

*Foreign preschool Staffs and the increasing number of
bilingual children*

**Candace Alison Loque
300481-2139**

**Kennaraháskóli Íslands
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Kennari: Hanna Ragnarsdóttir

Abstract

I have three reasons why I am writing this paper. The first reason is to give a view of the different reasons why people come to Iceland.

The second reason is to give information on how multicultural education can be useful in a multicultural preschool and the larger community. The fact that there is an active international exchange of academics and cultures through orderly acceptance of university students here in Iceland can only lead to an increase of the number of foreign teachers who will soon be part of the Icelandic work force. To be able to constructively manage conflicts and clashes of ideas in a multicultural environment there is a need for an organization to be able to improve employee productivity by constructively managing the conflict itself through understanding and applying multicultural education. A multicultural environment is an inevitable part of the educational and employment experiences of professionals.

The second purpose of this paper leads me to another concern. It is to give an insight of the importance of acquiring language skills, credibility of employees, competency and social flexibility in a multicultural context. Social flexibility between staff members and the children is important. Their multicultural social interactions can provide excellent opportunities for building global professional networks.

Preface

This is a final paper which is a compulsory requirement to be able to attain a Bachelor of Education degree from the Teachers University of Iceland summer of 2008. The idea of this paper started because of my interest concerning the increasing number of foreign preschool staff members and bilingual children.

I would like to thank my teacher, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, for the privilege of giving me the freedom to work on my own yet had guided and generously shared her extensive knowledge on topics concerning multicultural education. I am grateful that she had corrected my writing and had always provided feedback and suggestions. I have benefited greatly from her guidance, expertise, wisdom, availability and willingness to help me throughout my studies.

I would also like to thank my former teacher, Anna Ingólfssdóttir, for her implicit and explicit knowledge of the Icelandic grammar. The guidance she has provided has helped me select an appropriate technique for presenting grammar items that are found in the grammar book I made available to be used in any interested preschool.

Table of contents

What is multicultural education?	1
Role of the Teacher.....	3
Foreigners or citizens and the sense of belonging.....	4
Different situations of people coming to Iceland.....	4
Criteria for hiring.....	5
Questions.....	6
Interviews and Observations.....	7
Importance of being accepted.....	10
Unlearning discrimination.....	11
Preschool staff may not realize that they are discriminating.....	11
The importance of language	14
Parent's meetings	16
The importance of parent's participation.....	16
Interviews with principals.....	18
Discussion.....	19
Conclusion.....	20
References	22

Introduction:

What is multicultural education?

One of the most important vehicles by which the integration of minorities into the mainstream society can be promoted is through education. However, I would like to go deeper into the reconstruction of the school processes around pluralism. A kind of education which is multicultural. There are endless articles and books about this very subject matter that advocates teaching in a way that cultivates the children's intellectual capabilities from a variety of marginalized groups. Its cornerstones deal around institutionalized racism on children of color, education of minority pupils, sexism, structural inequity, social justice around children from low socio economic backgrounds and classism.

Within groups of children there can be so many different cultures. It does not matter if the children come from the same country or not. The goal of multicultural education is to be able to break down the hierarchy of cultures which usually occurs when people of different cultures come together. The kind of teaching must be in a way that the new individual would feel welcomed to the existing group and in which the certain individual learns more about his own culture which then will make a strong foundation of his/her thinking ability (Guðrún 1999:37).

Good relationships between the staff members and the parents of the children are very important. The staff members should encourage the parents to take part in school activities. By doing so, they will be able to see the life of their child within school premises as well as their child's daily encounters (Hernandez 2001:22).

Having teachers who come from different cultural backgrounds is even better although it is quite difficult to find teachers who have learned multicultural teaching (Teidt 2002: 50).

Multicultural education is not only for foreigners. It is for everybody. Learning how to live in a multicultural environment is very important to be able to be an active member of a multicultural society (Hernandez 2001:8). The goal of multicultural education is to be able to fully develop the literacy, personal, social and cultural development of the children making them active individuals who bear respect and responsibility towards a multicultural world.

Behind these goals are the staff members and the school who are role models and who have the mission to help children achieve excellence in the things they do (Hernandez 2001: 22).

If the children are not taught to tolerate and indiscriminate other cultures, they will take the views of the society instead. It is important to teach children to put themselves in someone else's shoes and to show consideration that all views are equal (Derman-Sparks 1989:2).

Eduoard Herriot who is a French politician once said that culture is what is always going to be left with us even when we have forgotten everything else. In many ways, he is actually right because the culture of an individual can give so much influence on how the individual acts or behaves even though he is not aware of it (Hernandez 2001:58).

I first became interested with this subject matter when I made a thesis about it which led me to the idea of writing about the foreign preschool staff members and the increasing number of foreign children. Later I began to think about the importance of language and what the preschool can benefit from having foreign staff members. To be able to focus more on this subject, I decided to observe for some time the relationships of five foreign preschool staff members with the children as well as with the other staff. I also took interviews to be able to have a deeper insight on their views and ideas and to understand the challenges they face concerning linguistic and cultural differences from Iceland.

Role of the Teacher

Making children responsible for specific parts of their work and giving them freedom to accomplish their work in a way that they think best is a good way to allow children to make mistakes and struggle on their own. In this way, the teacher is delegating his authority. This does not mean that the learning process is uncontrolled because in the end the teacher evaluates the final product and thus remain in control. The more common practice which is direct supervision which is in contrast with delegating authority. In this case, the teacher tells the students how to do their tasks and what their tasks are. The teacher observes the children closely and right away prevents them from making mistakes and errors (Cohen 1994: 2).

Through play children derive new knowledge, new emotions and skills. A child expresses itself through play. It is its means of expression, its dominant activity and its most important route to learning and development. In the preschool, play is the counterstone of the

child's activities and is a child's normal form of expression. A child can learn many things that no one can teach it through its play. It is also an extensive self education with a mixture of fun and earnestness. A child's experience is reflected through its play (National Curriculum Guide for Preschools 2005:13).

I think it is relevant to have an introductory course for foreign staff members before they begin to work in the preschool. By doing so, the foreign staff will be able to understand the reasons why there are different kind of approaches in the preschool here in Iceland.

Efling Stéttarfélag is one of the largest unions in Iceland which covers all areas of unskilled labour. With their courtesy they support their members in their efforts to further their education if they go to school. All preschool staff members who have worked in the preschool for at least three years, over 22 years of age and who have finished two hundred thirty hours of a course relative to working in the preschool, is given a chance to enroll in Mimir Símenntun, a school in Iceland. The course available is a two year thirty one unit course which is called "leikskólabrú" or the kindergarten bridge (Efling Stéttarfélag 2007).

