English Teaching and Learning in Three Primary Schools in Iceland

The Perspective of Immigrant Students

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M.Ed. Thesis

University of Iceland

School of Education

HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

MENNTAVÍSINDASVIÐ

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Preface

This 30 ECT credit thesis is part fulfillment of my M.Ed. degree at the Department of Education of the University of Iceland. Originally, I had intended to explore the views and perspectives of students in South Africa towards English learning and teaching. Due to unforeseen circumstances, my plans did not work out and I decided to change my focus to the reality of immigrant students in compulsory schools in Iceland.

My supervisors for this project were Susan E. Gollifer and Brynja Halldórsdóttir. I owe them my gratitude for sharing their wisdom and providing direction to complete my study within a strict timeframe given the change in research focus.

Additionally, I want to give my gratitude to those students who were willing to participate in the study, the Principals at the schools for granting me access to their facilities, and my Gatekeepers for helping me with everything I needed regarding my interview process.

Last but by no means least, I want to thank my parents Helga Gunnarsdóttir, and Sigtryggur Karlsson for their motivational support, my sister Ásdís Sigtryggsdóttir for being my role-model, Usman Ghani Virk for his advises and corrections, Gabríel for his company and motivation, and Ragnheiður Reynisdóttir for her enthusiasm and constant reassurance that I can finish this project.

Abstract

This is a study conducted on the perspective of 17 immigrant students aged 13-16 towards their English learning and teaching in Icelandic compulsory schools and on what future aspirations they have for their English. The significance of the study is twofold: to inspire my own professional development as an English teacher working in culturally diverse classrooms, and to give voice to a group of students in a research context that builds on existing international and national research whilst contributing fresh insights. This is a qualitative study that draws on the methods of narrative inquiry to conduct three focus group interviews in three different schools in Iceland. The students came from nine different countries and had been living in Iceland for 2-15 years. They were asked about their lessons, what they liked, what they thought could be improved, or what was missing, and about their future aspirations. The findings suggest that students seek more diversity in teaching methods, which they describe as predominantly focused on text- and workbook. Student responses further indicate the need for more meaningful learning approaches with emphasis on practical language usage. While some students felt that English was necessary and would serve them in their future endeavors to study or work abroad, others felt that it was not relevant to their future lives. English is a core curricular subject in Iceland, in recognition of its academic and social value. Therefore, teachers need to not only make their practice more meaningful to respond to academic and social needs, but to do this in a way that responds to the diverse cultural reality of students. These findings are intended to inform my own professional development as an effective English language teacher in an increasingly multicultural society.

Ágrip

Enskukennsla og -nám í þremur grunnskólum á Íslandi: Viðhorf innfluttra nemenda

Þessi rannsókn fjallar um viðhorf 17 innfluttra (immigrant) nemenda á aldrinum 13-16 ára, til enskunáms og -kennslu í íslenskum grunnskólum, og hvaða væntingar þeir hafa til ensku í tengslum við framtíð sína. Gildi þessarar rannsóknar er tvíþætt; í fyrsta lagi til þess að hjálpa mér að þróa mína eigin starfskenningu í sambandi við það að kenna í fjölmenningarlegri kennslustofu. Í öðru lagi til þess að ljá þessum nemendahóp rödd og setja í fræðilegt samhengi sem byggir á innlendum og erlendum rannsóknum og ritum, og að sama skapi að veita ferska innsýn í þennan málaflokk. Þetta er eigindleg rannsókn sem byggist á lífsögulegum rannsóknaraðferðum,. Í henni voru tekin þrjú rýnihópaviðtöl í þremur mismunandi skólum á Íslandi. Nemendurnir komu frá níu mismunandi löndum og hafa búið á Íslandi í 2-15 ár. Þessir nemendur voru spurðir að því hvernig venjuleg kennslustund væri hjá þeim, hvað þeim líkaði og hvað mætti fara betur, hvað vantaði og framtíðarvæntingar þeirra í sambandi við enskukunnáttu. Niðurstöðurnar gefa til kynna að nemendum finnst mega vera meiri fjölbreytni í kennsluháttum kennara, sem þeir lýsa sem mikilli áherslu á vinnubókarvinnu. Auk þess gáfu nemendurnir til kynna vöntun á merkingabærum aðferðum og nálgunum í kennslu, með áherslu á praktíska notkun á tungumálinu. Mun var að finna á því hvaða vonir nemendur höfðu til enskukunnáttu sinnar í framtíðarsamhengi. Sumum fannst það mikilvægt að læra ensku til þess að sækja sér menntun eða vinnu í útlöndum, fannst öðrum það ekki sérlega mikilvægt. Enska er kjarnafag í íslenskum grunnskólum og gengst þannig við mikilvægum sess enskunnar í menntunar- og félagslegum skilningi. Vegna þessa, verða kennarar að mæta ákalli þessara nemenda með því að beita fyrir sig aðferðum sem kenndar eru við merkingabært nám og standast kröfur um nám sem þjónar nemendum til þess að sækja sér menntun og nota tungumálið í samskiptum. Kennarar verða þó að gera þetta með því að taka tillit til menningarlegs fjölbreytileika nemenda sinna. Þessar niðurstöður eru ætlaðar til þróunar á minni eigin fagmennsku sem enskukennari í þjóðfélagi sem verður stöðugt fjölmenningarlegra.

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1   Introduction

Not so long ago, Iceland was considered a relatively homogenous country with predominantly Nordic, Germanic, and Celtic roots (Ísberg, 2010; Lemonick, 2006). The new reality of Iceland is a multicultural society with great variation and this creates a new challenge for the Icelandic education system. The question that provided the starting point for this study was how I can help immigrant[1] students develop their English language skills in an inclusive and meaningful environment in my role as a teacher.

Multicultural Education is a concept that can be traced back to the 1960's (Banks & Banks, 2010), but it is a relatively new concept in the Icelandic school system. The first steps taken towards meeting the needs of growing diversity in the student population was initiated by the city of Reykjavík in 2001 when the primary school, Austurbæjarskóli was asked to lead the development of a multicultural school (Magnúsdóttir, 2010). Since that time, the needs of immigrant students have been regulated by law and all schools are obliged to have a special program or a plan on how they intend to receive students who arrive in the country as immigrants (Article 16, Laws for compulsory schools no. 91/2008, Alþingi, 2008).

When students immigrate to Iceland they are expected to enroll into school as soon as possible, and to follow the National Curriculum with some modifications (Laws for compulsory schools). English language becomes one of their core subjects from grade four. How these students experience learning English is the focus of this study.

1.1   Purpose and Significance of this Study

In Iceland there has been an increasing focus on the challenges faced by immigrating students and their wellbeing in the Icelandic school system. This study aims to give voice to immigrant students about their experience of English learning and teaching, and what future aspirations they have in terms of using their English abilities. Although there have been previous qualitative studies on the perspectives of Icelandic students and specific

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[1] 'Immigrant' is the term used here to refer to a person who does not have Icelandic (and in this case English) as a mother tongue.

ethnic groups with regard to English language teaching and learning, there has not been a study drawing on immigrant students' perspectives to specifically inform teaching practice.

The purpose of this study is twofold: first it is to inspire my own theory of practice. My own theory of practice refers to the ideology and vision I bring to my classroom. It is influenced by the theories that I have studied as part of my teacher education and my own personal and professional experiences as a teacher. By drawing on the experiences of immigrant students, my intention is to develop my theory of practice informed by their broader perspective as a culturally diverse student group. Secondly, this study aims to provide an opportunity for students to voice their experiences of English learning and teaching, and how they view the role of English in the context of the future. By carrying out this study I therefore aim to develop my current theory of practice by drawing on the voices of students who tend to go unheard, who have lower English language proficiency than their Icelandic peers and whose teachers do not have specialized training to work with cultural diversity (Maltseva, 2009; Ragnarsdóttir, 2007). Although the study is aimed at informing my own practice the results are of interest to all English language teachers in Iceland and internationally.

The research questions for this study are:

How do students, who do not have Icelandic as their first language, in Icelandic compulsory schools (grades 8-10), experience English teaching and learning?

What are the students' academic and personal expectations for studying English?

1.2   The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. The first chapter offers a literature review where I will present the current literature related to my topic to provide context and background. Additionally, in this chapter I draw on previous research in Iceland to ground the study in the Icelandic context. In the following chapter, the research design is presented along with the methods applied in the data collection and analysis. The third chapter is devoted to the findings of the study, followed by a discussion and implications chapter. In the final chapter I draw my study to a close with a

final conclusion where I present the influence of the study on my own theory of practice.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Immigration in Iceland

Iceland is usually considered to be a rather homogenous country in terms of culture and population, and is mostly populated by northern Europeans; people with Nordic ancestry, i.e. from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, but also from Celtic heritage (Limerick, 2006; Ísberg, 2010, p. 6). Icelanders have strived to keep their cultural and linguistic heritage free from foreign influences. Previously, it was required by law that to become an Icelandic citizen, one had to renounce ones foreign names, and adopt an Icelandic name (Kjartansson, 2005, p. 5). Even today, it is illegal to give a child a name if Icelandic grammar rules cannot be applied see; Personal Names Act, no. 45/1996 (Alþingi, 1996). However, in the past decades Iceland has started to become more culturally diverse with increasing immigration from all over the world. This has created a new challenge for the Icelandic school system, which has had to find ways to help foreign children integrate into the schools and society.

Immigration trends in Iceland have changed rapidly in the past decades, "For most of the 20th century and until 1995 foreign nationals were around 1.7% of the population in Iceland…at the beginning of 2008 this number had gone up to 8.1%" (Ísberg, 2010, p. 28). Maltseva (2009, p. 7, citing Ragnarsdóttir, 2007) discusses that Ragnarsdóttir's research has shown that the multicultural population is widely spread, in urban as well as rural areas, and that in some preschools immigrant children account for 50% of the students. Additionally, Maltseva claims that in 2008 students with a foreign language (FL) as their mother tongue were 4.8% of students in compulsory schools.

These numbers indicate that the school system faces a serious challenge to serve the needs of these children, both culturally and with regard to language. Although many of these children are from countries that are closely related to Iceland, i.e. the Nordic countries, a large portion of these children are from countries that do not resemble Iceland in terms of language, culture, prosperity and so forth.

2.2 The Education System in Iceland – Receiving Immigrants

Iceland is a signatory of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), which means that Iceland has fully agreed to implement and enforce the guidelines outlined in the Convention. In this context this is important because education is a significant part of the Convention. In article 28 (1990, p. 8) it says that every child should have the right to equal opportunities to education: "primary education should be compulsory and available free to all". This is the case in Iceland, where students have equal and free access to education, which is compulsory from the age of 6 – 16.

The Icelandic Education System is separated into four branches: kindergarten/preschool, primary/compulsory school (middle school, and lower secondary, grades 1-10, ages 6-16 years old), high school, and lastly university. Public schools are a dominant part of the school system with only a few private schools at all levels. Therefore, the responsibility for accommodating students who have an immigrant background lies with the government, municipalities, and the surrounding communities: that is sport and leisure clubs, after school care centers, and, parent/school collaborations.

Article 16 of The Compulsory School Act (No.91/2008) states that all schools are to accept and welcome students beginning their compulsory education in accordance to municipality/school enrollment plans. Parents shall be informed about their child's education and the practice of the school in general. In this article it is stated that all schools are legally obligated to have a reception for immigrant children.

In the City of Reykjavík, for example, a holistic plan on how immigrating students should be integrated in schools is in place. The policy of the City of Reykjavík is to integrate immigrant students as soon as possible; the emphasis is on parental involvement, multicultural teaching methods, and the value of cultural diversity. There is also an emphasis that immigrant students enroll into a host program (Móttökuáætlun) and, if needed, an individual plan is constructed for each student. Additionally, there is an emphasis on that each student learns Icelandic, but also that they maintain and preserve their mother-tongue and appreciate their cultural and social background. These rules apply to all schools in the City of Reykjavík (Reykjavík City, N.d.a, N.d.b). Still, it is apparent that some areas have larger immigrant populations, and thus schools differ when it comes to adopting to the needs of immigrant students.

As mentioned earlier, schools have initiated special programs and in some cases established a special faculty for immigrant children, where they

get the help they need. Austurbæjarskóli is a school that has catered for immigrant students since 1994. The school is comprised of grades ranging from 1st grade through the 10th. Austurbæjarskóli accepts students who have either migrated to Iceland from abroad or children of Icelanders who have been living abroad for extended time periods. According to Austurbæjarskóli's webpage,[2] in the school year 2011 there were at least 80 students that had other languages than Icelandic as a mother tongue. Those students spoke over 25 different languages. The students learn Icelandic as a second language, along with the core subjects of math, natural sciences, languages, and social studies (Austurbæjarskóli, 2011). Similar programs can be found in other schools, e.g. in Grundaskóli in Akranes, and Álfhólsskóli in Kópavogur and in Breiðholtsskóli in the City of Reykjavík. All of these schools have a special program designed to tend to the needs of students with immigrant background.

Figure 1: *Picture showing location of schools discussed (Google.com, 2015).*

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[2] Last updated in 2011

2.2.1.1 Example of a School Receiving Immigrant Students

> On the homepage of Álfhólskóli, one can find a description of the enrollment procedure of immigrant students, how classes are chosen and what objectives this special department of the school has. First of all, the student comes with a parent for an interview and a needs assessment. Next, the student is enrolled into a class deemed suitable for the student to achieve his educational goals. The objectives listed on the page include that the students arriving should spend approximately 15-20 hours every week in what they call Nýbúadeild (department of new residents). The students' educational progress is constantly evaluated to ensure that she or he is achieving the required educational goals and aims. There is an emphasis on parental involvement in the education of the student and the parents are encouraged to participate and visit the faculty any time they deem necessary. When the student graduates, an evaluation is carried out to assess where she or he stands in his/her education compared to the Icelandic Curricula, to determine which high school the student should proceed to enroll in, and a report with his or hers assessment follows the student to the high school, so that the needs of the student can be met (Álfhólsskóli, 2013, pp. 1-3). This suggests that there is a holistic plan in place, where various aspects of the integration of a foreign student are covered in detail and with care.

