Intercultural sensitivity of greek teachers and relationship with their teaching practice

Sensibilidade intercultural dos professores gregos e a relação com sua prática docente

Sensibilidad intercultural del profesorado de griego y relación con su práctica docente

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the intercultural sensitivity of Greek primary education teachers and their relationship with their teaching practices. Today, intercultural competence is essential for effective communication and collaboration. Using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) by Chen & Starosta, data was collected, in a social study, from 220 teachers in the Attica region to assess their attitudes toward cultural diversity. The findings indicate that Greek educators exhibit a generally high level of intercultural sensitivity, with strong respect for cultural differences but lower confidence in intercultural interactions. The factors such as age, teaching experience, and migration experience influenced intercultural sensitivity, with younger and less experienced teachers displaying higher levels of engagement and enjoyment in intercultural settings. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between teachers' intercultural sensitivity and their teaching practices, particularly in adapting instruction to diverse student needs. The study underscores the need for targeted intercultural education training to enhance teachers' ability to manage diversity in classrooms. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on intercultural education and highlight the importance of developing culturally responsive teaching approaches.

Keywords: Intercultural sensitivity; Multiculturalism; Greek teachers; Education; Teaching.

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo investigar a sensibilidade intercultural de professores gregos do ensino fundamental e sua relação com suas práticas de ensino. Atualmente, a competência intercultural é essencial para a comunicação e a colaboração eficazes. Utilizando a Escala de Sensibilidade Intercultural (ISS) de Chen e Starosta, dados foram coletados, em um estudo social, com 220 professores na região da Ática para avaliar suas atitudes em relação à diversidade cultural. Os resultados apontam no sentido de que os educadores gregos exibem um nível geralmente alto de sensibilidade intercultural, com forte respeito pelas diferenças culturais, mas menor confiança nas interações interculturais. Fatores como é o caso da idade, experiência em ensino e vivência migratória influenciaram a sensibilidade intercultural, sendo que os professores mais jovens e menos experientes apresentaram níveis mais elevados de engajamento e mostraram satisfação em ambientes interculturais. Além disso, encontrou-se uma correlação positiva entre a sensibilidade intercultural dos professores e suas práticas de ensino, particularmente na adaptação desse ensino às diversas necessidades dos alunos. O estudo ressalta também a necessidade de treinamento ou preparo dos professores no sentido da educação intercultural para aprimorar suas capacidades de gerenciar a diversidade em salas de aula. Esses resultados contribuem para o discurso mais amplo sobre educação intercultural e, destacam a importância do desenvolvimento de abordagens de ensino culturalmente adequadas.

Palavras-chave: Sensibilidade intercultural; Multiculturalismo; Professores de grego; Educação; Ensino.

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar la sensibilidad intercultural del profesorado griego de educación primaria y su relación con sus prácticas docentes. Hoy en día, la competencia intercultural es esencial para una comunicación y colaboración eficaces. Utilizando la Escala de Sensibilidad Intercultural (ISS) de Chen y Starosta, se recopilaron datos, en un estudio social, de 220 docentes de la región del Ática para evaluar sus actitudes hacia la diversidad cultural. Los resultados indican que los educadores griegos muestran un nivel generalmente alto de sensibilidad intercultural, con un fuerte respeto por las diferencias culturales, pero una menor confianza en las interacciones

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interculturales. Factores como la edad, la experiencia docente y la experiencia migratoria influyeron en la sensibilidad intercultural, y los docentes más jóvenes y con menos experiencia mostraron mayores niveles de participación y disfrute en entornos interculturales. Además, se encontró una correlación positiva entre la sensibilidad intercultural del profesorado y sus prácticas docentes, en particular en la adaptación de la instrucción a las diversas necesidades del alumnado. El estudio subraya la necesidad de una formación específica en educación intercultural para mejorar la capacidad del profesorado para gestionar la diversidad en las aulas. Estos hallazgos contribuyen al discurso más amplio sobre la educación intercultural y destacan la importancia de desarrollar enfoques docentes culturalmente receptivos.

Palabras clave: Sensibilidad intercultural; Multiculturalismo; Profesorado griego; Educación; Enseñanza.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, globalization and increasing multiculturalism have made intercultural communication a fundamental aspect of modern social life, as interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds have intensified (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2007). The ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and cultural origins is essential for seeking opportunities and addressing the challenges of a globalized society (Martin & Nakayama, 2022). Intercultural communication refers to the exchange of messages between individuals from different cultural environments, considering cultural differences that influence perception, language, and behaviors (Gudykunst, 2005). Intercultural communicative competence is perceived as a combination of motivation, knowledge, and skills (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984).

