Space-centred English language learning:
The Cyprus case

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ABSTRACT: This paper discusses a study conducted in the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu in Cyprus, the area in the centre of the divided walled city of Nicosia where Greek and Turkish Cypriots have to use English to communicate with one another. The aim of the study was to locate the effects of a learning space on language learners, teachers and syllabus designers. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures were carried out for the interpretation of the collected data. The findings reveal that the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu has become an open-air classroom, a learning space, for language learners who often spend time there to practise and relate what they have studied in their English classes. The results also illustrate that the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu has influenced the structure of the local English course syllabi with inclusions of place-specific materials, tasks, activities and homework. In brief, the study uncovers the influence of a learning space on learning or/and practising English language and attests how spaces can shape English language course syllabi and foster ownership and participation in learning English. The study also verifies the significance of integrating spaces into language learning syllabi and suggests that syllabus designers consider specifying learning spaces as a design principle in the process of syllabus design.

KEYWORDS: Learning spaces, language learning, place, spaces, English, innovative, syllabus, design, Cyprus.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It could be said that identifying and defining learning spaces has never been an issue in language learning, in that almost all learning activities are planned to be carried out in classrooms. Learning then, is often assumed to be something that happens predominantly in classrooms, including the English classroom. As a result, syllabus designers have tended not to consider spaces other than the classroom when structuring language syllabi. **What** is going to be taught (structures, functions or tasks), in **which order** and **how**, have been their main concern; asking **where** has never been on the agenda. However, it should be noted that: "Learning arguably happens everywhere – on city sidewalks, in airplanes, in restaurants, in bookstores, and on playgrounds. Human beings – wherever they are – have the capacity to learn through their experiences and reflections" (Chism, 2006, p. 2.2). If learning occurs everywhere, and it is our contention that it does, then we need to re-examine the role of classrooms and their relationship to other learning spaces as loci for learning (Brown & Long, 2006). We argue that the classroom should not be, therefore, the only place for the teaching and learning practices to take place; more learning spaces (tangible, social or immersive) should be integrated into the process of learning.

What is space?

In order to understand how spaces, tangible, social or immersive, can be effectively integrated in the process of language learning, it is significant to define spaces in relation with human experiences. Human beings have been constantly constructing and living in interconnected tangible, social or immersive living spaces which they are a part. Within these spaces we observe the dynamic interaction of worldviews, ideas, concepts, practices, activities and experiences. We are shaped by spaces and then we shape new spaces to shape us (Blommaert, 2005; Michelle & Tong, 2012; Toohey & Norton, 2003). And through corporal and emotional interaction with the environment, human beings develop a sense of a place, filled with narratives, readings, shared memories, emotions, experiences, traditions and histories (Adawu & Martin-Beltrn, 2012; Bakhtin, 1981; Lefebvre, 1991; Mishler, 2006; Nespor, 1994; Pavlenko, 2007).

This sense of place is beyond the linguistic landscape, which can be defined as "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25) or "The sociocultural (hence ideological) meaning given to or implied by a geosemiotic zone or a visual representation of such a zone as in landscape painting" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 212). It is the way written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment, where "semiotic landscape" refers to "any (public) space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making" (Bolton, 2012). Then, when people enter (public) spaces, they are influenced in three ways. First, space "legitimises some forms of behaviour while disqualifying or constraining other forms; second, space attaches different values and functions to individuals' linguistic repertoires; and third, space shapes how an individual positions him/herself, and how he/she is positioned/ ascribed by others" (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck, 2005, p. 203).

Space, therefore, can be deemed as a realm of activity, which has its own boundaries with its tangible and intangible properties shaping and defining the perception of place, time and events. "Human beings inhabit various interwoven worlds. We clearly inhabit a corporeal or physical world, but we also inhabit a world of ideas, concepts and theory, and a world of interaction, practice and activity" (O'Toole, 2010, p. 121). Tangible, social or immersive spaces are the sub-constituents of human experience, and individuals have always been interacting with the spatial dimensions existing within various spaces around them.

Learning spaces in language methodologies

All the features and potentials of spaces described above should also be integrated in educational practices and applied in actual learning situations. Language learning as well needs to create or exploit spaces, places and contexts for language learners, where acquiring the language will be the natural outcome. When we examine language methodologies, we observe that traditional language learning methodologies focus less on creating learning spaces for their learners than on defining and describing how language learning will take place in classroom environments. On the

other hand, there are several innovative language learning methodologies which aim to construct learning spaces for language learners. These methodologies place learners at their heart, in the centre of their theory and practice, thus rendering their whole learning process as learner-centred. These innovative methodologies (such as Task-based language learning, Project-based language learning, Problem-based language learning, Neuro-linguistic programming, Content-based Language Learning, Content and language integrated learning, Competency-based language learning, and Strategies-based language learning) are also consistent with and mostly influenced by the oscillations and/or advances in technology, education, society and lifestyles. They focus more on individual learners' motivations, needs, interests and learning styles (Davies & Pearse, 2000). They are more technology oriented, offering linguistic input and output, feedback, student collaboration, interactivity, and fun (Brown, 2001).

