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OF ICELAND**

**Two Polish heritage language schools in Reykjavík:
What support do they get from the Icelandic and
Polish governments?**

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Two Polish heritage language schools in Reykjavík: What support do they get from the Icelandic and Polish governments?

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Abstract

With the rise of numbers of bilingual children in Iceland over the past two decades, there has been a greater need for education for children in their heritage language. Currently, the biggest migrant group in Iceland comes from Poland and with this comes a large influx of Polish children into Icelandic schools. The Polish community in Iceland wants to pass the Polish language on to the generation of children raised in Iceland, and to this purpose, a Polish language school was opened in 2008. Since then, more schools have opened, and more Icelandic compulsory schools have offered Polish lessons for their Polish students. This thesis aims to uncover how the Icelandic and Polish governments support the function and system of Polish heritage language schools in Iceland. Much of the information collected in this research was from other theses written on this topic, governmental websites, correspondence with one of the workers in the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Iceland who works directly with the Polish schools in Iceland, and interviews with one of the founders of the Polish school in Reykjavík. The most significant results were not surprising; the Icelandic government supports the study of heritage languages but, in most cases, does not admit them to their national curriculum, recognize them in their educational system, nor support them regularly in financing. However, there is support from the Polish government, with institutions like the Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (ORPEG), the Association Polish Community, and the Ministry of Education and Science of Poland.

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Preface

This essay: “Two Polish heritage language schools in Reykjavík: what support do they get from the Icelandic and Polish governments”, was written to fulfil the graduation requirements of International Studies of Education (ISE) at the University of Iceland, School of Education. I was engaged in research and writing this thesis from January to April 2022. This thesis is meant to be a guide for researchers, school staff and policymakers who want to dive deeper into the topic of heritage language schools in Iceland, primarily focusing on Polish schools.

This thesis was inspired by my personal experience in attending a Polish heritage language school in Iceland. I began to attend the Polish School in Reykjavík after its opening, from the second grade to the fifth grade. Before writing this thesis, I worked for a few years at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Reykjavík, which led me to attain some knowledge regarding heritage language schools, as the Embassy is one of the patrons of such schools. This research was complex, as I found many gaps that needed to be explained and investigated regarding this topic, since more things are happening in practice are than written on paper.

I want to give thanks to my supervisor in this project, Renata Emilsson Pesková, with whom I formulated my research question and who helped me keep on track and reminded me to look at the bigger picture while writing this thesis, for her excellent guidance and support during this process. I also want to thank the Polish School in Reykjavík, especially Katarzyna Dreksa who agreed to let me interview her about the school. I also wish to thank all those who took part in the research. Without their cooperation, I would not have been able to formulate this thesis. I want to thank the Embassy of Poland, who helped answer my question and give me the necessary information. My parents, school colleagues, and friends deserve a particular note of gratitude for the wise counsel and kind words they have given me in times of need.

This thesis was written solely by me, the undersigned. I have read and understand the University of Iceland Code of Ethics (https://english.hi.is/university/code_of_ethics) and have followed it to the best of my knowledge. I have correctly cited all works, including, but not limited to, written works or data. I thank all who have worked with me and take full responsibility for any mistakes contained in this work.

Signed:

Reykjavík, 9 May 2022

Natalia Ostapiuk

2 Introduction

This thesis will focus on Polish heritage language schools in Iceland and the Polish and Icelandic approaches to supporting the Polish schools in Iceland. The main inspiration for this thesis was a declaration signed by the Polish and Icelandic Ministries of Education in March 2020, „*Declaration between the Ministry of National Education of Poland and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland on cooperation in the field of education*“. My interest in this research is my background in attending one of the mentioned heritage language schools as a child. I was one of the first students to enrol at the Polish School in Reykjavík in 2008. I attended the second grade through the fifth grade, which was the last grade in compulsory schools in Poland. Prior to writing this thesis, I worked for several years at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Reykjavík, where I gained some knowledge of the organization of Polish heritage language schools in Iceland, as the Embassy is one of the patrons of these schools.

My curiosity about heritage languages was aroused when I graduated from the heritage language school. I found the school psychologically draining, as I noticed differences between the Polish school's educational system and the Icelandic system, both regarding the teachers' approach towards the students and the competition that teachers encouraged among the students. I felt that there was a great deal of partiality in the Polish school during my attendance. Many students were unfamiliar with partiality, which was off-putting and demotivating for their learning.

Looking at my experience and seeing the differences between the Polish school and my Icelandic school, the school system of the Polish heritage language schools required more cooperation with the Icelandic school system and government. The purpose of this thesis is to create an overview of Icelandic policies regarding heritage language schools and of Polish heritage language schools in Iceland. Looking into the cooperation of both the Icelandic school system and the governmental approach towards heritage language schools and their system, I believe we can see areas that need improvement. One thing I want to keep in mind in this thesis is to be respectful and aware that one of the main reasons behind the heritage language schools is to promote students' awareness of the students of their country of origin's, language and culture. Being a part of the International Studies of Education since 2019, I have realized that the national school system impacts its students' mentality, worldview and identity. Each country builds its national curriculum based on the qualities it wants the "ideal" citizen to possess.

After meeting teachers who teach in Polish heritage language schools, one of my main personal observations of the heritage language schools here in Iceland, especially the Polish schools, is that the teachers and school administration lack knowledge of the Icelandic school system. The teachers in such schools have often asked me how the Icelandic school system operates. In my view, teachers should understand and know the ground rules of the Icelandic school system, which is not as strict and demanding and, in many cases, as stressful as the Polish system. Katarzyna Dreksa, who is one of the head teachers of the Polish school in Reykjavík has stated that many teachers in her school have knowledge of the Icelandic school system and the classroom environment, as many teachers in the Polish school in Reykjavík work in Icelandic schools.

Preparing for this thesis, I looked into websites, e.g., *Móðurmál, Tungumálaver*, the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools, the websites of Polish heritage language schools in Iceland, and research made on similar topics. I developed research questions which I would like to find the answer to suggest some solutions. The purpose of this thesis is to look at governmental and non-governmental organizations, both in Iceland and Poland, involved with heritage language schools and other research to better understand their schooling and education approaches.

