

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Greek EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes towards Lifelong Education in Greece**

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**This paper refers to English taught as a foreign language within lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece. The lifelong learning structures investigated are Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning. The purpose of the research is to investigate Greek EFL teacher knowledge on lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece and on the role of English taught in them. Another goal is to examine the teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards lifelong education in Greece. Moreover, the research aims at examining whether Greek EFL teachers would make suggestions toward changes in the areas of educative materials, facilities and teacher training to improve the way that English as a foreign language is offered within lifelong learning in Greece. The method chosen is qualitative research materialized through interviews. The sample includes five Greek EFL teachers with teaching experience in lifelong education. Findings show that the Greek EFL teachers interviewed have sufficient knowledge of lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece as well as of their operation and the role of English taught as a foreign language subject matter in them. The teachers have a positive attitude toward these structures. The teachers also place great emphasis on the need for further teacher training. In conclusion, the findings show a positive attitude of the teachers towards English in lifelong education. There are numerous new suggestions put forward all conducive to the improvement and the development of English offered as a foreign language subject matter within the field of lifelong education in Greece.**

**Keywords:** lifelong learning, beliefs, attitudes, English as a foreign language, qualitative research, educative materials, facilities, teacher training

## **INTRODUCTION**

The present paper aims at exploring Greek EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards English offered as a foreign language subject matter within lifelong education educative structures operating in Greece. More specifically, it studies the institutions of Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers or Lifelong Learning. Pajares (1992a); Pajares (1992b) underlines the importance of paying attention to teacher beliefs which should be 'the focus of educational research'. Richardson also admits that 'attitudes and beliefs are important concepts in understanding teachers' thought processes, classroom practices, change and learning to teach. Attitudes and beliefs have been little investigated in the past. Research suggests that they 'drive classroom action and influence the teacher change

process.' (Richardson 1996). Teacher beliefs and attitudes are therefore important and need further investigation both because they help us understand classroom practices and because they can be conducive to teacher education which will help us understand classroom practices and because they can be conducive to teacher education which will help teachers 'develop their thinking and practices' (Richardson, 1996).

The Greek EFL teachers interviewed offer some suggestions concerning developments that could be effectuated as it concerns educative materials, facilities and teacher training within lifelong learning establishments functioning in Greece. The research findings are important since there has been little research

done so far in Greece on the subject of English taught as a foreign language in lifelong education.

The research method used is qualitative research and it is implemented through five interviews taken by five Greek EFL teachers with teaching experience in Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning.

Three research questions are posed to a sample of five Greek EFL teachers with teaching experience in the aforementioned establishments. The first research question aims to investigate teachers' knowledge of lifelong learning educative establishments operating in Greece as well as the way that courses are materialized within them. The second question relates to teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards English in adult education. Teacher beliefs are important since they are both based on knowledge and experience and they influence attitudes that shape teacher behavior and teaching practice. The third research question aims at investigating whether the teachers have suggestions concerning improvements that could be effectuated in the operation facilities, infrastructure and teacher training.

This paper has four sections. Section one deals with adult education and Greek EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards teaching English as a foreign language in lifelong education. It also deals with the reasons why these beliefs and attitudes are important in the field of lifelong education in Greece.

The three research questions, the research method, the sample, the research tool as well as the procedure followed during the materialization of the study. The research findings make an overview of the research refers to the study's limitations and makes propositions for follow up by presenting the implications of the findings for future research.

## Adult Education

Adult education is a separate scientific field. The contemporary conception of adult learning compares it to a "transformative" experience (Mezirow, 2000) where new acquired knowledge "transforms" adults' existing mental schemata thus "transforming" the way they view reality. In Greece today adult education is offered through lifelong learning structures like Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning ([www.gsae.edu.gr](http://www.gsae.edu.gr), [www.kdvm.gr](http://www.kdvm.gr), [www.ideke.gr](http://www.ideke.gr), accessed October 2017, Karalis and Vergidis, 2006). These structures offer Adult Basic Education as well as Adult Continuous Education or Vocational Training.

According to another definition by Lindeman, Adult Education is "an attempt to discover a new method and

create a new incentive for learning" (Lindeman, 2015). This means that adult learners need an approach to learning different from the one found in typical education structures. One of the basic goals of adult education is personal development and the development of the autonomous person, defined by Lawson as the 'autonomous man' (Lawson, 2013). This means that adults' need to be educated goes beyond finding a job into developing their general cognitive skills these skills include meta-cognition and meta-language. Metacognition refers to adults' ability to understand the way they think while meta-language refers to their knowledge about language (Lawson, 2013).

Adult learners have various learning needs, the majority of which are focused on enhancing their knowledge and skills on various disciplines—qualities that can help them in finding and keeping jobs. They also have individual needs which relate to self-actualization. These affect the subjects that adults engage in learning. For example, an adult who needs job skills to get a job will enroll in such courses. Someone who already has a job will need to learn a new hobby or improve their job skills to get a promotion (Knowles et al., 2015).

As far as it concerns English being taught as a foreign language in Adult Education institutions functioning in Greece, some learners need it to get a job or get promoted; others view it as a hobby. This affects their motivation and the interest which they exhibit towards it. In fact, "when there is no motivation to learn there is no learning" (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg 2017).

Also, since there is no single theory that explains all human learning, there is no single theory on adult learning either (Merriam, 2006). Most adults learn nonetheless by a process of mental inquiry and not by passive knowledge transmission (Knowles et al, 2015). This is why adult educators try to invent techniques to engage learners in the inquiry. In 1926 the American Association of Adult Education was founded and two streams of inquiry were expressed. The first was the 'scientific stream'. This stream sought to discover new knowledge through investigation. On the other hand, the 'artistic stream' sought to discover knowledge through experience and intuition and paid emphasis to 'experiential learning' (Knowles et al, 2015). This is the reason why adult learners have to be involved in experiential activities to learn.