The attributes of such innovative methodologies, then, compel\ them to centralise learning in spaces where the learner is always in the centre (Johnson & Lomas, 2005; Luz, 2008; Nordquist & Sundberg, 2013; Oblinger, 2006; Skiba, 2006). Blended/hybrid learning, for instance, combines the traditional face-to-face aspect of learning with the hypertext mentality of Internet technologies (Sharma & Barrett, 2007). The approach creates several immersive spaces for learners. Similarly, there are numerous sites advocating learning English through web-based learning methodologies. Second Live and WizIQ are the two examples of online learning platforms using virtual spaces. In Second life (secondlife.com), users can create 3D environments where inhabitants as avatars are involved in user-generated life experiences. Avatars are able to structure any content and construct any object by using basic prims (primitive objects). Second life is composed of islands where users can configure any human activity they want. They can also establish and structure any learning environment or space, where learners are involved in constructed learning situations (Wang & Shao, 2012; Schiller, 2009). WizIQ (http://www.wiziq.com) provides virtual classroom environments for teaching and learning processes. Users can structure any educational environment without any restrictions, identifying, planning and delivering any content they want. A connectivist approach to English language learning depicts learning as structures of associations, networks and nodes. Nodes are the created spaces connected to each other with information pipes (Siemens, 2005).

Constructivism has been acknowledged as the new paradigm in education and has in a way challenged most of our practice concerning learning. We know now that we construct knowledge through experience and the use of our prior knowledge, which is not isolated but extremely interactive (Von Glasersfeld, 1995; Williams & Burden, 1997). For a constructivist view, dialogic space is important because it is a means to interpret knowledge within a community of learners, unlike the belief which considers communication as the transfer of knowledge (Confrey, 1995). In addition, constructivism "…allows us to re-evaluate classrooms and to consider informal learning spaces as loci for learning" (Brown & Long, 2006, p. 9.1).

Language learning then becomes a process of internalising, embracing and reshaping constructs presented to learners within learning spaces. The main role of language educators, then, is to provide learners with well-constructed learning spaces to ease this process, proffer learners alternatives and opportunities to produce the target language in the most effective way. To e this, teachers need to perform different roles

according the learning situations. They should always be ready to act as facilitators, controllers, organisers, assessor, prompters, participants, resources, tutors, and observers (Harmer, 2001).

Are learning spaces integrated in language learning syllabi?

We argue that syllabus designers need to consider constructing or using learning spaces in course syllabi to make language learning more effective and successful. Before evaluating whether syllabus designers use spaces in the process of planning language syllabi, we need to outline some views regarding syllabus and the practice of syllabus design. According to Levinson (1996), casting non-spatial problems into spatial thinking gives us literacy, geometry, diagrams, mandala, dream-time landscapes, measures of close and distant relatives and of high and low social groups, and much more. Just as maps stand in an abstract spatial relation to real spatial terrain, so spatial arrangements can give us symbolic "maps" to other domains. Similarly, syllabus designers, in a way, are moulding objects and events into learnable constructs creating learning "maps" which we are able to see where we are, what options we have and where we can end up our journey of language learning. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2006), a syllabus is a map of how to achieve the "outputs" of desired student performance. Similarly, van Lier (1996) uses the metaphor of "triptik" for syllabus, which he defines as collection of maps leaving the students the freedom to go wherever they want to and travel with whoever they want to. If learners have the freedom to decide the paths and destination of their learning journey, language syllabi then should be structured to guide and facilitate learners to realise their language learning aims and expectations.

Therefore, syllabi based on language methodologies should be materialised including and covering every case in point, stimulating, encouraging, and motivating learner inclusion in the process of language learning. Learners should also be trained to make critical pedagogical decisions concerning their learning (Nunan, 1999). In addition, syllabi should reflect language-learning theories and approaches, meet learners' needs beyond the classroom as well, and satisfy language teachers expectations and beliefs of language learning. "Syllabus design usually involves assessing the needs of learners in a language program, developing goals and objectives, planning syllabus, selecting teaching approaches and materials, and deciding on assessment procedures and criteria" (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 65).

Language teachers are operating the syllabus, channelling skills and constructs to learners, and that is why it is important that they develop ownership and belief in the whole approach embedded in it. Clandinin and Connelly (1998), on the other hand, state that teachers are not the operators or transmitters of syllabus only but at times they act as syllabus developers and makers too. Woodward (2001), when discussing lesson planning, talks about the significance of teachers' assumptions/beliefs concerning every step they take during class. Ur (1996) classifies language syllabuses according to 10 aspects: Grammatical, lexical, grammatical-lexical, situational, topic-based, notional, functional notional, multi-strand, procedural and process. Finney (2002) believes that curriculum is synonymous with the term, syllabus which mainly specifies the content and the order of what is to be taught. She classifies language curricula into three main models: the content model, the objective model, and process model. However she believes that the best model is the integration of the three: a

mixed-focus curriculum. Begler and Hunt (2002) categorize syllabuses into two kinds: synthetic, which divides the target language into separate linguistic items; and analytic, which aims to involve learners in real-life communication. The type of syllabus you use to make your students acquire the target language, mirrors your language learning philosophy and practices. It is the link and interaction with your students, with their parents/guardians and immediate environment, the society you live and function in.

As it can be clearly seen from the above discussion, when defining or categorising any one syllabus, experts mainly take the content of language teaching, ordering the content and the methodology used to deliver this content as the basis of any syllabus. There is no specification of any kind in relation to space; the syllabus is always implemented in the classroom. It is our ardent conviction, however, that language syllabi should focus on creating or utilising major or minor learning spaces composed of tangible, social or immersive spaces. They should not restrict and prison language learning in the classroom only.

In the vast majority of language courses, the classroom is the place where language is studied, crammed and used. It is an artificial world created for learners to carry out the pedagogical duties, do the planned drills, activities, tasks and even homework. Learners are not encouraged and motivated to practise the language they have studied in the real world (Nunan 1999). Nunan and others like him believe that contemporary approaches to language learning need to develop strategies for activating language out of class. Ur (1996) as well believes that we should prepare learners "for effective functioning outside the classroom, activities should give learners practice in coping with at least some of the features of real life situations" (p. 107). According to Brown and Long (2006), learning spaces should not act as containers of approved activities; instead, they should provide environments for people. "Environments that provide experience, stimulate the senses, encourage the exchange of information, and offer opportunities for rehearsal, feedback, application and transfer are most likely to support learning" (Chism, 2006, p. 2.4).

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: LEDRA/LOKMACI MILIEU AS A LEARNING SPACE

As discussed above, using outside class spaces as learning spaces, and planning and integrating these into language syllabi, have a great potential to improve the language-learning process in general. Language-teaching professionals need to explore practices to integrate more learning spaces, tangible, social or immersive, in the language learning process. They ought to then plan and construct new learning spaces or make use of the existing spaces and convert them into learning spaces according the learning objectives of their courses. In this context, Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu (see Figure 1), the area between the north and south of the buffer zone in Cyprus, has been utilized as a learning space by some of the language courses in the vicinity.

Annals of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu

A brief history of the events regarding the actualisation and the use of the place will help to better visualise and understand the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu (figure 1), the area

between the north and south of the buffer zone in Nicosia, the capital city of Cyprus. Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, had been under British rule until 1960 when the Republic of Cyprus was established, which brought two communities, Turkish and Greek, together and made three languages Turkish, Greek and English widely used. However, conflicts and hostilities caused by political wrangling led to a division of the island into two halves in 1974, with an UN-controlled buffer zone in the direction of East to West. In the South part of this buffer zone there is the Greek Cypriot controlled area and the north of it the Turkish Cypriot controlled area. As a result of this division, with its old town centre located within the medieval walls of a circular plan, the city of Nicosia as well has been divided from one end to the other. Similarly, the urban space of Nicosia is also separated into two different halves, which made it almost impossible to have an integrated perception of an urban space. Until April 2003 there was no crossing between the north and south of the island and therefore the two communities were not able to communicate.
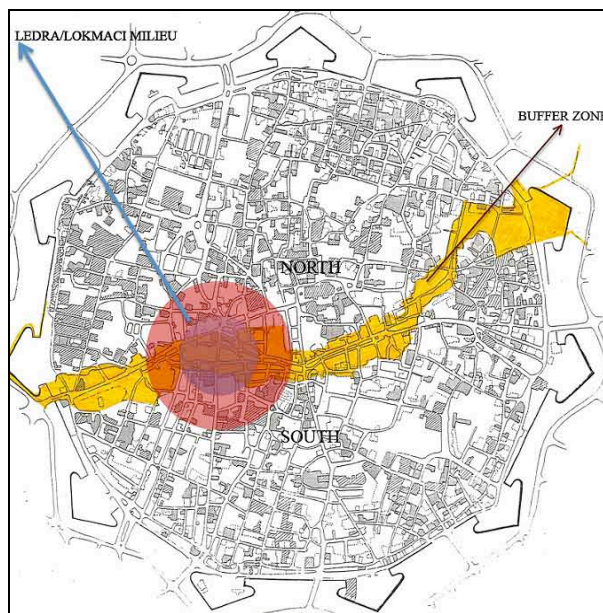

Figure 1. Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu

Figure 2. North Checkpoint at Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu

When the Agios Dometios and Ledra Palace checkpoints opened in 2003 after 29 years, bi-communal communication started again. Because these checkpoints are located outside the historical city walls, with a very wide buffer zone area between Turkish and Greek Cypriot checkpoints, and because they were far away from the intense use of the old city centre, it didn't help to improve the socio-cultural interaction of the two communities. However, the opening of the third checkpoint in 2008, the Ledra Street checkpoint, initiated a process which created a huge impact on bi-communal interaction. The Ledra street crossing point connected the Lokmacı area in the north with Ledra Street, as it was in the past before the conflicts between two communities began. Both in terms of the use of the old town within the historical walls and its geometrical connection to the centre, Ledra Street has always been a very important centre of attraction in the past as well as today.

Figure 3. A scene from Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu

Owing to the barricades, the Lokmacı district on the Turkish side was abandoned, ruined and neglected until this checkpoint was opened and only very few shops and houses were used by immigrants from Turkey, which made the district look like a suburban ghetto. Ledra Street, in contrast, was arranged as a better tourist urban space. However, as you come closer to the buffer zone, the buildings stood empty and neglected.