2.3   Domestic and International Status of English

2.3.1   Domestic Status

The English language has held a high status for an extended period now. Jeeves (2014, p. 273) discusses that "English has been easily accessible through trade and defense installations, since the World War II", and that exposure to English in Iceland is substantial. Another study shows that 73% of television broadcast, on a randomly chosen week, was in English (Ortega, 2011). 92% of Icelandic homes have access to the internet and thus Jeeves (2014, p. 273) claims that "internet access at home and at school…gives widespread access to other material in English. Jeeves also claims that at

the tertiary level most textbooks are in English (p. 173). This raises the question about English as a second or foreign language.

In the book *Introducing Second Language Acquisition,* Saville-Troike (2006) explains the difference between a second and foreign language.

> **A second language** is typically an official or societally dominant language needed for education, employment, and other basic purposes. It is often acquired by minority group members or immigrants who speak another language natively (p. 4).

> **A foreign language** is one not widely used in the learners' immediate social context which might be used for future travel or other cross-cultural communication situations, or studied as a curricular requirement or elective in school, but with no immediate or necessary practical application (p. 4).

Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) argues that the status of English in Iceland is somewhere between being a second language and foreign language because of the discrepancy between the four skills Icelanders acquire. They are strong with regards to listening and speaking informal American English (p. 58), but lack productive skills.

This is supported by Berman, Lefever, and Wozniczka (2011) study on attitudes towards languages and culture of young Polish adolescents in Iceland, the study explores the attitude of four students of Polish origin towards the culture and language in Iceland, namely Icelandic, Polish, and English. The research questions included whether the Polish students were motivated to learn their heritage language and to know that culture and to learn English?"

They report that the students interviewed claimed to use their English mostly for personal needs: leisure and planning for the future (p. 10). They also report that it might be a danger for students, parents and teachers to overestimate students' CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) because of their BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills). They show proficiency in BICS but lack CALP (p. 10). This is a point worth considering for every English language teacher: whether the aim is to develop students' proficiency in BICS or deepen their knowledge so they gain CALP. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) claims the status of English in Iceland is somewhat in line with students' overestimating their English proficiency, and that the quality status of English in Iceland is to some extent overrated and

implications in language teaching need to take this into consideration. The students interviewed in Berman et al.'s study saw English as a useful, enjoyable subject that serves them in various aspects of their lives: listening to music, watching movies, using the computer, and as possibly coming in handy when traveling. They vary in competence and skills when it comes to English; while some find it an easy subject others do not. On the list of importance, English would, according to Berman et al. (2011, p. 11), be "…very much a third language". That means that for these students their mother tongue comes first, Icelandic next, and English in last place. This differs for Icelanders who according to the National Curriculum have English as their first foreign language, thus the role of English in the lives of these students differs from the role in the life of the Polish students in Berman et al.'s study.

Maltsevas (2009) noticed a difference in the reasons for learning English between Icelandic and immigrant students. While Icelandic students reported that they felt that it was important to learn English for reasons such as dealing with computers and other technologies, using the language where they feel their native language lacks a word, and to access new developments in science, their immigrant peers felt that learning English was of importance because it would increase their employment aspects. This indicates that the status of English can differ due to the background of the students.

The National Curriculum of Iceland (2011) puts a strong emphasis on English proficiency being a key to the world and thus recognizes the importance of the English language.

> English plays a major role in international communication and commerce. The ever-growing cooperation and collaboration Iceland has with other countries calls for a substantial knowledge of English that could be crucial in commerce when Iceland's knowledge, industry, position, and interests are presented in the international market. As English strengthens its position as a lingua franca, both in the economy and in leisure, the value of solid good command of English becomes more obvious. The world of information and multimedia also demands competence in English. Rapid developments in digital mass communication and information and communication technology give Iceland access to vast material that requires an understanding of different variations of English. (p. 125)

As we can see the curriculum recognizes the international status of English.

2.3.2   International Status

The international or global status of English is often debated, and of course there are many factors to be taken into consideration when thinking about English in the context of globalization and as an international Lingua Franca. In his book, *English Next,* Graddol (2006) explains that there are languages that challenge English as the lingua franca in the world. These languages are, according to him, Chinese-Mandarin and Spanish. These languages are on the rise, and becoming more appealing to language learners across the world (pp.11, 62-64). However, Crystal (2003) in his book, *English as a Global Language,* states that "…English 'has already grown to be independent of any form of social control' … the momentum of growth has become so great that there is nothing likely to stop its continued spread as a global lingua franca, at least in the foreseeable future." (p. X). Another interesting fact, and an indicator of the status of English in the world, is the division of webpages on the internet based on language, but web pages using English as a medium of information account for 55.5% of all webpages on the internet. Next in line are Russian web pages, constituting 5.5% of the whole, but Spanish and Mandarin, mentioned before as challenging the status of English, come in 5th (Spanish), and 7th (Mandarin) (W3Techs, 2015).

   As we have seen, the influence of English both in Iceland and the world is substantial and using English as medium of communication can be beneficial to those who learn it. Most universities that fall under the European Union (EU) policy commonly referred to as the Bologna Process now offer programs in English (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2012, p. 16), so English proficiency can be a ticket to tertiary education around Europe, if not the world.

2.4   Addressing Diversity in Teacher Education in Iceland

Teacher education in Iceland recently was extended from three years, ending in a B.Ed. degree, to five years, ending in an M.Ed. degree. This was done to increase professionalism of teachers in Iceland. There are several options available to those who want to enroll into the teachers' degree program, e.g. teaching: math, natural science, social studies, and foreign languages. In these programs there is one course, *Teaching and learning for inclusion,* intended to prepare students for teaching in a culturally diverse

classroom, i.e. multicultural classroom. This course, which is 10 ECTS, is intended to inform future teachers about how inclusive education is carried out. Various subjects of inclusive education are covered, but the emphasis is on inclusiveness in terms of children with special needs. This course is compulsory for students following a B.Ed. degree. Another course *Teaching language in the multicultural classroom (5 ECTS)*, is offered to students, but since it is not compulsory, not all students enroll. There is a specific master's level program, *Educational studies with an emphasis on democracy, equality and multiculturalism* (University of Iceland, 2015), in which different aspects of democracy, equality and multiculturalism are explored. However, the status of this program is questionable because it does not provide the mandatory credits needed for a teaching license.

Given that Iceland is becoming more and more culturally diverse, it could be argued that teachers should be prepared to meet the needs of students that are immigrating to Iceland. It should be considered whether one course in a five-year program, which has an emphasis on children with special needs, is sufficient for preparing teachers to meet the requirement of a multicultural society. Additionally, it could be argued that it is not sufficient for the government, municipalities, or schools to construct a specific policy about how different needs of students in a multicultural society/school/classroom are being met, if teachers are not sufficiently prepared to take on these challenges.

2.5 Foreign Language Learning in the Icelandic Curriculum and Laws

It is important to examine foreign language learning in the context of educational policy. The Icelandic National Curriculum Guides for all school levels present a framework for all schools in Iceland, and is complemented by the Compulsory School Education Act. The National Curriculum Guides for Compulsory Schools (2014, p. 122) was presented in 2011, and for subjects in 2013, and published in English in 2014, where a new emphasis for education in Iceland was presented. In the curriculum itself (2011) educational implementation in Iceland is explained thoroughly, and in the additional curriculum from 2013 the subjects themselves are described, along with their goals, teaching methodology and assessment. These two curriculums are referred to as the National Curriculum Guides of Iceland. In this curriculum, there are six *Fundamental Pillars* that education should be based on.

- Literacy

- Sustainability
- Health and Welfare
- Democracy and Human Rights
- Equality
- Creativity

To explain the intention of these six pillars the policy says:

> The fundamental pillars refer to social, cultural, environmental and ecological literacy so that children and youth may develop mentally and physically, thrive in society and cooperate with others. The fundamental pillars also refer to a vision of the future, ability and will to influence and be active in maintaining society, change it and develop (p.14)…The fundamental pillars of education are divided into six categories. They are interrelated and interdependent in education and school activities by referring to them, a clear overview of educational work can be obtained (p. 16).

These pillars propose a holistic approach to education where literacy has the broad definition of being able to, not just read and write, but also to apply this literacy in a variety of circumstances, using technology, and the diverse media facing individuals every day. Sustainability is not only in this context referring to environmental factors, but also to equality, and respect for diversity and to support multiculturalism. Adding to this, it claims diversity to be a source of strength that can eradicate poverty and contribute to peace. Health and welfare refer to three factors in health: mental, physical, and social well-being, and that education, and schools should strive for promoting all three in their work. As Iceland is a democratic society, schools must prepare their students for informed participation in a society based on these values. Equality in this context refers, not only to gender, but also to all other variations in a diverse society, and that education should promote equality among all human beings, irrespective of race, gender, outlook on life, nationality, language, disability, residency, or sexual orientation. Methods of teaching and content should reflect these values and education should stimulate students to be creative and give them a chance to create and invent something new (p.16-22). These six pillars should form the base for every

subject and education as a whole, therefore English language programs in schools need to take into consideration these six pillars.

It is stated in the section referring to foreign language learning, that students are required to study English and one of the Nordic languages Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish (Ministry of Education, 2014, pp. 122-123) However, in most cases the language the students have to learn is Danish, unless the student has lived for an extended period of time in one of the other countries. Nowhere in the curriculum is there any special consideration given to those moving from countries other than Scandinavian countries. Therefore, students who immigrate to Iceland from countries outside of the Scandinavian circle have to work with the same curriculum as Icelandic students in terms of foreign language learning; they often have to study Icelandic, and then English and Danish through the medium of Icelandic. This will be explained later in chapter 2.6.3

According to the curriculum, the criteria for language competence is divided into the following categories: listening, writing, reading, speech, and cultural literacy. Each criterion has three levels, each representing a certain school level. By the end of each level the students are supposed to be able to meet these criteria described in the curriculum. To reach these criteria the curriculum suggests that the teaching methods will have to serve the needs of each student, so she or he can reach these goals.

> When organizing teaching, diversity should be kept in mind by applying methods such as individual oriented studies, cooperative learning, pair work, group work, peer teaching, portfolio education, carousel learning, story-telling method, outdoor education and learning stations. A relaxed atmosphere and environment should be created in the classroom so that pupils feel secure (p. 135).

This means that the teacher is required to apply a variety of methods in her or his teaching, so she or he may best meet the needs of a diverse classroom.

> From the beginning of their language studies, pupils should get used to hearing the language and understand how it is used in real situations and have ample opportunity to do their best at using it themselves in a meaningful context and on their own terms (p.135-136).

This again means that language learning must be meaningful to the students (the term meaningful will be covered in a chapter 2.6.1). In short that means that the language they are learning and using at school must have a context in their own lives; it must mean something to the students.

Policy dictates that language teaching in Icelandic schools must be provided by a skillful teacher who is willing to apply a variety of methods to his or her own teaching

The six pillars underline that students have different needs, and different ways of learning, thus applying the same approach to everyone will not only prove ineffective but is also contrary to education policy endorsed by law.

2.6 Pedagogical Approaches to Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

There are several pedagogical pillars that offer an explanation of how individuals learn, and are applicable to language teaching and learning. These include the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, and in recent years, the theories of Howard Gardner (Kaufman, 2004; Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010). Piaget's theory of Cognitive Development and Cognitive Constructivism states that knowledge is something that individuals construct upon pre-existing knowledge, that learning happens when the student discovers something new, and the teachers' role is to facilitate learning, not to drill knowledge into the mind of the student. Thus, the teacher must assist the student to assimilate new knowledge to the pre-existing knowledge by creating conditions for learning. Vygotsky's theory of Social Constructivism and his theory's implications for education in many ways cling to Piaget's theory, but Vygotsky argued that Piaget had overlooked the social nature of language, and thus had failed to acknowledge learning as a collaborative process. Vygotsky's constructed the theory of the *Zone of Proximal Development,* which is the zone where learning takes place. According to this, knowledge is created in a zone between what the student actually knows and what knowledge he is about to acquire.

2.6.1 Meaningful Language Learning

Stephen Krashen's theory of Second Language Acquisition, which is widely recognized for its value to language teaching, consists of five main hypotheses on acquiring the new language; language learning "…requires meaningful interaction using the target language (natural communication),

in which speakers are concerned not only with the form of their utterance but also with the messages they are conveying and understanding" (Gulzar, Gulnaz, & Ijaz, 2014, p. 135). Krashen's five hypotheses are:

- The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis
- The Monitor Hypothesis
- The Natural Order Hypothesis
- The Input Hypothesis
- The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The first hypothesis states that there is a difference between what the student learns unconsciously and what he acquires consciously (Gulzar et al., 2014, p. 136), meaning that the student can learn in his or her environment without consciously putting his or her mind to it, or she or he acquires new knowledge in a cognizant way. The second hypothesis (p. 136) explains the relationship between acquiring and learning a language. Krashen states that the goal of the monitoring process is to plan, edit, and correct functions in the language. This means that the student, when given the right condition, is able to monitor her or his own language use. The third hypothesis states "…that the acquisition of grammatical structure follows a 'natural order' which is predictable" (Schütz, 2014), meaning that it can be predicted how the student will acquire the grammatical structure of the target language. The fourth hypothesis claims that the natural learning of language takes place when the student receives an input that is one step from the knowledge he has already acquired, according to Johnson (2013a). The fifth hypothesis explains the affect effect on language acquisition. That means that variables like motivation, good self-image, and self-confidence play an important role in second language acquisition. When a student has a good self-image, is highly motivated, and is self-confidant, and in turn has low levels of anxiety and fear, second language acquisition is likelier (Schütz, 2014).

   This is in line with Freire's educational philosophy. Freire (1985, 1993) was opposed to what he referred to as *banking education,* which is in essence a teaching model where the teacher is the authority, the one who beholds the knowledge, the one who knows, and the student is a neutral recipient of this knowledge. The teacher deposits the knowledge he has into the mind of the impartial student, like putting money into a bank account. What is considered as knowledge is in the hand of the teacher. He

decides what the student should learn. Freire (1985, p. 21; 1993, pp. 55-61) claimed that with this model, the student would not learn anything besides rote memorization of information without understanding. With this model the student is considered to be an object that does not in fact have independent values and views, and is not capable of forming opinions. This makes them prone to oppression, for they will never be able to critique their way of living, and the way they are treated, and their situation in general. Students should not be considered empty vessels that can be filled, but rather the relationship between the teacher and the student must be interactive.

