



Where parental perspective, practice, and reasoning meet

The relevance of home language development
for parents with bilingual preschool-aged
children in Iceland

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*The relevance of home language development for parents
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M.Ed. Thesis in Teaching Studies (Language and Literacy)

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Preface

This thesis is the equivalent of 30 ECTS and is the conclusion of my M. Ed. Studies in the School of Education at the University of Iceland. My faculty advisors were Hrafnhildur Ragnarsdóttir, Ph. D., Professor in Developmental Psychology and Samúel Lefever, Associate Professor in Foreign Language Teaching. The specialist was Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, Ph.D., Associate Professor in Multicultural Studies. In the spirit of the subject matter of this paper, I have chosen to write in my mother tongue of English.

The focus of this study was to elaborate on the perspectives held by parents about home language development, the use of home language, and second language development in Icelandic. Forty three parents with children enrolled in an Icelandic preschool participated in this study by answering a questionnaire. Six of those participants additionally sat for follow up interviews.

The significance of language development and more importantly bilingual language studies is, for me, both personal and professional. I moved to Iceland twelve years ago and in order to learn Icelandic, I took a position working in a preschool. I learned to speak Icelandic alongside young children, and while doing so developed a passion for teaching. I enrolled in the University of Iceland in order to become an early childhood educator. In the twelve years I have both studied and worked in preschools here in Iceland, my interest has always gravitated towards bilingual children and multicultural issues. In my current position as Director of a preschool in Reykjavík, I am so honored as to work with over 80% bilingual children and their parents in my school. On a personal level I am married to an Icelander and we live in a mixed language environment, where we work together to insure that our two children develop language skills in both English and Icelandic.

With this paper I intend to give educators, students, parents, and anyone who might have an interest, insight into the phenomenon of bilingual language development from a parental perspective. Multiculturalism and more specifically, bilingualism are complex subjects with diverse factors which are not always easily explained. My sincere intention is that through this research, people will develop a better understanding for the complex situation parents find themselves in when raising bilingual children.

I would like to expressly thank my faculty advisors, Hrafnhildur Ragnarsdóttir and Samúel Lefever, and Hanna Ragnarsdóttir for their patience, guidance, support, encouragement and for the wealth of experience and knowledge they bestowed upon me. Without hesitation, I would like to express my utter and absolute gratitude to the parents who participated in this study, the respect I have for you and the information you shared with me is immeasurable. I would like to also thank Reykjavik Department of Education for allowing me to conduct this study. In closing I would like to thank my family, friends, co-workers, and fellow scholars for the support and encouragement you have all shown me throughout this journey.

Abstract

It is said that children who learn more than one language develop strong cognitive skills and diverse communication skills but often times take longer to learn those languages, and sometimes do not learn either language as well as monolingual language learners. Parents raising bilingual children don't necessarily calculate the advantages and disadvantages of their children learning more than one language. They are most often simply faced with making a decision based on the circumstances of their lives. The perspectives that parents hold regarding home language development most often affect how they behave in relation to home language development. If parents have a positive perspective about home language they will most likely be motivated to teach their children their home language. Preschool-aged children are in the throngs of language acquisition, making it all the more important for parents who speak a minority home language to make informed and conscious decisions about home language development.

This is a mixed method study where 43 participants took a quantitative survey with questions pertaining to perspective, language use, home language environment, and reasoning for home language development. Six participants also sat for qualitative interviews. In this study the researcher set out to learn what perspectives parents held about home and bilingual language development, how they practiced language development in the home environment, and what reasons parents had for home and bilingual language development. Results indicated that parents had overwhelmingly positive perspectives about both home language and Icelandic development, that parents used socializing and communication both as method and motivator for language development, parents made conscious decisions as to why and how the home language was used, and travel to the home country was important to parents as it linked home language development with cultural and personal identity.

Ágrip

Því hefur verið haldið fram að börn sem læra fleiri en eitt tungumál öðlist sterka vitsmunalega færni og fjölbreytta samskiptahæfni, oftast tekur það þau lengri tíma að ná tökum á báðum tungumálum heldur en eintyngd börn og stundum ná þau ekki fullu valdi á hvorugu tungumálinu fyrir sig. Foreldrar sem eru að ala upp tvítyngd börn eru ekki endilega að velta fyrir sér þeim kostum og göllum sem fylgja tvítyngi. Þeir eru eingöngu að taka ákvarðanir út frá þeim aðstæðum sem þeir búa við. Viðhorf þeirra til móðurmálsþroska hefur oftast áhrif á hegðun og málnotkun þeirra. Ef foreldrar hafa jákvætt viðhorf til móðurmálsþróunar eru þau líklegri til þess að vilja að börn sín læri móðurmálið. Leikskólabörn eru á mesta næmiskeiði þegar kemur að máltöku, sem þýðir að foreldrar með annað mál en íslensku þurfa að taka ákvörðun um það hvort þau ætli að kenna börnum sínum móðurmálið eða ekki.

Í þessari rannsókn voru 43 þátttakendur sem svöruðu meginlegri spurningakönnun um viðhorf til móðurmáls, málnotkunar, tungumálaumhverfis á heimlinu og ástæðu eða kveikju þess að kenna börnum móðurmálið. Síðan voru tekin eigindleg viðtöl við sex þátttakendur. Í þessari rannsókn var leitað eftir upplýsingum sem tengdust viðhorfi foreldra til móðurmálsins, hvernig foreldrar nota tungumálið innan heimilisins og hvaða ástæður foreldrar hefðu fyrir málnotkun. Niðurstöður sýndu fram á að foreldrar höfðu mjög jákvæð viðhorf gagnvart báðum tungumálunum, móðurmálinu og íslensku sem annað mál, að foreldrar beita samskiptum til móðurmálskennslu og sem ástæðu fyrir náminu. Einnig kom í ljós að foreldrar voru meðvitaðir um hvers vegna og hvernig þau vildu nota móðurmálið og að ferðalög til heimalandsins væru mjög mikilvæg vegna þess að móðurmálið tengdist menningu og sjálfsmynd barnanna.

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1 Introduction

Around half of the world's population is estimated to be bilingual; this means that the ability to learn more than one language is not beyond our capability. This is positive news for people who immigrate to Iceland where Icelandic is the national language. People who immigrate to Iceland are faced with the probability that in order to partake in Icelandic society, they will have to learn to understand and speak Icelandic. If an immigrant person wishes to apply for permanent residence in Iceland they are required by law to provide documentation showing that they have taken 150 hours of Icelandic language courses or pass a proficiency test in Icelandic (Útlendingastofnun, 2012). The number of people who have immigrated to Iceland has more than tripled within the past decade. In the year 2000 there were 8,903 people listed as immigrants and in the year 2012 there were 28,318 (Statistics Iceland, 2012). One reason for the large increase in these numbers is that people who immigrated to Iceland a decade ago now have children here. Many of these immigrants speak their native language or home language with their children. In this study the term home language will be used to refer to the languages most frequently used in the home, either a minority language or language other than Icelandic.

Children born to immigrants are not necessarily presented with a choice as to whether they would like learn more than one language. This is less a choice and more a circumstance of their reality. Most often parents choose to speak in their mother tongue at home and when their children begin to interact in society they are introduced to the majority language of that society. One of the most important aspects of home language development in preschool-aged children is the amount of exposure to the home language they experience in the home environment.

Pearson (2007) describes five key factors which often determine whether or not children become bilingual: "input, language status, access to literacy, family language use, and community support" (Pearson, 2007, p. 400). She goes even further to state that the age of acquisition affects how proficient children become and that attitudes, values and social situations affect greatly the amount of input which children receive in their home language. Language development is the same developmental process for

young children learning two languages as for learning one. Even though children are said to be quicker to learn multiple languages than adults, it often takes longer for children learning two languages to learn both. Regardless of the amount of time it takes to learn both languages, children learning two languages develop the same cognitive and linguistic skills as children learning one language (Bialystok, 2001; Pearson, 2008; Þórðardóttir, 2007). “For the most part, the cognitive and linguistic differences between bilingual and monolingual children who are otherwise similar turn out to be small. Some may even consider that the differences that have been established are arcane and trivial” (Bialystok, 2007, p. 248).

Language development is a natural phenomenon which begins between parent and child before birth. With each spoken word, parents facilitate the process of language acquisition. Neuman & Dickinson (2002) determined that connections between parents’ literacy practices and engagement in nurturing linguistic interactions with children in the home environment were directly linked to the development of linguistic skills. It is therefore important for parents to provide meaningful parent-child communication and experience with activities which encourage language development (Zajicek-Farber, 2010). The relevance of these statements is even greater when parents speak a different home language than the majority language spoken where they reside, as their children are presented with fewer opportunities to encounter that language. Children who do not learn to speak their home language may lag in communication and socializing skills (Wong Fillmore, 2000), meaning that parents must facilitate these skills.

Iceland has a relatively short history when it comes to immigration. From 1961 until 1997 immigrants residing here counted for less than 2% of the total population of Iceland (Statistics Iceland, 2012). In 1994 Iceland became a member of the European Economic Area (EEA). Upon entering the EEA Iceland adopted new legislation regarding immigration, which made it simpler for citizens of EEA member countries to immigrate to Iceland (Þorarinisdóttir, Georgsdóttir, & Hafsteinsdóttir, 2009). As a result, by 2012 the immigrant population in Iceland had risen to 9% of the total population (Statistics Iceland, 2012). Over a 16 year period the immigrant population in Iceland rose more than 7%. Within that context one must ponder as to the status of home language development and bilingual education in Iceland. What is being done? How do immigrants sustain home language? Is it important to immigrants to sustain their home language? What about their children, will they learn the home language of their parents when they attend preschools where Icelandic is the primary language used? This study aims to provoke thought and interest on the

subject of home language development and bilingualism through investigating the perspectives of parents raising bilingual preschool-aged children in Iceland.

Parents are role models for their children and the beliefs they hold are often transmitted to their children. Parental beliefs and perspectives regarding home language development can be determiners as to whether their children learn their home language. Parents' attitudes towards home language are most often reflected in how they use the home languages with their children (De Houwer, 1999; Pearson, 2008). This research study attempts to explore parental perspective, language use, and motivators when it comes to language development both in the home language and Icelandic. Focus is on the following research questions: *What are parents' perspectives about home language development? What are parents' perspectives about bilingualism and second language acquisition? How do parents facilitate language development through language use?* The researcher also set out to examine connections between parents' perspectives and practice; did parents' beliefs affect how they supported language development? If so, how? How are bilingual children in Iceland supported at the preschool level in regards to home language development? Finally, the researcher looked to develop a better understanding for why parents wanted their children to learn their home language and Icelandic.

A mixed method approach using both quantitative and qualitative research was used to gather data. Firstly, a quantitative questionnaire with closed questions was used to gather background information and statistical data about parents' perspectives and language use. Secondly, through the use of ethnographic interviews, further data regarding parental perspective and language use was collected. The data from these interviews provided greater insight into why parents held certain perspectives about language development, how they used language in the home setting, and reasoning or motivators for them in regards to language development both in the home language and Icelandic.

In order to correctly research the subject of bilingual language development, one must understand the context within which language development occurs and the process of language development in general. Chapter two provides a review of academic literature and previous research regarding language development in early childhood; the role parents play in language development, the role of parental perspective and attitudes in language development, bilingual language development, and the status of

bilingual language development at the preschool level in Iceland. Chapter three describes the methodological instruments used to collect data, participants and settings, and explains the role of the researcher and limitations. In Chapter Four findings are presented. In Chapter Five findings are discussed and analyzed. Finally, in Chapter Six the impact of the study and its limitations are presented.

2 Review of Literature

2.1 Language development and its beginnings

Language development is a process which begins with language acquisition. This process does not differ between languages. Children learning Icelandic go through the same process as children learning Polish. There is an age old adage often applied to life which goes something like this: *focus on the journey not the destination*. When applying this adage to language development the journey and the destination are equally important. According to Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith (2001), language development is a process which begins in the womb and continues throughout one's entire life, with every single encounter we have with language both spoken and written.

Pearson (2008) states that language development in its simplest form is composed of receptive and expressive components; receptive language being the intake of language through listening and reading, and expressive language being the output of language through speaking and writing. These components cycle off and build upon each other with every encounter one has with language, either spoken or written.

