

SPECIAL SECTION

Translanguaging decoloniality in a divided island as post-colonial pedagogic praxis: Cyprus and cultural subversions

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Abstract

As a political and pedagogic project, decolonisation involves the deconstruction of dominant Eurocentric forms of knowledge production, and the pluralisation of the knowledge field. But, in the case of a divided Cyprus, such practices and structures take on different meanings, within and beyond different contexts. In this article we link feminisms of resistance to curricular practices as a decolonial pathway to erasure of epistemic and gendered violence. If we are to suggest a collective project of decolonisation of higher education in Cyprus, we initially need to deconstruct conceptual frameworks of social justice through decolonising pedagogic practices. We consider ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ as one such avenue to pedagogic praxis through enabling cultural subversions, storytelling in the curriculum, and re-framing/re-telling narratives of the nation.

KEYWORDS

Affect, Cultural subversions, Cyprus, Pedagogic praxis, Social justice, Translanguaging decoloniality

1 | INTRODUCTION: EPISTEMIC VIOLENCES AND ISLAND DIVISIONS

Why has the history of a divided Cyprus, within curricula, not been positioned around the history of colonialism and genocidal violence? Wouldn't such an approach provide a holistic understanding of the island in shaping educational provisions that negate the affective and fractured learner identities of contemporary generations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots? How do we challenge ethnonationalist disseminations of self-consciousness in pedagogic settings? How do we erase damaged and negative cultural legacies of academic literatures, and instead, advocate for a paradigmatic shift through reframed units of conceptually decolonial and post-colonial curricula changes and practices?

Connected histories of partitions, genocidal violence and fractured identities have been fuelled by colonialisms and ethno-nationalisms with legacies of generational trauma shaping current societal discourse. At the same time, in bridging historical and societal discourses with learning practices of critical pedagogies, there are many moments of reckoning and reflecting deeply on our pasts. Such reflexive processes can be applied to inform a more inclusive present inside the classroom for social justice-driven educational and ethical citizenship to emerge (Christou & Michail, 2021). These practices call for the ‘affective habitus’ (Christou & Janta, 2019) of the decolonial eduscape to be contextualised, articulated and navigated by both teachers and learners. In this article we build on our conceptualisation of ‘new geographies of empowerment’ (Karayianni & Christou, 2020) to link feminisms of resistance to curricular practices as a decolonial

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pathway to erasure of epistemic and gendered violence. We consider ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ as one such avenue to pedagogic praxis through enabling cultural subversions, storytelling in the curriculum, and the re-telling or re-framing of narratives of the nation.

We briefly contextualise our conceptualisation of ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ here, with a more detailed explanation provided in the following subsections. We apply this core term in bridging its linguistic origin (translanguaging) with its metaphorical and transformative potential of emancipatory pedagogies of liberation and action (decoloniality). Thus, we link justice eduscapas with societal activism towards equity in education and erasure of ethno-national divisions.

During half a century of a divided island of Cyprus, partition has been well embedded in all aspects of citizens’ life, shaping an antagonistic consciousness between the Cypriots of the Greek (GC) and Turkish Cypriot (TC) communities. Living in absolute separation until 2003—and with very limited bicomunal contact—the two communities have developed completely isolated and independent to each other’s educational systems. In their curricula the history of division has been manifested by the imposed languages of Standard Greek (SG) and Standard Turkish (ST) as the official languages of belonging in the respective imagined nations. Continuing in a sense the colonial practice of ‘divide and rule’, the curricular practices in the GC community highlight elements of division and diminish any opportunities for pluralism and collectiveness among all Cypriots.

Language policy decisions have played a crucial role in shaping inclusive or exclusive identities by prioritising certain languages over others, thereby influencing power dynamics and social participation (Karayianni & Christou, 2024). The political construction of Cypriot-Greek and Cypriot-Turkish as dialects of SG and ST, respectively, has significant implications. Recognising only SG and ST as official languages can marginalise individuals who are not proficient in these standard forms, excluding them from positions of authority and creating tensions between proficient and non-proficient speakers (Karyolemou, 2003).

During the 1986 debates on the language of instruction in higher education, both leftists and rightists supported the inclusion of Greek and Turkish, reflecting an acknowledgment of the political importance of these languages, while the centrist party advocated for a Greek-only policy. In 1989, the leftist party endorsed the inclusion of English as an official language at the University of Cyprus, a stance not shared by other parties (ibid.). These examples illustrate how political ideologies shape language policy and reflect broader societal issues within the context of the Cyprus conflict. They also demonstrate the fluidity of political discourses in Cyprus’s turbulent history, with ideologies evolving over time.

