Language Acquisition

Acquiring Languages beyond knowledge in first language

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Thesis for B.A. degree

International Studies in Education

HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
MENNTAVÍSINDASVIÐ

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Abstract

This paper proposes that individual differences and motivation affects second language acquisition and that these factors are as important as proficiency in mother tongue. Researchers believe that knowledge in mother tongue has a positive effect on bilingualism which also has a positive effect on cognitive development (Cummins, 2001). The purpose of this thesis is to use individuals experiences to argue that proficiency in mother tongue is not necessarily an indicator of being an effective language learner. Other factors are also important, such as an individuals interest in the language, their attitudes towards language learning and their self motivation. This thesis first defines bilingualism, and discusses it as a liability and an asset. This is followed by an outline of different language acquisition and motivational theories. The second part of the thesis introduces cases drawn from individuals personal experiences of learning Icelandic and or English. These experiences are analyzed in relation to the literature review and used to draw the conclusion that individual differences and motivation affect second language acquisition and are factors equally important as proficiency in the mother tongue.

Key Words: Bilingual, Language Acquisition, Mother-tongue Education, Self Motivation.

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Preface

Living in Iceland for all these years, I have been in contact with many people and have been inspired by their enthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm for learning Icelandic. Throughout my study period at the University of Iceland focusing on language acquisition, and mother tongue education have led to the desire of writing my final paper on this topic, going beyond a first languages' influence on second language acquisition. This 10 ECT credit thesis is part fulfilment of my B. A. degree at the Department of Education of the University of Iceland. My supervisors for this project were Susan E. Gollifer and Brynja E. Halldórsdóttir. I am grateful to them for sharing their wisdom and helping me to bring out my idea successfully.

I want to extend my gratitude to all the teachers in the ISE program for their undying support and wisdom throughout the course period. I thank all who have worked with me and take full responsibility for any mistakes contained in this work. Last but not the least, I want to show my gratitude to my family- My Mother, Sophia O Akyeampong, my children Kenneth Osei Tutu Kwakye, Francis Kwarteng Kwakye, Victoría Grace Kwakye and every other member of the family who contributed immensely towards my schooling all these years. I could not have made it without their support and caring.

This thesis was written solely by me, the undersigned. I have read and understand the university code of conduct (November 7, 2003, http://www.hi.is/is/skolinn/sidareglur) and have followed them to the best of my knowledge. I have correctly cited to all other works or previous work of my own, including, but not limited to, written works, figures, data or tables.

Signed: Abena Acheampomaa Darko, 10th May, 2016.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The paper present or demonstrate that, individual differences, motivation and other variables has some effect on language acquisition and goes beyond knowledge in first language. The claim that knowledge in a native language has a positive impact on second language acquisition needs to be explored in the context of bilingualism. My own experience as a language learner made me think it is possible that this theory is true when it comes to learning a second language, rather than a third and perhaps fourth. Research proves the effectiveness of having a strong mother tongue on bilinguals, promoting learning in general and its effectiveness on cognitive development (Cummins, 2001). Thus, mother tongue education is important in a child's educational development. This is a true fact and should not be confused with this work, which is focusing on individual differences and motives that hinder or promote bilingualism.

Motivation plays a vital role when it comes to learning languages (Dörnyei, 2009). While language learning seems easy and natural for some people, the opposite is true for others. Why is this so? I suggest that different individual learning abilities need to be considered and this could be greatly affected by the many different factors that affect or promote language learning; for example, factors such as personality, motivation and self motivation, learning styles and cognitive styles, language learning strategies and a student's self regulation. Other traits or individual differences such as anxiety, creativity, willingness to communicate, self esteem and learner beliefs all contribute to effective language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2009).

This paper is inspired by my own experiences or observations from various adult learners of languages, both Icelandic and or English in Iceland. I draw on several language acquisition and motivational theories. I am going to use these observations to build up a case for this piece of work. In this work, case study participants were learning Icelandic or English in Iceland. I discuss different learning styles based on the experiences of all three participants, and also use a study by Anna Jeeves on English at Secondary School- Perceptions of Relevance as an example of motivational self-effect on language acquisition.

Learning Icelandic has proven difficulty for some people while the opposite is true for others. People who are slow in learning Icelandic may have very good background

knowledge in their native languages but may still struggle with acquiring the Icelandic language. Those that do not have difficulty in Icelandic language acquisition may also have very good background knowledge in their first language.

Why then is this a case? What makes some people easily acquire Icelandic and perhaps other languages, better and faster than others? There must be a reason. It is common knowledge that Icelandic is a complex North Germanic language that is difficult to learn due to its archaic vocabulary and complex grammar rules. According to an article in Iceland Magazine by Matt Eliason, Icelandic is an Indo-European language belonging to Germanic roots, that is closely related to Norwegian and Faroese. It retains many grammatical features of other ancient Germanic language. The modern Icelandic is still a heavily inflated language with extremely long words having specific syllables pronounced differently from typical English syllables. (Grapevine, 2013).

