The Linguistic Repertoires of Young Learners in Iceland

Multimedia, Subtitles, and Native Language Vocabulary Acquisition

Ritgerð til BA prófs í ensku

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Abstract

Subtitles have been shown to play a key role in foreign and second language vocabulary acquisition but that poses the question as to whether they play a key role in native language vocabulary acquisition. As new forms of media impact Icelandic society and television viewership declines, the presence of Icelandic subtitles in the lives of young learners in Iceland is diminished. Young learners in Iceland are becoming more proficient in the English language as a result of the changed linguistic environment in Iceland, especially due to the arrival of new forms of media. The research question of this study is whether young learners in Iceland incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material in English with Icelandic subtitles. A group of young learners in their tenth year were asked to answer an Icelandic vocabulary definition task before and after watching an episode of *The Simpsons* with Icelandic subtitles. Despite the fact that the numerous limitation of the study detract from the significance of the results, the results of the study support the notion that children incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material in English with Icelandic subtitles.
Preface

I would like to thank my instructor, Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Ph.D. for her invaluable support with all aspects of this study. I would also like to thank the local center Frostheimar for allowing me to conduct the study on their premises and aiding me in its administration. Lastly, I would like to thank family and friends for supporting me throughout the whole endeavour. Though the administration of the study did not go as planned, the results are quite interesting and will only encourage me to apply myself more to researching the linguistic repertoire of young learners in Iceland.
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Introduction

Iceland has become a multilingual environment where English is becoming an increasingly integral part of the Icelandic linguistic context. The linguistic demands of the international business and academic community and the increasing demand for English proficiency in the international context has led to higher proficiency in the English language among the Icelandic population. As the demand for proficiency in the English language increases, the start of formal instruction in English is now in fourth grade and sometimes even earlier. This has however made very little difference for the young learners in Iceland as some preliminary results from research have shown that they exceed the curriculum goals of formal English instruction in fourth grade before they even begin receiving formal instruction in the language (Arnbjörnsdóttir 3; Jóhannsdóttir 15). The explanation as to why young learners in Iceland have become so proficient in the English language may be because they are exposed to a vast amount of English through multimedia material in English. This amount of exposure does however not fully explain the levels of proficiency among young learners in Iceland. Their acquisition of the English language and English vocabulary has most likely been incidental and that does in itself require great deal of research as incidental vocabulary acquisition is still not fully understood by researchers in the field.

If we can trace the English proficiency of young Icelandic learners to multimedia, then we can reach the conclusion that multimedia has undoubtedly become an integral part of the linguistic environment of young learners in Iceland. Multimedia in the contemporary context includes various forms of media, many of which are popular and relatively new. Though there have been numerous new forms of media that have attained a certain degree a popularity in Icelandic society, Netflix, an online streaming service, is perhaps one of the more recent and more prevalent mediums whose impact on the linguistic environment of Iceland has likely been great. The rise of Netflix and other new forms of media in Iceland can be attributed to the availability of material in these mediums and ease of access. The rise of these mediums is also facilitated by the fact that media outlets in Iceland are simply unable to compete with global media outlets.
The rise of multimedia material in English also results in increased exposure to
the English language, especially among young learners. Though we have yet to fully
map out the amount of time that young learners in Iceland spend on the various
mediums available to them, it is safe to assume that they do spend a great deal of time
being exposed to English by multimedia in general. That assumption can be made
because there is no other explanation as to how they exceed curriculum goals in formal
English instruction other than the explanation that they have incidentally learned a great
deal of English through the English exposure available to them (Arnbjörnsdóttir 3). The
English exposure that is available to these young learners is for the most part just
through multimedia material.

The question that remains and is relevant to the discussion at hand is whether the
multimedia material in English that young learners in Iceland are exposed to does in fact
have Icelandic subtitles or not. Icelandic television viewership has dropped steadily
over the past few years and has been the primary source of Icelandic subtitles in Icelandic
society. The decline of Icelandic television viewership does of course decrease the
amount of Icelandic subtitles that young learners are exposed to if we make the
assumption that young learners are among the viewers that are moving from Icelandic
television and to other mediums usually without subtitles in Icelandic.

Subtitles have been proven in countless studies to be an effective tool for both
vocabulary and language acquisition. They are most prevalent in countries where
English is not a native language and the material is not dubbed into the native language
of the country in question. Subtitles provide the viewer with an additional input for
learning and thus aid in comprehension of the material. Numerous studies have shown
that subtitles can lead to incidental vocabulary gains in both foreign- and second
language acquisition but this poses the question of whether the same can apply to native
language acquisition (Bianchi and Ciabattoni 87; Broddason 177; D’Ydewalle).

The research question of the present study is whether young learners in Iceland
incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material in English
with Icelandic subtitles. In order to answer this research question, a study was
conducted with young learners in their tenth year. The study featured both a vocabulary
definition task and a questionnaire so that background information could be correlated
with the results of the vocabulary definition task. The participants in the study were
asked to watch an episode of The Simpsons which had Icelandic subtitles. The
participants were asked to answer a vocabulary definition task of words taken from the
subtitles of the episode both a week prior and immediately after watching the show. The
results of the study strongly support the notion that young learners in Iceland
incidentally acquire Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material in English
with Icelandic subtitles.
1. Literature Review

1.1 English and Icelandic in Icelandic media

Icelandic children are now becoming fairly proficient English speakers even prior to starting formal English instruction in school. Children generally begin receiving formal English instruction in fourth grade which is usually at the age of nine. However, some schools opt to commence English instruction earlier in third grade or sooner due to an increased demand for the English language in modern society. Regardless of where they start, some preliminary results from a survey conducted by researchers from the University of Iceland have indicated that some Icelandic children exceed the curriculum goals for English before they even begin their formal English instruction (Arnbjörnsdóttir 3; Jóhannsdóttir 15). This is one of numerous signs that point to a change in the linguistic environment among young learners in Iceland and warrants further study.

Numerous studies have shown that young learners, between ages of five and twelve, are especially capable of understanding spoken English even before they start receiving formal English instruction. A study by Samúel Lefever revealed that Icelandic children are quite proficient in comprehension listening tasks (14). Lefever’s study found that a large percentage of eight year-old children are capable of understanding basic spoken English despite not having received formal English instruction (14). This would suggest that they are being exposed to English a great deal outside the classroom as they have not received formal instruction. Their proficiency in the English language is likely the result of a great deal of English exposure from multimedia which has resulted in the acquisition of some receptive vocabulary. Additionally, this vocabulary acquisition in English is likely to have been purely incidental though it is difficult to speculate on motivational factors. Some researchers have examined this as presented in the next section.

The proficiency in comprehending spoken English that young learners have attained can be traced to their hobbies of watching television material in English and playing computer games. A study found that a vast majority of the English exposure experienced by Icelanders of various ages is receptive (Arnbjörnsdóttir 9). The informants in that particular study by Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir spent 16% of waking hours listening to English (9). Another study by Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir further supported the
argument that children are learning English incidentally from television and other forms of media as well (14). It has been established through studies that a large percentage of young learners are capable of understanding basic spoken English even before they start formal English instruction and that much of their vocabulary may have been acquired incidentally from watching filmic or television material in English (Lefever 14; Jóhannsdóttir 9). Based on the following studies and other research, it is difficult to dispute the notion that multimedia has had an impact on the proficiency in the English language among the Icelandic population. Furthermore, if we accept that multimedia has had an effect on proficiency in English, it may also be prudent to determine its effects on native languages, and in this case, the acquisition of Icelandic. One such effect could be the effect of Icelandic subtitles and television material in English on the vocabulary development of young Icelandic learners.

As we seek to find out whether children acquire native language vocabulary from the subtitles of audiovisual material in English, the assumption has to be made that the young learners are capable of understanding the context of the filmic or television material they are watching. The answer to this question can also help us understand if young learners in Iceland have become so proficient in English that they utilize English to learn Icelandic vocabulary, though in an incidental capacity. The purpose of this paper and the study that follows is not to provide a comprehensive answer to this broad question but rather focus primarily on the effect that Icelandic subtitles have on the Icelandic vocabulary of young learners. The imagery of the filmic and television material might also be the source of some incidental vocabulary acquisition in Icelandic. Those two sources of information, the verbal Icelandic text input and the non-verbal imagery could also be enough for the learner to cognitively categorize the word or simply comprehend it to a point where its purpose is clear.

In contrast to predicting the benefit that young learners may reap from watching subtitled material, it is also important to ascertain filmic and television material might actually have a negative effect on a child’s learning ability. Television and other forms of electronic media have been blamed for a decline in voluntary reading in a number of countries (Brodadason 175-176). A three-year study with over 800 subjects found that television directly reduces the frequency in which children read books during their leisure time (Brodadason 176). Despite the fact that voluntary reading of printed materials has been dropping steadily, reading of electronic material is certainly on the
rise. All forms of electronic media require reading, including social media, computer use, filmic and television material. Filmic and television material require reading if the individual watching the material is unable to fully comprehend the spoken language and thus requires subtitles, which might be subject to preference as well. The effects of filmic and television material on young learners still require further research as the linguistic environment of young learners is subject to change.

Television has been described as a medium that has enormous potential for education (Broddason 175). Þorbjörn Broddason argues that “The subtitles of foreign television programmes are an important source of reading matter for youths in many small countries” (177). A study conducted by Cohen and Salomon revealed that subtitles increase concentration and contributes to greater retention of programmable content (Broddason 177). Programmable content in this case is understood as language and vocabulary acquisition. There is no reason why the programmable content in question could not be the Icelandic vocabulary found in the Icelandic subtitles. If concentration is raised while watching subtitled material, it could allow for an increased capacity for incidental vocabulary acquisition.

