The linguistic repertoire, language ideologies and space: The case of a young asylum seeker on the island of Lesvos

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Abstract

This paper discusses the construction of the linguistic repertoire and the ways in which language ideologies are shaped in connection to space- in the context of im/mobility and the institutionalisation that results as part of the asylum procedure in a transit shelter for unaccompanied minors on Lesvos Island in Greece. The article examines a young person's (Amir, aged 17) linguistic repertoire and language ideologies in his metalinguistic interpretations by using a multimodal biographical approach developed by Busch (2012), which involves visual and verbal representation of linguistic experience. In most linguistic repertoire studies, linguistic and semiotic resources are seen as a whole – a move away from named bounded languages- and a focus on the relationality of the resources including language, body and other semiotic resources. However the invisibilised parts of the linguistic repertoire in asylum seeking and containment settings are less dealt with. By focusing on the semiotic process *erasure* in the context of an in-transit individual, this paper argues that the linguistic repertoire is a disintegrated whole that involves the expansion of the resources as well as the invisibilisation of the resources.

Key words: the linguistic repertoire, language ideologies, migration, asylum seekers, im/mobility

Introduction

This article discusses the construction of the linguistic repertoire and the ways in which language ideologies are shaped in connection to space- *topos* (place) - that is socially constructed (Lefebevre 1991) during prolonged forced im/mobility and the institutionalisation as part of the asylum procedure in a shelter for unaccompanied minors on Lesvos Island, in the north eastern part of the Aegean sea that shares a border with Turkey. The island operates as a hotspot for identification, registration and fingerprinting of the asylum seekers. Initially the island was a "transit" (Daskalaki and Leivaditi 2018) place until asylum applications were assessed. This shifted into containment and management of humanitarian crises (Pallister-Wilkins 2018) as the sea arrivals increased. This means asylum seekers on the island are caught in a complex migration infrastructure (Biao and Lindquist 2014) that involves multiple actors such as the humanitarian, nongovernmental, solidarity actors -especially the leftists, anarchists and European internationalists -as well as the securitisation (Rampton and Charalambous 2019) actors such as the Frontex European Border Agency, the Greek Coast Guards, the local government and the EU organisations in a highly complex asylum processing system.

In this paper, I examine a young person's (Amir, aged 17) linguistic repertoire and language ideologies which are an integral part of his metalinguistic interpretations under such

complexity, precarity and containment but also are in transit at the time of this research, by using a multimodal biographical approach developed by Busch (2012). The multimodal approach involves visual and verbal representation of the linguistic experience in a temporary institutional setting. This approach not only provides data about how the linguistic repertoire that involves both verbal and visual multimodalities (Adami 2016) including colour and text, is shaped in migratory settings and ways in which individuals interpret their linguistic behaviour (Hymes, 1977, p. 31), but also different time-spaces, present, past and future aspirations as well as disruptions such as change of country or school in one's personal biography (Busch, 2016). The analysis shows that the language learning spaces in the context of im/mobility not only provide opportunities for the expansion of the repertoire, but also leads to the *erasure* (Irvine and Gal, 2000) of resources within the constraints of institutional spaces.

This article draws on a nine month ethnography (October 2016- July 2017) that was produced in the framework of a large project which identified educational and linguistic needs of refugees in Greece and to implement non-formal educational activities for refugees residing in refugee settings such as camps and shelters in Greece. The linguistic repertoire and language ideologies emerged as two salient analytical foci in the ethnography where a language portrait activity was used in order to explore language practices of young people on the island of Lesvos. These two concepts are important as I demonstrate the choices asylum seekers make about languages are not only shaped by their life trajectories, but also linked to the institutional imperatives of the asylum processing and the life prospects they have set for a better future.

The linguistic repertoire of asylum seekers who are in-transit due to the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal signed in 2016, living in uncertainty, disruptions in schooling, dangerous journeys while crossing borders, requires a more complex theoretical approach. For example, if a minor is under the age of 15 their access to schooling is easier however s/he has to be represented legally, those are over 15 have less chances of schooling but legally can represent themselves. This means rather than a path towards schooling, many young people are forced to find jobs. For example during a house meeting in the shelter where this research took place, young people shared their concerns about employment and stressed that their families expected them to send money back home. The language choices that unaccompanied minors made under precarious conditions are not only products of power relations within the asylum

