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Capstick, T. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5145-7903> and Ateek, M. (2024) Translanguaging spaces as safe space for psycho-social support in refugee settings in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 45 (2). pp. 459-474. ISSN 1747-7557 doi: 10.1080/01434632.2021.1899192 Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/98582/>

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To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1899192>

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

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To cite this article: Tony Capstick & Mohammed Ateek (2021): Translanguaging spaces as safe space for psycho-social support in refugee settings in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, DOI: [10.1080/01434632.2021.1899192](https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1899192)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1899192>



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Published online: 28 Mar 2021.



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Translanguaging spaces as safe space for psycho-social support in refugee settings in the Kurdistan region of Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the linguistic and semiotic resources that NGO coaches draw on to create safe spaces in their English language lessons for psycho-social support in refugee settings. We do so by applying the rapidly developing concept of translanguaging, using data from a multi-site linguistic ethnography study in an NGO in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Interviews and classroom observations of six coaches were conducted in four different centres of the NGO across Erbil city. Detailed fieldnotes were recorded during the field visits and intensive observations of the translanguaging practices were made with follow-up interviews to ask about these practices. We analyse four discourse topics which are discussed through examples from the interviews and the video-recordings from the lessons. We argue that translanguaging spaces do not only create safe spaces but also generate new practices, while also providing opportunities to ensure positive identity and meaningful interaction within the English language classrooms we observed. The new practices in our data are the translanguaging practices which emerge every time the coaches and beneficiaries draw from their semiotic and linguistic repertoires. However, these were the outcome of unplanned translanguaging practices which were more often controlled by the coaches rather than the beneficiaries.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 5 February 2021

Accepted 8 February 2021

KEYWORDS

Refugee education;
translanguaging; Kurdistan
Iraq; psychosocial support;
multilinguals; cultural
identity

Introduction

Recent scholarship in applied linguistics challenges the idea of homogeneity and stability in language as the norm. Views of languages as separate, autonomous and bounded entities are being replaced by the view that language users employ the full linguistic and non-linguistic resources available to them to achieve their communicative goals (Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Jørgensen et al. 2011). Central to this development is how living in ‘superdiverse’ communities imposes new dynamics on late modern society that require us to take account of mobility, fluidity, mixing and historical narratives (Creese and Blackledge 2015). One of the driving forces of this mobility is conflict. Conflict leads to forced migration for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). It is our aim in this paper to investigate how language learning occurs in these settings. We investigate the linguistic and non-linguistic resources used by refugee, IDP and host coaches and beneficiaries who teach and learn English in an international NGO that run language programmes as part of their psycho-social support initiatives in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI). The NGO’s

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Advancing Adolescents programme is made up of structured group-based activities which draw on the Profound Stress and Attunement framework in which a safe space is created and prolonged stress is mediated in classroom activities (Macphail, Niconchuk, and El-Wer 2017). Attunement here refers to the process of responding to profound stress while the framework helps learners develop strategies for recognizing and responding to stress indicators, by developing empathy for example. In a previous study (Capstick 2019), this NGO's staff reported the need to create safe spaces, which create the conditions for post-stress attunement, through language lessons for the beneficiaries. The need for safe spaces is crucial in this context as it is important to not re-traumatise learners and to keep hyper arousal at a level where cognitive processes are still able to function and learning can take place (Van der Kolk 2000; Rothschild 2000). Language learning classes are increasingly seen by many in the humanitarian community in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey as a space in which to deliver this support (Capstick and Delaney 2016). In the NGO centre that we focus on, English language lessons had been developed into a vehicle for 'post stress attunement' programmes as English is a popular subject with adolescents in the region though learners from low socio-economic groups (such as those in this study) will have had little or no access to English language teaching. Though research sponsored by the NGO claims that the post-stress attunement interventions result in increased levels of diversity of social networks, trust and perceived confidence in the future for beneficiaries (Panter-Brick et al. 2018), what applied research has failed to explore is the role of language and communication in these interventions and how language use in these settings aids beneficiaries' ability to recover from trauma. What we do know from research away from humanitarian settings is that young people feel different talking about the adversity they have faced in a language which is different to the one(s) with which they are most familiar (Dewaele and Costa 2013). Indeed, for some students, one of their home languages may not represent safety if, for example, they have been persecuted or tortured in that language. Learning a second language may, therefore, represent liberation and hope for a new life, rather than a 'traumatic experience'. Moreover, moving between languages is more than a technical skill which needs to be understood as a dynamic process if it is to be used in therapy or education (Costa 2018). These insights form the rationale for carrying out this study. We align this dynamic view with an approach which focuses on the social distribution of language resources given that increasingly in Applied Linguistics research, the social and political situated-nature of migrants language use takes precedence over their proficiency. The current paper therefore examines the possibilities for taking what we know about the rapidly developing concept of translanguaging and applying it to research on displacement in order to connect current research interests in sociolinguistics to the immediate real-world problem of refugee language education programmes for those who design and teach them.