The processing of receptive language leads to the ability to produce expressive language. The main elements of any language system are phonology, semantics (vocabulary), syntax (grammar), discourse, and pragmatics. Tabors (2008) proclaims that "For children to be considered native speakers of a language, they must have control over all of these aspects of the language system" (p. 7). A brief description of these elements follows:

- **Phonology:** the system of sound segments or phonemes used to form words. Each language has its own set of segments and children are able to recognize and produce them from an early age.
- **Semantics:** also known as vocabulary, are meanings expressed through words and phrases. In order to communicate there must be a shared meaning represented by words and phrases. The ability to find and understand correct meanings for each new word learned is not only important but necessary in language development.

- **Syntax:** also known as grammar is the rules or guidelines by which words are structured and organized to form meaningful sentences.
- **Discourse:** how sentences are constructed for use such as in debate, narration, or creating stories.
- **Pragmatics:** a system of customs and or patterns which determine how language is used, for example in social settings and/or for conversational reasons. Examples of this would be when people take turns while conversing, adjusting the content of communications to match the listeners language ability, interests, or knowledge (Cain, 2010; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004).

According to Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith (2001), language development begins very early; even a fetus is capable of listening to the sound of its mothers' voice. Research today focuses as much on how developing children receive language as it does on the production of language.

Nonverbal communicative behavior and vocalizations before the age of twelve to fifteen months were considered to add little to our knowledge of language acquisition-the focus was on production of recognizable words. Now, by contrast, the vital role of early babbling in tuning the articulatory system to the particularities of the infant's native tongue is the subject of numerous in-depth studies. Over the last two decades, novel infancy research techniques have been developed that shed light on these much earlier stages of language learning. (Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2001, p. 2-3).

Psychologist Jerome Bruner (1983) emphasizes the importance of social and environmental interaction and the role it plays in language development. He theorizes that language acquisition does not begin when a child speaks its first words, but when parent and infant create a system of interaction that can serve the purpose of communicating a shared reality. This system referred to is represented by the acronym LASS (Language Acquisition Support System). LASS is the manner in which parents or caregivers interact with their children linguistically, meaning that when parents provide language input in a framed or structured manner they enable the child to partake in the linguistic community. Bruner (1983) states that language is learned through using it and that interaction between mother

and child in play scenarios allow children to master basic but necessary steps to talking. According to Bruner (1983), “The development of language, then, involves two people negotiating. Language is not encountered willy-nilly by the child; it is shaped to make communicative interaction effective – fine-tuned” (p.39).

Motherese is an example of early language development in a social context, and furthermore a fine example of Bruner’s LASS (1983). Motherese is a type of infant directed speech where the adult speaker, primarily the mother, uses different mannerisms in her voice to draw the infant’s attention to adult speech. Often times this type of speech is rhythmical where stress patterns in words and/or sentences are exaggerated (Karmiloff & Karmiloff – Smith, 2001).

Falk (2004) adds that “repetitions and questions with rising intonations are used” (p.495), to reinforce the infants’ attention by alerting, pleasing, soothing and alarming them and that this eventually enhances the process of language development. This type of linguistic interaction between adult and infant establishes a pattern akin to conversation; the adult uses these types of exaggerated or even sing-songy speaking patterns to call on a response from the child. Whether that response is cooing, smiling, or a simple jerk of the head in recognition of what was said, it is the beginning of social interaction through the use of language. Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith (2001) say that this type of exchange is one-sided in the beginning as only the adult is engaging in the use of language; this actually prepares the child for using dialogue and taking turns when it has the capacity for speaking.

2.2 Bilingual language development

As has been established, language acquisition is a complex process which is cultivated in children typically through social interactions. Bilingual language development is a complex phenomenon which can be affected by a number of factors. Children who learn more than one language in childhood differ in many ways from children who learn only one language, due to the reality that they experience diverse language environments, communicate in a manner which challenges them to use different resources, and they are sensitive to different cultural worlds (Bialystok, 2001).

Pearson (2008) refers to bilingual language learners as either Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BLFA) or Early Second Language Acquisition (ESLA). The first term refers to children who “learn two languages simultaneously” (p. 81), meaning essentially that these children have two

first languages. This type of language acquisition is referred to as bilingual language acquisition or simultaneous acquisition. Theoretically speaking, if children in this category receive adequate input and exposure to each language, then these two first languages will in effect be the same as single language acquisition for a monolingual child.

Pearson (2008) likens this process of BLFA to two trees growing in the forest side by side. She theorizes that if each tree were to firstly be planted simultaneously at birth they would develop roots in the ground from which would grow two trees independently yet, in accordance with what “nutrients each receives, we may expect parallel growth” (Pearson, 2008, p. 81). It is necessary to note the idea of parallel growth here, as language input is equally, if not more important, in multilingual language development as it is in monolingual language development. “Two languages cannot reach the same level of development in all areas unless there is sufficient exposure – and for reading and writing sufficient training – for them both to develop” (Pearson, 2008, p.89). It is common that children who start out with two or more languages end often with language skills in one dominant language as input and exposure dwindle in the minority or home language (Cummins 2001; Pearson 2008).

With regard to Early Second Language Acquisition (ESLA), also referred to as sequential acquisition, Pearson again makes reference to how a tree grows. In this scenario she likens the second language to a ficus tree. The ficus tree does not have roots in the ground, but rather roots itself onto another tree (Pearson, 2008). “The ficus has its own trunk and branches, but it grows on top of the roots and main trunk of its host tree. It may eventually overshadow the first tree, but more often, the two trees (or languages) live entwined until a ripe old age” (Pearson, 2008, p.82).

When applying this theory to children and language acquisition the ficus tree would be the language a child is introduced to secondly or upon entering preschool where the majority language is different from the home language. In this scenario the importance of the first or home language and development which has already occurred there will play a vital role in second language acquisition. Second language development is enhanced through strengths the child has already acquired in the area of language development (Alanís & Tinajero, 2005; Oller & Pearson, 2008; Tabors, 2008; Vygotsky, 1986).

Research has shown the importance of home language to children’s success in learning a second language (Bialystok, 2007; Cummins, 2001; Miller Guron & Lundberg, 2003; Pearson, 2008; Quiroz, Snow, & Zhao,

2010). Cummins (2001) states that, "Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in their school language" (p. 17).

Lev Vygotsky (1986) theorized that second language acquisition is developmental in nature and has a direct effect on all language development, not simply the development of new language skills in an individual language. When learning a second language there is no repetition of linguistic development, rather the native language is used as a "mediator between the world of objects and the new language." (p. 161). "Success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language. The child can transfer to the new language the system of meanings he already possesses on his own" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 196).

Furthermore, Vygotsky (1986) stated that a child's understanding of his/her home language is improved through the process of learning a second language. "The child becomes more conscious and deliberate in using words as tools of his thought and expressive means for his ideas" (p. 160) and "a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language. The child learns to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 196).

Thomas and Collier (2002) found that the amount of formal home language development children receive is the most significant predictor as to second language achievement. Children who were schooled in bilingual programs often outperformed their monolingual counterparts in academic achievement after an estimated four to seven years in dual language programs. Children placed in bilingual learning programs were also shown to learn English at the same rate as children in English only programs, and demonstrated higher levels of academic achievement than students from English immersion programs. Furthermore, Thomas & Collier found that children with a minority home language who are submersed into mainstream second language schooling, and receive no support in their minority language, represented the lowest performing groups and the highest drop out rates in later years of school (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Bilingual children have also been found to excel at metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 2001; Tabors, 2008). Metalinguistic awareness is a skill which involves understanding the properties and structures of language. Bilingual children often become aware of and learn to use these properties of language earlier than monolingual children. Bilingual children

must “make a decision about language at some, usually subconscious, level every time they open their mouths to speak and their brains must choose which language to tell their mouths to use” (Tabors, 2008; p. 15). An example of metalinguistic awareness would be the understanding of word ordering. The order in which we link words together in sentences can affect the meaning of that sentence. Different languages have different grammatical structures. Bilingual children, who choose between languages frequently, must think about things like word ordering in order to be understood.

Sigríður Ólafsdóttir (2010) conducted research on vocabulary skills of bilingual children aged 6-10 learning Icelandic as a second language. Many of her findings reflected previous findings in research conducted outside of Iceland (Bialystok, 2007; Huennekens & Xu, 2010; Quiroz, Snow, & Zhao, 2010; Zhang & Anual, 2008) in that bilingual children scored lower on vocabulary skills testing than did monolingual children. In her conclusions she states that home language skills are important building blocks for second language acquisition and that parents and families should be encouraged to continue language development in their home language through communicating, reading and other forms of multimedia use, i.e. the internet (Ólafsdóttir, 2010).

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir is a Professor at the University of Iceland in Second Language Acquisition and Pedagogy. Arnbjörnsdóttir’s contributions to the study of bilingualism in Iceland have been documented through research, teaching, and the publication of various articles on the subject. One important case study of hers makes reference to the term *linguistic behavior* or *málhegðun* (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010). Linguistic behavior is described as the relationship between how language is used in the home and in school. This relationship is especially important to bilingual children as they bridge between using different languages for different purposes between the two settings. “When language traditions/behaviors between school and home coincide, regardless of what nationality children are, children seem to be able to overcome linguistic and academic difficulties” (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010, p. 316).

Arnbjörnsdóttir (2010) studied four bilingual children from the same family over a 25 year period. The conclusions she came to were that bilingualism is a complex phenomenon which is dependent upon many factors, such as the individual, social influences, educational influences, and familial influences. Furthermore, she found that the expectations a family has towards education play a role in the development of language cultures

and behaviors. The culture for language behavior in the home was important because children understood what they would encounter linguistically upon entering school. Children were read to and encouraged to read along at home. They were encouraged to speak and ask questions with every opportunity, and to point out and name various items. She determined that that these children encountered fewer problems with second language acquisition in school due to the fact that methods used at home to teach language were methods also used in school. An additional conclusion she came to was that the relationship between parent and teacher affected how well each of the four children adapted to the new language environment, in accordance with the amount and value of information transferred between parent and teacher (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010).

2.3 Parental role in language development

Research has shown the important role that parents and family play in developing children's language skills (Bruner, 1983; De Houwer, 2007; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2001; Kassow, 2006; Neuman & Dickinson, 2002; Neuman, Koh, & Dwyer, 2008). There is no shortage of references documenting how language acquisition begins with the first interactions between mother and child. Children's language develops best in a rich context of both direct and indirect environmental influences (Pearson, 2007). Research has shown connections between parents' own literacy skills and knowledge, methods for nurturing their children, how parents engage children in language focused activities, and how often they do so (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Guiberson & Rodríguez, 2010; Hurtado, Marchman, & Fernald, 2007; Neuman & Dickinson, 2002).

...parental characteristics such as education, social competence, knowledge of child development, and attitudes toward parenting can contribute to the way parents interact with their infants, thereby affecting the contexts within which words are acquired. In terms of more direct influences, the role of parental input (the actual speech that the child hears on a day-to-day basis) has been shown to be an important influence on word learning. Specifically, the language that the child experiences affects the onset and progress of word production (Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2001, p. 60-1).

It is important for parents to understand the role they play in their children's language development since they are first to provide children with a constant source of language input. Tabors (2008) explains that most of the cognitive development which occurs in early childhood requires children to develop ideas about how the world works, and learn the vocabulary that helps them express these new understandings. This is done through the types of discourse carried out between adult and child. Children ask questions and when adults take time to answer, they are not only conveying information to them, they are developing children's vocabulary. This will in turn benefit children as they grow and develop even further connections with the world through social interaction in larger familial settings, social settings, and later through school.

Bruner (1983) discusses the relevance of play and various games used by parents when children are in infancy as a point of reference to the transference of language skills. When children are still in the infancy stage we begin to engage children in play such as *Peek-A-Boo*, *This Little Piggy*, *Patty Cake*, and the likes. Such games "... often provide the first occasion for the child's systematic use of language with an adult. They offer the first opportunity to explore how to get things done with words" (Bruner, 1983, p. 45-6).

Another example of social interaction between parent and child which facilitates language development is shared book reading. This method of language development has been widely researched in monolingual and bilingual children (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Huennekens & Xu, 2010; Kassow, 2006; O'Neil-Pirozzi, 2009; Zhang, Pelletier, & Doyle, 2010). The use of books with young children for developing language skills is a method which directly affects the construction of a solid vocabulary and strengthens comprehension skills in young children along with other important early literacy skills. Dickinson & Tabors (2001) researched why book reading is so strongly linked to language development. One of the conclusions they came to was that the conversation between parent and child while reading was an important factor in how language development occurred.