Foreigners or citizens and the sense of belonging

There are different reasons why people decide to migrate. It is not possible to say that people have the same reason. People sometimes choose to move from one country to another without anybody forcing them to do so. Sometimes the reason is for economic opportunity to be able to find a better job and a better land but sometimes it is just to simply search for adventure. The most common reason is to be united to their love ones. Although sometimes, the reason is to avoid starvation, escape unbearable family situations, avoid revolution and war and escape religious and political persecution (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1997).

Different situations of people coming to Iceland

People come to Iceland because of different reasons. Some of them are born here and some of them naturalised. Some are adopted and others come from mixed families. All children born in Iceland or those who have Icelandic mothers are all citizens of this country.

However, some people come here as refugees and it is Red Cross Iceland (RKÍ) and the flóttamannastofnun Sameinunðu Þjóðanna (UNHCR) who assist them with their needs. The government decides how many refugees are allowed to come. After the decision, the RKÍ together with the UNHCR prepares the work to be done for their arrival. These two organisations will then work together with the community in which they are going to be a part of. Red Cross Iceland has the authority from the Icelandic government to help refugees adapt to the Icelandic society which is in most cases very different from where they come from. RKÍ also takes care in finding shelter while RKÍ volunteers takes care of collecting clothes, household appliances and furnitures. Volunteers are then at hand to help refugees whenever they need them. Shortly upon their arrival, Icelandic courses begin. As they acquire language skills, it will then be easier for them to interact as well as get into the Icelandic society. Adults are required to attend a half day course for at least nine months while the children learn Icelandic in the preschool or the gradeschool along with tutoring. According to the Ministry of Social Affairs (Félagsmálaráðuneytið), RKÍ is responsible of helping the refugees during their first year of residence in the country. (Red Cross Iceland, 2006).

Moving to Iceland is exciting but also difficult. Schools rank as one of the most confusing issues. Language is another because it reflects the culture, mentality and the spirit of the nation. Preschool aged children are usually comfortable with their mother tongue and thus the importance of retaining their language skills of their mother tongue and learning a new language is very important. An issue on changing from one language to another is another problem. The task of the Icelandic preschool is to teach Icelandic to foreign children but also help to maintain the proficiency of the child's native language (Multicultural Policy for Preschools 2005: 8).

Criteria for hiring

These are the criteria for hiring people to work in Icelandic preschools. These criteria was passed by the Reykjavik City Department of Education.

The first criteria for hiring is through an interview which is conducted in Icelandic. The second criteria is that the person must have a valid residence and work permit in Iceland. The

same regulations apply to the hiring of foreigners as to the hiring of Icelanders although it is advised that foreigners must learn more Icelandic.

An introductory course is held especially for foreigners who wish to work in an Icelandic preschool (Multicultural Policy for Preschools 2005:10).

Although these are the only requirements. It is a fact that it takes more than an interview to know how a person is. The way the person works with the children and with the other staff cannot be seen only by interviewing.

Questions

The world is changing a lot. It is becoming more multicultural. Learning to get along cultures, races and religions can result to productivity in the workplace. The same thing is happening to Iceland. Some of the preschools have more than one foreign staff member. Some have been living here for a long time and have acquired Icelandic language skills. Others, however still lack vocabulary necessary to be used in common everyday situations in the classroom. These leads me to ask how foreign preschool staff members get along with the other staff and with the children considering that language is an important part of being socially active.

To understand better the real situations occurring in the Icelandic preschool, I asked permission from two preschools in Breiðholt to do fieldwork. My fieldwork lasted a week for three hours during different times of the day in each preschool last April 2007. I chose Breiðholt area because according to Stefna og starfsáætlun Leikskólasviðs og Menntasviðs Reykjavíkurborgar 2007, these two preschools had the highest number of foreign children autumn of 2006. I also know that both preschools had many foreign staff members.

I was given the chance to observe one Russian kindergarten staff member who had been living here for six years and is an art teacher. In another preschool, I was given the chance to observe a twenty three year old young woman from Kosovo who had been living here since she was twelve.

In another preschool I continued to talk to three more foreign preschool staff members . One from Spain. Another from Bulgaria and the last person I talked to was from Albania.

By the end of each week, I took an interview. Mainly, I wanted to find out how it has been coping up with Icelandic. I did not need to focus too much on their relationships with the other staff and the children because I already had the answers through my observations. However, with personal sensitivity and adaptability as well as making sure that I was staying within the bounds of my protocol, I took short interviews.

Through observations the behaviour can be described as it occurs naturally. One form of data collection is through an interview. A direct verbal interaction between the interviewer and the respondent occurs in an interview. Questions are asked orally and the subjects' responses are recorded. Obtaining information that would have not been offered otherwise can be done by establishing proper rapport with the subject. Through an interview, greater depth and richness of information is gained (McMillan 2004: 64 and 167).

During my interview, I found out that none among the five staff I interviewed had ever heard about the curriculum basis or the Aðalnámskrá leikskóla. Four out of five said that they would like to learn Icelandic more but they do not have the time and the lessons are not cheap. All five of them think that there should be an Icelandic course just especially for preschool staff members.

I have also decided to write a grammar booklet which focuses on concepts and ideas that are used in the preschool. My idea is to create a handy, helpful and easy to use reading material that helps foreign staff members to be able to say things right. This grammar book will serve as a reference to be able to modify and inflect the forms of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals and verbs that are commonly used in the daily preschool activities depending on their roles in the sentence.

Interviews and Observations

For five consecutive days I observed the relationship of one Russian preschool staff with the children in the classroom she was working with. I was there for two to three hours during different times of the day. She has been living here in Iceland for six years and is an art teacher. All the time I was there, I have observed that her relationship with the children was very good and they liked her very much. Although, one thing that bothered me was that she almost never let the children do their work on their own. It seemed that she does not lead them

to be able to do activities themselves, instead she was always helping them too much. During the first few days I was there I thought that she was just uncomfortable having me around that is why maybe she wanted to show off by helping the children as much as she can. However, it went on until the last day I was there and then I understood that this was just how she is. I could see that the other staff tried to stop her politely but she didn't seem to think it was a problem. She had applied her culture of teaching children to an Icelandic preschool. She had a different idea on how to raise children and a different pedagogy. When I interviewed her, she talked mostly about how different it is here in Iceland and how she does not agree that children learn through play. She thinks that children should start their academic life as soon as they enter preschool. In her opinion, playing almost the whole day is a waste of time. I asked her if she attended an introductory course when she started working in the preschool, her answer was that there was no need and there was nothing like that.