Challenging institutional monolingual bias

In the last 10 years or so, research has advocated for a translanguaging approach in Second Language (L2) and Foreign Language (FL) contexts, where the language-of-instruction and the languages of the learners diverge (Al Masaeed 2020; Fallas Escobar 2019). Evidence now exists about how multilingual practices enhance classroom learning processes while the language ideologies of teachers continue to position learners' use of their full linguistic repertoire as a dysfunction. Li and Martin (2009) demonstrate these tensions between the multilingual practices and the language ideologies that prohibit using any language but that of the schools' official language policy. Classrooms that allow multilingual practices are deemed to be unprofessional and teachers are accused of disrupting the students' learning. Consequently, teachers feel guilty when they practise translanguaging because of the stigma attached to it (Zhang et al. 2020). Larsen-Freeman (2018) points out that using the full range of linguistic resources will increase as a practice in bilingual education because of the growing body of literature that favours such practices. Opposing 'separate bilingualism' (Creese and Blackledge 2010) and advocating for classroom teaching which recognises that linguistic and other semiotic resources can work as a 'whole' enables learners to move across

language boundaries for meaning-making and knowledge construction (Busch 2012; Jonsson 2019). In doing so, the monolingual bias (Block 2003) is disrupted, however, the term has been used not only to stand against ‘lingual bias’ (Block 2014) but also to embrace multimodal and multilingual practices that go between and beyond named languages to maximise learners’ participation in knowledge construction (García and Li 2014). Moreover, García and Leiva (2014) argue that what is unique about translanguaging is that it is transformative in nature, in the sense that it could potentially break the hierarchy of language practices that value some varieties over others. By breaking the artificial divide between majority versus minority or target versus mother tongue, ‘translanguaging empowers both the learner and the teacher, transforms the power relations, and focuses the process of teaching and learning on making meaning, enhancing experience, and developing identity’ (Li and Lin 2019, 211). This issue of identity is of central importance in settings which have experienced conflict, where NGO’s role is to enable beneficiaries to confront stereotypes which exist within their beneficiaries’ communities; some of which relate to the use of specific languages such as Kurdish. Many scholars have discussed the dilemma of addressing (trans)languaging without labels (such as ‘Kurdish’) (Gynne 2019; Turner and Lin 2020). In line with Jonsson’s (2019) study and Turner and Lin’s (2020), we will use the labels of different languages while acknowledging the fluid nature of translanguaging in transcending named languages.

Translanguaging in educational contexts

In this section we move from the wider literature on translanguaging to translanguaging in education contexts and language education specifically. Johnson for example advocates for making the pedagogical gains associated with translanguaging explicit by discussing the shared communicative repertoire between the teacher and the students. Work in this vein sees translanguaging practices as resources for moving across varieties in the co-construction of knowledge. Johnson points out that translanguaging for translation is used by teachers for explanation and clarification. Translanguaging in these examples can be seen as a pedagogical strategy. However, pedagogy is informed by language ideologies. In Martínez, Hikida and Durán’s study (2015) of bilingual language school teachers’ perceptions of their everyday practice of bilingualism, the authors found that the teachers echoed ideologies of linguistic purism that favour language separation while also reflecting counter-hegemonic ideologies that celebrate multilingualism. In other words, teachers’ beliefs are often different to their practices. Teachers in this study and many others hesitate to embrace translanguaging and often return to language separation as the default configuration, abiding by monolingual societal and institutional ideologies. Furthermore, translanguaging, it is argued, brings together the different dimensions of the students’ linguistic, cognitive and social skills, and in doing so, transforms their skills, values and beliefs, which in turn creates opportunities for new subject positions (Li and Zhu 2013). Palmer et al. (2014) have explored the bilingual practices of bilingual teachers in dual language programmes in the USA. Teachers allowed, valued and mirrored students’ voices and dynamic linguistic practices. The teachers’ bilingual practices shed light on their agency in transforming the classroom into a place that challenge the strict separation of languages. Similarly, Creese and Blackledge (2010) found that students’ translanguaging practices created identity positions that opposed institutional policies and values. These reflections on identity will be taken up in the analysis below.

Translanguaging space and embodied repertoire

Identity is again a salient feature where translanguaging is seen to create social spaces which bring together different dimensions of personal experience and environment into one coordinated and meaningful performance. These are spaces where different identities and ideologies not only co-exist but also combine to generate new identities in the sense that they are spaces where various semiotic resources and repertoires, from multilingual to multisensory and multimodal ones,

