1. Introduction

In the early years of the 21st century, humanity faced two unprecedented global challenges: the intensifying effects of climate change and the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These crises have tested our resilience, unravelling the fabric of societies, economies, and educational institutions worldwide. These crises have impacted traditionally disenfranchised communities the most. It is in the midst of these trials that the significance of intercultural education, as well as related fields, has become more pronounced than ever before.

Rethinking and being committed to the notion of interculturalism is where, in our view, the field of intercultural education always serves as an inspiration, offering a pathway for understanding, empathy, and collaboration, especially today in an increasingly interconnected world.

The broad field of intercultural education has the following attributes [1]:

(a) Embracing all diversities of cultures and languages, giving prominence to increasing plurilingualism and the attributes of multilingual settings;
(b) Embracing all perspectives that shape our global community, nurturing the seeds of respect and mutual appreciation;
(c) Giving a voice to all those groups that have been disenfranchised and providing space for dialogue where dialogue has been absent.

However, especially nowadays, as we confront the complex intersections of global warming and the aftermath of the pandemic, the reality of war in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as the most recent challenge of a world permeated by the opportunities and threats of artificial intelligence (A.I.), the challenges and opportunities that intercultural education presents have taken on a new urgency.

There is a reality call for us, as experts in the field, to find common topos (i.e., space) in order to promote international dialogue and take action at a global level.

2. An Overview of Published Articles in the Current Special Issue

This Special Issue brings together theoretical perspectives and empirical insights on intercultural studies and multi-/plurilingualism from various settings across the world.

The collection begins with a conceptual article by Montero-Sieburth [2], who problematises how knowledge about migrant and minority students is produced. Drawing on her extensive experience as a researcher in a wide range of countries, Montero-Sieburth develops a sustained and cogent critique of the limitations of research outlooks that essentialise students. A particular concern about such research is that it often generates ‘deficit’ outlooks, ultimately leading to standardised, teacher-directed educational models. The article argues for replacing such epistemic outlooks with community-based ethnographic research practices. This model of knowledge creation involves participatory and dialogic engagement by teachers, learners, and researchers, and it aims to generate more nuanced,
contextually specific understandings of the learning settings. In this way, it is expected that learning experiences can be developed that directly address and embrace the diversity of our classrooms.

In her article, Ciabatti [3] reports on a qualitative study that took place in Australia, drawing on the experiences of pre-service teachers to develop an understanding of how intercultural education is understood and practiced in this setting. This study, which involved in-depth interviews with seven teachers who had a migrant background, uncovered multiple discrepancies between theoretical descriptions and interpretations of intercultural capability on the one hand and the way intercultural capability is taught on the other. It also shows how the personal experiences of teachers shape their conceptualisations of intercultural pedagogy and the way this is eventually implemented. Based on these insights, Ciabatti argues for a new definition of intercultural capability, which is not limited to teaching about diversity but also extends to learning from and through it. The article also makes the case for critical and reflective work in teacher education, which can help pre-service teachers become agents of change in their settings.

This call point is picked up in the next article by Fall [4], who argues for challenging epistemic injustice through translingual literacy. Fall’s study uses a variety of methods, ranging from focus groups and interviews to emplaced observations to describe the experiences of translingual students (i.e., students whose identities transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries). An important observation is made that such students often experience epistemic racism on account of their hybrid identities. By synthesising perspectives from racio-linguistic theory and New Literacy Studies, this article offers powerful insights into how epistemic racism emerges from the ideologically laden interactions of translingual students and school stakeholders. It also shows how students use overt and covert processes of trans-literacy (or “trans-resistance”) to push back against the marginalised position in which they are placed.

The question of identity is also the focus of the next article in the collection. Stavrakaki and Manoli [5] report on a study that uses arts-based interview elicitation methods as a means to help teachers learn about their students’ cultural and linguistic capital. In this study, learners were asked to produce self-portraits using colours that signified salient aspects of their identity (e.g., representations of emotions, national flags, etc.). This activity triggered a process of identity construction, as participants had to negotiate the multiple aspects of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and connect them with the new context in which they lived.

