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## **Limits to translanguaging: Insights from a conflict-affected context**

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# Limits to translanguaging: Insights from a conflict-affected context

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## Abstract

This paper looks at how histories of conflict and ideologies of language as a bounded entity mapped onto a homogeneous nation impact on translanguaging practices in a superdiverse classroom in conflict-affected Cyprus. Drawing on ethnographic data from a highly diverse primary school in the Greek-Cypriot conflict-affected context, this study examines how nationalist understandings of language and belonging affect the ways in which a group of Turkish-speaking students of Pontian and Turkish-Bulgarian backgrounds relate to their Turkish-speakerness in classroom interaction. The findings show that, despite the polylingual and hybrid realities of this particular school, in formal educational practices Turkish-speaking students kept a low profile as to their Turkish-speakerness. Even when the teacher encouraged translanguaging practices and a public display of students' competence in the Turkish language, this was met with inarticulateness and emotional troubles, fuelled by a fear of associating 'speaking Turkish' with 'being Turkish'. In discussing these findings, the paper points to the impact of different overlapping histories of ethno-nationalist conflict that associate Turkishness with the 'enemy group' and the ways in which these histories socialize children within essentialist assumptions about language and national belonging.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, language ideologies, nationalism, conflict, superdiversity, , Turkish, linguistic identity, Cyprus, education

## 1 Introduction

The Herderian 'language-nation-state' equation has provided modernity with a charter for the national politicization of language, giving rise to ideologies that link 'a language' to the unique character of 'a people' and to claims for territory and political autonomy (Briggs and Bauman 2003, May 2012). Sociolinguistic research has long pointed to the historical predominance of such ideologies (Blommaert and Verschueren 1992, Jaffe 1999, Irvine and Gal 2000); yet, in contemporary globalized societies these homogenizing assumptions are often thought to have significantly less purchase. In recent decades, studies of linguistic practices in urban and superdiverse settings have pointed to creative, fluid and heteroglossic linguistic practices that challenge narrow and reified conceptions of language and demonstrate the historical constructedness of such traditional understandings. Specifically, scholarship on translanguaging – namely bilinguals' shuttling between languages – argues for the merits of developing pedagogic strategies that encourage such complex discursive practices in multilingual classrooms (García 2009, Creese and Blackledge 2010, Canagarajah 2011). However, research in societies troubled by conflict provides evidence that in such contexts ethnonationalist representations of language and identity still hold particularly strong (Bar-Tal 2007, Charalambous and Rampton 2011, Charalambous, et al. forthcoming-a). So what happens to pedagogic calls for translanguaging when superdiverse realities meet ideologies of interethnic conflict, in which language serves as a criterion for the ascription of oppositional ethnonational identities?

This paper sets out to examine the ways in which this powerful ideology of language affects the ways in which a group of Turkish-speaking students of Pontian<sup>1</sup> and Turkish-Bulgarian backgrounds relate to their Turkish-speakerness in Greek-Cypriot educational settings. Our analysis discusses three macro-histories of conflict where Turkishness was charged with negative historical indexicalities – in Cyprus, Pontus and Bulgaria. The study shows how these conflict narratives intersect in a superdiverse and polylingual setting through students' collective historical trajectories. It also shows how they affect classroom interaction by reinforcing understandings of the Turkish language as iconically mapped onto the homogenous Turkish 'nation'. Thus, the association of 'Turkish-speakerness' with 'the enemy group' seems to inform the interactional micro-practices of the Turkish-speaking students, by discouraging them from publically deploying their Turkish linguistic recourses.

In what follows, we first discuss the relevance of language ideologies as a theoretical concept and then we briefly introduce the ideological processes that historically contributed to the stigmatization of Turkish language use in these three conflicts, before moving on to present our study's setting and the analysis of the ethnographic and interactional data in focus.

## **2. Theoretical considerations**

In the last few decades, the study of 'language ideologies' has been established as an important field of sociolinguistic inquiry, combining linguistic anthropology with the sociological study of ideology (Silverstein 1979, Woolard 1998). Looking at the 'shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world' (Rumsey in Woolard 1998), language ideologies allow us to address the meta-level of socio-culturally motivated beliefs, ideas, perceptions around language, in order to examine the socio-political significance of linguistic practices (Jaffe 1999, Blommaert 2006). In this sense, language ideologies provide a 'mediating link between social structures and forms of talk' (Woolard 1998) by drawing attention to the embeddedness of micro-linguistic processes within 'a wider socio-political and historical horizon of relationships of power, forms of discrimination, social engineering, nation-building and so forth' (Blommaert 1999: 2). Although often articulated in metapragmatic accounts (Silverstein 1979), for most of the time language ideologies remain implicit but equally formative of linguistic practices, e.g. by negatively stigmatizing the use of certain varieties; or defining certain languages/varieties as emblems of nationhood (Blommaert 1999: 2).

To empirically examine the inherent historical and social nature of language at the level of the implicit, one has to move beyond the referential aspects of meaning and address what Peirce described as the iconic and indexical dimensions of language-in-use, which anchor it firmly in larger socio-political processes (Blommaert 2006). The notion of 'indexicality' – the ability of language to 'point' beyond its immediate referents to other signs, ideas, beliefs and values – is central in connecting semiotic micro-practices to larger scale ideological processes and contributes to understanding the construction and negotiation of social identities. Irvine and Gal (2000: 35-36) observe that "it has become a commonplace in sociolinguistics that linguistic forms, including whole languages can index social groups", while boundaries between languages are often used to index boundaries between people. The role of language ideologies in indexically tying entire linguistic systems such as languages and dialects to identity categories 'has been especially well theorised in the literature on

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<sup>1</sup> Pontians are self-defined as an ethnically Greek and Orthodox Christian community who settled around the Black Sea area around the 8<sup>th</sup> century and in 20<sup>th</sup> century was forced to migrate to countries of the former Soviet Union. For details see section 3.2.

language, nationalism and ideology’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 597), but has also attracted the interest of more interactionally oriented studies.