This kind of educational ideology is in opposition to the traditional educational system, where the teaching is formed to serve the mass, but does not take into account the individual differences that surely must exist in a diverse group of students. Therefore, students that do not fit into the norm with the majority of the population could feel left out, because the education does not appeal to them and what is taught is not in sync with their cultural background.

This in turn is in line with what John Dewey (2000) had to say about education. The essence of Dewey's theory is *learning by doing*. Dewey's theory of learning by doing has everything to do with the experience of the student; the student learns by experience. This is though only valued if the experience involves the two principles that Dewey used in relation to his theory; the principles of continuity and interaction. The latter states that the experience is both affected by the former experience of the student and will affect the coming experience. The principle of interaction states that the individual's experience is a result of the interaction between the individual and his environment. The two principles go together and make and provide (Enfield, 2001, p. 5, citing Dewey, 1938) "…the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience". That means that learning takes place through experience, which coincides with what Freire and Krashen have to say about learning. Therefore, in line with this reasoning, learning a new language must involve using the language.

2.6.2   Language Teaching Approaches

As with every subject taught in schools, various teaching methods and approaches exist when it comes to teaching languages. In Icelandic schools teachers are "…professionally responsible for implementing the most successful working and teaching method to achieve the best result…" (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 46). When teaching a second language (L2)

or a foreign language, teachers can use various methods and techniques to achieve their goal. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2012) quoting Prabhu (1990) there is no "best" method when it comes to language teaching (p.4). According to Prabhu (1990) the best method is the method that "… has most sense of plausibility at any given time" (p. 175) for the teacher.

Larsen-Freeman (2012) presents eight different language teaching approaches. These approaches show the great variety language teachers have to choose from. These are useful when considering the methods used by the teacher in the context of this study. These methods are: The Grammar Translation Method, The Direct Method, The Audio-Lingual Method, The Silent Way, Desuggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, and Total Physical Response. The Grammar Translations Method will be outlined here below to give this study a context.

2.6.2.1 *The Grammar Translation Method*

The objectives of this method are first and foremost to help students gain proficiency to be able to read literature in the target language. To be able to do this, the students must be able to understand the grammatical structure of the language and know the vocabulary. Another aim, related to this method is to promote mental growth (Larsen-Freeman 2012, p. 19). Teaching using this method would consist of students reading aloud passages from a text and helping them with words the student does not know. The student then has to translate the text into his native language; this method revolves around memorization of vocabulary and grammar.

It is likely that language teachers use more than one method in the classes they teach, and use the method that, as Prabhu (1990) states, they find most plausible at any given time.

2.6.3 **The Value of Mother-tongue in Language Learning**

According to Nation (2001, p. 5) the value of L1 (mother tongue) in teaching English as a L2 (second language) should not be disregarded in some areas of L2 language acquisition. L1 can help with familiarizing the content in L2 teaching. This is not the case with students learning English as a L3 through a second language. Thus, one could argue that students that have an immigrant background are at a disadvantage when it comes to learning English, especially when compared to their Icelandic peers. Additionally, Yazici, Ilter, and Glover (2010, p. 261) claim that:

Children with a rich vocabulary in their mother tongue when they start school find it easier to learn the school language and learn to read and write earlier…children learn better in the second language if they have a higher level of mother tongue competence.

Cummins (2001) states in an article on the importance of mother-tongue of bilingual children that "…children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language" (p. 18). Another statement in his article claims that "mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children's abilities in the majority school language…abilities in the two languages are significantly related or interdependent. Bilingual children perform better in school when the school effectively teaches the mother tongue" (p.19).

This shows the value of mother tongue education for immigrant children. It is clear that they will perform better in school, and be quicker to acquire the second language (Icelandic) and thus more capable to take part in other subjects. English is often used as a medium of instruction, as is reported in Arna Borg Snorradóttir's thesis (2014, p. 29) about language use in the English classroom. It is likely that when students do not understand the instructions, the teachers resorts to Icelandic to clear up any misunderstanding. Another important aspect of this is student interaction with their classmates, which can be limited when they do not have competence in Icelandic.

In a school that has students from several different countries in their Immigrant Faculty, it is a challenge for teachers and other members of the staff to meet the needs of each student when it comes to L2 acquisition. Another factor pointed out by Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir (2008, p. 18) is that students aged 6-9 years and who move to another country experience challenges when acquiring literacy in the new language. This suggests that students who do not have sufficient literacy in their L1 will experience literacy acquisition challenges in L2 or L3. Linked to this, Arnbjörnsdóttir (p. 20) states that those 2-4 hours a week spent learning English and Danish (lower classes of compulsory schools) are not sufficient for successfully learning a new language and this applies to both immigrants and native Icelandic students.

A study conducted by Elena Maltseva (2009) for her M.Ed. thesis, explored the discrepancy in English proficiency between Icelandic and

immigrant students in 10th grade. Maltseva discusses bilingual children learning a third language in the context of the findings of Cenoz (2003 in Maltseva 2009), who discusses the different ways of acquiring a third language as a bilingual student. In order to acquire these languages consecutively, two languages are acquired simultaneously, and the third language follows, or all three languages at the same time. This is likely the case for many immigrant children in Icelandic schools; they might have one language at home, speak Icelandic to their friends at school, all while studying English as a third language, and even Danish as a fourth. Maltseva claims that by the time most children start studying their third language they have gained proficiency in two languages, but that this is not the case for immigrant children because they usually do not have the necessary foundation in their own language to learn a new one. That means that they are still learning a second language (Icelandic) and in some cases even their L1 for a number of reasons, including that parents chose not to increase their L1 proficiency.

In relation to languages, Maltseva claims that the students in many cases lack proficiency in their L2, Icelandic, and are even in the process of acquiring skills in Icelandic at the time they are learning their L3, English. She examines this in relation to Cummins theory of threshold, where he suggests that for the long term positive cognitive effects of bilingualism to come forth, a higher threshold level of bilingual proficiency is needed.

2.6.4 Exposure in Learning Languages

The Critical Period Hypothesis proposes an explanation for the role of exposure in language acquisition: "automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear (after puberty), and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a conscious and labored effort" (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2000, quoting Lennenberg 1967, p. 176). This theory has through the years received critique and even adult advantages over children have been proven when it comes to learning languages (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2000, quoting Krashen et al., 1979; Long, 1990). Another explanation can be found in Krashen's theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), where he states, as mentioned before, that given the right input (exposure), and that the language is meaningful for the student, this input plays a key role in the SLA.

The value of exposure in language learning is according to Bisson et al. (2013) well known. For example, children exposed to a FL at an early age have an easier time acquiring a native-like accent. Adults showed improved

sensitivity to words that were in a short FL weather report compared to other FL words. Similarly FL learners that watched movies where the target language was spoken and by using subtitles in the FL improved their speech perception (p. 1). Bisson et al. (2013) also report that multi-modal learning, where the target language is presented both by pictorial and verbal information, promotes incidental vocabulary acquisition (p. 5). This occurs when the student gets acquainted with a new word, not only by hearing it, but in a context and with pictorial reference.

Generally, the influence of English on society in Europe is substantial due to the high usage of internet and exposure to commercials, movies and music. In the year 2010, 65% of Europeans used the internet on a regular basis and almost every home had a TV. The use varies across Europe with 33% of Turks and 92% of Icelanders using the internet. The same applies to films that are broadcasted across Europe, with Scandinavians usually subtitling foreign movies, but not dubbing them (Lindgren & Munoz, 2013, p. 107). This indicates that there is a high degree of exposure to English language due to popular culture from English speaking countries. This is supported by a study conducted by Lefever (2010, p. 12) who suggests that children at primary school age attribute their English knowledge to learning it from other English speakers or watching television. In this study, Lefever examined children at young age and found out that they had acquired competence in English without formal instruction. These children were eight years old, and the most skilled ones showed competence in reading, listening and speaking.

According to Lindgren & Munoz (2013) viewing of FL films with L1 subtitles has a positive effect on the vocabulary knowledge of young children. What seems to be a passive activity is quite the opposite; it is a complex process where the children process the FL while reading the subtitles and connecting them to the pictures on the screen. Therefore, a complicated interaction between watching, reading, and being exposed to the FL occurs (p. 108). Lindgren & Munoz's own study explored the influence of exposure, parents and linguistic distance on young European learners' foreign language comprehension and found that exposure to a FL through the internet was common, with the average of 70% of the children using the internet for exposure. The activities on the internet were listening, playing, watching, reading and writing (pp. 114-116). The most common type of exposure in the study was listening to music in a FL and watching television or movies in a FL. In the three categories researched, exposure came in second place in terms of the strongest predictor of FL comprehension (p. 121).

Maltseva's study indicated a clear discrepancy in English proficiency between Icelandic and immigrant students, where the Icelandic students had greater proficiency than the immigrant students. Maltseva (pp.65-68) offers various explanations for this discrepancy. First of all, the reason could be that while the Icelandic students have lived in Iceland their entire lives, the immigrant students had lived in Iceland for three and a half years on average, and they could be coming from countries with different emphasis on English learning in the curriculum, which could have impacted the immigrant students' proficiency in English. Maltseva's findings also suggest that the Icelandic students travel more, and on their travels use English as a medium of communication and thus get more acquainted with the language. The same applies, according to Maltseva, to exposure to TV, music and computer games, to which immigrant students are exposed noticeably less than their Icelandic peers. Adding to this Arnbjörnsdóttir (2008, p. 20) claims that when Icelandic children are learning English as a L2, they have a good foundation in their L1, but this does not always apply to children that are moving to a new country. Without a certain help and assimilation of the curriculum, bilingual students will not be able to keep up, while they are acquiring the native tongue, with their e.g. Icelandic peers.

2.7   Multicultural Education

Schools in Iceland are becoming more and more diverse as discussed above. One of the potential negative impacts of increased diversity in schools is that immigrant students in Iceland can get lost in the school system, especially if schools do not take specific measures to meet the different needs of students in terms of culture, language, religion etc. This chapter covers some of the issues that relate to education in a multicultural society.

Culture is defined by Terry and Iriving (2010, p. 104) as a broad concept; it includes lifelong learning of participation in family life and social networks. The main components of culture include behavioral styles, language and different dialects, non-verbal communication, worldviews, values, and perspectives. Cultural practices may be shared within a specific group or across groups. Irving (p. 104) goes on to explain that within each culture, sub-groups may be formed; these subgroups can differ based on ethnicity, class, language, religion, and geography. With increasing migration to Iceland from around the world, it can be argued that there is a significant need for new approaches in education, to serve the diverse needs of a multicultural classroom.

Article 29 of the CRC (1990) states that education should be directed to: "The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own." This article relates to the context of a multicultural classroom, where different cultures are prevalent. But what is multicultural education and what should teachers be aware of in the context of multiculturalism? This section aims to answer these questions.

According to Banks (Banks, 2006, p. 129) "multicultural education…is not an ethnic- or gender-specific movement. It is a movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world." Banks is speaking in reference to the United States, but multicultural education approaches are as relevant in contemporary Icelandic society. Banks carries on saying that educators should not view multicultural education as the study of "others" and thus cause multicultural education to be marginalized and excluded from mainstream education (p.129). The design of multicultural education helps to unify divided nations, rather than to divide a cohesive one, meaning that it can help to solve the problems caused by cultural hierarchy that can in some cases exist in homogeneous societies.

Multicultural education is explained by Banks and Banks (2010, p. 3) as:

> …An idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a
> process. Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all
> students—regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic,
> racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal
> opportunity to learn in school. Another important idea in
> multicultural education is that some students, because of
> these characteristics, have a better chance to learn in schools
> as they are currently structured, than do students who belong
> to other groups or who have different cultural characteristics.

Banks further states that multicultural education is not a goal to be obtained, but rather an ongoing process that will never be fully realized (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 4).

There are five dimensions to multicultural education according to Banks (2006, pp. 132-137) and Banks & Banks (2010, pp. 20-22) these dimensions are: *Content Integration*, *The Knowledge Construction Process*, *Prejudice*

Reduction, *An Equity Pedagogy*, and finally *An Empowering School Culture and Social Structure*. As described by Banks (2006, p. 133) multicultural education is not a simple process, but rather a complex and multidimensional one. Banks states (p. 133) that it is not just about content integration but also addresses other interrelated factors.

The first dimension, Content Integration, refers to the content used while teaching. How do teachers use examples and content from "…variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline" (Banks, 2006, p. 133; Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 20). Banks & Banks (2010, p. 20) go on to state that of course some subjects are more suitable and fit content integration better than others. In this context, Banks & Banks name language and arts which relates to the context of this thesis. This also relates to the section about meaningful learning, where it is discussed that the content of the lessons needs to have meaning to the students. This meaning must be in line with the multicultural aspect of education.

The second dimension, Knowledge Construction Process, discusses to what extent "…teachers help students to understand, investigate and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it" (Banks & Banks, referencing, Banks 1996). This refers to how scientists construct knowledge within an discipline, such as social-, behavioral-, natural sciences (Banks, 2006, p. 133). An example of how this can be implemented in the classroom, or in education, is if students would explore e.g. how racism appears in science, what perpetuates racism in science, how race is a factor in interpretations of mental ability tests, and so forth. Furthermore in the Icelandic context, it could be explored in terms of how knowledge is constructed in an Icelandic society. All in all, the teacher needs to help students to view the knowledge in the world from the perspective of multicultural awareness (Banks, 2006, p. 135).

The third dimension, Prejudice Reduction, according to Banks & Banks (2010, p. 21) describes a lesson and/or activities that teachers can use to aid students in developing a positive attitude towards diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural groups. This is important, state Banks & Banks (p. 21), because children tend to arrive at school with negative opinions and misconceptions about the groups mentioned earlier. Developing a positive attitude can be carried out in lessons by showing positive image of different racial or ethnic groups, in "…a consistent and sequential way" (p. 21). This is especially

important in foreign language teaching, where teachers have an exceptional chance to impart to their students' open-mindedness and advocate for a panoramic view towards different cultures.