The second preschool staff member I observed had very good relationship with the children and the staffs. I talked to her a lot of times and she was always full of life. It was great that in the classroom she was in, there was a child who came from the same country as she does. Everytime the mother of the child came to fetch her child, she talked to her and their relationship was great. They always talked in their mother tongue because the child's mother does not speak Icelandic. From what I have observed, I saw that this certain parent felt so secure that her child was going to be with someone from the same country as she is from. In fact, she always talked to her for a little while everytime they met. This is a great example of why it is also beneficial to have foreign staff in the preschools here in Iceland especially when parents do not speak Icelandic. Having more foreign staff members increases the possibility that some of them might speak the same language as some of the parents. This can help foreign parents feel that they can connect to the school and it also gives them the opportunity to speak out what they wish to say without any language limitations.

After observing both of the preschool staff members as well as talking to them. I continued to talk to three more foreign staff. The third person I talked to is from Spain and she has lived here for two years. As I talked to her, I found out that she knew very little Icelandic when she began working in the preschool. She said that she was very unsure how it would be for her but she knew it was going to be better because she was during that same time also beginning her lessons in Icelandic in the University of Iceland. She said that learning Icelandic in school as well working in a preschool here in Iceland has made it a lot easier for her to learn the

language in a very short span of time. She thinks that it is great to work with the staff as well because they often correct her when she makes mistakes.

The fourth person I observed was from Bulgaria. She talks very little Icelandic. She was working in a classroom in which the children were two and a half years and younger. There was not much conversation required but it was of course necessary to talk to the children. She almost never talked to them. After some time she began talking in Bulgarian to one child and I thought it was great because the child was from Bulgaria. Although, I was a bit disappointed after a few days because I found out that the child she was talking to was actually her own child. I could not understand why she was working in the same classroom where her child is and how she even got the job when the people around were always translating for her.

The fifth person I observed was from Albania. When I first met her, I thought she was Icelandic because she spoke the language so fluently. This girl spoke five languages namely French, Italian, Icelandic, English and of course Albanian. I think she was brilliant. Her skills can be of good use to the preschool but when I interviewed her she said she was going to change her job soon. The reason is because she does not somehow feel like she fits in. I think that she will be a great loss to the preschool. The thing that bothered me was that the other staff did not even know that she spoke that many languages. It seemed like they do not think of it as an advantage.

Importance of being accepted

Children need friends because it is more fun to have them and they can learn so much among their peers. They learn that they are not always the ones who rule and that they should let others have the chance to be able to speak out their thoughts. Children need to be able to learn how to play together because it can give them so much benefit in the future since everything starts with a good foundation to be able to reach it's end.

Good relationship between the staff and the children is very important. If the relationship is good then the child is given the opportunity to develop a positive image of himself that will lead to the development of the social skills of the child. There are three main factors that are important in having a good relationship with the child. These are the relationship with the child, the connection between the child and the staff and lastly the communication between

both parties. In regards to experience, background, expectations and differences in cultural views. The staff is the most important bridge who help stimulate the social knowledge and assistance in building up social relationships like friendships (Katz and McClellan 1997: 85).

The experiences that children have can help them develop more knowledge and understanding towards others. For example the teacher might ask the children how a child who has been absent for some amount of time can be able to fit in the present schedule of their school activities when the child comes back. How the other children in the other class feel about the present activities? Do they want to know what activities they are supposed to do during the present time and what the other class is doing? Through this we can be able to give importance to the activities that the other children are doing and also be able to share the feelings of others (Katz and McClellan 1997: 86-87).

It is important that adults do not practice discrimination towards the child because they can give a negative influence towards the whole group. Sometimes this can cause children not to be able to fit in the group or not to be able to make any friends at all (Bonnievie 1999).

Unlearning discrimination

There is discrimination in the workplace when people are treated differently because of their personal characteristics like race, gender, or sexual orientation rather than their ability to perform their job. It is hard to access jobs, promotions and compensations when there is discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination can either be intentional or unintentional and is characterised by the motivation behind it. Employees are less productive, less satisfied and less loyal to their organizations when they are treated improperly. Discrimination also occurs when a capable individual is not given a job position or a promotion because of his communication skills (Mor-Barak 2005: 54, 37 and 148).

The way the people in the dominant culture view and evaluate the performance of a minority of whatever kind, can lead to difficulties like exaggeration of poor performance and the neglect of their contributions in meetings (Kandola and Fullerton 109).

If there will be no special preference given to any group and all people will compete on an equal basis, then the most talented people will win the most desirable positions (Stockdale and Crosby 2006: 225).

It is important that all staff members must understand the organisation's visions and the benefits to be gained. They must also be kept continually updated and must be included on the decision making on how to proceed (Kandola and Fullerton 2000: 83).

Preschool staff may not realize that they are discriminating

To acknowledge the differences of various cultures is the framework against discrimination. Preschools that target the appreciation of diversity foster the ability of children to coexist with different cultures and teach them to appreciate that they are unique and different as well as have fun in learning about others. It is the role of the preschool to be able to teach children that all individuals are due respect and acceptance irrespective of differences.

In order to avoid discriminatory behaviours it is important that the preschool staff members be aware of the differences between each member of the classroom and bring all its members of different racial or ethnic groups into unrestricted and equal association. It is also very important that we must learn and unlearn to belittle other cultures besides our own as well as diminish the concept of stereotyping that we were taught when we were children ourselves (Brown 1998: 49-51).

There are a number of things that are different between cultures and it is important that all preschool staff members should be familiar to them in order to approach the children and their parents in an appropriate and respectful way.

Nonverbal communication for example can sometimes be misinterpreted. Gestures are inextricably woven in each individual and culture. Every country has its own way of saying things. However, although sometimes it is informative and entertaining, it can also be dangerous. It is a fact that very few gestures are universally understood. Some gestures that include hand signals maybe perfectly acceptable to some cultures but rude and obscene in other cultures. It is important to consider that simply because a country practices certain cultural habits or patterns does not mean that the rest of the world does.

In the Western countries for example calling someone to come by folding all the five fingers up and down is normal but it is very insulting to Veitnamese people. Either it will mean that

you are calling a dog or that you look down on that certain individual (Ingibjörg Hafstað,1994).

