Ricerche ed esperienze

Inquiries and experiences

Language, Culture, and Instruction in the Inclusive Classroom: Educators of Migrants and Refugees in Malta

Lingua, cultura e istruzione nell'aula inclusiva: Educatori di migranti e rifugiati a Malta

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ABSTRACT

Migrant learners in Malta are EU nationals (the vast majority) or non-EU (mostly from Libya, Serbia, Syria, and Pakistan) with little or no ability to speak English or Maltese, and at times with limited, interrupted, or no formal education. Newly arrived students with no proficiency in English or Maltese can attend induction classrooms for a year to acquire communicative competence in the languages of schooling, before being placed in mainstream classrooms where academic instruction is conducted through English and Maltese. Teachers possess varying degrees of reading, writing, and speaking proficiency in both languages. English and Maltese are used in academic and social interactions, but formal academic writing usually takes place in English. In this paper, we give the results of a quantitative survey that examines Maltese teachers' perceptions about their own cultures, the languages they speak, and what they need to carry out effective instruction with their students who come from a variety of countries, with varying L1 language and literacy.

I Migrant Learners a Malta provengono da Paesi europei nella maggior parte dei casi e a volte da Paesi non europei come Libia, Serbia, Siria e Pakistan. Possiedono spesso una scarsa capicità di parlare le lingue di scolarizzazione, l'inglese o il maltese e in alcuni casi sono del tutto privi di formazione scolastica. Gli studenti appena arrivati che non parlano le lingue di scolarizzazione hanno la possibilità di frequentare classi di induction per un anno in modo da acquisire le competenze comunicative di base in inglese e in maltese prima di unirsi alle classi mainstream. Gli insegnanti, dall'altro lato, possiedono varie abilità linguistiche in entrambe le lingue. A scuola l'inglese e il maltese vengono usati in misura uguale nel parlato, ma si tende a preferire la lingua inglese nello scritto. In questo contributo, presentiamo i risultati di un questionario distribuito a insegnanti maltesi per cercare di capire come percepiscono la loro cultura, le loro lingue e le loro necessità per insegnare con successo studenti di varie nazionalità.

Introduction

Most Maltese people have some degree of bilingualism in English and Maltese (some are trilingual, with Italian possibly being the third language). In general Maltese are proud and prominently identify with their culture, and their national language (Maltese), which according to a recent self-report census, is spoken by 90% of Maltese citizens (National Statistics Office, 2014), although with different levels of proficiency. Born and raised in a bilingual society, Maltese teachers are often not aware of how they learned their languages because they have been simultaneous bilinguals since childhood. Migrants to the islands, on the other hand, are typically nonnative English speakers from diverse societies. Depending on their country of origin, some of the children of these migrants might have experienced great trauma, and have arrived with limited or interrupted or no formal education. Others, typically those originating from countries with high level of education, come with great expectations but have limited or no knowledge of the language of instruction (that is Maltese and English).

In Maltese schools students are expected to learn academic content through English and Maltese, and are subject to instruction and standardized testing in either or both these languages. After the initial induction year whereby students are encouraged to acquire English and Maltese communication competence, the responsibility for educating the migrant students rests on the Maltese teacher in the mainstream classroom. This paper attempts to present the current school situation in Maltese schools, describes the teachers who seem to be struggling with the situation, the Maltese school system, and discusses the ongoing results of a study of teacher perceptions concerning instruction in the mainstream classroom.

As schools seek support for the increasing number of migrants and refugees, mainstream teachers may logically have difficulties understanding the needs of such diverse, yet vulnerable, students. In this study we discuss some Maltese mainstream teachers' perceptions of students' language and culture, present instructional strategies practiced in the classroom, and determine the challenges teachers face in providing successful education in the inclusive classroom. By focusing on themes such as student's educational background, teaching methodologies, and teacher's views of the educational system in their country, the study investigates the following questions:

- What are mainstream educators' perceptions of language, culture, and instructional practices when teaching migrant/refugee students in the mainstream classroom?
- What are the linguistic challenges associated with teaching migrant/refugee children?
- What do teachers feel they need to carry out more effective language instruction?

This paper presents the desaggregated data emerging from a cohort of 25 Maltese participants from a study that included 84 teachers in total representing various countries. The data helps us gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic, cultural, social, psychological, and academic challenges students may face when migrating to a new country, with different languages and cultural practices. We also hope to give educators data to help them reflect upon their own beliefs and experiences concerning the roles language and culture play in instruction, which may have inadvertently impeded best instructional practices. Finally, teachers may

be better equipped to modify language instruction for their students, and will be able to make recommendations to schools that will benefit the teaching of migrant and refugee students.

1. Migration in Malta

In recent decades, people have increasingly fled their native countries to escape political oppression, civil war, and genocide occurring in countries such as Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, Libya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan. Malta, as a European Country in the middle of the Mediterranean and its southern-most frontline state has responsibly received a number of migrants saved at sea. According to a report issued by UNHCR (2015 a), Malta is one of the smallest EU countries, yet in 2010 and 2014, Malta ranked second (17.5 applicants per 1,000 inhabitants), in the number of applicants from migrants seeking asylum.

