

**Home language environment  
of Polish children in Iceland  
and their achievement  
in Icelandic grammar school**

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MA Thesis in Education Studies

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## **Preface**

This thesis is the equivalent of 50 ECTS and is the culmination of my MA studies in the School of Education at the University of Iceland. My supervisor was Robert Berman, Ph.D. Associate Professor and Marey Allyson Macdonald, Ph.D. Professor was the specialist.

The aim of my research was to describe the language patterns of home language environment of Polish immigrant children in Iceland in order to obtain a better understanding of their situation, attitudes, development and achievements. Fifteen children and their parents from the capital area of Iceland took part in the field work.

My interest in immigrants' issues is both professional and private. I possess a degree in International Relations and I have always been concerned with the impact that the economy, politics and global changes have on individuals and societies. Therefore, when I moved to Iceland as a voluntary immigrant from Poland I started to observe better how immigrant communities function. Moreover, by working in the Icelandic educational system, as well as participating in immigrants' associations and councils, I became acquainted with various programmes and ideas on immigrants' education. That is how my interest in issues related with multiculturalism, immigrants' education, language learning and immigrants' identity arose. This was also the reason for my enrolment in the School of Education at the University of Iceland.

With this paper I want to give professionals, as well as anyone interested in multicultural matters, one insight into the immigrant family in Iceland. I believe that my research may be also a good starting point for other studies on immigrants and their attitudes towards mother tongue and second language acquisition, both in Iceland and abroad.

I would like to thank Robert Berman and Marey Allyson Macdonald for their valuable comments and suggestions, encouragement and the time they dedicated to help in developing the study. Many thanks to parents and children who decided to participate in the study, as well as those who assisted in contacting Polish families. Finally I would like to thank all those individuals, including my family and friends, who supported me along the way.



## **Abstract**

Nobody doubts the importance of the mother tongue in raising bilingual children, but the possible influences of growing up in two or more languages on the child's development are the subject of rich discussion.

How does the quality of mother language input, including reading and other child-parent language interactions, affect the child's development and achievement in school? Examining this question is particularly interesting in Iceland, a country which in recent decades changed from a rather homogenous to a multicultural one and where number of foreign citizens (most of them of Polish origin) oscillates around 8%.

Although there has been research on acquisition of the second language of immigrant children in Iceland, as well as on mother tongue teaching and L1 and L2 acquisition in other Nordic countries, there is a need for deeper research of the various language environments of a particular immigrant group and the possible influences of these environments.

This study is based both on qualitative and quantitative inquiry. The field work consisted of semi-structured interviews with fifteen children of the Polish speaking community in Iceland, selected based on characteristics such as gender, socio-cultural background and future plans of the family. Moreover, parents of interviewed children received a questionnaire on frequency of child-parent activities related to language development and school achievement. Later, children's grades in Icelandic were collected. Data were systematised, interrelated and interpreted.

This study tried to assess the language environment of Polish immigrant children to help explain their achievements in school. Results indicated that Polish played a much more important role in parent-child home language interactions. However, it seemed that parents' attitude towards Icelandic did not deter their children from achieving good results in that language, because parents, concentrating on interactions in the Polish language, were unintentionally helping their children to develop language skills that transferred to Icelandic.



# Ágrip

## Tungumálaumhverfi pólskra barna á Íslandi og árangur þeirra í íslenskum grunnskólum

Enginn efast um mikilvægi þess sem móðurmálið hefur í uppeldi tvítyngdra barna, en möguleg áhrif að alast upp með tvö eða fleiri tungumál á þroska barnsins eru háð ríkri umræðu.

Hvaða áhrif hefur gæði inntaks móðurmáls, þar með talið lestur og önnur tungumálasamskipti milli barna of foreldra, á þroska barnsins og árangur þess í skólanum? Að kanna betur þessa spurningu er sérstaklega áhugavert á Íslandi, landi sem á undanförunum áratugum breyst úr fremur einsleitu að fjölmenningarlegu, þar sem fjöldi erlendra ríkisborgara er um 8%. Þar að auki eru flestir innflytjenda á Íslandi af pólskum uppruna.

Þrátt fyrir að það hafi verið gerðar rannsóknir um þróun annars tungumáls hjá börnum innflytjenda á Íslandi, og einnig um móðurmálskennslu og L1 og L2 færni á hinum Norðurlöndunum, þá er þörf á markvissari rannsóknum á mismunandi umhverfi tungumála tiltekins innflytjendahóps og mögulegum áhrifum þeirra.

Þessi rannsókn byggir bæði á hugmyndum eigindlegra og meginlegra aðferðafræða. Verkefnið samanstóð af hálf-skipulögðum viðtölum við fimmtán börn í pólsku samfélagi á Íslandi, valin á grundvelli persónueiginleika eins og kyni, félags- og menningarlegum bakgrunni og framtíðaráformum í fjölskyldunni. Þar að auki, fengu foreldrar barnanna lista með spurningum um tíðni tungumálasamskipta milli þeirra og barnanna sem tengist málþroska og árangri í skóla. Síðan var einkunnum barnanna í Íslensku safnað saman. Niðurstöðum var raðað kerfisbundið, tengdt saman og túlkað.

Þessi rannsókn reyndi að meta tungumálaumhverfi pólskra barna innflytjenda til að hjálpa við að útskýra árangur þeirra og framfarir í skólanum. Niðurstöður benda til þess að pólska gegndi mikilvægara hlutverki í samskiptum foreldra og barna heima fyrir. Þó virtist að viðhorf foreldra gagnvart íslenskunni var ekki að letja börnin frá því að ná góðum árangri í því máli, vegna þess að foreldrar, einbeittir í athöfnum á pólskri tungu, voru ómeðvitaðir að hjálpa börnum sínum að þróa tungumálakunnáttu sem fluttist yfir í íslenskuna.





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# 1 Introduction

Language acquisition is a complex world for researchers and for children and their families, but it becomes even more puzzling in the case of bilingualism. Nobody doubts the importance of the mother tongue(s) in raising bilingual children, but the possible influences of growing up in two or more languages on the child's development are the subject of rich discussion.

Language environment is considered crucial in the process of bilingual children's learning and socialisation. Among other factors influencing bilingual children's development, parent-child language interactions are often investigated (see e. g. Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 1999).

More specifically, this paper tries to answer the following question: How does the quality of mother tongue input, including reading and other child-parent language interactions affect the child's language development and achievement in school?

Quality of mother tongue input is understood in this study to be the diversity and frequency of parent-child interactions that provide expanded opportunities for language use, that transcend the everyday language of mundane commands and queries, and that in their complexity supersede simple communications on household matters. Language development includes development of both mother tongue and second language (L2) of a child, as well as the possible relations between two languages. For the purpose of the paper, the achievement in school is included in the analysis and presented as school grades in the L2.

Examining the home language environment of migrant children is particularly interesting in Iceland, a country which in recent decades changed from a rather homogenous to a multicultural one, and where the number of foreign citizens now oscillates around 8%, many of them being children.

Iceland, as opposed to Canada or the United States, does not have a longstanding history of immigration. Icelandic society was not built up in the presence of various languages, cultures and races. Also, not being a colonizing country, unlike the United Kingdom, The Netherlands or France, few immigrants that Iceland receives usually know Icelandic upon arrival.

Moreover, Iceland cannot be compared to other Nordic countries because, although sharing quite similar cultures and languages, it has different patterns of immigration. Among Nordic countries, Sweden has the highest proportion of immigrants (foreign-born citizens) at 14,7%, while Denmark stands at 9,8%, Norway at 8,2 % and Iceland at around 8% (data for the year 2010; in the case of Norway for the end of 2009; Statistics Denmark, 2011; Statistics Iceland, 2011; Statistics Norway, 2010; Statistics Sweden, 2010).

Even though the percentage of immigrants in Nordic countries is quite similar to Iceland, in the case of other Nordic countries the immigration flows have been steady and ongoing for several decades, while in Iceland they increased rapidly in the last 10 years (see e.g. Statistics Denmark, 2011; Statistics Iceland, 2011; Statistics Norway, 2010; Statistics Sweden, 2010).

While Poles and citizens from other Baltic countries form significant minorities in the whole Nordic region (mainly due to the accession of these countries into European Union in 2004), in Denmark, Sweden and Norway ethnic groups from Turkey and the Balkan Peninsula are prevalent, too. Moreover, typical for Iceland is labour (and therefore often temporary) migration, whilst many immigrants in other Nordic countries are asylum seekers, coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia, as well as from other Asian and African countries (see Norden, 2010), who see themselves as becoming more permanently settled.

Most immigrants in Iceland are indeed Poles. For a longer period, Polish males were the dominant group of all foreign residents on the island. Some of them decided to bring their families to Iceland, especially at the time of strong economic growth in this country until 2007. However, the newest data show a massive return of Polish males to their home country, largely as a consequence of the 2008 economic crisis and subsequent growing unemployment in Iceland, especially among immigrants. This exodus cannot be confirmed for whole-family migration (Statistics Iceland, 2011).

Between 2005 and 2010, the number of children of Polish origin between 0-14 years of age residing in Iceland increased from around 220 to around 1000 individuals. Although many Polish families decide to return to Poland after several years of living, working and being educated in Iceland, many choose Iceland as their new home. Statistics show that

every year since 2005 an average of 25 children aged 0-4 years, about 14 children aged 5-9 and about 12 children aged 10-14 of Polish origin obtained Icelandic citizenship (Statistics Iceland, 2010 & 11).

Interestingly, many Poles, as well as representatives of other Eastern European nations, unlike immigrants from other continents, including Asia or South America, move to Iceland temporarily, with the aim of earning and saving enough money to return to their home country. That is why, in the case of Poles, it is questionable whether one should call them immigrants rather than temporary migrants, since even they themselves do not know their own future. Additionally, the aforementioned economic crisis changed the plans of many; i.e. some lost their jobs and left the country; some had to accept lower salaries or positions; while others were forced to stay for a longer period in order to pay off growing debts in Iceland.

At the same time, although there has been research on acquisition of Icelandic among immigrant (including Polish) children in Iceland (e.g. Sigríður Ólafsdóttir, 2010), as well as on mother tongue teaching (L1) and L2 acquisition in other Nordic countries (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976), there is a need for deeper research of the various language environments of immigrant children and their possible influences.

Sigríður Ólafsdóttir (2010) found that in the case of immigrant children in Iceland, their language proficiency in L2 did not seem to grow much during a two-year period. Several factors could explain such a situation, including shortcomings in mother tongue maintenance among immigrant children. Therefore, the question arises as to the nature of migrant, in particular Polish, children's home language environment and whether and how it affects their language development and achievement in Icelandic grammar school.

This study with the use of mixed, qualitative and quantitative inquiry will help to assess the language environment of young immigrants from Polish (non-mixed) families to help explain their achievements and progress in school. Its role is also practical: it can be a tool for teachers, policy makers and other professionals to develop new ideas on how to reach and help immigrant communities with language maintenance and acquisition matters.





## **2 Bilingualism in theory and previous research**

Since the academic discussion on bilingualism emerged, there have been contradictory opinions on its possible positive and/or negative effects. Early studies tended to suggest that bilingual children could not develop very good language skills in either language. Nowadays, although research still confirms that bilingualism rarely has both languages in balance and that one language usually predominates, bilingualism is increasingly seen as an asset (Bialystok, Craik, Green, & Gollan, 2009; Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez, 1992).

Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) as well as Belz (2002) argue that knowledge of two languages does not simply sum up, but has a surplus value. In other words, it supports flexibility of the mind and creativity of a person, whose “playful use of multiple linguistic codes may index resourceful, creative and pleasurable displays of multicompetence” (Belz 2002, p. 59).

Moreover, various authors argue that knowing more than one language and culture (in non-disadvantaged circumstances) can have cognitive advantages, including a greater awareness of linguistic structure, and social advantages (e.g. an ability to establish a strong cultural identity), as well as economic advantages, among them opportunities in the global market (see e.g. Bialystok, 2001; Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez, 1992).

On the other hand, Cummins (1979) states that bilingualism, although generally considered beneficial, may cause losing one’s L1, which in turn may have negative effects on academic progress and achievement, and result in so-called “semilingualism”. This may occur when a minority language is being replaced by the dominant language, due to low exposure and infrequent use on the minority language. Moreover, he suggests that cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) decreases when the mother tongue and the language of the receiving country are very dissimilar. (Note my discussion in Section 2.2 of the concept Cummins terms “semilingualism”).

McLaughlin (1995) argues that what may look like deprivation in both languages of bilingual children should be seen as a temporary language imbalance, which sometimes causes decreased performance compared to that of speakers of just one language. However, if given enough exposure

to speakers of the language and opportunities to use the language, bilingual children are able to achieve age-level proficiency in their mother tongue. The author believes that it is not only the school's role, but also the parents'/family's duty to use the mother tongue with children, even if they are resistant to it. Otherwise, it may have negative effects not only on children, but on the family's communication in general (as suggested also by Wong Fillmore, 1991).