In order to establish peaceful communication, we must be able to understand that there are different patterns of human activities in each culture. The behavioural and linguistic diversity should be treated with respect and ignorance should be considered as a dangerous thing. It is better to abstain from saying something and just admire if unusual things happen because sometimes we do not really understand everything and it is better to think that maybe we lack some sense of imagination.

In Asia, people use an ordinary pot to make tea. Usually, people do not have an electronic kettle. It happened that a child during play was told by a preschool staff member that she was using the wrong thing. It would be a shame to not consider that maybe the child is doing just as how the child has seen his/her mother at home (Brown 1998: 52).

Another incident happened when one child was practicing to use a knife during lunch time for a couple of weeks. In his/her home, they eat Pakistani food like chapitis and rice which are regularly eaten with just simply using the hands because this is how they eat. The child is discovering how to use utensils which is new to him/her. All the preschool staff members are encouraging the child to continue practicing. However, during one lunch time the child tries to fork up his bean but after a number of unsuccessful trials, the child gives up and picks the bean up with his hand and then eats it. During this exact period of time, a preschool staff passes by the corridor and sees what the child is doing and tells the child that only animals eat with their hands. This particular preschool staff has discriminated the child without knowing that he/she is already doing so by implying that because only animals eat with their hands then the child's parents and the child him/herself are members of the lower species (Brown 1998:53).

Once, another Asian child was very keen and excited that he/she was going to be in preschool but after a few months time his/her view changes. The child drastically changes from being an active participant who is full of life to a child who does not want to go to school anymore. This child begins to wet his trousers and have nightmares. Finally, the child stops to talk to everyone and begins to get discriminated by his classmates. In the end, the preschool staff does not try to find the root of the problem but instead advises the parents of the child to find another school where there are a lot of Asian children (Brown 1998: 58).

Selecting literature is also relevant and the child's home culture should also be considered. Preschool staff members should not expect that children would immediately relate to the books that are introduced to them. It is good to have a varied selection of books that contain characters that the children can relate to themselves.

I think it is relevant to have an introductory course for foreign staff members before they begin to work in the kindergarten. By doing so, they will be able to understand the reason why there is a different kind of approach in the kindergartens here in Iceland.

The examples above show that there is an immediate relevance to educate preschool staff to be able to meet the needs of children regardless of their race and to be able to diminish discrimination. Preschool staff members may not realize that they already are discriminating. There is a need for them to attend a seminar that will enable them to understand the cultures of the children and other staff members in the classroom. This seminar should be provided by the school.

The importance of language

Mankind's most important means of communication is language. The use of the mother tongue joins people together and strengthens their feelings of solidarity. Language is also a major factor in the culture of nations and ethnic groups. The Icelandic nation of today is linked with the past through the literary heritage and language. That is why developing language ability is very important, be it in conversation, when asking demanding questions, when reading for children, telling them stories and teaching them poems and rhymes. In as many preschool activities as possible, language stimulation should be integrated. Often it is through play that language is being used but there are a lot more everyday activities that can stimulate the use of language (National Curriculum Guide for Preschools 2005: 22).

The usage of the language that surrounds children is very important especially when the child is in the process of learning. Children learn a new language by listening and seeing things in the preschool and with talking to the staff and their peers. The preschool must be able to provide a healthy language environment that gives the children the opportunity to use the language, listen, create ideas and improve thinking, talk to each other and exchange ideas.

This environment should either be in a small or large group composed of children of the same age and adults. Children should be encouraged to use the language (Kolbrún Vigfúsdóttir 2005: 7).

Lev Vygotsky (1986) said that the environment plays a significant role in the acquisition of language and other dimensions of cognitive development. Children's experiences of language are socially oriented (Blackledge 1994:115). It is through talking and interaction with others that the child is exposed to the communicative functions of the language (Wood 1988:131). He also said that what a child is able to do today with his teacher's help, is what he can do alone in the future (Wrigley 2000: 18). That a child can learn a language much better when the child interacts with another child who knows and speaks the language well (Gregory 1997:129).

According to Vygotsky, acquiring the means to communicate clearly is the factor that creates cognitive and linguistic progress which are viewed as the two sides of the developmental coin (Wood 1988:132).

In contrast is Chomsky's theory that a child is a language "acquirer" who discovers and makes creative, generative use of rules from the very start of language development. He displaced the image of the child as a learner who develops a language by being taught and reinforced. His theory implies that children do their language acquisition. This opened the question to researchers if adult talk to children is largely irrelevant to their development. One line of evidence is when children form plural forms of words like mouse to mouses and cats to catses which are extremely unlikely to be the result of imitating adult speech. Although earlier in life they used the correct form which is mice and cats (Wood 1988: 97-100).

Among 640 children in the preschools in Reykjavik year 2006, there are 385 children who have either one foreign parent. Among the children, there are all in all 85 nationalities (Stefna og starfsáætlun). This data clearly shows us that there are a lot of bilingual children who attend the preschools in Reykjavik.

Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages fluently. According to Vygotsky, a child's understanding of his native language is enhanced by learning another language. The child becomes more purposefully conscious in using words as tools of his thought and expressive

means for it's ideas (Vygotsky 1986:160). He also said that one does not return to the immediate world of objects and does not repeat past linguistic developments. The individual uses instead his native language as a mediator between the world of objects and the new language (Vygotsky 1986:161).

Parent's meetings

The law states that " Preschool principals are suppose to hold meetings with the parents and the staff for the benefit of the children" (Icelandic Gradeschool Law1994). It also states in the National Curriculum for Preschools that it is important to use the parent's knowledge of their children to understand the children better. It is also important to find ways that the parents will be able to actively take part with the activities that are beneficial for their children (National Curriculum Guide for Preschools 2005: 36).

Research shows that parents participation gives positive effects in their children's early learning and education. Active involvement of parents helps children to demonstrate higher levels of achievement, better attendance and helps children display more positive attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, preschool staff need to perceive parents as allies rather than adversaries (Rodd 2006: 221). Better relationships between the adults and children and between adults themselves help develop the feelings of safety, security and trust which are characterized by openness and sharing between people (Rodd 2006:65).

The importance of parent's participation

Care and education always come together and are inseparable. Parents are the first teachers of their children. For this very reason, it is clear that good relationship with the parents and the staff is very important. Whatever the situation is, it is still very important that the parents or the caretakers of the child can be able to build up trust with the preschool staff members and be able to feel secure when they leave the most important extensions of their lives to their hands (Moylett 2005:60).

