HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
Hugvísindasvið

English in Adult Education

MA Essay

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September 2014

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Abstract

The study was conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of a specialized program to meet the needs of adults who have diverse English skills and use English as a Lingua Franca. The program was developed for Menntastoðir, an adult education program in Reykjanesbær. Menntastoðir is an adult education institution that provides opportunities for improving adults' knowledge and competences. The purpose of the study is to map out the type and amount of English exposure among Menntastoðir students and to examine whether the course improved students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation. The study also investigates if the materials and specific teaching strategies used in the classroom helped students make progress. Moreover, the study focuses on participants' feedback to generate a discussion on how instructors can meet the needs of individual adult learners.

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1 Introduction

Learning in adulthood is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by a single learning theory or principles. The field of adult learning has sparked much interest and controversy among educators. In the last decades the area of adult education has gone through many changes. A contemporary approach to learning in adulthood is grounded in the notion that adults are participants in their own learning in contrast to traditional approach that was teacher centered.

Teaching adult learners is a challenging task as adults are a group of individuals who 'self-direct' their learning. Educators guide and assist learners; but they are not responsible for their learning. Adults are practical, which means that they make an effort to learn if they consider learning meaningful in their daily life experiences. To maximize learning, it is critical to provide students with relevant teaching practices and clear objectives. One of the most important factors in adult education is to address the notion of learners' diversity which reflects in different areas of life. Effective teachers of adults recognize the importance of adjusting teaching instruction according to learners' needs and expectations. Successful educators understand that adults come to a classroom with extensive life experiences and different priorities. Moreover, adults are engaged in a variety of tasks outside school, which might influence their learning outcome. Recognizing adults' multiple roles and commitments is a crucial issue, therefore teaching adults requires flexibility. Under the circumstances that English in Iceland is used as a Lingua Franca, it is important to support learners' by embracing different varieties of English. Teaching adult learners in Iceland is a unique experience as English is no longer considered to be a foreign language but a second language. As the exposure to English in Iceland is extensive, it is necessary to correspond to this linguistic trend by implementing meaningful teaching practices. Adults are more likely to participate in a learning process if they are provided with proper support and encouragement. It is critical therefore to promote the idea of continuing education and motivate adults to develop the quality of their life.

The thesis aims at examining the effectiveness of an English program offered by Menntastoðir in Reykjanesbær. The study attempts to discover whether the English course meets the expectations of adults learners. Specifically, the thesis aims at

examining whether materials and teaching practices improved learners' English in reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation. Importantly, the thesis is to generate a discussion on how instructors can teach English to adults who use English as a Lingua Franca. The study is meaningful since there has been relatively little research in the field of adults language learning in general.

The thesis is organized as follows. The first chapter includes the introduction that is followed by the lieterature reviev referring to the charactreistcics of adult learning. Chapter 3 includes the description of study. Next, chapter 4 includes the statistical results of the study, while chapters 5 and 6 are concerned with the discussion and the final conclusions respectively.

2 Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 *Characteristics of adult learning*

Until recently, there has been relatively little research in the field of adult education. Most educators assume that the difference between the ways adults and children learn can be attributed mainly to their age difference, especially in language learning, but the difference goes far beyond age. Effective adult education is based on an understanding of how adults learn and what factors determine their learning success or failure. This chapter addresses some characteristics of adult learning with particular attention to early and current theories of adult learning. It also presents the Andragogical Model of learning (Rachal, 1994). The notion of Andragogy is defined as a learner-focused education, while pedagogy refers to a teacher focused education (Conner, 2004). Next, the chapter examines the notion of social context of adult learning. Moreover, it discusses the role of objectives, relevance and motivation in adult learning. Additionally, the topic of English as a Lingua Franca is explored and its effect on adult education. Furthermore, the chapter covers the topics of English in Iceland and how it effects lifelong learning. Finally, the last section focuses on Miðstöð símenntunar á Suðurnesjum, a lifelong learning center; that promotes adult learning.

2.2 *Theories of Adult Learning.*

As early as the middle of the nineteenth century, scholars have been interested in the ways adults learn. Psychologists and philosophers have tried to understand the nature of learning, and what factors determine whether or not learning occurs. Scholars have suggested many theories, and these theories differ in many respects. The majority of scholars claim that theories help educators facilitate a learning process, as it may "increase our understanding of a real-world event or behavior or they may help us predict what will happen in a given situation" (Toracco, 1997: 114). Nevertheless, there are some psychologists who object to theories. To be more specific, Hilgard & Bower (1996:143) claim theories "send the investigator down the wrong path, and even if the scientific logic makes them self-correcting, the paths back are strewn with discarded theories". Gagné (1965) postulates "I do not think learning is a phenomenon which can be explained by simple theories, despite the admitted intellectual appeal that such

theories have" (p. 5). It seems important to investigate the theories that dominated the field of learning, and see what changes have occurred throughout the years.

2.2.1 Early Theories of Adult Learning

The twentieth century debate on how people learn focused mainly on Behaviorism and Cognitivism (Skinner, 1968). According to behaviorists, "a study of psychology must be based on a study of that which is overtly observable: physical stimuli, the muscular movements and glandular secretions which they arose, and the environmental products that ensue. The behaviorists differed among themselves as to what may be inferred in addition to what is measured, but they all exclude self-observation" (Hilgard & Bower, 1996:75). In other words, behaviorists have a common conviction that all behavior is triggered by external stimuli. Watson (1878-1958) is considered the father of Behaviorism, while Thorndike (1874- 1949) is the first modern psychologist who brought a scientific approach to the study of learning. Thorndike's theory of learning has also been called Connectionism, as the theory was centered on association between sense impressions and reactions to action. Importantly, Thorndike developed three laws that were believed to determine the learning of animals and human beings:

1. The law of readiness (the circumstances under which a learner tends to be satisfied or annoyed, to welcome or to reject).
2. The law of exercise (the strengthening of connections with practice).
3. The law of effect (the strengthening or weakening of a connection as a result of its consequences). (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2012: 24).

Skinner (1904-1990) is considered the father of modern Behaviorism, as he further elaborated and refined Thorndike's learning theory. Similarly, Skinner claims human beings respond to stimuli, and behavior followed by reinforcement (positive or negative) is likely either to reoccur or disappear. In other words, Skinner believes that through proper reinforcement, teachers can promote the occurrence of desirable behaviors, and decrease the occurrence of negative behaviors.

Concurrent with Thorndike's work on Stimulus-Response theory, the Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) developed the term classical conditioning. Pavlov conducted an experiment in which he proved that behaviors are shaped by stimuli. The scholar conducted the research in which dogs were observed. Pavlov found that dogs salivate when the occurrence of food is signaled by a ringing bell. Referring to

a learning process itself, Pavlov's research provides an explanation of how and why students respond emotionally to various situations. The emotional reactions acquired through conditioning might include fear or excitement toward a particular subject or person. In the classroom, teachers implement positive and negative reinforcement, which is a common practice encouraging positive behavior. In simple terms, students can be rewarded for good behavior and punished for misbehavior. Consequently, rewards are used to reinforce a particular behavior, whereas punishments are implemented to weaken a particular behavior (Skinner, 1938).

Behavioral theories have proved useful in some types of learning that include drills and practice, however it has not focused on learner's cognitive development. In the 1970s and 1980s, the approach to learning changed dramatically. Behavioral theories gave way to cognitive theories, which emphasized the importance of mental processes that influence learning.

Jean Piaget (1896- 1980) was the first person to consider learning a developmental cognitive process. Cognitive theorists claimed that people construct knowledge by exploring the world around them. The scholar based his theories observing children. Piaget assumes "that children construct knowledge for themselves by actively making sense of their environment". (Pinter, 2006: 6). Piaget mapped out four stages of growth: Sensori-motor stage (from birth to two years of age), Pre-operational stage (from two to seven years of age), Concrete operational stage (from seven to eleven years of age) and Formal operational stage (from eleven years extending into adulthood). Piaget states that learning is strongly determined by biological, physical and developmental stage factors. According to Piaget, learning in adulthood requires a specific approach since adults' needs and interests are different from children's.

Constructivism is a theory of learning that is centered on the belief that human beings create knowledge and build new ideas relying on their current and previous experiences. According to Splitter (2009) constructivism is "an epistemological and psychological theory about how we learn by actively and consciously bringing our past experiences and understandings into a collaborative exercise with other students, as we process, interpret and negotiate the meaning of new information" (p. 3). In simple terms, people develop their understanding about the world, as they have current knowledge and previous experiences. Also, individuals can incorporate their new

concepts and ideas into previous experiences. According to Nyback (2013) "With personal constructivism, the learner attaches meaning using previous knowledge and experience; an internal change in cognitive schemata occurs as a result of the learner's connection to the current environment" (p. 5). Constructivism supports Piaget's belief that people are not passively engaged in their learning process, but they actively create their meaning about the world (Piaget, 1997). Moreover, Constructivism relies on Kelly's theory of personal constructs (Kelly, 1991) that posits that people create knowledge about the world through their experiences. Since teaching methods are changing and more emphasis is put on individual learning, Constructivism theory is considered to be important in current teaching curriculum. To be more specific, in a traditional approach to teaching, the focus was put on a teacher's performance, while students were not much involved in a learning process. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993) claim that a current curriculum should be based on a Constructivist theory that encourages learners' autonomy and inquisitiveness, whereas a teacher should be only a facilitator.

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT), developed by Mezirov (1991), is centered on the cognitive learning process and its role in transforming how a person perceives the world and views oneself (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). According to Mezirov (1996) "learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future actions" (p. 162). TLT posits that learning can transform person's feelings, beliefs and attitudes. "A change in perspective is personally emancipating in that one is freed from previously held beliefs, attitudes, values, and feelings that have constricted and distorted one's life" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999: 320). Mezirov (1981) developed the following phases in the transformation of one's perspective.

1. a disorienting dilemma
2. self- examination
3. a critical assessment of personally internalized role assumptions and a sense of alienation from traditional social experiences
4. relating one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues recognizing that one's problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter

5. exploring options for new ways of acting
6. building competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. planning a course of action
8. acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
9. provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback
10. a reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective
11. (p. 7).

Mezirov (1997) defines change in one's "frame of reference". He describes frames of reference as "the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences" (p. 5). According to Mezirov (1997), the frame of reference consists of two dimensions: "habits of mind and a point of view" (p. 5). A person's habits of mind are influenced by social, cultural, political or economic factors (p. 6). A person expresses a specific point of view as "the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation" (p. 6). According to Mezirov (1997), learners' habits of mind are more likely to change than their points of view.

Mezirov (1997) points out that "we do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frames of reference" (p. 7). In other words, not all learning is subject to change. A person is more likely to transform their point of view if what they learn does not fit into their set of beliefs.

According to the Transformational Learning Theory, learners should become autonomous and independent thinkers who are able to make responsible decisions (Mezirov, 1981). All in all, encouraging an autonomous approach to learning among adult learners is an important educational objective.

2.2.2 Social Theories of language learning

Social learning theories posit that learning occurs within a social context (Mitchel, Myles & Marsden, 2013). According to Richards & Smith (2002: 493) a social learning theory is "an approach to SLA derived from Vygotsky's work which emphasized the casual relationship between social interaction and cognitive development". Vygotsky (1978: 90) emphasized the importance of social factors and assumed that "learning is a

necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function". In his socio-cultural theory, Vygotsky assumes that individual development can be only understood with reference to cultural and social factors that are deeply embedded in human cognition. Vygotsky (1978:103) coined the term the "Zone of Proximal Development", which "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." In other words, ZPD is the gap between what learners can understand alone and what can be achieved with the guidance of more capable peers. According to Saville-Troike (2006: 112) the best way to help students within ZPD is through scaffolding. The notion of scaffolding was introduced by Bruner (1973) who describes scaffolding as "a process of 'setting up' the situation to make the child's entry easy and successful as he becomes skilled enough to manage it" (p. 60). In simple terms, children should be provided with proper guidance, but they should also start solving tasks independently at the right time. Scaffolding also refers to adult learning. Adult learners should be provided with instructors' assistance in order to be able to learn effectively (Fisher & Frey, 2010). Except for teacher's guidance, it is important that adults get engaged in group work in order to work effectively. Fisher & Frey (2010) state that their "experience and reviews of the research suggest that the teacher must be involved in guided instruction, using appropriate scaffolds, while students are engaged in productive group work with their peers" (p.2). Moreover, Majid (2010) points out that adults are a diverse group of learners; therefore a variety of tasks should be implemented to cater to different learning styles. Majid (2010) explains that adults' different educational and life experiences are viewed as a "means to scaffold their learning process"(p. 1). All in all, adult learners can learn successfully provided that they have an opportunity to be guided by instructors and work with other peers. It is important to take adult learners' diversity into account in order to facilitate learners' understanding.

The next section will focus on more current theories of learning.

2.2.3   Current Theories of Adult Learning

Brain-based Learning Theory originated in the first decade of the 21st century and seeks to explain what factors determine learning. Caine and Caine (2002: 15) describe brain-based learning as "recognition of the brain's codes for meaningful learning and adjusting the teaching process in relation to those codes". In simple terms, the brain mechanisms influence learning, and educators can recognize these mechanisms in order to facilitate learning. Materna (2000) points out that the Brain-Based Learning Theory attempts to provide a new educational framework, that is different than the traditional approaches.

Caine and Caine (2002: 24) identify the following principles that are important in a learning environment.

- Learning engages the entire physiology,
- The search for meaning is innate,
- The search for meaning occurs through patterning,
- Emotions are critical to patterning,
- Every brain simultaneously perceives and creates parts and wholes,
- Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral attention,
- Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes,
- We have at least two types of memory systems: spatial and rote learning
- The brain understands and remembers best when facts and skills are embedded in natural spatial memory
- Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat
- Every brain is unique.

Ozden & Gultekin (2008) claim that in order to make learning effective, real life experiences should occur in teaching. They posit that "Learning becomes more expressive when the brain supports the processes in search of meaning and patterning" (p. 2). They explain that such an approach can "internalize and individualize learning experiences" (p. 2). According to Brain-based Theory, establishing good communication with learners and guiding them through their learning can maximize the effectiveness of teaching. Brain-based Theory posits that it is important to eliminate learners' fear and anxiety by creating a stress-free learning environment. According to Ozden & Gultekin

(2008) brain-based classrooms are "brain friendly places" where learners can engage in a variety of challenging tasks (p. 3). Furthermore, according to Fogarty (2002) all learners are unique; therefore it is critical to be responsive to new teaching practices.

In brain-based learning, there are three important phases: orchestrated immersion, relaxed alertness and active processing (Ozden & Gultekin: 2008). Orchestrated immersion focuses on helping learners to "grasp the gist" of a teaching material (p. 3). The relaxed alertness denotes challenging learners with a low level of anxiety (p. 3). Finally, active processing means "the theoretical organization and internalization of the meaningful information by learners" (Caine & Caine: 2002). Finally, a Brain-based Theory posits that different teaching strategies should be implemented as a learning experience, while students should be encouraged to take risks (Jacobs, 1997).

All in all, Brain-based Theory relies on current research according to which brain mechanisms enables learners to learn more effectively. Educators are encouraged to enhance their teaching instruction through recognizing the importance of brain functions.

The recent theory of Multiple Intelligence, proposed by Gardner (1993), aims at explaining learning through the notion of multiple intelligence that exists in human beings. According to Gardner (1993: 8) "there is persuasive evidence for the existence of several relatively autonomous human intellectual competences that can be fashioned and combined in a multiplicity of adaptive ways by individuals and cultures". Gardner (1993) identified the following kinds of intelligence :

- Linguistic- writing, reading, telling stories
- Logical-mathematical- calculating, reasoning
- Musical- sensitivity to rhythm and sound
- Spatial- visualizing, designing
- Bodily-kinesthetic- dancing, gesturing
- Interpersonal- understanding other people
- Intrapersonal- understanding one's own interests

Gardner (1993) claims that human beings have different kinds of intelligence, therefore their learning styles are diverse. He explains that effective instructors

recognize the importance of introducing different teaching instructions in order to fit in with the varying learning styles of students.

Very recently, Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML), originated by Mayer, is centered on the belief that "learners attempt to build meaningful connections between words and pictures and that they learn more deeply than they could have with words or pictures alone" (Mayer, 2009:15). By implementing visual aids, learners "build a coherent mental representation of the presented material" (Sorden, 2005). CTML claims that adult learning is limited by the capacity of human mind and that learners organize their knowledge in a proper way if they focus on relevant material (Mayer & Moreno, 1998). Moreover, CTML relies on the use of online learning that expands learning possibilities through a variety of challenging tasks.

Multimedia Learning Theory has influenced instruction. Learners can learn more effectively when they are stimulated by both words and sounds. CTML theory of learning aims at encouraging learning through innovative solutions that sustain learners' attention. This theory is centered on the idea that modern society needs challenging approaches to learning.

To sum up, the theories of adults learning described in this section have been developed in an attempt to understand the process of learning and enhance teaching instruction. Learning theories help instructors guide teaching and understand learners' limitations. Current theories of learning suggest that brain mechanisms influence learning.

The next section will focus on characteristics of adult second language learning.

2.2. Adult Second Language Learning

Age has been considered an important factor in second language acquisition. Collier (1988) suggests that success in L2 acquisition highly depends on age. Previous studies conducted by Johnson & Newman (1989) showed evidence that there is a correlation between the age of acquisition and language accuracy, in that the younger learners are, the higher their language proficiency is (Lenneberg, 1967). Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypothesis claims that there is a certain period where young learners are more predisposed to language learning. Some researchers claim that after the period of

puberty, it becomes more difficult to acquire native-like proficiency, whereas others assume that adults can reach a native-like proficiency as well. Despite the fact that children are more likely to develop native-like fluency in the long run, adults can learn a second language quicker than children in the early stages (Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979). These findings might suggest that adults can outperform children in achieving a working ability to communicate. Nevertheless, it is generally believed that young learners have an advantage over adults in L2 attainment. Early studies conducted by Lenneberg (1967) supported the Critical Period Hypothesis and demonstrated that adults are not as good at second language learning as children. The scholar posits that after the period of lateralization (the distinction between right and left hemisphere) the brain loses plasticity making a learning process more difficult. According to the studies of Bialystok & Hakuta (1994), Johnson & Newport (1989) and Oyama (1978) language learning abilities in L2 start declining from age 6 or 7 to 16 or17. However, Hinkel (2005:447) suggests that Critical Period Hypothesis is a controversial topic and researchers provide "incompatible interpretations to this phenomenon". In simple terms, following Hinkel (2005) it can be assumed that scholars' explanations of critical period hypothesis are not clear and need more clarifications.

2.2.4   Specific effects of Age on SLA

The impact of the age factor has become a popular excuse for people who find learning a second language problematic. Learners frequently tend to attribute the lack of second language proficiency to their age, whereas there might be other issues that should be considered instead (Wlodkowski, 2008). Namely, when children speak a second language they use a relatively small range of vocabulary and grammar (Bialystok, 1994). Conversely, adults have advantages over children in terms of higher cognitive development and life experiences, which helps them to learn a second language quicker (Krashen, Scarcella, & Long, 1982). In particular, adults have higher grammatical sensitivity and understanding of semantic relations (Bialystok (1994). Moreover, according to Bialystok (1994) adults can make associations and generalizations more ably than children. Children are more likely to gain native like fluency than adults, nevertheless adults' acquisition of a new language is not hindered after the period of puberty. Schaie (2005:36) posits "According to longitudinal studies, most normal, healthy adults can be effective learners well into old age". According to Wlodkowski

(2008) "There is evidence that the brains of adults in their seventies and eighties continue to produce new neurons for cognition" (p. 86). Willis (2006) also explains "The combination of physical exercise, stimulating environments, and continued learning appears to be able to increase brain cell growth and connections throughout life" (Wlodkowski, 2011:36). In simple terms, older adults can learn effectively if they exercise their brain by involvement in physical and mental activities. In fact, younger students' reaction time is quicker than that of adult learners due to some changes in the nervous system.