Experiential activities usually involve 'interaction' among the participants. According to Taylor and Kroth (2009), 'interaction' is a key concept in adult learning. To implicate adult learners in interactive experiential activities, adult educators first exploit learners' need to know, 'their' self-concept' and past experiences. They use those as well as their 'readiness to learn' to connect

what the learners already know to new information.

Evaluation of adult learning performance is another key concept in adult education. This is because, after the materialization of adult education and training courses, adult educators need to evaluate the learners' acquired knowledge. Educators ask learners to participate in projects or make presentations. Learners need to be able to use the knowledge acquired in problem solving. (Knowles et al., 2016).

### **Beliefs and Attitudes and How these Relate to English Taught as a Foreign Language in Lifelong Education**

Beliefs are defined as mental conceptions that an individual has about an object (Fishbein, 1963). According to this definition, a belief about an object contains different positive or negative characteristics, attributes, values or goals that an object is associated with (Fishbein, 1963). Another definition of 'beliefs' is that they are 'a particular type of cognition' (Richardson, 2003). More specifically, they are defined as 'psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true' (Richardson, 2003). Beliefs differ from knowledge in the sense that knowledge depends on a 'truth condition'. For something to constitute knowledge, it has to be proven scientifically whereas beliefs do not need to be based on concrete evidence neither to be proven. This 'truth condition' is also referred to as 'the truth element' (Borg, 2001: 186). A belief is therefore based on a condition that is felt to be true. Individuals holding specific beliefs may recognize that, since beliefs are not based on unquestionable facts, different beliefs might be held on the same subject by others. The term 'belief' is also defined as a 'subset of a group of constructs that name, define and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions' (Zheng, 2009). Belief systems act as guides for individuals to 'define and understand the world and themselves.' (Pajares, 1992).

Beliefs are influenced by some variables. First, since they constitute a 'particular cognition' as mentioned above (Richardson, 2003), beliefs are based on knowledge of fact, or observation of them. Besides, beliefs are influenced by emotions. People's emotions about something determine what they believe about it. Emotions influence people's beliefs in two ways. First, they shape beliefs that might have not existed before and second, they change existing beliefs. They may also 'enhance or decrease the strength' of a belief.

Another aspect of beliefs is their conscious or unconscious nature. Borg mentions that there are different opinions about the consciousness element of beliefs. Some maintain that consciousness is 'inherent' in

the definition of belief whereas others support that individuals may be conscious of some beliefs and unconscious of others. There is also a direct relationship between beliefs, behavior and teacher practices (Borg, 2001). Beliefs shape the way people think and act. Besides behavior, teachers' beliefs are also related to their practices. Analyses have been conducted to measure the associations between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. Findings showed 'substantial coherence' between them in the teaching of some subjects including mathematics and reading comprehension (Stipek, et al., 2001).

Beliefs often influence motivation, goals set and expectancy for success (Eccles and Wigfield 2002). In the same manner that this applies to adult learners, it applies to teachers as well. More specifically, when teachers believe that they can achieve something then they have greater motivation to try it. The same applies in the case where they believe in the value of something and that it is worthwhile to try it. Beliefs are thus 'value commitments' in the sense that they motivate individuals to act in a specific way. Since the word 'value' originates from the Aryan word 'lubh,' which means 'to like or to hold dear' (Borg, 2001), it comes naturally that someone who loves something will act upon it and will apply it in action. Attitudes, on the other hand, express personality traits and relate to people's thoughts and feelings. Attitudes towards a specific object, situation, or idea are inferred through 'a person's behavior, verbal or non-verbal, and the context in which this behavior occurs' (Heider 1958, Jones and Davis 1965, Kelley 1971). People's attitudes have been studied and assessed over the years because they reflect personality traits or predispositions and they also affect and account for human behavior and actions (Ajzen, 2015).

Ajzen (2005) supports that attitudes influence behavior and distinguishes between two types of attitude. The first types are 'general attitudes' towards physical objects, groups, institutions, events, or general targets. The second type of attitude is 'performing specific behaviors' towards an object or target. These are referred to as 'attitudes toward a behavior' Attitudes influence behavior. Since the 1960s there have been several types research in the question of the 'relation between attitudes and subsequent behavior' (Fazio, 1986). There were researchers like Wicker (1969) who stated that attitudes do not reflect upon behavior and others that correlated attitude and behavior. Still, in the 1980s the relationship between attitude and behavior was approached differently. This is what Zanna and Fazio (1982) referred to as the "When" approach. Instead of asking the question of whether attitudes influence behavior, researchers began to examine the variables which affect the degree to which attitudes influence behaviour. They researched the conditions under which certain attitudes

provoked certain behaviors.

Several variables influencing the degree by which an attitude can relate to a type of behavior were identified. Some of them were personality factors such as self-image, level of self-monitoring and moral reasoning. Situational factors influence attitudes as well (Fazio, 1986). The confidence with which an attitude is held was also found to be important as well as the stability of an attitude or the degree of clarity by which an attitude is defined. An individual's attitude toward an event or situation will in turn influence the individual's definition and interpretation of the situation.

### **The Importance of Greek EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes towards Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Lifelong Education**

In the case of teachers, their attitudes are important in the sense that they influence classroom practice. According to Ajzen's attitude categorization (Ajzen, 2005), teachers' behaviors are 'performing specific behaviors' that are influenced by and they also themselves influence teaching situations and events. This is why teachers' attitudes are important; because they both interpret and define classroom reality.

As far as Greek EFL teachers' practice is concerned, 'what teachers think, know and believe influences what they do in the teaching classroom' (Borg, 2003). Teachers are 'active decision-makers who play a central role in shaping classroom events' (Borg, 2015). Similarly, Greek EFL teachers' beliefs on adult education in general and English offered as a foreign language subject within Lifelong Education structures in particular, affect their attitudes towards it. Their attitudes in turn define and shape teaching reality. This applies both in the cases of pre-service teaching and in-serving teaching. Increasing research in the area of teacher beliefs and attitudes helps in understanding teacher practices. (Zheng, 2009).

