it to the hope of 'changing life'' (Rancière, 2010: 116). This is what 'critical art' does (Ibid.).

Similarly, the participants, writing about what Arts of Resistance mean to them, stressed that it is both critical art and the aestheticization of their lived experiences, as the extracts below demonstrate:

> Art of resistance is a language of silence and pains by artists, poets, painters, etc. who use it to show how much they love their country as well as it's a way to present their own pains that cannot easily be shown. They are trying to hide the pains which are so close to their hearts, lives, and souls defying their dignity. Art of resistance is a sign of silence that is a result of continuing pains people still suffer from, so keeping silent and talking by their drawings, poems, words, music surely are the language that those artists would like to come through showing their own tears and pictures of love and smiles. (N., written assignment)

In this poetic extract, N. relates Arts of Resistance to Palestinian artists' voice and agency, who, suffocated by the conditions in which they live, produce works of art to express their distress and to protest against the injustice they are subject to. The participant also poignantly describes the place of silence in unspeakable traumas, which, for artists, is replaced by other symbolic forms of representations, e.g. by music, paintings, and poetic productions. Their expressions are not always manifested in the linguistic form. N. implicitly posits that the content of artists' work of resistance is not only tears and distress, but also 'pictures of love and smiles'. The recurrent presence of 'love and smile', as analysed in the previous chapter, represents what I called 'languaging of

wellbeing': in N.'s view, artists return to beauty and produce something beautiful with their sufferings, longing for justice.

The aestheticization of the lived experiences, as well as forms of dissensus, being it cultural, linguistic, and aesthetic, are found in participants' everyday lives as language teachers. Their resistance against the system in which they live clearly emerges in the next extract:

> When you see a teacher having unhealed wounds teaching his children to be patient, determined, and painstaking, you should realize that this is art of resistance in Gaza. [...] the people of Gaza try their best to overcome the situation and prepare a generation that defend their identity. (A., written assignment)

This participant relates Arts of Resistance to her own living experience, and reflects on the art of living of teachers in the Gaza Strip, who despite their own distressful and traumatic experiences caused by the siege, teach their students values like hopeful patience and determination. Other participants also pointed out that they practise resistance as language teachers, not only against the siege, but also within their own community, and especially when working within the education system that the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) has developed for Palestinian refugees. This point requires further elaboration, since it not only points at the capability discussed in this chapter, but it also speaks to the importance of an education system that contextually develops individuals' values, goals, and aspirations.

4.1 Resisting UNRWA and developing a hidden curriculum

The participants clearly articulated the tensions they feel about the education system provided by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As contextualised in Chapter I, UNRWA has a humanitarian mandate and is responsible for the provision of education to Palestinian refugees. The vision of the education programme is a holistic mission 'which develops the full potential of Palestine Refugees' (UNRWA, 2011: 1).

However, it must be noted that the implementation of the UNRWA's mandate has been critiqued by participants. They have lamented the discrepancies

between UNRWA's stated education policies, and the actual implementation of those policies on the ground:

> ...there [in the schools of UNRWA], it's teaching English you know... only for exam. I don't want to work there! with UNRWA... [laughing] they would fire me after one day. You are not free in teaching there. I would leave straightaway... no politics, no resistance, no justice... it doesn't make sense how they do education there... it is not education in fact how I ... ehm, how I think education is, not for exams... not like they do. [laughing] no no, UNRWA is not for me [laughing]. I understood this with you, Grazia, ehm, that I want a job to make me more free. (N., interview)

N. openly states her disappointment in the UNRWA education system. During the course of the workshop series, she states, she understood that she wanted a job in which she could be free, and which allowed her to teach according to her values and goals. She argues against a 'banking system' of education (Freire, 1976, 1996), which does not entail critical thinking and the development of the individual as a political and critical human being. It is important to note that In Gaza, the graduate unemployment rate has reached 64 percent, (UNRWA, 2017b) and UNRWA's contracts (most of the time, temporary) are among the best working conditions that teachers can potentially aspire to. The courage of this participant must be acknowledged: she decided to not try the UNRWA recruiting test, as being employed within that system would not be pertinent and coherent with her own values. She wants to dedicate herself to teaching in a meaningful way.

Her main disappointment related to the UNRWA system is its neutrality, which does not allow discussion about resistance, and hence does not nurture students' ontological and epistemological becoming. In doing so, the system does not allow for a space to develop an 'engaged pedagogy' (hooks, 1994). Other participants lamented the same issue:

> In UNRWA schools it is HIGHLY NOT recommended to talk about resistance and occupation. Teachers are allowed to celebrate special occasions but they are not allowed to prepare special materials to teach about resistance and resistance IS OUR LIFE because we live under occupation. Teachers can't encourage any act of resisting any kind of occupation.

However, some teachers have a great sense of duty to the Palestinian cause that makes them risk their jobs to enlighten students about their cause and dilemma. (F., reflective journal, her emphasis)

F. stressed that resistance is what characterizes a life under conditions of siege, and as such, education cannot be separated from that. However, she complains that within UNRWA schools it is not permitted to extend the debate to resistance. She continues by describing ways in which teachers, even those who work for UNRWA, practice forms of everyday resistance, covertly: these included posts on social networks and also classroom practices such as developing an integrated curriculum which also facilitates students' discussions of what matters to them: i.e., feelings, lived experiences, poems.

For instance, another participant, who had previously worked for UNRWA, articulated further on that:

Actually, I enjoyed our course because it was very important for us as Palestinian teachers. This helps us to pay attention for hidden curriculum that makes me feel that I am taking charge of great job, which requires growing the next generation who will liberate Palestine. It is greater than just teaching a language. It is definitely building conscious and brave minds instead of explaining lessons and having exams. (L., evaluation form)

During a follow-up interview with her, I asked her what she meant by 'hidden curriculum', and she explained:

The hidden curriculum that we have to do our things but hiddenly because we are not allowed. (L., interview)

The concept of 'hidden curriculum' as developed by Henry Giroux, encompasses 'those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life' (Giroux, 2001: 47). L. refers to the process of transmitting to students values and beliefs against those stated institutional norms that regulate teachers' behaviour within the UNRWA Institution and its system of education. Teachers, therefore, in order to fulfil their role as educators, need to practise resistance and to resist the system

within which they teach in order to develop their own critical pedagogy as the practice of hope and resistance.

The next section describes how the capability of linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance was developed within the context of a classroom, during a teaching practice that participants developed.

5. Nurturing linguistic, aesthetic, and cultural resistance in the classroom: the teaching practice 'The world with its countries… in the Palestinian way'

A group of four participants, starting from the English for Palestine textbook as input, re-adapted and re-created the lesson 'The world with its countries' (Grade 9, unit 10) '…in the Palestinian way', as they re-named it. They delivered the teaching practice to their peers, who pretended to be students. The chosen lesson is the last lesson of a unit about respecting the environment and the beauty of natural sites around the world. The period focuses on the poem 'The world with its countries', written by John Cotton. The textbook activities involve: (1) an audio recording of the English poem 'The world with its countries'; (2) a comprehension task in the form of a 'mix and match headings-paragraphs' exercise, (3) a grammar exercise on adjective formation, and (4) the reading out loud of the poem.

The four participants adapted, re-structured and delivered the 45-minute lesson, developing their own teaching materials, but following the main topic of the lesson, i.e. the poem 'The world with its countries'. In preparation to the poem, they introduced unfamiliar vocabulary through visuals collated in a PowerPoint presentation; they drilled pronunciation and prepared controlled exercises to reinforce the memorization of the new vocabulary. Then, they focused on the poem by John Cotton: in order to foster and scaffold a gradual understanding, they elicited students' opinions on the poem in a brainstorming activity in pairs, and then they monitored understanding through a quiz competition.

The four trainees, then, complemented these activities by including creative and critical methods in the second part of the teaching practice, in which they experimented with different Arts of Resistance: (1) they showed a video with pictures of Palestine and the Palestinian poem 'Who am I without exile?' by Mahmoud Darwish; (2) they created and performed what they called a 'simple

drama' on the topic of the lesson; and (3) one of them performed the poem 'The world with its countries… in the Palestinian way', which she had written for the lesson. The next paragraphs present those critical and creative activities.

5.1 The video 'Who am I without exile?'

First, the four participants showed a video taken from YouTube, which consisted of a photographic presentation of historical and natural sites in Palestine including sites in the Gaza Strip and in the Occupied Territories, showing ruins and historical tourist places, as well as olive trees, the Gaza beach and the hills of Palestine. The video had a Palestinian traditional instrumental arrangement as a soundtrack, and a voiceover was reciting the famous Palestinian poem 'Who am I, without exile?', written by Mahmoud Darwish.

As the four pre-service teachers played the video, everyone went silent, admiring the pictures and listening to the poem. The poem in the video was in Arabic, and this was one of the few occasions in which participants drew on their own multilingual repertoire during an English teaching practice. In the debate that followed the video, participants (both the four teachers and the peers-students) articulated contrasting sensory, affective and emotional reactions: a participant found it 'extremely sad' because of the frustration it evoked, whereas another participant loved the video because of the attachment with her native tongue and with the poem, as the extract below demonstrates:

> A.: How is the video?'
>
> [Nobody replies promptly]
>
> A: Do you like the video, girls?
>
> [Someone breaths deeply, and everybody is silent]
>
> F.: The video is extremely sad. [Silence]. It is a dream for us to visit these places but we are under siege, under war, under occupation… Everything has been stolen… In Palestine they want to go to the sea, here is Gaza we have the most beautiful sea, but they cannot. We want to visit the mountains and Jerusalem and our land, but we cannot. [Silence].
>
> L.: I loved the video in Arabic, ehm with Darwish. It makes a bridge between the English literature and our Palestine language and culture.

[...] it is good to see Arabic because we love this poem and it is in Arabic. It makes a relation with us and it is a beautiful poem!

B.: it is resistance. Resistance links everything because we are living under occupation.

L. and B. interpreted the video as being an example of a critical work of art which encompassed 'dissensus', or in their words, 'resistance', which pervades art and the art of living. Dissensus happens when an Arabic – Palestinian – poem becomes part of an English lesson. Whereas in a 'traditional' English lesson their Palestinianness needed to remain hidden, so that they could have taught the English language, here the introduction of an 'artefact' that epitomizes a Palestinian aesthetic allows visibility to the hidden subculture. L. points out that using the poem 'makes a relation with us' and B. that 'resistance links everything', because of the specific context of oppression in which they live. Using the poem and the video attends to establishing this link – which is often contested.

5.2 The 'Simple Drama'

After the poem by Darwish, the four trainees performed a brief sketch that they had prepared for the class, adopting drama pedagogy: three of them acted out the script that they themselves wrote, while the fourth one played the soundtracks they had chosen for the performance. The performance, in English, was about the plights of an old lady in exile, who remembers the 'old days' in Palestine and the places she is now prevented from visiting. The script of the short 'play' that the four of them developed is reproduced as follows.

The mother, Um Saeed was sitting on the table, contemplating at her past days. Suddenly, her daughters, Lara and Mariam get to the home suddenly, and greet their mum. The daughters ask their mother: Oh mum, how it's going? The mother replied with a sick voice: "Not so good". The daughters start wondering: "oh why? What's wrong with you?" The mum releases her thoughts related to the past days saying:
"I do miss that days". Lana and Lara start wondering: "Oh, what days do you miss mum? Tell us!" Um Saeed starts to narrate her story saying:
"That time when the roses sway along the bay,

It was a time when we were gathering beside the lake,

It was a time when we were crossing the rivers, diving highly deep in the sea, playing around the trees and smelling the lovely breeze,

It was a time when doves were knitting their nests up the mountain,

It was a time when children were singing for freedom and say: we are free,

It was a dream, but I waked up to see how roses withered, how rivers besieged, how doves where chased, so they far away fled".

The daughters got too much sad over that speech dismal. They feel how much they are deprived from their least rights which everyone should own as a human body, which is to enjoy the air and the natural views of their country, Palestine.

