



## Teacher Opinions on Problems Resulting from Individual and Cultural Differences in the Adaptation Class of Students from Different Nationalities

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### Abstract

Various problems experienced by children of foreign families who immigrated to Turkey from different countries for various reasons have been frequently discussed in learning environments recently. Among these, primary problems such as individual differences, cultural differences and language problems at school come to the fore. PICTES (Supporting the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System) project (2016-present) is jointly carried out by UNICEF and the Ministry of National Education to integrate Syrian students under temporary protection living in Turkey into the Turkish education system. This research aims to examine teachers' views on the problems arising from the cultural differences of students from different nationalities in an adaptation class opened within the scope of the PICTES project. The participants of this research, in which a holistic single case design was used among the qualitative research methods, were determined by the criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods. Research data were collected from an adaptation class in Afyonkarahisar. The descriptive analysis method was used to analyse the research data. According to the findings, teachers state that language difference is the main cultural difference in the adaptation class and that students are reluctant to learn Turkish. In addition, the participants state that there is a tendency among students to engage in aggression, lying, violence, and grouping according to their nationality, that they have problems adapting to school, and that their families avoided cooperation. As a result of the research, teachers need professional development in teaching foreign students, eliminating cultural differences and establishing cooperation with foreign families. It is also determined that students tend to speak in their native language because they do not need to speak Turkish in the adaptation class.

### Keywords

Refugee  
Temporary protection  
Foreign student  
Adaptation class  
Cultural differences

### Article Info

Received: 01.25.2023  
Accepted: 12.08.2023  
Published Online: 01.16.2024

DOI: 10.15390/EB.2024.12536

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## Introduction

Migration, a social phenomenon affecting societies at various levels in terms of cultural, economic, educational, military, political, legal and social aspects, is a situation many countries have encountered in recent years. Migrations sometimes occur voluntarily and sometimes out of necessity. Many people leave their homes yearly, searching for security and stability (Di Tomasso, 2010). It is seen that mass migrations are on the world's agenda and have increased due to the civil wars in recent years. The main reason for mass migrations is war, which necessitates mass migrations. It is seen that the people involved in these migration movements are named with the concepts of immigrant, asylum seeker and refugee. However, these concepts are used according to the characteristics of the migrating people. For example, refugees differ from immigrants because migration occurs unplanned and is mainly driven by human-induced needs (Tribe & Keefe, 2007). Asylum seekers are people who seek safety in another country to be protected from persecution or serious harm in their country and are waiting for the outcome of their application for refugee status within the scope of relevant national or international documents. When an unfavourable decision is made on their refugee application, asylum seekers must leave the country. If they are not permitted to stay in the country by the host country, they may be deported like an ordinary foreigner who commits an illegal or irregular act (IOM, 2009). Refugees, on the other hand, are people who have to leave their country of citizenship because they fear being oppressed for a good reason due to their race, religion, nationality, belonging to a specific social group or political opinions, and who cannot benefit from the protection of their country or who do not want to benefit from their fears due to their fears (UNHCR, 1951). People coming to Turkey from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan are not defined as immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers and are placed under temporary protection.

The term temporary protection emerged and was included in the literature after the sudden mass migration of Syrians to Turkey due to the war in their country. Syrians in Turkey fled the conflict and widespread violence and took refuge in Turkey en masse to seek protection. For this reason, Syrians in Turkey are defined as "Syrian Nationals Under Temporary Protection" or "People Under Temporary Protection" (Fansa, 2021). According to the Temporary Protection Regulation dated 13.10.2014, it is stated that those whom the Republic of Turkey temporarily protects cannot claim citizenship rights. The duration of temporary protection can be determined following the decisions of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Turkey and terminated when necessary (General Directorate of Migration Management, 2019). According to the temporary protection regulation, those from Syria are within the "temporary protection" scope and are not legally considered asylum seekers or refugees. Refugees, asylum seekers or children under temporary protection are included in the Turkish education system as foreign students who have come to Turkey from other countries with various obligations. It is aimed to ensure access to education for children under temporary protection in Turkey through the PICTES project, which started on 03.10.2016 and is still ongoing.

During the acculturation process, factors such as age, gender, exposure to interaction with different cultures, personality traits, intercultural similarities and differences, and perception of discrimination affect the adaptation process. Since each country has its cultural characteristics, it is perfectly normal for students who have immigrated to Turkey from different countries to reflect the characteristics of their own culture. Therefore, children of immigrant families have difficulty adapting to school because they have different cultural characteristics and speak a different language (Hart, 2009). Meeting the educational needs of foreign children emerges as an obligation for schools (Pinson & Arnot, 2010). However, more is needed to consider this as the duty of schools. As schools have duties, families and children must adapt to a new environment (Hamilton & Moore, 2004). For this reason, both schools and families should cooperate. In this cooperation, it is essential to understand the key inputs and processes, with the starting point being language learning in adapting foreign children to the education system (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). In other words, the first step in eliminating adaptation problems by ensuring cooperation is creating a road map or action plan to determine the needs. Language proficiency in teaching directly affects educational outcomes (Roxas, 2011). Language problem comes to the fore among the problems encountered in the education of foreign children.

Immigrant groups have their characteristics and needs (Rah, Choi, & Nguyen, 2009). Youth and children in immigrant groups have social, economic and psychological needs, as well as educational and cultural ones (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009). Schools are institutions where social rules are learned, allowing immigrant children to integrate into society (Hamilton & Moore, 2004). For this reason, school-family cooperation is necessary to ensure cultural adaptation and language teaching. However, families cannot participate in school activities because they need to know what they expect from education in the country they migrate to and have language deficiency (Roxas, 2011).

Similarly, children have difficulty adapting to school due to cultural differences and language deficiency (Kirova, 2001). The adaptation of children of immigrant groups is primarily affected by their school experiences (Mosselson, 2006). Immigrant children need positive experiences in the language learning process at school to communicate with their environment and socialise. Immigrant children may feel lonely and even not want to go to school due to their language and academic deficiencies (Patiadino, 2008). For immigrant children to adapt to school, it is crucial to maintain healthy intercultural relations, especially enabling them to interact with their environment by gaining language proficiency.

