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“We would like to support, but well, we can’t.”
Parent-teacher collaboration to support Finnish language acquisition among Arabic, Dari and Farsi speaking elementary immigrant children based on positive and challenging experiences in Finnish schools

University of Eastern Finland
Philosophical Faculty
School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education
Master’s Degree Program in Early Language Education for Intercultural Communication
Master’s thesis in Education
December 2019
**Työn nimi** – **Title**
“We would like to support, but well, we can’t.”
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**Tiivistelmä – Abstract**

After rising numbers of international immigrants in European countries including Finland since 2015, both receiving societies and immigrants have faced different challenges of integration. Education is one main factor influencing decisively immigrant’s and in particular immigrant children’s integration into receiving societies. And undoubtedly, parents play a key role in their children’s success in education and later life. In consequence, in order to support immigrant children during their, in most cases, first encountered challenge in the receiving society’s educational system of learning a new language, a close cooperation between schools, teachers, and parents is required. In this regard, parent-teacher collaboration strategies are not only beneficial for immigrant children’s acquisition of a new language but allow parents at the same time to be involved in their children’s education and assist teachers in their work.

This research focuses on the existing positive and challenging experiences that Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children aged 7 to 13 made with learning the Finnish language after the first year of their preparatory course in Finland. For that, an overall bottom-up methodological approach was pursued, based on major theories on parental involvement and on second language acquisition as the theoretical framework as well as by applying qualitative narrative research methods. This included the gathering of narratives in the form of semi-structured interviews with 23 immigrant Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking children and their parents and 4 Finnish teachers.

The results of the thematic narrative analysis illustrate that even though the currently applied parent-teacher collaboration are very beneficial for immigrant children’s education, they are struggling to cope with challenges related to the growing numbers of pupils with varying educational and cultural backgrounds at Finnish schools. In consequence, solutions to these challenges such as closer parent-teacher communication channels should be incorporated into the present parent-teacher collaboration to foster immigrant children’s Finnish language acquisition and to pave by that the way to a more successful and thriving school life.

**Avainsanat – Keywords**
Finnish Language Acquisition, Parent-teacher collaboration, Immigrant Education, Immigrant Children, Narratives, Parental Involvement, Preparatory Education, Arabic, Dari, Farsi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At first, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Finland and specifically to the University of Eastern Finland for giving me the opportunity to make the unique experience of studying in a serene and tranquil environment in addition to meeting warm-hearted people and making new wonderful friends.

I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks in particular to my supervisor Professor Ritva Kantelinen for her advice, support and encouragement, and for simply accepting me with all my weaknesses and strengths. Additionally, warmest thanks to all teachers, university members in particular of Opinsauna, Yhteisötila Aava, the reception center staff in Kitee, and in general to everyone who helped me in finding interview partners. And of course, I want to sincerely thank all my interview partners for sharing their stories and experiences with me, allowing me by that to gain in-depth insights, which were crucial for my research.

Last but not least, I want to thank very much my family and friends for providing me with constant support and continuous encouragement throughout the three years of my studies, for helping me in developing my research idea, for dedicating their time and proofreading skills to my thesis, for pointing out new aspects and insights to my research as well as to patiently and kindly tolerating my seclusion while writing on the thesis.

Joensuu, December 2019

Farzaneh Kamali-Vinne
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IH      Interaction Hypothesis
SLA     Second Language Acquisition
SLL     Second Language Learning
UEF     University of Eastern Finland
1. INTRODUCTION

“We would like to support, but well, we can’t…”
(Mrs. Golzar, Parent)

Since the so-called refugee crisis in Europe in 2015, the number of immigrants has increased dramatically worldwide, with one out of seven people being considered as migrating globally (IOM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Center, 2016, p. 5). As a result, the integration of immigrants into receiving societies gains in significance and urgency in Europe (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011, p.78). In Finland, in total 335,523 people from different countries of origin were registered as newly arrived migrants, asylum seekers and refugees between January 2015 and May 2018 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2018). Among those were, evidently, also Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking people who had arrived in Finland for different reasons ranging from forced migration to studies or work. In 2017, 12,090 Farsi-speaking, 26,467 Arabic-speaking and 5,792 people from Afghanistan (i.e. Dari-speaking or Pashto-speaking) were living in Finland either as immigrants, refugees or as asylum seekers according to Statistics Finland (2018), and among those also many who had migrated with their children.

Since education plays an important role in the integration of immigrant groups into receiving societies (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011, p. 77) and in Finland, it is offered equally to all children regardless of the country of birth, the integration of this growing number of immigrated children might cause challenges for the Finnish educational system. Although Finland is famous for its efficient educational system grounded, among other concepts, on parental involvement, these changing outer social-political conditions and global developments have undeniably caused new challenges in children’s school life with regard to immigrant children’s Finnish language acquisition. In consequence, there is high need to elaborate and apply newly adapted, effective and constructive parent-teacher collaboration to smooth the learning process of immigrant children in general as well as their Finnish language acquisition in particular. Moreover, since not enough educational materials on teaching strategies for the learning of Finnish as a second language seem to be available due to the often perceived only recent significant migration movements to Finland, more research in this field is thus required.