Greece is a country that, following modern social changes, has been transforming into a multicultural society in recent decades, mainly due to migration movements from the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Asia, as well as significant refugee flows. The result of these changes in the social sphere is the diversification of the student population and the need for implementing intercultural educational policies (Markou & Parthenis, 2015). The multicultural composition of Greek society has led to significant changes in the educational system, making intercultural education necessary for promoting social cohesion and acceptance of diversity (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). A key issue in this discussion is the intercultural competence of Greek educators and their readiness to teach in culturally diverse classrooms. Palaiologou & Faas (2012) highlight that a large proportion of educators operate and think based on a naive assimilative approach, a fact related to the official educational policy that has been followed.

Intercultural Competence is a dynamic and multidimensional concept, with its various dimensions leading to a multitude of definitions and approaches (Deardorff, 2011). It is understood as the organic synthesis of motivation, skills, and knowledge that an individual must possess to interact effectively with people from other cultures. It emerges from the combination of self-awareness, sensitivity, and abilities, which must be continuously developed. It often has a dual reference, both as an outcome and as a process of communication, focusing on both communication partners and the relationship that develops between them (Wiseman, 2002).

According to Bennett (1984), the concept of intercultural sensitivity is an indicator that an individual can work and live successfully in multicultural environments. It is defined by an individual's interest in other cultures, their awareness of cultural differences, and their ability to modify their behavior to respect people from different cultural backgrounds. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity represents a continuum that moves from an ethnocentric approach to a more ethnorelative perspective of the world, capturing the progression of an individual's awareness of cultural differences. The model's dynamic and developmental nature describes more the changes in worldview rather than attitudes and behaviors, tracing their evolution across various stages in response to cultural differences, where observable behavior at each stage is indicative of the underlying worldview (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hammer et al., 2003).

The significance of intercultural sensitivity has been highlighted by Chen & Starosta. They initially recognize conceptual confusion regarding the definitions of intercultural sensitivity, sensitivity, and competence as a major challenge in measuring intercultural competence (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Fritz, Mollenberg & Chen, 2000).

According to these researchers, intercultural communication competence consists of three interrelated components: intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural adroitness (Chen & Starosta, 1998). They describe intercultural sensitivity as "one of the essential abilities that help an individual to coexist successfully in a multicultural society" (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Intercultural awareness is the cognitive aspect of intercultural competence, referring to the understanding of cultural norms that influence an individual's thinking and behavior (Chen & Starosta, 1998). A crucial part of intercultural awareness is self-awareness and cultural consciousness, which relate to an individual's ability to recognize the distinct characteristics and cultural values of their own culture as well as others.

The third concept, intercultural adroitness, is defined as the behavioral aspect, emphasizing the skills necessary for optimal intercultural interaction. According to Chen (2002), this includes message skills, interaction management, identity management, behavioral flexibility, and relationship cultivation (Fritz, Mollenberg & Chen, 2000: 3).

Intercultural sensitivity is understood as "an individual's ability to receive and send positive emotional signals before, during, and after intercultural interaction" (Fritz, Mollenberg & Chen, 2005). The researchers argue that if a valid measure of intercultural sensitivity is to be developed, it should be confined to the affective aspect of intercultural communication to avoid confusion with intercultural awareness. Furthermore, Chen & Starosta (1997) emphasized that intercultural sensitivity includes self-esteem, empathy, self-concept, open-mindedness, nonjudgmental attitudes (which allow an individual to listen without making quick judgments) (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 2000), and social relaxation (Yu & Chen, 2008).

This study aimed to investigate the intercultural sensitivity of Greek primary education teachers and their relationship with their teaching practices.

1.1 Literature review

The empirical exploration of the concept has been a topic of international literature for decades. Empirical data indicate that this concept, or at least some of its dimensions, is influenced by factors such as age (Segura-Robles & Parra-González, 2019), gender (Holm et al., 2009), professional experience, such as previous work in multicultural classrooms or abroad, education and training, for example, participation in educational programs focusing on interculturality (Merino et al., 2024), learning foreign languages (He et al., 2017), academic performance (Holm et al., 2009), and personal experiences, such as migration experience, travel (Yurur et al., 2018), religious beliefs (Gordon & Mwavita, 2018), and interactions with people from different cultural environments.

In Altan's (2018) research, conducted with 70 undergraduate students in English, while a particularly high percentage of intercultural sensitivity was noted, what is significant is the connection made by the researcher between the findings and the students' participation in intercultural education courses during their studies. The research by Segura-Robles & Parra-González (2019) on a sample of 363 Primary Education teachers between two cities in Spain showed a high degree of intercultural sensitivity, with the factors "pleasure during interaction" and "observant interaction" showing the highest percentages. The researchers pointed out the importance of the participants' interaction with individuals from different cultures during their childhood, due to the geographical location of the cities, as well as the teachers' training in intercultural matters.

