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Kasia Lech, Marianne Kennedy

Displacing Practitioner: on Professional Training for Multilingual Theatre in Europe

Writing multilingualism – as an interaction of languages from ethnic, state, territorial, or disability contexts occurring within a space or simultaneously within multiple spaces (physical, geographical, socio-political, or virtual) – into theatre training in Europe is both a key challenge for European theatre systems and an extremely complex issue. Theatre systems in Europe are predominantly national-language-specific, organized by and narrated in national tongues assigned to specific territories. This includes formal theatre training in drama schools, which happens through and in the official language(s) within their territory (and their culture(s)). Even if a school offers two language programmes – like the Academy of Arts Novi Sad (Serbia) with programmes in Hungarian and Serbian – these languages rarely interact. Yet, realities in Europe are multilingual and move languages across spaces and places. In contemporary Europe, historically underpinned language interactions meet contemporary ones facilitated by increased migration, disability contexts, globalization, cheap airlines, and technology.

Theatre institutions and artists increasingly recognize the absence of multilingualism in European theatre programming. They are beginning to stage productions incorporating multiple languages, reflecting the diverse and interconnected contexts of minority/regional languages, translation, globalization, new technologies, migration, disability contexts, and European cultures. At the 7th Festival of New Theatre for Children at the Wrocław Puppetry Theatre in June 2024, five of seventeen shows included more than one language. Belarussian-Ukrainian-Polish *Mothers: A Song for Wartime*, directed by Marta Górnicka (Powszechny Theatre, Warsaw), opened the 2024 Utrecht Spring in the Netherlands. Theatre Gu Leòr (Scotland), Theatr Bara Caws (Wales), and Fishamble: the New Play Company (Ireland) completed the 2024 three-nation tour of *TAIGH/TÏ/TEACH*, a tri-lingual co-production directed by Muireann Kelly. There is also a growing understanding amongst mainstream institutions that there is a need to shift their practices regar-

ding language. Matthias Lilienthal at the Münchner Kammerspiele (Germany), Shermin Langhoff at the Gorki Theatre (Germany), Milo Rau at the NTGent (Belgium), and Caroline Guiela Nguyen at the Théâtre National de Strasbourg (France) are examples of leaders who included multilingualism at their vision of theatre institutions.

The developing interest of theatre leaders in multilingual productions impacts theatre training and its interest in different languages. This also corresponds with the freedom to move and work within the EU, opening new collaboration possibilities and increasing interest in internationalization. On the other hand, precarious situations (economy or war) also force artists to travel and work in different linguistic contexts. Leading Europe's practitioners¹ during the European Theatre Forum 2020: European Performing Arts in Focus marked including multilingualism in theatre training as a critical challenge for Europe's higher education. Including multilingualism in formal theatre training underscores its significance for Europe's theatres of tomorrow, but it will take some time until it is written into the curriculum of drama schools.

This essay focuses on the current moment, exploring multilingual theatre training that happens in addition to the curriculum or in post-formal training contexts. Such training goes beyond role-specific techniques (acting, directing, and so on) and cuts across other contexts: audience, theatre systems, and socio-political aspects of theatre. This means that part of the training includes developing awareness and skills to respond to the following:

- audiences in different languages and cultures have different receptive strategies and can interpret productions and react differently;
- theatre systems and ways of employing and paying theatre-makers operate differently across different countries;
- multilingual theatre is always coupled with the responsibility to create visibility and space for languages on our stages, especially in relation to underrepresented languages, people, and their stories.

We argue that a displacement – from one's language, system, and culturally-framed "artistic quality" – is a core element of such training, so it becomes a collaborative web of elements rooted in ontologies and epistemologies taken from many languages and production roles. We base our arguments on training practices developed and issues encountered during the *Jeune Théâtre Européen Jeunes Publics*

¹ Professor Regina Guhl (Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover, Germany); Máté Gáspár, (Cultural Manager & University Lecturer, Budapest, Hungary); Beata Szczucinska (Akademia Teatralna im. A. Zelwerowicza, Warszawa/Warsaw, Poland); and Leo Swinkels (Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Zuyd Hogeschool, President of Platform European Theatre Academy, Maastricht, Netherlands).

project (JTEJP). This Creative Europe project ran from July 2022 to October 2023 and brought together France's Espace des Arts, Scène Nationale de Chalon sur Saôn, ArtVeda (Tunisia), Artfraction (Serbia), Jeune Théâtre National (France), Staatstheater Mainz (Germany), Pedio Texnis (Greece) and the University of Galway (Ireland).