Drawing on this tradition of sociolinguistic scholarship, this study focuses on the impact of the ethno-nationalist conceptualization of language, which assumes a ‘fatal equation’ of language, state and nation’ (Smith 1983 in Ozkırımı 2000: 19). This ideology is premised on the conflation of the classic Herderian idea that ‘language bears the stamp of the mind and character of a national group’ (Herder in Ozkırımı 2000: 13) and the assumption of ‘nation-state congruence’ which sees ethnic (language, nation) and political (state) boundaries as coinciding (May 2012: 7). Drawing on Enlightenment and German romantic ideas of monolingualism, ethnolinguistic nationalism has consolidated the ‘dogma of homogeneity’ (Blommaert and Verschueren 1992), namely the essentialist assumption that national groups should be linguistically and culturally as ‘pure’ and homogeneous as possible. As a result of such understandings of language, projects of intense nation-building have treated the existence of multiple ethnic communities as a threat and a source of instability for the state (Eminov 2001).

Recent sociolinguistic studies – especially in urban multilingual environments – have challenged such objectified conceptions of language, nation and social identity and revealed hybrid linguistic practices and more dynamic and fluid negotiations of ideologies, social relations, institutional roles etc. (see for example Rampton 1995, Jaspers 2005, Madsen, et al. 2013). The changing social conditions of globalization such as the increasing mobility, technological affordances that allow for transnational communication and diasporic affiliations, and the consequent “diversification of diversity” – processes that have been recently described with the notion of superdiversity (Vertovec 2010) – have solidified linguistic attention to hybridity and fluidity and have highlighted the ideological nature of older conceptions and paradigms. As Blommaert and Rampton (2011: 3) point out, “rather than working with homogeneity, stability and boundedness as the starting assumptions, mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication”.

This scholarly work has given rise to a number of concepts that describe these more heteroglossic practices and their social implications, such as ‘crossing’, ‘translanguaging’, ‘polylinguaging’ etc. (Jørgensen 2008, Creese and Blackledge 2010, Rampton 2011, Madsen, et al. 2016). For the purposes of this study, of particular relevance is the notion of translanguaging, namely the flexible use of linguistic resources from what are described as autonomous languages for the purposes of effective communication (García 2009: 140). The concept of translanguaging points to the inherent hybridity involved in the language practices of multilingual speakers and the spontaneity of shuttling between languages to meet the communicative complexities of globalization in an increasingly heterogeneous world (García 2009, Canagarajah 2011). This conceptualization of language use breaks abruptly with the hegemony of monolingual language ideologies which imposes an ethos of uniformity that ignores or is hostile to multilingualism. In the context of education, translanguaging research has studied the discursive practices of bilingual students and suggested the development of translanguaging pedagogical strategies for teaching both language and content (García 2009, Creese and Blackledge 2010, Canagarajah 2011).

Nevertheless, outside sociolinguistic descriptions, the ideological baggage of ‘national languages’ that index ethnic/national belonging continues to be a powerful force, even in the era of globalization when autonomous national economies have (almost) been eclipsed. After all, as May points out “we continue to live in the era of the nation-state [as] the nation-state remains the bedrock of the political world order” (May 2012: 6). Things become even more complicated when we move our analytic attention to contexts troubled by interethnic conflict.

Whereas increasing diversity forces us to rethink notions such as ‘ethnicity’ and ‘identity’, discourses of conflict rely on essentialized concepts of a homogenous national/ethnolinguistic self in opposition to a primary national Other (Charalambous, et al. forthcoming-a, Zembylas, et al. forthcoming). Discourses of conflict emphasise the importance of preserving ethnic and/or religious boundaries (Bar-Tal 2007), while language is often seen as a salient part in the process of sustaining a unified ‘us’ against the ‘enemy’. As a result, in these contexts notions of hybridity become particularly problematic (e.g. they may be associated with spying and betrayal). For example in the case of Cyprus, during the period of intense interethnic violence between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots (1950s-1974) the language of each community was seen as crucial in preserving ethnolinguistic identities and ensuring collective survival<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, using the language of the other community came to be seen as betrayal and was often even penalised (Ozerk 2001, Karoulla-Vrikki 2004).

In what follows, we return to the question of language ideologies and examine the historical manifestations of ethnolinguistic nationalism in the context of three different interethnic conflicts, which emerged after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and where Turkishness was associated with ‘the enemy’: the local Cyprus conflict which forms the wider socio historical frame within which classroom activity is located; the Pontian collective history of warfare and persecution by the Ottomans in early 20<sup>th</sup> century; and the history of forced assimilation of the Turkish-Bulgarian community in recent Bulgarian history. In doing so, we focus on the ways in which Turkishness and Turkish-speakerness have been charged with negative indexicalities in the case of each conflict. Later, our analysis will demonstrate the impact that these historical backgrounds seem to have on the interactional practices of these students in the classroom.