While subtitles may be a very beneficial learning tool for the population of Iceland, it may also worth considering whether there is a dependence on Icelandic subtitles among the population of Iceland. A study by Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir found that younger individuals were more likely to watch filmic or television material without the aid of Icelandic subtitles and some even only watched material without subtitles (8). Based on this it is safe to assume that there is very little dependence on Icelandic subtitles among young people. Despite the fact that young Icelanders do not require Icelandic subtitles to comprehend the material, it does not mean that they do not incidentally read them while watching the material. A lack of dependence on Icelandic subtitles is however might lead to young Icelanders choosing to watch material without subtitles, as opposed to with subtitles, if presented with the option.

A study by Ortega found that 27.4% of the television material broadcasted in a week by RÚV, Skjár Einn and Stöð 2 was of domestic origin and in Icelandic (cited in Arnbjörnsdóttir 3). This is only one of several studies that have shown that Icelanders are exposed to significantly more television material in English than in Icelandic and by extension they are exposed a lot more to material with Icelandic subtitles rather than
material without them (Arnbjörnsdóttir 4). Despite the fact that children’s material is frequently dubbed into Icelandic, foreign material is predominantly in English with the exception of Skandinavian material on RÚV. As foreign material is in English, it means that viewers are exposed to significantly more English when watching foreign material. The linguistic environment among young learners in Iceland is thus changing due to an increase in exposure to the English language and this exposure can be traced to multimedia and to new forms of media in particular. In order to examine the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland and how they incidentally acquire vocabulary in English and Icelandic, it is important to further map out the amount of English and Icelandic that young learners are exposed to in children’s material. Though it is frequently dubbed into Icelandic, much of the children’s material is still in English with Icelandic subtitles in tow.

1.2 The rise of new forms of media

Children are now exposed to English more than ever before with the rise of new forms of media, most of which do not have the option of enabling Icelandic subtitles. The new forms of media that children are preoccupied with are the various social media platforms such as Facebook, and other online media such as online streaming services, video-sharing websites and online piracy. These new forms of media have risen to become fairly dominant hobbies in Icelandic society, especially among young people and children. Social media has risen in modern society due its connectivity while streaming services and online piracy have arisen to their convenience and the availability of content that television networks are struggling to compete with. These new forms of media are increasingly responsible for the reduced exposure to Icelandic subtitles among young learners in Iceland that watch television material.

Exposure to Icelandic subtitles has decreased over the years primarily due to the rise of other mediums. A report by Capacent in late 2014 showed that television viewership in Iceland decreased by 38% from 2008 to 2014 (Júlíusson). This decrease in viewers can be a result of a combination of factors but it is unquestionable that one of those factors is in fact the arrival and popularity of internet-based streaming platforms such as Netflix. Netflix is a popular streaming service that offers a variety of television and film material for a monthly subscription fee. Netflix officially arrived in Iceland on
January 6th, 2016, with Icelandic subtitles (“Netflix aðgengilegt á Íslandi”). Before it officially arrived in Iceland, Icelanders had subscribed to the American Netflix, which naturally did not have Icelandic subtitles. In 2014, media outlets reported on numbers collected by Statistics Iceland that around 20,000 homes in Iceland were subscribers of the popular streaming service (“Netflix notendur á Íslandi yfir 20.000 talsins”). Furthermore, this number is only projected to increase ever since Netflix has been made more accessible. It is also expected that a significant portion of Icelanders that have subscribed to the American Netflix will not abandon that for the Icelandic Netflix as the American Netflix offers a much wider range of material, but lacks Icelandic subtitles (Albertsdóttir).

Online media, which is also categorized as social media, is an internet-based form of media that could also potentially have an effect on the presence of Icelandic subtitles in the lives of young Icelandic learners. Online media such as YouTube and other video-sharing websites provide millions of videos uploaded and can be accessed for free. They are lacking in Icelandic subtitles but occasionally offer closed captions in English and other languages. Like television, online media does have great potential for education through subtitles or closed captions. Despite its potential and much like the other forms of media mentioned here, online media currently exposes young learners to a great deal of English video material without the presence of Icelandic subtitles.

Online piracy has been fairly common source for films, television and music in today’s world. Despite numerous attempts at stopping online piracy through legislation, online piracy is still on the rise worldwide. Online piracy went up by 44% in North America from 2008 to 2014 (Steele). The number of internet users believed to have taken part in online piracy rose from 297 million in late 2011 to 327 million in early 2013 (Resnikoff). The popularity of online piracy stems from the fact that it is of course free but in addition to that, it is convenient and places all filmic and television material at the user’s fingertips. Pirated filmic and television material is of course mostly if not completely void of Icelandic subtitles especially if it was uploaded by an individual or group outside of Iceland. This increased availability of filmic and television material does of course have a negative impact on television viewership as it is free, gives the viewer nearly infinite options, and only requires an internet connection to access.
Television is the primary and sometimes the only source for Icelandic subtitles that young learners are exposed to and it is rapidly becoming less popular due to the dominance of other forms of media. As mentioned previously, the television viewership in Iceland dropped 38% from 2008 to 2014 according to one study (Júlíusson). It is apparent that the presence of Icelandic subtitles in the lives of young Icelandic learners has been significantly diminished over the past few years. Social media and online media are becoming a more integral part of the lives of Icelandic children. All statistics point to the fact that online piracy is still on the rise, especially in western countries. Netflix is however the largest concern and perhaps one of the biggest contributors to the diminished television viewership in Iceland. The arrival of the Icelandic Netflix could however strengthen the position of Icelandic subtitles in Iceland. None of the mediums mentioned here are expected to suffer any serious decline as they have all proven to be lucrative. Online piracy in particular has revenue streams both from advertisements and subscription fees (Resnikoff).

We can hypothesize that the rise of new forms of media will continue and older mediums will become less popular in contrast. While this may not seem prophetic as this has been a recurring event in modern society, it is something that researchers in the field of vocabulary acquisition need to keep up with as it is a factor in the various ever-changing linguistic environments. For instance, newspapers are becoming less popular with the arrival of forms of media that allow instant access to news articles that are more current as well. While it is difficult to predict what the next new and popular medium will be, history tells us that this change is inevitable and research is needed in order to determine what the effect of existing and future forms of media will be on the linguistic environments of Iceland.

A comprehensive study is definitely needed in order to understand how much time young learners spend with these various forms of media. That is of course a challenging task as it has to do with the personal interests of children and getting permission for such a study may prove to be difficult. It may be especially difficult to ascertain how much young learners participate in online piracy as the distribution of such material is of course illegal and children may be doing this without their parents’ permission or knowledge. Regardless, the questionnaire in such a study could potentially be directed to the parents, instead of the young learners, as they may be able to provide more reliable and accurate answers. Researchers in this venture should be
primarily interested in the correlation between the amount of time a young learner spends being exposed to the various forms of media available to him and his proficiency in the languages that he is exposed to on a daily basis.

The importance of determining what languages a young learner is exposed to through these mediums cannot be understated. While a great deal of children’s material is dubbed into Icelandic for comprehension, much of the children’s material remains in English. The material in English on Icelandic television channels does however have Icelandic subtitles. It is thus important to study the effect that dubbed material and subtitled material has on the Linguistic Repertoire of Icelandic children. The impact of subtitles on vocabulary acquisition will be discussed in the next few chapters.

1.3 The nature of vocabulary acquisition for young learners in Iceland

Vocabulary acquisition is generally not subject to age related influences as studies have shown that there is no maturational point where vocabulary acquisition is diminished (Jóhannsdóttir 17). The critical period hypothesis is however relevant for the present study as the participants are within the critical period that allows for more efficient language acquisition according to the critical theory hypothesis (Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle 1114). Despite the fact that the participants are in their tenth year which is considered an efficient age for language acquisition, the primary emphasis of this paper will be on vocabulary acquisition and not language acquisition in general. The impact of the critical period hypothesis will not be discussed at length though it is acknowledged that the participants in the present study are within the critical period (Hoefnagel-Höhle 1114). The participants for the present study were chosen as they are at the age where they have most likely just begun their formal English instruction and have at this point primarily been exposed to English through multimedia. It is thus safe to assume that their vocabulary acquisition in English at this point in their lives has primarily been incidental.

Vocabulary acquisition is a complicated endeavour that is generally both incidental and intentional but also multi-dimensional. Researchers agree that there are numerous dimensions to vocabulary acquisition but disagree on the exact number of dimensions and their importance (Van Zeeland and Schmitt 609). The process of adding a new word to a learner’s vocabulary is believed to start when the learner is first
exposed to a word as he immediately starts to develop knowledge of the word (Van Zeeland and Schmitt 611). The learner must then learn the appropriate and various uses for the word in order to expand his knowledge of the word. This process can either be incidental or intentional though some aspects of process will always be incidental. The primary focus of this paper and the study that accompanies it will be on meaning and how children incidentally establish a meaning for new words.

How children acquire new word meanings in their native language has been the subject of numerous studies and articles. They do without a doubt learn a great deal of vocabulary incidentally, simply by observing and relying on their cognitive functions to establish a meaning for the word. Meara found that children often learn new word meanings based on some intrinsic interest, as in the word intrigues them (2). The English vocabulary size of Icelandic young learners in their tenth year has yet to be adequately measured. What we do know about the vocabulary of young learners in Iceland is that their vocabulary acquisition has been mostly of a receptive nature and primarily through multimedia material in English. We also know that a great deal of a young learner’s learning is implicit and mostly incidental (Jóhannsdóttir 5).