interact and co-produce new meanings (Zhu, Li, and Lyons 2017, 412–413). The transformative nature of these spaces is seen to generate new configurations of language practices thereby challenging and transforming old configurations and understandings of these practices. In short, classrooms and schools become spaces in which teachers and learners deploy a multitude of meaning-making semiotic resources to invoke new configurations of language and education practices. The semiotic repertoires described here include aspects of communication that are not always considered as ‘language’. This is because communicative repertoires are multimodal in nature (Kusters et al. 2017). They include gaze, gesture, body movement and positioning, gaps and silences, smiling and frowning (Blackledge and Creese 2017). These semiotic resources do not work separately from linguistic resources; rather, they are integrated. In fact, the meaning-making process involves more than just language, as the semiotic resources available at our disposal have meaning potentials (Hall 2019). In translanguaging space, multimodal and multilingual semiotic resources work together. Zhu, Li, and Lyons (2017) use the term ‘orchestration’ to describe the dynamics of how these resources work together in communicative zones, where verbal and non-verbal communicative practices create a translanguaging space. Much of the work that informs these contemporary orientations is informed by Goffman who highlighted the vital role played by ‘body idioms’ in assessing and interpreting people’s level of involvement (1963). Bucholtz and Hall (2016, 173) point out that ‘bodies and embodiment are central to the production, perception, and social interpretation of language’. They warned against that inclination to conceptualise the body as the background noise of language rather than as essential and integrated part of language. Studies also emphasise the role of embodiment in meaning-making and to focus on the body as a dimension of the semiotic repertoire (Zhu, Li, and Lyons 2017; Blackledge and Creese 2017). For example, Blackledge and Creese (2017) found the participants in a busy meat market in Birmingham deploy wide-ranging semiotic resources when their biographical and linguistic histories rarely overlap. They use gestures, eye gaze, nods and head shakes, shrugs and smiles to negotiate meaning. These gestures are ‘translanguaging practice and a record of mobility’ (265) and will be taken up in the analytical framework for the present study.

An additional orientation here is McNeil’s work (1985, 351) as he refuses to consider gesture as an ‘ad on’ to speech and argues that ‘the whole gesture and speech can be encompassed in a unified conception’. In this sense, gesture is fluid in nature as it does not have fixed functions and its level of involvement in meaning construction with the utterance it accompanies varies, where sometimes it is more essential to the speech it accompanies than other times (Blackledge and Creese 2017). In the same vein, Kendon (2004) further points out that gesture and speech form an integrated system of communication, and asserts that gestures, posture and body movements must be considered in detail in any treatment of communicative interactions. Zhu, Li, and Jankowicz-Pytel (2020) also argue that embodied repertoires are central to interactions and pedagogy. They found how the teachers in their study provided instruction through the orchestration of a range of multimodal, multisensory and multilingual repertoires. Similarly, van Lier (2008) views gesture as an important resource for both teachers and learners in their learning and Rosborough (2014) has found how gesture, bodily movements and interactions play an essential role in the meaning-making experience in English language classrooms. In the next section, we relate work on English language education to refugee settings where learners are likely to have experienced trauma.

Translanguaging and trauma

The current paper seeks to apply the work on translanguaging spaces reviewed above to refugee settings where displaced learners’ embodied repertoires can be called on to create a translanguaging space that is a safe space. This is because displaced learners often feel a disconnection from their linguistic and cultural heritage when they are displaced as their host schools and neighbourhoods may use different varieties to those of their countries of origin (Capstick and Delaney 2016).

Arabic-speaking Syrian refugees will, for example, struggle with Kurdish-medium schools in KRI. Symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1977) can result from this, compounding the trauma that many refugees seek to overcome in their psycho-social programmes. Outcomes of this trauma which have been shown to manifest in language lessons has included poor memory, concentration and processing of information, and increased anxiety. Gordon (2011) has shown in detail how these outcomes interfere with learning. In addition, foreign language anxiety (see Zheng 2008), it has been argued, interferes with learning and is one of the most accepted phenomena in psychology and education. This means that language learning environments need to be safe rather than stressful. Gordon (2011, 2) for example emphasises that 'it is imperative for the ESL field to recognise and investigate trauma as a factor in language learning'. We emphasise here, therefore, the importance of identifying how far engaging refugees' full linguistic repertoire in the learning of foreign or second languages enables NGOs to create safe spaces for their psycho-social support programmes. UNICEF (2016) suggest that safe spaces ensure positive identity and feelings through self-regulation as well as self-esteem and self-appraisal. They also suggest that safe spaces provide a voice and meaningful engagement and interaction with others. Positive identity and meaningful interaction, we have seen in the previous sections, are the outcomes of translanguaging pedagogies. Teachers and learners use empathy, communication and cooperation in both safe spaces and spaces for translanguaging (Capstick 2019, 11) However, how exactly might translanguaging practices enhance the cultivation of a safe space for reducing anxiety at times of increased trauma for the beneficiaries in this study when the coaches and beneficiaries involved have low levels of English? In short, our main research question for this study is: what linguistic and semiotic resources do the NGO coaches draw on to create safe spaces in their English language lessons for psycho-social support?