In Iceland, about 20% of the population is of non-Icelandic origin, including immigrants and those born to foreign-born parents, making the country a multicultural society. Approximately 3,000 foreign-born children attended compulsory school in Iceland in 2020, out of which approximately 5% attended heritage language schools and classes (Emilsson Pesková, 2021). According to The Icelandic Language Committee, Icelandic is the language that should amalgamate Iceland's inhabitants. To fully integrate into Icelandic society, foreigners should be able to learn Icelandic (Emilsson Pesková, 2021, pp. 7). In accordance with the Icelandic Language Committee's proposition, Icelandic compulsory school teachers should be good role models in language competence and have the ability to teach Icelandic both as a native and second language (Menntamálaráðuneyti, 2008, p. 27). Generally, it is understood that Icelandic as a second language means that the language was acquired and used by foreigners living in Iceland. Based on the declaration by the Icelandic Language Committee, mastering Icelandic is of the utmost importance for new Icelanders. In the school context, bilingual students' goal is to reach Icelandic proficiency at an age-appropriate level (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2020).

My aim is to identify what support do Polish heritage language schools receive from the Icelandic and Polish governments. To answer this question, I performed a

policy review on the organization of heritage language schools, their approach and their understanding of the Icelandic school system. It is also essential to look at how the teachers in Icelandic and Polish schools support education and how it complements each system, and vice versa. The Polish teachers' and Icelandic teachers' knowledge of the curriculum and system of both schools would create a better bridge in co-operating and supporting the system in their students' educational process and how both the Polish and Icelandic governments penetrate and/or interfere with the education system in heritage language schools. With these questions, I will dive deeper into the Icelandic government's support for heritage language schools and its policies in integrating them into the Icelandic educational system.

3 Theoretical and conceptual framework

This chapter starts by explaining how heritage language education is organized in the US, Australia and Canada, as well as what defines heritage language, heritage language learner and heritage language school. In subchapter 2.1, heritage language and heritage language learners are defined as a minority language of either immigrant or indigenous origin by its speaker at home. Learners of heritage languages are heritage language speakers who formally study their heritage language, which may be difficult to develop due to inadequate social input. The most common definition and categorization of heritage language learners is based on three criteria: their link to the heritage language's place in the community, their family connection to the heritage language, and their proficiency in that language (pp. 5, Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2017).

The nature, size, content, and operation of heritage language schools differ significantly from those of public schools. A heritage language school, however, does not have a set definition. Heritage language schools provide children of shared ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage with an array of out-of-school educational experiences. It is common for heritage language schools to offer their classes outside of regular school hours. They are typically run during the weekends or after school hours, and they offer education that is based on community involvement. These schools are typically created by ethnic or linguistic minority communities to maintain the cultural and linguistic identity of their children. These schools support mainstream education but could also include heritage language teaching and cultural and religious teachings of their targeted language and country. However, due to other after-school provisions, such as after-school clubs and activities, it is not easy to establish a universal definition of heritage language schools (Mayor, U. et al, 2010).

The term "heritage language" was introduced in 1970s and 1980s and widely used in Canada to describe immigrant languages. Other synonyms have been used in the literature over the years in other parts of the world. In the United Kingdom, an equivalent term is "supplementary education". It is mostly a matter of political choice which term is preferred by a state, country or authority in reference to minority language, supplementary language schools or heritage language schools (Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2017). For heritage language development, language dominance is particularly relevant in terms of relative proficiency, according to Flores et al. (2017). Furthermore, according to Vitopoulos (2017), as a result of the present era of globalization, a number of cultural, social, economical and linguistic problems are currently being compounded by ethnic identity and ethnic differences. In Australian education, the provisioning of community languages has had a long and successful

history. Considering the complexity of national collaboration and the nature and quality of programs, Australian education places an emphasis on providing and enhancing community legitimacy for languages and cultures (Scarino, 2017). Conversely, New Zealand, provides little governmental support for migrant heritage languages, which leaves the maintenance of the languages to self-financed ethnic community groups (di Salvo, 2017).

In Europe, the sociolinguistic, educational, and political characteristics of immigrants and regional minorities are similar, including their geographical spread, their public and domestic vitality, the relationship between ethnicity, identity and language, and the shift from the majority and minority languages. As a result of the “one language, one state” philosophy, regional minority languages have been threatened, such as the Welsh in the United Kingdom and the Basque in Spain. A key reason for this threat occurs when parents decide to stop speaking their native language to their children, and thus that language becomes less prevalent, or in other terms the discontinuation of “intergenerational transmission”. A number of organizations are responsible for advancing regional minority languages in Europe. For example, the European Parliament established the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages in 1982 to support linguistic diversity in Europe (Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2017).

The argument of Carreira et al. (2017) is that heritage language programs need to be rooted in the educational system in order to become institutionalized. It is therefore of importance that heritage language instruction paradigms are developed and established in a manner that reflects and incorporates the latest research and pedagogical findings, and are feasible organizationally. In addition, building communities requires collaboration and connections with both professional organizations and public/private initiatives both within and outside of educational institutions.

According to Aberdeen (2016), learning one’s heritage language can happen in several different ways. Some of these are through bilingual school programs, universities, extra-curricular activities or afterschool programs, while others take place as a community heritage language school. In this thesis, we will focus on what Aberdeen defined as “community HL programs”, which vary according to the language they teach and the culture they represent.

In addition, heritage languages are those that are spoken in the country of origin of the bilingual child’s parents, as well as in the country of residence of the child’s parents for communication with their children. According to Emilsson Pesková (2021), several criteria can define heritage language, including personal experience, social

understanding, and proficiency. As defined by Valdés (2000), heritage languages are minority languages that are learned at home, which are never fully developed because they lack social input, leading to the speakers growing up with a different dominant language which leads them to become more fluent in the dominant language of the society or country they reside. In addition to referring to a language that one may understand, the term can also refer to a language that someone identifies with culturally but does not speak (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Additionally, heritage languages are those spoken by immigrants whose native language is not the dominant language of their home country. A heritage language can also be called first language, or first language taught to its speakers (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007).

In general, native languages are defined as languages passed on from parent to child, which helps connect children directly to their parents by passing on the language. Criticism of the native language of a child is an indirect criticism of their parents. A heritage learner's language may affect their feeling of belonging to their heritage community or ethnic community if their language differs from that of their community. In classes that focus solely on prescriptive norms, students can feel alienated and demotivated since heritage languages are closely connected to their roots and to their sense of identity (Bayram & Wright, 2017).

Being an immigrant child and student means being exposed to, and in most cases learning, two languages simultaneously. In most cases, immigrant children use their first language at home and are obligated to attend compulsory school in which their classes are conducted in their host country's language, their second language. Learning two languages simultaneously many immigrant children lack proficiency in their second language, meaning they find it challenging to express themselves in that language, while they can do so without difficulty in their heritage language (Cummins, 1996). To avoid this, the student should practice both languages simultaneously. For immigrant students to succeed in a new school environment, it is essential for them to nurture their heritage language. Unfortunately, for most immigrant parents, insufficient time, patience, or resources make it difficult for them to teach their children their heritage language effectively. Heritage language schools offer immigrant students the chance to be educated in the heritage language in areas where their parents may lack knowledge (Wajher, 2019).