Furthermore, it is believed that health can also affect all learning. Namely, one of the biggest disadvantages that adults might face is the decline in eyesight. Nevertheless, this problem may be alleviated by use of eyeglasses and brighter lighting. Pesce and other scholars (2005) showed evidence that it can be problematic for older adults to process visual information from a computer screen or a projector. Additionally, hearing impairment can affect "more than 25 percent of adults over the age of 65, and more than 50 percent of males over the age of 75" (Bee & Bjorkland, 2004:56). Concurrent with the hearing impairment, older adults may develop a "translation" problem (Wlodkowski, 2008: 37). It is explained as follows, "Rapid speech is more difficult for older adults to decipher. In addition, adults over 50 usually have some impairment in discerning very soft sounds and high-pitched sounds" (Wlodkowski, 2008: 37). The scholar also assumes that "Attending to the acoustic environment and modelling the speed of presentation and verbal delivery can help older adults adjust for this sensory loss" (Wlodkowski, 2008:37). All in all, despite the decline in vision and hearing, adults can still be effective language learners provided that they are properly supported by educators and their learning environment. Except for minor considerations such as vision loss and hearing, the age of adults is not a major factor influencing their ability to acquire a second language. The most significant factor in adult language acquisition is the context in which they learn. Instructors should eradicate this common stereotype that adults' ability to learn a new language is determined by their age. Also, it is important to acknowledge that the greatest obstacles to adult language learning are ineffective teaching methods and an improper learning environment.

All in all, it cannot be concluded that children are better second language learners. The main difference lies in the fact that adults and children learn differently. This suggests that it is important to select teaching strategies and materials according to the age group and their specific needs.

The next section will move to Andragogical Instructional Model of teaching.

2.3   Andragogy as an Instructional Model of Teaching

The existence of various learning theories help educators establish instructional practices. For example, instruction can be reinforced by applying Behavioral Theory of instrumental teaching; according to which learning can be encouraged through positive or negative reinforcement. Also, Cognitive Theory can be applied into teaching by recognizing the importance of developmental stages of learners. Moreover, educators can establish instruction referring to Constructivist Theory; that posits teachers should engage learners in various activities in order to help them discover meaning for themselves. Furthermore, Transformative Theory can reinforce instruction through placing emphasis on learners' independency and autonomy. Finally, more current theories of Multimedia Learning or Brain-based Theories can be used to establish proper instruction and meet learners' needs. Since adult learners are diverse and learn for specific reasons; not all of the above mentioned theories could be used by adults educators to establish meaningful teaching instruction. To meet the needs of unique adult learners, Andragogical Instructional Model was designed.

The term *andragogy* was originally used by Kapp in1833. According to Bolden (2008),

> The intent of the concept of andragogy was to present a shift from pedagogical approaches that were teacher directed to a learner-centered methodology in which the needs of the learner are considered and the learner collaborates with the instructor in decisions that are made about the learner's education. The role of the instructor is that of facilitator and coach instead of expert authoritarian (p. 3).

In other words, in the andragogical model, learners become participants in their own learning, whereas a teacher is only a facilitator. According to Knowles (1984), the role of facilitators is immense, as their role is to create a safe environment promoting trust and physical climate. Mezirow (1981:15) claims andragogy is "an organized and

sustained effort to assist adults to learn in a way that enhances their capability to function as self-directed learners". The concept of andragogy "meant art and science of helping adults learn, and was ostensibly the antithesis of the pedagogtical model" (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005:59). Importantly, Knowles (1984) assumed adult learning is a complex process in which learners acquire knowledge only under certain conditions .

Knowles (1984) associated andragy with a range of instructional practices that could be used by instructors to maximize learners' abilities. Assumptions of the andragogical model and their applications in teaching are presented below.

1. **The need to know**. Adults need to know why they learn something to be able to undertake learning; otherwise they do not make an effort to improve. Also, it is important to trigger students' need to learn. According to Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2012) the level of adults' awareness could be raised by showing learners "the gaps between where they are now and where they want to be". Moreover, the scholars suggest that adults' learning could be enhanced by "Personnel appraisal systems, job rotation, exposure to role models, and diagnostic performance assessments…"." (p. 63). In other words, adults are more likely to make intellectual growth if they are properly motivated.

2. **The learners' self-concept**. Adults need to feel capable of making their own decisions to develop their "self-direction". Additionally, they feel resistant when some rules are imposed on them. According to Brookfield (1986:84) "Facilitators should create environments where adults develop their latent self-directing learning skills". Knowles (1975) assumes that the "self-directing concept is a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others" (p. 18). In other words, Knowles suggests that adults can learn more efficiently and quicker if they are encouraged to take initiative and choose a learning strategy that they would benefit from the most. Moreover, the scholar assumes that adults who passively wait to be taught by their teachers are less likely to gain educational growth than those students who are actively involved in their learning process. Following Knowles, Holton& Swanson (2012) "As adult educators become aware of this problem, they make efforts to create

learning experiences in which adults are helped to make the transition from dependent to self-directing learners" (p.64).

3. **The role of the learners' experiences**. Adults enter an educational activity with a great volume of life experience that can either prompt or hinder their educational growth. Firstly, adults can use these experiences to their advantage since they are often aware of the goals that they want to achieve. Furthermore, grown-ups can be mature in their approach to education and make responsible decisions. On the other hand, the accumulation of life experience can be problematic in a learning process since adults have already developed habits and they can reject new ideas that are proposed in the learning environment. It is improper to devalue or ignore adults' as quite often adult learners "define themselves in terms of the experiences they have had" (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005: 65). Hence, it is a challenging task for educators to accept adults' identities and needs and to help them overcome learning obstacles. Importantly, teaching adults requires diverse teaching strategies to prompt motivation and intellectual growth. Following Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2005: 65) "the emphasis in adult education is on experiential techniques, techniques that tap into the experience of the learners, such as group discussions, simulation exercises, problem solving activities, case methods, and laboratory methods instead of transmittal techniques". Additionally, the collaborative work can help students open their minds to new ways of thinking.

4. **Readiness to learn**. In learning easier tasks should precede more difficult activities to avoid disappointment and possible pitfalls. This developmental movement is "a developmental task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society, and difficulty with later tasks" (Knowles, 1980: 51). Specifically, the materials or teaching strategies that are used at an improper time can hinder learners' development and result in educational failure. It is therefore advisable to devise adult-education programs in accordance with the assumption that the materials should be well sequenced and timed. As Knowles explains, (1980:51) "If the teachable moment for particular adults to acquire a given learning is to be captured, it is obvious that the sequence of the

curriculum must be timed so as to be in step with their developmental tasks". Planning lessons to appropriate sequence is therefore important.

5. **Orientation to learning**. Adults are practical in their orientation to learning, which means that they usually make an effort to learn, provided that they perceive learning helpful in their daily life experiences. Similarly, by virtue of nature, they do not come into an educational activity, if they realize that they will not benefit from learning in their daily life situations. As Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2005: 66) suggest, "…adults are life centered (or task-centered or problem-centered) in their orientation to learning" in contrast to children who are "subject centered". Adults are likely to perform various tasks quicker and more effectively if they are able to apply knowledge in real life. Thus, it is crucial to remember that school textbooks should be as authentic as possible so that adults can find some real life applications in them.

6. **Motivation**. Adults engage in an activity if they are properly motivated. Scholars have various definitions of motivation, however "Most social scientists see motivation as a concept that explains why people think and behave as they do." (Weiner, 1992 in Włodkowski, 2008:1). Understanding learners' thinking and behavior facilitates students' learning. The notion of motivation will be discussed in a later section.

It is worth noting that originally Andragogy consisted of 4 assumptions, but it has grown from four to the six described above over time. Specifically, assumption number 1 (the need to know) was added in 1990, whereas assumption number 6 (motivation to learn) in 1984. All in all, the Andragogical Model promotes independence and self-directing (Jarvis, 1985: 51). An educators' role is to encourage and nurture learning environment. Moreover, learners should participate in a variety of activities that include discussions and problem solving issues. Since adults learn what they need to learn, so that learning programs should be organized around real life applications. Furthermore, learning experiences should refer to specific needs and expectations of adult learners to create meaningful and relevant learning environment.

2.3.1   Critics of Andragogy
The concept of Andragogy has met with its supporters and critics. Brookfield (1986) points out that the assumptions "relating learning to particular social roles and focusing

on immediate application can lead to a narrow reductionist view of learning; that is, learning how to perform at an improved level of competence in some predefined skill domain" (p. 99). Griffin (1991) posits Andragogy lacks a "sense of historical, economic, and cultural forces that shape the possibilities for and the meaning of individual growth and transformation'' (p. 268). More recent critics note that Andragogy ignores a social factor of learning and focuses only on the individual learner (Merriam, Cafarella, Baumgartner, 2007: 88). Sandlin (2005: 27), identifies five critical issues that come from different perspectives. They are:

1. Andragogy assumes wrongly that education is value neutral and apolitical.
2. Andragogy promotes a generic adult learner as universal with White-middle class values.
3. Andragogy ignores other ways of knowing and silences other voices.
4. Andragogy ignores the relationship between self and society.
5. Andragogy is reproductive of inequalities and; it supports the status quo.

All in all, Andragogy is criticized for the assumption that learning is not affected by cultural and political factors. Moreover, Andragogy assumes all learners acquire knowledge in the same way. Furthermore, Andragogy does not take any other ways of learning into account. Finally, structural systems that are based on race, gender and class are not taken into consideration at all.

Despite the fact that Andragogy has met with its critics, it has been very influential in a range of settings. According to Pratt (1993:7) Andragogy is "the window through which adult educators take their first look into the world of instructing adults". Andragogy is a "unifying concept of adult education" and it may help facilitators to understand adults as learners (p. 7). Moreover, Andragogical assumptions could be used to foster online learning where individual needs and expectations are taken into account (Burge, 1988). Also, Andragogy has been very influential in lifelong learning institutions where learners have different education and personal backgrounds (Burge, 1988). The concept of Andragogy has reached a global dimension as it "describes the process of educating and leading adults to fulfill their role as parent, educator, citizen or worker" (Henschke, 2008: 8).

The next sections will focus on the importance of objectives, relevance and motivation in adult learning.

2.3.2   *The role of clear learning objectives*

Adults are goal-oriented, therefore it is strongly advisable to set clear objectives to help learners attain their goals (Wlodkowski, 2008). More specifically, students need to be instructed as to what skills they will accomplish by the end of a course and what is required from them. According to Mager (1997) an "instructional objective is a collection of words and/or pictures and diagrams intended to let others know what you intend for your students to achieve" (p.3).

- It is related to intended outcomes, rather than the process for achieving those outcomes.

- It is specific and measurable, rather than broad and intangible.

- It is concerned with students, not teachers. (p.3)

When teachers give lectures (process), they want their students to learn (outcome). Moreover, objectives need to be clear and logical in order to be understood by learners. Furthermore, objectives that can be seen or heard are considered measurable. Additionally, instructional objectives refer to students' performance, rather than the teacher's performance. Mager (1997) assumes that:

> instruction is only successful to the degree that it succeeds in changing students in desired ways, rather than in undesired ways. If instruction doesn't change anyone in desired ways, it isn't any good, regardless of how elegant the lectures are or how complicated the hardware used to present it is (p. 13).

The importance of instruction is stressed by Wlodkowski (2008) who concludes that "objectives provide the mutual bond for learning and are why cooperation makes sense" (p. 153). He explains that objectives are important as they function as a "unifying force", and 'set the purpose for learning" (p.153).

Bloom & Stent (1956) devised a classification system of objectives that were recognized on a global scale. Nowadays, this classification system is known as Bloom's taxonomy that includes six objectives. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) revised Bloom's system and devised a new classification order that more accurately refers to recent

research on brain functioning. Graphic 1 below represents Original Bloom's Taxonomy, whereas graphic 2 refers to the revised Levels of Blooms' Taxonomy.
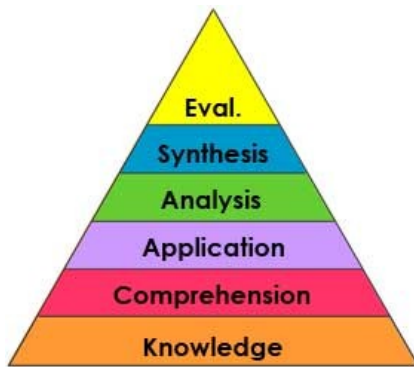
Graphic 1. Original Bloom's Taxonomy (1956)
Taxonomy (2001)

Graphic 2. Revised Levels of Bloom's

Source: Adapted from Sousa, 2006, pp.249-250.

The major difference between the two graphics is the shift from nouns to verbs. Following graphic 2 educators can check learners' competence.

Instructional objectives are essential in adult development since they help learners make choices and organize their knowledge. Objectives are the cornerstone of effective instruction as they guide adults through the learning process and demonstrate the value of what is being taught.

2.3.3   Relevance and Strategies for meeting students' needs

Important and meaningful materials maximize learning. It is important to tap into adults' experiences and refer to their personal interests in order to keep them focused and motivated. According to Wlodkowski (2008), "for adults to see learning as truly relevant it has to be connected to who they are, what they care about, and how they perceive and know." (p. 214). He points out that learners can become bored very quickly if a lesson is not relevant for them. (p.214). Wlodkowski (2008) explains that "the fastest avenue to their interest and involvement is a relevant lesson" (p. 214). In particular, if adults find lessons aimless, they lose interest immediately and do not make an effort to memorize information and participate in activities. Instinctively, many

adults do not accept information that does not serve any meaningful purpose in their life. Building a motivational environment sparks learners' interest and create a successful learning experience. More specifically, there are various strategies to build more positive attitudes toward learning. Wlodkowski (2008: 136-223) provides numerous ways to enhance the feeling of connection among adults. The most significant strategies are listed below.

Strategy 1. The importance of introductions (Wlodkowski, 2008:136).

Introductions are important . However, it is crucial to welcome the group and say a few words about yourself. It is also significant to let students introduce themselves, which help them reduce the tension and break the ice (Wlodkowski, 2008).

Strategy 2. The role of multidimensional sharing (Wlodkowski, 2008: 136).

Wlodkowski& Ginsberg (1995:137) explain that multidimensional sharing are "those occasions, ranging from introductory exercises to personal anecdotes to classroom celebrations" when learners have a better opportunity to "see one another as complete, evolving human beings who have mutual needs, emotions and experiences" (p. 137). One of the ways to enhance the process of learning in general is to let learners discuss their daily life experiences. Consequently, such discussions help learners relax and enhance learning.

Strategy 3. The importance of assistance (Wlodkowski, 2008: 138).

There is a range of learners who experience learning related anxiety. To alleviate tension, it is important to assure students that they can always seek assistance and help. This strategy is extremely important due to the fact that it builds the feeling of care about the learners who find learning problematic. Hill (2004) claims "We are telling the learners that their vulnerability will be safeguarded and that they will have a nonjudgmental and interested response to their request for assistance" (p. 135). In plain

words, when educators and learners become partners in solving learning problems; the learning process is enhanced.

Strategy 4. The importance of sharing something of value with adult learners. (Wlodkowski, 2008: 139).

One effective way to identify with learners is to refer to their emotions. Identification with learners increases when instructors are perceived as ordinary human beings who also have some perspective on life. In many countries, however, there is a huge distance between learners and students and there is little room for sharing humor and experiences. Jourard (1964) notices that:

> By judiciously self-disclosing our reactions to common experiences–television shows, sporting events, travel, maybe even a little trouble we've had with life along the way–we give adult learners a chance to identify positively with us and become more receptive to our instruction (p.26).

It is important to realize that identification with students increases the success of a learning process.

Strategy 5. The role of collaborative and cooperative learning (Wlodkowski, 2008:140).

Group work is a meaningful learning tool. According to David Johnson and Roger Johnson (1995) "cooperative learning promotes individual achievement significantly more than do competitive or individualistic effort" (Wlodkowski, 2008: 142). Interestingly, Barkley, Cross & Major (2005) "have found abundant evidence that collaborative learning is an effective and motivating format for nontraditional students– underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, working-adult students, commuters, and re-entry students" (p.22). All in all, collaborative learning has a lot of advantages, but most importantly it allows learners to get acquainted with other students' diversity.

Strategy 6. The assessment of learners' current expectations, needs and goals. (Wlodkowski, 2008: 152)

A learning experience is more meaningful if instructors know their students' expectations and concerns regarding the course. It is therefore advisable to get some insight into learners' perspective to check if a learning process is successful. Bearing in mind that teaching adults is a personal and diverse experience, it is extremely important to monitor students' feedback and implement changes if necessary.

Strategy 7. The acknowledgement of different ways of knowing and different levels of skills among learners (Wlodkowski, 2008:158)

Following a stereotypical approach, adults are expected to know more since they are older (Wlodkowski, 2008). By virtue of nature, adults do know more, but they have some limits. Many adults feel embarrassed when they realize that other participants' knowledge in a certain field is more extensive. To reduce learners' intimidation, it is necessary to acknowledge that the level of knowledge and skills can vary among adults, which is natural and commonplace.

Strategy 8. The importance of differentiated instructions (Wlodkowski, 2008: 161).

Educators face a problematic situation when adults feel discouraged to learn since they lack academic skills to perform tasks efficiently. Additionally, learners may also feel disappointed with the fact that they have to devote a lot of time and effort to learning. According to Wlodkowski (2008:) "Seeing diversity as an array of strengths on which to build, it is a flexible form of instruction that matches content, process, and outcomes to students' differences in readiness, interests, and needs" (p. 180). He points out that a flexible approach to content can encourage learners to participate more in classroom activities. (p. 180)

All in all, to meet all learners' needs, it is advantageous to use a number of alternative materials including magazines, journals, media or Internet sources.

Strategy 9. The role of scaffolding and assisted learning (Wlodkowski, 2008: 162).

One of the ways to teach efficiently is to assist students offering help, hints and clues. (Wlodkowski, 2008). Such assistance is called scaffolding, which allows adults to become more independent. Vygotsky (1978) devised the theory that learners make progress when their instructors assist them at an appropriate time. Following Wertsch (1991) the zone of proximal development is "the phase in a learning task when a learner can benefit from assistance (Wlodkowski, 2008:183). In general, adults can work independently to a great extent, but they also need proper assistance at an accurate time.

Strategy 10. The role of assessment (Wlodkowski, 2008: 166).

To encourage learners' positive approach to learning, it is essential to focus not only on learning objectives, but also on the form of assessment (Wlodkowski, 2008). Adults feel more safeguarded if they know the assessment criteria. Wlodkowski (2008) explains that: "Assessment criteria help them to gauge the relationship between their effort and the learning outcomes of that effort. This reflection encourages both strategy and effort attributions that also support their motivation" (p. 202). To conclude, assessment is a powerful tool that can help develop a positive attitude to learning and determine expectations for success.

2.3.4 *Motivation*
Motivation is considered one of the most important factors that determine success in learning. Most scholars have a similar understanding of motivation, although this understanding can vary depending on the discipline.