Greek EFL teachers teach in various educational environments. The majority of Greek EFL teachers work in typical education, in public or private primary and secondary schools. Those have to follow a prescribed syllabus and teaching methodology. Their beliefs on the need for English offered as a foreign language subject to children and adolescents in primary and secondary education stem from the legislative framework of English teaching in these structures. Their attitudes are influenced by the belief that primary and secondary education should facilitate learners in the acquisition of English language skills. This means that, regardless of their beliefs or attitudes, or their desire to create their material and be more creative, they are forced to follow a specific syllabus and course book and this in itself leaves them less space to be creative or differentiate their

teaching according to each student's needs.

On the other hand, adult educators have the freedom to be more creative in their teaching. Adults have different needs in learning the language and these needs are much more diverse than the needs that children and teenagers have. Also, the reasons for adults to learn a foreign language are not so obvious as those of children and teenagers who do it as part of their general education. As mentioned earlier, some need to acquire or ameliorate their English knowledge to find a job or to be promoted in their work. Others need to be taught English for Specific Purposes for occupational reasons. Still, others view language learning as a hobby and would prefer being educated or trained in it as much as possible. These needs affect Greek EFL teachers' beliefs about the reasons why they should teach adults as well as about their particular teaching practice.

In the past years, there has been much interest in the study of language teacher cognition. This is because 'what language teachers think, know and believe' influences classroom practices (Borg, 2015). This applies in typical as well as in non-typical Adult Education and various learning disciplines—both scientific and artistic ones. Teachers' beliefs are therefore important in understanding their thought processes as well as their teaching practices. Teachers' attitudes are also important since they are influenced by their beliefs and in turn, they influence classroom practice.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method that was followed to study Greek EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English offered as a foreign language subject within lifelong education structures in Greece was the qualitative method. This approach was selected because qualitative research is usually employed to explore the meaning that particular groups of people ascribe to a concept, problem, or social phenomenon.

Qualitative research has not been defined clearly since it has neither a theory nor a set of methods or practices that is distinctly its own (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Nevertheless, it uses as its starting point information taken by the research participants (Ormston et al., 2013). This is why it was chosen as the present research method because it places emphasis on Greek EFL adult education practitioners and takes their beliefs and attitudes as a starting point for suggesting changes in this educational area.

The research tool was the interview and the process of research involved data collected by interviewees; the researcher interpreted the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). The researcher is familiar with teachers having

experience in Lifelong Education and interviewing them was an interesting way of researching their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes as well as suggestions about future changes that would facilitate the role of the educator as well as the teaching process in Greece.

Qualitative research, with Interview as its research tool, was chosen in the present study because, it is a process “that gives credence to the development of powers of reflective thought, discussion, decision and action by ordinary people participating in collective research of ‘private troubles’ that they have in common” (Adelman, 1993). The interview itself allowed for the collaboration of the researcher with people that she meant to study (Berg, 2004).

Furthermore, the qualitative study takes a more in-depth approach to the subject it studies to understand it in more detail (Opdenakker, 2006). Furthermore, Turner mentions that interviews “provide in-depth information on participants’ experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic” (Turner, 2010). In the present case, qualitative research is a method to help in professional development as well. The sample consists of people active in the field of education and the research is about adult education. Research findings may be applied to help the future professional development of teachers as well as those of peers. Also, in answering the interview questions, teachers were freer to openly express their suggestions as it regards changes that could be made in the field of English in adult education. This was because the interview included open-ended questions which enabled the Greek EFL teachers to express their views.

The information was gathered by talking to Greek EFL teachers and meeting them in a natural setting. So the interviewer herself was the one who gathered the information and not a data collecting instrument like a questionnaire, for instance. The analysis of the data was done in an inductive, bottom-up way. The process involved working with the data until a set of themes had emerged. The researcher emphasized the meanings that the interviewees set on the issue of EFL within lifelong education in Greece and not on meanings that the researcher brought to the interviews with her. The latter made interpretations of what the Greek EFL teachers said and finally, she tried to present a holistic view of the issues researched.

The way that the researcher presents the issues studied is influenced by teachers’ backgrounds, prior understandings and experiences. This is what (Hennin et al, 2010) call ‘reflexivity’. ‘Reflexivity’ may be interpreted as ‘personal’ or ‘interpersonal’. In the case of ‘personal reflexivity’ the researcher is influenced by their backgrounds and assumptions during the data gathering process. On the other hand, ‘interpersonal reflexivity’ relates to the interview setting as well as the interview dynamic that may exist between the interviewer and the interviewee and can influence the data gathering process

as well. In the present case, research was based on the sample’s prior knowledge, understandings and experiences, to better reflect their beliefs and attitudes as well as suggestions concerning English, taught within adult education. The interview dynamic between the interviewer and the teachers was positive since they were colleagues and shared common experiences and understandings in most of the issues examined.

After the completion of the interviews, the researcher first transcribed them thus organizing data for analysis. Then she got a general sense of the information and tried to pinpoint the general ideas of the participant sample. In the end, she began a detailed analysis by coding the material into segments to later bring meaning to the information gathered by the research tool.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before the interviews were conducted, all Greek EFL teachers were assured that their answers would be anonymous and their personal information would be nowhere disclosed. Though the interviews contained questions like the age of the participants as well as their overall and adult teaching experience, this was done for statistical reasons and could in no way infer to the participants.

### **Reliability**

The first four questions of the interview ask EFL teachers what they know about Greek lifelong learning structures offering English as a foreign language as well as what they know about these structures’ operation. The questions are thus designed to investigate and assess the teachers’ knowledge and familiarity with English offered in lifelong education. Beliefs are said to be based on a ‘truth condition’ (Richardson, 2003) or ‘truth element’ (Borg, 2001). Since knowledge is a factor that influences and shapes beliefs, it should therefore be investigated.