The Cypriot dialect, *Kypriaka*, is a crucial component of the Cypriot identity since it is the linguistic code (used in face-to-face/oral interaction) on which the Cypriots heavily relied until the nineteenth century. Although print media was introduced in the island as early as 1878 (with the emergence of the first Cypriot news article *KYΠΡΟΣ*—*CYPRUS*), until the end of the nineteenth century the dominant mode of communication for the public was still face-to-face interaction. Until the middle of the twentieth century, less than half of the population could be considered literate, thus writing was a form of communication largely confined to power, that is, the state or the church. The Cypriot dialect has two linguistic variations, the *Cypriot-Greek* (CG) used mainly by the GC community and the *Cypriot-Turkish* (CT) used almost exclusively by the TC community. The two variations of *Kypriaka* share largely a common vocabulary (Tsiplakou, 2006, p. 337) despite the fact that each community also had its own distinct language, that is, Standard Greek (SG) and Standard Turkish (ST). Both linguistic variations used in the two Cypriot communities stand in a diglossic relationship with the official languages of the island, Greek and Turkish (Hadjoannou & Tsiplakou, 2016).

By underestimating the linguistic variations of the Cypriot dialect (*Kypriaka*) that the people of the two communities use in their everyday lives as ‘unofficial dialects’, it is like the respective leaderships in the two communities subtract agency from citizens that could lead to any kind of subversion of the master narratives. The respective Standard Greek and Turkish languages have been imposed as the official languages in the Cypriot public sphere through the educational curricula via school-books and also in how the news is circulated in print (and electronic means) via newspapers (Karayianni, 2011), establishing these languages in the people’s perception as ‘tool[s] of virtue’ that could define one’s social class and connect one with Greece (and Turkey) (Sciriha, 1995).

In contrast, oral culture, which was dominated by the Cypriot dialect, has been excluded and in some cases even demonised in the print culture developed by the Greek Cypriot community in order to create a desire of belongingness to the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2006) of the modern Greek state. Similarly, one of the objectives of the first TC newspapers in Cyprus, *Zaman*, was to ‘make sure that the Turkish language survives on the island of Cyprus’ (Azgin, 1998, p. 642; García et al. 2014). Karyolemou’s (1994) research on the Greek Cypriot press illustrates this demonisation since it identifies that authors of serials and letters in newspapers blame the Cypriot dialect for the ‘linguistic weaknesses’ of the Cypriots and their inability to use the Greek language ‘properly’ (ibid.). The official languages SG and ST dominate the press in both communities until today (August 2024). The varieties of the Cypriot dialect come to the surface occasionally to add

humorous commentaries to the article, and the reader will be signified about the use of spoken language with quotation marks (Hadjioannou & Tsiplakou, 2016, p. 517). In the TC community, the newspaper *Avrupa* (renamed as *Afrika* for a short period of time in 2001)—a newspaper expressing the oppositional discourse—often uses CT as its written language. The newspaper, as its owner Sener Levent writes, ‘took it on itself to proclaim loud and clear what its rivals had avoided: that our emperor was naked’ (Levent, 2002, p. 162), meaning that it functioned as an independent newspaper raising a voice that was opposed to the political regime in the northern part of the island. *Avrupa* maintained its high readership despite the attacks it received by the TC administration and extremists. The newspaper *Avrupa*, however, also constitutes a good example to clarify that translanguaging does not always equate to decoloniality, nor does decoloniality inherently imply anti-racism. While the newspaper utilises critical translanguaging to counter nationalistic discourses, its previous name, *Afrika*, was contested by anti-racist activists. The editor’s rationale for the name, implying Cyprus’s ‘backwardness’ and employing racist visual and linguistic tropes, highlights that decolonial efforts can still perpetuate racism. It is crucial, therefore, to critically examine and differentiate the entangled but distinct dimensions of translanguaging, decoloniality and anti-racism.

Although the constitution of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) recognises Turkish as an official language of Cyprus, the development of two separate educational systems for the two communities led to the exclusion of the language of the other from the curricula. Specifically, during the first years of the British rule in Cyprus the colonial administration supported the already separated educational systems established on the island by adopting a laissez-faire attitude allowing the two communities to take decisions over their language and curricula policies. After 1931, the colonial administration changed its policy since realising that the school curricula enhanced Greek and Turkish nationalism, which as a result, turned the Cypriots against the colonial rule and instead towards other ideas such as that of *enosis*; that is, the union with Greece (mostly desired by the GCs). The colonial government then enacted a policy of ‘planned cultural and educational lending’ whose major thrust was to orient Greek and Turkish Cypriots away from their perceived ethnic centres and towards ‘a higher conception of their responsibilities as Cypriots and of the position of Cyprus as part of the British Empire’ (Cyprus Governor, Sir H. Richmond Palmer, as quoted in Persianis, 1996, p. 56). However, unlike other instances of British colonial rule, this shift in the colonial power’s attitude did not involve the anglicisation of Cyprus, either in practice or policy (Hadjioannou & Tsiplakou, 2016, p. 524). The bicomunal conflict which followed and the de facto separation of the two communities in 1974 had in a sense sealed the exclusion of the language of the other from the two Cypriot education systems.