Figure 4. Lunch time at Ledra/Lokmacı Milieu

Asian immigrants mainly resided in this area. Property on both sides was rented at cheap rates. The opening of the Ledra Street checkpoint revived social life in a short time. Within a few months the neglected buildings on the Turkish side were restored and adapted to modern use and sidewalks and roads were constructed in a very short period of time. On Ledra Street a large number of buildings were also repaired or renovated. Following the opening of this checkpoint, many people from each side started to visit the "other" side. These people, whether tourists, Turkish or Greek Cypriots, communicated mainly in English.

Shopping stores, restaurants, coffee shops, cultural event areas and daily activity nodes were developed within this one kilometre diameter area starting from the beginning of Ledra Street into the Lokmacı district. This improvement of the use of space inevitably created a demand for new and powerful forms and means of communication. The evolving uses of the street, the communication requirements for shopping, the socio-cultural interaction at the restaurants and bars where people feel the spirit of the place (the poetics of space) and increase their awareness of spatial perception resulted in a huge demand for a common language – English.

Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu as an English language learning space

Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu has thus become a language learning space for language learners and a resource for syllabus designers. It became a place where Greek and Turkish Cypriots have to use English to communicate with each other and with other nationalities. Consequently, the users of the place have become more interested and motivated to learn or improve their English language skills than hitherto. More people enrolled in language courses in the vicinity, and learners started to pay more visits to the place in order to practise and use what they had learned in their language classes within the actual milieu of Ledra/Lokmaci. Thus, Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu created many English language-learning settings, especially in the north part of the island, for language learners who previously had had almost no opportunities to practise English language. This impelled language teachers and syllabus designers to integrate examples drawn from the real world space of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu into classroom-based course materials and tasks in their language courses. The Milieu has thus become a learning space in itself; and not only that, but a major resource for English Language teachers and syllabus designers. Our study then shows how existing, perceived or constructed learning spaces, tangible, social or immersive, within which language learning takes place, need to be investigated to observe how they influence such learning and determine how they can better be implemented in language syllabi and learning.

AIM OF THE STUDY

As outlined above, most of innovative methodologies in the last two decades emphasise the significance of out-of-class learning opportunities, and place learners, their experience, environment and needs in the centre of learning. They construct learner specific spaces for learner's instant or intentional interaction, where learning occurs and becomes meaningful and perdurable. It is therefore an academic imperative to identify, understand and describe how learning is functioning within these constructed tangible, social or immersive learning spaces. In accordance with

this perspective, this study aimed to uncover the perceptions of individuals regarding English language presence and its effects in a learning space and to investigate how English language learners, teachers, and syllabus designers were affected by this space. This study also sought to locate the changes regarding the inclusion of space related elements made to language syllabi in the vicinity. More specifically the study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of individuals regarding the presence and effects of English language in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?

2. What are the effects of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu on language learners, teachers, and course developers?

3. What modifications are observed on the language syllabi of the language courses regarding Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study a mixed method design was employed. Mixed methods research focuses on "… collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 5). Firstly, a descriptive method to locate and describe the perceptions of the individuals concerning the presence and effects of English language, and secondly a qualitative method with active semi-structured interviews together with focus groups to find out the views of language learners, teachers and course developers, were utilised to collect data for the study. Simple content analysis was also employed with two of the language course syllabi to spot the inclusion of space/place related elements.

Context

Private English language courses develop their syllabi according the needs of their learners. The English language courses offered in North Cyprus fall into four categories:

1. General English language courses for learners to learn the language for various reasons;
2. Courses to help learners with their English lessons at schools;
3. Courses to prepare learners for university entrance and standardised international exams like IELTS and TOEFL;
4. Courses designed for specific purposes (ESP).

For general English courses, syllabus designers are free to decide and plan the content of the whole course. For support courses offered to students, they follow the content outlined in the national curriculum. For exam preparation courses, they focus on the content and the styles of the target exams. They write, include and study similar exam questions. For ESP courses, syllabus designers plan the course according to language needs of the professions. Courses for tourist guides and English for law are popular

ESP courses. There is no authorised control over the content and delivery of language courses, but the Ministry of Education monitors and inspects the physical (classrooms, buildings, equipment, and so on) and commercial standards (fees) of the courses in general. The present study examined the syllabi of two general English courses.

Participants

A structured interview containing questions about the perceptions of English language was held with 80 people aged between 14 and 85 at random in the project area. Participants were randomly selected to better represent the population from which they were drawn and therefore to be better enable us to generalize the results. Out of the eighty interviewees, 31 were form North Cyprus, 27 from South Cyprus, seven from Turkey, five from Russia, four from Britain, four from the Philippines, and two from Ukraine. There were 46 female and 34 male interviewees. 72 of the interviewees stated that they had been residing in Cyprus for more than a year and only eight of them were visiting the country. In order to find out the effects of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu on language learners, teachers, and course developers, 12 individuals in total were interviewed from two private language courses. Out of these, seven were language learners, three teachers and two course developers. The language learners were teenagers and adults aged between 14 and 25.