The JTEJP aimed to create models for multilingual theatre for young and new audiences by multinational and multi-European theatre companies. The project brought together early-career theatre artists collaborating with experienced mentors, producers, and organizers from diverse professional backgrounds and languages: Serbian, Hungarian, French, Finnish, Polish, English, Irish, Arabic, Greek, Amazigh, Tunisian, Albanian, Ukrainian, Russian, German, Arvanitika, and Italian.

The current essay bases its arguments on the observation of the various creative processes, workshops, and productions throughout the project by Kasia Lech and Marianne Kennedy, present on all seven mobilities. After each mobility, qualitative data was collected through questionnaires, focus groups, and qualitative interviews. There was also a final questionnaire. After each work-in-progress, there was a focus group with spectators and workshops for audiences. After the final mobility in October 2023, master's students from the University of Galway (Ireland) and the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands) interviewed key partners and artists about the project and its engagement with multilingualism and young audiences. They worked in small groups and, in the end, met to discuss results and how the project operated in relation to scholarship on young audiences, multilingualism, and local, national, and European politics.

To make this argument and explain the idea of multilingualism as a placement in theatre training, this essay briefly discusses different contexts in which language situates or places human experiences, expressions, perceptions, and relations to others and the world, including theatre systems, practices, and training.

Language, multilingualism, as displacement in theatre training

Human language is a systemic mode of communication characterized by complex rules such as grammar, syntax, spelling, and pronunciation. Based on these rules, auditory, visual, or tactile symbols of language are arranged into utterances. Humans articulate languages through speaking, writing, signing, and fingerspelling². Language profoundly influences various aspects of human experience, spanning physical, psychological, emotional, cultural, social, spiritual, and virtual realms. It allows people to express themselves through auditory, visual-spatial, tactile, and graphological means, shaping how they communicate, emote, comprehend, narra-

² R. Grzegorzycowa, *Wstęp Do Językoznawstwa*, Warszawa, Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2017, pp. 12-13.

te, connect, create, remember, and engage with others and the world around them. Moreover, language provides a framework for understanding and structuring personal and collective experiences, knowledge, and cultural identities. Languages embody, narrate, and archive cultures³. This includes theatre.

Language is fundamental in Europe's theatres and is all-encompassing, as argued by Małgorzata Sugiera, Karel Vanhaesebrouck, and Timmy De Laet, ranging «from creation, production, and performing to spectating, reception, and scholarship». This, as they demonstrate, also stands in contexts that seek to deprivilege language, such as dance and post-dramatic theatres⁴. In training, theatre-makers are trained not only on how to use their language to perform their role in theatre (so how to communicate in the process), but also how to use language to facilitate audience engagement with a performance or theatre institution. For actors, of course, this also includes training their tools – tongue, vocal cords, etc. – to use language so it fulfils the standards set in a particular theatre system⁵.

The mechanisms through which language shapes all these different phenomena – including theatre practices and training – are rooted in each language's unique rules, auditory, visual, or tactile symbols, and language's histories, as language functions as a repository of cultures and their histories. In turn, how language performs its diverse functions differs across languages. This means that by bringing together different languages, multilingual situations also bring together diverse ways of experiences, expression, and organization of physical, psychological, emotional, social, political, spiritual, and virtual contexts⁶.

Moreover, these different modes may have different socio-political capitals and histories. Thus, multilingual situations also raise the question of power structures between languages⁷.

From a theatre and theatre training's point of view, multilingual situations bring to the fore different language's modes of operating as a tool for communication, as speech (its sounds, signs, clarity, and intelligibility), and as a tool of storytelling and re-presenting. However, different languages also carry different ways of performing and responding to physical, psychological, and emotional experiences and expressions, as well as, by extension, different aesthetics of scenic truth and or/authenti-

³ S. Hall, *Introduction*, in S. Hall, J. Evans and S. Nixon (edited by), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, Sage, 2013, pp. xvii-xix.