The only institution in the RoC that, after a long ideological debate in the parliament, adopted Turkish too as an official language is the University of Cyprus (Hadjioannou & Tsiplakou, 2016, p. 510). However, in reality, Turkish is not used as a language of teaching in any¹ of the university’s programmes even though a small number of TCs study at the university after the opening of the crossing points in 2003.

It is evident that the colonial legacy of controlling Cypriot agency persists today, involving resistance that subverts master narratives of ethno-nationalist superiority. Such acts can occur both indirectly and directly, using moderate and extreme methods. For instance, this ranges from disallowing the use of *Kypriaka* in early elementary classrooms and labelling it as improper (Ioannidou, 2009), to issuing direct official directives for teachers to tear out a page about Atatürk (entitled ‘Turkey’s greatest hero’) from Oxford Press English language textbooks before distributing them to fifth-grade students (Cyprus Mail, 2021; Kathimerini, 2021; Kızılyürek, 2021; Politis News, 2021). As a priority area to exemplify pedagogical praxis, we propose in this article a list of suggested ways to apply ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ as a form of cultural subversion.

That is why we consider that the fixed monolingual policy applied to the Cypriot public schools also has a political dimension that causes social injustice and cannot be overlooked. The Cypriot society is, however, changing, and mobilisations like the $\Omega\zeta \Delta\alpha\mu\epsilon^2$ are being initiated by the youth of both communities, demanding social justice through the pluralism of recognising the diversity of the Cypriot linguistic versions—manifested by the use of *Kypriaka* as their use of official means of communication—while calling for a collective action that reunifies the island. Such mobilisations, according to Papadakis (2021):

express a utopia, i.e. the right to life, because normality is death itself. Whether it is the death of Democracy, or the death of the new generation that has been condemned to the wages of 800 euros, or the death of immigrant women in Cyprus and immigrants in the seas.

In this article we wish to revisit our previous self-reflective arguments on whether ‘in an age of rising nationalism in Cyprus the very use of *Kypriaka* to communicate bicommunally (or even the act of bicomunal communication itself) [is] a form of de facto resistance?’ (Karayianni, 2011, p. 43). We build on this core question to further develop an

explorative argument which sees ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ as the transformative tool in the processes of enacting a Cypriot pedagogical praxis that will subvert the culture of division, and will instead prepare all Cypriots for living and engaging inclusively with each other in a reunified and pluralised public sphere.

To clarify the basis of our definition of our key concept which is ‘translanguaging decoloniality’, we envisage a bottom-up reflexive awareness to learning (on decolonial justice and bicomunal pedagogies) when the classroom becomes an engaged space for linguistic repertoires and socially constructed stories of self/other to emerge in dialogue with each other. In other words, the classroom as a social laboratory for political possibilities can transform curricula and students with intentional inclusivity away from dominant majority discourses and open to polyglossic histories and polyvocal socio-cultural scripts of communities sharing island geographies of nations in division. In the limited work that has linked translanguaging to feminist theories (i.e., Robinson, 2019), we also add with this article the depth of combining critical theories for social justice with engaging translanguaging education as a tool to actualise learning through and for equity and justice. Adapting feminisms of decolonial translanguaging gives educators the task to question knowledge production through diversities and beyond mental and physical borders (Karayianni & Christou, 2024). The feminist lens here questions and challenges the patriarchal structures in divided societies that reproduce exclusions through institutional and social practices that privilege lives lived and controlled by patriarchal supremacy. The feminist lens here adds to the critique of the symbolic power of language as a tool of oppression and control, and highlights at the same time its transformative potential when language becomes a tool of liberation and empowerment. Deep historical divisions and structures require women to claim space, place and dignity as central to processes that promote equity and equality. For us as researchers this means confronting the ethnonationalist patriarchies that are embedded in language, inclusive of flipping around the hegemonic power and dominance of the English language in the case of decolonising Cyprus, a point we revisit in the conclusion. That is, instead of making the assumption that English language is a sole tool for domination, there is the prospect of looking at shifting its influence from hegemon to cross-cultural communicative outlet, from cultural superior signifier to an outlet for intersectional critique of power and a platform for seeking inclusive justice.

The article advances a normative argument for translanguaging decoloniality in the context of the politics of Cyprus. Subsequently, we develop in two different sections how narrations of the nation construct what we term ‘pedagogies of discomfort’ and juxtapose with an approach that seeks to embed a ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ operationalisation that meaningfully combines affective praxis. Finally, we conclude by re-visiting our core argument in this article aligned to interrogating our previous findings, while making suggestions as to how we can override ongoing curricular colonialisms.

2 | METHODOLOGICAL REFLEXIVITIES: ‘TALKING’ TEXTUAL ANALYSIS IN ‘RE-WRITING’ POSITIONALITIES

From the perspective of a feminist praxis, we have embarked on our joint collaboration within a context of critical interactions with established discourses that seek to amplify dialogue by provocations, critiques and the unsettling of our sense of self in relation to others. We have also focused on how these interactions have a sensorial and gendered embodied and subjective impact in how we further address and deconstruct our own sense of being in the social world. Engaging with a phenomenologically feminist analysis allows us to confront the social and political questions we pose, while we also reflexively become more aware of our own positionality.