According to Turkey's domestic law and international agreements, all children in Turkey, including foreigners, have the right to receive primary and secondary education. Various practices have been implemented to provide education to foreign children regardless of the duration of their stay in Turkey. In Turkey, foreign children have been offered the opportunity to receive education in their native language in TECs (Temporary Education Centers) since 2014. It aims to integrate Syrian children into the Turkish education system through the PICTES (Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System) project, initiated by the contract signed between the Ministry of National Education (MONE) and the EU Delegation to Turkey in 2016. In order to increase the Turkish language skills of foreign children, it has been decided to establish adaptation classes in line with the Ministry of Education's circular numbered 2019/15. It has been stated that if there are not enough students to open adaptation classes deemed appropriate at each grade level, students registered in the third and fourth grades of primary school can receive education in combined adaptation classes (MoNE, 2019). The adaptation class mentioned in this study is a combined class of fourteen students from different nationalities. This adaptation class aims to teach Turkish to students older than the age of starting primary school and to ensure they continue their education at the appropriate grade level.

It is seen that foreign children migrating to Turkey experience various problems, such as language deficiency and cultural differences in schools (Delen & Ercoşkun, 2019; Erdem, 2017; Kapat & Şahin, 2021; Karaca & Doğan, 2014; Sarıtaş, Şahin, & Çatalbaş, 2016; Şeker & Sirkeci, 2015; Tanrikulu, 2017). Yiğit, Şanlı, and Gökalp (2021) express that foreign students cannot communicate with their teachers and peers due to the language barrier, and this makes it difficult for them to adapt to school. Kardeş and Akman (2018) said that in addition to the negativities experienced by foreign students, they are considered inadequate by Turkish teachers because they do not have sufficient equipment. In addition, they state that language deficiency causes adaptation problems, suggest organising courses for foreign students to learn Turkish. According to Topaloğlu and Çam Aktaş (2022), since foreign students do not know Turkish well enough, they experience communication problems, inability to express themselves, academic failures, adaptation problems and difficulties in reading and writing. Teachers think foreign students exhibit belligerent and restless behaviour due to adaptation problems (Saracaloğlu, 2014). It is understood that children of families who immigrated to Turkey have difficulties in academic success, cultural adaptation and adaptation to school due to their language deficiency.

In the study conducted by Selbes and Selbes (2023), the issue of adaptation of foreign students to school is examined under eight topics: language, lessons, exams, extracurricular activities (recess, lunch break, etc.), teachers, friendship relations, and social activities. Research findings show that the students in the research group have problems, especially in the specified areas. A new study by Öner and Dur (2023) determine that teachers think the curriculum is unsuitable for foreign students, that foreign students have problems in classroom communication, and that they can not include parents in the teaching process. The same study determine that the main problems experienced by foreign students are language, exclusion, absenteeism, family and financial problems. In summary, some studies address that the problems are encountered when mass migrations begin, and foreign students include in these migrations begin to benefit from the Turkish education system.

In these studies, various suggestions are made to help practitioners, such as school administrators and teachers, overcome the problems. However, these studies show that adaptation problems from the past to the present continue. This study differs from others in that it takes place in a "separate" adaptation class; students with similar characteristics in terms of language problems are together, and the adaptation process continues only for their needs. Syrian children and their families have immigrated to the Turkish education system from different nationalities. There is the opportunity to work with children from different nationalities in the adaptation classes. How students from different cultures affect classroom dynamics and social relations is becoming increasingly important for educators. Teachers stand out as primary resources that directly affect the success of these students. Based on teachers' experiences and observations, this study reveals in detail how cultural differences manifest in the classroom and the effects of this situation on educational practice. Additionally, strategies and approaches to how teachers overcome such difficulties can be illuminated. Ultimately, it aims to contribute to developing educational policies and methods.

#### *Purpose of the research*

Foreign families struggle to adapt to the social and cultural environment and try to survive in their new country. The children of these families strive to adapt to the social and cultural environment of the new country and the education system. Especially for children, the new school life can negatively affect their social and academic success. Children of families who migrated to Turkey for various reasons are educated in the same schools and classes as Turkish students. The individual and cultural differences of these students may cause adaptation problems. Therefore, determining the current situation of these students will enable the creation of programs and educational situations accordingly. It has been observed in the literature that studies on foreign students mainly focus on Syrian students. Limited studies reveal the everyday problems of Syrian and foreign students migrating from countries other than Syria. This study addresses the problems arising from individual and cultural differences encountered by students of different nationalities during their integration into the education system. Understanding and resolving these problems are being researched to provide a more effective adaptation process in education. By focusing on teacher views to understand how they cope with these issues and how they help students adapt, this study aims to contribute to educational policies and practices, providing a better understanding and support on this crucial issue. This research aims to identify problems arising from individual and cultural differences in the adaptation class of students of different nationalities and propose solutions to the identified problems.

In line with these purposes, the research seeks answers to the following questions:

- What are the individual differences of adaptation class students?
- What are the cultural differences of adaptation class students?
- How do students speaking different languages communicate with each other in the adaptation class?
- What are the problems encountered in the adaptation class?
- What kind of practices are used to ensure the active participation of adaptation class students?
- What do teachers think about adaptation class practice?

### Method

In this study, holistic single-case design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In this context, the individual and cultural differences of the adaptation class students of a primary school located in Afyonkarahisar and the practices in the teaching process were examined. In single-case designs, a single unit of analysis can be an individual, an institution, or a school. Holistic single-case designs can be used to study unusual and unique situations (Yin, 1984). The reason why the study was carried out with a holistic single case design is that the opinions of the adaptation class teacher, school principal and the classroom teacher who has a foreign student, among the participants of this research, were taken about the adaptation class.