As a result of their lack of proficiency in the school language, immigrants are frequently marginalized and fail in compulsory schools in their host countries by their teachers, and peers tend to categorize and discriminate against them (Wajher, 2019).

According to Wajher, language learners with another native language can transfer knowledge and skills from their native language to a second language. Parents believe that their child's heritage language learning is essential in establishing connections with family members and developing a sense of cultural identity, as the children in these families begin learning a second language in the host country as soon as they begin attending school there. Eventually, they will use the second languages more frequently than the language they were raised in. The difference in language can make it difficult for them to communicate with their parents about their feelings and thoughts. It can also result in bad relationships between families and more family conflicts, as language barriers can disrupt communication within families (Wajher, 2019).

Teachers of foreign origin and their parents may experience mistrust, lack of communication, and miscommunication due to their students and their guardians' inadequate intercultural competencies. There is a perception made towards Icelandic teachers that they do not adequately support the different learning needs of their students of non-Icelandic origin (Emilsson Pesková, 2021). According to Katarzyna Dreksa's experience, Icelandic teachers often categorize students with a different first language other than Icelandic as "mállaus" (unable to speak), which, as Dreksa describes, "is bizarre and false" (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). Just because a student does not understand Icelandic does not mean that they are "mute" and "less smart" than the Icelandic students who speak fluent Icelandic (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). Teachers in Icelandic schools must be educated on the fact that bilingual students have a rich vocabulary in another language and eventually will become more advanced lingually from Icelandic students as they will have a grasp on one more language than them, which is their heritage language (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

Heritage language learners are positioned between the angled definitions of native speakers and second language learners. Other definitions may include someone raised in a home where the official language of the country in which they reside is not spoken. A much more inclusive definition defines them as those who have a cultural or historical relationship with the language and culture (Aberdeen, 2016).

Learning heritage languages can pose a number of challenges related to identity, inclusion, and exclusion because not all learners who desire to speak the languages are native speakers. In order to identify heritage language learners as a diverse group of language learners, it is imperative that educators, administrators, policymakers, and curriculum and teacher development professionals work together. Researchers and institutions continue to negotiate the level of proficiency in heritage languages when

defining heritage speakers or heritage learners. It is important to distinguish between heritage language learners who have cultural or family ties to the language but do not actually know how to use it in their environment, and those who have acquired the language to some extent but are not yet fluent in it (Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2017).

It is a negotiating point between researchers and institutions to determine who is a heritage speaker and who is a heritage learner based on their proficiency level in the heritage language. Teachers are facing a challenge determining what level of proficiency is required to identify a student as a heritage language learner, and linguists are having trouble determining whether they are heritage language speakers or not. The diversity of heritage language learners must be understood by stakeholders in order to find learning materials that can address the diverse needs of heritage language learners. As a result of the global diaspora of languages resulting from international migration, heritage language education has experienced a resurgence of interest (Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2017).

Arvanitis (2017) argues that a heritage language is not just a matter of ethnospecific identity or of mainstream versus minority status; it is also an integral part of plurilingualism and cultural heritage. As the modern world is becoming increasingly nationalized, ethnocentric, and radicalized, teachers' intercultural training needs to be redesigned. In order to avoid methodological nationalism, responsive teachers adapt their teaching material and philosophy to their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Teachers with strong intercultural awareness, responsiveness, and competence are more likely to engage in culturally responsive teaching (Arvanitis, 2017).

Culture-responsive pedagogy and second language studies are problematic in heritage language education. North American and European mainstream schools provide quality education to students of foreign backgrounds, especially those from foreign backgrounds (Arvanitis, 2017). In schools and universities, French is one of the most commonly studied foreign languages. The availability of these classes can sometimes be limited for French speakers, especially in a country where a language other than English is considered a threat (Emilsson Peskova & Ragnarsdóttir, 2017). Despite the growing influence of globalization, national education and immigration policies continue to influence larger contexts of globalization and national education. French heritage language education in the United States remains a challenging endeavour (Ross et al., 2016).

3.1 Heritage Language School and Education

The term “heritage language schools” refers to schools whose classes are intended for teaching language and culture to individuals familiar with the particular language or culture. Heritage language communities organize and support fundraising efforts that fund these schools, which operate independently from regular schools in terms of scheduling and educating outside regular school hours (Aberdeen, 2016). According to Liu et al. (2011) one of the main challenges that could arise in developing a heritage language school is the selection of the appropriate educational methodologies and curricula, as each country has its own education system and methods of teaching.

Heritage language communities often establish heritage language schools which function independently from regular schools and thus face many challenges. They need to provide for their tuition needs funding from the private sector and tuition fees which are not sufficient for sustaining successful programs. Due to a lack of funding, it is more difficult for many schools to have difficulties in providing textbooks or good educational material. A lack of funding can also be linked to the employment of incompetent teachers or the payment of inadequate salaries to them. The lack of educators in heritage language schools may result from teaching on a volunteer basis or with minimal pay. The practice of teaching heritage language classes on weekends is often associated with hiring teachers or parents who have other jobs and work voluntarily in heritage language schools. With the lack of funding, heritage language schools need to find an appropriate facility where classes can be held, preferably free of charge or with low rent, which can mean that their equipment may not be sufficient to conduct classes effectively, which may in turn indicate that they lack educational aids (Liu et al., 2011).

It is common for parents to become the only heritage language teachers their children will ever have; in many cases, they are the only people they will ever have contact with. A heritage language can be taught at home in an organized way, learning groups can be formed, or other ways can be found to engage children in their heritage languages. In some immigrant families, parents feel responsible for maintaining and developing their children’s heritage languages, such as by sending them to heritage language schools on-site or online (Emilsson Pesková, 2021).

When a child is not able to speak their heritage language, they may be unable to understand and embrace the values, practices, and norms that are embedded in their culture (Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2017). Knowing a heritage language can provide many benefits, including the ability to communicate with friends and family (Oh & Fuligni, 2010). To not let them disconnect from their family and culture, there are established

heritage language schools. The purpose of establishing a heritage language school is to teach a heritage language and culture to students living outside their heritage countries but with an affinity for the language or culture (Aberdeen, 2016).