The commonly identified areas of difficulty to learning Icelandic are grammar, pronunciation, sentence structure and verb conjugation. Some sound pronunciations in Icelandic are a tongue quiver(-roller). Foreigners learning Icelandic finds some letters difficult to pronounce. Letters such as L, two tone letters NN, MM, LL, and other letters such as Ö, U, Þ and Ð are all very confusion because they are uncommon in other languages and have specific sound rules.

According to Dr. Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, language learning difficulties appears at different stages. In the case of Icelandic, verbs are conjugated variously for tense, mood, person, number and voice- active, passive or middle. Even though Icelandic vocabulary has fewer lexemes than that of English, a single word can have a phenomenal range of meanings depending on the particles used. Considering Halda for example, Halda literally means to keep, which can become halda fram- claim/ maintain, Halda upp á – celebrate and halda uppi- support. (Iceland Magazine ,2014).

Another area of difficulty and confusion in grammatical features of Icelandic is word order. It is well known that Germanic languages other than English exhibit the so called verb- second or V2 languages and this is different from English since the verb must always be placed second in the sentence. (Rögnvaldsson, & Thraínsson, 1990). For example, you do not say "Yesterday I went to the zoo" but rather "Yesterday went I to the zoo"

I personally found this word order formation challenging. Constructing sentences in this form did not sound right and this has hindered my ability to communicate, in addition to my limited vocabulary. In my early years of migration, I knew the only way to integrate into the society was to overcome the communication barrier, and so I was determined to learn the language, but I constantly encountered difficulties. Some of these are as mentioned above, word order in sentence and cultural differences. I had gotten used to beginning sentences or conversations with politeness by using "Please", but "Vinsamlegast" is seldom used in Iceland. Perhaps, my informant should have taught me " Má ég (Fá)" instead of Vinsamlegast since that was more commonly used. So, within the first months of living in Iceland and with an early introduction to this complex, different language, my eagerness to learn the language quietly died down due to the constant challenges I faced. In my opinion, I could have benefited more from having informal exposure first than formal exposure.

Why does language acquisition vary between people? Is this due to individuality and language structure?. This is perhaps what Cummins describes as attribute- base and input-based proficiency. ''Attribute based proficiency acquisition is strongly influenced by relatively stable attributes of the individual learner, such as cognitive and personality variables. Input-based aspects of proficiency on the other hand does not depend on the attributes of the individual learner but from the quality and quantity of second language input received from the environment''. (Cummins, 1991, pp 70).

In order to contextualize my discussion on attribute-based proficiency in relation to the three participants that I used as case studies, I first present theories of Language Acquisition.

Chapter 2.0 First Language Acquisition

When it comes to how I acquired my first language, I have no clue how that happened as a child. I do not remember getting formal instruction or education from anyone. All I can say is that I knew I was able to understand and communicate with my siblings, parents and everybody in the community. However, at about nine years, I was in a different school in a different community where English was the medium of instruction and communication, I found myself lacking the ability to understand and communicate in English. Because I had grown up exclusively monolingual, until I changed societal background, then I began the journey of bilingualism.

However, I have had a first-hand experience with my children and in my mind these theories are part of first language acquisition. Various theories of how we acquire language have been put forward over the years by different theorists and there has been much debate on which theory is effective and which one is not. Some of these theories include behaviorist, innatist, and interactionist (Lightbown & Spada, 1993). How children learn a language has been a debate for some researchers particularly among Americans psychologists. In 1957, B. F Skinner wrote Verbal Behavior Analysis and suggested that children learn language through interaction with the environment (Skinner, 1957). These interactions occur through principles of conditioning such as stimulus, association response and reinforcement (Skinner 1957, pp 30, 32). In 1959, Noam Chomsky challenged B.F. Skinner's theory. Without having the innate ability to acquire a language, childern will not learn all they need to know language wise (Chomsky, 1959). His studies led him to the Innateness Hypothesis, a theory that describes how children's knowledge of language is inborn, as cited by Jackendoff 1994, 35**.** However, the question of how children acquire language is still a subject of debate and linguists still argue how much of language is learned and how much is innate.

2.1 Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition (SLA) is the learning of any language in addition to the mother tongue. Second language acquisition also refers to one's introduction to a second language after having received native competence in a first language (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2003). Ellis (1997) argued that the second language is not only the language learned

or succeeding one's mother tongue but the third or fourth language is part of the second language acquisition.

Acquiring another or additional languages requires an individual to pass through the same stages as in learning their first language. However, some individuals find it difficult in learning another language especially the adults. It is essential that second language learners receive an enormous amount of exposure to the language for them to learn it (Krashen, 1981). There are some reasons why people learn the second or third language which include expanding their knowledge in communication system, feeling part of the society. Learning the second language requires time, effort and organization in order for the individual to learn the language. One needs to be fluent in the native language also. Generally, learning the mother tongue is not really difficult but rather, the skills in learning other language varies for the individual, their attitudes towards the language and motivation.

L2 can be acquired either formal or informal. Schools and language courses are the formal ways to acquire L2 and through walking on the streets and the community is where to acquire the informal way of L2 (Baker, 2011). People are knowing or learning more different language and culture everyday because the world is now globalized. Acquiring the second or third language is important because it increases the opportunities in employment (Baker, 2011). In view of this, it is therefore very essential to be aware of bilingualism and its contribution to peoples educational development in general. The next chapter further introduces the term bilingualism in more depth.