In the research of Roh (2014) with middle and high school students in Korea, the significant role of the multicultural context was found, with a strong correlation between the students' level of intercultural sensitivity and their level of multicultural experience. The exploration of intercultural sensitivity in future educators in Serbia, in addition to the important

role of education in the development of intercultural sensitivity, showed that contact with representatives of other cultural groups is also important.

Staying or living in a different cultural environment is not sufficient for the initiation and development of intercultural sensitivity. To achieve intercultural learning and awareness, it is necessary to establish contacts and interactions with people from other cultures, demonstrate mutual respect, and have the willingness to recognize and utilize cultural diversity as one of the sources of learning (Petrović and Zlatković, 2009). Empirical data from the research of Yurur et al. (2018) show that exposure to other cultures through studying abroad or student exchange programs helps to increase their intercultural sensitivity. However, other studies emphasize that mere contact with people from different cultural backgrounds or staying in a multicultural environment does not necessarily lead to a reduction in ethnocentrism, and targeted interventions are required to develop intercultural sensitivity (Jenkins & Skelly, 2004; Melle and Ferreira, 2023).

The role of education in the development of intercultural sensitivity has been highlighted in various research contexts (Fuller 2007; Gordon & Mwavita, 2018; Merino et al., 2024). The value of instructional interventions has been confirmed by research involving different approaches. The use of specific educational materials (Ebersole, Kanahele-Mossman, and Kawakami 2016), practices emphasizing self-reflection (Daniel and Pray 2017) or critical friendship (Leeman and van Koeven 2019), appears to improve levels of intercultural competence. Participation in a targeted intercultural education program and experiential cultural experience in a learning environment that fosters dialogue can enhance individuals' intercultural sensitivity, so they can work effectively with communities from different cultural backgrounds (Merino et al., 2024).

A study with 549 students in Finland, conducted by Holm et al. (2009), found that students with high academic performance were more likely to become interculturally competent. The main finding of the study concerned the importance of education in preparing gifted students for cultural diversity by developing critical thinking and exposure to other cultures.

Mendoza et al. (2017) found that the respect for diversity exhibited by the teachers surveyed was not a factor that contributed to adapting teaching content to meet the needs of a multicultural classroom. The researchers concluded that experience only gains meaning when both migrants and natives are "open" to mutual acceptance and interaction.

In Greece, research on the intercultural sensitivity of educators is limited. In the study by Spinthourakis, Karatzia-Stavlioti, and Roussakis (2009), the intercultural sensitivity of educators was found to be particularly high. At the same time, the participants reported feeling inadequately prepared by their university education, which they believe would pose an obstacle to their future teaching work, which may require intercultural sensitivity.

Arvaniti and Sakellariou (2014) conducted research on 204 fourth-year undergraduate students, using the Chen and Starosta (2000) scale as a research tool. They found a satisfactory level of intercultural sensitivity, primarily regarding the dimensions of the desire to engage in interactions with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and respect for cultural differences. However, a low percentage of confidence, comfort, and enjoyment was observed during intercultural encounters.

Training in intercultural education was a factor that influenced the level of intercultural sensitivity. Students with more training in intercultural education showed higher levels of intercultural sensitivity. In contrast, students with inadequate training in intercultural issues showed fewer positive responses regarding respect for the values of people from different cultures and the feeling of enjoyment during interaction.

In the research of Chranioti and Arvaniti (2018), involving 148 educators, the findings revealed high levels of intercultural sensitivity among the sample. Specifically, the majority of participants stated that they enjoy intercultural interaction and respect cultural differences. However, the educators appeared to lack confidence during intercultural encounters and did not pay particular attention during interactions, which, according to the authors' interpretation, suggests a superficial approach to the "other."

The research by Arvanitis, Bertozzis, and Armaos (2018) was conducted with 166 students from the University of Patras and 184 students from the University of Modena & Reggio Emilia in Italy. Both groups of students showed high levels of intercultural sensitivity, which the researchers attributed to the intercultural education courses they had taken during their studies. No significant differences were found based on the demographic characteristics of the sample.

A related and interesting study is the one by Karanikola & Balias (2015), conducted with 318 Primary Education teachers, utilizing Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The results show that the teachers in the study are at the acceptance stage, the first of the three ethnorelative stages of this scale.

1.2 Research question

The purpose of this study is to investigate the intercultural sensitivity of Primary Education teachers, based on the responses they recorded through a self-report questionnaire. Additionally, the study aims to examine whether the level of intercultural sensitivity of teachers is associated with demographic and other factors. Furthermore, the relationship between the intercultural sensitivity of teachers and their teaching practice was explored.