The majority language and culture of the country in which bilingual children reside can overshadow the child's identity, preventing them from developing their own sense of self. To develop their identities, it is important not to allow the dominant language to overshadow their heritage language (Yu, 2015). Mosty et al. (2013) conducted a study in Iceland which found that immigrant parents equate heritage language with self-esteem and identity. Guvercin (2010) argues that when people speak in their heritage language, a connection between the heart, brain, and tongue occurs. When children hear their mother's language in their ear, it releases emotions in their brain and heart, giving them more trust and confidence to the language that their mother is speaking. Taking Guvercin's argument into consideration, in addition to helping develop ethnic identity, heritage languages can be used to boost a child's self-esteem by enhancing their ethnic identity. When ethnic identity is discussed, it is about belonging to an ethnic group that has a shared culture, language, values, and religion (Yu, 2015). It can be done by heritage language schools, whose purpose is to not only develop bilingual children's language skills in their heritage languages, but also teach the history and culture of their heritage. Heritage language schools know the culture behind the language well and allow bilingual and immigrant students to participate more fully in their cultural communities which gives them better sense of confidence, self-identity, and sense of belonging to a community (Oh & Fuligni, 2010).

Heritage language schools are created by immigrants who wish to pass on their heritage languages to their children. Language and culture are taught in these schools primarily to students who identify personally with the language and culture involved. With heritage language schools, the immigrant student can be educated in their heritage language in fields in which their parents have limited knowledge. In Iceland the Polish heritage language school are opened by the Polish diaspora, parents who wanted to maintain the Polish language in their children's lives.

4 Iceland's actions and approach towards HL schools and education

On March 3, 2020, a declaration was signed in Warsaw between the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Poland, Dariusz Pionkowski, and the Minister of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland (currently the Ministry of Education and Children of Iceland), Lilja D. Alfreðsdóttir, on cooperation in the field of education. The declaration states the need for both ministries, hereinafter referred to as Governments, to establish closer cooperation in the field of education, recognizing the will of both Governments to promote cooperation in the field of education for the mutual understanding of the societies of both Governments. Declaring that both Governments will cooperate in the field of education, paying particular attention to the education of people of Polish nationality living in Iceland (Ministry of National Education of Poland of the Republic of Poland, 2020).

For this purpose, the Governments agreed to support pupils in accessing education in their mother tongue within the framework of the education system as well as within language schools such as the above-mentioned *Polish School in Reykjavík*. The Governments agreed to foster the establishment of direct cooperation between Polish and Icelandic schools and education institutions to enable them to implement joint projects remaining in their area of interest. The declaration also cites that the Governments agreed to enhance cooperation between Polish and Icelandic youth, teachers, school staff, schools, and educational institutions within the framework of European Union programs and EEA grants. They also agreed to exchange information on their national education systems, experiences, and examples of good practices regarding their reform and prospect for their developments (Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Poland, 2020).

The declaration cites that the Polish and Icelandic governments decided to keep in regular contacts after the signing of the above-mentioned declaration and to appoint contact persons to oversee the realization of the activities specified in the declaration. All cooperative activities would be subject to the Polish and Icelandic governments' availability of funds (Ministry of National Education of Poland of the Republic of Poland, 2020).

Iceland's compulsory schools emphasize the development of student's cognitive abilities and their well-being and participation. Literacy, democracy, sustainability, human rights, health, equity, and welfare constitute the six fundamental pillars of Icelandic compulsory education (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014, p. 14). Compulsory schools define health as the mental, physical, and social well-being of every

student (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014, p. 21). School for all, also known as inclusive schools, is Iceland's educational policy, which addresses student's academic and extracurricular needs. Diversity is seen as a strength, while multiculturalism is viewed as an essential element of democracy (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014). Various Icelandic policies reflect culturally responsive teachings and multicultural principles.

As part of the Icelandic curriculum, bilingual students are expected to become active bilinguals. It is their right to be taught Icelandic as their second language if a student has another heritage language other than Icelandic (Lög um grunnskóla [Compulsory School Act] 91/2008). As mentioned above, bilingual students should be encouraged to retain their heritage language to develop a positive self-image and to strengthen their family ties. Staff, students, and families of Icelandic compulsory schools should all be made aware of the importance of bilingual education in Icelandic schools (Emilsson Pesková, 2021). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020), a student's bilingualism is a skill that the student brings to their school, which should be developed and supported rather than being ignored or belittled.

Despite the declarations made by the Icelandic government, many Icelandic bilingual students do not have formal access to their heritage language education. Iceland has recognized the importance of heritage language learning at the national and international levels. Local policies and compulsory schools may acknowledge heritage language studies conducted by outside institutions (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014). For instance, Tungumálaver, which is a language lab in the Center for Language and Literacy in Reykjavík, which offers Nordic languages, Swedish and Norwegian, and Polish to be taught both on-site and online (Tungumálaver, 2020). Tungumálaver offers distance learning (online learning), on-site teaching (on-site learning) and counselling for schools all over Iceland, and distance and on-site teaching in many languages for Reykjavík City's primary schools. The Language Center works according to the National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools. Polish is taught according to the Polish Curriculum Guide for students studying abroad, but the National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools is also followed (*Tungumálaver*, 2020).

Tungumálaver offers on-site study in Norwegian and Swedish for students in Iceland, while Polish is offered for students in the Greater Reykjavík Area (Reykjavík, Mosfellsbær, Kópavogur, Garðabær, Hafnarfjörður, Seltjarnarnes), and its teaching is directed towards students in the grade and higher. Language study at Tungumálaver replaces Danish as a subject at school. On-site instruction takes place on different days.

Each group has 20 students that are assigned according to their residence (*Tungumálaver, 2020*). Basic skills of the language are required of students in the Language Center. They need to understand Norwegian, Swedish, or Polish, read texts that suit their age group and be able to make themselves understood in spoken language (*Tungumálaver, 2020*).

With Polish being a part of Tungumálaver, the Reykjavík City Council does recognize Polish and with the agreement of the Icelandic school principal, Polish language can be added as an extra subject with a grade in the Icelandic school's grade certificate. Formally Polish heritage language schools are not recognized by the Icelandic educational system, making it harder to recognize their student's grades in the Icelandic schools. However, many schools in the Capital Region, especially schools in Kópavogur, recognize the grades of the Polish school and other heritage language schools (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

Móðurmál – the Association on Bilingualism, a non-governmental and non-profit organization based in Iceland, specializes in the field of heritage language instruction in Iceland. As part of its initial mission, The Parents of Bilingual Children Association was established in 1994 around a project to develop a structured language program, which includes clearly defined objectives and curricula. Móðurmál actively supports mother tongue groups that offer mother tongue instructions in over fifteen languages (other than Icelandic) to plurilingual children (Móðurmál – the Association on Bilingualism 2021). The School and Recreation Department of Reykjavík (Skóla og frístundasvið Reykjavíkurborgar) has supported and partially funded the program, along with other institutions, with grants. The organization is mostly run by volunteers and parents (Móðurmál, 2021).