The comprehension hypothesis claims that input that is comprehensible is a necessary condition for language development (Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua 137). This condition can be brought upon by numerous activities, such as extensive reading and through forms of media as well. This input is mostly associated with extensive reading of literary works, the various forms of media that have become so popular over the years also require for a great deal of reading and can thus be associated with the comprehensible input mentioned in the comprehension hypothesis (Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua 137). Though extensive reading is mostly associated with improving and overall language proficiency, vocabulary acquisition is an integral component of language development and should thus be considered a relevant result of extensive reading. Extensive reading can, like many activities that require language-use or comprehension, lead to incidental vocabulary acquisition.

As the current state of English in Iceland is compared to a second language environment, it is worth noting that researchers have stated that for young learners, vocabulary acquisition in L1 and L2 is a very similar process (Jóhannsdóttir 16; Meara 7-8). Despite some difficulties with phonological and orthographic forms in L2
vocabulary acquisition, there are no fundamental variations between the vocabulary acquisition in L1 and L2 (Meara 8). Young learners in a second language environment simply acquire additional vocabulary, whether it is incidentally or intentionally, and the reason for it is simply because they have a linguistic environment that supports their vocabulary acquisition. A large part of the environment that supports their vocabulary acquisition could in this case be their interaction with multimedia such as television. Though the linguistic environment in Iceland is compared to a second language environment, it is important to make the distinction that young learners in Iceland are usually not bilingual.

Comprehensible input is vital to ensure that incidental vocabulary acquisition takes place and there are certain conditions need to be fulfilled for it to take place. A certain degree of attention is required for incidental vocabulary acquisition to take place (Huckin and Coady 183). There is some disagreement among researchers whether the learner’s attention should be focused on meaning or both form and meaning. Krashen argues in his Input Hypothesis that for incidental vocabulary acquisition to take place, the learner’s attention must be focused primarily on communicative meaning rather than form (Huckin and Coady 183; Krashen 30). Other researchers in the field have however determined that attention to both meaning and form is necessary for vocabulary acquisition in general (Huckin and Coady 183). While influencing a learner’s attention to aspects of a language may seem more like intentional vocabulary acquisition, incidental vocabulary acquisition also comes down to what the learner is paying attention to in an incidental capacity. Determining which factors motivate learners to pay attention to certain aspects of vocabulary acquisition will undoubtedly prove challenging as those factors may vary greatly and may come down to some intrinsic interest unique to the learner.

Numerous studies have shown that there is a link between extensive reading and incidental vocabulary acquisition. Most studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition have focused on reading input (Van Zeeland and Schmitt 609). Studies conducted through multiple choice tests upon the completion of reading a text have shown an increase in vocabulary brought upon by incidental vocabulary acquisition (Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua 138). It has been established multiple times that there is a positive relationship between the act of reading in a foreign language and incidental vocabulary acquisition in that language. It has however been researched less whether
there is a link between the act of reading and incidental vocabulary acquisition in the native language of the reader. That is partly why there is a need to examine whether subtitles do in fact lead to incidental vocabulary acquisition in the viewer’s native language as subtitles are in fact the act of reading text.

It can be argued that most research in regards to reading and incidental vocabulary acquisition has primarily looked into extensive reading in the form of reading texts such as books or short stories. The reading of subtitles is however an act of reading as well though it provides the viewer with additional non-verbal input in the form of imagery and verbal input in the form of listening. This simply provides the viewer with additional information in order to comprehend the text and in this case that additional information is in the form of subtitles. A study found that reading while simultaneously listening to someone narrate the same text resulted in incidental vocabulary acquisition gains of up to 22% (Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua 139). This further supports the notion that two forms of verbal input may result in additional incidental vocabulary acquisition as it may allow the reader to realize a higher level of comprehension (Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua 139).

An important question that rose among researchers in second language research was whether learners need to be taught explicit strategies for word guessing that would lead to effective vocabulary acquisition. Naturally, this form of instruction would be more conducive to intentional vocabulary acquisition rather than incidental vocabulary acquisition. While intermediate and advanced learners primarily rely on cognitive functions and guessing strategies for second language acquisition, a study found that less advanced learners of English do not utilize guessing strategies but rely on their ability to translate instead (Huckin and Coady 187). This might better describe the vocabulary acquisition of young learners in Iceland as they are naturally fairly weak learners of English while they have not received formal instruction or had much time to learn the language.

There is evidence to support the notion that some young Icelandic English learners’ proficiency is limited to naming individual items using only English (Þráinsdóttir). At least one speech pathologist claims that numerous Icelandic children are able to name simple objects in English but not in Icelandic (Þráinsdóttir). This suggests that these young learners have acquired a certain amount of English vocabulary
incidentally and possibly without knowing the Icelandic equivalent of the word in question. Having an understanding of words in the English language without knowing their Icelandic counterparts is however a cornerstone of the notion in which young learners in Iceland are able to incidentally acquire Icelandic vocabulary from subtitled audiovisual material in English. The fact that young learners in Iceland are able to learn English words without knowing the Icelandic counterpart would also indicate that they are able to incidentally learn new words without the aid of their native language.

In the current linguistic environment of Iceland, young learners are exposed to a great deal of English which is likely the reason behind their increased proficiency in the English language. This English proficiency is witnessed in instances of young learners exceeding the curriculum standards of formal instruction in English before they commence formal instruction (Arnbjörnsdóttir 3). This proficiency is the result of a great deal of exposure to the English language through multimedia and that has led to incidental vocabulary acquisition. While young learners are rapidly becoming more proficient in English, the question remains as to what impact multimedia has on their proficiency in the Icelandic language. As previously mentioned, at least one speech pathologist has reported instances of children not being able to name simple Icelandic words but being able to name their English counterparts. The effect that this increased exposure to the English language through multimedia has on the Icelandic language thus requires further research. Icelandic subtitles are found in all foreign material on Icelandic channels that is not dubbed and are the subject of the present study. If young learners in Iceland are able to incidentally acquire English vocabulary through verbal auditory input and non-verbal imagery, the questions remains as to whether they can incidentally acquire Icelandic vocabulary with an additional verbal text input channel.

1.4 The Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland

Labelling an environment as either a foreign language environment or a second language environment may simply be an inadequate description of a young learner’s linguistic environment in Iceland. It may prove more illuminating to discuss an individual’s Linguistic Repertoire when describing an individual’s lexicon or the words he or she is able to use in communication. An individual’s vocabulary in the languages
he is proficient in is however an integral part of his Linguistic Repertoire regardless of how many languages the repertoire covers.

Linguistic Repertoire is a term that has become increasingly more used in Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics as it allows researchers to focus on the languages and language varieties of a speech community without the restrictions that labelling languages and varieties inevitably contain (“Linguistic Repertoire and Communicative Competence”). Linguistic Repertoire is a term that can apply to the languages of both groups and individuals. The term can also apply to multiple areas of the language or languages, such as syntax, phonology, lexical choices etc. For the purposes of this paper and the study within, this term will be used to identify the unique linguistic environment that Icelandic children are a part of.

Icelandic children are a group that seemingly have their own repertoire that does not coincide with the repertoire of the community. While it is to be expected that younger generations do not have the same exact Linguistic Repertoire as the generations before them, the more recent change in repertoire has caused some concern in regards to children’s competence in this native language. Linguists and speech therapists claim in the media that it is now common for children to substitute English for their Icelandic counterparts. An example of this was when a young Icelandic learner was presented with a picture of a pencil and the learner was unable to recall the Icelandic word for it and proceeded to use the English word (Þráinsdóttir).

As a result of the emergence of English as a lingua franca, the creation of new Linguistic Repertoires of speakers in ELF countries around that world has become quite apparent. Researchers have determined that these repertoires are the result of the immediate processes of language contact and are induced by communicative need (Hülmbauer, Böhringer, and Seiflhofer 26). ‘Communicative need’ can be interpreted as simply knowing or recalling the accurate word in either language for a specific purpose. This is generally referred to as code-switching or translanguaging and it is a fairly prominent phenomenon among young learners in Iceland and is becoming increasingly more common among older individuals as well (Park 50). A part of the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland thus involves a great deal of translanguaging between English and Icelandic. Transsanguaging is the act when multilingual speakers switch between languages frequently and is considered by them to be a completely
natural speech pattern (Park 50). It is facilitated by a decent vocabulary size in a second or foreign language. Translanguaging generally occurs when an individual can only recall a word in his second or foreign language rather than his native language though it is also used as a type of linguistic flair. The fact that Icelanders are beginning to Translanguage at an increasingly younger age is definitely a sign of a changed linguistic environment and a change in Linguistic Repertoire.

The term ‘Linguistic Repertoire’ encourages us to cease viewing the acquisition of vocabulary in English and Icelandic separately. We need to start examining how children acquire multiple languages through the complex input in the Icelandic linguistic context. The complex input in this case is brought upon children through the various new forms of media available to them and add a layer of exposure to the English language to their lives. This complex input in the form of multimedia exposure is perhaps the source of the current linguistic context in Iceland and should thus be considered the focal point of research into the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland.

Icelandic subtitles have been an important aspect of television material in Iceland and a contributor to the Linguistic Repertoire of the Icelandic people. Though television viewership has decreased significantly over the past decade, television in Iceland still remains a relatively popular form of media. Icelandic subtitles contribute to the Linguistic Repertoire of the Icelandic people by aiding them in comprehending foreign material and providing them with Icelandic text to read. Comprehension of foreign material through tools such as subtitles can theoretically be beneficial for the viewer as it can lead to vocabulary acquisition as well as aspects of language acquisition. The reading of Icelandic text naturally gives the viewer the chance to read Icelandic text that is likely to be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. These benefits of Icelandic subtitles are contributors to the overall Linguistic Repertoire of the Icelandic people as they theoretically aid in vocabulary and language acquisition.