We have also been deeply reflexively aware of the power dynamics between us which we have acknowledged as instrumentally existing during a prior successful doctoral supervisor (Anastasia Christou/AC) supervisee (Christiana Karayianni/CK) relationship, while currently we perceive each other as colleagues jointly co-authoring, co-creating and co-constructing academic activisms. In helping to build a post-doctoral publication profile and offering authoring capacity opportunities while mentoring, AC has encouraged CK to be first author who in turn had to be persuaded to accept. This is the first of several occasions when AC has been persuaded by CK to become leading author, and this has added additional enriching layers of reflexive opportunities for how we co-developed this article.

So, firstly, we wish to situate our own positionality in how we have embarked on working collaboratively on this article. We see this aspect as one element of ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ albeit in the metaphorical sense which we will discuss in re-visiting our definition of the concept in the next section. For now, we reflect on our own journeys.

AC is a long-term committed academic activist, trade unionist, feminist, anti-fascist and anti-racist. As an interdisciplinary critical scholar, both her research and poetry transcend geographies and cultures in meaningfully seeking social justice. As a lifelong anti-fascist, anti-racist, union negotiator-representative, peace and anti-poverty campaigner,

struggles for equality, social and environmental justice are embedded in her teaching, research, writing and volunteering portfolios.

AC self-identifies as a working-class migrant woman and acknowledges that her background will also bring connections to the Greek diaspora and her Hellenic ancestral heritage. At the same time, she acknowledges being on the margins of an insider-outsider of Cypriot society and life. Her past fieldwork in Cyprus, collection of life stories and ongoing local connections give her marginal glimpses to subjectivities and aspects of primarily Greek-Cypriot life, which highlight a mostly outsider current status. AC is reflective of how discussing histories of colonialism, genocidal violence and wider inequalities can be sensitive and triggering. In our collaborative work we strive to practice the principles and values of compassion and respect for each other's experiences and life histories, and to be appreciative of each other and what each of us brings to the research and writing process. We take time to listen and to process, so we can respond to each other, by enabling feelings of un/belonging and while prioritising care. We also try to take care of each other by taking care of ourselves, and being mindful of our spaces, and how these might be shaping our work and emotions. Above all, we centre a dialogic approach to our interactions, and we seek this textual talking as a stage in co-writing this article, but also as a re-writing of our positionalities in delving into decolonial introspections.

CK has an interdisciplinary educational background that combines media and cultural studies together with art and defines her approach as a scholar. She joined academia due to her strong interest in producing research that would contribute to social change. Born in Cyprus, CK grew up in a city of the southern coast of the island, away from the division line, in the 1990s; however, this decade was characterised by nationalism that was embedded in all levels and aspects of the Cypriot society. Her middle-class family, part of the Greek Cypriot community, was never politicised, so CK was neither exposed nor 'protected' by the nationalistic discourses that dominated the public sphere of the Republic of Cyprus. Thus, CK's notion of national identity and its link to language when she was growing up was rather uncertain. An identity that was usually defined as an imaginary belonging to the great nation responsible for inventing culture to the world, *Hellenism*, and always under the threat of the 'barbaric Other', the *Turks*. Meanwhile, any sign of cultural hybridity that characterised the Cypriot being was largely suppressed, ridiculed or undermined. Acknowledging this uncertainty and social injustice, CK developed a critical stance towards the suppressing forces in the Cypriot society that impose and construct meanings according to their political, financial and personal interests. A suppression that consequently deepens the gap between the two communities instead of diminishing it, and that is why CK is committed to research that exposes social injustice and amplifies the voices of resistance.

CK views translanguaging as a transformative educational method that aligns with her commitment to social justice. Being herself an educator for almost two decades, CK has seen involvement of multiple languages fluidly within a single lesson, challenging the monolithic narratives of language and identity that historically suppress cultural hybridity in Cyprus. She believes that embracing translanguaging in education is a way to promote and validate the linguistic diversity of Cypriots, developing an education environment where multiple identities can grow and coexist. An environment where learning is enhanced and so is the resistance against the nationalistic forces. Thus, CK advocates for translanguaging as an educational practice that bridges divides, celebrates linguistic diversity, and empowers students of all Cypriot communities to challenge and transcend the imposed boundaries of their national identities.

We situate our reflective stance in important discussions of care within the feminist stance of how we need to consider individuals and communities receiving and providing care as a mark of survival challenging power. These discourses connect with 'radical care', an underexplored praxis that links radical politics with radical hope in times of precarity (Aswad, 2024; Hobart & Kneese, 2020). For us, autoethnography is a feminist narrative form of writing in placing the self/other in a matrix of political and cultural experiences refracted through the perennial epistemological question of 'how do we know what we know'? We see links between the cultural and the political as the means whereupon our social positioning and our experiences along with constraints we have encountered becomes a textual engagement with what we write when we are grappling with these issues.