Móðurmál has set its goals on its website; teaching children their heritage language, supporting multiple language groups, providing opportunities for bilingual children to learn their languages, participating in research on bilingualism and heritage languages, developing heritage language instruction, and supporting active bilingualism in Icelandic society are all part of the association's goals (Móðurmál, 2021).

Parents, institutions, teachers, and the public are actively encouraged to participate in mother tongue classes run by Móðurmál, as well as to attend lectures and presentations about the importance of mother tongues as part of the association's active support in the development of regular heritage school languages. It also provides professional development opportunities to mother tongue teachers (*Móðurmál, 2021*). The association cooperates with other institutions, i.e., the City of Reykjavík, in pursuing

the possibility for bilingual students to receive school credits for their heritage language study in upper secondary school (*Móðurmál*, 2021). Mother tongue groups who associate under the umbrella of Móðurmál work independently and they decide about their curricula and all internal matters. To promote bilingualism in Iceland, Móðurmál partners with the authorities, local governments, educational institutions, and international umbrella associations (*Móðurmál*, 2021).

There are 21 schools in Iceland outside of Reykjavík that provide Polish lessons during the school week and school hours, according to information provided by Margherita Bacigalupo-Pokruszyńska, who work with Polish schools in Iceland through the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Iceland (personal communication, March 7, 2022). As of 2021, there are approximately 456 students in Icelandic compulsory schools, outside of the Greater Reykjavík Area who attend Polish lessons provided by their Icelandic compulsory school (M. Bacigalupo-Pokruszyńska, personal communication, March 7, 2022).

The Icelandic government does not support the school organization and does not hold any training program for teachers in the Polish school (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). Funding is provided solely by Osrodek Szkolenia Nauczycieli Spólnoty Polskiej (Eng. Teacher Training Center of the Polish Community). The Association, like other Polish based associations, e.g., Wspólnota Polski, organizes all training programs for teachers in Poland on-site and online (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

5 Polish heritage language schools in Iceland

5.1 Polish School in Reykjavík

In the summer of 2008, the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Reykjavík was founded, and with it, an idea sprouted to create a Polish School for Polish children sprouted. Educators and parents had asked about the possibility of enrolling their children in a school that taught them both their heritage language (Polish) and their culture. The preparation for the school lasted several weeks with the enrolment of the first students, gathering staff, volunteering, and searching for textbooks. The major problem was the lack of space, as the Consulate had only two spare rooms to use as classrooms (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

In September 2008, the school opened in the Consulate, and October 18, 2008, marks the inauguration of the 2008/2009 school year. The school was named Polish School in Reykjavík (pol. *Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku im. Janusza Korczaka*), hereafter referred to as the Polish School. After the ceremonial opening of the first school year, the first integration and familiarization with the classes took place, and the first group of teachers was recruited. During the year, classes were held every Saturday for 2–3 hours for each class (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). In the beginning, the school faced some difficulties, mainly due to the lack of rooms, boards, and textbooks, but in the end, the school succeeded, and primary school students moved to rooms provided free of charge by Breiðagerðisskóli (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). Today the teaching takes place in Fellaskóli on Sundays. Parents and teachers created the Board of the Association of Friends of the Polish School in Reykjavík, hereafter referred to as BAFPSR, which took over the duties of running the facility (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

The school provides four goals and a mission; to strengthen the Polish national and cultural identity. The school argues that in acquiring language competencies it is necessary in the process of communicating in Polish and learning about Polish literature, history, and culture. Acquiring cultural and literary education based on Polish children's literature and cultural texts is one of the four goals of the school. The school acquaintances, consolidates, and expands knowledge about Polish culture, history, society, and the natural and geographic environment (Sienkiewicz, 2018). In achieving the intended goals, close cooperation of the Polish School in Reykjavík with BAFPSR which is to help the school in achieving these goals. The members of BAFPSR consist of parents or guardians, teachers, and students at the Polish School (*Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku*, 2009).

The task of the schools board, BAFPSR, is supporting the Polish School in the native upbringing of its students. In meetings of the Pedagogical Council and in meetings convened at their request are discussed assistance in collecting fees for the activities and events of the Polish School and all undertaking and tasks aimed at the developmental operation of the Polish School (Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku, 2009).

BAFPSR represents its Management Board of the Polish School, which, at the request of the Principal or Deputy Principal of the Polish School, may participate in the meetings of the Pedagogical Council, during which significant decisions are made. The teachers at the Polish School, the Director and the Deputy Director form the Pedagogical Council. The Pedagogical Council of the Polish School, at the request of the Principal or Deputy Principal of the Polish School, determines the teaching material based on the curriculum for individual classes and the organization of the school year, determines the division of teaching and educational work at the Polish School, selects and classifies students, decides on the issue of certificates and school reports, oversees the organization of school events celebrations, and reports applications for school aids to BAFPSR (Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku, 2009).

The principal and the deputy principal of the Polish School are appointed by BAFPSR at the board meeting by a simple majority of votes. The principal and the deputy principal are elected from the Pedagogical Council (Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku, 2009). The principal and the deputy principal supervise the ongoing activities of the Polish School, represent the Polish School, and, if necessary, act as substitute teachers.

The highest authority of the Polish School is the Pedagogical Council, in whose meeting a majority must approve all decisions. In disputes, the Chairman's vote counts double. Meetings of the Pedagogical Council are held at least four times a year, including at the beginning and end of each classification period. A meeting of the Teachers' Council should be notified to all eligible members in a generally accepted manner. The obligation to participate in meetings of the Pedagogical Council is assigned to the director, the deputy director, and the teaching staff. The right to participate in the meetings of the Pedagogical Council is also granted to all members of BAFPSR after prior notification of their willingness and approval of participation by the chairman (Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku, 2009). Details of the operation of the Polish School and dates are specified in the Regulations of the Polish School, the observance of which is agreed in writing by every adult student or parent/guardian representing a minor child (Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku, 2009).