Research design and settings

The current study involved interviews and classroom observations in four different centres of the NGO across Erbil city. The aim of this section of the paper is to describe the type of linguistic ethnographic perspective employed when collecting data in these four settings, before moving on to describe how this analysis was combined with the analysis of the discourse topics identified in the previous study (Capstick 2019). The reason for the multi-sited approach is that displaced people and humanitarian actors communicate when they come into contact in rapidly changing settings. As such, it was necessary to observe interactions between coaches and beneficiaries. Pseudonyms have been created for the six coaches whose interviews are drawn on in the analysis presented below and whose classes were observed. These classes were part of the Advancing Adolescents programme of structured group-based activities. The classes are made up of refugees from Syria, IDPs from Iraq and host community from KRI. This makes for a complex linguistic setting. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Kurdish language (Sorani variety) in the Kurdistan region of Iraq has risen in status as a result of changes in political and social power. However, different varieties (Badini also known as Kurmanji) of Kurdish used by Syrian Kurds mean that some varieties of Kurdish remain minority varieties - with very powerful links to group identity for Syrian Kurds. Moreover, the Kurdish community were deprived of using and learning their home language in Syria. This poses many challenges relating to language and identity (see Shanks 2016).

Six coaches were observed and interviewed for the study: two from Syria (refugees), two from Kurdistan (host community) and two from the southern parts of Iraq (IDPs). For the Advancing Adolescents Programme, the coaches must be under the age of 30. These 'lay' coaches, who have never worked as teachers, deliver the Advancing Adolescent Programme. They are trained by the NGO to understand how stress physiology affects brain functions and how to facilitate experiential learning. They are not introduced to strategies for dealing with different language varieties in heterogenous classes where few learners know any English and they had

received just two weeks of English language teacher training before starting their 8-week English courses. One of the authors saw many similar situations in the other countries which neighbour Syria. The coaches were observed twice and interviewed twice during one of the author's field visits to Iraq.

Detailed fieldnotes were recorded during the field visits. In each of the humanitarian settings, the aim was to make detailed intensive observations of the translanguaging that went on and then to ask participants about these practices in interviews. For example, in NGO centres this meant observing people in the playgrounds, staff rooms and corridors, as well as attending many of the activities that were provided for the beneficiaries including drama groups, a fathers' group and Arabic lessons. Key participants were selected in each site. The project was explained to them and consent for data collection and use of those data gained. Following Copland and Creese (2015), an approach was taken which foregrounded the local and immediate interactions of actors from their point of view and considered how these interactions were embedded in wider social contexts and structures. Language lessons were video-recorded where possible, though occasionally the NGO beneficiaries preferred not to be video-recorded. The data analysed for this study consists of 10 English language lessons which were video and audio recorded (a total of 8 h 3 m 36 s) with fieldnotes and copies of course materials. The number of students observed in these lessons ranged from 13 to 18 with an average of 15 students per lesson. Each lesson lasted approximately 45 min while post-lesson interviews with coaches lasted approximately 50 min.

Methods of analysis

The analysis presented in the following section was carried out first by returning to the previous study (Capstick 2019) to identify which discourses the coaches oriented to in their interviews. The second part of the analysis relates the discourse topics to the analysis of the classroom video data. In order to establish the discourse topics, the coaches were all asked the same questions about language use and language learning, as the research aim was to establish a link between what they said in the interviews and whether they draw on the full range of their semiotic repertoires in their video recordings of their classroom teaching. Drawing on Krzyzanowski (2008), we define the basic analytic category 'discourse topic' as 'expressed by several sentences in discourse ... by larger segments of the discourse or by the discourse as a whole' (Van Dijk 1984, 56). The topics were addressed by the participants during the interviews, which were primarily framed by questions about home language use in their classrooms. All the discourse topics relate to home language use; this is the macro-topic. In this macro-discourse topic about home language use there are various sub-topics (see Reisigl and Wodak 2001). We then used these discourse topics to select data from the fieldnotes and observational data from inside and outside the classrooms. These are illustrated below with extracts from the interview data. There are many examples of each discourse topic. All the interviews and the video-recorded interactions in the classroom were translated and transcribed for analysis. One lesson is presented in the analysis below because it includes sequences that are typical of the translanguaging practices in the NGO programme.

The analysis carried out below seeks to understand how the NGO coaches firstly orient to the four discourse topics related to the use of different language varieties in the classroom and then in the second part of the analysis to identify instances in the classroom video data where the coaches' teaching orients to these discourses. For example, the first part of the analysis identifies those parts of the interview data where each coach orients to the 'English first' discourse while in the second part of the analysis, moments in the classroom video data which related to the discourse topic of 'English first' were analysed. In addition to the coding of the transcripts of the classroom observation video data sets, an inventory of semiotic practices of this video data was then drawn up based on Blackledge and Creese (2017).

Analysis – Part 1

In this section, each discourse topic is introduced followed by an example extract from the interview data. This is followed by an analysis of the discourse with an extract from the video footage.