Chapter 3.0 Bilingualism

In early studies of bilingualism, researchers claimed bilingual children had a lower IQ and were far worse off in cognitive development than monolingual children (Bialystok et al, 2014). These studies have been criticized for lack of a controlled research base; some of the bilingual subjects were from different socioeconomic backgrounds than monolinguals and the term of bilingualism was not adequately defined during these studies. In later studies these kinds of variables have been better excluded. In these later studies, bilingual subjects have been recorded as having higher intelligence and better academic development than monolinguals. In most cases, being bilingual is an advantage, as development, both academically and cognitively, is believed to be faster and better (Hamers and Blanck, 2003).

A bilingual is someone who knows and has the ability to use two or more languages. 'Bi' here does not necessarily mean two as it is in the case of a binocular and a bicycle, which refers to two or uses two eyes or two wheels. In most cases, when a person is bilingual, the number of languages known or used is not limited to two (Baker, 2011). Abilities and competence levels in these languages may vary considerably. The productive bilingual actively speaks and writes in both languages, while the passive bilingual has a receptive ability, and understands or reads in both languages.

Baker (2011) distinguishes between "individual bilingualism" and "societal bilingualism". Focusing on individual bilingualism, there is much debate among scholars as to who should be classified as bilingual. Whilst Bloomfield (1933 p.77) restricts bilinguals as those who have "native-like control of two or more languages" Diebold (1964) includes people with minimal competence in two languages. The problem with defining bilingualism is that ability lies on a continuum and it is difficult to assess one's proficiency in a language, particularly as so much of language knowledge is context based, something that general assessments do not take into account. For many bilinguals, one language is spoken at home, and tends to be in informal registers, whilst the other is spoken in school with an extensive academic vocabulary, but this does not reflect a deficiency, merely a different area of knowledge. A bilingual therefore is someone who speaks more than one language in their daily lives in the situation or place one finds him or herself.

It is rare to find bilinguals with a balanced or equal ability in their language usage. One language is often used more than the other language and this can change with time. A bilingual's language acquisition is determined by the age of the child when they started learning. Simultaneous or infant bilingualism occurs when children learn two languages from birth, while a sequential or consecutive bilingual learns a second language after three years of age (De Houwer, 2009).

How can one elect who deserves the title of bilingual? Can we merely include the speakers that are flawless in the four macro skills (speaking, writing, listening and reading) of at least two languages? Or only include children that learn two languages from a young age and not adults that learn a language to be able to float in a specific environment? Bialystok (2001) explores some of these questions and raises the question: what is proficiency in a language? This is difficult to explain because vocabulary/language acquisition can vary so greatly according to social status, age, exposure and even purpose. To answer this question Bialystok (2001) cites Romaine (1995) and his six patterns of home language bilingualism. These describe children that are bilingual, but each of the languages they use have a minority or majority status according to the linguistic input received by the child. Döpke (1992) goes as far as saying that understanding or even reading a language without being able to produce it can be considered bilingualism although many may disagree. In my opinion there is still no definition that can sustain the vastness of the word that is bilingualism. Currently there is vast interest and research in this field.

3.1 Bilingual as a liability and an asset

Being bilingual is not a liability. Being part of two cultures, being able to visit other countries, and not having to face any problems due to languages, can open many doors in regards of studying or living in other countries. Being bilingual might even encourage people to study other languages as well, as those individuals have experience the benefits that follow.

It seems that learning two, or at least two, languages at once is not too much for a child to handle. In Hamers' and Blanck's book (2003) they look at the French psychologist Ronjat's (1913) research. He established that learning two languages simultaneously happens in a normal and harmonious way.

Being bilingual could also benefit a person later in life, as it is usually seen as an advantage in certain jobs. Being able to speak two, or even multiple languages is a major advantage in today's society as the world is becoming increasingly multilingual and individuals expressing themselves in many languages will likely be sought after in many different fields of work. Being bilingual could increase career progress when working internationally, but only if your proficiency in both languages cover the workplace circle of communication. In addition, I think being bilingual could increase understanding of different cultures and open up the mind to several ways of thinking about a problem and solutions. Thinking in two languages about one problem could produce different kinds of results and solutions to said problem (Cummins, 2001).

Whilst bilingualism can be a great advantage to the language user, circumstances that nourish this must be created. It is important that a first language is acquired well and that parents and care givers are informed and educated on the importance of this.

Through communication and educational development, bilingualism has gain some positive effect on the individual or people speaking different languages. They continue to explore and get more knowledge and understanding in many different languages in the school and anywhere they find themselves and use them effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast. Cummins (2001) further adds that processing information through different languages helps to develop the thinking ability of the individual.

When bilinguals do not acquire sufficient knowledge of their first language, they can become semi-lingual, this is where a person has a lack of proficiency in both of their languages. This can furthermore lead to a lack of identity or interfere with construction of self, as Ellen Bialystock (2001) puts it. It is however clear that the benefits of bilingualism outweigh the negatives and that under the right social circumstances, bilingualism is an asset that can create a multitude of opportunities.