### **3. Historical backgrounds and the indexicalities of Turkish in three conflicts**

#### **3.1. Turkishness and the Cyprus conflict**

The ‘Cyprus conflict’ developed with the nationalisation of the island’s religious communities – Christians and Muslims – into ‘Greek-Cypriots’ and ‘Turkish-Cypriots’ with political claims on the ‘Greekness’ and ‘Turkishness’ of the island respectively (Bryant 2004). The independence of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 was soon followed by a period of interethnic violence (1963-1967). The conflict culminated in 1974 with a Turkish military operation, which resulted in the island’s *de facto* partition into two ethnically homogenized parts: the Republic of Cyprus which controls the southern part and is practically dominated by the Greek-Cypriots; and the ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ (1983), a political formation officially recognized only by Turkey. Today, while the partition still remains in place, since 2003 the opening of some checkpoints has allowed relative freedom of movement across the divide.

In the development of this intractable conflict, language emerged as an ‘an essential pillar of identity and an indispensable precondition to [collective] survival’, with monolingual policies in both communities as a way of policing ethnolinguistic boundaries (Karoulla-Vrikki 2004: 21). With independence (1960), although both Greek and Turkish were constitutionally defined as official languages of the Republic, education remained strictly communal and contributed to the wider spread of nationalism (Bryant 2004). After 1974, the *de facto* partition further intensified ethnic self-containment but also ‘ethnic estrangement’ between

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<sup>2</sup> In the period before the island’s *de facto* division in 1974, the majority of Turkish-Cypriots used to be biligual and communicatively competent in (Cypriot) Greek.

the communities (Bryant 2004). Studies in the Greek-Cypriot society identify a historically predominant ethnocentrism – both in public discourses (Papadakis 1998), educational discourses (Papadakis 2008b, Charalambous, et al. 2014) and in students’ imaginings (Spyrou 2002) – which emphasizes Cyprus’ ‘Greekness’ and constructs the Turks as the nation’s ‘barbaric archenemy’ (Papadakis 2008a: 5).

Furthermore, despite Turkish being an official language, Turkish learning has been introduced in Greek-Cypriot education only since 2003 as a ‘measure for building trust’ between the two communities and has been perceived by nationalist circles as a ‘threat’ to education’s ‘Greekness’ (Charalambous 2012). Research has shown that students of Turkish had frequently been called ‘traitors’ (Charalambous 2014) while teachers had to develop a number of approaches to deal with the controversy around Turkish learning (Charalambous, et al. forthcoming-b). Therefore, within the Greek-Cypriot nationalist narrative, the Turkish language seems to invoke associations with the enemy state – Turkey – and the historical traumas and suffering it inflicted on the Greek-Cypriot people.

### **3.2. Turkishness in the Greek-Pontian narrative**

Pontians are an ethnically Greek and Orthodox-Christian community which settled around the coastal area surrounding the Black Sea – *Pontos*<sup>3</sup> – during the Hellenistic and Byzantine times (Kitromilides 1990). Despite being Orthodox, during the Ottoman times a large part of the Pontian population gradually became Turkish-speaking (Kitromilides 1990, Marantzidis 2000); yet they continued to self-identify as Greek, professing that ‘though my tongue is Turkish my heart is Greek’ (Clogg 1996 in Marantzidis 2000). In early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Greek irredentism ideas gave rise to a Pontian claim for union with Greece (Kitromilides 1990). This brought about ‘an exceptionally violent conflict between Muslim and Christian guerrilla groups’ (1914-1924) (Marantzidis 2000: 61), which resulted in extensive persecutions – described by Pontians as ‘genocide’ – and forced mass migration either to Greece or to the Caucasian region, in areas of the former Soviet Union – today belonging to Russia, Georgia and the Ukraine (Theodorou 2011).

Turkish-speaking Pontians use a variety of Anatolian Turkish with substantial Russian influences (Ries, et al. 2014), but they are often bilingual in Russian or Georgian. This group started migrating to Cyprus as repatriate Greeks in the early 1990s after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and today form the largest group of economic migrants (Theodorou and Symeou 2013). Despite being Turcophone, Pontians perceive Greece as their historical homeland and feel an ethnic proximity to the Greek-Cypriot majority, while they tend to demonise Turks as their historical enemies (Theodorou 2011). Zoumpalidis’ study (forthcoming) demonstrates that many Turcophone Pontians in Cyprus report Greek as their ‘mother tongue’, despite lacking fluency, since ‘mother tongue is taken to highlight one’s ethnic allegiance’. Moreover, upon migrating to Greece and Cyprus, the Turkish speakerness of this group has often been considered an element of ethnic impurity and social stigma (Marantzidis 2000, Theodorou 2011) and research in Cyprus confirms that Pontians have become more ‘aware of the potential social and economic damage’ that the use of Turkish may cause (Zoumpalidis forthcoming). Similarly, a study in education reports that Greek-Cypriot students tended to perceive their Pontian peers as outsiders and to associate their Turkish-speakerness with the Turkish enemy (Theodorou and Symeou 2013), while Pontian children respond to this stigma through ‘ethnic self-monitoring’: they silence or play down the Turkish elements of their background; they actively reject the ascribed category of the ‘Turk’ and they seek to construct an ‘authentic’ Greek self (Theodorou and Symeou 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> Pontos is an ancient Greek word for ‘sea’

Yet, despite the public disavowal of Turkishness, boundaries appear to be more blurry in everyday practices, since for example many Pontians listen to Turkish music and include it in community events, while some have established links with Turkish settlers from the Black Sea region who reside in the northern side of the divide (Akçali 2007: 68).