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

- What is the level of intercultural sensitivity among teachers?
- Is there a correlation between teachers' intercultural sensitivity and their teaching practice?
- What demographic characteristics influence teachers' intercultural sensitivity?

2. Methods

A social survey was carried out, involving 220 teachers in the Attica region, in a mixed qualitative and quantitative study (Gil, 2017; Pereira et al., 2018).

The Likert scale adapted for this study was used to convert qualitative information into quantitative information (Pereira et al., 2018), and for this quantitative part, we used descriptive statistics with sampling, data classes, mean and standard deviation values, and statistical analysis (Vieira, 2021; Shitsuka et al., 2014).

2.1 Sampling method

The participants were selected from various areas of Attica using the convenience sampling method, in which the sample is based on individuals who are willing to participate, geographical proximity, and availability at a specific time (Golzar et al., 2022).

2.2 Participants

The target group of the study consisted of Primary Education teachers. A total of 220 Primary Education teachers from the Attica region participated. Of these, 176 were women and 44 were men. All participants were of Greek nationality and, in their vast majority, Greek Orthodox Christians. Half of the teachers held a master's degree, while 4 out of 10 were simply graduates of a Pedagogical Department.

Regarding migration experience, most participants had no such experience (N=168). Half of the teachers reported having no teaching experience in general education institutions with high percentages of immigrant, foreign, repatriated, and Roma students, while 4 out of 10 had up to five years of relevant experience. Finally, they believed that their training in intercultural pedagogy was merely adequate.

2.3 Instruments

a) Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)

The primary research tool used was the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale by Chen and Starosta (2000). The reliability and validity of the Chen & Starosta scale have been demonstrated across different cultural contexts (Fritz et al., 2005; Fritz et al., 2002; Yu & Chen, 2008) and among various populations (e.g., multinational employees and students). Additionally, it has been translated into Greek and used with both students and educators (Arvaniti & Sakellariou, 2014; Chranioti & Arvanitis, 2018; Spinthourakis et al., 2009).

The questionnaire consists of 24 items (Table 1), where participants are asked to indicate the extent to which each statement represents them using a Likert-type scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). The 24 questions are grouped into five dimensions:

- Respect for Cultural Differences The ability to recognize, accept, and respect cultural differences in communication (items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, 20).
- Interaction Enjoyment The level of enjoyment experienced during intercultural communication (items 9, 12, 15).
- Intercultural Engagement The degree of involvement in intercultural communication (items 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24).
- Interaction Confidence The confidence an individual has when engaging with others in intercultural communication (items 3, 4, 5, 6, 10).
- Interaction Attentiveness The ability to perceive and respond to messages during intercultural communication (items 14, 17, 19) (Chen & Starosta, 2000).

Dimensions	Items
Intercultural engagement	1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
	11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.
	13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
	21. I often give positive responses to my culturally-different counterpart during our interaction.
	22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.
	23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.
	24. I have a feeling of enjoyment toward differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.
Respect of cultural difference	2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.
	7. I do not like to be with people from different cultures.
	8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.
	16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.
	18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.
	20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.
Interaction confidence	3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
	4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.
	5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
	6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
	10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
Interaction enjoyment	9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.
	12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.
	15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.
Interaction attentiveness	14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.
	17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
	19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.

 Table 1 - The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale [ISS].

Source: Adapted from ISS of Chen & Starosta (2000).

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability analysis for overall Intercultural Sensitivity, as well as for the individual dimensions of teachers' intercultural sensitivity. The findings indicate that Cronbach's alpha values for each factor are as follows:

- Respect for Cultural Differences: $\alpha = 0.705$
- Interaction Enjoyment: $\alpha = 0.627$
- Intercultural Engagement: $\alpha = 0.682$
- Interaction Attentiveness: $\alpha = 0.778$
- Interaction Confidence: $\alpha = 0.787$

Table 2 - Reliability Analysis for Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity.

Dimensions	Questions	Cronbach Alpha	
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	-	0,923	
Respect of cultural difference	2R,7R,8,16,18R,20R	0,705	
Interaction enjoyment	9R,12R,15R	0,627	
Intercultural engagement	1,11,13,21,22R,23,24	0,682	
Interaction attentiveness	14,17,19	0,778	
Interaction confidence	3,4 R ,5,6,10	0,787	

Source: Research data (2025).

A second research tool (Table 3) was an 11-statement scale developed by the researcher to investigate teachers' teaching practices. The response scale was a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5). A factor analysis was conducted, where the KMO coefficient was 0.818 > 0.8. Items with high loadings (>0.40) were considered, following axis rotation using the Varimax method. As a result, three factors emerged, explaining 58.67% of the total variance. Specifically, the first factor explained 25.46% of the total variance and was named "Teaching Competence." The second factor explained 22.82% of the total variance and was named "Instructor's Psychology." Finally, the third factor explained 10.39% of the total variance but was excluded from the study due to low reliability.

Table 3 - Factor Analysis for Teaching Practice with Varimax Rotation.

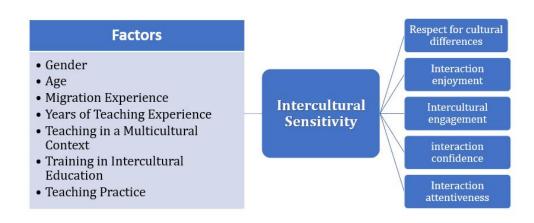
	Factors (KMO=0,818, Variance=58,67%)			
Items	1	2	3	
6. I adjust the teaching goals and materials to the experiences, needs, and interests of students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.	0,840			
7. I create the classroom environment so that it reflects the culture of the foreign students in my class.	0,781			
5. I believe that I can comfortably and effectively manage issues related to diversity.	0,636			
3. In the lesson with students from different ethnocultural backgrounds, I apply alternative practices, such as: cooperative teaching, games.	0,625			
10. I use various methods of assessment that cater to the learning styles of all students.	0,539			
8. I show all my students, especially those with a different cultural background, that I have high expectations for their progress in school.		0,788		
11. I foster respect among students from different cultural backgrounds, making them feel important in the classroom.		0,758		
4. I believe that referring to the cultural elements of foreign students in the classroom leads to the degradation of the education provided.		-0,725		
9. I encourage students to learn about each other and their cultures through appropriate educational activities.		0,645		

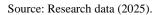
2. I believe that training and support from the state are more important than the initiative of the teacher for more effective teaching in multicultural classrooms.	2		0,692
1. I have attended training or seminars related to interculturality (from public or private institutions) to better manage multicultural classrooms	r		-0,639
Cronbach Alpha	0,785	0,757	0,063
Variance	25,46	22,82	10,39

Source: Research data (2025).

The third part of the questionnaire consists of questions recording the basic demographic characteristics of the sample, such as gender, age, teaching experience, migration experience, and educational background. The conceptual framework of the research is illustrated in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1 - The Research Model.





3. Results

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the dimensions of teachers' intercultural sensitivity. The response scale ranges from 1 to 5. The average score for both overall intercultural sensitivity and all its subscales is above the midpoint of the scale. This indicates that teachers exhibit relatively high levels of intercultural sensitivity, according to their self-reports.

Regarding the individual dimensions of intercultural sensitivity, it is observed that, based on the mean scores, the highest level is found in the dimension of respect for cultural differences (M= 4.49 ± 0.48), followed by interaction enjoyment (M= 4.31 ± 0.57), intercultural engagement (M= 4.15 ± 0.49), interaction attentiveness (M= 3.83 ± 0.69), and finally, interaction confidence (M= 3.58 ± 0.74).

Table 4 - Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity Dimensions.

Dimensions	М.О.	T.A.
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	3,94	0,51
Respect of cultural difference	4,49	0,48
Interaction enjoyment	4,31	0,57
Intercultural engagement	4,15	0,49
Interaction attentiveness	3,83	0,69
Interaction confidence	3,58	0,74

Correlations were conducted between the individual variables of intercultural sensitivity using the non-parametric Spearman's rho correlation coefficient. Table 5 below presents the correlation coefficients among the dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. A statistically significant relationship was found among all the individual dimensions of intercultural sensitivity.

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
[1] Respect of cultural difference	-	0,646***	0,733***	0,530***	0,502***
[2] Interaction enjoyment	-	-	0,593***	0,460***	0,554***
[3] Intercultural engagement	-	-	-	0,563***	0,529***
[4] Interaction attentiveness	-	-	-	-	0,365***
[5] Interaction confidence	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5 - Correlation Coefficients Among the Examined Variables.

 $\Sigma \eta \mu$. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < 0,001. Source: Research data (2025).

Table 6 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney and Independent Samples t-test analyses for the dimensions of teachers' intercultural competence based on gender. No statistically significant differences were found in the mean ranks or mean values in any case ($p \ge 0.304$).

Table 6 - Mann-Whitney and Inc	lependent Samples t-test	for the Dimensions of Teachers'	Intercultural Sensitivity by Gender.