Cummins (2001) agrees with McLaughlin (1995) on this point and believes that those children who enter school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue tend to develop stronger literacy abilities in the language of instruction. He suggests that parents or other caregivers may be a key to success, if only they spend time with their children effectively, e.g. on storytelling and discussions which help to develop both vocabulary and concepts in the mother tongue. He considers the two languages in which children grow up as interdependent: "Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue they have learned in the home to the school language." In this way, children start first to transfer simple concepts, e.g. telling time, and then gradually more complex ones, e.g. identifying cause and effect or relating information (Cummins, 2001, p. 17).

## **2.1 Issues of growing up in two languages**

Bilingual language development of children is not a static outcome, but a constant and dynamic process, in which each child advances in a unique way. During each bilingual child's development one of the languages may become more dominant than the other, and the balance between languages can vary at particular periods of time (Baker, 2001).

Although a child may become bilingual (or trilingual) acquiring languages simultaneously, if his/her parents have different mother tongues, the majority of immigrants, including children, are successive bilinguals. Successive learning means that "they learn the ethnic group language in the home and immediate community; the second language gradually enters their lives via television, contact with peers, and occasionally daycare" (Verhoeven & Stromqvist, 2001, p. 1). There are some discrepancies as to the age that separates simultaneous and successive bilingualism, but most specialists agree that children are in a "simultaneous acquisition mode" up to age four (Grosjean, 2010, p. 15).

According to Ball (2010), ways of retaining mother tongue, especially in the situation where it is not a language of instruction in the migration country, are through:

- continued interaction with children's family and community in their mother tongue on "increasingly complex topics that go beyond household matters";
- formal instruction in their mother tongue in order to develop reading and writing skills and, not less important;
- "exposure to positive parental attitudes to maintaining the mother tongue, both as a marker of cultural identity and for certain instrumental purposes" (Ball, 2010, p. 2).

Cunningham-Andersson and Andersson (1999) postulate growing up in two languages. They suggest that once a language used at home is picked up, parents should not switch it, because frequent changes of language may cause questions of identity. Moreover, parents should keep track of children's language development and praise them continuously for achievements. According to the authors, story-reading is the best way to increase children's vocabulary and understanding. Finally, they suggest that while being brought up bilingually, a child becomes bicultural, too, "[through] children's books and games which are part of the common background of those who know the culture from inside. These cannot be learned later instead. Childhood memories are an important part of being a native of a culture" (Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 1999, pp. 86-87).

However, parents and others who take care of bilingual children should be educated in bilingualism issues, including how to retain bilingualism and what effects bilingualism may have on children. Grosjean (2010) gives an example that parents must understand why it is that some children go through a period of refusal to speak their mother tongue in public and/or at home "because they do not wish to be different from other children" (Grosjean, 2010, p. 214).

Moreover, some authors suggest that children will become bilingual only if their parents "have a positive attitude towards bilingualism and [believe that] their own language practices have an impact on the child's practice" (De Houwer, 1999, as cited in Zurer Pearson, 2008, p. 123). In

other words, parents of a bilingual child should be aware of their important role in language development, especially in the first stages of the child's acquaintance with the new language. These beliefs should coexist: "If parents lack one belief or the other, the environment they provide for their children will likely lead to weak or nonexistent learning of one of the languages" (Zurer Pearson, 2008, p. 124).

Maintenance of the mother tongue and living with bilingualism can become difficult at times; however it should never be discontinued. "There are bound to be times when the going is difficult and frustration occurs because of a communication problem, an unkind remark by an adult or a child, a bad grade in the weaker language", but it is very important to continuously encourage children. "As they grow older, they must be able to talk with others about what it means to be bilingual and bicultural and express some of the difficulties they may be having" Grosjean, 2010, p. 216).

Indeed, in the next chapter I will discuss the factors named by various authors as influencing the language environment of a bilingual child.

## **2.2 Factors affecting language environment of immigrant children**

Ball (2010) names numerous factors that may affect the quality of the language environment of immigrant children, including the family's socio-economic status, immigrant parents' and community's behaviours and attitudes, the status of the mother tongue (e.g. high or low status; a majority or a minority language), peer relations and other demands for children's participation (e.g. paid or domestic work, after-school activities) (Ball, 2010, p. 2).

The quality of the language environment might also depend on the reasons for learning and using the mother tongue: to communicate with parents, other family members, and friends; to take part in school activities; to communicate with others in the community; and finally, for various activities, including TV watching or sports. Grosjean (2010, p. 171) states that "the child has to feel that he or she really needs a particular language." To do so, also other factors mentioned before, including the type of language input, family, community and school roles, as well as the attitude toward the language and culture, should be favourable (Grosjean, 2010).

Raguenaud (2009) discusses the importance of time available for bilingual children. She suggests that “if the parent who speaks the home language is also away at work most often, it will take much family and community support and resources to make sure the child hears and speaks that language enough with other adults and peers to reach her desired level of fluency.” The author’s advice is therefore to “get a detailed picture of how much daily input [children] receive in and outside the home.” If a child is only sparsely exposed to one of the languages, “he [or she] will not meet the expected milestones in language acquisition and is less likely to become bilingual” (Raguenaud, 2009, p. 7).

Research (Zurer Pearson, 2008, pp. 128-129) has found that “children need more exposure to the minority language than to the community language for the same measure of learning”. That is because the dominant language is present in the child’s environment through TV, school or neighbours.

Therefore it is important for immigrant parents to constantly interact with and observe the children. “By responding fully to their questions, by surrounding them with interesting materials and activities, parents can learn something of their children’s potential and refrain from inhibiting their learning by limiting their expectations” (Andersson, 1981, p. 18).

On the other hand, one cannot forget the importance that the second language has for immigrant children and their parents. Zurer Pearson (2008) argues that “very powerful is the natural attraction of the majority language culture for the child” (p. 129).

Nevertheless, in order for a child to be attracted to the L2, his/her parents need to become interested in acquiring the L2 as well, rather than only imposing L2 learning on their children. They should not “project [their] own difficulties in learning a second or a third language onto [their] child’s language development” (Raguenaud, 2009, p. 12).

Genesee, Paradis and Crago (2004) are concerned about language socialization. They argue that “because of the interwoven nature of language and culture, dual language children are particularly at risk for both cultural and linguistic identity displacement.” They continue that:

Erasing a child’s language or cultural patterns of language use is a great loss for the child. Children’s identities and senses of self are inextricably linked to the language they

... speak and the culture to which they have been socialized [...] All of the affectionate talk and interpersonal communication of their childhood and family life are embedded in their languages and cultures. (p. 33)

Other authors also see bilingualism as an issue that should be approached from various perspectives. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) argue that bilingualism is both a sociolinguistic, pedagogic and social issue: “If we are speaking of the semilingualism of migrant children, there is obviously the danger that semilingualism will be treated as a characteristic of the child, i.e. a deficiency [...] to try to explain the child’s poor school achievement.” However, in their opinion, any possible negative effects of bilingualism should be treated as a deficiency in the social system, or in particular, the “educational system for migrant children which should be changed to suit the children, not vice versa.” Therefore, the authors suggest that language should be treated not as a cause of children’s poor achievement, but as a mediating variable “through which society imposes its structure on every new generation”. The independent variables can be found in the society, and they include the child’s status in the community, his/her attitude towards the majority-speaking community or his/her self-concept (Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976, p. 22, emphasis as in original text).

### **2.3 Research on bilingualism in various contexts**

Research on bilingualism and its possible influence has been evolving from the first decades of the twentieth century. Bialystok (2002) writes that “for almost a century, there has been a small, but consistent research interest in the possible implications that bilingualism might have on children’s cognitive and intellectual development” (p. 159). The author cites the first important studies, including IQ testing (see e.g. Saer, 1923) or achievement measures used in schools (e.g. Macnamara, 1966).

Much of the research was conducted in historically multicultural countries, including United States and Canada. In the first one, typically Hispanic children were researched (see e.g. August & Hakuta, 1997; Collier, 1987). In the latter, research on French-English bilinguals was particularly frequent (e.g. Swain & Lapkin, 1982).

On the other hand, recently we have been observing changes in the demographics of the European countries. This has led to increased research on bilingualism of various ethnic groups in the region (see e.g. study on North American, Vietnamese, Turkish and Finnish immigrants in Nordic countries by Holmen, Latomaa, Gimbel, Andersen, & Jorgensen, 1995; and on Turkish immigrant youth in the Netherlands and Sweden by Vedder & Virta, 2005).

In general we can assume that in various areas of the world different groups of immigrants represent particular patterns of language maintenance and acquisition and therefore they all are worth getting a better insight into. Berman (2001) writes that: Various contexts “provide a rich basis for comparing not only how the same languages are acquired in different situations of contact, they also make it possible to consider the impact of the relative social status of the home (typically minority) language compared with the school (mainly majority) language” (p. 420).

Practice from Nordic countries shows that minority groups have different conditions for maintaining their mother tongue, depending both on the regulations and language practices of the receiving country but also on the relative status of a particular minority in the society (see e.g. Holmen et al., 1995). As a result, parents who are offered few opportunities to play an active role in promoting the mother tongue with their children, at least through their schooling, tend to be either unmotivated to use the L1 at home (the Turks) or start to play an active role privately (the Vietnamese). This research by Holmen et al. (1995) seems to indicate how different migrant groups’ perception of mother tongue may vary in new circumstances.

Mushi (2001) studied immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s language acquisition in culturally and economically varied contexts in Chicago. She found that parents’ motivation to use both mother tongue and second language is the first step to children’s effective learning in school. She suggested also that joint activities involving parents were much more likely to evoke linguistic behaviour in their children than parents’ utterances, usually regarding household matters, on their own.

Home language environment is indeed crucial in the first years of the immigrant child. Research (see e.g. Leseman, Mayo & Scheele, 2009; Patterson, 2002) show that for bilingual children, just like for

monolinguals, reading, storytelling, rich discussions with parents and watching educational programmes in the mother tongue have a positive impact on vocabulary and language comprehension. Generally, studies on bilingualism indicate that proficiency in the first language depends on the amount of input.

Various studies suggest that children from quite similar backgrounds can differ significantly in their level of L1 and L2. Zentelia (1997) investigated the situation of Puerto Rican children in New York. She found that “despite the impact of family migration stories and schooling, children from the same type of background could differ markedly in their ability to speak/read/ and/or write Spanish or English.” The main factors that seemed to influence the differences in language acquisition in her research were: frequency of children’s visits to Puerto Rico, enrolment in a bilingual class or in an English-only class, spending time in the blocks (*el bloque*) or inside home, identification rather with African Americans than Puerto Ricans, or participation in religious activities that require the use of a particular language.

Puerto Rican children that Zentelia observed (*el bloque’s* children) “were not raised behind the closed doors in nuclear families isolated from their neighbours.” Therefore, she suggests that one cannot assume that “children with monolingual Spanish parents did not speak English with adults. The presence of overlapping networks guaranteed constant visiting, sharing, and exposure to both languages” (Zentelia, 1997, p. 78).

Zentelia (1997) comments that children’s “English, Spanish, and Spanglish provide insights to specific ways in which they and their families have been buffeted by a particularly damaging combination of historical, political, and economic variables.” On the one hand, she describes children’s impressive creativity and flexibility in adapting to new, multicultural environment; on the other, she writes about their “lost opportunities to develop excellent skill in speaking, reading, and writing [...] which might have enabled them to alter to transform their circumstance positively” (Zentelia, 1997, p. 265).

According to Hart and Risley (1995), usually children from families with high socioeconomic status (SES) receive more language input that stimulates their language development. Moreover, observations by the authors show that, in fact, the most effective language input, e.g. shared



book reading and conversations on complex matters, is more frequent in high SES families.

On the other hand, various studies suggest that one cannot evaluate parents' language competence only in terms of how much they speak to the child or how long their sentences are, nor in accordance with their SES. It is rather "responsiveness to the child's communicative attempts" that matters. In this way, a highly educated, middle-class mother, who is stressed and apathetic may provide a less appropriate language environment than a less educated mother who is willing to respond to her child's needs and interests (e.g. Bishop & Mogford, 1993, p. 256).

In the case of immigrant children, many other factors seem to influence the amount and quality of language input. In a Dutch study from 2010, Scheele, Leseman and Mayo examined the relationship between children's cultural background, the family's socioeconomic status, home language and literacy practices and children's L1 and L2 vocabulary. Groups included in the study were Turkish and Moroccan immigrants and Dutch families. The authors found that the differences in the language input were very much related to the background characteristics of the family, including the status of the mother tongue. Immigrant families trying too hard, by overemphasizing the L2 to prepare their children best for schooling often put young children's language development at risk. Scheele et al. write that "the (limited) available time for literate and oral language interactions has to be divided over two languages, which have to compete for scarce resources" (Scheele et al., 2010, p. 137).

Moreover, immigrant parents with higher education are often inclined to provide more formal, literate language activities in the L2. A relevant example are people with higher education in the Moroccan-Dutch community, who after migration at a young age, obtain their secondary and academic education in The Netherlands and "have no other option than to take recourse to (written materials in the) Dutch language", because often, especially in case of Moroccan women, they had no or limited access to public education back in their homeland (Scheele et al., 2010, p. 136) .