Banks (2006, p. 137) describes the fourth dimension, Equity Pedagogy, as the use of "…techniques and teaching methods that facilitate the academic achievements of students from diverse racial and ethnic groups and from all social classes." Furthermore Banks & Banks (2010, p. 22) recommend that teachers from all subjects analyze their own teaching approaches and assess to what extent they reflect multicultural concerns. Teachers should use techniques "…that cater to the learning and cultural styles of diverse groups" and should be conscious about the fact that "the techniques of cooperative learning are some of the ways that teachers have found effective with students from diverse racial, ethnic, and language groups" (Banks, 2006, p. 137). Again in terms of language teaching this has special value, due to the breadth of languages, what languages are, and what purpose they can serve in developing a more equitable social attitude towards different cultures.

Lastly, what Banks & Banks (2006, p. 137, 2010, p. 22) mean by an Empowering School Culture and Social Structure is the importance of "…school culture and organization that promotes gender, racial, and social-class equity." They recommend that all parts of the school's society and culture participate in this promotion, and that all aspects of the school are included in examining their environment in the context of empowerment, regardless of class, ethnicity, race, or gender. Though the context of this thesis is primarily focused on English language learning and teaching, the approach must be applied in the school as a foundation as it is not sufficient that only the FL teacher takes on the role of implementing multicultural approaches in education. The ideology must be applied to the entire school, to ensure that students from diverse background feel that they are equals to their fellow students.

Multicultural Education is obviously a complex system and many different variables need to be considered when implementing multicultural education approaches. Banks & Banks (2010, p. 22) discuss that it is important, when implementing the concept of a multicultural classroom, for schools to be considered a social system where "…all of its major variables are closely interrelated". This means all parts of the school must work together to apply this philosophy. It is not sufficient that one teacher tries to implement it. It must be a holistic approach adopted by everyone (p. 22).

Cummins (2003, p. 39) states that in almost every country the educational systems are in fact constructed by the dominant societal groups, as systems that perceive the differences that students bring to school (differences in class, culture, gender, language, race) as deficits that explain the poor academic performance. Furthermore, Cummings claims that the poor academic achievement of marginalized groups is blamed on the group itself, not the lack of active action with regards to meeting the needs of these marginalized groups. Connected to this Nieto (2009, p. 40) discusses in terms of teachers and multicultural education: Majority of teachers are indeed concerned about their students, but due to their

> …limited experience and education, they may know very little about the students they teach. As a result, their beliefs about students of diverse backgrounds may be based on spurious assumptions and stereotypes.

Magnúsdóttir (2010) explored the main obstacles, which students in Icelandic compulsory- and high schools faced, related to multicultural educational dimensions. Immigrant Students in compulsory schools reported that they felt that Icelandic children, their peers, were closed off and hard to reach and connect to. This could be explained in terms of the five dimensions of multicultural education, and an absence of encouraging the students to be open-minded, and interested in the multicultural aspects of their school and schooling. These students also reported that they lived in two different cultures, one being their home-culture, the other being the Icelandic culture, which is stated as being more liberal and free, and this liberal way is even feared by the parents (p.69). Due to this, they experienced a constant conflict between these two cultures. The problems these students face can be explained in some ways through the philosophy of multicultural education. For example, if the school would have a holistic approach with regards to the inclusion and integration of different cultures, ethnicities, races and social classes, such as by teachers using materials that promote open-mindedness and interest in other societies and cultures, these kinds of issues could be dealt with in a comprehensive manner.

Half of the teachers interviewed in Maltseva's (2009) thesis reported that they considered their immigrant students to be at a disadvantage in comparison to the Icelandic students. This assessment was then supported by the student's self-assessment and the difference in their grades. Even in the light of these facts only 42% of the teachers used special TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) methods to address the needs of immigrant

children. As Maltseva (2009) points out TEFL teachers need to try to employ these special techniques while teaching in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. Teachers also reported that they did not receive any special kind of support in their classrooms while teaching English, and that their education did not prepare them to meet the different needs in a multicultural classroom.

In this section the literature that constructs a foundation for this study has been reviewed: both Icelandic and foreign literature. The next section is devoted to the methodology of the study.

3 Methodology

In this chapter the research will be described in detail. The research methods, the methodology, sampling and participants, data collection and data analysis procedures will be explained in depth. Furthermore, various ethical issues and limitations of the study will be clarified and put into context with the study.

This thesis is based on qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are according to Lichtman (2013, pp. 4-5) an answer to the questions that cannot be answered with quantitative research methods. Where quantitative methods build on statistical facts, qualitative methods build on in-depth interviews, observation and investigation of human beings in their natural settings. This is done in order to try to understand the different traits in their behavior. Another definition is offered by Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 3), "Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them."

Within qualitative methods is the domain of Narrative Inquiry, which is by the definition of Barkhuizen (2014, p. 3) a way of using stories as a way of collecting data: "Narrative inquiry brings storytelling and research together either by using stories as research data or by using storytelling as a tool for data analysis or presentation of findings." This is done with interviewing participants about their experience of certain topics or circumstances, although it can also be used to collect data about people's life stories. This research aims to investigate the students' experience of studying and learning English as a foreign language, as well as to ask them about their expectations and aspirations toward their English learning. Thus, Narrative Inquiry was deemed to be a suitable method, as the students were to tell their story, their experience of English learning and teaching, and what expectations they have for learning English.

3.1 Data Collection

To gather the information needed, focus groups were considered most suitable for interviewing the students. This is based on the belief that the

students would feel more comfortable expressing themselves accompanied by their fellow student rather than in one-on-one interviews. It was also to encourage them to either confirm what others had to say about their experience or build on what their peers had to say about the matter, and thus increasing the quality of the data. The data collection was solely based on three focus group interviews in three different schools, with students from the age 13-16 years participating.

3.1.1 **Population and sampling**

In this research, students that met a certain criteria were interviewed, thus purposive sampling methods were used: a certain framework was constructed and sent out to five different Schools taking part in the study. Bloor et al. (2002, p. 30) state that researchers can use purposive sampling techniques when they use particular characteristics or specific research questions to guide their sampling. Due to the various complications it could bring if students did not meet the criteria described below, it was necessary to use purposive sampling. This was to some extent due to the limited time of the study; if the student would e.g. need a translator in the interview that would have called for different approaches in the data collection process.

Population: The initial criteria for participation was that the students were immigrants, and that they did not have either Icelandic or English as mother tongue / first language, were in grades 8-10 in compulsory schools (13-15 years old), and that the parents were proficient enough in Icelandic to be able to give their consent to a letter in Icelandic. In addition to this the students themselves needed to be proficient enough in Icelandic to participate in the interview. Later speaking to one of the principals to ask for permissions to conduct an interview there, I was told that most of these children would not consider themselves to be immigrants, rather they would consider themselves to be Icelandic. In consideration of this, the criteria was changed from the students being immigrants to students that did not, as stated before, have either English or Icelandic as their mother tongue. A letter was sent out to a few schools in the greater Reykjavík area, asking whether they had students that met the criteria, and a positive response was received from two. Another letter was sent to a school outside of the capital area, due to the fact that it had done extensive work with immigrant children, which also returned a positive response. These schools had enough students that met the criteria given.

The gatekeeper at each school was appointed by the corresponding principal, to act as someone who could assist me with finding the students that fit the criteria. This person was well enough acquainted with the students and their parents to be able to assist. At each school, there was a person overseeing issues regarding immigrant students. Our contact was mainly through e-mails, through which I asked whether they had students that fit my criteria. They then got back to me with positive response informing me that they had students that fit my criteria and were willing to participate. The gatekeepers assigned to assist me took care of all communications regarding obtaining consent from the parents and the students before I met them. They also helped me while interviewing the students at the schools, showed me around the school, introduced me to the students, and provided a room for the interviews to take place.

3.1.2   Focus Groups

Focus group interviews are originally intended for marketing research and originate from that field (Bloor et al., 2002, p. 1), but are now used in various fields of research. Focus groups have certain benefits, as stated above; it was deemed to be more suitable to interview the students in a group, rather than to interview them one by one. This would help them to exchange ideas or experiences with one another and then to affirm or refute them. Therefore, the students could perhaps manage to further elaborate upon the answers of others and reflect on the discussion. According to Bloor et al. (2002, p. 6) focus groups can offer the … "participants to engage in 'retrospective introspection', to attempt collectively to tease out previously taken for granted assumptions." This means that the participants get the chance to reflect upon themselves in a collective way and challenge any preconceived ideas that they might have. They thus challenge each other to deepen the answers that might come up in the interview.

The optimum size for focus groups are according to Bloor et al. (2002, pp. 26-27) six to eight participants. This advice was followed in this research. Even though groups of this size are more sensitive to someone not showing up to the interview, it was not certain that there would be more than eight students fitting the criteria for this research. Keeping the participant number this low also increases the chance that every one of the students feels comfortable and is likely to want to express him or herself. Bloor et al. (2002, p. 28) state that the number of groups participating is in correlation to the size of the study, and should not be "…deduced by a

statistical calculation as is necessary in more quantitative methods." In this research there are three groups from three different compulsory schools.

The optimum length for focus group interviews according to Bloor et al. (2002, p. 53) is if the participants are volunteering their time to the interview, no more than two hours. This was thought to be too long time for students at this age, thus the length of the interviews was decreased to at most 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded with two different recording devices, if one should break down before or during the interview. In addition to that I decided to write down field notes before and after each interview as a way to keep track of my thoughts and so that each interview could inspire the next one.

According to Lichtman (2013, p. 208) focus group interviews can either be highly structured or semi-structured or dancing in between: highly structured focus group would be a group where the interviewer is the one who is in absolute control of the discussion and the questions are predetermined and little room is for the interview to take a course on its own. Semi-structured is on the opposite end: where the interviewer has few predetermined questions and the interview can take a course not foreseen by the interviewer. The focus group interviews in this study are semi-structured, meaning that there are some predetermined questions and certain information that I was looking for, but there was space left for new information to come forward if it relates to the main topic. The questions are open ended and general, to the point that they are to inspire the interviewees to speculate on the research problem.

The questions prepared for the interviews are based on the research question: How do students in Icelandic compulsory schools (grades 8-10) view their English learning, and teaching? What are the students' academic and personal expectations for studying English? Following are the two main questions and prompts.   The first question is as follows:

1. Tell me about your English classes?

Prompts: Tell me about the activities in your English classes? What is a typical lesson you get? What do you find interesting in your English classes? What do you think is useful? What is fun in your English studies? What is not so fun? How would you like to change the classes if you could? What methods does the teacher use? Do they vary? Do you think there is something missing? Where would you say you learn most of your English? Please explain further?

The second question is related to their academic and personal expectations for their English learning, and as with question one, there are some additional questions to deepen the information needed.

2. Do you think studying English is important? Why? Why not?

Prompts: How can you use the English you learn at school? What use can you make of English? Do you use English every day? Where would you be without your English knowledge, does it matter to you? Why? How would you think English will help you in the future? Do you think about English as a part of your Future?

The interviews took place in the schools in question during school hours. This was thought to be most suitable so that the students would be in an environment that they are familiar with and feel safe in. This would not be inconvenient for them, as they would not have to travel anywhere to attend the interview, and this would also help so the students would not forget or decide not to attend the interviews.

3.1.3   **Participants of the Study**

As explained above, the participants of this study are 17 students in grades 8-10 in three compulsory schools in Iceland, two of them in Reykjavík and one of them in a small village on the coast. At the first school, I had received consent from six parents, indicating that their child could take part in the study. When the day came to conduct the interviews only four of them showed up for the interview, due to some unfortunate circumstances. Amongst them were three boys, two in 10th grade, and one in 9th grade, and one girl in 10th grade. At the second school, eight parents had given their consent, but when the day came two participants were unwell, so there were six students. The group consisted of one boy in 9th grade, and five girls, three in 9th grade and two in 8th grade. At the third school nine parents had given their consent, on the day of arrival two students were unwell, and so seven students participated in the interview. This group consisted of all three grades, one girl in 10th grade, three girls and one boy in 9th grade, and two girls in 8th grade. The two schools in the City of Reykjavík serve rather large neighborhoods, and thus they have a large student population, one with approximately 450 students, and the other one with approximately 480 students. The school in the countryside is situated in a

relatively large municipality in Icelandic context, and has approximately 600 students.

3.1.4 **Data Collection Process**

As explained before, my search for participants was made by sending an inquiry through e-mails to several schools in the larger Reykjavík area, due to time constraints, three schools; with one focus group at each school, was considered realistic. One of the schools is where I teach and concerns regarding ethical issues and limitations connected to that will be discussed later. It was selected so I could, as a teacher, reflect subsequently on my own practice with the results of the research. One of the other schools is a school where I once went to do my practicum. So I decided to make use of the positive experience and relationship I had with that school. Regarding the third school, I was informed that it had a great success with teaching immigrant students, and I found it fascinating to explore further.

When a positive response had arrived from the three schools, a letter (appendix 1) was sent out to the respective gatekeeper to contact the students. They asked students meeting the criteria whether they were interested in participating in the study and were further asked to take a printed letter (appendix 1) to their parents to obtain their consent. Following that, in collaboration with the supervisor, we would find a time and place. The help I received from these supervisors was immeasurable and selfless.

When the interviewees had arrived, and been welcomed, they were informed about how the interview process would be, and were asked to sign consent for their participation (appendix 2). I had decided to have some sparkling water and candy for them to make them feel more welcome and appreciated. They were asked whether they agreed to be recorded and were informed about what would happen to the recordings after they had been transcribed. As a part of my fieldnotes they were asked to fill in a form (appendix no. 3) where they would write personal information such as: age, class, no. of languages they speak, where they use different languages, how long they have lived in Iceland, and where they had lived before if they were not born in Iceland. This was intended to give me enough information to understand their background and how long they had been learning English in the Icelandic school system. This information would then help me with my data analysis later.

As the interview progressed I had my list of questions (appendix no. 4) as described earlier, I decided not to take any notes meanwhile. Rather I

chose to write down my thoughts on the interview before and after, so that I could keep notes on my learning process throughout the data collection. The interviews were taped on a recording device. When the students had finished filling in the background information the interview began and the first one lasted for approximately 18 minutes, the second for approximately 19 minutes and the third for approximately 19 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Icelandic, but the potential language related limitations are discussed below.

Additionally, as part of my data collection, I made extensive field notes, in which I reflected on the data collected, how the interview was, and how it could help with my data collection (appendix 4),

In addition to this the students wrote down background information (appendices 3 and 5).