Recruitment of teachers mostly goes through public announcements by the school, and the school makes sure that all teachers have a Polish degree in pedagogy. If this is not possible, the school requires the teacher to have an educational degree in the taught profession (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). Most of the teachers in the Polish school work in educational settings in Iceland, pre-schools, and compulsory schools; thus, they receive training or seminars through the educational facility in which they work (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). The teachers also try to participate in yearly conferences organized by Móðurmál – the Association on Bilingualism. The school has access to the support system of Leisure grants (is. *Fristundakort*) with Hafnarfjörður being the only city council that does not provide leisure grant support for the Polish school (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

The Polish school focuses on the Polish language, geography, and history because its authorities consider that learning these subjects will help students better grasp the materials studied in the Icelandic schools (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). As many of the teachers in the Polish School work in Icelandic educational organizations, primarily in compulsory schools, they have a good comparison of the Polish and Icelandic school systems and see what material is helpful for Polish children to study to help them learn these subjects in Icelandic schools in the future. Furthermore, one of the leading and hidden purposes of the school is the value of both languages. The school teaches its students Polish in order to have an excellent base to let them have an easier time studying Icelandic (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

As the school's curriculum is from Poland, the teachers customize it for students in the Icelandic school system and focus on areas which the Polish students have more difficulty with the Icelandic schools (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). They also compare the both Icelandic and Polish educational systems and create a hybrid system to benefit Polish-speaking students in the Icelandic schools (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). For a long time, the school used textbooks for Polish schools in Poland, but the school's authorities have noticed that students had difficulty using them and changed to lighter books specifically made for students of the Polish diaspora (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). The school focuses its curriculum and study material on the student and focuses on their needs and requirements so that they can have a more straightforward understanding of the material, e.g., science, geography, and history in Icelandic (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022).

As Katarzyna Dreksa described it, in the beginning, the school's organization was more "imaginative", meaning that teachers and the Polish schools authorities built their school based on their perception of what a heritage language school should require (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). With time as its teachers began working in Icelandic schools, they took parts and pieces of the Icelandic educational system and integrated them into the Polish School, building on the factors which the teachers thought were the best ones to benefit their students of Polish origin in Iceland (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). The school focuses on the student's progress rather than on the school's program based on the Polish educational system. As Katarzyna Dreksa described it, "the school has more of an Icelandic approach towards its students and the school material and stepping out of the very Polish mentality that used to be in the school during its early days" (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022), meaning that the school currently focuses on more of a practical knowledge usage rather than on information-based study.

The budget of the Polish School is based on multiple resources fees paid by parents/guardians, funds obtained by the Polish School and BAFPSR, income from the events organized by the previously mentioned organs and from organized collections, as well as donations from charities and institutions and private and legal persons. The school has obtained financial support every two years from Poland and different associations, i.e. Stowarzyszenie "Wspólnota Polska" (Eng. Association "Polish Community"), a Polish non-governmental and public benefit organization, works under the patronage of the Polish Senate to strengthen the relationship between Poland and Polonia, or Poles and people of Polish descent living abroad (S.W. Polska, n.d.). Edukacja dla Demokracji (Eng. Education for Democracy Foundation) supports pro-democratic and pro-civic societal changes, primarily in Poland and the former USSR, especially where access to education, the labor market, and the possibility of co-deciding about one's fate is limited. This organization helps the Polish School in Reykjavík by organizing seminars, conferences, and similar events for teachers and by promoting the usage of the Polish language in homes. The organization is co-financed by the Chancellery of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, which allows it to give financial aid to the school yearly. In years the 2011–2018, the organization has raised 5mln Zł (~150mln ISK), which went to 100 Polish heritage language schools (Fundacja Edukacja dla Demokracji, n.d.). The school also receives partial financial and educational aid from The Ministry of Education of Poland through the Embassy of Poland in Reykjavík, primarily through books and educational materials (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). The school budget is prepared so that the payments of parents or guardians would cover salaries for

teachers and rent premises for the needs of the Polish School. Funds other than fees paid by parents or guardians are allocated to purchase school aids, books for the school library, textbooks for students, textbooks for teachers and any other necessities for the proper functioning of the material facility (Polska Szkoła w Reykjavíku, 2009).

The Icelandic government does not take any steps in financial support, as the school is not a part of or recognized by the Icelandic educational system, thus, the principal of the Polish School cannot have a full-time job salary (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). The Polish School has only received financial help from Móðurmál and from Reykjavík City's School and Recreation Department. As one of Móðurmál's schools, the Polish School has access to Fellaskóli on Saturdays for free, which was previously paid for the Polish School (K. Dreksa, personal communication, March 11, 2022). The school also received a gift from Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir for their 10th anniversary and was nominated for The Icelandic Education Award 2020 in the category of Excellent school work (*Íslensku menntaverðlaunin 2020: Framúrskarandi skólastarf*, 2020).

To acquire language competencies necessary for the process of communicating in Polish and learning about Polish literature, history, and culture the Polish language, geography, and history are taught at the Polish School in Reykjavík for cultural and literary education based on Polish children's literature and cultural texts. The school's teachers work in Icelandic schools, and therefore have a good comparison of the Polish and Icelandic systems to see what material is helpful for Polish children to study. With their connections with Icelandic schools, they created a "hybrid system" to benefit their Polish-speaking students in the Icelandic schools.

5.2 ORPEG

The Center for the Development of Polish Education Abroad, in Polish Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, or the abbreviation ORPEG which will be used hereinafter, supports young Poles abroad to learn the Polish language. By developing various forms of education, ORPEG enables students to learn about Poland and improve their Polish language skills during a permanent or temporary stay in another country. They encourage Polish youth to connect to the Polish language and culture, by learning online through distance education, and use the didactic offer of Polish schools and teachers and Polish diaspora centers cooperating with ORPEG. The organization provides Polish textbooks and teaching aids, conducts consulting activities, and assists teachers working abroad with their professional development, reaching out to the most remote places in the world. The organization works to provide education to the children of Polish

citizens temporarily living abroad and to support the education for Polish children (ORPEG – Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, 2021). The ORPEG school carries out didactic tasks by conducting educational activities in accordance with the study program framework for Polish schools and the study plan, to enable the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to obtain a primary school graduation certificate (Szkoła Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjavíku, 2020, p. 5).

ORPEG was established in Poland in 1973 by the Minister of Education and Upbringing and the schools were opened at the most critical Polish diplomatic missions in the first years. Gradually, more and more schools opened all over the world. Education in schools was also made possible for young people with Polish heritage (ORPEG – Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, 2021), to preserve a sense of national identity among children of Polish heritage living abroad by teaching children and adolescents the Polish language, history, and culture in Polish, facilitating their possible return to the Polish educational system and providing systematic and substantial support to teachers teaching Polish (ORPEG – Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, 2021).

