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“If I stay here, I will learn the language”: **Reflections from a case study of Afghan refugees learning Greek as a Second Language**

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At the end of the 19th, and especially during the 20th century, a lot of people from countries in the South of Europe, including Greece, emigrated to other European countries, the US or Australia. In the past two decades, however, countries like Greece have been transformed into host countries, originally accepting immigrants from the former Soviet Union and later from different countries of Africa and Asia. In modern Greece, the integration of immigrants is an issue of great importance. The role of learning the language spoken in the country, Greek, is very important so that the process of integration will be facilitated. This study examines, through qualitative methods, the factors which influence the process of learning the Greek language by immigrants from Afghanistan. A semi-structured interview in Greek in a non-random group of immigrants was used. According to the results of the study, attitudes, along with personal motives of the participants for learning the target language appeared to be very important factors for their socialization and integration in the Greek society.

Keywords: second language learning, attitudes, motives

1. Introduction

The need for learning the language of the host country is among the first challenges to be faced by anyone who changes places of residence and moves to another country. The immigrants' attitudes towards the language and the native population can significantly affect the learning of the language of the host society (Bernaus, Masgoret, Gardner, & Reyes, 2004; Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Dörnyei, 2001, 2003, 2005; Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011; Hosseini, 2013; Istiyani, 2014). Many studies have found positive correlation between language attitude and language proficiency (Atchade, 2002; Winke, 2013). Researchers in social psychology and education have recognized the importance of motivation for successful second language (L2) learning (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985, Gardner & Clément, 1990; Hiromori, 2009). Affective variables, such as attitude, orientations, anxiety,

and motivation, have been shown to be at least as important as language aptitude for predicting L2 achievement (Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand, 2003).

1.2. Language and cross-cultural adaptation

For immigrants arriving in a new country, knowledge of the second language is important in many respects, to find employment, to satisfy basic needs and to communicate with the local population which is the carrier of a different cultural system. Initiatives such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2013) have started promoting multilingualism and multiculturalism recognizing the multicultural environment of modern Europe and can become strategic means of counterbalancing and responding to the challenges of globalization (Sifakis, 2004). According to Ortega (2009), when learning a second language, cognitive abilities alone cannot explain individual differences. Since learners are conscious and volitional subjects, in explaining perception, behavior and learning, human intentions, goals, plans and commitments should also be taken into account. These are influences that include volition and motivation and can contribute to language learners' success or failure in learning the second language. One of the main antecedents investigated in L2 motivation research is attitudes towards the language, the L2 community and its speakers. The learners' attitudes towards the second language are considered essential factors that influence language performance and explain linguistic behavior (Eshghinejad, 2016). The most successful learners display strongly positive attitudes toward the second language, its culture and social practices (Triantafillidou & Hedgcock, 2007). In her study, Istiyani (2014) found that both the high and low achievement students who studied English as a foreign language had positive attitudes towards community, English speakers and English in general. Those attitudes were incorporated with their motivations, which means that they increased their motivation. Language is not just a one-dimensional means of naming objects; it's a means of understanding the world and a means of socialization. Particularly in the case of immigrants, different languages are connected to different worlds and different cultures and the immigrants' socialization took place under very different circumstances compared to that of the host country. Consequently, the transition from one stage of socialization to another is not always smooth (Mpatsalia, 2003). Cross-cultural adaptation is important for immigrants' adaptation. It takes place through communication, so aptitude in the language of the host country facilitates it. Relevant studies have shown that learning the host language can be reinforced by motives of adaptation (the will to participate in the culture of the host country), positive attitudes towards themselves, the host environment and the host culture, and emotional rapport with the locals (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988; Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2003). It is also about succeeding in attaining material, symbolic and affective returns that the immigrants desire for themselves and being considered as worthy social beings. People who undertake to learn an additional language are engaged in changing their worlds, so L2 learning is always transformative (Ortega, 2009).

1.3. Language attitudes and motivation

Attitude is defined as a disposition to respond positively or negatively towards an idea, object, person, or situation. Students have positive or negative attitudes towards the language they learn or the people who speak it (Hosseini & Rourmandnia, 2013). To substantiate the theoretical assertions about the relationship between attitude and language learning, extensive studies have been carried out. Truitt (1995) found that students' beliefs and attitudes vary based on cultural background and previous experiences.