#### *Research Context and Participants*

The adaptation class, where students of different nationalities study, formed the context of this research. The study participants were determined by the criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods. The logic of criterion sampling is to review and examine all cases that meet a predetermined materiality criterion. This approach is common in quality assurance efforts (Patton, 1990). The basic understanding of the criterion sampling method is to examine all cases that meet some criteria determined before the study. Participants are selected based on the assumption that they can provide in-depth and comprehensive information because they have experiences that meet specific criteria (Palinkas et al., 2015). The criteria determined by the researchers are:

- Having an integration class where students from different nationalities are together,
- Adaptation class students must have just arrived in Turkey,
- The adaptation class is located in a primary school,
- Participating teachers work in the primary school where the adaptation class is located.

The research considered credibility, transferability, reliability (triangulation) and confirmability criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). At the beginning of the study, the ethics committee approval was obtained regarding the codes and themes acquired after the field screening and the participants were informed. Thus, the credibility of the research was tried to be ensured. According to Maxwell (2008), participant verification can be used to ensure credibility. To ensure transferability, how the research context was selected, the characteristics of the participants and the adaptation class students observed were detailed. To ensure diversification, more than one researcher was employed. The observations made by the researchers in various environments were compared. To ensure confirmability, what the participants said during the interviews was given in their own words. In addition, another teacher who had a foreign student and the school principal at the school where the adaptation class was located were included in the study group.

The school's adaptation class consists of 14 foreign students from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Syria in the third and fourth grades of primary school. The adaptation class, a combined class due to insufficient students, is in the same corridor as the other classes. The lighting and thermal comfort of the classroom are similar to other classrooms. There is also an interactive whiteboard in the adaptation class. Although there are sufficient desks for the 14 students in the class, classroom size is acceptable. It was stated that no textbook prepared for the adaptation class was provided. The numerical distribution of students according to their nationalities is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Adaptation Class Students by Nationality and Gender

<b>Student's Nationality</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
Iraq	3	5	8
Syria	1	1	2
Afghanistan	1	2	3
Iran	-	1	1
Total	5	9	14

According to Table 1, it is seen that the majority of the students studying in the adaptation class are Iraqi. In the adaptation class, where there are more male students in terms of gender, the ages of the students are different from each other, between 8 and 11 years old. None of the adaptation class students were born in Turkey and came to Turkey recently. These students were directed to the adaptation class at this school by the commission established by the Provincial Directorate of National Education to learn Turkish. Thus, it is aimed to integrate these students into the education system by teaching them Turkish.

One of the research participants, the adaptation class teacher, was coded as "H". Teacher H graduated from the Turkish Language Teaching Department at the undergraduate level. The teacher needs to learn a common foreign language to communicate with the students in the adaptation class. She worked as a paid teacher in the adaptation class at this school and stated that she worked as a paid teacher in different schools in the previous two years. Teacher H stated that she encountered foreign students for the first time this year and did not receive any training other than taking courses on teaching Turkish to foreign nationals during her undergraduate education.

Since it was possible to directly observe the behaviour of adaptation class students outside of class, the classroom teacher who was included as a participant in the research was coded as "A". Teacher A, who graduated from the Department of Classroom Teaching at the undergraduate level and has 20-25 years of professional experience, has one foreign student in his class. Teacher A stated that he did not receive any training for foreign students. He could observe the students in the adaptation class during the breaks while on duty and could not communicate with them because they needed to speak Turkish.

The school principal, who was included in the research as a participant because he had met the families of the adaptation class students during their school enrollment and was responsible for the education process of the adaptation class, was coded as "E". Teacher E has a bachelor's degree in science and has 20-25 years of professional experience. He stated that he had encountered foreign students for the last 5-6 years and that he was informed about how the integration of foreign students should be and the difficulties that may be encountered in the education process, etc., in some of the meetings, seminars and in-service training he attended. He stated that he observed the students in the adaptation class during breaks and encountered the families of these students during student registration and for various reasons but could not communicate adequately due to the language problem.

### *Data Collection*

The research was started by the decision of Afyon Kocatepe University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board, dated 29.11.2022 and numbered 143367, that there is no ethical objection. The study collected data through semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions and an observation form. Open-ended questions used in semi-structured interviews enable participants to convey what they perceive with their thoughts (Merriam, 2013). For this reason, open-ended questions were used in the interviews. Expert opinion was taken to ensure the validity of the semi-structured interview form prepared in line with the research questions, considering the studies in the literature on immigrant students. Then, a preliminary application was carried out. Through the interview form, the participants were asked what kind of individual differences they observed in the students in the adaptation class, what they saw as cultural differences, whether there were problems arising from cultural differences, what they did to ensure active participation in classes and their thoughts and suggestions regarding the adaptation class practice. While the interview enables the interviewer to learn about the experiences, opinions, or reactions of the participants regarding a particular phenomenon or event (deMarrais, 2004), it provides the opportunity to obtain information about what cannot be seen and to provide alternative explanations for what is seen (Glesne, 2013). In order to ensure internal validity in case studies, it is possible to have the data source check the data and get an opinion about the findings from a colleague.

In contrast, external validity can be achieved with rich descriptions (Merriam, 2013). In addition to the physical examination of the location of the adaptation class in the school, the professional experiences, age ranges, and ability to speak a foreign language of the adaptation class teacher and other participating teachers were examined. Descriptive information was collected about the nationalities, genders, ages, families, time spent in Turkey, behavioural patterns in and out of school, and socio-cultural situations of the students in the adaptation class.

To ensure the internal validity of qualitative research, data is collected from different sources such as interviews, observations and document analysis (Creswell, 2014). First of all, the physical environment characteristics were examined by the researchers: the size of the classroom, the adequacy of light, the adequacy of heat, the adequacy of ventilation, the adequacy of the materials on the classroom walls, the arrangement of the desks and the adequacy of the number of rows for the students, and the technological equipment of the classroom. The classroom observation form was created in line with the research questions. With permission from the school administration and the adaptation class teacher, observations were made in the adaptation class for two lesson hours on different days. Through in-class observations, data were collected about the seating arrangement of the orientation class students, the in-class communication status of the students among themselves and with the teacher, the materials used in the lessons, the methods and techniques used, the use of technology, and the student's participation in the lesson.