ORPEG runs 69 Polish schools through Polish diplomatic missions located in 36 countries worldwide on four continents. Their schools provide supplementary education in the Polish language and knowledge about Poland (ORPEG – Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, 2021). In addition to overseeing the European School, ORPEG provides distance learning to the schools that are part of the institution “Primary School of the National Education Commission and Secondary School of the National Education Commission” and supervises European schools and conducts distance learning in the schools that are part of it. ORPEG is the official educational institution of the European Union, controlled jointly by its member states. They provide multilingual and multicultural education to children whose parents are employed in the institutions and agencies of the European Union (ORPEG – Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, 2020). ORPEG also conducts counselling activities for parents and students migrating or permanently staying abroad. Students can use free materials for learning Polish and about Poland, created as part of the “Enable Poland” project and the interactive platform “Open school”, which enables direct contact with a Polish teacher (ORPEG – Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, 2021).

In the school year 2021/2022, ORPEG sent 106 teachers to 11 countries to work abroad, who work among the Polish diaspora and Poles abroad and teach approximately 14,000 students of all ages each year. The teaching is established by the Polish diaspora and takes place in facilities of the local public education systems. The structure of ORPEG

includes the Polonia Center for Teachers, which provides methodological support to teachers working abroad. This center conducts stationary and online courses, prepares didactic materials, and maintains constant contact with educators (ORPEG – Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, 2021).

5.3 Polish School John Paul II

Polish School John Paul II at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Reykjavík is a Polish school in Iceland operated by ORPEG and will hereafter be referred as the ORPEG School. It allows students who attend schools operating in the Icelandic education system to complete their Polish compulsory education, which consists of a free eight-year Polish primary school education (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjavíku, 2020, p. 4), in accordance with the supplementary education plan and curricula considering the framework of supplementary education for Polish schools. The teaching takes place on Saturdays in Landakotsskóli in Reykjavík, and in Háaleitisskóli in Reykjanesbær.

The body running the ORPEG School is the Ministry of National Education of Poland. One of the responsibilities of the ministry relates to the organization of education for Polish children abroad (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjavíku, 2020, p. 4). The governing bodies of the ORPEG School include the headmaster, the Pedagogical Council, the Parents' Council, and the Students' Council (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjavíku. 2020, p. 16).

Polish School John Paul II considers the Educational and Preventive Program based on the vision and mission of the ORPEG School and include educational and preventive content and activities tailored to the students' developmental needs. The main idea of the school is to understand its students' needs, respect, and their dignity and right to comprehensive personality development. The school implements the objectives and tasks set out in the regulations on education organization for children of Polish citizens temporarily staying abroad. The school provides students with the opportunity to learn in further education in Poland. By doing so, the school undertakes activities to maintain and develop the sense of national and linguistic identity of students. The school also cooperates with Polish diaspora associations and organizations supporting the development of Polish culture abroad and similar associations in Poland (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjavíku, 2020, p. 5).

The didactic and educational tasks of the school include, in particular: the implementation of curricula considering the training program for Polish schools by conducting educational classes in the full-time mode on selected days of the week, on Saturdays, enabling students to acquire knowledge and skills in the subjects taught at the school necessary to obtain the primary school leaving certificate. It enables students returning to Poland to join the education system in Poland by educating them in the spirit of patriotism and ideological tolerance, mutual companionship, and a sense of responsibility for their behavior and beliefs. The school shapes and maintains national identity among students, awakening intellectual and emotional ties with Poland by cooperating with associations and organizations of the Polish diaspora and the Polish diaspora supporting the development of Polish culture abroad. The school creates an environment conducive to the comprehensive personal development of students by recognizing moral values, making choices, and prioritizing values. Polish School John Paul II cooperates with socio-cultural associations and institutions with educational institutions, youth organizations, cultural and religious institutions, with the aim of enabling students to maintain a sense of their national identity and to develop social competence, as well as religious tolerance (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawla II przy Ambasdzcie RP w Reykjaviku, 2020, p. 5-8). According to the school's policies, the organization of religion lessons has the aim of maintaining a sense of national identity, educating young people in the spirit of the social teaching of the Church in accordance with applicable law in Poland (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawla II przy Amsbasdzcie RP w Reykjaviku, 2020, p. 8).

The Pedagogical Council, which consists of consists of the school's principal and all teachers employed by the school, is a collective body of the school in implementing its statutory tasks related to education, upbringing, and care. An invitee may also be invited to join a meeting of the Pedagogical Council with consent or on request by the Pedagogical Council. This may include representatives of associations and other organizations, e.g., the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Iceland, whose statutory purpose is the educational activity or expanding and enriching forms of didactic activity (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawla II przy Ambasdzcie RP w Reykjaviku, 2020, p. 17).

According to the school's statute (2020, p. 19), the Parents' Council is the main operating body of the ORPEG School representing all parents or legal guardians of students. The competencies of the Parents' Council include adopting the Educational Program in consultation with the Pedagogical Council of the Preventive School, issuing opinions on the set of textbooks established by the school principal, opinions on the program and schedule of increasing the effectiveness of education or upbringing at the

school, giving opinions about the draft financial plan presented by the principal of the ORPEG School, and commenting on innovative projects and pedagogical experiments at the school (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjaviku, 2020, p. 19).

The Student Self-Government operates at the ORPEG School. The Student Council is a social body that includes all ORPEG School students. As part of the school's fundamental rights, the Student Government may present to the Pedagogical Council and the school's director its conclusions and opinions on all matters, such as the right to understand the curriculum, its content, its objectives, and its requirements, and the right to an honest and justified assessment of students' progress, the right to organize school life, enabling the maintenance of appropriate proportions between the school's effort and the possibility of developing and satisfying one's interests, and the right to edit and publish a school newspaper. In consultation with the School Director, they have the right to arrange cultural, educational, sporting and entertainment activities based on their own needs and organizational capabilities and choose a teacher who will serve as the supervisor of their organized activity (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjaviku, 2020, p. 20).

The tasks of the Students' Self-Government include developing democratic forms of coexistence between students and teachers, shaping team cooperation skills, caring for the school's good name and image, cooperating with other schools, taking care of the school, and organizing support for students with learning difficulties. The students have the right to express their opinions on the decision to remove a student from the list of students and caring for the school's good name and image (Szkola Polska im. Jana Pawła II przy Ambasadzie RP w Reykjaviku, 2020, p. 21)

ORPEG's mission is to shape and maintain a sense of national identity among the Polish diaspora living abroad. They encourage Polish youth to connect to the Polish language and culture abroad. The ORPEG School allows students to complete their Polish compulsory education, which consists of a free eight-year Polish primary school education, enabling their students, should they move or return to Poland, to join the Polish education system.