During the adjustment period of the child there has to be a key person who the parents can trust. This is where the mother of the child experiences and adjusts to different experiences which is also the time in which the preschool teachers show the interest towards the child,

knowing that they partly are to take over the role as also being the mother of the child. Mothers who are not able to find a key person to be able to trust may doubt if the decision of putting her child to school might be wrong . Being not able to connect and build her trust to any of the preschool staff members may end up that she might criticise and feel unsure about leaving her child in the preschool. Mothers say that it is important that they find support from the preschool staff members and that being able to have more information helps them to have positive reactions (Dalli 2002:40-41).

Preschool staff members who do not try to find out the needs of the children will never have the opportunity to know the children much better than how they already know them. Parents know their children very well, almost their every move, what they like and dislike. They know the rate of their development and their anxieties. These knowledge that the parents have of their children may never be discovered by the preschool staff members before they talk to the parents. There is so much information that parents can give. These informations should be dealt with respect. Knowledge from the parents should be valued with acceptance and trust between the parents and the preschool staff members (Moylett 2005:60).

When children have more stable and safe relationships with the parents and preschool staff members, it can support their development more. We should of course take note that parents and preschool staff members have different views on the children. Preschool staff members look at the children in the group as a whole but parents only has concern to the need of their child. Parents of very young children need more trust on the preschool staff members. It is easier for the preschool staff members to have closer relationships to the children when the parents get to know them better. The views of the parents can give a lot of influence on how the child will feel towards the preschool (Niss 2006:14-16). Parents who does not know how to speak the language of the nation they are living are mostly those who does not show up during parents meeting. That is why it is most important to translate everything so that everyone can understand and take part (Conteh 2003: 43). Parents feel more welcomed if they understand what is going on. In this case, foreign preschool staff members may be of help. When the parents see that it is not only them who are different, then they would feel safer in the preschool environment.

Interviews with principals

I took interviews from two preschool principals and asked them the questions I had in mind. The first principal I interviewed said that when she first employed a foreign preschool staff, she was very unsure if it was a good idea but she just had to take the risk because they needed people and there was no Icelander who applied for the vacancy. She said that if two applicants are both qualified and one of them speaks Icelandic better than the other then she would choose that person. All of the foreign preschool staff that she employed are well educated and had shown much interest in their job. All of the foreign preschool staff members she employed stayed for some time before changing their jobs. Over the years, her opinion on hiring foreigners has greatly changed. She says that it is not important for the foreign preschool staff to go to school and learn more Icelandic because they already know enough and Icelanders themselves do not speak Icelandic right. Although, the foreigners themselves enroll to learn more Icelandic even though they had not been told to. She thinks that the children especially those who are bilingual can benefit a lot from having foreign preschool staff members because even though they might not speak the same language, they usually help the foreign children and parents to feel safer. Lastly, she is not afraid of having more foreign preschool staff members because due to her experience, they learn to speak the language sooner than she expected. Parents think it is great that the school itself provides a multicultural environment. In their preschool, they make sure that there is only one foreign preschool staff in each classroom. Lastly, the only thing that bothers her is that the foreign staff members do not usually show up during meetings and when they do attend, there is always some misunderstanding.

The second principal from whom I took an interview with told me that she has not had any problem with having foreign staff members because they can relate to the parents of the same cultural background as them. In this way closer connections to some of the parents were achieved. Sometimes, the foreign preschool staff members also became translators for the parents.

Discussion

A multicultural workplace accommodates a mix of workers from different ethnic backgrounds. The increasing number of foreigners working in the preschools here in Iceland is one of the challenges that need to be approached in the right manner. This can be done through multicultural education. Another challenge is the increasing number of bilingual children. Understanding the norms of other cultures can be beneficial to create a healthy environment. Successful relationship is the key to success. Understanding the values, traditions, behavior and eliminating stereotypes can promote better atmosphere in the workplace. Different attitudes, beliefs, customs and values of all the preschool staff members and the children should be taken into account to be able to develop successful relationships between each other.

Language is another challenge. It is the most important means of communication. The difficulty of fluently speaking a language is a common problem. To be able to learn a language well, one has to take a lot of risks. Icelandic preschool staff members should encourage the foreign preschool staff to continue taking risks because by doing so they will be able to learn more. I have always found it amazing that children can separate and not confuse words in their native language and their second language. Preschool staff members should make sure that the child will not replace his/her native language as he/she learns a second language. A strong foundation of learning another language is through keeping the first one.

Parents should also be considered an important part of the child's learning because it is through them that we can learn more about the child. If the parents come from a different cultural background, we must allow the foreign preschool staff members to reach their trust. Through this, we can expect better participation from the parents in school activities.

My general objective is to continue to understand different cultures and apply multicultural education in the preschool that I am working.

Conclusion

It is very obvious that having foreign staff members in the preschools is a very big part of multicultural education. Focusing on this branch of this very wide subject has given me a lot of insights on how much there is to be done to be able to succeed on creating an active multicultural environment. To ensure that there is a positive outcome in the relationship between foreign preschool staff members with the other staff and also with the children, I have realized that we should focus not only on how children can benefit but also how the foreign preschool staff members can contribute actively to the benefit of everyone involved. After my observations and interviews with five foreign preschool staff, I have also realized that there is a need for them to attend an introductory seminar before they start to work. Although, they had very little problems with the Icelandic language, I realize that there is a great need for the preschool to provide free or cheap carry on Icelandic courses as well as free necessary seminars for all the foreign preschool staff to be able to actively take part of the growing multicultural Icelandic preschools and be ready to meet the increasing number of foreign children.

Útileikir.

Hér er eltingaleikur
Um eltingaleik
Frá eltingaleik
Til eltingaleiks
Farðu í eltingaleik í kringum garðinn
Farðu í eltingaleik ásamt/með hinum börnunum

Hér eru eltingaleikir
Um eltingaleiki
Frá eltingaleikjum
Til eltingaleikja
Farið þið í eltingaleiki



Hér er haust
Um haust
Frá hausti
Til hausts
Það er komið haust.
Á haustin detta laufblöðin af trjámum.
Á eftir sumrinu kemur haustið



Hér er hjól
Um hjól
Frá hjóli
Til hjóls
Hjólaðu á þríhjólinu
Viltu fara að hjóla?
Viltu ganga frá hjólinu þegar að þú ert búin/n að leika þér með það?
Hjólið er inni í skúr
Hver vill fá hjól?