In the past five to ten years a second phenomenon, economic migration, has also resulted in an influx of migrants in the country. An improvement in the Maltese economic trends created a supply of jobs, for which the Maltese population did not suffice. This economic upswing attracted a number of economic migrants from a number of EU and non-EU countries such as Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Spain.

In the past few years, massive regular and irregular migration has thus taken the island country by storm and this phenomenon has of course left its effects on the local educational system. The extreme changes in the classroom context which took place over a relatively short period of time left teachers unprepared. They had never received any formal pre-service or in-service training to handle the sheer volume of new students who come with their own individual needs and offer new challenges, for which teachers need to be adequately equipped.

2. Educating migrants

It is crucial to offer students educational opportunities, guidance, and the instruction they need to succeed in school, in their future careers, and to reveal the potential assets they bring to a country (Attard Tonna, Calleja, Grech, Pisani & Tonna, 2017, pp. 85-86). Although migrant students often enter the new classroom with limited language proficiency, academic deficits, and emotional instability, many would argue that students deemed as lacking the ability to succeed do indeed have the potential to learn, but they have not been able to receive proper educational foundations yet. Teachers need to be able to form the classroom bond that encourages low anxiety language learning and student achievement. Teachers must first see to the emotional well-being of students, before working on the linguistic skills they will need to enter the mainstream class the following year.

To create a truly inclusive education, a school must strive for equal opportunities and the right to participation for all (Vassallo Gauci, 2017). Teachers need to be prepared to meet the diverse needs of students, offer differentiated instruction, and build on student strengths rather than weaknesses. . As engagement, interest in school, and future success hinge on students' linguistic achievement, teachers must plan appropriate lessons that are culturally and linguistically relevant. Although natives of a country often fear that migrants and refugees may impede the host country's population, culture, and language, these students

represent the future of the country. Schools must therefore support educators in teaching all children, who will eventually enhance the host country.

3.   Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE or SIFE)

Depending on where migrant students originate, and why they migrated, children may have lost several years of schooling in their homelands, if they have been able to attend school at all. Some migrants mostly from non-EU countries have had their schooling interrupted while traveling to host countries. Students may be placed in classrooms that do not parallel their academic or literacy skills. Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) must learn how to speak, read, and write the new language(s), without having their native literacy skills to draw upon. They need to integrate with culturally diverse students, while adapting to the host country's customs and policies. Moreover, home countries have distinct political, cultural, and social views of education, including styles of instruction, or required years of schooling. Educational experiences vary and may not reconcile with the new school system. Students unaccustomed to the class-room experience enter a new world of educational behavioral expectations (e.g, when and where to sit, how to walk single file, when to speak, when to raise a hand for permission, and other established rituals) that may take months to learn.

Children from certain ethnic or religious groups in countries that experience violence and cultural oppression often do not enroll in formal school settings for fear of exposure or discrimination. Anxiety about potential victimization often causes parents to avoid community services or school registration. Overlooked children lack recognition as society members, and lose the opportunity to learn native literacy skills. Some children have the burden of providing for their families and as a result cannot attend school due to their responsibilities. The situation is even bleaker for students who belong to castes, or who come from countries that promote gender bias and oppression towards women. Many young female migrants are often barred from receiving a primary-level education, let alone a secondary education. Young girls become child brides (Missing Out-Refugee Education in Crisis, 2016) or have difficulties attending school due to the perilous journey, and lack of bathrooms facilities.

Obviously, interruption or absence of schooling in the home country engenders low or limited native language literacy skills. In the best case scenario, language learners who enter secondary and post-secondary school will need at least five to seven years to acquire sufficient proficiency. There is little time to catch up, fully grasp the new language(s), and pass standardized tests required at the end of secondary school (Collier & Thomas, 1989; 2014). Such students are at risk of dropping out of school early.

As a result of the above issues, mainstream teachers face challenges in determining how to regain students' lost years of schooling. Further, many teachers feel discouraged when they find themselves teaching children who, due to their transient condition, would have to leave the country before they have the chance to finish what they started. Challenges such as these make the case for autonomy in curriculum decision making during in-service teacher training as well as push-in instruction support more urgent.

4. Malta's official languages and language of schooling

Maltese teachers are usually raised bilingually with English and Maltese both being official languages. Italian is also widely spoken by around 60% of the population, and this is mostly due to the physical proximity as well as the historical and commercial ties between Malta and Italy.