Discourse topic 1: ‘English first’

This discourse topic relates to the instances in the interviews when the coaches describe the need to use English first before switching to a variety which is more familiar to the beneficiaries.

Example from the interviews:

Zakia: Now we don’t focus on translation many times I ask my Iraqi students do you understand in English and they say yes, but I translate the ideas they can’t get in English.

This discourse topic (Capstick 2019) reflects the common view among NGO staff that the target language, English, should be used first. This orientation to a monolingual ideology goes against the psycho-social aims of establishing a contract among learners which values and respects all of their views and opinions but not, it would seem, all their language resources. Full immersion in the target language in the first task of the first lesson also increases the risk of foreign language anxiety (Zheng 2008). This anxiety is exacerbated in the case of learners experiencing trauma given its negative effects on how learners process new information, such as vocabulary, in the sense that ‘second language learning involves a fundamentally traumatic experience for the individual’ (Clarke 1976, 377).

Example from Zakia and Lanya’s class

Bold = Modern Standard Arabic

Normal font = Syrian Arabic, English

Italics: translation

Example 1: Lanya (Kurdish Sorani speaker) and Zakia (Arabic-speaking) team-teach a lesson starting with a ‘getting to know you’ activity where the beneficiaries throw a ball to one of their classmates while saying that person’s name.

1 Zakia: you have to say her name.

(the student throws the ball while saying her own name instead of the name of her peer that received the ball)

2 Zakia: No, her name not your name (short pause).

Zakia 3: لا لا هي شو اسما؟ شما لما تتلفي الطابة، شو اسما؟ you have to say شو اسما؟

(translation: No No. what’s her name? you have to say her name when you throw the ball, What’s her name?)

4 Student: Fatima

Zakia 5: so يجب أن تقولي اسمها عندما تلقين الكرة

(translation: So you have to say her name when you throw the ball)

Zakia 5: الأسماء. You have to remember names.

(translation: You have to remember names. Names)

This example features translanguaging with Syrian Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and English. Zakia started her first two takes by using English. Zakia then uses Syrian Arabic (turn 3) on noticing that the Syrian refugees throw the ball without saying their peers’ names. This was followed by using English (you have to say) when she used the modal verb to show obligation. Zakia repeats the same instruction in line 5, employing MSA to extend the message to the Arab non-Syrian students in the classroom (i.e. IDPs) and to explain grammar rules and instructions,

indexing the formal register of this variety. Lanya mainly addressed the home students (i.e. Kurdish) by explaining the same instructions of the game using both English and Sorani. This is why Zakia shifted to use English in her last turn (line 6) when she addressed all students (home, IDPs and Syrian refugees) to maximise communication with the whole group.

Discourse topic 2: 'She has to translate'

This discourse topic (Capstick 2019) refers to the instances in the interviews where the coaches orient to a discourse about the need to translate target language into the beneficiaries' home language variety or a variety that is familiar to them.

Example of this discourse in the interview data:

Zakia: What I like that Lanya helped me so much and she talked so much, she take the most of time, this is the reason I can't express I can't share, just I translate for my students side translate and it is difficult because maybe take more time to speak in English at first and then she has to translate to Kurdish and then I have to translate to Arabic.

This is not an uncommon discourse among teachers who feel that translation is the default position when students do not understand the target language or classroom instructions. In the lesson observations we saw many examples of the coaches using the target language; then, if there was silence or misunderstanding, the coach would translate the target language into the learners' home language (see excerpt 2).

Example 2 (Zakia and Lanya's class)

1 Zakia: what does countable and uncountable mean?

2 Student: uhmmm, what?

3 Zakia: what do we mean by countable or uncountable?

4 Zakia: you can use Arabic. That's OK.

5 Student: when nouns (short pause)

Zakia 6: بالعربي، مافي مشكلة

(translation: In Arabic, No problem.)

Student 7: عندما نستطيع عد الأشياء countable nouns

(translation: **When we can count things countable nouns**)

Zakia 8: Bravo! يعني الأسماء اللي بتعديها countable

(translation: Bravo! Meaning that things you can count are countable)

9 Student: Yes

In this example, the dominant language at the beginning was English. Zakia initiated her question in line 1 in English, to which the student used repair in English asking for clarification and repetition in line 2. Zakia repeats the question in English and gives permission to the student to use Arabic (lines 3 and 4). The student insists on using English. After a short pause (line 5), Zakia assures the student that she could use Arabic (line 6), using a shared variety (Syrian Arabic). The teacher's encouragement for the student to use Arabic could be seen as an act of support for the student to draw on her linguistic repertoire. The student employs translanguaging effortlessly in the next turn (line 7), using MSA to explain the rule of countable nouns and shifts to English to reference key content (countable nouns). This is similar to the way Zakia utilised MSA to give instructions in the first excerpt. Zakia praises the student's participation and paraphrases the rule in Syrian Arabic, also using English to reference key content. The student agrees with her using English. What is noteworthy here is that the language spoken by the last interlocutor determines what language is to be followed by the next one. This is evident in lines 1 and 2, 4 and 5, 6 and 7, 8 and 9.