In conclusion, a bilingual is someone who speaks different languages for many reasons in different situations with various degrees of proficiency to communicate with other speakers. As research and evidence have proved, bilingualism has difficult definition and its a subject that is complex to determines clear distinctions. Furthermore, when people

speak with non-native –like proficiency in both different languages, it is still bilingual. Bilingualism is seen as a rare phenomenon, but also as a fact about life in the world today. Language ability and language use also count in determining who is bilingual, so bilingualism is defined by different people based on how they feel it works for them. People who speaks in different languages but are not too much fluent with the languages is still termed as bilingual. The reason they aren't is quite simply because bilinguals aren't equally competent in all of their languages. They usually use the language in different domain of their life, have different purposes and they speak with different people at different times. Baker (2011) added that the individual may speak in two or three languages, will be competence in one language. One may also use a language for reading and writing and another for conversation (Baker, 2011).

Chapter 4.0 Key factors in language Learning

Motivation

Motivation is defined as the ability to do something or the readiness to do something without been told or asked to do. Heckhausen (1991), further adds that motivation is the goal-directed behavior and when the individual tend to measure it, it draws attention to a number of characteristics of the person.

Some of these behaviors an individual or person shows when been motivated include his or her goals, activities, desires and aspiration which arouse and make use of ways to help in maintaining these goals (Masgoret & Gardner, 2002).

Motivation can be grouped into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Below is a gist of explanation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

4.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Brown (2007) defines intrinsic motivation as an activity done to satisfies a person or give pleasure to someone performing an activity. Intrinsic motivation happens without expecting anything in return but rather there is an excitement or it is seen as a chance to learn, investigate and realize our goals (Coon & Mitterer, 2010).

Learning language to satisfies or improve oneself is a strong predictor of the success in the language inasmuch, students with this behaviour are curious and enjoy learning the language.

Competition & cooperation, challenged, curiosity, control and recognition are factors that are increasing intrinsic motivation but for the purpose of the topic, I will focus on challenged, curiosity and control.

Challenged- People are more motivated when they pursue goals that have personal meaning, that boost their self-confidence, when performance feedback is available, and when the goal achievement is possible but not necessarily certain.

Curiosity- Internal motivation is increased when something in the physical environment grabs the individual's attention (sensory curiosity) and when something about the activity stimulates the person to want to learn more (cognitive curiosity).

Control: People want control over themselves and their environments and want to determine what they pursue.

4.2 Extrinsic Motivation

Brown (2007) defines extrinsic motivation as ability to perform an activity with the expectation of a reward or an appreciation either with an item or to be praised in nature. Attracting attention or winning medals or receiving financial rewards from the media or other resources are some of the ways to be motivated because it involves some rewards in return. (Karageorghis & Terry, 1969).

Due to the reward received in the extrinsic motivation, it encourages others and students to learn because they will be rewarded if they are able to learn other languages. Furthermore, it motivates the students because they will receive praises from their teachers and colleagues as well. All these are positive attitude that the language students are expected to possess.

4.3   Attitude

Attitude refers to an individual behavior or reaction towards any situation associated with any immediate context be it learning language or others (Gardner, 1985). He further argued that "attitude is an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent"(Gardner, 1985, P. 9).

There are many factors that need to be considered with respect to learning attitudes, such as the evaluation of the teaching environment. Is the classroom a dreadful or enjoyable place to be? Are the Language class and classmates accommodating and supportive?

Learning attitude is concerned with a learner's learning experiences, beliefs, values as well as a learner's educational background. The attitude of learning is one of the important individual factors that plays a vital role in the learning behaviors. It has great effect on the learning process and learning outcomes. It determines a learner's success or failure to a great extent. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the problem of the students' attitude toward learning.

Attitudes are cognitive- are capable of being thought about and affective- have feelings and emotions attached to them. Here what this is saying is the thoughts and feelings that comes about when someone speaks to us in a language that we do not understand. What is the emotion that follows with this scenario? Do we develop a positive attitude to overcome this emotion (Baker, 1988)?

4.4 Types of attitudes

Most research focus more on the speaker and their attitude towards a language with regards to the language the individual wants to learn. In 1950s, Gardner and Lambert studied various attitudes which they regarded important to L2 learning. Stern (1983) classified them into three which include: "attitudes towards the community and the language speakers, the learning concerned and attitude towards the languages and language learning in general." These attitudes are influenced by the personality of the individual   or the learner. Stern (1983) further adds, one can be ethnocentric, thus, using his or her cultural values and standards to judge another culture or authoritarian, thus, to act according to the rules and regulations set at a community by not going or doing your will.

With a positive attitude towards learning an additional language helps to develop certain learning strategies which helps to aid effective language learning. The language learner with a positive attitude towards learning additional languages would develop certain learning strategies to facilitate effective language learning.

4.5 Language Learning Strategies

Students willingness to improve their learning or understanding of the second language sets up strategies with behaviours, steps or techniques they develop to help or improve their language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990).

Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defined language learning strategies as the behaviour, action and ways that the individual exhibits when learning the second or a foreign language which influence the process of learning. For example, one learner may seek out partners for conversation. Another learner may group words to be learned and then labels each group, whiles one may use gestures to communicate in the classrooms when in difficulty. Another may break down words into their components whiles the other uses guesses when reading to depict meaning. All these are the different strategies students adopt to learn languages effectively.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) also added that developing L2 communicative ability is an active and self-directed tools for strategies. Research further shows that the conscious structures used of such strategies is related to language achievement and proficiency.