### **3.3. Turkishness in Bulgarian history and society**

Turkish-Bulgarians historically originate from the Ottoman era and comprise the largest minority in Bulgaria – today 10% of a population of about 8 million (Dimitrova, et al. 2013: 3). After Bulgarian independence (1878) – especially during communist rule in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – intensive processes of nation-building resulted in a set of forced assimilation policies that treated the Turkish-Bulgarian minority as a destabilizing factor (Eminov 2001). During this period, Turkishness seemed to invoke political associations with Turkey, which was seen as a threat to the territorial integrity of the Bulgarian state (Dimitrova, et al. 2013).

The assimilationist rhetoric of this period argued for the common descent of all Bulgarians despite their ethnolinguistic diversity – ‘there are no Turks in Bulgaria’ (Stojanov in Eminov 2001) – and featured language rather centrally as an agent of national unity, taking ‘for granted that nation=language=territory=state’ (Lunt 1986 in Eminov 2001: 3). As a result, in the 1960s Turkish schools were merged with Bulgarian and social/cultural activities in Turkish were banned (Eminov 2001); in the 1980s there was mass change of Turco-Arabic names to Slavic-Bulgarian, purification of Bulgarian from Turkish loans and penalization of public display of Turkish culture (Eminov 2001, Dimitrova, et al. 2013); while in 1989 this effort peaked with the forced migration of more than 300,000 citizens with ‘Turkish consciousness’ back to Turkey (Eminov 2001). In this historical context, Turkish-speakerness indexed not only ethnic impurity but also political separatist intentions.

In the post-1989 period, despite the softening of tensions, there are still strong indications of prevailing socioeconomic disparities, discrimination and stigmatization of Turkish-Bulgarians (Dimitrova, et al. 2013), while the collective traumas seem to have strengthened the minority’s Turkish ethnic identity (Eminov 2001). Furthermore, despite the partial restoration of Turkish teaching in Bulgarian education, effective support is still lacking (Dimitrova, et al. 2013), while the use of Turkish in other areas of public life remains problematic (Eminov 2001).

Having discussed the impact of ethnonational ideologies in the development of three histories of negative indexicalities around the Turkish language in three discursive contexts in which these Turkish-speaking students possibly participated, in the next section we provide a short description of our study and settings, before our ethnographic account of how the ethnonationalist ideology that organically connects ‘a language’ to a national collectivity – here ‘speaking Turkish’ to ‘being Turkish’ – informed the interactional choices of Turkish-speaking students.

## **4. The study: method, data and setting**

This paper draws on data from a two-year ethnographic project which examined discourses and practices for addressing issues of peace and conflict in Greek-Cypriot primary schools. The case study<sup>4</sup> presented here involves 7 weeks of fieldwork in the classes of three teachers

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<sup>4</sup> The data set of the entire project included: 40 semi-structured interviews with Greek-Cypriot teachers, 3 months of ethnographic fieldwork in 6 classrooms and a series of teacher training workshops offered to participating teachers (18 hours).

(Years 2, 3, and 6) in a highly superdiverse school, focusing specifically on Year 3 (7-8 year olds). Fieldwork unfolded in two phases: a first phase of 6-weeks (October-December 2009) aiming to explore existing practice during literacy and history lessons; and another week later in the year (April-May 2010) when, after a series of teacher workshops on matters of conflict and peace<sup>5</sup>, participating teachers were asked to design and implement peace-related lesson plans. The interactional episodes discussed in the paper derive from a series of video-recorded peace education lessons in the Year 3 class (240 minutes in total) during this second phase.

To analyse these data, we employ a linguistic ethnographic perspective (Rampton 2007), which involves detailed ethnographic description of observed practices (+22 hours), transcriptions of audio- and video-recorded lessons (+9 hours) and 6 interviews with the 3 participating teachers. For the purposes of data analysis, we first coded this data with the assistance of NVivo9, looking for instances where Turkishness and Turkish-speakerness became salient and then proceeded with the micro-analysis of selected interactional episodes.

The educational setting was a small primary school located in the old city-center of Nicosia close to the buffer zone cutting across the city and separating north and south. The school had a strikingly superdiverse population, with 95% of its students being of migrant working class backgrounds, with diverse and complex migration trajectories, who resided in the area because of the cheap accommodation options there. Because of its population, the school belonged to the Zones for Educational Priority (ZEP)<sup>6</sup>, a special educational intervention programme for combating inequalities in socio-economically deprived areas. All participating teachers described the school as 'special', 'very different' and sometimes 'difficult'. The students' wide variety of ethnolinguistic backgrounds was also reflected in their varied levels of competence in Greek, especially academic competence.

The Year-3 class consisted of 11 students (3 girls, 9 boys), of which only one was of Greek-Cypriot origins; for the remaining students Greek was their second language, while at home they were speaking varieties of Turkish, Bulgarian, Russian or English. Four students were of Georgian-Pontian backgrounds (Yorgos, Christos, Iacovos, Maria<sup>7</sup>), one Russian-Pontian (Alexis), one Turkish-Bulgarian (Emil), one Slav-Bulgarian (Petar), one Russian (Valentin), and two of mixed Filippino backgrounds (Stefani and Monica). The teacher of Year 3, Thalia, was a young woman in her late 30s with 15 years of teaching experience and considerable postgraduate studies. Thalia had been teaching in the school for the past 4 years and was teaching the same group for the second year. This seemed to have strengthened group relations as students appeared very fond of Thalia, keen to participate and generally enjoying their time in class. In interview Thalia described her students as 'very cute' and 'good kids', but 'mediocre to bad' in terms of achievement, and she reported simplifying her teaching considerably to meet their needs. Thalia also appeared quite knowledgeable as to her students' out-of-school lives (migration histories, residence, family circumstances, interests etc.) and her teaching often sought to draw links to her students' lives outside.