In the observations made outside the classroom, it was observed whom the students communicate with when the teacher is not in the classroom, whom they avoid communicating with, who they are against if they have aggressive attitudes, who they are against if they have a tendency to violence, how the negative behaviours begin, and what the behaviour in the schoolyard is like. According to Merriam (2013), the researcher in the observation process is a participant observer. It was checked whether the data collected through observation supported the data obtained in the interviews. While one of the researchers made in-class observations, the other researchers, together with Teacher A, the school's on-duty teacher, observed the behaviour of the adaptation class students in the school and the schoolyard. Observations made outside class started when the adaptation class students arrived in the morning, continued during all breaks, and continued until they left school at the end of classes.

In order to understand whether the situations encountered in the observations made in and outside the classroom are constantly experienced and to obtain detailed information about the adaptation class students, semi-structured interviews were held with the adaptation class teacher, a classroom teacher and the school principal. Before the interviews and observations, the researchers

visited the school with the adaptation classroom. It was observed that a friendly atmosphere was created because one of the researchers was working as a classroom teacher in a nearby school and had met the teachers at the school in various in-service trainings. While all the researchers took part in the interview with the school principal, one researcher each took part in the interviews with the other participants. Interviews were conducted outside of class, such as during recess or lunch. The interviews were held at times deemed appropriate by the participants and lasted 15-20 minutes. First of all, the explanatory text of the research was read aloud to the participants at the beginning of the interview, and they were informed that it would be audio-recorded. After the participants confirmed that they participated in the research voluntarily and gave permission for voice recording, interview questions were started by obtaining information about their educational background, professional seniority, foreign language status, and education about international students. Probe questions were used during the interviews to deepen understanding. Probe questions are used to obtain more in-depth information or reveal more details about the subject asked during the interview (Fox, 2009). The interview transcripts from the audio recordings were read to the participating teachers, and their approval was obtained.

#### *Data Analysis*

In analysing the data obtained in this study, the descriptive analysis method was used in qualitative research. According to the descriptive approach, the findings are presented by adhering to the original form of the data obtained and making direct quotations when necessary (Wolcott, 1994). The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analysed according to the themes of individual and cultural differences in the learning environment, how students are communicated with, what is done to ensure effective participation in classes, adaptation problems encountered during the teaching process, and teachers' opinions about the adaptation class application. In order to increase the validity of the research, the data obtained from the researchers' observations, the interviews with the classroom teacher who had a foreign student and the school principal, and the data obtained from the interview with the adaptation class teacher were compared. The themes, categories and codes obtained from the analyses made by three researchers were compared, and their consistency was examined.

### **Findings**

This section presents findings with categories and codes under the themes created in line with the research questions. Frequency values are not included in the tables due to the limited number of participants interviewed. Direct quotes obtained from the answers given by teachers in the interviews are presented in this section. In addition, the research findings are given below, in line with the research sub-problems.

#### *1. Interview and Observation Findings Regarding Individual Differences of Adaptation Class Students*

The first sub-problem of the research was determined as what are the individual differences of adaptation class students. In this context, it has been observed that the primary individual differences of adaptation class students differ in their nationalities, genders and age groups, especially the language they speak. It has been observed that students only sit close to those who speak the same language in the classroom and do not try to communicate with students of different nationalities. The categories and codes related to the theme of individual differences obtained from the answers received when the research participants were asked what the main individual differences of the students studying in the adaptation class are given in Table 2.



**Table 2.** Opinions on Individual Differences

Theme	Category	Codes
Individual Differences in Adaptation Class	Spoken Languages	Language differences
	Lack of Communication Skills	Avoiding eye contact
		Avoid answering
	Nationality Difference	Cultural differences
		Social differences
	Physical Differences	Height differences
		Gender differences
		Age differences
	Academic Disabilities	Inability to acquire reading skills
		Inability to acquire writing skills
Inability to acquire listening skills		
Inability to acquire speaking skills		

The opinions about the individual differences of adaptation class students in Table 2 support the findings from the researchers' observations. Adaptation class teacher H listed the students' differences in her class as height, gender, nationality, languages they speak, family structure and academic deficiencies.

Teacher H's observations about individual differences are as follows:

*Observation 1:*

*"For example, some of the students are tall. In terms of gender, girls are less successful than boys. Some of the boys can read and write and behave very politely. This situation surprised me. Three of the girls in the class are illiterate and constantly pick fights. Iraqi students are more naughty than other foreign students. My Afghan students cannot read or write but are quiet and calm."*

The data obtained from the researcher's observations and the individual differences stated by Teacher H are similar to the students' height and illiteracy. Teacher A, who stated that the students in the adaptation class did not speak Turkish, expressed his observations about individual differences as follows:

*Observation 1:*

*"There is a foreign student in my class. At first, he had problems with the language, but now he has learned Turkish very well. His intelligence level is high. As far as I observed in the adaptation class during breaks and my shifts, there are individual differences in language, age group and gender."*

According to teacher A, the foreign student's intelligence level in his class effectively taught Turkish well. According to school principal E, individual differences include language and belonging to different nationalities. He said the following about a foreign student who has been studying with Turkish students in this school since kindergarten:

*Observation 1:*

*"We have a student who has been coming to our school since kindergarten and is now in the fourth grade, and she is fully integrated. They speak Turkish very well, and if we did not tell you they are Iraqi or Syrian, you might think they are Turkish."*

## 2. Interview and Observation Findings Regarding Cultural Differences of Adaptation Class Students

Cultural differences among the adaptation class students were seen as differences in nationality, personal hygiene, communication status and spoken language. No differences were found in terms of characteristics such as clothing style. The categories and codes related to the theme of cultural differences obtained from the answers received when the research participants were asked what the main cultural differences of the students studying in the adaptation class are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Views on Cultural Differences

Theme	Category	Codes
Cultural Differences in the Adaptation Class	Personal care	Clothes cleaning
		Hair care
	Communication	Avoiding communication
		Aggressive behaviour
		Harsh reactions
		Social Problems

In Table 3, the findings obtained from the participants' opinions regarding the cultural differences of the adaptation class students support each other with the findings obtained from the observations. In Table 3, the findings obtained from the participants' opinions regarding the cultural differences of the adaptation class students support each other with the findings obtained from the observations. When the participants were asked what cultural differences they saw in the integration class students, adaptation class teacher H stated that the main cultural difference between her students was the language difference and said the following:

### Observation 2:

*“Students constantly speak among themselves in their native language. I have often asked them to speak Turkish, but they have yet to. They constantly talk to each other in their language during class or breaks. Since I do not know their languages, I could not get any information about their cultural characteristics. Frankly, I do not know.”*

According to the researchers' in-class and out-of-class observations, adaptation class students prefer to communicate only with classmates of their nationality in their native language. During in-class observations, it was observed that students were trying to whisper something in their native language to the student to whom the teacher asked a question. Since the teacher could not understand the students' native languages, no judgment could be made about what they were saying to each other.

