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Title: "A classroom for all": Culturally responsive teaching and spaces in DYEP classes. A case study in a Greek island.

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Konstantina Tzouda, "A classroom for all": Culturally responsive teaching and spaces in DYEP classes. A case study in a Greek island.

Abstract

This master's thesis explores the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices and the role of the classroom environment in Reception Structures for the Education of Refugee Children (DYEP) on a North Aegean island in Greece. The study aims to examine whether and how teachers incorporate students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their teaching, as well as the extent to which the layout and arrangement of the classroom support inclusion and participation.

A qualitative case study approach was adopted. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with four teachers working in two primary schools hosting DYEP classes. Observations focused on teaching practices aligned with Culturally Responsive Teaching, such as translanguaging, code-switching, the use of students' first languages, audiovisual material, and classroom decoration. Interviews provided insight into teachers' perspectives, experiences, and challenges.

The findings indicate that elements of culturally responsive teaching are present, mainly through supportive teacher–student relationships, the use of multilingual practices for communication, and the use of audiovisual material to enhance engagement. However, these practices are applied in an unsystematic way and rely largely on individual teacher initiative. In addition, while students' work is displayed in some classrooms, cultural and linguistic diversity is only partially reflected in the learning environment. The study highlights the need for greater institutional support and targeted teacher training to strengthen culturally responsive practices in DYEP classes.

Περίληψη

Η παρούσα μεταπτυχιακή εργασία διερευνά τη χρήση πρακτικών Πολιτισμικά Ευαίσθητης Διδασκαλίας (CRT) και τον ρόλο του περιβάλλοντος της τάξης σε Δομές Υποδοχής για την Εκπαίδευση Παιδιών Προσφύγων (ΔΥΕΠ) σε ένα νησί του Βόρειου Αιγαίου στην Ελλάδα. Η μελέτη στοχεύει να εξετάσει εάν και πώς οι εκπαιδευτικοί ενσωματώνουν το πολιτισμικό και γλωσσικό υπόβαθρο των μαθητών στη διδασκαλία τους, καθώς και σε ποιο βαθμό ο σχεδιασμός και η διακόσμηση της τάξης υποστηρίζουν την ένταξη και τη συμμετοχή.

Υιοθετήθηκε μια ποιοτική προσέγγιση μελέτης περίπτωσης. Τα δεδομένα συλλέχθηκαν μέσω παρατηρήσεων στην τάξη και ημιδομημένων συνεντεύξεων με τέσσερις εκπαιδευτικούς που εργάζονται σε δύο δημοτικά σχολεία που φιλοξενούν τάξεις ΔΥΕΠ. Οι παρατηρήσεις επικεντρώθηκαν σε διδακτικές πρακτικές που ευθυγραμμίζονται με την Πολιτισμικά Ευαίσθητη Διδασκαλία, όπως η διαγλωσσική επικοινωνία, η εναλλαγή κωδίκων, η χρήση της πρώτης γλώσσας των μαθητών, το οπτικοακουστικό υλικό και ο σχεδιασμός και η διακόσμηση της τάξης. Οι συνεντεύξεις παρείχαν πληροφορίες για τις απόψεις, τις εμπειρίες και τις προκλήσεις των εκπαιδευτικών.

Τα ευρήματα δείχνουν ότι υπάρχουν στοιχεία διδασκαλίας που ανταποκρίνονται στις πολιτισμικές ιδιαιτερότητες, κυρίως μέσω της υποστηρικτικής σχέσης δασκαλών-μαθητών, της χρήσης πολυγλωσσικών πρακτικών για την επικοινωνία και της χρήσης οπτικοακουστικού υλικού για την ενίσχυση της συμμετοχής. Ωστόσο, αυτές οι πρακτικές εφαρμόζονται με μη συστηματικό τρόπο και βασίζονται σε μεγάλο βαθμό στην ατομική πρωτοβουλία των εκπαιδευτικών. Επιπλέον, ενώ οι εργασίες των μαθητών προβάλλονται σε κάποιες αίθουσες διδασκαλίας, η πολιτισμική και γλωσσική πολυμορφία αντικατοπτρίζεται μόνο εν μέρει στο μαθησιακό περιβάλλον. Η μελέτη υπογραμμίζει την ανάγκη για μεγαλύτερη θεσμική υποστήριξη και στοχευμένη κατάρτιση των εκπαιδευτικών, προκειμένου να ενισχυθούν οι πολιτισμικά ευαίσθητες πρακτικές στις τάξεις του ΔΥΕΠ.

Content

List of tables

Lists of abbreviations and acronyms

CRT: Culturally Responsive Teaching

DYEP: Reception Structures for the education of refugees

IEP: Institute of Educational Policy

ZEP: Educational priority zone

1. Introduction

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has emerged as an important pedagogical framework that affirms students' cultural identities while simultaneously promoting equity and participation for all learners, regardless of socio-economic conditions. Rooted in multicultural education (Banks, 1989) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), CRT views students' cultural knowledge and lived experiences as valuable resources that can be meaningfully incorporated into classroom practice. Broadly defined, CRT is an approach that validates students' cultural identities, integrates their experiences into the curriculum, and positions education as a means of promoting equity and social justice (Gay, 2002, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014).

The concept of CRT was first systematically introduced by Gay (2002, 2015), who identified five essential elements: developing knowledge about cultural diversity, integrating multicultural content, demonstrating caring relationships, engaging in effective cross-cultural communication, and employing culturally congruent instructional strategies. Early studies grounded in these principles highlighted the significance of CRT within learning environments and its contribution to more inclusive educational practices.

Several studies have explored teachers' attitudes toward CRT. Siwatu's (2007) Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy scales (CRTSE) revealed that pre-service teachers reported high confidence in relational aspects of teaching but felt less prepared to integrate students' languages and cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Dickson et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of incorporating student perspectives when evaluating CRT, while Cruz et al. (2020) identified gaps in teachers' efficacy related to identity affirmation. Research by Rhodes (2017) and Samuels (2018) further documented tensions between teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices, underlining the need for structured professional development.

Empirical research also highlights the positive impact of CRT on the educational process. Bonner and Adams (2011) identified communication, trust, and reflection as key components of culturally responsive mathematics instruction, while Hernandez et al. (2013) proposed a teaching model that integrates academic content with social justice. International studies support these findings, with Meléndez-Luces and Couto-Cantero (2021) reporting increased engagement among Roma

students in Spain. Overall, pedagogical frameworks based on CRT contribute to strengthening students' self-confidence, thereby supporting their socioemotional development.

CRT can be implemented in various ways throughout the educational process, including through the layout and arrangement of learning spaces. The classroom environment and its decoration play a significant role in fostering learning, as the sense of belonging and acceptance extends from school corridors into the classroom through displays of students' work. Engagement with the arts and related activities has been identified as an effective means of supporting inclusion, offering students opportunities to express their ideas and beliefs (Bećirović & Bešlija, 2021).

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on a case study of two DYEP classes on a North Aegean island. Through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers, the research aims to examine the use—or absence—of teaching practices aligned with the CRT framework, as well as the role of the learning space in the educational process.

2. Literature review

2.1 Culturally Responsive teaching

In 2002, with the research conducted by Gay, the term "Culturally Responsive Teaching" was created, which, as he mentions, is "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). In his research, he states that teacher preparation programs must explicitly train preservice teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to teach ethnically and culturally diverse students effectively. More specifically, some of the key features of culturally responsive teaching that are mentioned and concern the obligations of teachers are to: a. acknowledge the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum, b. build bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities, c. use a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles, d. teach students to know and praise their

own and each other's cultural heritages, e. incorporate multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools (Gay, 2002, pp. 29).

Subsequently, Villegas and Lucas (2007) set a new foundation for CRT by shifting the weight from the simple application of techniques to the change in perspective. They propose six significant qualities of culturally responsive teachers: 1. Understanding how learners construct knowledge, 2. Learning about students' lives, 3. Being socioculturally conscious, 4. Holding affirming views of diversity, 5. Using appropriate instructional strategies, 6. Advocating for all students.

These particular articles are considered as the theoretical basis of CRT and provide its basic criteria, on which later researchers relied and further developed in subsequent studies (e.g., Siwatu, 2007, Cruz, 2020, Dickson, 2015). After extensive research, it appeared that there are many studies analyzing, at different levels, the techniques used in culturally responsive teaching (Szlachta & Champion, 2020; Bassey, 2016; Hernandez, Morales & Shroyer, 2013; Bonner & Adams, 2011), as well as many surveys concerning teachers' views on culturally responsive teaching (Howes, E., & Wallace, J., 2024; Saridas, 2023; Cruz et al., 2020; Samuels, 2018; Bonner et al., 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2007; Siwatu, 2007).

The research of Siwatu (2007) concerned the development and validation of two instruments: 1. Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) and 2. Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy Scale (CRTOE). The results of this research show that teachers reported high self-efficacy in: 1. helping students feel like valued classroom members, 2. developing positive relationships with students. Low self-efficacy in teachers was reported in communicating with English Language Learners (ELLs), especially using native language greetings and praise.

Another study concerning teachers' beliefs is that of Cruz et al. (2020), in which it was revealed that teachers reported high self-efficacy in: 1. building personal relationships and trust, 2. making learning meaningful through students' interests, 3. helping students develop positive peer relationships. The low self-efficacy areas are: 1. teaching students about their culture's contributions to science, 2. designing math lessons showing contributions of other cultural groups, 3. using students' home languages for greetings/praise, 4. implementing strategies to minimize

home–school cultural mismatches. Both studies reveal that teachers feel more confident in building relationships than in embedding culture into curriculum and assessment.

An additional study that agrees with this is the research by Akoyunoglou and Paida (2019), who report that "emotional security and psychosocial support are crucial for developing cognitive skills, strengthening memory, improving verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and enhancing children's social competence." The above research was conducted in public schools in Chios during the 2018-2019 school year and focuses on the views of educators regarding the emotional and psychosocial support of their students based on Psychological First Aid – PFA and the basic principles of the "listen, protect, connect" model.

Finally, the research of Gay (2015) examines how teachers' beliefs about culture and diversity shape the educational practices they use and argues that belief systems are central to implementing culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Teachers' views, therefore, play a decisive role in the educational process when CRT techniques are applied, since, as he states, "beliefs are the filters through which teachers interpret the cultural realities of ethnically diverse students" (Gay, 2015, p. 2).

2.2 Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

2.2.1 Translanguaging

There are many researchers who have attempted to interpret the term *translanguaging*. In the study of Garcia O. (2017, p. 6), some of these are mentioned:

For Wei L. (2011), translanguaging is going both between different linguistic structures, systems, modalities and going beyond them. He says: "The act of translanguaging then is transformative in nature, it creates a social space for the multilingual user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance." (p. 1223)

The term translanguaging has been increasingly used in the scholarly literature to refer to both the complex and fluid language practices of bilinguals, as well as the pedagogical approaches that

leverage those practices (Garcia O., 2017, p.2). In Greek literature, the term was introduced by Tsokalidou, R. (2015, p.6), which states that “Translanguaging allows us to refer to the wider ideological issues of multilingual management and the development of languages and language varieties.”