Early researchers made a list of ways and other features they believe to be important for good L2 learner. Rubin (1975) adds good L2 learners are good thinkers, they believe to communicate at any time and often feel free to express themselves. Further, they are willing to correct any mistakes they make and ready to focus and look for patterns and analyze things. They take advantage of any chance they get and monitor their speech and pay attention to anything they are being told. Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1975) add to the list of strategies used by successful L2 learners, saying that they learn to think in the language and address the affective aspects of language acquisition.

The effectiveness of using L2 learning strategies is supported by research and it has been proven that successful language learners often use strategies in a well organized manner. Here are some findings:

Use of appropriate language learning strategies often results in improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific areas (Oxford et al., 1993; Thompson & Rubin, 1993).

Chamot & Kupper (1989) also said successful language learners select ways that suit them in a well organized way, structured to the requirements of the language task. These learners help others to get knowledge about the strategies use and why they believe it is important (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Cognitive tasks such as translating and analyzing, and the meta cognitive such as-planning and organizing strategies are often used together and support each other (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Well tailored combinations of strategies often have more impact than single strategies.

Certain strategies or clusters of strategies goes well with specific language skills or tasks. For example, L2 writing, like L1 writing, benefits from the learning strategies of planning, self-monitoring, deduction, and substitution. L2 speaking demands strategies such as risk taking, paraphrasing, circumlocution, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. L2 listening comprehension gains from strategies of elaboration, inferencing, selective attention, and self-monitoring, while reading comprehension uses strategies like reading aloud, guessing, deduction, and summarizing (Chamot & Kupper, 1989).

The powerful social and affective strategies are found less often in L2 research. This is, perhaps, because these behaviors are not studied frequently by L2 researchers, and because learners are not familiar with being attentive to their own feelings and social relationships as part of the L2 learning process (Oxford, 1990).

4.6 Factors influencing the choice of L2 learning strategies

Oxford (1990) made a combination of research already done on how motivation, attituded and beliefs, learning styles and tolerance of ambiguity as factors that influence the choice of strategies existing among second language learners.

Motivation: Students who are motivated adopt and use more strategies making evidently their reason for studying the language in the choice of strategies than less motivated student.

Attitudes and beliefs: These factors are known to have effects on the strategies learners use. Poor strategy use or lack of organized strategies are as a of negative attitudes and beliefs.

Learning style: A learning style is the general approach to language learning and they often determined the choice of L2 learning strategies. For example, analytic-style students preferred strategies such as contrast analysis, rule-learning, and dissecting words and phrases, while global students used strategies to find meaning (guessing, scanning, predicting) and to converse without knowing all the words (paraphrasing, gesturing).

Tolerance of ambiguity: Students who could tolerate ambiguity used different learning strategies in some cases that those who could not.

Chapter 5   Literature Dörnyei's (2005) Motivational Self System

Zoltan Dörnyei (2005) in his book Psychology of Second Language Acquisition proposed a change in the formation of Second language (L2) motivation as part of the individual's self system. The new model of the L2 Motivational Self System was to synthesize a number of approaches with the most effect to the field (Gardner 1985, Noels 2003, Ushioda 2001) whiles extending the teritory of L2 motivation theory to make it readily available in diverse language learning souroundings in todays globalized world.

In accordance with the theoretical consideration, Dörnyei (2005) proposed that the L2 motivational self system should have a component associated with the ideal self and another with the ought self and reliazed the need for a third major important factor, which was to be in close connection to students learning surroundings. Dörnyei finds that one of the things to boast of in the 'educational shift' of motivation research in the 1990s was the reliazation of the motivational effect on of major component of the learners surrounding, such as the teacher, the curriculum, and the learner group. (Dörnyei 1994, 2001b; Ushioda 2003). Dörnyei (2005)) goes on to say that, for some language learners they are not initialy motivated to learn a language because of internal or external self images, but from succeding at the learning process when they discover that they are good. Thus, the L2 Motivational Self System consists of the following

Ideal (L2) Self, which concerns the L2-specific face of one's ideal self: if the person we want to become speaks an L2 (Example.,what ever this person does, that is what we want to be doing too), the ideal L2 self is a powerful tool to learn the L2 because we would like to have our actual self and ideal self the same.

Ought-to L2 Self, which concerns the attributes that individuals believe they ought to possess to avoid possible negative outcomes; such perceived duties, external expectations, and obligations, and this self may therefore differ from individual's own desires or wishes.

L2 Learning Experience, which concerns situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the positive impact of success or the enjoyable quality of a language course).

Thus, the L2 Motivational Self System suggests that there are three primary sources of motivation to learn an L2: (a) the learners' internal desire to become an effective L2 user, (b) social pressures coming from the learner's environment to master the L2, and (c) the actual experience of being engaged in the L2 learning process.