Outside of aid from the parents or guardians of the Polish schools, both Polish heritage language schools in Iceland receive direct and indirect funding and support from Polish governmental and non-governmental organizations, i.e., ORPEG, the Ministry of National Education, Association "Polish Community", the Education for Democracy

Foundation, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, and the Chancellery of the Senate of the Republic of Poland.

The Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Reykjavík started a Polish School for Polish children in 2008. The school argues that it is necessary in the process of communicating in Polish and learning about Polish literature, history, and culture. The Pedagogical Council determines the teaching material based on the curriculum for individual classes and the organization of the school year. The Polish School is a school for Icelandic students of Polish origin in Reykjavík, Iceland. For a long time, the school used textbooks from Polish schools in Poland, but the school's authorities noticed that students had difficulty using them. As its teachers began working in Icelandic schools, they took parts and pieces of the Icelandic educational system and integrated them into the Polish School. ORPEG supports young Poles abroad to learn the Polish language by supporting and promoting their language learning. The organization provides Polish textbooks and teaching aids, conducts consulting activities, and assists teachers working abroad with their professional development. It enables students returning to Poland to join the education system in Poland. ORPEG provides Polish textbooks and teaching aids, conducts consulting activities, and assists teachers working abroad with their professional development.

6 Discussion

The previous chapters explored the school systems of the two Polish heritage language schools in Reykjavík and their support from the Polish and Icelandic governments. After a brief summary in the next paragraph, this discussion chapter brings together the theories, policies and the findings based on the description of two Polish schools in Reykjavík and the Icelandic government's support of Polish heritage language schools.

As mentioned above, the school system of the Polish heritage language schools requires more cooperation with the Icelandic school system and government. One of the main challenges is that many Icelandic schools do not recognize heritage language schools. Non-governmental organizations, i.e., Móðurmál, are the ones that actively work to support heritage language education in Iceland. According to the Icelandic government (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2020), all children have the right to study and maintain their heritage language. The signed declaration between the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Education and Children of Iceland states that both the governments will cooperate in the field of education, paying particular attention to the education of the Polish diaspora living in Iceland and accessing their education in Polish with the educational system and within heritage language schools (Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Poland, 2020). The findings of this thesis show that the Icelandic education system does not invest financial means into helping maintain the heritage language of their plurilingual students.

As mentioned above, the school system of the two Polish heritage language schools requires more cooperation with the Icelandic school system and government. One of the main problems is that many Icelandic schools do not recognize heritage language schools. With better support from the Icelandic schools and the Icelandic government, the gap between heritage language schools and compulsory schools would be minimized, creating better communication, and understanding between the two institutions. Heritage language schools being a part of the Icelandic national curriculum would help solve some issues.

Looking at the function of the school, it should have the right to be at least in some part of the Icelandic school system or be recognized as a school in the Icelandic school system. Incorporating the signed declarations between Iceland and Poland into the National Curriculum of Iceland would be a starting point for more significant support of heritage language schools in Iceland.

7 Conclusions

This research aimed to identify how the Polish and Icelandic governments support the Polish heritage language schools in Reykjavík. Based on the information provided, Iceland's educational policy, each student's academic and extracurricular needs are addressed. Students with a heritage language other than Icelandic have the right to be taught Icelandic as a second language since Icelandic is the language that unites all Icelanders. Thanks to Tungumálaver, which offers teaching in their other languages, many schools in the Capital Region recognize the grades of Polish schools and other heritage language schools. Móðurmál aims to promote heritage language and active bilingualism in Icelandic society and supports the development of regular heritage language classes and groups that offer heritage language lectures, including Polish, for plurilingual children. These two organizations show that Iceland cares for and promotes heritage language classes and schools for bilingual children. However, this support does not come directly from the Icelandic government.

The Icelandic government does not take any steps in financial support in supporting their Polish heritage language school, as it is not recognized by the Icelandic educational system. The school has managed financial support every two years from Poland and different associations, i.e., Wspólnota Polska, Edukacja dla Demokracji and the Ministry of Education of Poland, which shows that the Polish heritage language schools do receive regular support from the Polish side. However, with the declaration signed by both ministers, it does indicate that the Icelandic government is taking steps to support Polish heritage language schools. After describing the two Polish schools in Reykjavík, it is clear that they perform like a regular school.

There are many reasons for the Icelandic government to support heritage language schools. Part of the solution could be making a sub-category in the school system for heritage language schools and supporting these schools financially. With more migrant children in Iceland and more need to open heritage language schools or courses, the Icelandic government should take steps from their side to support the language maintenance of the students in Icelandic public schools.

Both Polish schools in Reykjavík have a statute describing their school's organization. By going through their statute, it is clear that they do operate as formal schools. Both schools get support from Polish organizations run by the Polish Ministry of National Education. They are also supported by Móðurmál, through which the Polish School in Reykjavík receives support from the Reykjavík City Council. The thesis provides a new insight into the support of the Icelandic government towards heritage language education. Unfortunately, the results indicate little information on the support of

Icelandic government of Polish heritage language schools or similar institutions. On the contrary, the Polish government has contributed a lot to developing and maintaining Polish heritage language schools, holding seminars through the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Iceland.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address the question of Icelandic educational policymakers on heritage language education. It is not possible to provide information on the full support from the Icelandic side for heritage language education due to insufficient governmental policies on the topic.

I suggest clarification and further research should be conducted on the issue of benefits and challenges of attending a heritage language school from the perspective of immigrant students who attend or have attended heritage language schools. There are only a few research papers about the challenges that the authorities and teachers at heritage language schools face regarding their collaboration with both governments. It would be beneficial to do research based on interviews with current and former students, parents, teachers, and school authorities of a heritage language school to get a more apparent conclusion about support from the Icelandic side. Most importantly, to interview Icelandic and Polish teachers and policymakers regarding their approach toward heritage language schools by conducting research on both educational systems and seeing how they support each other.

To my mind, looking at the function of the heritage language school, it should be to some extent part of the Icelandic school system or be recognized as a school in the Icelandic school system. This problem could be tackled by improving the collaboration of Móðurmál and Iceland's Ministry of Education and Children. Looking at the function of the school, it should have the right to be at least a part of the Icelandic school system or be recognized as a school in the Icelandic school system. Incorporating the signed declarations between Iceland and Poland into the National Curriculum of Iceland would be a starting point for more significant support of heritage language schools in Iceland.

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