The language situation in Malta is multifaceted and the issues are even more complex because bilingualism and language dominance differ all over the country. Language dominance is determined largely by which languages are spoken in the home (social language or the language of intimacy) as well as how much exposure to academic language is received in other educational or professional venues or conversational situations (Camilleri Grima, 2013). In the choice of language by domain, it is clear that in the home Maltese is spoken by the large majority (82.8%-95.9%), with only an average of 4% of Maltese speaking English at home (Sciriha, 2001). In educational, formal, and official situations, English is certainly the prevailing language. Therefore, Maltese can be described as the language that expresses Maltese identity, while English can be described as a second language, which "provides access to near-universal knowledge and culture" (MEDE, 2012 p.34, 41). In terms of societal use and educational policy, Maltese and English can be seen as complementary languages performing a range of sometimes parallel, sometimes different, functions without any clear differentiation, except that the use of Maltese in most families ensures its intergenerational transmission (Language Education Profile, Malta 2015). It is worth noting that code switching takes place in all conversations anywhere in Malta (Vella, 2013) and Maltese learners and their teachers interact bilingually all the time to fulfil pedagogical requirements (Camilleri Grima & Caruana 2016). Nevertheless, in Malta, even the well-educated Maltese teacher will be more dominant in one language or the other, depending on the proficiency level and use of either language. The truly balanced bilingual is more of an unrealistic goal because of the different domains in which we learn or socialize through language, and we use different language for different reasons (Ariza, 2018).

School policy on the language of instruction and assessment is also a complex matter. As yet, there are no clear indications on when and in which cases instruction should take place in Maltese or in English, and the National Curriculum Framework (MEDE, 2012) simply recommends that schools develop their own language policy according to their own needs.

Generally, subjects where specialized terminology is mainly English, such as mathematics, sciences, ICT and business, are taught in English, while other subjects are taught in Maltese (history, religion, etc.). The majority of all written texts in schools are in English (including textbooks, exam papers, and worksheets). Early childhood educators from the state sector have reported that they make use of both Maltese and English in a fairly 'balanced' way throughout the day. Both languages are introduced simultaneously early on in the kindergarten classes (Mifsud & Vella, 2018) and the vast majority of teachers switch readily from one language to the other in order to accommodate language diversity in the classroom and to facilitate learning (Camilleri Grima, 2015; Gauci, 2011; Sultana, 2014). Research conducted in Maltese schools shows that codeswitching is extremely beneficial for the effective management of learning processes and teaching activities (Camilleri Grima, 2013). Using one language to scaffold learning of the other in the form of translanguaging has also shown to be helpful in understanding and learning the target language (Canagarajah, 2011). Depending on the students' ability, educators may teach the subject in English, but scaffold comprehension by reteaching

the concepts in Maltese, as they believe the student will not understand the material because it is taught in English, the lesser dominant language of the student. Even though the particular subject should be taught in a specified language, there are teachers who might revert to their other language during instruction, and scaffold comprehension by reteaching the concepts in the students' preferred language.

5. Language support for migrant learners

In response to a Parliamentary Question, the current Minister for Education and Employment stated in January 2018 there were 5,744 foreign students in local schools, with the majority of them (3,835) attending state schools[1]. Some of these students speak at least one of the two official languages of schooling (usually English), but many others cannot speak either Maltese or English. At policy level, the National Curriculum Framework (2012) acknowledges this fact and recommends that, "all schools should be in a position to provide children and their parents with language support in Maltese and English so that they gain a basic working knowledge of these languages at the earliest moment in order to allow them to integrate quickly" (NCF, 2012, p.4).

The education system in Malta provides centralized support to schools through the Migrants' Learners Unit. The Migrants' Learners Unit, within the Ministry of Education and Employment, was created in 2014 to develop and implement an organizational structure for the provision of education to learners from a migrant background. The Unit offers an induction course to all newcomer learners (migrant learners or refugees) in Maltese schools who cannot communicate in Maltese and English before entering mainstream classrooms. Induction classes are held on the same school premises or, when this is not possible, in the geographical proximity of the child's receiving school. The induction course lasts for approximately one year and learners are encouraged to join mainstream classes as soon as possible. Apart from induction classes, the Unit extends its services to other areas, such as the provision of language support to migrant learners who are already in mainstream schools. This is achieved through pull-out sessions where students are drawn out from their mainstream class in small groups and given extra support in Maltese or English as needed. The Unit also organizes social activity classes where cohorts of Maltese and non-Maltese learners are invited to participate during after school hours, as well as Maltese and English summer language classes. Migrant learners attending Maltese schools are encouraged to take part in these activities, which are offered free of charge (Caruana, Scaglione & Vassallo Gauci, 2019).