⁴ M. Sugiera, K. Vanhaesebrouck and T. de Laet, *Editorial Introduction*, in «European Journal of Theatre and Performance», III, 2021, p. 15.

⁵ Cfr. K. Thomaidis, *Theatre and Voice*, London, Bloomsbury, 2017, p. 53.

⁶ Cfr. K. Lech, *Multilingual Dramaturgies: Towards New European Theatre*, Cham, Springer, 2024, pp. 30-54.

⁷ Cfr. U. Vogl, *Multilingualism in a Standard Language Culture*, in M. Hüning, U. Vogl and O. Moliner (edited by), *Standard Languages and Multilingualism in European History*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing, 2012, pp. 1-42.

city, rehearsal, and receptive strategies. Different languages also denote differently organized theatre systems as socio-cultural-political structures within which individual theatre organizations operate⁸.

In other words, by displacing a theatre maker through multilingualism, one creates an opportunity for a practitioner to look at their language and culture, theatre-related terms and practices developed within the language, its theatre system, its way of thinking and speaking about theatre makers, and its accepted “artistic quality” not as natural but as socially and culturally constructed and context-specific.

Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento focuses on actors to discuss the potential of such a step away from one’s culture. Although she does not explicitly look at language, she speaks about “intercultural actors” – whose “cultural reality is no longer the one prescribed by a perfect juxtaposition of national and ethnic boundaries.” These actors, she argues, often experience double-foreignness; the actor is «seen as foreigner by her social and professional environments» and spectators and, at the same time, the actor perceives «these environments and her audiences as unfamiliar». Nascimento points out that such displacing experiences allow intercultural actors to draw on “foreign and familiar” and offer a challenge to homogeneous and stable identities, and new aesthetics of intercultural performance and broader cultural encounters⁹.

The JTEJP project shows that multilingual situations – whether in a country one recognizes as familiar or not – facilitate displacement from the familiar, thus opening a multifocal perspective on the known and unknown and creating new intercultural theatre-making perspectives and practices. This also includes new ways of understanding one’s audience and opening to possibilities of diverse spectators’ languages and receptive strategies. The JTEJP’s focus was on young spectators, from 8-year-olds to young adults, which has particular urgency.

As scholars have repeatedly emphasized, different systemic inequalities against theatre for young audiences and stereotypical imaginaries of children linger in theatre systems: from inequalities between funding and status of “adult” theatre and theatre for young audiences to questions on who makes the decision to participate and judges the “success” of works for children and youth and assumptions about young audiences¹⁰. This includes the countries from which the JTEJP’s artists came, as shown by research conducted by students from University of Amsterdam at the end of JTEJP. The danger, as Jeanne Klein argues, lies in the fact

⁸ K. Sedgman, *The Institutional Persona: When Theatres Become Personas and The Case of Bristol Old Vic*, in «Persona Studies», V, 2020, n. 2, p. 100.

⁹ C.T. Nascimento, *Crossing Cultural Borders Through the Actor’s Work Foreign Bodies of Knowledge*, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 7-9, 136.

¹⁰ Cfr. J. Klein, *Applying Developmental Epistemic Cognition to Theatre for Young Audiences*, in R. Kemp and B. McConachie (edited by), *The Routledge Companion to Theatre, Performance, and Cognitive Science*, London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 83-90.

that children “do not necessarily recognise prejudicial discriminations directed against them” in theatre for young spectators and yet they shape their understanding of children – and thus self – in the formative stages of life¹¹. The question of representation and prejudicial ideas on self becomes an even greater issue when applied to children who do not (fully) belong to the dominating or official or recognized linguistic contexts, such as children with migrant, minoritized linguistic or disability backgrounds. They have few opportunities to see their realities, languages, and cultures reflected on stage. In turn, they face an indirect yet prejudicial statement made by theatres against them: in their home (the country where they grow up), some of their languages, and some of their cultures are less valuable, and, in the cases of migrant languages, have no cultural or public value for at all. This is one of the reasons why, as Lech has argued, multilingual theatre for young audiences is a culturally and politically urgent task that upholds fundamental human and children’s rights and battles the intersectional inequalities related to childhood, migration, and disability.¹²