Other researchers have reached similar findings, such as Malallaha (2000), who investigated the attitudes of Arab learners towards English in Kuwait, a predominantly Arabic and Muslim environment. She discovered that they have positive attitudes towards English and their proficiency in tests was positively related to their attitude. Attitudes towards a language are connected to opinions regarding its speakers. Ellis (2008) claims that one of the ways social settings can influence L2 acquisition is through affecting learners' attitudes towards the target language, target-language speakers, the target-language culture, the social value of learning the L2, and themselves as members of their own culture.

According to a lot of research (Dornyei, 2001; 2003; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009), motivation for learning a language is positively related to the educational and professional success of the immigrants. According to Brown (2000), L2 learners benefit from positive attitudes, while negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation. According to Becker (2007), there are three basic factors in learning a second language: motivation of the individual learning it, exposure to the language and effectiveness of the L2 learner. As Ortega (2009) stresses, the overall amount of motivation is quantified via three dimensions, motivational intensity (how much effort people expend in learning a language), attitudes towards learning the L2 (how much enjoyment people report when they learn the language) and desire to learn (how much personal investment in succeeding in the language people claim for themselves).

1.4. Language and integration

As Esser (2006) claims, knowledge of the language of the host country plays an important role for the integration of immigrants into host societies. Language is a valuable resource, through which other resources can be obtained and in which one can choose to invest. Educational success, placement on interesting positions and the structuring of identities all clearly depend on language proficiency and affect it (Esser, 2006). According to research carried out by Hou and Beiser (2006), although demographic characteristics and pre-immigration achievement were the major factors determining English-language proficiency during the early years of resettlement, post-migration opportunities and incentives became increasingly important over time. Other researchers confirm the importance of learning the host country language for immigrants (Bernaus, Masgoret, Garderr & Reyes, 2004; Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003; Mattheoudakis, 2005). The results highlight the responsibility host countries have to provide opportunities to facilitate language acquisition by newcomers. Regarding refugees, in particular, according to Morrice (2007), lifelong learning policies should stem from a more holistic which would understand social exclusion. This approach would recognize that in order for refugees to become integrated, effective members of society there is the need for a process of assimilating into social networks, developing cultural understanding and knowing the rules of social engagement. Often, it is through informal and non-formal learning opportunities that these are picked up. Something which also has to be taken into account is that many refugees are illiterate in their own native language, something which significantly affects their ability to acquire a new language. Consequently, traditional approaches to teaching a second language to adults do not really work for them, so there is a need for programs specifically suited to their needs (Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011; Huntley, 1992; Marrapodi, 2013).

2. The research

2.1. Rationale and aims of the case study

The present study focuses on language education offered to refugees in Greece, where Modern Greek is the dominant language and it intends to explore a non-formal educational setting that offers free of charge language courses to immigrants and refugees aged 15 and above, as, according to literature research, this group seems to be a rather neglected one (Scientific Committee in Support of Refugee Children, 2017). The refugees' and immigrants' attitudes towards the language of the host country are important in facilitating its learning. In order to invest in learning the language spoken in their new country, immigrants need to develop positive attitudes and motivation to acquire it and devote time and effort learning it. According to Androulakis, Mastorodimou & van Boeschoten (2016), knowledge of the local language is necessary to improve immigrants' socio-economic and professional status. In the case of the Greek context, excellent knowledge of the Greek language is seen as a necessary tool to enable them to change their employment conditions, by allowing them to redefine their identity. By improving their knowledge of Greek immigrants hope to make progress, negotiating, in essence, their identity; who they are and who they want to be in this social context, facilitating their goals in terms of employment and their ambitions. The degree in which they learn the host language constitutes a symbolic act of choosing an identity and is linked with interconnecting attitudes and representations (Androulakis, 2011). A survey carried out by Mattheoudakis (2005) indicates a high interest by immigrants in Greece to learn Greek but a very low level of enrollment on and attendance of language courses. According to Rodakopoulos and Lily (2010), if the immigrant group learning Greek lacks clear goals this contributes to the Greek lessons not living up to the attendants' expectations.

