

# Challenges and Initiatives in Refugee Education



# Challenges and Initiatives in Refugee Education:

## *The Case of Greece*

Edited by

Aspasia Chatzidaki and Roula Tsokalidou

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



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This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-6451-7

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6451-0

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors of this volume would like to thank all the contributors who entrusted them with their work, and shared their enthusiasm and commitment to refugee education. Our warmest thanks are also extended to the publishers for both their initial interest in our work, and their cooperation in all the necessary stages until the completion of this volume. Furthermore, we would like to thank Matina Psaroudakis and Helen Papamichalopoulos for proofreading the manuscript, and contributing to its improvement. Finally, our warmest thanks go to Maria Argyroudi and Konstantina Metaxa, both auxiliary staff at the “Centre for Intercultural and Migration Studies” of the University of Crete, for painstakingly working with the editors during the preparation of this volume. This endeavor would not have been possible without their help.





# INTRODUCTION

The compilation of the current volume has not been an easy task. Over the last few years, many colleagues and researchers in Greece have undertaken projects that address various aspects of the refugee education issue, which has proven to be an important challenge for both the Greek society and the Greek educational system. Having said that, we would like to argue that the difficulties inherent in any academic endeavor cannot compare with the plight of refugees who have to face the perils of the journey to safety besides a sense of uprooting and innumerable individual tragedies.

According to the information available, by the end of 2019, an unprecedented number of 79.5 million people have been forcibly displaced, while 26 million of them are considered to be refugees and half of the those are under the age of 18 (<https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>).

In Greece, which is the focal point of the studies in this volume, the sudden and massive influx of refugees through the islands of the Aegean Sea and the borders with Turkey has created what has become known to most people as the ‘refugee crisis’. According to information provided by the Greek Ministry of Education, ([https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/CENG\\_Epistimoniki\\_Epitropi\\_Prosfygon\\_YPPEH\\_Apotimisi\\_Protaseis\\_2016\\_2017\\_070\\_.pdf](https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/CENG_Epistimoniki_Epitropi_Prosfygon_YPPEH_Apotimisi_Protaseis_2016_2017_070_.pdf)), since the summer of 2015, 817,175 people crossed the Greek-Turkish border in 2015-2016. The journey to freedom has taken a toll on a few hundred people as well; 410 deaths by drowning were reported and 176 people were declared missing during this period (UNHCR, 2016). These populations were transient and did not consider Greece as their final destination but as the gateway to Europe. However, since the closing of borders in spring 2016, thousands of refugees and asylum seekers have been stranded in Greece pending the authorities’ decision on their status and measures undertaken by the European Union.

The Greek state responded swiftly by setting up Refugee and Accommodation Centres (RACs) with the aid of the Ministry of Defense. The central authorities often had to overcome pressures and objections by the local communities who were not eager to accept such facilities in their vicinity. Quite often, such camps were created in remote areas and offered services of poor quality to the people they hosted. Moreover, bureaucratic

delays and other factors led to phenomena of overpopulation and harsh living conditions in some of these facilities, especially on the islands in the Northern Aegean. At the same time, these camps became hubs for the involvement of official and non-official agencies, many of them NGOs, which provided educational and recreational services to refugees and immigrants.

The reception and integration of refugees into the Greek society encompasses a wide array of measures ranging from subsistence- and health-related issues to education, training and civic integration for different categories of aliens. Education has been one of the major challenges facing refugees, both adults and children. There have been multiple responses to their needs, some organized at a formal level and others implemented by individual actors and agencies.

The chapters in this volume aim to present a mosaic of activities and projects organized for the education of refugee children, adolescents and adults in Greece, with the aim to highlight both the challenges posed by the context and the solutions offered. Many of the initiatives presented here are grounded on innovative theoretical frameworks, others follow more traditional paths in second language learning and teaching. All of these projects, however, refer to experiences which can prove highly educational even if transferred to a different national context.

The ten chapters of this volume, organized in three parts, include studies and projects which were implemented for and with refugee students of various age groups. Part I (*“Educating Children and Adolescent Refugees”*) includes studies and projects focusing on the education of young speakers either in Reception classes or in other contexts.