For these reasons, the here presented research project aims at gaining new insights into beneficial aspects of parent-teacher collaboration to support the Finnish language acquisition of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children, as well as into current challenges that parent-teacher collaboration are facing and ways to overcome those.
This research is based on the theories on parental involvement of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Han, Freud, Erikson, Maslow and Ellis, as well as on parental involvement models in form of Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement and Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s Parental Involvement Model, as outlined in detail in section 4. In line with this theoretical framework, I used an overall bottom-up methodological approach entailing qualitative narrative research methods. This included the gathering of narratives in the form of interviews with parents, teachers and children in Joensuu, Kitee and Tampere in Finland in April and May 2018. Even though the interviews were conducted in Arabic, Dari, Farsi and Finnish, quotes of the interviews are added in this research either in their translated or original form in English exclusively (see section 6). Based on the theoretical framework, these collected narratives were analyzed in three steps in answer to my research sub questions (see section 7).

In the following chapters, the thus identified challenges as well as potential solutions to overcome those and to increase the efficiency of parent-teacher collaboration are critically discussed. The final findings of this analysis and discussion of positive experiences, challenges and potential solutions, in turn, are summarized in the final section 8.

At first, however, after defining some terms used frequently in my research, I will provide an overview of the Finnish educational system, as well as on basic education for immigrant children in Finland in order to get familiar with parent-teacher collaboration to enhance Finnish language acquisition of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children in the following section.
2. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines immigrants as “people residing in a country other than their country of birth” (IOM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Center, 2016, p. 5). In this research, the term immigrant is referred to a parent or a child who was born in a country other than Finland regardless of their residency status in Finland whether being an asylum seeker, a refugee or a permanent resident.

By child or children in this research, I mean the elementary pupils aged between 7 to 13 years old at the time of interviewing who have been moved and lived in Finland for less than three years with their parents.

The term parent-teacher collaboration in this research encompasses a) parent, b) teacher and c) collaboration. a) Parent has been used to refer to child’s caretaker or guardian who were mothers or fathers of elementary school age children. b) The term teachers refers to Finnish teachers who have gained their academic degrees in Finland and have more than three years of experience working with immigrant children. c) When referring to collaboration, it can be defined within but not limited to parental involvement models like Epstein’s six Types of Parental Involvement, Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s Parental Involvement Model, and Immigrant Parental Involvement (see section 4.2).
3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Finnish Educational System and Language Education

The right for having good education and succeeding in studies for each pupil is specifically stated in Finnish National Core Curriculum (Opetushallitus, 2016, p.23). In Finland, compulsory education starts when the child turns seven years old, and ends when the syllable for basic education is completed or the child has studied for at least 10 years (Infopankki, 2018). Compulsory education is free of tuition fee for every child. The official languages are Finnish and Swedish written in Latin alphabet. Together with Karelian, Veps and Ingrian, the Finnish language belongs to the northern Baltic-Finnic language family, one of the sub-branches of the Finno-Ugric language family (Bereczki, 2004, p. 165). Language education starts at early childhood and is in the core of each child’s learning plan and the development of the language proficiency is considered as life long process (Opetushallitus, 2016, p.179).

3.2 An Insight to Finnish Basic Education for Immigrant Children

In 2015, the number of immigrants worldwide mounted up to 244 million people, with the result that nowadays one out of seven people are considered as migrating globally (IOM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Center, 2016, p. 5). Between January 2015 and May 2018, in total 335,523 people with various citizenships immigrated to Finland, out of whom 70,302 were between 0 and 17 years old and about 80% were granted a residence permit (Finnish Immigration Service, 2018).

As education plays an important role in each individual’s life, it is one of the main aspect that needs to be taken care of in case of immigrating children, since lacking proper education can have decisive impacts on children’s future lives. It can, among other things, affect their health, personality and future career: “For children of immigrants, education is the primary vehicle for integration” (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011, p. 78). All pupils of compulsory schools age between seven and seventeen years, and children whose Finnish skills are not sufficient to join regular classes, have the right to enter a preparatory education (Opetushallitus, 2016). As a result, in Finland, immigrant children receive preparatory education to study Finnish as a second language for about 20 hours of tuition per week and for one year. After the end of this year, the child is transferred to “regular” classes at Finnish schools, where it has the possibility to continue studying Finnish as a second language (Infopankki, 2018):
The Preliminary Schooling in Preparation for Basic Education at School in Finland comprises 1000 hours that, in general, are used in the course of a year. One important teaching method that is used is Total Physical Response (TPR). The aim is for students to be integrated into general classes first in art, physical education (PE), music and crafts, and then gradually into other subjects as their skills in Finnish increase.” (Kuopio 1775, 2012)

Concerning immigrant children’s language learning, Finnish or Swedish as a second language is offered fully or partly to immigrants following specific syllable (Opetushallitus, 2016, p.203). However, the focus might vary based on the region the pupils are studying in. It is highlighted that in lesson planning, immigrant children’s background situation, mother tongue, culture and the duration of their stay in Finland should be taken into consideration (Opetushallitus, 2016, p. 148). In this regard, however, it is often argued that there is only little educational literature available on planning classes for pupils with diverse cultural and education backgrounds and on teaching strategies for the acquisition of Finnish as a second language, since, compared to other European countries, the history of immigration in Finland is rather short and Finland seems to have become a more multicultural society only in the last twenty years.