Besides knowledge, some people’s emotions influence their beliefs too. In this respect, the interview contains questions that ask EFL teachers about their teaching experience in lifelong learning structures as well as about the reasons that made them choose to teach there and their evaluation of the effectiveness of the educative programs they materialized. These questions aim to assess teacher beliefs which are influenced both by their knowledge and familiarity and their emotions deriving from their personal teaching experiences.

### **Validity**

The research questions were modeled on tools illustrated in two studies. The first was Griva and Chostellidou’s ‘English Language Teachers’ Conceptions and Attitudes to Multilingual Development in Education’ (2012) and the second was Shinde and Karekatti’s ‘Pre-

service Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching English to Primary School Children' (2011).

Griva and Chostellidou's tool aimed at defining multilingualism and EFL teachers' attitudes toward it. Mastering English as a foreign language is the goal of adult education too; in this sense, it leads to adult multilingualism and their ability to communicate in different cultural and linguistic environments. The questions investigating EFL teachers' knowledge of, familiarity with and experience in EFL in adult education were modeled on this tool's questions aimed to assess EFL teachers' knowledge of and familiarity with multilingualism.

Concerning whether English should be offered as a subject matter to adults, Griva and Chostellidou's study investigated Greek EFL teachers' attitude toward increased lifelong opportunities for 'foreign language learning,' 'multilingual comprehension,' and 'openness to other people's languages'. The study also investigated EFL teachers' 'prioritizing the development of the citizens' multilingual repertoire and the ability to communicate in European languages' (Griva, Chostellidou, 2012: 1780). These questions are similar to the ones posed in this paper concerning the usefulness of teaching English to adults.

Furthermore, Griva and Chostellidou's study investigated 'institutional factors' like 'the design of new FL curricula,' 'the improvement of the equality of teaching materials' and 'the provision of more time in the curriculum to advance competence in target languages'. Similar to these questions is question number nine of this research where Greek EFL teachers are asked whether they would make any suggestions or changes concerning educative materials, facilities, or teacher training in the domain of English teaching within lifelong learning educative structures in Greece.

Moreover, the present research interview was modeled on Shinde and Karekatti's questionnaire from "Pre-Service Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching English to Primary

School Children" (2011). Though this questionnaire was designed mostly for EFL teachers of children, questions concerning teacher training could be adapted to teachers of adults as well. Shinde and Karekatti state that teachers should get appropriate training about how to talk effectively while teaching children. Their study also explores teachers' beliefs about teaching and they think that 'teaching is greatly affected by the belief systems of its practitioner teachers'. They correlate teacher beliefs with their attitude, teaching methodology and, finally, with learner development.

## Research Questions

The research questions were first designed to deal with

Greek EFL teachers' knowledge about Lifelong Education Institutions and Educative Structures functioning in Greece. So teachers were first asked about what they know about lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece and the role of English taught as a Foreign Language within these structures. Also, teachers' experience in such structures was examined. Teachers were, more particularly, asked about their teaching experience in lifelong learning structures and about the reasons why they chose to work in these establishments.

The second issue that research questions were designed to probe into was teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the educative programs offered and about the role of English offered as a foreign language subject within Lifelong Educative Structures functioning in Greece. Their beliefs were researched by questions aiming to encourage teachers to evaluate their teaching experience in lifelong learning structures and conclude as to whether it helped their further professional development. Teachers were also asked about their expectations from the course and about whether they believed that the expectations were achieved. This would be measured by feedback got from the learners too. Concerning the measurement of teachers' attitudes, Greek EFL teachers were asked whether English as a Foreign Language should be offered to adults and why; they were also asked about the areas in which it could help the

learners. Another way to measure the teachers' attitudes was to ask them whether they would participate in adult education courses as learners themselves.

The third research question aimed at assessing the teachers' view as to whether there is a need to make amendments or changes in areas like educative materials, facilities, or teacher training in adult education. More precisely, teachers were asked what they believed could change in these fields to make adult education courses more effective.

## Sample

The sample that was interviewed consisted of fifteen Greek EFL teachers who have all had teaching experience in the three types of lifelong learning structures that were discussed above, namely Centers of Lifelong Learning, Vocational Training Institutes and Second Chance Schools. The role of experience is important since many teachers form their beliefs and shape their attitudes under the influence of teaching experiences (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2009). Also, the interview contained some more detailed questions relating to the way that the courses were organized, for example, that only people who have had experience teaching in those structures would be able to answer. Other examples of questions were those relating to

teaching materials or facilities. In the end, five of the interviews were used since after some time there was 'saturation' data, meaning that the teachers said more or less the same things.

Five of the teachers' interviews were finally chosen according to criteria related to focus groups defined by Kitzinger (1995) and Creswell (2009) that relate mostly to knowledge about the questions that the research addresses and experience in settings relating to the thematic field of the study.

The overall teaching experience of the Greek EFL teachers in the participant sample ranged from more than ten to twenty-five years while their teaching experience in lifelong learning structures, in particular, ranged from two to fifteen years. Some of them have worked in all the three mentioned lifelong learning structures whereas some others have only experience with one structure mainly Second Chance Schools.

Only two of the people questioned had experience in Centers of Lifelong Learning. Since this institution is now inactive and it has functioned for certain not always continuing periods, younger teachers have mostly taught in it because teachers with more experience would either not know about these centers or opt for typical education structures. Teachers who have had experience in centers of Lifelong Learning were below forty years of age. Centers of Lifelong Learning were first founded in 2006 and they were then called centers of Adult Training. Their operation terminated in 2011. They functioned again from 2014 until 2017 but they again stopped operating for a second time due to the end of funding. Today, there have been new funds granted but their third phase has not started functioning again. This is why only teachers under forty years of age of our sample have had experience in these structures.

Concerning Vocational Training Institutes, three of the Greek EFL teachers interviewed had experience them. Some in these structures in their first years of operation in the 1990s while others worked in them during the last decade. At the same time, two teachers have had teaching experience in Vocational Training Institutes during almost the whole duration of their operation. Since these structures have been incorporated into the educational system and are considered as initial vocational training institutes, they constitute an important part of post-secondary educative structures and their operation has been continuous over the years.