Data collection

Structured interviews

As part of the quantitative method of the study, structured interviews consisting of eight questions were conducted with individuals using the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. A structured interview is used in survey research as a quantitative method aiming to administer the questions in the same manner and sequence in order to ensure that the responses are reliably combined. The data are mainly collected by an interviewer by writing down the responses of the interviewee to the questions (Surhone, Timpledon & Marseken, 2010). The structured interviews in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu were not conducted like active interviews; they simply aimed to collect quantifiable data for the study. They were conducted to mainly observe whether the general users of the Milieu were aware of the changes concerning English language and to find out perceptions which might help better understand the English language effects of the space on language learners, teachers and syllabus designers. Four time slots, morning, afternoon, evening and night, were used for structured interviews to gather the perceptions of all sorts of people visiting the place for different reasons.

Semi-structured active interviews

Semi-structured active interviews were designed to find out the views of participants concerning the overall effect of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu on the process of language learning. Researchers interviewed seven language learners, three teachers and two syllabus designers from two private language courses in the vicinity. During the interviews, active interview procedures were applied. Both researchers were present in all sessions, which went beyond asking questions to respondents and noting down their answers. The active interview "is a two-way conversation...unavoidably interactional and constructive". It is a "meaning making conversation – a site and occasion for making meaning. It is more like a two-way informational street than a

one-way data pipeline (Silverman, 2004, p. 143). Through active interviews, the respondents were most of the time excited to come up with pertinent observations about their learning, which are presented and discussed under findings and conclusions.

Focus group method

After the active semi-structured interviews, a focus group method was used. Wilkinson (2004) states that focus group methodology is a way of collecting qualitative data, which essentially involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), "focused" around a particular topic or set of issues. The researchers met all 12 participants, seven language learners, three teachers and two syllabus designers from two private language courses, three times in two-hour sessions and discussed their experience with Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. In the first session, participants discussed the changes to the language syllabi and their effects on language learning. In the second session, they discussed how and why they used the Milieu and how this affected language learning, teaching and syllabus design. In the final session, they talked about their language experience, feelings, and future plans concerning language learning, teaching and syllabus design.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated to find out frequencies and percentages of the participants concerning their perceptions regarding the presence and effects of English language. Then, qualitative analyses were carried out analysing the active semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions of learners who used the space-modified syllabus. The analyses were grouped and discussed under three main groups: Language learners, teachers and syllabus designers. The data were also analysed according to the participants' views concerning the effects of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu on learning, teaching, materials, tasks, activities and syllabuses. The analyses and the categorisation of interviews were based on the specific research question concerning the effects of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) describe this technique of qualitative data analysis as ordering and using the categories already existing at the beginning of the process. This is, according to them, the opposite of an inductive procedure which derives a set of categories for dealing with text segments from the text itself. Finally, a simple content analysis method based on an examination of the data for existing instances (Wilkinson, 2004) was employed to locate and count Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu specific elements, pictures, videos, tasks and activities in the course syllabi.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: Perceptions regarding English language

In order to better perceive and analyse the effects of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu on language learners, teachers and syllabus designers, it was significant to locate whether the general users of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu were aware of the English language specific changes in the area and find out their perceptions concerning these changes. It was also noteworthy to find out how physical spaces can shape linguistic attitudes and perceptions of individuals using it. Therefore, eight questions (see Appendix) were asked to a total of 80 individuals in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu during the structured

interviews. Questions were in Greek and Turkish Cypriots' mother tongues and English for other respondents of different nationalities.

Firstly, respondents were asked to state their reasons why they go to Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. They were able to express as many reasons as they wished. According to the results shown on Table 1 (see Appendix), respondents mainly visited Ledra/Lokmaci milieu for shopping and spending time. Only 28.75% of the respondents were there to practise English. The results of the second question investigating the importance of knowing English and desire to learn/practise/improve English are given on Table 2 (see Appendix). Turkish Cypriots (83%) stated that knowing English was important in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu more than Greek Cypriots (53%) and other nationalities (76%). When asked whether they wanted to learn English, again Turkish Cypriots (95%) expressed more desire than Greek Cypriots (40%) and other nationalities (74%).

The study also tried to find out the main reasons for English use in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. As illustrated in Table 3 (see Appendix), respondents used English while shopping, asking for prices or requesting some sort of help. They also stated that they used English to communicate and help others to communicate with people in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu and police officers at the checkpoint. When asked what people using Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu did to practise or/and improve English, they mentioned several points as shown on Table 4 (see Appendix). It was interesting to observe that spending more time in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu and reading English signposts in the area were among the highest preferred methods to practise/improve English.

Interviewers also aimed to find out the changes regarding English language in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu (see Table 5, Appendix). Most of participants (81.25%) noticed that there were more English signs in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu, more people conversing in English (70%) and more shop assistants speaking English (67.5%). Participants were also asked how they felt compared to the past, when they spoke English in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. As shown on Table 6 (see Appendix), they had varied feelings, mostly positive. It was interesting to observe that most of their feelings reflected their main attitudes towards English language as well. Participants expressed diverse feelings, illustrated on Table 7 (see Appendix). Moreover, when asked how they felt when people spoke English and they did not understand them, feelings of annoyance, frustration and tension were the first three to be experienced by individuals using the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu.

fResearch Question 2: Effects of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu on language learners, teachers, and course developers

Language learners, teachers, and syllabus designers of different language courses were first interviewed to find out their views on the effects of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. All 12 participants willingly participated in active semi-structured interviews and discussed their experience with the researcher. Then a focus group was used to elaborate more on their experience and observe their interaction concerning the active use of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. Their views and experience were grouped, analysed and presented under three main headings: (a) Language learners, (b) Language teachers, and (c) Syllabus designers. As a method of analysis, we will not quantify the findings and focus on their occurrences only.