According to teacher A, cultural differences are considered cleanliness and behaviour problems. In the observations, it was seen that the students ignored the cleanliness of their clothes. School principal E defined cultural differences as follows:

### Observation 2:

*“Now, of course, we see in their families such elements that affect their cultural world, such as how they live, the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the games they play. There are even cultural differences in the way they communicate. For example, they can become impulsive and angry when they think they are mistreated. Even though they try to integrate here, there is an effort, especially among parents, to continue the cultural characteristics they acquired there.”*

According to Principal E, the situation where adaptation class students get angry and display combative behaviour is similar to what teacher H explained about behavioural problems.

### 3. Interview and Observation Findings on How to Communicate with Adaptation Class Students

The findings regarding the third sub-problem of the research, which is how students who speak different languages communicate with each other in the integration class, are given below. It was observed that none of the students in the adaptation class spoke Turkish sufficiently, and only one student could understand simple instructions such as "come, write, read". It was observed that there were problems in student-teacher communication and communication problems between students because the students in the integration class needed to learn Turkish, their nationalities were different from each other, and classroom teacher H only knew Turkish. The students need help understanding the classroom teacher's instructions during the lesson. The teacher can communicate with commands such as "read, sit, shut up, listen" using body language. The categories and codes created under the communication theme are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Experiences in Communication with Adaptation Class Students

Theme	Category	Codes
Communication	Communication Problems	Indifference of students
		Avoiding communication
		Lack of translators
	Solution Efforts	Using body language Expressing commands with signs

Teacher H, who was asked how she communicated with her foreign students, stated that she had great difficulties communicating with her students and did not decrease for some students. She said the following:

*Observation 3:*

*"I speak Turkish in class. It is nice that one of the students, a male, can read and write, and he is trying to learn Turkish and speaks it a little. She interprets some other students' languages and helps us understand each other. I have a Syrian student. He does not know Turkish and has never learned to read or write. For example, I cannot get along with her in any way. I especially dealt with her one-on-one, showed her the letters, made her watch a video on how to make the letters, etc. Nevertheless, she is uninterested, and there is no progress."*

In the researcher's observations, it was observed that some students tried to add question meaning to the words with the help of tone of voice without using question suffixes and tried to communicate with expressions such as "Teacher, this is a drawing notebook?" (is this a drawing notebook?), "Teacher, this summer?" (will this be written?). It is also noteworthy that most students are not interested in the lesson, as stated by teacher H, and they even avoid making eye contact with the teacher. Similarly, the school principal, teachers E and A, stated that they could only benefit from their peers who were translators in order to communicate with the students in the integration class and that the foreign students who worked as interpreters were studying in other classes of the school. Teacher A said the following about his communication with the foreign student in his class:

*Observation 3:*

*"My foreign student is very different from the ones in the adaptation class. He learned to speak Turkish quickly. His speech could be stronger. Nevertheless, he understands everything; he has nothing negative, and it is like he is one of us. Students in the adaptation class do not socialise with other students at school and even form groups among themselves."*

According to teacher A, the foreign student in his class learned Turkish and socialised with his classmates. On the other hand, students in the adaptation class cannot socialise with other school students or students of different nationalities in their classes.

#### 4. Interview and Observation Findings Regarding Behavior Problems Encountered in the Adaptation Class

The fourth sub-problem of the research was determined as "What are the problems encountered in the adaptation class?". The problems encountered in the adaptation class were seen as avoiding communication, aggressive attitudes, shouting, reluctance to participate in class and grouping. It was observed that they shouted at each other and other school students and exhibited a combative attitude outside of class. The categories and codes determined under the theme of behavioural problems, based on the data obtained from the interviews, are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Behaviour Problems of Adaptation Class Students

Theme	Category	Codes
Behavior Problems	In-Class	Discrimination
		Insult
		Disobey the teacher
		Grouping
		Violence
	Out-Class	Shouting
		Aggressive behaviour
		Ignoring warnings
		Disobeying teachers
		Grouping

According to Table 5, foreign students' grouping and opposition to teachers' behaviours are seen both in and outside the classroom. Information was received from teacher H regarding the in-class problems experienced with foreign students and from teacher A and school principal E about their extracurricular situations during breaks. According to teacher H, there is a tendency to group and aggressive attitudes among students of the same nationality among students in the adaptation class. She stated that fights are more common among girls, adaptation problems are experienced, and lying behaviour is seen in almost all adaptation class students. According to other participants, students of the same nationality play games together during breaks and do not communicate with students of different nationalities in the adaptation class or with other students. It was stated that they forced the younger children off the swings in the playground in the school garden, got on the swings themselves, and ignored the teachers' warnings on duty.