Hér er hrífa
Um hrífu
Frá hrífu
Til hrífu
Leiktu þér með hrífuna í sandkassanum/snjónum

Hér eru hrífur
Um hrífur
Frá hrífum

Til hrífa

Leikið ykkur með hrífurnar í sandkassanum/snjónum



Hér er húfa

Um húfu

Frá húfu

Til húfu

Þarna í hillunni er húfan þín

Þetta er húfan þín/þessa húfu átt þú

Settu á þig húfuna

Vertu með húfuna á höfðinu

Hér eru húfur

Um húfur

Frá húfum

Til húfa

Þarna í hillunni eru húfurnar ykkar

Þetta eru húfurnar ykkar/þessar húfur eigið þið

Setjið húfurnar á ykkur

Verið þið með húfurnar á höfðinu ykkar



Hér er kastali

Um kastala

Frá kastala
Til kastala
Farðu og leiktu þér í kastalanum
Leiktu þér í rennibrautinni sem er á kastalanum
Leiktu þér hjá kastalanum

Hér eru kastalar
Um kastala
Frá kastölum
Til kastala
Leikið ykkur í kastölunum
Leikið ykkur í rennibrautunum sem eru á kastölunum
Leikið ykkur hjá kastölunum



Hér er pollagalli
Um pollagalla
Frá pollagalla
Til pollagalla
Þarna á snaganum er pollagallinn þinn
Þetta er pollagallinn þinn/þennan pollagalla átt þú
Farðu í pollagallann þinn
Vertu í pollagallanum þínum

Hér eru pollagallar
Um pollagalla
Frá pollagöllum
Til pollagalla
Þarna á snögunum eru pollagallarnir ykkar
Þetta eru pollagallarnir ykkar/þessa pollagalla eigið þið
Farið þið í pollagallana ykkar
Verið þið í pollagöllunum ykkar



Hér er röð
Um röð
Frá röð
Til raðar
Farið þið í einfalda röð.
Ekki fara úr röðinni.

Hér eru raðir
Um raðir
Frá röðum
Til raða
Farið þið í einfalda röð
Farið ekki úr röðinni



Hér er róla
Um rólu
Frá rólu
Til rólu
Farðu og leiktu þér í rólunni
Leiktu þér hjá rólunni

Hér eru rólur
Um rólur

Frá rólum
Til róla
Leikið ykkur í rólunum
Leikið ykkur hjá rólunum



Hér er sandkassi
Um sandkassa
Frá sandkassa
Til sandkassa
Farðu og leiktu þér í sandkassanum
Leiktu þér hjá sandkassanum
Leiktu þér með dótið í sandkassanum

Hér eru sandkassar
Um sandkassa
Frá sandkassa
Til sandkassa
Leikið ykkur í sandkössunum
Leikið ykkur hjá sandkössunum
Leikið ykkur með dótið í sandkössunum



Hér er skófla
Um skóflu

Frá skóflu
Til skóflu
Leiktu þér með skófluna
Mokaðu sandinn/snjóinn með skóflunni

Hér eru skóflur
Um skóflur
Frá skóflum
Til skófla
Leikið ykkur með skóflurnar
Mokið þið sandinn/snjóinn með skóflunum



Hér eru skór
Um skó
Frá skóm
Til skóa
Þarna á gólfinu eru skórnir þínir.
Þessa skó átt þú/þetta eru skórnir þínir
Farðu í skóna þína.
Vertu í skónum þínum

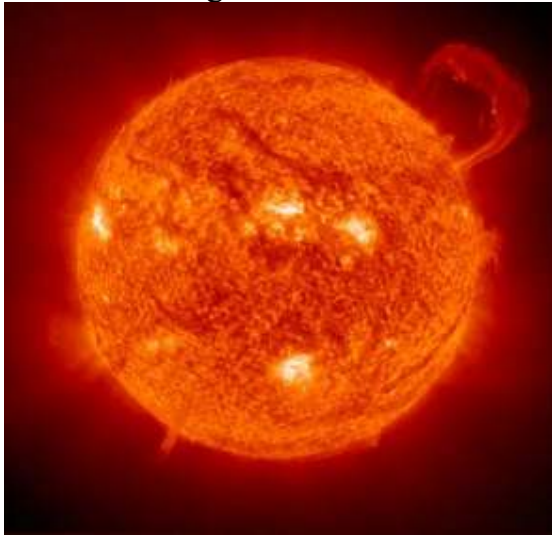
Hér eru skór
Um skó
Frá skóm
Til skóa
Þarna á gólfinu eru skórnir ykkar.
Þessa skó eigið þið/þetta eru skórnir ykkar

Farið þið í skóna ykkar
Verið þið í skónum ykkar



Hér er snjór
Um snjó
Frá snjó
Til snjós
Við ætlum að leika okkur í snjónum
Eigum við að fletja engla í snjónum?
Búum til snjóhús
Hvað finnst þer skemmtilegast að gera úti í snjónum?

Hér er sól
Um sól
Frá sólu
Til sólar.
Sólin skín í dag.



Hér eru stígvél
Um stígvél
Frá stígvélum

Til stígvéla
Þarna á gólfinu eru stígvélin þín
Þetta eru stígvélin þín/þessi stígvél átt þú
Farðu í stígvélin þín
Vertu í stígvélunum þínum

Hér eru stígvél
Um stígvél
Frá stígvélum
Til stígvéla
Þarna á gólfinu eru stígvélin ykkar
Þetta eru stígvélin ykkar/þessi stígvél eigið þið
Farið þið í stígvélin ykkar
Verið þið í stígvélunum ykkar



Hér er sumar
Um sumar
Frá sumri
Til sumars.
Í sumar ætlum við að hjóla



Hér eru ullarsokkar

Um ullarsokka
Frá ullarsokkum
Til ullarsokka
Þarna eru ullarsokkarnir þínir
Þetta eru ullarsokkarnir þínir/þessa ullarsokka átt þú
Farðu í ullarsokkana þína
Vertu í ullarsokkunum þínum

Hér eru ullarsokkar
Um ullarsokka
Frá ullarsokkum
Til ullarsokka
Þarna eru ullarsokkarnir ykkar
Þetta eru ullarsokkarnir ykkar/þessa ullarsokka eigið þið
Farið þið í ullarsokkana ykkar
Verið þið í ullarsokkunum ykkar