To add to the complexity of the language situation, educators who are brought up bilingually from early childhood often are not knowledgable about language acquisition and have received no formal training on how and why they learned their languages, or when to differentiate between language usage. This, therefore, emphasizes the need for teachers to be more aware of their own language

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1   The information was given by Education Minister Evarist Bartolo as reported in *The Times of Malta*, 25th January 2018 https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20180124/local/church-schools-only-host-132-of-5700-foreign-students.668795 .

acquisition so that they can apply this knowledge to the classroom when dealing with students of different countries and languages. Language learners pass through a series of important stages, such as the silent stage i.e. the time the student listens and internalizes, but does not produce the language. It is only later, after a few months to a few years that social language evolves (also referred to as basic interpersonal communication skills –BICS, by Cummins, 2000). Students, in particular older students, struggle to learn academic language, or cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), and it may take over a period of 7 to 10 years to acquire proficiency (Cummins, 2000). Studies show that students are not able to interpret language or have everyday conversations without comprehension. Educators are often not knowledgeable about the lengthy process of acquiring, or learning a language and expect students to learn the target language quickly (Thomas, 2017). It is also imperative to know that for those students who lack literacy skills in their own language, English proficiency (or Maltese) could take much longer, as language proficiency not only consists of speaking, but also writing and listening. Cummins (2000) promotes the idea (common underlying proficiency, or CUP) that native language development is crucial to learning in another language because once the knowledge is conceptualized in one language, it will make input in the next language more comprehensible because the concept is already learned in the heritage language.

Studies show that although children may be able to listen and speak well (and may even sound like native speakers, due to learning the language at an early age), after four years of school, they still may not be proficient in writing (Cummins, 2000). Since a greater focus on reading exists, students thought to be proficient in English may not actually be, as they lack writing skills, and great depth in academic topics. Further, since languages hold many writing styles, the challenge is often in print concept, and handwriting such as Arabic script, is written right to left (Showalter & Hayes-Harb, 2015).

The dual-language approach, a method that allows students to speak, as well as retain and reinforce their native language while receiving instruction in English (or the language of instruction of a particular subject), is purported to be the best strategy (Magee, 2017). Proponents of dual-language, such as Cummins (2000), feel that this method assists students in transitioning smoothly from one language to another as the concepts are learned in the native language and just transfer to the second language. While teachers instruct in the target language, students flourish by incorporating native-language materials for better comprehension. A genuine dual-immersion program, however, would need bilingual teachers who are proficient in the multitude of languages students speak.

6. Parental support

Many teachers to be actively involved in their children's education and expect parents to help their children with their homework. These expectations are often not met when dealing with migrant parents. Teachers must face the challenge of having little or no support from migrant or refugee parents. These parents most often do not speak English or the host country's language, they are unable to communicate with school faculty, or help their child in school (Ariza, 2000). Parents may not be culturally accustomed to the host country's educational system, instructional practices that take place in the classroom, and to the extent to which their involvement is needed, required, or allowed. In addition, parents are unable to interact with the schools because they must work and, sometimes in more than

one job, may lack transportation, or may need an advocate to become involved with the school system (Ariza, 2000). With many parents unaware of the host country's school policies, they often allow educators and administrators to take control of their child's schooling, and therefore, stay out of the process. Attard Tonna et al. (2017) also speak of the entitlement gap – "While the parents of a good number of Maltese students (…) may feel a sense of entitlement when dealing with teachers, those of some migrant students are more likely to be deferential and outwardly accepting. Furthermore, because of language difficulties they may experience, migrant students do not voice their concerns and do not ask questions – they may not know how, or may not feel empowered enough to do so" (pp. 86-87). This situation begs for the training of teachers on communication with parents to understand cultural and social barriers, and encourage them to become involved in their child's school life. In such situations, students with migrant background have the potential to become at-risk students; it is therefore important to help teachers overcome the challenges they may face in teaching them.

7. The Study

7.1. Methodology

In May 2018 a qualtrics survey entitled *Perceptions of Language, Culture, and Instruction for Mainstream Teachers of Migrants and Refugees,* consisting of 43 Likert-scale (i.e., 'not at all' to 'greatly'), multiple choice, select all that apply, and fill-in-the-blank questions (see topics in Appendix A) was used for this study. The survey was distributed online to mainstream educators of migrants/refugees through international education organizations' list services such as the University of Malta's teacher database, the University of Leeds' [UK] Centre for Language Education Research School of Education's ESOL research email list, TESOL France email list, and global TESOL's open forum list service. Eighty-four teachers took part in the online survey. The survey was written in English and geared towards English-speaking educators. The researchers simplified and clarified the language of the questions, inserted definitions of complex words in parentheses, and explained educational terms within the questions. Data collected from the survey were categorized into themes such as demographics, language, pedagogy, materials, instructional methods and strategies, perceptions, assessment, and challenges.

7.2. Results

Teacher and Students' Demographics
A total of 84 participants from 12 different countries completed the survey. However for the purpose of this paper we disaggregated the data and highlighted only those responses from Maltese participants (n=25). All participants were of Maltese nationality and the majority of them (60%) were under 34 years of age. Most of the participants (84%) were qualified teachers. All in-service teachers came from state schools and taught students of different year groups (in primary and secondary schools, aged 5 to 16).