institutions but also involve hope (Del Percio 2018) for future employment. This means certain languages are celebrated, some are delegitimised and *erased* but often language skills are not found competent (Vigoroux 2013). In the case of unaccompanied minors in transit and containment, this means multiple border crossings and multiple reshuffling of the linguistic repertoire as their destinations or country of settlement is undetermined. By bringing together the concepts of the linguistic repertoire, language ideologies especially the process of *erasure* (Irvine and Gal 2000) and space (Lefebevre 1991) in a transit shelter, this paper demonstrates how a young person learns to conceptualise his repertoire in specific ways and ways in which his semiotic resources are shaped and reshuffled (Vigouroux, 2008) under uncertainty. Space in the context of this paper refers to *topos* (place) whereby linguistic practices are reshuffled, re/produced and ideologies are interpellated and lived (Lefebevre 1991). A change of space i.e. migration entails an immediate change of sociolinguistic ecology. For example many refugees made new words that denoted their refugeehood: *Malakistan*, *malaka* means "wanker" in Greek and "-istan", a middle Persian suffix generating *nomina loci*, a noun referring to a place. Malak*istan* would mean a place of wankers (e.g. Afghan*istan*, place of the Afghans, or Yunan*istan*, place of the Greeks). This types of combinations were also increasingly used by people who worked with refugees on Lesbos island. A second example to this is *Alibaba* which referred to the thieves in the camps deriving from the story of *Alibaba and Forty Thieves.* A third example is Crazy*istan* or *Trellistan* (τρελή [feminine] means "crazy" in Greek) that was often used by young people and staff who worked with them to refer to the "crazy" situation of the asylum processing in Greece with –*istan* ending indexing "the place of the crazy". A last example is *Moria no good* or *Moria don't like* (facebook) referring to the conditions in the infamous refugee camp which is now a detention centre on the island. All these examples show how a shift in physical and discursive space shapes language practices that are specific to people sharing similar environment. Interestingly I did not come across with these words in my Athens study.

The first part of the article provides a conceptual framework and deals with the notion of linguistic repertoire (Blommaert& Backus, 2013), language ideologies (Irvine& Gal 2000) space (Lefebevre 1991) in the current context of young asylum seekers on Lesvos island. In the second part, this article gives an overview of language portraits as a research method for data collection. The third part of this article provides data analysis, where I employ an interactional approach. The analysis concentrates on the meaning processes and the

background information gained through ethnographic fieldwork by using the notions of linguistic repertoire, language ideologies and space. Therefore, interactions in this article are context specific, constructed during the encounters between the researcher and the researched and the interpretation of data relies on what was "inferred" or "intended" relying on this specific "communicative background" (Gumperz, 2001, p. 219).

The linguistic repertoire, space and language ideologies

The context of this paper calls for a theoretical focus on how individuals' linguistic repertoires that is "biographically assembled patchworks of functionally distributed communicative resources" (Blommaert& Backus, 2013, p. 29) are entangled with "language ideologies and metalinguistic interpretations of speakers" (Busch, 2012, p. 510) that become an integral part of the linguistic repertoire shaped in different time spaces. The linguistic repertoire and language ideologies are products of language learning experiences which involve "range of learning trajectories, from maximally formal to extremely informal […] recognizable emblems of social categories and spaces" (Blommaert& Backus, 2013, p. 21). Busch (2012) argues the repertoire "is seen as a whole, […] enabling a move away from thinking languages and codes as bounded entities" (p. 521). The linguistic repertoire connotes a disintegration of different parts of the repertoire for individuals experiencing uncertainty and forced im/mobility. Although the linguistic repertoire argues for "wholeness" meaning the "relationality of the parts" (Busch, 2012, p. 518), I argue that in the context I am considering here, certain parts of displaced individuals' repertoires are *erased* (e.g. local language Suruchi- local dialect of Bandari spoken in Hormozgān province of Iran, is not included in Amir's repertoire) and certain parts become the iconic representations of the "whole" (e.g. English represents wholeness in Amir's narrative). Bristowe, Oostendorp and Anthonissen (2014) found that their participants, included all resources in their repertoires with the exception of Xitsonga "represent(ing) one of the so-called minority language groups in South Africa" (p. 247) that was stereotyped negatively in an educational setting. Similarly, Mike Baynham (personal correspondence, 17 March 2020) found that his participant from Mozambique also did not mention his local language Changana, in a series of conversations during TLANG project in Leeds and that only very late Changana became visible in his repertoire.

Busch (2016) argues that the linguistic repertoire is not a "toolbox or reservoir of competences" (p. 7) or "a patchwork of skills, some overlapping and some complementary, with lots of gaps between them" (Blommaert& Backus, 2013, p. 23) but that it is also about what is *erased*. In other words the linguistic repertoire in the context of displaced individuals is also a representation of ideological processes i.e. *erasure* which "renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible" (Irvine& Gal 2000, pp. 87-89). Although *erasure* has been recently dealt with by Kerfoot & Tatah (2017) in a diasporic context, this paper focuses on an in-transit context where uncertainty and forced im/mobility shape the linguistic repertoire. The social situation of unaccompanied minors in transit differs from diaspora contexts because they experience multiple displacements, multiple changes in their everyday lives. For example they may stay three months in a detention centre, five months in a shelter and could be deported anytime. This makes asylum seeking minors to make decisions under urgency. Often, in the context of this paper, this meant choosing English as their lingua franca as it was perceived as a language that could be adapted in any social context flexibly.

Therefore the linguistic repertoire is also spatial because it is "formed through individual life trajectories to the available linguistic resources in particular places" (Pennycook& Otsuji 2014, p. 166). Since space is not "just as a neutral background but as agentive in sociolinguistic processes" (Dong& Blommaert, 2009, p. 3), this paper argues that values attached to "certain linguistic resources and patterns (Dong &Blommaert, 2009, p.4) namely language ideologies are "[…] constructed from the sociocultural experience of the speaker" (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 192). The body and the embodiment of the repertoire in the context of the displaced individuals therefore represents "ways of being and doing" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 145) and also ways of "perceiving, experiencing, feeling, and desiring" (Busch, 2012, p. 510) shaped by migratory spaces that are beyond "national space" (Blommaert, 2008, p. 16) but within the constraints of the asylum institutionalisation.