Dimensions	Test	Gender	Ν	M.B./M.O.	Statistical	p-value
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	Mann Whitney	Man Woman	44 176	71,78 62,87	U=1689	0,198
Respect of cultural difference	Mann Whitney	Man Woman	44 176	49,32 57,05	U=832,000	0,304
Interaction enjoyment	Mann Whitney	Man Woman	44 176	56,14 55,34	U=954,000	0,915
Intercultural engagement	Mann Whitney	Man Woman	44 176	54,14 55,84	U=938,000	0,822
Interaction attentiveness	Mann Whitney	Man Woman	44 176	55,12 54,32	U=933,000	0,816
Interaction confidence	t-test	Man Woman	44 176	3,64 3,57	t (108) =0,384	0,702

Source: Research data (2025).

Table 7 presents the results of the Spearman correlation analysis between teachers' intercultural sensitivity dimensions and age. The investigation of the variation in teachers' intercultural sensitivity based on age did not reveal statistically significant differences in Overall Intercultural Sensitivity across different age groups. However, regarding the specific dimensions of Intercultural Sensitivity, a statistically significant negative correlation was found with the factor "Respect for Cultural Differences" (r=-0.210, p<0.05), the factor "Interaction Enjoyment" (r=-0.229, p<0.05), and the factor "Intercultural Engagement" (r=-0.205, p<0.05). Specifically, according to the results of multiple comparisons, it was found that teachers aged up to 39 years exhibited higher levels of Respect for Cultural Differences, Intercultural Engagement, and Interaction Enjoyment compared to teachers aged 40 years and older.

Dimensions	Age
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	0,058
Respect of cultural difference	-0,210*
Interaction enjoyment	-0,229*
Intercultural engagement	-0,205*
Interaction attentiveness	0,052
Interaction confidence	0,059

Table 7 - Spearman Correlations of Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity Dimensions with Age.

*p<0,05. Source: Research data (2025).

Table 8 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney tests for the dimensions of teachers' intercultural sensitivity based on migration experience, where statistically significant differences were found in the mean ranks for the dimensions "Engagement during Interaction" (U=773.000, p=0.024 < 0.05) and "Confidence during Interaction" (U=740.000, p=0.013 < 0.05). It appears that for the "Engagement during Interaction" factor, participants with migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=67.77), whereas those without migration experience had a lower mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those with migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a higher mean rank (M.R.=69.04), whereas those without migration experience had a lower mean rank (M.R.=51.31).

Dimensions	Migration Experience	Ν	M.B.	U	p-value
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	No	168	53,21	892,000	0,153
	Yes	52	61,23		
Respect of cultural difference	No	168	53,10	890,000	0,151
-	Yes	52	63,27		
Interaction enjoyment	No	168	52,46	837,000	0,068
	Yes	52	65,31		
Intercultural engagement	No	168	51,70	773,000	0,024
	Yes	52	67,77		
Interaction attentiveness	No	168	52,35	838,00	0,069
	Yes	52	64,17		
Interaction confidence	No	84	51,31	740,000	0,013
	Yes	26	69,04	, 0 0 0	3,020

Table 8 - Mann-Whitney Tests for Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity Dimensions Based on Migration Experience.

Source: Research data (2025).

Table 9 presents the results of Spearman correlations between the dimensions of teachers' intercultural sensitivity and their years of teaching experience. From this table, it is evident that years of teaching experience show a statistically significant negative correlation with the dimensions "Respect for Cultural Differences" (r=-0.210, p<0.05), "Enjoyment from Interaction" (r=-0.228, p<0.05), and "Engagement during Interaction" (r=-0.195, p<0.05).

Dimensions	Years of Teaching Experience
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	0,065
Respect of cultural difference	$-0,210^{*}$
Interaction enjoyment	-0,228*
Intercultural engagement	-0,195*
Interaction attentiveness	0,074
Interaction confidence	0,017

Table 9 - Spearman Correlations of Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity Dimensions with Years of Teaching Experience.

*p<0,05. Source: Research data (2025).

Table 10 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis tests for the dimensions of intercultural sensitivity of teachers based on years of teaching experience in general education institutions with high percentages of migrant, foreign, repatriate, and Roma students. No statistically significant differences in mean ranks were found in any case ($p \ge 0.214$). The data were grouped into four categories: No years, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, and over 11 years.

 Table 10 - Kruskal-Wallis Tests for the Dimensions of Intercultural Sensitivity of Teachers Based on Years of Teaching in Multicultural Settings.