5.1 Desire, language learning, Variations from person to person
An Analysis of Three cases

These are quotations extracted from casual discussions I had from the case participants on a daily basis. These conversations took place many years ago without an intent of writing a final thesis, except for the case which happened a couple of months ago that gave rise to choosing this topic. During the conversation with this individual, I came to realization how we are all different. Our attitudes and the desires to accomplish anything language learning wise are different from person to person and that could be the reason for variation in additional language acquisition. There has not been any controlled assessment of the participant's fluency in the Icelandic language. The knowledge about this was extracted from the discussions.

First participant /Case 1 was highly motivated and eager to learn the Icelandic language. ''I wanted to really learn the language, I thought it would be very cool to be like Icelanders in terms of speaking and understanding the language''. The second participant /case 2 on the other hand did not have that much interest in learning Icelandic. ''I love to live in Iceland, and I love to develop myself educationally, but that is impossible as the language is a barrier for me'' These are the reason for the introduction of these above, such as motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motives, and learning styles.

The third participant / case 3 is an individual who begun to use Icelandic almost immediately after moving to the country. She only had the ability of speaking and listening skill and not the writing and reading skills because she only used Icelandic for social interaction and not for academic purposes. ''When my sister and family came home for visit, I was always keen on the language they were speaking, I think I could make up a few words and sentences back home then. And then being here and getting all these exposures to the language have contributed in learning it''. This case is the reason I wrote on language

acquisition. Does one have to be efficient in all four skills of a language to become or be considered a bilingual?   Certainly not as Diebold(1964) includes people with minimal competence in two languages as bilinguals.

5.2 Language people / Person Concept

With the definition of bilingualism in mind, it is safe to say that most countries in the world are considered as bilingual countries and that their citizens are bilinguals. In West Africa as an example, Countries have many languages and dialects, and many people are able to use many of these languages. Sadly, not everyone has the ability to know many of these languages. These people that are able to speak many of these languages and seem to have an ease at learning languages, and they are what I am calling "Language People".

According to the various language acquisition theories, language learning is innate, through behavior and interactions, which everyone without any disabilities possess . This should then allow all language learners to acquire any targeted language with little difficulty, but this is clearly not the same for all due to the cases, theories and literature explained and discussed.

A language person in my opinion is one that has had an exposure to the target language, has interest in this language and is therefore highly motivated to learn, and enjoys learning that particular language.

A non- language person therefore, is one whom irrespective of the amount of exposure to a particular language he has attained, or of extensive formal or informal training acquired, still struggles with that particular language due to lack of interest and poor learning strategies. It is as if when he hears the language, it goes through one ear and passes out the other. I am afraid to point out that it is perhaps the innateness mechanism of such people were improperly developed or malfunctioned.

5.3 Introduction of cases

Participants / case building in connection to Literature

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Case 1

Robin is a forty-five (45) year old West-African male who has been in Iceland for the past eighteen (18) years. He is quite fluent in two of the native languages in his home country and also fluent in English language. In Iceland, he works at a large Icelandic shipping company. He has been working there for quiet a long time and has had the opportunity to learn Icelandic both formerly and informally. Formerly through organized Icelandic courses and informally through interactions with friends and colleagues at work and in school. In the academic ladder, he had obtained B.A at Reykjavik University. According to him, he was persistent. He knew what he wanted and saw the relevance in learning Icelandic, he was constantly interrupting friends to help explain some vocabulary that was difficult for him. He was learning everywhere basically and not just in the classroom. In due time, he was able to communicate fluently in Icelandic due to his interest in the language. I am considering this person as a language Person. In comparison to other people without these motivations, learning Icelandic would not be this smooth irrespective of their background knowledge in their first language.

Case 2

Frank is a forty-one (41) year old West-African male who had been in Iceland for the past fourteen (14) years, although he is currently not living in Iceland (since it is difficult for him to develop himself educationally). He is fluent in his native language as well as in English. Before moving to Iceland, he lived in a community other than his tribal community for many, many years in his home country and should have been able to pick up their language, but he did not. Prior to his moving away from Iceland (two years ago), he also worked at a large shipping company for many years, had great amount of exposure to the Icelandic language, had the opportunity to learn Icelandic formally and informally through organized courses and interactions with friends. He has obtained Doctors Degree in the academic hierarchy. I am going to say straight away that he is not a language person.

He was and is just comfortable with the language he already knew and made little or no effort to learn additional languages. The effort he made at the Icelandic language was just to get by and for examination purpose that were obligatory by Ministry of Interior

(Regulation on Icelandic language text, 2008). There could be many factors leading to why communicating in foreign language other than his was a challenged. One common factor could be inaccurate utterances. When children learning their first language, they receives appraisal despite inaccurate utterances, they have more time for listening and learning before speaking. However, adults learning a second language are exposed to a more complex language and can feel inadequate and embarrassed when they fail to be accurate in their speech. This feeling of frustration could affect motivation for the language acquisition in a negative way (Krashen, 1982).

Case 3

Monica is a thirty-eight (38) year old West-African female who has been in Iceland for eighteen (18) years. She is fluent in three of the local languages and in English. Her level of education is up to the 9th grade.