JTEJP: the process and findings

Seven mobilities and transnational meetings happened in Novi Sad (Serbia), Chalon-sur-Saône (France), Mainz (Germany), Galway (Ireland), Tunis (Tunisia), Athens (Greece), and Chalon-sur-Saône again, in addition to several Zoom meetings. Each mobility involved local artists and communities, and most featured workshops on different aspects of multilingual theatre, either for the artists or for young people. Over two years, the artists created and rehearsed four work-in-progress multilingual productions for young audiences. All of these performances developed in different countries (Ireland, Tunisia, Greece, and Serbia/France) through various methods (e.g. devising, translation, multilingual playwrighting) and were aimed at different age ranges of audiences (8-10-year-olds, +12, family audiences, teenagers), they were presented to international audiences of producers during the final mobility in Chalon-sur-Saône in October 2023. In addition, the project offered lectures from those involved and local experts about various aspects of theatre-making, workshops on multilingual theatre-making for artists involved, young people, and actors-in-training.

Through the process, the artists involved created four multilingual work-in-progress pieces. Each partner presented an initial idea for a multilingual project for a young or new audience, and each project was then developed into a more formal

¹¹ Ivi, p. 83.

¹² K. Lech, *Multilingual Theatre For/With Young Audiences*, in «TheTheatreTimes.com», 28 February 2024, <https://thetheatretimes.com/multilingual-theatre-for-with-young-audiences-on-the-jeune-theatre-europeen-jeunes-publics-project/> (last access: 18 October 2024).

proposal within international ensembles predominantly made of artists from within the project. The final presentations all used languages to look at the known contexts – national, local, social, or cultural – in a new way. For the Irish-based work-in-progress *Savage*, rooted in the legend about Children’s of Lir, Arabic and Serbian stories helped to highlight the possibility of retelling the national myth from different perspectives. In the Tunisian piece *Dibya* the focus was on deconstructing simplistic narratives on Tunisian history and culture by bringing to light the rich story of Amazigh language and contextualizing it within broader North-African and Mediterranean regions. The Greek performance *Borderline* explored racist violence experienced by different communities in Greece and underpinned by power relations between Greek, Albanian, and French languages. Serbian *Mary’s Monster* focused – in Serbian, English, Greek, and French – on a journey of Frankenstein across Europe and his learning of languages.

The research conducted after the JTEJP by the students from Amsterdam and Galway showed that the artists’ awareness of a child as a creative agent increased throughout the project. They were less likely to imagine a young spectator as a one-language “native speaker” whose language perfectly fits their familial, national and ethnic contexts. The data collected via observations, questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews confirms these findings and shows a change of attitude amongst producers and artists. There was also a growing awareness of creative possibilities in rehearsals and performances by envisioning an audience speaking various languages and being a creative partner with their agency. The project also developed their methods and knowledge about multilingual theatre-making and evoked curiosity and will to make more theatre in multiple tongues for young people.

The difficulties in the process arose from temporal and financial pressures and from the fact that the initial ideas were developed in national groups (Irish, Serbian, and so on). The individual pieces were rehearsed for two weeks during mobilities, with a work-in-progress show at the end. That pressure of time and the need to deliver meant that some artists turned to tools they knew to work rather than searching for new ones or experimenting with multilingual communication, which takes more time. Some also prioritized the creative team getting to know each other over multilingual experiments. This is in line with research that shows that more extended rehearsal periods and more room for creative failures are needed in multilingual creative processes¹³. The project’s structure needed to be rethought to focus less on the work-in-progress showcase and more on the process. This links with another hindrance to multilingual processes: the national context of the initial ideas.

As the project progressed, the reflection was made – in evaluation by experts and the questionnaires by artists – that the ideas for the productions should have been

¹³ K. Lech, *Multilingual Dramaturgies*, cit., pp. 266-267.

developed in cross-national multilingual groups instead of national teams. The finances further enhanced the national context – stretched with inflation – and partly sustainability determined that each project would be workshoped in the country of the company that proposed it (fewer people to travel). In turn, it was challenging for the artists (although efforts were made) in rehearsal – after envisioning their project from their perspective situated in their language and culture – to stretch creative ownerships in their project beyond their immediate languages and cultures, especially given the timeframe.