Second language acquisition and L2 motivational and attitudinal considerations are particularly relevant in today's globalized world. This is the case not only in Greece, but in many countries, since international migration has reached record levels. There is no previous research on Afghan refugees' language attitudes towards the Greek language, so the present study aims to examine their attitudes, the relationship between language aptitude and their attitude toward Greek as well as the relationship between language aptitude and the degree of integration into Greek society. The choice of the nationality of the participants (refugees from Afghanistan) was made because the specific group now has a dominant presence in Greece (Dimitriadi, 2013). The top nationalities of arrivals in Greece in 2016 were from Syria and Afghanistan. The number of refugees from Afghanistan arriving in Greece rose during the past few years (ESI, 2017).

There is little evidence shedding light on the attitudes of the refugees trying to learn Greek in non-formal educational settings like the one of the study. The primary research questions of the study are the following:

- What are the attitudes of Afghan refugees toward learning Greek as a second language?
- What are their profiles and goals?
- What are their perceptions towards the usefulness of the host language?
- What are their reasons and motivation for learning Greek?
- How do the participants learn the Greek language and how long do they consider they need in order to acquire some basic skills in it?
- What is the role of the host language in their integration into the host society?

The study aimed to examine the ways Afghan refugees approached the Greek language, the methods through which they acquired it, the difficulties they faced learning it, their attitudes towards its usefulness and the relation between those attitudes and their level of attaining it. The participants were prompted to talk about how language aptitude was related to confidence in Greek, if the frequency of using their mother tongue related to their ability to speak Greek and if their knowledge of Greek was connected to their integration into Greek society. Finally, they were asked to comment on the role of the state regarding their learning Greek and facilitating their communication with civil services.

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. Place and time of the study

The present research was carried out in the fall of 2012 with a non-random group of seven people who had Afghanistan as their country of origin and lived in a medium size Greek city, Volos. The first researcher taught Greek to most of the research subjects in a non-formal class of Greek as a second language at the Immigrant Centre of Volos, a non-profit organization, where teachers volunteer and students do not have to pay to attend. The research subjects that were not her students were acquaintances and friends with the other participants. This relationship facilitated access to the specific group of immigrants.

2.2.2. The sample

The subjects aged from 21 to 26 years with an average stay in Greece of 3 or 4 years. Their mother tongue was Farsi and only one participant spoke Dari. They were all asylum seekers and considered themselves refugees. They claimed that they fled Afghanistan because of the war and the persecution they faced there, as they were all members of the Hazara minority group. Many of them were originally planning on going to other EU countries and Greece was considered a transit country. Most of them had very little schooling in Afghanistan. They had not attended any formal education classes in their country or had only been to school for a very short period of time (according to their statements, the average school attendance in Afghanistan for the participants was 2 years). In addition, they did not speak any English or other languages which would enable communication with the local population.

Their reading and writing skills in their mother tongue were mainly acquired through personal effort and occasional attendance of lessons in reading the Koran in their local mosque in Afghanistan. Their level of language efficiency in speaking Greek was good for most (5 people); in terms of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) their speaking skills were B1 level. One spoke very good Greek (level C1) whereas one of the subjects did not even have basic skills in the language. They had been attending Greek class Level A1/A2 of CERF, as their reading and writing skills in Greek were very basic, although some of them had speaking skills which were much better than the specific level.

2.2.3. Research tool and data analysis

Qualitative methods of research were considered more suitable to the specific study (Androulakis, Mastorodimou & van Boeschoten, 2016; Ersanili, 2014). Data regarding the attitudes of the participants and their motivation to learn Greek was obtained through semi-structured, individual interviews with each participant, conducted by the first researcher. According to Newton (2010), the influence of a responsibly engaged researcher helps

interviewees describe perceptions they would otherwise think irrelevant or in their normal social context feel inhibited from mentioning.

The interviews were characterized as semi-structured because, though they drew on pre-designed questions, they offered both the researcher and the participants a lot of flexibility. They were conducted in Greek and only one of the participants who could not speak Greek gave the interview in Dari while another participant interpreted. Newton (2010) stresses the force of this particular research method in finding similar perspectives from a small sample of individuals interviewed in-depth in the context of a case study. He considers it is the power of semi-structured interviews to provide rich, original voices which can be used to construct research narratives that gives the method its invaluable quality.

The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. It is a research method for making valid references from data to their context, with a purpose of providing new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action, with the aim of attaining a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Content analysis can be used even with very unstructured interviews and provide comparable data (Newton, 2010). The basic approach of qualitative content analysis is to retain the strengths of quantitative content analysis and against this background to develop techniques of systematic, qualitatively oriented text analysis (Mayring, 2014).