As mentioned above, immigration control and asylum processing in Greece involves the practices of the supranational organisations such as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the Frontex European Border and Coast Agency which control the borders of the Schengen countries as well as the national organisations such as the Greek Asylum Service that collaborates with international organisations and the institutions of the EU. In this respect, asylum institutionalisation is beyond sovereignty and entails a *de facto*

transnationalisation of immigration policies that entails the deconstruction of "'the state' in its role in the migration process" (Sassen 1996, p. 5). Therefore migratory space in this paper means a space that is constructed in this particular context that involves supranational and national actors and their institutions such as the NGOs that operate under the logic of solidarity that is governed with charitable feelings. In other words asylum institutions operate with the logic of humanitarianism that involves "nongovernmental organizations, international agencies, states, and individuals […] which mobilises sympathy and technology, physicians and logisticians" (Fassin (2012: x). The nongovernmental is indeed governmental (Fassin 2007), in other words refugees' government is humanitarian government (Mavelli 2017).

In the light of these conceptualisations, I aim to answer the following two questions:

(i) How is the linguistic repertoire of a young person shaped in the context of controlled space and complex migration trajectories;

(ii) To what extent do the linguistic repertoire and language ideologies shape each other in in-transit contexts?

*(To) Spiti***: the shelter for unaccompanied minors**

As part of my fieldwork (conducted together with a social anthropologist and an education assistant), I conducted participant observations, where I took fieldnotes, audio recordings during Arabic lessons, observed the young people during Maths & Science lessons, attended football games and excursions with them on a weekly basis in a shelter called *Spiti* which means "home" [pseudonym] in Greek, located in the centre of the island. The shelter was a Greek NGO that however was funded by an international NGO and was run by staff that had background in social sciences. It is noteworthy to mention how the staff's specialisms in psychology, sociology, anthropology, education and so on was capitalised on and how the refugee crises enabled many unemployed social science graduates to find jobs in humanitarian relief. The shelter hosted about 20 male minors who were under 18 years old from Syria, Morocco, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ghana and Somalia of whom some applied to asylum, family reunification and relocation. It is important to mention that unaccompanied minors' age are often scrutinised and in order to determine their ages although not always implemented, medical examinations and techniques such as "dental examinations and X-rays of various bones of the body – including wrist or collarbone" can be used "to determine bone

maturity"[1] of the unaccompanied minors under Article 6 of Ministerial Decision 92490/29.10.2013[2].

The shelter provided English, Arabic, Maths and Science lessons as well as recreational activities such as drawing, drama and music lessons for the young people. Young people in the shelter could not go to public schools at the time of this research and informal education was provided to them there. A weekly schedule was present in the communal room where young people were encouraged to attend classes inside and outside the shelter. As many children and young people were denied schooling due to racism and discourses circulating around vaccination and lack of resources, this gave opportunity to many nongovernmental organisations such as *Spiti* to include an educational element to their agenda. The larger infrastructure that *Spiti* belongs to mainly provides health care, accommodation and support services where they cooperate with state agencies and other actors, if necessary. Most young people attended Greek and English lessons in a support center in Mytilene, the capital of the Lesvos island and had positive attitudes towards English but they also wanted to learn German as their desired destination was Germany. The Greek language was associated with staying in Greece, whereas German seemed to be associated with hope (Narotzky & Besnier 2014). In a recent correspondence with a UNICEF staff, I asked why requests about German classes were declined. "It is part of child protection" he stated. These requests were declined in order to prevent false expectations and disappointment but this created tensions between asylum seekers and humanitarian actors about language teaching and learning choices. The circulation of these discourses on the island coupled with the ideologies of the institutions such as *to Spiti* that provided housing and sustained itself through informal educational programmes and other institutions such as humanitarian actors including legal actors that the young people interacted had an impact as I will show on Amir's making sense of his linguistic repertoire. Amir was in highly institutionalised spaces in terms of where he stayed, where he learnt languages, practiced his art and various other activities.

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[1] European Council on Refugees and Exiles, AIDA Legal Briefing No. 5 December 2015.<https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ECRE-AIDA-Detriment-of-the-doubt-age-assessment-of-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-December-2015.pdf> accessed 15 March 2020.

[2] Lanzorte Convention. Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. 28 February 2017 <https://rm.coe.int/16806f85c3> accessed 15 March 2020.

In order to show how the shelter functioned as an institution, I provide some excerpts from my fieldnotes. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes shows how databases were created about young people's educational activities as the NGOs funding depended on their donors' satisfaction about education provided in the shelter. Stavros was one of the teachers working in the shelter and I observed his Maths and Science lessons regularly and usually asked him a number of questions before or after his lessons.