The kinds of talk that occur during book reading may be particularly well suited to the development of language skills that children need to draw on to do well in school. When a child and adult look at a picture book together, an important, and possibly unique, opportunity presents itself. The reader and the child are jointly focused on a self-contained illustration

and text. This joint attention provides support for extending the child's language. In providing the joint topic and focus, the book affords an opportunity for complex, explicit language such as explanations, definitions, and descriptions. (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001, p. 34)

The invaluable role of the parent in language development can be further explained through discussing what happens when there is a lack of social interaction between parent and child or a lack of understanding of the importance of language input on behalf of the parent. Research has documented that when parents struggle with environmental factors such as low socio-economic status, low educational background, and/or mental health issues, their role as primary language facilitators can be negatively affected (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Jay & Rohl, 2005; O'Neil-Pirozzi, 2009; Smith & Gibbard, 2011). Lee & Burkam (2002) report that children from socio-economically challenged home settings need meaningful language experiences in early years in order to develop conceptual knowledge, comprehension and later reading proficiency.

In order to support and inform parents as to the importance of language development in early childhood, various intervention studies have been carried out, and when parents were taught language development strategies and practices, positive results could be seen in their children's linguistic progress (Jay & Rohl, 2005; O'Neil-Pirozzi, 2009; Smith & Gibbard, 2011). O'Neil-Pirozzi (2009) found that language-based interventions empowered parents and increased self-efficacy, which in turn facilitated development in their children. Said interventions were found to increase parents' ability to stimulate language development in their children through the use of effective language utterances.

The role of the parent when it comes to multilingual language development in children is most frequently linked to their role as language facilitator in the home language (Collier & Auerback, 2011; Cummins, 2001, De Houwer, 2007; Guiberson & Rodríguez, 2010; Pecenek, 2010; Worthy & Rodríguez-Galido, 2006). Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal (2001) found that high quality interaction, adult recasts, (a form of correcting linguistic mistakes through correctly recasting the proper utterance to the child) and focused language input in the home language by the parent contributed to the degree of home language use by the child.

Pearson (2007) developed a model which demonstrates use and input of the home language. This model is called the "input-proficiency-use cycle"

(see Figure 1). With this cycle Pearson illustrates the important role parents and the linguistic community, play in the development and sustainment of home language. Pearson (2007) believes linguistic input to be the greatest factor which parents and communities can provide, and if there is enough input there will be learning. “Without interacting with people using the language, no learning takes place. Without enough interaction, learning can take place, but the children do not reach enough of a comfort level in the language that they will willingly use it” (p. 126). She further theorizes that when children use language which they have heard, this invites further input so the cycle becomes self supporting. “A greater amount of input leads to greater proficiency, which leads to more use, which invites more input and the cycle starts again” (Pearson, 2007, p. 127) .

Additional factors which Pearson believes to play important roles are familial, peer, and community attitudes towards home language use and the age of the child when input occurs. Pearson also believes that negative attitudes will take away from the value and use of the home language, whereas positive attitudes will add to the value and use (Pearson, 2007).

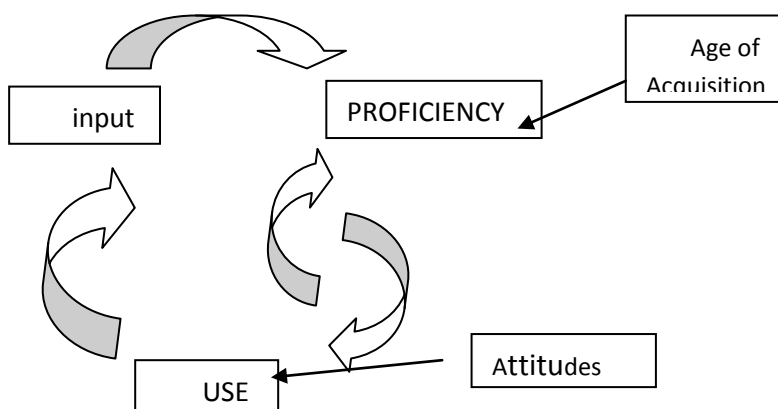


Figure: 1 The input-proficiency-use cycle (Pearson, 2007, p. 401)

Parental attitudes and perspectives towards home language and bilingual language development are often found to be strong motivators for language use. Worthy & Rodríguez-Galido (2006) found parents not only to be eager and capable to assist in language development in their home language, but that they were also “a virtually untapped resource of positive and powerful, language models” (p. 597). Teachers in their study were advised to create dialogue with parents about their attitudes towards language development and their willingness to help support their children.

Smith & Gibbard (2011) found that when parents were informed about how language development is influenced by both the type and amount of language interaction between parent and child, it had positive effects on their attitudes towards language development and more importantly, after these interventions, their children were found to have “significantly higher child word count” (Smith & Gibbard, 2011, p. 1).

Understanding the impact of negative attitudes may highlight even further the important role parents play in home language development. Cummins (2001) addresses the loss of home language and the role parents also play in this. As easy as it is for children to learn conversational skills in a majority language, without familial and especially parental support, children can also quickly lose language skills in their home language. “Children’s mother tongues are fragile and easily lost in the early years of school. ...where language communities are not concentrated or ‘ghettoized’ in particular neighborhoods children can lose their ability to communicate in their mother tongue within 2-3 years of starting school” (p. 19). Cummins (2001) recommends that parents create a strong home language strategy which should broaden and expand in relation to contexts, functions, environments and skills which the home language is used in.

Shannon & Milian (2002) researched parental perspective regarding dual language programs and came to the conclusion that “Besides educators, parents are the strongest allies of well-implemented bilingual education programs” (p. 693). Lao (2004), in a similar study targeting bilingual education amongst Chinese-English bilinguals, found that when parents’ perspectives were not positive regarding bilingualism, children did not learn sufficient Chinese, as the parents “did not use Chinese often enough with their children at home” (p. 114) and furthermore “L1 maintenance and development cannot be achieved without strong commitment from the parents” (p. 116).

Wozniczka (2011) conducted research with Polish students enrolled in primary school in Iceland. The focus of her research was to find out how the quality of home language input (reading and parent child interaction) affected children’s second language development in Icelandic and their progress at school. She found that Polish families encouraged and sustained mother language skills in the home environment, and that regardless of parental perspectives about second language acquisition in Icelandic, the use of Polish in the home environment was “helping their children to develop language skills that transferred to Icelandic” (Wozniczka, 2011, p. 79).

2.4 Bilingual language policy in Icelandic preschools

In Iceland the majority of preschools are run by local municipalities making childcare and early childhood education widely available and affordable to all families regardless of their social background or home language. In recent years the number of children in Icelandic preschools with another home language than Icelandic has increased considerably. In the year 2000 the number of children with a different home language than Icelandic enrolled in preschools was 676. That number grew to 1,908 by the year 2011. The percentage of children with a different home language than Icelandic enrolled in preschool grew from 4.6% to 10% within a decade (Statistics Iceland, 2012).

Preschool policy documents do not seem to reflect this increase in the number of children attending preschool with a different home language than Icelandic. Preschools in Iceland are required by law to operate in accordance with the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools 2012 (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2012) and The Preschool Act No. 90/2008. Neither of these documents mentions home language development, second language development, or bilingual language development. The only mention of home language in The Preschool Act No. 90/2008 is in regard to translation services for parents and reads as follows: “In the case of parents who are not native speakers of Icelandic or who use sign language, the school shall endeavor to ensure interpretation for all information necessary for communication between parents and school on the basis of this Article” (The Preschool Act, English version, 2008).

In both the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2012) and The Preschool Act No. 90/2008 there are, however, strong guidelines and rules as to the development of the Icelandic language. One of the objectives of preschool education is “to provide systematic linguistic stimulation and contribute to common skills in the Icelandic language” (The Preschool Act, 2008). The National Curriculum Guide for Preschools states that “Preschools should use everyday relations to stimulate children’s sense of the Icelandic language by learning new words and concepts and developing their language” (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2012, p. 34).

The City of Reykjavik gives more recognition to the importance of home language development in its policy documents. In 2006 the City of Reykjavík published the “Multicultural Policy for Preschools”. In the English translation of this document, the importance of home language is pointed

out. It states that “the task of the preschool is to teach the children Icelandic but also to offer parents support in maintaining the proficiency of the child’s native language” (Menntasvið Reykjavíkurborgar, 2006, p. 8).

Recommendations found in this policy are as follows:

- The Reykjavík City Department of Education emphasizes the importance for children of foreign origin to become bilingual. The aim is for the children to maintain proficiency in the languages spoken by their parents and to learn Icelandic as a second language.
- The child’s parents should be encouraged to maintain the child’s proficiency in the native language/languages and thereby help facilitate the child’s bilingualism. Staff should encourage parents to speak their native language to their child and plan joint projects that facilitate the use of the native language.
- The preschool will attempt to make the native language of the child both visible and audible with the help of the parents. The parents are moreover encouraged to introduce their native language to the children and teachers in the preschool. (Menntasvið Reykjavíkurborgar, 2006, p. 8).

The Reykjavik Department of Education provides additional funding to preschools with large percentages of children of foreign origin. All preschools also have access to counseling and support from a specialist in multicultural and bilingual issues from the Department of Education (Reykjavíkurborg, 2010).

Several grass-root organizations have been formed in Iceland which support home language development. One such organization called *Móðurmál, Association of Bilingualism* conducts home language schooling in twelve languages (Móðurmál, 2010). This program is run by volunteer teachers who usually have a background in education and/or language development. One of the principal goals of this program is to increase children’s ability to use and understand their home language. Methods used to teach home language are thematic work, storytelling, reading, music, internet and television use, writing, games and play, and drama. Since its founding in 1994 Móðurmál (2010) has received grants and support from various municipal and government organizations in Iceland. Parents pay tuition fees for a semester at a time; the organization requires that children have “some knowledge and understanding of the second

native language i.e. be comfortable being immersed in the second language” (Móðurmál, 2010).

There are resources available for both parents and teachers of preschool-aged multilingual children. One example of a resource available to the public is an internet website called *Fjölmennning í leikskóli; engan eins en allir með* (Multiculturalism in Preschools; no one the same but everyone included, author’s translation). This website contains a vast array of information regarding learning and teaching Icelandic as a second language, language development, bilingualism, multiculturalism, and various links to other websites with additional information for parents and teachers (Jónsdóttir & Þorláksdóttir, 2012). The website is useful to people who read and comprehend Icelandic, since it is only offered in Icelandic. In 2011 an additional website was set up for the purpose of promoting home language development and multicultural educational activities. This website is named *Tungumálatorg* or Language Plaza (Tungumálatorg, 2012). This website offers information in many languages for teachers, parents, students, and anyone with an interest for language development and multiculturalism. In addition to offering information, this is a social website offering people with the opportunity to exchange information and ideas.

Kolbrún Vigfúsdóttir (2002) conducted M.Ed. research in two separate Icelandic preschools where the focus was to compare how the linguistic needs of bilingual children were met. Vigfúsdóttir (2002) found that the preschools contained all the necessary materials to promote language development with bilingual children and that various staff members developed both interest and proficiency in working with bilingual children. She also found that the preschools lacked both formal and uniform methods of teaching second language with bilingual children and evaluation of children’s progress in second language development. In addition to this, she concluded that there was no formal policy regarding how to support second language development in bilingual children, and that education provided to teachers and staff at preschools was lacking. Furthermore, she implied that the National Curriculum for Preschools needed to place clearer emphasis on second language development and teaching methods (Vigfúsdóttir, 2002).

Elín Þöll Þórðardóttir (2007) is a specialist in Speech pathology and has researched bilingualism in both Iceland and Canada. Þórðardóttir (2007) found that bilingual children develop language skills in the same order as monolingual children, however, not always at the same rate. She draws attention to important factors in bilingual language development: “Among

other important factors one must mention teaching methods which are used, education, experience and skills of teachers and the quality of teaching materials and books” (Þórðardóttir, 2007, p. 120; author’s translation).

In this chapter a review of literature and research in the areas of basic language development and multilingual language development was discussed, in particular the role of the parent in home language development. In addition, multilingual language development policy and practice in Iceland were discussed. In Chapter 3, the research methodology will be presented.

3 Methodology

3.1 Review of the Method

This research is a mixed method study using both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection, analysis, and the documentation of data. The researcher set out to answer the following research questions: *What are parents' perspectives about home language development? What are parents' perspectives about bilingual and second language acquisition? How do parents facilitate language development through language use?* It was the belief of the researcher that the data gathered with a mixed method approach would provide a comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon of bilingualism from the perspective of parents who participated in this study.

This particular study was descriptive in nature. After quantitative data was collected and analyzed the researcher then collected additional data through semi-structured interviews in order to elaborate upon and better explain the quantitative data. Characteristics of quantitative research are statistical in nature where the researcher works with numbers, deductive logic, and has control of the research. Characteristics in qualitative research include the study of behavior as it occurs in its natural setting; researchers collect data directly from sources, detailed narratives are used to provide in-depth understanding of contexts or behaviors, focus is placed on participants' perspectives or understandings, data analysis is inductive where generalizations are made, and the research design can evolve and change as the study takes place (McMillan, 2004).