Hér er úlpa
Um úlpu
Frá úlpu
Til úlpu
Þarna á snaganum er úlpan þín
Þetta er úlpan þín/þessa úlpu átt þú
Farðu í úlpuna þína
Vertu í úlpunni

Hér eru úlpur
Um úlpur
Frá úlpum
Til úlpna
Þarna á snögunum eru úlpurnar ykkar
Þetta eru úlpurnar ykkar/þessar úlpur eigið þið

Farið þið í úlpurnar ykkar
Verið þið í úlpunum ykkar



Hér er vegasalt
Um vegasalt
Frá vegasalti
Til vegasalts
Farðu og leiktu þér á vegasaltinu
Farðu og leiktu þér hjá vegasöltunum

Hér eru vegasölt
Um vegasölt
Frá vegasöltum
Til vegasalta
Leikið ykkur á vegasöltunum
Leikið ykkur hjá vegasöltunum



Hér eru vettlingar
Um vettlinga
Frá vettlingum
Til vettlinga
Farðu í vettlingana þína.

Þarna í hillunni eru vettlingarnir þínir.
Þetta eru þínir vettlingar/þessa vettlinga átt þú
Vertu í vettlingunum.

(Vettlingar beygjat eins í eintölu og í fleirtölu).
Farið þið í vettlingana ykkar
Þarna í hillunni eru vettlingarnir ykkar
Þetta eru vettlingarnir ykkar/ þessa vettlinga eigið þið
Verið þið í vettlingunum ykkar



Hér er vetur
Um vetur
Frá vetri
Til veturs.
Í vetur kemur snjórinn.
Um veturinn var kalt.



Hér er vor
Um vor
Frá vori
Til vors
Í vor bráðnar snjórinn.
Um vorið kemur Lóan til að kveða burt snjóinn
Um vorið fara lækir og ár að renna



Innileikur.

Hér er bangsi
Um bangsa
Frá bangsa
Til bangsa
Þarna er bangsinn þinn
Þetta er bangsinn þinn
Leiktu þér með bangsann þinn
Leiktu þér hjá bangsanum

Hér eru bangsar
Um bangsa
Frá böngsum
Til bangsa
Þarna eru bangsarnir ykkar
Þetta eru bangsarnir ykkar
Leikið ykkur með bangsana ykkar
Leikið ykkur hjá böngsunum



Hér er bíll
Um bíl
Frá bíl
Til bíls
Leiktu þér með bílinn
Leiktu þér hjá bílunum
Leiktu þér á kassabílunum

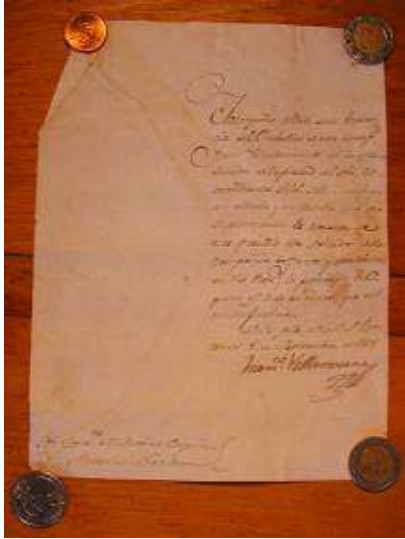
Hér eru bílar
Um bíla
Frá bílum
Til bíla

Leikið ykkur með bílana
Leikið ykkur hjá bílunum
Leikið ykkur á kassabílunum



Hér er blað
Um blað
Frá blaði
Til blaðs
Þarna er blaðið þitt
Þetta er blaðið þitt
Hvað ætlar þú að lita á blaðið þitt?
Litaðu eitthvað fallegt á blaðið þitt.
Hérna eru litir sem að þú mátt nota á blaðið þitt

Hér eru blöð
Um blöð
Frá blöðum
Til blaða
Þarna eru blöðin ykkar
Þetta eru blöðin ykkar
Hvað ætlið þið að lita á blöðin ykkar?
Hérna eru litir sem þið megið nota á blöðin ykkar.



Hér er bók
Um bók
Frá bók
Til bókar
Þarna er bókin
Skoðaðu bókina
Þarna í bókahillunni er bókin

Hér eru bækur
Um bækur
Frá bókum
Til bóka
Þarna í bókahillunum eru bækurnar
Skoðið þið bækurnar
Leikið ykkur hjá bókunum



Hér er dúkka
Um dúkku

Frá dúkku
Til dúkku
Þarna er dúkkan þín
Þetta er dúkkan þín
Leiktu þér með dúkkuna þína
Leiktu þér hjá dúkkunni þinni

Hér eru dúkkur
Um dúkkur
Frá dúkkum
Til dúkkna
Þarna eru dúkkurnar ykkar
Þetta eru dúkkurnar ykkar
Leikið ykkur með dúkkurnar ykkar
Leikið ykkur hjá dúkkunum ykkar



Hér er kubbur
Um kubbb
Frá kubbi
Til kubbs
Leiktu þér með kubbbinn

Hér eru kubbar
Um kubba
Frá kubbum
Til kubba
Leikið ykkur með kubbana
Leikið ykkur hjá kubbunum



Hér er leir
Um leir
Frá leir
Til leirs
Þarna er leirinn
Þetta er leirinn
Leiktu þér að leirnum
Leiktu þér hjá leirnum

Leikið ykkur að leirnum
Leikið ykkur hjá leirnum

(leir er alveg eins í eintölu og fleirtölu).



Hér er litur
Um lit
Frá lit
Til lits
Þarna er liturinn þinn
Þetta er liturinn þinn
Hver er uppáhalds liturinn þinn?
„rauður” er uppáhalds liturinn minn
notaðu þennan lit

hér eru litir
um liti
frá litum
til lita
þarna eru litirnir ykkar
þetta eru litirnir ykkar
hverjir eru upp á halds litirnir ykkar?
„bleikur” og „grænn” eru upp á halds litirnir mínir
notið þið þessa liti



Hér er málning
Um málningu
Frá málningu
Til málningar
Þarna er málningin þín
Þetta er málningin þín
Hvað ætlar þú að mála á blaðið þitt með málningunni þinni?

(málning er eins í eintölu og fleirtölu).

Þarna er málningin ykkar
Þetta er málningin ykkar
Hvað ætlið þið að mála á blöðin ykkar með málningunni ykkar?