Turkish was a language with a relatively significant presence in the school as students of Turkish-speaking Pontian backgrounds formed the biggest ethnic group (about 40% of the population), coming mostly from Georgia and Western Russia. According to teachers, most Pontian families had migrated to Cyprus in the late 1990s and many had spent a number of years in Greece as repatriate Greeks before moving to Cyprus. For this reason, these students

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on the project and its outcomes see (Zembylas, et al. forthcoming)..

<sup>6</sup> Zones of Educational Priority refer to networks of schools in socio-economically deprived areas, which take special measures to ensure the prevention of functional illiteracy, school failure and early school leaving, as well as to strengthen social cohesion through the reduction of marginalization and exclusion.

<sup>7</sup> All names used are pseudonyms.

were generally more confident in Greek, as they had been attending Greek-speaking education since their early childhood, while Turkish was used in their home environments, mostly for oral communication. Apart from this ethnic group, we have also recorded the presence of Turkish-speaking students from other backgrounds in the school, such as Bulgarian, Roma, Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot. While this diversity involved very different varieties of Turkish, teachers reported that Turkish-speaking students seemed to manage basic understanding across these varieties. Nonetheless, Greek remained the preferred language of communication between all students in the school.

In Thalia's class Turkish was the home language of 6 out of 11 students: 5 students of Pontian backgrounds and the Turkish-Bulgarian student, Emil. According to Thalia, Emil was a 'quiet but very good kid', who was 'still struggling with Greek' because, in contrast to most students, he had only entered Greek-Cypriot education a year ago, while his family still could not speak Greek. Yet, with regards to Turkish, Emil was by far the most fluent speaker – in the Bulgarian variety of Turkish – since he also reported having basic literacy skills, acquired through chatting online with his uncle in Bulgaria.

Furthermore, especially during the second phase of fieldwork, it emerged that many Turkish-speaking students in Thalia's class had considerable out-of-school experiences with Turkish people and culture. Students mentioned watching Turkish TV series; having friendships with students of Turkish origin in the school; members of their family travelling to Turkey; having significant relations with people on the northern Turkish-speaking side; and visiting the other side with parents rather frequently because of either commercial or social relations there. According to Thalia, the proximity of the area to a pedestrian checkpoint in the buffer zone, the lower prices of some goods in the north and the lack of a strong emotional involvement in the local conflict – along with the knowledge of the language – could have been reasons that explain the more frequent crossing of these families to the north, compared to Greek-Cypriot families. Nevertheless, despite these experiences with Turkishness outside school, during the first 6 weeks of fieldwork we hardly recorded any instances of students using Turkish in class or mentioning links to Turkish people and culture.

In what follows we explore the ways in which the ethno-nationalist ideology that organically connects 'a language' to a national collectivity informed the interactional choices of these students. Our analysis starts with an ethnographic description of instances of the suppression of Turkish-speakerness in school life; and then proceeds with a close look at some interactional data where Turkish use comes to the foreground of the lesson.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 Suppressing Turkish-speakerness in everyday school practices

Beginning with the case of Pontian students, teachers confirmed our observation that Turkish-speaking students refrained from speaking Turkish – especially in more formal contexts like the classroom, or in front of the researcher, Thalia added that Pontian students seem to carry from home 'a guilt mixed with fear' for being Turcophone, as they often feel the need to clarify that 'I speak the language but I'm not Turkish'. Similarly Nikos (Year 6 teacher) narrated an episode where his Pontian students refused to speak the language with Turkish people for fear of being characterised as 'Turks':

**Nikos:** Once some Turkish teachers came in the school, teachers came for a conference here and visited the school, and there were some Turks amongst them, so in class the Turks talked to the children, and then I told them 'now you should speak [Turkish] too, because their language is similar, you can communicate let's say'. Eh at

that point many students who I knew were Turcophone did not want even to come close to these Turkish teachers

**PC:** How would you interpret that?

**Nikos:** Look, it relates to- I mean in a formal school procedure I shouldn't be characterized in any way with this cursed word, that I am a Turk let's say. [...] Because as Pontians, they have this great depreciation for the Turkish nation, it's huge, very big, they [the Turks] are the enemy. And it's very telling that they say 'we don't speak Turkish sir, we speak Ottoman' which is what their parents say

In line with research discussed in section 3, this episode gives away students' heightened sense of the stigma associated with Turkish-speakerness, both within the Pontian narrative and within the local Cypriot history – as Nikos' students at several points had also displayed an awareness of the dominant Greek-Cypriot narrative of hostility towards Turkishness.

In the case of the Turkish-Bulgarian student, Emil, Thalia described him as 'feeling bad and uncomfortable' during classroom discussions about Muslims and Turks and mentioned that it took him several months to disclose that he also had a Turkish name:

**Thalia:** Like Emil explained that he has two names, [the other] is Mehmet, they have their Turkish name by which people call them and their school name, and I asked him directly 'should I call you Mehmet?' but he was unyielding in that, 'no' he told me, 'I don't want to, I want you to call me Emil', and apparently that's what happens in Bulgaria, when they go to school there, the Muslims don't want to stand out

Emil's heightened sense of the social stigma around his Turkish/Muslim identity was perhaps intensified by the presence of Petar, a Bulgarian student of Slav Orthodox origins with whom, according to Thalia, he had a somewhat tense relationship.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Emil's awareness of the stigma of Turkishness could be also associated with his family's relations with the Turkish-speaking northern side of the Cyprus divide. According to Thalia, before moving to the Greek Cypriot side, Emil's family had first migrated to the north, and members of the family were still residing there. This is likely to have involved significant, and rather positive relations with the other side, which – once again – Emil initially tried to conceal:

**Thalia:** by the way, Emil's grandmother and sister live in the occupied areas

**PC:** oh really?

**Thalia:** and Emil- today that he is absent from school, he is in the occupied areas for sure, e:::rm he goes there and stays for 2-3 days let's say, last year he was having these long absences becau::se- and when I was asking him, in the beginning he was embarrassed and he was telling me that he was sick, but later, when he felt more comfortable, he told me 'my grandmother and sister are on the other side and I go over there and stay with them'

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Thalia had narrated an incident when, during the previous year, when Emil hardly knew any Greek, Petar's mom had come to school to complain about Thalia asking Petar to translate things for Emil in Bulgarian.

Emil's initial conscious suppression of this information also gives away a sharp awareness of the potentially negative indexicalities of his involvement with the other side in the Greek-Cypriot context.<sup>9</sup>

Thalia's own classroom practices, however did not in any way seem to encourage the suppression of Turkish-speakerness. In line with the suggestions of the translanguaging literature (García 2009, Creese and Blackledge 2010) and despite the monolingual national policies, Thalia's pedagogies generally embraced her group's superdiversity and encouraged translanguaging to ensure understanding and maximise communication. One usual way of doing so was by inviting students to offer equivalents of Greek words in their native languages, which often resulted in hybrid constructions that combined linguistic features from different languages. This was established as a legitimate classroom practice, and students often volunteered such information even without being prompted:

*During a Greek class, students talk about their card collections and mention Spiderman*

**Valentin:** Miss in Russian it's *Celavek pauk*, *celavek* means man and *pauk* is spider

**Petar:** in Bulgarian it's *Spiderman*

**Yorgos:** in Turkish it's *Oncek adam*

In such instances, Turkish-speaking students responded positively to Thalia's call for translanguaging and contributed isolated Turkish lexical items alongside others, acknowledging their Turkish-speakerness in the context of the class's linguistic diversity. However, as our analysis in the next section demonstrates, things changed when students were put in the 'spotlight' and were asked to perform their Turkish-speakerness in contexts that involved Turkey and Turkish people.

## 5.2. Suppressing Turkish-speakerness during the peace education lessons

This section draws from the lessons Thalia designed during our peace education workshops, which involved teaching two short stories about positive Greek-Turkish relations. The interactional episodes discussed here come from two lessons focusing the short story 'Grandfather and granddaughter'. The main character is a bilingual grandfather – most probably from a Greek family of refugees from the western coast of Turkey – who finds a traditional Turkish slipper washed ashore, while strolling with his granddaughter along in by the seaside in Lesbos (Greek island very close to the Turkish coast). After putting the slipper back in the sea and instructing it to travel back to Turkey and 'send greetings' there, he makes up the slipper's story: a Turkish girl called Meltem lost it during a secret meeting with her lover, Ahmet. Discussing Turks in class within a context like this was quite unusual and students indicated their surprise with various remarks: e.g. 'it's all about the Turks!' or 'is this book<sup>10</sup> only about the Turks?'

During the lesson, discussion centered on the grandfather's good relations with Turkey and Turkish people. Thalia opened the discussion with a question about the grandfather's translanguaging practices between Greek and Turkish ('why does the text have many difficult words?'), which probably aimed to bring out his likely bilingualism. When Thalia asked specifically about the grandfather's use of Turkish words and expressions, some students replied that he might have been in Turkey or might have travelled there frequently and have

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<sup>9</sup> Other students also seemed to be aware of Emil's relations with the north, as Maria once mentioned in class that she had seen Emil in one of her visits to the other side.

<sup>10</sup> The two short stories were chosen from an anthology of literary texts not frequently used in the class.

friends, while others seemed to assume that the grandfather was actually friends with his story's characters. At several points, Thalia stressed the grandfather's positive orientations towards Turkey, which she described with words like 'love', 'nostalgia', 'friendship', and 'cooperation'. In this discussion, all students responded quite positively, and references to 'Turkey' emerged 28 times in classroom interaction.

However, when Thalia attempted to link her students' own Turkish linguistic resources with the Turkish characters in the story, this was met with hesitations and resistances. Specifically, following a student's suggestion that the protagonist should include in the slipper a written message for his friends in Turkey, Thalia addressed the Turkish-speaking students, asking them to say in "Meltem's language" what they would tell her if they met her. Emil was absent on the day, so all Turkish-speaking students in class were of Pontian origin:

*Extract 1*

**THALIA:** very nice/ what language did Meltem speak?  
2 **Maria:** Turkish  
3 **THALIA:** Turkish, does anybody know Meltem's language?  
4 **Students:** *((in chorus))* ye::s  
5 **Boy:** no::  
6 **THALIA:** nice/ what would you tell her in Turkish if you met her/  
7 who's going to tell us/ in Turkish  
8 **Yorgos:** miss I'm ashamed  
9 **THALIA:** ok someone who is not ashamed  
10 *((two girls giggle))*  
11 **THALIA:** come on Christos/ what would you tell her?/ sh::::: / I  
12 don't know Turkish myself  
13 *((Thalia instructs some students to sit properly, about 6'))*  
14 **THALIA:** we are listening/ loudly/ say a sentence  
15 **Christos:** miss I have to think  
16 **THALIA:** ok think/ the others who know Turkish should think too/  
17 because we can't say anything/ sh::::: *((Thalia waits for 3-4'))*  
18 come on, the bell will ring and we won't make it, I want  
19 a whole sentence for Meltem, not just a couple of words, more,  
20 Christos do you want to make a start?  
21 **Maria:** no miss (he's shy)  
22 **THALIA:** come on Christos darling, I'm listening to you  
23 **Christos:** miss I don't remember much Turkish  
24 **THALIA:** ah, who remembers?  
25 **Valentin:** miss ( )  
26 **THALIA:** ah do you know [Turkish] too?  
27 **Valentin:** no miss, I just understand some, I don't know  
28 **THALIA:** ah, come on hurry up, the bell will ring, come on Yorgos,  
29 we said so many things, say something to Meltem, tell her something  
30 about her shoe, something about Ahmet  
31 **Petar:** nice slipper  
32 **THALIA:** nice! do you know Turkish?  
33 **Petar:** *((loudly and a bit surprised))* no[:::  
34 **Boy:** [no  
35 **Valentin:** Emil miss  
36 **THALIA:** yes, Emil would tell us if he was here*((to Yorgos))*come on,  
37 say  
38 **Yorgos:** *yahşisan? yahşisan?* e::r *((translates))* 'are you ok'?  
39 *((the bell rings))*  
40 **THALIA:** *((to the class))* stay, stay *((to Yorgos))* go on  
41 **Yorgos:** e::h *nerdesen?* 'where are you'?  
42 **THALIA:** tell her also about her slipper  
43 **Yorgos:** e:::rm  
44 **THALIA:** sh::::: *((Christos raises his hand))* Christos should tell us  
45 **Christos:** *((says a Turkish word, inaudible))* miss it means did you  
46

47 find it?  
 48 **THALIA:** ((to Iacovos)) say something too, a tiny sentence, you don't  
 49 want to, ok, anyone else who wants to say?  
 50 **Valentin:** miss I only understand, I don't speak  
 51 **THALIA:** you don't speak, ok  
 ((students leave for breaktime))

In this excerpt, Thalia initiates a classroom task by associating her students' varieties of Turkish (Pontian Turkish and Bulgarian Turkish) with 'Meltem's language' – the language spoken in Turkey by Turkish citizens. This uniform representation of Turkish language and the request for a public performance of Turkish-speakerness in class is met with considerable reservation and inhibition by the Turkish students, which contrasts with their usual enthusiastic participation in classroom discussions. Thalia tries several times to entice her students to speak Turkish, but to little avail: Yorgos, usually an overenthusiastic classroom participant, opts out admitting that he finds the task emotionally challenging (line 8); Christos first defers his contribution (15)<sup>11</sup> and then also opts out by playing down his communicative adequacy (23), with Maria also interpreting Christos' reluctance in terms of emotional difficulties (21); Valentin (Russian origins) clarifies that he does not know enough to contribute (27); while Petar (Slav Bulgarian origins) is fast to rebut Thalia's assumption that his contribution indicates Turkish speakerness (33). After considerable negotiation, Yorgos finally overcomes his initial reservation and offers two sentences in Turkish (38, 41), with Christos joining in a few turns later (45). After 38 lines of negotiation, reluctance seems to have been somewhat mitigated and speaking Turkish is now established as 'being ok', although there are still some reservations (47-49). Since there were no signs of a problem in the relationship between students and teacher, nor signs that students were suffering imminent fatigue or were suddenly highly demotivated as learners, there are sound reasons to argue that the histories of ethnonational conflict and persecution discussed earlier combined with the local context of the intractable conflict in Cyprus can help us here explain students' reluctance and emotional trouble. By withdrawing from 'speaking Meltem's language' in class, students avoided displaying fluency in Turkish, fearing perhaps that this fluency could be mistaken as an emblem of Turkishness.

A similar incident took place in the beginning of the next lesson, in which Emil, the Turkish-Bulgarian student, was also present. After a short revision of the basic story line, the class discusses what students would do if they found the slipper themselves and, following the discussion in the previous lesson, Yorgos says that he would ask his father to help him write a message in Turkish so that Meltem could understand it. At this point Emil takes the floor to say that he knows how to speak and write in Turkish and Thalia gets excited, recalling her earlier difficulties in recruiting Turkish-speaking participants:

*Extract 2*

1 **Emil:** miss I know how to read and write in Turkish  
 2 **THALIA:** in Turkish? where were you yesterday when we needed  
 3 you/ we want you to tell us some Turkish later/ because  
 4 yesterday we were trying  
 5 **Yorgos:** miss I said some  
 6 **THALIA:** yourself yes/ some children said a bit/ not much/ today  
 7 you'll tell us more/ because you know how to write as well/  
 8 ((to Yorgos)) maybe Emil could write this message for you  
 9 **Emil:** miss to write 'sh' you write 's' with a dot under it  
 10 **THALIA:** ok, nice, you'll tell us in a couple of minutes, Savvas  
 11 ((Savvas says what he would do if he found the slipper, 14'))  
 12 [....]