Lara replied: "Oh, mum how harmful to live in this open prison!! when I want to watch any place from our country, we google and search for it to see just a pictures, yes, we watch nothing, but a picture which can't be touched!!".

Lana replies: "but we will struggle and fight", Lara continues: "we will strive", the mum happily ends the conversation: "and survive"

A. played the role of the mum
L. played the role of Lara
R. played the role of Lana

The script and its pedagogical use present an opportunity for insightful reflection.

First of all, the four trainees re-appropriated drama pedagogy. The trainees performed a sketch and a poem without setting tasks for the students. They made use of drama pedagogy to create a moment of contemplation and admiration during the teaching practice: pedagogically, it was a moment of (aesthetic) rupture. In doing so, they activated a careful negotiating process: pedagogies that were introduced during the workshop series (as drama pedagogy) were not unproblematically received by the trainees, but were rather appropriated according to the trainees' needs. This recalls Canagarajah's

concept of linguistic resistance, wherein not only English must be appropriated but also ELT pedagogies (Canagarajah, 2003: 122).

It must be acknowledged that my virtual presence probably affected the way in which participants made use of drama pedagogy: for instance, when I was sent the script of their play, I found I was included as a spectator:

> this is our simple drama that we did during our lesson on Saturday, hope you liked it, Grazia. (A.W., email)

I interpreted the drama performance as a gift, given because of the network of relationships that we had established. It was an aesthetic piece of critical art, without the intention to be used as such: it did not have a pedagogical motive attached to it other than contemplation and admiration, and trainees could not have anticipated what my response would have been. They just 'hoped that I liked it'. In doing so, they actually stimulated my curiosity, and provoked a reaction in me, which configured in my willingness to write about that. This is what critical art does: it stimulates reactions in the spectator who is moved to respond and to continue the work initiated by the art piece (Rancière, 2004, 2010).

Secondly, the script, written by the participants, combines symbols of the traditional Palestinian literature of resistance such as checkpoints, passports, walls, keys of destroyed homes etc., with new symbols which do not belong to this tradition: for instance, the daughters add to the mother's memories that they use Google now, to search for beautiful pictures of their land. Adding the technological dimension to the reality of immobility is an interesting choice, as it breaks with the Palestinian aesthetic regime, and introduces a component of modernity. As Salih and Richter-Devroe write, traditional symbols risk normalizing Palestinians as victims of the past before the international audience (Salih and Richter-Devroe, 2014: 21). Conversely, the participants replaced those classical symbols with roses, birds, rivers, sea, lakes and technologies: they affirmed their subjectivities as writers and agents and as young people engaging with contemporary challenges and opportunities. They appropriated English to re-write narratives, altering both a sense of beauty and the power structures of established regimes, nurturing aesthetic, cultural and linguistic resistance, as the following poem also demonstrates.

5.3 The poem 'The world with its countries…in the Palestinian way'

As a conclusive activity during the teaching practice, one of the trainees performed the poem she had written for the occasion: 'The world with its countries… in the Palestinian way'. The table below presents side by side the original poem by John Cotton and the one that A.W. wrote.

The world with its countries	The world with its countries… in the Palestinian Way
The world with its countries, Mountains and seas, People and creatures, Flowers and trees, The fish in the waters, The birds in the air Are calling to ask us all to take care There are our treasures, A gift from above, We should say thank you With a care that shows love For the blue of the ocean, The clearness of air, The wonder of forests, And the valleys so fair. The song of the skylark, The warmth of the sun, The rushing of clear streams And a new life begun Are gifts we should cherish, So join in the call To strive to preserve them For the future of all. John Cotton	The world with its countries mountains and trees rivers and fields are looking at us with blind eye and deaf ear the fish in the water the birds in the air are all calling for freedom screaming in one voice: "What is happening to Palestinians is unfair" The birds were looking for food the bees were looking for honey but they were attacked by bullets so they fled away these treasures roses, Shrubberies and trees, was bringing to our soul all sorts of pleasure but by their beauty, the Israeli army bother so they cut off the trees, and the roses withered the bird's voice scattered A.W.

The participant who was leading the teaching practice, A.W., re-wrote a poem that belongs to English literature and adapted it to suit the Palestinian aesthetic tradition. However, in doing so, again she broke with the regime of the Palestinian tradition, also drawing on John Cotton's poem itself. In addition, she

encouraged her peers in class to write their own poem in response to the English one. Two examples are presented below:

Thinking and thinking what to write Thinking of rhythm Thinking of rhyme What can I say A lecture or three hours of living with nature beauty My soul was flying with the skylark I was like seeing the rivers and the seas I was walking under the trees Yet, I remembered Palestine Where is my land I feel so sad (A.A.)	Going to nature Going to life Going to the green Going to Palestine We have just sea We have also a dream Being in love And being free Give us back our right And we give you your siege By our hope and heart Palestine will be free (N.A.)

Those three activities described above entail acts of linguistic, aesthetic and cultural resistance. Participants produced works of 'critical art' and used them during their lesson for pedagogical purposes. In doing so, they reconfigured the art of resistance itself and re-created English pedagogies that suited their needs. They used art as resistance.

5.4 Critical reflection on the teaching practice

After the teaching practices, there was a thought-provoking debate among the participants themselves, which summarizes several themes already discussed in this study. The debate touched upon: (a) the context of Gaza, with its barriers and unfreedoms; (b) the aspired-to well-being of the participants; and (c) an overall emergence of capabilities as part of language education. The dialogue itself was a moment of critical examination. Such a rich debate was prompted by a participant, who questioned the choice of using the poem 'The world with its countries' by John Cotton since in her opinion it was unrelated to the context of Gaza. Participants got involved in a process of critical reasoning:

N.M.: I don't see ehm... links... connections

N.A.: The poet is a Christian poet, it is a poem about humanity as connected by God who gave us his gifts from above. It is about human beings. Now our role is to make a mission and to bridge this poem to our cause of struggling for Palestine and Gaza. … The acting explained those links.

A.W.: The aim is to *incorporate* English and Art of Resistance in class and so we did it [...]

N.A.: For example, we are in Gaza; we are prevented to move anywhere. We live in prison. What are our dreams? Dreams here are to make students *fly* to Palestine… The poem helps us to be in touch with Palestine.

F.A.: I'm nervous about that because we can never go to our land and can only see it through the pictures. Our homeland… [...]

B.B.: We are prevented from going anywhere. And in prison we need to challenge the occupation.

N.M.: OK, I agree with you, but the English poem is in *English* and it talks about beautiful nature and it is *not* linked to our reality.

N.A.: We have to make our students fly. This English poem will be for *them*, to make it their voice. I don't know... but I think that they can do it. Ehm... They can use this poem and make it *their* voice. It is for them. [Pause] It is for us. [Pause] We have plenty of songs that capture our attention and maybe they are American or Indian songs and Bollywood. English is an international language so we can use it!

N.M.: I mean OK, but what can you give to the students through that poem? How can we make related to us? What's the message? [Pause] I'm not a student, I am a *Palestinian* student.

N.A.: [Pause] We are *all* human beings. This is the message.

(their emphasis)

The participants started by introducing and reflecting on their own context of siege, which also has consequences for the learning and teaching process. Wellbeing and the values and goals of language education in this context are,

according to participants, 'to make students fly', and I would add, for teachers to fly with them: trainees insist on nurturing hopes and aspirations, in spite of distress and despair.

In order 'to make students fly', to overcome the restrictions imposed by the siege, participants made use of videos, poetic texts and images in order to nurture imagination. Nussbaum calls 'narrative imagination' the capability to empathize with others through textual encounters and literature (2006a). The participants made use of different sensory inputs in order to establish reciprocal empathetic relationships: on one hand, students had the opportunity to aspire and live their dreams of freedom by exploring texts and beautiful images related to places that are inaccessible; and on the other hand, they re-appropriated those texts and images to convey their voice and agency to the world 'outside the prison'.

In establishing this reciprocal relationship, participants also nurtured their capability of affiliation: they are bound both to their community ('I'm not a student, I'm a *Palestinian* student!'), and at the same time they are aware of the fact that 'we are all human beings': it is their mission to make 'humanity' aware of the unjust conditions in which they live and therefore to share the responsibility for a more humane future.

In order to communicate, participants stressed the value of English as an international language which is owned and used by every speaker for different purposes. This is a form of 'linguistic resistance' (Canagarajah, 2003). The debate itself consisted of a respectful discussion, which involved a dialogic process of critical reasoning and critical thinking skills, which were also acknowledged by participants in follow-up interviews. They all were enthusiastic about the debate, and N.M. commented:

> The debate was so, so useful […] It was the best because we have to relate everything... with the art to our situation, to our *doing* and *living*... and it will be so interesting to us and to the students... ehm... to show the potential that we… and they... have something to *do*, something to *say*. Also… [giggling] N.A. was right about being human beings [giggling]. [N.M., interview]

The participant's reflections on the dialogue that occurred after the teaching practice embed critical pedagogy theories about praxis as the combination of both action and reflection (Freire, 1996). The process of collective critical thinking was an act of cognition in dialogic praxes. Thanks to the reflexive process, N.M., one of the two participants involved in the dialogue, modified her opinion and acknowledged that her peer made her reflect about her own affiliation to both the Palestinian community and 'humanity'. She acknowledged that in the interview, showing her humility and openness.

Freire writes that 'dialogue cannot exist without humility' and dialogue fuels and is fuelled by critical thinking (Ibid.: 71-73). According to Freire, dialogue is the core of 'problem-posing' education which is 'constantly remade in praxis', through action and reflection (Ibid.: 65). The actors are therefore involved in a constant process of becoming. Similarly, the participant commented on the 'potential' becoming of both teachers and students, who in the dialogic process nurture their 'voice and agency', and the awareness that 'they have something to do, something to say'. During the debate itself, what N.M. had to do and say was indeed to resist the decisions of her peers and to debate it with them, nurturing her faculty of voice as contestation.

Voice and agency, with resistance, pervade all the capabilities mentioned in this study, emerging in different ways. Hence, I interpret voice and agency as a meta-capability which enables other capabilities to be cultivated and converted into achieved functionings. On the other hand, I consider participants' acts of resistance as achieved functioning themselves, since they transformed the capability of voice and agency into political actions according to their values and goals found in critical hope and peaceful resistance.

6. Values and goals of language education

The considerations that particularly emerged in this chapter, both on the everyday practices of resistance and also on how participants nurtured this capability in the context of the classroom, led to the analysis of the values and goals of language education in the Gaza Strip. The analysis of the data shows that participants view the English language as instrumental to allow their 'besieged' voices to be heard before the international audiences that have the power to influence the living conditions in the Gaza Strip. The instrumental

teaching and learning of English as a way to develop voice, agency and linguistic and cultural resistance is a political educational act, in the Freirean understanding of the terms (1976, 1994, 1996, 1998). In addition, it is an act that embeds and embodies critical hope towards an aspired justice and more holistic wellbeing: learning and voicing thoughts in the international foreign language par excellence is an act of hope and resistance in itself. Hence, I claim that the participants view English-language teaching as having two fundamental and intersecting values and goals: to nurture critical hope and to foster peaceful resistance. In addition, I discuss the holistic view of language teaching put forward by the participants as a way to develop individuals' full humanity despite the inhuman condition imposed on them.

6.1 Language education to nurture critical hope

According to Freire, 'critical hope' is the constant development of individuals' critical awareness, and drives the struggle to improve human existence (Freire, 1994). As such, it is 'an ontological need' anchored in practice: hope by itself does not have the power to ameliorate society, but on the other hand, the struggle to make the world a better place cannot consist of calculated acts or scientific approaches that do not consider hope as a driving force (Ibid.: 2). Hope is, therefore, at the same time an ontological need and an embodied experience, involving the entire body, feelings, desires, cognitions, emotions and intuitions. It is at the intersection of the cognitive and the affective domain. Hope also acts in the search for completeness of the human condition, and it is in this hope-driven quest, that the 'political' value of a transformative education and educability of beings is found (Ibid.).

