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Teachers' challenges in teaching Deaf students from multicultural
backgrounds

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Patras, Greece, June 2024

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Teachers' challenges in teaching Deaf students from multicultural backgrounds

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Acknowledgments and Dedication

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This piece of work is dedicated to two little people, back then, who I had the honor to have students and to all little people who are negotiating among multiple identities, languages and worlds.

Abstract

This essay is the imprint of a small-scale qualitative research that aims to capture the challenges faced by teachers of Deaf children who have migrant, Refugee or Roma background. In the context of the research, literature was studied regarding Deafness as a special form of disability, where, in addition to hearing loss, the existence of a different culture is involved as a result of the use, on behalf of the Deaf, of a separate language, Sign Language. In this sense, the Deaf Community is already confronted as a linguistic cultural minority. Also, a variety of intercultural practices that contribute to the successful education and inclusion of children who are cultural minorities at school, were studied. Prominent position of the practices mentioned in this work, are those related to the issue of students' representation in educational materials, differentiated teaching, cooperative learning and all techniques that constructed bonds of friendship and trust within the classroom and school. Finally, bibliographic data concerning similar studies on the education of Deaf minorities, in schools of abroad were utilized. From the results it appears that similar difficulties and skepticism are faced. In order to draw conclusions, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with Deaf and hearing teachers who, either in the current or recent school years, taught Deaf students with migrant, Refugee or Roma backgrounds in their classes. The results of the research highlight the need for a more systematic recording of the specific student population, and for further training of teachers in issues of intercultural education.

Keywords

Deaf education, migrant/refugee and Roma background, teachers' practices, intercultural education

Προκλήσεις εκπαιδευτικών που διδάσκουν Κωφούς μαθητές με πολυπολιτισμικό υπόβαθρο.

Ελένη Βενετάκη

Περίληψη

Η παρούσα έκθεση αποτελεί την αποτύπωση μιας μικρής κλίμακας ποιοτικής έρευνας που σκοπό έχει να αποτυπώσει τις προκλήσεις που αντιμετωπίζουν οι εκπαιδευτικοί Κωφών παιδιών που έχουν μεταναστευτικό, προσφυγικό ή Ρομά υπόβαθρο. Στο πλαίσιο της έρευνας μελετήθηκε βιβλιογραφία που αφορά την Κώφωση σαν μία ιδιαίτερη μορφή αναπηρίας, όπου εκτός από την απώλεια ακοής ενέχεται και η ύπαρξη μιας διαφορετικής πολιτιστικής κουλτούρας σαν αποτέλεσμα της χρήσης, εκ μέρους των Κωφών, μιας ξεχωριστής γλώσσας, της Νοηματικής. Υπό αυτή την έννοια, η Κοινότητα των Κωφών αντιμετωπίζεται ήδη σαν μια γλωσσική πολιτισμική μειονότητα. Επίσης, μελετήθηκαν ποικίλες διαπολιτισμικές πρακτικές που συνεισφέρουν στην επιτυχημένη εκπαίδευση και ένταξη παιδιών που αποτελούν πολιτισμικές μειοψηφίες στο σχολείο. Εξάρχουσα θέση των πρακτικών που αναφέρονται σε αυτή την εργασία, είναι αυτές που έχουν σχέση με το ζήτημα της αντιπροσώπευσης των μαθητών στο εκπαιδευτικό υλικό, η διαφοροποιημένη διδασκαλία, η συνεργατική μάθηση και όσες τεχνικές προωθούν το χτίσιμο των δεσμών φιλίας και εμπιστοσύνης μέσα στην σχολική τάξη. Τέλος, αξιοποιήθηκαν βιβλιογραφικά δεδομένα που αφορούν παρόμοιες έρευνες εκπαίδευσης Κωφών μειονοτήτων, σχολείων του εξωτερικού και εκ του αποτελέσματος φάνηκε να αντιμετωπίζουν παρόμοιες δυσκολίες και προβληματισμούς. Για την διεξαγωγή συμπερασμάτων, πραγματοποιήθηκαν εννιά ημι-δομημένες συνεντεύξεις Κωφών και ακουόντων εκπαιδευτικών που είτε στην τρέχουσα, είτε τις πρόσφατες σχολικές χρονιές δίδαξαν στις τάξεις τους, Κωφούς μαθητές με μεταναστευτικό, προσφυγικό ή Ρομά υπόβαθρο. Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας, αναδεικνύουν την ανάγκη τόσο για συστηματικότερη καταγραφή του συγκεκριμένου πληθυσμού μαθητών, όσο και για περαιτέρω επιμόρφωση των εκπαιδευτικών σε ζητήματα διαπολιτισμικής εκπαίδευσης.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά

εκπαίδευση Κωφών, μεταναστευτικό/προσφυγικό Ρομά υπόβαθρο, εκπαιδευτικές πρακτικές, διαπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση

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Chapter 1-Introduction

1.1 Overview

This essay presents a small-scale qualitative research that intends to describe the challenges teachers, who work in Primary schools for the Deaf, face when they are summoned to teach students from ethnocultural backgrounds different than the Greek. It touches issues that concern disability studies, Deaf studies and intercultural education.

Depend on the social status, the financial resources or just the place of the world that “accidentally” people are born, live and grow, possessing a disability affects, in different degree, individuals in all aspects of life. Disability is related to inequalities that arise from the existence of physical or mental individual impairments that exclude, or complicate, people from participation to social goods (Karagianni & Koutsoklenis, 2023). People from ethnocultural minorities with law status quo, that additionally possess a kind of disability run higher risk of being discriminated in education, health care, labor market, social services, not only regarding the dominant population but even within their own communities.

In this dissertation, minorities that are being studied in relation to disability, are refugees, migrants and Roma population. The accurate percentage of disability among them cannot be asserted since their special conditions of life make their identification and recording difficult. Despite the percentage of disability in the general population is claimed to be 16% (WHO, 2023), international and national sources estimate higher numbers among refugee/migrants and Roma communities, due to their worse conditions of life that deteriorate their health and lead to physical or mental damages that would not emerge under “normal” circumstances of living.

Deafness is a special kind of disability. Technically, there is a kind of physical impairment, however, what makes people with hearing loss distinguish, is their participation in a wider community, the Deaf one. The use of Sign language gives prestige to Deaf people and makes them part of a world, that does not self-identify as disabled, and shares, except for the language, values, morals, perception about life; defends their rights and works for their continuity, prosperity and common acceptance over dominant hearing world (Lambropoulou, 1999).

Despite not considering themselves as disabled, people with hearing loss undoubtedly are in need of special education. Deafness, can affect in many ways the mental, cognitive and psychological development of children since, without suitable early educational and therapeutical intervention, they might be deprived from a language of communication, oral or signed, in decisive developmental landmarks of their life (Zobola, 2015). Innumerable studies have been actualized worldwide, and in Greece, about the inclusion of disabled students in education and about the challenges of Deaf students' education in particular. Similarly, issues about refugees/migrants' education and second language acquisition, under the light of intercultural approach have been developed. Roma children's successful academic inclusion also motivates many researchers to study the challenges and the good practices that meliorate their chances for systematic school attendance and good performance. However, McAuliff (2021), who has made a critical review on literature concerning Deaf refugees' education indicates a gap in this field. Although, international studies about Deaf ethnocultural minorities, do exist (Acamatsu & Cole, 2000; Guardino & Cannon, 2016; Pizzo, 2016; Moers, 2017; Becker & Bowen, 2018; Prawiro-Atmodjo, Elsendoorn, Reedijk & Maas, 2018; Swanwick, Elmore & Salter, 2021), for Greece there are not data available about the percentages of those populations with hearing impairment in Greek schools, neither studies concerning their education.

This essay will try, if not to enlighten, to raise the discussion about the difficulties of those students that consist a minority, within the minority environment of a Greek school for the Deaf, through their teachers' eyes. Challenges that educators face regarding communicational/linguistic and identity issues, intercultural awareness, family's role, as well as practices they employ to support their students, are being discussed and analyzed combining literature targeted to Deaf studies and intercultural education.

1.2 Structure

Chapter 1 is the introductory section that describes the rationale, the motivation and the expected contribution, of this study. It summarizes the issues that are going to be discussed throughout the essay and familiarizes readers with the context of the chapters.

Chapter 2 is the summary of the theoretical background the dissertation is based on.

Apart from some general statistics about percentages concerning disability in refugee/migrant and Roma population, it focuses on those characteristics of deafness that make it a special cultural group with their own identity, and in parallel emerges issues of education for Deaf children in general. International studies about Deaf refugees and migrants are exposed, and some few about Deaf Roma. Inclusion, teachers' expectations, management of the students' multiculturalism, individual curriculum, family's views and school-family co-operation issues emerged; themes that were actually employed for this dissertation too. Last part of this chapter is dedicated to some good practices that promote intercultural competence together with the language competence. The vast majority of practices is borrowed by intercultural and second language education studies. **Chapter 3**, describes the methodology followed for the conduction of this dissertation. Purpose, research questions, the type of the study, the choice of sample and the tools of data generation are overviewed and the procedure of Data analysis is exposed. The ethical concerns and difficulties that emerged during the process of generating data as well as elements that limit the range of the findings are presented. **Chapter 4** concentrates participants' answers derived after the semi-structured interviews. Findings are organized according to the four initial research questions together with some representative citations taken from the original interviews. **Chapter 5** interprets findings of Chap. 4, in the light of the literature overviewed in Chap. 2. Answers are organized in six bigger themes: i) Cases teachers have met in their schools, ii) student's first evaluation, iii) students' performance regarding Greek Sign Language (GSL) acquisition and Greek oral/written language acquisition, iv) teachers' difficulties in teaching students from multicultural backgrounds, v) practices in teaching students from multicultural backgrounds and finally, vi) views that pertain to students' Deaf and ethnocultural identity. Last **Chapter 6** offers a synopsis of the conclusions of this study, indicates the limitations and suggests some implications for further research.

Chapter 2-Literature Review

2.1 Disability in vulnerable populations

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) about 16% of the global population experience a severe disability. The same institution claims that about 1.300.000.000 people, run double risk of facing inequalities because of ableism and discrimination in several fields such as educational system, work place, health care and social services; conditions that can easier lead them to poverty and deteriorate their health and social status. Consider in all this vulnerability, to add one more: belonging to a cultural group that is not the dominant within a society. Becoming refugee or migrant or having been born Roma.

UNCHR (2023) states that more than 12.000.000 disabled people have been violently displaced from their home countries, because of war, persecution and violation of human rights. It is more possible that they will face discrimination, physical or sexual assault, with even more problematic access to education, health services and employment compared to refugees without disabilities.

Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum in 2016 updated an existing, since 2013, law that promote the faster identification and recording procedures of disabled “*citizens from Third countries or not-natives that come in Greece without legal documentation*”, and prioritize their transmission to suitable housing that reassures their access to health care (L. 4375/2016, art. 8, par. 2). Despite this positive step, Greek National Confederation of People with Disabilities (2017) reports there are still not enough statistical data about refugees with disabilities entering the Greek borders and that only obvious disabilities are tracked down. Refugees with “invisible” disabilities stay out of tracking continue living with the total refugee population, never enjoying services that could cover at the minimum their special needs. The same Confederation for the year 2019 states that by the end of November 2018, only 1.071 refugees, out of 71.200 that arrived at refugee camps, were scanned having disabilities or chronic diseases, 802 adults and 269 children. However, they insist that numbers are much higher, more than 10.000, reconsidering two factors: the percentage of disabled people in the general population, defined by WHO, combined with the possibility of acquired disabilities

among the refugee or migrant population because of their exposure to extreme physical or mental situations. Another organization, the “Social Hellenic Group for Urgent Help” (2021), claims that in Greece there are only 9.000 refugees with disabilities registered and likewise implies the number is not totally representative. Many of them are marginalized because of the disability and language deficit, sometimes even by their own ethnic groups, unable to ask on their own for help that State can provide to them.

Roma is a special and, by general consensus, disadvantaged cultural minority within Europe. Council of Europe highlights that among European countries, Romani people live below the average in relation to the dominant population. They have less paid jobs, are excluded from the labor market, live in poverty under pitiable houses and worse health conditions and finally, score higher levels of illiteracy (European parliament, 2022). Although yet there are not reliable data about the high incidence of disability among Roma population, Roma children seem to have double chances, compared to their peers, of having a disability and more than four times chances of having a severe disability (Emerson & Llewellyn, 2022). Prejudices, because of their Roma status, affect them in all domains mentioned before (housing, labor market, health access etc.) and additionally minimizes the possibility of participating in inclusive education (European Disability Forum, 2022).

The picture about the population of disabled Roma in Greece, again is not clear. Municipalities' records estimated, for the year 2021, that 60% of the total Roma population has some kind of severe or less severe disability. It is highlighted that those data are just an estimation and municipalities “*have not set quantitative criteria of measurement*” (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Registration of Roma Settlements and Population in national level, 2022, p.76). Greek National Confederation of People with Disabilities (2017), took various actions to affect policy decisions concerning the establishment of independent offices within Municipalities for better management of disabled people, in terms of services' access, sensitization and communication of the public, in relation to disabilities in vulnerable population, such as refugees and Roma.

Both in Roma and refugee/migrant population, disability percentages are estimated to be higher than the average, as it is considered to exist relation between poverty and

disability (Oliver, 2009). According to Susser and Watson (1971, as cited in Oliver, 2009), possibilities people have to be healthy, sick or dead are not irrelevant to the society they exist in. Their social and economic status can affect their chances to define their lives. According to Doyal (1983, as cited in Oliver, 2009) poverty and disability are connected with a double-direction arrow: disability can lead to poverty, but most importantly, the poverty itself can be blamed for disability. Additionally, society's beliefs about disability are going to define the ways they confront people with disabilities. What a community, which is a cultural structure, conceives as deficit, maybe another community conceives it as a natural incidence, or even more as a sign of God. The interpretation societies give to disability affects the degree and the type of involvement disabled people have within their societies (Oliver, 2009)

2.2 Deafness

2.2.1 Deaf and deaf- Deaf World

Medically, deafness is approached as the status of a person with hearing loss. Moderate and severe impairment, means hearing loss between 41-80 decibel (dB) and can characterize a person as “hard of hearing”. This person, wearing hearing aids, or not, may still struggles in fully conceiving oral speech by using their hearing canal only. Loss more than 81 dB indicates profound impairment and the person is characterized as “deaf”. Wearing hearing aids, or not, they cannot conceive oral speech via hearing and mainly use the visual canal to understand language (Sign Language, lip reading or text reading). Considering that the normal hearing is between 0-20 dB, every loss more than that implies disability (WHO, 2024). The “World Report of hearing” published by WHO (2021), refers to 430.000.000 people that have at minimum a moderate hearing impairment, 30.000.000 of whom, almost the 7%, have profound or total hearing loss. European Federation for Hard of Hearing People for the year 2015, provided statistics about the percentage of hearing impairment per country and clearly claims that, similarly to other south European counties, “*Greece does not even have a general estimate to offer*”. (EFHOH. 2015, p. 8)

Despite the medical definition as described above, there are about 70.000.000 people around the Globe, for whom the degree of hearing loss is not the common feature that connects them (World Federation of the Deaf, 2024). Deaf people do not want to be distinguished exclusively by their hearing impairment and do not think about themselves as “disabled” (Lane, 2002). Since living in an environment without oral speech and hearing stimuli, they adapted by developing a non-depended-on-sounds language that serves their communicational needs. This need for a separate Signed Language, and not their hearing loss, is what make Deaf people in countries around the world a separate cultural group (Lambropoulou, 1999).

This special community, the “Deaf World” is described as a cultural minority and it is argued to have common features to any ethnic minority (Ladd & Lane, 2013). Deaf people consist a linguistic minority among a larger group, the hearing people, exactly the same way an ethnic minority uses a different language, in relation to majority’s dominant national language. History, morals, values and common experiences pass from one generation to another via this minority language. People of the community support special schools to provide appropriate education to younger members, establish national or international unions/clubs to promote their rights, or music and sport events or feasts that empower the connection between members of the community, and moreover, proudly celebrate their diversity towards the majority (Ladd & Lane, 2013). Padden (1980, as cited in Lambropoulou, 1999, p. 22) gives the definition below:

A deaf community is a group of people who live in a particular location, share the common goals of its members, and in various ways, work toward achieving these goals. A deaf community may include persons who are not themselves Deaf, but who actively support the goals of the community and work with Deaf people to achieve them. (p. 92)

Scholars, and Deaf people themselves, needed another term, instead of “deafness” to define in more accuracy their identity, so term “Deafhood” came up (Ladd, 2005), to describe a dynamic situation where not only someone has to learn how to become “Deaf” but also to defend, promote and reserve this identity as “*a responsible sign-language-using member of a national community*” (Ladd, 2005, p. 14) without being

categorized as deaf, hard of hearing or hearing person. For ethnic groups, identity, “Greekness” for example, is a notion culturally constructed, learned unintentionally because of the upbringing of a child in the particular society. However, Ladd (2005) again highlights Deaf’s resemblance to an ethnic minority since majority’s identity usually is not under question. Minority’s identity is the one that have to be continuously defined both externally and internally. Members of minorities are those who receive offensive comments and reactions and it might be a life-long struggle to preserve their identity and not give in to the pressure of majority’s assimilation.

In this thesis “deaf” will be mentioned for individuals with a percentage of hearing impairment, and Deaf for those who are members of the Deaf World and fulfill the characteristics as explained in the previous paragraph.

2.2.2 Educational and developmental challenges for Deaf children

Despite this self-determination as not disabled, hearing loss is a sensory deficit that affect peoples’ development in all aspects of personality and cognitive skills (Zobola, 2015). Very young children develop their first Language (L1) combining specific sounds/words and images when deaf children learn their L1, which naturally is the visual Sign Language, combining images with SIGNS. However, deaf children coming from hearing parents, which is almost the 90/% of the total Deaf population McAuliff (2021), cannot develop this procedure naturally and base their language development, if any, in combining blurry sounds and lip movements (Diamandi, 2021). Following this path, deaf children not only, tend to be self-marginalized by their hearing environment but additionally fail to understand it, lack of a language to express their feelings, thoughts, fears and wishes. As a result, there are not rare the cases where deaf children present behavioral disorders, difficulties to adapt in their environment, emotional immaturity and sometimes even apathy for their surroundings (Zobola, 2015).

Apart of the deprivation of expressive language, a child that is being brought up without access to oral speech, cannot benefit from all those hearing stimuli, environment offers and make unintentional learning possible via simple discussion or even passive hearing, as it happens with hearing children. This contact with oral language makes even young

hearing children understand and use correctly grammatical and syntax rules. They have a huge repertoire of vocabulary from which they can choose the words that better express them. For deaf children, even if suitable early intervention takes place either medical technology is used to replace hearing impairment, some hearing experiences insist being unreplaceable and therefore cognitive delays are unavoidable (Zobola, 2015). On the opposite, Deaf children coming from Deaf parents, who introduce them in their natural language from day one, are expected to gain all these experiences and environmental interactions, to acquire Speech, as a cognition, and faster develop abstract and symbolic thinking that help them in all cognitive and social demands of life (Moore, 2001). For Orfanos (2011) it is taken for granted that since a Deaf child is encouraged to use their hands as a main mean of communication, their development, will follow the same steps as a hearing child. However, Zobola (2015) comments that Deaf people, no matter their age or education, inevitably will have more limited access to information since they use only the visual canal when hearing people can use both visual and hearing canal at the same time.

2.2.3 Education for the Deaf

Teaching methods for students with hearing impairment do not reflect the way of teaching, rather than the language chosen to communicate and succeed the teaching goals (Diamandi, 2021). Epigrammatically the methods are i) Oral method, ii) New-oral method, iii) Supporting speaking and listening, iv) Total communication method and v) Bilingual-intercultural method. For the purposes of the present dissertation, we are going to dedicate more space to the last two, as the others are considered as obsolete, with more disadvantages rather than positive outcomes for Deaf students and moreover are not popular in modern schools for the Deaf neither in international nor national level (Lambropoulou, 1999; Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou, 2010, UN, 2007).

The Total Communication method, consists a philosophy, rather than a real teaching method (Lambropoulou, 1999). It intends to use every possible communicational canal to transmit information to a Deaf person and succeed communication. Sign Language, louder voice, lip reading, writing and finger alphabet are deployed by teachers and students so as the latter to choose the mean better fits them to interpret the world and

express themselves in the same time, in relation to their abilities. For that is suitable for Deaf, as well Hard of Hearing students. Teachers usually use Signs and oral speech, in parallel, so students make direct correspondences and are led to learn the oral language, which is the main reason for method's popularity. Negative aspect of the method is that, despite Sign Language is used, the grammatical and structural format is copied from oral language, which means that Sign Language, the official language of the Deaf, is not taught properly; on the opposite, it is used as a crutch for the oral dominant language (Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou, 2010).

In Bilingual Intercultural method, Sign Language, majority's oral language and written speech are deployed as means of communication for Deaf students. This practice expanded as soon as United Nations recognized the cultural value of national Sign Languages as equal to the official spoken national languages for Deaf students' education in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007). Lambropoulou (1999) describes that dedication to that method means Deaf children from their infant age learn the national Sign Language, which is the basis for communication. The whole family, if they are not Deaf themselves, are taught and use Sign Language in daily communication with their children. Nursery and Primary schools that follow Bilingual-intercultural method, use Sign Language as primary language of communication in all aspects of school life. Except for the official national spoken language, which is learnt as second (L2), with emphasis to reading and writing, all the other subjects are taught in Sign Language. This method, when systematically used, seems to have positive outcome for Deaf students' academic performance when in parallel respect children's bilingual identity and cultural diversity as Deaf in a hearing society (Lambropoulou, 1999). The existence of a strong L1 leads to more effective and faster L2 acquisition as according to Cummins (1991) languages are interrelated. As soon as there is an efficient linguistic system it is easier to employ the mechanism of this existing system to construct new ones.

Irrelevant to the method Deaf schools opt to support their purposes, Lambropoulou (1999) summarizes in three wider categories the factors that can affect deaf and Deaf children's academic progress: i) individual characteristics, ii) educational actions they participate in and iii) environmental circumstances. First category refers to elements such as students' motives, their self-esteem, as well as their personal physical or mental

skills. The degree of hearing loss and children's intelligence are included in this category. Second, reflects the suitable educational procedures, meaning the time dedicated in learning, the quality of learning, the choice of a compatible school language, the therapeutic interventions, child's age when teaching or therapeutic interventions started being practiced etc. Lastly, environmental circumstances, usually refer to home habitat, family's views and support related to disability and Deafness, social status, class's social synthesis, utilization of free time, etc.

2.3 Deaf from cultural minorities in schools

2.3.1 Deaf Refugees- Migrants

As claimed in previous section, identification and registration of refugees with disabilities, hearing impairment in particular, is not successful and does not give reliable data concerning the nature and degree of disability. Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al.* (2018) cite number of older studies from Europe, USA and Australia and reach to the conclusion that at minimum 20% of Deaf school's population are migrants either coming from linguistically minority backgrounds. For Greece, Ministry of Education, Religion and Sports (2018), could not verify the number of refugee children attending special schools at all, because of the versatility that characterizes those populations. Sudden re-location to other forms of housing, either in different parts of Greece, either in different countries make record attempts fruitless.

Acamatsu and Cole (2000), recognize that migrant and refugee children can face the same difficulties in their adaption and acculturation in new homelands, however underline a difference concerning the conditions of their migration. In the first occasion, transfer to another targeted country is a result of planning by the family to assert a better life when in the second, children with their families run away from their countries to anywhere just to survive. Since there is no always targeted country families may have to go to many different places having as result children's fragmentary education and insufficient language training. McAuliff (2021), mentions one more crucial element for refugees with deafness, which is their doubled displacement. A deaf child is anyway displaced from the hearing environment of their family, not having the same chances

for access to communication. Even if they purchase deafness later in their childhood, again they are displaced from the world as they knew it until the incidence of their deafness. As soon as ultra-violent events force them to fly away from their country, they become again displaced as refugees.

Migration and resettlement are stressful situations: bureaucracy procedures, housing, evaluation, the state of limbo for official Refugee status are complicated processes. In this environment, children with hearing loss find themselves living in refugee camps and, since they are not identified as having special communicational needs, they deprived of suitable education, their families may fail to understand the nature of deafness and finally they, are exposed to many different languages from which they do not have access since they are spoken languages. A possible family member loss comes to complete the picture of deaf refugee children's experience (Acamatsu & Cole, 2000). Living those experiences without having a language to be explained what has happened to their lives and why, without having on their own a language to express feelings and questions about their situation, make deaf refugees children migration an unpleasantly unique experience they can explain only after their rehabilitation to third countries and after having being educated (Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al*, 2018).

Deaf children's history, including family and home country background, seems to be important factor for children's cognitive picture as soon as they come to the resettlement country. Despite deaf learners consist a group of great heterogeneity, migrant and refuge deaf children differ from their native peers in the way that they might come from countries where early intervention is unavailable (Guardino & Cannon, 2016), either families are unaware of their children's hearing loss and confuse their lack of communication with mental retardation (Pizzo, 2016). Finally, refugee children with hearing loss may come from countries where they had no access to formal or systematic education therefore, they have not fully developed an L1, (Acamatsu & Cole, 2000). Moreover, Pizzo (2016) adds that even if a family settles in a new country, it is very possible that their living conditions (poverty, housing, place of relocation, search for job) may act as obstacles to children's access to suitable education.

After all mentioned above, teachers working with the Deaf, can face great challenges as soon as they might have to handle, for example, 12-year-old deaf students arriving

at schools for the Deaf, with no previous education, attending the same classes with other 12-year-old children that have been attending school for many years (Becker & Bowen, 2018).

2.3.2 Deaf Roma

Although statistical data for Roma population are insufficient, there are international studies (Álvarez et al., 2005; Mašindová et al., 2015) that indicate there is a gene mutation scanned in Roma families, that relates hearing impairment in higher frequency for this population. For Greece, Karagianni and Vlachou (2015), state that 8,7% of Roma children that participated in their survey have some disability, with deafness coming second in frequency, after mental retardation.

Numbers about Roma students with hearing impairment attending suitable educational frames are not recorded. There are only smaller single studies to give some data for concrete territories but neither institutions for the Deaf, neither other involved social services collect data taking under consideration the ethnographic dimension (Swanwick, Elmore & Salter, 2021). In Greece, for study processed in Macedonia and Thrace, only 50.7% of disabled Roma children received special education, again without data about deaf students in particular (Karagianni & Vlachou, 2015). The bigger picture for Greece completes the reality that Roma students, diachronically consist a cultural minority with deficient schooling. Their inclusion face difficulties since school environment (routines, official language, curriculum, materials) represents only the dominant culture (Magos, 2022). Stereotypes and discrimination Roma students have to deal with, by their classmates, teachers and the whole institution of school, not only does not encourage their involvement but increases school quitting instead (Unicef, 2020). The survival circumstances under which many Roma families live, can prevent children from systematical schooling that not only enlarges their educational gap compared to their peers, but additionally make them choose to follow some “typical Roma” jobs to help their families’ income (Magos, 2022).

Swanwick, Elmore and Salter (2021), focus on three bigger interconnected categories concerning the educational challenges of Roma deaf/hard of hearing children: language and communication, family resources and family’s access to a complex social service

system. The first refers to students' rich repertoire of languages when school environment is unable to value those complicated linguistic profiles; for that, language of assessment is not the adequate having as result misevaluation of children's abilities and skills. Additionally, educators had difficulty to work with students, whose family culture is oral and not written. As a result, teaching practices as well as assessment, except for the language, can be culturally incompatible with children's experiences. Family resources, refer to Roma families' creativity, or not, overcoming the obstacle of everyday communication with their deaf children. Apart from the cases where there are more members with hearing loss, families employed alternative ways to make their children equal members of the family. Very important for educational inclusion and development for Roma students with hearing impairment is the convenience or inconvenience, for their parents, to understand and take advantage of the system of social services offered to them, if they manage to navigate successfully. Access to medical control, identification from a young age, early intervention and technological support (hearing aids, etc.) is not taken for granted, as information for these facilities are not in a language always familiar to Roma families. As soon as personnel working with Roma children with hearing impairment, create bonds of trust and respect with families, educational, health and support services succeed to contribute better students and their families.

2.3.3 Adaption of cultural minorities in schools for the Deaf

As exposed in previous paragraphs neither Deaf refugee/migrant and Roma population in general, nor students in particular, are yet recorded representatively, therefore it was not possible to find studies about their education in Greek schools. In order to make a "map" of factors that affect their school adaption and success we will use international resources related to Deaf refugees/migrants/Roma students' education and national resources explaining the issue of intercultural education in Greece.

First evaluation. Placement and assessment.

Children from multicultural backgrounds and hearing impairment that first come to school, obviously have to pass through a procedure that is going to assess their cognitive level so as to place them to the right context and help in the formation of suitable

educational goals based on their needs. However, because of the diversity of this population, assessment can lead to misleading directions, detail that makes it challenging for those who actualize the evaluation (Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al.* 2018). Students may occupy more than one language systems for communication (Sign Language, spoken language, written language), that are possibly not familiar to the evaluator and give as result distortion of the real potential of students (Guardino & Cannon, 2016). Additionally, children themselves may not be familiar to the educational and assessment methods of the host country (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Their country of origin may employ different approaches and children cannot express their full repertoire of cognitive skills because of difficulty to handle the new environment.

Moers (2017) claims that not only communicational needs, should be taken under consideration in students' educational placement. She memorizes of a Deaf Somali student, fluent user of Somali Sign Language, who preferred her neighborhood's mainstream school, combined with interpreter's support, instead of a school for the Deaf, that did not host other Muslim students. A Deaf child is not defined only by their Deaf identity but from their ethnic and religious identity too. All identities must be equally respected and children depended on their needs, are placed to the educational context that will provide them more chances of social and educational inclusion. Magos (2022) comments of cases that even ethnic-religious factors are not always defining for the students' placement; developmental or social status criteria can co-exist too. He exposes the occasions of a newly-arrived refugee boy that make a good match with his autistic classmate and of a second-generation middle-income migrant black girl being best friends with a lower-income native peer. From these examples we can understand that students' better school adaption can be seriously influenced by a thoughtful assessment of the child's total personality and not by overestimating separate parts of it.