Teacher H said the following about the problems she encountered in the classroom:

*Observation 4:*

*"Foreign students, unlike our students, behave extremely aggressively and incompatibly. We always have an adaptation problem. We have entered January, but the complaints regarding getting along with each other have not ended yet. Some girls disrupt the atmosphere and peace in the classroom. This situation surprised me very much. I cannot see what they are doing during recess, and I cannot say anything if they are being naughty, but aggression and disharmony are common problems for all of them. They constantly insult each other. When I first came to class, I said that the president would silence the class and that I did not want to complain. However, now there are complaints again. They only allow their nationals to ride in the park in the school garden. They do not allow Turkish children to ride. There is more grouping among Iraqis. I called the family of the female student we were having a problem with, and we tried to talk through a translator. Her family said they would take care of it, but the girl exhibited the same negative behaviour again the next day. When I asked a student in another class who speaks Turkish as an interpreter, 'You promised me when I called your family the other day, why are you continuing?' she cried and said that she would not do it again and that her father would use violence against her. How can I ask for help from families with peace of mind in this situation? Our school principal called the parent about this issue, and when we asked, she said there was no violence at home. As a result of domestic violence, I started to think that they were also prone to violence."*

Teacher H said she used Turkish-speaking foreign students in other school classes to communicate with students and their families. Teacher H stated that although she wanted to fight against negative behaviours by cooperating with families, she was hesitant because she was afraid of physical violence against children and thought that students could lie about domestic violence because they constantly lie. School principal E, who was interviewed about the problems encountered, stated the following:

*Observation 4:*

*“Apart from these, we have about 250 students in the school. For discipline problems, we had to call the parents of these 14 students as much as we did not call the parents of 250 students. Families could be more interested, and we can only communicate through a translator. However, since parents are indifferent and need to know our education system, they cannot help us or the students. For example, some students in the integration class defy the teachers, do not listen to their teachers, and start fights with other children in the school. Problems persist.”*

According to the findings of the interview, school principal E attributes the continuation of problems in student behaviour despite their efforts to cooperate with parents to their parents' indifference and unfamiliarity with the Turkish education system. Teacher A said the following about the negative behaviour of students in the adaptation class during breaks:

*Observation 4:*

*“The foreign student in my class did not consistently display negative behaviour. However, while we were on guard duty, the students in the orientation class picked up the little ones in the park in the school's garden, got on them themselves, and started a fight. They shrug their shoulders at the warnings of their fellow teachers on duty as if to say, “What does it matter to me?” There is also aggressive behaviour between girls and boys.”*

During the observations in the orientation class, it was observed that some students looked at each other harshly and tried to show with hand movements that they were uncomfortable with people talking about them. It has been observed that students exhibit belligerent attitudes outside of class and do not take into account the warnings of the teacher on duty. The data obtained from the interviews and the data obtained from the observations support each other in terms of the problems encountered.

#### *5. Interview and Observation Findings Regarding the Things Done to Ensure the Active Participation of Adaptation Class Students in Lessons*

The findings regarding the fifth sub-problem of the research, which is what kind of practices are used to ensure the active participation of adaptation class students in classes, are included in this section. It was observed that the main problem in teaching the lessons in the adaptation class was the need for more communication caused by the language problem. It was observed that the students asked by the classroom teacher to read out loud the letters and syllable groups she wrote on the board could read some of the letters and syllables. In addition, it has been observed that students who cannot understand the clues given by the teacher try to get to their desks as soon as possible. Students who sit in their seats constantly talk within their groups, avoid communicating with classmates of other nationalities and behave threateningly with hand gestures and harsh looks. It was observed that the classroom teacher did not use the interactive whiteboard but used the pages she downloaded and copied from the internet for the students to read. The categories and codes determined under the theme of ensuring active participation based on the data obtained from the interviews are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Actions and Shortcomings to Ensure Effective Participation

Theme	Category	Code
Ensuring Active Participation	Applications Performed	Reinforcer Verbal feedback Direct expression method Play video
	Material Use	Worksheets Coloring pages Lack of print resources Lack of visual material

The adaptation class teacher was asked whether individual and cultural differences impacted her practices to ensure the active participation of foreign students in classes. The adaptation class teacher stated that the first practice she did was an icebreaker activity and said:

*Observation 5:*

*"In a video I found online, foreign children were saying where they were from by saying their name. After watching this video, I introduced myself and had them introduce themselves. For example, while they initially introduced themselves as "I am Iraq", now they can say "I am Iraqi". I also tried to teach words such as 'how are you, are you okay?', 'Goodbye, have a good day' by using videos showing what situations we can use them."*

The adaptation class teacher stated that there were constant fights and arguments between the adaptation class students, who were from four different nationalities, and that she used some reinforcers to ensure the students' participation in the lesson and said:

*Observation 5:*

*"For example, most of them did not raise their fingers. Since they were young, I used stamp-shaped awards with well-done words, a smiley face and a star. I made these for the notebook of the person whose handwriting was good and who raised her hand and attended the class. After that, everyone started joining in and stood silent for a bit. They also love to paint. I tell them I will give a painting to those who attend the class and behave well. Of course, at the end of the lesson, I give it to all of them and say that I will give colouring work to the well-behaved one who writes well and reads well. Then, they try to participate in the lesson by raising their hands. There were some problems with raising the finger initially, but they are fine now."*

According to the adaptation class teacher, reinforcers effectively ensured active participation in the lesson, but the situation differed according to observations. It was observed that the interactive whiteboard or any colourful visuals were not used in the classroom, that verbal feedback was given to the students in the form of "well done" to those who answered the syllable reading questions correctly, and that the students were reluctant to respond to the teacher's clues and their attention was distracted. School principal E stated that he did not attend or observe the lessons in the orientation class.

#### 6. Interview and Observation Findings Regarding Teachers' Thoughts About Adaptation Class Practices

In the sixth sub-problem of the research, it was tried to reveal especially the opinions of the mentor teachers about the adaptation class practices. In this context, the teachers were asked what they thought about the adaptation class practices opened for foreign students to acquire Turkish skills and what their suggestions, if any, were. It was observed that the interview participants did not have positive opinions about the adaptation class practices in general and made various suggestions. According to the participants, the main reason for the failure of students in the adaptation class to learn Turkish is that they feel they need to speak something other than Turkish. Because they cannot express

themselves in a culture they are unfamiliar with, they develop aggressive and discriminatory attitudes. The categories and codes determined under the theme of teacher opinions based on the data obtained from the interviews are given in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Teacher Opinions on Adaptation Class Practices

Theme	Category	Codes
Teacher Opinions	Problems	Failing to achieve one's goal Failing to teach Turkish Failing to teach Turkish Socialisation problems
	Suggestions	Education in regular classes Exposure to Turkish