The role of education in fostering this 'critical hope' as a way to resist the status quo and strive for change and transformation also comes through the words of a participant, when she highlights that

> After several wars on Gaza, students were about to lose their hopes or smiles, considering their life in Gaza was just a miserable one with no any right to live as other ladies [...] as a teacher I have this responsibility on my shoulders to reinforce our right in existence as human beings on our own land. (A., reflective journal)

The participant, committed to an education that engages with societal transformation, stresses the identity of Palestinians as 'human beings' who live in a land they cannot, however, freely inhabit or move across. In a situation of denial of basic rights to safety, dignity, and self-determination, the responsibility of a teacher is, according to A., to nurture students' hopes and smiles, and to provide her students with the vocabulary to articulate this capacity to aspire before the international community.

Similarly, in the extract below, L. summarizes the values and goals of English-language education in the context of siege of the Gaza Strip:

> English is a golden opportunity for students to speak and discuss the Palestinian dreams and talents to the entire world, to spread the truth of Palestinian people who love life and deserve to live better than these miserable conditions. (L., written assignment)

Thus, L. argues for equipping students with a foreign vocabulary that enables them to express their dreams and hopes, as well as denouncing the situation of despair in which they live. Through language education, individuals can articulate their aspiration for wellbeing and manifest their identities as 'full humans', as individuals who 'love life and deserve to live better', who have a capacity to dream and to aspire in the face of despair, and to manifest their dreams and aspirations through the denunciation of their conditions. Within the context of these needs and aspirations, English is seen as a channel to reach the widest possible audience.

By claiming that the students should be aware of the difficult conditions in which they live, L. implicitly discusses a process of 'conscientizacao' (Freire, 1996: 140), of building critical consciousness, as she articulates her belief that her students should be involved in a process of active transformation by producing counter-narratives in English. This involves both critical awareness and a focus on the process of being and becoming.

Freire claims that hope needs practice in order to become historically concrete (Freire, 1994). Historical conditions are not naturally occurring, but are rather the result of the individual's interaction with and intervention on one's own and others' contexts. This leads to the second value and goal that participants

identified for English language pedagogy in the Gaza Strip: namely, peaceful resistance.

6.2 Language education to foster peaceful resistance

Similarly, the participants find in language one of the possible manifestations of *sumoud* (Ryan, 2015), and ascribe to this the critical hope that comes with the value and goal of learning English as the international language:

> The language itself can be stronger than military trend. Students should feel that they learn English to defend their land and rights and to spread the truth of Palestinian reality, not just to have exams and succeed at specific level. (L., written assignment)

Peaceful resistance linked to critical hope – which, as can be seen in the above extract, is embedded in linguistic resistance (Canagarajah, 2003) – involves the attempt to overcome isolation and to re-write and disseminate counter-narratives, as these extracts illustrate. It also involves rejecting the oppression and enclosure that occupation imposes, as S. unequivocally argues in her evaluation form:

> We need to learn how to resist by using the western language in order to convey our message and our voice to the whole world. [S., evaluation form].

English-language education in the Gaza Strip, as these extracts clearly demonstrate, is one of the practices of hope and peaceful resistance to the siege imposed by the multi-purpose isolation of nearly two million people living in the Gaza Strip. It offers the possibility to nurture relationships by breaking the isolation, letting the wider world know about the challenges the siege imposes, and looking for solidarity across borders. Language education, therefore, has a holistic value.

6.3 'Language is not a set of boxes'

The role of education as holistic in fostering individuals' dreams and ambitions and in giving them the tools to 'talk back' (hooks, 1989, 1994; Pennycook, 1994) is a perspective that appears to be embedded in how education is perceived in the Gaza Strip. Rather than simply focussing on 'academic' and 'operational'

competences (Barnett, 2010), language education is also seen as having a transformative power, one that has wider social and individual repercussions. Barnett (2010) criticises educational practices that are increasingly instrumentally driven. Rather, he argues for 'lifewide learning', that is a learning that is the result of several concurrent influences, as opposed to the single, vertical dimension of lifelong learning.

This holistic view resonates with the transformative power of educational praxis which the participants in the Gaza Strip talk about, and encompasses both changes in the material-socio-economic circumstances and the individuals' process of becoming. This is reflected in the course's evaluation form returned by N., in which she focuses on her responsibility of being a 'good model' for her students, of showing them the way to be active and committed political agents:

> I believe that me as a teacher should be a good model to teach students how to defend their cause, rights, and dreams. (N., evaluation form)

N.'s commitment and understanding of her role as a language teacher goes beyond the context of the classroom. During a presentation that she prepared with one of her peers as part of a classroom activity during the teacher training course (see Figure 11), she emphasized that language teaching needs to be engaged with daily life, and that language cannot be perceived 'as a set of boxes'.
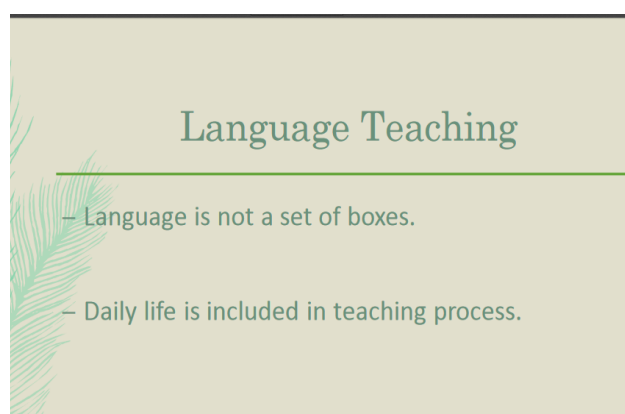

Figure 11: Power Point Slide on Language Teaching

As she explained during the presentation, language cannot be taught as a series of gap filling exercises, as a sequence of role-plays, or through listening and reading comprehensions only. Rather, she put forward a view of language education as being part of everyday life, which, under duress and distress as in the Gaza Strip, needs imperatively both to denounce the harsh living conditions and also to express the dreams and hopes which are constitutive of individuals' ontologies, i.e. their being and becoming in the world.

7. Summary

This chapter focused on aesthetic, linguistic and cultural resistant practices as a corollary of the capability of voice and agency. By drawing on a variety of data, I explored issues related to the creation of counter-narratives and the position of participants as individual political subjectivities within the system of education of which they are part.

I argued that by analysing both artistic textual counter-narratives that participants produced and their everyday practices of resistance which encompassed teaching a 'hidden curriculum' (Giroux, 2001), I shifted into what Rancière (2004, 2010) has called an 'aesthetic regime of art', whose focus is dissensus, as opposed to a textual 'system of representation', which creates essentialised and homogenous perceptions, and which is often developed in the elitarian academic fields of Orientalism and Occidentalism. In doing so, I acknowledged the political individualities of the participants, and how they affirmed their voice and agency which culminated in their acts of resistance.

Ultimately, voice and agency, and aesthetic, linguistic and cultural resistance are at the heart of localized, critical, and creative pedagogies in contexts of occupation, pain and pressure. Voice and agency pervades the other capabilities identified in the study, and as such can be considered a meta-capability. Acts of aesthetic, linguistic and cultural resistance are a translation of the capability of voice and agency in achieved functionings.

As a result of this, I unpacked the values and goals of language education as emerged in this thesis: I pointed out that those move between critical hope, peaceful resistance and an awareness that language education encompasses everyday life beyond the context of the classroom. In relation to the context of

pain and pressure, language education is a holistic endeavour which involves the epistemological and the ontological process of becoming.

Chapter IX. Synthesis of the research findings and critical reflections: from a framework of reference to an ecology of language education

1. Introduction

This concluding chapter aims to pull together and synthesize the findings of the doctoral research, sharpening the final output of my work as a *bricoleur*. In this chapter, I return to the research aim and to the subsidiary research questions that guided the research project, and I highlight what this study has taught me. At the same time, I revise the research questions by offering some critical reflections on the overall framing of this research project.

The research project was guided by the following aim and subsidiary questions:

Research aim: *to explore and to co-construct a grounded framework for language education in the context of pain, pressure and siege of the Gaza Strip (Palestine).*

Subsidiary research questions

> *(a) What are the values and goals of language education in the context of occupation of the Gaza Strip?*

> *(b) What capabilities can be identified in language education in the context of occupation? How can they be nurtured?*

> *(c) How can the Palestinian Arts of Resistance be used in language education?*

As stated in the Methodology chapter, I interpreted these research questions as guidelines for the elaboration and exploration of a language framework in contexts of pain and pressure, forced immobility, instability and siege. However, I did not see the function of research questions as leading the research project and constraining my research agenda, rather opting for a 'strategic positioning' (Tuhiwai Smith, 2006). This allowed me not to hypothesize a predetermined result, but rather to recognize the complex agency of people who, in conditions of distress, are involved in transformative processes, and consequently shape the research outcomes accordingly. In addition, adopting a 'strategic positioning'

would have helped me in case of any abrupt and unexpected changes in the Gaza context, wherein the precarious political conditions may change over-night.

Inspired by decolonizing ways of working, adopting such a strategic positioning meant to 'let go' of control over the research project, and to develop a certain degree of openness which I had not experienced before. This included being ready to not be ready with technological disruptions, experimenting with virtual hospitality rituals, and allowing for participants' voices and agency to be expressed (or to not be expressed) in the ways and genres they preferred. As a result of this, I found myself having data poems to analyse, pictures and sketches, which I could not have foreseen.

In hindsight, I acknowledge that the deliberate choice of adopting a strategic positioning enhanced my ethical way of working in praxis, constructing a safe space for conversations, experimentation, sharing, envisioning, creating, discovering and building friendship relationships. On the other hand, to give a complete picture, it must also be added that this was not an easy positioning to be in as sometimes I felt uncomfortable and afraid of being inadequate while responding to all the constant changes and challenges that this research came with. My feelings can be summarized as in an article I co-authored with colleagues:

> the feeling of being overwhelmed by the complex nature of a project; the anxiety of not having enough specific expertise or experience to work in a context of pain and pressure; and the stress when online communication is virtually impossible. (Fassetta et al., 2017: 148)

However, noticeably, this positioning was chosen precisely in order to enable contextualised pedagogical practices to emerge in the making, rather than following a prescribed framework of reference for language teaching and learning. This positioning even gave rise to a celebration of the research and learning process, and it allowed me to perceive language education as part of a human ecological approach: i.e., within an ecological system (Van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2006).

Before returning to the ecology of language education, I shall first go back to my research questions, pulling the final different threads together.

When I initially developed my research questions, my presupposition was that my first analytical effort would have addressed the values and goals of language education in order to be able to understand localized practices; then, I expected to be focusing on capabilities and finally on teaching methodologies. However, in practice the process was reversed: I found myself reflecting first on the situated context in which the research was conducted; secondly, on language teaching pedagogies and on practicalities; thirdly, on the teaching/learning capabilities; and only at the very end of the process was I able to unpack the ontological and epistemological values and goals of language education.

In returning to the research questions, I retrace the process that went from contingent issues of establishing connections and of classroom pedagogies to a more holistic understanding of language education; therefore, I describe the means, then the capabilities, and finally a broader conceptualization of the values and goals of educational praxis for the specific context of this study. In line with a strategic positioning, and in order to offer critical reflections on the overall research process, I have opted in this thesis for presenting the research questions as they were initially conceived. Without presenting updated versions of research questions, I opted for showing the background to this research enquiry.

It is undeniable that in any research project, questions may be sharpened and amended as part of the research process itself, even though this is often done covertly by researchers. Conversely, what decolonializing methodologies taught me was to have an attitude of openness towards what the research could have offered, in addition to acting with humility as a researcher investigating a field in which participants are the experts. As part of this, I find it epistemologically valid to add in this final chapter a question that was not conceived in the initial proposal of this research project, but to which I found an answer in this study.