In a similar vein, Kyrligkitsi and Mouti [6] propose a multi-method profiling process to develop a holistic description of students with refugee and/or migrant backgrounds. This involved synthesising information from a variety of sources (questionnaires, portraits, narratives, needs analysis, and assessment tools), which documented the views of teachers and students in a non-formal education setting in Greece. The findings suggested the prevalence of deficit perspectives, as seen in the negative self-image of the students and the teachers’ dedication “to pass on their knowledge to their students and develop them”. An unease with activities that brought student identity to the fore was also documented. Findings also indicated the salience of the students’ first languages and English as markers of identity and a perceived urgent need to acquire Modern Greek as well, as this language is viewed as a requisite for societal integration.

In the next article, Giannakou and Karalia [7] look into hybrid linguistic performances in multicultural classes by examining how English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) can facilitate learning Modern Greek as a second language. In this study, data were elicited by public school teachers in Greece using a variety of methods (questionnaires, interviews, narratives, and metaphor elicitation). This study revealed how learners’ languages are marginalised, as teaching and learning appear to take place mainly in Modern Greek, facilitated by ELF. The teachers in this study did not appear to problematise this situation, claiming that the use of ELF is positively appraised by students as a reported source of security. It is suggested that the use of ELF, as an alternative to monolingual instruction, can facilitate students’
learning experiences, which are typified by formal instruction (e.g., reading comprehension, learning grammar rules, and translating vocabulary items).

Similar insights into how the language education of people with refugee and migrant backgrounds is sometimes enacted are explored in the next study by Rousoulioti and Seferiadou [8]. This article focuses on the memorisation of vocabulary, which appears to be a mainstay of language instruction in certain settings. It was found that the strategies used are generally dictated by the teachers based on considerations of perceived effectiveness. Learners are generally required to read words aloud, link them to personal experiences, and connect them to other words in the semantic field.

In the next study, Saki [9] problematises how language support is provided for ethnic minority pupils in Japan. The article synthesises the perspectives and experiences of nine language education specialists (language support teachers, volunteer interpreters, mother-tongue language supporters, and principals) who were involved in assisting primary school children with foreign ethnic backgrounds. It was noted that, in addition to problems associated with resource provision, the pupils’ learning experience was influenced by “a notable deficiency in the understanding of the distinctive learning needs of ethnic minority children”. Building on this observation, an argument is made for more effective teacher education initiatives.

Liakou [10] reports a similar set of concerns in the next article of the collection. This study, which focuses on the way German is taught as a foreign language to students in Greece, including students with refugee and migrant backgrounds, reveals a notable methodological inflexibility when it comes to accommodating the specific linguistic profiles of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Some examples of such inflexibility include the teachers’ insistence on using monolingual (i.e., German) forms of content delivery, the use of transmissive pedagogical models, and classroom arrangements that prioritise control over pedagogical appropriateness. Such findings, coupled with a documented lack of awareness by the teachers of the student’s linguistic background, typify the model of instruction that Montero-Sieburth cautions against.

Bachtsiavanou, Karanikola, and Palaiologou [11] extend the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students to include questions of parental involvement. In this article, readers are presented with the views of teachers who work in segregated (‘reception’) classes for immigrant and refugee children regarding the ways in which parents can be involved in their children’s education. This study highlights the value of parental involvement but also notes multiple obstacles that may hinder its effective implementation. These include language barriers and the reported unfamiliarity of the parents with the local education system. To alleviate some of these challenges, the authors argue for the use of translation services and a shift in perspective that can enable teachers to view linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset.

The following three articles in this Special Issue examine the aspects of multi-/ plurilingualism and interculturality in Higher Education. This discussion is initiated by Lee, Cha, and Ham [12], who examine how multicultural education discourses have been institutionalised in Higher Education. The authors argue that academic discourses about multicultural education are likely to be driven top-down by “universalistic norms and values” rather than being prompted by societal demands that emerge locally. This claim is supported by an analysis of a corpus of academic articles from 105 countries, revealing that articles on multicultural education are more likely to appear in academic settings that are more strongly connected to global civil society.