As reflexive researchers, we underscore the necessity to be constantly aware, and explicitly in recognition of our social and political backgrounds that might shape our ideological assumptions. In order to embrace diverse stories, we must initiate awareness of our own stories in seeking to understand the stories of others. These immersive acts into storytelling also entail elements of vulnerability and affective discomfort. However, they can also become prods of accountability when we authentically share our dialogical storytelling in re-writing our positionality, and by extension, we are then 're-storying' (Carter et al., 2014; Stavrou et al., 2019) the emotional baggage that this process entails. As a result of the above, we are also reflexively aware of the shortcomings and inherent limitations of our article in that we are not Turkish speakers, and as this project unfolded shortly before the pandemic, this context along with other obstacles has limited our opportunities to conduct fieldwork with academics, students and researchers at universities, public and private,

throughout the island. So, we had to re-shape our initial project idea into mostly a desktop study, but with one of us (CK) residing in Cyprus and collaborating transnationally.

Throughout the article, emphasis is placed on viewing our collaborative academic writing as a reflexive, critical process that intentionally exposes our stance as researchers and this is linked to the concept of 'voice' and its relevance to educational and social issues. Our personal journey into 'deconstructing' our positionality as we are co-writing this article also shifts our self-awareness to highlighting the influence of positionality on the textual representation of our methodological approach and our discussions as an ethical concern. This forms part of an overall joint effort to substantiate the case for 'de-constructing' positionality in our academic writing as a reflexive journey into 'voice', not just for ourselves but above all for others.

3 | PEDAGOGIES OF DISCOMFORT: NARRATIVES OF THE NATION

Here, we find it an important juncture to clarify our definitional approach to our key concept, that of 'translanguaging decoloniality'. We see the combination of situational storytelling transforming curricula consciously as intentional inclusiveness to liberation learning in the form of political praxis. This does not necessitate cultural subversion as a top-down re-writing of learning content, but as a bottom-up reflexively enhanced awareness of the political possibilities of pedagogical praxis as decolonial awareness against the dysfunctional limitations to othering. We thus ground 'translanguaging decoloniality' as a twofold approach to emancipatory education. First, it embraces the naming and use of languages in the classroom as a dialogically driven social construction that expands linguistic repertoires away from majority dominance (Turner & Lin, 2020), fostering an inclusive celebration of polyglossic learning. Second, it situates the shaping of curricula at its core, employing a pedagogical strategy that immerses students in the decolonial histories of a divided island through iterative processes that include embedded socio-cultural scripts from all communities. While deepening learning through this suggested model might be seen as contentious, we agree that the conceptualisation of translanguaging is also ideological (Lewis et al., 2012) and hence its contextualisation is also political. Our concept of 'translanguaging decoloniality' finds enriching depth through work that has already interrogated and problematised how (African) multilingualism challenges mainstream conceptions (transplanted from the Global North to the Global South) and enduring colonial matrices of power hidden in discursive communications. This is an ongoing conversation on how to decolonise multilingualism in settings where the 'recentering' of power is important. Here, we are also in agreement with Ndhlovu and Makalela (2021, p. 84) that a universal conceptualisation of language does not exist and hence language concepts from a plethora of (African) epistemological and ontological positionings can become praxis for educational contexts as learning pathways. Indeed, they can become alternative pathways to co-create new frameworks for the complexities of multilingual and decolonial encounters in the classroom (de Los Ríos & Seltzer, 2017; Makalela, 2016; Ndhlovu, 2018; Reilly et al., 2022). In the next section we articulate how such action can become applicable to achieving the transformative potential we see it contributing to the classroom.

The prevailing nationalist ideologies active and historically prevalent in both Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities have also been at times accompanied by the alternate concept of 'Cypriocentrism' (Avraamidou, 2018; Tekerek, 2021). Ethnonationalist tendencies on both sides have been seen as key obstacles to strengthening a bi-communal sense of collaboration in the form of 'Cypriotism', where a sense of Cypriot consciousness emerges as a bridging device enabling a peaceful co-existence. Ethnonationalism has been historically considered an obstacle to bi-communal cooperation, whereas 'Cypriotism' or Cypriot consciousness can potentially be seen as a driving force for peaceful coexistence (Avraamidou, 2018, p. 441). 'Cypriotness, as a "Cypriot consciousness" initially and later as diffused forms of cypriotcentricism appeared as the process of institutionalisation of independence' (Panayiotou et al., 2022, p. 61). That is, because ethnic nationalism as socio-political ideology culturally shaped on each side offers a rigid lens that gives prominence to the conflict and division of Cyprus, where the island has distinct and separate communities with pronounced exclusionary belongingness. On the other hand, a civic sense of belonging by centring Cypriotism offers a potential to re-imagining communities as independent and emancipated from British colonialism and outside of partition confines. We envisage the potential of educational transformation along the lines of 'translanguaging decoloniality' as an opportunity to construct the foundations for a civic consciousness of bi-communal inclusivity and respect with an awareness of a shared history of decolonial futurity.