3.1.5   **Field notes**

As mentioned before, the students were asked to fill in a form where they gave certain background information about themselves: age, grade, hours of English lessons a week, how long they had lived in Iceland, how many and what language they speak, where they use these different languages, and where they lived before they moved to Iceland, that is if they had lived somewhere else[3].

3.2   Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis process is a complex process with many different approaches according to Lichtman (2013, pp. 244-246). The qualitative data is usually in the form of words, not numbers, which makes the analytical process more complicated and prone to being biased. Lichtman (p. 246) recommends analyzing the material continuously throughout the study. This can be done in many different forms, either by keeping a diary, writing field notes or something similar. In this research, a circular model was used, where I would write down my thoughts before and after the interview, as well as letting the interviews inspire the ones that came after, to deepen the views that might rise in the succeeding interviews as recommended by Lichtman (2013, p. 247)

The analytical procedure deemed most suitable for this study was a *thematic analysis:* thematic analysis according to Barkhuizen (2014, p. 75) is

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[3] Appendix 5, a table with the students information

that interviews are transcribed and then read repeatedly, with coding and categorization of the data in mind. In other words, looking for main themes in and organizing them in thematic headings, or central themes, and then sub-themes. Within the tradition of thematic analysis, there are several ways of working with the data. In this instance the way chosen is inductive coding or analysis, where the data speaks for itself, and themes arise from the data, but not from preexisting theories (Russell, 2011, p. 444).

In short, what I did was to transcribe the interview word for word. Subsequently I read over the interviews again and again to code the data into various central and sub themes. After that, I reviewed the data and the themes in the light of the main research questions. Accordingly, I compared the data and themes that came out of each interview to see a correlation and comparison amongst the three.

The direct quotes of the students in the Findings chapter have been translated by me. All errors of grammar and language have been ignored, unless they affect the meaning of the response.

3.3   Ethical Issues and Concerns

Various ethical issues and concerns can arise when conducting qualitative research. According to Lichtman (2013, pp. 52-55) there are nine main ethical concerns that a researcher embarking on qualitative research needs to bear in mind. These are: Do not harm; Privacy and Anonymity; Confidentiality; Informed Consent; Rapport and Friendship; Intrusiveness; Inappropriate Behavior; Data Interpretation; and finally Data Ownership and rewards. These guidelines were used as a framework for this research and throughout the research process I tried to keep this in mind.

There is an ethical concern related to the age of consent in Iceland. Upon reaching the age of 18, the consent of parents is no longer needed for the student participation in a study. The teenagers participating in this study were 13-16 years old, and thus a signed consent from a parent or a legal guardian was needed. It was deemed appropriate to get a signed consent from the students participating in the study, given that they should feel that they were not being forced to take part, but rather it was their choice. Another ethical concern was participants' anonymity. Following are the guidelines given by Persónuvernd (The Data Protection Authority): I as a researcher I am not allowed to know how many students fit my profile, nor their names or anything that could reveal their identities prior to getting consent from their parents. Thus, the respective gatekeeper appointed by the principal of each school helped me contact the students fitting the

criteria. An announcement of intended research was sent to Persónuvernd (appendix 6), and additionally, the policy of the City of Reykjavík is, if anyone intends to conduct a study involving people younger than 18, a request must be sent in to the municipal authorities, asking for permission.

Additionally, related to anonymity is the duty to treat participants' personal information with care, and with the aim of not revealing anything that could expose their identity. This was done by destroying any audio recording, documents signed by them and their parents, and personal information, after processing. To protect the students' anonymity, none of their real names were used and pseudo names were used in the coding and categorizing of the data. Furthermore, the names of their schools were not used, or anything else that might reveal their identity.

Another concern was to respect their confidentiality: that they could feel free to express themselves, as promised in the beginning of each interview, so that anything that they might say in the interview would not be connected to them or have any negative repercussions for their education. This refers to for example that if the participants would criticize their teachers or the method they use, their critique would not be traceable to them. On the topic of intrusiveness, it felt natural that the interviewing would take place at their school where they would feel safe and would not have to go out of their way to participate. Lastly the data ownership, by signing a document consenting to the interview and agreeing to that the interviews were recorded, the data by definition belongs to the researcher, with the conditions agreed to: that the data will be destroyed after processing.

At last ethical issues related to my position, as a male, Icelandic, with English as a second language, and a teacher at one of the schools participating in the research. Questions such as what ideas I might bring to the research, what could I have done to cause bias in the research, how the students viewed me, and how that could have interfered with the interview process, were considered. There are several concerns that need to be accounted for with regards to my position in the students' eyes. In one of the schools I am a teacher, and thus I can expect to be viewed as someone who could cause bias in the research, make them afraid of expressing themselves freely about their lessons and viewpoint on the material. They might fear that I would speak with my colleagues about their performance and their views. I tried to be explicit about confidentiality and that they could speak freely about anything they wanted, without having to fear any repercussions. The same fear about expression could have been prominent

in the other interviews, for similar reasons, that I am a teacher, and that I am asking them about their views of their teachers, again similar procedures were followed, so I did my best to reassure them about the high importance placed on confidentiality.

It is a concern that I as a teacher, using the same material and school curriculum as some of the other teachers, can bring my views to the table of the analytical process and thus be biased in my coding, where I look for issues that are in accordance with my own view of the material and curriculum. This I tried to avoid by being continuously cognizant of my impartiality.

In situations like these, the formation of a power relationship is inevitable. I, for example, am much older than the participants, I am a teacher and thus an authority figure. This became evident when one of the students could not put their phone down during the entire interview, and thus I had to ask the participant several times to put the phone down. This will be noted in the analysis, where this could have affected the relationship in a way that they started thinking of me as an authority figure, which in turn could have affected the way they answered, and their motives to answer. The same is applicable for the entire interview, that the students' attitude could have been somewhat affected by this apparent power dynamic. It was obvious that most of the students considered me to be an authority figure, like a teacher, or an adult, and some were obviously shy and passive. This could also be caused by the dynamic of the group, that some felt unsafe or not at ease because of the age/grade differences.

3.4 Limitations of the Study

As with any research, there are several limitations to this study. First of all the limited population of the study can cause limitations to the generalizability of the data. With a larger sample the themes would have stronger backbone and would be supported by more data. This shall be noted despite the fact that generalization is never the aim of qualitative research. Another limitation is the limited time at hand for the study. Due to the limited time, there was no possibility of conducting follow-up interviews with the students to seek more in-depth information about themes that might have arisen from the data. This time limit also restrains me from interviewing the teachers to give them voice on the matter, and classroom observation to back up the data. Additionally the students interviewed were all qualified by the gatekeeper with enough proficiency in Icelandic to participate in the interviews. Therefore, it only gives a voice to

certain group of students that receive teaching in English in Icelandic schools, this group consists only of students that have neither Icelandic nor English as their mother tongue, and have parents that are relatively proficient in Icelandic. Students' voices, who do not speak Icelandic well enough to participate in the interview, will not be heard in this study, and therefore it substantially limits the population of the study. The participants were interviewed in Icelandic, that might in some cases have caused, even though the gatekeeper chose students that were proficient in Icelandic, some limitations to the study, in the that some participants were shy to express themselves. At last looking back to the interviewing process and working through the collected data, I would have liked to probe some topics that came up more often. There were few instances that the answers were too abstract to draw useful data from them for the purposes of this thesis. This is still a part of the learning process, and this experience will be useful when embarking on a research project in the future.

3.5   Conclusion of Methodology Chapter

In this chapter the research methods and methodology has been reviewed. The study is a qualitative study, where the methods of narrative inquiry were used as framework. The data was collected through three focus group interviews in three different schools, two in Reykjavík, and one in the countryside of Iceland. The sampling was gathered with the help of a gatekeeper at each school, from students meeting the criteria of not having either Icelandic or English as a mother tongue, but are proficient enough to participate in an interview, and that their parents are proficient enough in Icelandic to give informed consent for their child's participation. The interviews took place at the students' schools on school times. Various ethical issues were addressed regarding the research, such as anonymity, age of consent, and standpoint and bias of the researcher. There are several limitations addressed in the research chapter as well, e.g. small sample, lack of follow-up in-depth interviews, teachers' perspective, and classroom observation.

4   Findings

In this chapter the experiences of students in the three schools will be outlined and all major themes from the interviews will be explained through the voices of the students and inductive procedures. Firstly, their description of a normal lesson will be introduced, followed by a description of novelties in their lessons. Thereafter, the students view on their teacher's approaches in the classroom will be detailed, before an outline of what the students liked and disliked in their English learning and teaching will be explored. Lastly, their view on where they learn English, and their aspirations for learning English will be explored.

Before discussing the findings I want to introduce the students[4]: At the first school I interviewed a group of four students, Simone, 16 years old, in 10th grade, who speaks Spanish and Icelandic, and has lived in Iceland for eight years; Alfred, 15 years old, 10th grade, speaks Serbian, Icelandic, English, has lived his whole life in Iceland; John, 15 years old, speaks Polish, Icelandic, and English, 6 years in Iceland; and Jim 15 years old, 9th grade, speaks Filipino and Icelandic, 8 years in Iceland.

At the second school, I interviewed a group of six students: Smith, 15 years old, 9th grade, 7 years in Iceland; Wanda, 14 years old, 9th grade, 6 years in Iceland; Delilah, 13 years old, 8th grade, 9 years in Iceland; Petra, 13 years old, 8th grade, 6 years in Iceland, these student all speak Polish and Icelandic. Additionally: Nanna, 14 years old, 9th grade, speaks Filipino, English, Icelandic, 4 years in Iceland; Angie 14 years old, 9th grade, speaks Lithuanian and Icelandic, 12 years in Iceland.

At last in the third school I interviewed a group of seven students: Anna, 15 years old, 10th grade, speaks Lithuanian, Icelandic, Spanish, and English, 3 years in Iceland; Amanda 14 years old, 9th grade, speaks Slovakian and Icelandic, 6 years in Iceland; Julia, 14 years old, 9th grade, speaks Portuguese, Icelandic, English, Danish, 7 years in Iceland; Edwin, 15 years old, 9th grade, speaks Filipino, Icelandic and English, 8 years in Iceland; Margaret, 14 years old, 9th grade, speaks Portuguese, English and Icelandic, 2 years in Iceland; Elsa, 14 years old, 8th grade, speaks Latvian, Icelandic, 2 ½

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[4] Table in appendix 5

years in Iceland; Ingrid, 13 years old, 8th grade, speaks Russian, Icelandic, English, (Danish), 13 years in Iceland.

4.1 Experience and Views of Students

The students described an everyday English lesson as well as what they thought was out of the ordinary or a novelty, understood as variations from the normal English lesson. We went over what methods teachers were using in their classroom and what materials were used. We discussed their view on English as a subject and explored their own experience of learning English. This section focuses on how the students experienced English as a subject and what they thought could be improved. This serves as a means of generating data that I will use in my discussion chapter. My emphasis is on working with data that can benefit me as a teacher and inspire my own theory of practice. In this chapter all translations are from Icelandic to English and do not reflect instances where the students experienced language difficulties, which they did when speaking Icelandic. The type of difficulty was linked to syntax and vocabulary usage. However, this did not impose any problems in the interviews and should not affect the results.

4.1.1 The typical Lesson

The main theme that emerged was linked to students working in a workbook. "He (the teacher), you know, at least in my class, gives us time to work with the book, and sometimes when he has given us time to work with the book, he goes over what we have been doing" (Elsa). "Yes, we answer questions in the book, if we're answering something related to a movie, we get, most of the times, to watch the trailer or something" (Julia). "We spend most of the time in the workbook, but sometimes we read or do assignments we get from the teacher" (Petra). "We spend most time with Spotlight, that is a book, then we try to talk to each other in English, and sometimes we read a text from the book" (John).

   All schools had the same text- and workbook for every class, a workbook called Spotlight[5] 8, 9, or 10. This book is considered by *The National Centre for Educational Materials* (NCEM - Námsgagnastofnun)(N.d.) to be a core material for each of the three grades, 8th, 9th, and 10th. The NCEM is the provider of teaching material for all schools in Iceland, and works under the Ministry of Education. In the first school (South-School) all participants had the same teacher and it seemed that this teacher used the workbook

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[5] A review of the book in the Discussion chapter

throughout his lessons, working with 9th and 10th grade. Two of the participants reported, that they did not really learn anything, because it was so noisy, and there were so many disturbances in the classroom. Asking them about what they expect when going to their English lessons the answer was: "Everyone is arguing with our teacher, everyone is angry, and there is always noise" (John). "Yes, English classes are so boring, we never do anything…there is always so much noise" (Simone). Alfred did not agree with this "No, there are almost just normal classes (normal classes in this instance are probably classes that he is used to, similar to classes in other subjects), not really any disturbances, everyone is just learning full throttle". Still, Jim at the same school, reported that there was noise, but still they managed to learn.

In the second school (North-school) the typical lesson was similar in both the classes taught by two different teachers, one for 8th grade and one for 9th grade. These teachers used the workbook in most of their lessons, which were based on the workbook itself. Sometimes they would do different assignments, e.g. speech and listening practices using a CD that accompanies the textbook, which provides listening practice in the form of gap filling or comprehension.

In the third school (East-School) the participants had two different teachers for the 8th, 9th and 10th grade; one teacher (T1) was teaching the only 10th grader in the interview, and the other teacher (T2) was teaching the 8th and 9th grade participants. These teachers' typical lessons were mostly based on using the Spotlight books. Students in 8th and 9th grade reported that T2 let them watch a show (a TV series) the first class of every week, but that was not typical for T1. T2 often let the students watch something related to the content of the workbook, e.g. a trailer of a movie or something similar, to contextualize the topic at hand or to spark interest.

Students' perspectives of their lessons seem to suggest that the typical class consists of work around the textbook and the workbook with little variations. These variations will be described here below.

4.1.2 Novelties in English Classes

When the students were asked to describe a typical lesson, there were also reports of different things that took place in the classroom, something out of the ordinary, or novelties. I use the term novelty to describe instances that the students suggest happen infrequently and are not a part of the typical English lesson.