2. Research question three

Part B: How can pedagogical practices be co-constructed and co-developed online, in a context of poor Internet connections and with limited technological facilities?

Reflecting on the means that enabled the development of contextualised pedagogical practices in this study, I understood those to be the online environment, which favoured the unfolding of relationships, and Arts of Resistance.

In order to tackle forced immobility and the isolation that the siege imposes, the Gazan inhabitants increasingly rely on the Internet connection. The technological medium does not reduce economic gaps, neither can it be considered a substitute for mobility, but nevertheless it enables connections amongst Palestinians and sympathetic people worldwide (Aouragh, 2011a, 2011b, 2014; Tawil-Souri and Aouragh, 2014; Hammond, 2012; Fassetta el al., 2017; Imperiale, 2017).

In this study, due to the border closures, fieldwork was conducted online. The Internet connection, both at the Islamic University of Gaza and at the University of Glasgow, proved to be poor and interrupted, causing very low video and audio quality during the Skype calls, through which the workshop series took place. In addition, constant power cuts at the Gaza end caused challenges and frustration.

The participants and I learned to consider disruptions as part of our normalized way of working, and as integral actants on our networks. Rather than working against the interruptions, we worked within them; as in actor network theory (Latour, 2005; Law, 2007; Dankert, 2011), we considered how different agents interacted within the network. Our network consisted of materialities and was shaped in relationality.

This led the participants and me to perceive the challenges in terms of opportunities for our ontological and epistemological process of becoming. Pedagogically, interruptions allowed participants to be in control of my own body as projected on the screen, and they perceived this in terms of responsibility and determination to make things work. We developed rituals of

virtual commensality and of exchanging gifts online, practicing what I called virtual academic hospitality. Inspired by Jacques Derrida (1992, 2000, 2002), I framed virtual academic hospitality as the impossibility of the possibility of hospitality, online, as not dependent upon travelling. Virtual (academic) hospitality is the willingness to establish human connections, despite the harsh circumstances of being banned from visiting one another.

Part A: How can Palestinian Arts of Resistance be used in language education?

The benefits of employing creative, visual and multimodal methods in language education have already been efficiently and widely demonstrated (e.g. Schewe, 2013; Frimberger, 2016; Ntelioglou et al., 2014). Similarly, creative art therapy is proven to nurture the wellbeing of individuals, and their capacities and agency to deal with traumatic events and with the psychological consequences that the trauma causes, contributing to self-awareness and self-esteem, fostering social and problem-solving skills, reducing anxiety, and enhancing coping mechanisms (Malchiodi, 2006). Hence its value in the fields of psychosocial support and more broadly in global mental health has been largely recognized, leading to an increase of its practice especially with young people and children with traumatic past experiences such as forced migration, conflict, war, military occupation, etc.

In language education with vulnerable people, the use of creative methods and art-based teaching pedagogies has been explored by Frimberger (2016; Frimberger et. al, forthcoming), who demonstrated that multimodal, multilingual and creative methods can enhance and develop a contextualised, wellbeing-focused language pedagogy. In this study, creative art-based methods found contextualization in the use of Palestinian Arts of Resistance, which – according to the literature review I conducted – had not been used before in language education. Palestinian Arts of Resistance, as with other local Arts of Resistance, is characterised by spontaneity and anonymity and by no means by an elitarian interpretation of aesthetic and artistic expression. Conversely, it is associated with artistic expressions that have the intentional aim of protesting against injustice for external audiences (Scott, 1990; Tripp, 2012). Tripp (2012: 403) in his research on Arts of Resistance in the Middle East, noticed that in the context of Gaza, artistic expressions were also dedicated to the local Gaza

audience, with the intention of transmuting the depicted collective suffering into something that 'has meaning beyond the immediate horror of the violence of their situation'.

Participants highlighted that, according to them, Arts of Resistance do not only involve 'the beauty of the arts' produced by the artists, but it is also an aestheticization of the art of living, which in their context encompasses acts of daily resistance, as discussed in Chapter VIII. They highlighted the nexus between critical art, political resistance and everyday life, which as Ranciere (2004, 2010) noted could be synthesized in the concept of dissensus.

Pedagogically, making use of contextually-developed art-based methods in language education has helped nurture the capabilities that emerged during the workshop series. In the discussion chapters, I have introduced some examples of activities and tasks that the participants and I co-constructed during the workshops (e.g. use of political cartoons, miming and improvisational games, the use of poems, of videos, etc.). The participants demanded and developed contextualized exercises that were meaningful to them and to the context in which they live, stressing the importance of entertainment and enjoyment in pedagogy (as in hooks, 1994).

In addition, participants re-appropriated and re-adapted ways in which to use art-based methods in language teaching, developing critical, creative and localized pedagogies that suited their needs. By way of example, as expanded in Chapter VIII, during a drama-pedagogy exercise, teachers themselves created a short sketch and performed it in front of the students without loading the students with precise tasks, but rather letting them observe and enjoy the play without having specific predetermined learning outcomes. In addition, despite the fact that I, as workshop leader, had not introduced the use of poems during the workshops for language-teaching purposes, participants wrote poems and made use of them in their own teaching. Engaging also with audio-visual materials, the participants highlighted that those are not always available in classrooms in Gaza; hence their preference for contextually relevant drama-pedagogy exercises, for cartoons and comics, and for poems and literature linked to the Arts of Resistance.

As demonstrated, participants valued and capitalized on the Arts of Resistance and on contextually relevant art-based tasks and exercises, understanding the classroom space as one in which also students' and teachers' artistic might be cultivated.

3. Research question two

What capabilities can be identified in language education in the context of siege? How can they be nurtured?

This question was largely discussed in Chapters VI, VII and VIII, and constituted the bulk and the main contribution of this thesis. I identified the following capabilities for language education in the context of pain and pressure in the Gaza Strip, which were nurtured during the workshops series: intercultural capabilities (which included L2 language and communication, mobility, and affiliation); emotions and languaging; and voice and agency, with its corollary namely aesthetic, cultural and linguistic resistance.

Intercultural capabilities: L2 language and communication, mobility, and affiliation

As a consequence of the siege, the population of Gaza lives in a context of isolation and 'forced immobility' (Stock, 2016). Due to the practical impossibility for people of moving in and out of the Strip, Gazans find themselves living in a context of 'enforced monolingualism and monoculturalism', since their freedom of movement is constrained (Imperiale et al., 2017). However, this study demonstrates that the participants placed importance and value on the development of intercultural capabilities.

Intercultural capabilities not only were present, but were also aspired to and highly valued by the participants in this study. They valued not only the learning of linguistic skills, but rather a more holistic understanding of the intercultural reality – which they are prevented from experiencing directly, but are nevertheless intrigued by. As a result of this study, as I have already I discussed elsewhere (Imperiale, 2017 ; Imperiale et al., forthcoming; Fassetta et al., 2017), intercultural education in a context of forced immobility – which is a topic that still remains unexplored by the available literature – is highly desirable, and needs to find a contextually sensitive way of developing.

Building on Crosbie (2014), I contend that 'intercultural capabilities' in the context of this study, are articulated in L2 language and communication, mobility, and affiliation. The participants nurtured their capability of L2 language and communication; they valued the possibility to speak English authentically and to be able to show their knowledge to members of their families. Mastering English, therefore, was not only a matter of establishing connections with people outside the Strip, but also a matter of determining their roles (as teachers, translators, interpreters) within their own community.

The participants highlighted in their praxis that, despite the fact that the freedom of movement is not an option nor the freedom of choice in relation to where to live (de Haas and Rodriguez, 2010; de Haas, 2014), their understanding of mobility is intimately translated into a capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004), and a capacity of feeling at home (Lederach and Lederach, 2010). Mobility intersects also with the capability of affiliation, both to the participants' community and to the community of human beings. Affiliation is affected by the enforced monolingualism and monoculturalism of the Strip. However, the participants showed openness towards what I called intercultural curiosity, which requires a minimum level of background knowledge.

The knowledge about the world outside of the Strip often reached participants through texts, and through stereotyped images. This gave rise to moments of intercultural laughter and awkwardness, which did not affect respect and curiosity. Conversely, the participants' intercultural curiosity motivated them to nurture intercultural capabilities in the classroom, through the use of 'narrative imagination' (Nussbaum, 2006b) in order to travel to places they have never visited – including their own homeland.

Emotions and languaging

The conceptualization of this capability was admittedly quite challenging. In order to conceptualize this capability, I drew upon feminist theories (Ahmed, 2004) and I explored scholarly work in global mental health – especially on the individual and cultural expression of distress (Nichter, 1981, 2010), as participants assigned a predominant role to emotions and to the expression of them both inside and outside of the classroom.

I demonstrated that the participants lived emotions as embodied, shifting, socially constructed and politicizable, in an attempt to develop counter-narratives (Ahmed, 2004). In addition, in the post-traumatic landscape of the Gaza Strip, distress and trauma are everyday topics of conversation and lived realities. Hence, the participants envisioned a therapeutic function of (language) pedagogy when it facilitates the expression and the framing of distressful experiences, when it is an 'education of attention' and the 'embodiment of feelings' (Ingold, 2000).

I called this capability 'of emotions and languaging', drawing both on the concept of languaging as developed by Jensen (2014) and Phipps and Gonzalez (2004), and on work in global mental health on 'idioms of distress' (Nichter, 1981, 2010), which aims to provide a culturally and contextually sensitive understanding of distress. I focused on how participants expressed their wellbeing, which intermingled with their distress. Metaphorical uses of the semantics around 'smile' and 'laughing' were not only found in the trainees' expressions but in their lived experiences within the workshops and the interviews: several humorous events nurtured the capability of laughing and smiling in the face of despair.

During the context of the classroom, the participants nurtured this capability as they themselves decided to develop a teaching practice about emotions, since this is what matters to them. The use of Arts of Resistance, and especially of poetry, helped the articulation of otherwise difficult linguistically-formulable knowledge. Pedagogically, the participants built on engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), and also on critical pedagogy as developed by Zembylas (2008, 2009, 2012): a pedagogy that creates discomfort, that allows for a space to disclose vulnerabilities and build upon those as transformational opportunities (Butler, 2004).

Linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance as a corollary of voice and agency

The capability of voice and agency (Crosbie, 2014) underpinned and transpired throughout the whole research project and was embedded in the critical pedagogy approach that was tacitly adopted during the research project. Voice and agency was manifested in different forms, e.g. in participants' adaptability

and transformations of the challenges caused by the Internet connection; in languaging their distress and their wellbeing; in writing poems; and more generally in co-constructing workshop activities. The capability of voice and agency suffuses the other capabilities and as such, I argue that it is a meta-capability with an architectonic role for language education.

In addition, I contend that the capability of voice and agency is more contextually enacted in acts of linguistic, cultural and aesthetic resistance. Through poems, anecdotes, and everyday artistic endeavours, through teaching and their everyday life, participants practiced acts of resistance which were often culturally, aesthetically and linguistically grounded.

In English, participants claimed their possibility to 'talk back' about their oppressing circumstances (hooks, 1994; Pennycook, 1994). They appropriated English – the international language – to voice counter-narratives and at the same time they also appropriated language pedagogy and used it to serve their ultimate goals of hope and cultural resistance, which recalls the concept of 'linguistic resistance' as developed by Canagarajah (2003).

In the context of the classroom, the participants created aesthetic and artistic tropes that differ from traditional Palestinian symbols. In doing so, they developed critical art which ruptured with previous artistic regimes. This recalls the theories of Jacques Ranciere (2004, 2010), and confirms and establishes a clear nexus between cultural, aesthetic, linguistic and political arts and forms of resistance or political dissensus.

Dissensus and resistance were perceptible in participants' every day acts of resistance, especially in their concerns about the ways in which the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) – responsible for education with Palestinian refugees – translated the bespoke educational policies into practice. Participants manifested disappointment towards a 'banking system' of education (Freire, 1996). They rather interpreted their mission of language teachers as nurturing students' hope and peaceful resistance.