Language learners
During the active interviews and focus group discussions, all participants indicated that inclusion of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu elements into the whole process of language learning resulted in a worthwhile experience. Learners stated that they were more motivated when they saw Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu-related elements in their lessons. They observed that they became better oral communicators after spending more time in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu for various course-related tasks. They mentioned that they became more fluent and they developed certain strategies to initiate conversation with English language-users in the vicinity. Before the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu experience, they were afraid of making mistakes and they did not want to talk in English, but they stated that most of the people in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu made mistakes when they were talking and no one cared about their mistakes. According to Piazzoli (2011), in generated affective spaces, language learners abandon their pre-existing, competitive, judgemental group dynamics and become more comfortable, collaborative and supportive. They learned, they said, to ask for clarification if there were things they didn't understand, which they confessed never happened in class. Before talking in class they used to think a lot, trying to organise their thoughts and words but after their experience in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu they were able talk about everything instantly, like native speakers. Learners also expressed that they improved their listening skills as well. They became better at understanding the main points in speech by listening only once. At first they stated they wanted to listen to everything twice as in class and asked people to repeat almost everything they said which made them very uncomfortable. Learner participants felt pleased to study materials which were connected to real life around them.

When asked what they thought about the one-to-one relation with the materials and Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu, they stated that for the first time in their lives they did something meaningful with the things they had been studying at school. Concerning the meaningfulness of the course, one of the participants stated the following: "I knew that just after class I would be able to apply or at least try what I had learned during class. This was great, because it gave meaning to after-class tasks and activities. I wanted to see whether I could do them or not." When asked what they liked about the course, almost all participants stated that whatever they did during the course had a realistic and immediate purpose. They never asked why they were asked to do certain tasks. "We saw the aim before we started the activities; it was great to see the connections, to understand the functions behind."

When discussing their feelings and future plans concerning English language learning, they stated that they felt very comfortable and relaxed while using the language in the vicinity. "I spoke as if English was my mother tongue, there were so many people around trying to communicate, they were all like me, at times better, at times worse than me." Language learners stated that they would continue learning and studying English, because they understood that learning languages was not very difficult when using it in real life situations. "It wasn't like learning a language; I never thought that I was there to practise English. I went there to spend time and, when I was there, I used English to communicate with people. It was so natural; not difficult at all." All of the participants stated that they understood through their experiences in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu that studying or learning English could be very

effective, if learners are involved or are a part of the syllabus they are using to learn a language.

Language teachers
Language teachers stated that the most valuable effect of the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu was that they did not worry at all about motivating students when they involved Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu elements in the learning process. "When I mentioned things about Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu, I was able to see the motivation of the students towards the task or activity." The students became more willing to participate in the activities. They didn't even complain about homework, if it had something to do with Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. Teachers stated that their students improved their language in all skills but their speaking improved much more compared to other skills. "They became more fluent, talking without worrying about their mistakes, with no hesitations". Teachers were also pleased to see their students using more English with them outside class as well. "When they wanted to say something outside class, they used English unlike past."

The language teachers in the study also stated that their students improved their vocabulary and started to use more words in their writings. "It was interesting to observe the variety of vocabulary in their writing; it wasn't like this before Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu". One of the teachers complained about his students wanting to relate everything to Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. "I had to think what I can include in the lesson about Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu all the time." Teachers also said that they felt more comfortable to see Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu-related elements and tasks on the syllabus. "We didn't try to understand the context, we knew everything about it. We were part of it." One of the teachers suggested planning the whole course on Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu and organising everything accordingly. "I saw my students' progress and why not organise the whole course around Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu."

Syllabus designers
Analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions mainly revealed that syllabus designers who were English language teachers at the same time were very pleased with the presence of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. During the process of structuring the content of the language course syllabus, they stated that they started to consider what kinds of spaces they would utilise and how they were going to present the content within these spaces. This, they stated, was something very new, because they had never considered space as a design principle. "We plan everything for classrooms, we never think of other options."

They also stated that they saved lots of time because they considered Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu-oriented elements as their first option; they did not spend time finding the material or task that best reflected the language point in the syllabus. They stated that they compiled a material bank of the pictures and videos of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. "Of course it is important to use the right picture, because people know the place, know the events." They also stated that some students offered to give pictures and videos of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. Syllabus designers stated that they were very careful when writing about Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu not to mention something to demotivate students. They were also very careful not to include any racially and ethnically biassed material in the course syllabus. "There shouldn't be any hidden message concerning ethnic viewpoints. We need to act responsibly." During the focus group

discussion, they liked the idea of developing a unique Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu syllabus and said that they might consider the possibility of developing and piloting one in the following course. Syllabus designers also stated that they were very pleased that what they had produced was effective and useful.