In South-School the participants reported that a girl from the state of California, USA, sometimes came into their English lessons. According to the students, she would play games with them and converse with them. For this particular school, this was the only novelty the students reported taking place. Still, this was only discussed by the three students in 10th grade. In North-School they suggested that it was out of the ordinary to read books and do book reports, although the latter seemed to be less frequent. In East-School the students reported a more variety of novelties. A student in 10th grade discussed how her class was a part of a European School Project, which they would work on 2-3 times a year. In this project, she described how they would use the web to post videos they create in English about Reykjavík and which are then sent out to their peers in various European countries. They then receive in turn reports about other European cities. Anna saw this in a positive light: "Because then we get to record [video] and we skip, you know, working with the book [Spotlight]". Another novelty the students mentioned was watching videos, which was sometimes, but not always, related to the workbook. This was only mentioned by students of T2. T2 also had one class a week where the students were allowed to read magazines or books in English.

Students' perspectives of the classes seem to suggest that despite the typical lesson being centered on a textbook, teachers also include other activities that students refer to as breaking up the routine of the typical lesson.

4.1.3 The Teachers' Approaches – Through the Eyes of the Students

The students were asked how their teacher went on about their teaching, i.e. what methods they applied in their teaching. They were asked to describe how the teacher performed the lesson in order to get a sense of how they experienced the teaching.

In South-School the students in 10th grade stated that the teacher always spoke to them in the target language during the lessons. The teacher would assign work for the lesson, and then walk around the classroom, helping them when needed. The 9th grade student reported that they always did group work in his classes. This is somewhat contradictory to what he said about their typical lesson, but this could be explained by his definition of group work being different from what is normally considered group work. "We always do group work… then she walks around" (Jim, 20th of March).

His idea seems to be that if they sit in a group they are doing group work, but not that they are working on a group project/assignment.

There are not substantial differences in the methods used by teachers in North-School. One teacher uses the whiteboard to give instructions, and so the students know what they are supposed to do in a given lesson as well as when they should finish, and hand in, their assignment. The teacher also uses handouts. The other teacher had a slightly different way of going about his lessons, using what the students referred to as "Cycles" which means that the teacher would divide their English lessons into cycles taking about two weeks each. This way the student always had a clear idea of what they were supposed to learn for each cycle. A cycle could represent 20 pages in the workbook, then the teacher would test them out of each cycle, in this case a workbook chapter. The emphasis is on, as with South-School, the workbook. There was no mention of using the target language in the classroom.

The methods applied by teachers in East-School do not differ in any extensive way from the other schools. They use the workbook in most cases, but sometimes with T2 they read together or watch movies, TV shows or the like. They also reported occasionally playing games, reading magazines or doing cross-word puzzles. T2 seems to put more emphasis on exposure in the classroom, using different mediums to expose and spark interest in the language: "T2 often lets us watch a movie or a show, especially if it is the first class of the month; additionally we speak English in class" (Ingrid). This suggests that the use of English in the class is not the norm. T1 applies more individual methods where he uses the textbook and students described that they come into the classroom and start working when told to do so. The students must use the target language in class: "…we need to speak English during lessons, or else it will lower our grades" (Anna). Even though Anna seemed to be joking about the grades, other students agreed that T1 expected them to use the target language.

4.1.4   Likes and Dislikes – What could be Better?

Most of the students saw English in a positive light. However, the difficulties that they highlighted were focused on language related challenges:

> I would say that for me and Delilah, we are Polish, it is sometimes really hard if you don't understand a word or you understand it incorrectly, and maybe then you give the wrong

on an exam. And it is just really hard for me to learn English and I am not really good at it. I think it is hard and I would not particularly want to learn it, because I think that it is just too hard (Petra, 23 of March).

Some students agreed to this statement while others did not. Many of the interviewees saw English as an easy subject to learn: "everything is very easy…I do not dislike anything, easy things are not boring" (Julia), and especially simple compared to Icelandic: "…the rules in English are simpler, in Icelandic they are insanely complicated" (Julia). Related to this Alfred misunderstood the question, when asked about the typical lesson in English, and said "It is going just fine, but the thing is that in my case I don't know any language perfectly, but my classes are going just fine". Alfred has been living in Iceland his whole life.

> I do not think Icelanders have a hard time learning English, you know, and everything that Icelanders watch is in English. That is why it is not so hard to learn English in Iceland. Everything you see on the internet, basically almost everything is in English (Anna, 27th of March).

John reported that he found it enjoyable to read out loud, because it offered practice in the target language. Some of the students said that Spotlight was a nice book, not flawless but good in many ways. Alfred claimed that he felt as if he was not learning very much from using it.

They were asked what they would change if given the chance and how they would go about teaching English. One suggestion was going abroad on a school trip to practice their English. Several other suggestions were made, and while students in one interview said they felt that learning English was boring in every way[6], some of the students in the other interviews reported that they did not really want to change anything. In North-School the student wanted more variation:

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[6] This could be, like discussed in the Methodology chapter, related to the power structure of the interview, and how the students perceived me. Another point in this is that I had just asked one of the interviewees to put down her phone which could have changed power relationship between me and the participants.

I think just not always doing the same thing, I at least don't find it interesting…I think there is a need for some more fun assignments, not always just working on a chapter [from the text/workbook] (Delilah, 26th of March).

Petra responds to this: "There are many students that are just very bored by this, by just always working on the chapters [Spotlight]".

There were students that felt the instructions given by the teacher were insufficient, that the teacher spoke too fast for them to comprehend, and that the explanations were not clear enough. The teacher in this instance is a teacher that, according to the students in South-School, always uses English as a medium of instruction. When asked what they would do differently, they said that they wanted instructions to be given more slowly and more individual based lessons:

It is really hard to learn a new language, and I think it would be better if instead of being taught to the whole class at once, it could be more one on one (John, 20th of March).

When the teacher comes and gives us assignments and only tells us: 'work on this' and then…don't just say: 'hey – write!', how am I supposed to do that when I don't know how to write? (Simone, 20th of March).

They asked for more emphasis on speaking and writing, and less emphasis on grammar, and suggested that the class should be divided into groups in regards of their English proficiency: "different classes, divided by how good their English is" (John). To watch more movies was a proposal made by a few of the students. Some asked for fewer tests; both large tests, and small chapter tests, while in North-School writing essays was the general answer to what they felt was most boring. The students that were taught by T1 in East-School wanted to do something like the other students were doing in her school, like playing games, doing crossword-puzzles (although it shall be noted that crossword-puzzles appear in Spotlight on several occasions). They wanted to do activities other than the ones in the workbook. Similarly in North-School they reported that they wanted to do something different from the workbook. Delilah and Smith felt the workbook was hard, although this was not shared by other students. There was only one school, South-School, that asked for less homework; spending around one hour before each lesson on homework was felt too much in their opinion.

Students in 10th grade spend two hours a week on their homework, and the student in 9th grade spends three hours a week on his homework.

Additionally, they felt the classes were repetitive and that they were always working on chapter after chapter in the workbook, and there was a lack of variation in their course of learning. There was a call for a different approach in North-School, and one student suggested taking the class outside of the school:

> I would rather say, do something different than only sitting in the classroom, like they should go outside and teach the kids what some things are called that are outside, not just inside…I would like to stop working on the books for a while, and do something more outside…we're just always in the classroom and never go outside (Petra, 26th of March).

This was seconded by everyone in the group:

> We have never done any assignments that use videos, or anything else that we could do. Like using computers or some videos outside or interviewing other people to see how they view English (Petra, 26th of March).

Other suggestions from the same group included doing something different from the workbook, something such as playing games, performing plays in English and doing more group-work (though not everyone was pleased with the later suggestion).

4.1.5 English Acquisition - School or Elsewhere

When the participants were asked about where they thought they acquired or learned most of their English, in all cases their answers were from watching movies, TV shows, playing games on the internet, or on the computer, by using the Internet, or as one put it: "basically everywhere". Not one of these students mentioned school as their main source of English learning. When asked in North-School if school was an important influence in their learning of English, the students burst into laughter and thought I was joking. Whilst this could be interpreted as a normal response from students, that one never really learns anything at school, the fact that students in other schools did not mention school as a main factor in English language learning suggests that students do not value their English lessons.

When students from North-School were asked about learning English at school, Petra said: "I think you are just bored with this, and then you just stop wanting to learn anything at school". Asked whether it was because the material used at school was not interesting enough, she responded: "No I don't think so [that the material is interesting enough]: it's always the same, and I, at least, don't find it interesting". Julia at East-School claimed that they learned grammar and writing at school: "Yes, like the rules (grammar), and how to write right". Jim at South-School said that he learned most of his English while doing his homework, with the help of a computer and his sibling. John reported that he felt he acquired all his English from movies:

> …Two years ago I just didn't know anything [about English] and now for the last two years I watched super many movies and that helped me a lot, so yes it's not just about the school (John, 20th of March).

It seems that the students view their English learning at school to be minimal and that they acquire most of their English by watching TV shows or movies, by surfing the internet and by playing computer games. The impact of school is only mentioned by two students in two different interviews. One claims that he feels that they learn grammar, and the other one suggests that he considers the homework which is assigned at school to be his source of English language acquisition.

Students at South-School reported, when asked about their daily usage of English, that they sometimes used it when talking to their friends. Prompting them further on this, one student said that he was not sure why he spoke English with his friends at times, but all agreed that they sometimes used English when they did not know the word in Icelandic.

4.2 Expectations of Students of their English Learning

The students were asked about the importance of knowing and learning English, what they felt was important about knowing English and in what context. Multiple reasons were related to work prospects: "Because you can get a job abroad somewhere" (Smith); to general life opportunities: "It helps a lot in life, because it (the language) can be used just about everywhere"(Delilah); "It is the most common language…that most people speak…reading books, on the internet" (Elsa); "we can just go everywhere, and speak English to everyone" (Julia); "to understand what we see on the internet" (Edwin); "because almost everything is in English" (Anna); "almost

everyone speaks English" (Simone); "yes, it's that kind of language, that everyone speaks" (John).

Reading books in English, searching for information on the Internet, traveling, studying, or working abroad seem to be the most common responses of students. In general they see English as an important language to know and are aware of its status in the world, and see it as a key to accessing information, a key to successful interactions with foreign cultures, and for opportunities that they would otherwise not be able to access.

4.2.1   Their Future and English

Asking the students about the future benefits of learning English, some of them had well-constructed ideas on how English would benefit them in their future endeavors. Still, there was a substantial difference between the two schools in the Reykjavík area and the school in the countryside when it came to thinking about the future in the context of English. While the students in the school in the countryside reported that they would probably use English to speak to foreigners, they did not see many other possible uses for their English knowledge, e.g. when asked whether they wanted to move abroad they did not show much interest, and when asked whether they wanted to study abroad they reacted in a similar way. Some showed minimal interest while others were absolutely disinterested. One of them went as far as claiming English to be too hard a subject for her, so she was not interested in learning more than required. Most of the students from the countryside have been living in Iceland between four and twelve years.

In the schools situated in Reykjavík the tone was quite different. Some students had precise ideas on how they would use English in their future. One said that he wanted to move abroad when he had grown up.

> You see, I want to move abroad to some country when I grow up, I don't really know where yet. But you know, first you speak English, and then you learn the language [the foreign country's language]. If you are going to apply for a job then you are asked: do you speak English? What other languages do you speak? It is not good if you don't speak English (abroad). (John, 20th of March).

This applied to his schoolmates as well. They indicated that they wanted to move abroad and seek adventures. Additionally John says that everyone

thinks this way: that everyone knows that they have to know English, and asked why, he answered: "it just helps in life and basically with everything".

Anna in East-School stated: "I think that almost everyone will speak English in the future", thus stating its importance again. Others reported that if they wanted to move abroad they would use English and everyone responded in a positive way when asked if they wanted to move abroad: "If you want to travel and if you want to live somewhere in a foreign country, then if you know English, then you can do that" (Ingrid). They thought about English in the context of moving abroad for work and for studying.

5 Discussion and Implications

In this discussion chapter I intend to draw upon my findings and discuss these in relation to the literature review to inform my theory of practice. As stated earlier, I aim to develop my current theory of practice by drawing on the voices of students who tend to go unheard, who have lower English language proficiency than their Icelandic peers and whose teachers do not have specialized training to work with cultural diversity (Ragnarsdottir, 2007, 2010; Maltseva, 2009).

I have divided the discussion section into two main themes that represent the key findings and reflect the research questions. First I look at the students' experiences of learning and teaching and then I move the focus onto their aspirations for learning English. An important note is that in this thesis the male pronoun is used to represent students and teachers of both sexes when speaking in general terms. This is a stylistic choice related to my own identity as a male teacher. However, I am conscious that this may come across as gendered but this is not my intention and should not reflect any gender bias on my part.

5.1 Experience of Learning and Teaching English

As I presented earlier, students described their lessons as predominantly focused around a textbook and workbooks, with little variations from this as the norm. This is contradictory to what is said in the National Curriculum (2014), about how teaching should be carried out. In the curriculum it says:

> When organizing teaching, diversity should be kept in mind by applying methods such as individual oriented studies, cooperative learning, pair work, group work, peer teaching, portfolio education, carousel learning, story-telling method, outdoor education and learning stations. A relaxed atmosphere and environment should be created in the classroom so that pupils feel secure (p. 135).

This seems to be far from the reality and perspective of the students, where their perception is that learning English is rather monotonous in terms of variety of teaching methods, and the material used by the teachers. Based

on my own experience as a teacher, the probable cause for this is lack of time. This might also be explained by the pressure of measuring student performance, and using a workbook with measurable features is an effective way to get statistical data on how the students are doing. My experience suggests that it is harder to measure abstract and creative lessons, where students are using more variety of skills. However, based on empirical data, a main factor is that the teachers have not received any specialized training in applying TEFL approaches in a culturally diverse classroom, as Maltseva's (2009) study indicates; thus they are not prepared to work with the diversity of the classroom (see Banks & Banks, 2010, Nieto, 2009). Teachers must be aware of the different languages in the classroom, what languages the students speak and how their language abilities affect their learning. This is apparent when listening to Petra from Poland; she claims she has severe difficulties with learning English, and is not interested in continuing learning the language. Could the problems of the students be related to the insufficient training of the teachers, and the preconceived ideas of the teacher, regarding immigrant students, that they bring to the classroom? (see Nieto, 2009). The teachers' approaches in the classroom, or the lack of variety, suggests that the teachers do not address the diversity of the classroom, and thus are not aware of the multicultural aspect of learning and teaching.