The first chapter, *“Exploring Unaccompanied Minors’ Linguistic Repertoires Through Identity Texts. Results from a Study in Northern Greece”* by Gogonas and Gatsi, is a study that focuses on mainly unaccompanied refugee minors aged 14-18, an especially challenging group of students. The study presents the views of young refugees concerning the importance of English and multilingualism for their lives as they were detected in a project utilizing the ‘identity texts’ approach, which appears in quite a few of the studies in this volume. The chapter by Liouza, Panagiotidou and Tzoni, titled *“A Case Study of Early Childhood Development Intervention for Refugees: Providing a Head Start Towards Education and Inclusion”* presents the project “DIA-drasis: Child Centre for the Development of Social Skills” organized by the YMCA of Thessaloniki. The project is unique in the context of Greece as it constitutes a first effort to provide preschool education and childcare for both refugee and local

preschool children and their families. Through the ‘DIA-drasis’ project, and the many challenges that all participants had to overcome, local and refugee children and parents managed to come closer and share happy educational moments during the two-year duration of the project, a process that had important broader social and educational repercussions as shown by the participants’ words themselves.

In the chapter titled “*Approaching the Education of Young Refugees – Teachers’ Perceptions and Students’ Voices*” by Simopoulos and Magos, the authors provide a thorough depiction of the educational options available for refugee students in Greece and discuss the actors’ (teachers and students) experiences, expectations and attitudes. Further, they highlight various elements and choices that could improve this procedure for all those involved.

Part II (“*Educating Adult Refugees and Teachers’ Perspectives*”) consists of five papers organized along two axes; the education of adult refugees, on the one hand, and teachers’ perspectives on the other.

The chapter titled “*Language Education for Refugees and Migrants in the Greek Context: The Stories of Language Teachers within Formal and Non-formal Educational Settings*” by Gkaintartzi, Mouti, Papapostolou & Sarantopoulou, provides us with further insight into the needs, experiences and practices of teachers and volunteers involved in refugee education in Greece. The authors have utilized case studies, semi-structured interviews, narratives and observations in order to reach their research aims. The need for more and better training for teachers involved in refugee education becomes clear from their data.

The chapter by Mitsikopoulou and Karavas is titled “*A Multilingual and Multiliteracies Place-Based Curriculum for Adult Refugees*” and it presents the challenges and the steps for the development of a multilingual and a multiliteracies curriculum aiming at the integration of adult refugees in the city of Athens. Similar to other projects in the volume, this one also places emphasis on the voicing of the refugees’ own experiences through the educational process.

In their paper, the “*Identity and Tranlanguaging in Language Education for Refugees*”, Skourtou, Kourtis-Kazoullis, Oikonomakou & Gouvias discuss the implementation of Greek language courses for adult refugees at the School of Humanities of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece) from 2016 to the present. The authors explain how the classes were organized with the aim to lead students to a process of transformation, constantly affected by the wider social developments and the increased

educational needs of the refugees. Flexible teaching, translanguaging practices and the use of identity texts were utilized to this end. The authors make a strong argument for the premise that language learning in this context is strongly linked to the development of survival and adaptation skills for the refugee students.

The chapter by Papastathopoulos, Simopoulos & Stergiou, titled “*Non-formal Education for Refugees: Moving from “Chaos” to an Inclusive Framework*” provides the reader with an insight into the assumptions and attitudes of primary and secondary school teachers, through interviews with 60 teachers. At the same time, we can access the voices of 88 refugee students attending Reception Facilities for Refugee Education settings and other Greek public schools. Through this work, the authors attempt to provide some experimental answers to the challenges that have arisen, through the development of curricula, creation of educational material, training of educators and Greek as Second Language teaching with children and adults.

The final chapter of Part II, “*Teaching Language Through the Eyes of Refugees: Translanguaging and Identity Texts in the Service of Refugee Education*”, by Tsokalidou, Al Soueis, Arvanitidou, Kompiadou & Paraskeva, presents another initiative in the language education of adult refugees, this time at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The authors present the project titled “Teaching language through the eyes of refugees” and discuss the challenges in both designing and implementing innovative material that was based on the texts and the languages of the refugee students themselves. Translanguaging practices and identity texts are in the forefront of this effort which took place during the academic year 2018-2019. The project resulted in the refugee students feeling empowered and the researchers much wiser and richer from having shared their students’ realities.