1.5 Summary of studies on subtitles and vocabulary acquisition

The role of subtitles in second- and foreign language acquisition has been the subject of numerous studies and articles. Researchers have examined the effects that watching subtitled material has on vocabulary acquisition and reading ability in general
and how that affects a learner’s Linguistic Repertoire. Despite numerous studies and research articles where subtitles are the main focus, information regarding their effect on native language vocabulary acquisition is scarce. However speculative that may be, the fact remains that Icelandic children live in a new linguistic environment with their own emerging Linguistic Repertoire and that requires new studies in order to understand the current process of their native language vocabulary acquisition. In order to understand this process, this chapter has presented an overview of the various studies that have been conducted on the effects that subtitles have, both in terms of incidental and intentional vocabulary acquisition. The studies show that subtitles as well as closed captions have a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition in a second language.

The results of a study conducted in Belgium supported the notion that subtitled material aids in the acquisition of foreign language vocabulary (D’Ydewalle). The fact that subtitled material aids in foreign language vocabulary acquisition further supports the notion that subtitles in general are an effective learning tool for vocabulary acquisition. The study also supported the notion that vocabulary acquisition, at least in terms of foreign language learning, is not affected by age. This is however not surprising as many researchers agree that vocabulary acquisition is not deeply affected by the critical period hypothesis like language acquisition is.

Researchers in another study argued that when individuals are exposed to subtitled audiovisual material, there are three aspects of the material that compete for the individual’s attention (Bianchi and Ciabattoni 86). One of them is just sound, the auditory channel, and the other two are both visual channels, one being the actual video and the other being the subtitles. The study found that this combination of three channels of receptive information aid in both short term and long term vocabulary tasks, as well as comprehension tasks (Bianchi and Ciabattoni 87). This further supports the notion that subtitles and closed captions are an efficient learning tool that aids vocabulary acquisition.

As mentioned previously, television itself has been described as a medium that has enormous potential for education (Broddason 175). Studies by Icelandic researchers have demonstrated a positive relationship between subtitled television material and reading ability (Broddason 177). While some studies in countries where English is the native language have identified that a large amount of television viewing can be
detrimental to a learners reading ability, this does not appear to be this case in countries where television material is subtitled (Broddason 176). Reading ability is of course crucial for viewers to be able to adequately read subtitles as the subtitles are only present on the screen for a short amount of time.

Studies have shown an increase in vocabulary acquisition when students have been exposed to captioned television (Broddason 177). A study conducted by Neuman and Koskinen revealed that students of an unspecified age were able to incidentally learn new words with the aid of closed captions (Broddason 177). Closed captions essentially serve the same purpose as subtitles, which is to aid the viewer in comprehending the material he is viewing. Research that demonstrates a positive relationship between closed captions and vocabulary acquisition also supports the notion that there exists a positive relationship between vocabulary acquisition and subtitles.

1.6 The difficulty of researching the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland

Young learners in Iceland are predominantly exposed to English through listening according to various studies previously mentioned and thus their vocabulary is mostly receptive. Vocabulary is divided between receptive and productive. Receptive vocabulary is what the individual understands and productive vocabulary is what he can use. It is difficult to determine the vocabulary size of Icelandic young learners, especially before they begin formal English instruction, and that is because they lack the productive vocabulary to define a word. This is actually extends to Icelandic as well as the young participants in my own study were unable to define Icelandic words using their Icelandic vocabulary but on numerous occasions expressed that they understood the word that they were asked to define. The children were asked to define the word in Icelandic and that is likely the reason there were no recorded instances of translanguaging during the study. The difficulty with word definition tasks appears to be that young learners are not able to define words using their productive vocabulary or do not feel comfortable enough with their definition in order to express their idea of the word.
One of the difficulties researchers may be presented with when researching aspects of the Linguistic Repertoire of young Icelandic learners is determining their vocabulary size in Icelandic and English. Young Icelandic learners are relatively speaking, becoming very proficient in English without the aid of formal instruction. This has been shown through numerous studies as they exceed the curriculum goals before even commencing formal English instruction (Arnbjörnsdóttir 3). Due to the fact that they exceed the curriculum goals, their performance in formal instruction is perhaps a poor indicator of their overall proficiency in the English language and by extension, the size of their English vocabulary. Evaluating the vocabulary size of these young learners is important in order to determine the appropriate lexical items to be used in various studies that involve them.

Young learners in general are a difficult group to conduct studies with as they are of a young age and thus lack a certain degree of a maturity which can be a hindrance in studies. There are several ways that young learners and children as a whole can be participants in a study. Young learners can have ownership of the research, they can be collaborators in the research, be consulted about the research, or be sources of research data (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 8). The young learners in the study were sources of research data and were not consulted or informed as to the nature of the study out of concern that it would drastically alter the results. Having children participate in a study as sources of research data can create some difficulties as there are numerous factors that have be considered. There is a natural power discrepancy between the child and the adult and this can affect the responses of the child as the child may not feel comfortable communicating with an unknown adult like they normally would (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 15).

The presence of gatekeepers can actually have a negative effect on the study as their presence may affect the responses that the young learner feels comfortable giving (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 14). A child in a study may request that a gatekeeper be present as the child may not feel comfortable with some aspect of the study. A gatekeeper is a custodian, a day care employee, a teacher, or some other third party in the research that the child feels more comfortable to be around (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 14). The very presence of gatekeepers during the various processes of a study may influence the responses that a child or young person may feel giving and alter the outcome of the study. This affected the present study somewhat as at gatekeepers were
present close by during the study and a gatekeeper was during the interview process on one occasion.

Giving feedback to the participants would have been rather difficult as that would conceivably have diverted their attention to the subtitles more than usual. That may be ideal for intentional vocabulary acquisition but this study only takes into consideration incidental vocabulary acquisition. The Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People by the NCB research centre highly recommends giving feedback to young learners after the study has concluded (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 15). Findings of the research study were not shared with the participants however, and the reason behind that is because the same group of participants could be used for future research on subtitles. Sharing the research with this group of participants could then have an effect on future research. The Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People suggests however that this could positively affect the future research with the same group of participants (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 15). Regardless, the results of the present study indicate that more research is needed to fully comprehend the relationship between subtitled material and vocabulary acquisition. For that reason, the results of the present study will be shared with the participants if the decision is reached that it would not eliminate them as participants in future studies.

Researchers in the field of vocabulary acquisition agree that research into L2 listening has received very little attention in comparison to the research that has been done on the effect of reading (Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua 139; Van Zeeland and Schmitt 610). Listening is considered to be an integral component of incidental vocabulary acquisition through subtitles as it provides an additional layer of input to aid in comprehension. Listening is also a strand of learning that is important as it gives the student the ability to hear correct pronunciation and various other aspects of speech in a given language. The studies that have been conducted on extensive listening have however yielded considerably positive results with one study showing vocabulary gains of up to 40% (Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua 139). Additionally, a study by Vidal showed gains in vocabulary from both reading and listening with higher vocabulary gains from reading but higher long-term vocabulary gains from listening (Van Zeeland and Schmitt 611). Listening is of course an important aspect of incidental vocabulary acquisition through subtitles. The notion that young learners in Iceland are utilizing their English proficiency to aid in their acquisition of Icelandic vocabulary hinges on
the English auditory input in the audiovisual material in English. Paul nation was quoted saying that “there is a growing body of evidence that shows... that learners can pick up new vocabulary as they are being read to” (Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua 139).
2. The Study

2.1 Background and methodology

In order to answer the research question of this paper a study was conducted to examine whether young learners in their tenth year do in fact incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material in English with Icelandic subtitles, a study was conducted. The purpose of this quantitative study was to create an experimental study where incidental vocabulary acquisition could be studied. In order to accomplish this, the participants of the study were not informed as to the nature of the study so that they would watch the television show without focusing on the subtitles more than they normally would. The young learners in the present study were only a source of research data and not consulted about the research.

2.1.1 Methodology

A study was performed in order to answer the research question of whether Icelandic children incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material in English with Icelandic subtitles. This is an experimental study that includes a background questionnaire, an intervention, and a pre and post test in the form of a vocabulary definition task.

2.1.2 Participants

The participants in the study were Icelandic children in fourth grade and were all in their tenth year. The participants attended various different schools but all attended the same after-school program at a local center where the study was performed. Despite being from different school, the participants were all from the same part of Reykjavík. The participants were chosen based on their age and the fact that they had just begun formal English education.

In total there were seventeen participants in the first part of the study and seven participants in the second half of the study. Out of the seventeen participants in the first part, ten of the participants were girls and seven were boys. The participants in the second half of the study were not asked to answer a questionnaire. All of the participants were in fourth grade and in their tenth year.

Parental consent was obtained by e-mailing the parents of the children. Parents were assured that the study would be completely anonymous. Additionally, the
Icelandic Data Protection Authority was contacted via telephone to ensure that the study was sufficiently anonymous to not require their permission, to which they agreed. In order to ensure anonymity but still keep track of the participants in the questionnaire and pre- and post- tests, participants were issued random numbers on a list of names that only the day care employees had access to. The list was lost between the pre- and post- tests, making the matching of the tests impossible. These numbers were therefore not used and became irrelevant aided by the fewer number of participants in the second half of the study.

2.1.3 Data collection

The data was collected through a background questionnaire, a vocabulary definition task prior to watching a subtitled episode of The Simpsons, and the same vocabulary definition task after the participants had seen the show. The participants’ answers in the vocabulary definition task were transcribed and in some cases summarized for the sake of brevity.