The inspiring contribution by Magos [13] reports on an action research project in a higher education setting, which aimed to increase interactions among pre-service teachers and peer refugees. The action research intervention involved three iterations of intercultural routes or walks, with the participation of students who were enrolled in a teacher education course at a Greek University as well as refugees. These action research cycles were highly beneficial for developing intercultural communication and empathy and also helped participants challenge stereotypical perceptions of identity.
In addition, an interesting study by Sugino on how empathy can be generated in Higher Education is also included, though this time through international exchanges. Sugino [14] uses qualitative analysis to describe Japanese’ students’ attitudes towards Chinese students and highlights the existence of stereotypes. It is noted that these attitudes are shaped, at least initially, by perceived linguistic fluency. However, they are amenable to change through sustained interaction in the context of intercultural exchanges. This study, just like Magos [13], highlights the possibility of challenging stereotypical perspectives and adopting attitudes that are more respectful towards diversity.

As a final contribution, the article by Samsari, Palaiologou, and Nikolaou [15] focuses on the qualitative narrative inquiry approach, with five teachers sharing their personal accounts and stories about their efforts, initiatives, and moves towards more inclusive schooling as well as the barriers they face in the school environment. Narrative-discursive analysis unravels the effectiveness of inclusive practice in Greece for culturally diverse students according to specific aspects of inclusive pedagogy such as progressive education, transformative learning, innovative practices, and strategies, as well as school-family partnerships. Teachers’ experiences revealed their complex work to handle the increasing multicultural and multilingual diversity in schools and to respond to all students’ needs in a context of slow but steady measures towards inclusion.

3. Conclusions

This Special Issue brings together researchers, scholars, and practitioners to share, reflect, and discuss how the multicultural and multilingual field can address new challenges and move forward from an intercultural perspective in times of turbulence and challenges we face on a global scale.

Let us all join in our efforts to gain some insight through the great contributions published in this Special Issue in order to overcome any language barrier, stereotype, or prejudice and give space to the promotion of an international dialogue.

Let us act as intercultural mediators and as teachers with an international perspective!

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: As Guest Editors of the Special Issue “Special Issue “Migration and Multilingual Education: An Intercultural Perspective”, we would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to all authors whose valuable work was published in this Special Issue, contributing to its success. We are thankful to all the teachers and students who participated in the studies that are included in this Special Issue and as respondents.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References
2. Montero-Sieburth, M. Reflections for transforming the perspectives of teacher-directed practices towards community-based ethnographic practices with migrant and minority students. Societies 2023, 13, 189. [CrossRef]
3. Ciabatti, N. Teaching about culture or learning with and from others? Societies 2023, 13, 194. [CrossRef]
4. Fall, M.S.B. Introducing “Trans–Resistance”: Translingual literacies as resistance to epistemic racism and raciolinguistic discourses in schools. Societies 2023, 13, 190. [CrossRef]
5. Stavrakaki, A.; Manoli, P. Exploring migrant students’ attitudes towards their multilingual identities through language portraits. Societies 2023, 13, 153. [CrossRef]
7. Giannakou, A.; Karalia, K. Teaching the Greek language in multicultural classrooms using English as a Lingua Franca: Teachers’ perceptions, attitudes, and practices. Societies 2023, 13, 180. [CrossRef]
9. Saki, M. Stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of the provision and practice of language support for ethnic minority school children in Japan. Societies 2023, 13, 197. [CrossRef]
10. Liakou, C. German language teaching in a multicultural class in Greece: A case study about students’ and parents’ perceptions of plurilingualism. *Societies* 2023, 13, 187. [CrossRef]


13. Magos, K. “Refugees in the amphitheatre”: An intercultural action research on co-educating student teachers and peer refugees. *Societies* 2023, 13, 60. [CrossRef]

14. Sugino, C. Intercultural opportunities to evoke empathy toward minority citizens: Online contact with Chinese international students at a Japanese women’s university. *Societies* 2023, 13, 132. [CrossRef]


**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.