Research in connection with bilingualism can be difficult because bilingualism is a complex phenomenon where many factors can affect language development. Bialystok believes that "research on bilingualism probably fails to reflect its diverse reality" (2001, p. 9). Bialystok (2001) further states that bilingualism presents difficulties in research due to the fact that it is not characterized by the normal classifying qualities exhibited in developmental research, such as age, gender, or grade but rather "At best bilingualism is a scale, moving from virtually no awareness that other languages exist to complete fluency in two languages" (p. 8). Researchers use a qualitative research approach because they believe there are multiple realities which can be represented through participant perspectives, and

that context is vital to providing insight to the phenomenon being researched (McMillan, 2004).

The researcher in this study believed that through employing a mixed method approach and using both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyze data, the study would be strengthened and the complex nature which is characteristic of bilingualism would be better documented. Again, the focus of this study was to investigate perspectives towards language development held by parents. Perspectives and attitudes are very difficult to research as they vary from one individual to the next and as such are difficult to measure.

The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace qualitative or quantitative approaches but, rather, to combine both approaches in creative ways that utilize the strengths of each within a single study. By mixing methods in ways that minimize weaknesses or ensure that the weaknesses of one approach do not overlap significantly with the weaknesses of another, the study is strengthened (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 559).

3.2 Setting

The study was conducted amongst parents with children enrolled in Roundhouse Preschool (a pseudonym) which is located in a suburb of Reykjavík. Children enrolled in Roundhouse were between the ages of six years old 18 months. Roundhouse Preschool was purposefully chosen for this study due to the diverse linguistic make-up of the families whose children are enrolled there. At the time this study was conducted (Autumn 2012) there were 56 children enrolled at the preschool and the number of children who came from homes with a different home language than Icelandic was 47 or 83.9%. There were 13 different home languages represented in this study, as can be seen in the list of the languages and number of children who spoke each language which follows. Many of these children also spoke English as a second language but were not registered as having English as a home language in the preschool's enrollment records.

- Albanian 2
- Filipino (various dialects) 10
- Icelandic 11
- Latvian 2
- Lithuanian 6
- Nepalese 1
- Polish 15
- Romanian 2
- Russian 2
- Serbian 1
- Slovakian 2
- Tamil 1
- Thai 3

3.3 Sample

For the questionnaire part of this study parents of all 56 children enrolled in Roundhouse were offered to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. Forty three sets of parents (76.6%) completed and returned the questionnaires, all of whom spoke a different native language than Icelandic. The linguistic make-up of the participants was very diverse and there were a greater number of languages spoken by the parents who answered the questionnaire than was represented among the preschool children. The reason for this difference was that in some of the homes the parents were from mixed backgrounds, did not have the same mother tongue and spoke additional languages with each other such as English. Also, some parents did not speak their mother tongue with their child as a home language. For example, one mother of Thai origin spoke Icelandic with her children and a mother of Easter European descent spoke Polish with her child.

For the interview part of the study parents of five households were specifically chosen and asked to participate in an ethnographic interview. Participants were chosen in order to include a variety of languages and a diverse make-up of home language environments.

As per request of the participants all of the interviews were conducted in their homes.

The diverse make-up of home language environments represented by participants selected for interviewing was as follows. Pseudonyms are used for the participants.

- Participant 1 - Susan: Polish single mother, strictly Polish spoken in the home.
- Participant 2 - Rose: Tagalog parents with some mixing of English spoken in the home by parents with children. Siblings in the home mixed Icelandic, Tagalog, and English. Only the mother participated in the interview.
- Participants 3 - John and Paula: Thai mother and Icelandic father and siblings all spoke strictly Icelandic in the home. Both mother and father participated in the interview.
- Participant 4 - Debra: In this home the mother spoke a Filipino dialect with the children, the father spoke a Slavic language with the children, and the parents spoke English with each other and with the children when all of the family was together. The siblings mixed English and Icelandic when speaking together. Only the mother participated in the interview.
- Participant 5 - Robert: Nepalese parents who only spoke Nepalese in the home. No siblings. Only the father participated in the interview.

Permission to conduct research amongst parents with children enrolled in the preschool was formally requested and granted from the Reykjavík Department of Education and Recreation in the autumn of 2012 (see appendix A). Anonymity of the school, parents and children was strictly guarded throughout the research process. Neither names nor specific identifiable aspects were asked for in the questionnaire and participants were free to leave questions unanswered if they so chose. Participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the research and gave their written consent prior to participation.

The consent form was translated into Polish, English, and Icelandic in order to ensure that participants fully understood the purpose of the study and intent of the researcher (see Appendix B for the English version of the form). The interview participants were also given an additional consent form to sign (see Appendix D).

3.4 Instruments and data collection

The first instrument for data collection used in this study was a questionnaire devised to gather quantitative data for statistical analysis. Participants were offered the questionnaire in Polish, English, Icelandic, or Tagalog (see Appendix C for the English version of the questionnaire). Participants took the questionnaire home with them, filled it out, and returned it in a sealed envelope to the researcher.

The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions which were divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 24 questions designed to gather background information about the children and the parents and their home language environment. Participants were asked questions regarding their educational, linguistic, and vocational backgrounds and the language behavior of their children. Participants were also asked to list which languages were used in the home environment, who spoke them, and how often they travelled to their home country.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 closed questions. These questions were designed to ascertain parental perspectives and behaviors regarding language development both in the home language and Icelandic. Participants were asked to rate the importance of home language development and Icelandic development, and whether it was important to them that their children learned to speak home languages and/or Icelandic. Participants were asked to list how they supported home language development through language activities in the home, and whether children were presented with opportunities for using the home language outside the home. Finally, participants were asked if they considered their children to be bilingual and to rate their children's abilities in the home language and Icelandic.

For the interview part of the study the researcher devised seven open-ended questions (see Appendix E) in order to deepen and enrich the data collected through the questionnaire regarding perspective and language use. The interviews allowed the participants to elaborate on their beliefs and attitudes and explain their thoughts in more detail. All five interviews took place in home settings and were recorded; each interview took approximately 40-50 minutes. The respondents were offered the option of choosing what language they preferred to be interviewed in. Three interviewees chose to use English for the interview process and two Icelandic. All respondents declined the use of a translator. The reasons given for not using a translator were as follows: they wished to speak directly to the researcher, they thought the interview process would take

too much time with a translator, and they were confident in their ability to understand and be understood in Icelandic. The interview process was relaxed and the discourse took on a natural flow between the interviewer and the respondent as often questions were followed with additional inquiry, which encouraged descriptive narratives and personal reflection on behalf of the respondent. The interviews were transcribed and coded and recurring patterns or themes in the data were analyzed.

3.5 Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research the researcher is often looking to understand a particular phenomenon and thus chooses a purposive sample. In this study the researcher was also the Director of the Roundhouse Preschool, a mother of two bilingual children, and a bilingual naturalized citizen of Iceland. Her interest in the research bridged through both her personal and professional lives. Arguably enough, being both the director of the school and researcher could be considered a limitation due to the power relationship between the researcher and participants, who in this study are parents with children enrolled in the school where the director works. The possible limitations to consider were firstly, willingness of parents to participate, secondly, how parents answered questions, and thirdly, anonymity. Parents may have been reluctant to partake in answering the questionnaire but did so in order not to disappoint the director. The power relationship could also have affected how participants answered the questions – they may have answered in a manner which would reflect well upon them in the eyes of the director. Finally, anonymity was at risk as the director already knew who the participants were. Although questions were designed not to reveal personal information to outsiders, the director knew details about the families and their backgrounds on a personal level.

On the other hand, a trusting relationship between the director and the parents of children in the preschool could have positive impact on parents' participation in the research study. Parents may have been more likely to participate in a genuine manner because of their amiable relationship with the director.

The researcher was aware of limitations that might present themselves in regards to her dual role as director/researcher, however this preschool was chosen because of the multicultural diversity represented in the high percentage of bilingual families enrolled at the school. There are few preschools in Iceland with such rich linguistic diversity. At the time the research was conducted (autumn of 2012) this preschool had the highest

percentage of bilingual enrollment in all of Iceland. The belief was that this setting would provide a sufficient and diverse amount of data. The researcher took all necessary ethical precautions by informing participants of her intentions and the purpose of the research. The researcher took special care to practice integrity and impartiality on the behalf of all participants and the data provided by participants. Participants were informed of all precautions taken to protect anonymity and confidentiality. In this respect participants who partook gave their informed consent and were aware of the purpose of the research.

Brooker (2002) argues that in qualitative research the researcher must be mindful of ethical responsibility and adhere to the principle of allowing participants' understandings and views to emerge. "If the researcher makes a commitment to the research subjects, whether professional, personal, or political, her or his efforts should be judged by their results rather than rejected in advance" (Brooker, 2002, p. 16). In qualitative research the researcher is firstly inductive and secondly deductive, searches for complexity, relies on words, is personally involved, and rooted in symbolic interactions where the goal is to interpret and create understanding (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010).

In this chapter the research methods were described and the mixed method approach was explained. The research setting and selection of participants were described. The instruments for data collection were explained and finally the role of the researcher was discussed. In the next chapter the data collected through the questionnaire and ethnographic interviews will be presented.

4 Data and Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives towards language development held by parents raising bilingual preschool-aged children in Iceland. Focus was placed on both home language development and language development in Icelandic. This study also focused on how parents support and facilitate home language development. Data was collected through the use of a quantitative questionnaire developed by the researcher and qualitative ethnographic interviews. The questionnaire focused on parental perspectives regarding language acquisition, language development through home language use, and opportunities for children to use home language outside of the home. The interviews were conducted with five sets of parents where questions focused primarily on perspectives regarding home language environments, use and sustainment of home language, and what importance they placed on language development in the home language and Icelandic.

4.1 Background information

The aim of the background information was to develop a picture of the home language environment and opportunities for language development in the home. Parents who participated answered questions regarding their children enrolled in Roundhouse Preschool in autumn 2012. In all but seven of the families the children were born in Iceland. The home language environments were diverse in the 43 homes; in 12 (27.9%) homes three or more languages were spoken, in 12 (27.9%) other homes two languages were spoken, and in 19 (44.2%) homes only one language was spoken. In all but one of the 19 homes the home language used was an Eastern European language. The only Polish participant with a mixed home language environment was one where the mother spoke Polish, the father Romanian, and English was used between the two of them.

Another significant piece of background information regarding home language development was frequency of visits to the home country. Participants were asked if they traveled to their homelands, how often, and for how long they stayed. Twenty nine (67.4%) of the 43 participants stated that they travelled frequently to their homeland. The average length of stay was four weeks; the longest period of stay listed was 12 weeks and the shortest two weeks.

4.1.1 Home language environment

Home language environment includes language use between all family members residing within the home. The majority of parents who answered the questionnaire used only their mother tongue when speaking with their child. Twenty-seven (62.7%) mothers reported using only their mother tongue when speaking with their children, 14 (32.5%) reported using more than one language, and 2 (4.6%) used a language other than their mother tongue. Thirty-one (72.9%) fathers reported using only their mother tongue when speaking with their children, 11 (25.5%) used more than one language, and in one case there was no father in the home. Information about language use between siblings was also requested. Parents reported that in 14 homes siblings mixed the use of Icelandic and the home language, in 3 cases siblings used both English and home language at home, and in 10 homes siblings only used the home language. Parents were more likely to use their mother tongue at home while siblings tended to mix Icelandic and the home language when communicating.

4.1.2 Additional information

Participants were asked three questions about what type of support would benefit them as parents of bilingual children. These questions were asked in order for the researcher to ascertain whether parents wanted support and if so, what type of support parents might want.

Participants were overwhelmingly positive in their answers, as 39 (90.6%) answered yes to learning more about language development, 37 (86%) answered yes to working with teachers, and 33 (76.7%) answered yes to receiving a handbook offering support for language development.

4.2 Perspectives about language development

The home language questionnaire (see Appendix C) sought to ascertain statistical data regarding participants' perspectives about home language development, reasons for learning the home language and Icelandic, language activities and language use employed by parents in the home setting, additional opportunities for home language use outside of the home, and participants' perspectives regarding learning Icelandic as a second language.