Monica's competences in all these languages are speaking and listening with a little bit or reading skills in English. I cannot specify if this is due to her educational level or not, but the fact remains that she is bilingual. She did not have the pressure from the foreigners' act or law to be fluent or pass examination in Icelandic to be qualified for green card or citizenship back then. She has obtained little formal education in the Icelandic language, but has had exposure to the language, through family visit back home before she moved to Iceland, exposure to the language at her formal work places, (old peoples' homes, as kitchen assistant in a playschool and many times she has been in contact with her social workers).. Even though she lacks formal training in the Icelandic language, Monica was able to acquire the language and is fluent in the skills of speaking and listening.

Case three participants' language acquisition is a clear example of the language acquisition theories explained in the chapter one above. She seems to have learned these languages through stimulation, interaction with the social environment and through repetition and imitation.

5.4 The Ideal verses the Ought to self

Dörnyei's (2005) ideal second language (L2) self applies to cases one and three as they had the zeal to know the Icelandic language. These self realizations- the relevance of Icelandic language's impact on their lives, motivated them to learn the language and they became good at it in due time. Unlike case 2, who the ought – to – self applies to. For one, Case 2 is not a language person. His only motivation to learn Icelandic was the external expectations and obligations that comes with living in a country were the first language is not English. He had little desire or interest for learning the language or any other additional language for that matter. This ought – to – self attitude does not favor learning a language.

Another example of Dörnyei's (2005) motivational self system is seen in Anna Jeeves'(2010) research article on English at Secondary School- Perceptions of Relevance. The study explored the question of relevance of secondary school English studies in Iceland. The study's hypothesis was to find a possible 'discrepancy' between English students present and future needs with what characterizes perceptions of practical and personal relevance of secondary school English studies in Iceland as the research question.

The literature review showed that students perception of English studies were extremely broad based and were driven by students motivation and objectives. The research question was examined within the framework of several experts, however the focus was primarily set on Zoltan Dörnyei's (2005) '' L2 motivation self system'' and Ema Ushioda's (2009) '' person – in- context'' method for individual story research.

The results from the data collection which was done through interviews revealed the four selves model of relevance- which were the inner self, the learning self, the international self and the English self.

THE FOUR SELF MODEL
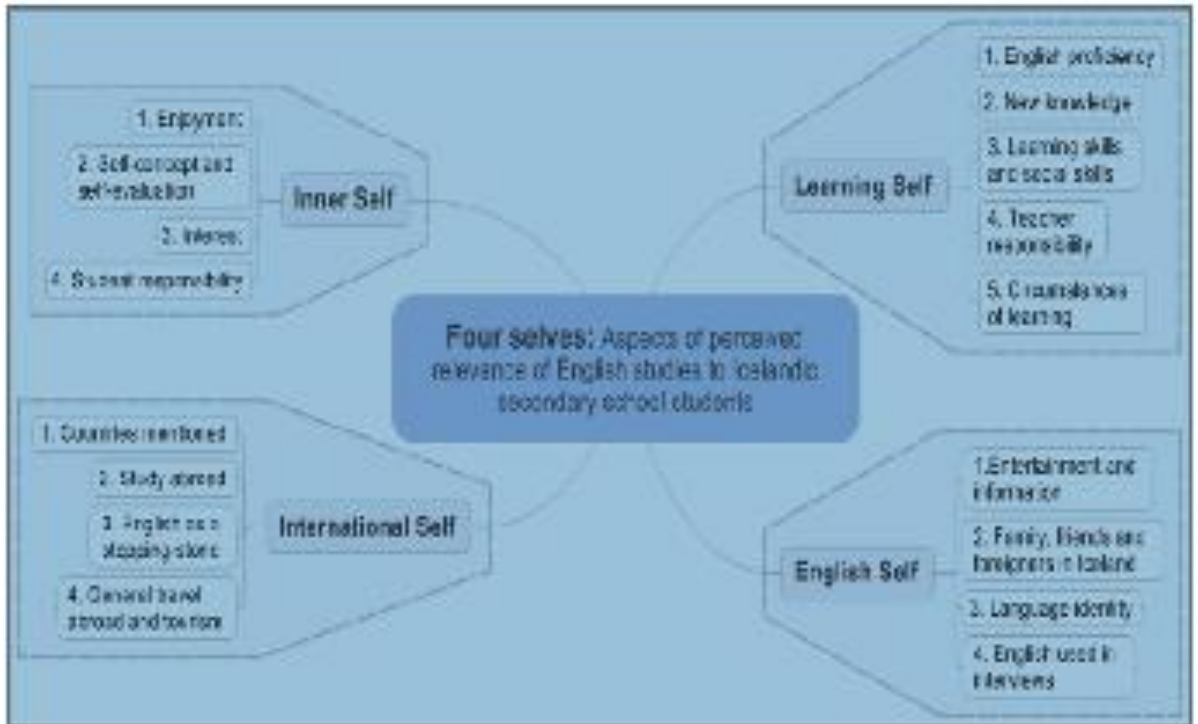
THE INNER SELF- consisting of enjoyment, self concept and self -evaluation, interests and student responsibility. Inwardly, students found learning English language to be enjoying and interesting. They had a positive feeling towards the language and found the classroom to be stress-free and a fun place to be. Students' enjoyment in English language learning led to sailing through English courses which boost their self-esteem.