Dimensions	Years of teaching experience in multicultural settings	Ν	M.B.	H (3)	р
Overall Intercultural	No years	110	56,54	4,127	0,242
Sensitivity	1-5 years	87	51,00		
	6-10 years	10	42,60		
	More than 11 years	12	40,20		
			.0,20		
Respect of cultural	No years	110	57,67	4,250	0,236
difference	-	07		,	,
	1-5 years	87	56,00		
	6-10 years	10	30,80		
	More than 11 years	12	43,50		
Interaction enjoyment	No years	110	58,44	2,580	0,461
	1-5 years	87	53,76		
	6-10 years	10	46,00		
	More than 11 years	10	40,00 39,92		
Intercultural engagement	No years	110	54,28	3,115	0.374
5.6	1-5 years	87	56,52	-, -	-)
	6-10 years	10	70,40		
	More than 11 years	12	37,83		
Interaction attentiveness	No years	110	53,38	3,127	0,365
	1-5 years	87	57,12		
	6-10 years	10	69,40		
	More than 11 years	12	37,51		
Interaction confidence	No years	110	57,91	1,134	0,769
	1-5 years	87	52,97		
	6-10 years	10	47,90		
	More than 11 years	12	48,93		

Source: Research data (2025).

Table 11 presents the results of the Spearman correlations of the factors of teachers' intercultural sensitivity with their training in intercultural education topics. It is found that there is a statistically significant positive correlation only with the factor "Respect for cultural differences" (r=0.188, p<0.05).

 Table 11 - Spearman correlations of the dimensions of teachers' intercultural sensitivity with their proficiency in intercultural pedagogy training.

Dimensions	Adequate Training in Intercultural Education
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	0,65
Respect of cultural difference	0,188*
Interaction enjoyment	0,050
Intercultural engagement	0,039
Interaction attentiveness	0,042
Interaction confidence	0,178

*p<0,05. Source: Research data (2025).

A correlation was conducted between the dimensions of teachers' intercultural sensitivity and the factors of teaching practice. As shown in Table 12, both the factor "Teaching Competence" and the factor "Teacher's Psychology" display a statistically significant positive correlation with both the overall Intercultural Sensitivity and all the factors.

Table 12 - Spearman correlations of teachers' intercultural sensitivity dimensions with the factors of their teaching practice.

Dimensions	Teaching Competence	Teacher's Psychology
Overall Intercultural Sensitivity	0,415**	0,469**
Respect of cultural difference	0,363**	0,414**
Interaction enjoyment	0,413**	0,474**
Intercultural engagement	0,491**	0,490**
Interaction attentiveness	0,412**	0,461**
Interaction confidence	0,416**	0,297**

**p<0,01. Source: Research data (2025).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the level of Intercultural Sensitivity, the existence of significant differences in terms of gender, age, years of teaching experience, teaching experience in multicultural settings, as well as migration experience. Additionally, the relationship between Intercultural Sensitivity and Teaching Practice was examined.

The results of the study show that teachers demonstrate a high level of intercultural sensitivity, indicating a positive attitude towards diversity. This is particularly important in the complex and pluralistic Greek social and educational context. According to the research data, teachers believe that they are sufficiently sensitized to individuals with different cultural backgrounds. However, there is a clear difference between the dimensions of intercultural sensitivity that relate to respect and commitment towards others and those related to action. The highest scores are recorded in respect for intercultural differences, while the lowest are in observance and confidence during interaction. Observance during interaction concerns teachers' efforts to gather more information about others and understand subtle cultural nuances during intercultural interaction, and confidence during involvement reveals how comfortable and capable they feel in a multicultural environment. The findings seem to reflect the difficulty of maintaining sensitivity at the same high levels when it surpasses theoretical statements and moves to the level of practical contact and communication. In the research by Arvanitis & Sakellariou (2015) in the Greek context, a similar differentiation was observed between the positive predisposition towards the other and its practical handling, as the participants expressed a positive stance on engaging in intercultural interactions, recording high levels of respect for cultural differences and a willingness to further educate themselves about the distinct other, but recorded lower practical comfort, confidence, and pleasure during intercultural encounters. The same results were found in the research by Chranioti & Arvaniti (2018), which, according to the researchers, highlight the difficulty or even indifference of teachers to respond effectively in real-time and space within an intercultural interaction. The responses of the participants in this study indeed confirm the gap between

positive theoretical perceptions of respecting differences and the real ability to communicate with those from different cultural backgrounds.

When examining differences based on gender, no significant differences were found in terms of overall Intercultural Sensitivity and all its dimensions. This result contradicts the findings of other studies. In the research by Mendoza et al. (2017), male teachers recorded higher overall intercultural sensitivity compared to female teachers. On the other hand, in the studies by Ayas (2006) and Helmer (2007), females recorded higher levels of intercultural sensitivity than males.