Teachers and their bilingual competence
The vast majority (80%) of the Maltese respondents declared that their first

language – or the language they usually speak at home or with close family members – was Maltese while the rest said they spoke both Maltese and English. In contrast, it is interesting to note that only 16% of the paticipants reported that they speak exclusively in Maltese during formal or social situations; 24 % said they spoke only English, while half of the teachers reported that they spoke both languages. Twenty per cent (20%) of the teachers said they spoke Maltese and/or English and another language (Italian, German, or Spanish) during formal or social situations, according to the context or the people present.

Most teachers reported that they acquired Maltese, their first language, because it was the language spoken at home, whearese they learned English mostly at school, (63%) or while in close proximity to those who spoke the language (23%). However, the overall majority of participants stated their speaking, writing, reading and listening abilities in Maltese and English were balanced.

Teachers' and students' language use in the classroom

Teachers reported using English in the classroom either most of the time (33%) or at least half of the time (33%). Teachers also reported that they use varying degrees of Maltese during instruction, with a good percentage of teachers stating they made frequent use of Maltese (32%).

Teachers stated that learners rarely make use of their native language for learning purposes in class, which correlates with the finding that a majority of teachers view students' use of their native language for social communication only.

Almost half the teachers reported their students had very little knowledge of the English language upon arrival to their new country, and one third of teachers reported their students knew no English at all. This could account for home countries that do not teach English due to political and cultural reasons. Some students may know a little English, but refrain from speaking it due to feelings of embarrassment, shyness, or resentment. With the demand for students to speak English, some students may resist speaking English altogether because they resent the idea of having to abandon, or refrain from using, their native language, or view the constant repetition of words as an insult to their intelligence (Yu, 2001).

Findings concerning students' literacy (reading and writing) levels in their native language were disappointing. Over half the teachers reported that their students arrive semiliterate or preliterate even in their *own* native language, having neither the ability to read or write in their own native language. Teachers may not be prepared to work with students who have missed several, or all, years of formal schooling. Almost 70% of teachers reported that the main reason for students' limited or preliterate condition was interruption or no previous schooling. Teachers must help both boys and girls adjust to entering school again, or for the first time (girls may not have been allowed to go to school in their home countries).

Materials

Teachers reported that they use textbooks (written both in Maltese and in English) and literary materials such as picture books and reading books for pleasure during instruction. It is possible that teachers rely on traditional textbooks for instruction more and literary materials less. It is important that schools provide teachers with reading materials that supplement the curriculum and help students acquire content knowledge in other ways. Many teachers say they allow students to use dictionaries in the classroom, particularly English and some bilingual, but none of the teachers makes use of dictionaries in the native language of the learners and surprisingly, 11% of teachers stated they do not make use of dictionaries at school. Perhaps this is due to the lack of resources in schools. The absence of

resources may hinder the quality of academic assistance for incoming students.

Strategies to support teacher and student

Teachers reported that the instructional strategies they most often used in the classroom were interactive activities (13%), group activities (11%), and realia (11%). It seems that teachers focused less on differential instruction (9%), and on providing culturally relevant lessons (8%). Eleven per cent (11%) of the teachers reported they mainly taught through a teacher-centered approach (e.g., lecturing, worksheets, and note-taking methods). Given this finding, it is important that teachers learn how to incorporate engaging activities to help foster student-centered learning.

Understanding language acquisition is key to helping students learn. The majority of teachers reported that they understood the second, third and fourth stages of second language acquisition (stage 2: early production; and stage 3: speech emergence; stage 4: intermediate fluency), yet teachers were less knowledgeable about the significance of the first and the fifth stages (stage 1: silent/receptive; and stage 5: advanced proficiency and literacy). Teachers who are well informed about the formal stages of language acquisition can better instruct students with multiple languages.

Perception

Teachers were quite knowledgeable about their students' religious practices, and cultural traditions, while they reported to be more unfamiliar with their students' body gestures or languages. Training in recognizing cultural gestures would allow teachers to have better understanding of students' expressions, visual cues, senses, perspectives, language, and tone.

While a majority of teachers reported they developed their knowledge about instructing migrant or refugee students by conducting research on their own, others felt that information was best gathered by talking to cultural insiders, or others who shared the same culture as their students. Other teachers reported they gained some knowledge from talking to parents, reading current literary journals or attending instructional workshops. This suggests that more workshops or trainings should be offered to teachers, and that more teachers should take advantage of the workshops that are offered.

Assessment

Almost half of the teachers who took part in the study reported that their schools do administer standardized testing to evaluate migrant and refugee students on language proficiency and only 20% reported having standardized tests to evaluate content. It was troubling that 36% of teachers were not sure what their students were assessed on. As high-stakes testing can hinder students' ability to progress in elementary grade levels and successfully finish secondary school, it is imperative that teachers know what their students will be tested on.

The majority of teachers acknowledged that students' standardized tests are in English and Maltese, with teachers reporting that for some standardized tests (e.g. Maths and Science), only the English version is available, even for Maltese students. None of the teachers reported that students are offered language assistance from translators or interpreters. Regardless of these students being a major part of a schools' student body, schools have often failed to create standardized tests in students' native languages. Thus, students continue to be tested on content without having the necessary fundamental language skills.

