

Short Bio

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L2 language learning challenges of adult migrants with low educational backgrounds in Greek Second Chance Schools: students' voices

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Adult migrant second language learners, particularly those coming from low-educational backgrounds with limited or non-existent prior schooling experiences constitute a unique and under-researched population in Greece despite the sharp influx of migrants and refugees crossing the Aegean waters and the Greek land borders during the past decade. This qualitative work aims to give voice to these students and investigate their perceived barriers in acquiring Greek as a second language within the context of Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Greece. SCSs constitute a part of the formal Greek adult education system since 2000 and aim to provide adults whose education was interrupted early with a state-recognized middle-school diploma. Five former SCS students from Syria, Afghanistan and Albania participated in individual in-depth interviews which were conducted in English and Greek. Data were coded with NVIVO software using thematic analysis within an interpretive case study approach. Findings revealed two main categories of barriers. The first category involved school-centered barriers related to Greek state policies. Sub-themes within this category included the limited capacity of teachers, teachers' insufficient training for teaching L2 to culturally diverse learners with a low literacy background, lack of teachers with a knowledge of students' L1 or English, classes with students who had extremely diverse Greek language proficiency levels and classes with students with disabilities who weren't provided with support teachers. The second category encompassed learner-centered obstacles related to limited L1 literacy and prior schooling experiences, trauma, lack of time, family and child-care related tensions, and the sudden cultural adjustment. Findings indicate that overall Greek SCSs offered participants a warm and safe L2 learning

environment yet there are certain changes and adjustments that could optimize Greek language learning in Greek Second Chance Schools for migrant students with emergent literacy skills.

Key words: Greek as a second language, adult education, immigrants, refugees, emergent literacy, second chance schools, barriers

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