Research Question 3: Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu modifications to language syllabi

A simple content data analysis method was used to count Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu-related elements incorporated into the two intermediate English language course syllabi. Many changes explained below were spotted on language syllabi concerning the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. It was observed that Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu-oriented materials, tasks, activities and homework had been integrated into language syllabi.

Inclusion of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu oriented materials
According to McKay and Tom (1999), materials should use real language, reflecting what people hear, say and write. Audio-visuals, stories and situations should be relevant and appealing to the interests and the needs of students. They should ensure interaction and awareness of their immediate surroundings. We found that many pictures, multimodal texts and videos of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu had been incorporated into the syllabi of the two language courses. Pictures were from the shops, restaurants, and open space. Multimodal texts, integrated with spatial elements of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu, which made "them something other than writing and pictures presented together" (Exley & Mills, 2012. p. 198), were created by syllabus designers. Videos were either self-recorded or from the Internet. On the first syllabus there were 12 pictures of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu and two videos. On the second syllabus there were 15 pictures and three videos. They were all related to the thematic units and were very familiar to the students. Three of the worksheets were Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu specific: the first one asking students to go there and find what they really like about the place, the second one asking them to go there and find two English speaking people to interview about their holiday preference, and the third, to write down all colours with their objects they see in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu.

Inclusion of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu oriented tasks/activities/homework
There were 5 major and 11 minor Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu related tasks incorporated into both syllabi. In one of the major tasks, learners were asked to interview three people about littering and suggest solutions to solve the problem. Similarly in another task they were asked interview two people about environmental issues in Cyprus and make a poster to raise awareness about environmental problems. In another, learners were asked to bargain for the price of cheap sunglasses sold in the shops before negotiating a deal and make a leaflet on "tips of bargaining" in Cyprus. Eighteen activities were about the Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. There were activities asking students to write about their personal experience on various daily events such as shopping, dining, and etc. in the vicinity. Dialogs for dialog completion activities were from Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. Learners were also asked to examine pictures from the vicinity and locate certain adjectives, nouns, verbs, and etc. Learners were also asked prepare short talks about Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu related topics. 11 different pieces of homework were specified on both syllabi concerning Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. Learners were asked to find and interview people about various issues. They were also asked to photograph certain instances in the vicinity. The most interesting was the one asking

students to photograph something the most colours in it. They were also asked to interview people and report them in various formats.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from our study that Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu has had an immense effect on individual's use of the English language. Analysis of the findings revealed that the nascence of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu created a space placing English Language in the centre. People using the space started to understand the necessity of knowing and using English. They began to change their attitudes towards learning English. With increasing use of English, Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu became a tangible and social space to practise English with authentic instances.

People started to think more about the influence of English and the importance of communicating with people from different cultures. People using Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu felt differently when using English and when someone used English. According Garrett, Coupland & Williams (2003), language attitudes are directly related to our feelings when using or dealing with the language. People at Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu had diverse feelings mainly related with language anxiety but it was also interesting to see that they felt suspicious which could have been the effect of the political instability of the island. Analysis of the findings concerning the presence and effects of English language in a learning space, Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu, revealed that people develop educational associations regarding a space when they are to interact with it. It seems that language learners consider themselves as part of the process of learning and develop ownership towards language materials. This finding supports that of Jacobs (1961), who like us, believes that people develop ownership within the spaces they interact bodily and socially, and this feeling of ownership is reflected in other dimensions of life as well.

In fact, incorporating space related elements (tangible, social or immersive) into language syllabi motivates learners, as they are themselves one of the components of these spatial realities or constructs. It is evident from the findings that leaners improve their language knowledge, abilities and skills by interacting and communicating in the vicinity within which they reside. Van Lier (1996) believes that through interaction in social contexts learners develop new perspectives, knowledge and strategies. Language learners also willingly carry out their course related tasks and activities in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. This in a way makes us consider urban spaces as open-air classrooms, an option for boring class tasks and activities. Learning should not be restricted to classrooms and as Bolton (2012) states it should be broaden through electronic space, educational travel and migration, global travel, media awareness and usage, popular culture, and the virtual space of the Internet. From the analysis of the data, we also observed how successfully language learners overcome inhibition regarding speaking and communication. Language learners initiated conversation, discussed and talked freely with people in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu. This developed their self-confidence and resulted in more involvement in language learning.

Analysis of the findings revealed that language teachers were pleased to observe their students becoming more motivated towards undertaking activities and tasks when Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu elements were incorporated. They stated that this had not been

the case before, and learners were eager to even ask for more language work. With the inclusion of Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu elements into the course, new discoveries were made every day for themselves and their students. Evidently, the inclusion and richness of authentic teaching materials makes language more effective (Stern, 1983). They were also satisfied with the progress of their students concerning language abilities and skills, especially with speaking and listening. Language teachers spent less time and effort explaining to students the logic of actual and authentic communication situations, because they were able to experience these in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu.