Data collection was done in accordance with guidelines set by the NCB research centre. The questions were fairly simple and phrased with simple language. The data collection process was brief to account for shorter attention spans. In addition to that, the participants were interviewed in private to reduce distractions. The overall interview process followed the recommendations of the Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 20)

2.1.4 Background Survey

The participants were visited twice at the after-school program during the study. During the first visit, they were asked to answer a questionnaire to determine their gender, when they started learning English in school and when they were first able to understand English. They were asked how proficient they considered themselves to be in Icelandic and English. Finally, they were asked how much television material in English they watch on a regular basis.

The participants were asked to answer questions about their proficiency in English and Icelandic. The participants were first asked about their proficiency in the English language. The participants were given five possible answers and were asked to choose the one that best describes their proficiency with the English language. The possible answers were ‘very good’, ‘good’, ‘average’, ‘little’, and ‘none’ for those
individuals that have not yet begun understanding English. The participants were then asked about their proficiency in the Icelandic language and were given the same possible answers that they were given with the previous question, with the exception of the ‘none’ option which was not available. In the final question of the questionnaire, the participants were asked how much television material they watch in English. The possible answers were ‘very much’, ‘much’, ‘average’, ‘little’, and ‘none’.

2.1.5 Vocabulary Test

Twelve words were chosen for the vocabulary definition task from a list of 36 words that were deemed to be sufficiently uncommon in both Icelandic and English. All 36 words were inputted into a word frequency list based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English. This list in particular allows researchers to input words into a search engine and see them ranked among the top 60000 most frequent words based on data for the Corpus of Contemporary American English. This list was used to determine whether there is any correlation between the Icelandic vocabulary that the participants possess and their English counterparts. Four of the twelve words that were chosen were in the 0-1000 range in the words frequency list, another four were in the 1000-4000 range and the final four were in the 4000-11000 range. It is likely that the Icelandic words chosen for the study may not match the frequency of their English counterparts. Though determining the frequency of the Icelandic words in the vocabulary definition task would be interesting, it is no possible due to the lack of an adequate Icelandic frequency list with a search function.

The words chosen for the vocabulary definition task and their position on the top 60000 lemmas list drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English were:

1. Season/Leiktíð - #506
2. Media/Fjölmiðlar #757
3. Amount/Upphæð #782
4. Pressure/Álag #765
5. Waste/Úrgan #1996
6. Barely/Með naumindum #1983
7. Definition/Skilgreining #2122
8. Lifestyle/Lífsmáti #3112
9. Lord/Lávarður #6740
2.1.6 Administering the tests: Procedure

The children were visited twice. During the first visit the children were asked to perform a short vocabulary definition task immediately followed the questionnaire. The children were asked to define twelve Icelandic words that had been taken from the Icelandic subtitles that came with an episode of *The Simpsons*. The episode is titled *Homer at the Bat* and it is the seventeenth episode in season three. Both the questionnaire and the vocabulary task were conducted in an interview format. The participants were interviewed one at a time in a separate room to reduce distractions. In the vocabulary task, the children were asked to explain the words to the best of their ability rather than define them and all the answers provided by the children were transcribed.

During the second visit, the intervention took place as the children were shown an episode of *The Simpsons* which was immediately followed by the exact same vocabulary definition task they had completed one week prior. Great care was taken to ensure that television screen was sufficiently large and that the children were seated close enough to the television to be able to adequately see the Icelandic subtitles on the television screen.

2.2 Analysis and Results

The results from the questionnaire and the two vocabulary definition tasks were calculated in Microsoft Excel. The results from the questionnaire were entered into the Excel document first followed by the answers from the vocabulary tasks.

When asked about their proficiency in the English language, three of the participants rated their English as ‘very good’, five of the participants rated their English as ‘good’ and the final nine rated their English as ‘average’. None of the participants selected the ‘little’ or ‘none’ options. When asked about their proficiency in the Icelandic language, eleven of the participants rated their Icelandic as ‘very good’
and six of them rated their Icelandic as ‘good’. None of participants selected the ‘average’ or ‘little’ options. When asked about how much television material in English they watch, four of the participants selected the ‘very much’ option, three selected the ‘much’ option, seven selected the ‘average’ option and three selected the ‘little’ option. None of the participants selected the ‘none’ option.

The answers given by the participants in the vocabulary definition task were either marked as ‘Correct’ for an accurate definition of the word, ‘Partially Correct’ for having the right idea for the word but being unable to adequately communicate the definition, and ‘Wrong’ for being unable to define the word. The performance of the participants was calculated in two separate categories, the first category only including correct answers while the second category is for overall correct answers includes both correct and partially correct answers. The average performance of each individual was calculated as well as the average performance for each question. The average performance per question was then compared to the results from the second vocabulary task in order to answer the primary research question of this study. The percentage increases and decreases for all answers were calculated and an average percentage change was also calculated. The individual performance numbers were calculated and compared to the answers from the questionnaire. The performance of the participants was correlated against the following factors, when respondents reported first being able to understand English, how proficient they consider themselves to be in English and Icelandic, and how much television material in English they watch on a regular basis. The participants’ gender was also correlated with the results of the vocabulary definition task to determine how the two genders differ in terms of how much television material they watch in English and how proficient they consider themselves to be in English and Icelandic.

2.2.1 Vocabulary definition task #1 – pre-test

After answering the background questionnaire, the participants were asked to answer a vocabulary definition task that took place prior to them having watched the episode of The Simpsons. The pre-test was administered to ascertain how many words on the list the participants were able to define before watching the show. The first four words in the vocabulary definition task were ranked between 0-1000 on the top 60000
lemmas list. The first four words were leiktíð, fjölmiðlar, upphæð and álag. As seen in Table 1, three of the participants which makes up 17.7% of the participants, were able to give a partially correct definition of the first word, leiktíð, while the rest were unable to define the word. One participant was able to accurately define the second word, fjölmiðlar, and one participant was able to give a partially correct definition of the word. In the third word, upphæð, six of the participants or 35.3% were able to accurately define the word while four participants which is 23.6%, were able to convey a partially correct definition to the researcher. In the fourth word, álag, eight participants or 47.1% of the participants were able to correctly define the word and one participant, which is 5.9% of the participants, gave a partially correct definition. The next four words in the study were úrgangur, med naumindum, skilgreining and lífsmáti. It is worth noting that while med naumindum is a phrase, its English counterpart is just a word. These words were ranked between 1000 and 4000 on the top 60000 words list.

Table 1:

The results for the next four words can be seen in Table 2. In the fifth word, úrgangur, 41.2% of the participants gave an accurate definition of the word. In the sixth word, med naumindum, which is a phrase in Icelandic, 17.7% of the participants gave a correct definition while 11.8% gave a partially correct definition. 35.3% of the participants were able to give a partially correct definition for the seventh word, skilgreining, but none were able to accurately define it. 23.6% of the participants were
able to accurately define the eighth word, lifsmáti, and 23.6% were able to give a partially correct definition. The final four words the participants were asked were lágardur, geislavírkt, brynvarinn, and uppörvandi. These final four words were ranked between 4000 and 11000 on the top 60000 words list previously mentioned.

Table 2:

![Bar chart showing correct, wrong, and partially correct definitions for Waste/ ínguér, Barely/Met raumindum, Definition/Skiðgreining, Lifestyle/Lífsmáti]

The results for the final four words can be seen in Table 3. 5.9% of the participants were able to accurately define the ninth word, lágardur, while 23.6% were able to give a partially correct definition. 23.6% of the participants were able to give a correct definition to the tenth word, geislavírkt, while 5.9% were able to give a partially correct definition. 23.6% of the participants accurately defined the eleventh word, brynvarinn. None of the participants were able to accurately define the twelfth word, uppörvandi, but 5.9% were able to give a partially correct definition.
2.2.2 Vocabulary definition task #2 – post-show

The second part of the study had ten fewer participants in the vocabulary definition task as the second part had only had seven participants while the first part had seventeen. The increase in correct and partially correct answers is however significant as can be seen in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 4:
The performance during the vocabulary definition task was compared to the word frequency list based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English. The participants were able to accurately define 22.08% of the four words in the 0-1000 bracket, leiktið, fjölmiðlar, upphæð and álagn, as well as being able to accurately define or partially define 35.35% of the words in the overall category. The participants were able to accurately define 10.33% of the four words in the 1000-4000 bracket, úrgangur, með nauminum, skilgreining and lifsmáti, as well as being able to define or partially define 38.3% of the words in the overall category. The participants were able to accurately define 13.28% of the final four words in the 4000-11000 bracket, lávarður, geislavirkt, brynvarinn and uppörvandi, as well as being able to define or partially define 22.13% of the words in the overall category. The correlation between the performance of the participants and word frequency can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5:

There was a percentage increase in the amount of correct definitions given in almost every word as can be seen in Tables 6 and 8. There was no change in the first word, leiktið, and there was a -9.3% percentage decrease in correct definitions in the tenth word, geislavirkt.
In the overall category, which is partially correct and correct definitions combined, there was a percentage increase in all definitions with the lone exception of the eighth word, lífsmáti, where a -4.4% decrease in both correct and partially correct definitions. These results can be seen in Tables 7 and 9.

Table 7:
On average there was a 12.91% increase in correct definitions in the second part of the study and a 14.45% increase in the overall category of both partially correct and correct definitions. These results can be seen in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Percent decrease in correct definitions</th>
<th>Percent increase in correct definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word 1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word 2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word 3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 4</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 5</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 6</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 7</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word 8</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 9</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 10</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 11</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 12</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Percent increase in overall definitions</th>
<th>Percent decrease in overall definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word 1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 11</td>
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<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word 12</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boys had a higher rate of correct definitions than girls in the first part of the study as can be seen in Table 10. Gender or other parts of the questionnaire were not specified in the second part of the study. Boys had 16.8% correct definitions while girls had 10.01%. Boys also had 24.37% partially correct and correct definitions while girls had 20.58%. Boys thus had 6.79% more correct definitions and 3.79% more definitions in the overall category.