5.1.1.1   Meaningful Learning and Teaching – Students Report

In the literature review, the need for meaningful learning and teaching is a central theme in the work of a number of influential scholars who work with multicultural educational approaches and language concerns in the multicultural classroom (Banks, 2006 and Banks & Banks 2010). The students are obviously dissatisfied with solely using the workbook and feel the need to do something different. They request more creative approaches that focus on communication more than grammar learning, thus supporting pedagogical approaches such as those promoted by Krashen (Gulzar et al., 2014) and Dewey (Enfield, 2001), who suggest that for learning to take place, the context has to be meaningful, and Freire (1985, 1993) claims that education cannot take place if students are filled like empty vessels. This can easily happen when working with textbooks in the context of the English classroom.

The books for all grades are divided into chapters, where each chapter has its own theme. These are usually themes that are either informational-focusing on events or phenomena; related to pop-culture; or something connected to English culture. The assignments in the workbook are usually

built on the text from the textbook. These assignments range from translations to connecting together sentences in Icelandic and English. Furthermore, there are *right and wrong* or *true and false* exercises. All these exercises are of the nature that either the students have to answer in their workbook or in their notebooks. In general these exercises, as stated earlier, fall under the grammar-translation method, where the focus is mostly on rote memorization of vocabulary through back and forth translating. The context of the chapters can in some way appeal to the students, e.g. when the text- and workbook deal with popular music or movies.

The workbook seems in many ways be a shortcut to easy teaching and creates fewer challenges in the classroom. The main theme in the workbook is gap-filling and other exercises in line with the grammar-translation approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2012) but with additions of speaking and listening practice. Looking at the theories of Krashen, Dewey, and Freire, it seems obvious that for the students to learn, the lessons must be suitable to their personal context, and be meaningful to their reality.

Immigrant students' situation is different, and they are not only learning the subject at hand, but also in many cases learning the societal rules, about the culture and how to engage with their Icelandic peers. Their situation is in some ways arguably more complex than that of their Icelandic peers. Looking at the table (appendix 5), they have eight different mother tongues and their time in Iceland ranges from 2-15 years. It can be argued that their experience of Icelandic culture, language, and norms differs significantly, and that they have different experiences from their countries of origin. Therefore if meaningful learning is to take place it must take aim from the multicultural perspective, and the different background of the student group. Banks and Banks & Banks (2006, 2010) ask: Does the content challenge the given norms in term of culture, or is the content neutral and made to appeal to the mainstream of the culture it is taught in? These are valuable questions in terms of teaching diverse classrooms, and how the norms and homogeneity of the society can find their way into the classroom through the material used in education.

An example of this are the problems Alfred faces, where he states that he does not speak any of his languages perfectly, which makes his situation more complex than his Icelandic peers. This could even result in Alfred not keeping up with his school mates (see Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008). To take consideration of his troubles, teachers must apply methods that are inspired by the concepts of multicultural education, and as Arnbjörnsdóttir

(2008) suggests, modifies the curriculum to each students'' needs. While Alfred is the only one that mentions this, it should apply to all students from a diverse background.

5.1.1.2   Methods and Approaches in TEFL

When asked about the methods applied by their English teachers, the main theme seems to be that they give instructions on working in the workbook, then walk around the classroom helping as needed. Though hard to read what methods seem to be used by the teachers, there are strong indicators that most teachers rely on traditional methods like the grammar-translation method, described earlier in chapter 2.6.2. The assignments in the workbook are much in line with what this method promotes, and has the same emphasis as the methods. The methods used by the teachers are in some ways, to say the least, not in line with what is promoted in the curriculum, and what is stated in the theories of learning. It is hard to criticize these teachers without interviewing them about their methods, or observing them, but according to the students, the methods used do not vary greatly, besides, one teacher who lets his students read on a regular basis. The students talked about other things happening in their classroom, but they were novelties rather than norms. As described in the section about the variety of teaching methods in language learning and teaching, the selection is extensive. It seems from the perspectives of the students, that the teachers are not making use of this variety.

The students discussed ideas on what they would like to change in their English lessons. Most students reported that they would like more variation in their lessons and that they would like to do something different from the workbook. Some felt that the workbook was good, but still they wanted to do something different. The students mentioned activities like playing games, going out of the classroom and learn about their surroundings, more emphasis on meaningful learning; like speaking and writing, with less emphasis on grammar. The students mentioned watching more films, better and more comprehensive instructions, more individually based lessons, and less emphasis on testing. Additionally, one student spoke of doing group work and one talked about doing theater in English, and another suggestion was using technology in the lessons.

Freire argues in his theory of Banking education (1985, 1993) that education should be an interactive process, where the students are active participants in the learning process. The workbook dependency does not promote this. According to Freire this way of education only promotes rote memorization, and information without understanding. Moreover this is in

line with Dewey's (Enfield, 2001) theory, where he claims that the learning experience must have value and context in the lives of the students. This can result in exclusive practices as Cummins (2003) discusses about the construction of the educational system, that it is constructed by the dominant societal groups for the dominant group and view deviating students' diverse background as an explanation for poor academic performance.

5.1.1.3 Novelties of their Experience

The students reported several novelties in their English classes; these novelties are things that the students felt were out of the ordinary. These were things like when, as discussed above, the girl from California came to visit the students a few times and played with them, and practiced their speech proficiency. These things are a good example of how meaningful learning can take place fitting with the theories of Krashen (see Gulzar et al. 2014), where the students use the language with a person they would not be capable of interacting with without using their FL. It gives their study an instant meaning, and additionally, it gives them insight into a different culture, and broadens their perspective, which is in line with the concept of a multicultural classroom.

More novelties were reported, like when the students get to watch something that breaks up the normal routine and gives them a sort of a break from the workbook, adding to that, the students discussed the European Project, book reports, listening activities (which still could be a part of the workbook), playing games, reading magazines or books, and doing crossword-puzzles (which again are often in the workbook as well). Most of these activities they claimed only took place occasionally, although some they said happened on a regular basis, such as reading magazines or books, others only a few times over the semester. The same applies here as with the other that these occurrences are the exceptions rather than the norm. The students' call for more variation in the classroom and in the lessons, are somewhat understandable if they report doing mostly the same, with varying themes (the different chapters in the workbook). Based on the perspectives of the students and their preferences, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect or demand school to be fun at all times; it is part of the learning experience to face things that are hard, and even uninteresting at some point. With that said, it is the responsibility of the teacher to have enough variation so the student and the teacher feel that the content and the ways of learning still appeal to the students. This is particularly the case when working with students from multicultural backgrounds.

5.1.1.4 Multicultural Classroom

In the first interview there was a request from the students to have more individually based lessons, with slower and more detailed instructions, so that they would not be asked to do something they could in fact not do. This indicates that they feel left out in the classroom, when the teacher is giving instructions to the students: The perception is that he speaks too (could be both in Icelandic and English) fast and seems to leave these students out. This resonates with the idea of multicultural classrooms and preparing teachers for meeting the different needs of a diverse group of students. The multicultural education ideal is an all-inclusive education, where the diversity of the student group is embraced, as Banks (2006) states, that multicultural education is a "movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring and active citizens in a deeply troubled and polarized nation and world". The indication of these students feeling left out, suggests that either the teacher is not implementing the ideology of multicultural education or is not applying all inclusive approaches in his classroom, in terms of culturally and linguistically diverse student group. A solution to this problem could be found by referring back to the five dimensions of multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 2010, Banks 2006), where the third dimension discusses that the teacher can design his lessons around activities that help students to develop positive attitudes towards diversity. This would suggest that the teacher must be aware of the many obstacles that students in a diverse classroom face. In addition to this, the fourth dimension: Equity Pedagogy, where teachers apply teaching methods "…that facilitate the academic achievements of students from diverse racial and ethnic groups and from all social classes" (Banks, 2006) is noteworthy. This means that when developing a lesson, the teacher must take into account the wide range of students' backgrounds. Lastly, to include the fifth dimension in context with this, then it is not enough that once teachers do apply the concept of multicultural education to their teaching approach, it must be a holistic implementation of the school, and preferably of the whole educational system.

The philosophy of the multicultural education is also in line with what the National Curriculum (2014) discusses in the Six Pillars of education.

It is hard to say whether the content of the lesson or the school curriculum reflects the idea of multicultural education, but there is obviously a need for that thought in the classroom, and in the schools. The textbook and the assignment do somewhat reflect a multicultural

educational concept. The book for 10th grade includes a chapter devoted to South Africa, where the Apartheid era and the cultural and ethnic diversity of South Africa is covered. In the book for 9th grade there is a chapter devoted to Asia where different parts of Asia are introduced. Lastly in the book for 8th grade there is a chapter about Sweden. The other chapters are usually connected to countries that are English speaking, like Canada, Ireland, and the UK, or they are about pop culture. To summarize: there are some chapters that could be considered in line with the concept of multiculturalism, in the sense that various cultures are introduced, but with that said, it does not necessarily mean that these topic are promoted with multiculturalism in mind.

Additionally, in the curriculum it is stated that the criteria for language competence, regardless of cultural background, are listening, writing, reading, speaking, and cultural literacy, each with multiple layers of criteria that teachers need to consider, so my questions are: Can these goals, for immigrant students, be attained by using the text- and workbook, or by basing teaching solely on them? Does that comply with the National Curriculum? Does that correspond with the concept of multicultural education? In my own experience as a teacher who uses the Spotlight textbook in my teaching, the book does not promote multiculturalism or the concepts of multicultural education. It is not all bad, far from it, and is probably a good addition to the material offered to teachers, but sole reliance on the book in the contexts of multiculturalism and meaningful learning is insufficient.

Another interesting aspect of this is that during the interviews, it was apparent that in many cases, students had trouble with their Icelandic. Many of them reported that they speak Icelandic with their friends and it would be reasonable to assume that when the teacher fails to get the message across in English, the medium of instruction switches to Icelandic. This could be related to the value of what is said about mother tongue and as one student reported that he felt that he did not really speak any language perfectly; this can have adverse effects on his entire education. The value of mother tongue proficiency, as discussed earlier (p. 30-31), is widely appreciated, according to Cummins (p. 31) that mother tongue can promote both greater success in the school language (Icelandic), and greater success at school in general. This correlates with Maltseva's (p. 38) study where she discussed that the immigrant students in many cases lack proficiency in L2, Icelandic, and are still acquiring L2 while learning L3, English.

Some of the students indicated that English was a difficult subject for them. In my opinion, this indicator deserves special attention as English is one of the core subjects in the National Curriculum. Adding to that, it is becoming a more and more important subject in contemporary life and its status as a lingua franca. There are a few explanations offered by the literature. It could be explained by a lack of proficiency in their mother tongue (see Nation 2001, Cummins 2001). Another explanation offered by Maltseva (2009) is that they are acquiring skills in many languages at the same time. Additionally it can be assumed that due to the small population of immigrants in Iceland, and the diverse countries they are migrating from, the students might not get sufficient opportunities to practice their L1. Related to this, it would be interesting to take a look at how schools are assisting students with immigrant backgrounds to develop and maintain their L1.

At last this brings us back to the ideas of multicultural education, where Banks and Banks (2006) explain:

> Another important idea in multicultural education is that some students, because of these characteristics, have a better chance to learn in schools as they are currently structured than do students who belong to other groups or who have different cultural characteristics.

This offers an explanation of the difficulties faced by these students in schools that are predominantly structured to serve the needs of the majority-group students, and does in fact not incorporate the diversity that comes with immigrant students. Thus the classroom is likely to reflect this structure as well as the teachers that work within those parameters.

5.1.2   Exposure – A Factor in Language Acquisition

When learning English, exposure is an important factor. It gives the learner a feeling for how the language works, how it sounds in the natural environment, and the learner acquires the language unconsciously (Bisson et al. 2013). The students were asked where they thought they learned most of their English, and the general feeling was that they learned it everywhere besides school. They discussed movies, computer games, internet browsing, TV shows, just about anywhere, except from at school. This would correlate with the widespread exposure to material In English as discussed in the literature review and the access to internet in Iceland, and the incidental vocabulary acquisition (see Heuven et al. 2013, Bisson et al.

2013, and Lefever, 2010). This a rather harsh reality check for every teacher, to learn that his students do not feel as if they are learning anything at all at school. Even though they like the subject, it is not leaving a large impact on them, educationally at least. I think it is interesting that students claim that they are learning everything related to English outside of school, besides grammar and homework. This is obviously a serious claim, and every English language teacher should consider and be aware of this. In relation to the literary review, this can be explained with the great amount of exposure to English. It seems with the great technological progression that has taken place recently, as well as the amount of time spent surrounded by English, one can see that a large part of their vocabulary and English proficiency comes from exposure (see Lefever, 2010)

In the case of this study it can be presumed that all of the students who do not have Icelandic or English as their mother tongue, are learning English through either Icelandic or English as a medium of instruction. Another factor that could explain why some students feel that English is a difficult subject is their background and former English knowledge, and how long they have lived in Iceland, and how much exposure they receive or have received before and after they arrived in Iceland. Not every country puts the same emphasis on learning English as Iceland does, and the "Americanization" of Iceland, through TV, pop culture, computer and internet use also plays a role in the English acquisition of Icelandic people. Although only based on four students, Berman et al. (2011) claims that English is a third language for some students in the Icelandic school system rather than L2 as it is to their Icelandic peers.

Based on the claims of one group of students, their use of English with their friends is common, both to compensate for their lack of proficiency in Icelandic, and for reasons they are unable to explain. Thus, it seems that the reason for this could be twofold: both that the students are exposed to so much English that they are acquiring vocabulary in English rather than Icelandic. This would in turn correlate with theories about exposure in language learning (see Bison et al. 2013). The other reason could be they feel that it is in some ways "cooler" to speak English, like quoting movies, or computer game characters. This is of interest for English teachers, and they could possibly use this to their advantage. Another factor that should be considered by English language teachers is the status of the student's mother tongue, what future plans he and his family have, whether they are going to stay in Iceland or are just here for a short time. It is important to

be clear on these aspects, because then the lesson can be designed specifically with the learning needs of this student in mind.