The book of García, O., & Kleyn, T. (2016), it is considered one of the fundamental works concerning both the theory and pedagogy of translanguaging. As mentioned, learning tends to be monolingual, with the result that students with a refugee/migrant background who are trying to learn the language of the host country are unable to respond to the learning process. “Translanguaging disrupts the ideology of separate named languages and the monolingual bias of schooling.” (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 21). Translanguaging enables these students, and others, to integrate their linguistic and cultural identities into the educational process.

Some educational practices in the context of translanguaging based on Vogel, S., & García, O. (2017), designing activities where students use all their language skills, reflecting on language, and creating "co-learning spaces" between teachers and students, or as Yan, X. (2024) “translanguaging space”. “The concept of translanguaging space allows learners to use all their linguistic resources freely and flexibly, creating a more equitable, inclusive, and empowering classroom environment.” (Yan, 2024, p. 5). Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2020) also mention other educational practices of translanguaging, such as comparisons of morphology or vocabulary between languages, recognition of words with a common root, analysis of texts in one language and production in another.

Charalambous, C., Themistokleous, C., & Ioannidou, E. (2020), conducting their research on students in Cyprus (where there are both Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking students), they characterize the educational practice of translanguaging as a political act against linguistic nationalism. The results of this article also show the socio-political nature of this practice, as they state “Translanguaging practices humanize the contact between communities that have been historically separated.” (Charalambous, C. et al., p. 105).

Several studies have been conducted on teachers' attitudes toward the use of translanguaging as an educational practice. Some of these studies show that teachers have a negative attitude toward translanguaging (Panagiotopoulou, J. A., et al., 2020; Tsokalidou, R., & Skourtou, E., 2020; Tsagka, V., et al, 2024) as they either fear institutional sanctions (Panagiotopoulou, J. A., et al.,

2020; Tsokalidou, R., & Skourtou, E., 2020; Yuvayapan, F., 2019; Ticheloven, A., et al., 2019), either the resistance of colleagues and parents (Tsokalidou, R., & Skourtou, E., 2020; Yuvayapan, F., 2019), either consider monolingual teaching as the only means of learning a foreign language (Tsagka, V., et al., 2024), either they fear that using other languages in the classroom may undermine their professional image (Yan, 2024), either fear that the use of multiple languages in the classroom may result in class disruption and a lack of control (Ticheloven, A., et al., 2019). Finally, the study of Ticheloven, A., et al. (2019), reveals that many students felt "left out" because they could not understand the language used by others.

Some other studies reveal the positive attitudes of teachers (Dougherty, J., 2021; Gorter, D., & Arocena, E., 2020; Yuvayapan, F., 2019) who report that the educational practice of translanguaging can enhance students' cognitive, social, and emotional development and promote equality within the school context (Dougherty, J., 2021), to enhance student participation in the educational process and understanding (Yuvayapan, F., 2019).

Furthermore, based on research by Gorter, D., & Arocena, E., (2020), who conducted a survey of 124 teachers' views on translanguaging after a 3-month training seminar, participants observed that it is easier for their students to learn a foreign/second language when they can compare and connect it to their own.

In addition, the research conducted by Yuvayapan, F. (2019) reveals that although many of the 50 English language teachers in public and private schools in Turkey who took part in the survey have a positive attitude towards translanguaging, their perceptions and practical use of this educational practice are not consistent. Translanguaging is mainly used for supportive purposes, such as explaining difficult words or grammar, classroom management, supporting students with low academic performance, and building trusting relationships between teachers and students. (Yuvayapan, F., 2019). In conclusion, for translanguaging to become established as a pedagogical practice and not an optional choice for individual teachers, it should be incorporated into teacher training.

In the Greek framework, Tsokalidou, R., & Skourtou, E. (2020) conducted a survey in primary schools in Thessaloniki and Epirus among students with a refugee background, Albanian-speaking students, and Roma students. The authors present Greece as a country that still operates on the basis of monolingualism, as it insists on the use of only the Greek language, even though the

percentage of refugees and immigrants has increased significantly in recent years. As they report "Language diversity is still perceived as a deficiency rather than as a resource." *(*Tsokalidou, R., & Skourtou, E., 2020, p. 239*).*

Another study by Tsagka, V., Georgouli, E.-I., & Stergiou, L. (2024) conducted in primary schools in Greece, reveals that the use of other languages in the educational process was limited even in reception classes. Furthermore, the above study observed limited participation of students with a refugee background in the educational process and their temporary integration during breaks. Finally, a very important finding of this study is that translanguaging appeared as an educational practice, but its occurrence was random and unsystematic. As they report: "Many educators still seem to be unaware of the benefits translanguaging can have for the inclusion of students with a refugee/migrant background." (Tsagka, V., et al., 2024, p. 76).

However, it is often confused with the term "code-switching". "Translanguaging is not simply code-switching, it is a stance, a belief in the fluidity and unity of bilingual practices." (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 66). This distinction is necessary because, as the authors of the study point out, "the concept of 'social exclusion' is not only a political concept, but also a social one" and therefore as Vogel, S., & García, O. (2017, p. 6) state "While code-switching preserves named language categories intact, translanguaging dismantles them.".

2.2.2 Code-switching

The term code switching is broadly discussed and used in linguistics and a variety of related fields. (Gleason, J. B., 1973; Nilep C., 2006; Myers-Scotton, C., 2017; Hofweber, J. E., Zeller, J. P., & Treffers-Daller, J., 2023). One important reference is the research by Nilep, C. (2006, p.1), which attempted to define code-switching by looking at it from different perspectives (linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and anthropological) and, as it is states "Code switching is defined as the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction."

Heller, M. (1997, p. 139), defines the code-switching as "The use of more than one language, variety, or style by a speaker within an utterance or discourse." However, in the context of education, it is considered a sign of linguistic deficiency due to the prevalence of monolingualism.

Lin, A. M. Y. (2013, p. 202) in her research, she studies 30 years of research on code-switching, highlighting that initially “Code-switching is seen as an additional resource in the bilingual/multilingual teacher’s communicative repertoire enabling her/him to signal and negotiate different frames and footings, role-relationships, cultural values, identities and so on in the classroom.”

In their research, Qian, X., Tian, G., & Wang, Q. (2009) found three types of code switching: 1. Tag-switching, which is short switches, questions, or parentheses; 2. Intra-sentential, which are changes within the same sentence that mainly concern vocabulary; and 3. Inter-sentential, which concerns changes between sentences with the aim of managing the class and providing explanations.

Furthermore, Yevudey, E. (2013) conducting research on the educational value of code-switching in primary schools in Ghana, found that teachers used this particular teaching practice either for explanation, or to smoothly introduce the lesson, or to correct students, or to recognize/reward students, or to repeat sentences so that all students could understand.

Teachers consider code switching to be necessary for understanding difficult concepts, managing the classroom, and creating rapport with students (Munawaroh, H., et al., 2022), to encourage students to express themselves without fear and for explanations of vocabulary, grammar rules, and instructions (Hazaymeh, W. A., 2022).

“Teachers clearly code-switch to L1 for numerous functions that improve students’ learning.” (Hazaymeh, W. A., 2022, p. 1846). In conclusion, students' first language plays a decisive role in the educational process.

2.2.3 The use of the first language of students

Numerous researches have been involved with code-switching and how students use their first language in the learning process (Qian, X., Tian, G., & Wang, Q., 2009, Lin, A. M. Y., 2008). There are many reasons to use students' first language. In their research, Qian, X., Tian, G., & Wang, Q. (2009) found that teachers in Beijing elementary schools use it either for translation so that all students can understand, to clarify specific terminology, to emphasize and draw their students' attention, to save time in the teaching process, and as a form of praise, encouragement,

and reprimand. As it is reported, “Teachers can expertly ‘kill three birds with one stone’— their purposeful use of one single act of switching can serve three purposes.” (Qian, X., Tian, G., & Wang, Q., 2009, p. 728).

Teachers, as reported by Lin, A. M. Y. (2008, p. 276), “teachers used the L1 for ‘warming’ and ‘directing’ functions, and the L2 as the primary choice for disciplining children.”. Using the students' first language also strengthens the relationships between students and teachers, as it helps to enhance participation and understanding among all members of the school class (Hazaymeh, W. A., 2022).

An important concept that should be highlighted is the term “heritage language” and based on Gounari, P. (2014, p. 257) is the “languages other than the dominant language (or languages) in a given social context”.

In their research Gkaintartzi, A., Kiliari, A., & Tsokalidou, R. (2015), examining teachers' perceptions and ideologies regarding bilingualism and the use of their students' heritage language, of the 822 teachers who participated, 48.2% believe that knowledge of the students' native language hinders the learning of Greek as a second/foreign language. Furthermore, it appears that 54.8% of participants believe in the importance of teaching students' native languages, but that only applies to students with an immigrant background and cannot be integrated into the school context. Specifically, they state that “We are not interested in what they will do with the Albanian language, but they certainly have to learn Greek correctly.” (Gkaintartzi, A., Kiliari, A., & Tsokalidou, R., 2015, p. 68).

There are many reasons for using students' first language in the educational process, such as clarifying meanings, managing communication, enhancing attention, and creating new categories of knowledge (Moore, D., 2002).

2.2.4 The use of pictures and images that highlight the students’ cultures

The use of images in the educational process is an educational practice on its own, but as mentioned in the article by Hussain, S., & Khan, H. K. (2022), although teachers understand their pedagogical value, they do not use them in the educational process because, as they report, they have not been properly trained to use them as an educational tool rather than as decoration. “Teachers need

guidance and professional training to use pictures effectively and efficiently in the classrooms." Hussain, S., & Khan, H. K. (2022, p.344).

Images offer many learning benefits, such as explaining concepts that cannot be presented in real life, improving memory and understanding, making lessons more interactive and participatory, and enhancing creativity (Hussain, S., & Khan, H. K., 2022). "Seeing is never a neutral observation, we always see something as something, depending on one's personal experiences and the broader social, cultural, and historical contexts." (Hellman, A., & Häikiö, T. K., 2024, p.43).

Burgard, K. L. B., et al. (2021) use historical photographs in their research with the aim of creating experiential and inclusive classrooms. "It is difficult to overstate the power of visual images, particularly historical primary source photos, to provide a window into the past… Perhaps the most important thing photos do, however, is evoke emotion that can promote curiosity and learning." (Burgard, K. L. B., et al., 2021, p.3). The importance of this educational strategy lies in the fact that "If students do not see their self, heritage, and culture represented in those photos, then the development of their historical understanding is incomplete or fragmented." (Burgard, K. L. B., et al., 2021, p.4).

2.2.5 The use of audiovisual material

"The use of audiovisual media is linked to Vygotsky's theory of social interaction, as learning takes place through collaboration, imitation and communication." (Kouskouti, G., 2022, p. 25).

In their research Rands M. & Gansemer-Topf A. M. (2017) found that: "Various audiovisual tools (…) increased engagement by helping students to work at their optimal level of challenge. Tools such as portable white boards, (…) placed around the classroom afforded frequent assessment of students' understanding and for students to create and share knowledge." Furthermore, according to Kouskouti, G. (2022), the use of audiovisual media in the educational process increases participation and attention, improves memory and pronunciation, and enhances the joy of learning. As Montero Perez, M. (2022) and Wei, R., & Fan, L., (2022) mention, it is now at the core of modern language teaching. "Teaching with audiovisual input may turn out to be the next revolution in L2 vocabulary learning." (Wei & Fan, 2022, p.9).

The use of audiovisual material can be achieved in various ways, such as through the use of video. According to Montero Perez, M. (2022) video is considered a multimodal tool that, with the use of captions or subtitles, can help capture authentic and everyday language use. As indicated by Wei, R., & Fan, L. (2022, p. 2) “audiovisual input offers contextual learning environment which demonstrates language in use vividly and authentically”.

2.3 Schooling opportunities for refugees and/or migrants in Greece

2.3.1 Reception Structures for the Education of Refugee Children (DYEP)

One key term that needs to be analyzed is the DYEP classes, and how they have been established within the Greek education system: "For the provision of education to the children of third country citizens, reception structures for the education of refugees (DYEP), which belong to the formal education, are operated, and in this case: "In school units of the Regional Directorates of Primary Education of the country, within the boundaries of which there are accommodation centers and/or any kind of accommodation used by the Greek State or the UNHCR or other international bodies for the accommodation of third country nationals (hereinafter referred to as "accommodation structures"). The DYEPs operate in specific school units of primary and secondary education, one (1) per school unit, and belong administratively to these units. Each DYEP may include more than one department, depending on the number of pupils (Government Gazette No. 139654/GD4/17).

"DYEPs contribute to the smooth educational and social integration of refugee children through the teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language and the organization of cultural activities." (Government Gazette No. 152360/GD4, 2016).

"The DYEPs that are established [...] operate within school units during lunchtime from 14:00 to 18:00." (Government Gazette No. 152360/GD4, 2016).

The teaching subjects/lessons that students must attend per week (total of 20 hours) are as follows: Greek language: 6 hours, English: 4 hours, Mathematics: 3 hours, Physical Education: 3 hours, IT: 2 hours, Aesthetic Education (Visual Arts, Music, Theatre Education): 2 hours. (Government Gazette No. 139654/GD4/17).

"DYEPs may also be staffed by substitute teachers, who are hired and employed in accordance with the procedure and schedule (full-time or part-time) provided for in the applicable legislation." (Government Gazette No. 152360/GD4, 2016).

2.3.2. North Aegean Island

One of the main reasons for this is that the island is one of the main destinations for refugees and/or migrants arriving in Greece. In order to manage the daily influx of refugees arriving in Greece, these islands have created so-called hotspots, or Closed Controlled Facilities accommodating asylum, which temporarily house refugees and migrants until their legal issues are resolved or they are transferred to other permanent accommodation facilities. The length of time someone can stay in these facilities varies. During this period, young children must attend school. According to the law, students who live in Closed Controlled Facilities attend DYEP classes. To serve the students staying in the Closed Controlled Facility in this North Aegean Island, two DYEP classes were created in two different schools for the 2024-2025 school year, when this research occured.

The Decision on the establishment of Reception Facilities for the Education of Refugees (DYEP) and the designation of school units for the 2024-2025 school year, within which the Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP) will operate, is published in the Government Gazette B 3532/19 June 2024 and states that on the North Aegean Island they will be created in two primary schools, one secondary school, and one nursery school.

2.4 Layout and arrangement of the classroom

Culturally responsive teaching defies conventions of traditional educational practices with respect to ethnic students of color. This is done in several ways (Gay, 2018, p.33) One of these methods is considered to be the teaching environment. Human spatiality, including as this relates to the spaces of schooling, is socially created and, hence, can be transformed by human action. (Wrench A. et al., 2018, p.1200). Many other studies have been conducted (Fraser, B. J., 1998; Evans, G. W., 2006) with the aim of linking the physical environment of the classroom with the socio-emotional experience of students.

The book “Linguistically Appropriate Practice: A Guide for Working with Young Immigrant Children” of Chumak-Horbatsch R. (2012) refers extensively to classroom layout and arrangement. The author of the book suggests creating a multilingual and multiliterate zone within the classroom. In this specific area of the classroom, the students' first languages can be recorded and displayed on the walls of the classroom. This specific area within the classroom is referred to as ‘language centre’. “Setting up a new classroom space called the ‘language centre’ allows children to explore and use their home languages, the classroom language, and written materials in both.” (Chumak-Horbatsch, R., 2012, Chapter 5, p. 64–65). Some of the author's suggestions for this specific "corner" in the classroom include signs and posters in all of the children's languages, bilingual books, vocabulary cards, letter games, picture words in different scripts, and mirrors or photographs so that children can recognize themselves in their environment. “The language centre provides opportunities for children to use and explore both their home language and the classroom language through books, games, and materials.” (p. 70).

In addition, the author draws attention to the presentation of students' home languages, as she states “Charting the home languages represented in the classroom makes linguistic diversity visible and legitimate.” (Chumak-Horbatsch, R., 2012, p. 66). It is therefore suggests creating a "Language Map" or "Classroom Language Chart" where all the students' languages can be recorded with their names, flags can be used, different alphabets and key words for each language, and students should be involved in their creation.

A final suggestion by the author regarding the layout of the classroom is to create labels on classroom furniture, areas, and materials in the students' languages as well as in the foreign language you wish them to learn. Barrett P., et al (2015) conducted one of the most comprehensive empirical studies on classroom design and how it can influence students' educational progress. The study is the final stage of the HEAD (Holistic Evidence and Design) research program and its main objective is to measure whether and to what extent the design of the school environment affects student performance. The research was conducted in 153 classrooms in 27 schools in the United Kingdom and includes data from 3.766 students aged 5 to 11. Barrett P., et al (2015) based their research on the SIN (Naturalness – Individualisation – Stimulation) model, which has three (3) basic design principles. The first is Naturalness and includes factors such as connection with nature, lighting, air quality, and temperature. The second is Individualisation and includes factors

such as flexibility and connection of the space to the needs of the students, as well as the degree of ownership. Finally, the third basic principle is stimulation, which includes levels of visual complexity and colors that aim to enhance students' attention, concentration, and interest.

The above research shows that the characteristics of the school unit do not affect learning efficiency, unlike the quality of the individual school class. However, some of its key conclusions are that high efficiency is linked to the quality of natural lighting, that concentration is enhanced by thermal comfort and the ability to change the classroom climate, that participation in the educational process is enhanced by increasing the sense of personal identity and flexibility within the classroom, and that learning attention is positively influenced by a balanced level of aesthetic stimulation on the classroom walls. This means that an overloaded wall and an empty wall can negatively affect learning attention.

“Seven key design parameters have been identified that together explain 16% of the variation in pupils' academic progress achieved.” (Barrett et al., 2015, p. 118). These design parameters are lighting, temperature, and air quality in the classroom, a sense of ownership and flexibility in the space, and finally, the complexity and color of the walls.

Another study that highlights the importance of the classroom environment in the educational process is the study by López, V., et al. (2018), which describes the construction and validation of a classroom climate measurement scale for elementary school students in Chile. As stated in the article: “Classroom climate refers to the set of characteristics of the learning environment as perceived by students, which influences their motivation, engagement, and social behavior.” (López et al., 2018, p. 2). Four basic dimensions of classroom climate are evaluated to create this measurement scale. The fourth dimension concerns the Physical Environment. As reported by López et al., (2018, p. 6) “Physical environment: refers to the physical and material conditions of the classroom, including aspects such as light, noise, temperature, cleanliness, organization, and space distribution, which influence students’ perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging.”.

The main finding of the researchers in this study is that during the interviews that took place, “Students often referred to the physical state of the classroom — its cleanliness, lighting, and available space — as key elements shaping their comfort and willingness to participate.” *(*López et al., 2018, p. 11).

Konstantina Tzouda, "A classroom for all": Culturally responsive teaching and spaces in DYEP classes. A case study in a Greek island.

Finally, this study mentions that although it is often overlooked and not considered an important factor in the successful educational process, the physical condition of the classroom can create a positive atmosphere and contribute to the educational process as well as to the emotional well-being of the students in the class.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research aims – Research Questions

The focus of the present study emerged from the researcher's professional experience in educational settings involving students with a refugee background. Having previously worked in an Accommodation Center for Unaccompanied Minors, and later as a teacher in a public primary school on a North Aegean island, the researcher became increasingly interested in the ways teaching practices respond to students' cultural and linguistic diversity, particularly within DYEP classes.

The purpose of this study is twofold, to see if there is a practical application of CRT techniques that use the different backgrounds and cultures of students with refugee backgrounds in the educational process and to show whether the educational space is of importance and whether it meets the educational needs of the students.

Research Questions:

1. Is culturally responsive teaching used in the educational process of the D.Y.E.P. classes in a North Aegean Island?
2. Is the layout and arrangement of classrooms consistent with the principles of culturally responsive teaching?
3. What do teachers suggest for improving teacher preparation to meet the challenges of cultural diversity in schools?

3.2 Research Approach

This paper is based on a qualitative case study, aiming to understand how culturally responsive teaching practices are applied in a specific school setting. A case study is considered appropriate when the goal is to examine in depth a bounded context – in this case a school – using multiple sources of data. As Bell (2010) points out, this method makes it possible to study complex educational phenomena within their natural environment, while Isari and Pourkos (2015) emphasize its suitability for exploring processes, meanings, and perceptions that emerge within them. The case study was selected as the research method for this particular project, as it allows phenomena to be studied in their natural environment and enables the collection of authentic qualitative data.

The research was carried out in public primary schools on a North Aegean Island. The reason why schools on this island were chosen is because of its location and its relationship with the refugee population arriving in Greece. The North Aegean Island is located right next to the border with Turkey. Many refugees who want to use Greece as a stopover to get into Europe have to cross the border between Turkey and Greece first. This North Aegean Island is one of the first and most frequent destinations, that refugees use to enter Greece.

Four (4) teachers participated, all of whom taught in two DYEP (Reception Classes for Refugee Education). The selection of participants was not based on specific criteria, since they were all teachers on temporary contracts and their placement in these classes was not their first choice. The aim was not statistical representativeness, but rather the collection of rich material and a variety of perspectives (Isari & Pourkos, 2015).

Two main methods were used for data collection: classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. The observations focused on classroom climate, teacher–student interactions, language practices, and the general learning environment (e.g., posters, displays, materials). The researcher acted as a non-participant observer so as not to interfere with the lesson. Notes were taken using a structured observation tool and were later developed into more detailed texts on the same day, in order to avoid gaps or omissions (Bell, 2010; Isari & Pourkos, 2015).

After the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to record their views, rationales, and experiences regarding culturally responsive teaching. The interviews lasted

between 25 and 45 minutes, took place in a quiet space within the school, and were audio-recorded with consent. According to the Interview Techniques Guide (2021), they started with more general questions and then moved on to deeper and more reflective topics. The interview questions focused on teaching strategies, ways of utilizing students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as difficulties or successes that arose in practice.

As for ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from all participants and official permission was granted by the school. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through the use of pseudonyms, coding of the data, and removal of identifying details. Teachers were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

To ensure the validity of the research, triangulation was used, as multiple data sources were used to study the same phenomenon. The aim of triangulation is to enhance the validity and reliability of the research results.

3.3 Research Methods and tools

This paper adopts the case study approach since as stated by Bell J. (2010) "case study approach can be particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it provides an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth." "Case study research consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of phenomena, within their context. The aim is to provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied." (Cassell, C. , & Symon, G. (Eds.), 2004, pp. 323). This method was chosen as based on Cassell, C., & Symon, G. (Eds.). (2004, pp.323): "The case study is particularly suited to research questions which require detailed understanding of social or organizational processes because of the rich data collected in context."

The present research was based on two basic qualitative data collection methods: observation and interview. These two methods were chosen with the aim of providing a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, allowing its approach both through its physical manifestation and through the perspective and experience of the subjects involved, who in this case are the teachers of the DYEP class. Observation, according to Isari F. and Pourkos M. (2016), is a method of collecting data in the natural environment where the phenomenon in question is

observed and is directly linked to the researcher's immediate experience. Observation is directly linked to the research questions posed by the researcher and requires preparation as it is characterized by fluidity, constant change, and unpredictable situations.

Observation as a Research Method

Observation is one of the most basic methods of qualitative research, especially when the researcher seeks a direct understanding of social phenomena within their natural environment. Based on Isari F., Pourkos M., (2016), “the systematic and organized observation of individual behaviors, or social interactions and processes, is a method of data collection/production, which is particularly useful in social, psychological and educational research”. “Observation is the process of gathering open information firsthand by observing people and places in a research site.” (Creswell, J., 2015). This specific qualitative data collection method was chosen because, as Creswell, J., (2015) states, “the observer is given the opportunity to record information as it appears within a context, to study real behavior and to study individuals who have difficulty expressing their ideas verbally.”

In this research, non-participatory observation was applied, where the researcher held the role of an external observer, without actively intervening in the field. As a non-participatory observer, “you are "on the outside" and sit on the periphery or in some advantageous point in order to monitor and study the phenomenon being studied” (Creswell, J., 2015). The observation took place in a natural environment, specifically inside the school classroom and in the school yard, and lasted a total of two weeks, with recordings being made in two schools that have a D.Y.E.P. class. The observation was carried out two (2) times in each school for the entire duration of the school program. A total of 8 hours were observed in each school unit. These 16 hours include lessons from the school curriculum as well as break times and playtime in the playground.

During the observation, detailed observation fields were maintained through the use of the observation grid, which is a systematization tool for observation. The observation grid was designed in advance, based on the research questions and the literature review of the study. The recording included both descriptive elements (space, time, activities) and comments - observations of the researcher.

For the implementation of the observation, an observation grid was created based on the literature. (Dickson, G. L., et al., 2016; Zebdewos Zekarias, E., et al., 2024; Muñiz, J., 2019; Krasnoff, B., 2016, Cruz, R. A., et al., 2020). This observation grid aims to monitor whether culturally responsive teaching is used during the educational process in DYEP classes on a North Aegean Island.

The research by Dickson, G. L., et al., (2016), aims to develop and initially update a tool that can measure high school students' perceptions of practices implemented in the context of Culturally Responsive Teaching. This research is rare in that it presents and analyzes students' personal opinions on whether and to what extent their teachers use educational practices associated with Culturally Responsive Teaching. According to the above research, teachers use their students' first language during the educational process and allow students to use it themselves. They also appear to use audiovisual material.

The research by Zebdewos Zekarias, E., et al., (2024), sought to understand the ways in which teachers, school principals, and early childhood/preschool education specialists in Ethiopia use educational tools and techniques that fall within the framework of Culturally Responsive Teaching. The multi-faceted approach they use is considered very important for the literature. The above research also provides a basis for the use of the students' first language, the use of audiovisual material, and the use of textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.

The research by Muñiz, J., (2019) examines whether and how professional standards for teachers in all 50 US states use Culturally Responsive Teaching. To conduct the research, New America collected and analyzed publicly available standards documents from all 50 US states. The analysis was based on the eight core competencies of CRT, which were developed based on a review of the literature. This research also provided a basis for the use of the first language by teachers and students, the use of alternative means of communication other than verbal, and the use of textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.

Krasnoff, B., (2016) conducted a study on practical and evidence-based research for guiding teachers and schools in the application of teaching techniques within the framework of CRT. This research highlights the importance teachers should place on students' first language, the use of alternative means of communication other than verbal, the use of audiovisual material, and images

that reflect the students' culture. It also emphasized the importance of designing a classroom environment that reflects a variety of cultures.

Finally, research by Cruz, R. A., et al., (2020) on the extent to which teachers feel effective when applying teaching techniques within the framework of CRT, the importance of using students' first language to greet them and reward them is evident.

The following observation grid was created based on this research. The analysis of the use of students' first language in the educational process was divided into its use with the translanguaging method and the code-switching method. In addition, another observation grid was created concerning classroom decoration to show the extent to which and the ways and techniques teachers use to make their classrooms more inclusive based on Culturally Responsive Teaching.

The parameters relating to the existence of a computer and an interactive whiteboard were added, as these are the most well-known educational tools currently used in Greek schools for the use of audiovisual educational materials during the educational process.

Two observation grids were used. The first concerns the educational process and the observation of the pedagogical methods applied by the teachers.

Semi-structured Interviews

The interview plan that was created and used consists of the questions presented in Appendix A.

The interviews were conducted on school premises during teachers' free periods. The language used was Greek, and the interviews were then transcribed and translated into English so that excerpts could be used in the research.

The question plan was created after the observations were completed and aimed to resolve any questions that arose. Furthermore, during the observations, teachers used different teaching techniques, but the aim of the questions was to analyze teaching techniques that may not have been used during the 16 hours of observation.

The interviews were conducted with: 2 teachers for the subjects of Greek Language and Mathematics, 1 English Language teacher, 1 IT teacher who are all the teachers who staffed the DYEP classes during the period when this case study was conducted.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Two observation grids were used. The first concerns the first research question and attempts to answer the question “Is culturally responsive teaching used in the educational process of the D.Y.E.P. classes?”. It concerns the educational process and the observation of the pedagogical methods applied by the teachers:

Table 1: Observation Grid for the CRT methods	
School:	Hour:
The teacher:	
Uses translanguaging:	
Uses code-switching	
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners’ cultures.	
Uses audiovisual material	

The second concerns the teaching environment and aims to answer the second research question “Is the Layout and arrangement of classrooms consistent with the principles of culturally responsive teaching”:

Table 2: Layout and arrangement of the classroom environment.				
	School 1 1st observation	School 1 2nd observation	School 2 1st observation	School 2 2nd observation
Images and posters in the classroom that reflect different cultures.				
Religious symbols in the classroom.				
Learners' paintings on the classroom walls as a decoration				
Existence of a computer				
Existence of an interactive whiteboard				
The use of translanguaging in the decorations of the classroom				

The analysis of the data followed a systematic coding process aimed at organizing the findings in a meaningful way and directly addressing the research questions of the study. Data from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were treated as two complementary sources and were initially analyzed separately.

First, all observation notes and interview transcripts were read repeatedly to allow familiarity with the data and to identify Repetitive patterns, actions, and concepts. During this phase, open coding was applied, with codes emerging directly from the data rather than being imposed in advance. For the observation data, the coding process was based on the observation grids that had been developed on the basis of the literature. Specific codes focused on Culturally Responsive Teaching methods that was used by the teachers, such as the use of translanguaging, code-switching, students' first languages, audiovisual material, and layout and arrangement of the classroom environment.

In a second stage, axial coding was used to group related codes into broader categories. These categories were aligned with the two main analytical axes of the study: (a) Culturally Responsive Teaching practices during the educational process and (b) the layout and arrangement of the classroom environment. This process allowed individual observations and practices to be connected and examined as part of wider patterns across lessons, teachers, and school settings.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic coding, focusing on teachers' perspectives, experiences, and reflections. Codes were developed around the same key themes of the observations. From the analysis of the interviews, other parameters were noticed, such as teachers' roles in DYEP classes, perceived challenges, and suggestions for improving teaching practices and learning spaces, which could not be revealed by the observation process. Particular attention was paid to how teachers explained or justified practices that had been observed in the classroom.

Finally, the findings from observations and interviews were brought together through data triangulation. This comparative process made it possible to identify convergences and divergences between teachers' reported beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

3.5 Participants

The teachers who participated were all women and of Greek origin. The four participants differed in terms of educational background and professional experience. Two teachers held degrees from Pedagogical Departments, while the remaining participants had backgrounds in English Literature and Cultural Technology and Communication. Three of the four teachers held postgraduate qualifications, including Master's degrees in Special Education, Language Teaching in Multilingual and Multicultural Environments, and Education. Teaching experience ranged from first-year teachers to highly experienced educators with over three decades of service in public education. Participants taught in one or both of the two primary schools hosting DYEP classes on the island.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This Master's thesis was conducted in accordance with the academic and ethical guidelines of the Hellenic Open University. The research process followed the requirements set for postgraduate

dissertations and was carried out with continuous supervision and guidance from the appointed supervisor and co-supervisor, who supported the researcher throughout all stages of the study.

All methodological decisions, as well as issues related to data collection, analysis, and reporting, were discussed during the supervision process in order to ensure that the study met the academic standards of the Hellenic Open University and respected basic principles of research ethics.

Participation in the research was voluntary. Before the beginning of the data collection, participants were informed about the aim of the study, the procedures involved, and the way the data would be used. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.

Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the research process. Pseudonyms were used, and no identifying information related to the participants or the schools was included in the thesis. The data were used exclusively for the purposes of this Master's thesis and were handled with care and responsibility.

4. Data Presentation

4.1 Observation Data

This section presents the data collected through classroom observations conducted in two primary schools hosting DYEP classes. It describes the observation process and provides an overview of how the observations were organized and documented.

Table 3. Timetable and content of each observation

Participant	Subject Matter	Duration
Teacher 1	Greek Language, Mathematics, Arts, Playing in the yard	6 hours
Teacher 2	Greek Language, Mathematics, Arts, Playing in the yard	6 hours
Teacher 3	English, Playing in the yard	3 hours
Teacher 4	IT, Playing in the yard	3 hours

4.1.1 Theme 1: Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods used

The observations were carried out at the two schools on different days, which were selected based on the school schedule in order to observe both English and computer science lessons. The teachers of these subjects were present at the two schools on different days.

At School 1, the researcher first visited the school and met with the teacher. The purpose of the research and the observation process were discussed in detail, and the teacher provided the school schedule, after which the observation days were determined. The teacher also explained that the students arrived by bus at 2:00 p.m.

On the day of the first observation, the students arrived at the school by bus from the Closed Controlled Facility in Chios at 13:50. According to the teacher, many students did not have time to eat at the Closed Controlled Facility and therefore brought their food to school. For this reason, the educational process was delayed, and until 14:15 the students remained in the schoolyard either playing or eating.

After this period, the teacher called the students in Turkish, and they lined up and waited to go to the bathroom and wash up. During this process, it was observed that some students washed their hair in addition to washing their hands. As mentioned by the teacher, many of the students did not follow basic rules of hygiene, and this practice was used as a way to ensure that all students entered the classroom clean. The washing process lasted until 14:30. After that, all students entered the classroom in order to begin their Greek language lesson.

According to the school schedule, the students should have been divided according to their level, with half attending the English language class and the other half attending the Greek language class. However, due to the small number of students present on that day (13), the two teachers decided that all students would attend the Greek language class together and subsequently all attend the English language class afterwards.

The students spoke two languages. As the classroom teacher mentioned, three (3) students spoke only Turkish, three (3) students spoke only Persian, and seven (7) students spoke both Turkish and Persian. Furthermore, all students were from Afghan. During the lesson, while the students were completing exercises, the teacher often addressed the researcher in Greek in order to provide important information about the students. One such piece of information was that three (3) of the

students attending the class did not know how to write in either their first language or in English, and the teacher began teaching them the writing process from scratch. For this reason, these students were given personalized exercises. These three students were also the only ones who did not understand either English or Turkish.

Upon entering the classroom, the teacher used Turkish to introduce the researcher to the students and to explain the reason for the visit. As the teacher had previously mentioned, when she obtained this position as a teacher at the DYEP class, she began learning Turkish in order to communicate more effectively with her students.

During the teaching process, several Culturally Responsive Teaching methods were used. Translanguaging was employed, as the teacher spoke three languages during the lesson: Turkish, Greek, and English. In addition, the teaching material provided to the students was also written in Turkish to enhance understanding. Although some of the photocopies distributed to the students were written in Greek, the teacher explained and discussed them on the board using Turkish.

Code-switching was also observed, as the teacher alternated between Turkish and Greek. Furthermore, when something was not understood by the students, the teacher used Google Translate on her mobile phone. Turkish was also used verbally to welcome the students, praise their efforts, and reinforce positive behavior.

In order to ensure that all students understood the instructions clearly, the teacher also used students who understood both Turkish and Persian to explain the tasks to students who spoke only Persian.

Finally, during the teaching process, the computer and interactive whiteboard in the classroom were used to play educational games that the teacher had created, as well as the teacher’s mobile phone, which provided voice instructions translated into Turkish via Google Translate.

The teacher devoted most of the lesson to the Greek language and subsequently distributed a mathematics worksheet, in which the students were asked to draw the corresponding sum using the appropriate color. After completing the activities, the students went outside for a ten-minute break in the schoolyard.

Table 4: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 1 – First Observation	
School: 1	Hour: First Hour 14:30-15:20
The teacher:	Teacher 1
Uses translanguaging:	. ✓
Uses code-switching	✓
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	✓
Uses audiovisual material	✓

Then, the students gathered around their English language teacher and entered the classroom. At the beginning of the lesson, some oral exercises were carried out with the aim of teaching the students how to introduce themselves in English.

During the teaching process, the English language teacher spoke only in English. On some occasions, she used the translanguaging technique, as she had learned certain classroom instruction-related words in Turkish from the other teacher and used them during the teaching process. However, the main language used during the lesson was English.

The teaching material used was also in English and consisted of an interactive book that included multiple audio recordings and songs for vocabulary learning. The students were not given any photocopies. Instead, they all watched the interactive whiteboard and sang the songs in order to learn new vocabulary.

The educational material focused on the early stages of English language learning. As mentioned by the teacher during the observation, many of the students did not know any English and were new to the school.

Table 5: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 1 – First Observation

School: 1	Hour: Second Hour 16:00-16:45
The teacher:	Teacher 3
Uses translanguaging:	. ✓
Uses code-switching	
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	
Uses audiovisual material	✓

After the lesson ended, the students played in the schoolyard from 4:45 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The class teacher also participated in the games and attempted to teach the students various words in Greek through this process. In addition, many students initiated conversations with the class teacher in Turkish and talked about various issues that concerned them. Even the resolution of conflicts during the games by the teacher was conducted in Turkish.

During the second observation at School 1, the students arrived at the school by bus at 13:50 and played in the schoolyard or ate their lunch until 14:15. The teacher then called the students in Turkish to gather for handwashing in the bathroom.

The teaching process began at 14:30, and the students were divided into two groups. One group (12 students) went to the classroom with the class teacher, while the other group (12 students) went to the computer room with the computer science teacher. For the purposes of the observation process, it was decided to observe the classroom teacher's lesson first and then the computer science lesson.

On the occasion of Mother's Day, the teacher used this time to have the students create various crafts for their mothers. During the educational process, the teacher also used the translanguaging technique, and Turkish, Greek, and English were used for the instructions and discussions that took place during the lesson.

In addition, code-switching was also observed, as the instructions given in class were provided in both Greek and Turkish, and some of the teacher's sentences began in Greek and ended in Turkish. Even the greetings and rewards for the students were in Turkish.

In terms of classroom resources, the room did not include an interactive whiteboard. However, it was equipped with a projector, a computer, and a whiteboard. The teacher used all of these resources to explain instructions via Google Translate, as well as to present the project to the students and explain all the necessary steps.

Table 6: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 1 – Second Observation	
School: 1	Hour: First Hour 14:30-15:15
The teacher:	Teacher 1
Uses translanguaging:	. ✓
Uses code-switching	✓
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	
Uses audiovisual material	✓

Afterwards, the students went outside to play in the schoolyard from 3:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. Some of the students played soccer, others used the swings available at the school, and some played games with the teacher.

It was observed that during outdoor playtime, some of the girls used rhythmic rhymes that children typically use before starting a group game, such as hide-and-seek, with the aim of randomly selecting a player through the rhythm of the words. The melody was familiar, and when the researcher approached the group and asked whether the language used was Turkish or Persian, the students responded that it was Turkish and appeared annoyed by the reference to Persian.

After playtime, the students were divided again, with half of them returning to their classroom to create crafts for Mother's Day, while the rest went to the computer lab.

During the lesson, the computer science teacher used some Turkish words, however, she mainly addressed the students in Greek and attempted to explain instructions using body language and visual aids.

Many of the students did not know how to use either the computer mouse or the keyboard. Therefore, in order to practice using them, each student was seated at a computer and was asked to draw whatever they wished using the "Paint" application and the available tools. The teacher demonstrated where to find the tools and what to click on, and at the end of the lesson, the students created their own individual drawings. There were two students for whom clicking the mouse button was particularly difficult, and the teacher paid special attention to these students.

Table 7: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 1 – Second Observation	
School: 1	Hour: Second Hour 17:15-18:00
The teacher:	Teacher 4
Uses translanguaging:	. ✓
Uses code-switching	
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	
Uses audiovisual material	✓

At School 2, a meeting was also held with the class teacher and the principal before the observation took place. Both were very welcoming and positive toward the study and the procedures required for its completion. The school schedule was then provided, and the days on which the observations would take place were arranged.

During the first observation, the students arrived by bus at 2:00 p.m. and entered the classroom. As there was a large number of students present (23), they were divided into two subgroups according to their level of proficiency in Greek and their age group. Half of the students remained in the classroom to attend the Greek language lesson, while the rest went to the neighboring classroom with the English language teacher to attend the English lesson. During this observation, the Greek language class was observed first, followed by the English language class during the following hour.

Before the division of the groups, the teacher introduced the researcher to the students and explained the reason for her presence in the classroom. In order to facilitate communication, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard and, more specifically, Google Translate. The students were very welcoming and even offered drawings to the researcher.

Almost all of the students were from Afghanistan, except for two who were from Uzbekistan. All students understood and/or spoke Turkish, and some of them also spoke Persian. Only one student spoke English.

During the teaching process, the classroom teacher used various techniques that were consistent with Culturally Responsive Teaching. First, she used translanguaging and combined Greek, Turkish, and English during the teaching process. Furthermore, she frequently switched between Greek and Turkish throughout the lesson.

As she mentioned during the lesson, because she had worked for several years in DYEP and ZEP classes, she had learned to understand Turkish and had begun learning it a few years earlier.

As she knew some phrases in Turkish, she used them to communicate with her students, as well as to welcome them and inquire about how they were doing. However, English was used to reward the students.

The teacher kept the teaching materials she used in a file cabinet, where she had printed various photocopies on different educational topics, and she provided each student with personalized exercises according to their level of proficiency in Greek. The students were seated in such a way that the teacher could move around the classroom and support each student individually during the completion of the exercises. Then, in order to teach vocabulary to all students, the teacher used the book recommended by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), *«Γεια σας»*.

Finally, it is important to note that on the day of the observation, three (3) new students joined the class, and the teacher took time during the lesson to inform them—using Google Translate—about the class rules, routines, and other relevant information regarding how this particular DYEP class operated.

Table 8: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 2 – First Observation	
School: 2	Hour: First Hour 14:00-14:50
The teacher:	Teacher 2
Uses translanguaging:	✓
Uses code-switching	✓
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	✓
Uses audiovisual material	✓

At 14:50, the groups changed, and the students were moved to the neighboring classroom and the researcher followed, in order to observe the English language lesson.

During the lesson, the teacher used the translanguaging method, as the languages she utilized to communicate with the students included English, Greek, and Turkish, particularly for specific words or phrases related to maintaining order in the classroom. For example, she frequently used the word *"otur"*, which means "sit" in Turkish.

The material used was the same as that used at School 1. It was designed for young learners, primarily those who were coming into contact with the English language for the first time. The interactive whiteboard was used to display songs related to letters and vocabulary that the students were learning.

Table 9: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 2 – First Observation

School: 2	Hour: Second Hour 14:50-15:45
The teacher:	Teacher 3
Uses translanguaging:	. ✓
Uses code-switching	✓
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	
Uses audiovisual material	✓

The lesson lasted until 3:45 p.m., after which the students went outside for a break and lunch. This school was one of those eligible for the school meal program, and every student at the school was entitled to school meals. Therefore, students in the DYEP classes were provided with school meals on a daily basis and were given a fifteen- to twenty-minute break to eat their lunch.

After the meal, the teacher decided that, as it was a beautiful day, it would be a good opportunity to reward the students by allowing them to play in the schoolyard with balls and other toys until the end of the school day. The teacher did not participate in the games, however, she was very friendly to any student who wanted to talk and tried to communicate in Turkish while also encouraging her students to speak Greek.

During the second observation, the students arrived at the school at 2:00 p.m. As there were 25 students present, they were divided into groups, with half going to the computer room with the IT teacher and the other half going to the classroom to attend Greek language lesson with the class teacher. During the first school hour, the researcher observed the students in the computer science class. During the lesson, the teacher used the translanguaging technique, as she attempted to communicate with the students in both Greek and Turkish.

It is important to note that these students were the most advanced group and appeared to understand Greek at a very satisfactory level, as they successfully followed the instructions given to them in

Greek. In addition, the teacher provided the students with personalized educational games aimed at practicing mouse and keyboard skills and supported them individually. Each student worked on their own computer, and upon completing a challenge, the teacher provided a more demanding one. The educational games included activities such as puzzles and drawing tasks.

Table 10: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 2 – Second Observation	
School: 2	Hour: First Hour 14:00-14:50
The teacher:	Teacher 4
Uses translanguaging:	. ✓
Uses code-switching	
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	
Uses audiovisual material	✓

Then, the students changed classrooms and moved to the main classroom. The teacher had prepared a puppet theater and asked the students, using Google Translate on the interactive whiteboard, to divide into groups and create a story in any language they wished.

After the students divided into groups and wrote or planned their stories, they created their own characters.

During both the explanation of the activity and the activity itself, the teacher used Greek, English, and Turkish. She also switched between these languages multiple times, often beginning a sentence in Greek and completing it in Turkish or English.

Table 11: Observation Data for the CRT methods for School 2 – Second Observation	
School: 2	Hour: Second Hour

	14:50-15:45
The teacher:	Teacher 2
Uses translanguaging:	. ✓
Uses code-switching	✓
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	
Uses audiovisual material	✓

After the Greek language activities, the students went outside for lunch between 3:45 and 4:15 p.m. The two teachers distributed the school meals, and the students sat together to eat.

After finishing their meal, all students and both teachers returned to the classroom and presented their stories.

The language chosen by all groups was Turkish, however, during the presentations, some students also used words and phrases in Greek.

The table below summarizes the methods used by the teachers in relation to Culturally Responsive Teaching:

Table 12: Observation Data for the CRT methods

	School 1 1st	School 1 1st	School 1 2nd	School 1 2nd	School 2 1st	School 2 1st	School 2 2nd	School 2 2nd

	observation Teacher 1	observation Teacher 3	observation Teacher 1	observation Teacher 4	observation Teacher 2	observation Teacher 3	observation Teacher 2	observation Teacher 4
Uses translanguaging:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Uses code-switching	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Greets learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Praises learners using a phrase in their native language.	✓		✓					
Uses textbooks that include some pictures and images that highlight the learners' cultures.	✓				✓			
Uses audiovisual material	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Across the classroom observations, a variety of teaching practices related to Culturally Responsive Teaching were recorded. Teachers were observed using multilingual practices to varying degrees, including translanguaging, code-switching, and the use of students' first languages for

communication, classroom management, and emotional support. Audiovisual material and digital tools were also present in most classrooms and were mainly used to facilitate understanding, maintain students' attention, and support participation. However, the use of these practices varied depending on the teacher, the subject taught, and the available resources.

It was also observed that teachers of DYEP classes were those who used teaching techniques associated with Culturally Responsive Teaching more frequently than teachers of other subjects.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Layout and arrangement of the classroom environment.

During the observation at School 1, the researcher was informed by the class teacher that the DYEP class had its own classroom, where lessons were usually held. However, on the day of the observation, this classroom was being used for the presentation of books from the school library, and therefore the lesson took place in the library. The library did not include images or posters reflecting different cultures. After examining the limited number of books available, as well as the board games, it was observed that all materials were in Greek and organized according to the students' grade level. In addition, religious symbols related to the Christian religion were present in the room. The library functioned as a shared space used by all teachers and students of the school. As a result, there were no student drawings displayed on the walls. Instead, various posters related to some of the books available in the library were present. However, one wall decoration included elements of translanguaging in relation to World Children's Book Day (Picture 1)

The presence of a computer and an interactive whiteboard in the room, both of which were used during the educational process, was considered a positive factor. The teacher also gave the researcher the opportunity to visit the DYEP classroom, which at that time was being used for the presentation of books with the aim of selling them to students and/or their parents. The classroom did not differ in terms of decoration or available electronic equipment between the two observations.

The second observation took place two weeks later, during which the researcher was given the opportunity to observe the DYEP classroom. No pictures or posters explicitly reflecting the different cultures of the students were present on the classroom walls, as all decorations had been created either by the teacher or by the students (Picture 2). Student drawings were displayed and

were related either to specific educational topics or to international awareness days (Picture 3) Furthermore, translanguaging was evident in the classroom decoration, as teaching materials and classroom rules were written in the languages spoken by the students. Specifically, educational material displayed on the classroom walls was written in both Greek and Turkish (Picture 4, Picture 5).

The educational board games available in the classroom consisted mainly of puzzles or games related to learning the Greek language. In addition, a computer was used by the classroom teacher during the teaching process. However, instead of an interactive whiteboard, a projector was used to project content onto the classroom whiteboard.

During the observation at School 2, the researcher was informed by the class teacher that the classroom in which the DYEP classes were held was shared with a sixth-grade class. The classroom walls displayed only material related to the sixth-grade curriculum, and there were no pictures or posters reflecting the cultural backgrounds of the DYEP students. Religious images related to the Christian religion were also present. No photographs, drawings, or posters using translanguaging were observed, with the exception of some stickers placed on the walls that were written in English. An interactive whiteboard was available in the classroom and was also used as a computer during the teaching process.

During the second observation, a change in the classroom layout was noted. As explained by the DYEP class teacher, the morning-shift teacher had independently rearranged the desks on that day without consulting the DYEP teacher. Both the class teacher and the students appeared surprised upon entering the classroom and finding the desks arranged differently. During the first observation, the desks were arranged in a U-shape (Picture 6), whereas in the second observation, the desks were arranged in groups (Picture 7)

In addition, English language and computer science lessons were conducted in different classrooms. English language lessons took place in an adjacent classroom, which was used by the fifth grade during the morning shift. In this classroom, pictures and posters reflecting different cultures were displayed (Picture 8). There were also posters using translanguaging, created by students during the morning shift (Picture 9) However, the languages used in these materials were Greek and German, suggesting that they were likely produced during German language lessons.

Finally, the computer room was used by both the morning-shift teacher and the DYEP class teacher. The computer science teacher mentioned during the observation that the classroom decoration and layout had been arranged by the morning-shift teacher. No pictures or posters reflecting the cultural backgrounds of the DYEP students were observed. However, a poster displaying classroom rules in both Greek and English was present (Picture 10). This was the only classroom in which no religious symbols were observed. Although the room was equipped with several computers, there was no interactive whiteboard.

Overall, observations related to the layout and arrangement of classroom environments revealed noticeable differences across classrooms. In some cases, students' work was displayed on classroom walls, and efforts were made to create a welcoming and supportive learning environment. At the same time, visual references to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds were limited or inconsistently present.

Table 13: Observation Data: Layout and arrangement of the classroom environment.

	School 1 1st observation	School 1 2nd observation	School 2 1st observation	School 2 2nd observation
Images and posters in the classroom that reflect different cultures.				
Religious symbols in the classroom.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learners' paintings on the classroom walls as a decoration		✓		
Existence of a computer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Existence of an interactive whiteboard			✓	✓
The use of translanguaging in the decorations of the classroom				

4.2 Interview Data

This section presents the data derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participating teachers. It outlines the main thematic areas explored through the interviews, including teaching practices, the use of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and teachers' views on the classroom environment.

4.2.1: Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods used

During the interviews, teachers referred to various techniques they use in the teaching process.

<u>The use of the first language during the educational process:</u>

The use of translanguaging and code-switching techniques was observed across all teachers. The IT teacher stated that the primary goal of all teachers was for students to learn Greek in order to communicate with one another. In order to achieve this goal, she explained that teachers needed to learn some basic Turkish to facilitate communication.

All teachers used Google Translate to communicate directly with students and to confirm that the students understood what was being explained to them. The English language teacher also used Google Translate to record vocabulary. With students who were at a more advanced level, she reported that she wrote down the words she wanted them to learn, and the students then wrote the English words along with their Turkish translations in their notebooks.

As teacher 2 characteristically stated when asked about the languages she uses to communicate with her students:

> *"Mainly in Greek now, but I also use English and Turkish. In English, whatever I want to say to them, half in Greek, half in English, I throw in Turkish words when I need something immediate, I'll shout it in Turkish, and when I want to translate a longer text, I'll use a translator and put it in Turkish."*

In addition, she stated that she did not consider it necessary to speak the language of the host country in the classroom and believed that the appropriate approach to student inclusion was the use of their first language in the educational process.

Teacher 1 also agreed with this view, as she mentioned that, in order to manage this "*mixture of different languages*," she had learned Turkish and attempted to communicate with students through it. She acknowledged the difficulties faced by students who did not know Turkish, as Google Translate did not support their languages. As a result, students attempted to communicate with the teacher using a combination of Turkish, English, and Greek.

Educational Material:

With regard to the teaching material used by each teacher, Teacher 2 mentioned that, due to the absence of an official syllabus or prescribed textbook, each teacher used educational materials of their own choice, which they adapted according to the needs of the students.

Teacher 2 also stated that she used the two books recommended by the Ministry of Education, namely *The Suitcase* and *Hello*. In addition, she used either teaching materials that she had created herself or materials found online in order to tailor instruction to the individual needs and learning pace of each student. As she states:

> *"(...) I use my own material, which I have either created myself or found on the internet, and I have adapted it to suit each child's age, cognitive background, and abilities."*

Teacher 1 reported similar practices, as she attempted to link the teaching material she used to the students' first language. She also mentioned that, due to frequent student mobility and the unstable number of students, the systematic use of textbooks would be particularly difficult. For this reason, she either searched for educational material online or created materials tailored to the specific needs of her students.

The computer science teacher used educational material found online, depending on the content she aimed to teach, and also reported using artificial intelligence tools to support her teaching.

The English language teacher stated that she used educational material recommended by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), which was organized according to students' age groups. As she mentioned during the interview, this material constituted a comprehensive package, and she made use of the available digital resources, including various games and songs.

She also noted that when a specific thematic focus was planned, she attempted to ensure that her lesson aligned with that theme. For this reason, she emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration among teachers.

Audiovisual Material:

All teachers used either an interactive whiteboard or a projector and computer during the teaching process and considered these tools an essential part of learning. The English language teacher stated that she often used songs, photographs, and educational games during the teaching process in order to help her students learn English more effectively.

The interview data provided insight into teachers' perspectives on the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching practices and the role of the classroom environment. Teachers described a range of strategies they used to support communication and understanding, particularly through multilingual practices, visual aids, and audiovisual material. Many emphasized the importance of building trusting relationships with students and creating a sense of safety in the classroom.

4.2.2: Layout and arrangement of the classroom environment.

During the interview, the teacher of the DYEP class at School 1 referred to various issues concerning the layout and arrangement of the classroom environment. As she mentioned, it was a significant advantage that they had their own classroom and that the students could decorate it with their own creations. More specifically, she stated:

> *(...) Children feel satisfaction when they make something, construct something, and then see it on the wall in the classroom, with their name underneath. (...) They feel that they belong to a group, they feel that they have contributed to decorating our classroom beautifully. "*

As she mentioned, she placed great importance on displaying her students' creations in the classroom and kept drawings and photographs from all students who had attended during that particular school year.

She also expressed the belief that the presence of an interactive whiteboard would greatly contribute to the educational process. One of the main techniques she used to encourage students to attend school regularly was the integration of computers into the educational process through various educational games and videos, which, as she stated, appeared to be highly effective. She believed that the use of an interactive whiteboard would further improve the quality of teaching and increase students' interest in the lesson.

Another issue she highlighted concerned the classroom itself, as she stated that it did not have the necessary capacity to accommodate all students. According to her, the available chairs and desks were suitable for 14–15 students, whereas the number of students often reached 24 to 25.

Finally, she stated that even if an interactive whiteboard could not be provided, it would be beneficial to modernize the existing electronic equipment. She explained that the computer and projector were slow to start due to their age, which created difficulties during the teaching process. Nevertheless, she reported being very satisfied with the educational material and stationery provided by the school.

The teacher at School 2 described a markedly different experience regarding classroom decoration. As she mentioned, she shared the classroom with the morning-shift class. The morning-shift teacher reportedly demonstrated a negative attitude toward the DYEP students throughout the school year, and it became apparent that the DYEP class was not fully welcomed in the shared space. The teacher reported that complaints had been raised during the school year regarding minor theft of school items belonging to morning-shift students by DYEP students, as well as concerns about changes to the classroom layout. In addition, she noted that complaints had also been made by the morning-shift teacher regarding writing on the classroom whiteboard.

The DYEP class teacher reported on these specific incidents:

> *"I don't know how we can ask for visibility when we don't want to exist at all (students with refugee/migrant backgrounds) in a school setting."*

The teacher at school 2 mentioned the need for a space in the classroom where students can display their drawings, as they feel like guests in their own classroom.

> *"It's not enough that they feel like guests in a country and in a container. They also have a class that is not their own."*

One incident that became apparent during the observations at this school concerned the rearrangement of desks by the morning-shift teacher, who did not inform the DYEP class teacher of this change. On the day of the second observation, upon entering the classroom, both the teacher and the students appeared surprised by the new arrangement. As the teacher mentioned during the interview conducted after the second observation, one of the changes she would like to see in her classroom was the restoration of the desks to their previous U-shape arrangement. She explained that although she could rearrange the desks each time in a way that would better support the educational process, doing so on a daily basis was particularly challenging, as students became distracted before the lesson even began.

However, one positive aspect of this classroom, as she mentioned, was the presence of an interactive whiteboard. This was considered an essential component of the educational process, as it allowed students to participate more actively in the lesson.

Finally, she expressed the need for additional storage space for both the teacher and the students to store personal belongings, books, and photocopies. According to her, only one shelf in the classroom library and the lower section of one desk had been allocated for storage. As a result, teaching materials could not be adequately organized, and students experienced difficulties in locating the materials they needed.

The computer science teacher reported that she had not decorated or made any changes to either of the two computer rooms she used, despite expressing a desire to do so. However, she believed that these classrooms “belonged” to the morning-shift teachers. As she states:

> *"When you feel like a guest somewhere, I don't think you feel entitled to interfere with the space."*

The ideal situation for her would have been to have her own classroom, however, since this was not possible, she expressed a desire for better cooperation with the morning-shift teachers, so that they could also contribute to the classroom environment and make a sense of “belonging” more visible. In terms of equipment, she believed that both schools were adequately equipped with the necessary resources and a sufficient number of computers to support the effective teaching of computer science lessons.

An important point she raised concerned the fundamental difference between the two school contexts, noting that School 1, which had its own DYEP classroom decorated by the students, had created a more welcoming atmosphere for them.

Finally, the English language teacher reported that she taught at both schools that were observed for this study. As she stated, the differences between the two classroom environments were evident. Although she did not teach English in the classrooms officially allocated to the DYEP classes—since, during English lessons, students were divided by age and half remained in the main classroom while the other half attended the English language lesson—the contrasts between the two schools were still apparent.

As she explained, at School 1 a classroom had been allocated exclusively for the DYEP classes, and both the teacher and the students were able to decorate it as they wished. In contrast, at School 2, where the DYEP classes shared a classroom with a morning-shift class, several challenges arose throughout the school year. Although both the English language teacher and the DYEP class teacher had requested that at least one notice board be made available for students to display their work and drawings, the morning-shift teacher reportedly refused and used all available classroom space for her own students. The English language teacher also referred to an incident involving minor theft during the school year and explained that some of the DYEP students had never attended school before and were deprived of basic resources, such as toys, food, and clothing. As a result, she considered it understandable that students might take school items when they found them available in the classroom.

At School 1, English language lessons were conducted in the library, which, as a shared space, could not be decorated or modified. At School 2, English lessons were held in a classroom adjacent to the DYEP classroom, which was also shared with a morning-shift class.

However, with regard to available equipment, she reported that both schools were adequately equipped to conduct English language lessons effectively. Both classrooms included interactive whiteboards, which she considered particularly important, as a substantial part of the lesson was based on their use. In addition, both rooms were equipped with air conditioning, desks and chairs for all students, and sufficient classroom space. The school principals had also ensured the provision of appropriate teaching materials, including textbooks, for students attending DYEP classes.

In conclusion, with regard to the classroom environment, teachers acknowledged its importance for student participation while also highlighting limitations related to time constraints, available resources, and the temporary nature of DYEP classes.

4.2.3 Suggestions of the teachers

The computer science teacher stated that she considered the main part of her role to be introducing students to the subject and to the use of computers, however, she emphasized that the most important priority was for students to acquire some basic Greek, as well as to learn the rules and routines through which a classroom operates. As she characteristically stated:

> *"My personal goal is to create an atmosphere similar to that found in Greek schools: to respect one another, to have rules, to listen to the teacher."*

During the interviews, many teachers emphasized the importance of students learning and following classroom rules. Teachers stated that a large proportion of the students who attended the DYEP classes during the specific school year had never attended school before or had done so only for a very limited period of time. For this reason, all teachers focused particular attention on teaching and reinforcing classroom rules.

Teacher 2 stated that:

> *"I try to focus a little on practical issues that concern them in their daily lives and on anything that might be of interest to them because they are children."*

Teacher 1 also reported:

> *"My role is to give them as much knowledge as possible and, at the same time, different stimuli that will generally help them on their way to developing certain values and respect for other people. (...) It is much more important to me that they learn to respect those around them than that they learn to say good morning."*

Teacher 1 mentioned that another way to create a safe educational environment and encourage students to participate in the educational process was her involvement in other classes. As she stated, when the number of students was small and there was no need to divide them into groups,

she attempted to participate in English, computer science, and physical education lessons in order to “gain” her students’ trust. As she characteristically stated:

> *"I take a very active role in the entire learning process, in all subjects."*

However, in order to support the acquisition of the Greek language, Teacher 2 mentioned during the interview various educational games that could be incorporated into the teaching process. These included pantomime, crossword puzzles, cube puzzles, alphabet hangman, theatre activities, and puppet theatre.

In addition, Teacher 1 reported making extensive use of educational computer games, as she had observed that they had a particularly positive effect on students’ participation in the educational process.

During the interview, the English language teacher also made several suggestions for improving the educational process. One of her main suggestions concerned the use of interactive lessons. As she specifically mentioned, she attempted to avoid “lecture-style” teaching and instead aimed to make her lessons more interactive, with a strong emphasis on games and active student participation.

Another suggestion she put forward was the establishment of a DYEP center that would serve kindergarten, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary students. According to her, such a center would allow for better organization and would reduce the need for students to travel between different schools where they were placed. As she stated:

> *(...) It should be a place for learning, socializing, and events.*

This idea was mentioned because, at the beginning of the school year, some students had displayed problematic behavior and had taken items belonging to other classes. This incident occurred at both schools, however, each school addressed the issue in a markedly different manner.

At one of the schools, the morning-shift teachers collected various items, such as toys, clothing, sweets, and food, and offered them as gifts to the students attending the DYEP classes.

As the English language teacher reported:

> *(...) They helped them not to feel deprived. I think that was very wise. It was a great act of kindness (...) We know that these children (...) are deprived. (...) What will you*

> *do about it? You will say that someone came into my classroom and took my things? No! You will offer them to them.*

However, at the other school, the reactions were markedly different.

Another important suggestion raised by the teachers concerned the socialization of students. As reported by the English language teacher, no educational field trips were organized during the school year by the DYEP classes at the primary school level. She stated that it would be highly beneficial for students to become familiar with the place where they lived, for example through visits to an Environmental Education Center, attendance at a theatre performance, or visits to the local library.

The presence of an interpreter during the educational process was another suggestion put forward by the teachers.

In summary, teachers' suggestions focused primarily on the need for greater institutional support and more targeted professional training. Participants emphasized the importance of technology in the educational process, not only as a tool for achieving optimal learning outcomes but also as a fundamental means of communication between teachers and students.

4.2.4 Issues that arise

One of the main problems identified, as mentioned by Teacher 2, was the frequent transfers and constant changes in the student population. Teacher 1 also noted that students changed every two weeks and that there was a wide variation in age among students.

The broad age range further shaped the educational process and created challenges when large age differences were present within the same class. As she explained, when activities were designed for younger students, older students tended to disengage, perceiving them as childish. Conversely, when activities were aimed at older students, younger students were unable to follow the lesson or participate actively.

In addition, linguistic diversity among students was identified as another significant challenge, as not all students shared the same language. Interestingly, although the majority of students were from Afghanistan, the language most commonly used for communication between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves, was Turkish. Teacher 2 stated:

> *"Their first language is Farsi. However, most of them only speak Farsi and cannot read or write. Some can read but not write, yet they speak half Farsi and half Turkish, so I would say that their first language, or at least their second language, is Turkish. Most of them have lived in Turkey for many years, some were born in Turkey, that is, in the midst of the migration, so they have two languages as their basic languages, Farsi and Turkish. They speak, write, understand Turkish, everything."*

One problem identified was the potential institutionalization of students attending DYEP classes. According to the DYEP teacher at School 2, this occurred because students did not come into contact with other students within the school, as their school schedules differed from those of the mainstream classes.

Another issue mentioned by Teacher 1 concerned students' behavior within the school environment, which, as she explained, originated in the Closed Controlled Facility where the students lived and continued after their transition to school. The lack of communication with parents created an impasse in addressing these behavioral issues. She also referred to the presence of students with special educational needs, including students on the autism spectrum, which further increased the challenges faced by teachers. Although some students had formal diagnoses, no additional support services were provided to facilitate their integration into the school environment. In addition, there were cases in which referrals for diagnostic assessment had been suggested to parents, but the procedures were not initiated.

Finally, a further problem identified in one of the two schools concerned the shared use of the classroom by morning- and afternoon-shift classes. This situation reportedly led to the development of a hostile attitude on the part of the morning-shift teacher, resulting in limited communication and a lack of cooperation between teachers.

As she characteristically stated:

> *"There was no integration, no visibility, no inclusion, no willingness to do anything as a team or to interact in any way."*

In summary, the challenges identified in DYEP classes included linguistic barriers, frequent changes in the student population, and difficulties related to students' emotional needs. Overall,

the interview data indicated that teachers faced multiple challenges while attempting to respond effectively to their students' needs.

5.Results

This chapter presents the findings of research conducted in two public schools on an Aegean island, where Refugee Education Reception Structures (D.Y.E.P.) were in operation for the 2024-2025 school year. The results include 16 hours of non-participatory observation in the classroom and during breaks, as well as four (4) semi-structured interviews with the four teachers who taught in the D.Y.E.P. classes.

The findings are organized based on the three research questions of the study: (1.) Is culturally responsive teaching used in the educational process of the D.Y.E.P. classes in a North Aegean Island?, (2.) Is the layout and arrangement of the classrooms consistent with the principles of culturally responsive teaching?, (3.) What do teachers suggest for improving teacher preparation to meet the challenges of cultural diversity in schools?

5.1 Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods used

The analysis of the data revealed that teachers in DYEP classes applied practices related to Culturally Responsive Teaching, although their application varied in terms of frequency, which differed for each individual teacher, a finding that reflects the flexibility of CRT described in the literature (Gay, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

One of the main findings concerned the use of translanguaging. In both schools, teachers used more than one language (mainly Greek, Turkish, and English) during the educational process and during playtime, with the ultimate goal of managing the class, providing instructions, or facilitating understanding, a practice widely discussed in studies on translanguaging (García & Kleyn, 2016; Wei, 2011; Tsagka et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with Siwatu's (2007) study, which reports that teachers feel more confident in managing relationships than in using students' linguistic and cultural resources. This practice served as a means of creating a safe educational environment in which all students had the right to express themselves. Similar findings have been reported in

the international literature, where the use of L1 is recognized as an educational tool that supports learning and enhances student engagement (Qian et al., 2009; Yevudey, 2013; Hazaymeh, 2022).

At the same time, extensive use of translanguaging and code-switching was observed, not in a targeted manner during the educational process, but rather randomly, with the aim of optimizing communication between teachers and students. The non-systematic use of these specific techniques also reported in contexts where teachers lack systematic training in multilingual pedagogy (Lin, 2013; Yuvayapan, 2019). Language switching was used to explain concepts, maintain order in the classroom, and provide emotional support to students. This finding is at odds with numerous studies showing that code-switching is used deliberately and not randomly by teachers to explain concepts, maintain order, strengthen the teacher–student relationship, and communicate effectively (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Hazaymeh, 2022; Qian et al., 2009). However, it agrees with Qian et al. (2009) and Hazaymeh (2022), who revealed that these two teaching methods enhance students' emotional security and facilitate their participation in the learning process.

Of particular importance was the use of the students' first language for greetings and rewards, which was recorded in several cases. This practice aimed to create a sense of belonging in the classroom and acceptance of all students regardless of their background, an element considered central to culturally responsive relationships (Villegas & Lucas, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Similarly, Bonner and Adams (2011) recognize trust and communication as key components of CRT, while Gay (2015) and Bassey (2016) point out that these relationships enhance both the learning process and the emotional security of students. Furthermore, this finding was also linked to the research of Akoyunoglou and Paida (2019), who found that the emotional state of students with a refugee background is closely linked to their learning engagement.

With regard to teaching materials, the findings showed that teachers did not incorporate culturally relevant images and references, despite the emphasis placed on being in line with the curriculum in research on multicultural education (Banks, 1989; Muñiz, 2019). However, this could not be determined with certainty due to the limited observation time and the lack of compulsory teaching material. The choice of teaching materials was at the discretion of the teacher, and in other cases before or after the observations, the inclusion of culturally relevant images and references may have been taken into account by the teachers.

On the contrary, the use of audiovisual material (interactive whiteboards, computers, educational games, videos, and songs) was a key part of the educational process for all teachers who participated in the study, confirming previous research highlighting the role of audiovisual media in promoting participation**.** This finding was linked to the research of Rands and Gansemer-Topf (2017), who point out that audiovisual materials can act as a motivating factor for student participation in the educational process, as well as to the research of Kouskouti (2022), who considers the use of audiovisual media as a means of inclusion. Overall, the findings showed that CRT practices were mainly used to facilitate communication and understanding between the teacher and the student, primarily in an empirical and non-targeted manner, while the integration of students' cultural identity into the educational process and the educational material used was not considered a priority by teachers.

5.2 Layout and arrangement of the classroom environment.

The second axis of findings concerned the role of the layout and arrangement of the classroom space and its contribution to the creation of a culturally responsive learning environment.

The observation data revealed that DYEP classes were not organized with the cultural diversity of the students in mind. The presence of images, posters, or decorative elements referring to the students' countries of origin was limited or non-existent. These findings are consistent with the research of Hussain and Khan (2022) and Muñiz (2019), who point out that although teachers recognize the pedagogical value of images, they often use them superficially or decoratively due to a lack of appropriate training. As a result, as Hellman and Häikiö (2024) also mention in their research, this dynamic does not contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging among students in DYEP classes.

However, the observation process also revealed the extensive presence of student artwork (paintings, handicrafts) on the walls of one of the two classes, which reflected the teachers' efforts to strengthen the students' sense of participation and ownership of the space, a practice strongly linked to a positive classroom climate and student engagement (Barrett et al., 2015; López et al., 2018) Creative activities were also used as a means of highlighting the cultural identities of the students in both classes that were observed. This finding contradicts the literature, which states

that the physical space of the classroom often remains “neutral” or monolingual, thereby limiting the potential of CRT (Lin, 2013; Gay, 2015).

The availability of computers, projectors, and interactive whiteboards greatly aided teaching, as it enabled the use of audiovisual material and facilitated language comprehension. (Evans, 2006; Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2017) Nevertheless, there was a noticeable absence of multilinguistic elements in the decoration of one of the two classrooms (e.g., multilingual inscriptions or words in the students' first and second languages), which suggested that the space was not fully utilized as a pedagogical tool in the context of Culturally Responsive Teaching, suggesting that the learning space was not fully utilized with culturally responsive teaching in mind (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Muñiz, 2019). However, the teacher was keen to create such a multilingual space but encountered obstacles due to a lack of classroom space. Therefore, although the space supported teaching on a practical level, it could not incorporate the cultural and linguistic diversity of the students.

6. Conclusion

The present study attempted to highlight the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in DYEP classes on a North Aegean island, with a particular focus on the teaching practices used during the educational process and the layout and arrangement of the classroom environment. The research aimed to examine whether and how culturally responsive approaches were applied in the educational process of students with a refugee background, through classroom observations in two schools offering DYEP classes during the 2024–2025 school year and semi-structured interviews with the teachers of these two (2) classes.

The findings of the study showed that culturally responsive teaching practices were being used in the DYEP classes that were examined. More specifically, practices such as translanguaging, code-switching, and the use of students’ first languages were observed in most lessons, mainly as tools to facilitate communication, enhance understanding, and support classroom management. Teachers often used students’ first and/or second languages to give instructions, clarify meaning, greet learners, and praise them. These practices appeared to contribute to a more supportive classroom climate and to the development of positive teacher–student relationships, as teachers

themselves sought to maintain good relationships with their students and to foster an atmosphere of trust and respect within the school environment.

An interesting finding that emerged from the observations concerned the language used for communication in the classroom. Although the majority of students were of Afghan origin, Turkish was predominantly used as a means of communication between teachers and students, indicating that classroom language practices were not shaped by students' actual first language. Therefore, the absence of the students' first language, Persian, was observed during the educational process, as it was replaced by what was likely the students' second language, Turkish, for the purpose of communication between students and teachers.

The research also revealed that teachers focused on forming relationships with their students, which is consistent with the research by Akoyunoglou and Paida (2019). The findings highlighted the need for systematic efforts to support students on an emotional and psychosocial level through teacher training, as well as the urgent need for changes in the school environment. The two studies reached similar conclusions, emphasizing that greater importance should be placed on systematic ways of integrating intercultural education techniques into schools that host DYEP classes and on supporting the teachers who undertake such roles.

At the same time, the study revealed that the use of CRT practices was not systematic and largely depended on the personal experience, beliefs, and linguistic knowledge of each teacher. This conclusion is consistent with the literature on the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Siwatu, 2007; Bassey, 2016; Gay, 2015). While some teachers actively incorporated students' linguistic resources into the teaching process, others used them in a more limited or ad hoc way. For the most part, culturally responsive practices emerged as spontaneous solutions to everyday classroom challenges rather than as part of a planned pedagogical approach. This finding highlighted the lack of formal training and institutional guidance regarding culturally responsive teaching in DYEP classes. The lack of systematic training was considered a major obstacle to the effective implementation of CRT (Siwatu, 2007; Bassey, 2016; Gay, 2015).

With regard to the classroom environment, the results indicated that the layout and arrangement of the classrooms only partially reflected the principles of culturally responsive teaching. Learners' artwork was commonly displayed on classroom walls, supporting students' sense of belonging and participation. This finding is considered particularly important, as, according to Chumak-

Horbatsch (2012, p. 68), “When children see their home language, script, and photos represented in the classroom environment, they feel acknowledged and respected.”

However, there was limited presence of images, posters, or multilingual material that explicitly reflected the cultural backgrounds of the students. Muñiz (2019) points out that the failure to utilize space reveals shortcomings in the implementation of CRT due to the institutional framework.

Translanguaging practices were only partially incorporated into classroom decoration due to a lack of available classroom space in the school building, and the learning space was not consistently used as a means of making diversity visible and valued. On the other hand, the availability of technological equipment, such as computers and interactive whiteboards, allowed teachers to use audiovisual material, which increased student engagement and supported the learning process.

The interviews provided further insight into teachers’ experiences and perspectives. Participants emphasized the challenges of working in DYEP classes, including constant student mobility, the wide age range, the prevalence of multilingualism among the student population, and student behavior, which in many cases was related to their incomplete schooling.

In conclusion, this case study suggested that culturally responsive teaching was present in DYEP classes, mainly through language-related practices and interpersonal relationships. However, its application remained fragmented and heavily reliant on individual teacher initiative. Bonner et al. (2017) and Cruz et al. (2020) point out that, although teachers express positive attitudes toward CRT, they find it difficult to implement it in a consistent and stable manner. Proper guidance for teachers who undertake such positions is considered essential, with the ultimate goal of promoting the systematic use of teaching practices related to Culturally Responsive Teaching, as well as the integration of its core principles into the educational process, the selection of educational materials, and the decoration and layout of the classroom. Future research could further explore students’ perspectives or examine DYEP classes in other regions, contributing to a broader understanding of culturally responsive education in the Greek school context.

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8. Appendix A: Question Plan

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself. - What is your name? - Where are you from? - What did you study? - How long have you been working as a teacher?
2. How did you get this job? Was it your choice?
3. What do you think of this position?
4. What exactly do you do?
5. Can you tell us a little about your students? - How many are there? - Where are they from? - What language do they speak? - Have they been enrolled in the DYEP class for a long time?
6. What is your relationship with your students? Do you have personal relationships with them?
7. Do you have contact with their parents?
8. In what language do you communicate? 9. How do you communicate?
10. What do you consider to be your role as a teacher in a DYEP class?
11. Have you experienced any difficulties during the school year? If so, what were they?

12. What do you consider to be the disadvantages of this position?
13. What suggestions would you make to improve the DYEP classroom at your school?
14. How is the teaching material you use selected?
15. Are techniques used in the teaching process that are not consistent with the curriculum? In other words, do they have an informal teaching style?
16. What do you think could improve the teaching process in terms of the classroom and equipment?
17. It has been observed that there is constant student mobility. Do you think that the school could help reduce this phenomenon?
18. What would be an ideal DYEP class for you?
19. Would you choose this position again? Why?
20. What is the best part of your role?

9. Appendix B: Photographic Documentation of Classrooms (School 1)

9.1. Picture 1

School 1: Library (First Obvervation)

9.2 Picture 2

School 1: DYEP Classroom (Second Observation)

9.3 Picture 3

School 1: DYEP Classroom (Second Observation)

9.4 Picture 4

School 1: DYEP Classroom (Second Observation)

9.5 Picture 5

School 1: DYEP Classroom (Second Observation)

10. Appendix C: Photographic Documentation of Classrooms (School 2)

10.1 Picture 6

School 2: DYEP Classroom (First Observation)

10.2 Picture 7

School 2: DYEP Classroom (Second Observation)

10.3 Picture 8

School 2: English Classroom (Second Observation)

School 2: English Classroom (Second Observation)

10.4 Picture 9

School 2: English Classroom (Second Observation)

10.4 Picture 10

School 2: Computer Classroom (Second Observation)