The same applies to Second Chance Schools which have continuously been operating since 1997. All Greek EFL teachers in our sample have had at least two school years of teaching experience in Second Chance Schools. They were familiar with the syllabus as well as the way

that the teachers themselves were asked to prepare the teaching material following adult education teaching

### Research Tool

The research tool employed in this research was interviews with Greek EFL teachers. More specifically, five teachers with teaching experience in three lifelong learning structures were interviewed. The lifelong learning structures were Centers of Lifelong Learning, Vocational Training Institutes and Second Chance Schools. The participant teacher experience in these structures ranged from two to fifteen years whereas their overall teaching experience ranged from more than ten to twenty-five years.

The interview questions were modeled on the following research tools: Griva's and Chostelidou's question items in 'English Language Teachers' conceptions and attitudes to multilingual development in Education' (2011) and Shinde and Karekatti (2012) questions in 'Pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English to primary school children. The interview questions were modeled on the above tools because the research questions addressed in these studies were similar to the ones researched by the present paper. For example, the first research addressed issues concerning teachers' conceptions and attitudes to multilingual development in education. In this research similar questions concerning teachers' beliefs and attitudes were addressed concerning adult education. The second research included mainly questions referring to how children learn. The way children learn was juxtaposed to the way adults function; this was a way to examine how adults learn as well. It was also a way to examine how English should be presented to them. Some of the questions also referred to the usefulness of teacher training so that the latter could become better in their practice. They addressed therefore teacher development through teaching practice.

The interview contained questions that aimed at studying the Greek EFL teacher sample knowledge, beliefs and attitudes on English offered as a foreign language subject within lifelong learning structures in Greece. More specifically, three lifelong learning structures were examined: Centers of Lifelong Learning, Vocational Training Institutes and Second Chance Schools.

The questions employed were a series of questions regarding the sample Greek English as a Foreign Language teachers' knowledge, experience, beliefs and attitudes concerning the institution of lifelong learning in Greece and English offered as a foreign language subject within it.

The first question aimed to check the familiarity of the Greek EFL teachers sample with lifelong learning

structures functioning in Greece and about English taught as a Foreign Language within these structures. More specifically, the question aimed at eliciting whether Greek EFL teachers know about Institutes of Vocational Training, Second Chance Schools and Centers of Lifelong Learning. Though more lifelong learning education structures might function in Greece, the present research aimed mostly at studying the three aforementioned ones; this was also the content of the second interview question, namely what the sample Greek EFL teachers know about Institutes of Vocational Training, Second Chance Schools and Centers of Lifelong Learning. The question also asked if the teachers know how these institutes' English courses are organized.

The first two questions therefore aimed at examining teacher knowledge. Teacher knowledge is generally considered important in many ways since it can influence teaching practice, classroom management, teaching methods as well as classroom assessment (Voss et al., 2011). In our case, in particular, it was necessary to measure teachers' knowledge of lifelong learning structures offering English as a foreign language subject in Greece to safely draw conclusions based on their beliefs and attitudes expressed in the interview. The first question, therefore, was "Are you familiar with lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece and about English taught as a Foreign Language in these structures?" The second question focused on the three lifelong learning structures to be studied in this research and was "What do you know about the following educative structures: Vocational Training Institutes, Second Chance Schools and Centers of Lifelong Learning?"

The third question was "Do you have any teaching experience in any of the above Lifelong Learning Institutes functioning in Greece?" It aimed at assessing the teachers' teaching experience in any of the three lifelong learning institutes functioning in Greece. As mentioned earlier, the experience is important since only EFL teachers with experience in lifelong learning structures operating in Greece can safely express their opinions or ideas about it. Experience also relates to learner achievement. According to Goldhaber (2002), good teachers can have a positive impact on learners. Experience in teaching can aid someone in their teaching practice development and in this way, the more experienced a teacher is in specific learning settings the better chances they have to be more effective in their teaching and thus evaluate the whole teaching experience positively.

The third question's rationale was to elicit the teacher sample teaching experience in any of the above lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece. Teachers' teaching experience is important both for their teaching

practice and for their relationship with students (Brekelmans et al., 2002). Experience does in fact influence teachers' behavioural and dominance patterns and has an impact on learner performance and achievement (Vanderhaar et al., 2006).

Questions number four, five and six aimed at eliciting the Greek EFL teachers' beliefs. Teachers' beliefs have been found to influence both teaching behavior and learner achievement (Van der Schaaf, et al., 2008). More specifically, question number four of the interview was "Why did you choose to work as an EFL teacher in Lifelong Learning Institutes?" Question five was "How would you evaluate this experience? Do you think that teaching in Lifelong Learning Structures can aid EFL teachers in their further teaching development? If so, in which ways?"

The fourth interview question aimed at eliciting the reason why Greek EFL teachers chose to work in lifelong learning institutes. It had to do with their motivation in teaching adults. Teacher motivation, and more particularly, autonomous teacher motivation for teaching is related to teachers' 'sense of accomplishment' and makes teachers more supportive towards learners thus enhancing the latter's autonomous motivation for learning too. (Roth et al., 2007).

The fifth and sixth interview questions were "How would you evaluate this experience? Do you think that teaching in Lifelong Learning Structures can aid EFL teachers in their further teaching development? If so, in which ways?" and "What were your expectations from this course and to which extent were they achieved? Did you receive any useful feedback from your students?" respectively. Both questions number five and six aimed at studying whether the teachers were aware of the degree to which teaching in general influences their teaching development. In particular, it should be made clear whether the teachers believe that teaching in lifelong learning structures can aid their professional development as teachers. Evaluation of their experience encourages them to focus on the experience itself and measure its effectiveness. This is a form of self-feedback they get relating to their performance. This is important for teachers so that they can conclude whether teaching adults can help their general teaching practice and development. Another form of feedback useful to teacher development is received by the learners themselves. Sheen mentions 'corrective feedback' (Sheen, 2004: 263) given to teachers by their learners in the classroom. In the case of adult learners, this might be even more useful since adults are generally more conscientious about their learning.