There is a paradox in the representation of the Cypriot cultural hybridity in the colonial context in which, to paraphrase Gregoriou (2004, p. 250), Cyprus appears as both an object of desire and admiration for the mixture of heritage in the monumental culture, but also as an object of aversion for its people for lacking a racial origin of their own. Building

upon Dixon's arguments on the 'non-race Cypriots', Gregoriou contends that the anti-colonial educational discourse actually reinforced this belief through its obsession with the purity of the 'Hellenic authenticity' and points alternatively towards a postcolonial education instead that will expose the misreading of cultural hybridity as an authenticity risk (ibid., p. 251).

In the next section, we cover the key aspects of how we envisage 'translanguaging decoloniality' through affect and praxis.

4 | TRANSLANGUAGING DECOLONIALITY: AFFECT AND PRACTICE

In resisting historical positionings of coloniality and ongoing bordering with cultural impacts of processes of transculturation, a pathway through pedagogies of social justice while enacting translanguaging as a transformative practice, is what we advocate for in this article. Translanguaging as pedagogic practice holds a number of promises when defined 'as an act of bilingual performance, as well as, a bilingual pedagogy of bilingual teaching and bilingual learning' (García & Leiva, 2014, p.199) and 'as a political act for transformation in education ... linguistic pluralism for emancipation at school level (with possibilities for policy level changes at local or national levels) and unifying endeavours for collective action towards equality and human rights at a (trans)national level' (Smith et al., 2020, p.98).

The politics of history, education and fear are re-inscribed in how the idea of a cultural self emerges in a divided Cyprus, shaped by the interplay of 'roots' and 'otherness'. As Gregoriou (2004) argues, such fascinations and derisions for otherness hold a marked tainting of a double colonial legacy, namely that of its colonial othering as a hybrid nation and its resistance to such colonial usurpations of educational control. Taking the Greek Cypriot anti-colonialist education politics as a case in point, Gregoriou focuses on the processes of transculturation of local education idioms during colonial times and finds partial collaboration, appropriate to Empire and that of ideological simulation of the Hellenic diaspora. While Gregoriou sees such an educational hybridity as a task for postcolonial education, we find a point of linguistic agency in interjecting translanguaging as a potential project of decolonial critical pedagogies.

In moving away from prescribed narratives of the nation, especially when we interrogate whose nation we are speaking about, it is by enabling the cultural subversions that will emerge when storytelling of multiple and varied stories is placed as a destabilising tool in the curriculum and especially 'the canon' of particular disciplines. Giving voice to students themselves to write and re-write their stories, encouraging opportunities for bi-communal teaching and learning, developing bi-communal writing retreats that enable interactivity, dialogue, debate, are all ideas that can foster translanguaging pedagogies and would be possible to implement if there is a joint endeavour to do so by both communities. The latter is one particular aspect of how the opportunities for social interaction offer multimodal and multisensory experiences for translanguaging spaces to bridge translanguaging instincts, as Li Wei (2018, p. 9) categorises 'the artificial and ideological divides between the so-called sociocultural and the cognitive approaches to Translanguaging practices'. Indeed, Wei concludes by highlighting the added values of translanguaging as *transcending* and engaging in multiple meaning-making processes and subjectivities; as *transformative* for individuals; as having *transdisciplinary* value for conceptualising and working across the divides of disciplines.

At the same time, above and beyond the pedagogic innovations and the sociological imagination that translanguaging practices have triggered over the past decade, an equal measure of critical scepticism exists and it is advancing limitations (Brooks, 2022) as to its transformative potential. Hence, we highlight here concrete examples of how the transformative potential of 'translanguaging decoloniality' might happen:

- When the 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 2000) can intersect productively in the classroom with the 'decolonial imagination' (Savransky, 2017) then students transform 'objects of study' to processes of becoming through interacting with the world in making meaning of their sense of 'being' through 'belonging' in the world.
- When we expand our linguistic repertoires to embrace semiotically different settings, diverse traditions and plural views by invoking criticality and enhancing creativity, then we move away from bounded entities, and by disrupting rigidities we create new subjectivities (García & Li, 2014).
- Translanguaging exposures are those that break bubbles and silos that tend to exclude many students, and by extension, orient pedagogies towards social justice and racio-linguistic equity (Brooks, 2022).
- Translanguaging practices in the classroom, combined with decolonial ethics, can offer opportunities for students to make reflections on human rights education to promote peace pedagogies that dismantle border thinking, and instead expand the pluriversality of humanity as praxis (Zembylas, 2017).