3.3 Literature Reviews on Current Challenges of Teaching Immigrant Children

In addition to varying cultural and educational backgrounds, the language barrier represents, of course, one of the main challenges in the education of immigrant children. Although children might gain necessary conversational skills in Finnish during this one year of preparatory education explained in previous section, they need to study Finnish for four to seven years to gain the essential language skills for academic learning. (Hakuta, Butler and Witt, 2000, as quoted by Sinkkonen and Kyttälä, 2014, p. 169) Moreover, preparatory classes stand somewhere between general education and special education in Finland, since children may pursue one of these two subsequent education paths after the preparatory year. And as it is difficult to know precisely whether an immigrant child is suffering from general learning difficulties or culturally and linguistically based difficulties, “immigrant children are overrepresented in the field of special education in Finland” (Karppinen, Hagman and Kuusela, 2008; Sinkkonen et al., 2011, as quoted by Sinkkonen and Kyttälä, 2014, p. 169). In this regard, according to Sinkkonen and Kyttälä “Different cultural factors, in addition to linguistic disadvantages may disturb the students’ learning and adjustment to the Finnish school system” (2014, p. 170), meaning that challenges that immigrant children are facing in
education might be due to their need to adjust to a new culture and to a new school system, and to their learning of the Finnish language alone.

In consequence, due to the high variety of different educational and cultural backgrounds of immigrant children and thus resulting differing, unique challenges for immigrant children, their families, schools and teachers, teachers are required to gain sufficient knowledge of how to encounter and deal with diversity (Sinkkonen and Kyttälä, 2014, p. 170). However, it is currently argued, that Finnish schools do not have proper and efficient multicultural planning materials and teaching strategies, and that teachers themselves are therefore forced to create new material and effective ways in order to work with immigrant students (Sinkkonen and Kyttälä, 2014, p. 178). Also for these reasons, teachers’ worries on how to handle classes with children with various cultural backgrounds and mother tongues seem to have increased in Finnish schools in the last years (Sinkkonen and Kyttälä, 2014, p. 170).

3.4 The Case of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-Speaking Immigrant Children in Finnish Education

With regard to, for instance, Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking people having moved to Finland and on whom I am focusing in this research, there were 12,090 Farsi-speaking, 26,467 Arabic-speaking and 5,792 people from Afghanistan (i.e. Dari-speaking) registered as living in Finland either as immigrants, refugees or as asylum seekers (Statistics Finland, 2018). Having moved to Finland to live there in the future, I am referring to these three groups of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers likewise as “immigrant parents” or “immigrant children” within this research, even though, of course, their migratory backgrounds, reasons for migration and current situation in Finland varies.

In addition to their varying migratory backgrounds, also their respective mother tongues might cause specific challenges to children’s education in Finland. In this regard, Arabic, which has been spoken by 26,467 immigrants in Finland in 2017 as already mentioned above, represents the native language of more than 200 million people worldwide, and is mostly spoken in the countries of Iraq, Syria, Oman, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, etc. (Accredited Language Services, 2018b). However, as there are nowadays more than 30 different forms of spoken Arabic dialects, Arabic-speaking people usually know Formal or Modern Standard Arabic as well to be able to communicate among each other (Accredited Language Services, 2018b). Modern Standard Arabic belongs to the Semitic languages, most of which are considered as
dead languages or as used in religious practices only, since the original source of the Arabic language’s development was Islam and Islam’s holy book of Quran from the early 7th century AD on (Accredited Language Services, 2018b). Since then, Arabic has turned into one of the major world languages, with the Arabic alphabet comprising 28 letters written in a cursive way from right to left (Accredited Language Services, 2018b).

The languages of *Farsi*, the official language of Iran where it is mostly spoken, and of *Dari*, the official language of Afghanistan where it is mainly spoken, (as well as of Tajikistan’s official language Tajiki), in turn, represent actually the same language, which is sometimes referred to as “Persian” as well (Accredited Language Services, 2018c; Accredited Language Services, 2018d; Accredited Language Services, 2018e). Accordingly, both Dari and Farsi (as well as Tajiki) belong to the Indo-Iranian language family, which is one of the language branches of the Indo-European language family (Accredited Language Services, 2018d). Dating back to 6th century BC, these three languages are the only languages that underwent all the three stages of Old, Middle and Modern Development of the Indo-Iranian languages. After the Islamic conquest of Persia in the 7th century AC, the Arabic alphabet written in cursive from right to left was introduced into the Persian language (i.e. into nowadays Dari, Farsi, and Tajiki), to which 4 letters were added to convey certain sounds which are not to be found in Arabic, comprising thus currently in total 32 letters (Accredited Language Services, 2018d). Overall, from a linguistic point of view, Dari, Farsi, and Tajiki can thus be considered as dialects of the same language, which have been declared three distinct languages for mainly recent political reasons about fifty years ago (Radio Zamaneh, 2017).