Syllabus designers gained a different perspective on incorporating space-related elements into the language syllabus. They started to value more the construction of learning spaces, tangible, social or immersive. They concluded that they have to consider the space within which language learning takes place when structuring language content. The classroom is not the only place to deliver and practise the content of language learning. Learning spaces, tangible, social or immersive, should be determined and used in every language syllabus. They also realised that they have to involve the learner in these constructions as well. Nunan (1999), too, emphasises learners' contributions and involvement in syllabus design. Without the learner, spatial constructions are far away, isolated from the learning process and ineffective to produce any useful and worthwhile learning outcome.

IMPLICATIONS

In the process of syllabus design, the main focus has traditionally been on the content of the language learning (structures, functions or tasks), the order of this content and methods used to deliver this content. Syllabi are categorised and labelled according to the variations of the above elements. However categorised or labelled, in all syllabi, the classroom has always been the application field of the syllabus and spatial considerations were all in terms of the classroom. The present study suggests that language learners are more motivated and involved when interacting with the environment outside the classroom, but of which the classroom itself (and themselves) is a part.

Learning spaces, tangible, social or immersive, make language learning more meaningful, valuing as they do individual differences, abilities and potentials. The main implication of this study is, then, that the syllabus design process should integrate the fourth element, the learning space (tangible, social and/or immersive) within which the syllabus is delivered, when structuring any language syllabi. The integration of learning space should be the primary concern of syllabus designers because, according to the findings of the study, learning becomes more meaningful and effective when there is dynamic interaction between learners and the learning spaces they inhabit.

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APPENDIX

Structured Interview Questions and Tables

Questions

1.   Why do you go to Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?
2.   Is knowing English important in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?
3.   If knowing English is important in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu, do you want to learn English?
4.   Why do you use English in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?
5.   If you know English, what did you do to practise/improve your English?
6.   What changes have observed concerning English Language use in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?
7.   Compared to the past, how do you feel you when you speak English in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?
8.   How do you feel when someone talks to you in English and you don't understand him?

Tables

Why do you go to Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?	Frequency	Percentage
For Shopping	72	90
To spend time	46	57.5
To observe people from other cultures	43	53.75
To find/make a friend from a different culture	29	36.25
To walk around	27	33.75
To practise English	23	28.75
To learn more about other culture	23	28.75
To have breakfast/lunch/dinner	21	26.25
To meet friends	17	21.25
To have a drink	12	15
To visit the historical places	11	13.75
For business	9	11.25
To show visitors the other side	6	7.5

Table 1. Reasons to visit Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu

Is knowing English important in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?	Yes	No
Turkish Cypriots	83 %	17 %
Greek Cypriot	53 %	47 %
Others	76 %	24 %
If knowing English is important in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu, do you want to learn English?	Yes	No
Turkish Cypriots	95 %	5 %
Greek Cypriot	40 %	60 %
Others	74 %	26 %

Table 2. Importance of knowing English and desire to learn/practise/improve English

Why do you use English in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?	Frequency	Percentage
To ask prices	71	88.75
To request help in a shop	65	81.25
To talk to the police officers at checkpoints	47	58.75
To understand leaflets/brochures distributed in the area	21	26.25
To Chat with people	17	21.25
To help people who do know Greek/Turkish to communicate in English	15	18.75
To ask directions	15	18.75
To Ask / tell time	11	13.75
To complain about something	5	6.25

Table 3. Reasons to use English

If you know English, what did you do to practice/improve your English?	Frequency	Percentage
Listen to English Music	46	57.5
Spend more time in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu	39	48.75
Read English signposts in the area	17	21.25
Read English books	17	21.25
Use Internet	14	17.5
Try to converse in English	13	16.25
Enrol a language course	6	7.5
Listen to English radio	5	6.25
Watch English channels	3	3.75

Table 4. What they did to practise/improve English

What changes have observed concerning English Language use in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?	Frequency	Percentage
There are more English signs	65	81,25
There are more people conversing in English while shopping	56	70
There are more English speaking shop assistants	54	67,5
There are more English speaking police officers at checkpoints	46	53.75
There are more people conversing in English while dining	39	48,75

Table 5. English Language use

Compared to the past, how do you feel you when you speak English in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu?	Frequency	Percentage
More Comfortable	34	42.5
More anxious	32	40
More Elated	27	33.75
More Threatened	24	30
More Free	23	28.75
More Satisfied	22	27.5
More Confident	16	20
More Privileged	15	18.75
More Fortunate	12	15
More Afraid	12	15
More Inferior	11	13.75
More Important	11	13.75
More Engrossed	7	8.75
More Indifferent	6	7.5
More Inspired	6	7.5
More Clever	5	6.25
More Challenged	5	6.25
More Courageous	4	5
More Embarrassed	4	5
More Frustrated	2	2.5

Table 6. Speaking English in Ledra/Lokmaci Milieu

How do you feel when someone talks to you in English and you don't understand him?	Frequency	Percentage
Annoyed	43	53.75
Frustrated	42	52.5
Tense	36	45
Curious	32	40
Afraid	27	33.75
Panic	31	38.75
Suspicious	25	31.25
Indifferent	24	30
Embarrassed	21	26.25
Lonely	19	23.75
Inferior	17	21.25
Alienated	15	18.75
Threatened	14	17.5
Stupefied	12	15
Humiliated	10	12.5
Lost	9	11.25

Table 7. Feelings when you do not understand English