3. Results

3.1. L2 acquisition

As one participant said regarding the way he learnt Greek: "I didn't learn so much from the classes, I learnt more from work and friends, foreign friends and Greek friends, but mostly from the Greeks". Acquisition of Greek was mainly through talking with Greek friends and in non-formal educational settings with a total average of 7 months in different time periods. The participants' answers regarding the time they took to achieve a basic level of the target language were their own self-evaluation and not in any way formally assessed by the researcher or any other relevant educational authority. The time they took to acquire basic communication skills in the target language was significantly different for every participant, probably because communication is evaluated in a different way for every person. The people who spoke the best and the worst Greek stated the same amount of time, 2 months, another said he took 4 months and the rest 1 to 1 ½ years. They all thought that the first lessons they had, mainly in the shelter for unaccompanied minors, had a positive or even very positive impact.

No matter how much emphasis was placed by the subjects on the usefulness of the lessons, the average time of attending them was very low, only a few months. In addition, the fact that most of them stated that they needed about one year to get basic knowledge in the language reflects their lack of confidence regarding their language skills, something which must have impeded communication with the Greek speakers and their smooth integration in the host society for a long period of time. They also connected their lack of effort in learning Greek to the fact that they considered Greece as a stopover on their way to another EU country. One of the participants said: "I didn't do any studying at home nor attended lessons for 4 years, because I was thinking of leaving Greece, so I didn't learn anything. I am still not doing any studying because I am thinking of going".

3.2. Difficulties in L2 acquisition

Regarding the difficulty of Greek, most of the participants had encountered difficulties in their effort to learn it. However, their answers varied, so there were no consistent findings in this respect. It is interesting to note that the person who spoke no Greek did not regard the language as being difficult, while another one of the participants attributed the difficulty to the fact that he was illiterate in his mother tongue. For most people (5 out of 7), the most difficult part was grammar and syntax while two also mentioned pronunciation. Some of them connected their level of proficiency in Greek to their motivation and their hopes of staying in Greece. One of them connected the difficulty of learning the language to the effort you put into it: "it's not very difficult, it depends on the effort somebody makes".

Six participants stated that if they did not understand something they asked for clarification and in this way they improved. Mistakes seemed to cause feelings of shame to most participants (5), while two of them stated they did not mind and they found the process of correction constructive. The reaction of others to their mistakes varied; laughter, indifference, and in some cases connection to their origin ("he is a foreigner and he doesn't know"). They really elaborated when talking about what the local Greek population said when they made a mistake speaking in Greek, something that shows that the Greek people's comments and reactions were particularly important to the participants. Although they did not say so, the possibility of refusing to speak the language altogether or limiting their communication to the minimum of instances required would seem a possible approach from the part of the subjects in order to avoid being ridiculed because of their poor language skills.

3.3. L2 Usefulness

Most of the participants stated that a good knowledge of Greek would help them, especially in their work environment and transactions with private (e.g. bank transactions) and public sectors. The person with the best knowledge of spoken Greek connected it with better communication with the Greeks and knowledge in general, while for one of the subjects a better knowledge of Greek had no practical purpose. One of the participants said that he considered learning any language useful, but "if I leave Greece I will not use this language". The main reason that motivated the participants to learn the language was to facilitate their work efforts: "I learnt the language in order to be able to work", "being able to speak Greek helps you with work and everywhere else".

Language, therefore, was restricted to its usefulness in the work environment, without being considered to have a vital role regarding communication with people of the host society and the refugees' better integration in it. This, in turn, affected the participants' motivation for learning it, which seemed to be in a rather low level, as they did not show particular enthusiasm regarding their language learning apart from general statements about the L2's usefulness.

3.4. L2 language aptitude and confidence

Their evaluation of their knowledge of Greek in the fields of reading, comprehension, writing and speaking was particularly low, in comparison to their real language skills, as they were judged by the first researcher who had taught most of the research subjects for 1 year. They did not have any confidence in their abilities in the second language at all. Only two people

claimed they were good in speaking and comprehension, while in the other language skills they evaluated their abilities in a medium level.

Their confidence in the knowledge of Greek was very low because, in their opinion, they did not come into much contact with native speakers. Another factor mentioned by the participants was a lack of a longer, more organized L2 education. They had tried different types of classes, mainly in non-formal settings, usually for short periods of time. They also mentioned that their performance in Greek was not very good because they mainly focused on improving their speaking skills and not on other fields like reading and writing.

3.5. L1 use and L2 language aptitude

All subjects but one read information and listened to the news on the Internet in their mother tongue. They had friendly relations with people of many nationalities, including Greeks. Most of them (5) lived together with people of the same nationality, while two lived on their own. Most of the participants communicated using Greek in their working environment. Two used Greek and English alternatively and one Greek and Dari. In their everyday life they mainly spoke their mother tongue, while one of them stated he spoke Greek only in Greek class and nowhere else.

The subjects with the worst or even medium knowledge of Greek did not seem particularly integrated into Greek society as they hardly even socialized with the Greeks and they spoke Greek mainly at work. They only associated with people of their own nationality and relied very much on members of their own community for help and support. The frequency of the use of their mother tongue in their everyday life did not help towards the improvement of their skills in the language of the host society, as they said themselves.

3.6. L2 and integration

Most subjects said they liked Greece. "There is no war here and the climate is nice" said one participant. However, they all stated the difficulty of getting legal permits and help from the government. They all mentioned the fact that they did not have permanent residency status which seemed an issue of great importance to them: "The government doesn't give papers; they don't help if we get hungry". They related getting residency permits with learning the L2. "If we stay here we will learn the language well". Five people expressed their wish to return to their homeland; however, two of them connected it to the existence of peace. Almost all individuals but one regarded the Greeks as friendly to foreigners and said they helped them learn the language. The participant with the best spoken ability in Greek mentioned a Greek girlfriend who "really helped me when I first arrived and corrected me when I made mistakes".

The level of L2 aptitude seemed to be a determining factor in the sense of belonging to the host society. The relationship between language and culture was important in all the answers. Most participants (5) regarded their Greek as not sufficient for the life they wanted to lead in Greece, in contrast to the two (2) people with the best level in the language.

Knowledge of the host language was for them a determining factor for understanding the Greek culture and not a means of better integration into Greek society. They all stressed its importance during the interviews. They had also realized the importance of coming into contact with the local population in order to improve their language skills: "You learn the

language better if you have experiences with Greek people". Although the participants had positive attitudes towards their host country, they had not accomplished, even those with the best level of language skills, to be integrated in their society. This was connected, in their view, not only to the insufficient knowledge of the target language, but to the culture difference as well. One of the participants connected it to the fact that he didn't want to stay in Greece but was forced to remain in the country due to his inability to reach other European countries: "I still haven't gotten used to the country because I have stayed here without wanting to".

3.7. Role of the Greek state

The participants claimed that the Greek state did not help immigrants learn Greek. Most of them (5) would prefer to have an interpreter when dealing with civil services; however, that did not seem to relate to their level of Greek. The need of the specific group of immigrants for the government's help and for official support to learn the target language and to be integrated into the host society was more than evident. One of the participants also narrated an unpleasant incident regarding his contact with public services: "I went to the police when I crashed my motorbike to ask what I had to do and when I didn't understand what they told me they said: 'This is your problem'".

The subjects connected the negative learning experiences they had in the past, prior to their participation in the lessons in the Immigrant Centre of Volos, to the indifference of the teachers. One of the subjects said about a previous teacher: "She didn't even give us any photocopies or any other material". About another teacher they stressed the fact that he didn't even try to explain when they hadn't understood something: "When we asked him a question, he said: 'Just let it be'". They also stressed the fact that in the Immigrant Center the teacher used a dictionary in Farsi which they thought helped them immensely in their efforts to learn Greek.

4. Discussion

This study relates to second language learning by immigrants and refugees living in a host country. It is concerned with the motivational propensities to learn a L2 which were analyzed regarding L2 use in the participants' everyday life, effort and persistence while attending classes and their attitudes and motivation towards the L2. Emphasis should be placed on how immigrants and refugees' motivation to learn the language of their host community can be connected through educational initiatives, as well as how learners in their daily effort can feel the personal relevance of learning the L2 and relate themselves to their host country. In doing so, we need to consider how motivation and attitude theories are used in this process.

Proficiency in the host language is vital for the economic and social integration of immigrants. It improves access to higher-paying jobs and facilitates interactions with the native population. The participants in this study, however, mainly associate with members of their own ethnic group and so their opportunities for learning and using the host language are significantly diminished. They live together with other Afghans, they have friends from their own community and some of them even work with people from their country. While this can have initial positive effects on employment probabilities, it can impede acquisition of the second language by reducing exposure to it. The duration of the lessons in learning the L2 was very short, which is connected to the extensive use of their mother tongue in

their everyday life and the lack of lessons adapted to their needs. So, the study confirmed similar research findings regarding the negative influence of the use of ethnic communication in intercultural adaptation and the obstacles it places in L2 acquisition (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988; Kim & Kim, 2016). Language is a very important prerequisite in the process of integration (Krumm & Plutzar, 2016). According to Ishphording (2015), immigrants tend to move into ethno-linguistic enclaves inhabited by earlier immigrants with the same ethnic background, to benefit from existing ethnic networks. A negative relationship has been documented by a lot of research between enclave density and host country language acquisition for a range of settings and in many countries, like the US, Australia, Canada, Israel and the UK (e.g. Ishphording, 2015).

The findings support the importance of attitudes and personal motives for the learning of the second language and confirm, therefore, similar research findings (Androulakis, 2011; Dornyei, 2001; 2003; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009; Ellis, 2008; Hosseini & Rourmandnia, 2013; Malallaha, 2000, Truitt, 1995). In addition, they bring to the forefront the importance of the knowledge of the host language to facilitate integration into the host society. However important the Afghan refugees think the knowledge of Greek for their everyday life, their integration into Greek society and understanding the culture of this society is, they do not consider their level in Greek sufficient. Although they claim to have positive attitudes towards members of the L2 community, in practice they do seem integrated into the host community. One of the participants characteristically said: "I speak Greek only every Tuesday and Thursday during your class", which means that he had virtually no contact with the local population and there were no opportunities for him to practice the language. Except for the participant who spoke very good Greek, everyone else had no Greek friends or acquaintances, apart from the ones who worked with Greeks. Even in this context, their contact with the locals was minimal and consisted only of interactions with their co-workers regarding work-related matters. Integrativeness refers to "a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community" (Gardner, 2001: 5), which might explain their low level of effort and investment in learning Greek. Another antecedent which is important in motivation research is self-confidence when using the language, which can also affect the participants' communicative competence. In this case, the subjects' communicative anxiety when using Greek is very high and their self-perception of their communicative competence very low. Most of the subjects said: "My Greek is not good at all". They did not separate their speaking competence -which was quite good for many of them- from other skills and they assumed that their general level was not satisfactory since they evaluated their writing and reading skills as poor. The comments or jokes of the locals when they made mistakes caused a lot of anxiety to the Afghan refugees in their attempts to use Greek in their everyday interactions. This confirms similar findings that anxiety when learning a second language can play a debilitating role (Ortega, 2009) and is not static but evolves as a consequence of interactions with those around the L2 learner (De Costa, 2015). The fact that there was a participant who stressed that being illiterate in his mother tongue caused additional problems in his efforts to learn Greek as a second language confirms similar research findings (Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011; Huntley, 1992; Marrapodi, 2013) and asserts the fact that special programs, curricula and educational materials need to be developed for illiterate or semi-literate adult L2 learners, specifically suited to their needs and interests (Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011).

Limitations of the current study need to be discussed. The sample of the study was small so the results are mainly pertinent to the specific group. Further research on the attitudes of immigrants towards the Greek language is recommended, in order to draw more reliable conclusions. However, since many Afghan refugees in Greece but also in other European

countries share a lot of common characteristics with the participants of this study, like for example the fact that they are illiterate or semi-literate in their mother tongue, further research would draw conclusions relevant to other similar groups of Afghan refugees living elsewhere or perhaps even for groups of refugees from other countries with similar prior educational experiences.

5. Implications of the research

The learning of the host language in non-formal settings and the need for organized classes and information about the systematic learning of Greek is evident. Positive attitudes towards the host society and the speakers of the target language come to the surface, together with the desire for integration, both of which need to be enhanced in order to increase the participants' motivation in learning Greek. Further research is required on the elements that encourage the learning of Greek as a second language so that the learners' needs can be more accurately pinpointed and didactic approaches suitably adapted. There is the need to increase motivation and find appropriate methodological approaches with the aim of the immigrants attending language classes for a longer period of time. The selective use of mother tongue during teaching is something which could also be taken into consideration. All these can contribute to enhancing their desire to learn the language and secure them greater and faster acquisition of communicative skills that will facilitate their social integration.

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