Paradoxically, even though the artists under pressure turned to what they knew, in the final questionnaires, they pointed out contexts in which they were displaced from the known as the most beneficial for their development of understanding multilingual theatre making. And so, we now turn to the different multilingual displacements that the project staged.

Multilingual displacement 1: setting up the (frustrating) rules

At the start of the process, English (and, to a lesser extent, French) became the language of communication; for those who could speak English and for those who could not, English was translated into French. This was an issue for two key reasons. First of all, in such a mode of communication, no one could hear what languages were spoken in the room and what they sounded like. It seemed to stand in opposition to the project's multilingual ambitions. The second reason was connected to power. Violent acts of colonization underpin the international statuses of English and French. English, specifically, through its status as a global language or “standard” language of international exchange, has contributed to inequality and has polarized territorial and social splits¹⁴. The JTEJP process needed to combat these linguistic hegemonies.

In response, the rule was created for creative meetings that each person would first speak in their language of choice and then translate it either by themselves or with the help of others until everyone in the room has some (but not necessarily complete) understanding. This meant that things took longer, but it also allowed for hearing ideas and creating in a multilingual mode. It brought difficulties in making sense processes to the fore, emphasizing self-awareness of how one “makes sense” and, in turn, making it more challenging to form assumptions about others. However, these difficulties in making sense also raised fears about whether multilingual communication can be fruitful. Feedback from some participants showed that some also appreciated the presence of interpreter. Yet the interpreter meant that French and English (and their speakers) held more symbolic power, as these

¹⁴ M. Gazzola and R.W. Ronza, *The Politics and Policy of Multilingualism in the European Union*, in «Brown Journal of World Affairs», XXV, 2018, n. 1, pp. 58-59.

were the chosen languages of interpretation. At the same time, these frustrations, wishes for clarity, and questions were necessary because, as Alison Phipps argues, such feelings are essential in forming ethical connections with differences¹⁵. It reveals different inequalities and structures that organize one's engagement with another. The artists' presentations of ideas in Chalon-sur-Saône in October 2022 provide an example.

During this second mobility, the artists presented their ideas for the project they would like to develop through the JTEJP. On the first day, all artists spoke French or English and were interpreted to English and French respectively. In this situation, one's level of either French or English was an advantage. Those who would feel more confident and clearer in another language needed to translate themselves to one of the two languages and then allow their words to be translated again. Only one of those translations (the second one) was visible, obscuring the inequality the situation created. The artists presenting on the second day – rejecting their privilege of speaking English and/or French – chose to present in other languages (Irish, Greek, and German), mixing English/French into their presentation, making the differences and multilingual negotiations visible.

Multilingual displacement 2: lack of common language as a creative agent

The multilingual mode of communication operated differently at different parts of the project. It was the most obeyed during the initial workshops, presentations, and to various extent in different rehearsals for work-in-progress presentations. In Ireland and Greece, the processes were led in local languages that is English and Irish, and Greek, respectively. The Tunisian and Serbian pieces were rehearsed in a multilingual way. In turn, this meant that creative processes and ideas were shared across many languages, and their ways of knowing. And whether or not languages were shared in the creative team was an important factor in this.

The Serbian team rehearsed in France with artists speaking Arabic, French, Serbian, German, and Greek, and the technical team predominantly in French, which the director and majority of artists involved did not speak. English was not a common language, as most of the technical team could not speak it. In this context, the rehearsals needed to rely on fragmented translations, multilingual negotiations, and non-verbal communication, in short, on translanguaging. The theme of translating oneself became a central theme in the Serbian work-in-progress. Their piece, *Mary's Monster* went beyond the artists' national or local contexts.