Teacher Challenges

The majority of teachers felt that their educational system had not prepared them to teach these students. Thirty-two per cent (32%) of teachers stated that they had received very little training in teaching migrant and refugee children, while a worrying 24% of teachers reported that their school system did not prepare them at all. In terms of ways that would help teachers become more successful as educators of migrant/refugee students, teachers primarily reported that schools could help them by giving them more training. They also felt they would be able to teach students better if given smaller classes and more resources, opportunities to observe or team up with other teachers, different teaching materials in the students' language, administrative support, and bilingual assistants.

Overall, the data indicate that teachers do indeed face challenges in educating migrant/refugee students and that a great portion of teachers feel unsupported. Therefore, schools should prepare teachers and provide them with training on how to reach and serve the influx of refugee and migrant students in their classrooms.

7.3. Discussion and Recommendations

As migrant and refugee students enter the classroom to start a new life, educators must focus on their students' mental well-being before even considering the curriculum. The process of overcoming trauma and feeling safe is crucial to students' academic achievement. Since teachers and staff members offer pathways to future comfort levels for newcomers, it is vital that teachers have the opportunity to become more trauma-informed (Hollifield, Warner, Lian, Krakow, Jenkins, Kesler, & Westermeyer, 2002) and receive training on ways students can overcome trauma. This also points to the importance of teamwork amongst various professionals. The complexity of such relationships require different expertise to work together to ensure the best possible support to these children, especially in these initial stages of their experience in a foreign country.

Since many newcomers are without a friend, mentor, or someone to guide and advocate for them, it is also important that students build relationships with teachers or staff, and individuals who will support them every step of the way. Teachers must also help students make new friends with whom they can share their experiences and cultures, and to whom they can ask questions they may hesitate to ask others. Talking with other students can also help with language acquisition while students converse, especially as they may not be able to establish relationships easily on their own. To assist them, schools can create after school or Saturday events such as camps, clubs, cultural organizations, and various types of programs where students could get to know each other through social activities. Since many newcomer students do not take part in extracurricular activities due to tasks they must attend to for their families, schools should find ways to engage students in out-of-classroom activities in order for students to spend time with peers or become involved with the community (Ariza, 2000).

This situation also shows the importance of what many European documents and studies insist on, namely of ensuring inclusive settings. et al (2017) report that findings from many studies (NSSE, 2008; Schofield, 2006) show the harm of early selection or labeling students, and insist on the importance of delaying selection of students for different tracks. Numerous studies have shown that this practice limits the educational opportunities of disadvantaged students, including that of migrant students who are often assigned to lower bands due to their language

limitations.

Rather than administer a test to identify and assess students' linguistic and academic needs, teachers could offer a survey or other alternate tools to determine students' needs. It is also important to create lesson plans using sheltered-instruction, a method that simultaneously teaches English language, content knowledge, and academic skills. Sheltered-instruction involves modifying instruction for individualized learning, which may include cooperative learning activities and the use of visuals, while the language of instruction is scaffolded for comprehension. It is important to teach concepts in a way that can relate to students (Magee, 2017).The evaluation process should primarily consist of informal alternative assessments that focus on performance and participation, and progress (Ariza, 2018).

Assessment techniques such as observation checklists, rating scales, anecdotal records, interviews, and portfolios are key in assessing students fairly. It is also important to perform a student needs analysis to determine appropriate interventions and to recommend appropriate instructional strategies. Ideally, for accurate evaluation, students should be assessed in their own language to determine if they do indeed have authentic academic or linguistic problems in their native language, a developmental delay, or have experienced limited or interrupted formal education (Ariza, 2018).

Since language proficiency has such a profound effect on an individual's ability to learn and develop (Gatwiri, 2015), it is crucial that schools commit themselves to providing high quality language education to all newcomers without stalling their learning in other content areas. When working with text, refugee and migrant students should be offered a variety of genres, particularly ones that reflect students' experiences and cultural identities in the stories (Ariza, 2018). For elementary students, picture books could be used to help explain concepts with a limited amount of text and multicultural books in the native language. Trade books, graphic novels, short novels, and books in the native language are ideal for secondary grade students. Creative writing activities could include the translation of short passages or poems in students' first languages and storytelling projects where students share a personal story by writing, drawing, and possibly creating their own books. As many countries have a lack of libraries or students may not know the vast amount of items a library has to offer, it is important that the library becomes a welcoming place for students to visit regularly. It is also important to collaborate with the librarian for assistance in selecting books that students would find interest in.

The integration of drama into the curriculum has the potential for students to become engaged, have 'be there' experiences, and comprehend concepts through a more meaningful and visual approach. Role-play, also known as Readers Theater or simulation, helps students who struggle with reading (Ariza, 2018). By having students act out stories they have finished reading, or reconstruct historical events under study, students can experience the look (setting and characters' attire), feel (characters' expressions and physical gestures), and sound (use of language, tone, and voice pitch) when recreating the story or event. Music and songs go hand in hand with language learning, as students must pronounce vocabulary, often repeatedly, as they sing the lyrics to a song (Ariza, 2018).