According to Włodkowski (2008), "Motivation is basic to our survival. It is the natural human process for directing energy to accomplish a goal." (p. 2). He posits that it is problematic to define the notion of motivation, therefore "We have to infer it from what people say and do" (p. 2). Also, the scholar assumes that "being motivated means being purposeful. We use attention, concentration, imagination, passion, and other processes to pursue goals, such as learning a particular subject or completing a degree" (p. 3). Importantly, individuals can achieve their goals, but this achievement is shaped by culture and society. Wlodkowski, (2008) explains that "How we arrive at our goals and how processes such as our passion for a subject take shape are, to some extent,

culturally bond to what we have learned in our families and communities". (p. 3) In other words, individuals who are enthusiastic about learning are more likely to achieve their goals. Nevertheless, different cultural background might account for learning success or failure. Importantly, Guy (2005) explains that educators find it problematic to influence the motivation of "linguistically and culturally different learners". Consequently, educators need to "rely on their experience, intuition, common sense, and trial and error" (Włodkowski, 2008: 3). Also, the scholar suggests some teachers are "pragmatic" in their approach to learners, and expect their students to speak about uncomfortable topics in front of others. Wlodkowski (2008) explains that learners are diverse; therefore it is not reasonable to grade students for their participation in class. Such a practice can cause anxiety and the loss of interest in a particular subject. Instructors should remember to help learners increase their motivation as motivation and learning are inseparable (Zull, 2002). According to Tough (1979) adults are naturally predisposed to develop and grow intellectually, nevertheless this "motivation is frequently blocked by such barriers as negative self-concept as a student, inaccessibility of opportunities or resources, time constraints, and programs that violate principles of adult learning" (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005: 67). In order to help learners overcome the aforementioned obstacles instructors need to know their students' backgrounds since they are culturally diverse. Importantly, students who are more motivated and cooperative achieve better learning results. Moreover, in a friendly environment, instructors are more psychologically positive about teaching. All in all, if learners and instructors cooperate, a learning process is more successful.

Gardner and Lambert (1959) initiated the study of motivation for language learning. The scholars' sociolinguistic study investigated English- speaking students learning French as a second language. In the study two factors were taken into account: Language Aptitude (language learning ability) and Motivation. After the study, Gardner and Lambert " proposed a 'socio-educational model of second language acquisition which centers on two overarching classes of reasons for language learning called orientations. The Integrative Orientation (desire to learn a language in order to interact with, and perhaps to identify with members of L2 community) and the Instrumental Orientation (driven by the learners' practical goals, such as attaining an academic goal or career advancement" (Igoudin, 2008:6). In simple terms, adults are driven by two

kinds of motivation: integrative and instrumental. Instrumental factors can refer to better job opportunities, higher salaries, scholarships or awards, whereas integrative factors are associated with a better quality of life in terms of self-esteem, satisfaction or challenges. Finally, two factors in learners' motivation were recognized. These are intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The latter refers to motivation driven by external factors, whereas the former relates to learning for self-accomplishment (Brown, 1991). Brown points out that most research showed the "superiority of intrinsic motivation in educational settings" (p. 247).

Dörnyei is known for his work on motivation in second language learning. He introduced a motivational model. Dörnyei and Czizer surveyed 200 Hungarian teachers to find out what strategies are the most successful. These strategies (also called 'Ten commandments for motivating language learners') are presented below:

1. Set a personal example with your own behavior
2. Develop a good relationship with the learners
3. Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence
4. Make the language classes interesting
5. Promote learner autonomy
6. Personalize the learning process
7. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness
8. Familiarize learners with the target culture
9. Create a pleasant relaxed atmosphere in the classroom
10. Present the tasks properly (Dörnyei, 2001)

All in all, learners experience different emotions, which are not constantly positive, therefore it is necessary to create a supportive learning environment that will connect with what is relevant to students at a specific time. Finally, teaching adults is an extremely personal activity, thus it is crucial to address all possible problems that learners might face and increase their motivation.

The social context of adult learning will be discussed below.

2.4 Social Context of Adult Learning

Adult learning is shaped by the social context in which it takes place. Rapid development of modern society brings on changes that strongly influence teaching and learning.

Adults need to be responsive to enormous changes that occur in society. These changes are mainly brought on by digital technologies, the global economy and changing demographics. Firstly, technology has changed the world dramatically, which has influenced many aspects of life. People need to know the latest technological inventions to function in present society. In simple terms, without the knowledge of technology, adults find it difficult to learn. To be specific, with the invention of interactive textbooks and e-books students do not have to take notes in class or spend hours in a library. Additionally, teachers use web-based platforms that extend classroom community using online assignments or discussions. Blogging, Twitter or Facebook are also considered educational tools that are so commonly used by students. In addition to technologies that learners incorporate into their learning environment, there is also a vast accumulation of information that adults need to process. It is estimated that in

> 2002 about five exabytes (one exabyte equals over one billion gigabytes) of new information were produced: five exabytes of information are equivalent in size of the Library Congress book collection". They also estimated that the amount of new information stored on paper, film, magnetic, and optical media has about doubled in the last three years. (Merriam, Cafarella, Baumgartner, 2007:18).

The scholars also assume that the access to information is more feasible at present times than it used to be, however the consequence of such a revolution is that educators need to undergo training constantly to stay updated. Importantly, the responsibility of facilitators is immense since they need to become acquainted with the newest inventions in order to help their students use this technology capably. Hence, the need for lifelong education is and will be instantly on the rise. Additionally, the proliferation of technologies enhances adults' educational growth and creates opportunities for people who have specific needs.

2.4.1 Globalization

Globalization is a commonly used term that refers to the movement toward economic, financial or communication integration. According to Merriam, Cafarella &

Baumgartner (2007) "the term has been used to reflect the increasing integration of economics around the world, particularly through trade and the flow of finances. In addition to finances, this "flow" also includes the movement of people and information". (p. 18) Next, following Finger (2005) globalization is a "movement of economic integration, of cultural homogenization, and of technological uniformization" (p. 269). Referring specifically to adult learning, globalization has changed the way an educational environment is perceived. Nowadays, the focus is put on service quality, which means that facilitators need to train themselves quickly to ensure a good quality of teaching. In other words, knowledge has become a product that is sold to learners. As a result, the education environment has become a business where goods are exchanged. Usher, Bryant & Johnston (1997) explain that "Educational institutions themselves become part of the market, selling knowledge as a commodity and increasingly reconstructing themselves as enterprises dedicated to marketing their commodities and to competing in the knowledge business." (p. 4) In other words, educational centers want to ensure their best quality of teaching in order to become prominent in the market, whereas adults search for the best schools that will fulfill their requirements and provide a good quality service. As Haddfield (2003) notices:

"Customer is exactly how adult learners think of themselves, and they hold our institutions of higher education accountable for providing paid-for results and educational experiences that make a difference in their lives." (p.19)

To summarize, globalization is not only understood in terms of trade, financial or communication unity, most importantly the term refers to the flow of information which is "sold" by educators and "bought" by learners. This puts pressure on educational programs to provide the most current, high quality education.

2.4.2   English as a Global Language

Over the years, English has become the most dominant language in the world. The English language is used worldwide in various fields such as economics, culture or technology. There are various reasons for the rise of English as a global language. Nevertheless, there are some traits that are shared by people worldwide. The examples of people's explanations on the rise of English are presented below:

✓ Experts attribute the worldwide spread of English to British colonialism and American culture, rather than to the inherent qualities of the language.... (Rezendes, 1994: 82)

✓ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, English was the language of the leading economic power - the US. (Guardian, 1997: 21)

✓ Experts say the simultaneous rise of the US as a military and technological superpower and the receding of the British empire gave many in the world both the desire and option to choose American English. (Campbell, 1996: 10)

✓ A language becomes an international language for one chief reason: the political power of its people - especially their military power. (Guardian, 1997: 21)

✓ A global economic and political structure needs a common tongue. (Stevenson, 1994: 16)

✓ English is the only language used in international air traffic control and is virtually the only language of a whole range of other activities from scientific research to pop music. (Stevenson, 1996:16)

✓ If trade and tourism around the world are going to operate and a global economy function and a global culture flourish, a widely shared, reasonably accessible language is requisite. (Stevenson, 1996: 16)

✓ For the electronic media that bind the world together are essentially carriers of language...The English language is now the operating standard for global communication. (Economist, 1996)

✓ English is necessary for living on the Internet. (Korpela, 1995:10)

✓ In more than 100 countries, people in chat rooms discuss topics and communicate in English. (Rohde, 1996:12)

To summarize, as English has reached the status of a Global Language, there is increased pressure for people to learn English. In order to participate in the business world, people need to realize that English is a vital part of international economy, society and culture. At present, English is seen more as an additional language, rather than a foreign language. English is the most widely taught language around the world as it is the language of power.

2.4.3   Demographic changes

Demographic changes shape a social reality of contemporary learning. In general, demographics refer to characteristics of people or groups of people. Nowadays, adults

outnumber youth and the number of adults will continue to grow. Merriam, Cafarella & Baumgartner (2007) explain that:

> In comparison to colonial times when half the population was under age 16, in 1990, fewer than one in four Americans were under age 16 and half were age 33 or older. The medium age of the American population of 36.0 years in 2004 is expected to increase to 39.1 in 2035. (p. 8)

The scholars add that "The number of adults over age eighty-five is expected to increase to about seven million in 2020 and to twenty million in 2050" (p. 8) In the face of such a demographic situation, lifelong-learning institutions are on the rise. Today's adults are better educated than the previous generations. Centers that promote continuing adult education emphasize the fact that older adults also have an undeniable potential for an intellectual development. According to statistics in America "22 percent of adults with fewer than four years of high school participate in organized adult education, while 34 percent of high school graduates and 66 percent of college graduates do" (Kim, Collins, Hagedorn, Williamson, & Chapman, 2004 in Merriam, Cafarella & Baumgartner, 2007: 9). Importantly, students who drop out of school at an early age can continue their education and become professionals. As Rachel (1989: 10-11) explains: "adult education may be the only hope of escape" for those who stopped learning at an early stage of their life. In other words, older adults are also given a chance to continue their educational growth despite their age.

Concurrent with the increasing number of older adults in a society, population has become more diverse in terms of culture, race and ethnicity. Many countries experience strong growth in immigrant population. In Iceland, specifically, a vast majority of immigrants come from Poland, the Philippines and Lithuania; which can be a challenge to adult facilitators. To be specific, immigrants have different educational backgrounds; which means that there is a range of people who are either highly or poorly educated. Following Alfred (2004) "This polarization in the composition of the immigrant population suggests that planners of adult and higher education programs face a challenging task as they attempt to meet the variety of needs and expectations that immigrants bring to the new country" (p. 14). In other words, immigrants are changing society by incorporating their own mindsets into monocultural systems.

All in all, digital technologies, the global economy and changing demographic shape a society and influence learning in adulthood. It is crucial to recognize the importance of adapting teaching instructions to these rapid changes in order to help learners exist in a modern society. The next section will focus on in the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

2.5   . English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The term lingua franca refers to the process of using a language as a medium of communication between people of different native languages. According to Samarin (1987:371) lingua franca refers to "any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language". In simple terms, if two people speak English as an additional language, they are both using ELF. Seidlhofer (2011) prefers to think of ELF "as any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (p.7). Seidlhofer suggests ELF speakers use English as a tool to communicate, which is in many cases the only language available.

The concept of ELF is problematic for teaching. Online communication and development of new technologies have changed the way English is used. Researchers argue whether or not Lingua Franca is a "variety in its own right whose norms are established by its users instead of native speakers" (Fiedler, 2011: 81). Some scholars perceive ELF as a "hybrid space, a third culture" where speakers display their own identities (Fiedler, 2011: 90). In this 'hybrid space' speakers construct their identity, but at the same time they are influenced by standards established by native speakers. Some researchers claim that there is a "growing unease" (Dewey, 2009:61) around the issue of whether ELF is a variety in its own right. In other words, the use of English is diverse and its properties do not seem to be so clear. The review of current knowledge in this area is not extensive and it seems that scientists find it problematic to set some general norms defining ELF characteristic features. Due to the fact that ELF can take different forms in various areas, it is extremely problematic for teaching. Not all educators are willing to accept ELF as a "variety in its own right" in a classroom setting, although they seem to "recognize lingua franca communication, and local, mixed accents" outside school. Many educators seem to ignore the real English-speaking world in a

classroom setting for some reasons. One of the reasons is the fact that ELF is not integrated into schools' curriculum. Moreover, many teachers believe native accents are superior to nonnative ones. According to Hujala (2008:72) "The national curricula, first, should make a clear distinction between English and other foreign languages because of its status as a global lingua franca". In other words, ELF should be given the status of a global lingua franca that has clear characteristic features. Furthermore, "More weight should be put on oral skills, fluency and accommodation skills; the teaching material should present a wider variety of accents, including nonnative ones; overall cultural sensitivity should be promoted" (p. 72). In simple terms, Hujala (2008) argues that teaching should be oriented towards cultural diversity, whereas classroom materials should include different accents.

Traditionally, RP (Received Pronunciation) and General English were the two pronunciation models that were applied in English teaching. Nowadays, educators are concerned with the issue of whether the RP model should be taught at schools and educational centers. As Macaluay (1988) argues, there is no need for non-native speakers of English to implement the RP standards into their speech. He claims "Since RP is not necessarily the easiest or most appropriate accent of British English for foreigners to learn, the choice of RP as a model is difficult to justify" (p.11). Macaluay (1988) points out that it would be more beneficial for teachers and students if "the speech of the majority of the population" was more important than RP. (Macaulay 1988, in Mauranenen& Ranta, 2009:11). Despite the fact that the majority of people around the world are ELF speakers, many educators still have an inclination to attach great importance to the RP model. Clearly, there is no unity among scholars in their approach to the RP standards. Trudgill (2005) argues for RP and against ELF accents, explaining his position in the following way, "...it seems to me that even if native speakers do not 'own' English, there is an important sense in which it stems from them, especially historically, and resides in them." (Mauranenen& Ranta, 2009:11).

Many educators oppose to ELF since ELF characteristics are not clear. Jenkins (2007) proposed a third model of pronunciation, which is called Lingua Franca Core (LFC). Jenkins (2007) attempted to establish some pronunciation features that all ELF speakers share. The scholar assumes that there are three fundamental areas: vowels,

consonants and prosody. Jenkins (2007) explains that the following features seem to be included in ELF:

- all the consonants, except /θ/ and /ð/
- initial consonant clusters
- vowel length distinctions
- the mid-central NURSE vowel
- nuclear stress

According to Jenkins (2007) some features can be omitted from LFC and speech will still be intelligible. These features are as follows:

- /θ/ and /ð/
- final consonant clusters
- vocalized L
- individual vowel quality
- reduced vowels
- lexical stress
- intonational tones
- rhythm

(Jenkins, 2007 in Deterding, 2011: 93).

Fiedler (2011) notices non-native speakers tend to misuse English phraseological units and they often lack intercultural competence to convey a message. Fiedler explains "the more ELF is seen as a form of English in its own right, detached from native speakers and their norms, the richer and more independent the use of phraseology will be in ELF interactions" (Fiedler, 2011: 91). Except for the misuse of phraseological units, ELF speakers use "general extenders" in their speech, which is considered the sign of incompetence in English (Overstreet, 1999). The so called extenders include phrases such as: *you know what I mean, and so on, things like that, stuff like that*. All in all, ELF speech is abundant in a range of lexical items that do not correspond to native English norms. Nevertheless, Jenkins (2007: 239) claims that the goal should not be native speakers' accuracy and proficiency but successful communication, therefore instructors should be more flexible in terms of these varieties.

English has become the most commonly used language in economics, trade, tourism and politics. People have realized that the knowledge of English provides new opportunities on a professional and educational level. For the first time in history, English has reached a global dimension in cultural, educational and socio-political issues. Seidlhofer (2011:7) claims, "this process has obviously been accelerated by the dramatic expansion of electronic communication through the internet". In this computer age, English is the dominant language of communication between all people around the world. Consequently, the English language is no longer the preserve of native speakers. On the contrary, according to Brumfit (2001), "…The English language no longer belongs numerically to speakers of English as a mother tongue, or first language. The ownership of any language in effect rests with the people who use it, whoever they are…" (p. 116). All in all, ELF speakers outnumber native speakers, hence it is significant to recognize the importance of ELF in cultural, social and educational areas.

Under the circumstances, when non-native speakers outnumber native speakers of English, lingua franca "functions as a native-culture-free code" (Fiedler, 2011: 80), which means that communication in English is possible without identifying with this language. ELF interactions are detached from native speakers' norms and display various identities. ELF speakers adopt formulaic units and culture-specific references into their own speech to display their identity. In other words, ELF speakers' cultural background influences their linguistic performance in English. Hujala (2008) points out that identification with native English serves no purpose, therefore instructors should accept learners' own identities.

To sum up, English as a Lingua Franca is a global phenomenon which changes the way the English language is spoken and taught. Importantly, English is no longer considered the preserve of native speakers as it is spoken by a vast majority of non-native speakers. ELF provides a great advantage to a number of people around the world who can use English as a communicative tool and maintain their native language identity. In a classroom setting, educators' role is to recognize the importance of different varieties of English and place emphasis on communication rather than native-like proficiency.

The next section will be concerned with English in Iceland.

2.6   *English in Iceland*

English is a commonly spoken language in Iceland. Iceland belongs in Kachru's Expanding circle where English has the status of a foreign language. Nevertheless, English is considered to have a more prominent status as a second language in Iceland. According to Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir (2007) "the status of English in Iceland today may have more in common with a second language than a foreign language context but fits neither definition" (51). Although English does not have the official status of a second language, the use of English in Iceland is so widespread that many people consider this language to be a second language. The role of English in Iceland has not been subjected to many studies so far, but it could be beneficial to examine this phenomenon more extensively since the topic is so unique.

Firstly, it is important to understand the main difference between a second and foreign language. The term SL (second language) refers to the concept of learning the target language outside of the classroom in various settings, whereas a foreign language (FL) environment means that learners have little opportunity to hear the target language outside of the classroom. According to Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir (2007):

> language learning takes place either in a second language situation where the learner learns the target language in the target culture (as in most immigrant situations), or in a foreign language context where the learner learns in the learners' native language culture and exposure is mainly limited to the classroom. It is suggested that this dual distinction is no longer adequate given the increased presence of English in countries such as Iceland where it is widely spoken but it is not a native language (p. 52).

Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir (2007) suggest that the use of English in Iceland is not only limited to the classroom environment. On the contrary, it is commonly used outside the classroom in a variety of settings, thus it is not relevant for the Icelandic context to refer to English as a foreign language. Specifically, English is commonly used In Iceland in stores, at the bank, the post office, on television or the Internet. Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir (2007:52) report that Icelandic children acquire a "passive colloquial English from their environment; although this proficiency varies greatly from one student to another once formal instruction begins". Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) points out that the nature of input is passive. She explains, "English exposure in Iceland is colloquial and contextual. Icelandic youth are overwhelmingly exposed to one

type of register that is associated with popular culture: colloquial, informal speech mainly from visual materials. (p. 54) Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) suggests "It is quite possible that although viewers understand the materials they are watching, they do so because of visual cues rather than actual comprehension of the language" (p.54). Consequently, as their passive skills are greatly developed, they might overestimate their language proficiency (54).

Exposure to English is mainly guaranteed by television where there is little dubbing. In general, Icelanders are exposed to English every day. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007:55) points out that "TV, music lyrics, computer games, the Internet, tourists and travel" are the sources of exposure to English in Iceland. Arnbjörnsdóttir reports that according to the national survey 93.3% of respondents claimed that they used English 93% of the time on their travels, whereas 87.1% said that their exposure to English comes from TV (p.55). Naturally, the type of exposure and the amount of exposure may vary according to age group and the area people live in. For instance, there are many Icelandic children who can already speak fluent English when they start school. Conversely, there are children who cannot say a single word in English when they start their first years of education. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007:59) notices that some children have an advantage over other children due to the fact that their parents travel a lot and undertake some studies in English speaking counties. Despite the fact that English is commonly used in Iceland and a lot of people are proficient English speakers; some learners overestimate their language proficiency. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007:60) explains "there may be an overemphasis in English language instruction on both passive comprehension and receptive skills". Students are not given a chance to practice their productive skills; that is speaking and writing. Some students also feel that textbooks used at schools do not match their actual needs, and are not relevant for an Icelandic learning context (p.60). Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) concludes that the status of English in Iceland is unique and is similar to what she calls the generation1.5. To be specific, 1.5 students are:

> …U.S.-educated English language learners. There is great diversity among them in terms of their prior educational experience, native and English language proficiency, language dominance, and academic literacy…Equipped with social skills in English, generation 1.5 students often appear in conversation to be native English speakers. However, they are usually less skilled in the academic

language associated with school achievement, especially in the area of writing. Academic writing requires familiarity with complex linguistic structures and rhetorical styles that are not typically used in everyday social interactions (Harklau 2003, in Arnbjörnsdóttir 2007:61).

Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007:63) explains that Icelandic learners are different from 1.5 generation students in the respect that Icelandic students have academic language skills in their native language, whereas 1.5 generation students' literacy in their first language is limited to a great extent. Additionally, Icelandic learners display better receptive skills than productive skills. The lack of productive skills is reflected in the projects of university students who tend to struggle greatly with academic English. Many students do not realize that their receptive English skills are not satisfactory at university level. There are many courses at the University of Iceland where the medium of instruction is English. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) reports "An informal survey of the University of Iceland's Prospectus revealed that during the 2007-2008 academic years, English was the language of instruction in 276 courses. Out of the 301 courses in the Faculty of Engineering, 110 were taught in English; of the approximately 1100 courses in the Faculty of Humanities, 82 were taught in English" (p.65). Moreover, Icelandic university students need to read textbooks in English, which can be problematic for some students since they lack reading proficiency (productive skills).

All in all, Icelanders are exposed to English in a variety of settings. They hear or read English in TV, music, magazines and the internet (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2007). Importantly, the use of English in Iceland is so common that "it may have more in common with a second language situation, than a traditional foreign language context" (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2007: 51). This context affects English language teaching in adult educational programs.

2.7   *Lifelong learning*

Lifelong Learning programs give all adults the opportunity to develop their skills and competence, and the main goal is to provide adults with continuous education and intellectual growth. Lifelong education is mainly targeted at people who dropped out of school at an early age; nevertheless, people who are unemployed or want to be better educated can also participate in those programs. Kessler-Harris (2007) claims, "In an increasingly complex technological society, where both adults work in 85 percent of all

partnered or married households, the need for continuous education and training during one's lifetime is an unavoidable reality" (Wlodkowski, 2008: 429). In simple terms, lifelong learning is a great opportunity for people who work and have families. Due to lifelong learning programs, adults can develop professionally and gain experience. The most important thing, however, is that adults who are involved in continuous learning are able to stay active over many years. The main goal of continuous education institutions is to lower the dropout rate. There can be many factors associated with students' dropout. Namely, many students leave school early due to their mental health issues. Psychological problems can affect many teenagers who are dissatisfied with their appearance. To be specific, teenagers who are not satisfied with their body image, tend to avoid school. Nowadays, there is pressure among teenagers to follow Western ideals of beauty; hence there are many students who skip school since they feel humiliated by their peers. Concurrent with body image issues, teenagers might be affected by drug or alcohol abuse, which might keep them away from school. Consequently, lifelong learning institutes want to create new opportunities not only for dropout students, but also for those people who are out of work.

2.7.1 Lifelong learning in Iceland

Adult education has played an important role in Iceland. Interestingly, Iceland occupies the third place among 35 European countries in its participation in continuous education. The first Center of Continuous Education was established in 1997. Importantly, centers promoting adult education vary in terms of organizational structure but they have common roots. Following the statistics, nearly 72 thousand people in Iceland participated in lifelong learning in 2012. The table below shows that women participate in lifelong learning more frequently than men. The total percentage of women participating in lifelong education constitutes 35%, whereas men constitute 29%. The participation of men and women who completed basic education was comparable (men-31% and women 31%). Also, the participation of women, among those who completed upper secondary and tertiary education, was more numerous than the participation of men.

Table 2. Participation of 16-74 year olds in lifelong learning by sex and educational attainment in 2012

	Total	Males	Females
Total	32.1%	29.1%	35.2%
Basic education	31.2%	31.1%	31.3%
Upper secondary education	30.4%	26.7%	36.1%
Tertiary education	35.8%	30.9%	39.5%

Adapted from Statistics in Iceland. 2013.

Additionally, unemployed people participate in lifelong education more commonly than people who are employed. Table 3. below presents the participation in lifelong education by people who are not in the labor force, unemployed and employed people.
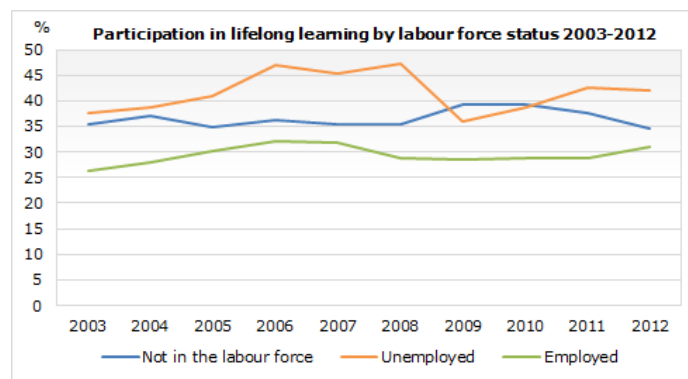
Table3. Adapted from Statistics in Iceland. 2013.

The figure shows that almost 42% of unemployed people participated in continuous education. In 2012, participants who were not in the labor force constituted 35%. The proportion of unemployed people constitutes 42%, whereas 31% refers to employed participants.

In general, educated people are more willing to participate in lifelong learning outside of school. Statistics report that the total of 35,900 people took part in some training, workshops or courses. The table below depicts the proportion of people who participated in lifelong learning with reference to the level of completed education.
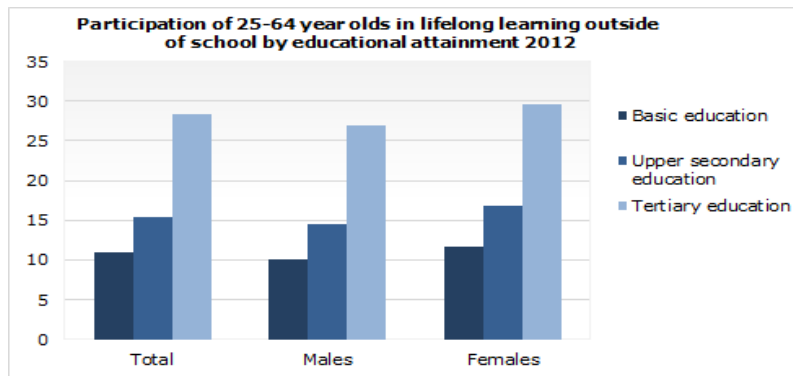
Table 3. Adapted from Statistics In Iceland. 2013.

Among those participants who completed tertiary education, 28% participated in some courses or training outside of school, 15% of those who had completed upper secondary education and 11 % of those who had only completed basic education.

All in all, lifelong learning in Iceland is a popular form of extending one's education. Lifelong learning creates a great opportunity for uneducated people who want to complete basic or secondary education, and also for educated people who need to increase their qualifications.

2.8   *Miðstöð símenntunar á Suðurnesjum (MSS) in* Reykjanesbær

MSS (Miðstöð símenntunar á Suðurnesjum) is the lifelong learning center of Suðurnes that was founded on 10 Dec 1997. The main goal of MSS is to promote lifelong learning and help residents to improve the quality of their life on a personal and educational level. MSS employees take pride in providing service to people who need to gain access to education. Many people decide to undertake some courses or training as they are unemployed. In the article entitled *Ideas seeking people*, Anna Lóa Ólafsdóttir, a study and counsellor at MSS, explains "For unemployed job-seekers, participation in organized activities is a preventive measure that decreases the risk of depression, family problems or substance abuse" (Magnúsdóttir, 2009). In other words, by participation in educational activities, unemployed people are less likely to suffer from psychological and family problems. Furthermore, Magnúsdóttir (2009) says:

The Adult education centre MSS offers free study or career guidance and short courses that focus on three areas: self-esteem, competence portfolio and job-seeking. A more extensive study opportunity consisting of 600 lessons is available for those with insufficient study skills. The course strengthens the participants' competencies in reading, writing, oral communication, everyday mathematics and IT skills, as well as finding a learning style that suits adult learners. Another activity that deserves to be mentioned here is the entrepreneurship training offered by the Icelandic innovation centre and financed by the local labour market council.

In simple terms, MSS offers a variety of courses that help learners to increase their self-confidence and competence in reading, writing and speaking. Moreover, MSS gives its participants the opportunity to complete education at secondary level.

Menntastoðir is intended for those people who are at least 23 years old and have not completed their education on a basic level. Under special circumstances, participants under the age of 23 can attend the course. In the study offered by Menntastoðir there are particular subjects:

Subject	credentials	number of hours
Icelandic	10	130
English	10	130
Danish	5	50
Bookkeeping	5	60
Math	14	185
IT	5	50
Self-confidence classes	6	50

Menntastoðir's program lasts 6 months and students need to participate in classes in order to graduate after a six-month period. However, there is also a possibility to complete Menntastoðir during a period of 10 months (dreifi- og fjarnám). Teaching in Menntastoðir is supported by use of the moodle, where learners can find information concerning a course description. Additionally, the moodle gives access to schedules and grades. Significantly, in case of absence participants can learn from home since all extra materials can be found in the moodle.

For many people, Menntastoðir is considered a second chance for their educational development and is believed to guarantee a substantial growth in many areas. Guðjónína Sæmundsdóttir, project manager at MSS, admits that it is very pleasing to see the vast number of people utilizing their potentials and building up their self-confidence, which will improve both work and personal situations. She encourages all people to get acquainted with the programs that MSS has to offer since it might appeal to many residents.

This chapter addressed some characteristics of adult learning with particular attention to theories of adult learning. Also, the chapter examined the notion of Andragogy as a dominant instructional model of adult teaching. Moreover, it discussed the role of objectives, relevance and motivation in adult learning. Next, it presented the notion of social context of adult learning and its influence on learning. Additionally, the chapter covered the topics of Lingua Franca and its effect on adult education. Furthermore, it examined the topic of English in Iceland and how it effects lifelong learning. The last section focused on Miðstöð símenntunar á Suðurnesjum in Reykjanesbær, a lifelong learning center; that promotes adult learning.

The next chapter presents the description of the study. The purpose of this study was to map out the type and and amount of English exposure among Menntastoðir students. Also, the research was conducted to gain information whether the course improved students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation. Moreover, the purpose of the study was to examine if if the materials and pecific teaching strategies used in the classroom helped students make progress. Additionaly, the study was conducted to examine participants' feedback and generate a discussion on how instructors can meet the needs of unique adult learners who have different language levels and diverse backgrounds. Ultimately, the goal was to provide a common understanding of what intructors need to know be able to support and and enhance adults learning. The study is significant as it might provide some deeper insight into factors that determine second language learning by adults who use English as a Lingua Franca. Moreover, this research is meaningful since there has been relatively little research in the field of adults language learning in general.

3 . The Study

3.1 Methodology

The study was conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of a specialized program to meet the needs of adults who have diverse English skills and use English as a Lingua Franca. The program was developed for Menntastoðir, an adult educational program in Reykjanesbær. Menntastoðir is an adult educational institution that responds to the educational challenge of an adult population by providing them with an opportunity to improving their knowledge and competences. The study aims at examining how the English course in Menntastoðir meets the needs of students who have diverse educational backgrounds and different levels of English skills, yet are exposed to and use English in different areas of their lives. The study is significant as it might provide some deeper insight into factors that determine second language learning by adults who use English as a Lingua Franca. Moreover, this research is meaningful since no study of this kind is available in Iceland. To obtain the desired data, 73 Menntastoðir students were asked to complete a questionnaire that included 32 questions. The surveys were conducted online from the end of March 2014 to the end of April. Participants were sent a reminder twice to complete a questionnaire. The first reminder was sent after ten days, while the second reminder was sent after two weeks.

The purpose of this study is to:

- map out the type and amount of English exposure among Menntastoðir students
- gain information whether the course improved students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation
- examine if the materials and specific teaching strategies used in the classroom helped students make progress
- examine participants' feedback and determine its final recommendations to guide curriculum development
- generate a discussion on how instructors can meet the needs of unique adult learners

Ultimately the goal is to provide a common understanding of the nature of English language learning to adults to inform instructors and enable them to support students' learning.

3.2 Participants

The questionnaire was sent online to 220 students who already completed the English course in Menntastoðir that consisted of 130 hours and lasted 4 months. 72 Icelandic Menntastoðir students participated in the study: 47 females and 25 males. The informants belong to the 18-to-65 age group, nevertheless the greatest proportion of participants constitutes adults who belong to the 25-to-35 age group. Most of the respondents completed Primary School education, although there are also some informants who attended 1-3 years of a Secondary or Technical School.

3.3 The Survey

The first set of questions in the survey covered the information concerning the participants' background (specifically: age, gender and marital status).

The second set of questions provided information about participants' experience with English. First, respondents were asked at what age they began learning English. Second, participants provided information regarding education completed prior to Menntastoðir. Third, participants were asked to give reasons why they decided to start learning at Menntastoðir.

The next set of questions was centered around participants' skills and competence in English before and after the course. The skills that are investigated are the following: reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation.

The next set of questions focused on participants' opinions regarding the materials and teaching strategies used in the class. Specifically, participants were asked what kind of class activities and teaching materials they preferred most. First, informants provided some insight into the usefulness of the textbook selected by the teacher and Raymond Murphy's grammar book. Second, participants were asked whether or not Stoðkennarinn website helped them improve their English. Third, participants provided answers whether or not they did homework systematically and whether or not the amount of homework was right for them. Moreover, respondents were asked whether or

not attendance affected their learning outcome. Furthermore, participants were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of group-work and in-class presentation.

The fourth set included questions that referred to participants' experience with English (for example, how much time and under what circumstances do they speak, write, read or listen to English). On most questions, participants could specify or explain their answers.

There were two open questions included in the survey. Namely, the participants were asked to write down some changes that could be made to this course, and they were also asked to make some other general comments. It is important to note that questions varied in the number of given answers by respondents. Some respondents did not answer all questions. See appendix A for questionnaire.

3.4   The Analysis.

The responses were analyzed to gain general frequency of responses. The computer program Survey Monkey was used to obtain frequencies.

The next chapter presents the results of the study. The purpose of this study was to map out the type and and amount of English exposure among Menntastoðir students. Also, the research was conducted to gain information whether the course improved students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation. Moreover, the purpose of the study was to examine if if the materials and pecific teaching strategies used in the classroom helped students make progress. Additionally, the study was conducted to examine participants' feedback and generate a discussion on how instructors can meet the needs of unique adult learners who have different language levels and diverse backgrounds. Ultimately, the goal was to provide a common understanding of what intructors need to know be able to support and and enhance adults learning. The study is significant as it might provide deeper insight into factors that influence second language learning by adults who use English as a Lingua Franca. Moreover, this research is meaningful since there has been relatively little research in the field of adults language learning in general.

4   The Results

The survey consisted of 32 questions. The questionnaire was divided into 4 sets according to themes. The first set of questions provided background information including age, gender and marital status. The second set of questions was concerned with the participants' skills and competence before and after the course. The next set provided information regarding students' evaluation of materials and teaching activities used in the classroom. Finally, the last set of questions referred to the extent of the participants' exposure to English outside of class. All questions asked in the study were to help to generate discussion on how instructors can meet the needs of unique adult learners; and to provide a common understanding of what instructors need to know to be able to support and enhance student learning.

4.1   Background information

This set of questions is relevant to the study as it shows participants' diversity in terms of age gender and marital status.

The first question asked the participants' age. Seventy-two of 73 informants answered the question. Following the figure, 50% (N= 36) of participants were between 25-to-35 year olds. Next, 24% (N= 17) of participants were 36-45 year olds, 15 % (N= 11) were 18-24 year olds, 8% (N= 6) were 46-55 year olds and 3% (N= 2) were 56-65 year olds. There was no one aged 66 or above. Figure 1 below represents the age data.
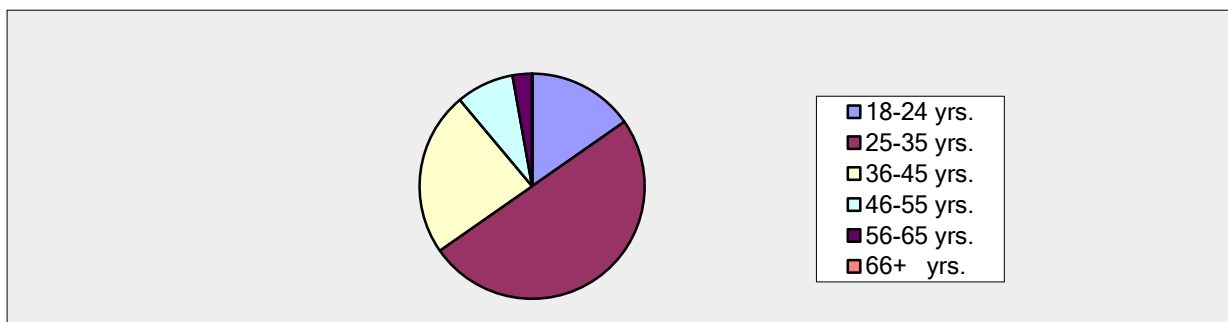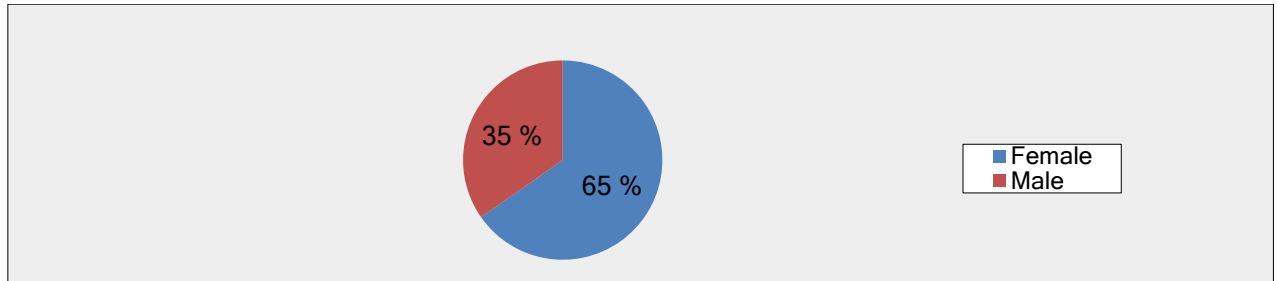

Figure 1. Question 1: What is your age?

The second question asked about the participants' gender. Seventy-two participants answered the question. Figure 2 shows that females outnumber males. Specifically, there were 47 women (65 %) and 25 (35 %) men.

Figure 2. Question 2: What is your gender?

The last background question referred to participants' marital status. Figure 3 below indicates that 45 % (N= 33) of participants constitute people who live in cohabitation. Next, there are 29 % (N= 21) of participants who are single, 19 % (N= 14) who are married, and 7 % (N= 5) who are divorced. There were no widowed participants.
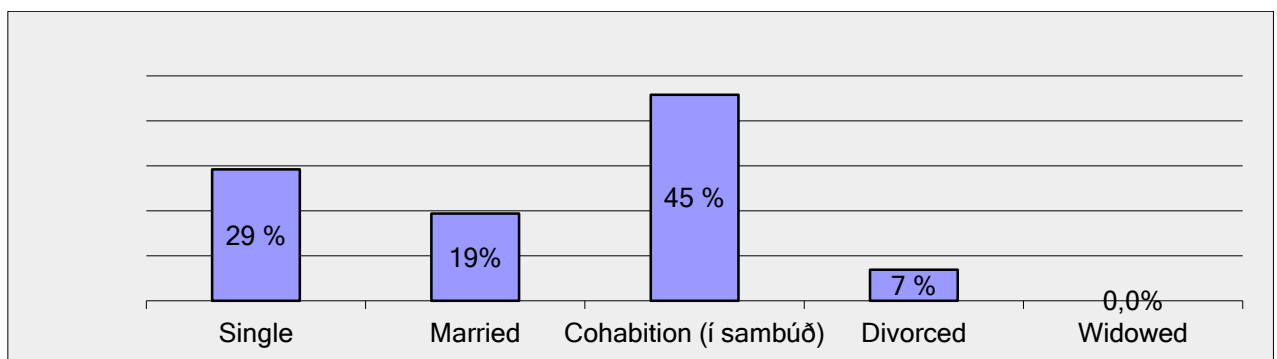
Figure 3. Question 3: What is your marital status?

4.2. Education and English Language Background

In the next set of questions, participants provided information about their experience with English. First, the question provides information when participants started learning English. Sixty-three participants answered the question. Following the figure, 43% of participants started learning English when they were 10 or 12 years old, and 32 % of participants began learning English at the age of 6 or 9. Next, 14 % of respondents started learning English before they were 5. Only 8 % of participants began learning English at the age of 13 or 15, and 3 % of participants reported that they started learning

English after the age of 20. Importantly, there was no one in the survey who had never learnt English.
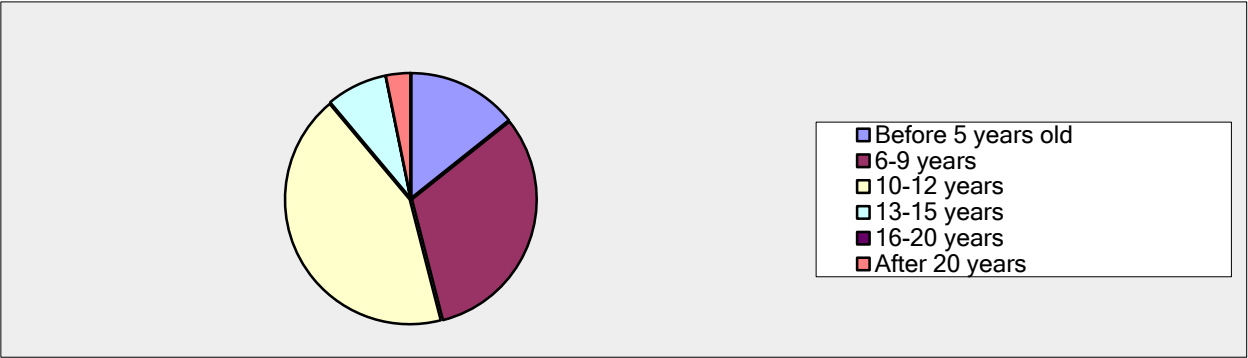
Figure 4. Question 4: When did you begin learning English?

Figure no 5 represents the answers regarding education completed prior to Menntastoðir. Sixty-two participants answered the question. Referring to the figure, 71% of participants completed Primary education (Grunnskóli), 20% of participants finished 1-3 years of Secondary school (Framhalds/Fjölbrautaskóli), whereas 9% of respondents said that they had attended a Trade or a Technical school. One participant specified that he had attended a primary school but he did not manage to complete it.
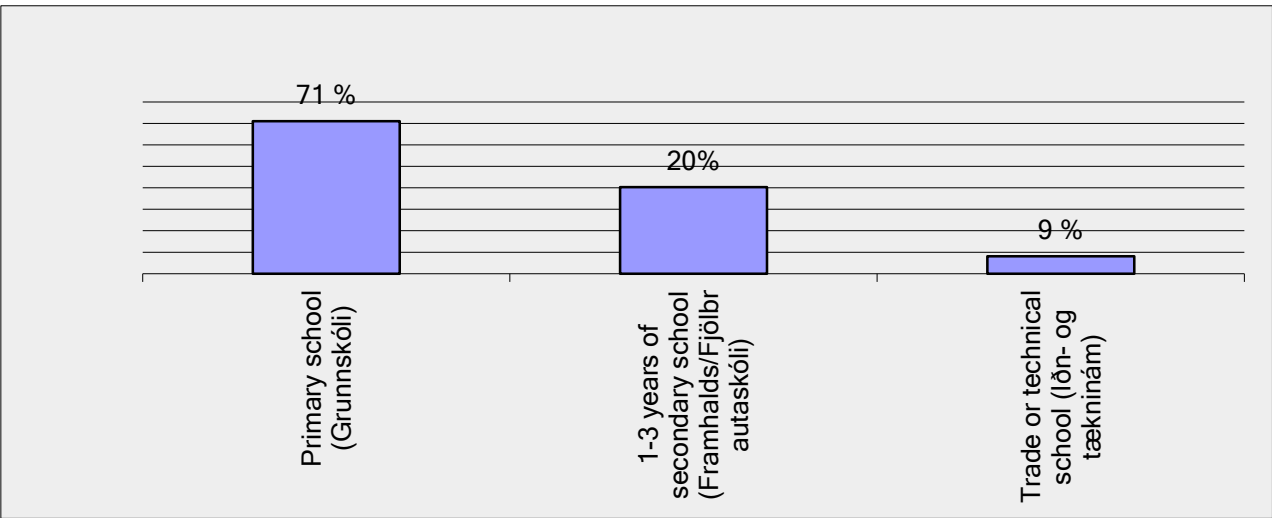

Figure 5. Question 5: Education completed prior to Menntastoðir.

In question no 6, respondents were asked to give reasons why they decided to start learning at Menntastoðir. Sixty-two participants answered the question. The question included options to choose from: work, study, leisure or future prospects. The figure indicates that 45 % of respondents declared they decided to go to Menntastoðir to focus on study. Surprisingly, the same percentage referred to participants who went to Menntastoðir due to improving future prospects. Next, 7% of participants said that they wanted to develop intellectually to find a job, whereas 3 % of participants reported that they had studied at Menntastoðir for entertainment. One respondent specified that she decided to learn English to both increase their competence and for fun. Two participants declared they wanted to complete Menntastoðir to further continue their education in Keilir and later at a university.
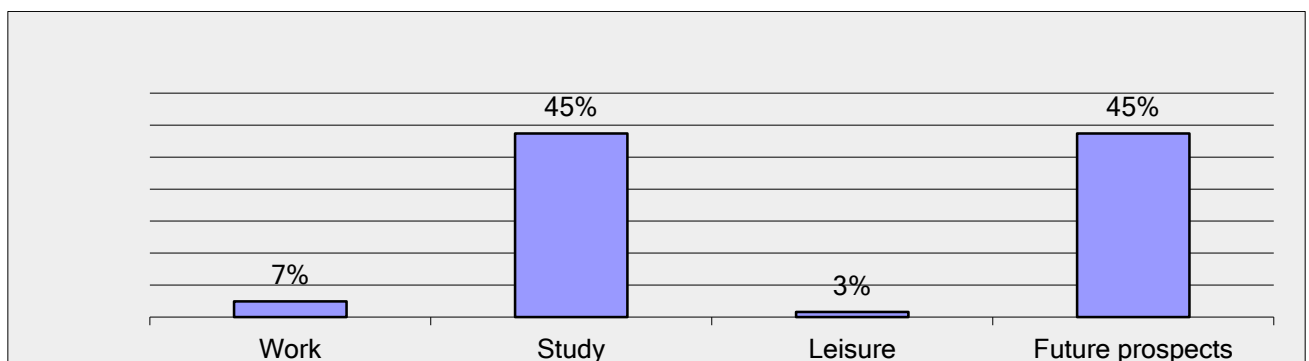
Figure 6. Question 6: Why did you choose Menntastoðir?

Question 7 provided some insight into participants' self-confidence after studying at Menntastoðir. Sixty-three participants answered the question. Respondents were asked to decide whether the course helped them increase their self-confidence. The options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Can't judge. The figure shows that 48% of participants strongly agreed, 48% agreed, 1% disagreed, 1% strongly disagreed and finally 2% of participants admitted that they can't judge.
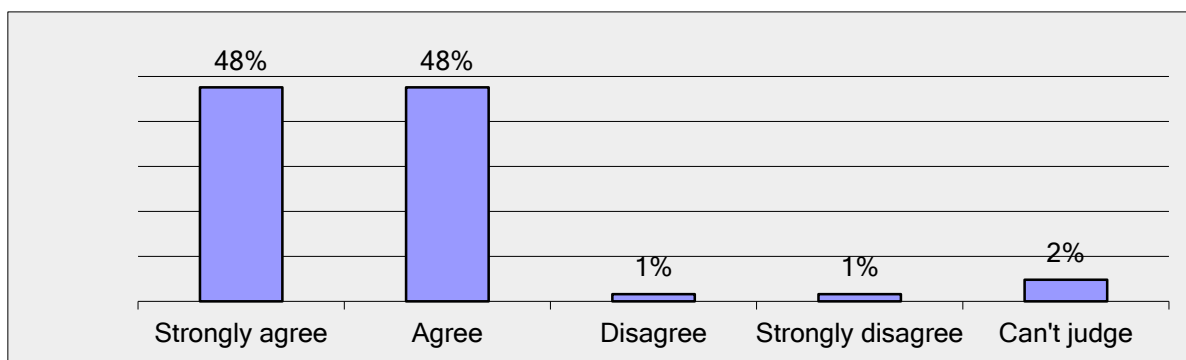
Figure 7. Question 7: Do you think Menntastoðir increased your self-confidence?

In Questions 8 and 9, participants were asked to rate their general English skills before and after the course respectively. Respondents were evaluating their reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation skills. The answering options were as follows: Very good, Good, Fair, Poor or I don't speak English. Following chart 9, the majority of participants claimed to be very good at listening, reading, speaking and writing. Only 8 respondents said their pronunciation skills were very good. Few respondents reported they were poor at these components. Importantly, there was one person who could not read in English, and one person who could not write in English. The answers are presented in chart 9 below.

Rate your general English skills before taking the course.						
Answer Options	Very good	Good	Fair (sæmilegt)	Poor	I don't speak English	Response Count
Reading	18	23	18	3	1	63
Writing	13	18	22	9	1	63
Listening	20	30	10	3	0	63
Speaking	15	21	18	9	0	63
Pronunciation	8	18	26	9	2	63

Figure 8. Question 8. Rate your general English skills before taking the course.

To show how participants' general English skills changed after the course (with reference to participants' general English skills before the course), it is significant to relate to the numbers below illustrated by chart 10.

Rate your general English skills after taking the course.						
Answer Options	Very good	Good	Fair(sæmilegg)	Poor	I don't speak English	Response Count
Reading	30	26	4	2	0	62
Writing	20	33	7	2	1	63
Listening	31	28	3	1	0	63
Speaking	22	30	9	2	0	63
Pronunciation	17	32	12	2	0	63

Figure 9. Question 9. Rate your general English skills after taking the course.

It is important to note that all components: reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation improved significantly over the course. Importantly, the skills that respondents reported to be fair or poor initially improved greatly. Also, the number of participants who did not read, write or pronounce dropped to 0. Still, there was one person who could not write at the beginning and at the end of the course.

4.3. Participants' evaluation of materials and teaching strategies used during the English classes. (Third set of questions).

In question 10, participants were asked what kind of class activities they preferred most. The answering options were as follows: reading, listening, writing, conversations, translations and grammar. Fifty-three participants answered the question. The respondents were asked to evaluate the usefulness of each kind of teaching referring to the scale from 1 to 6. Number 1 on the scale meant the most preferred kind of teaching, whereas number 6 denoted the least preferred activity. The answers provided by respondents are illustrated in figure11 below.

| Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	6
Grammar Learning	14	11	6	6	9	7
Translating texts into Icelandic/English	16	5	8	5	10	9
Conversations (debates)	9	8	12	10	6	8
Writing (essays, summaries)	7	13	7	11	8	7
Listening	3	7	11	13	12	7
Reading (novel, stories)	4	9	9	8	8	15

Figure 10. Question 10: What kind of class activities were the most helpful? Rate from 1-6, 1 being the most preferred and 6 being the least preferred.

Summarizing, 16 respondents reported that translating texts into Icelandic/English was the most effective activity, while 14 participants preferred grammar lessons, and 9 respondents considered debates to be number 1. Next, writing essays and summaries were labeled number 1 by 7 respondents. Listening was declared the most effective by 3 respondents, whereas reading was reported the most effective by 3. The least preferred were reading (15), translations (9) and debates (8). Grammar learning, writing and listening were marked evenly.

Figure 11 illustrates the frequency of responses referring to the question of whether materials used in class sparked participants' interest in English. Fifty-two
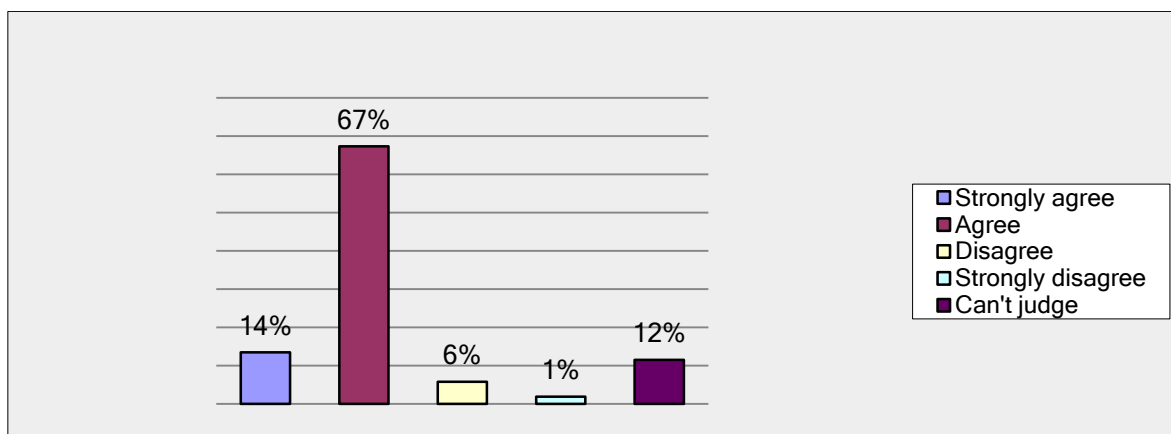
participants answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly agree and Can't judge.
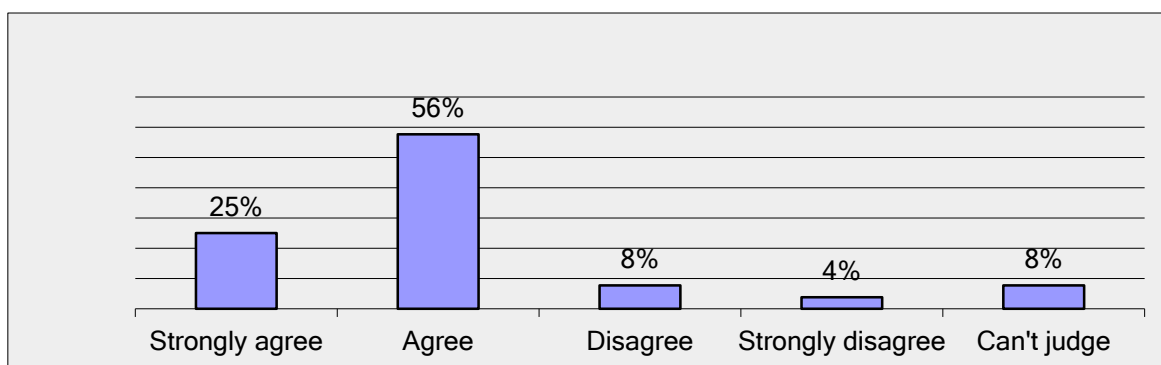
Figure 11. Question 11: Did the materials used in class spark your interest in English? (by use of stories, texts, videos, songs).

The frequency of answers was as follows: 25% of participants strongly agreed, 56% agreed, 8% disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed, and 8% could not judge. Figure 15 refers to participants' evaluation of Raymond Murphy's grammar book. Fifty-one respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. The results were the following: 14% of participants strongly agreed that the grammar book was useful. Moreover, 67,3% of respondents agreed, 6% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed, and 12% could not judge.


Figure 12. Question 12: Was Raymond Murphy's grammar book useful?

Question 13 referred to the textbook chosen by the teacher. The textbook included upper-intermediate texts and exercises selected by the teacher. 53 respondents
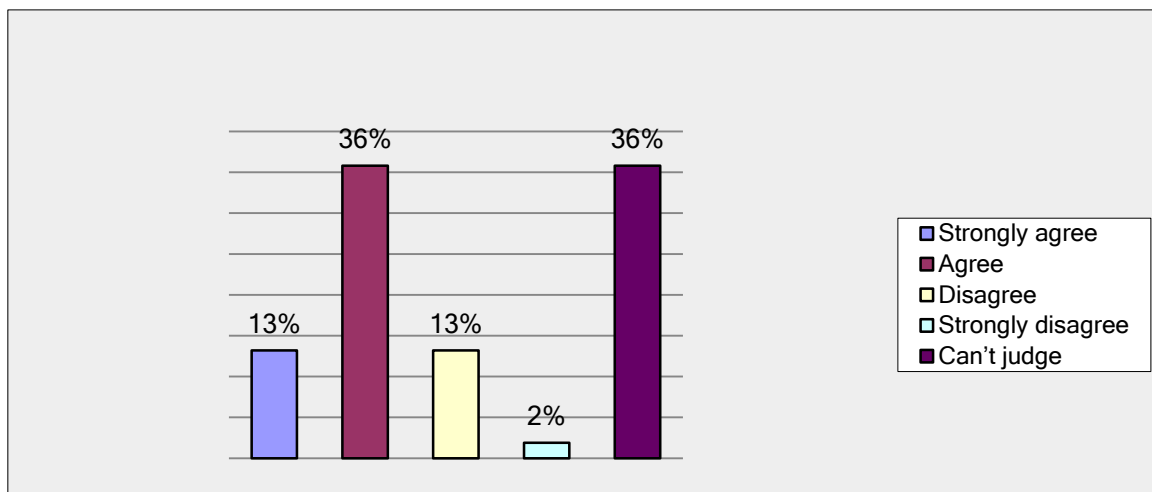
answered the questions. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge.

Summarizing, 32% of respondents strongly agreed, 53% agreed, 4% disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed, and 7% could not judge. One female, belonging in the 46-to-55 age group, said that the textbook contained too many chapters, and the level of vocabulary was too high for her. Also, one male in the age group 46-, 55, specified that the content of the textbook was interesting.
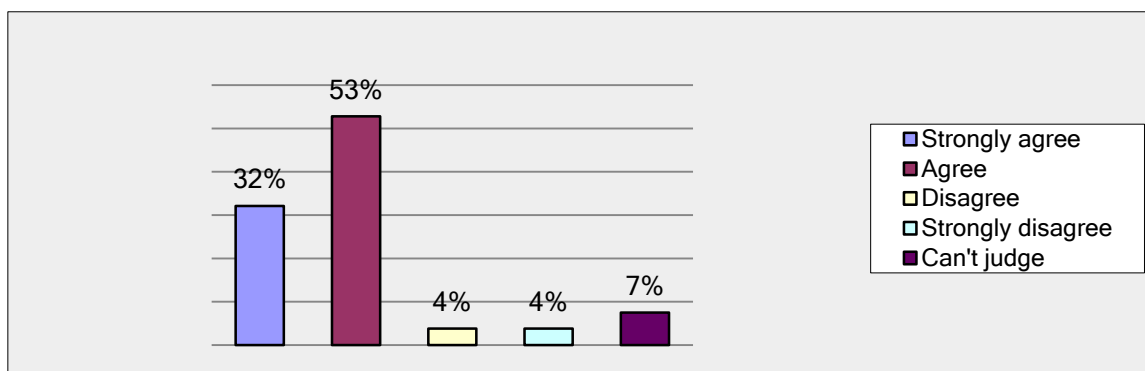

Figure 13. Question 13: Was the textbook chosen by the teacher useful?

Question 14 provided participants' evaluation of the Stoðkennarinn website. The website gives an opportunity to practice grammar, writing, listening and reading. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, and Can't judge. The frequency of responses was the following: 13% of respondents strongly agreed that the website enhanced their learning, 36% agreed, 13% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed, and 36% could not judge. The participants who declared they could not judge, further explained their answers. Namely, 3 people claimed they did not know about such a website, and 5 respondents admitted the level of the website was far too easy for them. Also, one person claimed he did not use the website due to laziness. It is important to note that 20 participants did not answer this question. It might be assumed that these respondents never used this website to learn.

Figure 15. Question 14: Did using *Stoðkennarinn* website help you to improve your English?

Figure 16 presents the participants' evaluation of listening to a text. *"Bits English Language Learning"* is the website that includes listening exercises. Fifty-two respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. To sum up, 8% of participants strongly agreed the website was useful. Next, 79% agreed, 2% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed, and 9% could not judge. 2 informants, who claimed they could not judge, explained their answers. One respondent said she could not read English, therefore the website seemed useless, whereas the second participant claimed he did not have an opportunity to listen to those texts due to his absence in class. Twenty-one participants did not provide any answer to this question, therefore it might be assumed that these respondents did not attend classes when listening exercises were assigned.
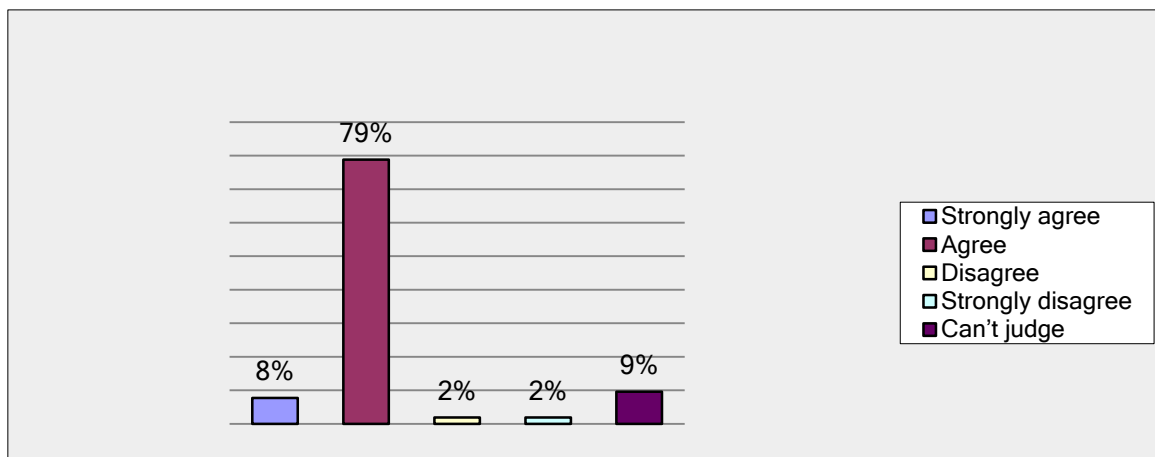
Figure 15. Question 15: Did listening to a text help you improve your English? ("Bits English Language Learning"- listening website used in the class).

Figure 16 refers to participants' homework; namely, if homework was done systematically. The question is relevant as it shows participants' diversity in terms of their approach to the issue of homework. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. Following the figure, 48% of participants agreed that they had done homework systematically, while 42% respondents strongly agreed. Next, 6% of informants disagreed that they were systematic, while 1% of respondents strongly disagreed. Also, 1% of respondents could not judge. Additionally, one female specified she was not systematic due to illness. Moreover, one male declared doing no homework, as he was already proficient in English. Lastly, the participant who could not judge, explained that she did not do her homework systematically due to family issues, which made studying difficult. Twenty participants did not answer the question, which might suggest that they did not do their homework at all.
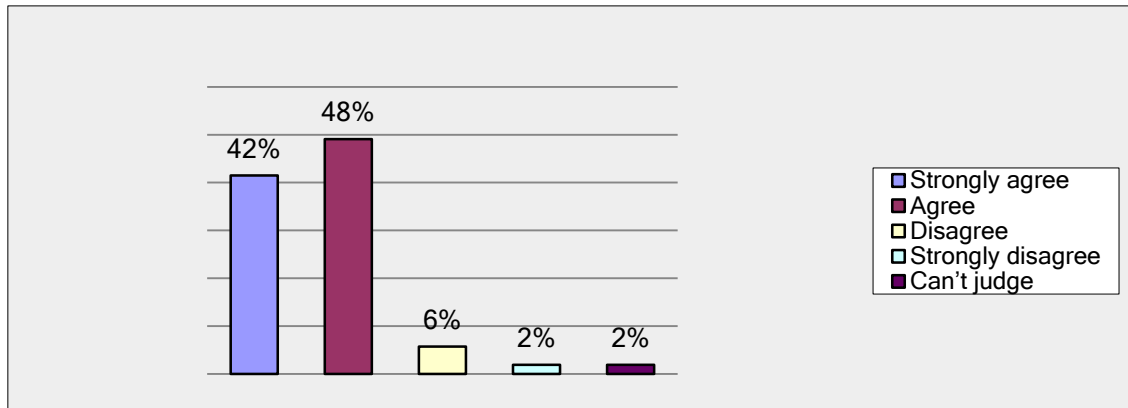
**Figure 16. Question 16: Did you do your homework systematically?**

Question 17 refers to the amount of homework that students were assigned. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. The frequency of responses was as follows: 73% of participants agreed that they were assigned enough homework, while 15% of respondents strongly agreed. Moreover, 8% of participants disagreed, while 2% strongly disagreed. One participant, who reported he could not judge, explained he had been absent frequently; therefore it was problematic for him to answer this question. Also, a few students elaborated on their answers. Specifically, one female suggested there should be more homework, especially in writing. Finally, one male added that nothing could be changed in the amount of homework assigned.
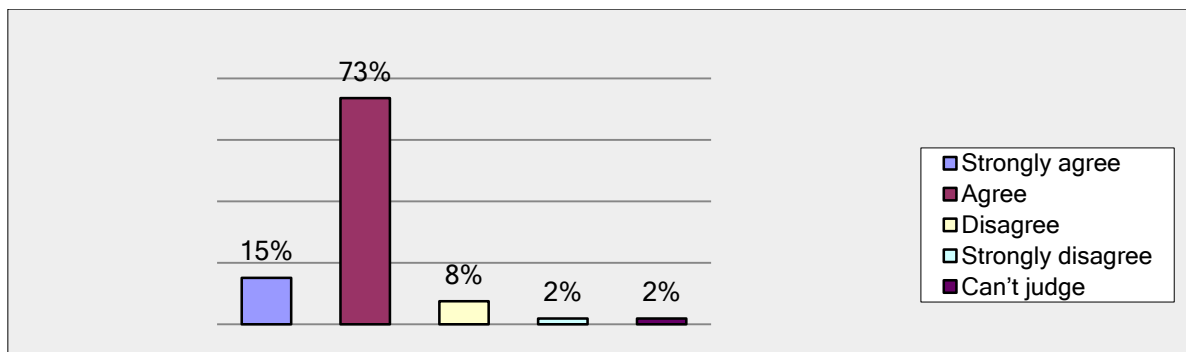
**Figure 17. Question 17: Were you assigned enough homework?**

Figure 18 illustrates the frequency of responses for the question of whether or not attendance affected participants' learning outcome. The question is important in the research as it indicates respondents' diversity in terms of their approach to attendance. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows:

Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. Referring to the figure, 40% of respondents strongly agreed that attendance had an impact on their learning outcome. Next, 38% of participants agreed, 11% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed, and 11% could not judge. One female admitted that it was not necessary for her to attend classes, as her level of English was high enough to pass all tests. Moreover, one male claimed that due to his absence, he could not follow a great number of projects.
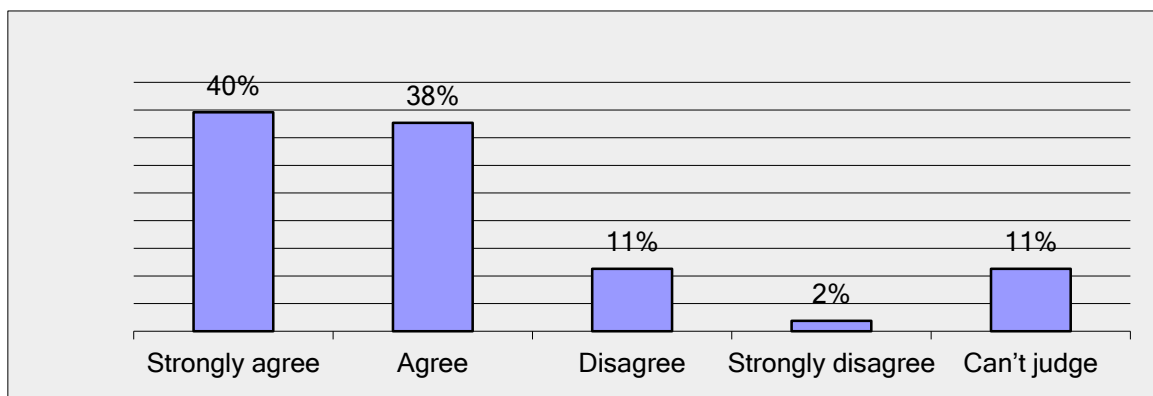

Figure 18. Question 18: Did your attendance affect your learning outcome?

Question 20 was concerned with doing an in-class presentation. Participants were asked if doing a presentation increased their self-confidence. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. To conclude, 39% of participants strongly agreed that doing a presentation in class increased their self-confidence. Moreover, 38% participants agreed, 4% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed, and 17% could not judge. In specifying comments, one female said she did not do the presentation due to anxiety issues that she could not overcome. One male reported that it was the first time he had spoken in public, therefore it was a valuable experience.
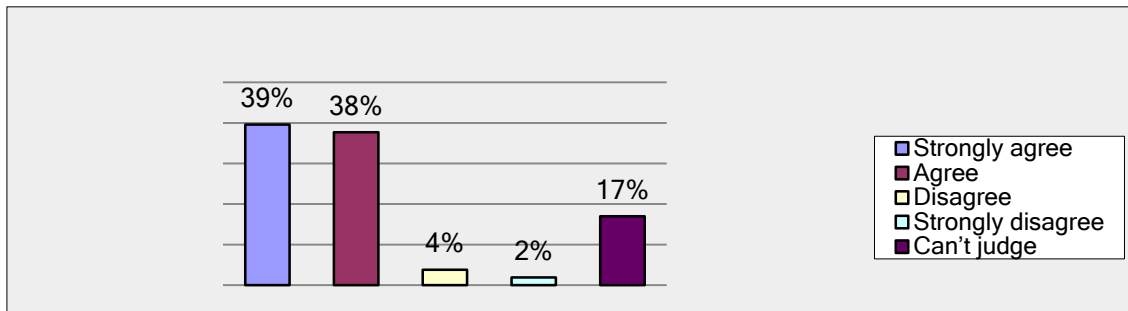
Figure19. Question 19: Do you think that doing a presentation in class increased your self-confidence afterwards?

In question 20 respondents were asked if they learnt more while working in teams rather than alone. The question was asked to examine if cooperative work helped participants make progress. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. Following the figure, 48% of participants agreed that working in groups helped them learn more than working alone. Also, 25% of respondents admitted that they strongly agreed, while 11% participants disagreed. Finally, 8% respondents strongly disagreed, and 8% participants could not judge. One male specified he could not concentrate while working in teams, therefore he preferred to work individually.
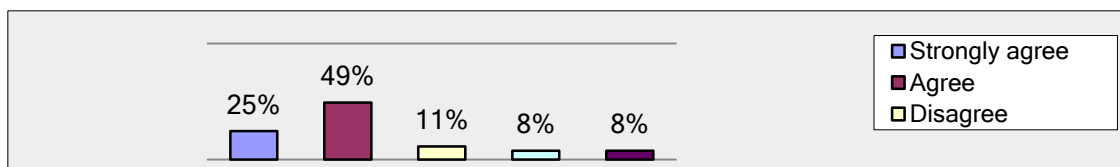
Figure 20. Question 20: Did you learn more while working in teams rather than alone?

In question 21, informants were asked to evaluate if the English level of classes were right for them. The question is relevant to the study as it examined whether the level of the course matched participants' language proficiency. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree and Can't judge. The frequency of responses was as follows: 56% of participants agreed that the level of English classes was right for them, whereas 28% respondents strongly agreed. Next, 8% of participants disagreed, and 2%

strongly disagreed. Finally, 3 females could not judge. The participant who strongly disagreed explained that he was the most proficient English speaker in the class; thus he needed more challenging projects to work on.
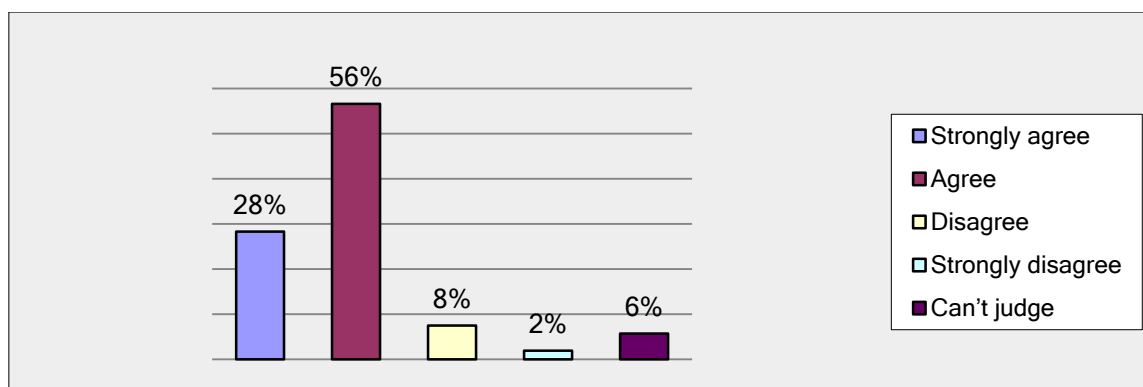
Figure 21. Question 21: Do you think the English level was right for you?

The next set of questions was open ended. Participants were asked to write down any changes that could be made to this course. These questions are relevant to the study as it examines participants' feedback and determines its final recommendations to guide curriculum development. Also, this section is to help generate discussion on how instructors can meet the needs of unique adult learners. Moreover, the answers provided by participants prove that adult learners are diverse. Thirty-two participants provided some feedback. Some responses are quoted below:

- ✓ " I think that the way this course is done is very good."
- ✓ "No changes needed. Now I understand writing English better"
- ✓ "No this has been helpful, and will help me in the future."
- ✓ "It was perfect for me."
- ✓ "It could be a little longer, it was a bit too short for us who are not that good in English. 2 extra weeks would be fine."
- ✓ "More homework".
- ✓ "No changes required."
- ✓ "The teacher should speak Icelandic."
- ✓ "I wouldn't change anything, the lessons were great, the conversations were awesome and I learned a lot from them, all in all it was wonderful :)."

- ✓ "I would have liked to see more conversation exercises. Also I really thought it was a great lesson to stand in front of the other students talking about a specific subject. A debate between students might be a good idea."
- ✓ "I am unable to accurately gauge what changes should be made to this course. When I took the course, I was by far the most adept in English and was assigned a special workload as well as philological literature (Conrad's Heart of Darkness, for example as well as my own urban fantasy literature) to analyze. The course I took was therefore completely different to what other students were required to complete."

In general, participants did not provide explicit answers to this question. Also, informants' responses were very similar in content. Some participants suggest there should be more in class debates. Nevertheless, the majority of participants did not suggest there should be any changes implemented into the course.

In question 24, participants were asked to provide some other comments. Eighteen participants responded to the question. The comments are diverse in their content. Some respondents' answers are quoted below:

- ✓ "It was a good course and it prepared me for Keilir."
- ✓ "Kata is a great teacher and it was good and useful to attend in class with her :)."
- ✓ "Kata is a very good teacher but it is a little hard to have only an English speaking teacher. But maybe better for us who are learning. Keeps us busy speaking it ;)"
- ✓ "Good job :-)"
- ✓ "I need to say that being in the class helped me brake the fear of being in the center of attention."
- ✓ "I need to comment on the presentation: The presentation did not offer me any significant challenge. The teacher requested I speak more slowly so as to allow other students to follow. The colloquial use of English comes naturally to me and thus, I may have begun chatting away rather too fast. "
- ✓ "I think is going a way too quickly through the material and it should be slower."
- ✓ "Now I´m at the university of Reykjavík and what I´m missing most is reading and understanding."
- ✓ "Kata is a fantastic teacher that connected with the people in her class on a personal as well as an educational level."
- ✓ "I thought it was very good. It is hard to have so many people with different backgrounds in the English language. Maybe have more groups that work together and help the ones that know less."
- ✓ "I think the classes are great for novice English students and most of it was still helpful for me as I was a little further along than many of the other students in the class. I had a great time with Kata and the students in my group. Thanks :)"
- ✓ "I enjoyed the class for a variety of reasons but none of them were due to the lessons themselves. To be completely honest, the time I spent in those classes would have been better off spent on studying other subjects such as mathematics, as indeed happened on occasion. This is not some sort of self-aggrandizing statement, it just did not offer me a worthy challenge. I still consider deciding to go to Menntastoðir one of the best decisions I have ever taken in my life, it taught me very much (in other subjects) that I needed at that particular time of my life and for that, I am indeed profusely grateful. I need to admit I am proficient in English, with comparisons to others in the group"
- ✓ "The teacher is a great person."
- ✓ "The teacher is really good at explaining grammar."

All in all, some participants admit they were satisfied with the course, whereas others suggest there should be some changes implemented. Importantly, some informants admit their level of English was outstanding, therefore the classes were not challenging enough. On the other hand, many participants report the classes were well organized and fascinating. Importantly, some respondents claim that Menntastoðir helped them to increase their self-confidence and further their education.

In question 24, participants were asked if English is more like a second or foreign language in Iceland. The question is significant to the study as it might help to determine some recommendations for instructors in their teaching practice. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. All in all, 85% of participants felt that English is more like a second language in Iceland, whereas 15% claimed English is more like a foreign language. Twenty participants did not answer the question, which might suggest that they did not understand the difference between the foreign and second language. There was no one who specified their answer.
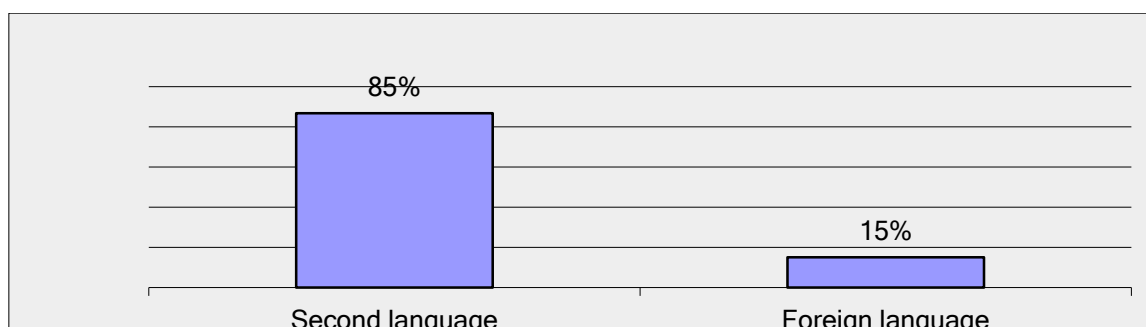
Figure 22. Question 24: Do you think that English in Iceland is more like a second or foreign language?

## 4.4. Participants' experience with English (the last set of questions).

The last set of questions is concerned with participants' experience with English. This set of questions is important to map out the type and amount of English exposure. The purpose of this section is to examine how much time per day is devoted to listening,

speaking, reading and writing in English. This section also aims at providing some insight into participants' use of English. Specifically, respondents have to specify under what circumstances they use English. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are analyzed separately.

Figure 23 illustrates how much time per day participants hear English. Importantly, participants were supposed to choose any day from Monday to Friday. The answering options were as follows: under 30 minutes, more than an hour, more than three hours, never. Fifty-two respondents answered the question.

Summarizing, 54% of participants reported they hear English for more than three hours per day, while 36% of respondents declared they listen to English for more than an hour. Only 8% of participants admitted that they hear English for less than 30 minutes. Importantly, there was nobody who claimed they never hear English.
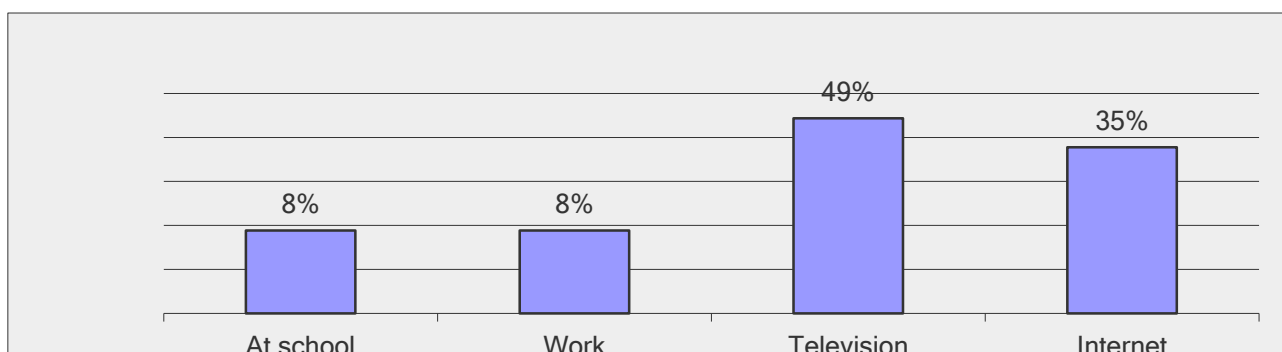
Figure 23. Question 25:   Think of any day from Monday to Friday. For how
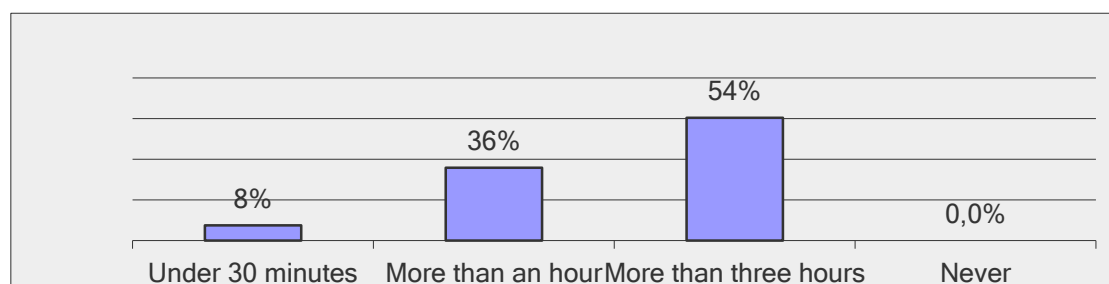
many minutes do you hear English?

Figure 29 presents the circumstances under which respondents hear English. Fifty-three participants answered the question. The answering options were as follows: school, work, television, the Internet. The frequency of responses was as follows: 89% of participants admitted they listen to English mainly on TV. Next, 8% of respondents reported that they hear English at school. Similarly, the same number of respondents hear English at work. Next, 35% of participants declared that they hear English on the Internet. Moreover, one respondent specified she hears a lot of English on Skype while speaking with her boyfriend from England. Also, one male explained he watches English movies every day, which is the reason why he is proficient in English. Additionally, one female admitted she mainly hears English at her workplace, where she

needs to talk to foreigners. One female claimed she only hears English when she is at school and participates in English classes.

Figure 24. Question 26: Think of any day from Monday to Friday, under what circumstance do you hear English?

Figure 25 is centered on speaking English. Participants were asked for how many minutes per day they speak English. Participants were supposed to choose any day from Monday to Friday. The answering options were as follows: Under 30 minutes, more than an hour, more than three hours, never. Fifty-two respondents answered the question. The figure indicates that 60% of respondents speak English for less than 30 minutes a day, while 27% of respondents speak English for more than an hour a day. Also, 8% of participants declared they speak English for more than 3 hours a day. Finally, 5% of respondents admitted they never speak English. Interestingly, the participants who never speak English belong to the 46-55 year-old age group. One female reported that she had to speak English in the English class for the first time in her life. She also explained that she never speaks English with foreigners, as she hardly understands English. The same female specified she did not decide to do the presentation in the class due to her learning anxiety.

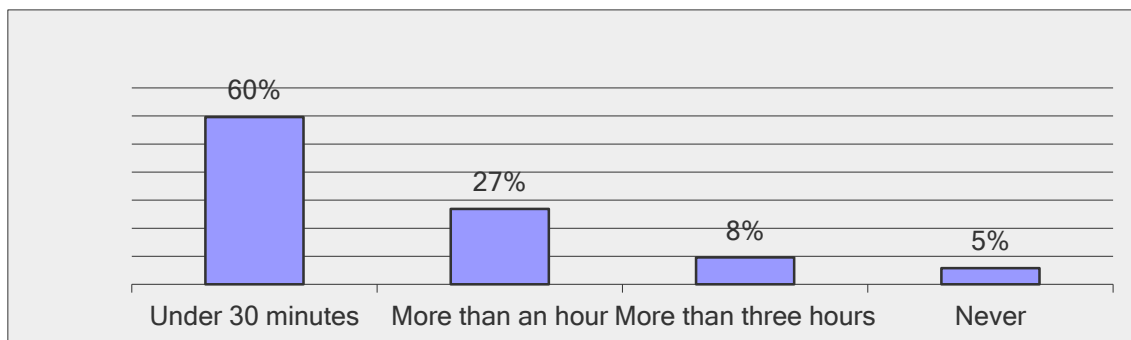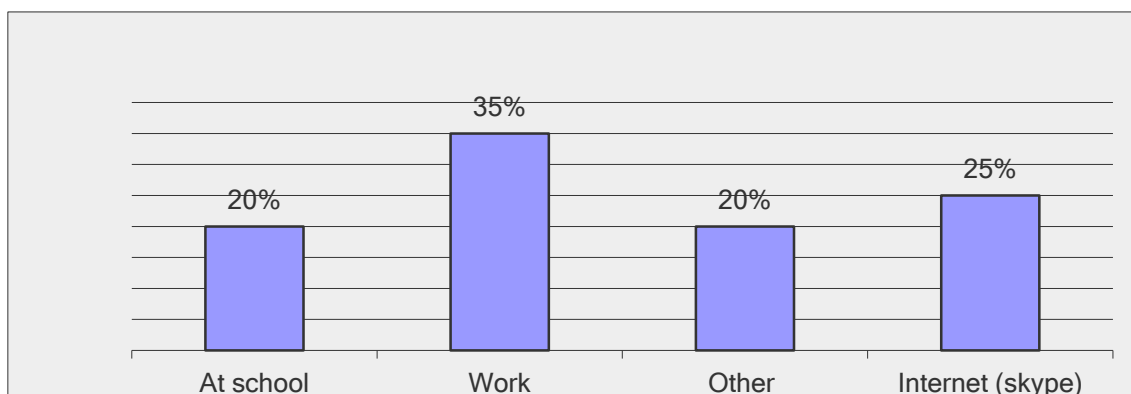**Figure 25. Question 27: Think of any day from Monday to Friday, for how many minutes do you speak English?**
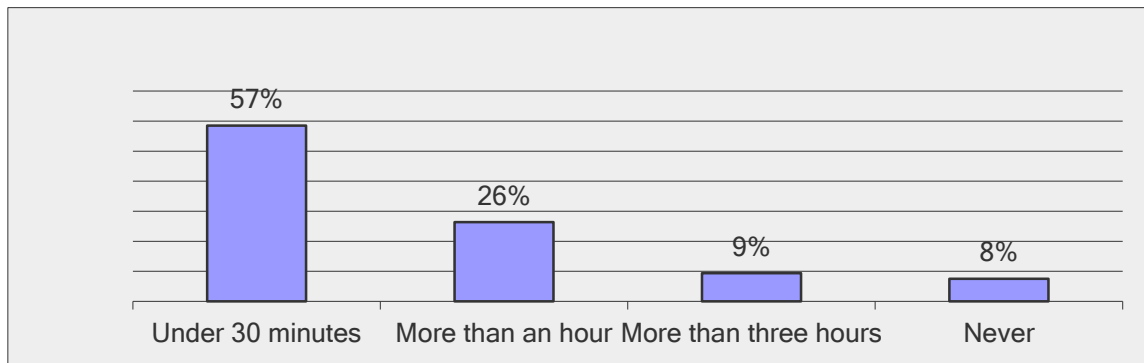
Figure 26 presents circumstances under which participants speak English. Fifty respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: at school, work, other, the Internet (Skype). The figure shows that 30% of participants reported that they speak English at their workplace, while 25% of respondents claimed they speak English on the Internet (Skype). Moreover, 20% of participants speak English at school, whereas some participants (20%) declared they speak English in other circumstances. Some respondents elaborated on this question. Namely, 1 female explained she speaks a lot of English as she works at the airport. Moreover, one male admitted he speaks English since he travels abroad frequently. Furthermore, one male explained he speaks English while talking with his family members in America.

Figure 26. Question 28: Think of any day from Monday to Friday, under what circumstances do you speak English.
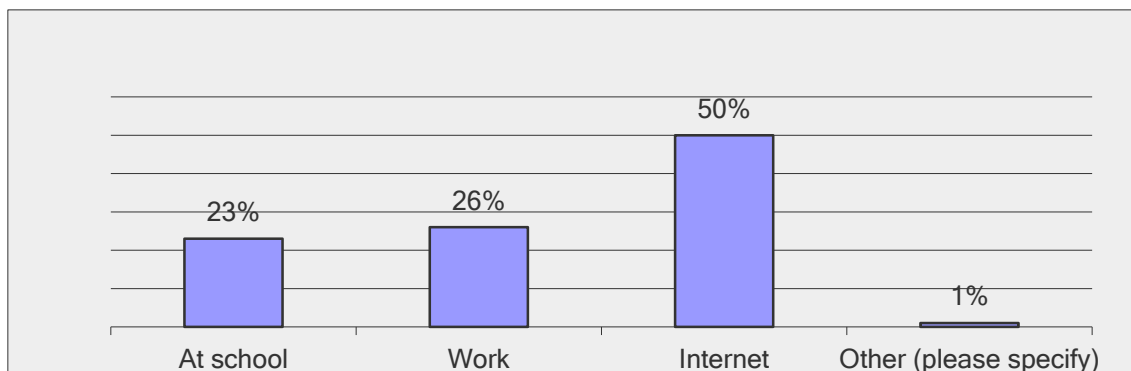
Figure 27 illustrates how much time per day participants write in English. Fifty-three participants answered the question. The answering options were as follows: under 30 minutes, more than an hour, more than three hours, never. Following the figure, 57% of participants write in English for less than 30 minutes a day. Moreover, 26% of

informants write in English for more than an hour, while 9% of respondents admitted they write in English for more than three hours. One female specified that she writes in English at her workplace where she responds to e-mails. Finally, 8% of informants admitted that they never write in English. The participants who never write in English belong in the 46-to-55 age group.

Figure 27. Question 29: Think of any day from Monday to Friday, for how many minutes do you write English?

Figure 28 presents circumstances under which participants write in English. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: at school. work, the Internet, other. Following figure 33, 50% of participants write in English on the Internet. Furthermore, 26% of respondents claimed they write in English at work, whereas 23% of respondents said they write in English at school. Only 1 % of participants reported they write in English in other circumstances. Specifically, one female at the age of 23-35 reported she sends text messages to her boyfriend in England. Furthermore, 1 male belonging in the 23-to-35 age group, declared that he writes in English mostly on Facebook.

Figure 28. Question 30: Think of any day from Monday to Friday, under what circumstance do you write English?

Figure 29 indicates how much time per day respondents read in English. Fifty-three participants answered the question. The answering options were as follows: Under 30 minutes, more than an hour, more than three hours, never. Following the figure, 51% of participants read in English for more than an hour, while 24% of respondents read in English less than 30 minutes per day. Next, 23% of respondents read in English for more than three hours, and only 2% of participants never read in English. One male admitted he reads English subtitles while watching television. The participant who never reads in English belongs in the 46-to-55 age group. It is worth noting that this participant did not complete Primary School.
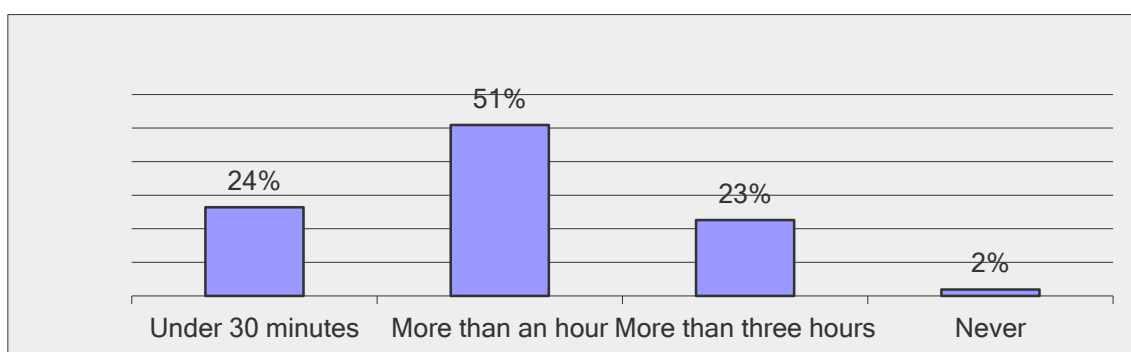

Figure 29. Question 31: Think of any day from Monday to Friday, for how many minutes do you read English?

Figure 30 indicates how much time per day participants read in English. Fifty-three respondents answered the question. The answering options were as follows: at school, work, television, the Internet.

Following the figure, 60% of informants read English on the Internet, whereas 20% on television. Next, 15 % belongs to the work environment, whereas only 5 % of

informants read English at school. One female, belonging in the 25-to-35 age group, reported she reads in English a lot as she buys foreign magazines. One male, also at the age of 25-35, admitted he reads English when he shops for products on E-bay.
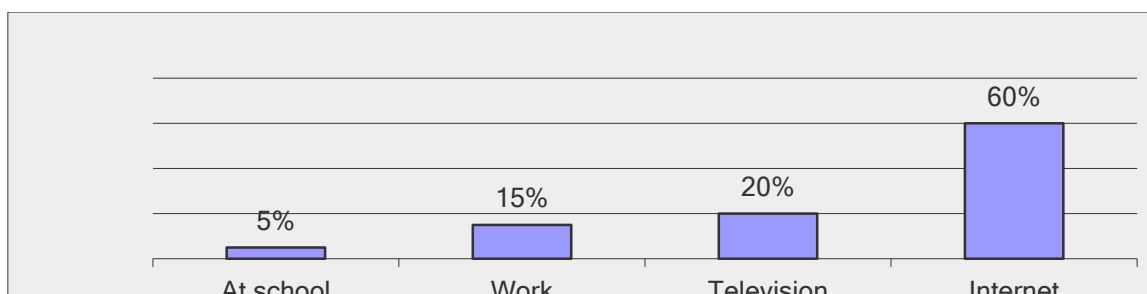
Figure 33. Question 32: Think of any day from Monday to Friday, under what circumstances do you read English?

Discussion

The main findings of the study support the notion that adult students are diverse in terms of their age, gender, marital status, educational background and English proficiency. The study also shows that students' approach to homework and attendance varies among individuals although the majority recognize the importance of regular attendance and of completing homework for success in their coursework. Similarly, the reasons for pursuing continuing education and the level of participants' self-confidence after the course are different among respondents. Although this is not traditional I have chosen to discuss the instructional implications of each factor immediately after the factors that demonstrate the diversity.

The study demonstrates the diverse backgrounds of adult learners. As can be seen from this study, 50 % of participants are between 25-to-35 years old, while respondents belonging in the 56-to-65 year-old group constitute only 3%. The findings of the study also indicate that females outnumber men. Sixty-four percent of participants who learn at Menntastoðir live with partners and 36% of participants live alone. The study shows that 43% of the participants started learning English when they were 10 or 12 years old, while only 4% reported they started learning English after the age of 20. Importantly, 14% of the participants started learning English before they were 5. The results of the study indicate that the largest group of participants started learning English at an early age. Importantly, it should be stressed that there was no one in the study who had never learned English. Educational background of participants was also diverse. The majority of participants completed Primary education. Only 20 % of the participants completed 1-3 years of Secondary School, while 9 % of the respondents finished Trade or Technical School. It should be stressed that the largest proportion of participants had a poor educational background.

The emergence of diverse learners accounts for the existence of lifelong learning centers; where all learners, despite their different backgrounds, can pursue education. "The dimensions of student diversity include age, learning style, skill level, cultural background, physical ability, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Not all of these dimensions are of equal importance in a given teaching and learning situation…" (Perry & Birdine, 1996). To address the issue of diversity, it is critical to provide

learners with a variety of activities so that all learners can benefit from a learning experience. To be more explicit, to encourage learning and spark learners' interest, instructors can select topics that would correspond to learners' age or gender. Some teaching instruction may appeal more to females than male and vice versa. Differentiated instruction is an effective way to address the needs of adult learners who have diverse backgrounds. To achieve this goal it is crucial to become familiar with the diverse backgrounds of learners. Students who completed only Primary School need additional teaching support, whereas students who attended Secondary School or the university could be provided with more challenging tasks.

The study indicates that adult students learn for diverse purposes. The majority of participants decided to learn at Menntastoðir to extend their education and develop intellectually, while few respondents attended the course for fun or for work related reasons. The findings of the study support the notion that adults are willing to participate in lifelong learning, although the reasons for pursuing education may vary among individuals (Wlodkowski, 2008). Some adults continue learning to complete basic or secondary education, whereas others want to increase their qualifications or they study for fun. This has an effect on teaching instruction. Adults need to know that they will benefit from learning in their daily life situations, therefore it is important to search for real life applications in teaching materials and activities in order to meet learners' expectations.

The findings of this study support the notion that adult learners have a different approach to the issue of homework and attendance; although the majority of respondents recognize the importance of systematic preparations for classes and of attending classes. Educators can encourage adult learners to do their homework; as it is a great tool to promote individual thinking among adult learners. It is important to note that some instructors still use a teacher-centered approach, where there is no room for learners' individual thinking. Through doing homework, adult learners are given opportunities to express their opinions and work on their own mistakes. To encourage adult learners to do their homework, instructors can implement different forms of homework. The use of digital technology (web-based platforms, interactive textbooks, Blogging, Twitter or Facebook) might be an incentive for adult learners to do

homework. Adult learners have a diverse approach to homework, therefore it is important to encourage all learners to do homework as it has an effect on instruction (Zazpe, 2012). The approach to attending classes also varied among learners. The majority of learners attended classes regularly, whereas some participants did not consider attendance an important issue. For many adult learners attendance is not always a priority, as they have a lot of commitments outside school. Nevertheless, learners' absence may affect instruction. If learners are absent most of the time, it may be problematic for instructors to maintain the flow of a course. Importantly, encouraging learners to attend classes plays a great role as it reinforces teaching instruction. Educators can model the behavior that they want to see in their students. To stress the importance of attendance, educators may attach grades to attendance; although it may create a problematic situation since adults do not like such a level of control. Moreover, one of the ways to reinforce good attendance is to create a pleasant learning environment where adults can feel appreciated.

The research indicates that *Menntastoðir* helped the majority of students increase their self-confidence. It should be noted that most students who decided to attend *Menntastoðir* had not attended school for many years. Nonetheless, 2% of the respondents strongly disagreed that *Menntastoðir* helped them increase their self-confidence. There were also a few participants who felt they could not judge whether or not *Menntastoðir* increased their self-confidence. Hence, it is possible to assume that the course did not help them become more self-confident. The findings of the study support the notion that adults have different levels of self-confidence when they start learning at an older age (Swanson, 2005). Some adults find it problematic to express opinions in class, therefore instructors could make an effort to help learners overcome their shyness or anxiety. It could be also inferred that learners who have a poor educational background are less likely to take initiative in class projects.

The study demonstrates the diversity of English proficiency before and after the course. Although the vast majority of participants believed their English skills were very good or good before the course, there were also a few individuals who claimed they were fair or weak in English. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that all components: reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation improved

significantly over the course. The skills that respondents reported to be fair or poor initially improved greatly. Moreover, the number of participants who could not read, write or pronounce dropped to 0. There was one person who could not write at the beginning or at the end of the course. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the findings were based on participants' self –assessment, which may lead to an overestimation of language proficiency. To be specific, many respondents reported they were very good or good at language skills prior to *Menntastoðir;* nevertheless many participants may have overestimated their language proficiency. Indeed, the majority of participants were proficient in receptive language skills; nonetheless they were poor at productive skills. One reason for this could be the fact that Icelandic students are mainly exposed to English through television and the Internet, which does not help them develop their productive skills. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) reports that Icelandic students find it problematic to read textbooks in English when they enter universities as they lack productive skills. Instructors could attempt to integrate learners' productive and receptive skills into an English lesson. Learners need to practice writing to improve their productive skills. Many educators neglect writing practice in class due to the fact that adult learners prefer to focus on speaking instead (Thornbury, 2008). Consequently, writing projects are relegated to homework and not much attention is drawn to learners' writing errors. Thus, it is important to place more emphasis on accuracy in writing to help students become more proficient in English. Although English is widely spread in Iceland, it is the priority to practice all language skills to achieve better results. It is also important to stress that Icelandic learners use English as a Lingua Franca; which means that learners may lack proficiency in some language skills.

New theme: exposure. The study aimed at mapping out the type and amount of exposure to English among Menntastoðir students. The results demonstrate the diverse types and amount of exposure to English among participants. The research also examined whether participants considered English to be more like a second or foreign language in Iceland.

The research shows that 85% of the respondents thought English is more like a second language in Iceland, while 15% of the participants believed English is more like a foreign language. It seems that participants realize English is so widespread in Iceland

that it could be viewed a second language. According to Arnbjörnsdóttir (2011) high exposure to English indicates that English should no longer be considered a foreign language in Iceland. Nonetheless, some participants claimed English is more like a foreign language in Iceland. This may be because there are still some people who are not exposed to English much.

The study suggests that, the majority of participants hear English mainly on television and the Internet. A smaller group of respondents hear English at work or at school. The study indicates that the vast majority of participants hear English for more than three hours per day. It is reasonable to conclude therefore that most Menntastoðir students watch television in English.

As far as speaking English is concerned, the study shows that the majority of respondents speak English at work. The study also reveals that there are many participants who speak English on Skype. Smaller proportions of respondents speak English at school or in other circumstances. The study indicates that the vast majority of respondents speak English for less than 30 minutes per day. There are few participants who never speak English. It might be concluded that these participants do not speak English a lot. The study implies that they need to speak English when they are at work.

The research shows 50% of the participants write in English on the Internet. A smaller proportion writes English at work and at school. It can be concluded that the vast majority of participants use the Internet to communicate with other people all over the world. The study also indicates that more than half of respondents write in English for less than 30 minutes per day. Still, 8% of the respondents said that they never write in English. This might be because these participants do not have any writing skills.

As the study indicates, the main source of reading is the Internet. It seems Menntastoðir students do not read much academic literature or magazines. Surprisingly, only 5% of participants read English at school, which might explain why there are so few people who are familiar with academic vocabulary. Following the study, the majority of participants read English for more than an hour per day. Only 2% of the participants never read English and it is possible that these participants do not understand English at all.

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that many Menntastoðir students seem to be exposed to English mainly through listening. This might explain the phenomenon of why they are good at receptive tasks, but not so good at productive skills. Although they seem to read English quite a lot, but the reading texts they are exposed to contain mainly colloquial speech, which does not help them develop their productive skills. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) concludes that "English in Iceland is colloquial and contextual. Icelandic youth are overwhelmingly exposed to one type of register that it associated with popular culture: colloquial, informal speech mainly from visual materials" (p. 54). Consequently, it has an effect on teaching. In a classroom setting, instructors need to place more emphasis on teaching academic English in order to help learners understand academic texts (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2010). Importantly, "The language exposure and use is intense enough to affect Icelanders'identity and general language use" Arnbjörnsdóttir (2011). It can be inferred that English is not a foreign language in Iceland, therefore educational curriculum should be oriented towards the needs of learners who are extensively exposed to English and use English as a Lingua Franca.

All in all, the research indicates that Menntastoðir students are a diverse group of students of varying age, gender, marital status, educational backgrounds and English proficiency. Also, the results demonstrate that students' differences reflect in their approach to the issues of homework and attendance. Finally, the study reveals students' diversity in terms of their reasons for learning and the level of their self-confidence after completing Menntastoðir. Successful educators address the issue of diversity by recognizing the importance of the diversity and providing meaningful teaching instruction. As adults have various backgrounds and different levels of English skills, it is critical to connect to students' experiences and preferences. An effective teacher values the diversity of learners by offering support and assistance. Clearly stated objectives, differentiated instruction and engaging classroom environment can encourage learners to participate in classes. Learners' diversity

The next theme addresses teaching materials and classroom activities that are considered to be useful by students in terms of teaching. First, the research investigates the usefulness of grammar teaching, translations into English/Icelandic, debates,

writing, listening and reading. Second, the study examines whether or not the books used in class were useful. Third, the study indicates whether or not online websites helped students improve their English. Moreover, the study shows the usefulness of doing in-class presentations.   Finally, the research reveals whether group-projects helped students make progress.

It is evident from this study that the majority of respondents believed translating texts into Icelandic/English was the most helpful classroom activity. This might suggest that students need to be familiar with equivalents of English vocabulary in their native language to be able to learn efficiently. The research also shows that respondents consider grammar teaching to be the most helpful kind of activities after translations. It is interesting to note that students seem to recognize the need to learn grammar, even though grammar learning is commonly believed to be tedious and uninteresting. It is reasonable to state that adults seem to like learning things they already know and what they are good at. Moreover, the study shows that some participants considered debates a useful teaching activity. It should be noted that many students like to participate in class debates as they are self-confident and proficient in English, nevertheless there are also students who never express their opinions in class as they are either too shy or have poor English speaking skills. Following the results of the research, few participants claimed writing was a useful teaching activity. It might be assumed that the majority of students do not favor writing activities, as their productive skills are poor. Moreover, the results indicate that only a few students favor reading. Furthermore, the study indicates that a small proportion of participants like listening activities. This may be because Icelandic students are already good at listening so listening tasks may not be considered challenging enough by some students. In general, the research shows that translation activities are the most preferred teaching activities, while reading activities are the least preferred.

As far as Raymond Murphy's grammar book is concerned, 81% of the participants reported that the grammar book was useful, 7% of the respondents disagreed, while 12% of the participants said they could not judge. It is possible that some students did not use the grammar book at all as they believed they were already proficient in grammar. As far as the textbook made by the teacher is concerned, 85% of

participants reported it was useful, 8% of the respondents claimed it was not useful, while 7% of students admitted they could not judge. It could be concluded that some students did not consider the textbook useful, as the level of vocabulary presented in the textbook was either too high or too low for them. In general, the findings of the research suggest that the vast majority of participants liked the textbook.

The study indicates that the *Stoðkennarinn* website, which gives an opportunity to practice grammar, writing, listening and reading, was considered helpful by 49% of the participants. Still, there were 15% of the respondents who claimed the website did not help them improve their English. Interestingly, 36% of the participants said they could not judge whether or not the website helped them make progress. This might suggest that many students did not know how to use the website as their computer skills were poor. Additionally, it is possible to speculate that some students did not make an effort to use the website due to laziness or lack of time. Also, some students may not have used the website as it was too easy for them. As far as the listening website http://esl-bits.net/ is concerned, 87 % of participants believed the website was helpful. 4% of the respondents claimed that the website did not help them make progress. It is interesting to note that 9% of the participants could not judge whether or not the website was helpful. This may be explained by the fact that these students did not attend classes and they did not have an opportunity to use this website. Nevertheless, the vast majority of students claimed the website helped them improve their English. This could be because this website gives students an opportunity to follow a text while listening, which improves their spelling.

The findings of the study indicate that doing an in-class presentation improved students' English. To be more specific, 77% of the participants reported that doing an in-class presentation helped them enhance their English. Interestingly, the study shows that 17% of the participants could not judge whether or not the presentation helped them become better English users. It could be inferred that some students did not do this in-class presentation due to anxiety issues that they could not overcome. Finally, 6 % of the participants claimed the presentation was not a valuable experience. It is possible to conclude therefore that some students do not recognize the importance of making public speeches.

The study demonstrates that a group-work was favored by 74% of the participants. The study implies that the vast majority of participants believed teamwork was an enjoyable activity. Nevertheless, 19% of respondents claimed that group-work was not effective and they preferred to work alone. It is possible to conclude that some students do not like working in teams as they work faster than others, which might be a source of frustration. Six percent of the participants could not decide whether or not the group-work was an effective activity. It is reasonable to suspect that these students do not know which teaching activities match their learning style most accurately.

All in all, the study shows that 81% of the participants considered the teaching materials and activities interesting and helpful, whereas 12% of the respondents disagreed the teaching materials were useful. Moreover, 8% of the participants reported that they could not judge whether or not classroom activities and materials sparked their interest in their English learning. It could be inferred that students like these teaching materials and activities that are most relevant to them. "For adults to see learning as truly relevant it has to be connected to who they are, what they care about, and how they perceive and know" (Wlodkowski, 2008: 214). It is possible to assume that some learners did not like classroom materials and activities as they did not correspond to their personal experience. Additionally, students seem to favor the activities that they are already familiar with. Finally, there are some students who do not know what activities they prefer most, as they have not attended school for many years and they are not aware of their own learning styles.

The next questions address the participants' speculations regarding possible changes that could be made to the course. The main purpose of this was to examine participants' feedback and determine its final recommendation to guide curriculum development.

In general, respondents were satisfied with the course. To be more specific, the research indicates that many students considered classes to be well organized and interesting. Nonetheless, some students believed the course should be a bit longer due to the fact that some students were weaker than others and they required more practice in English. The findings of the study supports the notion that adults have different language proficiency, therefore some learners need more time and support to make

progress. Moreover, the study indicates that there should be more in-class debates about specific topics, it is important to facilitate learning by introducing cooperative tasks. Also, the findings of the research suggest that some students believed the materials should be presented slower. Additionally, it is suggested there should be more group work in order to help weaker students make progress. These findings support the notion that learners can understand more with the support of a more qualified person (Vygotsky, 1978). The study shows that some students felt that the level of English was not right for them, and therefore they needed more challenging projects to work on. It could be beneficial to provide some students with more advanced materials, otherwise learners may find lessons aimless and not relevant. In general, only a few respondents proposed possible changes that could be made to this course, which did not match the survey in individual items. In simple terms, students seemed to be very positive about the course in the open-ended section, but they did not report the same answers in individual items. Specifically, the study shows 12% of students did not consider Raymond Murphy's grammar book helpful, but they did not provide any comments in an open-ended section regarding this book. Similarly, many respondents did not like the Stoðkennarinn website but they did not explain why the website was not effective or why they did not use it. Furthermore, 8% of the respondents claimed the class times were not convenient for them, but they did not provide any feedback on what possible changes could be made. Moreover, 8% of the respondents claimed the presentation was not a valuable experience, but only one respondent justified his answer.

It is worth pointing out that some students are not aware of how they learn and what factors shape their learning, therefore instructors could help learners discover their learning style. It is significant to note that most participants completed only Primary School education, which might be the reason for their lack of learning awareness. Finally, it is also possible to assume that the survey was too long and, therefore some students did not want to provide more explicit feedback.

Ultimately, the goal of the study was to provide a common understanding of what instructors need to know to be able to support and enhance student learning. Following the Andragogigical Model, learners' diversity and specific needs need to be considered while setting objectives. Adult students use English as a Lingua Franca,

therefore teaching materials and teaching goals could be centered on the idea that full competence rather than 'native-like mastery' is the priority. It is important to stress that adults learn differently than children, hence they should also be taught differently. There are certain characteristics that adult courses need to have. First, adults need to be introduced to clear objectives in order to understand the reason for learning. Second, adult learners need to feel they 'self-direct' their learning and they are responsible for their decisions. Third, adults learn more effectively if they are properly motivated, therefore listening to students is important. Moreover, teaching materials and activities should be relevant and meaningful, so that they can find real life applications in them. Furthermore, adult learning is shaped by social conditions such as digital technologies, the global economy and changing demographics. Consequently, it is the priority to adjust teaching to these constant changes. Finally, adults come to school with various levels of knowledge, different backgrounds and expectations; therefore instructors need to create a conducive learning environment that would embrace this diversity.

Conclusions

The study was aimed at examining the effectiveness of a specialized program in English at Menntastoðir, in Reykjanesbær. Firstly, the purpose of this study was to map out the type and amount of English exposure among adults learning in Menntastoðir. The findings of this study support the findings of previous studies conducted by Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) and Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2010 that Icelandic learners are extensively exposed to English; nonetheless the exposure is colloquial which means that instructors need to aim at integrating receptive and productive skills to achieve good teaching results. Moreover, the findings of the study indicate that adult learners use English as a Lingua Franca, thus teaching instruction should be centered on different varieties of English. It should be stressed, however, that English as a Lingua Franca is a respectively new phenomenon; therefore educators may find it problematic to guide curriculum development successfully. One of the questions that arose from the study is how educators can organize their teaching instruction to embrace different varieties of English and finally implement clear-cut recommendations to guide curriculum for adult English learners. Moreover, the findings of the study support the findings of Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) that Icelandic learners consider English to be a second language, therefore educators should adjust teaching materials and classroom activities to this new linguistic context. Secondly, the study aimed at gaining information whether the course improved students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation. The results of the research indicate that the course improved learners' English skills, nevertheless it should be stressed that the study was based on learners' self-assessment and some students may have overestimated their proficiency. Third, one of the goals of the study was to examine if teaching materials and specific classroom activities helped students make progress. In general learners were satisfied with the materials and teaching instructions, nonetheless the study support the findings that adults are diverse in terms of their backgrounds and language proficiency; therefore it is important to implement various materials and activities to cater learners' differences. Additionally, the study shows that adult learners are motivated to learn, nevertheless some students need the support of an instructor or other learners to understand the content of the course better. Ultimately, the purpose of the study was also to generate discussion on how instructors can meet the needs of

unique adult learners; and to examine participant's feedback to determine its final recommendations to guide curriculum development. The study implies that educators need to follow some principles to maximize adult learners' language development. Firstly, establishing clear objectives, implementing relevant teaching materials and motivating learners contribute to the success of adult learners. Second, educators should become familiar with learners' backgrounds and recognize the importance of diversity of learners. Teaching instruction should be individualized, as adults' have different English skills and life experiences. Importantly, instructors should bear in mind that adult learning is shaped by the social context in which it takes place, which dramatically changes the way how language is learnt and taught. The aim of this study was to help instructors put together effective learning for adults. Finally, it is worth noting that the study is significant as it might provide some deeper insight into factors that determine second language learning by adults who use English as a Lingua Franca. Moreover, this research is meaningful since there has been relatively little research in the field of adults language learning in general.

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Appendix A

1. What is your age?

   o 18- 24 y
   o 25- 35
   o 36- 45
   o 46- 55
   o 56- 65
   o 66+

2. What is your gender?

   o Female
   o Male

3. What is your marital status?

   o Single
   o Married
   o Cohabitation
   o Divorced
   o Widowed

4. When did you begin to learn English?

   o Before 5 years old
   o 6- 9 years
   o 10-12 years
   o 13-15 years
   o 16- 20 years
   o After 20 years

5. Education completed prior to Menntastoðir.

   o Primary School
   o 1-3 years of Secondary School
   o Trade or Technical School

6. Why did you choose Menntastoðir?

   o Work
   o Study
   o Leisure
   o Future Prospects

7. Do you think Menntastoðir increased your self-confidence?

   o Strongly agree

o Agree
o Disagree
o Strongly disagree
o Can't judge

8. Rate your general English skills before taking the course.

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	I don't speak English
Reading					
Writing					
Listening					
Speaking					
Pronunciation					

9. Rate your general English skills after taking the course.

Options	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	I don't speak English
Reading					
Writing					
Listening					
Speaking					
Pronunciation					

10. What kind of classes were the most helpful? Rate from 1-6, 1 being the most preferred and 6 being the least preferred.

Options	1	2	3	4	5	6
Grammar						
Translations						
Debates						
Writing						
Listening						
Reading						

11. Did the materials used in class spark your interest in in English?

o Strongly agree
o Agree
o Disagree

o Strongly disagree
o Can't judge

12. Was Raymond Murphy grammar book helpful?

o Strongly agree
o Agree
o Disagree
o Strongly disagree
o Can't judge

13. Was the textbook chosen by the teacher helpful?

o Strongly agree
o Agree
o Disagree
o Strongly disagree
o Can't judge

14. Did using *Stoðkennarinn* website help you to improve your English??

o Strongly agree
o Agree
o Disagree
o Strongly disagree
o Can't judge

15. Did listening to a text help you improve your English?

o Strongly agree
o Agree
o Disagree
o Strongly disagree
o Can't judge
o
16. Did you do homework systematically?

o Strongly agree
o Agree
o Disagree
o Strongly disagree
o Can't judge

17. Were you assigned enough homework?

   o Strongly agree
   o Agree
   o Disagree
   o Strongly disagree
   o Can't judge

18. Did your attendance affect your learning outcome?
   o Strongly agree
   o Agree
   o Disagree
   o Strongly disagree
   o Can't judge

19. Do you think that doing a presentation in class increased your self-confidence afterwards?

   o Strongly agree
   o Agree
   o Disagree
   o Strongly disagree
   o Cant' judge

20. Did you learn more while working in teams rather than alone?

   o Strongly agree
   o Agree
   o Disagree
   o Strongly disagree
   o Cant' judge
21. Do you think the English level was right for you?
   o Strongly agree
   o Agree
   o Disagree
   o Strongly disagree
   o Cant' judge

22. Write down any changes that could be made to this course.

23. Provide some other comments.

24. Do you think that English in Iceland is more like a second or foreign language?

- o Second language
- o Foreign language

25. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. For how many minutes do you hear English?

- o Under 30 minutes
- o More than an hour
- o More than three hours
- o Never

26. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. Under what circumstances do you hear English?

- o At school
- o Work
- o Television
- o Internet

27. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. For how many minutes do you speak English?

- o Under 30 minutes
- o More than an hour
- o More than three hours
- o Never

28. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. Under what circumstances do you speak English?

- o At school
- o Work
- o Television
- o Internet

29. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. For how many minutes do you write English?

- o Under 30 minutes
- o More than an hour

- More than three hours
- Never

30. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. Under what circumstances do you write English?

- At school
- Work
- Television
- Internet

31. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. For how many minutes do you read English?

- Under 30 minutes
- More than an hour
- More than three hours
- Never

32. Think of any day from Monday to Friday. Under what circumstances do you read English?

- At school
- Work
- Television
- Internet