Part III of the current volume (“*Educational Programmes*”) consists of two chapters which relate to projects funded by the European Union research agencies.

The chapter titled “*Building Knowledge Ecologies in School: Reconstructing Curriculum for Developing Inclusive Classrooms*” by Katsarou & Sipitanos refers to the implementation of an Erasmus+ programme which brought together educational communities and actors from Greece, and other European countries working together towards the goal of the successful co-educating students from various backgrounds. The research reported in this chapter draws from the ‘students as autoethnographers’ approach, which proved to be highly pertinent to this end.

The last chapter of the book, *“How the Refugee Issue Can Inspire Experiential Teaching and Learning”*, is devoted to an Erasmus+ programme aiming to raise awareness to the refugee issue in regard to children and adults. The authors, namely Tzakosta, Aleksopoulou, Beteinaki, Derzekou & Kapsali, present the implementation of the programme, which was realized by partners in Greece, Lithuania and the Netherlands. Through this programme, school children and adults in the various classes of implementation participated in a series of refugee-centred experiential activities that aimed to both raise awareness and help further build upon the children’s vocabulary.

The editors hope that this collection of papers will contribute to a more thorough understanding of the challenges inherent in the field of refugee education in Greece and beyond. Moreover, it is our wish that the ideas put forward in this volume will significantly add to the vast array of emancipatory and empowering responses available to policy makers and practitioners.

## Sources

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UNHCR, Breakdown of Men-Women-Children among sea arrivals in Greece for the period June 2015 - February 2016



## **PART I.**

# **EDUCATING CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT REFUGEES**





# CHAPTER ONE

## EXPLORING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS' LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES THROUGH IDENTITY TEXTS. RESULTS FROM A STUDY IN NORTHERN GREECE

NIKOS GOGONAS & GIOTA GATSI

### 1. Introduction

According to UNICEF data, some 75,000 refugees and migrants, including 24,600 children, are currently in Greece and the surrounding countries (UNICEF, 2018). According to data from the National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA), in 2018, the estimated number of unaccompanied minors in Greece was 3,741. Unaccompanied minors constitute a particularly vulnerable group both due to their young age, and because they lack parental/legal guardian supervision. Most come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. They are often held in protective custody in police stations, pre-departure detention centers, pending their transfer to a special hospitality facility<sup>1</sup>. The education of these children has been interrupted for a long period of time, and their schooling is not systematic while many of them remain unschooled. Children staying in NGO-supervised hostels attend classes.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the European Court of Human Rights established that the implemented protective custody scheme in Greece violated international law and on 18 November 2020, the Greek Ministry for Asylum and Migration announced that, since 14 November 2020, no unaccompanied migrant children remain in protective police custody (<https://www.humanium.org/en/protective-custody-of-unaccompanied-child-migrants-in-greece-a-long-standing-practice-is-coming-to-an-end/>)

Upon the outbreak of the refugee crisis, the Greek educational system was found unprepared to accommodate refugee students. Its main problems included teacher mobility, and shortages of classrooms and trained teachers. An additional problem was the inability to combat stereotypes and prejudices in the school environment, which in many cases led to high dropout rates, isolation and misinformation. More recently, efforts have been made to secure the basic right of children to education and a variety of frameworks and forms of education have been activated by formal and non-formal education bodies (UNICEF & REACH, 2017). Since 2017, there has been a significant effort for the inclusion of refugee students in mainstream schools. The 2018 Law 4547/18 on Education included a Chapter on Refugee Education with a particular emphasis on Reception Classes (operating alongside the regular school programme) and Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (RFREs) (operating in the afternoon) (Government Gazette 102, Articles 71 to 83) (Gatsi, 2019).

The present study draws on fieldwork conducted at the Open Temporary Refugee Center of Diavata from January to June 2017 which involved the production of “identity texts” by unaccompanied refugee minors and focuses on unaccompanied minors’ linguistic repertoires and views about languages (see also next section). More specifically, this research raises the following research questions: Which language(s) and varieties comprise the linguistic repertoire of the unaccompanied refugee minors? What are their views with regard to language learning and multilingualism?