Although whole-class instruction is necessary during instructional situations that call for a mutual understanding, it is important to use a variety of learning strategies, using multiple intelligence, and group work, which allows students to work, discuss, and learn together. Cooperative groups can offer students the opportunity to learn English and content knowledge in a less restricted setting, establish relationships, and overcome challenges as they work individually with the

support of peers sitting next to them, work in pairs (pair share), or share the work load with the entire group. While many students may be from school systems that shun group work due to cultural beliefs regarding the separation of gender, academic levels, and social status, as well as the temptation for students to cheat, and insist that students work independently, it is important that students be gradually introduced to the idea of cooperative learning in heterogeneous groups.

Technology can inspire collaboration and encourage students to interact. Digital devices such as apps, educational games, and podcasts can help all children learn vocabulary and the English (or target) language. Documentaries and brief videos can be used as instructional tools to teach major concepts that are otherwise over-detailed in textbooks, and difficult for students to read and comprehend. Students can also create their own storytelling video or photojournalism project that describes their home country or migration experience (Ariza, 2018).

Parental involvement is such an important link to student achievement (Attard Tonna et. al, 2017; PPMI 2013; NESSE, 2008) and parents' ability to communicate with their child's school is critical. Teachers can connect with parents through technology by using email, social media, and apps that have advanced translation features that will assist teachers with regular communication and updates on how their child is progressing in school. For those parents who do not have access to technology, schools could provide English language classes that would allow both child and parent to attend at the same time, and help them to support each other at home as well. Technology can be accessed, addressed, or introduced to the parents via school personnel.

By forming partnerships with community service entities such as local businesses, universities, and special interest organizations, teachers and schools can offer tutoring, service-learning, job programs and other programs for high school newcomer students, as well as adult-education or vocational classes. Bringing guest speakers into the classroom to share their knowledge about a subject or lived experience could help students gain first-hand knowledge about an important topic, event, or career opportunity. Speakers must be prepared to adapt presentations to a variety of language learners and proficiencies. Accompanying visuals will ensure students can comprehend what is being presented.

Collaboration between teachers could help resolve issues in the classroom they often cannot deal with on their own. Teamwork allows educators to find new ways to overcome stress (theirs and their students'), solve problems, and help teachers improve their instruction. With the input of other teachers' expertise in subject-content areas, classroom management, cooperative learning strategies, and differential instruction, lessons will be easier to create and more motivating for students to learn. The time and energy teachers put into working together, listening to each other, and devising strategies, will only increase migrant and refugee students' chances of academically excelling.

Finally, in the survey, the Maltese teachers identified the need for further training and professional development that would focus on the best ways to address the needs of language learners from the many cultures in today's classroom. Learning about language acquisition and best instructional strategies for migrant and refugee students with interrupted learning in the home language will assist teachers to provide more successful academic instruction. This type of knowledge will also help them to reflect upon and understand their own language learning paths to bilingualism.

Conclusion

When global migration crisis impacts children and youth, it not only affects the host country, but the world. For the education of migrant and refugee students to work successfully, it will take all members of the education community to come together and find ways that could best serve this population of students. Although teachers have the power and opportunity to make change, it is difficult to do it alone, or without training. With the need to prepare teachers who work with these students, it is the researchers' hope that the educational system will offer teachers of migrant and refugee students additional training in language acquisition, bilingual education, materials, appropriate teaching strategies for new language learners, resources, and the administrative support they need to accommodate students' individual needs. The unique linguistic and cultural complexities of Malta need to be considered and negotiated to mitigate barriers, and provide more inclusive educational opportunities for all students.

Future Research

To further this study, the researchers believe additional investigation in the areas of best practices of teaching Maltese and English to newly-arrived learners in the multicultural Maltese society is needed. Ongoing formative assessment will help teachers to see what types of differentiated learning are most productive in the linguistic realm.

Additionally, the researchers believe that a holistic approach to a successful school experience is important, especially because teachers are interactive with parents from SubSaharan countries, the European Union, and the Middle East. It is important to hold regular meetings with parents of migrant and refugee students who have migrated to and attend school in the host country to find out how schools could better serve their children. For example, what support do parents need? What expectations do they have? What do they want and need to know about the host country school? How can the host country help? What are the parents' educational backgrounds, and can the school help further their educations as well? It is important to examine how parents of migrant and refugee students perceive their child's classroom and school in hopes of finding new ways to increase student success, linguistic competence, and parental involvement. Supporting students in early educational settings will result in more successful integration and negotiation of the new country, while mitigating linguistic barriers.