As a result, these differences in mother tongues need to be taken into consideration when studying strategies to support the acquisition of Finnish as a second language of immigrant children, as it is done for the case of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi- speaking immigrant children in Finland within this research. In addition to that, the concept of parental involvement might contribute to a better understanding of current parent-teacher collaboration in Finland to support immigrant children in their learning process as well.

3.5 Parental Involvement in Finnish Educational System
With Finland being usually considered as providing for one of the world’s best educational systems, also the importance of parental participation in the educational system was known earlier than in other European countries (Eurydice, 1997, p. 18). However, in contrast to most
other member states of the European Union offering training courses or seminars for parents, such a training does not exist in Finland (Eurydice, 1997, p. 18). Instead, the focus is rather on the individual and collective rights and duties of parents in Finland. Parents are responsible for their children completing compulsory education at the Finnish primary school (peruskoulu), they can send their children to private schools, and their religious beliefs must be respected by schools (Opetushallitus, 2016, p. 59; Eurydice, 1997).

Parental participation in particular was specifically mentioned for the first time in 1931. From then on, all following Acts on primary school education or the school system in general considered parental involvement and cooperation as essential, and parents were always part of the decision making process (Eurydice, 1997, p. 89). Accordingly, it is stated in the Basic Education Act (628/1998, 3§), for instance, that education providers are responsible for enlisting cooperation in order to assist parents in their role as educators (Perusopetulaki 628/1998, 3§; Eurydice, 1997, p. 89). As a result, the goal of the current policy in Finland is to increase the involvement of parents in school matters such as school curriculums and educational projects, in order to improve children’s educational opportunities and to help them in exploiting their fullest potential (Opetushallitus, 2016, pp. 59-60).

In order to further boost this cooperation between home and school for guaranteeing trust, equality and mutual respect, it is also considered as part of the education provider’s responsibilities to inform the guardian on “child’s progress in learning and growth as well as other issues like curriculum, the goals of learning, learning environment and working methods, support for learning and pupil welfare, assessment and reports, choices related to studies and various events during the school year” (Opetushallitus, 2016, p. 60). Hence, constant feedback is considered as helping parents to support their child’s learning, while at the same time parents have the chance to get familiar with the school's daily life and take part in “planning and evaluation of school activities and objectives of the educational work together with the school staff and pupils” (Opetushallitus, 2016, p. 60).

Overall, when studying parent-teacher collaboration to support the Finnish language acquisition of immigrant children in the Finnish educational system, parents’ role in the Finnish educational system based on the concept of parental involvement need thus to be taken into consideration, as well as immigrant children’s diverging cultural and educational
backgrounds, migratory status and mother tongues. In addition to that, an appropriate
theoretical framework is of course required for conducting research, which is outlined in the
following section 4, starting with major theories on parental involvement, followed by
parental involvement models and by theories related to the education of immigrant children.
4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 The Importance of Parental Involvement

In every research, theoretical perspectives provide the basis and stimulation for researchers to go further. In light of the central role of the concept of parental involvement in the Finnish educational system, as outlined in section 3.5, the present research draws in particular from three major theories which have shaped considerably the research field of parental involvement and are outlined in this section: 1) Piaget's cognitive development theory, 2) Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, and 3) Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory.

4.1.1 Cognitive Development Theory

Knowing and understanding the nature of cognitive development, of the effects of both internal and external factors on how children think can be a great help in attempts to maximize children’s development (Taylor, 2015, p. 6).

Jean Piaget was the first to suggest that children think differently in different ages, which is the reason why he is often considered as the founder of developmental psychology whose work contributed significantly to the current understanding of learning and developmental processes (Taylor, 2005, pp. 5-9). In the context of cognitive development, Piaget stresses the role played by innate abilities and environmental aspects (Taylor, 2005, pp. 5-9). By far perhaps, the most widely-accepted claim made by Piaget is that human cognition is an active process and that children play an attentive role in their own cognitive development. That is to say, according to Piaget, cognitive development is not just about information children acquire with age, but that their interaction with their surroundings and environment plays a crucial role in this process as well (Taylor, 2005, pp. 5-9). In consequence, the role of adults for choosing and providing suitable activities and resources is essential (Tekin, 2011, pp. 5-6). Anchored in these reflections, Jean Piaget, who was also considered a constructivist and interactionist, proposed the theory of cognitive development in children which pays particular attention to the gaining of experiences and learning through peers and family members (Tekin, 2011, pp. 5-6). This point of view is, inter alia, also supported by Athey (as cited in Tekin, 2011, pp. 5-6), who argues that children learn faster in interaction with people and things in their environment, especially their parents. As a result, Piaget’s cognitive development theory can be considered as confirming the effectiveness of parental involvement in children’s growth and success.
Piaget’s cognitive development theory seems also to have been incorporated into Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory. Like Piaget, Vygotsky believes that children play an active role in the process of understanding their surroundings and in their cognitive development (McLeod, 2014). However, compared to Piaget, Vygotsky puts more emphasis on the fact that children develop their ways of thinking through interactions with others (Smidt, 2013, p. 24). According to Vygotsky (as cited in Tekin, 2011, p. 5), as the relationship between human beings and their environment is inevitable and human beings, especially children, are usually surrounded by family members, children learn and develop significantly through the interaction with their family members in the community. With the result that, ultimately, family members can be considered as the child’s first teachers. Based on these assumptions, Vygotsky’s understanding of social constructivism and his “Zone of Proximal Development” theory (ZPD) (see Figure 1) focus on how a person with a better understanding of the world such as a parent or teacher can guide and prompt what the child already knows, helping, by that, the child in learning more about the world surrounding it (Onchwari, Ariri Onchwari & Keengwe, 2008, p. 270).