In Tunisian team, the technical team, the director, the voice coach, and the mo-

¹⁵ A. Phipps, *Linguistic Incompetence: Giving an Account of Researching Multilingually*, in «International Journal of Applied Linguistics», XXIII, 2013, n. 3, p. 340.

vement coach shared languages (French and Arabic). However, no language was shared amongst the entire team, as one of the actors spoke only Greek and Arvanitika. They used digital technology to facilitate communication. This included the exchange of YouTube videos as a way of inter-cultural exchange of pop-culture references. In this deeply multilingual context – with different languages having different vowel and consonant sounds – the voice coach worked with breath as a starting moment for the voice. The movement coach focused on supporting each body to move within their own personal and cultural body language and its rhythm, which helped during the production to notice the difference between different languages used, even if, for some spectators coming from abroad, the differences between Arabic and Amazigh were not possible to hear. In other words, some innovative methods were facilitated by multilingual contexts and a lack of shared language. This was the case even though some artists found the situations difficult and frustrating while recognizing in questionnaires that these moments developed their multilingual practice the most.

Multilingual displacement 3: taking a language away

In Chalon-sur-Saône in 2022, French director Anne Bérélowitch and French-Finnish Parelle Gervasoni from La Compagnie facilitated a series of multilingual workshops with young actors in training from Conservatoire à rayonnement régional du Grand Chalon (conservatory in Chalon-sur-Saône). This was the final session after a one-year-long project, during which Bérélowitch and Gervasoni met the actors every month (9 times in total) for two and a half days each time. The fundamental rule of the workshops was that actors could not use French – the primary language of their training – in warm-ups or any creative exercises. They had to use other languages, regardless of their proficiency.

Lech and Kennedy observed the final session, and Lech also ran the focus group afterwards with the participants. One of the actors admitted he started to learn Italian to have a tool to use in the workshop. All young actors confirmed their sense of developing general acting skills, especially the sense of increased authenticity, linking them clearly to multilingual contexts. Some said that the session helped them to understand how their life experiences related to languages and mobility can make them better actors. They also confirmed their growing awareness of and confidence in using their linguistic resources after the session, and all clearly related it to their increased employability. For some, it was connected to an increased ability to work internationally, and some expressed that they plan to continue to use multilingualism in how they work as directors, actors, and community artists. All this agrees with what Lech and Kennedy observed in the session.

The actor-participants came from a variety of backgrounds and languages. It was, therefore, very significant how the workshops shifted their understanding of self

within their immediate and local contexts. As an observer, Lech and Kennedy noticed the growing confidence of actors to use different languages and play with them. In the interviews, Lech noted that participants commented on feeling empowered to be different since the difference was a core quality of the workshop group. For those with migrant communities it meant re-connecting to their native languages (physically and psychologically) and languages of their parents, or even grandparents. Some reported growing confidence in using these languages publicly or wishing to learn them.

In other words, the workshop created a space for the visibility and audibility of their familial stories. It connected these to France, even if the actual stories were from far away. The sense of transgenerational familial connection positively impacts children and young adults' mental well-being and sense of belonging. Moreover, here, even more so, the workshop demonstrated how these connections can contribute to and enhance one's acting career and French theatre in general. One actor commented how he initially used German phrases he remembered his grandfather to use as this was the only other language he had, and how this experience encouraged him to reflect on his identity. This value of languages and difference also translated into participants learning new languages throughout the projects and wanting to learn more.

The professional social benefits grow beyond the timeframe of the workshops. Participants from migrant communities commented on how much it meant for their confidence and sense of self to experience languages they shared with their families as valid means of artistic communication. This opens a question: who could become an audience in theatres if theatres reflected the diversity of local residents and their languages and noticed creative possibilities that arise from such engagement? If theatres engaged with artists from these disenfranchised communities, it would help to make these theatres a space where migrants and other minorities are welcomed. These were the questions also brought up by the JTEJP artists during their encounters with diverse spectators.

Multilingual displacement 4: encountering different receptive strategies

A vital aspect of the project involved engaging young audiences in Chalon-sur-Saône (France), Tunis (Tunisia), Galway (Ireland), and Athens (Greece) in focus groups post-performances. These interactions revealed various culturally and linguistically constructed ways of experiencing theatre, highlighting the relative nature of "artistic quality." Young people (aged 8 to young adults) participated in these workshops and commented on the work-in-progress showings just witnessed. These discussions captured their experiences and demonstrated the socio-political potential of multilingual theatre. It raised broader questions about audience inclusivity, with young spectators becoming active participants in theatre-making.