Table 10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct definitions</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>10.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Correct and partially correct definitions</td>
<td>24.37%</td>
<td>20.58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a discrepancy between the amount of participants that participated in the pre-test and the post-test. The fact that there were seventeen participants in the first part of the study and seven in the second part significantly detracts from the results. Though most of the participants that participated in the second part of the study had been present in first part, there is always the possibility that the participants in the second part of the study were simply more proficient in the English language or more familiar with the words on the vocabulary definition task.

2.2.3 Correlation with the questionnaire

The performance of the participants in the vocabulary definition task was also correlated with the answers they gave on the questionnaire. The six participants that reported having understood English from the ages of zero to five had 13.72% correct
definitions and 23.52% in the overall category. The nine participants that reported having understood English from the ages of six to eight had 13.73% correct definitions, which is a .01% increase over the zero to five participants, and 24.18% in the overall category. The two participants that reported having understood English at the age of nine had 5.9% correct definitions and 8.85% in the overall category. These results can be seen below in Table 11.

Table 11:

The participants were asked about how proficient they consider themselves to be in English and Icelandic. As we are discussing self-reported proficiency here, it is worth noting that the participants might not have the same standards for proficiency. Regardless, performance on the pre-test was correlated with the self-reported English and Icelandic proficiency of the participants and can be seen in Tables 12 and 13. The nine participants that rated their English as average had 10.47% correct definitions and 20.91% in the overall category. The five participants that rated their English as good had 10.6% correct definitions and 17.64% in the overall category. The remaining three participants that rated their English as very good had 23.5% correct definitions and 33.33% in the overall category.
As can be seen in Table 13, the six participants that rated their Icelandic as good had 13.73\% correct definitions and also had 13.73\% in the overall category. The eleven participants that rated their Icelandic as very good had 12.3\% correct definitions and 22.45\% in the overall category.

Table 13:
The three participants that watch a small amount of television material in English had 15.7% correct definitions and 27.47% in the overall category. The seven participants that watch an average amount of television material in English had 14.28% correct definitions and 26.04% in the overall category. The three participants that watch much television material in English had 5.9% correct definitions and 9.8% in the overall category. The four participants that watch very much television material in English had 13.22% correct definitions and 20.57% in the overall category. These results can be seen below in Table 14.

Table 14:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ TV Consumption</th>
<th>Correct Definitions</th>
<th>Partially Correct and Correct Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little television in English</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average television in English</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much television in English</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much television in English</td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants’ sex was also correlated to other questions in the questionnaire. The questions in regards to the participants’ English proficiency, Icelandic proficiency and the amount of television material they watch were correlated with gender. The possible answers on the questionnaire were given numerical value. For example, the ‘none’ in regards to English proficiency was given the numerical value of one while the ‘very good’ option was given the value of five. There were however only four possible answers in the question regarding proficiency in Icelandic and thus four was the highest numerical value and one was the lowest. These results can be seen in Table 15.
There were some noteworthy correlations in the study that may prove significant in understanding the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland. The most significant result of the study is the 12.91% increase in correct definitions in the post-test. The varied number of participants in the two separate parts of the study does however detract from the significance of the result. Regardless of the varied number of participants, a positive relationship was found between Icelandic subtitles and incidental vocabulary acquisition in Icelandic. That is a significant result as it would suggest that young learners in Icelandic may be incidentally utilizing multimedia material in English to acquire Icelandic vocabulary. The significance of other correlations will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.3 The Results

The results of the vocabulary definition task suggest that children do incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material in English. That also supports the broader notion that children in Iceland do utilize their English vocabulary to acquire Icelandic vocabulary, undoubtedly in an incidental capacity though. The data from this study may however be considered insufficient to determine that English plays
a big role in the acquisition of Icelandic vocabulary but it does definitely support the
notion that subtitled material plays a role in the acquisition of Icelandic vocabulary.

In the vocabulary definition task, there was a clear 12.91% increase in correct
definitions and a 14.45% increase in the overall category which includes both correct
and partially correct definitions. It is however worth noting that the amount of
participants in the second part of the study is significantly lower than in the first part of
the study which affects the results of the vocabulary definition task greatly. The first
part of the study had seventeen participants while the second part only had seven.
Despite the varied numbers of participants in the two parts of the study, this study
shows that the participants that underwent the vocabulary definition task immediately
after watching a subtitled episode performed better on average than the participants that
had not seen it.

The Icelandic words for this study were chosen from the subtitles of an episode
of *The Simpsons* and were selected based on the position of their English counterparts
on a word frequency list based on COCA, the Corpus of Contemporary American
English. By looking at the data we can see that there is definitely a wide gap between
the 0-1000 bracket and the 4000-11000 bracket. There is an 8.8% increase in correct
definitions and a 13.22% increase in the overall category. The 1000-4000 bracket is
more unpredictable as it has the lowest amount of correct definitions but the highest
amount of definitions in the overall category. With a couple of exceptions, the numbers
do show a higher percentage of correct definitions in the words that are more frequent
on this particular English word frequency list. This would suggest a correlation between
the Corpus of Contemporary American English word frequency list and the Icelandic
vocabulary of young learners in Iceland. That is a fairly significant correlation as it
suggests that there is a positive relationship between the English and Icelandic
vocabularies of young learners in Iceland.

2.3.1 Results of the background questionnaire answers

Having a questionnaire along with the vocabulary definition task gives us an
opportunity to compare background information with the results of the vocabulary
definition task. The participants were asked when they were first able to understand
English and were given three choices, ages 0-5, ages 6-8 and age nine. Six of the
participants stated that they were able to understand age English at the age of five or
younger, Nine of the participants were able to understand it between the age of six and 8 and the final two were able to understand it at the age of nine.

2.3.2 Gender comparison

We can immediately see some differences between boys and girls. By giving a numerical value to the possible answers to the various questions, we can see that boys definitely rate their English significantly higher than girls with and they rate their Icelandic slightly higher. In terms of English proficiency, the average number calculated from the number of boys and the numerical value assigned to the answers is 4 while for girls it is 3.4. In regards to Icelandic proficiency, the average for boys is 3.71 and for girls it is 3.6. This could however be linked to various behavioural factors based on age and gender. Boys in their tenth year might simply possess more confidence and thus feel comfortable with rating their English higher than girls. Boys did also perform better on the vocabulary definition task than girls. Boys had 6.79% more correct definitions and 3.79% more correct and partially correct definitions in the overall category. A vocabulary definition task of twelve words is however an insufficient method of determining proficiency in a language. The gender-specific results also revealed that girls watch slightly more television material in English. The average for girls was 3.5 while it was 3.43 for boys. This does not support the findings of the study as girls performed worse in the vocabulary definition task but the difference is negligible.

2.3.3 Onset of English

When the participants were asked at what age they started understanding English, some of the participants requested that the researcher elaborate on the question. When they asked for more information, the researcher gave them an example of them being able to either watch a television show in English or read a text in English and understand the words that they hear or read. The study showed that the age at which they began understanding English may have played a role in the vocabulary definition task as the two participants who began understanding English at the age of nine had 5.9% correct definitions and 8.85% in the overall category. The difference between the participants who started understanding English between the ages of 0-5 and the ages of 6-8 is negligible as there is a .01% difference between the two groups in correct definitions and a 0.66% difference in the overall category. This question could be considered fairly difficult and prone to inaccurate answers as it might prove challenging.
for the participants to remember when the first began understanding English and that is the reason why they were given broad age ranges to choose from.

2.3.4 Perceived English Proficiency

The participants who rated their English proficiency as ‘very good’ performed much better in the vocabulary definition task than participants who rated their English proficiency as ‘good’ or ‘average’. Participants who rated their English as ‘very good’ had 12.9% more correct definitions than participants who rated their English proficiency as ‘good’ and 13.03% more correct definitions than people that rated their English proficiency as ‘average’. Participants who rated their English proficiency as ‘very good’ also performed better in the overall category as they had 15.69% more correct and partially correct definitions than participants who rated their English proficiency as ‘good’ and had 12.42% more than participants who rated their English proficiency as ‘average’. This supports the broader question of whether English proficiency and vocabulary has an effect on Icelandic vocabulary acquisition as a larger English vocabulary would theoretically aid in incidental Icelandic vocabulary acquisition from watching television material in English.

2.3.5 Perceived Icelandic Proficiency

Participants who rated their Icelandic proficiency as ‘very good’ did not have more correct definitions than participants who rated their Icelandic proficiency as ‘good’. Participants who rated their Icelandic proficiency as ‘good’ had 1.43% more correct definitions than participants who rated their Icelandic proficiency as ‘very good’. Participants who rated their Icelandic proficiency as ‘very good’ did however have 8.72% more correct and partially correct definitions in the overall category. The 8.72% increase could suggest that the participants who are rate their Icelandic proficiency higher are more confident and more comfortable with expressing themselves through Icelandic are thus able to convey more partially correct definitions. It is also worth noting that all of the participants either rated their Icelandic proficiency as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ as opposed to the other two options ‘little’ and ‘average’. This would suggest that Icelandic children in their tenth year are generally very confident when it comes to their proficiency in Icelandic. Asking Icelandic children how proficient they are in Icelandic is perhaps not a very effective method of determining their level of proficiency. An argument can also be made that people around the world
generally consider themselves to be proficient in their native language, especially when they have also just been asked about their proficiency in another language.