4. Research question one

What are the values and goals of language education in the context of occupation of the Gaza Strip?

As already mentioned, the critical analysis about the values and goals of language education was only finalized after having conducted a prior analysis of teaching methodologies and of capabilities. It emerged from a broader understanding of participants 'sayings, doings, relatings' (Kemmis et al., 2014) and ontological being-in-the-world, surfacing after the understanding of the participants' everyday practices of resistance as English teachers.

I posited that, in this study, the participants' values and goals of language education correspond to nurturing critical and ontological hope (Freire, 1994) and peaceful resistance. Peaceful resistance in the context of Palestine is locally intertwined with resilience and is expressed in the concept of *sumoud*, which pervades coping mechanisms and steadfastness, compounded with spontaneous everyday protests against injustice. Protests are performed both in the streets and public spaces of Palestine, but also as this thesis shows, in schools, and in the intimacy of the indoors (Said, 1986).

Students and teachers are cultural workers (Giroux, 1992, 2001) and political agents in the Freirean understanding of the term. The completion of our workshop series was an act of critical hope and of peaceful resistance in itself; despite the challenges that might have prevented us from establishing connections, our determination to make things happen and our willingness to develop a network and to nurture relationships resulted in an act of defiance against the limitations imposed by the siege.

Returning to the shift from competency models to more holistic understandings of education as presented in the literature review in Chapter III, the participants argued against an education system that is concerned with' hav[ing] exams and succeed[ing] at specific level', as one of the participants openly and courageously stated. Barnett (1994, 2010) criticises educational practices that are increasingly instrumentally and market-driven, and that focus on academic and operational knowledge. This holistic understanding of language education resonates with the transformative power of educational praxis which the

participants in the Gaza Strip talk about, and encompasses both changes in the material-socio-economic circumstances and in the individuals' processes of ontological and epistemological becoming.

5. Research aim: a framework for language education?

After answering the subsidiary research questions, I return to the main aim of the research project, which was the real drive of this project: the exploration and co-construction of a grounded framework for language education in the context of the Gaza Strip.

Working through crystallization (Ellingson, 2009), I engaged with creative methods in order to pinpoint the development of a framework. I asked myself how such a framework – whose components are networks, capabilities, values of critical hope and peaceful resistance – would look like, and I played with tentative visual and metaphorical representations.

Again, opting for showing the research and thinking process that occurred behind the scenes, my first attempt of providing a representation of the model of language education, unconsciously and perhaps inevitably, returned to the tables, levels and compartimentalized boxes I am most familiar with. I contemplated the possibility of having 'levels' (e.g. A1, A2, etc. as in the CEFR, 2001) of 'capabilities' in order perhaps to reassure language teachers that capabilities can be part of a curriculum and perhaps even implying that these can be measured and developed linearly (Figure 12). I soon found that such a representation with tables and boxes was not suitable for the model that participants and I had co-constructed in the research study, and that, for instance, it was rather a metaphorical concept that emerged from a tradition that I myself had critiqued. In this representation, neither networks nor values, goals nor overarching, intertwined capabilities would have been legitimately portrayed.
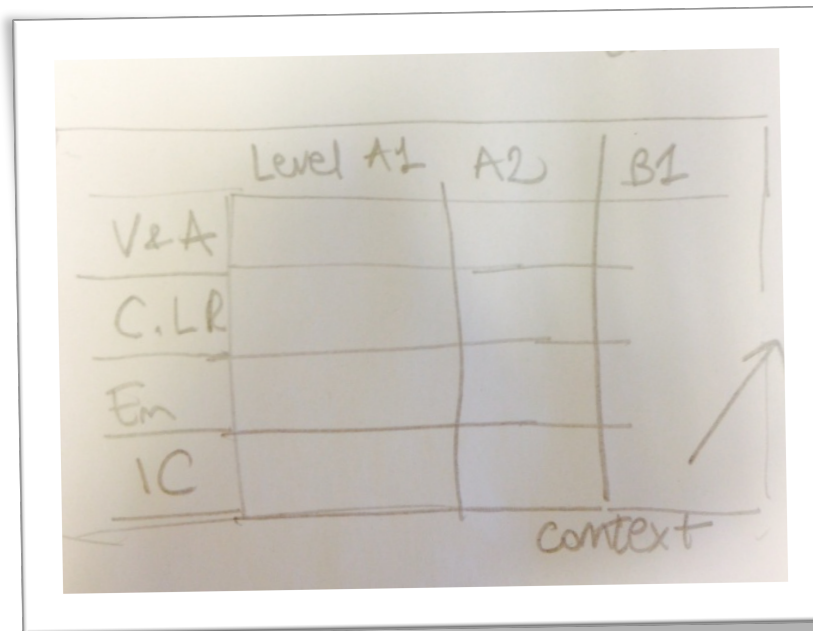
Figure 12: A framework of capabilities? V&A stands for Voice and Agency; C.L.R. stands for cultural and lingusitic (and aesthetic resistance); Em for Emotions and Languaging; and IC for intercultural capabilities.

Therefore, I experimented with alternative representations – inspired by the articulation of the refugee education reform strategy as developed by the UNRWA Strategic Reform of Education (Figure 13 below). In UNRWA's reform, the visual representation uses a construction supported by pillars, and a foundation. Similarly, I sketched the 'building', assigning to the network the role of foundation, and to the capabilities the role of pillars. The 'protective' roof – but also metaphorically the outer reach – would be values and goals, which, however, should also be found at the foundation level. This representation, even though it offered a broader scope compared to the CEFR-table-style, still did not adequately represent the dynamism of the language-learning process. In addition, it framed capabilities, context, values and goals as self-standing pieces that could have been assembled together. As a consequence, I found that this representation did not capture the relational approach that emerged in this thesis.

Figure 13: Capabilities as pillars?

6. Gaza teaches back: from a framework to an ecology of language education

The conceptualisation and representation of the framework was proving challenging. I knew the main components but not how to represent the dynamism of their links and relations. As Ellingson (2009) suggests in crystallisation, I returned to visual mind-mapping, using different colours and developing different sketches. I went back to my data, to the transcripts, and to the representation of the analysis process. Having memorised some of the quotes by heart, a metaphorical concept resonated with the whole framing of language education in the Gaza Strip. It was what A. wrote in her written assignment, in which she discussed what meant to her to be a 'successful teacher':

> So, in Gaza, everything is different, even the definition of the term 'success' is unique. According to the Gazan dictionary, Success can be defined as planting seeds in a sterile tree, then it could bring ripe fruits. Success means to plant hope in a land of despair and frustration.
>
> (A., written assignment).

In her figurative Gazan 'dictionary', A. found a metaphorical concept depicting success in difficult circumstances, one that invoked images of nurturing,

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watering, feeding, blooming, and flourishing, and one which summarizes the whole educational process in the Gaza land: planting seeds of hope in a land of despair and frustration.
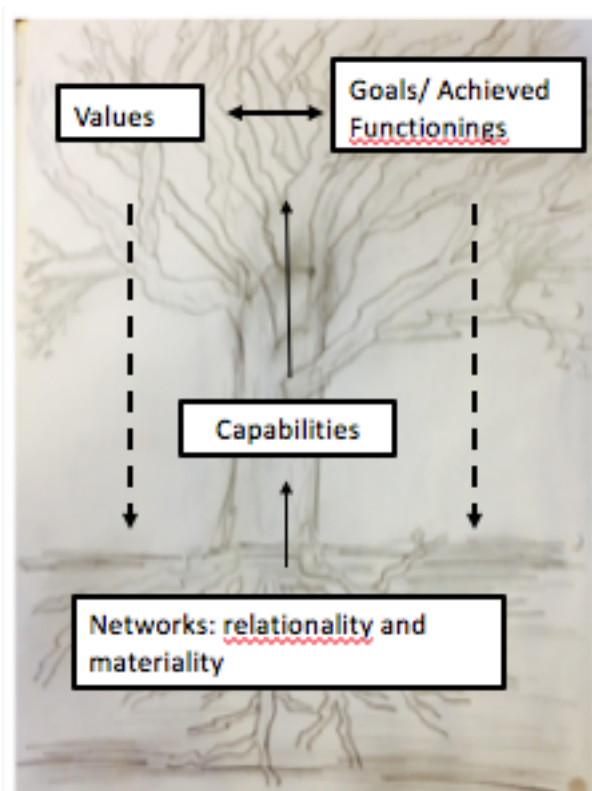
Figure 14: An ecology of language education

The representation afterwards came easily (Figure 14): the soil, the land with its intersecting roots is the network, which evolves in relation to what it encounters. At the intersections between the branched out roots the network unfolds: it changes, it is dynamic, and it is shaped by the presence of individuals in their environment. The network in intercultural language education is not a backdrop, but conversely is relationally co-constructed in the encounter. The network incorporates actors and actants and takes shape in materialities and in relationality (Latour, 2005; Ingold, 2000; Najar, 2016).

From the soil, a trunk originates. The trunk is composed by intertwined and intermingled capabilities, which in my study are being identified as intercultural capabilities; voice and agency and its corollary, linguistic, aesthetic and cultural resistance; and emotions and languaging. These are not compartments or containers, but rather the nourishing lymph which allows the tree to bloom and

flourish. The organic, live roots, the trunk and branches constitute the structure of our changing, dynamic, evolving organism.

The values and principles, and the goals and achieved functionings, are respectively represented by the leaves and the fruits of the tree. Their development and growth depends on several factors, i.e. the soil, the capabilities, the encounter with challenges and with resources. Fruits and leaves can be picked up and may fall again to the ground, opening up their shells and disclosing the vulnerable seed for it to flourish once again, giving birth to a new tree and hence representing both the foundational and the outreach components of the language ecology.

The organism evolution and the metaphorical conceptualization recalls human ecological approaches in language education (Van Lier 2004, Kramsch 2006, Levine and Phipps, 2011). Among the work of these scholars, I have never found any explicit reference to an organic tree, neither, to my knowledge, are there existing frameworks of reference that resemble this representation and conceptualization. However, the Tree of Life (Ncube, 2006, 2007) is a strength-based approach used in global mental health, in narrative therapy, and in general with people suffering from traumas and post-traumatic stress disorder, in order to help people reconstruct a coherent self by articulating their stories of sorrow and pain. The approach capitalizes on individuals' strengths and positive attitudes, on people's sense of belonging, on cherished beings and doings, on values and goals, on hopes, dreams, and relationships. Such a strength-based approach (Houghes, 2014) echoes the tenets of the capabilities approach – and my understanding of what language education involves in the Gaza Strip.

This metaphorical representation unpacks that language education in the Gaza Strip does not look like a framework of reference, but rather as an evolving organism, which adapts and re-adapts itself to the network and the contextual realities, and makes capabilities flourish. It points at the consideration of a holistic understanding of language education, and is not concerned with technicalities of language-teaching methodologies, but rather understands these as means to develop the ontological and epistemological transformations of students, that an education which is the practice of hope and freedom should be concerned with.

7. Concluding thoughts

In this research project, I was taught that education can be constrained by the precarious living conditions that oppress the young learners and teachers, but it nonetheless finds its way as a political act of hope and resistance. I was taught that individuals value their beings and becomings, and they poignantly and steadfastly act for their wellbeing and the development of their own society. I was taught that technology can enhance access and human connection when there is a strong determination to bypass difficulties and challenges, and when it is the only option as mobility cannot be contemplated. I was taught many lessons in the field of educational research and about language education in difficult circumstances: I understood that language education is better visualized and conceptualized as an ecology, rather than as a framework of reference, as this chapter has illustrated.

It is hard to conclude, but a more academic conclusion covering contributions, limitations, and future studies will be presented in the conclusive remarks in the next pages. I believe that, instead, this chapter should end on the note of what the participants taught me during this research project, beautifully summarized in the words of Y.:

> Teachers should teach their students that they should use their hard circumstances and the suffering as a challenge instead of playing the role of being a victim. Yes all the Palestinians are victims especially young children but we should not give up; we must challenge the hardship we live. Teachers should remind their students that yes we have electricity cuts that sometimes exceed 12 hours a day; yet the light of the candles is enough to sit the whole night on your desk just to finish your assignments.

> They also should remind that hundreds of children lost their moms and dads in the last war; yet they are going on in their lives, they study, work hard, and get the highest marks.

> In this regard, I would like to quote Ziadah's wonderful lines from her poem 'We teach life, sir'

"We teach life, sir, we Palestinians teach life after they occupied the last sky. We teach life after they have built their settlements and Apartheid walls; after the skies we teach life, Sir".

(Y., reflective journal)

Concluding remarks

This thesis was born out of a concern about the homogenization of language education. Whereas models of language education developed in Europe and in North America have been crucial to foster intercultural dialogue within contexts of free mobility and of peacetime, they have also been uncritically applied to language education with people seeking refuge and fleeing from war contexts. Furthermore, these frameworks have been exported indiscriminately to the countries of the periphery, establishing a clear distinction between norm-providing and norm-receiving countries – and therefore enhancing the gap created by linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). I have suggested in this thesis that critical applied linguistics might benefit from critical language pedagogies that emerge in contexts of protracted emergencies, and from the knowledge and expertise developed in praxis in such contexts.

The research aim that drove the enquiry was to explore and to co-construct a contextualised model for language education in the context of siege of the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip (Palestine) has been under siege since 2007. It is a context in which the siege impedes the free circulation of people and of goods; high percentages of the population live in poverty and in high poverty; unemployment rates among young graduates are increasing; and three military operations (the last of which in summer 2014) have affected the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals.

In this thesis I suggested that a holistic understanding of language education – especially in vulnerable settings, as in the Gaza Strip – is needed. In other words, I argued that language education should – and has the potential to – promote the wellbeing of individuals through appropriate pedagogies, a point also advanced by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA). I explored the capabilities approach as a theoretical framework that might contribute to supporting and developing a wellbeing-focused, human, ecological approach for language education in challenging circumstances.

In the previous chapter, I have synthesized the research findings by going back to the research questions, and I have elaborated on the ecology of language education, working through its metaphorical conceptualization and

representation. In these concluding pages, I pinpoint the contribution to knowledge this study makes, its limitations, and the potential future developments it opens up.

1. Contribution and impact of the study: a pedagogy of capability and of resistance

I assert in this thesis that a critical, intercultural language education that aims to foster a culture of peace, respect and social justice should be grounded in a pedagogy of capability and of resistance, considering the potential of languaging as an ontological and epistemological process, and also enabling the development of counter-narratives which are meaningful for the oppressed community. In addition, this study has contributed to piloting ways of developing and establishing online networks in situations of protracted emergencies. This is relevant, since it not only touches upon online pedagogical practices, but it also concerns participatory research methodologies.

The pedagogical model that I have developed in this thesis is one of 'capability and resistance'. Despite the fact that this study has identified different capabilities for language education, I believe that it is appropriate to refer to a 'pedagogy of capability' rather than a 'pedagogy of capabilities'. I contend that 'capability' refers to an overarching theoretical contrast with 'competence'; while the concept of 'competence' refers to what individuals are able to know and do, the concept of 'capability' includes the essential dimension of what individuals are able to be, alongside what they can know and do. As a consequence, the 'pedagogy of capability' that the participants and I co-developed for language teaching in a challenging context involves both the ontological and the epistemological dimension of becoming critical human beings.

The pedagogy of capability is concerned with the development of individuals' beings and doings and is grounded in individuals' values and goals – which are culturally and socially constructed. As such, I do not believe that a pedagogy of capability is grounded in ethical individualism (as it has been claimed about the capabilities approach), since values and goals are constituted in an immanent ethical praxis of relationality. The pedagogy of capability is then to be

contextually adapted and adopted, nurturing the specific and localized capabilities, values, and goals which pertain to different contexts.

More specific to contexts of despair caused by human-made disasters and injustice is a critical pedagogy of resistance. Resistance could be considered a contested term, especially when referring to the Palestinian context, where resistance might be associated to violent uprisings. Undoubtedly, this thesis rather points at the creative tension that peaceful resistance enables: resistance, in the Palestinian context, is embedded in the term *sumoud*, which is meant to signify a disposition of actions of everyday resilience. The pedagogy of resistance stimulates students to transgress, and to celebrate transgression. It stimulates students to go beyond the boundaries that are imposed on them, limiting their freedom. It also stimulates a peaceful and creative way of responding to the social injustice that individuals suffer from, providing a meaningful education that reaches beyond the classroom.

Methodologically, it is not my aim here to provide a 'how to' guide for researchers who intend to conduct work in difficult circumstances, in conflict areas, when access gets denied, or when borders do not allow to conduct research in the field: I believe that, in this respect, the contribution of this thesis is on a more affective level. This thesis speaks to the feeling of frustration, of being overwhelmed when things do not work out as they should, of the stress of making connections happen and, above all, of the anxiety of not being enough qualified to work in a context of crisis and emergencies. The contribution of this thesis is therefore to encourage researchers, and teachers, to embrace these challenges, and to work through these complexities. These may become the source of creative stimuli and, ultimately, opportunities for new beginnings and for the unfolding of positive outcomes.

What followed from my study was the development of an extended online teacher-training course for teachers of Arabic to speakers of other languages (TASOL), as part of the *Researching Multilingually at Borders* large-grant. The TASOL training course, which I co-developed with other colleagues, was grounded in critical pedagogy and in a pedagogy of capability and resistance – and also made use of creative methods in language education. As a result of the TASOL programme, the Islamic University of Gaza employed all the trained teachers in the newly created Arabic Centre, which provides Arabic courses

online. The TASOL training course received attention at the prestigious UNESCO/UNHCR 'Mobile Learning Week 2017', which had the conference topic 'Mobile technologies for education in emergencies and crisis'. The paper discussing the course was one of the 60 selected out of more than 500 proposals, and was presented by myself and by Dr Giovanna Fassetta at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, to an audience of policy-makers, practitioners, academic researchers, private donors, and major experts in the field. After the TASOL course, the theoretical and the methodological contributions of this thesis were incorporated into an AHRC and GCRF (Global Challenge Research Fund) bid to design and develop a capabilities-based syllabus for a Palestinian Arabic beginners language course. The bid was successful, and the new project is starting in October 2017.

The model of language education that I have proposed in this thesis received attention also in refugee education in Greece: I was invited to deliver a keynote about the findings and analysis of this study at a Press Conference for Refugee Education that took place in June 2017, in Athens. The model was included in recommendations presented to the Greek Ministry of Education, and was suggested as a viable option for language education with refugees.

While highlighting the impact of this work, and the attention it has received internationally, also in terms of potential transferability to other contexts, it is important to acknowledge the dangers of educational transfer and linguistic and cultural imperialism as outlined in Chapter 3. In this thesis, this was avoided thanks to the fact that knowledge, rather than transferred, was co-constructed with the participants of the study, and as such, the proposed model was the outcome of dialogic encounters and collective efforts of critical thinking, which included an analysis of both Western thought and indigenous and decolonising knowledge and methodologies.

2. Limitations of the study

Although this study was carefully planned, and it achieved its overarching aim, even going beyond my initial expectations, there were some inevitable shortcomings. The first one was methodological, and it relates to the limited

time and available resources; and the second one is a consideration about my PhD journey more broadly.

Critical participatory action research is a longitudinal ongoing practice, which requires extensive time in order to evaluate its impact, whether the research project is indeed a 'practice changing practice', and whether it changes 'practice architectures' (Kemmis et al., 2014). Due to the time constraints and to the financial pressures, this study did not include a second cycle of CPAR, during which I would have ideally re-proposed an ameliorated version of the workshop series on the basis of the suggestions provided by the participants. While there were important contextual differences, the lessons learnt during this study informed and were incorporated into the TASOL programme. Those were key to anticipating and to dealing with the challenges of the TASOL teacher-training course.

A second shortcoming I acknowledge is that both the Islamic University of Gaza and myself as a doctoral researcher had limited resources available to fund the workshop series, and therefore could not buy technological consumables such as premium versions of software or apps for online teaching. During the workshops we only used freely available software. Having had a different budget, the participants and I could potentially have developed more aesthetically 'attractive' teaching materials. Those teaching materials could have been collated into an open online repository, which could have been used by other teachers, and hence, could have supported the sustainability of the doctoral research reaching a wider impact. This would also have meant that participants' ownership of the research findings could have been ensured – as the literature on CPAR advises. On the other hand, having to use only free and familiar software ensured the deliverability and sustainability of the research project both in the Gaza context, and also potentially in other contexts of protracted crisis and emergencies; and it also ensured that during the workshop series the participants and I prioritized the pedagogical learning and teaching process rather than technological trends. In addition, recognizing officially the participants' ownership of some of the materials developed as part of the research could have caused issues in terms of anonymity. Underpinned by the principle of care of participants, I could not have – under any circumstance – disclosed the names of the participants since some of the data presented in this

research is sensitive. In contexts of military hegemony, where only in rare exceptions is it possible to leave the Strip, an imprudent disclosure of names – though done with the best intention of recognizing participants' voice, agency and ownership – might at best have jeopardised participants' already minimal chances to leave the Strip. At worst, it might have led to direct negative repercussions on the participants and on their families.

Finally, the last consideration I shall discuss in this section returns to the doctoral project as initially conceived: the access denial that I received a year into the PhD meant that a considerable amount of time was allocated to reading and sharpening a research proposal which was never taken any further. That proposal still sits in my drawer, waiting for the appropriate time to be developed. However, I have now understood that the thesis I presented here would not have been written if a colonel had given me a permit to access a refugee camp as he should have done, and if an important institution had allowed me to conduct research in its schools. In hindsight, I now celebrate the transformation of that denial into a creative and fruitful opportunity, with the awareness that substantial time and energy went into dealing with that issue.

3. Future work

It is my hope to continue improving the intercultural pedagogies that emerged in this thesis for situations of protracted emergencies and crisis, expanding the work on the capabilities approach and on creative and critical pedagogies in language education. The AHRC-GCRF research project in which I am now involved, 'The impact of language. Collaborating across borders to the design, development and promotion of an Online Palestinian Arabic Course' (PI: Dr Giovanna Fassetta, University of Glasgow), will enable me to continue the work in this respect. The focus of that project is on the development of a capabilities-based syllabus with tailored language teaching activities and resources. In other words, this project allows me to engage with language teaching in praxis. Developing a syllabus also allows me to unpack a research interest that has recently emerged, on issues related to assessment: i.e., how a pedagogy of capability can be assessed and through which tasks and tools. It is my hope, as a result of further studies, to elaborate on that, developing indicators for

assessing a capabilities-based curriculum, which could then be considered as applicable in schools.

The long-term plan for extending this work is to take it beyond the boundaries of the Gaza Strip and expand it to address additional contexts of protracted emergencies and crisis. For instance, it is my hope to explore and co-develop language pedagogies for refugees in countries at the borders of Europe, especially in the Mediterranean area, to which I am so personally attached. I do believe that in these relatively *new* teaching and learning situations much could be learned from those who have lived their lives in protracted emergencies. As part of this, I can envisage the creation of a network of language teachers working towards a wellbeing-focused language pedagogy of capability and of resistance – online – across countries and borders – in which the people in the periphery will be recognized as experts, and in which education will truly be co-constructed and geared towards – as a participant stated - 'planting hope in a land of despair'.

Epilogue

As I am writing these final paragraphs, approximately two years have passed since the workshop series. Needless to say, I am still in contact with the participants and as I see the word counter reaching the intended word limit for this thesis, I am becoming more and more nostalgic. It is time to let the PhD journey and the thesis go.

However, there is more to be said about *them*, about *us*. Those 13 young women who taught me so much, after the workshop series, completed their studies, started working in different occupations and I, admittedly, blushing and feeling emotional tears coming as I write, feel extremely proud of what they have achieved, thanks to our short but precious encounter. Some of them thanked me extensively because our workshop series – so they told me – changed them, inspired them, and helped them to develop themselves and pursue their dreams and hopes. This was to me the most meaningful impact of the whole research project.

N.A. writes for *We Are Not Numbers*. She writes about her family and the Palestinian cause. She is happy about 'let[ting] the world hear her voice through her stories'. She does it for her brother, killed during an assault in the 2008 war, at the young age of 24. She got married, and invited me to her wedding in Gaza, which, unfortunately I could not attend.

A.W. still writes poems, in English. 'English is her friend that helps [her] convey her message to the world'. She still smiles, despite her mother's poor health, and the hard circumstances in which her family is living nowadays.

A.A., whose dream was to go abroad to complete her study as a graduate student, got married and joined her husband, a Palestinian from Gaza, in Oman. After lots of difficulties with papers and bureaucracy, she was able to travel to her spouse. She has a child, and is now teaching English in a private language centre. She has started a Master's in TESOL.

R.A. is doing a course on translation because '[she] wants to play more with the language' and because she could not find a job. In this way, she hopes to be more competitive and ultimately to find a job. She says, however, that conditions are very difficult: 'no formal jobs, no marriage, no continuation of my

studies... this is the land of tragedies'. She will start a Master's in Applied Linguistics at the Islamic University of Gaza in October 2017.

Y. got married – she did not wear her hijab at the wedding and had scarlet nails as she wanted me to notice in the pictures she sent me. She worked for UNRWA for a while, in afternoon and evening shifts, but she did not like her job there. She now works with an institute on a community learning programme which involves active learning and psychological support for the 'orphans from the 2012 and the 2014 wars'. She is responsible for the language education project.

R. passed the UNRWA recruiting process and is teaching English in an UNRWA school, afternoon and evening shifts. She teaches young boys, whom she finds difficult to handle. She got married, and had invited me to her wedding, which I could not attend.

L. was curious about teaching Arabic as a foreign language through the Arts of Resistance. She enrolled to attend the subsequent teacher-training course that we developed as part of the RM Borders project, and now she is teaching Arabic as a foreign language in the Arabic Centre. She applied for an Erasmus mobility scheme between IUG and the University of Glasgow, and might arrive in Glasgow in October 2017, if border controls and visas allow her into the UK.

B. does not have Internet at home, did not have a Facebook account, nor WhatsApp, and has not been in touch after the course. I have heard from other girls that her family is struggling.

F. has a permanent contract with UNRWA, is teaching English in an UNRWA school and sometimes calls me on Skype because she 'has a lot to share about [her] students and [her] teaching'. She tries to discuss resistance with her students to promote 'unity within the Palestinian society', but, 'you know, it is not easy because it is an UNRWA school, and it is highly recommended to avoid any topic related to resistance…' Still, she is doing it, as she is 'just being a Palestinian' (her emphasis).

A. has a permanent job contract too with UNRWA. She teaches boys from Year 4 to Year 8. She enjoys it, but would rather be teaching in a girls school as she thinks that girls are 'less naughty'.

N.M. didn't want to teach within UNRWA because she 'would get crazy and leave the job straightaway' as she wanted to be free. She did an IT-related course, and taught in a private centre so that she could do 'meaningful teaching'. She then attended the teacher-training course that we developed with the RM Borders project, and is now a teacher of Arabic as a foreign language in the IUG Arabic Centre.

A. tried to apply for a Turkish university, but I haven't heard whether she was successful in travelling abroad or not. Continuing her studies abroad was her aspiration too, and she repeatedly asked me for advice on how to leave the Strip. I couldn't help much with that, unfortunately.

S.S. was employed by the Islamic University of Gaza as a teaching assistant and worked for a while as a freelancer translator. She too attended the teacher-training course for teaching Arabic as a foreign language that we developed with the RM Borders. After the completion of the course, when she was about to start taking on the new job as an Arabic language teacher, she received a prestigious scholarship for a master's in TESOL at a London University. She travelled to London and is now about to finish her Master's. She is starting to think about her PhD proposal.

And myself: apparently, I learned to be patient with technology. I developed and delivered with some colleagues the teacher-training course for online teaching of Arabic as a foreign language, as part of the RM Borders project. I also worked as a Research Assistant on an AHRC- and GCRF-funded research project on 'Idioms of Distress, Resilience and Wellbeing'. I contributed to developing a proposal for follow-on work in partnership with the Arabic Centre on developing a capabilities-based curriculum for teaching Palestinian Arabic online, which was successful, and so I am taking up a Research Associate position soon. This follow-on project builds on the insights gained from my thesis, and from the TASOL programme.

More things could be said about that, but this is a different story.

Another good story, a story of a new chance.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Copy of approval form from the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee (College of Social Sciences)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐   *Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application* ☒

Application Details

Application Number: 400130243

Applicant's Name   Maria Grazia Imperiale

Project Title   Intercultural language education with refugees in the Middle East

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Application Status   **Approved**

Start Date of Approval   *(d.m.yr)*   13/10/14

(blank if Changes Required/ Rejected)

End Date of Approval of Research Project   *(d.m.yr)*   31/03/17

Only if the applicant has been given **approval** can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations   (where Changes are Required)

- *Where changes are required all applicants must respond* in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and upload this as the **Resubmission Document** online to explain the changes you have made to the application.   All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded.

- *If application is Rejected* a full new application must be submitted via the online system.   Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document uploaded as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated.

(Shaded areas will expand as text is added)

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

MINOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Page 1 of 2

REVIEWER COMMENTS	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO REVIEWER COMMENTS

(OTHER THAN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS)

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the College Ethics Administration, email address: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

End of Notification.

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences
Florentine House, 53 Hillhead Street. Glasgow G12 8QF
The University of Glasgow, charity number SC004401

Tel: 0141-330-3007 or 1990
E-mail: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix B: Copy of request for amendments to approved ethics application the University of Glasgow's Ethics Committee (College of Social Sciences)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Request for Amendments to Approved Ethics Application

> Type in the shaded areas, which will expand as required. All sections should be completed.

Ethics Application Reference No.   400130243

Check the relevant box:

Staff: ☐

Student: UG ☐   PGT ☐   PGR ☒

Name: Maria Grazia Imperiale

Project Title: Intercultural language education to refugees in the Middle East

Type of Modification/s: *(tick as appropriate)*

1. Extension to Approval Period: ☐
2. Participant Group, change or addition: ☒
3. Methodology: ☐
4. Addition/Change to Researcher team: ☐
5. Documents to be amended: ☐
6. Information Sheet/Plain Language Statement: ☐
7. Consent Form: ☐
8. Recruitment Document: ☐
9. Other: ☒

Justification for Amendments proposed: *eg. Reason extension to approval end date required; addition of new participant group; change in project focus.*

Due to the recent political instability in the Middle East, it would be more prudent at this stage to conduct the fieldwork online. The location would therefore be the Islamic University of Gaza, UNRWA schools and camps in Gaza Strip, for virtual interviewing and online classroom observations. It implies that participants will be staff members and students of the Islamic University of Gaza, in addition to teachers and students of UNRWA schools, as stated in the previous approved application.

List of Supporting Documents attached:
Plain Language Statement
Consent Forms

Declaration:

I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information given above, together with any accompanying information, is complete and correct.

Signature/s

Staff:

Supervisor (if student project)

Student:

<u>End of Applicant Form</u>
<u>Ethics Office use only:</u>

Received: 03/12/2014
Forwarded for consideration: Click here to enter a date.
Outcome returned to applicant: Click here to enter a date.
Outcome: Select

_____End_____

Signatures can be scanned in, typed, or GUID used.

Appendix C: Copy of approval of amendments from University of Glasgow's Ethics Committee (College of Social Sciences)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Participants

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐   *Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application* ☒

Application Details : (Amendments to Original Approved Application)

Application Number: 400130243

Applicant's Name   Maria Grazia Imperiale

Project Title   Intercultural language education with refugees in the Middle East

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Application Status   **Approved**

Start Date of Approval of Amendments ____ *(d.m.yr)*   15/01/15

(blank if Changes Required/ Rejected)

End Date of Approval of Research Project *(d.m.yr)*   31/03/17

Only if the applicant has been given **approval** can they proceed with their data collection implementing the amendments to the original project with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations (where Changes are Required)

- *Where changes are required all applicants must respond* in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and provide this as the **Resubmission Document (Amendments)** to the Ethics Administrator (Terri.Hume@glasgow.ac.uk) via email to explain the changes you have made to the application. All amended application documents should also be provided.

(Shaded areas will expand as text is added)

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

MINOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS

REVIEWER COMMENTS	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO REVIEWER COMMENTS

Page 1 of 2

(OTHER THAN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS)

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the College Ethics Administrator, email address: Terri.Hume@glasgow.ac.uk

<u>End of Notification.</u>

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University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Title of the study:

Intercultural language education to refugees in the Middle East

 Researcher's details:

Maria Grazia Imperiale, University of Glasgow, College of Social Science, School of Education, St. Andrews Building, Room 682

Email: m.imperiale.1@research.gla.ac.uk

2. Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you can take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The study responds to the call of UNHRC and UNRWA for improved provision of refugee education. It focuses on language education: it wants to explore the current English and Arabic language teaching practices and how they could be

fostered to promote intercultural language education. The study will take between 6 and 9 months.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are either a pre-service or in-service language teacher (of English or Arabic as a foreign language). Your expertise and experiences are therefore very valuable.

5. Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part and later on you no longer want to continue taking part, you are still free to withdraw without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be interviewed or asked to meet other teachers to discuss about English and Arabic language teaching. You will participate in discussions and workshops on 'Building language teachers capabilities', where language teaching methodologies appropriate in Gaza Strip will be explored. Due to the limited access to Gaza Strip, interviews/focus groups/workshops will be done online, through Skype or Adobe Connect: you may be asked to reach the Islamic University of Gaza for training workshops and group discussions.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected during the study will be kept confidential. Any information about you will have your name removed so that you cannot be recognized from it. Finally, data will be stored and retained as outlined in the University of Glasgow guidelines, and then file will be deleted and destroyed by shredding.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

It is hoped that the study will contribute to the improvement of current teaching practices. Also, it may impact the TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language) and TAFL (Teaching Arabic as a foreign language) courses of the Islamic University of Gaza and other universities in Gaza. The results also, will be used to increase academic knowledge and debates as they will be presented in conferences and published in journals. As time goes on, I will notify you with the completion of the research project. Please note that in all future presentations or publications, you will not be identified.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The study is funded by a large AHRC grant 'Researching multilingually at the borders of language, the body, law and the state'.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by the University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

11. Contact for Further Information

Maria Grazia Imperiale. University of Glasgow, School of Education. St Andrews Building, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow. G3 6NH.

Email: m.imperiale.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Prof. Alison Phipps, University of Glasgow, School of Education, St. Andrews Building, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow, G3 6NH

Email: Alison.Phipps@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr. Katja Frimberger, University of Glasgow, School of Education, St. Andrews Building, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow, G3 6NH

Email: Katja.Frimberger@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr. Nazmi al-Masri, Islamic University of Gaza; TEFL and Curriculum Development, Gaza Strip.

Email: nmasri@iugaza.edu.ps

Please note that if you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, you can contact Dr. Muir Houston, College of Social Science Ethics Officer, Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Intercultural language education with refugees in the Middle East

Name of Researcher: Maria Grazia Imperiale

I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I confirm that the interview / focus group (delete as applicable) will be audio recorded with my consent. The data will be used only for the stated research purposes.

I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Person giving consent   Date   Signature

(if different from participant, eg Parent)

_____   _____   _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

Dear Graduates and students of the English Department of IUG,

السلام عليكم

I am Maria Grazia Imperiale, a PhD student at the University of Glasgow, working with Dr. Nazmi al-Masri.

As part of my PhD project, I am organizing a free teacher training course at IUG, on 'Using Art of Resistance in English language teaching' in the next month.

The workshops will be interactive and you will be given tips by experts, and experiment creative methods for teaching English, relevant to future English teachers in Gaza. You will gain knowledge, and also do a teaching practice.

I am looking for brilliant future English teachers, interested in experimenting creative methods in language teaching, interested in the Art of Resistance, and who are committed to education for Palestinians in Gaza. You don't have to be an artist, but be willing to try some different teaching techniques and activities. Your motivation and engagement is very valuable to me and your expertise and opinions are very important for my research project.

The Training Course is completely free of charge. And as part of a research project, your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected. I will give you more information about that on the first day.

Places are limited, so if you are interested, please read the Teacher Training Booklet attached, and fill the Application Form, which is included in the Booklet. Send the application form as soon as possible, and no later than the 27th of March, to myself, at this email address:
m.imperiale.1@research.gla.ac.uk

I hope this will be an interesting opportunity for exchanging knowledge, and build connections from Gaza to Glasgow.

It is my strong hope to be in Gaza for giving the workshop face-to-face, and I am fighting to obtain a permit to be there with you all. It will be my honor to visit IUG and be with you all in Gaza, Insha Allah.

In case that will not be successful, unfortunately, we will experiment online teacher training, breaking the siege anyway, and hoping for a real, in person meeting soon!

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

I look forward to hearing from you,

شكرا جزيلا

Maria Grazia Imperiale

PhD Candidate in Education

College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

'Using the Art of Resistance in English Language Teaching' Teacher Training Booklet

Course Overview

The course is an experimental, introductory course on using creative methods in language education. It is part of a PhD project on 'Creative methods in intercultural language education in Gaza Strip, Palestine', (PhD Candidate: Maria Grazia Imperiale, School of Education, University of Glasgow; Supervisors: Prof. Alison Phipps; Dr. Katja Frimberger; Dr. Nazmi al Masri) within the AHRC large-grant 'Researching multilingually at the borders of language, the body, law and the state'. Being part of a research project, participants will be ensured anonymity and confidentiality, and will be able to withdraw anytime. They will be asked to sign a consent form before the beginning of the workshops, and to read the Participant Information sheet, which will be provided.

The course aims at involving pre-service teachers in workshops on exploring the use of political cartoons, comics, drama and films for language teaching. All the activities will be relevant and embedded in the Gaza Strip context: the course will refer to English for Palestine; and will deal with authentic material relevant for ELT in Gaza Strip (ie. the political comic books 'Palestine' and 'Footnotes in Gaza', by Joe Sacco; the website 'Palestine Remix' etc..).

Participants will gain subject knowledge; they will experiment teaching techniques through interactive activities; will be asked to construct a lesson plan and then will apply their learning in a practice-teach session.

Participants are expected to engage during the workshops and to contribute with ideas, opinions, and constructive feedback. The space of the workshops is a safe-space, where all participants feel free to ask questions, to try out ideas, contributing to each other's learning.

The course is an intensive course of 20 contact hours, in 5 days (11-16th April 2015). In addition, participants may dedicate an additional 5 hours for compiling their learning journals; and another 2 hours to prepare a written assignment.

The course is free of charge. In return, participants will be asked to train another group of pre-service teachers (that will be done after participants' graduation, in the coming months, in the form that candidates prefer. Continuous contact and consultation for the training development will be provided).

There is no formal evaluation for the course. However, participants are expected to meet the course requirements as indicated in the section 'Course requirements and evaluation'.

Target candidature – Entry requirements

The ideal candidate is a pre-service English teacher, enrolled in her/his last year in the English Department, Islamic University of Gaza. The ideal candidate has a genuine interest in teaching English using a variety of teaching methodologies.

No specific artistic skills are required in order to participate in the course, but a strong motivation for exploring different teaching methodologies is required. Participants with any sort of artistic capabilities, are strongly encouraged to make use of them during the workshops. All the candidates are expected to participate actively during the workshops, contributing with ideas, opinions, feedback.

No teaching experience is required. However, pre-service teachers with any sort of informal teaching experience may wish to point that out in the Application Form.

The course is free for students of the Islamic University of Gaza.

In order to apply for the course, fill in the Application Form attached and send it by the 27th of March, 1pm to:

Miss Maria Grazia Imperiale: m.imperiale.1@research.gla.ac.uk.

Places for the course are limited. If demand exceeds the number of places available, candidates will be selected according to their application forms. Applicants may be asked to have a brief online interview to discuss their motivations to attend the course.

Participants will be given notification of acceptance by the 3rd of April.

Course Aims

The course enables candidates to:

Acquire an introductory subject knowledge on adopting creative methods in language teaching, exploring drama pedagogy and the use of comics and political cartoons in class

Experiment creative teaching techniques through interactive workshops

Reflect on the teaching materials in use in Gaza Strip (English for Palestine, Grade 8-9) and how could certain units be supplemented with the inclusion of creative methods

Apply their learning in a teaching context, demonstrating the teachers capabilities acquired during the workshops

Strengthen an active network of pre-service and in-service teachers

Syllabus content

The course consists of three specific topic areas:

the use of comics and political cartoons in ELT;

drama pedagogy in ELT;

films and videos for ELT purposes.

The workshops are interactive: they consist in a combination of input sessions; group work; interactive activities; discussions; peer learning; peer observation; lesson planning and also a teaching practice.

Duration and Start date

The course is an intensive 5-days course, for a total of 20 contact hours. Participants will need to dedicate an additional 8 hours for compiling their learning journals and to prepare a brief written assignment on the evaluation of the course.

Dates are: April, 10th-16th, at the English Department of the Islamic University of Gaza.

In addition to the course, participants will be invited to attend the Symposium 'Language and art of resistance' on April, 14th where international speakers will give talks on the topic.

Course requirements and evaluation

There is no formal assessment for the course, as it is in its experimental stages. However, participants are expected to meet the course requirements.

The 'informal' evaluation is continuous, as assessment takes place all throughout the course, and integrated, as it will be based on three components:

participation, active engagement, feedback throughout the workshops;

a 30-minute practice-teach class;

a written assignment, which consists on the participants' reflections on the course (to be submitted via email by April, 23rd)

Participants will be asked to compile a learning diary every day after the workshop. A copy of the learning journal will be submitted for research purposes.

At the end of the course, students will be invited to evaluate and reflect on the course, and provide feedback both in group, and in individual form (either through interviews or through a questionnaire).

Application Form

Personal Information

Name:

Surname:

Address:

Email:

Post- school Education

Institution:

Department:

Transcript of studies:

Exams (of relevancy for the course)	Grade

Teaching experiences. Please list all your teaching experiences (formal – informal: it does not have to be working experiences – it may be volunteering, helping siblings etc.)

_____

_____

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Motivation. Please, write not more than 200 words on why you intend to take part in the course.

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What do you think are the benefits and drawbacks of using creative methods in English language teaching?

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Artistic skills and capabilities. Please list your artistic talents, skills and capabilities; and what you could offer to the workshop members. If you think you are not an 'artistic' person, please reflect on your talents as a future teacher, and write what you could bring to the group.

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Please order these creative methods (from 1-7) according to the ones that you think you would adopt in your class. Please provide rationale for your choices.

□ Visual Arts

□ Comics

□ Political cartoons

□ Music

□ Films

□ Drama – role play – improvisation

□ Photography

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Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State

Certificate of Participation

We hereby confirm that

. . . .

participated in the 'Using Art of Resistance in English language teaching'

online teacher training course(24 hours) on April-May 2015

Professor Alison Phipps   Dr Nazmi Al-Masri

Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies   Dean, Community Service & Continuing
University of Glasgow   Education
Principal Investigator: 'Researching Multilingually   The Islamic University - Gaza
at the borders of Language, the Body, Law and   Co-Investigator: 'Researching Multilingually at
the State.'   the borders of Language, the Body, Law and the
                                                            State.'

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

عنوان الدراسة و تفاصيل الباحث

عنوان الدراسة

تعليم اللغة الانجليزية للاجئين في الشرق الأوسط

تفاصيل الباحث

ماريا غراتسيا إمبريال، جامعة غلاسكو، كلية العلوم الاجتماعية، كلية التربية،مبنى سانت اندروز، غرفة 682

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فقرة الدعوة

يتم دعوتك للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية. قبل أن تقرر ما إذا كنت يمكن أن تشارك، من المهم بالنسبة لك أن تفهم لماذا يجري البحث وما الذي ينطوي عليه. يرجى أخذ الوقت لقراءة المعلومات التالية بعناية ومناقشتها مع الآخرين إذا كنت ترغب في ذلك.يمكنك ان تسأل إذا كان هناك أي شيء غير واضح أو إذا كنت ترغب في مزيد من المعلومات. يمكن اخذ الوقت اللازم لتقرر ما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة ام لا.

أشكركم على هذه القراءة

ما هو الغرض من هذه الدراسة؟

تستجيب الدراسة لدعوة مجلس حقوق الإنسان والأونروا لتوفير وتحسين التعليم. لأنها تركز على تعليم اللغة: فهي تهدف لاستكشاف ممارسات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية الحالية وكيف يمكن تعزيزها، وذلك تماشيا مع الإصلاح التعليمي. سوف تأخذ هذه الدراسة ما بين 6 و 9 أشهر

لماذا تم اختياري أنا؟

لقد تم اختيارك لأنك من أصحاب المصلحة الرئيسية ودورك وعملك مع الأونروا مهم جدا. وبالتالي لديك الخبرات والتجارب هي قيمة للغاية. المشاركون المعنيون هم معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية من مختلف المدارس الثانوية التابعة للأونروا ومديري المدارس، والعاملين بالأونروا.

هل يجب أن أشارك؟

المشاركة في هذه الدراسة هي طواعية تماما. إذا قررت المشاركة وفي وقت لاحق لم تعد ترغب في الاستمرار، فيمكنك الانسحاب في أي وقت من دون ضرورة اعطاء أسباب.

ماذا سيحدث لي إذا شاركت؟

ستقوم مجموعة من مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية بالمحاولة جاهدين لتحسين نوعية تعليم اللغة. سيتم اجراء مقابلة معك،
أو يطلب منك لقاء معلمين اخرين للمناقشة حول تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، لوضع خطة عمل، ثم البحث فيها وتقييمها.

هل مشاركتي في هذه الدراسة ستكون سرية؟

ستبقى جميع المعلومات التي تم جمعها خلال الدراسة سرية. وسيتم ازالة الاسم بحيث لا يمكن التعرف عليه. أخيرا،
سيتم تخزين البيانات والاحتفاظ بها على النحو المبين في جامعة غلاسكو ، ومن ثم حذفها و تدميرها.

ماذا سيحدث لنتائج الدراسة البحثية؟

من المؤمل أن نتائج الدراسة سيتم استخدامها للتأثير على التعليم بالأونروا. أيضا، سيتم استخدام البيانات لزيادة
المعرفة الأكاديمية حيث يتم عرضها في المؤتمرات والمنشورات في المجلات العلمية.كما سيتم اعلامكم حين انتهاء
هذا المشروع البحثي.

من هو منظم وممول هذا البحث؟

المشروع البحث (AHRC) : البحث في حدود اللغة, الجسم, القانون, و الدولة في لغات متعددة.

تمت مراجعة الدراسة من قبل من؟

لقد تمت المراجعة من لجنة الأخلاقيات بجامعة جلاسجو، كلية العلوم الاجتماعية

الاتصال للحصول على مزيد من المعلومات .

Maria Grazia Imperiale, University of Glasgow, School of Education

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Prof. Alison Phipps, University of Glasgow, School of Education (ب

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Dr. Keith Hammond, University of Glasgow, School of Education (ج

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يرجى ملاحظة أنه إذا كان لديك أية مخاوف حول سير هذا المشروع البحثي، يمكنك الاتصال بالدكتور موير هيوستن،
Muir.Houston @ glasgow.ac.ukكلية العلوم موظف علم الأخلاق الاجتماعية،