Accordingly, as stated by Freund (1990, pp. 114-125), Vygotsky’s theory focuses on how an adult’s supervision can contribute to the child learning how to learn, and on how the interaction between parent and child during problem-solving activities will help the child to perform better in solving a problem independently the next time. Putting Vygotsky’s ZPD theory into practice, Freund’s study of children trying to match furniture items in different areas of a dollhouse showed thus that children who played with their mothers exhibited higher understanding and performance compared to children who worked alone (Freund, 1990, pp. 114-125).

Moreover, another beneficial and practical concept derived from Vygotsky’s theory, which is worth mentioning in this context is scaffolding. Wood, Bruner and Ross define scaffolding as
“a kind of process that enables a child or a novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted effort” (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976, p. 90).

All in all, based on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, children learn thus better with parents and their past experiences should be taken into account in their learning process, which is an important factor for teachers to bear in mind when working with immigrant children as well (Onchwari, Onchwari and Keengwe, 2008, p. 270).

4.1.3 Ecological System Theory

Similar to the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (see sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2) Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory also emphasizes the impacts of family and the surrounding world on children's development (Tekin, 2011, p. 6).

In this regard, Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 3) compares the ecological environment with a set of Russian dolls, that is to say he conceptualizes the ecological environment as comprising several layers of constructive structures. As can be seen in Figure 2, he proposed five systems concerning children’s development: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3; Onchwari and Keengwe, 2008, pp. 270-271). In this case, the microsystem represents the core layer and immediate environment of the child, affecting the child the most and comprising family, school or classroom, group or community, etc. (PSYCHOLOGY NOTES HQ, 2013). The direct interaction between these institutions and the child plays thus a crucial role in the child’s development and specifically focused in this research on language learning. The interconnections between these microsystems of the child’s immediate environment, in turn, can have positive or negative influences on child’s social outcome as well: “A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person

Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory. Source: PSYCHOLOGY NOTES HQ, 2013.
actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and the social life)” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 22-25; PSYCHOLOGY NOTES HQ, 2013; Paat, 2013). Unlike the case of the mesosystem and microsystem, the developing person does not have an active role in the case of the exosystem, which refers to the impacts of events happening in the child’s setting such as for instance at the parents’ workplace, the media, sibling’s schools, etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The macrosystem represents another layer of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system. It comprises all the other systems (micro-, meso-, exo-) at a larger scale by referring to the culture or subculture as a whole along in which the child is living, including social values, cultural beliefs, worldviews, law, political and economic systems, customs, etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). Although these factors might at the beginning not yet be part of the child’s world, they can significantly shape its development and success (Tekin, 2011, p. 6). And the last system suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 26), the chronosystem, takes into consideration environmental events and transitions in the course of life (Paat, 2013, p. 956). That is to say, every single event from the time that the newborn baby is carried home by its mother, the time it goes to school, graduates, finds a job, loses the job, marries, etc. to the last transition in the form of death is considered as having a huge impact on each individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27).

Studying these different systems that affect the child’s development simultaneously with the help of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory can thus help adults both parents and teachers in gaining a better understanding as well as awareness of the various ways a child might act in different situations and by that enhance its developing process and Finnish language learning.

4.2 Parental Involvement Models

Moreover, for a better understanding and illustration of parental involvement, several models have been suggested and accepted in the field of education, which are outlined in brief in this section. According to Tekin (2011, p. 7), the two majorly recognized and used parent involvement models are Epstein’s six types of parental involvement and Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s model of parental involvement. In addition to these two, in this section I also provide information on the model of “stages of immigrant parental involvement” to highlight issues related to parental involvement of immigrated parents and children.
4.2.1 Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement

“If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave this education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development.” (Epstein, 2009, p. 9)

As illustrated by this quote, the framework of Epstein’s involvement model is to assist school educators to implement practices in which families are actively involved to “make the school a welcoming place” (Epstein, 2009, p. 57) and to have an influence on children’s success at high levels. For that, Epstein defines in her framework six types of possible parental involvements, their respective challenges and potential results:

**Type 1. Parenting:** It helps families to create a supportive environment and home conditions to promote children as students at each age and grade level, to understand children’s developments, and to gain awareness about their own and other’s parenting challenges. It also assists teachers and schools to have a better understanding of families’ backgrounds and cultures, goals, needs, etc. and to respect the efforts of families (Epstein, 2009, pp. 9-27).