5.2   Expectations

5.2.1   **What do Students' Expectations Reveal for the Teacher**

There is no doubt in the minds of the interviewees that English is an important language to learn, and that they are aware of its importance in the modern world. They consider English to be a widespread language with a practical use; whether it is to talk to foreigners, or to use the internet, to search for information, read books, traveling, studying or working abroad. They are aware of its value.

There was a noticeable difference on how they intended to use English in their future, especially on how the students in the countryside saw their future in this context; they did not seem to be interested in moving abroad to work or study, but some felt that they might use English to travel or to speak to foreigners. In contrast, the students in the larger Reykjavík area considered English to be quite important for their future; some of them reported that they had future plans for moving abroad and English would be essential to a successful integration. This indicates that they are well aware of the benefits of learning English, and that they are aware at least of the status of English in Icelandic society, and as a lingua franca (see Graddol, 2006, Crystal, 2003). Another possible explanation for this difference in aspirations is that the students, that do not have special aspirations for their English language learning, are still assimilating to the Icelandic society, and thus have enough aspirations for just that.

Lastly, a possible factor in this difference in aspirations for learning English between urban and rural students, could stem from the exposure to English in their daily lives. Possibly, the students living in the rural areas see less of English in their surrounding than their urban peers, and therefore have different aspirations. If this is the case, teachers in the countryside need to be aware of this and put emphasis on exposure in the classroom that could spark aspirations in the students living in rural areas.

5.3   **Developing my Theory of Practice**

This thesis has a twofold purpose, where I wanted to give voice to a group of student that has not been heard before in this specific context, and to inspire my own professional development. By giving a voice to students

with an immigrant background, I have come to realize that although their perspectives on ELT and learning appear to be similar to those of their Icelandic peers, there is still much to be learned from what they say when analyzed in relation to relevant literature on ELT and in multicultural contexts. In this section, I outline the main issues that inform my developing theory of practice. Although I recognize the limitations of my research as discussed in my methodology chapter, the results of this study are already impacting my practice in the classroom, and will continue to inform my theory of practice.

First, it is important for me as a teacher to engage with the background of all my students. In the case of students with an immigrant background, this includes finding out about their languages and previous experiences with English language learning, their ability to understand classroom instructions in Icelandic and English, and their relationship with the content being taught. All of these factors would then need to inform the way that I develop my methods and the material for classroom teaching. Such approach is in line with the theories of multicultural education.

The general view of the students is to move away from the text- and workbook and be exposed to more variations of teaching methods. The Spotlight book has several nice features that teachers could definitely take advantage of. However, given time constraints and lack of support in working with students from diverse backgrounds, teachers tend to use grammar-translation approaches. In order to serve a diverse student group, teachers need to see the book in a new light. My own response at the moment would be to discard the book, draw on the multiple resources available to teachers on the internet and develop materials that respond to a reality in which students are stating that they learn more out of than in school.

Secondly, how can I relate to the experience of students. who claim they learn more outside of school rather than in their lessons? Having drawn on their experience in this research, I realize that student participation in their own learning needs to be an important part of my theory of learning. For example, students from the rural school suggested that they had lower expectations of using English for future studies, travelling, moving abroad than their urban peers. Thus, it should affect the way the English teachers in the rural areas go about their teaching, meaning that their teaching should reflect the awareness that students in rural areas could lack aspirations for their EFL. This offers a variety of approaches to teaching, where they e.g. practice their communication skills in a meaningful way, in the context of moving abroad. The background of the students is important

in this perspective, some of them might be living temporarily in Iceland for a few years, while others might be coming from countries that put similar emphasis on language learning as Iceland does. Others might have aspirations for learning English for absolutely different reasons. As a teacher, making use of this is important. To make the language acquisition an effective process, it is important to know the students' individual situation and build on it, as what is meaningful to one student might be of no value to another one.

As a teacher, I need to be aware of the backgrounds of the students and their language situation in my classroom. I need to be able to predict how the usage of language is affecting the students and how they react to the language used in the classroom. This is again closely related to the concept of multicultural education; the teaching and the content of the lesson must reflect the awareness of the diversity of the students. The reporting of hardship with learning English is of great value here. In this context I would like to argue that the background and their language situation is a key factor in how successful they become in learning English. This means that considering their background and their language situation in terms of how much experience they have with EFL, and how the teaching is carried out in the country they lived in prior to, in this context, Iceland. This should be of great value to the teacher to meet the varied needs of a diverse classroom.

The type of English these students are learning is of great importance and can in my opinion be a crucial part of how the lessons are carried out. As Berman described the two different language skills, BICS or CALP, it is probable that the students are acquiring BICS, rather than CALP. From the perspective of a teacher, this is important in that I can challenge my students in a language that is still foreign to them, to show that there is still something to be learned. Teachers must be ready to deal with this situation where the school is not their main source of English. This can be used to the teachers' advantage with focusing more on fine tuning the skills acquired, offering the students real challenges: like many of them reported that it was easy to learn, and that they were not really learning any English at school. It needs to be taken into account like Berman et al. (2011) said, that it might also be that the students are over estimating their English competence and that is a factor that teachers need to be cautious of.

As research shows, students nowadays seem to be exposed to English quite a lot in their daily lives. These students do not seem to be any exception to that. This is an important factor for me as a teacher to consider. If students are not learning English at school but are mostly acquiring their vocabulary and syntax knowledge by watching TV or shows,

or on the computer: the internet, games etc. it must be met with new approaches in English teaching. Teachers must make use of their prior knowledge so that the students receive input that is meaningful to their personal context. Again, this relates to the emphasis on meaningful learning.

6 Conclusion

The voices of diverse immigrant students in this specific context have not been explored in detail in the contemporary Icelandic education system. This research is a first attempt to work with multiple voices that represent experiences of students with an immigrant background who don't have either English or Icelandic as their mother tongue. The specific focus is on their experience of learning English and Teaching at their schools, and how they view English in the context of their future. This thesis has a twofold purpose, in that I wanted to give voice to a group of student that has not been heard before in this specific context, and to inspire my own professional development.

Despite the limitations mentioned under the methodology chapter, this study has raised some important findings that will be summarized here.

The relatively new reality of multiculturalism in Iceland is something that the school system must be aware of. Some of the students indicated that they felt left out, that the lessons should be more individually based and classes should even be divided according to levels of competence. This should be of great concern to teachers. This exclusion in the classroom is serious and must be dealt with, especially as students who felt excluded were the ones who have strong aspirations for learning.

The main conclusion is that these students call for more diverse teaching methods in a more meaningful context. To meet this challenge, teachers must have good knowledge of different approaches in language teaching and learning, they must be knowledgeable of their students, their background, and the cultural diversity they bring with them.

This study indicates that the needs of students with immigrant backgrounds in the EFL classroom are not being met because the variety of methods do not reflect meaningful learning approaches with emphasis on practical language usage in line with the concept of multicultural education. For further research it would be interesting to study the perspective of teachers working in an Icelandic multicultural classroom, about the challenges they face, and measures they take to address these challenges.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter of Consent (Parents)

Leyfi vegna rannsóknar   *Reykjavík, mars, 2015*

Kæra foreldri/forsjáraðili

Ég er nemi við Menntavísindasvið, Háskóla Íslands, þar sem ég er að ljúka meistaranámi mínu og mun útskrifast sem grunnskólakennari eftir það. Sem part af lokaári mínu við Háskólann mun ég framkvæma rannsókn, sú rannsókn mun fjalla í megindráttum um viðhorf og væntingar unglinga, í þremur grunnskólum á Höfuðborgarsvæðinu, til enskukennslu og enskulærdóms síns. Þau skilyrði sem ég leitast við að þetta unga fólk hafi, er að það sé í fyrsta lagi *nýbúi/landnemi* og í öðru lagi að þau sé hvorki með *ensku né íslensku* sem móðurmál.

Því langar mig að biðja þig um samþykki þess efnis að barnið þitt fái að taka þátt í rannsókn þessari. Að þú gerir það upplýst um það að neitir þú því mun það ekki hafa nein áhrif á skólagöngu barns þíns. Að þú sért upplýst um þú hafir leyfi til þess að draga til baka samþykki þitt á hvaða tímapunkti sem er án frekari útskýringa. Að lokum að öll þau gögn sem safnað verður, verður farið með sem trúnaðarmál og þeim eytt að lokinni úrvinnslu. Ekki verður hægt að rekja svör þátttakenda til þeirra.

Með fyrirfram þökk,

Karl Sigtryggsson

_____   _____

Karl Sigtryggsson, rannsakandi   Foreldri/forsjáraðili

Appendix 2 – Letter of Consent (students)

Leyfi vegna rannsóknar *Reykjavík, mars, 2015*

Kæri nemandi.

Ég er nemi við Menntavísindasvið, Háskóla Íslands, þar sem ég er að ljúka meistaranámi mínu og mun útskrifast sem grunnskólakennari eftir það. Sem part a flokaári mínu við Háskólann mun ég framkvæma rannsókn, sú rannsókn mun fjalla í megindráttum um viðhorf og væntingar unglinga, í þremur grunnskólum á Höfuðborgarsvæðinu, sem hafa hvorki íslensku né ensku sem móðurmál, til enskukennslu og enskulærdóms síns

Með þessu bréfi leita st ég eftir samþykki þínu skriflega að þú sért að taka upplýsta ákvörðun um að vera þátttakandi í þessari rannsókn minni. Að enginn sé að þvinga þig til þess að þú gerir það eingöngu vegan þess að þú vilt það sjálf/sjálfur. Einnig að þú sért upplýst/ur um rétt þinn til þess að draga samþykki þitt til baka hvenær sem er og getir gengið út úr rannsókninni hvenær sem er og þurfir ekki að útskýra það neitt nánar. Að lokum að þú vitir að allar þær upplýsingar sem koma fram í viðtalinu mun ég fara með sem trúnaðarmál og frumgögnum verður eytt að lokinni úrvinnslu.

_____   _____

Karl Sigtryggsson, rannsakandi   Nemandi

Appendix 3 – Background Information

Persónlegar upplýsingar

Þær upplýsingar sem koma fram á þessu blaði verður farið með sem trúnaðarmál og verður þessu blaði eytt að lokinni úrvinnslu.

Nafn: Aldur: Bekkur: Skóli:

Hvaðan koma foreldrar þinir?

Hversu margar kennslustundir færðu í viku í ensku?

Hversu mörg tungumál talar þú?

Hvaða tungumál talar þú:

- at home?
- with friends?
- at school?

Hversu lengi hefur þú búið á Íslandi?

Ef þú hefur búið einhversstaðar annarsstaðar, hvar bjóstu þá áður en þú fluttir til Íslands?

Appendix 4 – Fieldnotes

Spurningar fyrir rýnihópaviðtal

| Skóli: | Dagsetning: | Fjöldi: |

Spurninga:

Segið mér frá enskutímunum ykkar, enskukennslunni?

Aukaspurningar: Hvernig fara kennslustundirnar fram, hvað geri þið? Hvað er svona týpisk kennslustund? Hvað eru finnst ykkur áhugavert í enskukennslunni? Hvað finnst ykkur gagnlegt? Hvað finnst ykkur skemmtilegt í enskunni? Hvað finnst ykkur leiðinlegt? Hvernig myndu þið vilja hafa kennsluna, ef þið gætuð breytt einhverju? Hvaða kennsluaðferðir eru notaðar í enskunni? Hvernig mynduþið vilja hafa þær öðruvísi? Finnst ykkur vanta eitthvað? Hvar lærið þið mesta ensku, er það í skólanum eða einhversstaðar annarsstaðar? Uskýrið nánar?

Haldi þið að það sé mikilvægt að læra ensku? Hvers vegna? Hvað gerir það mikilvægt?

Hvernig geti þið notað enskuna sem þið lærið í skólanum, hvernig nýtist hún ykkur? Notið þið ensku dags daglega? Hvernig þá? Er enska mikilvægt fyrir framtíðina, hvernig þá? Hvernig getið þið hugsað ykkur að enska muni nýtast ykkur í framtíðinni? Hugsi þið um ensku sem hluta af framtíðinni hjá ykkur? Hvernig?

Auka: Hvernig? Af hverju? Getur þú sagt mér meira um það? Eru þið sammála þessu?

Hugleiðingar eftir viðtöl:

Appendix 5 – Participants of the Study

Table 1 School One – 20th of March

Student	Age / Grade	Languages	Years in Iceland
Simone	16 / 10th	Spanish Icelandic	8
Alfred	15 / 10th	Serbian Icelandic English	15
John	15 / 10th	Polish Icelandic English	6
Jim	15 / 9th	Filipino Icelandic	8

Table 2 School Two – 26th of March

Smith	15 / 9th	Polish Icelandic	7
Wanda	14 / 9th	Polish Icelandic	6
Delilah	13 / 8th	Polish Icelandic	9
Petra	13 / 8th	Polish Icelandic	6
Nanna	14 / 9th	Filipino English Icelandic	4
Angie	14 / 9th	Lithuanian Icelandic	12

Table 3 School Three – 27th of March

Anna	15 / 10th	Lithuanian Icelandic Spanish English	3
Amanda	14 / 9th	Slovakian Icelandic	6
Julia	14 / 9th	Portuguese Icelandic English Danish	7
Edwin	15 / 9th	Filipino Icelandic English	8
Margaret	14 / 9th	Portuguese English Icelandic	2
Elsa	14 / 8th	Latvia Icelandic	2 ½
Ingrid	13 / 8th	Russian Icelandic English (Danish)	13

Appendix 6 – Announcement to the Data Protection Authority

Karl Sigtryggsson
Vogabraut 48
300 Akranes

Persónuvernd

Rauðarárstíg 10 105 Reykjavík
sími 510 9600 bréfasími 510 9606
netfang postur@personuvernd.is
veffang personuvernd.is

Reykjavík 11. mars 2015
Tilvísun: S7286/2015/ TS/--

Hér með staðfestist að Persónuvernd hefur móttekið tilkynningu í yðar nafni um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga. Tilkynningin er nr. S7286/2015 og fylgir afrit hennar hjálagt.

Vakin er athygli á því að tilkynningin hefur verið birt á heimasíðu stofnunarinnar.
Tekið skal fram að með móttöku og birtingu tilkynninga hefur engin afstaða verið tekin af hálfu Persónuverndar til efnis þeirra.

Virðingarfyllst,

Peitur Skúlason

Hjál.: - Tilkynning nr. S7286/2015 um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga.