

THE ROLE OF LITERACY IN VOCABULARY & MORPHOSYNTACTIC DEVELOPMENT IN ARABIC-SPEAKING REFUGEES & MIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the role of literacy in the acquisition of vocabulary (i.e. both receptive and expressive) and morphosyntax in refugee and migrant adolescents. Previous studies have shown that vocabulary and morphosyntax are strongly correlated; while others claim that they are subjected to different mechanisms. Recent studies in bilingual children have found that lexical knowledge and literacy boost the acquisition of morphosyntax. In the present study participated ten refugee and migrant adolescents. Half of them received literacy support in Greek through schooling (i.e. the control group); while the other half received additional literacy support (two hours per week) attending teaching interventions (i.e. the experimental group). The methodology used was the following: the participants were tested by means of pre-tests, then two-month teaching interventions were implemented and post-tests were administered. Both tests and teaching interventions examined vocabulary and morphosyntactic features. The results have shown that the control group had better scores on receptive vocabulary during the administration of the pre-tests; while this difference was disappeared after the teaching interventions. No other differences were found between the groups. The findings suggest that in so short time span (2 months) it is difficult to observe significant results in expressive skills; nonetheless literacy can positively affect receptive vocabulary; while the expressive skills (vocabulary and morphosyntax) need more time. Finally, correlations between morphosyntax and receptive and expressive vocabulary were detected confirming the strong relation of the two domains.

Keywords: Literacy, vocabulary, morphosyntax, refugees/migrants.