Adaptation class teacher H expressed her thoughts about the adaptation class practice as follows:

*Observation 6:*

*These students need help learning Turkish successfully with the adaptation class practices. For example, if there were only one or two Turkish students, they would have to speak Turkish in public. All of the students immediately start speaking in their own language as soon as the break bell rings. Even though I have repeatedly asked them not to use languages other than Turkish in the lesson, they are unwilling to participate by speaking in their language."*

According to adaptation class teacher H, it is not easy to achieve the purpose of the adaptation class practice, and she thinks that foreign students should feel obliged to learn Turkish. The reason for this is that they believe they do not need to learn Turkish because there are people in the class with whom they can speak their language. Teacher A's thoughts about the adaptation class practices are as follows:

*Observation 6:*

*I wonder if implementing a compliance class would be the solution. The family of one foreign student in my class does not speak Turkish. The child did not know Turkish when she first arrived. However, she has adapted very well to the class. She has no problems, apart from a slight weakness in language comprehension, and is even doing very well in mathematics. The lack of understanding will be eliminated over time. The foreign students in other classes. Their teachers say they need to improve their behaviour and learn Turkish. However, adaptation class students' adaptation problems and behavioural disorders never end."*

Like H, teacher A thinks that the students in the adaptation class have adaptation and significant problems in learning Turkish. On the other hand, he stated that the behavioural problems of one or two foreign students studying in classes where Turkish students are the majority have disappeared and that they are successful in learning Turkish. Teacher A thinks that the adaptation class practices will fail to be successful. School principal E's thoughts about the adaptation class practices are as follows:

*Observation 6:*

*"There are both pros and cons to compliance class implementation. Thanks to the fact that students take Turkish lessons 26 hours a week, it seems possible for them to reach the level they could reach in 2-3 years in one year. Talking about the minuses, these children have trouble adapting. When 15-20 foreign students come together, they do not speak Turkish. They are constantly trying to speak their language. They are always together during breaks and on the way to and from school. Far from socialising with other students, groupings occur."*

School principal E thinks there were adaptation problems similar to other participants and that the aim of teaching Turkish still needs to be achieved. He thinks that the problems experienced arise not only because all of the students in the adaptation class are foreign nationals but also because they have different nationalities, and groupings occur. The students can use their languages. According to the teachers' observations, adaptation class students communicate with students of their nationality in their language during lessons and breaks. It was also observed that those who went to play invited their friends from their nationality to the game. It was seen that the teachers' observations supported the participants' interview and observation data.

## Result and Discussion

This research examined the problems arising from individual and cultural differences in the adaptation class where students with temporary protection status, whose ages and nationalities are different from each other. As a result of this examination, it was understood that the language spoken by the students who wanted to be taught Turkish in the adaptation class, which was established to ensure that they were older than the age of starting primary school when they came to Turkey and were taught Turkish and integrated into the intermediate classes, was the main cultural difference and that this difference caused adaptation problems. Research findings show that the adaptation class teacher and school principal need to be more adequate in eliminating the language difference in the adaptation class by teaching Turkish. The teachers think the adaptation class practices will fail to be successful. In addition, from the research findings, it was understood that the adaptation problem did not end, nor did it decrease, that the students experienced various behavioural problems such as aggression and lack of interest in lessons, and that there was no success in teaching Turkish. As a result of the research, it was concluded that in order to teach Turkish to adaptation class students and to prevent belligerent attitudes, students should be ensured to integrate with both their classmates and other students of the school and that families and other teachers of the school should also play a role as stakeholders in creating environments where students will need to speak Turkish.

Students of four different nationalities in the adaptation class are indifferent to the lessons and the adaptation class teacher while communicating with their friends of their nationality. They do not try to speak Turkish, and they avoid communicating. Although teachers interpret differently when students from different cultures make unwanted conversations in the classroom and give different reactions, this situation is called mutual distancing (Larson & Irvine, 1999). The adaptation class teacher stated that she planned the lessons in line with the achievements and taught the lessons with her methods because she lacked materials. However, she needed help to achieve success. She could have used more effective teaching methods in teaching Turkish. In-class observations also support the existence of this deficiency. Teachers should plan and implement various activities considering students' language, cultural and socioeconomic diversity (Borich, 2014). Considering that teachers, like students, experience adaptation problems (Karaca & Doğan, 2014), it can be said that teachers should receive training on effective teaching methods in teaching Turkish to foreign students and cooperate with other teachers of the school and students' families.

Students may be considered normal to have individual differences such as gender, language, height, family structure, academic status, communication skills, and interpersonal adaptation skills. The adaptation class teacher does not try to develop practices and plan activities based on individual differences. According to Borich (2014), no matter how expert a teacher is in transferring information, he or she must also consider the individual difference factor. Suppose the adaptation class teacher determines individual differences in detail at the beginning of the teaching process. In that case, it will guide the teaching process and may reduce behavioural disorders and adaptation questions. According to Roy and Roxas (2011), a teacher's decisions on the teaching process due to incomplete information about refugee students may be negatively affected, such as making students less likely to communicate with their peers; thus, refugee students may show non-compliance and may face the consequences of missing learning opportunities. Teachers face difficulties due to language differences, differences in learning strategies and educational experiences, cultural differences and deficiencies arising from



families (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Öner & Dur, 2023). It can be said that the school administration and guidance service should support teachers assigned to adaptation classes in reflecting on individual differences in the teaching process and ensuring that families participate in the education process.

Adaptation class teachers listed foreign students' cultural differences in the adaptation class as language, cleaning habits, and communication styles. The most prominent cultural difference among these differences is expressed as language differences. Families of adaptation class students do not speak Turkish or participate in their children's education processes. According to Rengi and Polat (2014), classroom teachers perceive language differences as the main cultural difference, and they stated that they could not solve the grouping that occurred among children due to language differences. However, they attempted to cooperate with families. According to Şeker and Sirkeci (2015), foreign families in Turkey do not show the necessary sensitivity and interest in their children's education. Topaloğlu and Özdemir (2021) determined that school principals had parents of foreign students whom they had not yet met. According to Walqui (2000), teachers and students must cooperate to establish communication between people from various cultures. Only in this way can they create an environment where they value each other and respect differences. Efforts can be made to help students in the adaptation class accept each other by having them work collaboratively in activities where they do not need to compete.