### **1.1. Multilingual Repertoires Versus Monolingual Ideologies and Practices**

Unaccompanied minors are on the move in search of a brighter future (Spiteri, 2012). They may see themselves as having a different, possibly hybrid, identity from that which they had when living in their homelands and/or possibly from certain transit countries, and they can be seen to be actively constructing a new status and identity in order to adapt to the new realities in which they find themselves (Spiteri, 2012). As a result of their mobility, their linguistic repertoires are not fixed or static, but dynamic and evolving along with the broadening of social experience (Blommaert & Backus, 2012; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011).

Translanguaging is a natural practice among multilingual speakers which reflects their dynamic use of language. According to Li Wei (2011, p. 1223), it is a language phenomenon that goes both between different linguistic structures and systems and beyond them. According to Canagarajah

(2011, p. 401), translanguaging is defined as "...the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system". García (2008) claims that translanguaging is based on the idea of the inherent and natural effort of bi/multilinguals to communicate and express themselves by using their unique linguistic repertoire freely in a holistic way, as language has no boundaries and cannot be owned.

However, there seem to be tensions between children's multilingual repertoires and resources, on the one hand, and monolingual ideologies and practices in European classrooms, on the other (García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017). Students of refugee (and migrant) background face exclusionary discourses, policies, and ideologies on a daily basis. Individual bi/multilingualism in schools is valued only if it is in hegemonic, prestigious languages. Most educational systems are informed by a standard language ideology along with an ideology of deficiency whereby only the use and native-like proficiency in standard languages are valorized while multilingual competence in migrant repertoires and non-standard registers is not legitimated (Creese, 2005; Horner, 2011; Weber, 2009).

Apart from prevailing ideologies, individual agency plays a significant part in the way learners position themselves and negotiate culture and identity (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). Choosing to speak in any given language is about more than a neutral exchange of information. It is also "an investment in a learner's own identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (Norton, 2000, pp. 10-11). These poststructural conceptualizations of learner agency and identity investment (Norton, 2000) are central to the pedagogical approach of identity texts (Cummins & Early, 2011).

## 1.2. Identity Texts

According to Cummins (2005) optimal literacy development occurs within the interpersonal space of the classroom only when there is both maximum cognitive engagement and maximum identity investment on the part of the students. Identity texts are a pedagogical approach, which allows for students to engage in cognitively challenging projects on self-selected topics that are relevant to their personal interests and lives. They are "the products of students' creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space orchestrated by the classroom teacher" (Cummins & Early, 2011, p. 3). These texts may have multiple forms "written, spoken, signed, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form" (Cummins & Early, 2011, p. 3). They thus allow the full expression of students' intercultural life experiences,

including their linguistic repertoires, and the construction of multiple and fluid identities. When students share identity texts with audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, the media, etc.), they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of the self. Identity texts then “hold a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light” (Cummins & Early, 2011, p. 3).

Several studies indicate that the use of identity texts in multilingual classrooms has led to the affirmation of students’ identities and this has had a positive impact on their academic achievement (Cummins et al., 2012; Cummins et al., 2005; Cummins et al., 2015; Gatsi & Delhay, 2015; Maynard, 2015).

## 2. The Present Research – Methodology

This study was conducted in the Open Temporary Refugee Centre of Diavata, near Thessaloniki, in Northern Greece from January until June 2017. The second author was a non formal education teacher at the centre where she also provided psychosocial support to unaccompanied minors. In this sense, we could say that the study has many of the characteristics of Action Research, as the researcher studied her own teaching context. Data consist of identity texts produced by 30 unaccompanied minor refugees of Syrian, Afghan or Pakistani origin, male, aged 14 to 18. All of them were residents at the Diavata reception center, but some of them eventually managed to be reunited with family members in Germany and Belgium. In the context of the psychosocial support activities, Gatsi asked the children in the target group to write on any of the following topics: *My Countries*, *My Trips*, *An Important Person in my Life*, *My Friends*, *My Languages* and *My Dreams*, *my Plans*. The children had the choice to either write their texts in the classroom, or to post them on a closed Facebook group. Some of them sent them privately to Gatsi through the Facebook messenger in a language of their choice. The reasons why the children were encouraged to use Facebook was because the linguistic expression of adolescents is facilitated by the tools Facebook offers (Androutsopoulos, 2014, p. 5). Often, seeing their peers’ reactions through, e.g., the translation tool, aids them to comprehend the messages and to interact in an environment in which they feel comfortable. Unimpeded by the formal norms of writing, they interact more confidently in the virtual community. At the same time, online communication provides an openness to linguistic diversity as they come into direct contact with the languages used by their peers. (Armand et al., 2014). To ensure a climate of confidence and security for the participants, we asked for the assistance of interpreters who were employed at the centre.