THE LEARNING SELF- English proficiency, new knowledge, learning skills and social skills, teacher responsibility and circumstances of learning. Students found their learning self improving. They gained new knowledge and were able to differentiate between vocabulary in movies and classroom vocabulary. They enjoyed learning activities in the classroom and noticed improvement in their pronunciation. Students admitted that, if English was not taught in Schools in Iceland, they would not have learned much. Some of

the students said English language helped them to learn French, as some of the words are similar.

THE INTERNATIONAL SELF:- Students mentioned a lot of countries indicating the benefits of English language in such countries, study abroad, English as a stepping-stone and general travelling abroad and tourism. Students saw the relevance in English to their international self as a guide to help their future studies in English countries and also when they are on holidays visiting friends and families.

THE ENGLISH SELF- Student found the English language as a resource for entertainment and information, family, friends and foreigners in Iceland, language, identity and English used in interviews. Here, the English - self deals with students daily encounters with the English language in Iceland, such as information gathered through the internet, and communication with family, friends and foreigners. Some prospective medical students point out that it is important to understand websites in English when they get referrals to medicine websites.

As a language learner, one is expected to be conscious of the relevance of that language in their life. This self awareness is a strong variable for motivation that will encourage anyone to learn a language and be successful. This is unlike case 2, where it seems like the Icelandic and the other languages he was exposed to had little relevance to him. He perhaps did not see a future self in all these languages and, made little effort to learn them. He saw that, upon leaving the country, there would be no use for the language in his life since he had decided to move out of the country.

When language learners do not see the importance of a language they are expected to learn, they are unmotivated. They could perhaps have negative attitudes towards the language and hence , would become poor learners, irrespective of their knowledge in their mother-tongue.

These 18-21 years students saw the needs for the English language in their lives which motivated them to learn and excel in it. These concepts when applied to any language that one faces to learn, with no doubt would excel and become proficient language learners.

Chapter 6.0 Conclusion

The aim of the present thesis was to demonstrate that, individual differences and motivation and other variables are part of language acquisition and language learning goes beyond knowledge in a first language. Theories of language acquisition from Cummins'(2011), Dörnyeis'(2005), Chomskys'(1959) and other linguists have been explored and discussed. And in view of this, the concept of a 'language person' was introduced, viewing people with an ease at language learning as language person and those that struggles as a non- language person.

This current thesis has tried to put forth that Language learning is mostly through individual differences, preferences and the relevance the learner attached to these targeted languages. The participants from the cases were all fluent in their native language, but while learning Icelandic as the targeted language, there was a variance in their capacity to acquiring the language.

These cases demonstrated that for one to be efficient in acquiring additional languages, one has to be motivated, and have a great deal of desire and satisfaction for the targeted language. They have to realize the importance or the impact of the targeted language's effects on them as students. Learning additional languages can be a self imposed desire, not a requirement to satisfy an authority. The targeted language should not be learned due to external pressure as the cases demonstrated. The use of the ideal self serves better and accomplishes better results than the use of the ought to self. Additionally, attitude towards learning languages counts as individuals having different learning abilities and strategies, and these goes a long way to ensure success in learning the language.

The concept of bilingualism has been defined from the perspective of different scholars. Bilingualism has been seen as a rare phenomenon but also a major fact about the world to day.

Research makes it clear that knowledge in mother-tongue promotes linguistic development and that mother-tongue education is important for all bilinguals (Cummins, 2001) thus, confirming the concept of bilingualism as an asset.

Consequently, for the purpose of this thesis, language acquisition theories have been explored, and motivation and self motivation theories were discussed as a major part of language learning. Effective language learners must be motivated inwardly and must see the relevance of the language they intend to per sue in order to be successful and enjoy the process. Dörnyei's (2005) motivational self system has been considered as the effective tool for language learning. The ideal L2 self puts the learner in right path and serve as positive attitude toward L2 learning unlike the ought- to- self, which is for obligatory purposes and therefore, may not entertain positive attitudes towards the target language.

Gardner points out that the attitude of learning is one of the important individual factors that plays a vital role in learning behaviors, as learning attitudes are concerned with learners experiences, values, and beliefs as well as the educational background of the language learner and this has a great effect of the learning process and learning outcomes (Gardner, 1985)

In view of this, three different individuals in their quest to acquire Icelandic as an additional language were introduced and discussed. These individuals had different educational backgrounds and experiences with different levels of motivation and desire of learning, although, all had good knowledge in their native languages. These cases demonstrated that ability to acquire additional language knowledge relies soley on the individuals desires, interest, and relevance they attached to that targeted language in order to achieve success in it.

Generally speaking, language learners vary in every sense of cognitive ability, learning styles and strategies, which determines how people demonstrate variance of language acquisition success irrespective of favorable conditions available to learners. Depending on this has led to the invention of the concept of who is a language person and who is not.

However, researchers could delve more into finding the limit to how mother-tongue influences second language acquisition. Is it a strong influence when learning a second language rather than a third and perhaps a forth? My encounter with an Eastern European who seems to know Icelandic, but not English made me wonder how she is fluent in Icelandic, but not English? But I have not gathered enough evidence or sample to support this and therefore need future research on this.

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