In adaptation class, students can only socialise with one another despite icebreaker activities and the teacher's efforts to communicate. Students do not try to speak Turkish and persistently avoid communicating, and the adaptation class teacher cannot motivate the students to learn Turkish. Factors affecting individuals' learning include individual differences, students' cognitive structures and environmental factors. The suitability of the teaching purpose to the individual's needs is one of the environmental factors (Senemoğlu, 2015). According to Kapat and Şahin (2021), although foreign students have a more comfortable environment in the adaptation class, their lack of exposure to Turkish and their deprivation of peer learning negatively affect them. Based on the findings that foreign students in other classes of the school not only learned Turkish but also adapted well with their classmates, it can be said that designing activities in which students will feel the need to speak Turkish will accelerate the learning of Turkish by adaptation class students and reduce adaptation problems. Arabic-speaking societies with strong verbal abilities, such as Syria (Sirhan, 2014), widely use storytelling instead of reading books to promote cultural traditions and customs (Wofford & Tibi, 2018). Regarding its suitability for students' cultural structures, it can be said that including storytelling and drama activities in the Turkish language teaching process can eliminate disinterest in lessons and encourage communication.

In addition to the language differences of adaptation class students not being eliminated, they also experience problems such as lying, adaptation problems, lack of interest in lessons, grouping together, and displaying bullying attitudes towards other students of the school. According to Galloway and Jenkins (2009), language problems of foreign students also bring adaptation problems. There is also a need for teaching materials in the orientation class. In the classroom, where there is a lack of resources for teaching Turkish, only colouring exercises are given to students in order to motivate them to learn. According to Erdem (2017), foreign students have communication and language problems in their education processes, lack of teaching materials, and teachers' competence problems. The integration class teacher is inadequate in developing educational materials that students can use to eliminate language deficiencies and adaptation problems and in ensuring communication between students. The findings in the studies of Şeker and Sirkeci (2015) and Topaloğlu and Özdemir (2021) that Syrian families do not show the necessary sensitivity and interest in their children's education support the data that families avoid working in cooperation with the teacher about behaviours such as bullying and lying in the adaptation class. Saritaş et al.'s (2016) finding that Iraqi students generally do not experience disciplinary problems because they came to Turkey to receive a better education differs from the finding that Iraqi students, who are more numerous than other students in the adaptation class where this research was conducted, have more disciplinary problems.

Delen and Ercoşkun's (2019) finding that foreign students generally exhibit undesirable behaviours in oral lessons, breaks, and entering and exiting classes supports the finding that there are groupings and fights during breaks among adaptation class students due to differences in language and nationality. According to Selbes and Selbes (2023), foreign students experience problems with their teachers and extracurricular activities such as friendship relations, recess and lunch breaks. It can be said that using "well done" and "smiley face" stamps and colouring pages as reinforcement for students' writing work in the orientation class to ensure their active participation in the lesson is insufficient to ensure effective participation. According to Borich (2014), within the framework of differentiated instruction, whose purpose is defined as offering students different ways to learn, students may be asked to choose to express what they know, write a story, draw a picture or talk about an experience related to what is taught. It can be said that an environment in which students with language deficiencies can express themselves can be created by allowing students in the orientation class to express themselves by making original pictures instead of giving them ready-made colouring pages.

It was observed that the adaptation class teacher needed to be more adequate in teaching Turkish to the students in the adaptation class. According to Topsakal, Merey, and Keçe (2013), it is stated that organising and implementing special adaptation programs for immigrant families and their children will accelerate the adaptation of foreign students to school. Öner and Dur (2023) stated that according to teachers, the curriculum was not considered suitable for foreign students, and there were problems in the classroom due to the language problem. Language is an essential part of the problems experienced by refugee students (Miller, 2009). Karaca and Doğan (2014) state that teachers and foreign students need to be trained because they have adaptation problems. Sarıtaş et al. (2016) express that foreign students who do not speak Turkish can learn Turkish quickly as a result of their interactions with their environment, even though they show shyness. Teachers working in adaptation classes must plan and implement activities that enable their students to interact with their environment.

As a result, this research examined the problems arising from individual and cultural differences in the adaptation class of foreign students with temporary protection status. The findings show that students' language differences are the primary source of problems and that this difference causes adaptation problems. Adaptation class teachers and school principal were inadequate in solving these problems and did not use effective methods in the teaching process. In addition, families and other school teachers need to cooperate to meet students' language learning needs and reduce adaptation problems. It is also essential to consider individual differences and apply appropriate teaching strategies to students. As a result, various precautions must be taken so that students in the adaptation class can learn Turkish and overcome adaptation problems.

## Suggestions

At the end of the research, the following can be suggested to eliminate the problems in the adaptation class of foreign students:

- Students in the adaptation class can be given Turkish language education through distance education, and they can be taught in other classes of the school in a face-to-face education environment so that they feel the need to speak Turkish.
- Technological opportunities such as interactive whiteboards, social media networks and personal blogs can be used in teaching Turkish.
- By collaborating with foreign students who have learned Turkish, students in the adaptation class can socialise with each other and other school students.
- Storytelling and drama activities can be used to ensure acceptance of individual and cultural differences.
- Adaptation class students can be encouraged to individually participate in activities in other school classes so that they feel the need to learn Turkish and communicate with other students.
- Adaptation class numbers can be made up of fewer students to prevent grouping.
- Short videos can be prepared in their language to inform adaptation class students that violence, which can also hinder other students' right to education, is considered a crime under the laws of the Republic of Turkey. These videos may also include information about the people or institutions they can get support from when they are subjected to violence and how they can seek their rights through legal means.
- School principal can lead the adaptation class teacher to cooperate with families and other school teachers.
- A group of adaptation class teachers can be created by ensuring coordination between schools and an adaptation class. Group teachers can be enabled to share their experiences.

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