**Type 2. Communicating:** Crucial to this type of involvement is the designing of a fruitful two-way communication channel between home and school to apprise families of school programs and children’s progress. Moreover, it might help educators in being more aware of their own communicating skills and offer opportunities to elicit parent’s views on school programs (Epstein, 2009, pp. 9-27).

**Type 3. Volunteering:** Refers to the recruitment, organization and training of parents in helping and supporting voluntarily the work at school or other locations. It helps parents in feeling welcomed and valued by the school. For educators, in turn, it allows to engage families in new ways for schools work as well as to be aware of parents’ specific talents and interests (Epstein, 2009, pp. 9-27).

**Type 4. Learning at home:** It supplies families with information and ideas on how to support their children at home. This comprises information on homework and other curriculum-related activities, on how to help children to broaden their skills on class assessments, on summer learning activities, etc. As a result, children might develop an improved self-concept as learners, a more positive attitude regarding schoolwork and greater homework completion, and parents might be considered as similar to teachers (Epstein, 2009, pp. 9-27; Tekin, 2011, pp. 7-8).
Type 5. Decision-making: Refers to the families’ successfully incorporation into schools’ decision making processes, their performances as leaders and representatives, increasing by that the awareness of parents’ voices, their effective input in child education policies, and the opinion of an equal status of families in leadership roles. By that, children might come to the conclusion that their student rights are protected (Epstein, 2009, pp. 9-27).

Type 6. Collaborating with the community: This type of involvement aims at strengthening school programs and children’s’ learning and development by recognizing and integrating resources from their community. In this case, community is not only defined as the direct environment of the child but rather as the whole environment affecting the child’s development. This type of involvement might boost the awareness of the school’s role in the community while increasing at the same time parents’ interaction with other families. Children, in turn, might be supported in realizing career and future job possibilities as well as options for further education (Epstein, 2009, pp. 9-27).

4.2.2 Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s Parental Involvement Model
Supplementing Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement model as well as the theories on parental involvement of Piaget, Vygotsky and Brunfenbrenner outlined in section 4.1, the parental involvement model created by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler in 1995 aims at providing answers to the questions of why parents choose to be involved, what they do when they are involved and why their involvement results in positive outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997, p. 3). According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997, p. 3), these questions are of significance as parental involvement has always been of concern and interest in developmental and educational settings especially as within this research regarding elementary school children, as well as since studies have shown and proved the importance of parental involvement in children’s educational success (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005, pp. 105-107; Epstein, 2009, p. 9). What makes Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s model unique, however, is that it pays more attention to understanding the process of parental involvement rather than searching for connections between parental involvement and academic success (Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2010, pp. 27-41). In this regard, parents’ decisions and choices are considered as being shaped first by their individual opinions and experiences and only next by other constructed environmental demands (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997, p. 8).
Anchored in these assumptions, the first version of their parental involvement model was introduced by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler in 1995. Since then, there has been ongoing research in order to enhance the understanding of the model in particular related to elementary and middle school grades (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp. 105-107; Walker et.al, 2005, pp. 85-86; Walker et al, 2010, p. 27-41; Tekin, 2011, pp. 8-10). As can be seen in Figure 3, the first layer of the model deals with parents’ motivations, perceptions of invitations and their life experiences (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp. 105-130). Central to this layer are parents’ own previous or current academic experiences, their beliefs and perceptions on what they can do to help as well as on their personal efficacy on influencing their children to obtain better results; and as the focus is on constructed behavior, it is assumed that it can change in the course of time as well as differ from one culture to another (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp. 105-130; Walker et.al, 2005, pp. 85-86; Walker et al, 2010, pp. 27-30; Tekin, 2011, pp. 8-10). In this context, it is furthermore assumed that parents are most motivated in being involved when they feel welcomed at school and by the staff, when being invited by teachers to meetings, or in particular when urged by their children to get involved, for instance in the form of their child saying “I hate school” or “I need help with my homework” (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp. 106). Moreover, also other factors such as time and energy, their own perception of their knowledge, and their cultural background and beliefs influence parents’ involvement, resulting, for instance, in parents’ hesitance in getting involved in case they have the impression that their skills and abilities are not adequate (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp. 105-130; Walker et.al, 2005, pp. 85-104). Linked to forms of involvement in this first layer are other forms of involvement such as parents discussing family and personal values and goals with children, showing interest in their children’s learning, talking about school days, the existence of a mutually respected family-school cooperation and participation, etc. (see Figure 3, level 1.5) (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp. 105-130; Walker et.al, 2005, pp. 85-104).
In addition to that, parents’ involvement affects their children’s learning outcome through helping in solving homework tasks, giving positive verbal feedback and praising, teaching of learning materials related to specific homework such as in case of a mother or father who can teach and help with English homework in the second level, etc., as summarized in level 2 of the model (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, pp.105-130; Tekin, 2011, pp.8-10). The focus of the third level, in turn, is on the child’s perception on the previous mechanisms. That is to say, if the child does not understand one or several of the previous mechanisms, the process of
moving forward remains inert. In contrast, if it is understood, it allows the child to move forward, like for instance when parents encourage their child to pursue an academic education and the child perceives this as an encouragement, parents are helping to boost the child’s confidence, being thus actively involved in its education (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997, pp. 3-42; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp.105-130; Tekin, 2011, pp. 8-10). As summarized in level 4, children can also attribute to their own learning when they are confident and believe that they can succeed in something, when they are interested and curious, when they are able to set goals and manage their time, or when they know how to ask for help and work cooperatively in a team (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005, pp. 105-130; Walker et.al, 2005, pp. 85-104; Walker et al, 2010, p. 27-30; Tekin, 2011, pp. 8-10). As, according to this model, children’s academic achievement is the overall goal, Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s model claims thus that parents can affect their children’s educational outcome at different levels (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997, pp. 3-42). The challenges that immigrant parents are facing in their attempts to foster their educational outcome might differ, however, to those of non-immigrant parents.