> Stavros writes what happens in the day on Google Drive. The system allows him to even rate the satisfaction of practitioners and boys from 1-7 Likert scale. The system then creates charts and graphs about the boys' educational activities. *(25 November 2016)*

As I mentioned earlier young people's activities were monitored in the shelter. This was also the case for the researchers. When I first entered the field (together with my colleagues) we were required to dress appropriately. This was not explained to us in detail but entailed that we had to be respectful to young people's religious backgrounds and also prevent any sexual provocation. We were reminded not to ask intrusive questions to the young people:

> Rules. Team members need to pay attention to dressing codes in order to respect the minors and avoid unnecessary discomfort. No questions about their lives and past …
> *(10 October 2016)*

The regimentation in the shelter not only meant data bases, dressing codes for staff and researchers, but also meant a lot of tension and frustration in the interactions between the young people and staff:

> Some minors expressed their concern about staying in *Spiti* […]They mentioned that they have a better chance of going to Athens if they stayed in Moria (refugee camp). Magda, the lawyer stated if the boys leave the shelter the police will be called and they will end up in detention centres. *(4 November 2016)*

These types of tensions between staff and the young people were common as the asylum processing in Greece is a slow and frustrating process. Similarly, staff commented that they spoke "refugee English" and that this was improper and often corrected young peoples' grammar errors as indicated in my fieldnotes: "as the boy reads, the interpreter corrects his English". The highly expertise-sised context of the shelter namely the presence of interpreters, psychologists, lawyers and caregivers meant beliefs about language were also highly specialised. For example one of the teachers where the young people attended English and Greek lessons commented "maybe it's difficult to learn two languages at the same time". Often my expertise as a "language expert" was also invited. One member of staff for example

asked me to correct their English. This highly institutionalised context meant the beliefs about the linguistic repertoire were co-constructed within the imperatives of this particular setting.

At this point it is important to note that unaccompanied minors or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are not referred to as refugees or asylum seekers but rather as "guests" (Derrida, 2005). The word φιλοξενία *philoxenia* (Rozakou, 2012), hospitality that entails "xenophilia (active love for or attraction to the Xenos or "stranger")" (Cabot, 2017, p. 141) is used in Greece. This terminology implies an asymmetrical relationship between the host and the hosted as well as hostility and hospitality (Fassin 2013). In this sense the young people on the island of Lesvos live in chronotopically ("time space" Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 84-85) conditioned and in betweenness of "minorhood", "refugeehood" and "guesthood". Nevertheless, the institutional context of young people is a context where their daily lives are regimented and controlled (Duchêne, Moyer, & Roberts 2013). In order to investigate the interconnection of language portraits and ideologies shaped in these specific time-spaces as in the cases of the young people on Lesvos Island, a language portrait activity was used in order to explore young people's metalinguistic interpretations about their repertoires.

Language portraits

For the purposes of this study language portraits were used as part of the ethnographic fieldwork. This method was particularly useful because of the constraints of the shelter: I was requested not to ask intrusive questions or cause any distress during the data collection. This meant it was taken for granted that the young people were vulnerable or rather traumatised (see Zembylas 2008). For example the teacher in the shelter wanted to talk about the *Oxi Day* (The day of No when Metaxas rejected the ultimatum given by Benito Mussolini) as his lesson was cancelled but he had to ask the psychologist if he could talk about this topic. In this respect, the shelter was psychologising (Fassin 2013) all actions and interactions among the interlocutors. However, the activity as a data collection method enabled the young people to participate in the study eagerly and reduced the distress that may have been caused through direct questions. The activity was conducted in the presence of the caregivers and a psychologist who monitored the interactions between the researcher and the participants in case any sensitive issues came up during the interactions. I also paid attention not to ask any distressing questions bearing in mind most refugees on the island crossed the sea in small

plastic boats, risking their lives. In this respect, I had my own assumptions that I developed during the course of my stay on the island. The activity was audio recorded in the presence of staff who also helped me with translations from Arabic, Urdu and Greek. Young people were informed that they could withdraw from the activity any time they wanted and that it was not part of the shelter's activities.

Previously, this method was primarily used by Neumann (1991) where primary school children were given a body silhouette with the instruction to paint all their languages on it and to use a different colour for each. During this activity, teachers were given the opportunity to engage learners in a conversation where they could to explore where learners came from and the languages they spoke (Krumm& Jenkins 2001). The activity also enabled teachers and learners to express emotions and feelings associated to language and language use (Busch, 2012, p. 511) as well as categories. In the context of this research, the language portrait activity gave the opportunity to young people to place their linguistic repertories including vernaculars and accents on their bodies. Particular parts of the bodies were selected for specific languages. The activity enabled the participants to interpret why they chose specific colours to represent specific languages on specific parts of their bodies. It is important to stress here that language portrait should not be seen as a "depiction of the repertoire 'as it is' but as a production of linguistic subjectivity? corresponding to a specific interactional situation" (Busch, 2016, p. 8).

The language portrait activity allows participants to "define for themselves which languages, codes, registers and so forth deserve a colour of their own" (Busch, 2006, p. 11). Although the choice of colours and parts of body selected by participants varies, Busch (2006) highlights that bright colours such as red are used for first languages that have high emotional value. On the other hand languages that play a marginal role at the time of drawing are depicted in pale shades and languages that have negative connotations are represented in in " 'non colour' grey" (Busch 2006: 11). Although this claim could not be generalised, Bristowe et al. (2014) also observed bright colours were chosen for home languages that had emotional value for their participants.

In the context of language portrait activity, young people were asked to draw a representation of their bodies (unlike Busch, 2012 where body silhouettes were provided to teachers). Since many of the young people had good drawing skills and were willing to draw their bodies,

template silhouettes were not used. Although the shelter discouraged questions about young people's pasts, the language portrait activity yielded certain fractions of young people's past lives. I chose to present Amir's case here because during the course of the ethnographic fieldwork, I built good rapport with him. He also spoke English which enabled me to speak to him directly rather than thorough the mediation of the interpreters in the shelter. Amir was also an artist and this made him more interested in the activity. Amir is emblematic because he stayed in the shelter for a very long time. He has been through many processes of the asylum whereas other boys were fairly newer than him. My choice in choosing Amir was also because his trajectory as a young boy who worked as a child and experienced multiple displacements and spoke many languages made me to pursue an understanding of the linguistic repertoire in such situations.

Amir's life as an asylum seeking young boy

During our discussion Amir talked about the province that he grew up in Iran. He is from a port city on the southern coast of Iran, a city that does mainly fishing. The city has a strategic position, and it is the main base of the Iranian navy but did not mention the presence of the navy. Back in Iran, Amir worked (from the age of 10) and went to school at the same time. He worked on a fishing boat as a child and learned Urdu for as a child labourer. Amir left Iran because of political issues that we did not discuss in detail in order not to create any discomforting feelings. He went to a public school for nine years in Iran. He came to Lesvos via human smugglers and stayed in Mantamados refugee camp and later on in Moria camp on the island. Amir applied for asylum but his application was rejected at the time of this research. Amir had lived on Lesvos for more than a year and learned English and Greek. The language portrait activity yielded data about how Amir acquired different languages during his migratory journey and containment on the island as well as his past schooling in Iran and his life as a child labourer.

The language portrait activity was carried out in the garden of the shelter where caregivers, interpreters, young people and I sat around a tennis table. The Arabic and Urdu interpreters helped me with the translation of the instructions given to the young people as well as interpreting young people's narratives about their portraits. Boys were giggling and engaging in the activity especially during the drawing where they interacted with staff who were assisting them. The interactions between staff and the boys were relaxed, jokes were made as they drew their bodies on paper. Amir wanted to talk about his portrait under a tree after all

the other boys completed the task. In the visual and narrative description of his language experience, Amir placed some languages in his repertoire on his body (Farsi, English and Arabic), some languages on his clothes (Greek, Urdu and Bengali) and did not place his local dialect Suruchi anywhere on his drawing. The first category of languages represented on body parts were used in formal education and the second group in institutional however in informal educational settings.

Table 1. The linguistic repertoire and its representation on the body

| Language	Location	Colour	Body part	Clothes
Farsi	Mother tongue, formal schooling	Red	Face: eyes, eyebrows, nose and lips	-
English	Informal schooling, Greece	Green	Neck, arms and hands	-
Greek	Informal schooling, Greece	Yellow	-	Trousers
Urdu	Child labour, Iran	Orange	-	Shoes
Arabic	Religious Education, Iran	Brown	Ears	-
Bengali	Shelter, Greece	Purple		T-shirt
Suruchi	Native language, Iran	-	-	-
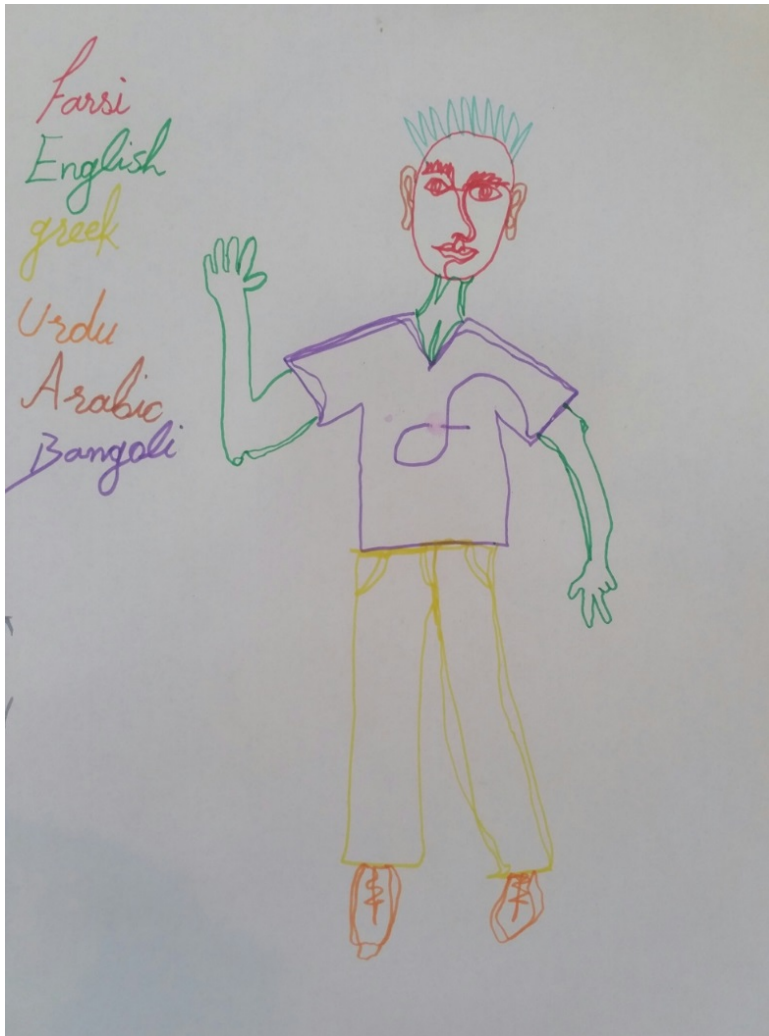
Image 1. Amir's language portrait ©Author ©Project P.R.E.S.S.

Based on these observations, themes emerged in Amir's metalinguistic interpretations could be summarised as (1) the linguistic repertoire and language ideologies are shaped by migratory/ institutional spaces whereby (2) the English language allowed im/mobilised individuals to navigate in migratory and global spaces however this entailed e*rasure* of the native languages in migratory spaces.

The linguistic repertoire and language ideologies in institutional spaces

Amir identified Farsi as his first language and exhibited a high level of linguistic awareness e.g. by comparing the grammar of Farsi with the English language that he learnt in a in the shelter and a support centre on the island of Lesvos. At the time of this research, Amir attended English lessons in a local support centre and took some lessons in the shelter where he lived. Often in these classes, teaching grammar was a priority and Amir expresses very explicit knowledge of grammar of English and Farsi in his metalinguistic interpretation.

Although Amir's metalinguistic interpretations about Farsi constitute sentimental connotations such as associating it with "freedom", his narrative is more geared towards grammar. In the interpretation of the language portrait activity, red colour symbolised freedom and he used red for his eyes, eyebrows, nose and lips. Although Amir did not state why he placed his first language on his face, he chose the parts for seeing, smelling and eating. As an artist, Amir liked red colour and used it in his paintings a lot. Amir explained that the meaning of red for him was freedom but did not mention how he associated this colour with the Farsi language.

Excerpt 1

Amir	Farsi. The red. The meaning of the red for me is the freedom
Birgul	Freedom
Amir	Farsi. In some language we have a part he, she it. It is separate. It is not (that) they say yeah she goes, he goes… It is a little bit separate [inaudible]… is like that but in Farsi we don't have …
Birgul	What do you say?
Amir	We say un
Birgul	Un?
Amir	Un yeah. It doesn't matter it's like he or she or he
Birgul	I can call Alaska and me un?
Amir	Yeah un same… the colour is red colour

Amir considered Farsi as the language of freedom since personal pronouns in English were many whereas in Farsi it was only one "un". Amir's narrative revolved around the grammar of English although I wanted to know more about why he associated Farsi with freedom. Although Amir learnt Farsi as his first language in Iran, the language ideologies he shows are connected to the new discursive space that he is situated in. Having been learning Greek and English in institutional contexts such as the language and support centre he attended, his metalinguistic interpretations follow ways in which institutions teach languages. At the time of this research honorary certification of language classes were introduced to the refugees attending the language lessons at the support centre. The centre followed a loose version of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages along with a structured curricula and tests from A1& further levels for English and Greek languages. Although some mother tongue education was provided in the shelter and the support centre through refugees themselves, volunteers, translators or caregivers, these lessons did not appear to have any structured curricula. In an interview with my anthropologist colleague with whom we did team ethnography as part of the research project and the Farsi interpreter, Amir said the following which indicated that his metalinguistic comments mainly developed during his institutionalisation in the shelter and the structures that the shelter was working with.

Although the interpretation of what Amir said in English has the interpreter's insights, what Amir says in what follows shows how learning new languages made him aware of grammar:

> […] Even though they teach you grammar in school, but you never pay attention to it, because you don't need it, but when you learn a second language then you understand, for instance, what is a subject, what is an object, case differences, that's what he means. […] I go look and find out what is a consonant, a voiceless letter of the alphabet, I'm learning Farsi in this process, as well. […] I learn, they have things that I know in English […] subject, object, consonant […]
> *(NL's interview with Amir)*

At the time of this research, Amir stated that he started to speak Greek three months ago and that he attended lessons at the language and support centre for six months, five hours per day. Unlike English, Amir did not comment on why he chose yellow for the Greek language and briefly stated "same like other colours". Interestingly, Amir chose to colour his trousers in yellow and not a specific part of his body, such as hands or eyes. Many refugees have the desire of moving to other countries and often prefer to learn English as it gives them greater chances of mobility, they claimed. Amir did not state any desire of moving to another country in our discussion. Amir attended Greek and English lessons in the language and support centre where part of my fieldwork took place. I attended Greek lessons that were provided to adult refugees in the language and support centre. In these lessons I observed that many refugees stated that the Greek language was "difficult" for them to learn. Teachers stated the Greek language was "rich" and "beautiful" appreciating the aesthetic qualities of the language. The question is however where do all these beliefs come from and how are these connected to the complicated migratory trajectories of Amir? Amir has only lived in Greece for 1,5 years and his metalinguistic interpretations seems to be shaped by the context of the shelter that he is living in and the wider context of language learning settings he has attended during his journey. This resonates with what Marckridge (2009) writes:

> One of the most pervasive language ideologies in Greece is the belief that Greek is a single language from antiquity to the present (p. 6).

Amir also employed a similar ideology that Marckridge (2009) addresses:

Excerpt 2

Amir	Yellow for Greek. Same like other colours… It is a very very very rich language. I have to… I want … I should know something … to create here… they wrote something here in the Greek.
Birgul	You mean ancient times?
Amir	Yeah ancient times … And it's very beautiful language but little bit … articles… and some … grammar is little bit difficult … They (Greeks) have many many … a lot of history about many things but I have to learn Greek to read about it …

As the Greek language has entered into Amir's repertoire, beliefs and values about Greek language also entered in his ideological repertoire. This shows how institutional and highly regimented space, namely the shelter and other institutions and language ideologies are interlinked and how these shape Amir's metalinguistic interpretations. He associated the Greek language with "past" and appraised its richness and ancientness. During my ethnographic work on the island including in the shelter, camps and the language and support centre, I observed how the Greek language was appreciated for its "ancientness" and "beauty" by the Greeks. This seems to resonate in Amir's metalinguistic interpretations. However Amir found the grammar of Greek difficult (as did many other refugees who also made similar statements during this study) but again appraised the history of the Greeks.

Amir also learnt some Arabic through schooling and stressed how "difficult" its grammar was at the time of learning the language as part of his religious education in Iran. Amir stated that he could read and write in Arabic but could not speak or understand the language. In the following excerpt, Amir explains why he chose his ears and the colour brown to represent the Arabic language:

Excerpt 3

Amir	It's a difficult language. Three, four, five years… study Arabic… every week two hour in the school …
Birgul	Why? Is it because of Qur'an?
Amir	Yeah, because we read the Qur'an… but … I don't know… Yeah the most of the reason is because of the Qur'an we read but I didn't know anything… just some words… 'I like this street'… I can read and write Arabic but can't speak or understand what they say.
Birgul	Why did you choose your ears?
Amir	Maybe it is very heavy for ears because they have many subjects (meaning personal pronouns)… English it's I, you, he, she, it … but they have twelve… very very heavy

Amir stressed that Arabic was "heavy" – referring to grammar of the Arabic language again. Similar to Excerpt 1, Amir talked about the grammar of Arabic language too. The attributions that Amir made to the languages seemed to be highly affected by the institutional context of past schooling and present conditions that he lived in. Although Amir stressed that Arabic was spoken locally, this extract shows that Arabic has mainly entered his repertoire through education. Although Amir spent nearly five years on Arabic language and states he can speak only "some words". The language ideologies Amir demonstrates about Arabic show how

school as a space shapes the in the school system has a clear connection to the shaping of a young person's repertoire and language ideologies.

In a similar vein, he stated that he could identify Bengali as he has been living with Bengali speakers in the shelter and could understand "bits" of it. One of the languages spoken in the shelter was Bengali and Amir could identify the language. Bengali entered into Amir's repertoire because he had Bengali speaking friends in the shelter. In the following excerpt-unlike previous examples- Amir did not talk about the grammar of the Bengali language. Instead he identified the language but found it as a mixture of Chinese and Urdu. This shows how Amir is using his knowledge about other languages and makes connections between them while identifying a particular language:

Excerpt 4

> It is something mixed from China and Urdu
> I can identify Bengali but cannot understand

Amir learned some "bits" of Bengali in the shelter and stressed that he can identify the language but that cannot understand it. Apart from the linguistic repertoire that Amir brought with him from Iran, it seems his repertoire is expanding due the context of the shelter and languages spoken in this particular setting. In terms of language ideologies, Amir categorised Bengali as a mixture of Chinese and Urdu. In excerpt 4, Amir stated that Urdu is a nice language and in the case of Bengali he does not make any positive or negative contributions to this particular language but just the fact that he can identify the language. It could be argued that ideologies regarding this new language in Amir's repertoire are in process, at least compared to other languages that Amir talked about, he is not making any specific affiliations or values to Bengali yet. Busch (2015, p. 9) argues that

> […] Personal attitudes to language are largely determined by the value ascribed to a language or language variety in particular social space.

It is however interesting that Amir's evaluation of Bengali, although developed in the social space of the shelter, is not as clear as the other attributions he made to the other languages in his repertoire. His narrative about Bengali is somehow "indifferent" that connotes that the repertoire is not "a set of competences, a kind of toolbox, from which we select the 'right' language, the 'right code' for each context or situation" (Busch 2015, p. 17) but rather constructed through life trajectories and in this case by the context of the shelter that Amir is in.

Navigating through English in migratory and global spaces

Refugees on the island of Lesvos usually have to navigate through the English language. The English language plays a central role in their migratory journeys and helps them to gain access to resources such as employment, legal issues, health, socializing with other refugees, shopping, travelling and so on. For many refugees on the island, English played a vital role because many refugees had the desire of going to other western European countries such as Germany. Although German is the official language of Germany, many refugees thought English will help them until they reach their desired destinations. These beliefs about language circulated through refugees subjectification to multiple humanitarian and solidarity actors. Many of the actors especially supranational organisations that refugees interacted with on the island spoke English and the only way that refugees could communicate with them was through English. Therefore English was the *de facto* lingua franca. Competing ideologies about English and Greek often caused tensions in terms of demand and supply of language education. In the next section, Amir states how English provides higher mobility and associates the values of languages with navigating in migratory spaces.

In his narrative Amir associates English with the "whole" body and this statement gives a sense of feeling 'whole' when one speaks English. After affirming how English works everywhere and that it is an international language, Amir associates the English language to the hand and this suggests English is useful for pragmatic reasons in the context of mobility and migration.

Excerpt 5

> The English language is like body. Everywhere it works. In all of the world it's international language. It's like hand. When you have a native language, just you can use it in your place. When you come out you can't use it. But English is international. Like hand. You can use it everywhere.

By comparing native languages and their 'fixedness' in one place, Amir understands 'native languages' to be only useful in countries of origin. This not only suggests that Amir has a sense of how his linguistic repertoire brought from Iran is devalued. Amir's narrative also suggests that his language/s are "out of space" or are not useful and this raises the question of how Amir positions himself towards the power of English and powerlessness of his language/s outside of Iran. Amir repeats the "internationalness" of English twice in his

narrative and associates the English language either with the whole body or hands. What is more Amir's narrative suggests a normalisation of English in a global context.

Amir's interpretation of English as a representation of the whole body and his awareness of the English language as an international language shows the ideological realm of language choices he makes in his migratory journey. The imagery that he constructs as a young person in transit is connected to the macro political factors and state of English as a dominant language in the context of his "asylum-seeking minorhood".

Erasing the native language

The language portrait activity not also showed ways in which Amir's linguistic repertoire expanded as part of his institutionalization in the asylum process and how language ideologies are interconnected to this process, but also generated insights about how native languages are *erased* from the linguistic repertoire. Amir did not indicate his native language Suruchi until he started to talk about Urdu that he learnt while working on a ship in his local neighborhood in Iran.

Excerpt 6

> Urdu is nice language. It's very close to my native language (Suruchi spoken in Hormozgan province) … we have a lot of words same with Urdu… not in Farsi. Also in my native language, we use Arabic, English, Urdu, everywhere from everywhere… In my city forty out of a hundred they know to speak Urdu and Arabic. People work in ships in Arabic countries…

Amir used orange to represent Urdu language and emphasised the similarities between Urdu and Suruchi, his native language. Amir did not mention Suruchi earlier in our discussion. Suruchi is the variety that Amir identified as his "native language". The associations that Amir made between Urdu and Suruchi are based on the similarities in their vocabularies. Amir also adds that in Suruchi they use Arabic, English and Urdu. It is interesting that Amir did not mention Suruchi earlier in our discussion and it only emerged when talking about Urdu. It is also interesting that Amir makes a distinction between similarities between Suruchi and Urdu and that these similarities are less between Farsi and Suruchi. Amir's positive evaluation of Urdu as a "nice" language is linked to his native language. As Irvine& Gal (2000, p. 38) put forward, the process of *erasure* entail that "Facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away". Amir mentions Suruchi only when he starts talking about Urdu. Suruchi is in a way ignored or not counted as a 'language'. Although for the purposes of this activity young people were asked to include

all varieties they spoke or knew, it is interesting Suruchi as Amir's 'native language' as he stated, did not come up earlier in his narrative. This shows that the linguistic repertoire is not only an ongoing process of adding and expanding the repertoire but also a process of *erasure* in the repertoire. Amir's narrative suggests that in the context of his migratory setting, Suruchi does not go into his repertoire as it is considered a local variety.

Conclusion

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and language portraits as part of ethnographic inquiry, I examined a young person's linguistic repertoire and language ideologies in the context of forced im/mobility and in the light of an institutional context. Theoretically, the study has shown how the notion of the linguistic repertoire cannot be separated from language ideologies that are constructed in the context of past and present institutional settings. Busch's claim (drawing on Gumperz, 1964) to see the repertoire as a "whole" or the *Gestalt* in terms of the "relationality of the parts" (Busch, 2012, p. 518) in the visual mode resonate in this study but rather as a disintegrated whole within the constraints of the precarious and complex institutional imperatives. The English language represents the "whole" in Amir's metalinguistic interpretations. Values attached to languages in the context of im/mobility are closely linked to the asylum institutionalisation as some languages allow the individuals to navigate easily under uncertain conditions.

As demonstrated in the analysis, the English language serves an instrumental role while navigating in the prolonged asylum system. Therefore the learning environments and spaces in the context of forced im/mobility not only provide opportunities for the expansion of the linguistic repertoire, but also the *erasure* of certain resources in the repertoire. This article has offered an attempt to include the ideological processes especially *erasure* in the theorisation of the linguistic repertoire as it has shed light on the missing parts of the linguistic repertoires in in highly institutionalised asylum settings as well as moving beyond an understanding of the language ideologies as "social, ethnic, national" (Busch 2015:9) constructs by concentrating on Amir's asylum context that involves multiple national, supranational and solidarity actors that have complex ideologies operating in regimented spaces on Lesvos island. The linguistic repertoire in the processes of forced im/mobility and humanitarian institutionalisation sheds light on how controlled space, as lived experience shapes the ways in which individuals learn to talk about their repertoires.

By using a multimodal approach, I have shown how involving the body in the interactions could yield to data about ways in which individuals experience language learning in various contexts. The fact that Amir put particular languages on his body in contrast with languages he placed on his clothes show how languages are embodied or dis-embodied as each belonged to a different context such as schooling and labour. This approach has also shown that forced im/mobility not only entails a loss of place, and a regimented uncertain life but also the *erasure* of linguistic capital brought from home countries.

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