<sup>11</sup> Numbers in parentheses indicate extract line numbers

13 **THALIA:** ok, Emil should tell us now/ if you found Meltem/ what  
 14 would you tell her in Turkish/ because she lost her slipper and  
 15 so on and so on  
 16 **Emil:** miss I would tell he::r  
 17 **Maria:** in Turkish!  
 18 **Yorgos:** not in Greek!  
 19 **THALIA:** let's see if those who know understand him/ ah Maria is  
 20 doing the reporter ((*Maria holds a pencil case in front of Emil*  
 21 *like a microphone*)) Emil tell us something  
 22 **Emil:** miss I would tell he::r  
 23 **THALIA:** ((*whispering to Emil*)) in Turkish now, not in Greek, say  
 24 **Emil:** (2') miss (6')  
 25 **THALIA:** whatever you were going to say in Greek/ say it in  
 26 Turkish/ yesterday we didn't have someone to help us  
 27 **Emil:** (5') miss  
 28 **THALIA:** say  
 29 **Emil:** (2')  
 30 **THALIA:** do you want to say it first in Greek and then in  
 31 Turkish?  
 32 **Maria:** miss he is ashamed  
 33 **THALIA:** ok, fine, first in Greek and then in Turkish  
 34 **Emil:** I would tell her I found the slipper in the sea a::nd I  
 35 took it (1') and I took it (.) to give it to you  
 36 **THALIA:** nice, now say it in Turkish/ now that you said it so  
 37 nicely  
 38 **Emil:** (4') ( -edin) (2') *buldum ben denizde*<sup>12</sup> (12') ((*Thalia waits for*  
 39 *Emil to go on but he doesn't*))

In this excerpt, Thalia constructs speaking Turkish as a legitimate classroom task and invites Emil to contribute. Emil seems initially comfortable mentioning his writing skills in Turkish (1) and offering a token of this knowledge (9). However, when it comes to performing his Turkish-speakerness, despite the repeated nudges by Thalia and students (17-23), Emil produces a series of long pauses and hesitations, which Maria again interprets as embarrassment (32). Maria's staging of this activity (with an imaginary microphone), which seems to raise the stakes by turning the task into a real performance (20-21) could also contribute to Emil's hesitations. Yet Emil's embarrassment seems to relate strongly to the use of Turkish – his L1 – as he only drops his silences and hesitations when Thalia invites him to use his much poorer Greek – his L2. Despite his fluency in Turkish, Emil appears much more comfortable speaking Greek and it is only after providing first a Greek utterance that he manages to articulate sentence in Turkish, which is left incomplete (Greek: "I found the slipper in the sea a::nd I took it (1') and I took it (.) to give it to you" /Turkish: 'I found your slipper in the sea').

Emil's hesitations in performing his Turkish speakerness here are reminiscent of the previous episode and seems to involve even greater emotional unease. When put on the spot, Emil seems caught between risking to be perceived as 'a Turk' by displaying his fluency in the language and (dis)pleasing Thalia, who they all like, by not speaking in Turkish as this task requests. The interaction after Emil's half-finished Turkish sentence provides further evidence as to why the ideological associations of performing Turkish-speakerness in front-stage classroom interaction were so emotionally troublesome for these students:

### Extract 3

40 **THALIA:** ((*to the class*)) did you understand?  
 41 **Christos:** yes miss I understood  
 42 **Maria:** miss I don't understand because he speaks differently

<sup>12</sup> English translation: I found your (slipper) in the sea



link between students' observed reluctance and the nationalist ideology of language dominant in the three ethno-nationalist conflicts, where Turkish has been historically associated with the 'enemies' or the 'others'. Conflicts promote homogenizing discourses in terms of both language and collective identity, and it is very likely that students' socialization within their communities' histories of conflict as well as within the local conflict narrative had motivated their efforts not to be identified with the 'wrong' group. As we have discussed earlier, in Cyprus similar troubles have also been reported in studies of Pontian students' identities (Theodorou 2011) and of Turkish language learners (Charalambous 2012, Charalambous, et al. forthcoming-b).

The study of a context of conflict, then, could invite a rethinking of naive assumptions of fluidity and hybridity in superdiverse settings, by drawing attention to the larger scale ideological processes that tend to structure and control social life. Rampton et al. (2015) observe that recent celebrations of superdiversity in terms of 'heteroglossic translanguaging and creativity in public culture' need to be considered against a background of continuing stratification, inequalities and exclusion and of ideological processes involving 'control, normativity and subjectification'. In a similar vein, elsewhere we have argued that when superdiversity meets nationalist conflicts, the renegotiation of linguistic and ethnic boundaries becomes more difficult, as discourses of conflict render these boundaries less fluid (Charalambous, et al. forthcoming-a). For these reasons, research in superdiversity and translanguaging should not overlook impact of larger scale ideologies like nationalism, which has shaped modernity and laid the foundations for the political world order of nation-states that we still inhabit.

It is therefore important to see superdiversity as producing a palimpsest of different ideological orientations that form an important layer of analysis in the sociolinguistic study of contemporary interactional practices. In the case in point here, the intersection of superdiversity and conflict seems to give rise to a complex dynamics of fluidity and fixity between two rather opposing language ideologies: on the one hand, the nationalist assumption that equates 'speaking Turkish' with 'being Turkish' imposed by the histories of ethno-national conflict, which becomes predominant in the formal context of the classroom; and on the other hand a more fluid heteroglossic ideology that informs both Thalia's pedagogies and the more informal domains of students' lives in spaces like home and leisure where Turkish-speakerness does not seem to involve the same undesired associations – e.g. when communicating with family, watching Turkish TV or visiting the north side. As Canagarajah (2011: 415) points out in his own study, the students are also in a process of 'identify[ing] favourable ecologies for translanguaging' and of constantly 'negotiat[ing] the competing orientations to language' that exist within a given context. What our study shows is that fixity discourses can create *unfavourable* ecologies for hybrid linguistic practices, and these often produce suppression and silences. In this sense, it is as important to analyse pauses, half-uttered sentences and inarticulateness (cf. Rampton and Charalambous 2013, Spyrou 2015) as it is to attend to articulate and creative polylingual performances .

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