Discourse topic 3: 'There are many identities'

This discourse topic (Capstick 2019) about multiple identities was a common discourse topic in the interviews. It relates to the training that the NGO provides about the diversity of religious, social and cultural identities within the communities of beneficiaries that the NGO reaches.

Example of this discourse in the interview data:

[With reference to the psycho-social support training materials the NGO uses with the coaches]

NGO Centre manager: *ok so there's no actual book they have to follow. We want to promote group work or leadership or identifying identity. So these are the themes they try to link to the course that's the coaches' responsibility to assess the group that registered for this course let's say for English and he has a theme like identity so if the group is a basic level they will for example there are many identities in the community there's doctors there's police officers there's nationalities.*

NGO staff and coaches oriented to a discourse about the importance of respecting different identities when delivering psycho-social support. However, nowhere in the interviews was there a link between the beneficiaries' identities and their language use or the importance of respecting heritage language use for positive identity and meaningful interaction, which are core tenets of creating safe spaces.

Example 3 (Zakia and Lanya's class 2): (Sorani, English, Arabic)

1 Lanya: It is too small to be counted

2 Lanya: *لهبهر ئهوهی شکر زۆر وورده، ناتوانین بیزمێرین*
(translation: Because sugar is too small, we can't count)

3 Lanya: *تەنانەت لە کوردیشا ناتوانین بڵێین یەک شکر، دوو شکر، سێ شکر. وا ئه‌ڵێین؟*
(translation: Even in Kurdish we can't say one sugar, two sugar or three sugar. Do we say that?)

4 Lanya: *نەمخێر ناتوانین*
(translation: No, we don't.)

5 Lanya: *بەلام ئه‌ڵێین* for example a kilo of sugar, yes, a kilo of sugar.
(translation: However, we say for example a kilo of sugar, yes, a kilo of sugar.)

6 Lanya: *شکر کەواته* sugar is uncountable noun
(translation: So sugar is uncountable noun.)

السكر لا معدود: (in Arabic to all students) Lanya 7

(translation: sugar is not countable)

Students: hahah (laugh)

Lanya usually uses Sorani for translation. However, on this occasion there is a change in her practices here. Lanya's first turn was in English to set the context for the grammar rule of countable and uncountable nouns. She elaborates using Sorani in the next turn. What is remarkable in her next turn (line 3) is the fact that she builds on the students' previous knowledge in Kurdish that sugar is uncountable. She drew on the similarities between English and Sorani and used students' knowledge of Sorani as a resource.

Discourse topic 4: 'In my eyes or in my movements'

This discourse topic (Capstick 2019) is about those moments in the interviews that the coaches explained the importance of gaze, movement and gesture in their teaching. The coaches talked about using different parts of the body rather than words to express meaning and show their psycho-social support.

Example from the interview data with Mustafa


Mustafa: *In English classrooms when I will show my psycho-social support for everyone, firstly I will play with my body to show them I am with you, in my eyes or in my movements, I will show*

to her or to him that I am here to support you, to learn, to teach you to be with you don't shame with me.

The final discourse topic relates to using movement in the classroom to teach and to support. Above, Mustafa signals an understanding of how semiotic repertoires are not limited to the linguistic but rather include aspects of communication not always thought of as language.

Analysis – Part 2: video analysis

What we found from the analysis above is that Zakia's and Lanya's translanguaging practices are repeatedly different from Huda's and Mustafa's. While the former teachers rely more on translanguaging through translation and employing their full linguistic repertoire in using multiple varieties, the latter, while choosing to use English, relied more on embodiment and other multi-semiotic and multisensory repertoires for meaning-making. The extract (in the [Appendix](#)) shows how this repertoire was employed by Huda in the classroom.

Huda's lesson lasts for 40 min and is a discussion of houses and rooms. Students are engaged with a group drawing activity and finally the teacher elicits some answers from the students about individual items in their rooms. This sequence is selected for multimodal analysis because similar sequences happen regularly in her classes. In this sequence, Huda stands in the middle of the classroom and starts talking about her house while simultaneously using iconic hand gestures of a triangular shape to represent house and a waving motion to represent river (turn 1). Next, Huda illustrates what is inside her room while all students fix their gazes at her. She folds her hands against each other and rests her right cheek against her hands as an iconic gesture to represent the verb 'sleep' (turn 2). Huda replaces the verbal action 'sleep' by an iconic gesture and refrains from using the linguistic resources while maximising the deployment of gesture and body movement, including closing her eyes. The gesture here represents what Kendon (2004) calls a 'visible action' as an alternative to spoken words. Huda turns around, picks a marker and starts drawing an alarm while saying 'alarm clock' (turn 3, turn 4). One student leans to the left, meeting the eye gaze of another, and says *بترسم* 'alarm', ('she's drawing alarm clock, alarm'), using Arabic to describe the action and Eng- *ساعة منبه*  for content words 'alarm' (turn 5). The learner uses translanguaging to describe the drawing in what seems to be peer-scaffolding. The other learner smiles and looks at the drawing immediately after the first learner says 'alarm clock' in Arabic (turn 6). Huda finishes her drawing, puts the marker down, turns around to face the students and says 'in my room "6 o'clock, 7 o'clock"' while tapping on the board moving her finger across the clock drawing. She then shouts *trrrrr* playfully while waving her hands to imitate a clock (turn 7). The learners burst into laughter. The coach repeats the action and the learners respond with laughter again. What is new in the last turn is Huda's usage of Arabic. She used the word *ساعة منبه* ('alarm clock') to maximise communication and make sure that all students understand what seems to be a target word.