In these four broad areas of exemplification where we see translanguaging opportunities in the classroom as transformative ones, we see story(re)telling as an emerging method for co-production and bicomunal coming togetherness in the classroom. The pedagogic desire for communities in a *collaborative learning approach* is also a political one. This kind of bicomunal learning mode is a truly grassroots educational journey. The re/telling of stories in understanding the self and other can stand as an empowering method, strategy and tool to promote engaging in dialogue while developing educational capacities, but also in celebration of the pluriversality of lived experiences, changing lifeworlds and diverse (individual and collective memory) stories. It can become a tool for preserving and promoting 'oral wisdom' (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013) that can become practical wisdom (phronesis) and thoughtful, practical doing (praxis) as elements of learning and knowledge (Kemmis, 2012) and dispositions that Aristotle described as guiding and informing ethical lives.

Translanguaging is a common practice in the educational Cypriot context as students are in a way forced from day one in their schoolyears into the bi-dialectical system; that is, a parallel switch between the use of their variation (Cypriot Greek or Cypriot Turkish) of the Cypriot dialect and of the official languages Standard Greek and Standard Turkish in the classroom. However, translanguaging in the Cypriot lower education context is usually not associated with the promotion of pluriversality of humanity as praxis (Zembylas, 2017) as its potential suggests. It is instead practised more as a need—an unavoidable and in many cases unwanted praxis—rather than as a method of achieving raciolinguistic equity as the literature suggests (Brooks, 2022). The use of the CG variation of the Cypriot dialect, for example in the classroom, is not encouraged as it is considered inappropriate (Ioannidou, 2009); the students are instead instructed to use SG. Nevertheless, CG surfaces very often in the context of the classroom not only because it is the oral linguistic code of the students, but also because even the teacher often slips and uses it in their teaching in order to elaborate meaning (ibid.). We suggest that this restrictive attitude towards the use of the variations of the Cypriot dialect within the school context that characterises lower education in Cyprus is not only unhelpful to the teaching and learning practice, but it also prevents plural views, and it leaves instead the process of constructing meaning stuck to bounded entities that lack critical and creative thinking.

An exemption in the way translanguaging operates in the Cypriot lower education context is framed in the case of the schools that belong in Educational Priority Zones. These schools are located in socially and economically deprived areas and they take special measures to support students, for instance, extra classes, smaller numbers of students in the classroom, and so forth. Most of the students in these schools have a migrant background and as a result there are children with different native languages in the same classroom. In one of these schools, Ayios Antonios Elementary School in Limassol for example, there are many students originating from the Roma community of Cyprus. This resulted when a small number of people from the Roma community—who consider themselves TCs—crossed the checkpoints in the year 2000 to the RoC controlled area in order to live in a place where they claimed there was less discrimination and more economic opportunities for them (Constantinou, 2007, p. 263). In an interview conducted in 2008, the headmaster of the school stated that apart from providing supportive language classes to the Turkish-speaking students, there have not been any additional instructions given by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. According to the headmaster though, the teachers have decided to take their own initiatives that would allow them to move beyond assimilating the language of the other as a communicative tool. They instead tried to involve the students in projects that embraced the semiotically different settings and diverse traditions, like creating a bilingual music CD, a book for Cypriot cuisine that included recipes from both communities, or even by changing the school's Christmas show into a New Year's show in order to remove the religious element and to have children participating using their own languages.

Translanguaging in praxis is also evident in higher education as it is part of the broader concept of freedom of speech that defines academic freedom and opposes any kind of censorship even in the mildest form of assigning any linguistic code as an improper language that characterises higher education in Cyprus. Apart from an unofficial, nevertheless existing, openness and tolerance towards the use of the CG within the higher education environment, translanguaging takes place in universities on other occasions too. For example, due to the fact that many programmes, especially in private universities, are taught in English. In this case, both the tutor and the students will switch from English to the CG or SG in order to elaborate meaning. Another case of translanguaging is when international students join programmes taught in Greek as part of the Erasmus exchange programme. In these cases, again, the students and the tutor will switch between CG or SG and English in order for the course to be accessible to the international students too. The most interesting case though is that of the public University of Cyprus which includes a number of TC students. The university's official languages are Greek and Turkish, but due to the unresolved 'Cyprus problem' and the 'withdrawal' of the TCs from the RoC, with the exception of the programmes of Turkish Studies, none of its programmes are using Turkish as a teaching language. That is why TC students in other programmes are in a sense forced to use English and Greek (if they have linguistic aptitude for the latter) when attending the courses. While the relationship of English and its linguistic status in