3.3.3 Immigrant Parental Involvement

“Immigrant families are not all alike nor are their needs or interest.”

(Han, 2015, p. 21)

Immigrated families are usually from diverse backgrounds, which is one of the reasons why their needs and educational experiences are often distinctly and significantly different from the locals. Immigrants can range, for instance, from experiences of being completely illiterate to those of a Ph.D. holder, from language proficiencies varying between zero and advanced levels, and comprise cultural similarities or differences that can make it easy or challenging for educators to involve immigrated parents (Han, 2015, pp. 21-22). Consequently, as the requirements for immigrated parents’ involvement in the education of their child might differ from those of non-migrated parents, and as parental involvement has nevertheless been proven of being essential in improving children’s school performance, as also outlined above, Han (2015, pp.21-22) advocates the application of an additional theoretical framework for parental involvement in the case of immigrated families.

In this regard, Han (2015, pp.21-22) argues that most previous theorists in educational studies analyzed parental interactions with schools based on general parental involvement models, which, however, may not cover or explain unique factors that immigrant parents are dealing
with. Thus, she proposed a new model based on the experiences of U.S. immigrants from all around the world. This model, which is called the *Stages of Immigrant Parental Involvement* (Han, 2015, p. 22), illustrates in detail immigrated parents’ needs and interests while they are going through the four stages of *Cultural Survivor, Cultural Learner, Cultural Connector* and *Cultural Leader*. Concerning this research, providing thus a better understanding on where immigrant families are standing within these four stages, educators and schools shall be assisted in recognizing immigrated parents’ specific challenges and the best ways to support them in order to have effective parent-teacher collaboration (Han, 2015, pp. 22-23). However, in this regard it is important to keep in mind that because not all immigrated parents move from one stage to the other in a chronological order, the amount of time immigrant parents spend in the destination country does not ascertain their stage within this model (Han, 2015, pp. 22-23). Nevertheless, these four stages through which immigrated parents might go can roughly be described as follows:

**Cultural Survivors** encounter various challenges and their prime concern is to meet the basic needs of their family in their new country of destination. In this stage, parents might be refugees or immigrants who have just arrived. They might be illiterate in their first language or might not provide of adequate target language proficiency. Moreover, some might have to work in multiple jobs in order to provide their family with food and shelter, with the result that they might not have enough time to learn much about the school system (Han, 2015, p.22).

**Cultural Learners** feel more comfortable to learn about the school culture and education system of their destination country. They do not feel insecure about being engaged in school instructions, curriculums, culture and more. Parents are ready to take part in parent-teacher conferences, which is why the help of interpreters and translators is crucial at this stage in order to enhance the parental involvement (Han, 2015, p.22).

**Cultural Connectors** like to impart their knowledge to cultural supervisors and learners as well as to propose supportive activities for children and parents. They have a higher acknowledgement of the school system, educational terminologies and policies. And they can motivate and empower Cultural Survivors and Cultural Learners to be actively involved in their children’s education (Han, 2015, p.22).

**Cultural Leaders** are the voice and representatives of Cultural Survivors, Cultural Learners and Cultural Connectors. They can clearly express immigrant families’ needs and communicate those to schools and communities. Cultural Leaders fulfill the role of a voice for voiceless immigrant students and families (Han, 2015, p.22).
Even though this model elaborated by Han (2015) highlights thus the mechanisms behind parental involvement of immigrated parents, it is, from my point of view, important to combine it with theories on the cognitive development and basic needs of immigrated children for the purpose of my research, which are briefly outlined in the following section.