The multimodal analysis here reveals how Huda negotiates meaning by means of sound, drawing, iconic gestures, posture, body movement and speech. In fact, she keeps her verbal actions and employment of her full linguistic repertoire to a minimum, while using iconic gestures to scaffold learning lexical items (turn 1). The data here and elsewhere shows that embodied repertoires are not secondary to verbal utterances. Huda creates a translanguaging space in a convivial way through the orchestration and coordination of a multitude of semiotic repertoires as well as linguistic ones. The student's Arabic verbal utterance (turn 5) signals the existence of such space as well as the students' strategic deployment of their linguistic repertoire for knowledge co-construction. Huda's imitation of the sound of an alarm (turns 7 and 9), alongside a drawing of an alarm clock (turn 4) and the verbal utterance of alarm clock in English (turn 3) and Arabic by the students are one example of how 'the linguistic repertoire is only one of a range of multisensory and multimodal semiotic possibilities that are activated, assembled and orchestrated to make and communicate meaning' (Zhu, Otsuji, and Pennycook 2017, 390).

Discussion

What the analysis from Huda's lesson demonstrates is that the translanguaging practices of her learners are engaged through different semiotic repertoires. We see how these practices work together not only to make meaning but also to create sound and visual effects that add enjoyment to the learning experience and fulfil the requirements of psycho-social support even where the 'English first' discourse is oriented to. Through the deployment of various semiotic repertoires of gesture, posture, gaze, drawing, sound, smiles, nods and head shakes, the meaning-making process is achieved in a supportive way even when verbal utterances in English are kept to a minimum (Blackledge and Creese 2017). The translanguaging space created here is, we argue, a safe space as learners are supported, engaged and responsive to Huda in ways not seen in the observational data from other classrooms. Blackledge and Creese (2017) have explained how these semiotic repertoires are a record of mobility and experience and include gaps and silences as they are responding to the places and people to which a wide range of semiotic resources are deployed. These authors suggest, as illustrated in Huda's classroom, that the manner in which people walk, stand and sit, as well as the gaze of their eyes and the movements they make with their bodies, all make up the semiotic repertoire. In this sense, embodied communicative practices are part of linguistic communicative practice (Blackledge and Creese 2017). These multimodalities of movement, touch, gesture, objects and sounds, as well as other modes of communication in addition to the use of words, combine to create safe spaces for learning while at the same time, we argue, affording new translanguaging spaces and resources for what Hua, Wei, and Jankowicz-Pytel (2019, p. 10) regard as 'multilingual and multimodal communication'. In addition, Huda's lesson is characterised by a playful mixture of activation and calming in what Proges calls the Social Engagement System which helps Huda's students, in this case, to navigate relationships and become more flexible in their coping styles (Porges 2009).

However, we see a different kind of translanguaging space created by Lanya and Zakia. Their translanguaging practices draw on MSA, Syrian Arabic, Sorani, Badini and English to create a translanguaging space as both coaches cross language boundaries of theirs, and their learners', experience, history and environment in order to construct a safe space for learning together. Bringing together these aspects in this study appear to provide the conditions for deployment of a range of semiotic and linguistic resources which enhance the development of a safe space given that safe spaces ensure positive identity, voice and meaningful engagement and interaction with others. We link these translanguaging spaces to positive identity construction here not because we view the relationship between place, language and identity as static, but rather because in Lanya and Zakia's practices we see them invoke previous and current locations in a seamless flow of MSA, Syrian Arabic, Sorani, Badini and English in the situated interaction of one lesson. That is, they both use linguistic features which are available and meaningful to them and their learners in the context of psycho-social support. Translanguaging practices are used here, we suggest, to create safe spaces. This should not be a surprise given that translanguaging space has, it is argued, its own transformative power when it generates new practices (Li 2011). The new practices in our data are the translanguaging practices which emerge every time the coaches and beneficiaries draw from their semiotic and linguistic repertoires. These will always be new as individual and group repertoires come together as history and environment are combined in what Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) call spatial repertoires i.e. they are formed through the individual life trajectories that link particular repertoires of individuals to the group. In our study, these repertoires are given their shape by the resources available to them across the time and space of their displacements.