Teachers' expectations about their multicultural students are not irrelevant neither to their first assessment and placement, neither to their future development. In relation to first placement, teachers can choose to place children to the same class with native peers, expecting they will be benefited from them educationally and socially, or can choose transition classes where teachers can provide more adapted-to-their-needs

teaching so students more quickly to follow their native peer's level (Prawiro-Atmodjo et al, 2018). It is important that their expectations will not turn inferior because of the adjusted, narrowed educational goals, since lower expectations can adopt lower communication and educational standards (Jussim & Harber, 2005, as cited in Prawiro-Atmodjo, et al. 2018). On the opposite, as soon as teachers insist to show higher expectations for their students, they invent ways to engage them in learning, especially when students show "resistance" to the dominant teaching approaches that may do not represent them (Magos, 2022). In Deaf education for minority students, teachers have to struggle extra with their own stereotypes about disability, together to ethnicity, and do not lower their expectations because of the multiple vulnerabilities their students possess (Cannon & Luckner, 2016).

Personalized educational curriculum

Migrants and refugees do not consist a homogenous population. The same works for migrants and refugees with hearing loss. Their cultural background, together with the age and conditions under which they lost their hearing, the supportive technology and the age it was available for them, the existence of special education for them in the origin countries, all are factors that affect their cognitive development or delay (Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al.* 2018). For that migrant and refugee children with hearing loss may come to school with no previous school experience, and additionally having little or zero competence in any spoken or Sign language. The first condition, no previous schooling, is a manageable factor and as soon as students learn basic academic skills they can perform much better at school, however the deprivation of L1 can lead to life-long difficulties in L2 acquisition (Akamatsu & Cole, 2000). For that, as soon as children with hearing loss, with no school neither language experience, arrive to a new country is of vital importance to directly be introduced to Deaf education. No more time has to be lost without language so as children have chances to develop academically, emotionally and socially (Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al.* 2018).

In Deaf education language acquisition is anyway a priority, however Pizzo (2016) suggests that for students with previous linguistic background and students without any linguistic background the proposed educational program for the Deaf has to be differentiated. Students that occupy a strong first language, oral or signed, have already

a communicational system to support them, and spend less time learning new words, for example, since they already possess the notions, new words carry. On the opposite, children with no L1, have to work in more levels: develop basic communicational skills, usually by learning the Sign Language of the host country, learning new notions and words and in parallel develop some basic academic skills that will give them access to basic school content (Guardino & Cannon, 2016).

For this differentiated education, teachers make use of multiple resources either from Second Language acquisition teaching, either by creating adapted to their students' needs material, or using a lot of visual material, whose pedagogical value is discussed in next section, either by employing pre-schooling strategies. Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al.* (2018) also refer to the practice of peer-to-peer teaching.

School curriculum- Promotion of interculturalism

As presented in previous section, school curriculum, books and processes in Greece, represent in high percentage the dominant cultural ethnicity making school a monocultural institution, despite students' multicultural identities, the majority of schools diachronically host (Magos, 2022)

Students from cultural minorities are systematically under-represented in school books, whose contribution covers the biggest percentage of available school time (Gay, 2000). Fragoulis (2020, as cited in Magos, 2022) supports that it is up to teachers, despite the strict curriculum, to take advantage of these few elements and enrich them, not only to represent all students' identity, but to raise awareness among them about diversity and intercultural respect. According to Ahrndt (2020), this intercultural respect cannot be cultivated just by bringing people from diverse cultural environments spatially together, neither by presenting superficial information about their cultures. This practice, at the end of the day, only promote or strengthen majority's current stereotypes, either present "other" cultures as strange and exotic (May, 1999). Representation in school material, either in the form of images, either as literature, matters for students belonging to marginalized groups and can act as "mirrors" or "windows": Students identify and explore themselves in relation to their own culture and their classmates, coming from dominant culture, are encouraged to approach multiple ways of world viewing (Bishop, 1990, cited in Ferlazzo, 2020)

Since Deaf education among students from cultures different than Greek is at stake in this dissertation, between literature and images referred above, some more dedication will be given to the powerful use of images in intercultural education. Magos (2022) recognizes for images their high pedagogical value, since they transmit loads of information for students belonging to minority groups, who, as soon as they recognize familiar processes exposed in their classroom, tend to feel their home culture is indeed recognized and respected among teacher and classmates' eyes. This representation can encourage their involvement to the learning procedures and result to social and educational benefits for them. Moreover, image in any form (photo, drawing, poster, etc.) can be the starting point for several actions in classroom. Images act as stimuli and depending on educators' suitable processing, can tell a whole story, where students together with their linguistic skills, engage their critical thinking to make meaning.

Except for the representation in official school books, Greek and international bibliography offer a big variety of approaches that can support intercultural education in school setting. According to Gay (2000), intercultural education has to satisfy some conditions: i) to attribute prestige to multiculturalism, ii) to build meaningful bonds between student's family/cultural environment and school environment, iii) to promote students' academic success, together with their cultural identity, iv) to include all aspects of school life, from the way students are located in classroom to teaching techniques and evaluation processes, v) to empower all students' self-esteem in relation to their academic development, cultural, social, religious, gender identity, vi) to transform students previous misconceptions about social and cultural structures, as soon as they proved to be misleading and vii) to help students find and express their voice, stand for their rights for other people's rights.

Landrum and McDuffie (2010) propose *Differentiated Learning* as an approach that adjusts school content, materials and procedures in order to take advantage of each and every student's personal resources, background and unique way of learning. The way of learning, although is connected to students' individual characteristics, is not irrelevant to their collective ethnocultural identity (Magos, 2022). Moreover, the admission that learners come in classroom with diverse levels of readiness and the idea they learn more effectively as soon as the content is connected to their interests and real-life experiences are guiding principles for differentiated learning. In this

multicultural classroom, all diversities, not only ethnocultural ones, exist and develop productively. Internal motivation for knowledge and autonomy are cultivated among students through co-operation procedures (Azmitia, 1999, as cited in Fykaris 2010).

Co-operative learning employs multiple practices to promote knowledge through smaller groups' work (Sharan, 2010). Gay (2000) supports that small groups not only approach cognitive aims in an alternative way, but other social skills too, such as collaboration, empathy and intercultural exchanging. Especially, students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, that are new-comers, benefit even more from small team-work since they gradually communicate and get to know with smaller number of classmates, instead of being exposed to the whole class. It is more possible, that in small teams they will reveal their abilities and potential, when spontaneous language learning is happening via peers' communication (Gay, 2000). Magos (2022) adds that students coming from minority backgrounds, tend to easier assimilate knowledge through group-work, because this approach fits better to their culturally dictated way of learning, which is usually based on collective rather than individualistic procedures. Groups are not composed randomly. He defines that in an interculturally-oriented education, teams are heterogenous in terms of ethnicity, gender, religion, social status, academic competence etc. They are based on encouraging interrelationship among members, feeling of responsibility concerning their offer to the team, feedback from one member to another and taking the best of each member's potential to make the team more successful (Felder & Brent, 2007). The final product is the creation of such a classroom climate, where all students feel they are included and involved in the learning procedure and they are part of a bigger collective in which they are safe and free to express all their identities (Sharan, 2010).

Task-based learning, is the approach where content is invented “*as an enabling factor in the acquisition of language*” and intend to create opportunities for all students' participation (Rodgers, 2009, p. 355). Educators perceive tasks as the more natural mean to support the language learning and try to create real-world environments to “force” their students employ all their linguistic or not linguistic skills (Long, 2014). According to Ellis (2003) tasks have to be clear and objectives realistic, but in the same time, have to demand unstoppable effort and employment of resources by participants.

Freinet's technique "*Quoi de neuf/What's new?*" is described by Le Gal (2017) as a popular tool in Primary education, where students bring to class things happening to them outside classroom. It helps building up interrelation between students and its value is based on the condition that every child feels free to share things that are important to them and simultaneously, is understood by the class community. Intercultural ability is being built by following the basic principle of this technique, which are summarized by Lachlou (2015): i) respect to the speaker, no-one laughs at the speaker, ii) confidentiality among the members of the team, iii) topics of discussion are set freely depend on the interest of each member. Themes can be "news" related to students' everyday life around school, home, neighborhood, leisure time but can expand to "adult-news", things that children may hear from their family or in media conversations. That means that topics related to students from minorities may arise, either by them, either by their classmates and it is up to educators the way they will approach the theme to promote students intercultural and critical thinking. Depends on teachers and students' choice, those active discussion can transmute to other creative actions, via students' group work such as collective narratives or any kind of artistic production (Magos, 2022). We can see that there is no one technique that stands out alone, but all practices are interconnected and applied in all aspects of school life.

Identity texts are, usually written products, often combined with artistic interventions, made by students, expressing their reality (Cummins, Hu, Markus, & Kristiina Montero, 2015). They are highly connected to reading and writing and were introduced in intercultural education as an alternative way to approach literacy in dominant language (Cummins & Early, 2011). Advantages of this practice is that i) writing skills are grown via experiences straightly connected to students' life and interests, ii) academic language patterns are developed during creative procedures and iii) teaching content is better understood because of the use of visual text organizers (Cummins *et al.*, 2015). One more outcome, noted by Montero, Bice-Zaugg, Marsh, and Cummins (2013) is that students have the chance to express and present their identity among their classmates, by presenting their piece of work to all school community. This sharing is inextricable part of the practice since students re-introduce themselves to their world as artists, writers, poets, creators, not just minorities (Cummins *et al.*, 2015).

Another practice proposed by Helot and Young (2002), is *students' parental engagement with school*. As soon as parents are systematically invited to school, they have the chance to share their experiences, traditions, language and culture with teachers and students. Not only they boost their children's pride for their identity but also offer to the rest school population the chance for fruitful intercultural encounters that promote understanding and sharing. In Greek context Nikoloudi, (2005), describes the case where a nursery teacher, under the frame of using a bilingual tale, invited an Albanian mother, not only to help them reading the tale but additionally give value to one more language that some of the students of the classroom employed and promote language awareness. Magos (2022), suggests the technique of *interviews*, where people from the local community, that can be minority students' relatives, are invited to school and talk about their story, engaging children with critical discussion about peoples' lives, their difficulties, their beliefs and their dreams. Take advantage of students' L1, as described above, apart from its intercultural value, can promote students' L2 acquisition. Although Greek educational system adopts a more monolingual and monocultural approach in educating ethnic and linguistic minorities (Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011; Magos, 2022), there is no doubt that heritage languages children use, carry a wealth of information and knowledge that cannot be underestimated by the school system (Helot & Young, 2002)

Council of Europe (2009) has already given the directions underlying that there is not one specific school subject of "How to be intercultural". It is a life-long procedure and a philosophic approach towards education where existing subjects, not only language, have to be re-approached to transform children to citizens of the world. Van-Ausdale and Feagin (2001) highlight that children, especially when they are very young, are confronted as if they are incapable of possessing cultural awareness and understating. Nevertheless, they have full consciousness about the existing stereotypes regarding gender, nationality, racial characteristics, religion and social status, therefore intercultural practices are to be promoted in all aspects of curriculum, regardless the developmental or biological age.

School and family

There is a common ground between educators who teach students belonging to cultural and ethnic minorities, that families either do not care about academic development, either ignore school, either refuse to co-operate with teachers' guidelines to promote their children's prosperity. Before school professionals come to conclusions about parents' detachment it is useful to take under consideration other cultural factors that may impose this attitude (Coehlo, 2007). Language barrier, not-compatible-to-their-working-hours meetings, unfamiliarity to the Greek processes in approaching school, difficulties in funding students' educational material can make parents feel inconvenient to communicate with school and teachers (Magos, 2022).

School, representing and reproducing the majority culture, teaches and assesses students based on dominant culture's criteria. As a result, parents, except for insecurity the lack of language provokes them, can also feel inconvenience about the way educators express their thoughts about their children's performance in a mode that will make them feel inferior in front of a representative of the dominant culture (Magos, 2022). Moreover, families may come from cultures, where school and home have completely separated roles and cannot understand what school demands from them when asking for participation in pedagogical meetings (Coelho, 2007). Social networking between parents from different ethnocultural groups is crucial for making the ones belonging to minorities feel more engaged to school's requirements and it is again up to school creating this kind of environment for meaningful intercultural encounters between parents (Magos, 2022). Coelho (2007), notices that parent's active involvement to school activities have positive outcomes concerning students' involvement too.

The way parental involvement boost hearing students' school success, similarly happens to students with hearing impairment (Marschark, 2007 cited in Prawiro-Atmogjo et al, 2018). Cultural background concerning education, school success, hearing loss and disability are factors than can determine parent's involvement to their children's schooling. Prawiro-Atmodjo, et al (2018), summarize number of studies where in specific countries, people with disabilities are considered as cursed, belief that discourage parents from sending their children to school, if any special educational institutions exist, or engage them to everyday life social activities. For this portion of parents, it is important, except for the language barrier, to help them understand the

nature of disability, the communicational needs of Deafness and the school processes that will lead to academic achievement on behalf of students. For all these to happen, school has to understand the socio-cultural meaning families bring from their home countries and find effective alternative ways to approach them (Leigh & Crowe, 2015) not as superior representatives of Western civilization rather than as equal participants working on the same task: student's personal and academic growth.

Language choices are important in Deaf education. Parents have to be informed for all the options they have concerning the language their children acquire at school when the modality of language, signed, spoken, or both, is an extremely complicated decision for migrant and refugee families. The fact that Deafness and Sign language intervene can make young students create a safe "Deaf space" which is not related to their family and is not based on ethnicity or nationality, rather than on a shared Deaf identity (McAuliff, 2021). This can be painful or suspicious for parents, since their children enter a world, they have no idea about (Ferro, 2002, as cited in Magos 2022). What can help parents' involvement to students' education and developing communication is the feeling that school respects and promotes their heritage culture and language (Prawiro-Atmodjo, et al, 2018). However, the modality families will choose for their children is depended on various factors Willoughby (2012): their beliefs that Sign language will prevent their child from speaking, child's family ability for unintentional exposure to linguistically rich environments, child's degree of hearing loss, that affects the possibilities of spoken language acquisition.

Magos (2022) condenses teachers' views about student's home languages, that it is family and cultural minority's duty to transfer heritage language to the next generation. Teaching of it can affect negatively migrants and refugees' Greek language acquisition and therefore affect their educational and social inclusion. This belief is considered to be scientifically inaccurate, since Cummins (1991) supports that the existence of a strong L1 has only positive outcomes for second language (L2) acquisition. However, in deaf migrant and refugee students' case, where for plenty of reasons exposed before, children may use little, or not at all, their heritage language, run the risk of being disconnected from their families and cultural communities (Lee & Oxelson, 2006). It is crucial for parents of those children to be suitably approached and targeted guided to

strategies that engage them and their children to various rich language experiences (Prawiro-Atmodjo, et al, 2018).

Chapter 3-Methodology

This chapter gives information about the methods employed for the actualization of this study that attempts to search the challenges teachers working with Deaf students from multicultural backgrounds face in primary schools for the Deaf.

3.1 Research questions

To explore the challenges, educators face when teaching Deaf students that come from backgrounds different than the Greek one, four research questions emerge after the thorough studying of literature for Deaf education, Deaf Refugees/migrants education and intercultural education.

- What is the profile of the students from different cultural background in Greek Schools for the Deaf?
- Which are teachers' views about the challenges Deaf students from different cultural background face, in relation to Greek Sign Language and Modern Greek, written or oral?
- Which are the factors that affect/facilitate academic progress and inclusion of students in the school community?
- What practices encourage students' identities, not only as Deaf persons but as people having an ethnocultural identity different from the Greek one.

3.2 Methodology

To be able to answer those questions a deeper understanding on teachers' interpretations, who work with this population, was needed and for that a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews was employed. The initial structure of the interview questions (Appendix B) was formed after studying relevant literature

regarding challenges in Deaf education. Theoretical background from Lambropoulou (1999) and Kourbetis and Hatzopoulou's (2010) work helped me understand the criteria of successful academic development for Deaf children, when the studies of Moers (2017), Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al.* (2018,) and Swanwick, Elmore and Salter (2021) gave me more focus regarding education for Deaf minority populations. Some few but crucial additional questions arise after discussion with my Supervisor in relation to teachers' intercultural competence.

3.2.1 Research Approach

This Qualitative approach, is based on researcher's Constructivist world view. The study attempts to rely on participants' meanings about the researched theme and for that, open-ended questions are used during the interviews to leave participants narrate their stories and construct the personal meaning of their context (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenological research was chosen, as participants describe their experiences about a phenomenon, in our case their school experiences with Deaf refugee/migrant and Roma students, and the researcher describes and groups those experiences so from individual to come up to some general themes (Creswell, 2014).

3.2.2 Sample, Research tools and Data Generation

Participants of the survey had to be teachers that have worked, or are still working, with Deaf migrant or refugee or Roma students, at least the last 3-4 years. Except for a few past colleagues who fulfill that criteria, a research invitation (see Appendix A) was sent via e-mail to four Primary schools for the Deaf, two in Attica, one in Thessaloniki and one in Patras. The invitation gave some more details concerning the study (Isari & Pourkos, 2015) such as the aims and the basic points that were to be discussed. Moreover, it guaranteed the anonymity of participants, described the expected time the interview would last and informed candidate participants that they could withdraw their participation any time before, during or after the interview. Except for the e-mail, a telephone communication with the head-teacher of each school followed to make sure they have received my mail.

After the telephone communication it was decided that three schools, two in Attica and one in Thessaloniki, were going to participate since they hosted the targeted, for this survey, student population. Directors were positive but because of the special characteristics of the sample population, some educators were Deaf themselves, face-to-face communication was preferable. It was proposed to me to visit schools, explain the purposes of the research and the conditions under which the interview would be conducted. Teachers were positive to participate and interviews were scheduled for the following days.

The final sample of the inquiry is a result of criterion sampling (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). As mentioned in previous paragraph a lot of teachers offered their help and although they fulfill the initial criteria, they shared some profile characteristics that, if all of them were “accepted”, the sample would not be that representative. The majority of teachers offered were hearing women who had little experience in Deaf education and in Deaf culture. Despite their offer, not all of them were chosen to participate since conformity regarding their experience would possibly give equivalent answers, making the sample weak and the data poor. Others were Deaf women, therefore directly involved with the Deaf culture, but did not have leading role in students' language education and although they would definitely give useful information, they possibly could not provide systematic teaching practices that helped them. To make the sample more reliable participants were chosen to reflect, in the maximum level, the repertoire of teachers who work in schools for the Deaf: very little, moderate and long-lasting school experience with Deaf children, variable age groups, hearing impairment or ability, participation or not in Greek Deaf community. The last criterion was estimated by the researcher during the introductory communication with candidate participants.

Five hearing and four Deaf participants consist of the final sample, with their teaching experience with Deaf children to vary from one year (the running school year), to 28 years. One hearing woman, despite having only one year of experience in official Deaf education, has dedicate a lot of personal time to unofficial Deaf education, via participation in Deaf camps etc. That distinguishes her from other hearing participants in the way she is an active member of the Deaf society. Weak point of the sample is the gender representation. Some more balance could be kept, since in this survey women are overrepresented in a rate 8/9. Re-considering that in Primary education 74,9% of

teachers are women (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2021), two more male teachers should participate to approach a closer-to-the-general-percentage male representation, however there was not much offer by male teachers. *Table 3.1* below summarizes participants' sample in terms of gender, age group, school experience with Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, ethnicities with whom they have worked with and their hearing ability or Deafness.

Participants' code name	Gender	Age group	Working teaching experience with Deaf students	Population of students from multicultural backgrounds	Hearing ability or impairment	Duration of interview
P1	Female	35-40	5	Albania India Pakistan	Hearing	43:52
P2	Female	35-40	11	Albania Russia Belarus Romania Filipins Roma	Hearing	56:48
P3	Female	50-55	28	Albania Egypt China Roma	Deaf	36:10
P4	Female	25-30	6	Syria Bangladesh Roma	Deaf	44:27
P5	Female	30-35	4	Bulgaria Georgia Roma	Deaf	35:24
P6	Male	50-55	22	Albania Pakistan India Roma Ukrainian Filipins Roma	Deaf	51:38
P7	Female	30-35	1	Roma- Albania	Hearing	26:31
P8	Female	30-35	1 (in official education. Many years in unofficial education)	Bangladesh Roma (the ethnicities are referred to her school experience only)	Hearing	48:37

P9	Female	25-30	2	Ukraine Roma	Hearing	34:26
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Table 3.1- Teachers' demographics.

Interviews were conducted in oral Modern Greek either in Greek Sign Language (GSL). Despite the researcher, is possessor of Proficiency in GSL Certificate and communicates efficiently with Deaf users, for the purposes of this survey, two GSL Interpreters were hired to mediate the communication and ensure better transmission of information between Deaf teachers and the researcher. All all them were actualized during the second half of April 2024. Three interviews were conducted face-to-face, two in participants' schools and one in participant's opted location outside school. The rest six were held using Zoom Meeting or Viber video call. In one case, participant preferred not to turn on the camera, which was, of course, respected. Regarding the duration of each interview, some participants were more specific in their answers, when others tended to expose more information about Deaf education in general. In the second case it was preferable to let them complete their thought and then provide them some extra clarification questions to specify their practices and thoughts concerning the student population of interest. For that, duration varied from 26 to 57 minutes (see *Table 3.1*). Participants were informed by the time the recording procedure started or finished and one participant, after the end of the main interview, requested two more times to turn on the recording to add some more thoughts that came up to her while we were talking in a more friendly mode about school and students. Interviews in Qualitative research demand experience on behalf of the researcher that conducts them, which I did not have; for that the first interview acted as trial, to help me self-monitoring about the suitability of the questions employed and the points I have to clarify in the following interviews (Isari & Pourkos, 2015).

Except for the semi-structured interviews, some observations, captured in the form personal field notes, were kept before, during and after the interviews (Creswell, 2009). Notes are written in an unstructured way to reflect elements of the environment or teachers' emotional strain that could not be captured while interview recording was happening and are used either for better analysis of the data, either as a reflexive journal to cross check some findings as they resulted from the interviews (Isari & Pourkos,

2015). Both uses of the notes will be explained in following sections of methodology and later in Chapter 4.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the steps of thematic analysis as they are proposed by Isari and Pourkos (2015): i) familiarization with the data, ii) coding, iii) themes' research, iv) themes' re-examination, v) theme's definition and finally vi) form of representation of the data and writing.

Familiarization of the data started as soon as each and every interview was completed. All interviews were transcribed within one or two days after their conduction, via "Windows Office Transcription" and the online tool "oTranscribe". The procedure of transcribing itself, the insistent re-reading of the final transcription, together with the field notes taken for each interview led to the next step which was the first attempt of coding the data. The content of the data was grouped and described in relation to the initial Research Questions and represented in a data table (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2018), to be easier for the researcher to value and re-value them, make thematic interrelations and search for latent themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), researchers' role is important in relation to which corners of the data they will decide to illuminate. Depend on their focus and interpretation new themes will arise or be ignored. A last re-examination of the obvious and latent themes was conducted and as soon as it was realized that no new themes came up, themes were defined and organized in their final categories. It was decided to be presented according to the Research Question they answer, except for some hidden ones that are presented separately. Some of data that provided very dense demographic information, except for the descriptive presentation, were thought to be organized in tables too, to become more user-friendly for the readers.

3.2.4 Research restrictions

This study, purposed to search the challenges educators working with Deaf children face, when teaching students from multicultural backgrounds. Because of time and

resources restrictions, this qualitative research, cannot provide generalizable findings due to the number of participants, which is small and does not represent the total population of educators who work with Deaf refugee/migrant or Roma (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). It can only constitute a sample of the challenges and the practices of teachers and may become the springboard for further research on the topic.

Concerning that is a Qualitative approach that attempts to “in dept” identify the challenges and the practices teachers employ to approach their Deaf migrant/refugee or Roma students, one more research tool could be used as a cross-checking method to the data derived from the interviews or as an extra mode of generate data by making on the spot useful observation that participants may have not thought to refer to. Participatory Observation, with “*the observer as participant*” (Isari & Pourkos, 2015, p. 109) refers to the researcher that reveals their identity but does not participate in the activities or procedures of the research field, a Deaf classroom in our case. However participatory observation requires from the researcher to dedicate time, to observe, to hear, to form questions and generally to follow their participants in the research field for a decent period of time (McLeod, 2009, as cited in Creswell, 2014). A combination of time and location restrictions, since two schools that participated in the inquiry are not in the same city I live, made no possible the use of the extra tool of observation.

Concerning the employment of Official GSL Interpreter, it was a decision dictated by the need that all information between Deaf participants and researcher have to be transmitted precisely by a professional. This, not only would reassure the validity and credibility of the interviews but additionally would be an action of respect conferment for Deaf people and GSL. Deaf participants understood the importance of their contribution to the survey since their stories were interpreted by a professional and not by a person who just uses GSL for some everyday communication. This choice, despite the positive outcomes, costs preciously in the directness between the two parts. During the interviews, some questions were interpreted to participants in a way that gave led answers by their side. Similarly, some answers were interpreted in oral Greek in relation to professional's perception. To overcome those problems i) the second official GSL Interpreter was chosen to be an educator herself, to easier connect to the themes discussed during the interviews; ii) active observation of professionals' interpretation and teachers' answers was actualized, to clarify the questions that, in researcher's

opinion, were not transmitted adequately or were more guiding for participants; iii) researcher's personal notes, taken while interview was conducted, were used to cover possible gaps in communication, without interrupting participants while they were expressing their opinions.

In qualitative approach, distant-conducted interviews via phone call or video call, are accepted as tools of data collection (Creswell, 2009) but can also cost in directness between researcher and participants. However, in our case, if technology did not intervene, due to time and space limitations mentioned before, either the availability of participants would be extra risky, either the researcher would have to invest more resources (days off work, frequent traveling to a city 6 hours away) to conduct them face-to-face (Bryman, 2016). Considering in the equalization of availability, participant's, researcher's and interpreter's availability when needed, support of technology was salvation for the in time completion of the research.

3.2.5 Ethical Concerns

The approach chosen for the actualization of this study, Qualitative approach, implies that the researcher has to understand participants' world and to make meaning through their eyes in relation to a "problem" that pertains to some anthropological or social touch (Creswell, 2014). To succeed that, researcher has to use methods that do not harm, offend or cause inconvenience to participants who dedicate their time and after all, share their personal story (Block, Warr, Gibbs & Riggs, 2013).

After what mentioned, conduction of interviews was a stressful procedure. A lot of ethical concerns came up in relation to ask all the necessary, insist in some themes where the answers may not satisfy the Research Questions but in parallel do not risk at any moment to harm instead of benefit the participants. Guillemin and Gillam (2004 as cited in Block et al., 2013, p. 70) suggest "*procedural ethics*" and "*ethics in practice*" to make the experience of participation to a survey as positive, and risk-less, as possible. The first refers to all these official procedures that include documentation such as signing a Consent form and can be planned beforehand by the researcher, when the second refers to every day issues that might arise during the procedures of generating data and the researcher has to act spontaneously however effectively.

In relation to procedural ethics, except for the initial mail (Appendix A) that was sent to the direction of each school and claims the anonymity and the non-binding nature of participation in the inquiry, no more consent form was provided to participants for signing. According to Liamputtong (2008) before giving a consent form to be signed more cultural parameters and relations of confidentiality have to be taken under consideration. A signed consent form might stress participants that by signing they lose their anonymity, or with the official prestige a signature on a document gives, they are committed to some kind of obligation to the researcher. However, in the beginning of all interviews researcher again guaranteed the anonymity of participants personal data and reassured them that no information provided during the interview is going to relate them or their school to students.

In relation to ethics in practice, in all the three schools I addressed for participants, I introduced myself as an ex-colleague, teacher that have worked with Deaf children, that in present is conducting a specific survey. In two of the schools, that I had indeed worked in the past, I had a friendly relationship with most of the members of the personnel and that is how even younger members, were encouraged to participate. My skepticism, having this dual role, was whether participants, ex-colleagues either new ones, would feel convenient to express their real thoughts or they would give the “politically correct” answers I would like to hear (Patton, 2002, as cited in Isari & Pourkos, 2015). Moreover, because of this familiarity, they would may feel that they are giving information that could be shared with other members of the Deaf community (Brewis, 2014). On the other hand, this familiarity, can turn to be an advantage since no break-the-ice procedures are needed and participants tend to easier feel trust and sympathy for a person they feel they have passed through the same difficulties, in relation to the topic discussed (Brewis, 2014).

Moreover, in the case of Deaf participants, that, as mentioned in Chapter 2, consist a separate cultural and linguistic minority, challenges that occurred to cross-cultural researches may arise. For example, as a minority, and diachronically even marginalized group, they may feel that researchers, who usually belong to the dominant population, interpret their answers in a way that does not represent them (Marshall & Batten, 2003). Again, the familiarity derived from the previous role of the researcher, combined to the

existence of a GSL interpreter, who in general is accepted as member of the Deaf society, left no communication shades between researcher and participants.

Researcher tried to make some explanatory questions, not only for practical reasons (better understanding of teachers' sayings), but to imply her full focus on what is being said during the interviews. Despite she tried to have neutral reactions and to show condescension in all teachers' answers, the friendly and confidential mood of some interviews, left space for facial encouragement and mutually expressive skepticism about teachers' challenges, means and resources in teaching Deaf migrant/Refugee and Roma Students.

Chapter 4-Findings

Chapter Four presents a description of the information that participants shared during the interviews, concerning their views and practices about the challenges Deaf students from multicultural background face in Greek School for the Deaf. Data are organized in four sections, each of which corresponds to a research question.

4.1 Students' population from multicultural background in Greek Special Schools for the Deaf

4.1.1 Students' ethnic background

To question related to teachers' teaching experience with students from multicultural backgrounds, participants' answers, whose experience varies from 1-28 years in Deaf Education, categorize students in three groups: the ones born in Greece from migrant/Roma parents, others who came in Greece at a young age, less than 2-3 years old, and those who came in Greece older than 8-9 years old. As we can see in *Table 3.1*, Chapter 3, Roma population is highly represented in schools. All teachers, except for one, have been involved with Deaf Roma. Only one participant defines her student as Roma-Albanian, one comments that Roma students are Greek citizens and the rest six participants just refer to them as Roma. Other countries of origin are: Balkan countries (Albania in biggest percentage, Bulgaria), Eastern countries (India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Filipins, China), Arab countries (Egypt, Syria) and Former East Bloc countries (Russia, Belarus, Georgia, Poland, Rumania, Ukraine-before and after Russian invasion 2021).

4.1.2 Students' school experience

Teachers describe that students' previous school experience varies. On the one hand, there are younger children either with no previous education, either graduated from Greek nursery schools for the Hearing and then moved to Primary School for the Deaf, or directly attended Greek nursery school for the Deaf. On the other hand, there are older students that, either attended Greek Primary schools for the Hearing, either were educated at their country-of-origin school for the Hearing, or attended their country-of-origin school for the Deaf (few) and finally, there are older children that came to school with no previous school experience. An overview of students' previous school experience as it was described by their teachers is presented in *Table 4.1*.

Students' age when came in Greece	School experience by the time they came to Greek school for the Deaf	Number of teachers involved in that question
Younger (<2-3 years old)	No previous school experience	4
	Greek nursery school for Hearing	3
	Greek nursery school for the Deaf	6
Older (>8-9 years old)	No previous school experience	6
	Origin country- Primary school for Hearing	3
	Origin country- Primary school for the Deaf	1

	Greek Primary school for the Hearing	2
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Table 4.1- Previous School experience.

4.1.3 Students' mother tongue

Concerning students' first language (L1), five out of nine teachers were hesitant to answer for all of their students. Grouping teachers' answers about L1, children are separated in four categories: Hard of Hearing students tend to be users of the oral language of their community, few students used the Sign Language (SL) of their home country and others are reported to have acquired Greek Sign Language (GSL) as L1 in the age between 3-6 after attending the Greek Nursery School for the Deaf. For the end, there are children older than 8-9 years old that came to school with no first language. Teachers supposed, recalling their very first communication with those children and their parents, they were only using some home signs or indication.

4.2 Teachers' views about the challenges of Deaf students from multicultural backgrounds in learning the Greek Sign Language and the Modern Greek

In this sub-section, students' challenges in GSL and Modern Greek learning were examined under the lens of being, or not, users of an L1 as soon as they attended Primary school for the Deaf.

4.2.1 Students who do not use any language as L1

To the question concerning the way teachers approached students from background different than the Greek one, who additionally had not developed an L1 because of lack of suitable education and supporting technology, all teachers claimed to start with pantomime that gradually turned to GSL. They considered as self-evident to build a basic communication through GSL.

(P5) *“I started with teaching him baby-words so at least he could communicate with the rest of the children during school-breaks, school-excursions, any in-school-activity, how they went home, come to school”*

Concerning students' capacity, without developed L1, in GSL acquisition, four participants stated that for older children is more difficult to acquire Sign Language in an efficient level. They noticed that students tend to use single Signs instead of full sentences. Another teacher also commented on delay or failure in acquiring idioms and expressions of Sign Language as a result of using GSL only at school.

(P8) *“...her Sign Language was used exclusively in school, she had severe deficiencies in idioms of Sign Language”.*

Concerning written Greek language, all teachers expressed their skepticism to introduce students as soon as possible the Greek alphabet, the syllables, the words and the sentences. Two teachers noticed denial/detachment for developing writing skills but give different interpretations to this attitude. One believed it was a matter of ignorance and also implied some additional learning difficulties the students might have. The other justifies the negative attitude towards reading and writing as a matter of lack of training and lack of meaningful, for the students, material.

(P4) *“I remember one year I was trying to teach written speech. A few words, only a few simple little words, I was trying. Nothing. There was denial, they didn't want to write. There was huge difficulty, they couldn't, by no means, memorize anything”.*

Because of the small number of schools related in the survey some of the students were “recycled” among diverse teachers' answers. Four educators interviewed, shared the same students with three of their colleagues, in different periods/school grades of students' education. Researcher, after comparing the answers between participants, the one that first took on the students and the other that taught them the following year, noticed two points: students that were described by their initial teacher as poor GSL users, have reached, a satisfactory level of communication in GSL, according to their next teacher. Second point was that after 5-6 years in school, the second teacher reports about students that they still have severe difficulties in reading more complex syllables (double consonant – vowel), memorizing words, understanding/form simple sentences.

4.2.2 Students, users of written L1

Researcher tried to elicit from participants about how students' writing skills in their L1, affect their writing skills in Greek. There were two opposite opinions. On the one hand, a teacher exposed her experience that students' literacy skills helped them understand faster the correspondences between their ethnic alphabet and Greek alphabet and therefore can easier succeed syllable and word formation. On the other hand, two teachers mentioned their literacy skills made them more confused between their written L1 and written Greek. Other teachers could not answer to that question, either because their students did not have previous literacy skills, either they could not recall more information. Common ground for both sides is that students continued facing difficulties in syntax, vocabulary and grammar.

(P1) “...*she quickly understood syllable separation...*”, “*she wasn't ready to use grammar elements*”.

To the question whether difficulties highlighted above, differentiated among Greek Deaf students and Deaf students with cultural background different than Greek, three participants noticed differences, justifying that natives had been exposed to relevant stimuli and usually come to school more familiar with the written form of Greek. One participant, hesitated to answer this question claiming that there are many factors to affect literacy in Deafness.

4.2.3 Students users of oral L1

To question related to the school performance of students, who have developed an oral L1, which is not the Greek one, teachers related this L1 development with children with higher auditory remains, the ones they refer to as “Hard of Hearing”. Six out of eight teachers, that have worked with Hard of Hearing students, claimed that they can easier succeed in school at all levels: they tend to become good users of the GSL when in the same time, gain a satisfactory level of the oral Greek language, for their age, although they had to overcome difficulties in the auditory separation and lack in vocabulary. In written Greek language, it seems that this category of students, followed the curriculum

the whole class follows without lots of differentiations and their progress is expected to be on the average of the class, as soon as there are no other reasons (fragmentary education, special learning difficulties) preventing them from learning

(P7) "...we use for example the school books for 5th grade, we simplify, where possible, the content of the texts and of course we are working on the grammar and syntax of 5th grade, which she does understand..."

There was only one occasion stated where the student, Hard of Hearing and efficient user of family's national language as L1, learnt slower the GSL, as she practiced and had contact with it only in school, and additionally, never learnt the Greek oral language except for some words of frequency. Additionally, this student was described as difficult to memorize, understanding and producing written Speech. Her teacher supports for that this poor performance there are some cultural reasons to blame, described in 4.3.1 sub-section of this dissertation.

In this group of students there was one special occasion I would like to mention. A Deaf student, born and raised up by Deaf parents, user of the National SL of their country as L1. Very quickly she learnt GSL, again as a basis of communication, very quickly conquered the mechanism of creating syllables and words, however, had delays in understanding grammar rules, conceiving and forming sentences, at the first two years of her schooling in Greece. Interviewing her last Primary School teacher, those difficulties seem to have flown away, since he almost forgotten to refer to that child as a student with migrant background. Adding the latter example, it seems that according to seven out of nine teachers, the majority of students that have developed an L1 (oral or Sign), follow a quite similar path in their learning: they familiarize quickly with GSL, quickly obtain the technical written form of Greek and easier produce oral Greek language although they do not use, yet, a rich vocabulary. An overview of the reported language difficulties students from multicultural backgrounds face, is presented in *Table 4.2*. "No data" is noted either because teachers interviewed did not mention anything special when asked about the specific population, either did not have any answers since some of their students left school.

L1		GSL	Written Speech	Oral Speech	Number of teachers involved in that question
None	Younger	Use of single words instead of sentences for long period	No data	Difficulty in letter sound correspondence. No data about Oral Speech development	2
	Older	Slower Development Lack of expressions and idioms Efficient level for everyday communication	Lack of interest. Difficulty in memorizing, reading specific combinations of letters, understanding written text	Maybe words of frequency	4
Oral-non-Greek		Quick development	Difficulty in Grammar-syntax structures	Difficulties in the auditory separation Poor Vocabulary	6
Sign-non-Greek		Quick development	Difficulty in Grammar-syntax structures	No data	2
GSL acquired at 3-6 years old		Follow normal pace as Greek Deaf	Follow normal pace as Greek Deaf	Follow normal pace as Greek Deaf	7

Table 4.2- Teachers' views about language difficulties.

4.2.4 Students from multicultural backgrounds that gained GSL as L1 in early age.

Five out of nine participants have worked in first grade and claim that as soon as students from multicultural background come from nursery school for the Deaf, therefore had a Sign Language basis, written speech started as if they were native Deaf. They did not notice exceptional difficulties from that student- population except for the fact that students do not have any support at home. The same attitude was scanned generally, for older students from multicultural backgrounds that have been attending the School for the Deaf for many years.

(P3) *“I follow the regular curriculum, we are here in Greece and our books are in Greek”*

Teachers did not highlight any special difficulties compared to their Greek peers. Reflecting on their answers, five out of nine participants tend to recall and share their experiences with those students that in a way, incommoded them during the teaching procedure. For students that were fully assimilated to school environment, communication and curriculum, teachers give very little information, only after insisting on some questions, about them since they are “*like Greeks*”.

4.3 Which are the factors that affect/facilitate students' progress and inclusion in school?

4.3.1 Homework- The role of family- The home culture

Homework, revision and practice at home was considered by teachers, as important factor for better school performance. It was notable that all participants, except for one, highlighted the absence of practical help at home, even before being asked a related question. Teachers, reflecting on their communication with parents shared their conclusions about parental attitude towards education and how it affects students' progress. They grouped parents to those that cannot help because they are not users of Greek Language themselves, but are interested about school, try to check whether their children have done their homework or help them in non-linguistic homework, communicate with school to be informed about their behavior and progress. Teachers who worked with population, usually coming from the Former East Block and Albania, report that their students tended to be more diligent and had actual better school performance.

(P1) *“...her mother, she tried to have some time for the child to study, and after that she was trying to check her homework, in one way, but up to that.”*

On the other hand, teachers involved with cultural backgrounds where manual survival skills are evaluated higher (usually Roma families) and maybe parents themselves were illiterate, students not only were reported not have any motivation doing homework and be interested in the learning procedure, they often had to work instead, to support family income, after school. For Roma community, school seemed to be, according to four out of eight teachers that worked with Roma, a procedural obligation so as to reserve an attendance certificate and asset benefits from the Social Services.

(P4) "They send them [their children] at school to get the subsidy, which is money. This is obvious"

One teacher commented that even if the family background did not help, as soon as she established a homework routine, students perform much better, in relation to the goals she had set.

Teachers involved with families, coming from Eastern or Arab countries and Roma Communities, shared the impression that parents did not have any academic expectations from their children (finish school, enter the University etc). Teachers' hypothesis was that they value other things, as important, for example girls to be healthy and good-looking so as to marry, bear and raise kids; boys to be strong and healthy so as to do manual jobs and offer to their family. These families did not consider their offspring's Deafness as a problem even if there is no common language of communication.

(P8) "I feel that parents from Bangladesh didn't have a clear image of Deafness, because the girl used the oral language in an efficient level"

Hearing impairment did not affect at all the "family-plan" and parents did not conceive Deafness as a disability for their child, especially, in cases where children were hard-of-hearing, therefore users of the oral language of their parents,

In a couple of cases, gender stereotypes described in the previous paragraph affected students not only in relation to their motivation to learn, but as well in their social adaption and inclusion. Seven out of nine participants, interpreted those stereotypes as

unnaturally violent behavior, for boys, and difficulty in interaction with their male classmates, for girls.

(P7) "...he said, if I don't support myself in that way, [the violent way] maybe somebody calls me a chicken, thinks I'm weak, inferior"

One participant mentioned about her two students, sister and brother, a situation where the gender roles defined by the family were gradually unbearable for the girl.

(P2) "Woman's role is this. End of story. She will stay at home, she will clean. That's all, she won't dedicate in anything else. The boy had a different perspective, for example...", "Girl came at school, especially in her pre-adolescence, with lots of nerves, in a really aggressive temper".

All teachers described communication with families as difficult. Language of communication was usually some poor Greek, either English and in a few cases, there are 1 or 2 interpreters at the same time, when parents did not use Greek at all (parents' language interpreter) and teacher was Deaf (GSL interpreter). Seven out of nine, claimed they had to communicate with students' parents who rarely answered their calls and rarely or never came to school to ask for their children's academic progress. However, teachers justified this absence because of practical reasons such as long working hours or distance between school and family's neighborhood. Three teachers mentioned that parents ask about their children's behavior but never seem upset about their academic achievements or difficulties. One of those two, read family's intention to approach school and receive some kind of un-comfortability on behalf of the family. This un-comfortability seems weird considering that the student has been attending the particular school for 5-6 years

(P8) "...they wanted to communicate with school, but because of the diverse language, they didn't know how to communicate and what kind of relationship they can have with Greek school".

For the -low- degree of communication and family engagement as described above, depend on their age, children seemed to have different interpretation in school

performance. Two teachers involved with younger children stated they may try harder to progress because of teacher's motivation and peer pressure

(P1) *"Considering her age and everyday contact she developed in a normal way"*

Three involved with older students claim they have no motivation for education and they are hardly involved in a procedural way

(P8) *"...it wasn't interesting, let's say, to copy a sentence for five times"*

In this subsection, teachers working with Deaf minors from backgrounds different than the Greek, seem to hierarchize family's engagement and investment in education and Greek language acquisition as very important factor that will define students' academic performance.

4.3.2 Fragmentary schooling and previous school experience

Previous school experience could affect positively, in many ways. Fragmentary education was one of the biggest obstacles for Deaf Roma students to achieve a satisfactory basic education. All, eight out of nine, teachers that have been involved with Roma students complained about long-period absences throughout the year. As a result, there are populations that, officially, have attended to school for the Deaf for more than 5 years and lack of basic literal skills as described in previous section. Except for the periodic presence in the case of Roma, there was also the fragmentary schooling related to the fragile living conditions Refugee students face, or family decisions that financial migrants had to take. As a result, students may attend school for some months, even for the whole school year, and in the middle of their schooling they had to move in other parts of Greece or other countries

(P1) *"Unfortunately I can't tell about their progress because all three of them did not continue in our school".*

There are also cases where students left the school, moved to another country and after 2-3 years they returned and had to start from the point they had interrupted.

Additionally, four teachers recalled students with no previous school experience, who had first to be introduced to other type of school skills, such as sitting on a chair for some hours, learn how to use the pencil or other school equipment, learn to pay attention to the interlocutor, who used a language they may had never seen before. For some of those students, maybe there was no language to explain them why their parents left them to a place with adults and children they are not familiar with

(P9) "They tried [student's parents] to leave, she was shouting, crying, hit her head on the floor"

On the opposite, participants claimed for children that have acquired school skills from ex educational experiences and were aware of the expectations school demands from them, seemed to engage faster to the learning procedure. There was only one occasion stated, where the previous school environment was completely different from the present one (separated schools for boys and girls/curriculum/pedagogical approaches) and student needed time to understand those differences and feel convenient. From the example offered below, it seemed that not only student needed time to understand the new school frame. School was also unaware of student's previous reality. Student shared her reality with her teacher, as soon as she could use in an efficient level GSL. Until that moment there was a skepticism on how that girl felt about her new school the first weeks/months.

(P6) "She had gone to a school for the Deaf in Pakistan, but education there was completely different, the communication completely different, as soon as she explained me, I understood. It was only for girls, I asked her: And boys? Where were they? In another building, she said, separately. And they were taught English, some basic English, some Pakistani, but most of it was about the way of life, for house work"

Five teachers who taught students, whose previous school experience had been to institutions for the Deaf only (Nursery for the Deaf - Deaf education since 1st grade), no matter their ethnic background, expected performance and engagement similar to their native peers, of course as soon as other cultural factors addressed above do not intervene.

To conclude, teachers of the research, declared that fragmentary schooling and long period absences constituted a great obstacle for students' academic performance. Additionally, they valued positively students' previous educational experiences as a factor that helps them integrate in school academically and socially.

4.3.3 The role of first evaluation

About the relevance of first evaluation and whether it can help students' better academic and social adaption, only more experienced teachers of the interview could answer, as those who have been working only one year claim to ignore the criteria school evaluates new-coming students. According to the interviews, younger Roma, Migrant or refugee students coming to First grade straight after Deaf Nursery school, usually continued their studentship with their Greek peers. Only one teacher stated that after one year, depending on their performance and engagement, they might change team and participate in one that will support better their communicational and educational needs.

For children that were new-comers to a particular school frame, the majority of teachers mentioned the existence of an evaluating team of professionals, consisted of Deaf and Hearing teachers, psychologist, social worker and Speech Therapist, who prioritized the criteria so as to include students in a team depended on their age, developmental level, cognitive level and the language of communication, if any. One teacher also stated that in her school the percentage of hearing remains played also a role to the sort of team student is going to be introduced. Three teachers mentioned it was considered important that students would enter a team that they would make a match with, that even if the cognitive level was lower or the level of language not sufficient yet, probational attendance to more classes was practiced to test how children themselves react.

(P2) "I mean, I remember in some occasions, not always, that those students [from multicultural backgrounds] have entered pilotly to some classes. The trial itself, sometimes... the connection, ok the connection with the students would not define in which team they would be introduced but ... it was a factor".

There a case stated, where female student from Eastern country could not accept that she would have a male teacher or participate in a team with only male co-students, so school re-form the groups so as the student, and her family, to feel more comfortable and having at least one female co-student.

To conclude, school managements seemed to try create classes of friends. The experienced school personnel attempted to form teams, based not only on students' academic level, that anyway varies a lot, but additionally on students' emerging chemistry.

4.3.4 In-school Class segregation

One teacher, highlighted that her students, two teen girls with Roma and Bangladesh background, users of GSL but not the oral Greek, wee coming along a lot together. At this school, there is another group of teenagers, consisted of girls from Greece and Albania, fully assimilated. Groups mutually avoided to interact during the school break and teacher supported for the latter group that girls are hard-of-Hearing and, although they use GSL, they also communicate orally; for that, her two Deaf girls are excluded. The first duet prefers as friends, boys with Roma background, with whom they have, more or less, the same code of communication.

(P8) "They did not consider them as their pals, no that they are not hanging out with us and they don't want us. They said no. No, she is very pretty, she is very popular. I'm not going to them"

This observation was noticed at the school where criterion of evaluation for entering a team, the degree of Hearing Impairment was stated, as mentioned in the 4.3.3 section.

4.3.5 Teachers' practices that encourage students' involvement

Teachers described many practices they apply in order to help their Deaf students succeed in technical parts of the learning procedure. A lot of visual material (images-photos-videos), the use colors to differentiate and attract attention, syllable cards for first literature, speech-therapy tricks, simplified texts, thematic vocabulary, repetitive

vocabulary in which grammar and syntax rules are gradually developed. However, in this dissertation we are not going to expand more on these practices such as it seems that those techniques, mentioned to be used for students with different ethnic background, are also used for Deaf students with Greek background. Some teachers offered their practices about what helped them approach their students culturally so as to help them, and themselves, find common grounds and succeed better, not only in relation to the inclusion procedure but the educational as well.

One teacher stated that as soon as her new-comer students come to class, without any first language, she tried to be very well prepared. She had carefully studied students' background, she found photos about their countries, or images she felt that are familiar to their culture, she showed photos even from her mobile phone related to Greek habits, to attract their attention and make them involve in a communication (pantomime at first), about familiar things of everyday family and school life.

Another teacher described her experience with her, already 14-year-old student, who came to Greece as unaccompanied minor, living under guardianship with his Guardians know very little about his social and family history. She tried to communicate via International and student's National Sign Language unsuccessfully. Later, she tried to show him the national alphabet of his country, captured his attention and a whole world of information was gradually revealed. Even if he had very poor literacy skills, he could indicate the name of his town and the school he was before. She Googled both and the student was positive when seeing the images. Teacher communicated with the school to take extra information about student's previous schooling. As soon as he gradually learnt GSL he communicated his migrant story and some traumatic experiences, related to his Deafness. His teacher repeatedly said, during our interview, how she prioritizes the theme of building trust between her and the student.

*(P5) "and then he trusted me ... and that's how I gained his trust...
at first he didn't have trust"*

Two teachers also describe that for some students, their hearing impairment, the fact that they are deaf when other people are hearing, is a fact they have never realized before going to a school for the Deaf. For some of those children, especially for older ones, this first-time awareness, can serve a huge motivation to learn GSL so as to

communicate with the people they share this new identity. Their literacy skills in Greek Language follow a slower pace but still some of them tend to try hard acquire it

(P5) "...you are just Deaf, and he looked at me in query, am I Deaf too?... So, you are Deaf too, we are the same! And he was happy entering a team..."

There were two more occasions, where teachers seemed they did adapt their lesson culturally, but in a different way. They harked their students' environmental needs and changed the focus so as to teach their early teen students, things that were relevant to the gender role they would have to serve in the future

(P8) "by the end of September I have already done some tests, some trial teaching...", "and then it came up to me this awareness, after watching children during the school breaks, understanding where, in which topics, their communication was focused on...", "... gradually their attitude helped me realize they need different objectives"

These few practices described above reflect some teachers' awareness, that except for the hearing impairment that led those students to that specific school frame, there were also other qualities they had to reconsider so as to approach effectively their students that come from cultural backgrounds different to Greek.

4.4 Practices with which students' identity is encouraged not only as Deaf but as people with cultural identity other than Greek.

4.4.1 Visibility of ethnic diversity

Teachers were asked about the ways students' different cultural identity is visible at school. Five out of nine teachers (note: all from those who have more than four years of teaching experience with the Deaf) claimed that for young children from different cultural backgrounds, when in school, their cultural diversity, except for racial characteristics, was not so obvious. Some dress code was different in official occasions

such as a national celebration or the Christmas theatrical play before holidays. A teacher mentioned that even in case of different religion, young children just imitated the religious habits of the dominant population, teachers and other students.

(P3) *“For example, in the morning pray, what foreigners do? They know we have to make the pray but, even if their parents have told them not to form the cross [the Christian-orthodox cross with thumb-indicator-middle fingers united moving from head to stomach and from right shoulder to left, forming a cross on individual's body], since they watch others, they copy them”*

All participants, except for one that only have a really young student, claimed that, as soon as students are getting older, or in cases they first came to school in older age, they revealed elements of their cultural identities. Many of them wanted to share experiences with their classmates and teachers about different traditions related to social events, different habits in religious celebrations. They brought different food, they wanted to share words they learn from their parents, they look proud when they show their ability to write in their native language. When talking about migrants, they recalled vacations, they memorized relatives that live in the origin countries or dream of a future trip as soon as they are grown-ups. By teachers' answers it seemed they are interested in learning their students' different cultural habits, and showed a discretely positive attitude in the other literacy skills their students develop

(P9) *“...she had started learning the Ukrainian alphabet with her mother, she came to school with her notebook and she showed to me”, ” I don't know that [whether student's literacy skills developed more than learning the alphabet]. I don't know Ukrainian”*

School and teachers, showed also indulgent tolerance in relation to pieces of jewelry and clothing habits. Teacher described her Roma student showing off about his earrings and necklace. Other described in detail about student that felt extremely warm but did not want to take off her hijab or turn over her sleeves. Teacher explained how they tried to convince her it is ok to wear it but that if she wanted, she could take off the clothes that make her feel so warm, since school is a safe space and her parents would

never find out. The description of this incident, despite the undoubtedly good intentions of the teacher to make the student feel convenient and safe, shows some deep misunderstanding on the notion of respect to the culture of others as an unseparated part of their identity that cannot be ignored or underestimated. Teacher also described, other students' query about their classmate's clothes and, since it was sixth grade class, they had a cultural talk on how people are dressed in other countries because of their religion. Although it is positive that teacher engaged the whole team in a discussion about their classmate's diversity, we cannot be sure about the conditions under which this discussion was conducted; whether the student from Pakistan wanted this discussion to take place, whether it was critical and fruitful rather than informative and stereotyping for people with different religion.

4.4.2 Teachers' attempts to represent student's cultural identity in the curriculum

Teachers were asked about any modifications or practices to boost their students' cultural ethnic identities. This question was scanning for answers through the total duration of each and every interview among the nine conducted.

Despite their positive view on student's traditions, school seemed not to include any of those diverse cultural elements in the educational material. Cultural diversity in the curriculum seemed to exist only as a separate section of specific subjects such as "Study of the Environment" mentioned only by one teacher. Personal feeling as an external observer, is that teacher's view as quoted below, seems to represent the attitude of the majority of educators interviewed

(P3) "Unfortunately, what I have seen until now is that those children must have a teacher who gives them some information, is not interested that much about their culture. Teacher has to focus on educational goals so as to reach a learning level".

Indeed, five teachers, clearly commented on how many different objectives they have to work on for their students: teach and develop the GSL, teach the Greek language as second or third which means alphabet, vocabulary, syntax and grammar of a language

students may cannot hear at all; help them with technical parts of pronouncing the oral speech, help them practice and take the most of their hearing remains, if any, support and boost their ability of lip reading. Not to mention the rest of roles teachers anyway have to serve in such an institution.

Among the teachers interviewed no one had special training in intercultural education by the time they were working with Deaf students from multicultural backgrounds. Three teachers mentioned that they would like to have books specially configured for ethnically diverse Deaf students. Moreover, two teachers stated that educational goals could be set on behalf of the school directors and not themselves, causing extra pressure and not necessarily followed students' pace and needs.

4.4.3 Teachers' concerns about students' Deaf identity.

Except for one participant, that her student was born and raised up by Deaf parents, the rest of teachers expressed skepticism whether their students are going to develop their GSL, speaking and writing skills as soon as they leave school, and with whom, since their family and cultural societies do not use neither GSL neither are familiar with Greek Language. They saw that some of them have constructed a Deaf identity but were not sure whether their family environment is going to encourage their children's familiarization to a society [the Greek Deaf Society], they themselves do not have linguistic nor cultural access.

Seven out of nine teachers believed parents should learn the GSL so as to have a qualitative communication with their children. More experienced teachers, recalled the past where there were classes for GSL offered by school, and parents, Greeks and non-Greeks, learn GSL and as a result their children perform much better in school and in life. All this thoughtful skepticism could reveal for teachers that priority seems to be students' Deaf identity in a hearing world and parents are those who have to come closer to students' deafness, indifferent their ethnic identity. Moreover, teachers seemed to rely on students' personal abilities to develop mechanisms of communication with their families

(P3) *“if the child is clever and they are interested, they have awareness for the different language at home too... They have to try hard, but they know there are different things in home and school”*

(P5) *“there is no communication, they do pantomime all the time. I see he has some spelling, so with his father he uses some Roma words”*

Participants' answers revealed that school has separated the roles concerning which representation of students' identity they defend. School for the Deaf is here to boost and cultivate the Deaf Greek identity when family has to preserve, if they choose to, student's ethnic and religious cultural identity.

As described in Methodology Chapter, a reflective journal was kept before, during and after the interview of each participant. Especially for the face-to face interviews, those personal notes together with the interviews gave some interesting findings, which are exposed in this final paragraph. Despite all the difficulties teachers focused on, there were cases where their interviews and some elements irrelevant to interviews, revealed the strong connections they had built, after all, with their minority background students. One participant mentions for his student:

“Now that she is 16 or 17 years old, she is back in Pakistan, back then she was 13-14, and we communicate by video calls, we talk. And she told me they [her family] wanted to make me get married, but I don't want to, I said NO” (P6)

Another teacher, who is Deaf herself, after the interview stopped, she showed photos of some students she talked about during the interview. Those students are now late teenagers or adults and she keep contacts with them via social media. She very proudly talked about them and how well they are doing with their lives at the present. Another teacher, during her whole interview, implies more that one times that she took a motherhood role, for her student that came in Greece as unaccompanied minor. She tried effortless to inform the NGO that hosts him, about the different way a Deaf child is need to be approached. Moreover, she continued to support and give advice to him after he

finished Primary school. As soon as High school director asked why this teenager still visits Primary school

“...and do you know what he [the student] answered? She is like a mom to me” (P. 5)

The three cases referred above, happened to come from Deaf teachers. Three out four Deaf participants, indicated their deeper connections with their Roma, either refugee or migrant students. It does not mean that hearing participants did not create such personal, life-long bonds, but for sure it not implied or expressed during the interview conduction.

Chapter 5-Discussion

In this Chapter, themes that emerged from the Data Analysis of Findings in Chapter 4, will be interpreted via the lenses of the given theoretical background given in Chapter 2.

5.1 Who are the students from multicultural backgrounds in Greek schools for the Deaf?

The research revealed that Greek schools for the Deaf, host a number of students that do not belong to the dominant culture group. If we divide them with ethnocultural/social criteria three big categories arise: i) Students that came with their families as finance migrants in Greece, ii) students that came with their families as refugees in Greece and finally iii) students with Roma background, that either are Greek citizens, either possess a citizenship different than Greek. First and third category are overrepresented in Greek Deaf school according to teachers' answers.

Apart from the ethnocultural criterion, for each big category, other characteristics can be attributed to students. Those that attended Greek Deaf education in a younger age, no more than 7 years old, and those that started their studentship in Greek Deaf context in older age, more than 8-9 years old. Regarding education, another group appears, children that have never attended education before coming to school for the Deaf, that

are again divided in two sub-groups, younger and older, who by the time they enter school they had no previous official education. Teachers could not claim about the reasons deaf refugee and migrant children were excluded from previous education, however there are studies to enlighten this absence. According to Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al.* (2018), citizens from developing, either war-zone countries who come to Europe as refugees or migrants, might have no access to early identification and intervention procedures. Additionally, family and society's perception about Deafness, and disability in general, affects decisions and perhaps minimizes educational options for disabled children (Guardino & Cannon, 2016). Lastly, Pizzo (2016) and National Confederation of People with Disabilities (2017) in Greece, claim that evaluation processes at refugee camps fail to identify their hearing loss and children, even in the host country do not take advantage of the educational and medical services provided. Roma students of this survey, despite being Greek citizens and theoretically do not have to overcome refugee and migrants' problems mentioned above, are again reported for late first attendance in school for the Deaf with no previous experience even in hearing school environments. Organizations that are involved with human rights, such as UNICEF (2020) note about Roma children that they are diachronically, reported to have inefficient schooling. When the discussion comes to deaf Roma children in particular, the study of Swanwick, Elmore and Salter (2021), outlined a number of reasons that delayed them from early deafness identification and right educational placement: i) hard-to-access social/health services system, ii) bureaucracy issues in an inaccessible language for parents, iii) stereotypes and discrimination Roma parents experience in their communication with public servants.

Last criterion for better management of the results of the current survey, is the existence or not of L1 among those students. According to teachers, a few students occupied their family's language as L1. Lambropoulou (1999), claims that children who are hard of hearing, either deaf well supported educationally and technologically since their very early age, can develop a spoken L1. Moreover, Deaf children coming from Deaf parents have the privilege to develop the National Sign Language effortlessly and occupy it as L1. However, from interviews came up that there is a big number of students that come to Greek schools for the Deaf without using any language as first. This category again can include younger or older students. The insufficient, or not at all, L1 development is

strictly connected to what we referred above about the access in schooling. Deaf children that do not have access to suitable education, or attend school periodically, combined with a possible lack of supporting hearing technology from an early age, are very possible to fail develop a language, oral or signed (Acamatsu & Cole, 2000).

5.2 First evaluation and placement

In order to scan how schools handle their students from diverse cultural backgrounds, as soon as they come to school, questions regarding their first evaluation and criteria about their first placement in suitable class frames were conducted. It came up that Greek schools for the Deaf take under consideration some specific students' characteristics to decide their placement in particular classes. All participants agreed in the criteria of class-placement below: i) students' biological age, ii) students' developmental age, iii) students' communicational skills, iv) students' cognitive skills. No-one reported the existence of separate welcome classes for new-comer refugee, migrant or Roma students. Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al* (2018), mentioned for their research too that placing children from cultural minorities with other Deaf native peers promotes the peer-to-peer learning and helps them adapt faster in the new frame. Moers (2017) suggests that more options have to be offered to Deaf students' placing and teaching. The existence of separate welcome classes, that will prepare them linguistically, either classes with other native peers and occasional withdrawal for extra one-to-one support, or finally classes that can occupy interpreters of student's L1, (considering the existence of one) to support them in class. Magos (2022), also supports that students cannot be viewed and classified only by their common ethnic identity, since there are more aspects of their personality that for them can constitute more important cohesive factors to be members of a team, rather than their ethnic origin.

Apart from the criteria mentioned above, one participant adds students' degree of hearing loss as fifth criterion for class first placement. We have to consider whether school practices in terms of first evaluation can intensify students' segregation. It was mentioned for that school that Hard of Hearing students and Deaf students avoided interaction in school breaks, because the first use oral language, that is not accessible to the second. However, the percentage of hearing loss and the ability to produce oral

language is a combination of many factors as analyzed in previous paragraph, apart from the medical percentage of hearing impairment: better access to supporting hearing technology, earlier therapeutic and educational intervention, family environment that offers richer linguistic experiences and more educational chances. School might choose to group students based on their hearing impairment, for better management of students and teachers' resources, as education for Deaf students have differentiations compared to the Hard of Hearing (Lambropoulou, 1999), however this strategy seemed to create and encourage social inequities that have social and ethnocultural root.

5.3 The curriculum

It arised that educational programming for students depended on their personalized educational needs. There are no specific school books teachers had to use. They could employ either Ministry's official books for hearing native Greek students, either material created for hearing refugees/migrants, or books created for Greek Deaf learners or, they could create their own material. Despite the school framework seemed to be flexible in terms of educational material choices, from teachers' answers it does not arise that students' special cultural characteristics and background are somehow reflected on purpose, in the taught material.

5.3.1 Sign language acquisition

No matter of their previous school experience or the existence or not of L1 this research found that GSL is a priority for the education of migrant/refugee or Roma Deaf students. This strategy seems to be followed to support the structure of Bilingual Intercultural model of teaching, where Sign Language is the basis of communication and the main language of instruction (Lambropoulou, 1999). McAuliff (2021) too, supports that in multicultural environments for refugee's Deaf education, the use of Sign Language as the basic language of instruction is encouraged. However, the degree of GSL acquisition varies depends on students' particular individual characteristics.

Regarding children that come to school without using efficiently any L1, spoken or signed, their age is a defining factor in relation to GSL competence. Students, whose

first contact with systematic language teaching is actualized in older age, are considered to slower acquire GSL and they possibly do not reach native's level, at least during their studentship in Primary school. On the contrary, teachers believe that younger children tend to more easily get used to communication in GSL. For that, Prawiro-Atmodjo *et al* (2018), insist on students' immediate introduction in Deaf education, to gain the lost time and succeed better results.

5.3.2 Written language acquisition

Regarding written language, other aspects of students' profile affect the degree of development and the difficulty or convenience students experience during learning.

Written language acquisition, meaning their real understanding and satisfactory use of Greek written speech in relation to their native peers, is a completely different story. Interpreting teachers' answers we ended up to the conclusion that acquisition depended a lot on learners' systematic schooling, the possible attendance in nursery school for the Deaf, the length of attendance in school-for-the-Deaf setting throughout the years, the diligence with which they practice writing tasks, especially the completion of homework, their degree of hearing loss, and family's support. From their answers we noticed that teachers over-attributed parental role in relation to students' academic success. Magos (2022) notices the same pattern however, more about teachers' views and family will be exposed in following sub-chapter. Lambropoulou (1999) for Deaf students, and Magos (2022) for minority cultural background students, both mention for the population each one has studied, that systematic attendance since the early grades of Nursery school can increase the possibilities of children's future academic success in all levels. Scholars from Deaf and the intercultural studies (Coehlo, 2007; Leigh & Crowe, 2015; Prawiro-Atmogjo *et al*, 2018) raise as important the family support.

5.3.3 Oral language acquisition

In this study, regarding students that are reported to succeed using oral Greek language, two factors are interrelated: i) degree of hearing loss, ii) satisfactory use of oral L1 as

Lambropoulou (1999) has marked. Teachers mention about their Hard of Hearing students who came to school using their oral home languages, that they also developed Greek spoken language, although, at least in Primary school, they lacked in terms of vocabulary, grammar and syntax structure. Similarly, students from ethnocultural minorities that in early age were supported by suitable hearing technology and education, behave as Hard of Hearing, have developed an L1 and gain Greek oral language too. Of course, factors mentioned in “*Written Language acquisition*” such as learners’ systematic schooling, the possible attendance in nursery school for the Deaf, the length of attendance in school-for-the-Deaf setting throughout the years and family’s familiarity with spoken Greek, were reported to affect oral language acquisition too. The belief that parents’ good employment of dominant language is going to improve students oral acquisition implies that parents at home are using the dominant language and not their heritage languages. This practice reminds past ages where school encouraged parents to speak “only Greek” to their children to boost their Greek fluency (Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011). This practice is imposed by an old-fashioned and monolingual school structure that had diachronically as result children’s alienation with their families and their ethnocultural communities, since they develop the dominant language at their heritage language expense (Lee & Oxelson, 2006).

Prawiro-Atmodjo, *et al* (2018) recognize that it is difficult for parents, belonging to ethnocultural minorities, to make language decisions. Willoughby (2012) supports that school has to approach them with cultural sensitiveness and inform them about their children’s linguistic options in relation to factors that affect possible oral language acquisition: i) Sign language, that will not obligatorily prevent their child from speaking, ii) unintentional exposure to linguistically rich environments and iii) degree of hearing impairment, as mentioned above.

5.4 Teachers’ views about what complicates students’ language education and inclusion

Despite interview questions were focused on teachers’ good intercultural practices when they teach Deaf students from ethnocultural minorities (see Appendix B), teachers dedicated decent percentage of interview-time, on the elements that, in their

opinion, obstructed or facilitated students' language education and inclusion. Those findings are going to be discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.4.1 Family- Home culture

In subsections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 about written and oral Greek Language acquisition, educators referred a lot to the dedication, children show in doing their homework. They strictly connected the completion or not of homework with parental responsibility and lack of parental intervention.

Teachers strongly attributed students' parents about the failure of the first ones to succeed in school. They highlighted the lack of communication between parents and school, the low or zero attendance in teacher-parents planned meetings, their indifference in their children's performance, the absence of involvement and control whether students are doing their homework. Last but not least, all of them expressed the opinion that if family could employ Greek language or GSL, students would perform much better. Teachers' view as mentioned above, are not unique finding of this particular research. Teachers interpret parents' attitudes via their own cultural lenses but do not count the perception those people may have about school. Coehlo (2007) states that there are parents that cannot understand why school keeps calling them to talk about their child. Their cultural background imposes them that school and home have segregated roles; the one does not intervene to the other. Additionally, many can feel insecurity that they will not be able to communicate with teachers, since they do not employ the Greek language in a sufficient level, and additionally they may have an internal fear about what and in what way teachers are going to transmit to them (Magos, 2022). Additionally, parents' survival race may prevent them from visit school, not only because of the lack of time but also because of some inconvenience related to their social status and class (Swanwick, Elmore & Salter, 2021). School is an entity with prestige and teachers sometimes, as representatives of the dominant culture (for parents' eyes) can be seen as hostile and strict judges. However, family's good co-operation with school is vital for students' development. School and teachers, have to find ways bring parents closer to the school community (Leigh & Crowe, 2015).

What was also scanned in educators' answers is the strong belief that Roma parents do not care about school at all, but occasionally send their children to participate, to assert finance profit of it. This statement on behalf of teachers is stereotypical, however not completely unfounded. Indeed, the Circular of 2002, (L. 3016/2002, art. 27) from the Hellenic Ministry of Economy and Finance, published the support of 300 euros/per child that attends the compulsory education for families with extremely low annual income (less than 3.000 euros). A simple certification that child is registered at any school was enough. The law was updated twice, in 2018 (L. 4512/2018, art. 214) and again in 2019 (Art. 13 – Amendment of Art. 214- L. 4512/2018 (A' 5) and the child subsidy would be given at the end of every school year by handing to authorities certificate of competent attendance. However, two parameters cannot be overlooked: i) teachers make this statement for Roma parents only, when this law includes all Greek citizens or citizens of third countries with low annual income, ii) education offered at Greek school is not directly connected to labor market accessible to Roma population. It is very possible that parents' "ignorance" for students' academic performance derive from their everyday experiential realization that their community is anyway excluded from the professional chances academic success can predict for the dominant population (Magos, 2022).

5.4.2 Fragmentary schooling previous school experience

Previous experience, can affect students' inclusion and academic performance, not only in relation to the writing or cognitive skills that students might have gained. It is usual for students who do not belong in the dominant culture to face adaption problems in their host country school, because, except for their possible fragmentary schooling, they might face difficult to adapt in host-country's teaching model (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Although in this research we do not have a notable number of cases to end up to safe conclusions, one case of a Pakistani girl was mentioned, where her previous school experience consisted separated-gender education, strictly defined relationship between students and teachers, and different curriculum. Not only student herself found it difficult to understand and accept her new school concept, but also teacher and students turn out they were not prepared to understand new-comer's habits and attitude. The

mono-cultural approach, national education system chooses to support, gives emphasis to the unity which is positive in terms of collectivity. However, when the unique characteristics of students, ethnocultural, religious, linguistic, social or individual (learning, sex orientation etc) are being hidden under conformity (Gkaintartzi & Tsokolidou, 2011) school can only boast for a contrived unity, that reproduce the suppression of people's identities. On the opposite, teachers commented for students coming from particular, former East bloc and Balkan counties that Greek school environment seemed familiar to them and did not notice any adapting difficulties.

5.5 Teachers' practices that promote language education and inclusion

Teachers employed successfully practices that are suggested by bibliography in teaching cultural minorities and promote intercultural education.

5.5.1 Visuals in intercultural education for the Deaf.

The use of images consists of a basic principle in Deaf education, not matter learners' age, cognitive level or cultural background, since it is compatible to their natural way of perceive information and gain knowledge (Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou, 2010). All teachers of the survey referred to images employed during the language development of students.

A few educators mentioned images as tools of cultural approach towards students. Especially during the first period they attend their class without any common language of communication, images represented experiences related to students' cultural background: home countries, previous school (if any) and everyday routines to make children feel familiar and comfortable and give motivation for communication about something they know about (Magos, 2022). Except for the first-approach use, what teachers mentioned to do is unitize pictures from specific subjects as a springboard for the whole class, minority and dominant group, to find and discuss differences and commonalities between diverse cultures. Despite the good intentions of this technique, that intends on the one hand to widen dominant-group students' perception about the

“multies” of this world, and on the other hand to show to the minority students that their culture is represented at school and affect positively their self-view (Bishop, 1990, as cited in Ferlazzo, 2020), it conceals some risks. If this approach only focuses on external, maybe “tourist-friendly” characteristics such as traditional costumes, food, music, feasts and habits can just reproduce or create stereotypes (May, 1999) instead of raise awareness about identity, diversity, intercultural competence and understanding (Fragoulis, 2020, as cited in Magos).

5.5.2 Intercultural talk.

The same attitude, as described before, seemed to happen when students' express questions about their classmates, who belong in minority groups. In this research teachers, more than one times, presented themselves as those who intervene between their students to “explain” to each part, dominant and minorities, the aspects of cultural diversity. However, as soon as this discussion is being held under a descriptive, rather than critical approach, it can establish crooked perceptions for students who belong to ethnocultural minorities. When attention focuses on external characteristics of people, combined with simplified interpretations about their diverse cultural features, the “intercultural talk” does not approach in respect as equal, minorities' expression of ethnocultural identity, rather than give to students of the dominant group, tools to recognize people of different cultures, depend on their external characteristics, physical or clothing. This attitude approaches acceptance of multiculturalism, but do not promote intercultural understanding (May, 1999).

On the opposite, what can help is the everyday exchange of news with students about their everyday lives. Some teachers seemed to practice, without knowing it, Freinet's technique “Quoi de neuf/What's new?” (Le Gal, 2017). Teachers encourage students talk about their home or neighborhood, experiences that sometimes may differentiate from their native peers. Not only their linguistic skills were developed, but under the protective environment of classroom their voices are being heard, or their Signs are being viewed, and their cultural identities are expressed and respected. Magos (2022) cites that, themes of this “news exchange” can have more sociopolitical extensions.

Something that children may see on TV, for example the beginning of a war, or incidences that are closely connected with students' communities, for example the murders against Roma teenagers from Greek police. This technique is super important for Deaf children especially if we reconsider that their access on information is based only on their visual canal and therefore they miss important details (Zobola, 2015). Younger Deaf's GSL level usually is not efficient so as to follow the News' GSL Interpreters (Lambropoulou, 1999), their lip-reading skills, if any, cannot support the tones of oral information (Diamandi, 2021) provided by the media. If they do not share the same language with their parents, school for the Deaf, seems the only place where students can discuss about things that affect their life, and humanity in general. That is how they, dominant and minority, avoid to develop social apathy, instead of critical empathy and surroundings' understanding (Zobola, 2015).

5.5.3 The use of home language.

In very few cases, educators employ students' L1, as a mean to capture children's attention and engage them in the learning procedure. Home languages thought are not used in language education as teachers noticed that, in case of Deaf multilingualism, the mixture of many languages could confuse multilingual Deaf learners. Indeed, Greek educational system belongs to those monolingual systems that diachronically have received students' bilingualism or multilingualism as a problem that would abstract them from dominant language acquisition (Helot & Young, 2002; Magos, 2022) therefore discourage the use of students' L1 at school. Language controversy is highly met while interpreting national studies and interviews of migrants that are now adults in Greece. It seems that migrants' inclusion or exclusion in Greek schools has been always a matter of individual concern strictly interrelated on how successfully "they" could learn the Greek language and follow the Greek curriculum (Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011). The stake for them, not for the Greek school, has been how themselves would neglect their heritage language, therefore the culture and traditions it carries, as to leave space for only one language to be developed "correctly". The issue of how families, belonging to ethnocultural minorities would themselves cultivate pride

and make meaning for their cultural and linguistic background has been an issue that has not concerned the institution of school (Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011).

5.5.4 Curriculum adaptations.

Students belonging to minority group population, may show resistance against the dominant teaching methods, and indifference regarding the aims of the standard curriculum (Magos, 2022). What some educators did, after thoughtful observation of their students' cultural needs and interests, was to reconsider their teaching goals and methods. They broke stereotypes that include what a typical school has to transmit to students and decided to give them supplies directly connected to their lives after school. Long (2014) proposes that curriculum is not a steady structure, rather than a flexible procedure. Educators can give meaning to their students' learning and search for their internal syllabus. This will supply the material and the exercises used that will be based on tasks that are meaningful to students.

5.6 Deaf identity and ethnic identity

The research stake in this survey is whether Deaf students from cultural minorities can exist in a Greek school for the Deaf wearing all their identities, the Deaf identity and their ethnocultural identity. According to teachers of this research, Deaf identity is constructed during students' systematic attendance in school for the Deaf, when their ethnocultural identity is cultivated by students' families. Throughout all the interviews there is a strong notion that school cannot affect this cultivation and will stay to its initial educational role, which is children's cognitive development. Students that really succeed balance between their Deaf and ethnocultural identities are according to teachers, students of higher intelligence that use their own resources to take the most of what each environment offers them. Individual skills have to support them to conserve their heritage identity and culture, away from school environment (Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011) combined with family's resistance and awareness.

5.6.1 Deaf Hood

It was noticed that the majority of Deaf educators of this research, despite the difficulties they admitted to face in understanding and coping with students who come from multicultural backgrounds, created with their students a special bond that seemed to derive from the sense of their common Deaf identity.

From Findings Chapter, it was revealed that for some Deaf students that come from multicultural backgrounds other than Greek, their attendance in school for the Deaf was their first schooling attempt ever. Moreover, it was claimed that many of them did not share a common L1 with their family and ethnic community. As a result, their existence in a school for the Deaf was their first and sometimes unique participation in a place and a community fully accessible to them. This Deaf Space, as described by McAuliff (2021) develops regardless family's contribution and authority and has as a cohesive point people's common cultural identity that is not ethnic, neither religious. Studies show that Deaf refugees prefer to co-exist with other Deaf refugees of different ethnicity instead of hearing people that share the same nationality. Additionally, this rallying among Deaf refugees from different countries of origin is not noticed between hearing refugees who prefer hanging out with their compatriots (McAuliff, 2021). Since the majority of Deaf children come from hearing parents, and many of them experienced Deaf school for the first time in Greek territory, Deaf educators, perhaps act as the first real role and linguistic models for their students. This common identity may motivate Deaf educators to take more personally Deaf children's inclusion, no matter their ethnocultural background. They perceive students as emerging Deaf active members, as Deaf community's continuity, who as a cultural and linguistic minority itself, struggles for their rights in hearing-dominant world (Ladd, 2005).

5.6.2 The perception of children as culturally blind

Through interviews, participants who interacted with younger children mentioned about them, they did not understand their cultural diversity, and for that their social and linguistic adaptation was faster. However, Van Ausdale and Feagin, (2001) summarize a number of studies which prove that even very young children, not only understand clearly differences that refer to ethnicity, country of origin, religion, gender, social class

etc. but can also relate all those aspects of identity with the privileges derived from them. In this research, if a Muslim student in a Greek school, where Orthodox morning pray is still actualized, participated in the pray routine, was not because they were too young to understand it is not a Muslim routine. Possibly they were aware of their minority status and repeated actions that were going to be encouraged by their school community as an effort to be acceptable. It is educators' role to create this kind of conditions, so students do not have to choose between their brought up and their inclusion to school procedures.

5.6.3 The perception that dominant culture is superior

Teachers of this survey never stopped their students' expression of cultural identity (tradition, habits, clothing, food etc.). However, elements of their home cultures such as language or their religious and cultural habits seemed that never were perceived as important enough to be represented in school material, to supply an intercultural project, to be the reason for any targeted activity. Via the answers it appeared that school is faithful to an institutional role and behaves as those children are not coming from ethnocultural backgrounds different from the dominant.

The fantasy that "our" culture is superior than the culture of "others" exists in big parts of Greek society and is reproduced via Mass and social media. Very often it is encouraged publicly, by politicians themselves. It is not surprising to meet this fantasy in the Greek school too, since it is poetically likened as "the mirror of our society" (Magos 2022). Apart from the passive behavior of not include minorities culture in school every day reality, encouraging, for example, your student to put off her hijab because of the extra warm temperature, is she wants to, although the intention is noble, reveals, unfortunately, complete disdain. Diverse cultural and religious expressions are not perceived as important, rather than as things you can just take off, even if for some people, consist who there are.

Chapter 6- Conclusion

6.1 Overview

Deaf students from diverse ethnic backgrounds do exist in Greek schools for the Deaf and schools have to develop ways to support their special educational and cultural needs. Because of students' family, social, ethnical, economical and religious background, educators themselves recognize, for the majority of those students, that they usually come to school with more restricted resources, compared to their native classmates.

Despite GSL acquisition was succeeded in the majority of the cases they could recall, bigger difficulties were identified in relation to oral and written Greek Language acquisition. Especially for students that started their schooling in Greek Deaf frame in older age, these difficulties seemed invincible. Educators tended to relate students' individual characteristics with their successful academic and psychosocial inclusion: i) intelligence, ii) age of initiation and long-term systematic attendance in Greek school for the Deaf, iii) percentage of hearing loss/existence of supporting hearing equipment, iv) parental attitude towards school, and v) parental familiarity to GSL and Modern Greek Language. Especially the last two imply that, for teachers of this survey, students' family background is defining factor for their academic development. It seems they know very little about particular minority groups of society such as refugees/migrants, who are anyway characterized by great heterogeneity, and Roma populations. The monocultural and monolingual philosophy, ingrained in Greek school system, impose them an equivalent way to approach their students, their families and similarly to interpret their success or failure. In that way, struggle with their own stereotypes regarding their students' cultural background seems the first step towards a more intercultural approach in the education they offer. Although they are prepared to intercultural education related to Deaf and hearing identity, they are not familiar to handle with students that except for the hearing impairment, occupy different ethnicities than the Greek. They seemed to have no faith, neither the resources, that school management can give positive outcome on Deaf students from different ethnocultural backgrounds academic and psychosocial success.

Despite the challenges they face, some teachers, based on their experience, instinctively employed methods that, after their description can be characterized as successful. Use of images closely connected to students' experiences, partial employment of their heritage languages, techniques related to the encouragement of spontaneous communication, differentiated curriculum, adapted to their interests and out-of-school reality are some of the practices educators mentioned. Last conclusion that has to be mentioned is that teachers seemed not to invest a lot to the expression and the visibility of students' ethnic diverse identity but on contrary they gave a lot of meaning to their emerging Deaf identity. Deaf educators in particular, had a leading role to introduce them to the Deaf world and create with them life-long bonds based on their shared Deaf identity.

6.2 Implementation and suggestions for further research work

Modern written and oral Greek Language, consist an L2 for Deaf students, and from that perspective teachers are qualified to teach Greek language as second to Deaf children who belong to the hearing Greek society (Lambropoulou, 1999). Actions have to be taken for teachers' further training in relation to issues of intercultural communication and education so as to update their strategies, techniques and approaches in relation to students that have an ethnocultural identity different than Greek and additionally, have the extra vulnerability of being refugees, migrants or Roma.

Since education for Deaf students who are refugees, migrants or Roma appears to be an untapped area of study in Greece, any research pertinent to this subject would significantly contribute to the larger problem of education for the Deaf in general and Deaf minorities in particular. Statistical information regarding this population of students who have attended Greek schools for the Deaf, would be an intriguing and useful discovery. Systematic tools of recording students' data can be created so as to include all parameters related to students' successful inclusion: ethnicity, prior school attendance, age of prior school attendance, employment of first language, age of hearing technology intervention etc.

Even more importantly, further research can be conducted, based on a more transformative world view that aims to take action about the questioned people of the study (Cresswell, 2014). Thoroughly observation of classrooms who host marginalized Deaf students, combined with teachers views, can give clearer results about the difficulties of Deaf students from multicultural backgrounds. As soon as difficulties are identified, teachers and researchers' systematic and productive collaboration can generate specialized practices and material which correspond to the particular communicational and cultural needs. The impact of those results will benefit students' better academic performance and psycho-social inclusion and in the same time will empower and widen educators' intercultural tools, who in this research seem to feel they can not affect a lot their students' successful academic performance.

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Appendix A: Teachers' invitation for interest

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Eleni Venetaki and I am a post-graduate student of the Hellenic Open University, in the program "*Language Education of Immigrants and Refugees*". I am sending this e-mail, in the context of writing my Dissertation, seeking your assistance, both yours and that of colleagues of your school.

The subject of the dissertation is "**Educational challenges in teaching Deaf students from multicultural backgrounds**" supervised by Ms. Sevasti Paidá.

The purpose of the research is to investigate the language difficulties faced by Deaf students, coming from multicultural environments in the Greek Primary School for the Deaf/Deaf, as well as the practices of their teachers, in order to manage these difficulties.

Research process

Open-ended interviews:

In order to investigate the questions above, interviews are expected with school teachers who teach currently, or have taught during the previous school years, Deaf students from multicultural backgrounds.

Interviews are expected to last 45 minutes to an hour, maximum. They can be conducted either in school with the permission of the principal, or in a place of their choice, outside school, or online. In the case of Deaf participants, there will be interpretation by an official GSL interpreter.

Anonymity

The researcher will ensure the anonymity of the participants. Data provided will be coded in such a way that it will not refer to a specific participant and will be used strictly for research purposes. Teachers who wish to participate in the interview are free to withdraw their participation before, during or after the end of the interview.

Supervisor

Student

Sevasti Paidá

Eleni Venetaki

Appendix B: Question plan for semi-structured interviews

1. What is the profile of the students from different cultural background in Greek Schools for the Deaf?

- Among your Deaf/Hard of Hearing students in recent years, are there students who are not from Greece. What countries do they come from?
- If they come from a country other than Greece, do at what age they came to Greece?
- Do you know what language they used as a 1st language when they came to your school?
- Do you know the previous school experience of your students before you take them on?

2. Which are teachers' views about the challenges Deaf students from different cultural background face, in relation to Greek Sign Language and Modern Greek, written or oral?

3. Which are the factors that affect/facilitate academic progress and inclusion of students in the school community?

- When a student first comes to school, and you know he is from another country, how is he/she assessed to decide which class he/she will be placed in?
- In your school, how the groups are formed and which groups finally host students who come from a cultural or linguistic community other than Greek?

In the case that the students are users of the Sign Language of their country/community

- How do you approach them?
- How do you start your lesson?
- What does your educational programming include?
- Where does the Language lesson focus in the cases of these students?
- Would you like to describe a language lesson to us? Which supervisory tools make it easier for you?
- Do you think they have difficulty learning Greek Sign Language?

- Is there anything that helps them in this process?

In case students are users of the Spoken/Written Language of their country/community

- How do you approach them?
- How do you start your lesson?
- What does your educational programming include?
- Where does the language lesson focus in the cases of these students?
- Would you like to describe a language lesson to us?
- Do you think they have difficulty learning the Modern Greek Language?
- Do you detect differences in learning compared to the spoken/written version of the language?
- Is there anything that helps them in this process?

In case students are not users of any 'official' Sign/Spoken/Written language?

- How do you handle situations where students, due to life circumstances, are not users of any 'official' Sign/Spoken/Written language?
- In what does your lesson focus on?
- In addition to Sign Language, which is considered the natural language of the Deaf, do you also introduce the Modern Greek Language in its spoken or written form?
- Would you like to describe a language lesson to us?
- Is there anything that helps your students in relation to the objectives you set for the lesson

Parents attitude plays an important role in the academic progress of a student.

- As far as you have talked with the parents and from your experience, how do the students' parents deal with Deafness?
- Are they aware of the nature and special communication needs of Deafness?
- Do they have expectations of their children?
- Are they involved in their children's education?
- Do they ask you for advice on how to strengthen them at home?

4. What practices encourage students' identities, not only as Deaf persons but as people having an ethnocultural identity different from the Greek one.

- Apart from language, how visible is the difference of a child from another country?
- In what other way is his/her diverse cultural background reflected? (religion-habits?)
- How do Deaf children with different cultural background react in relation to the Deaf Community? Do you think they are interested in the Greek Deaf Community and its activities? Do they self-identify as Deaf?
- Do you know if they have Deaf Communities of other countries/cultural groups as a point of reference?
- Do you know about your students in which language they communicate with their family?
- In which language does the school communicate with parents?
- In case a child comes to school without a first language, so he learns GSL as first and then develops oral/written Greek, how their family and the cultural community to which they belong are expected to communicate with them?

Author's Statement:

I hereby expressly declare that, according to the article 8 of Law 1559/1986, this dissertation is solely the product of my personal work, does not infringe any intellectual property, personality and personal data rights of third parties, does not contain works/contributions from third parties for which the permission of the authors/beneficiaries is required, is not the product of partial or total plagiarism, and that the sources used are limited to the literature references alone and meet the rules of scientific citations.