postcolonial settings in Cyprus is still an understudied subject (Buschfeld, 2013), it is even more compelling to see further studies on the linguistic behaviour of bidialectal teachers in the English foreign-language classroom, which contradicts popular beliefs that the standard variety of the first language (Standard Modern Greek) is used alongside English, since, in fact, it is the Greek Cypriot dialect that is more prevalent (Yiakoumetti & Mina, 2013). And, given that teachers express surprise and embarrassment when told about their linguistic behaviour, it is even more pertinent that sociolinguistically informed training that celebrates linguistic diversity should be incorporated as it has the potential to empower teachers to appreciate and make use of all the linguistic varieties available to them (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, we cannot oversee that Cyprus is in the midst of migration crises in Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean. Thus, it is increasingly challenging to continue seeing Cyprus as having only two discrete communities. The influx of new arrivals, including Roma communities and other migrant groups, has significantly impacted Cypriot education (Kyriakou, 2023). Even though we consider a bilingual education (Turkish/Greek) as a necessity in Cyprus in order to embrace the bicomunal constitution of the RoC, we need to embrace this complexity by adopting a more inclusive approach than traditional bilingual education (Turkish/Greek). We propose bilingual education as the basis to gradually develop translanguaging as a unifying pedagogical stance that incorporates the diverse linguistic repertoires of all students. This approach, which we see having bicomunal education as a starting point, not only supports bi-communal dialogue, but also embraces the multicultural realities of contemporary Cypriot society, fostering an educational environment that is inclusive and reflective of its diverse population.

5 | CONCLUSION: BEYOND CURRICULAR COLONIALISMS

Our work on ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ remains a work in progress. It has been challenged by complications during the COVID-19 pandemic and by the acknowledgment of limited research on decoloniality and translanguaging in higher education. We agree with other researchers that this limitation presents an opportunity to turn to the epistemologies of the South. Such a turn can engage in making translanguaging practices a chance to destabilise the hegemony of English-dominated colonial curricula (Ndlangamandla & Chaka, 2020). Additionally, this work involves complex layers of emotions. These emotions can become obstacles when addressing traumatic conflicts in divided island geographies. In such contexts, hegemonic narratives shape emotions of memory and identity, making them difficult to negotiate in pedagogic practices. A feminist lens in translanguaging pedagogies in the Cypriot educational context is important when we think that centring gender can refocus teaching as a tool that will minimise marginalisation of women and other minoritised students when both linguistic and epistemological exclusions exist. Curricular practices that re-centre a gendered and decolonial pathway where the classroom becomes a learning journey to erasure of exclusions can benefit by applying translanguaging to dismantle ‘critical ambivalence’ (Charalambous et al., 2020b). The concept of ‘critical ambivalence’ advanced by Charalambous et al. in their work on translanguaging highlights the affective ambivalence for educators that destabilises, but also helps them deconstruct the hegemonies of nationalist discourses and ideally offers an opportunity to embrace the discomfort by creating alternative spaces, acknowledged through this critical lens. In this article, we extend this by linking to Charalambous et al. (2020a) where digital storytelling can also be shaped to acknowledge the gendered obstacles, while transforming those to opportunities for empowerment and liberation. Having classroom spaces go from giving voice to students to cultivating translanguaging articulations of confident, yet respectful resistance to nationalist discourse through dialogue aligns with feminist principles of what we advanced elsewhere as ‘geographies of empowerment’ (Karayianni & Christou, 2020). Here, we also acknowledge the complexities when English is used as a positive aspect of student-teacher repertoires, despite colonial histories and the linguistic hegemony in knowledge production. This is not a straightforward matter and more nuanced thinking is required to understand that the English language can be both—that is, a tool for empowerment and a historical marker of oppression.

In other words, thinking about how to shape pedagogic transformations through translanguaging practices offers possibilities for renewal, as much as opportunities for refusal, but entail entangled emotional efforts for (self and other) healing. These processes are steeped in the politics of identity, power and trauma, but can also push the bordering of the everyday socio-politics through communicative and curricular efforts for reconciliation. The ideological appropriation of language as a pathway to peace might sound too compelling to materialise into practice, but it has already been done, albeit in small-scale efforts (Ioakimidis et al., 2022). Translanguaging spaces can enable students to have peace and reconciliation leading conversations, and by way of contributing holistically through using their full linguistic repertoire.

Storytelling in the classroom in ‘translanguaging decoloniality’ can also challenge the ‘capitalist heteronormative patriarchy and European models of civil society building that have kept Cypriot women on the margins’ (Papastavrou, 2012,

p. 95). Such dialogic narratives can question the entangled systems of power that intersect with economic forces, ethno-national and sex/gender oppressions to create more inequalities and sustain violence (Hadjipavlou & Mertan, 2010). Storytelling as an interactive learning space can become an alternative space to enable processes of decolonisation through translanguaging by enabling silenced voices and invisible stories to be harnessed for their peace and decolonial education potential.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All publicly available databases are listed in the bibliography. The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

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ENDNOTES

¹With the exception of the programmes of the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies.

²Ως Δαμέ is a political organisation which was created in 2021 as a collective call for reaction to the social injustice and corruption from which the Cypriot society suffers. Its first mobilisation took place on 13 February 2021 and was confronted with extreme police violence. The name of the organisation is a phrase in the GC version of the Cypriot dialect meaning 'Enough is Enough'.

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