Given that communicative repertoires are subject to the contingencies of the space produced (Blackledge and Creese 2017), we suggest that in order to mediate profound and prolonged stress in the psycho-social support programme of English language lessons, the coaches were seen to be drawing on the available linguistic and semiotic resources available to create a safe space for their learners. Whereas the first two discourse topics in Part 1 of our analysis provided evidence of the coaches' orientation to dominant discourses of language separation and monolingual bias, our analysis

in Part 2 suggests that translanguaging spaces are indeed ‘a space where multilingual individuals integrate social spaces (and thus “language codes”) that have been formerly practiced separately in different spaces by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment’ (Hua, Wei, and Jankowicz-Pytel 2019, p.9). Employing the multilingual practices of MSA, Syrian Arabic and English for meaning-making and knowledge construction works as an act of resistance to the English-only policy but in doing the personal histories and shared identities of the beneficiaries are more able to come into contact with each other in this translanguaging space.

Blommaert (2015) has pointed out that interactants employ their available resources to achieve their communication goals, and that limiting these resources in L2 context may limit the students’ agency and the richness of interactions. The participants in the present study demonstrated a natural flow crossing language boundaries that did not appear completely new to them. However, as we have seen in video example 2, learners initiate translanguaging practices only when the teachers translanguaged or allow them to do so. This shows the challenge that the coaches face, as do so many educators who have not benefitted from professional development opportunities, to design translanguaging strategies that empower their learners and take more control of their learning (Gynne 2019). Canagarajah (2011, 8) has criticised educational contexts in which ‘acts of translanguaging are not elicited by teachers through conscious pedagogical strategies’ and we encourage those NGOs who wish to develop language learning programmes to provide teacher development initiatives that equip those teachers that will teach these classes with the translanguaging pedagogies that have been successful elsewhere in the world.

Conclusion

The current paper explored the notion of translanguaging space in refugee settings where displaced learners’ embodied repertoires are called on to create a safe space for language learning. Displaced learners often feel a disconnection from their linguistic and cultural heritage when they are displaced as their host schools and neighbourhoods and national life often use different varieties to those of their countries of origin (Capstick and Delaney 2016). This dislocation can compound the traumatic events displaced people may have witnessed or experienced and interfere with learning. This means that language learning environments need to be safe rather than stressful. In the analysis of classroom language practices, we therefore sought to identify how the coaches in this study engaged beneficiaries’ full linguistic repertoire in the teaching of English in their attempts to create safe spaces for the post-stress attunement programmes. We found that translanguaging spaces do provide opportunities to ensure positive identity and meaningful engagement and interaction within the English language classrooms we observed. However, these were the outcome of unplanned translanguaging practices which were more often controlled by the coaches rather than the beneficiaries. There is indeed much greater scope for the cultivation of translanguaging spaces as safe spaces, such as in the mobilisation of semiotic resources such as gesture, for reducing anxiety at times of increased trauma for displaced people particularly when coaches and beneficiaries are not confident users of English.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix

Video example 4 (Huda's lesson)

Turn	Actor	Verbal action	Other forms of action	Image
1	Huda	My house is near the river	Huda looks at the students, bending towards them while moving her hands to form a triangular shape when she says 'house' and then moves her left hand in front of her when she says 'river'	
				
2	Huda	In my room I (gesture) in the bed	Huda stands in the middle of the class, all students fixing their gaze at her, folds her hands against each other and rests her right cheek against her hands to represent the verb 'sleep'	
3	Huda	I have alarm clock	Huda turns around, picks a marker and starts drawing an alarm clock while saying 'alarm clock'	
4	Huda		Huda draws an alarm clock. Students fix their gaze at the board to see the drawing	
5	Student 1 to student 2	<u>alarm</u> <u>بترسم ساعة منيه</u> (English translation: she's drawing alarm clock, <u>alarm</u>)	One student leans to the left, meeting the eye gaze of another, and says 'بترسم ساعة منيه, alarm'	

(Continued)

Continued.

Turn	Actor	Verbal action	Other forms of action	Image
6	Student		The other student smiles and looks at the drawing immediately after the first student said 'alarm clock' in Arabic.	
7	Huda	In my room, 6o'clock, 7 o'clock ... trrrrrr	Huda finishes her drawing, puts the marker down, turns around to face the students and says 'in my room "6o'clock, 7 o'clock"' while tapping on the board moving her finger across the clock drawing. She then screams 'trrrrr', imitating the alarm o'clock sound, while moving her hands in a wavy, vibrating way to give the sense of shaking that the alarm gives.	 
8	students	hahaha	Students laugh	
9	Huda	I have alarm clock ساعة منيه (English translation: alarm clock) The voice is trrrrr	As Huda speaks, she repeats the sound of an alarm 'trrrr' and says the word alarm clock in Arabic while moving her hands in a vibrating way, like before, and students laugh.	