4.2.1 Importance of language development

Participants were asked how important it was to them on a scale of five that their children learn their home language. Participants were also asked how important it was to them that their children learn to speak Icelandic, again on a five point scale. An overwhelming majority (95.3%) listed learning their home language as being either very important or important to them, 2.3% were indifferent and 2.3% said it was not important to them. When it came to learning Icelandic the results were similarly positive as 92.9% listed learning Icelandic being either very important or important to them, 2.3% were again indifferent, and 4.6% did not answer. Chart 1 shows responses to the two questions according to the number of participants.

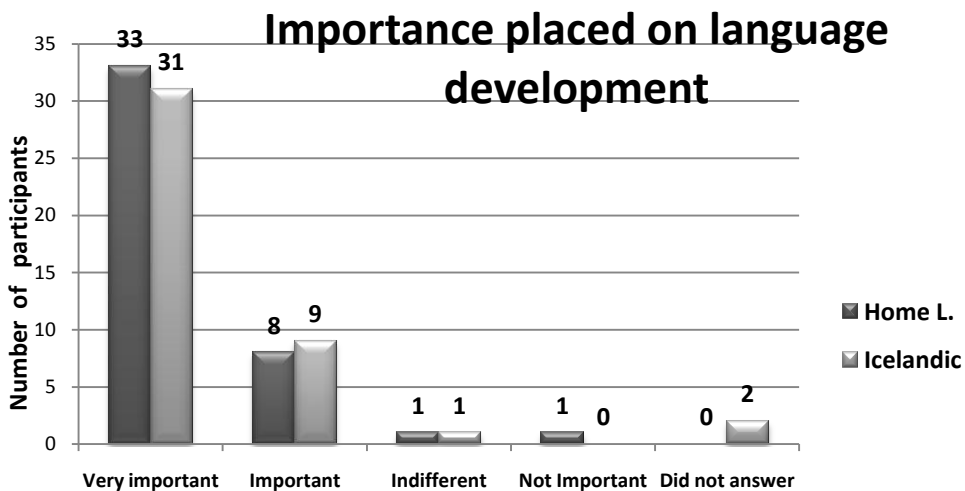


Chart: 1 Importance placed on language development by parents

4.2.2 Reasons for learning home language and Icelandic

Participants were asked to indicate reasons as to why they wanted their children to learn the home language and Icelandic. Participants could choose from a list of seven items which were based on information drawn from academic literature and previous experience (see Appendix C). Participants could write in additional reasons on the questionnaire. Charts 2 and 3 show the reasons chosen by the participants.

Reasons for learning home language

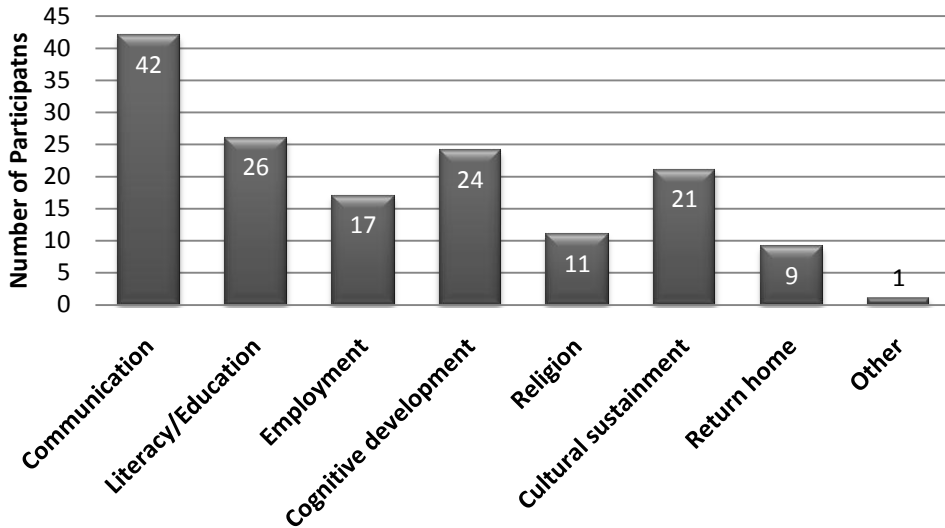


Chart: 2 Reasons for learning the home language

The reason for learning the home language most frequently chosen was to enable communication with relatives. Over 97% of the participants listed this. Increasing future educational opportunities for their children (literacy and education), was also an important reason for learning the home language and was chosen by 60% participants. Almost 40% listed opportunities for employment as an important reason for learning the home language and 56% felt that learning the home language would increase their child’s knowledge of language and general cognitive development. Just under half of the participants felt that learning the home language would help sustain or strengthen cultural and nationality identity. Fewer participants chose developing an understanding for religious beliefs or returning to their home land as being important reasons for learning the home language, as can be seen in Chart 2.

Reasons for learning Icelandic

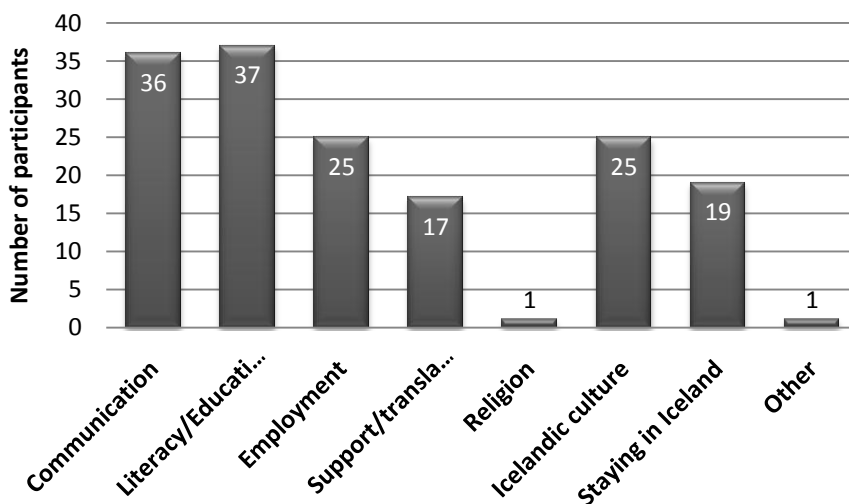


Chart: 3 Reasons for learning Icelandic

The most frequently chosen reason for learning Icelandic was to enable communication in Icelandic society. This was listed by 84% of the participants. A majority (86%) also thought it important that their children develop good Icelandic skills for schooling (literacy and education). Over 50% placed importance on the possibility of future employment as a reason for their children to learn Icelandic. Being able to provide support by translating for family members was chosen by almost 40% of the participants. Learning about Icelandic culture through learning Icelandic was seen as important by 58% participants and 44% listed staying in Iceland as an important reason for learning Icelandic, as can be seen in Chart 3.

4.2.3 Opportunity for use of home language

A large majority of participants (95%) reported that their children were afforded opportunities to use the home language in various contexts outside the home environment. Participants were given a list of 8 contexts to choose from and their choices are shown in Chart 4.

The most frequent opportunities for home language use outside the home were with extended family and friends. Almost 70% of the participants chose these answers. The third most prevalent opportunity

listed by participants was travel to the home land. Other frequent opportunities for home language use were communication via telephone and/or Skype and talking with other children at school. Children also had opportunities to use the home language in the neighborhood and at church and cultural centers, as can be seen in Chart 4. One participant noted that children could use the home language at events sponsored by the place of employment.

Opportunities for use of home language

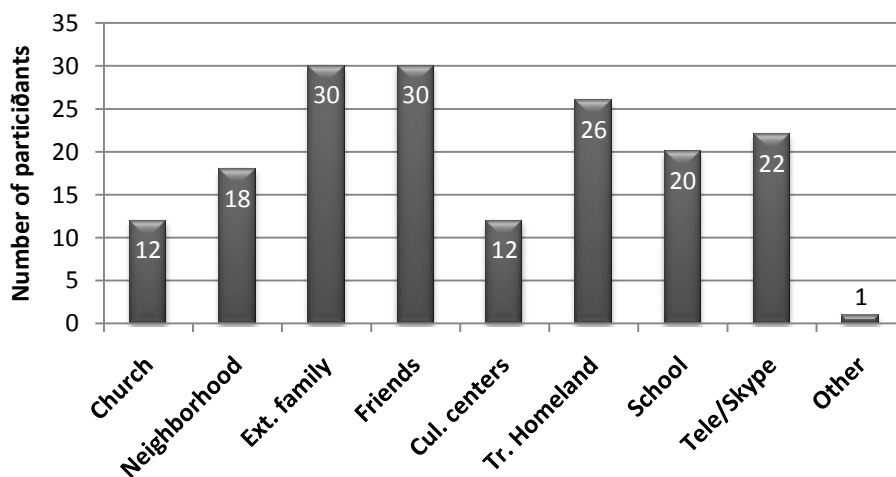


Chart 4: Opportunity for home language use in varied contexts

4.2.4 Types of home language use

Participants were presented with a list of seven linguistic activities which promote language development and were asked to indicate which types they used in their homes and how often within a week they participated in the activities.

Daily communication in the home language was the most common activity utilized by parents and was listed by 95% of the participants. The second most common activity listed was the use of television/DVD and 75% listed this at an average of four times per week. Almost 70% of the parents said they read books in the home language to their children at an average

of 3 times per week. Over 60% of the participants listed listening to music in the home language as part of weekly home language use. Finally, only about a fifth of the parents let their children use the computer for language development and fewer (14%) used direct instruction in the home language.

4.2.5 Bilingualism and ability ratings

In the final three questions participants were asked whether or not they considered their children to be bilingual and to rate their child's ability in the home language and in Icelandic on a rating scale based on age appropriate language development (see Appendix C).

Most of the parents (72%) considered their children to be bilingual, 20% answered no, and 7% did not answer.

In order to rate their language ability, participants were given a five point rating scale varying from very good to very poor (see Appendix C). Each ranking was further explained with examples of language ability, for example, the "Good" ranking was described as being able to understand most of what is said to them, can use many words in various contexts, asks when does not understand and can follow simple instructions. The rating scale for Icelandic ability included the option "Do not know" since not all parents spoke Icelandic with their children and were thus not capable of rating their children's Icelandic skills.

In general, participants rated their children's ability in the home language higher than their ability in Icelandic. Sixty five percent of the parents ranked their children's home language ability as very good or good, while just over 40% ranked their Icelandic ability as very good or good. Seven participants listed that they did not know how well their children spoke Icelandic, as they did not speak Icelandic with their children. One participant said their child possessed very good abilities in both languages; three rated their children's abilities as good in both languages and two listed fair abilities in both languages. In all other instances, participants listed dissimilar abilities in each language.

4.3 Data from interviews

The interview part of the study consisted of follow-up interviews with six parents (five households) who had completed the questionnaire. Respondents were selected in order to provide a diverse representation of home language environments based on the background information from the questionnaire. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to gather

further information regarding how respondents viewed home language and/or Icelandic development, their reasons for their views, how language development is encouraged in the home setting, and what participants placed importance on when it came to home language development. Respondents were asked seven open-ended questions, (see Appendix E) with follow-up questions used in order to better clarify or give the respondents opportunities to explain their views. The four main themes which emerged from the interviews were as follows:

- The home language environment was consciously decided upon by the respondents.
- Important reasons for home language development included daily communication in the home language between family members, socializing/communication outside the home, television and DVD, reading, and Skype or computer generated communication.
- Perspectives regarding bilingualism or dual language development were positive amongst all respondents.
- Links to homeland were often motivators for home language development as well as being an important part of cultural and personal identity.

4.3.1 Conscious decisions about home language

The interview process began with asking the respondents to describe the home language environment; what languages were used in the home, by whom, and what the reasons behind these choices were. All of the respondents made conscious decisions regarding home language for their children. They all described positive attitudes both towards home language development and Icelandic.

Reasoning behind each of the respondents' conscious decisions as to what languages would be used in the home environment varied, but each respondent was very resolved in their reasoning. All but one of the respondents mentioned the importance of their children learning one language first in the home setting before encountering a second language in preschool.

Susan was a single mother from Poland with three children. She based her decision of speaking only Polish in the home primarily upon having a strong background in the home language for later second language development. She stated:

I worked as a translator and I understood early that my children would learn better Icelandic if I taught them Polish first and did not mix languages with them. I have never mixed languages with them, if they speak to me in Icelandic I answer in Polish or if they only know words in Icelandic I teach them the Polish words.

Rose stated that her older child had encountered difficulties when entering primary school due to what she believed to be mixing of languages in early childhood, so when it came to the child currently enrolled at Roundhouse Preschool there was no mixing of languages at home.

I worried about (her daughter) because she had difficulty in school learning to read at first, but then we changed our rules at home and we only speak Tagalog with our children. Now I think that my son is doing much better learning my language and I hope Icelandic. My daughter is doing good in school now too.

She went on to say that:

First I did not think about them learning Tagalog because Icelandic was so hard for me. Now I am learning sometimes Icelandic from them because I am always teaching them the words in my language.

In one interview both the mother and father participated (John and Paula). They do not share the same mother tongue. The father is Icelandic and the mother is Thai. Paula made a clear decision to forgo using her mother tongue of Thai and to speak only Icelandic with her children. John took it upon himself to support both his wife and their children in learning Icelandic. They expressed a very united front during the interview. Paula said:

I was learning to speak Icelandic and decided my son was half Icelandic and would grow up here, it would be better for us both to learn Icelandic. I thought to myself that it is better he learns one language first, then if he wants he can learn Thai as a second language later.

Then John added:

We worked together to help our son, and in the beginning he did not speak much. We had to be very focused in how we supported him. I worked with him systematically, for example by reading daily, in order to ensure that the Icelandic he was learning was right and that he understood.

Debra provides a very good example of the complex reality facing many mixed language families. The mother is from the Philippines and speaks a regional dialect; the father is from a Slavic country. They met here in Iceland and communicate in English. In this home language environment there are four languages being used interchangeably. The mother and father speak in English with each other and when speaking together with their children. When speaking individually with their children each one speaks their mother tongue; in other words, the mother speaks in Filipino dialect when alone with the children, and the father uses the Slavic language when alone with them. The children are learning Icelandic at Roundhouse preschool and thus use a mixture of all the languages at home. The mother said that she feels English is the most predominant language used, and that the children seemed content when speaking English.

most comfortable speaking English. I don't worry so much about how long it takes for them to learn all of these languages. I know they are learning and that we are doing what is right. I have looked for information about bilingualism and we do our best. I feel good about the progress my children make but I do not want to put pressure on them.

Robert speaks Nepalese in the home environment. When his child was very young, his wife expressed an interest in teaching the child English as well.

My wife thought we should teach her English because you can use that language everywhere, but she (the child) doesn't have interest, she is only learning Nepalese. When we start taking her to school (Roundhouse Preschool) they tell us we should just concentrate on our native language because then it would help her to learn better Icelandic. We are very happy with this because now she is learning both languages very easily.

4.3.2 Important reasons for home language development

The most predominant reason given for home language development was to enable communication amongst family members. All of the respondents expressed the importance of communication with immediate family members and some expressed additional importance in regards to extended family both located in Iceland and in their home countries.

Debra placed significant importance on her children being able to communicate with extended family.

I want my children to be able to speak with all of my family because I have a very big family here in Iceland and even bigger in the Philippines. I want them to have connections to the Philippines and my family there, because you know they have dark skin and you can tell they are Philippine. I want them to not feel like outsiders if we go home to the Philippines, especially not in the family.

Respondents also felt that communication was a good method for teaching the home language. Emphasis was placed on speaking directly with their children and correcting them when they used the language incorrectly and helping them with words in their home language that they only knew in Icelandic.

Debra also stated that she purposefully used the home environment to teach her children vocabulary.

I use every opportunity to teach them words by pointing out everything and telling them what it is called in (Philippine dialect). I want them to know what the words are for the things in our home, and when we do things as a family. I believe they can learn as many words as I teach them in (Philippine dialect).

Rose used communication as a method to support home language development.

I am just always talking to my children in Tagalog, trying to teach them new words and how to say things right, like make the right sounds. I think this is the most practice they can have using Tagalog, and I can best help them when we are talking together because I can help correct them and tell them they are doing a good job.

All respondents also placed importance on their children being afforded opportunities outside of the home to use their home language and saw this as an important element of home language development.

John and Paula noted that using Icelandic (the home language) outside the home helped their child when he was struggling to learn it at first.

When our son was not speaking much, or better yet just starting to speak with us in Icelandic, we found that after spending a day at preschool speaking with other children and staff he seemed to develop better skills, used more words in his sentences, and sometimes came home to us with new words. Definitely, having opportunities to use language as often as possible will always be an important factor in learning that language.

Robert felt having opportunities to use the home language outside the home was important but in their case these opportunities were very limited.

Oh, when we meet with other people from Nepal it is really great to see her using our language with them, but she is always using Icelandic words mixed so I think it would be better if we had more friends and more time to spend with them, then she would maybe get better with our language and be much more sure she is speaking well. She is often shy when we meet people from Nepal at first and she will not speak right away, but after a while she is always okay.

Susan, Robert and Rose said they used Skype or another form of online communication as a way for their children to use the home language. Three of the respondents, Susan, Rose, and Debra, noted that listening to music in the home language was a factor which they found to help their children to learn their home language.

All the respondents mentioned the use of books in one form or another as being important for language development, but only Susan and John and Paula referred to reading as a factor of great importance. The three other respondents stated that they used books either for talking about the pictures in their home language or for casual reading once and a while.

Susan referred to the importance of seeing words in her home language as being an important part of reading and home language development.

I read to them every day. Sometimes I translate Icelandic or English books, more like telling the story. But every opportunity I have to read books written in Polish is important. If they will learn to read they must see the letters and words in Polish. (My daughter) is already starting to ask me about the alphabet and the letters in her name.

John and Paula also placed importance on the value of reading for learning language.

When we read to our children we have in mind that they are not only learning language but they are learning to read with us. Books and reading are very pivotal tools when it comes to learning language.

Robert, however, encountered difficulties in finding reading materials in their home language and expressed concern over whether or not their child would learn to read and write in Nepalese.

She is not learning to read and write, and she does not really want us to read to her if we have Nepalese stories. Sometimes I find computer books on the internet and she will listen then. I would like to have more books, and I ask people if I know they are going to Nepal to bring us some stories for children. I would like to at least teach her the ABCs in our language, then maybe she will learn to read and write.

Susan, Rose, and Debra also mentioned satellite television and DVD use as a factor which supported language development. Debra stated:

We have a satellite dish and the girls can watch children's programs in my husband's language and English and I have some DVDs in my language. This is good sometimes because I see they are listening and learning and you know, they ask if they don't understand something so I know they are learning our languages.

4.3.3 Perspectives regarding bilingualism

All respondents had positive views about their children learning more than one language. They felt secure that their children were happy and were not experiencing any particular difficulties in learning more than one language. Three of the respondents, Susan, Rose, and Robert, talked about their

children's experiences of learning second and third languages, and they believed that children have the capacity to learn more than one language at a time.

Rose stated:

I know it is much easier for my children to learn Icelandic when they are young, because it is a very difficult language to learn and also Tagalog because it is a blend of other languages too. So I am glad they are learning now, and maybe when they are older they can learn even more languages if they want to.

Robert also stated relief in his child having the opportunity to learn additional languages while still young.

I am very happy for her to learn two languages now. We will stay in Iceland and she will have no problems learning in school. I have sometimes difficulty speaking and understanding everything in Icelandic and have to ask for the people to speak English. She will do well and we are very happy she is in a school where so many children are also bilingual, so she is also happy and secure even though she is learning two languages.

Four of the five respondents mentioned that they were pleased with the fact that their children attended a multicultural preschool, and found this to be a positive element in their children's language development.

Paula made a conscious decision to forgo teaching her children her mother tongue, yet still held strong beliefs that her children would be more than capable of learning the language when and if they wanted to.

So many people tell me I am making a mistake and should speak my language with them, but I don't agree. I think they need to learn one language first and if they want to learn my language tomorrow I will gladly teach them. I will use the same focus to teach them to speak Thai as we did to teach them Icelandic. I have no problems with children being bilingual, I am happy for them. But I chose to do it different and I am happy with that choice. I hope they want to learn to speak Thai and my son is already making some friends at his school who also have Thai parents, he can understand some things and I am always ready to help him.

Susan made a strong argument that she believed parents needed to make an effort at being bilingual themselves and have positive influence on their children.

I believe that if parents don't learn to speak Icelandic too they will not be able to properly support their children. They will not be able to understand the world their children are living in here, to communicate with other parents, teachers, or out in public. Their children might not want to learn to speak Icelandic if they think their parents will not understand them. I think my children see me as a positive role model because I have learned Icelandic, I am going to University and they say Mamma learns at school like me. I am proud of my children growing up bilingual and see only positive outcomes for them as bilinguals.

Debra was also positive towards multilingualism and was secure in her role as a language facilitator.

I am very pleased with my children, because you know, not every child has the chance to learn two languages and mine are learning four. I know we are doing what is right, we cannot change our situation, we are a mixed family and to be happy we must communicate and learn together with all of our languages. We are very lucky that our children attend a school with other bilingual kids, and go to a church where almost everyone speaks two languages. It might take them longer to learn than children who speak only one language, but I know if I don't put any pressure on them and keep doing what is right they will be fine and clever later in life.

4.3.4 Links to home country, personal and cultural identity

All of the respondents mentioned various links with the home country as motivators for home language development. Two of the respondents had traveled to their home countries with their children, and all of the respondents wanted their children to establish connections with family still living in their home countries. Also, they wanted their children to learn that they have two cultural backgrounds, not only two languages. Respondents also talked about how language is an important part of personal identity and how sharing the same language gave them a closer connection to their children.

Susan expressed great passion when describing her desire to travel with her children to Poland and it was very important to her that her children be able to communicate once there.

I will not move back to Poland, but I cannot wait to travel home to Poland with my children. I want them to see what it is to be Polish, and I want them to speak good Polish when we are there, it will be easier for them to feel safe there and enjoy it. They will meet family members who live in Poland and experience things that I experienced growing up there.

Susan also emphasized the importance of identity and how she wants her children to identify with her through learning and speaking Polish.

It is important to me that my children learn Polish from me not only so they can communicate with me, but because I am their mother and I want them to connect to me, to learn about how I grew up and who I am because of that. I feel that the best way to do this is through speaking my native tongue, Polish.

Susan further commented on the importance of cultural identity as well:

I want my children to learn about traditions that I grew up with, like Christmas and Easter celebrations. You know there are words for these things that do not translate in Icelandic. I want them to know we are Polish and in Poland we do things different and that is a good thing, something to be proud of. Even though I do not intend to move back to Poland, I want them to feel Polish if we visit Poland.

Paula made a conscious decision not to teach her children to speak Thai as their mother tongue, yet still expressed a desire for them to learn about Thai culture by travelling to her home country, in the hope that they will want to learn Thai as a second language.

I want my children also to be proud to be Thai, even though they are more Icelandic. I think that travelling to Thailand will open their eyes and minds for being Thai and speaking Thai.

Rose expressed the importance of cultural and personal identity and of the children being better able to identify with family members through the use of home language on visits to the home country.

I have such a large family in Philippines, all my family is there. My husband has family here in Iceland and we are close with them, but it is important for me for my children to speak with my family in Tagalog when we go to Philippines. I think they will learn more about me, like the foods I like to eat, and why we live like we do even if we are living here in Iceland.

Robert has not yet travelled to the home country with his child. He expressed great hope that by visiting Nepal his daughter will develop a connection with the language.

I am waiting for us to go for the first time to Nepal with her, I think then she will have much more interest for learning Nepalese and for being from Nepal. Right now she does not care; she only thinks some things are nice when you say them. When I play music from my country she only listens a little and then asks for me to put the hip hop on. She understands much Nepalese now but, I think after we visit she will speak more and it will be important to her.

In this chapter, the data collected from 43 households through the questionnaire and from ethnographic interviews with six parents representing five households were presented. Overall, the participants in the study had positive perspectives regarding language development of both the home language and Icelandic. The participants felt that home language development was very important to enable communication both in and outside the home. Four themes regarding reasons for language choice and home language development were identified and illustrated with samples from the interviews. In the next chapter an analysis and discussion of the data will be offered.

5 Discussion

In this chapter three main areas of focus will be discussed: parents' perspectives towards home language development and second language acquisition, home language use as a method for language development, and parents' reasons for language use choices.

5.1 Parents' perspectives

One of the aims of this study was to obtain information regarding parents' perspectives about bilingual language development. The results from the questionnaire showed overwhelmingly that parents possessed positive perspectives with regard to their children learning the home language and Icelandic, with over 90% of parents saying it was either important or very important that their children learned both languages. These results reflect similar findings in previous research carried out abroad (Lao, 2004; Pearson, 2007; Shannon & Milian, 2002; Worthy & Rodríguez-Galido, 2006). These positive perspectives towards learning both the home language and Icelandic show that parents have given thought to language learning and that they understand the importance that both languages can have in their children's lives. They are willing to support their children in growing up in a multilingual environment. Positive attitudes towards home language and second language development often influence how language will be used in the home. De Houwer (1999) states that positive attitudes are often the first step for parents in determining how they will use language with their children and this contributes directly to the development of language skills.

Data from the interviews also illustrated positive perspectives held by respondents and the importance of home language development to those parents. All the interview respondents made conscious decisions regarding home language use and learning Icelandic as a second language. De Houwer (2007) suggests that the beliefs and attitudes of parents are perhaps the best determiners as to whether children will learn two languages. De Houwer uses the term *impact beliefs* to signify when parents' attitudes towards language choice determines language use, having a direct impact on their children's language development. All of the interview respondents expressed strong beliefs and attitudes regarding home language use which were reflected in how they approached language development and support in the home setting, and how satisfied they were with their children's

progress in home language development. This is in line with Pearson's belief that "positive attitudes of parents, siblings and peers toward a language can add value to the language and make it more attractive to the child" (Pearson, 2008, p.128). For example Rose (Participant 2) decided to change her approach to language use when she discovered her daughter was experiencing difficulties learning to read in school. She had used a mixed language approach in the home setting with her daughter because she thought this approach would help her child to learn Icelandic. When she changed her approach of language use in the home to using only her mother tongue with her children, the mother felt more confident. She stated that her daughter was subsequently experiencing better outcomes in school and that her son (the younger of the two children) has less difficulty in learning both languages.

All of the respondents in the interview part of this study expressed the belief that if children possessed good language skills in one language they would be better able to learn a second language. They also expressed awareness of the responsibility they have as language models for their children. Debra (Participant 4) had a very complex language environment where both parents spoke in their separate mother tongue with their children. The mother spoke passionately about how she used every opportunity to teach her children to speak in her language and her husband did the same. They were very aware of their role as models for home language use. Susan (Participant 1) also took her role of language facilitator seriously. She expressed the importance of teaching her children Polish and giving them a strong background in their home language. She believed this would help them learn good Icelandic later on.

A majority of parents in the study believed their children to be bilingual. Even though the children referred to in this study are between the ages of 2 and 6, in most cases the parents rated their children's abilities in both languages from fair to very good. The parents are pleased with the linguistic choices they have made for their children, and are positive about the linguistic progress being made by their children.

It is widely recommended by specialists that parents speak their mother tongue with their children from the very beginning. Decisions about home language use made by one of the respondents are contrary to this recommendation. Paula (Participant 3) chose to forgo her mother tongue of Thai in order for her children to learn Icelandic first. She had full support from her Icelandic speaking husband, and currently believes she has made

the right decision. However, some of her responses show that she hopes her children will want to learn Thai and about Thai culture some day.

She also mentioned that she was proud to know her son was developing friendships with other children of Thai background and that he was making efforts to speak with them in Thai. This is important to her for various reasons (see section 5.3).

5.2 Home language use

This study shows that participants employed various methods of home language use to promote language development. The majority of participants (95%) placed most value on daily communication as a way to facilitate language development. Parents intentionally encouraged their children to communicate in the home language with immediate and extended family members as well as friends who speak the same language, in order to facilitate language development. The participants' awareness of the importance of communication was also reflected in the various opportunities they provided their children with for using home language. It was striking how important travel to the home country was for many participants. It is clearly seen as an important opportunity for children to develop their communicative skills in the home language as well as strengthen family ties and cultural ties to the home country.

Reading was also a popular method of language use employed by participants in this study, as 70% of them listed that they read to their children regularly. Reading books to children is widely recommended as good language development practice, as reading is directly linked with the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Huennekens, & Xu, 2010; Nemeth, 2012). Parents are encouraged to expose children to reading materials from a very young age. De Houwer (1999) states that reading can be a very good source of vocabulary and cultural information which may not always exist in the home environment.

Reading to children at home not only helps children to learn their home language, it also prepares them for second language acquisition. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2010) discusses how developing reading skills in the home language environment helps prepare children for the language culture which exists in school. This was also seen in a recent study by Wozniczka (2011) who found that reading between parent and child in the home setting contributed directly to Polish children fairing well in Icelandic primary school.

The importance of reading for language development was also prevalent in the interview data. Susan stated that she read to her children every day and even went so far as to translate Icelandic books into Polish. She also expressed the importance of her children seeing their home language in written form. John and Paula stated that the importance of reading went further than facilitating language skills, but that they were also teaching their children to read. Robert (Participant 5) expressed dismay over the fact that reading materials in his home language were not readily available in Iceland, but he used other resources such as online books for reading to his child. He also stated that he wanted his child to at least see the Nepalese alphabet in hopes that she would develop an interest for reading and writing. These examples show parents' awareness of language development and how they can contribute to their children's language learning through language-based activities.

Participants in this study also listed the use of music, computers, computer-mediated communication, television/DVD, and direct instruction as examples of home language use which encouraged home language development. A good example of direct instruction came from the interview part of this study where Debra explained how she uses every opportunity to teach her children words in her language by pointing out objects and naming them. She also stated the importance of recasting, or correcting mistakes her children made in the home language. Rose stated that she teaches her children specific sounds (phonemes) in the home language. Not everyone put emphasis on the same activities, but the study shows that parents are aware of various ways to promote language development and they encourage their children to use them.

5.3 Parents' reasons for language use choices

This study sheds light on what motivates parents to teach their children their home language. The results show that parents were making informed choices about language learning which were beneficial for their children's social, emotional, and future well-being.

By far the most important motivation for learning the home language was to enable children to communicate with family members. Parents felt it necessary to be able to communicate with their children in their own language, rather than through a second language. They also wanted their children to be able to freely communicate with relatives, for example grandparents, in the home country.

Aspects of cultural identity were also mentioned as important reasons for learning the home language. For example, participants described a need to teach children about customs and culture from their home lands and wanted to use visits to their home countries as opportunities for children to learn more about their home culture. Susan mentioned the importance of learning about traditions that she had grown up with through the use of her mother tongue. She felt that there are certain words that don't translate into Icelandic. Robert was excited for his child to travel to his home land for the first time as he thought this would both stimulate her interest for learning the home language and for being Nepalese. Though Paula chose to forgo her mother tongue and use Icelandic with her children as a home language, she hoped that travelling to Thailand would open her children's eyes and minds for being Thai and speaking Thai. The parents' responses show that they sense the strong links between language, culture, and homeland and recognize that visits to the home country can help motivate their children to learn the home language.

Responses from participants in the interviews illustrate how language is an essential part of personal identity. Participants expressed very strong attitudes about the importance of personal connections with their children which can be achieved through the use of the home language. For example, Susan stated that it was important to her that her children learn Polish, not only so they could communicate, but so that they would connect with her. She stated that it was important to her that her children learn about how she had grown up in Poland and how things are different there. Rose stated that it was important for her children to speak Tagalog when travelling to the Philippines in order to learn more about her, for example why they eat the foods they eat and live like they do, even if they live in Iceland. This reflects what Nemeth (2012) says: "Language, identity, and self-esteem are also interlaced. For each of us, our language is a part of who we are. For infants and toddlers, language is an inseparable part of who their parents are as well" (p. 11).

Respondents spoke not only of their identity but also the importance of developing their children's identity through teaching them to speak their home language. In the interviews some of the respondents were very adamant in expressing that their children's identities are linked to their home language and the ability to speak and understand it. They understood that if they did not teach their children the home language, they might not understand what it means to be from that culture. Debra mentioned the color of her children's skin and that they should understand they are Filipino and should speak her dialect. She wants her children to have

connections to the Philippines so they will not feel like outsiders when traveling to their homeland and the ability to speak her dialect will help them. Rose also wants her children to identify with being Filipino, understand Filipino culture and not feel different when traveling home to the Philippines. For these parents, identity was directly linked to home language development and children being able to create understandings of the parents' roots, home language and home culture.

In regard to learning Icelandic, parents' reasons primarily revolved around their children's future prospects in Iceland. Parents thought it most important that their children develop good Icelandic skills so they could succeed at school. More than half of the participants recognized the importance of learning Icelandic for their children's future employment. They also said that learning Icelandic would help children learn about Icelandic culture and thus better adjust to Icelandic society. These figures are understandable as a large number of participants (45%) intended to stay in Iceland. (Only 20% listed the possibility of moving back to their homeland as a reason for home language development). Of the participants who stated that staying in Iceland was a reason for learning Icelandic, all of them listed future education and employment as motivators for learning Icelandic. These findings could be interpreted to mean that participants want to ensure that their children are able to successfully partake in Icelandic society through the use of Icelandic.

The importance and widespread use of English in Iceland added an interesting element to language choice for many of the participants in the study. English is often thought of as a global language or "*lingua franca*". Many people who immigrate to Iceland use English as a bridge language to communicate with others while they are learning Icelandic. English has a very prominent presence in Iceland as many television programs, movies, music, and reading materials are in English. Although the use of English was not directly researched, a third of the participants said that English was used as a second language in the home and 25% listed it as a third language. In the interviews all six respondents mentioned using English as an additional language in some capacity.

English is the first foreign language taught in primary school in Iceland so the participants' children will be faced with learning English as an additional language when they begin primary school. This may affect the choices parents make in regard to language use in the home. In at least one case in the study parents had seriously considered using English as the home language in place of their mother tongue because of its importance as a

global language (Participant 5). In 2012 the City of Reykjavik conducted a survey entitled *“What do parents of foreign descent have to say about preschool functions”* (author’s translation) among immigrant parents with children enrolled in preschool. One of the concerns expressed by participants in that survey was the commonality of English, and the effect it might have on how well their children learn Icelandic and their home language (Reykjavíkurborg, 2012). This is an interesting aspect worthy of further research.

6 Impact of the study

This research study offers insight into parental perspectives, reasoning for language development in both home language and Icelandic, and the use of home language. Data gathered in this study presents a picture of the diverse and complex nature of bilingualism and bilingual language development. The findings of the study suggest the benefit of educators and parents working together to support children's bilingual language development. Educators could benefit from hearing the perspectives, motivations, and methods employed by parents when it comes to home language development. Brooker (2002) asserts that often educators misinterpret parental views towards education as negative or even nonexistent, simply because they do not know what view parents hold. "Teachers who are unaware of parents' actual views may retain stereotypical views about such interests" (Brooker, 2002, p. 11).

The fact that parents in this study were positive and open for cooperation with educators with respect to their children's language development is encouraging. Parents and teachers can work together to promote bilingual language development. Preschool teachers can recommend a wide array of language activities which support good language development such as reading, storytelling, use of pictures, listening to music and the use of computer software and internet resources.

It should also be recommended that policy makers at both local and national levels in Iceland take into account the parental perspectives and motivators presented in this study. There is no mention of bilingual language development in Preschool Act No. 90/2008 or the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools (2012). Preschools are required to adhere to the policies, guidelines and goals set both by law and in the national curriculum. Therefore, emphasis on home language and bilingual development should be a part of language policy and visible to both parents and educators.

In 1992 Iceland ratified the UNICEF Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989). One of the articles of this legally binding document pertains specifically to rights of children with regard to home language development. Article 30 states as follows:

In those states in which ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his own language (UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 30, 1989).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an organization established in 1961 to promote policy for the improvement of economic and social well being around the world. There are currently 34 member countries, Iceland among them. In March 2010 OECD published findings regarding Migrant Education where policy recommendations were made for immigrant students. The policies relevant to this study are as follows:

- **At the national level:**
 - Establishing curricula, guidelines and pedagogy for language and intercultural teaching. Monitoring education outcomes of immigrant students and advancing research, evaluation and feedback.
 - Foster a holistic approach and shared responsibility at all levels, including national governments – not only of the host country, but of sending countries – local governments, schools (principals, language teachers, subject teachers, and classroom teachers), parents and communities and students themselves (OECD, 2010).
- **At the school level:**
 - Strengthen language support.
 - Provide language stimulation and support parents to read at home for their children.
 - Value and validate mother tongue proficiency. Train teachers for diversity, not only language teachers but also subject and classroom teachers.
 - Remove language and cultural barriers for immigrant parents and get their voices heard (OECD, 2010).

Iceland participates in OECD funded research, and should therefore be responsible for upholding policy recommendations set by OECD in the interest of social well being for people residing in Iceland. These recommendations are fundamentally similar to the recommendations being made here in this study.

The situation regarding bilingualism at the preschool level is not bleak. The City of Reykjavík Department of Education has set a good precedent for promoting good practice in schools with its publication, *Multicultural Policy for Preschools* (Menntasvið Reykjavíkurborg, 2006). It provides exemplary guidelines and recommendations (see Chapter 2.4, p. 27). Practical information is also readily available to teachers and parents in various pamphlets or on websites.

Lao (2004) concluded that home language development and maintenance could not be attained without sound and clear commitment from parents. This study tells us that parents are positive about home language use and bilingualism, that they have many reasons for wanting their children to learn both home languages and Icelandic, and that they would like to learn more about language development and work with educators. In a study of Taiwan's language education policy, Oladejo (2006) found that in order for policy to be meaningful and lasting, it must reflect the perceptions and beliefs of the society it is meant to cater to. Immigrant parents residing in Iceland are concerned about their children's welfare and education. They recognize the importance of strong language skills both in the home language and in Icelandic. They see bilingualism as being an advantage and are actively supporting their children's bilingual development.

More emphasis on language policy and practice at the preschool level will benefit both bilingual language learners and the educational system. It is important that policy makers and educators are mindful of the importance and weight parental perspectives can carry. As Shannon & Milian (2002) point out: "The choice and voice of parents are fundamental to the implementation of quality educational programs. Indeed, it is the right of all parents, regardless of ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic background to make informed educational choices for their children" (p. 695-6).

There is a need for more research in the area of bilingual language development at the early childhood level in order to increase understanding and improve practice from the onset of language development. As Nemeth (2012) states: "We know that language is a vital

component of early experiences well before a child can say his first word. We cannot afford to wait until children get to elementary school to start addressing the development of their home languages and their learning of [the school language]" (p. 8).

Despite the various research findings and conclusions described here, this study was not without its limitations. Firstly, it must be stated that researching perspectives about bilingualism is a complex matter which necessitates a broader spectrum of research methods and instruments. The sample size was relatively small and participants' children were all enrolled in the same preschool. This might have affected participants shared knowledge regarding language development and bilingualism, despite the diversity in language backgrounds. The dual role of the researcher/school director could also have influenced participant responses. Closed ended questions in the quantitative questionnaire might have hindered participants from listing further motivational factors or reasons for home language practices. Finally, caution should be taken in making generalizations based on the findings. The perspectives voiced by the participants in the study are personal and individual and not necessarily representative of other parents' views. Nevertheless, the findings of this study draw attention to the diverse and complex nature of home language use and bilingual language development currently found in Icelandic homes and preschools. However, further research is needed to expand our knowledge of bilingual language development and to better inform language policy and practice at all school levels.

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Appendixes

Appendix A. Permission letter to Department of Education

Leyfisbréf til Hildur Skarphéðinsdóttir,
10. September 2012 Skrifstofustjóri – leikskóla

Reykjavík

Ég undirrituð er meistaranemi á Menntavísindasviði Háskóla Íslands og er að gera rannsókn á sviði mál og læsi. Leiðbeinendi minn er Hrafnhildur Ragnarsdóttir prófessor.

Rannsókninni er ætlað að gefa vísbendingar um viðhorf foreldra af erlendu bergi brot um móðurmál og íslenska sem annað mál einnig hvernig foreldra stuðla við örvun í móðurmál á heimili.

Leitað verður til foreldrar með börn í vistun á leikskólanum XXX í XXX XXXX, þar sem leikskólann er með u.þ.b 80% börn í vistum sem tala annað mál en íslenska á heimili.

Með bréfi þessu óska ég góðfúslega eftir leyfi til að leggja viðhorfskönnun fyrir foreldrar með annað mál en íslenska sem þykkja þjónusta við Leikskólinn XXXXX. Könnun verður þýdd á helstu tungumálum sem eru töluð meðal foreldrahóp skólans.

Farið verður með allar upplýsingar sem trúnaðarmál. Ítrúustu nafnleyndar verður gætt þannig að ekki verði hægt að rekja upplýsingar til einstaklinga eða skóla. Öllum gögnum sem safnað verður er vandlega gætt á meðan á rannsókn minni stendur og enginn mun hafa aðgang að þeim nema ég og leiðbeinendi minn í rannsókninni. Gögnunum verður eytt að rannsókn lokinni.

Ég vona að verkefnið þyki áhugavert og vel verði tekið í þessa málaleitan.

Virðingarfyllt,

Nichole Leigh Mosty

Meistaranemi á Menntavísindasviði Háskóla Íslands

Sími: xxx-xxxx or xxx-xxxx

nichole.leigh.mosty@xxxx.is og nlm1@xxxx.is

Ég samþykki hér með þátttöku leikskólans í rannsókn Nichole Leigh Mosty

Hildur Skarphéðinsdóttir, skrifstofustjóri – leikskóla
dagsetning

Appendix B. Letter of consent

Reykjavik 10, september 2012

Dear parents/guardians,

I am a M.Ed. student at the University of Iceland, and am currently conducting research into Language development and literacy. The purpose of this research is to enhance our knowledge regarding parental perspectives of mother language development and Icelandic as a second language, in addition to accumulating information as to how parents practice mother language development in their home environments.

An important part of this research is a special questionnaire devised for parents to fill out. This questionnaire will be used to gather both language background information about the child and parents and how language development is practiced in the home environment.

The questionnaire will be entirely anonymous. Participants are asked neither to write names nor identity numbers (kennitala) on the questionnaire. There are however, descriptive questions about background information.

All questionnaires will be safely guarded strictly by myself during the research process and will only be reviewed by my graduate advisor. All questionnaires will be destroyed when the research is complete.

I respectfully ask for your participation in this research by filling out this questionnaire. By signing this letter you give your consent for your participation and allow me the use of your answers in my research paper. Having given your consent I would like to ask you to return the signed letter to me upon completion.

Best regards and special thanks,
Nichole Leigh Mosty
Graduate Student at Department of Education University of Iceland
Telephone xxx-xxxx
Nichole.leigh.mosty@xxxx.is

I hereby give my consent to participate in Nichole Leigh Mosty's research project as described above.

Signature of parent or guardian

Appendix C. Questionnaire

Background Information:

Year child was born: _____

Country child was born in: _____

How long have you lived in Iceland: _____

Languages spoke in home: check all appropriate answers

- Mother tongue (what) _____
- Icelandic
- Third language (what) _____
- Fourth language (what) _____

Which was the first language your child spoke? _____

At approximately what age? _____

Country and language of origin:

Mother : _____ Language _____

Father: _____ Language _____

What languages are spoken with the child? Check all appropriate answers

Mother:

- Mother tongue
- Icelandic
- Mixed Icelandic /Mother tongue
- Other (what) _____
- Mix of all above

Father:

- Mother tongue
- Icelandic
- Mixed Ice./Mother tongue
- Other (what) _____
- Mix of all above

Number of siblings: _____
Ages: _____

Languages siblings speak:

- Mother tongue of a parent

- Icelandic
- Mixed Icelandic and Mother tongue of a parent
- Other (what) _____

<p style="text-align: center;">Education Father:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Primary school ○ High School Diploma ○ Trade Certificate ○ University ○ Graduate School 	<p style="text-align: center;">Education Mother:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Primary school ○ High School Diploma ○ Trade Certificate ○ University ○ Graduate School
--	--

Place of employment Father: _____

How many hours does father work weekly: _____

Place _____ of _____ employment
Mother: _____

How many hours does mother work weekly: _____

Do you travel to your homeland? _____ Yes _____ No

If Yes how often: _____ How long do you usually reside there: _____ weeks or _____ months

Do you have an interest in learning about language development?
_____ Yes _____ No

Do you have an interest in working together with your child's teacher to learn more about language development?
_____ Yes _____ No

Would you like to own a handbook with information about language development to support you in teaching your child your mother tongue?
_____ Yes _____ No

Home language questionnaire

Please mark all appropriate answers:

- 1. How important is it to you that your child learns your mother tongue?**
 - Very important

- Important
- Indifferent
- Not very important
- Would rather they learn another language

If you marked that you would rather your child learn another language than your mother tongue could you list that language and why

2. Why would you like your child to learn your mother tongue?

- ___ In order to communicate and or understand relatives
- ___ To increase opportunities provided through literacy and education in your mother tongue
- ___ To increase possibilities for employment when old enough to work
- ___ In order to increase your child's knowledge of language and cognitive development in general
- ___ In order to develop an understanding for your religious beliefs
- ___ In order to help sustain or even strengthen cultural and national identity
- ___ Because you plan to move back to your home country eventually
- ___ Other, _____ what?

Please place an X before 3 answers you find to me most important to you

3. How important is it to you that your child learns Icelandic?

- Very important
- Important
- Indifferent
- Not important
- I don't wish for my child to learn Icelandic

4. Why would you like your child to learn Icelandic?

- ___ In order to take part in Icelandic society (communicate)

- ___ In order to learn to read and write for advancement in education
- ___ In order to increase opportunities for employment in Iceland when old enough to work
- ___ In order to support family members here in Iceland (for example through translating for family members who have experienced difficulties in learning Icelandic)
- ___ In order to develop an understanding for your religious beliefs
- ___ In order to develop a better understanding of Iceland and Icelandic culture
- ___ Because you plan on staying in Iceland
- ___ Other, _____ what?

Please place an X before 3 answers you find to be most important to you

5. Does your child have opportunities to meet with people, other than immediate family, who speak your mother tongue?

_____ Yes _____ No

6. If the answer is yes, please mark here all appropriate answers as to where and in what context:

- Church
- In the neighborhood
- In family settings
- Friends of the family
- Cultural centers or events
- School
- When traveling to my home country
- Through telephone Skype or other technological methods
- Other please list _____

7. Please mark all language activities used in your home:

- ___ Reading books (being read books) - How often in a week _____
- ___ Listen to music - How often in a week: _____
- ___ Daily communication - With whom _____
- ___ Video/DVD/Satellite television - How often in a week: _____
- ___ Computer games - How often in a week: _____
- ___ Direct instruction - How often in a week: _____
- ___ Other, what? _____

Please place and X before the 3 answers you find to be most important to you

8. Do you consider your child to be bilingual/ multilingual?

_____ Yes _____ No

9. How would you rate your child's ability in the home language?

- **Very good** (has strong vocabulary understands instructions and can take active part in conversation)
- **Good** (understands most of what is said to them, can use many words in various contexts, asks when does not understand can follow simple instructions)
- **Fair** (you notice that your child is learning vocabulary but has difficulty understanding everything or taking part in conversations)
- **Poor** (your child has very limited understanding of the home language therefore uses very little vocabulary)
- **Very poor** (does not speak the home language and you cannot gage how much he/she understands)

10. How would you rate your child's ability in Icelandic?

- **Very good** (has strong vocabulary understands instructions and can take active part in conversation)
- **Good** (understands most of what is said to them, can use many words in various contexts, asks when does not understand can follow simple instructions)
- **Fair** (you notice that your child is learning vocabulary but has difficulty understanding everything or taking part in conversations)
- **Poor** (your child has very limited understanding of Icelandic and therefore uses very little vocabulary)
- **Very poor** (does not speak Icelandic and you cannot gage how much he/she understands)
- **Do not know** as you do not speak Icelandic with your child

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix D. Consent for interview

Reykjavik 17, October 2012

Dear parents/guardians,

You recently completed for me a questionnaire regarding home language perspectives and language use. I would like to request that you partake in a follow up interview with me. Data gathered in this interview will enable me to better explain perspectives of mother language development and Icelandic as a second language, in addition to how parents use language their home environments.

If you are to grant me permission to interview you I assure you once again that all personal details will be held strictly confidential and all recordings or documentation will be safely guarded strictly by me during the research process, only to be reviewed by my graduate advisor. All data will be destroyed when the research is complete.

By signing this letter you give your consent for your participation and allow me the use of your answers in my research paper. Having given your consent I would kindly to ask you to return the signed letter to me upon completion.

Best regards and special thanks,
Nichole Leigh Mosty
Graduate Student at Department of Education University of Iceland
Telephone xxx-xxxx
Nichole.leigh.mosty@xxxx.is

I hereby give my consent to participate in Nichole Leigh Mosty's research project as described above.

Signature of parent or guardian

Appendix E. Ethnographic Interview – Guideline Questions

1. Can you describe for me the language environment in your home?
(What languages are used, by whom, why ?)
2. Could you tell me how you use language to teach your children language? *(For example: TV or DVD in the home language, computer, books e.t.c)* What do you feel to be most important? Why?
3. What do you do to help your child learn the home language? What about Icelandic, what/how do you help them to learn Icelandic?
4. Does your child like to be read to or listen to stories? What types of books or stories? Could you describe for me a little bit about you and your child's reading or storytelling habits?
5. How do you feel about your child learning more than one language or being multilingual?
6. Do you have any concerns about your child's language development? If so, what are they?
7. What advice would you give other parents raising bilingual children? and why?