On the other hand, according to the research by Scheele et al. (2010) language maintenance is considered to be particularly important for the Turkish community. This finding contradicts the research by Holmen et al. (1995). The reason could be the fact that Turkish immigrants in The

Netherlands, unlike in the Nordic countries where the study by Holmen et al. (1995) was located, are supported by various existing “sources of formal and academic Turkish language, including Turkish television on the Dutch cable, newspapers, books, and picture books for young children” (Scheele et al., 2010, p. 136).

Interestingly, although Turkish children were more exposed to their mother tongue than their Moroccan peers, it did not lead to a significant advantage in their L1 vocabulary. On the other hand, the Moroccan children had a higher level of L2 input and possessed a better L2 vocabulary than the Turkish children. Therefore:

Although Turkish–Dutch parents in principle had more written and oral Turkish language resources at their disposal to provide high quality L1 input compared to Moroccan–Dutch parents, the overall low education levels of the Turkish–Dutch parents in this sample probably set limits to the use of these resources, thereby limiting the linguistic quality of the L1 input in these families (Scheele et al., 2010, pp. 136-137).

In the next section, ideas from books and previous research on how various language resources can be used in parent-child interactions will be presented.

## **2.4 Types of parent-children language interactions**

### **2.4.1 Reading**

Reading to bilingual children is said to be one of the best ways to develop their language abilities. There are many methods of reading, among them:

- a parent reading to a child;
- a child reading with parent’s assistance;
- parent–child shared reading;

all of which can lead to improvement in the child’s comprehension, vocabulary and diction in the language. Another purpose of reading,

particularly in the case of bilingual children, is to motivate them to learn a language even better.

Saunders (1988), while observing his bilingual son, noticed that “books are also useful for acquainting children with the poetic uses of the language, particularly in the language they basically use only in the home and not at school. This may encourage them to experiment with such forms of language themselves” (Saunders, 1988, p. 241).

De Houwer (1999, as cited in Grosjean, 2010) also stresses the importance of the written language for children. He found that “it is an excellent source of vocabulary and cultural information that they may not have in their normal environment. Later, if the child becomes literate in the language, then moments dedicated to personal reading will be important” (Grosjean, 2010, p. 174).

However, Baker (2000a) suggests that “while creating the right physical reading environment is important, it is clearly not enough. Children need to be encouraged to read in order to develop a positive attitude towards a language and long-term learning habits.” Therefore reading shouldn’t be considered only as a skill. It has to be taught as a “pleasurable activity of value in itself” (Baker, 2000a, p. 48).

Motivating children to read can have long-lasting positive consequences. Guthrie (2004) suggested in his research that even children from low-income families, with little education, but who had been given access to books and therefore became enthusiastic readers, were performing better than many students with higher education and from higher-income families.

## **2.4.2 Stories from homeland, culture and tradition sharing**

Many authors consider language and culture as inseparable and for that reason they argue that achieving competence in a language would inevitably involve a competence in a culture (see e.g. Brown, 2000).

Stories from a home country, history of the family, customs and traditions constitute a great source of vocabulary and understanding, and enrich children’s comprehension of language(s) and culture(s). Not to mention that literature in general suggests visits to the country and places of cultural and historical significance to the country (see e.g. Baker, 2000a).

Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) write that:

Transmitting cultural tradition in foreign language is always much more difficult, if not completely impossible. Ethnic identity is also usually tied to language. [...] Mere acceptance of a cultural tradition is a creative process, as each generation, as it accepts the knowledge, at the same time re-moulds it. But to maintain a culture, it is not enough to keep up this old, existing tradition; there must be a constant renewal, a continuously active creation of the new. (p. 7)

Authors who consider western cultures (which includes Polish culture) to be largely verbal cultures, argue that minorities from such cultures need to possess a good command of their mother tongue, in order to maintain and pass the traditions forward.

Nevertheless, it is not only mother tongue that matters: “A child’s life experiences up to age seven form her treasure chest of neuro-connections. What she has been lucky enough to hear, smell, taste, touch and see up to this point are the basis for all future learning” (Tokuhamma-Espinosa, 2000, p. 19).

According to Gregory, Long and Volk (2004) areas of language and culture knowledge which adults and children share need to be under continuous development and allow everyone involved to gain new ideas of thinking, expressing, and tradition sharing. “It is only at the intersection of shared mutual knowledge that effective intercultural communication and learning are able to take place” (Haworth, Cullen, Simmons, Schimanski, McGarva, & Woodhead, 2006, p. 307).

### **2.4.3 Discussions about school, friendships, feelings**

Expressing oneself in one’s own language is very important because usually it is easier to talk about experiences and feelings in one’s mother tongue. Moreover, rich discussion on interesting topics can encourage a positive attitude toward the language (see e.g. Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 1999).

Raguenaud (2009, p. 30) suggests that in order to provide a rich language environment for the child, parents should narrate “every single

thing [they] do around house.” Indeed, as Hart and Risley (1995) claim: “the common vocabulary we use at home lays the foundation for the more sophisticated concepts [...] children will learn later on” (Hart & Risley, 1995, as cited in Raguenaud, 2009, p. 30).

However, some authors argue that it is not only the amount of input that matters. They emphasise the importance of thematic discussions:

The talk refers to more than just daily conversations. It can be thematic, covering a specific topic at a time [...]; it can be exploratory, digging into each other’s minds (e.g., personal immediate/long-term goals, worries/desires); it can be an educational game [...]. This kind of talk in L1 enlarges children’s vocabulary, improves their ability to express themselves logically, and helps them appreciate the flavor of the language. (Li, 1999)

Various studies (see e.g. Beals & Snow, 2002; Snow & Beals, 2006) investigate particular kinds of discussions between parents and their children. “Oral storytelling, cognitively stimulating mealtime conversations, or reconstructing personal experiences and memories are possible alternatives, as these activities reveal linguistic features that resemble academic language use in formal instruction” (Scheele, 2010, p. 123).

## **2.4.4 Singing and listening to music**

Baker (2000a) states that “for a language to live within the child, there needs to be active participation in the language.” Language has to be somehow useful to the child, as well and “enjoyable and pleasurable in a variety of events.” Two of these events include singing and listening to music (Baker, 2000a, p. 57).

In a study by Haworth et al. (2006) the socio-cultural approach investigating the factors that enhance young children’s bilingual development is applied. “The data from the study suggest that language input is, in itself, a mediator in young children’s developing bilingualism.” Both Haworth et al. (2006) and Bodrova and Leong (1996, p. 96) suggest that language is a cultural tool, as it is a “distillation of the categories, concepts, and modes of thinking of a culture.” Therefore, any language input that includes singing, chanting or poetry seems to:

Contribute to children's growing knowledge of frequently occurring patterns and ideas related to the language(s) being used. Input therefore extends beyond isolated words to phrases, sentences and longer texts which are repeated, memorised and filed away to provide models for future creative language output. (Haworth et al., 2006, p. 303)

In the next chapter the methodology of the current research, based partially on the Dutch study (Scheele et al., 2010) will be presented.

### **3 Methodology and methods.**

In this chapter I will discuss the methods I used to investigate how the quality of mother tongue input, including reading and other child-parent language interactions, affects the child's development and achievement in school, particularly in Icelandic.

#### **3.1 Arguments in favour of the applied method**

Although literature and academic journals provide rich research related to bilingual children, various authors mention their imperfections. Many previous studies related to the home language environment are of the intervention type, and usually of a short duration. This often means that parents are taught to practise certain language interactions with their bilingual children. In effect, children indeed improve their vocabulary, understanding and other language skills. However, when the research period is over, parents tend to discontinue the activity which may have a negative impact on children's development.

Moreover, very often bilinguals are considered as two monolinguals in one person. Barrera and Bauer (2003) suggest that in the studying of bilinguals there is a "need to move beyond the accepted view that what we know about monolinguals is sufficient for understanding bilinguals" (Barrera & Bauer, 2003, p. 253).

Another problem with the studies of bilinguals is that they tend to offer a "static view of bilinguals". The problem is that often cultural, as well as linguistic factors that affect a child's life are not explored, or are underexplored, and therefore understanding the child is limited. That is why in my study I wanted to hear children's voices, listen to their stories of the home language environment and understand their experiences and attitudes (Barrera & Bauer, 2003, p. 265).

It may also be an advantage that I am specialised in multiculturalism and therefore can focus on the socio-cultural context of the language interactions. Indeed, "research conducted with bilingual individuals should utilize a bilingual 'lens' in order to provide a better understanding of the bilingual mind" (Barrera & Bauer, 2003, p. 265).

After studying numerous reading materials, I decided to base my research both on the ideas of qualitative and quantitative inquiry. On the one hand, I was interested in obtaining rich information directly from

Polish immigrant children and their parents. On the other hand, my plan was to compare their home language practices and attitudes to children's development and achievement in Icelandic grammar school, with the use of tables and descriptive statistics (for further explanations of mixed method designs see e.g. Creswell, 2008).

### **3.2 Prologue to the main study**

Prior to the main study, in November 2010, I conducted two pilot interviews with a boy of five, whose parent agreed to participate in the study. A list of open questions was prepared beforehand, allowing for other possible questions (see Attachment 1). Both interviews were very informative and helped me to create a better set of questions for the future interviews.

In the first interview with the boy, I concentrated on more general questions, including: "How do you spend your free time?" and: "What do you like to do at home?"

In answer, I received rich information, concerning mainly relations of the boy with his siblings. Although it wasn't part of my prospective research, I found that boy's language patterns varied while interacting with different members of the family. The following dialogues have been translated from Polish:

I: Do you speak Icelandic or Polish with your brother?

Boy: He doesn't speak Polish.

I: No?

Boy: No, only I can speak Polish.

I: And your other brother?

Boy: He speaks sometimes in Polish and sometimes in Icelandic.

Moreover, the boy claimed that his parents never read to him:

I: Do your parents read before you go to sleep?



Boy: No, I just sleep.

I: And at any other time?

Boy: No, they don't.

On the other hand, the boy possessed quite a good collection of Polish cartoons and he named many of them, including “Bolek i Lolek” and “Reksio” as his favourites.

In the latter interview I wanted to discuss with the boy his last weekend at home. I found out that he had spent more time with his siblings than parents, or at least he mentioned activities with his siblings more frequently. Then we moved to his relations with parents:

I: Do you speak Icelandic or Polish with your father?

Boy: He cannot talk.

I: Can he not speak Icelandic?

Boy: No, he talks in Polish.

I: And your mother?

Boy: She can talk.

I: Does she speak Icelandic?

Boy: Yes, Icelandic and Polish.

I: And what language do you use with your mother?

Boy: One and the other.

I: And which one do you prefer?

Boy: Icelandic and Polish.

I: And if you had to choose?

Boy: Icelandic.

Interested by his choice of Icelandic, I continued:

I: When you watch TV, do you watch it in Icelandic or Polish?

Boy: Icelandic.

I: Why?

Boy: Because I can understand everything.

Finally, since I noticed that the boy came to the interview with a little book in Polish called “Tomek i przyjaciele” [Tom and his friends] I asked:

I: Do you have a lot of these?

Boy: Loads.

I: And can you tell me something about this book? Who is Tom?

Boy: It's him [pointing at the train].

I: And who is he?

Boy: He is a, yyyyyyy. [Tries to come with a Polish name for a train]

I: He is a train [pociąg]. And who are his friends?

Boy: Stanley....Yyyyyy, Włodek.

I: What do they do?

Boy: Yyyyyy, they drive.

I: Do you like their stories?

Boy: Yes. Yyyyy. Can you read this [pointing at one page].

The boy was very patient and willing to answer all of the questions the best way he could. However, I noticed that he sometimes had problems with understanding the questions, because of either language difficulties or inappropriateness for his age. Therefore at times my open inquiries had to be modified to more structured ones. Moreover, I realised that with young children at preschool age it might be rather difficult to measure the influence of the language environment on their achievements. This was one of the limitations of the study by Scheele (2010) who wrote that, even though “already at the age of three children show the beginnings of academic language [...], due to children’s young age [she] had to deal with high percentages of missing values” (p. 67).

Therefore I decided that in the main study I should interview older children, possibly in the first years of their grammar school attendance.

### **3.3 Main study**

The main study consisted of semi-structured interviews with fifteen children of the Polish speaking community in Iceland, where children’s experience with mother tongue and L2 was discussed upon receiving their parents’ consent.

Later, a questionnaire was given to caregivers who decided to join the research. Participants had to rate how frequently their child took part in certain activities related to language development. Activities were divided according to previous research (see e.g. Scheele et al., 2010, p. 123) into five scales, representing five types of language activities: the reading scale (questions about the frequency of shared stories reading); the storytelling scale including frequency of various types of storytelling (e.g. true stories, funny stories and tales); the conversations scale (different forms of spoken interactions with the child, e.g. personal experiences, shared culture values, opinions, memories or topics of general interest); the singing scale (frequency of singing or listening to songs and lullabies in mother tongue) and educational TV (frequency of watching TV programs with an educational purpose for young children) (see Attachment 2).

Additionally, in order to increase the credibility and validity of the results, I decided to triangulate the methods of data collection and asked

parents for the actual grades that their child obtained in Icelandic classes at school.

Finally, the results of children's interviews, parents' questionnaire and pupils' achievement in Icelandic from grammar school were systematised, categorised, interrelated and interpreted.

### **3.4 Impediments to data collection**

In practice, data collection took much longer than planned. Although after contacting several schools I received positive answers from all headmasters and their assurance of forwarding the letter to Polish parents/caregivers, the response from the Polish community was meagre. The reason for that may be that this community is the largest minority group in Iceland and therefore parents tend to believe that the researcher can find somebody else who is more appropriate or has more time to take part in the research.

Another possible cause for parents' reluctance is that very often people unacquainted with academic research associate any kind of survey/interview with marketing purposes. Therefore I decided to meet with parents directly whenever I could, in order to explain in detail the process and aims of my research. This helped to convince most of them to participate in the study.

### **3.5 Participants**

Children were selected through maximal variation sampling, based on characteristics such as gender, socio-cultural background, proficiency in mother tongue and Icelandic, socio-economic situation (SES) of the family in Iceland and future plans of the family (e.g. staying in Iceland or plans of going back to the home country in the near future). I believe that the selected children together represented multiple perspectives and the complexity of the studied phenomena.

In my paper I concentrated only on successive bilingualism, that is, when one language is acquired in infancy and followed by another language later (as defined e.g. by Grosjean, 2010). For that reason, for my research I chose children whose parents communicated at home in Polish.

Children with successive bilingualism whom I interviewed generally became acquainted with the Icelandic language at the moment of entrance

to the Icelandic school system. Few of them had had an Icelandic speaking babysitter. At the time of the interviews they were 7 or 8 years old.

Fifteen children were interviewed, of whom 6 were girls and 9 boys: Agnieszka (7), Artur (7), Ewa (8), Hania (8), Jacek (7), Joasia (8), Krzysiek (8), Magda (7), Marek (8), Michał (8), Piotrek (8), Przemek (7), Tomek (7), Wojtek (7), Zosia (7). The names of the children have been changed, but I decided to keep their real age and gender for the purposes of the study. Most of the children arrived in Iceland several years ago and only a few were born in Iceland.

However, to eliminate the possibilities of identification, I decided not to reveal their actual date of arrival. For the same reason, I omitted the information on whether a child was enrolled additionally in the Polish school in Iceland or not.

### **3.6 Field work**

In practice, the field work consisted of three parts: interviews with children, questionnaires with parents and collection of children's grades in Icelandic. In the next subsections I will describe each element of the process.

#### **3.6.1 Interviews with children**

The search for participants began by contacting by e-mail various schools located in the capital area of Iceland and with pupils of foreign origin. Later, headmasters or personnel responsible for contacts with parents forwarded the message to parents of Polish pupils. Additionally, a visit to one school offering mother tongue teaching for children was made, which gave me the opportunity to meet and talk to the parents of the children personally. The purpose and details of the research as well as a consent form was presented to the headmasters (gate-keepers) and parents or caregivers of the prospective participants (see Attachment 3).

Interviews with the fifteen aforementioned children were conducted during two sessions, the first in December 2010 and the second in January 2011. The interviews took place in separate rooms of the schools that the children attended and lasted about 15-20 minutes each. In two cases I decided to use group interviews; in total, 8 children were interviewed in this way. The reason for using a group interview as an

addition to individual interviews was that I wanted to see whether children's discussions would reveal any other interesting perspectives in the subject. Although I was afraid of receiving copy-cat responses, such a situation did not occur. Children negotiated the ideas a lot, and often came up with opposite opinions and stories.

As the interviews proceeded I continuously developed the set of questions by adding new ones or changing the existing questions into more appropriate ones. All interviews were recorded and then fully transcribed. For my convenience the entire process of transcription and analysis of the data was done by hand. I wrote all the interviews on paper with the children's pseudonyms and later, with the use of several coloured pens I marked information that was crucial and informative for the purposes of the research. Additionally, I marked with a question mark other issues that arose during the interviews and that could either become a part of the current study or needed a better insight in another study.

Later, after the initial division of the information with coloured pens, I categorised the data in the computer and selected the supportive evidence in the form of informative dialogues and sentences which I planned to add to the paper (see e.g. Lichtman, 2006).

### **3.6.2 Parents' questionnaire**

The next step in my research was to study the questionnaires obtained from parents in order to connect the Polish language experiences of children with any possible effects on the individuals' successes in Icelandic. To see the potential relation, I asked parents of the interviewed children to answer several questions. Data collection took a much longer time than expected because of a long period of waiting for the questionnaire from parents. The reason for that might be difficulties with answering some questions, e.g. regarding family's socio-economic status in Iceland, and future plans.

I based my questionnaire on the Dutch study from 2010 by Scheele et al. (see sections 2.3 and 3.3). However, I made several adjustments in accordance with my research question and characteristics of Polish immigrants in Iceland. In the questionnaire, I first concentrated once again on the language activities that parents tend to do with their children. Therefore I asked them:

- How often do you read to your child in Polish?
- How often do you read to your child in Icelandic?
- How often do you tell your child stories, folk tales, and share traditions from Poland?
- How often do you discuss with your child his/her experiences at school, friendships and feelings?
- How often do you sing and/or listen to the Polish with your child?
- How often do you join your child in watching educational TV in Polish?

Each parent could cross one of the following answers: never; seldom (less than once per month); sometimes (several times per month); often (several times per week); every day.

Next, I asked parents to comment on children's achievement at school. Parents had to finish a statement on how well their child was doing in the Icelandic grammar school. Moreover, they were asked to consider their child's achievement in Polish and Icelandic. In this group of questions the scale that parents could choose from was: unsatisfactory; satisfactory; good; very good; excellent.

Finally, I sought information about parents' background, because according to various studies (see e.g. Scheele et al., 2010), it may influence the language environment and the child's achievement. I asked parents about their education and their position held back in Poland, as well as in Iceland. Later, they were supposed to determine their SES in Iceland as one of: bad; average; good; very good (direct translation from Polish, where status can be determined from "bad to good" or from "low to high"). In case of this question, unlike in the previous ones I decided to use the forced scale method of a Likert scale (4-point scale) in order to avoid a neutral answer, which would probably not help in investigating the possible relation between parents' SES and bilingual children's achievements.

The last question concerned the future plans of the family and whether they would stay in Iceland or go back to Poland, and, in the case of returning to Poland, when approximately that would happen.

### **3.6.3 Grades in achievement in Icelandic**

In order to triangulate the data, after receiving the parent's questionnaire I asked them also for children's grades in Icelandic. I decided to involve the children's grade in Icelandic and not in other school subjects because I was particularly interested in their language achievement. However, it has to be recognised that it was rather difficult to obtain an accurate measurement of children's achievements, because in the Icelandic educational system there is no standard method of language proficiency measurement for children of that age (7-8 years old) and because participants came from several different schools.

Since in various grammar schools in Iceland there are different measures for grades (written opinion and/or numeric grade) I have standardised the marks into a scale: very good (10-8,5), good (8-6,5), satisfactory (6-4) and deficient or needing improvement (3,5-0).

Another problem is that in some schools only grades for reading and writing are given, while in others, written comments from teachers on different areas of literacy are practised. In the case of one boy (Piotrek), who had just started his education in Icelandic grammar school last semester, I used those grades.

At this point it is worth mentioning that my aim was not to compare Polish children to Icelandic peers. I looked at their grades in order to determine whether they were doing well in school or not.

Moreover, grades are a measurement that determine whether children succeed in or drop out of high school and university, which means that they have impact, and as such, may be more consequential than parent's perceptions of their children's academic abilities and Icelandic proficiency.

After analysing the data from interviews I concentrated on parents' questionnaires. I used MS Office Excel to create tables with parents' answers. Later, with the help of Excel I transformed the data into visual tables and graphs. I employed the same method while analysing children's grades.

## **3.7 Ethical issues**

Anonymity of the participants was ensured and their decisions respected during the study period. Names of the children as well as any information



that could help in identifying them or their families were changed or eliminated in the process of data transcription and analysis (see also section 3.5). All the data were kept in a safe place and only the author of this research had access to them.

Possible biases during the process of sampling, interviewing the participants and interpretation of the data had to be considered, because being an immigrant myself, I couldn't avoid subjectivity. Indeed, as Lichtman (2006) suggests:

Since it is the researcher who is the conduit through which all information flows, we need to recognize that the researcher shapes the research and, in fact, is shaped by the research. As a dynamic force, [the researcher] constantly adapts and modifies her [his] position with regards to the research topic, the manner in which questions are formulated, and the interpretations she [he] gives the data. (p. 206).



## 4 Findings

This chapter covers the main findings from my field work. The chapter is organised in accordance with the theoretical considerations on parent-child interactions presented in chapter 2 (see especially section 2.4), followed by any other matters that emerged during field work and that could influence children's language development and their achievement at school. However, before moving to the practical description of parent-child interactions, a few words should be said about the Polish proficiency of the children participating in the research.

In general, I consider the Polish proficiency of the fifteen interviewed children as good, although I noticed that some of them had problems with grammar. An often repeated example was the misuse of personal pronouns, e.g. "ja" [I] or "mi" [(to) me]. The reason for that could be the necessity of using such pronouns in all cases in the Icelandic language.

Moreover, I observed that children sometimes code switched, using Icelandic or even English words to fill the missing words in Polish.

Overall, I can say that boys were much more talkative than girls. Two girls, Ewa and Joasia were particularly shy interviewees and I had to ask them very structured questions in order to receive their responses, while the boys, Przemek, Wojtek and Krzysiek, as well as one girl, Joasia, could talk for hours.

In the next sections the transcriptions of interviews with these children and their parents' answers are presented.

### 4.1 Reading

In the first part of the interviews I concentrated on the idea of parent-child reading, since it is considered in the literature to be one of the most influential language development activities (see section 2.4).

#### 4.1.1 Regularity of reading

After a short introduction, I started interviews with the question, "How often do your parents read to you?" I received very diverse answers from the children. While most of the answers oscillated between "sometimes" and "usually", there were two children (Michał and Marek) who said that their parents hadn't read to them at all.

Some children excused their parents for the irregularity of reading and explained that their parents were too tired for that activity.

Joasia stated: “My mom reads to me almost always, because sometimes she is tired, but then she sings to me instead.”

Hania said: “Sometimes my mom cannot read to me because my sister disturbs us. She is only four.”

Artur commented: “My dad is almost never at home. He is at work all the time. And my mother she is so busy.”

Here it is interesting to compare children’s stories with their parents’ opinions. Table 1 shows the person who filled out the survey for each child. In eleven cases the questionnaire was filled out by the mother and in three cases by both parents. There was only one example of a father completing the paper. Broader participation of women in the study could be due to the fact that in the places that I visited while searching for prospect participants I mainly encountered and spoke to mothers.

Neither in the interviews with children, nor in the parents’ questionnaire, did I ask whether a child lived with both parents or not, because I found the issue both difficult to discuss with children (for them and for me, as a beginning researcher) and not directly related to the question I researched, although definitively worth further investigating. What I wanted to concentrate on was parents’ general attitude and motivation to reading.

**Table 1. Frequency of parent's reading to a child.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Reading in Polish</b>	<b>Reading in Icelandic</b>	<b>Person who filled out the questionnaire</b>
Hania (g)	often	seldom	Mother
Joasia (g)	often	never	Mother and Father
Wojtek (b)	often	sometimes	Mother
Zosia (g)	often	every day	Mother
Agnieszka (g)	sometimes	sometimes	Mother
Ewa (g)	sometimes	sometimes	Mother and Father
Jacek (b)	sometimes	never	Mother
Krzysiek (b)	sometimes	often	Mother
Magda (g)	sometimes	seldom	Mother
Przemek (b)	sometimes	never	Mother
Artur (b)	seldom	never	Mother
Marek (b)	seldom	never	Mother
Piotrek (b)	seldom	never	Mother and Father
Tomek (b)	seldom	never	Mother
Michał (b)	never	never	Father

(g)\* - a girl (b)\* – a boy

As presented in Table 1, it is clear that Polish parents spend more time on reading in Polish than in Icelandic to their children. Most of them said that they read in Polish sometimes (six parents), often (four parents) or seldom (four parents). No parent said that he/she read every day. However, one parent admitted that he never read to his child (Michał's father). Interestingly, all four cases of seldom reading in Polish were boys' parents.

Reading in Icelandic to a child is much less frequent. Eight parents claimed that they never read in Icelandic to their child. Two parents stated that they read seldom, and three parents sometimes. Yet, the mother of Krzysiek read to him in Icelandic several times per week and Zosia's mother did it every day.

### 4.1.2 Gender

An interesting pattern observed during the interviews was that usually mothers were the ones who read to children. However, in three cases, both parents were active in reading, while fathers were named by two boys (Krzysiek and Piotrek), as the only readers.

Krzysiek said: “I like such books about animals. Yes, I have one book, named *Encyclopaedia of Animals*. And I like it when my father reads from it. Because there are those interesting things about animals.”

### 4.1.3 Types of books

While children typically mentioned well known children’s stories like ‘Kot w butach’ [‘The Master Cat, or Puss in Boots’ by Charles Perrault] or stories by Hans Christian Andersen, Wojtek said: “And I would like to say, that when my mom reads, then she reads a funny book called Mikołajek [Le Petit Nicolas by René Goscinny]. And this is one of my favourite books.”

No child mentioned books by Polish authors such as Jan Brzechwa, Wanda Chotomska or Julian Tuwim, but when asked particularly about them, they responded positively.

It was surprising that children could seldom give the titles of the books:

Tomek: Well, my mom reads books only from time to time.

I: And what does she read to you?

Tomek: Well, for example like this, ‘Kot w butach’, or... mhm... I don’t remember anymore what their names are...

Joasia responded to the question: “I like all kinds of books. But mostly I like books about roe-deer and about princesses.”

Two children mentioned that their parents read to them books helping in learning the language. For example, Krzysiek said: “My dad always reads to me books from grandma. I like it a lot. They have different, mhm, letters, like U, Z...”

Indeed, five children mentioned that they received books from their grandmothers when they were in Poland last.

#### 4.1.4 Attitude towards reading

As the literature shows, no language development activity will be successful without the positive attitude of those involved (see subsection 2.4.1.). Among interviewed children, the attitudes towards reading ranged from very positive to very negative.

Wojtek had already planned the book reading for the evening and he seemed very excited about it:

My mom, when I'll go to sleep, mom will read about a man that fixes cars. About the car mechanic. Because I have such a book and many stories in it. And I have one more, fat one, with even more stories in it.

One boy had somehow a different experience of reading. He said:

Przemek: Well, I like to read, because my mom is always by my side and she looks whether I read correctly. But sometimes my parents forget, so then I go to Play Station

I: And when they forget, do you ask them to read to you? Or do they propose you reading a book?

Przemek: Well, they do that rather than I.

I: In which language do they read to you?

Przemek: In Polish.

Przemek: Well, most about numbers and letters.

On the other hand, a couple of children gave reasons for disliking book reading.

Marek said: My parents don't read very often to me. Because my dad can't read in Icelandic, and I have a lot of Icelandic books. Because I don't have many Polish books, and those that I have, those are so boring.

I: Why do you think they are boring?

Marek: Well, because they are so old already.

Another boy, when asked about parents reading to him said: "I don't like when they read to me."

I: Why not?

Jacek: [silence]

I: And what do you like to do with your parents?

Jacek: Nothing. I just like to play outside.

Finally, Michał, when asked the same question said: "No, I just prefer to play a game."

I: A computer game?

Michał: Yes, GTA.

On the other hand a girl, who obviously enjoyed reading a lot, answered my question sadly:

Magda: My mom used to read to me, but she doesn't do it anymore.

I: And if you would ask her?

Magda: [Silence]

I: Do you sometimes ask her to read to you?

Magda: Nooooooooo.

I: But do you like when she read to you?

Magda: Yaaaah, a lot.



## **4.2 Other language interactions with parents**

### **4.2.1 Stories from Poland, culture and tradition sharing**

When asked about stories from Poland, Magda, participating in a group interview said: “My mother used to tell me stories when I was little, but I don’t remember much of them.”

Almost nobody reacted to her answer, but one boy, Krzysiek, was very excited and responded:

I like such stories a lot. My mom tells me, how this, how grandpa had tractors back then, and what kind of horses he had... Cause he had those horses and then he sold them. And then my sister wanted those horses so my grandpa bought two for us. Here, in Poland.

It was particularly intriguing to hear Krzysiek’s convincing statement: “Here, in Poland.” He was the only child who used these words together. I will discuss this further in the section 5.4 of the Discussion chapter.

Wojtek added then: They tell me such stories. They tell me that I was born in Poland, and things like that.

I: And do you like such stories?

Wojtek: “Yes, to hear that I was born in Poland, and how it was back then...”

Hania commented: “I have such book. And there are photos from when I was little. My mother told me how it was when I was little. And about my brother, when he was small.”

Only one child, Przemek, mentioned the history of Poland in his answer: “I have such a book, such an old one, where Polish kings are, and they want to kill one.”

While all children were rather positive or neutral about the idea of story-sharing, one boy, Marek, stated: “I don’t like to listen to such stories. I’m too old for that.”

Table 2 confirms that parents in general affirmed that they told their children stories from Poland, talked about Polish culture, and discussed their past.

**Table 2. Polish history and culture sharing.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>History and culture sharing</b>
Ewa (g)	often
Piotrek (b)	often
Przemek (b)	often
Agnieszka (g)	sometimes
Hania (g)	sometimes
Jacek (b)	sometimes
Joasia (g)	sometimes
Krzysiek (b)	sometimes
Magda (g)	sometimes
Tomek (b)	sometimes
Wojtek (b)	sometimes
Zosia (g)	sometimes
Artur (b)	seldom
Marek (b)	seldom
Michał (b)	seldom

Nine parents stated that they did that several times per month, while three said several times per week. The rest spent time sharing history and culture less than once a month.

Answers received from parents on culture sharing are particularly interesting when we link them with the interviews with children. As mentioned above, the majority of children were very positive about culture and history sharing, and enjoyed listening to stories from the family's past. Therefore, results from interviews and questionnaire show that keeping cultural and historical heritage is important both for Polish immigrants and their children. Such discussions, as argued in section 2.4.3, should occur naturally every day and should not be forgotten or underestimated for they help children in expressing themselves and enrich their vocabulary.

### **4.2.2 Questions about schools, friendship, feelings**

All of the children said that their parents were interested in how it went at school, whom they played with or how they felt. Usually such conversations took place when the parents were just back from work and they didn't last for a long time.

Agnieszka said: "My father, when he comes back from work, he asks me how it went at school, what did I eat."

Przemek mentioned: "My mother sometimes asks who my best friends are. And then I tell her who they are and what we do. And she sometimes lets me go to visit them, when I don't have to learn for school."

Ewa stated that she talks with her mother about her girlfriends. She added:

Ewa: Sometimes, when my friend is in my room my mother comes when we play and she asks us.

I: What does she ask you about?

Ewa: Just about what we are doing. And how it goes at school.

Table 3 shows similar results from the parents' questionnaire: parents participating in the study talked with their children in Polish about their experiences, friendships and feelings at least several times per week or daily.

**Table 3. Discussions about experiences, friendships and feelings.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Discussions</b>
Artur (b)	every day
Marek (b)	every day
Wojtek (b)	every day
Agnieszka (g)	often
Ewa (g)	often
Hania (g)	often
Jacek (b)	often
Joasia (g)	often
Krzysiek (b)	often
Magda (g)	often
Michał (b)	often
Piotrek (b)	often
Przemek (b)	often
Tomek (b)	often
Zosia (g)	often

This is in accordance with every interviewed child's experience. Such discussions, as argued in section 2.4.3, should occur naturally every day and should not be forgotten or underestimated for they help children in expressing themselves and enrich their vocabulary.

### **4.2.3 Singing and listening to music**

Generally the interviewed children weren't used to singing a lot with their parents. If they brought up singing as a shared activity, it was usually mothers who participated. Only Wojtek mentioned singing and commented that he had been singing a lot of carols with his parents last Christmas.

When I asked children in what language they sing, Zosia answered: "I sing with my mother. But my mother doesn't sing in Icelandic, because my mom doesn't really know Icelandic. But sometimes she sings in English."

Agnieszka: I listen to songs for adults. In English.

I: And do you sing them as well?

Agnieszka: Yes, sometimes.

I: And songs for children, in Polish too?

Agnieszka: No, not really. They are childish.

Magda mentioned with nostalgia: “I have such Polish songs, but I don’t remember them anymore, because my grandma always sang them to me, but she doesn’t live here.”

In Table 4 the music activities that parents share with children are exhibited.

**Table 4. Music activities that parents and children share.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Singing in Polish</b>	<b>Singing in Icelandic</b>	<b>Listening to Polish songs</b>
Krzysiek (b)	every day	sometimes	sometimes
Wojtek (b)	often	often	often
Hania (g)	sometimes	seldom	every day
Joasia (g)	sometimes	seldom	often
Ewa (g)	sometimes	never	often
Przemek (b)	sometimes	never	often
Zosia (g)	sometimes	never	often
Magda (g)	sometimes	never	sometimes
Agnieszka (g)	seldom	sometimes	never
Piotrek (b)	seldom	never	every day
Jacek (b)	never	never	often
Artur (b)	never	never	sometimes
Michał (b)	never	never	sometimes
Tomek (b)	never	never	sometimes
Marek (b)	never	never	seldom

Only Krzysiek's mother tends to sing with him in Polish every day. Other parents do it only sometimes (seven), while many (five) never sing with their children. Interestingly, but not surprisingly it is only boys that never get to sing with their parents.

On the other hand, Wojtek's mother was the only one who mentioned singing in Icelandic with him several times per week. That is interesting, but could be explained by the fact that she has been involved in the Icelandic school system and therefore must have had more contact with Icelandic music especially dedicated to children. Other parents usually did not practice it at all (ten), while the remaining four did it only from time to time.

#### **4.2.4 Watching educational TV together**

The literature names the use of video tapes, DVDs and television programmes as a "helpful supplement to a child's language diet". Even though while watching TV children are only passive receivers of the language, it might be a good tool to increase vocabulary.

However, parents seem to have limited control concerning children's programme choice. It's rather the child who "holds" the remote control. Secondly, very often TV channels in the mother tongue offer dubbed or translated programming from other countries. This doesn't help a child to get to know the culture of the home country. As Baker states, "The cultural elements in television broadcasts and videos are as important as the language content in conveying the status of a language community to the child" (Baker, 2000a, p. 56).

Finally, while TV "may help to a limited extent in extending the language versatility of the child, television is essentially a passive medium... The child is the recipient of the language rather than the producer of the language" (Baker, 2000a, p. 16).

Possessing decoders offering various Polish channels is particularly popular among the Polish community in Iceland. This often means reduced time for Icelandic television, which was noticeable in children's responses to my questions.

In general, children were very enthusiastic when I asked them about TV:

Piotrek: I love TV. When I just come home from school I run to the remote control and I choose cartoons.

I: And in which language do you watch TV?”

Piotrek: In Polish.

Basia said: “I like it a lot, because I have such, such Polsat [Polish channel]. And I watch cartoons. There is a cool cartoon, which teaches children. And it teaches children to cook, count...”

Agnieszka stated: I love to watch Hanna Montana.

I: But in Polish or Icelandic?

Agnieszka: In Polish. In Icelandic not, because I don’t really know it well yet.

When asked whether the children knew any Polish cartoons, only two boys responded. Wojtek said: “I love ‘Three little cats’ [a Disney’s cartoon], and ‘Reksio’ [a Polish cartoon].”

Artur said: ‘Bolek i Lolek’ [a Polish cartoon]: “I like DVDs with ‘Bolek i Lolek’. Because I have such DVDs.”

Other children couldn’t answer the question unless I named the titles. However, Marek said: “I don’t like Polish cartoons.” When asked why, he responded: “Because they are boring, really boring and not cool.”

Ewa said: “I don’t like them, because they are, they are so, so for babies only.”

Children were concerned a lot about the language on their TV:

Krzysiek said: I watch TV over 5 hours per day.

I: In what language?

Krzysiek: In Polish, because I have Polish TV... But once, once I wanted to switch the channel and something bad happened, and I pressed something wrong and the TV turned on, and it was all in Icelandic. And my father had to call the technician. And then it was again in Polish and it was fine.

Zosia, when asked whether she liked to watch cartoons in Icelandic answered:

Zosia: I don't like it at all.

I: Why not?

Zosia: Well, because there are many such words, such that I don't know, such blablebliblubla.

I: And have you been here for a long time?

Zosia: Yes, already for a few years. But every year I go to Poland for long holidays.

Artur, who previously mentioned that he enjoyed watching Polish DVDs, asked about watching TV said:

Artur: I have a Polish TV.

I: And do you have Icelandic one as well?

Artur: No, my father turned it off.

I: Why do you think he did it?

Artur: Because he doesn't like Icelandic.

Most of the parents, as presented in Table 5, watched TV together with their children from time to time.



**Table 5. Watching together educational TV in Polish.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Watching educational TV together</b>
Hania (g)	everyday
Agnieszka (g)	often
Ewa (g)	often
Joasia (g)	often
Magda (g)	often
Piotrek (b)	often
Krzysiek (b)	sometimes
Michał (b)	sometimes
Przemek (b)	sometimes
Tomek (b)	sometimes
Wojtek (b)	sometimes
Zosia (g)	sometimes
Artur (b)	seldom
Jacek (b)	seldom
Marek (b)	never

Interestingly, more frequent watching of educational programmes together was indicated in five out of six cases by girls' parents. That does not however mean that boys spent less time with their parents in front of TV, but rather, that their choices of TV programmes were different.

At the same time, particularly in this type of language interaction I noticed discrepancies between parents' and children's statements on the frequency of this activity. This may occur in any study that triangulates the research methods, but in this case it could have resulted from different understanding of the term "educational TV." That is why, in order to avoid any questionable conclusions, in the last two chapters of the paper I concentrated on other types of parent-child interactions investigated in the study.

### **4.3 Other issues that emerged during data collection**

During data collection for the paper other important issues emerged. Children often anticipated my questions and started discussions on various related topics, including as explained in section 4.3.1., their attitude towards Icelandic.

### 4.3.1 Parents' and children's attitude towards Icelandic

Zurer Pearson (2008) argues that children's attitude towards a foreign language, especially for children at the preschool or early elementary school may very often be a result of their parents', siblings' or closest community members' attitude, while in the case of teenagers it is often related to peers' attitude.

Grosjean (2010) has a similar opinion:

Children are extremely receptive to the attitudes of their parents, teachers, and peers... Clearly, negative attitudes about language and its culture and the lack of need for the language, at least when one is young, do not augur well for the child's acquisition of that language (Grosjean, 2010, p. 176).

Since children mentioned Icelandic many times during my interviews I asked each of them: "Do you like to speak Icelandic?"

Children in the group interview said loudly together: "Noooo."

Only Przemek said: "I like it. I like it in my school." Then Zosia, who first said 'No' added: "I like it. But I don't really like to talk. Because I can't do it well yet."

Children usually gave the possibility of communication with Icelandic friends as a reason for liking Icelandic. Joasia stated: "I like it when I talk to my girlfriends. So then I understand what they say to me. And they can understand what I say to them."

And Krzysiek said: "I've been here in Iceland already for three years!

I: And do you like speaking in Icelandic?

Krzysiek: Yes.

I: Why do you like it?

Krzysiek: I like to speak Icelandic, because after school I go to my friend, who lives very close to me. And he is Icelandic and he is in the same school."

I: And do you speak Icelandic with your parents?

Krzysiek: I don't speak, because my mom and dad don't understand it at all.

Ewa, when asked whether she speaks sometimes with her parents, said: “No, I don’t talk with them in Icelandic at all. Because they don’t understand it really. And I have family in Poland. And they only speak Polish, too.”

In continuation I asked her: “And do you like being here, in Iceland?”

Ewa: “Yyy, sometimes. But when I’m on holidays in Poland I like it there.”

The interesting point is that children very often referred in their answers to their parents’ knowledge and abilities in Icelandic. Usually children complained that their parents did not speak Icelandic, or not too well (see e.g. Ewa in section 4.1.2 and above), but Hania was very proud and said: “My mom goes to such a school, and she learns Icelandic there.”

Jacek mentioned during the interview: “Sometimes I teach my father Icelandic.”

Although I did not ask parents directly about their opinions on Icelandic, I could see from their answers in the questionnaires that they were not used to practicing it themselves or listening to the language in home situations.

As a reminder, Table 1 in section 4.1.1 indicated that eight parents never read in Icelandic, even though all children mentioned having some Icelandic books at home.

### **4.3.2 Parental evaluation of the child’s Polish and Icelandic**

Table 6 summarises parents’ opinions of their children’s achievement in Polish and Icelandic.

**Table 6. Parental evaluation of the child's Polish and Icelandic.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Polish of the child</b>	<b>Icelandic of the child</b>	<b>Achievement in Icelandic school</b>
Piotrek (b)	satisfactory	very good	excellent
Joasia (g)	very good	excellent	very good
Krzysiek (b)	good	very good	very good
Wojtek (b)	satisfactory	very good	very good
Zosia (g)	very good	good	very good
Agnieszka (g)	satisfactory	good	good
Artur (b)	good	good	good
Ewa (g)	satisfactory	good	good
Jacek (b)	very good	good	good
Magda (g)	good	very good	good
Marek (b)	satisfactory	excellent	good
Michał (b)	good	good	good
Przemek (b)	good	good	good
Tomek (b)	good	good	good
Hania (g)	good	satisfactory	satisfactory

It is thought-provoking that according to the majority of questioned parents their children's Polish is either worse or at a similar level as their Icelandic. Only in three cases (Hania, Jacek and Zosia) is their achievement in Polish is better than in Icelandic.

Then again, if we look at two boys who mentioned that they didn't share or like doing any language activities with their parents, we can see that their level of Polish is determined as satisfactory. However, they are excellent in Icelandic (Marek) and in the Icelandic school in general (Piotrek), according to their parents. That could be due to their rich peer relations.

It is interesting to look at Table 6 and consider children's achievement in Icelandic grammar school in terms of their gender. Parents of girls perceived their achievement in Icelandic grammar school usually as good (three cases). In two cases girls' achievement was very good, but in one case (Hania) satisfactory. On the other hand, parents of boys described the achievements as good (six cases), very good (two cases) and even excellent (one case). This will be further investigated in the 5th chapter.

### 4.3.3 Parents' background and family plans

Further, Table 7 presents parents' future plans, as well as their background, including socio-economic status in Iceland and their education. Five parents mentioned that they were planning to go back to Poland. Many of them said that it would happen in the next 4 or 5 years. Three parents said that they would stay in Iceland and one parent was unsure, but said that she and her family would rather stay in Iceland. Six parents weren't sure of their future at all.

**Table 7. Parents' background and family plans.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Future plans</b>	<b>SES in Iceland</b>	<b>Education</b>
Michał (b)	leave	below average	vocational
Hania (g)	leave in 4 years	good	university
Joasia (g)	leave in 5 years	good	secondary
Marek (b)	leave in 5 years	average	secondary
Piotrek (b)	leave, unsure when	average	vocational
Ewa (g)	not sure	average	vocational
Jacek (b)	not sure	average	secondary
Magda (g)	not sure	good	university
Tomek (b)	not sure	below average	vocational
Wojtek (b)	not sure	average	postsecondary
Zosia (g)	not sure	no data	no data
Agnieszka (g)	not sure, rather stay	average	postsecondary
Artur (b)	stay	good	secondary
Krzysiek (b)	stay	good	postsecondary
Przemek (b)	stay	average	vocational

Looking at the data in comparison with parents' socio-economic status in Iceland, only two parents named their SES as below average, while the rest of the parents stated that their SES in Iceland was average (7) or even good (5). One person couldn't or didn't want to answer the question. Still, many parents who are in a good socio-economic position are planning to go back to Poland, which may suggest that they are in Iceland to save some money before moving to Poland.

On the other hand, two parents whose situation is below average are either willing to leave Iceland or still uncertain about their future and probably looking forward to the changes in the Icelandic economy after the crisis of 2008.

When it comes to parents' education, most of them finished vocational schools (five parents) and secondary schools (four parents). Three parents have a postsecondary education, while two of them, a university degree. One parent did not state her level of education.

Generally, the data show that parents with a higher level of education (secondary/postsecondary or university level) are characterised by the better socio-economic status in Iceland, while both parents whose SES is below average have finished vocational schools.

#### 4.4 Children's grade in Icelandic grammar school

At this point it is interesting to look at Table 8, which presents children's grades from the last academic year, 2010.

**Table 8. Children's grades in Icelandic.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Grade in reading</b>	<b>Grade in writing</b>
Ewa (g)	very good	very good
Joasia (g)	very good	very good
Krzysiek (b)	very good	very good
Michał (b)	very good	very good
Wojtek (b)	very good	very good
Agnieszka (g)	good	good
Hania (g)	good	good
Jacek (b)	good	good
Magda (g)	good	good
Marek (b)	good	good
Tomek (b)	good	good
Piotrek (b)*	good	satisfactory
Przemek (b)	good	satisfactory
Zosia (g)	satisfactory	good
Artur (b)	satisfactory	satisfactory

\*Grade from winter semester 2010/2011

According to the data, five children obtained very good results both in reading and writing: Ewa, Joasia, Krzysiek, Michał and Wojtek. Six children: Agnieszka, Hania, Jacek, Magda, Marek and Tomek, received good marks both in reading and writing. Piotrek and Przemek were good in reading and satisfactory in writing, while Zosia was satisfactory in reading, but good in writing. Artur obtained satisfactory marks in both areas of literacy. In the researched group of Polish children there was no example of a child whose Icelandic was deficient, according to the grades from Icelandic grammar school. However, due to the small sample we cannot generalise these results to whole population of Polish migrant children in Iceland.

So far I have been discussing main results from the interviews, questionnaires and grades' collection, mostly separately. In the next chapter I will compare data from all types of data gathering and try to answer the research question of whether and how the home language environment, including parent reading to a child and other parent-child interactions influences Polish children's development and achievement in Icelandic grammar school.





## **5 Discussion**

The research question of this study was: “How does the quality of mother tongue input, including reading and other child-parent language interactions affect the child’s language development and achievement in school?” In this chapter, the answer to this question is discussed, and the crucial findings of the study are related to the theory and previous research presented in chapter 2.

In general, the interviews with children together with the questionnaires filled out by parents and data with school achievement brought together many interesting insights into how the home language environment of Polish children in Iceland and its impact varies, depending on parents’ and children’s attitude to the L1 and L2, parents’ education, family background, the amount of free time or plans for the future. However, I shall start with a shared characteristic that was observed in the study.

### **5.1 Importance of mother tongue and L1 to L2 knowledge transfer**

Although generally the literature says that parents tend to neglect the mother tongue because of the inferiority of the minority language in the new country (see. e.g. Baker, 2000a), in the case of Polish families in Reykjavik and the capital area of Iceland it was the opposite. This may be due to the fact that many of them were only temporary migrants to Iceland or uncertain about their future.

Both parents and children that participated in the study indicated that they had to or were willing to focus on Polish more, especially when it came to home language interactions. This is of course understandable and should not be called into question, since mother tongue is the best choice when communicating one’s experiences and feelings (see subsection 2.4.3.)

On the other hand, many parents did not see the Icelandic language as a new capability and an asset that would help them and their children in learning and understanding other languages and cultures in the future. Therefore, it was interesting to observe whether and to what extent parents’ attitude towards Icelandic may influence their children’s language development and academic progress. In the next subsections I

will encapsulate contrasting stories of two individuals and their parent-children interactions.

### **5.1.1 Artur's story**

Artur's history is particularly interesting. He is an example of a child whose parents never read to him (because, as he explained it: "My dad is almost never at home. He is at work all the time. And my mother she is so busy."

He was also one of the interviewed group who seldom heard stories about Poland and its culture and never participated in any music activities with his parents. He claimed as well that he did not watch Icelandic TV mainly because his father turned it off for "he doesn't like Icelandic."

Surprisingly, Artur, unlike other boys participating in the research, did not mention Icelandic as a great tool of communicating with his friends. Then, if we consider Artur's achievement in Icelandic, we clearly see that he was not doing as well as his peers (satisfactory grade in reading and writing, see also Table 9), even though his parent evaluated his knowledge in both languages as good.

Therefore, Artur's case suggests that infrequent language interactions with parents as well as their negative attitude towards the L2 may adversely impact a child's development and achievement at school.

### **5.1.2 Zosia's story**

Zosia is on the other hand an example of a child with a rich home language environment. However, even though Zosia's mother read to her every day in Icelandic and often in Polish, she did not receive good marks at school, just like Artur.

Her case is exceptionally intriguing, because as Zosia mentioned in section 4.2.3: "I sing with my mother. But my mother doesn't sing in Icelandic, because my mom doesn't really know Icelandic [...]". Hence, as the citation suggests, it might be that Zosia's mother, who read in Icelandic without the proper knowledge of the language (according to Zosia), actually may not have helped her daughter's Icelandic development.

Although some authors claim that in cases where parents are uncertain about their second language proficiency, it is best to use mother tongue in

parent-child interactions (see e.g. Baker 2000a; Baker, 2000b), the question of whether or not parents should use L2 in reading and other activities with children requires deeper research. Yet, in Zosia's case using L2 (with definitely good intentions of her mother) may have defeated its purpose.

### **5.1.3 L1 to L2 knowledge transfer**

As various authors suggest, in the case of studies of bilingualism one should take into account that acquisition of a second language might be facilitated by the knowledge that the child builds up in his/her mother tongue (see e.g. Cummins, 1991; Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004; Scheele, 2010).

Scheele (2010) writes that:

If indeed bilingual children can use the knowledge and skills acquired in L1 in learning L2, the expected negative effect of bilingualism, i.e. the language arrears that result from reduced language input per language, may be counteracted, at least partly, by a *positive* effect of bilingualism. (p. 73)

Yet, while some previous research in the field showed no indication of the transfer of language knowledge (see e.g. Kan & Kohnert, 2008; Ucelli & Páez, 2007), other studies (e.g. Verhoeven, 2007) demonstrated significantly positive relation between two languages.

The interesting fact is that studies that suggested no indications of such transfer referred to “either balanced bilingual or L2 dominant children, whereas the studies that did find cross-linguistic correlations included L1 dominant minority language children that acquired L2 as a second language” (Scheele, 2010, p. 100).

Indeed, as seen in Table 9 (see section 5.2) and in extracts from interviews, every child that received very good grades in Icelandic (Ewa, Joasia, Krzysiek, Wojtek, with exception of Michał) participated also frequently in reading activities, as well as in other parent-child interactions. Moreover, those were the children with positive attitudes and excitement towards such interactions.

However, since various studies presented contrasting findings on whether knowledge in L1 can be transferred to L2, this matter needs further investigation.

## 5.2 Position of Icelandic

### 5.2.1 Parents' attitude towards Icelandic

According to the data (see Table 9) it seems that parents' attitude towards Icelandic did not deter their children from achieving good results in that language. This might be because many parents, concentrating on activities in the Polish language, were, perhaps unintentionally, helping their children to develop language skills that transferred to Icelandic.

**Table 9. Parent-child reading activities and the level of language proficiency of a child.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Frequency of reading in Polish</b>	<b>Frequency of reading in Icelandic</b>	<b>Grade in reading in Icelandic</b>	<b>Grade in writing in Icelandic</b>
Ewa (g)	sometimes	sometimes	very good	very good
Joasia (g)	often	never	very good	very good
Krzysiek (b)	sometimes	often	very good	very good
Michał (b)	never	never	very good	very good
Wojtek (b)	often	sometimes	very good	very good
Agnieszka (g)	sometimes	sometimes	good	good
Hania (g)	often	seldom	good	good
Jacek (b)	sometimes	never	good	good
Magda (g)	sometimes	seldom	good	good
Marek (b)	seldom	never	good	good
Tomek (b)	seldom	never	good	good
Zosia (g)	often	every day	satisfactory	good
Piotrek (b)	seldom	never	good	satisfactory
Przemek (b)	sometimes	never	good	satisfactory
Artur (b)	seldom	never	satisfactory	satisfactory

However, three children who were never read to in Icelandic, and only seldom (Artur and Piotrek) or sometimes (Przemek) read in Polish, obtained the lowest grade of all participants.

Zurer Pearson (2008) wrote that:

When children feel that their language is special but not strange, their positive attitude encourages their use of the language, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the cycle. Conversely, if parents, siblings, or peers think, for example, that the people who speak the language are backward or stupid, or if others make jokes about it, their negative attitudes will subtract value, lead to reduced enthusiasm for using the language, attract less input, decrease proficiency, and so on. (p. 128)

What the author says above in regard to the mother tongue, applies in many cases to Polish children's ideas about Icelandic. In the next subsection I shall have a look at Krzysiek's history.

### **5.2.2 Krzysiek's story**

Due to the fact that some parents of the interviewed children thought of Icelandic as a strange language, if not an "intruder" in their homes (see e.g. discussion with Krzysiek on problems with television in section 4.3.1.), children were not very encouraged to listen to or use this language at home.

From Krzysiek's responses I could clearly see that he demarcated the areas where Icelandic was welcomed and not. Interactions with parents were situations where Icelandic was an infrequent guest, while schooling and meeting with peers were contexts where Icelandic use was acceptable and enjoyable, mainly because only in this way could Krzysiek communicate and understand his friends.

Nevertheless, I noticed that Krzysiek was especially confused about where he belonged, e.g. while he was telling me one of his family stories back in Poland and added several times "Here, in Poland." For that reason I would expect him to have mixed feelings about the context that he was in and to encounter problems with acquiring new language. Surprisingly, his attitude toward Icelandic was positive, and his results in

Icelandic, among the best ones in the group. He was reconciled with the situation that his parents did not know Icelandic, but at the same time he saw this language as an opportunity for himself.

### **5.2.3 Children's perceptions of Icelandic**

Definitely, as Zurer Pearson (2008) argues: 'The majority language has especially high instrumental value for the child.[...] It is their social lifeline; it is their link to their peer group and to the popular culture that helps them fit in with this peer group' (p. 129). Indeed, this was the case of the Polish children, and I could assume that it would become even more visible in a study with teenage bilinguals.

Furthermore, many children, with Piotrek as an example, felt that they had gained a new role together with the development of their Icelandic. They became teachers and assistants of their own parents in various contexts, including school settings. Even though Piotrek (who just entered the Icelandic school system last term) was still not doing very well in Icelandic, he could be on his way to doing so because "The language self-esteem of children can be raised by admiring and not just observing their skills in two languages. [...] A positive attitude to bilingualism is a long-term preserver of bilingualism in a child" (Baker, 2000a, p. 49).

### **5.2.4 A need for L2 use in home language environment?**

The study by Scheele (2010), as well as previous research (e.g. August, Snow, Carlo, Proctor, Rolla de San Francisco, Duursma, 2006; Duursma, Romero-Contreras, Szuber, Proctor, & Snow, 2007) showed that "parental use of L2 during literate interactions is not crucial to children's academic language achievement in L2, whereas L1 use is crucial to L1 academic language development" (Scheele, 2010, pp. 120-121).

The present study revealed a similar pattern – parental reading in Icelandic did not foster Polish migrant children's development in Icelandic. Table 9 shows that Zosia (her case was discussed in section 5.1.2.), whose mother read to her in Icelandic every day, received only a 'good' grade at school. The same applied to Agnieszka who was read to in Icelandic from time to time.

On the other hand, as mentioned in section 5.1.2, parents' enriched mother tongue input indeed seemed to contribute not only to their children's L1, but also to their L2 development.

### **5.3 Implications of family's future plans and SES on children's achievement in school**

In order to see whether there is any relation between Polish migrant parents' socio-economic status and plans for the future and their bilingual children's achievement in Icelandic school I will illustrate the case of Marek.

#### **5.3.1 Marek's story**

Marek's family, like five other participating families, is planning to leave Iceland in 5 years. At the same time, the level of his Icelandic is considered to be good, while that of his Polish, only satisfactory.

Remarkably, Marek is the one who loves to spend time outside with his (Icelandic) friends and seems not to be much attached to Polish language and culture.

When I asked him during the interview whether he likes to listen to stories from his homeland he said: "I don't like to listen to such [Polish] stories. I'm too old for that." He continued: "My parents don't read very often to me. [...] Because I don't have many Polish books, and those that I have, those are so boring." Finally, he commented on watching TV with the words: "I don't like Polish cartoons." When asked why, he responded: "Because they are boring, really boring and not cool."

Indeed, Marek's mother, despite being sure about returning to Poland, did not try to change her son's attitude towards Polish and the culture, as she claimed that they never listened or sang together, nor watched educational programmes in TV. Therefore, a question arises: How will Marek find himself in Polish reality in five years from now?

#### **5.3.2 Future plans of the family vs. children's experiences and achievement**

Interviews demonstrated that children, unlike their parents, often did not consider themselves as temporary migrants. Although the majority of questioned parents were uncertain about their future or wanted to leave

Iceland in a few years, the children in general were satisfied with living in Iceland. When they mentioned Poland, they talked about it in the past tense, or considered it as a place of summer holidays.

When we look at parents' future plans in relation to their children's achievement (see Table 10) there is no evidence of influence of one variable on the other.

**Table 10. Parents' future plans and children's achievement.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Future plans</b>	<b>Polish of the child</b>	<b>Icelandic/ Reading</b>	<b>Icelandic/ Writing</b>
Michał (b)	leave	good	very good	very good
Hania (g)	leave in 4 years	good	good	good
Marek (b)	leave in 5 years	satisfactory	good	good
Joasia (g)	leave in 5 years	very good	very good	very good
Piotrek (b)	leave, unsure when	satisfactory	good	satisfactory
Jacek (b)	not sure	very good	good	good
Magda (g)	not sure	good	good	good
Tomek (b)	not sure	good	good	good
Zosia (g)	not sure	very good	satisfactory	good
Ewa (g)	not sure	satisfactory	very good	very good
Wojtek (b)	not sure	satisfactory	very good	very good
Agnieszka (g)	not sure, rather stay	satisfactory	good	good
Przemek (b)	stay	good	good	satisfactory
Artur (b)	stay	good	satisfactory	satisfactory
Krzysiek (b)	stay	good	very good	very good

On the other hand, children of all three families that are determined to stay in Iceland are doing well in Polish, but their level of Icelandic varies from satisfactory (Artur), through satisfactory/good (Przemek) to very good (Krzysiek).



It would be fascinating to see how children who are doing very well in Icelandic and who will probably move back to Poland in a few years (including Joasia and Michał) will maintain their knowledge in Icelandic and transfer it to other language learning.

However, it is not only parent's future plans, but also their level of education and SES that is said to affect children's achievement at school. Below is the story of Hania.

### **5.3.3 Hania's story**

Hania's mother, who possesses a university degree and whose socio-economic situation in Iceland is good, considered her daughter's achievements in Icelandic school, including the Icelandic language, only as satisfactory, even though Hania was doing relatively well

As mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, Hania's mother is also the one who goes to school and learns Icelandic. Therefore, her expectations towards her daughter's language achievements might be more accurate.

It is interesting to look once again at Table 6 where gender differences were discussed. Although there has been not much research in parental expectations towards bilingual children's language development (see. e.g. Philips, 1992) the results of the questionnaire square with the findings of various studies, which show that usually more requirements in language acquisition are given to girls.

Indeed, according to the interviews with children, parents tended to spend more time on reading books to girls (including Hania). On the other hand, parents' opinions on school achievement and level of Polish and Icelandic language of girls were often worse than for the boys.

Baker (2010a) argues that:

Many parents expect girls to become fluent readers earlier than boys. The gender difference may be due to the type of language interaction that occurs between parent and girls and boys, gender stereotypes, and the expectations and behaviours of teachers. (p. 51)

### 5.3.4 Parents' education and children's perceived and real achievement

If we compare parents' education with their expectations towards children (Table 11) we can see that parents with a higher education had higher expectations towards their children's achievement and therefore considered their results, especially in Polish learning, lower than other parents.

**Table 11. Parents' education and children's achievement.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Parents' education</b>	<b>Polish of the child</b>	<b>Achievement in Icelandic school</b>	<b>Icelandic of the child</b>
Hania (g)	university	good	satisfactory	satisfactory
Magda (g)	university	good	good	very good
Agnieszka (g)	postsecondary	satisfactory	good	good
Krzysiek (b)	postsecondary	good	very good	very good
Wojtek (b)	postsecondary	satisfactory	very good	very good
Artur (b)	secondary	good	good	good
Jacek (b)	secondary	very good	good	good
Joasia (g)	secondary	very good	very good	excellent
Marek (b)	secondary	satisfactory	good	excellent
Michał (b)	vocational	good	good	good
Piotrek (b)	vocational	satisfactory	excellent	very good
Przemek (b)	vocational	good	good	good
Tomek (b)	vocational	good	good	good
Ewa (g)	vocational	satisfactory	good	good
Zosia (g)	nd	very good	very good	good

As a continuation, it is interesting to look at Table 12, where we can observe that in five cases parents actually overestimated their children's achievement in Icelandic.

**Table 12. Children's grades versus parents' opinions.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Grade in reading</b>	<b>Reading in Polish</b>	<b>Reading in Icelandic</b>	<b>Icelandic of my child</b>
Joasia (g)	very good	often	never	excellent
Krzysiek (b)	very good	sometimes	often	very good
Wojtek (b)	very good	often	sometimes	very good
Ewa (g)	very good	sometimes	sometimes	good
Michał (b)	very good	never	never	good
Marek (b)	good	seldom	never	excellent
Magda (g)	good	sometimes	seldom	very good
Piotrek (b)	good	seldom	never	very good
Agnieszka (g)	good	sometimes	sometimes	good
Jacek (b)	good	sometimes	never	good
Przemek (b)	good	sometimes	never	good
Tomek (b)	good	seldom	never	good
Hania (g)	good	often	seldom	satisfactory
Artur (b)	satisfactory	seldom	never	good
Zosia (g)	satisfactory	often	everyday	good

Skutnabb and Toukomaa (1976) reached the same conclusion. Based on their study of Finnish children in Sweden, they wrote that: "it is evident that parents overestimate their children's language skills." In their sample, parents' estimations of children's skills were in general (much) better than was actually the case. That happened because, as the authors suggested, often parents' knowledge of Swedish was not too good: "The less they know Swedish, the more they overestimate it. Children and young people, in turn, are quite likely to consider their language skills fluent if they have no trouble speaking everyday language" (p. 56).

Table 12 shows indeed that the parents of Joasia and Marek, who never read to them in Icelandic (probably because their capabilities or/and confidence in the language were not good enough) thought of their children's knowledge in L2 as excellent, while in reality it was very good in the first case, and good in the latter.

### **5.3.5 Role of SES of parents in bilingual children's L2 development**

Scheele (2010) suggests that:

Being a minority language in a country where acquisition of the dominant language is highly emphasised and stimulated, L1 has a relatively lower status than L2. Most probably, higher educated parents with higher status jobs face higher demands regarding acquisition of the dominant language and have more opportunities to acquire L2 via courses or contacts with colleagues, and, consequently, provide more L2 input to their children. Following the competition hypothesis, a higher level of input of L2 will be at the expense of L1 input. (pp. 88-89)

However, this pattern was not visible in my research, mainly due to the fact that many Polish parents with higher education were not planning to stay in Iceland (see also Table 7). Moreover, although not investigated in this study, for an immigrant the fact of having a higher education does not imply having a higher status job in Iceland or conversely, when having an academic education, e.g. in medicine, engineering or IT and a position in the field, knowledge of Icelandic is not required.

Table 13 indicates how the SES of fifteen questioned parents related with their children's achievement in Icelandic grammar school.

**Table 13. SES of Polish parents in Iceland and children's achievement in Icelandic.**

<b>Child</b>	<b>SES in Iceland</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Grade in reading</b>	<b>Grade in writing</b>
Hania (g)	good	university	good	good
Magda (g)	good	university	good	good
Krzysiek (b)	good	postsecondary	very good	very good
Joasia (g)	good	secondary	very good	very good
Artur (b)	good	secondary	satisfactory	satisfactory
Wojtek (b)	average	postsecondary	very good	very good
Agnieszka (g)	average	postsecondary	good	good
Jacek (b)	average	secondary	good	good
Marek (b)	average	secondary	good	good
Ewa (g)	average	vocational	very good	very good
Piotrek (b)	average	vocational	good	satisfactory
Przemek (b)	average	vocational	good	satisfactory
Michał (b)	below average	vocational	very good	very good
Tomek (b)	below average	vocational	good	good
Zosia (g)	nd	nd	satisfactory	good

As visible in Table 13, Hania and Magda, whose parents possessed a university degree and whose socio-economic situation in Iceland was relatively good, did not seem to be doing any better at school than the other children. These observations contrast with the results obtained by Hart and Risley (1995), who related higher SES of the parents with a larger amount and better quality of language input to children, and consequently with better children's achievements in language acquisition.

This chapter attempted to systematise the findings from the study and relate them with the literature in order to answer the research question. Finally, in the last chapter the main conclusions from the study are drawn, followed by recommendations for further research



## 6 Conclusions

My study assessed the language environment of fifteen Polish immigrant children in Reykjavik and the capital area of Iceland to help explain their achievements and progress in Icelandic grammar school.

Results indicated that generally Polish played a much more important role than Icelandic in parent-child home language interactions. However, it seemed that parents' attitude towards Icelandic did not deter their children from achieving good results in that language (with the exceptions of Zosia and Artur, as described in section 5.1.), because parents, concentrating on activities in the Polish language, were unintentionally helping their children to develop language skills that transferred to Icelandic.

Moreover, children who mentioned peer interactions as important part of their leisure time obtained good grades at school as well, despite their rather "weak" home language environment (see. e.g. the story of Marek).

Skutnabb and Toukomaa (1976) wrote that "the children's poor skill in the mother tongue prevents them from developing a strong and balanced national and cultural identity, which leads to psychological, educational and social problems as well as forced cultural assimilation" (pp. 84-85). This, although not proved in the study, could be further investigated, e.g. in case of Marek, in a longitudinal study.

This study showed that although all fifteen parents practised reading and other language interactions in Polish rather than in Icelandic, some children were yet performing better in their Icelandic than in Polish. This may be explained by previous studies (Goldberg, Paradis, & Crago, 2008; Páez, Tabors, & López, 2007; Uccelli & Páez, 2007; Uchikoshi, 2006), which suggest that bilingual children's "First language (L1) develops at a slower rate than their second (L2) language [...] at least from about 3 to about 7 years of age, a period in which most children enter kindergarten and primary school and experience increased L2 and reduced L1" (as cited in Scheele, 2010, p. 71).

On the other hand:

The children's poor skill in the foreign [majority] language prevents them from getting a good education and advancing in working life, and from taking part in the social, economic

and political life of the society on a broad front on equal terms with natives, i.e. it prevents structural incorporation. (Skutnabb & Toukomaa, 1976, p. 85)

Indeed, several children's achievement in Icelandic was less than "good." Hypothetically, if Przemek and Artur, who obtained only "satisfactory" grades, stayed in Iceland, they would need to improve their competences in the language. As Baker (2000a) argues:

To deprive someone of the majority language competence is to deprive them of chance of success in later life. However, ensuring a high degree of competence in the majority language need not be at the cost of minority language skills. Bilingualism is usually a case of addition and not subtraction, multiplication and not division. (p. 44)

In my study I did not want to compare native Icelandic children with Polish migrant children, as often happens in assessment tests. In this way successive bilingual Polish children would probably score worse than the Icelandic peers, or be considered as "incompetent speakers in each of the languages" (Jessner, 2008, p. 15), for such tests tend to "suggest 'disabilities' and 'deficits' or lack of second language proficiency, thus legitimizing the disabling of language minority students, stigmatizing them for apparent weaknesses in the majority language, with monolingual scores used as points of comparison" (Baker, 2000b, p. 130).

What I wanted to concentrate on was the home language environment of each child that I interviewed to see whether and how it affected his/her development, without making generalisation or direct comparisons with native Icelanders.

However, although reluctant in the beginning, I decided to use the children's grades in Icelandic, since it was the only available achievement measure offered for children of the age of 7 and 8, at the time when this study was conducted. Thus, I believe that there is a need to create an instrument to measure bilingual children's language development without negative comparison to native speakers of the language.

The study suffered from several limitations. First, the measures of type and frequency of language input were based on parents' self-reports, which may have been biased, e.g. if parents gave socially desirable



answers. Moreover, the data from the questionnaire did not allow me to draw firm conclusions about the actual quality of the each parent-child language interaction. Thirdly, the present study was of a cross-sectional design and therefore it could not provide an insight into children's dual language development and changes in time. Finally, the research covered only a group of fifteen Polish children residing in Reykjavik and capital area of Iceland.

Further research with the use of a longitudinal design is needed to follow Polish children over a longer period of time in order to describe and examine the possible changes. In the case of children who will move back to Poland, it would be interesting to investigate whether and how they maintain their Icelandic and whether their knowledge is useful in other language acquisition.

Moreover, future studies could examine whether the home language environments of other communities in Iceland can be characterised by similar patterns as indicated in the present paper. This would include Polish migrant children living in other, also more remote areas of Iceland.

Finally, there is a need for research on other types of interactions and language input, e.g. provided by siblings, peers or/and teachers, which should be investigated, since previous studies have indicated that they play an important role in language acquisition as well (see e.g. Duursma, Pan, & Raikes, 2008; Obied, 2009).

Despite the aforementioned limitations, I believe that the present study offered an insight into how home language environment of Polish migrant children in Iceland influences their achievements and attitudes, and what improvements could help in motivating children to dual language learning and higher academic achievement. After all:

Becoming bilingual and bicultural should be a joyful journey into languages and cultures. When children undertake it, it is important that they be accompanied, if at all possible by caring and informed adults who will ease their passage from one state to the next, and with whom they can talk about what they are experiencing. (Grosjean, 2010, p. 217)

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## Attachments

### Attachment 1. Sample questions (in Polish).

Przykładowe pytania:

1. Ile masz lat?
2. Jak długo już jesteś na Islandii?
3. Czy masz rodzeństwo?
4. Jak często rodzice czytają Ci do snu?
5. Kto Ci czyta książki?
6. W jakim języku są te książki?
7. Jak często rodzice opowiadają Ci historie, bajki czy dzieje Polski?
8. Czy znasz jakieś polskie tradycje, np. Lany Poniedziałek, Andrzejki?
9. Jak często rodzice rozmawiają z Tobą o Twoich doświadczeniach, np. o tym, z kim się bawiłeś?
10. Jak często śpiewasz z rodzicami?
11. W jakim języku lubisz śpiewać?
12. Czy słuchasz czasem muzyki z rodzicami?
13. W jakim języku?
14. Jak często oglądasz programy telewizyjne?
15. W jakim języku oglądasz telewizję?
16. Czy lubisz język islandzki?
17. Czy lubisz język polski?
18. Czy Twoi rodzice lubią język islandzki?
19. Czy podoba Ci się na Islandii?
20. Czy często jeździsz do Polski?

## Attachment 2. Parents' questionnaire (in Polish).

Szanowni Państwo,

Zwracam się do Państwa z prośbą o wypełnienie krótkiej ankiety, która jest anonimowa i ma na celu uzyskanie jeszcze lepszej informacji na temat środowiska językowego Państwa dziecka/dzieci.

Proszę zaznaczyć krzyżykiem właściwą odpowiedź.

	Nigdy	Rzadko*	Czasem**	Często***	Codziennie
1. Jak często czytasz swojemu dziecku książkę w języku polskim?					
2. Jak często czytasz swojemu dziecku książkę w języku islandzkim?					
3. Jak często opowiadasz dziecku historie, bajki lub dzieje Polski?					
4. Jak często rozmawiasz z dzieckiem o jego doświadczeniach?					
5. Jak często śpiewasz z dzieckiem w języku polskim?					
6. Jak często śpiewasz z dzieckiem w języku islandzkim?					
7. Jak często słuchasz z dzieckiem polskiej muzyki?					
8. Jak często towarzyszysz dziecku w oglądaniu programów edukacyjnych?					

Objaśnienia:

\* Rzadko – mniej niż 1 raz w miesiącu

\*\* Czasem – kilka razy w miesiącu

\*\*\* Często – kilka razy w tygodniu

	Niezadowolający/e	Dostatecznie dobry/e	Dobry/e	Bardzo dobry/e	Zachwycający/e
Wyniki mojego dziecka w Szkole Polskiej na Islandii* uważam za:					
Wyniki mojego dziecka w szkole islandzkiej uważam za:					
Poziom języka polskiego mojego dziecka uważam za:					
Poziom języka islandzkiego mojego dziecka uważam za:					

\*Pominąć, jeśli nie dotyczy

Byłabym również wdzięczna za wypełnienie poniższych pól:

Ankieta wypełni(ta/ł/i)		Mama	Tata	Oboje rodziców/opiekunów
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**Mama:**

Wykształcenie	Podstawowe	Zawodowe	Średnie	Średnie pomaturalne	Wyższe
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Zawód wykonywany w Polsce: .....

Zawód wykonywany na Islandii: .....

Mój status społeczno-ekonomiczny na Islandii oceniam na:	Zły	Przeciętny	Dobry	Bardzo dobry
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**Tata:**

Wykształcenie	Podstawowe	Zawodowe	Średnie	Średnie pomaturalne	Wyższe
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Zawód wykonywany w Polsce: .....

Zawód wykonywany na Islandii: .....

Mój status społeczno-ekonomiczny na Islandii oceniam na:	Zły	Przeciętny	Dobry	Bardzo dobry
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W przyszłości zamierzam: pozostać na Islandii .....

Wrócić do Polski (określić kiedy, jeśli możliwe): .....

Uprzejmie dziękuję za wypełnienie ankiety. W razie dodatkowych pytań bądź wątpliwości proszę o kontakt pod nr telefonu 8679789 bądź na adres elektroniczny [akw1@hi.is](mailto:akw1@hi.is)

### **Attachment 3. Letter to parents (in Polish).**

#### ***BADANIE ŚRODOWISKA JĘZYKOWEGO POLSKICH DZIECI NA ISLANDII***

*Nazywam się Anna Woźniczka i jestem studentką ostatniego roku Edukacji Międzynarodowej i Rozwoju Społecznego na Uniwersytecie Islandzkim.*

*Zwracam się do Państwa z prośbą o udział Państwa dziecka w badaniach potrzebnych do mojej pracy magisterskiej, dotyczącej środowiska językowego dzieci polskojęzycznych na Islandii i znaczenia nauki języka ojczystego w rozwoju dziecka. Zamierzam objąć badaniami dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym/ wczesnoszkolnym (1-5 klasa szkoły podstawowej), których rodzice planują pozostać na Islandii przez dłuższy okres/ na stałe.*

*Badania są w pełni anonimowe i będą polegały na przeprowadzeniu krótkiej, ok. 30-minutowej rozmowy z dzieckiem. Pytania będą miały charakter otwarty, np. „Jakie polskie bajki lubisz?”. Rozmowa będzie nagrywana, po czym po transkrypcji zostanie skasowana. Wszelkie dane, mogące pomóc w identyfikacji dziecka, jak i jego rodziny, zostaną zmienione.*

*Rozmowy planowane są od grudnia 2010 do marca 2011 w dni robocze po godz. 16, a w dni wolne o dowolnej porze i mogą się odbyć:*

- a) Na terenie Wydziału Edukacji Uniwersytetu Islandzkiego (Háskóli Íslands - Menntavísindasvið, Stakkahlið, 105 Reykjavík)*
- b) W innym, dogodnym dla Państwa, miejscu (np. miejsce zamieszkania lub szkoła/przedszkole dziecka, po uprzedniej zgodzie placówki)*

*Przystępując do badania, wyrażacie Państwo świadomą zgodę na uczestnictwo dziecka w badaniach. Aby zachować zasadę anonimowości nie wymagam Państwa pisemnej zgody, a zgodę ustną traktuję jako wiążącą. W każdym momencie badania mają Państwo prawo zrezygnować z udziału dziecka w badaniach, bez uprzedniego podania przyczyny.*

*Jeśli macie Państwo jakiegokolwiek pytania bądź są zainteresowani udziałem dziecka w badaniach, proszę o kontakt mailowy na adres: [akw1@hi.is](mailto:akw1@hi.is) bądź telefoniczny - 8679789.*

*Dziękuję za współpracę,*

*Anna Woźniczka*