The sixth interview question concerned teachers' expectations from the course they taught and the extent to which these expectations were achieved. The teachers were also asked whether they received any feedback from their learners concerning the fulfillment of their



teaching objectives. Teachers' expectations from their teaching have been researched in several studies. They are important since it has been found that learner success is a positive factor in teacher reinforcement and further motivation (Kyriacou and Kunc, 2007).

The final three questions, namely questions seven, eight and nine aimed at assessing EFL teachers' attitudes towards the need for English as a foreign language to be offered within lifelong learning structures in Greece. It also aimed at researching whether the teachers believe that there is a need for changes or developments in the way lifelong learning courses are organized. The study of attitudes is important since teachers' attitudes affect their behavior and influence their classroom practice (Fazio, 1986). The first attitude question was "Should EFL be offered as a subject matter to Adults? Why/ Why not? In which areas can it aid Greek adult learners?" While the positive answer to this question might seem self-evident, it is important to see the teachers' attitudes concerning the reasons why this course should be useful or necessary to adults. The second question was "Have you as a student attended courses in any of the aforementioned Institutes of Lifelong Learning? Would you attend a Foreign Language course in a Centre of Lifelong Learning? Why/Why not?" This question sought to directly see the teachers' attitude toward lifelong education since it asked them if they would follow a lifelong learning language course themselves. The final question was "Would you make any changes concerning the way these courses are materialized? In which areas (educative materials, facilities, EFL teacher training)?" The question aimed at researching whether Greek EFL teachers have a positive attitude toward the need for change in the way English is taught as a foreign language within lifelong learning structures in Greece and in which areas this change needs to be effectuated.

Finally, the sample teachers were asked if they would make any changes concerning the ways lifelong learning courses are materialized. Changes could be made in the areas of educative materials or facilities or EFL teacher training for instance. Still, teachers were free to add any other areas they thought would be open to change. After the questions, Greek EFL teachers needed to relate some information relating to their status (age, gender) as well as to their teaching experience. The interviewer asked them to relate both their overall experience in general and their experience in lifelong learning structures in particular. This aimed at finding out how experienced the teachers were, how many years they had worked in education and how much they had worked with adults.

### **Procedure**

The interviews with Greek EFL teachers were conducted during one month in Athens. Being an EFL teacher

herself, the researcher contacted by email or telephone colleagues she knew had teaching experience in lifelong learning structures like Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning. With some of them, she had collaborated in the past while others were people she was not familiar with personally and whose contact information was given to her by a school advisor who had worked as a director in a Second Chance School and had herself collaborated with them.

After having contacted them either by email or telephone, she arranged meetings with them which she conducted mainly in public spaces like cafes or in-home offices. The ideal place for the interview would be the teaching settings. Creswell mentions that the research setting would ideally be the setting related to the thematic area of the research (Creswell, 2009). For example, with people working in Second Chance Schools, it would be ideal to meet and talk within this setting. This was not possible though since most of them are not at present working in these institutions. Also, the time when the meetings were arranged was usually during days or hours when teachers were not working. Another difficulty that had to be overcome was the arrangement of the meetings themselves not only with the place where they would be arranged but also relating to the time; this was difficult because all five teachers lived and worked in Athens whereas the researcher was at the time of the interviews a substitute English teacher in Heraklion, Crete.

All of the meetings were therefore arranged in Athens. The researcher conducted the interviews orally and recorded them anonymously.

Another difficulty was that some of the teachers taught in Second Chance Schools for only one or two school years while there was also one who, though he had worked for years in Second Chance Schools, had only taught for a couple of semesters in a Vocational Training Institute and, in fact, almost twenty years ago when Vocational Training Institutes started operating in Greece. Though some teachers did not remember much about the institutional framework within which lifelong learning structures operated during the time that they worked in them, they all remembered that there was not a very specific syllabus and that they had to prepare the majority of the teaching materials themselves.

### **Presentation and Discussion of Research Findings**

This paper will attempt to answer the three research questions: teachers' knowledge and experience in lifelong learning educative structures functioning in Greece, their beliefs and attitudes towards English offered as a foreign language subject within these structures and their possible suggestions concerning amendments that could improve these existing structures' operation in the domains of educative materials,

infrastructure and teacher training. Research data will be provided by five interviews taken by five Greek EFL Teachers who have all had English as a Foreign Language teaching experience in Lifelong Learning Structures functioning in Greece. The five teachers have teaching experience in Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning.

### Research Questions

The first issue that needs to be investigated is the teachers' knowledge on the subject of lifelong learning institutions functioning in Greece. Only teachers who know about lifelong education in Greece and about English offered as a course there could be reliable sources on the investigation of beliefs and attitudes. Beliefs are based on knowledge about the world and they are 'psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions that are felt to be true' (Richardson 2003). On the other hand, attitudes are thoughts and emotions which might be influenced by beliefs and, in their turn, influence behavior. (Fazio, 1986).

The second research question aims at investigating EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards English offered as a foreign language subject matter in lifelong learning structures like Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning. Their beliefs are important since they influence their thinking concerning the usefulness of English teaching to Adults. On the other hand, EFL teachers' attitudes are worth investigating since they might influence their opinions about amendments or changes towards the better that could be effectuated in the way adult education establishments operate in Greece today.

The content of the third research question relates to changes that could be applied to the way adult education is provided in Greece today. This relates to the teachers' suggestions towards possible changes that regard educative materials, facilities and teacher training within Lifelong Learning Structures functioning in Greece. Greek EFL teachers' views on these matters are of primary importance since they constitute an integral part of adult education being adult educators and language teaching practitioners at the same time. Given the way that adult education operates in a non-typical way in Greece today, given also the fact that adult learning is a "transformative experience" (Mezirow, 2000) and that there's no single theory on adult learning (Merriam, 2006), the role of teachers as decision-makers, lesson and course planners as well as course evaluators is very decisive for the future of English offered as a foreign language subject to adults in Greece.

### RESULTS

Concerning the first research question, the first teacher is

familiar with all lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece. Still, he is familiar with Second Chance Schools and Vocational Training Institutes as a teacher. In Centers of Lifelong Learning, he has only participated as a learner. The second teacher has had a long teaching experience in all three lifelong learning educative structures studied. He mentions that there are differences in the way courses are organized within the lifelong learning educative structures where he has worked. He admits that the function of Second Chance Schools is more innovative than the one of Vocational Training Institutes because they are at an experimental state and this offers the teacher great initiative in determining the material.

The third and fourth teachers have about twenty years of teaching experience and are most familiar with Second Chance Schools. The fifth teacher has worked in Lifelong Education in a Second Chance School for two years and in Vocational Training Institutes for several semesters. Concerning Vocational Training Institutes, the teacher remembers that she had to create her educative material there in her classes too but the students' language proficiency was greater than in the case of Second Chance School students.

As far as the teachers' beliefs and attitudes on English offered in lifelong learning education in Greece are concerned, the first EFL teacher evaluates working with adults as a "rich experience" for the educator. It is, therefore, evident here that the first teacher's positive experience of teaching adults influences his beliefs toward adult education. According to Frojda and Mesquita (2000), emotions influence beliefs and they also shape the way people think and act (Borg, 2001).

When it comes to learners, the first teacher believes that English as a foreign language subject can aid learners. The teacher also believes that teaching English in lifelong learning is something positive since he has seen learners who have benefited from it. On the other hand, the teacher's attitude towards EFL in adult education is positive. This is attested from the fact that he has also benefited from adult education by attending seminars himself.

The second teacher's positive experience with teaching adults has made him have an equally positive attitude toward it as a learner himself and that has influenced his motivation and goals set (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). In this respect, he has participated in an adult education course on English teaching which was a positive experience. He has a positive attitude toward English offered in lifelong education. This is because he would himself attend courses as a learner too since he thinks that they could aid Greek adult learners.

The third EFL teacher believes that English should be offered as a foreign language subject to adults. The

teacher also bears a positive attitude toward teaching English to adult learners herself. When asked if teaching English to adults has helped her further teaching development she says: *"I'm positive that it has."*

The fourth and fifth EFL teachers mention examples from their teaching experience where students were positively affected by their teaching. One of them felt gratified when being able to read a Bank sign in English and another one was very glad to be able to participate in a journey abroad and use English to communicate there. More specifically, the teachers' positive attitude toward teaching English to adults and their belief that this helps them, made changes in those two students' lives and everyday reality.

All five teachers have positive experiences in adult education. This is something that has influenced their attitudes towards it and, in some cases, it has even encouraged them to participate in lifelong learning educative programs as learners themselves.

On the subject of teacher training and improving institutions' operation and infrastructure, the first EFL teacher believes that teacher training is of primary importance, both initial and continuous training for those educators who involve themselves in adult learning. He says that the Ministry of Education or public bodies supervised by it should offer teachers training in adult teaching methodology. He also says that some classroom facilities like DVD projectors would be useful.

*If I would have to improve something it would be things like more DVD projectors in each classroom and that sort of facility.*

Still, he considers teacher training as the most important of all.

The second EFL teacher proposes changes in facilities and teacher training. Concerning educative materials, he mentions that the materials provided by the lifelong learning structures were efficient; still, he had to prepare his material too.

The third EFL teacher emphasises teacher training and the creation of educative material by teachers, based on the learner's needs. The fourth EFL teacher says that the Second Chance School where she worked was well equipped and even operated in an autonomous building. She, therefore, does not propose changes in facilities. She would change educative materials though by proposing additional materials other than only the one's teachers design each time according to their learner needs.

Finally, the fourth and the fifth EFL teachers propose more teacher training since they believe that teachers

should be more 'guided'. They also believe in teachers creating their educative material and leaving it in their portfolio for the consultation of their successors.

Overall, all five Greek EFL teachers propose changes towards the further development of lifelong education offered in Greece and, more specifically, towards the teaching of English as a foreign language in adult educative structures like Second Chance Schools, Institutes of Vocational Training and Centers of Lifelong Learning. They mostly emphasises teacher training both in the subject matter taught and in adult education methodology. The need for investment in infrastructures by the Greek state, which is responsible for the operation of these structures, is also put forward while educative material development is mostly viewed as the teachers' responsibility.

## DISCUSSION

This section will present findings that were drawn from the above five interviews and which relate to the three research questions addressed in this research.

Relating to the first research question, namely Greek EFL teachers' knowledge on lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece, and more precisely on Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning, all five teachers have knowledge of all three structures and all have teaching experience in at least two of them.

All teachers have at least one year of teaching experience in Second Chance Schools. They are familiar with their operation and they all mention the fact that they had to create their educative materials there, that there was not a fixed but a 'negotiated' syllabus and that teaching had to be individualized and differentiated.

Concerning Vocational Training Institutes, four teachers have teaching experience in them from two to many more semesters. It seems that teachers had a part-time occupation as English for Specific Purposes trainers in these Institutes. They mention that the syllabus there was stricter than in Second Chance Schools and that the learners' level of English language proficiency was greater than the level of learners in Second Chance Schools.

Only one of the teachers has teaching experience in Centers of Lifelong Learning. They are all familiar with them but only the second teacher has worked as an adult educator in them materializing several educative courses.

The five Greek EFL teachers' knowledge about and teaching experience in lifelong learning structures operating in Greece makes them reliable sources for the gathering of information in this study.

Concerning the second research question that deals with Greek EFL teachers' beliefs towards the need to teach English to adults, all five teachers believe that it is a 'rich' and 'worthwhile' experience. They believe that the teaching of English within the three lifelong learning structures studied aids both learners and teachers.

In the case of learners, it is a way to boost their self-confidence, especially in the case of Second Chance School learners who re-enter education. It also helps them be more functional within multilingual societies which are more common today. Also, it offers them a professional asset since English language proficiency can help learners find jobs or get promoted in them more easily. Teaching English to adults can therefore further aid their professional development. All of the teachers mentioned—to a greater or lesser extent—that their teaching was influenced by working in non-typical education where they had no prescribed textbooks or syllabus and where they needed to investigate learner needs and create new educative material or even co-teach with educators from other disciplines. So, teaching English to adults can help EFL teachers themselves in their teaching practice.

All teachers also had positive attitudes towards teaching English to adults. This is proven by the fact that they attended adult education courses as learners themselves. Three of the teachers attended seminars in Centers of Lifelong Learning. Like their adult students, most of them needed new knowledge for their professional development but some of them did it out of interest in new subjects like Photography, Psychology, History or First Aid. The teachers' positive attitudes towards teaching English to adults are also proven by the fact that they make several suggestions concerning possible developments in the field.

The teachers' positive attitudes towards English offered in lifelong education make them willing to propose ways to improve this learning experience in Greece. More specifically, all five EFL teachers emphasised on the need for further teacher training of educators who teach English as a Foreign Language to adult learners. One teacher, said that the in-service training that she received was not enough, that it was too theoretical on adult education theories; she would rather be educated on EFL teaching methodology instead because she considers it more useful even for teaching adults.

Educative materials were also discussed. Some teachers with teaching experience in Second Chance Schools said that existing material created by predecessors and left to the school was useful to them but there was always a need for new material to be elaborated. The concept of 'portfolios' was thought to be useful so that one educator leaves material to their

successors to aid them in their work. Still, the latter always needs to design and develop new material following the methodology of differentiated learning whereby they would need to cater to individual learners' learning styles and needs.

The subject of infrastructure and facilities was touched upon to a lesser extent by the five Greek EFL teachers interviewed. Some said that facilities are always a problem while most of them mentioned the need for more up-to-date technological equipment like computers, audiovisual materials and projectors. A teacher mentioned that this equipment exists but not in sufficient number so that educators would 'sometimes fight for a projector'. Another educator mentioned the issue of lifelong learning structures functioning in autonomous buildings. Most Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning operate during the afternoon hours in buildings that house typical education schools in the morning. Only one of the interviewed teachers said that the Second Chance School of Korydallos where she taught for two years operated in an autonomous building and was generally well equipped.

It was found by the five interviews that all Greek EFL teachers had sufficient knowledge of lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece and most of them also had teaching experience in at least one of them. All teachers had teaching experience in Second Chance Schools, the majority of them in Vocational Training Institutes too while there was one teacher who had experience in Centers of Lifelong Learning as well. All teachers also believed that teaching English as a Foreign Language to adult learners aids their further personal and professional development and there is a need to support the expansion and development of lifelong learning in Greece. The majority of the teachers also admitted that teaching English to adults is a practice that helps the teacher's professional development too since it makes them rethink their teaching practice. Finally, concerning changes that could be done, all the interviewed teachers emphasised on the need for both initial and in-service teacher training, especially the latter type within lifelong education structures functioning in Greece. The need for the design and production of innovative and differentiated educative materials was also touched upon while the need to improve facilities like buildings and, mostly, new information technology equipment was stressed too.

### **Research Findings and Contribution in the Field of Lifelong Learning in Greece**

The research questions and their findings can aid in the field of Lifelong Education in Greece in the sense that they can first inform all parties interested in the existing situation as well as on thoughts and attitudes of people

who have experience working in it. The fact that the interviews were taken by EFL teachers with a long teaching experience in adult education can offer a clear view of how people with a thorough knowledge of English offered as a foreign language subject matter within lifelong education in Greece could contribute to its improvement and further development. At the same time, these are the people who will apply most of the changes since they are directly involved in the lifelong learning field in Greece.

Also, the research findings could sensitize public bodies responsible for the planning, funding and the materialization of lifelong learning courses by indicating to them which areas need more attention. For instance, teacher training was mentioned by all teachers as a need. Besides training already being provided, more teacher training courses on adult education could be organized by the bodies responsible. Infrastructures could be better funded too and emphasis could be placed on equipping all establishments with Information and Communication Tools. Furthermore, more teaching materials could be produced.

## CONCLUSION

The present research on Greek EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards English offered in lifelong education structures in Greece posed three research questions which it attempted to answer taking as feedback information from interviews taken by five Greek EFL teachers with teaching experience in Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Centers of Lifelong Learning operating in Greece.

The research questions aimed to investigate teachers' knowledge and experience concerning English offered in the field of lifelong education in Greece, their beliefs and attitudes towards it as well as their ideas and suggestions towards the need for changes or improvements in fields like educative materials used in these structures, facilities offered and teacher training of adult educators teaching English as a foreign language subject matter.

The findings showed that Greek EFL teachers are aware of the legislative and operational framework of lifelong learning structures functioning in Greece since they have all had teaching experience in them. The teachers also believe in the need to continue providing adult learners with educative programs that aim at their English as a foreign language learning because this would be useful to adults for both professional and personal reasons. The teachers' attitude is positive toward the need to make improvements in the field. More specifically, teachers insist on providing all their EFL teacher colleagues with more-both pre and in-service—training and, in fact, the training not only on adult

education methodology but on teaching English as a foreign language as well. The teachers also say that public bodies have to support lifelong education structures' operation by the provision of more technical and information technology equipment and by improving infrastructures like buildings and hygiene factors. They finally agree that, though there is no need for specifically prescribed textbooks, and that teachers should be left free to diagnose learner needs and design differentiated courses, more materials should be published to aid practitioners.

Further research could be conducted on the topic. Greek EFL teachers are becoming more and more aware of lifelong learning structures offering English as a foreign language subject matter; they also become more experienced in working in these structures as the years go by and they could thus make more useful suggestions towards changes. Public bodies have shown during the past decades that they have the intention of promoting adult education through funding and teacher training. Being the major practitioners teaching English to adults, Greek EFL teachers' contribution to state decisions could prove crucial for the improvement of lifelong education functioning in Greece.

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