2.3.6 Television Viewing and Performance

The participants who stated that they watch ‘little’ television material in English actually performed the best in both correct definitions and in the overall category. The participants who watch ‘little’ television material in English had 2.48% more correct definitions than participants who watch ‘very much’ television material in English, 9.8% more than participants who watch ‘much’ and 1.42% more than participants who watch an ‘average’ amount. The participants who watch ‘little’ television material in English also had 6.9% more correct and partially correct definitions in the overall category than participants who watch ‘very much’ television material, 17.67% more than participants who watch ‘much’ television material and 1.43% more than participants who watch an ‘average’ amount. This data goes directly against the findings of the study as it conflicts with the results of the vocabulary definition task. The results of the vocabulary definition task would suggest that children do incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching English audiovisual material. While a twelve-word vocabulary definition task is hardly an effective method of determining proficiency in Icelandic, this data would suggest that children who watch less television material in English may actually be more proficient in Icelandic. This is however not indicative of their full exposure to English from various forms of multimedia in English.

2.3.7 Significant positive relationships

Though the 12-word vocabulary definition task is a poor indicator of proficiency and vocabulary size, a positive relationship was found between the self-reported English proficiency of the participants and their performance on the Icelandic vocabulary definition task. The correlation between self-reported Icelandic proficiency and performance in the vocabulary definition task is fairly insignificant as the participants that rated their Icelandic proficiency higher had fewer correct answers. The fact they had more answers in the overall category might simply be an indicator of confidence, as they participants that felt more confident with their proficiency in the Icelandic language also felt more comfortable with speculating on the words in the test. Confidence may have also played a role in other areas of the study such as comparing the performance of the two genders and the age at which the participants started understanding English.
2.3.8 Analysis of the definitions

Many of the definitions given by the participants were deemed to be partially correct as they demonstrated that the participant had some understanding of the word but was unable to accurately define it or place it within an accurate context. In word one, ‘leiktíð’ or ‘season’, several of the participants defined it as “time to play” or “to play”. This is for the most part a correct definition in the literal sense though they understood the word not in relation to sports or games but in relation to their own activities such as playing. This suggests that to understand the literal meaning of the word but not its intended meaning and context as presented in the episode of The Simpsons that was shown to them. None of the participants were able to accurately define the word in either test by mentioning its intended context. It is certainly a fairly uncommon word especially for children in their tenth year as they do not watch sports as much as adults do. Attempting to determine the reason why none of the participants incidentally added this word to their vocabulary would be purely speculative and futile as other researchers have suggested that incidental vocabulary acquisition is generally a result of some intrinsic interest (Meara 2).

A very small number of participants were able to accurately or partially define the second word, ‘fjölmiðlar’ or ‘media’. The reason behind that is fairly elusive as it is fairly common word in Icelandic society. A definition given by participant would have been deemed to be accurate had the participant mentioned any form of media or a medium. A more media-oriented context is perhaps needed to allow for incidental learning of this word.

Many of the participants were able to accurately or partially define the third word, ‘upphæð’ or ‘amount’. Some of the participants defined the word by attempting to establish a literal connection between the two parts of the word upp and hæð. This resulted in them giving the definition of “moving up”. Other participants mentioned “piles of money” and that can perhaps be traced to media exposure as “amount of money” is a fairly common expression in popular culture.

Around half of the participants were able to accurately define the fourth word, ‘álag’ or ‘pressure’. Most of the participants were able to define the word by mentioning synonyms such as stress while others were able to give more detailed
definitions for the word. Like its English counterpart, this word is fairly prominent in Icelandic society.

Nearly half of the participants were able to accurately define the fifth word, ‘úrgangur’ or ‘waste’ in the first part of the study while most of the participants were able to accurately define the word in the second part of the study. Participants defined the word either by mentioning garbage or by mentioning sewage. Both were considered to be an accurate definition of the word.

A small number of the participants were able to provide a definition for the sixth word, ‘með naumindum’ or ‘barely’ which is a phrase in Icelandic. This phrase is uncommon in modern Icelandic discourse and is only really prominent in written speech such as subtitles or in some other text form. This would explain the 25.1% increase in correct definitions in the second part of the study.

None of the participants were able to accurately define the seventh word, ‘skilgreining’ or ‘definition’, in the first part of the study while one participant was able to define in the second part. The word proved to be quite challenging and despite its frequency in the English language, the participants were unable to define the word or mention any synonyms aside from one instance in the second part. Some definitions were deemed to be partially correct when the participants mentioned ‘analysis’, as in trying to ‘analyze’ something. The participants were not literally asked to ‘define’ the words in the vocabulary definition task but rather ‘explain’ the words.

The eighth word in the vocabulary definition task, ‘lífsmáti’ or ‘lifestyle’, was the only word that had a marked percentage decrease in the overall category which is partially correct and correct definitions combined. While there was a -4.4% decrease in overall definitions, there was a 19.2% increase in correct definitions. The increase in correct definitions is considered to be an indicator of a positive relationship between the English language, Icelandic language, and Icelandic subtitles. While the decrease in overall definitions would suggest the opposite, it is important to note that correct definitions are more important to the study than partial definitions as partial definitions only show that the participant has the right idea for the word in mind and subject to speculation. The partial definitions for the eighth word primarily had to do with ‘being happy’ and it is speculation that this is an indicator of the participant having right idea in mind for the word.
The ninth word, ‘lávarður’ or ‘lord’, saw a percentage increase in both correct definitions and definitions in the overall category. The word is certainly uncommon in Icelandic discourse as there are no such lords in Icelandic society but that is speculation. While the uncommon usage of the word in Icelandic discourse would explain the low number of correct definitions in the first part, the increase in both correct and overall definitions can be explained by incidental vocabulary acquisition from being directly exposed to the word through subtitles. Partially correct definitions were given to participants that stated that he was a ‘boss’ or ‘someone in charge’. The partial definitions showed the right idea of a lord being someone separate from other people as he is ‘in charge’, though lords are not necessarily in charge of something.

The tenth word, ‘geislavírkt’ or ‘radioactive’ was the only word that had a marked percentage decrease in correct definitions. While there was a 13.3% increase in overall definitions, there was a -9.3% decrease in correct definitions. Partially correct definitions were given to participants that mentioned ‘rays’ or ‘lasers’. The only recorded incident of code-switching in the vocabulary definition task occurred on word ten when a participant mentioned ‘lasers’. This decrease in correct definitions detracts from the notion that there is a positive relationship between the English language, the Icelandic language and Icelandic subtitles. While it does detract from the notion, it is still just one word out of twelve words and there is still a 12.91% increase on average in correct definitions in the second part of the study.

The eleventh word, ‘brynvarinn’ or ‘armoured’, was the only word that had no partially correct definitions. The participants who were able to accurately define the word primarily mentioned knights and their armour. The word also saw a slight percentage increase of 4.9% in correct definitions. This increase in correct definitions is however minor and not significant.

The twelfth word, ‘uppörvandi’ and ‘inspiring’, can be considered highly uncommon in Icelandic speech yet it is ranked high on English word frequency lists such as COCA. Despite its uncommon usage in Icelandic discourse, it saw a percentage increase of 12.91% in correct definitions and 14.45% in overall definitions. The participants’ definitions that were deemed to be partially correct had to do with happiness or synonyms of happiness.
Choosing the appropriate words for the vocabulary definition task was difficult and may have had an effect on the results. The words were chosen to reflect frequency in the English language in order to determine whether there was a correlation to be found word frequency in the English language and the vocabulary knowledge of young learners in Iceland. As the words may not reflect frequency in Icelandic as they do in English, they may have proved to be too difficult for the young learners that participated in the study. Determining whether the Icelandic words were common or uncommon in Icelandic discourse is highly speculative as the study lacked the data to determine the frequency of the Icelandic words.

2.4 Conclusions

This study has yielded numerous results and has given some insight into the Linguistic Repertoire and television habits of children in their tenth year. Most importantly, the results of this study heavily support the notion that children do in fact incidentally learn vocabulary in their native language, Icelandic, from reading subtitles in their native language, Icelandic, while watching audiovisual material in a foreign or second language, English. Whether the same results would be reached in outside the Icelandic-English linguistic context is however something that definitely needs to be researched. Further studies with a more even number of participants and more participants in the two separate parts of the study would undoubtedly yield more reliable data. The data none the less answers the research question of this paper and supports the broader notion that young learners in Iceland may in fact be able to use subtitles to add to their Icelandic vocabulary. The implications are that the linguistic environment of young learners in Iceland has changed and requires more research in order for us to fully comprehend the effect of English exposure on the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland.

A third part of the study was initially organized but cancelled due to scheduling conflicts and miscommunication in the administration of the tests over time. In the third part of the study the long term effects of the intervention would have been tested by administering the vocabulary definition task again after a period of two weeks. The purpose of that would have been to determine if the vocabulary acquisition was not just short-term. Results from the same vocabulary definition task conducted two weeks after
The Simpsons episode would likely give us a better idea of whether there was any lasting incidental vocabulary acquisition.

With some exceptions, the words that are higher up on the word frequency based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English did have a higher number of correct definitions in the vocabulary definition task. This is however far from being a conclusive result though it does imply that the Icelandic vocabulary of the participants might also be tied to their English vocabulary. That is the implication tied into the notion that children incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching subtitled English audiovisual material. It does however provide support for the broader notion that the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland has changed to a point where their proficiency in the English language is able to support their acquisition of Icelandic vocabulary. In order to research this notion, we must start examining how children acquire vocabulary in the two languages through the complex input found in the multilingual environment of Iceland.

The results of the questionnaire, when combined with the vocabulary definition task, show that boys in their tenth year are generally more confident with their English than girls and slightly more confident with their Icelandic though the difference there can be considered negligible. While boys did perform better in the vocabulary definition task, that is hardly an adequate method to determine proficiency in a language or vocabulary size. The questionnaire did reveal that both genders are generally very confident when asked about their proficiency in English and Icelandic. The questionnaire combined with the vocabulary definition task also supported the notion that the age at which they start learning English can play a role in their vocabulary size. Additionally, the questionnaire revealed the girls watch television material in English slightly more than boys do.