The two interpreters (for Arabic, Farsi and Urdu) explained to everyone that the texts would only be accessible to participants (which was already the case for texts published in the closed Facebook group) and that personal information would be treated with confidence and respect. The participants agreed and thus created an “informal contract” or “ritual” as it is typically known through other studies of this type (Armand et al., 2013, p. 39).

In total, 70 texts were collected. Thirty of these referred to the topic “My Languages”, which indicates the importance of the topic to the participants. In the presentation of our results we refer to all 30 texts, but we have selected the 16 most representative ones to include in our discussion. Children wrote texts in English, Greek, Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi. Texts written in Arabic, Urdu and Farsi were translated in Greek by the interpreters.

To analyse our data, we followed the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2012). Initially, we became familiar with the data by reading it carefully several times in order to search for meanings, themes and patterns related to children's views with regard to language diversity. After having formed a first impression, we recorded our initial ideas before proceeding to coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We then combined different codes to search for possible issues emerging from the data. After a set of possible themes were formulated, we reviewed them to see if they met the criteria to be included in our analysis. Because some themes overlapped, they had to be merged while others were grouped into separate themes to form a coherent pattern. So, the themes we arrived at after the analysis are: the usefulness of the host country's language, the value of languages for study and work, and the usefulness of English.

### **3. Findings**

In what follows we present and discuss the children's texts. Texts written in English are presented exactly as the children wrote them. In the case of texts written in languages other than English, translations are provided.

#### **3.1. Participants' Linguistic Repertoires**

The first set of texts refers to the children's linguistic repertoires. In the following excerpt, A from Palestine (17 years old) who now lives in Germany, informs us that he intends to add Spanish to his already rich linguistic repertoire:

### Text 1

Hi everyone, my name is A from Palestine. I live in Germany. The city of Manheim. I speak Arabic, English and German a little. In the future I will learn Spanish.

Another illustrative example of a multilingual biography is that of I from Syria (16 years old) (text 2), who mentions he speaks Arabic, Greek, English and is currently learning German since he lives in Germany. He also wants to learn Japanese and French, thus expressing a positive attitude towards various languages from different continents:

### Text 2

Hello my name is I am from Syria my mother tonight is Arabic and I speak English and Greek and I living in Germany and I learn German I want to speak French and Japanese.

It is worth noting that children's repertoire seems to be enriched with the languages of their transit countries (26 identity texts). This is the case for R (17 years old) in text 3. After he had left Afghanistan where Dari is spoken, he moved to Pakistan where he learned Urdu. Also in Greece, he learned Greek and in his current country of residence, he learned German. Translanguaging instances are prevalent in his text through the use of German, Greek and emoticons:

### Text 3

Hey everyone my name is R I m from Afghanistan I live in Germany before I was in Greece my mother language is dari but I can speak urdu, English, deutsch, Persian and a little ellinika melaw me (emoticon) and I really miss my friends from Greece love you all guys (emoticons).

Another example is of 16-year-old Syrian T, who, while being in Germany, sends the following text online in Greek, thereby demonstrating his ability to write in Greek, a transit country language. His message and the repetition of the phrase “my love” demonstrate his strong emotional attachment with Greece and the Greek language.