In Ireland, Tunisia, and Greece, audiences reflected the cultural contexts of the artists. However, in the Serbian piece, young French theatre-makers (aged 16-18) formed the audience, providing a cross-cultural experience. Despite these differences, spectators consistently expressed strong connections with the artists, whether through the vulnerability of the performers or seeing them as part of their community. These encounters allowed theatre makers to engage with diverse audience interpretations, both familiar and unfamiliar.

For some, multilingualism reaffirmed the importance of traditional languages in their local realities. Ireland's piece, for the spectators, stressed the cultural value of Irish, stretching beyond the context of the island. It also provided a linguistic environment where the Irish-speaking children of the audience felt comfortable enough in the multilingual environment to ask their questions in Irish rather than translating themselves into English. It would have been interesting to see what would have happened if new languages of Ireland (such as Polish, with the biggest non-Irish community) were added. In Greece, teenage spectators, many from migrant backgrounds, connected with the piece's representation of racial violence and marginalization but viewed it as a matter of the past. This was later contrasted with the opposing experiences of migrant artists working in Greece, which emphasized the hyper-contextual experiences of multilingual works. Tunisian audiences noted how the multilingualism of the piece reflected their diverse communities. In the Serbian piece, the spectators, as young theatre-makers, viewed the work through a professional lens, recognizing how multilingualism resonated with their creative and career opportunities and goals.

However, regardless of these variables, in all focus groups after the showings, spectators narrated their experiences of these presentations in a strong connection to the artists on stage, whether this was the vulnerability of the artists – exemplifying arguments by Bert O. States¹⁶ – or seeing the artists as an extension of their community.

The focus groups became an important extension of theatrical events and took on an identity of their own. They became simultaneously acts of displacement from normative language practices and multilingual acts of imagining and rehearsing new, more equal, collaborative ways of communicating in theatre. For example, in Tunis, Lech spoke to the families in English (with some help of Polish) and Anne Bérélowitch translated it to French. Some audiences needed further translation to Arabic, a language in neither Lech nor Bérélowitch spoke. In this and other focus groups, we relied on communal translations, mixing different languages and their rules, and negotiating senses between languages through gestures, tone of voice, and lexical similarities across languages. In turn, these discussions also highlighted

¹⁶ B.O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p. 119.

how different languages and nonverbal cues across languages contributed to shared meaning across cultural boundaries. This attention to feedback extended and acknowledged the socio-political contexts in which the work was being made, giving voice to the marginalised and agency to the children to shape the work.

Multilingual displacement 5: unsettling the known by multiplying contexts

An important multilingual displacement strategy of the project was bringing ideas about theatre developed in different languages together and interrogating how these ideas, rules and legislations are naturalized in one language and theatre system but operate differently across territories.

The artists and experts shared methods for making multilingual theatre in nine workshops throughout the initial mobilities. The approaches in these workshops differed, and so did their ideas on multilingualism and language. This allowed different viewpoints on approaches to multilingual theatre-making. While all workshops were exciting and enriching artistically, they were also valuable through these differences and diversities, which emphasized multiplicity within languages and theatre-making. The workshops also revealed the profoundly contextual nature of, and multiple perspectives on, linguistic marginalization in broader European and local contexts, which extended into different discussions about theatre systems and multiple producing models in use across nations, from municipal producing houses to the independent theatre producer, not to mention the varying statuses afforded to the creative practitioner and the arts more generally across Europe and Tunisia. Such situated knowledge is often inaccessible to those from different theatre systems, and this leads to how multilingualism facilitates and reveals financial displacements.

Multilingual Displacement 6: Financial displacement

As Christopher Balme argues, financial constraints and disparities can often drive creative solutions and innovations in multinational theatre projects¹⁷, thus creating an invaluable training ground for producers striving to work in multilingual and transnational environments, regardless of the size or perceived power of the producing organisation or individual producer. This was the case during the JTEJP project. Its multicultural nature made the producing and financial disparities visible, thus preventing participants from taking their systems for granted. The producers of the JTEJP project had to contend with various financial systems, including different currencies, tax regimes, and expensive and lengthy visa processes (for

¹⁷ C. Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 56.