Hér er perla
Um perlu
Frá perlu
Til perlu
Þarna er perlan
Þetta er perlan

Hér eru perlur
Um perlur
Frá perlum
Til perla
Þarna eru perlurnar
Þetta eru perlurnar
Leikið ykkur með perlurnar
Leikið ykkur hjá perlunum



Hér er púsluspil
Um púsluspil

Frá púsluspili
Til púsluspils
Þarna er púsluspilið
Leiktu þér að púsluspilinu
Leiktu þér hjá púsluspilunum

Hér eru púsluspil
Um púsluspil
Frá púsluspilum
Til púsluspila
Þarna eru púsluspilin
Leikið ykkur að púsluspilunum
Leikið ykkur hjá púsluspilunum



Hér er tölva
Um tölvu
Frá tölvu
Til tölvu
Þarna er tölvan
Þetta er tölvan
Komdu og leiktu þér í tölvunni, ég skal sýna þér
Leiktu þér hjá tölvunni.

Hér eru tölvur
Um tölvur

Frá tölvum

Til tölva

Þarna eru tölvurnar

Þetta eru tölvurnar

Komið þið og leikið ykkur í tölvunum, ég skal sýna ykkur

Leikið ykkur hjá tölvunum.



Mannanöfn.

Hér er Alda
Um Öldu
Frá Öldu
Til Öldu

Hér er Aleksander
Um Aleksander
Frá Aleksander
Til Aleksanders.

Hér er Alexander
Um Alexander
Frá Alexander
Til Alexanders

Hér er Alexandra
Um Alexöndru
Frá Alexöndru
Til Alexöndru

Hér er Andri
Um Andra
Frá Andra
Til Andra

Hér er Axel
Um Axel
Frá Axel
Til Axels

Hér er Bára
Um Báru
Frá Báru
Til Báru

Hér er Bárður
Um Bárð
Frá bárði
Til Bárðar

Hér er Benedikt
Um Benedikt
Frá Benedikt
Til Benedikts

Hér er Björg
Um Björgu
Frá Björgu
Til Bjargar

Hér er Björk
Um Björk
Frá Björk
Til Bjarkar

Hér er Borgný
Um Borgný
Frá Borgný
Til Borgnýar

Hér er Börkur
Um Bök
Frá Berki
Til Barkar

Hér er Eiríkur
Um Eirík
Frá Eiríki
Til Eiríks

Hér er Erna
Um Ernu
Frá Ernu
Til Ernu

Hér er Elísabet
Um Elísabetu

Frá Elísabetu
Til Elísabetar

Hér er Elín
Um Elínu
Frá Elínu
Til Elínar

Hér er Embla
Um Emblu
Frá Emblu
Til Emblu

Hér er Emilíana
Um Emilíönu
Frá Emilíönu
Til Emilíönu

Hér er Felix
Um Felix
Frá Felix
Til Felix

Hér er Gréta
Um Grétu
Frá Grétu
Til Grétu

Hér er Guðríður
Um Guðríði
Frá Guðríði
Til Guðríðar

Hér er Halldór
Um Halldór
Frá halldóri
Til Halldórs

Hér er Haraldur
Um Harald
Frá Haraldi
Til Haralds

Hér er Heimir
Um Heimi
Frá Heimi
Til Heimis

Hér er Hekla
Um Heklu
Frá Heklu
Til Heklu

Hér er Hrefna
Um Hrefnu
Frá hrefnu
Til hrefnu

Her er Hrólfur
Um Hrólf
Frá Hrólfi
Til Hrólfs

Hér er Hörður
Um Hörð
Frá Herði
Til Harðar

Hér er Jóhanna
Um Jóhönnu
Frá Jóhönnu
Til Jóhönnu

Hér er Jónína
Um Jónínu
Frá Jónínu
Til Jónínu

Hér er Júlía
Um Júlíu
Frá Júlíu
Til Júlíu

Hér er Júlíana
Um Júlíönu
Frá Júlíönu

Til Júlíönu

Hér er Katla
Um Kötlu
Frá Kötlu
Til Kötlu

Hér er Karólína
Um Karólínu
Frá Karólínu
Til Karólínu

Hér er Katrín
Um Katrínu
Frá Katrínu
Til Katrínar

Hér er Kolbrún
Um Kolbrúnu
Frá Kolbrúnu
Til Kolbrúnar

Hér er Kristjana
Um Kristjönu
Frá Kristjönu
Til Kristjönu

Hér er Lena
Um Lenu
Frá Lenu
Til Lenu

Hér er Ólafía
Um Ólafíu
Frá Ólafíu
Til Ólafíu

Her er Ólafur
Um Ólaf
Frá Ólafi
Til Ólafs

Hér er Óliver

Um Óliver
Frá Óliver
Til Ólivers

Hér er Ólína
Um Ólínu
Frá Ólínu
Til Ólínu

Hér er Petrína
Um Petrínu
Frá petrínu
Til Petrínu

Hér er Pálína
Um Pálínu
Frá Pálínu
Til Pálínu

Hér er Páll
Um Pál
Frá Páli
Til Páls

Hér er Ragnhildur
Um Ragnhildi
Frá Ragnhildi
Til Ragnhildar

Hér er Reynir
Um Reynir
Frá Reyni
Til Reynis

Hér er Sigríður
Um Sigríði
Frá Sigríði
Til Sigríðar

Hér er Sigtryggur
Um Sigtrygg
Frá Sigtrygg
Til Sigtryggs

Hér er Sigurður
Um Sigurð
Frá Sigurði
Til Sigurðar

Hér er Sigurveig
Um Sigurveigu
Frá Sigurveigu
Til Sigurveigar

Hér er Siv
Um Siv
Frá Siv
Til Siv

Hér er Skúli
Um Skúla
Frá Skúla
Til Skúla

Hér er Stefanía
Um Stefaníu
Frá stefaníu
Til Stefaníu

Hér er Stefán
Um stefán
Frá Stefáni
Til Stefáns

Hér er Steinunn
Um Steinunni
Frá Steinunni
Til Steinunnar

Hér er Unnur
Um Unni
Frá Unni
Til Unnar

Hér er Þorgerður
Um Þorgerði

Frá Þorgerði
Til Þorgerðar

Hér er Þröstur
Um Þröst
Frá Þresti
Til Þrastar

Hér er Örn
Um Örn
Frá Erni
Til Arnar

Hér er Örvar
Um Örvar
Frá Örvari
Til Örvars

Reykjavík 17 September 2007

Candace Alison Loque

Hanna Ragnarsdóttir