Although no statistically significant differences in intercultural sensitivity were found based on the teachers' age group, it was observed that teachers under 39 had higher levels of involvement and satisfaction during interactions compared to those over 40, as well as higher respect for intercultural differences. The same differentiation was observed regarding teaching experience, where less experienced teachers expressed higher levels of respect for intercultural differences, satisfaction, and involvement during interaction. This finding agrees with other studies (Mendoza et al., 2017; Strychnou, 2020) and could possibly be attributed to the lack of relevant training for older teachers. Additionally, younger teachers have grown up in a society with a more pronounced multicultural character than their predecessors, which is confirmed by the changes in Greek society in recent years due to large migration and refugee flows.

Teaching experience is a factor that shows a negative correlation with certain dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. This appears to be related to the previous finding regarding the impact of age. Thus, younger teachers with less educational experience showed higher agreement with respect for intercultural differences, enjoyment, and involvement during interaction.

Also, higher levels of agreement with involvement and confidence during interaction were observed from teachers with experience with migration, especially those with more years of experience, compared to those without such experience. This can be explained by the fact that teachers who worked abroad are more familiar with teaching students from different nationalities and cultures. Regarding teaching experience both abroad and in Greece, it was noted that it is very helpful, as specialized training, theoretical knowledge, and practical skills and experiences seem to be crucial in the intercultural competence and sensitivity of teachers and in their better performance in educational and social duties (Segura & Parra-Gonzalez, 2019).

Another observation of the research is that teachers, regardless of whether they consider themselves adequately trained in intercultural education or not, show equally high levels of intercultural sensitivity in both groups of the sample. What seems to be affected by the existence of sufficient training in intercultural education is respect for cultural differences. There is research data that agrees that training in intercultural education does not relate to the high levels of intercultural sensitivity of teachers (Mendoza et al., 2017; Strekalova-Hughes, 2017). However, overall, the research data show that training in intercultural education courses is associated with significantly higher levels of intercultural sensitivity (Arvanitis & Sakellariou, 2014; Petrović & Zlatković, 2009; Yurtseven & Altun, 2015).

This study contributes to the enrichment of international literature on intercultural sensitivity and the factors influencing it. However, its contribution lies in exploring the relationship between teachers' intercultural sensitivity and their teaching practices. The findings suggest that teachers who develop teaching skills related to intercultural diversity management exhibit higher levels of intercultural sensitivity. The ability to employ appropriate teaching strategies, adapt educational goals and materials to the experiences, needs, and interests of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and create an inclusive classroom environment that reflects the cultures of all students is associated with higher levels of commitment, satisfaction, observability, and confidence in interaction.

A similar association was found with the factor termed "teacher psychology," which was positively correlated with the dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. Specifically, teachers who foster respect among students from different cultural backgrounds make them feel valued in the classroom, express positive expectations for culturally diverse students, and view

their presence in the classroom as beneficial, exhibit higher levels of intercultural sensitivity. Therefore, it was found that teachers with higher intercultural competence, particularly in terms of respect for intercultural differences, enjoyment of interaction, engagement, observability, and confidence, also demonstrate higher teaching competence and a more positive teaching mindset.

It appears that a common channel connects teachers' intercultural sensitivity with their teaching practices, making it a crucial component of effective teaching in multicultural environments. Intercultural sensitivity influences teaching practices by enhancing teachers' ability to manage differences and adapt their teaching methods according to the needs of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Gay, 2002; Segura & Parra-Gonzalez, 2019).

Intercultural sensitivity not only affects teaching practices but also shapes teachers' psychology. Educators who develop this sensitivity tend to have a more positive attitude toward their students and engage in intercultural interactions with greater ease and confidence (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017). This underscores the necessity of integrating intercultural sensitivity into teacher training and educational policy to ensure that students from diverse cultural backgrounds can fully participate in the educational process and benefit from a meaningful learning experience.

Teachers' ability to recognize, understand, and appreciate cultural differences can enhance the learning experience and promote social cohesion in the classroom. It is evident that culturally responsive teaching requires culturally aware teachers with a strong foundation in cultural diversity, the ability to design culturally relevant curricula, and the skills to create inclusive learning communities while maintaining consistency and fostering effective intercultural communication (Gay, 2002).

What is needed is a comprehensive intercultural education policy that enables teachers to interact seamlessly with students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the organization of training programs is essential, as research suggests that such initiatives contribute to fostering respect for cultural differences. These programs should aim to enhance hands-on experience with cultural diversity.

Limitations and Future Research

In every study, there are limitations. In this case, one major limitation is that the sample comes from a single region of the country, Attica, so the results cannot be generalized or considered representative of the broader Greek reality. Additionally, the research would have been enriched by a sample with an equal number of men and women. As a suggestion for future research, it could be proposed to explore the topic using qualitative research tools, such as interviews or action research.

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