The study revealed that children in their tenth year who watch more television material in English performed significantly worse on the vocabulary definition task. While that result does not support the notion that children incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from watching subtitled English audiovisual material, it does not really go against it either. There is a high probability that the television material in English that the children are watching does in fact not have Icelandic subtitles. The children could be watching Netflix, television channels that do not have Icelandic subtitles, television
material or films purchased abroad or watching television shows and movies on a computer.

The results of the study were significantly limited by the varied number of participants in the two separate parts of the study. The first part of the study had seventeen participants while the second part had only seven. The discrepancy in the number of participants in the two separate parts and the overall low number of participants in the second part limits the accuracy of the results. Initially, it was decided that the participants would be given a random number by day care employees in order to track individual improvement exclusively. This idea was however abandoned due to the low amount of participants in the second part of the study.

One of the limitations of the study was the lack of opportunity to determine the long term results of the intervention. As previously mentioned, the third part of the study was abandoned due to scheduling conflicts. Conducting the same vocabulary definitions task a couple of weeks or more after the children had seen the episode of The Simpsons would give more reliable results of whether there had been any long-term vocabulary acquisition. Though it is impossible for researchers to predict what children will end up remembering and what they will not as that might simply be based on chance or intrinsic interest.

Studying incidental vocabulary acquisition in itself is a fairly difficult task as the amount of incidental vocabulary acquisition per person varies greatly. Incidental vocabulary acquisition is considered to be a matter of some intrinsic interest and is thus difficult to study in detail (Meara 2). Taking the participants’ intrinsic interest into consideration while conducting quantitative research is of course impossible. Incidental vocabulary acquisition in itself is thus difficult to research and just one study that only provides short-term results may provide fairly limited results.

One of the problems that researchers are faced with when conducting research with children is that the need for a gatekeeper to be present. A gatekeeper in this case is a parent, a teacher, a day care employee or some other person that is familiar to the child (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 14). In the present study, gatekeepers were invaluable in maintaining order among the participants and streamlining the research process. One participant requested to have a gatekeeper present beside him during the study. The problem that faces researchers is that children can be difficult research participants as
that are not accustomed to speaking to strangers. This problem does naturally go away as the children get older. The presence of gatekeepers is however not always appropriate as their presence can negatively affect the responses that the child is willing to give the researcher (Shaw, Brady, and Davey 14). While a gatekeeper was only present for one interview, their close proximity to the research environment may have had an effect on the responses that the children felt comfortable giving.

While studying the repertoire of young Icelandic learners, it is important to consider whether they share the same or a similar Linguistic Repertoire in different geographical areas. If we make the claim that English proficiency is highly dependent on media exposure, would it not be safe to assume that English proficiency should be lower in areas where young learners are not exposed to multimedia in a lower capacity. Less exposure to English also greatly affects their overall repertoire which results in fewer instances of translanguaging and less overall English usage. It is thus important to consider that conducting a study of a linguistic nature with one group of children in one area of the country is likely a poor indicator of the overall Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland. This is a difficulty that researchers are presented with in Iceland and must adapt accordingly by travelling to various areas of the country where media exposure may vary and conduct the same study for comparative results.

The results of the study may not accurately reflect the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland as the results are entirely from one area of the country. The participants in the present study are all from the same area in Reykjavík. Though they are from three separate schools, they all attend the same after-school program which is in vicinity of all three schools. The fact that the participants are all from the same area means that the results of the study are limited. The results of the study hinge on the notion that media exposure plays an important role in the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland. Media exposure can of course vary greatly among areas of the country which in turn means that exposure to the English language will vary. For a more complete picture of whether young learners incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from English audiovisual material, the study would have to be conducted in additional areas of the country.

Finally, the small number of lexical items is perhaps insufficient to provide results that support the notion that children incidentally learn Icelandic vocabulary from
watching subtitled English audiovisual material. The small number of lexical items thus may limit the results of the vocabulary definition task to a certain extent. Additionally, twelve words are hardly an indicator of proficiency in either language and thus it is hard to compare the results of the vocabulary definition task to the perceived proficiency of the participants or the amount of television they watch. Additionally, the lexical items chosen for the vocabulary definition task may not accurately reflect frequency in Icelandic.

A number of questions arose from the study that need to be answered to further understand the linguistic environment in Iceland, the impact of Iceland subtitles and their future. One such question is how large is the Icelandic vocabulary of Icelandic children in their tenth year and how large is their English vocabulary. A comprehensive study coupled with vocabulary testing could help us further understand the Icelandic and English vocabulary sizes of children in their tenth year. Studying the vocabulary sizes of young learners on an annual basis would help us understand the amount of words that young learners add to their vocabulary in either language. The rate at which they add to their English vocabulary prior to commencing formal English instruction is particularly interesting as that can be tied to significant incidental vocabulary acquisition.

A question that still lingers in the face of this study is how much are young learners in Iceland exposed to Icelandic subtitles with the arrival of so many new and popular forms of media. A comprehensive study is needed to examine the amount of time that young learners spend watching filmic or television material and in contrast, how much they are exposed to English through other forms of media which are not subtitled. In addition to giving us insight of the amount of Icelandic subtitles that young learners are exposed to, this would give us insight into the forms of media that are perhaps responsible for the rise in English incidental vocabulary acquisition. This is also needed in order to help us understand what has led to children exceeding the curriculum goals of formal English instruction in fourth grade.

While this study has given some insight into the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland, the current situation and the future of the multilingual environment in Iceland is still a subject of great interest. The argument can be made that young learners in Iceland are becoming more proficient in English with every new generation.
While this can be attributed to young learners beginning formal instruction at an earlier age, studies have shown that is not the case as students generally exceed curriculum goals before they even begin formal instruction (Arnbjörnsdóttir 3). A more likely suspect that is responsible for this change in the linguistic environment in Iceland is multimedia. Children are primarily exposed to English through multimedia in today’s society and that exposure is not likely to significantly decrease in the near future. Changes in multimedia are however difficult to predict and so is the future of the Linguistic Repertoire of Icelandic children.

As young learners in Iceland are becoming more proficient in English, it is worth considering whether the impact of formal instruction has lessened to or whether changes are required in order to adapt to a changing linguistic environment and a different Linguistic Repertoire among young learners. Young learners in Iceland are exposed to a great deal of English outside of formal instruction and that has led to them exceeding the curriculum goals early on in formal English instruction. The question is whether formal instruction needs to adapt to this change in the Linguistic Repertoire of young Icelandic learners and what form this adaptation would take. The results of the present study do indicate that young learners in Iceland do incidentally add to their Icelandic vocabulary by utilizing their proficiency in English. Could that indicate that the formal instruction should take into consideration children’s entire Linguistic Repertoire to aid in the acquisition of both Icelandic as it does with English. Perhaps subtitles could be utilized in formal instruction to aid in vocabulary acquisition. These ideas may be considered radical but the question remains and formal instruction will eventually need to adapt to a changing linguistic environment.

The purpose of this paper was to research a small part of the native language incidental vocabulary acquisition of young learners in Iceland and to answer the research question of whether young learners in Iceland incidentally acquire Icelandic vocabulary from watching audiovisual material English with English subtitles. The results of the study brought forth some compelling evidence that supports the notion that children do in fact incidentally acquire Icelandic vocabulary from watching subtitled audiovisual material in English. The study does however lack long-term results that would indicate whether the learners retain vocabulary that they acquired during the study. The study was further limited by additional factors and more questions may have risen from the study than were answered by it, which is not necessarily a bad result.
However, it did provide insight into the broader notion behind the study of whether young learners in Iceland do in fact utilize their proficiency in the English language to incidentally acquire vocabulary in Icelandic.

The impact of multimedia on young learners in Iceland is a cornerstone in the present study as the research question hinges on the notion that young learners in Iceland are exposed to a great deal of English on a daily basis through multimedia. The arrival of Netflix in Icelandic society is perhaps the most pressing contemporary concern that is relevant to the topic at hand. Netflix and various other new forms of media are, based on statistics, large contributors to the decreased popularity of Icelandic television and at the same time, contributors to decreased exposure of Icelandic subtitles among young learners in Iceland. This does however require further study so that accurate correlations can be made between these various new forms of media and general viewership of Icelandic television.

This study was primarily focused on the contemporary linguistic tendencies of young learners in Iceland and those tendencies are of course ever-changing as evidenced by numerous examples of a changed linguistic environment listed in the literature review of this paper. It is not considered prophetic to state that the linguistic environment of young learners in Iceland is ever-changing as the Linguistic Repertoire of all age and ethnic groups are inevitable subject when exposed to a vast amount of multimedia in another language. Academic prudence demands that the ever-changing linguistic environments of Iceland and the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland are researched to determine the effects of existing and future forms of media on the language and vocabulary acquisition of young learners.

There is still a great deal that we do not know about the Linguistic Repertoire of young learners in Iceland. These young learners are seemingly and incidentally acquiring a great deal of vocabulary in the English language without the benefit of prior formal instruction and that while that is fascinating by itself, it does pose the question of how they learn the language with their vocabulary acquisition in the language being almost completely if not completely incidental. The Icelandic linguistic context provides researchers with the opportunity to examine a linguistic environment that has changed a great deal. This study has demonstrated the importance of not viewing the acquisition of vocabulary in different languages separately but rather to examine how
children acquire vocabulary in many languages through the complex input found in the multilingual environment that the Icelandic linguistic context has become.
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