From 'languaging' to 'translanguaging':
Reconsidering foreign language teaching and testing
through a multilingual lens

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Abstract
This paper is the result of a research project exploring the complex nature of interlinguistic mediation, i.e., a translanguaging activity which involves relaying of information from one language to another. Although it is essential for individuals in today's multilingual societies to have acquired the skills that will enable them to use two or more languages in a parallel fashion (an ability also foreseen by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* − CEFR), mediation has not received much attention. Given this void, this paper stresses the urgent need for the implementation of foreign language programmes that will support the development of interlinguistic mediation strategies and points to the role of language testing in the effort to promote multilingualism.

Keywords: interlinguistic mediation, translanguaging, multilingual programme, multilingual testing

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the importance of implementing programmes and administering language tests which favour translanguaging and interlingual mediation practices. It actually draws a) upon a longitudinal research project on mediation[1] –a communicative undertaking which entails purposeful relaying of information from one language to another, with the intention of bridging communication gaps between interlocutors and b) on relevant literature concerning recent views on multilingual education in general and the development of translanguaging skills in particular. As a matter of fact, the present paper is the result of the writer's systematic involvement with the issue of interlingual mediation (see Stathopoulou 2015), an issue almost

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[1] Doctoral research under the supervision of Professor B. Dendrinos, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The research (Stathopoulou 2013a) is related to the work being carried out at the *Research Centre for Language Teaching, Testing and Assessment* (RCeL) (http://www.rcel.enl.uoa.gr).

neglected in any discussion for foreign language pedagogies, probably due to the dominant monolingual paradigm in mainstream language didactics.

2. Exploring the 'unexplored': Interlingual mediation in a testing context

The development of multilingual societies due to the socio-economic changes because of globalisation, brings to the fore people's strong need to communicate effectively in various intercultural contact situations. Commenting on the recent and unavoidable mixing of language in everyday life, Shohamy (2006: 13) points out:

> In many situations, information from the Internet is obtained in one language while discussion about it is conducted in another language, pointing to the constant mix of languages and codes. In the public domain too, a variety of languages and codes are used simultaneously and organically as indicated in the languages of public signs, names of stores, streets, public announcements and advertisements.

In this new context, it is very likely for a person to act as mediator, i.e., to find himself/herself in a situation in which s/he has to serve as a linguistic and cultural bridge between individuals who do not share the same language, move back and forth with ease between languages and relay messages from one language to the other for a given communicative goal. Terms such as translanguaging,[2] polylanguaging[3] and code-crossing, which have recently emerged in the literature, reflect this need on the part of multilingual speakers to use the resources available to them so as to communicate effectively. Questions such as why and how people translanguage, what types of strategies and skills someone needs to participate effectively in today's superdiverse societies (cf. Hornberger 2007; Hornberger and Link 2012) and through what means the ability to use translanguaging and interlinguistic mediation techniques can be developed (cf. Creese and Blackledge 2010a; Yagmur and Extra 2011; García, Flores and Homonoff Woodley 2012; Gort and Pontier 2012; Hambye and Richards 2012) have attracted the attention of scholars in the field of foreign language pedagogy.

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[2] Williams (1994) coined the term and refers to the alternation of language modes.

[3] A term used by Jørgensen (2008, 2010), Jørgensen, et al (2011) and Jørgensen and Møller (2012). Polylanguaging occurs when speakers employ different linguistic resources at their disposal.

The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) has constituted a step in the direction of promoting multilingualism, by stressing the necessity for language programmes to enhance the development of language users' interlingual strategies and plurilingual competences (cf. Coste and Simon 2009). As a matter of fact, in 2001, mediation was included in the CEFR without however receiving as much attention as the activities of reception, production and interaction. Given that no can-do statements for the mediatory use of language are provided by the CEFR, the particular language activity has seldom been included in foreign language curricula or featured in classroom activities until recently[4] and its investigation is rarely attempted (e.g. Stathopoulou 2009). In response to the need for further investigation as to what ensures the success of mediation and what the prerequisites for successful mediation are, this research attempts to shed light on aspects of this area by drawing data from the national foreign language examination system leading to the state certificate of language proficiency – known as KPG, the only examination system in Europe which has legitimized mediation (Dendrinos 2006). In fact, consistent with the recommendations of the European Commission to promote multilingualism, the KPG examination suite has incorporated inter-linguistic mediation tasks as an exam component in both the writing and the speaking tests from B1 level onwards.[5] A major thus driving force for this research was the inclusion of mediation tasks in the KPG exams. Novelty coupled with lack of research findings shaped the definite need for the systematic investigation of mediation performance.

The scope of the research, whose extensions are discussed in the present paper, has been to acquire a multileveled understanding of the mechanisms of interlinguistic mediation in a testing context. The study is concerned specifically with interlinguistic mediation involving Greek learners/users of English and it focuses on *written* mediation in English, produced on the basis of information in written source texts in Greek. Specifically, the research investigated what mediation entails and what types of written mediation strategies lead to the achievement of a given communicative purpose. Drawing data from the *KPG Task Repository* and the *KPG English Corpus*, compiled with tasks and scripts respectively from the KPG exams, this research has

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[4] In Greece, the newly developed National Curriculum for Foreign Languages actually includes illustrative descriptors for the mediatory use of language, which are partly based on the task-analysis results derived from the research conducted by Stathopoulou (2013a) (cf. Dendrinos and Stathopoulou 2011).

[5] See Appendix 1 for an example. For further information on mediation tasks and how they are different across levels, see Dendrinos and Stathopoulou (2010).

led to the development of a) a levelled mediation task typology[6] and of b) an Inventory of Written Mediation Strategies (IWMS),[7] outcomes which may contribute to the creation of benchmarks for reliable assessment of mediation competence. The investigation of mediation performance through the textual analysis of candidates' scripts has enabled an understanding of how task parameters affect written mediation strategies and which strategies lead to successful communication at different levels of proficiency. While the quantitative analysis has helped to discover whether frequency distributions vary in the scripts of different proficiency levels, the qualitative analysis conducted has contributed to discovering the extent to which certain linguistic features of specific mediation strategies can be considered as predictive of proficiency level. The section below briefly defines mediation in the light of research results. This definition may actually prove useful in any future discussion for implementing programmes favouring the simultaneous use of two languages.

3. Defining interlingual mediation as translanguaging practice: Shifting attention from 'languages' to 'resources'

Interlingual mediation is considered as a form of translanguaging as it involves purposeful transferring of information from one language to another. In fact, the particular term has been chosen to capture this fluidity and movement between languages and to describe the act of drawing on multiple linguistic and cultural resources in order to communicate (Stathopoulou 2013a, 2013c). In line with the above, Shohamy (2013: 229) points out that "translanguaging is one such example of moving freely within, between and among languages."

The term translanguaging has actually been coined by Williams (1994, 1996, 2002) who sees it as a bilingual pedagogy that alternates language modes (cf. Baker 2001; García 2009a).[8] The input is in one language while the output is in the other language. Translanguaging as pedagogy was initially related to bilingual education and refers to "building bilingual students' language practices flexibly in order to develop new

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[6] See Stathopoulou (2013d) for a discussion of what differentiates mediation tasks across proficiency levels and what tasks are appropriate for each level.

[7] For the implications of the particular inventory for the construction of mediation specific can-do statements, see Stathopoulou (2013b).

[8] It is also referred to in the literature as "transcultural repositioning" (Richardson-Bruna 2007: 235). Note that the use of 'languaging' (verbalisation) indicates a shift of understanding from language as a system, a static 'object' to a process (Becker 1991 cited in Jaworski 2012).

understandings and new language practices" (García et al 2012: 52).[9] In a pedagogic context, translanguaging may involve the teacher asking a question in the source language and expecting the learners to answer in the target language. In our context of studying mediation, the term refers to reading or listening in one language and producing speech (oral or written) in the target language.

By viewing mediation as a form of translanguaging, attention is shifted from languages (or from language entities as static objects) to resources, thus emphasizing the fact that there are no clear-cut boundaries between languages (cf. Canagarajah 2006; García 2009b; Dendrinos 2012). Given that the mediator is not expected to be totally fluent in both languages involved, it goes without saying that my view of mediation as translanguaging practice reflects a radical departure from the model of the ideal speaker. Overall, the mediator is viewed as a (plurilingual) social actor actively participating in the intercultural communicative event, drawing on source language content and shaping new meanings in the target language.

The systematic analysis of mediation tasks and scripts (Stathopoulou 2013a, 2015, 2016) has enabled an understanding of what ultimately counts as successful mediation, which is roughly discussed below. In fact, the ability to mediate, which is seen as forming part of speaker's plurilingual competence, is "not conceived as the sum of abilities and competences in distinct languages but as one global but complex capacity" (Coste and Simon 2009: 174) which may be more or less developed depending on the mediator's proficiency in each of the two languages or his/her linguistic experiences. Being able to mediate entails not only being competent in switching between languages and in relaying information from one language to the other according to the rules and possibilities of a given communicative encounter, but also having the capacity to use a wide range of mediation strategies which ultimately determine the success of the end-product. During the act of mediation, in other words, the mediator is involved in a process of selection on different levels: on the level of meanings and language through which these are realized and on the level of mediation strategies. S/he is actually required to select the appropriate messages to transfer into the target language on the basis of the task at hand, and has to decide through what

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[9] In Wales, as García, Bartlett and Kleifgen (2006) claim, translanguaging techniques are used to develop two languages with students listening to discourse presented in one language and working in the other.

linguistic means to transfer them (and which mediation strategies to use) in order to be successful in his/her task.

The section that follows stresses the importance of a programme reinforcing connections between languages, aiming at the development of learners' translanguaging strategies and focusing on languages as resources rather than on languages as systems to be taught.

4. Reconsidering foreign language education in a multilingual perspective: teaching and testing interlinguistic mediation

4.1 Favouring translanguaging practices within the classroom: A shift from monolingualism to multilingualism

As Dendrinos (2012) aptly puts it, there is an urgent need to reconsider language education for multilingualism and reject the simplistic notion that multilingualism is just about learning lots of foreign languages –a claim consistent with the recommendations of the European Commission. In fact, the European Commission's Civil Society Platform to promote multilingualism[10] (Action Plan for 2014-20) has recognized the need to support "successful programmes of bilingual and/or multilingual education and use them to build language education pedagogies for the development of plurilingual competences".[11] The crucial target clearly stated therein is to facilitate a shift from monolingualism to multilingualism by turning monolingual European schools into places where a single language of instruction no longer dominates, but where several languages are used as resources. In these schools, learners are encouraged to deal simultaneously with several different languages while this environment of intertwining of language practices, as Coste and Simon (2009) would put it, does reflect a non-separatist view of language.

A pedagogical approach fostering the existence of multiple voices within the classroom "means to recognise and appreciate all kinds of multimodal languaging practices as legitimate means of creating meaning and sense, to accept situations of not understanding and of limited control," and to foster the capacity "to regard one language through the eyes of another language" (Bakhtin 1981: 296 found in Busch

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[10] The Civil Society Platform to Promote Multilingualism was set up in 2009 to help achieve the objectives of Communication 2008/566 on 'Multilingualism: An asset for Europe and a shared commitment'.
[11] Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism Policy Recommendations for the Promotion of Multilingualism in the European Union, Brussels, 09 June 2011
http://ec.europa.eu/languages/pdf/civilsocpl-executive-summ_en.pdf

2011). In such an approach to language learning, the learner is not viewed as an epistemological subject engaged in the solitary acquisition of a language, but as a social actor being able to perform meaningful actions in the different discursive spaces in which s/he is involved (Bono and Melo-Pfeifer 2011). By this means, "linguistic homogenization through the spread of English" (Hambye and Richards 2012: 175) will be avoided, linguistic diversity will be promoted and multivoicedness will be much appreciated.

The implementation of a programme replacing the tradition established by mainstream foreign language didactics and favouring mediation practices within the classroom would enable learners to make sense of multilingual linguistic landscape they live in (cf. Gorter 2006). Additionally, the incorporation of mediation activities are likely to contribute to the development of learners' "communicative competence so that their practices articulate the interplay of languages and cultures which they experience as part of the learning process" (Dendrinos 2005: 62).[12] As a matter of fact, the learning outcomes of such an approach will be related to the development of learners' linguistic repertoires in different languages and ultimately, of their plurilingual competence.[13]

Stressing the importance of developing translanguaging strategies within the framework of foreign language pedagogy, Canagarajah (2011: 7-8) also mentions that "we have to be open to the possibility that translanguaging will be actively practiced in literacy in the future." Drawing thus upon the semiotic resources they have from a variety of contexts, languages and cultures, it is necessary for people to learn to use translanguaging strategies and resort to interlinguistic mediation so as to communicate effectively in bi- or multi- lingual contexts. As also asserted by Hornberger and Link (2012) and Hornberger (2007), such practices of parallel use of languages, which have recently been theorized and documented as 'hybrid classroom discourse practices' (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Tejeda 1999), 'multilingual classroom ecologies'

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[12] This is in line with what Canagarajah and Said (2010) point out. They actually accentuate the importance of training students "to shuttle between communities by deploying the relevant codes" and highlight the need for pedagogy to be refashioned to accommodate the modes of communication and acquisition seen outside the classroom (Canagarajah 2009: 20).

[13] In fact, within the context of bilingual education, Baker (2001) explains that in a context of 'strategic classroom language planning', the switching of languages may promote a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter and may help students develop skills in their weaker language. The grounding of multiple complex and interacting pluralities within the language classroom ultimately contributes, as Coste and Simon (2009) aptly put it, to the forging of [students'] personal and plural identity.

(Creese and Martin 2003), and 'flexible bilingual pedagogy' (Blackledge and Creese 2010; Creese and Blackledge 2010a) offer possibilities for instructors and learners to access content through the linguistic resources and communicative repertoires they bring into the classroom while simultaneously acquiring new ones.

Additionally, accentuating the positive effects of translanguaging, Creese and Blackledge (2010b) affirm that there is no evidence that translanguaging practice is oppositional to the development of proficiency in standard or non-standard varieties of individual 'languages'. In practice, translanguaging repertoires unproblematically incorporate linguistic items from a range of sources which do not require singular proficiency. Similarly, Hornberger (2005: 607) notes that "bi/multilinguals' learning is maximized when they are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills (in two+ languages), rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices". In the same vein, Hornberger and Link (2012: 4) suggest that

> developing awareness of and an orientation to translanguaging and transnational literacies in classrooms with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can provide practitioners, teachers, and researchers with a fuller understanding of the resources students bring to school and help us identify ways in which to draw on these resources for successful educational experiences.

Last but not least, García (2009a) refers to translanguaging in the classroom as a way to develop learners' metalinguistic understanding and metacognitive awareness, important for bilingually educated individuals in the 21st century.

Shifting attention from the advantages of a multilingual approach to teaching and learning to the teachers' role, it is important to mention that the teachers aiming at developing their learners' translanguaging skills should be trained on how to achieve learners' multilingual literacy and learn how to generate materials for developing their students' mediation competence. In fact, the successful mediation strategies derived from the extensive analysis of scripts could be incorporated into strategy-oriented courses aiming at developing learners' mediation skills (cf. Stathopoulou, 2013a). Instructors who wish to develop their students' mediation strategies, should, first of all, organize task-based courses and link specific types of tasks to specific strategies

making students aware of the interrelationship between tasks and mediation strategy use. Additionally, language teachers could build on strategies students already use in their texts. Language activities should not be taught separately from strategy instruction, but the one complementing the other. Finally, the teaching of strategies should be explicit making students aware of the range of strategies that can be used in different sorts of tasks.

4.2 Translanguaging practices and testing: The case of the Greek foreign language exams

Although there is a growing interest in multilingual teaching and learning within the field of language education due to the emerging needs for intercultural communication in today's superdiverse societies, multilingual testing is completely overlooked in the field of language assessment, which is still dominated by the monolingual paradigm (Shohamy 2011, 2013). Assessment policies and testing practices are based upon monolingual (native-like) constructs rather than being oriented towards assessing multilingual competencies or strategies for drawing upon different resources in order to communicate, for reasons which seem to be both political and economic (Shohamy 2011, 2013; Dendrinos 2012, 2013).

Discussing the neglected concept of multilingual testing, Canagarajah (2006: 241) maintains that tests have to reflect the communication practices of the specific communities of communication "in relation to the repertoire of codes, discourses, and genres that are conventional for that context." What he actually implies is the notion of glocality. It is true that the majority of examination systems are linked to global testing examination bodies or universities which are based abroad. Their examinations are administered *only* in the target language, while the worldview and ideology described and construed in them (cf. Balourdi 2012) seem not to take into account the relevant features of the local communities in/for which they are administered.

KPG exams, is the only exam battery that is based in Greece, is administered by the Greek state, thus having a glocal character (Dendrinos 2009) and at the same time promotes multilingualism by assessing mediation performance. This decision on the part of the testers to include mediation tasks in test papers reflects current views about the creative interaction of various languages and modalities as already discussed in the present paper. As a matter of fact, such approaches to testing do not view languages as separate systems in the mind of the language user. There are no clear-cut

boundaries between them and what is ultimately assessed is learners' ability to simultaneously draw on different linguistic and cultural resources from a variety of contexts in order to make meaning.

There is still a long way to go as regards the concept of multilingualism in the field of testing. As Shohamy (2013) maintains, what ultimately needs immediate reconsideration is the construct of language; in other words, scholars in the field should firstly address the question what it means to know a language in today's multilingual and multicultural societies, and then deal with the issue of how to assess multilingual competence.

5. Conclusion

The practice of mediation is regarded as an important aspect of human intercultural communication. In today's multilingual contexts, being able to cope with multiple intercultural experiences and mediate effectively seems to be a prerequisite for individuals' successful participation in these. Language users are actually required to be equipped with the necessary intercultural tools, such as 'sociolinguistic sensitivity',[14] mediation and negotiation skills, language and cultural awareness, which will enable them to be effective in filling communication gaps.

Given thus that the translinguistic contact situations seem to necessitate a readiness on the part of most language users to engage with a repertoire of codes, what emerges as a necessity to be stressed, is the need for multilingual approaches to language learning. This paper discusses the importance of the implementation of programmes which will include mediation activities as a means for engaging students in languaging practices which involve interplay of languages, thus supporting linguistic diversity and promoting intercultural competence in general, and mediation skills in particular. What has been discussed in this paper is that such an approach to language learning not only implies becoming aware of the presence of different languages and codes as a resource, but also entails a commitment to multivoicedness.[15] As a matter of fact, it is not about "adding" another language (parallel monolingualisms as Heller 1999 would put it); it is about developing skills and strategies of simultaneously and

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[14] Canagarajah and Said (2010: 161) define sociolinguistic sensitivity as "one's awareness of dialect differences, identity considerations, contextual constraints and cultural sensitivity".
[15] See Busch (2011) who speaks of a heterroglossic approach to language learning.

flexibly drawing upon different linguistic and cultural resources, thus developing a 'multilingual ethos of communication' (Dendrinos 2001).

By drawing on an exam battery which assesses the simultaneous use of two languages, the paper concludes by pointing to the role of testing in the effort of promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

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Appendix

May 2009 KPG writing test paper

You and your friend Martin have decided to spend part of your summer vacation doing volunteer work. Use information from the site below and write an **email** (150 words) to Martin. Try to **convince** him that it's a good idea for the two of you to take part in the Syros project of the Greek Ornithological Society. Sign as Alex.

Helpful hint

Stress those aspects of the project which make it particularly attractive for you. For example:

➲ **Location, flexible dates, cost, type of work**