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Appendix A
Topics in the survey

Teacher Demographics	Age, teaching status, years teaching, subjects taught, and number of non-refugee versus refugee students they teach
Student Demographics	Gender, country of origin, reason for migrating, living situation, mobility, grade, and academic level
Teacher's Language Acquisition	How teacher acquired first language and/or English, and language(s) used in the classroom
Student's Language Acquisition	Literacy levels in English and native language
Pedagogy	Educational background of students
Materials/Tools	Materials used in the classroom: textbooks, dictionaries, technology, and availability of resources
Strategies	Instructional methods: activities, diffferentiated instruction, teacher centered vs. student centered instruction, and teacher' familiarity of the stages of language acquisition
Perception	Teachers' knowledge of students' culture and refugee experience: trauma, cultural differnces, and multiculturalism
Assessment	High stakes testing/language used to evaluate students
Challenges	Teacher views on educational system's training and support

Appendix B
Results
Table 1: How Teachers Acquired their First Language and English

	How Teachers Acquired 1st Language (Maltese or English)	How Teachers Acquired English
Language was spoken at home	56.25%	11.54%
Received language instruction at school	23.75%	42.31%
Took lessons outside regular schooling	2.50%	19.23%
Were in close proximity of speakers	17.50%	19.23%
Other	0.00%	7.69%

Table 2: Amount of English Language Students Speak Upon Arrival

Greatly	Very Much	Fair Amount	Very Little	None	Not Sure
0.00%	6.56%	14.75%	49.18%	26.23%	3.28%

Table 3: Native Language Literacy Levels (Reading and Writing)

Advanced in Literacy	Somewhat Literate	Semiliterate	Preliterate	Other
15.56%	13.33%	42.22%	6.67%	2.22%

Table 4: How Often Teachers Allow Students to Use Their First Language in the Classroom

Entire Time	Very Much	Fair Amount	Very Little	Not at All
8.89%	22.22%	28.89%	40.00%	0.00%

Table 5: How Teachers Describe their Students' Use of Language in the Classroom

Students use their native language for learning purposes	21.05%
Students use their native language for social communication	39.47%
Students use their first languages and the target language interchangeably	18.42%
Native language and target language are used separately	13.16%
Native language not used at all	7.89%

Table 6: Teachers' Usage of English with Students in the Classroom

Greatly	Very Much	Fair Amount	Very Little	Not at All
65.22%	23.91%	10.87%	0.00%	0.00%

Table 7: Reasons for Students' Limited or Preliterate Skills

Schooling was interrupted	No previous schooling	Girls could not attend school	Not sure	Other
39.76%	25.30%	14.46%	10.84%	9.64%

Table 8: Students' Use of Literary Materials in the Classroom

Textbooks	Picture Books	Picture Concept Books	Traditional Literature	Realistic Literature	Books for Pleasure	Other
17.16%	17.16%	14.92%	12.69%	17.16%	15.67%	5.22%

Table 9: Students' Use of Dictionaries in the Classroom

English Dictionaries	Native Language Dictionaries	Bilingual Dictionaries	Do Not Use Dictionaries
37.31%	23.88%	31.34%	7.46%

Table 10: Materials Used in the Classroom with Students

Realia	Photographs	Manipulative	Markers/crayons	Paint
27.03%	28.86%	18.92%	22.30%	2.70%

Table 11: Teachers' Instructional Strategies Used in the Classroom

Interactive Activities	Group Activities	Differential Instruction	Teacher-centered Instruction (e.g., lectures & taking notes	Culturally Relevant Lessons
21.93%	22.50%	20.32%	17.67%	17.67%

Table 12: Teachers' Understanding of the Stages of Language Acquisition

The FIRST stage of second language acquisition (silent/receptive) when students may delay speech in the new language for several months	20.11%
The SECOND stage of second language acquisition (early production) when students use words or short phrases to communicate	20.65%
The THIRD stage of second language acquisition (speech emergence) when students are often able to make themselves understood with simple language, but with several errors	20.65%
The FOURTH stage of second language acquisition (intermediate fluency) when students become more fluent and may appear to comprehend more than they can produce	19.02%
The FIFTH stage of second language acquisition (advanced proficiency and literacy) when students are beginning to sound more native-like but will still need scaffolding to support academic instruction	15.22%
Some of the stages listed above but not all	4.35%

Table 13: How Teachers Increase Their Knowledge About Instruction

Reading current literary journals	Attending instructional workshops	Talking to parents	Talking to cultural insiders (others who share the same culture as students)	Researching students' cultures	There are no opportunities to increase my knowledge
18.38%	18.38%	13.97%	23.53%	25.74%	0.00%

Table 14: High Stakes/Standardized Testing Used to Evaluate Students

Language proficiency	Content Knowledge	Not Sure
52.94%	41.18%	5.88%

Table 15: The Language High-Stakes/Standardized Testing Used to Evaluate Students

English	Spanish	Bilingual versions	Interpreters help with translations
92.00%	4.00%	2.00%	2.00%

Table 16: What Teachers Think Would Help Them Become Better Educators

More teacher training	12.37%
More classroom technology	6.99%