### Text 4

I speak 3 languages Arabic Greek English but most of all I like Greek, my love. Now i'm in Germany As you know and learn the language and have started going to school every day. My love I learned the Greek language when I was there and afterwards. I came here and the people here ask me sometimes Which is your favourite language and I tell them Greek. That's how I feel. I don't know why I love it so much; (T, Syrian, 16 years old)

### **3.2. The Usefulness of the Language of the Host Country**

In some of the following texts, the children express the view that learning the host country language at school is a key factor affecting integration. Most of our subjects claim that they speak or learn the language of the host country (N = 28). In the following excerpt written in Farsi, a young Afghan prioritises the learning of Greek as he is currently staying in Greece.

#### **Text 5**

My name is AH from Afghanistan and I know Dary very well I want to learn Greek first and then English because I will stay in Greece.

Similarly, in another excerpt, 17-year-old AK from Syria shows the importance of the host language, in this case German, since she lives in Germany.

#### **Text 6**

Hello, I am AK. from Syria I speak Arabic (mother language), English and German, a little bit turkisch. For me now the most important language is German because I live in Germany and English also because of my study.

### **3.3. The Significance of Multilingualism for Studies and Job Prospects**

Multilingualism is mentioned in 17 texts as an asset for studies and for a career. In the text below, written in English, MZ, a 17 year-old Moroccan states, among other things, that if you know more languages "you can find a job".

#### **Text 7**

I speak arabic and berber it's my mother's language and English and also Greek now I'm learning spanish. Why? In my opinion it's good and fantastic to know more languages to find a job and to have documents and to have a futur.

Also illustrative is the text of 17-year-old A, an Iraqi who states that he wants to learn Dutch in addition to English in order to fulfill his dream of working as a pilot in the Netherlands. The text was written in Arabic.

#### **Text 8**

My name is A and I'm 17 years old from Iraq. My dad is called A and he is 44 years old and my mom is called N and she is 40 years old, I have 2 sisters and 1 brother. My father is a teacher of Arabic and my mother is a doctor. I

am a student who loves reading and my dream is to become a pilot. I speak Arabic and English. I am a refugee and would like to go to the Netherlands and learn the Dutch language. I am married and have a child. My whole life is my wife and my child I wish her a happy life and I will do my best to make it so. (A, Iraqi, 17 years old)

The text of 17 year old A from Syria, written in English, follows a similar pattern:

### **Text 9**

My name is A. and I m from Syria. Im 17 years old. I speak 3 languages and Arabic, English and German Language. For me it is very important to speak many languages because I want to live in Germany to study and to work here.

## **3.4. The Value of Multilingualism for Social Relations**

In 15 identity texts, it has been shown that language is an essential component of communication and social relationships, a way to connect with people, a vehicle for better understanding, familiarity, and empathy development. As the 17-year-old Afghan describes in the text below, in order to get to know someone better you need to learn his/her language. The text was written in Dari.

### **Text 10**

If you speak the language, everything is easy. I also learned Greek in Greece and English. Language is an important thing you can do to get to know people better. (Afghan, 17 years old)

In the text below, 16 year old L from Syria shows us the special importance of languages in creating and building interpersonal relationships. The text was written in English.

### **Text 11**

Hello everybody my name is L I am from Syria and living now in Belgium in the capital Brussels. I speak Arabic and English learning now French and Dutch and in soon future I would like to learn Greek language because I had already experience with this language and I have a lot of great friends from there then I could talk with them in they are language.

Finally, a similar text, where multilingualism seems to lead to mutual understanding and acquaintance among people, has been produced by 17-year-old Iraqi A. It tells us that language leads to mutual understanding, isolating difficulties and creating respect. The text was written in English.



### Text 12

It's help to connection with people and to understand each other and I like to learn everything difficult to make easy for another people they see it difficult and I have many friends from different countries so I like to speak with them in they are language (emoticons).

## 3.5. Language Hierarchy

In this part of the data a representation of “strong languages” emerges. “If you can speak English you can talk to the whole world”, says the 17-year-old Pakistani multilingual. In other words, the young people in our sample seem to be aware of language ideologies and the global impact of the English language. The majority (28) state that they speak English to varying degrees and the remaining two say they would like to learn it. All of the following texts were written in English.