Tunisian and Serbian artists). The vastly different taxation systems in individual countries, coupled with the different statuses of artists and different recognition of self-employed/freelancers, created issues around paying artists working in transnational contexts.

These disparities often highlighted the power dynamics at play between the project's lead partners, which in this case was France as the lead partner and Germany as a large municipal theatre and the other members, particularly around final decision-making. In turn, the JTEJP necessitated the development of a new, multi-faceted European producing system that facilitated exchange between partners, regardless of their annual turnover or funding structure. This system, though ever-evolving and certainly not complete (given the relatively short timeframe of this project in financial terms), was facilitated by peer learning and both individualized and ensemble-based, ensuring that all partners could navigate each other's cultural and financial systems to create work together. Producers had to narrate and represent their systems to other partners, particularly around areas of inequality to originate a more equitable creative process. They also had to engage deeply with each partner's financial and governance needs, fostering mutual respect and understanding crucial for developing the ensemble of the artistic work. The differences between Ireland and France make a good example.

An Irish artist cannot invoice a French institution as the French system does not recognize artists' self-employment, while the Irish system relies on self-employed artists. This meant that an Irish artist involved in the JTEJP project needed to apply for a French local tax number or risk being charged high taxes or an 'emergency tax.' The solution found through discussion between the producers was to directly pay an Irish theatre company, and the artists later invoiced said company. This displacement became even more pronounced for the Tunisian and Serbian partners of the project, who also invoiced in this way but had the additional precarity of currency fluctuations and costly and time-consuming visa processes (which changed during the project). In other words, there were different factors at play and a range of power dynamics in operation that related to the organisation's size, status and funding.

This and other learnings from the production meetings, alongside their subsequent recommendations submitted to the European Commission, resulted in a call for clearer guidelines around reasonable expectations in relation to support of national Creative Europe desks, ensuring that this support should be able to be used against the overall project, rather than only in relation to the country where the desk is located. There was also a recognition that per diem allowances should consider the cost of living in the country being visited. All of these learnings and associated recommendations were underpinned by multilingual dialogues and the multiple perspectives represented in the project that simultaneously displaced and united its participants.

The JTEJP project underscores the importance of recognizing and adapting to the diverse financial systems in transnational theatre collaborations. Financial displacement, rather than being an obstacle, can serve as a powerful teaching and learning tool for fostering intercultural understanding and collaboration. By embracing the challenges of displacement that arise, theatre practitioners, and in particular producers, can create more inclusive and dynamic artistic environments and projects that have learnt to respect and reflect the diversity of their participants and their cultural contexts and, in turn, of the audiences that come to see the work.

Conclusion

The JTEJP project built staged multilingual displacements to facilitate learning and training in making multilingual theatre for young audiences. It encouraged artists and organizations to see the young spectator as multilingual creative partner with their agency. The project also developed creative practitioners' methods and knowledge base around multilingual theatre-making. This learning evoked creative curiosity and the will to reflect European multilingual realities on stage. The JTEJP project and this essay show that the displacement of a theatre-maker through multilingualism, in effect, the "othering" of their linguistic means of communication, creates a de-territorialised training space for the creative practitioner, through which they can critically question the largely culturally influenced systems that flow from linguistic, financial and political centres of power.

Kasia Lech, Marianne Kennedy

Displacing Practitioner: on Professional Training for Multilingual Theatre in Europe

This essay explores methods for multilingual theatre training in contemporary theatre and its implications for European theatre systems. It argues for a displacement – from one’s language, system, and culturally-framed “artistic quality” – as a core element of such training. The essay shows that multilingual theatre training goes beyond role-specific techniques (voice, acting, directing etc.) and also includes skills and understandings related to different audiences, theatre systems, and socio-political aspects of theatre. The case study is the *Jeune Théâtre Européen Jeunes Publics* (JTEJP). This Creative Europe project involved early-career theatre artists working across multiple languages and cultural backgrounds to create new models for multilingual theatre for young and new audiences.