### Text 13

Hello everyone. My name is U I am from Pakistan. But now I am in sandorini island of Greece. I can speak english greek turkish punjabi urdu siraiiki pashto and a little bit persian. But my mother tongue is punjabi. I want to learn only english. Because if you can speak english you can speak with all the world. I think in world if you go any country you can talk with this country people. I can speak british english. But I want to learn american english.

Accordingly, 17 year A states the importance of the English language and the fact that it is used “everywhere”.

### Text 14

A.....I'm speaking Farsi Dari, English, Greek, now I live In Thessaloniki in M..... For me, Farsi and Dari the both of them are important I think Is important because Afghanistan speak Dari And Iran speak in Farsi I'm from Afghanistan. But I was living in iran My mom is from Iran and my dad is from Afghanistan but I can speak good Greek and English. Also Greek and english are important English is important more than all the languages because you can use it every where.

Equally important is 17-year-old K's perspective with regard to the significance of English as a global language. He believes that education in the host country should be offered in English in order to facilitate international students.

### Text 15

Hi all, I speak Arabic and Kurdish fluently and speak little Turkish and Dutch but at all times the best English is the best because I am outside my country and it is a universal language. Everyone speaks, studies and works in the country, but in the countries where we live now they do not understand that it is easy to We work and study in English and it is very difficult to work, speak and study in their mother tongue.

Finally, it is worth noting that many of our study participants view international, hegemonic languages as the most important ones to learn. Along these lines, the following text by a 16-year-old unaccompanied minor from Morocco suggests that English, French, German, and Spanish are the most important languages as they have many speakers.

### Text 16

I can speak amazighia its my mother language and Arabic and English and a bit of French and Greek, in my opinion the most important languages English franch Germany espanol. Why, because most countries in the world they speak this languages.

## 4. Concluding Remarks

In previous studies, both in the Greek context (Gatsi, 2017; Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011) and in other environments (see Armand et al., 2013; Cummins et al., 2015), students' identity texts are presented as areas of identification of multilingual repertoires and of the difficulties that students encounter in the educational process. Through these texts, the role of languages of origin and school education emerges in the process of constructing students' identities (Armand et al., 2013; Cummins, 2007). In the present research, identity texts provide us with insights into the children's linguistic repertoires and their views about language learning and multilingualism. The results of the study show that the majority of children view multilingualism in a positive light. They proudly describe the number of languages they have learned, and express the desire to learn even more. In most cases, it appears that the adolescent refugees in our sample have acquired the languages that make up their language repertoire "naturally", through linguistic socialization both in the camp where the present study was conducted, and in the intermediate transit countries (Gardner-Chloros et al., 2016). Adolescents in our sample do not hesitate to use languages regardless of their level of proficiency in them. In order to enhance the effectiveness of communication, they use various semiotic means at their disposal (García & Li Wei, 2014) such as words from different "named

languages” and emoticons. As noted by García (2009), translanguaging functions as a catalyst in meaning making. This practice allows potential bilinguals to face challenges in understanding and producing language when creating their own text by conveying their unique voices (Tsokalidou, 2016, 2017). This does not mean, however, that juvenile refugees are unaware of the importance of academic language knowledge as a key factor in integrating in the host country. The most important linguistic capital highlighted through children's identity texts is English. Good knowledge of English not only facilitates communication with the rest of the world, but is also the key for studies and careers.

Research such as this is of particular importance in the current timing, given that access to Greek education is becoming easier for minor refugees and thus, the number of refugees attending Greek mainstream schools is on the increase (Greek Ministry of Education, 2018). Education policy makers should listen to the “voices” of young refugees and increase the hours of English in Reception Facilities for Refugee Education. In the formal educational system there is also a need for the inclusion of multilingual pedagogies and language instruction based on the needs of the refugee students. This would involve a change from the ideology of deficiency in which only the standard language and native-like proficiency are valorized, to one of ability and achievement, where all language varieties are built upon. Such a shift is deemed necessary in educational systems elsewhere as well, for effective language education in times of superdiversity.

Disseminating the findings of this research to all parties involved in refugee education may contribute to further theoretical engagement with, and raise awareness about concepts such as language socialisation, multilingualism and translanguaging as useful resources for learning and teaching thus, leading to the creation of more inclusive pedagogies.

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