4.3 Basic Needs of Immigrant Children

4.3.1 Freud’s Theory on Psychosexual Stages

As founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud’s work on psychosexual stages can be considered as providing the basis for theories related to immigrant children. The primary focus of Freud’s theory on psychosexual stages is on human feelings or behavior such as wishes, desires, shame, hate, guilt, and experiences of love rather than on sexual experiences (McLeod, 2017). In the fourth stage out of five of his theory, called Latency (5-12 years), Freud suggested that the development of the ego (socially accepted reality based desire) and superego (socially accepted reality based desire plus morals) is at the highest and that children act more independently. At this stage, much attention is paid to the acquisition of new knowledge as well as of practical and academic skills (Freud, 1940, pp. 27-29; Parrish, 2014, pp. 84-95). At the same time, this need for being recognized and accepted might be one of the challenges immigrant children are facing at this stage. Therefore, it is, for instance, advisable for teachers to search for the reasons behind unaccepted behavioral issues for a better understanding of children’s behavior and actions (Onchwari, Onchwari and Keengwe, 2008, p. 269).

4.3.2 Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory

Based on Freud’s theory on psychosexual stages, Erik Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory defines eight stages that mark children’s development and which are characterized by the interaction between growing individual abilities and a broadening social environment of the child (Onchwari, Onchwari and Keengwe, 2008, p. 269; Pretorius and Van Niekerk, 2015, p. 36). Like Freud, Erikson believes that personality development is grounded in fixed stages; each of these stages being affected by the previous one (McLeod, 2018). Moreover, Erikson highlights as well that the outcomes of a successful completion of each stage are a healthy personality and virtuousness (Erikson, 1980, p.52; McLeod, 2018; Onchwari, Onchwari and Keengwe, 2008, p. 269).
According to Erikson, the first four stages of our personality development cover the ages from zero to twelve years old and represent our childhood development (McLeod, 2018). The first stage out of these four stages, which Erikson categorizes as Trust vs. Mistrust, covers the age from zero to one and half. At this stage, infants are dependent on caretakers and require attentive bonding with their parent(s) to develop trust (Christiansen and Palkovitz, 1998, p. 4; Pretorius and Van Niekerk, 2015, p. 37). If the child passes this stage successfully, it will have trust and hope that in case of a crisis others will support it; whereas the failure to pass this stage successfully will result in a sense of fear and anxiety shaping the following developmental stages (McLeod, 2018). The following stage of Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt lasts until the age of three. At this stage, children start to insist on their independence by choosing their toys, walking away alone, etc., which is the reason why, according to Erikson, at this stage it is crucial for parents to let their children explore their abilities in an encouraging environment (Erikson, 1980, p. 68-71; Pretorius and Van Niekerk, 2015, p. 37; McLeod, 2018). If children are not given the chance to explore their environment and capabilities freely at this stage, they will start to feel deficient in their ability to survive, resulting in dependency on others, lacking self-confidence, and a feeling of shame or doubt in their capabilities (McLeod, 2018). At the third stage of Initiative vs. Guilt, children interact more with other children of their own age due to preschool or kindergarten; they start to plan and initiate activities and feel more secure to lead others, seeming by that to have suddenly grown both psychologically and physically (Erikson, 1980, p. 78-79; McLeod, 2018). At this stage, if the trusting child feels unaccepted in its new environment, it will be thrown off and withdraw even if it had passed the previous stages successfully (Onchwari, Onchwari and Keengwe, 2008, p. 269). The last stage called Industry vs. Inferiority lasts from five years to twelve years of age (McLeod, 2018). At this stage, children observe and participate, watch and try out, and begin to learn reading and writing, assigning thus a crucial role to teachers in their life (Erikson, 1980, p. 87-89; McLeod, 2018). Furthermore, as children feel more confident about their abilities at this stage, experiencing minor failures might be vital to develop modesty in order to reach a balance between modesty and competence/sense of mastery (Erikson, 1980, p. 87-90; McLeod, 2018).

Overall, as all these four stages play a crucial role in children’s development, it is critical that parents and teachers are aware of children’s fears, level of emotional security and their background in the form of cultural views on autonomy, initiative and industry (Onchwari, Onchwari and Keengwe, 2008, p. 269).
4.3.3 Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory

To this psychosocial theory of Erikson as well as to Freud’s psychosexual theory, Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory can be added. Similar to Erikson, Maslow created a five-level hierarchy of needs through the observation of the growth and development of students (Freitas and Leonard, 2011, pp.9-13). As can be seen in Figure 4, fundamental needs which one has to obtain such as air, food, shelter, clothing, etc. are categorized by Maslow (1943, pp.370-396) as “Physiological needs” at the lowest level of his hierarchy of needs, meaning that if those basic needs are not sufficiently met, one can not proceed to achieve a higher developmental stage (Maslow, 1943, pp.370-396; Freitas and Leonard, 2011, pp.9-13; Noltemeyer et al., 2012, pp. 1862-1867). Deficiencies related to the second level of needs in Maslow’s theory called safety have a direct effect on children’s academic and cognitive competence (Noltemeyer et al., 2012, pp. 1862-1867). This refers, for instance, to having a health insurance, a peaceful environment, financial security, etc. (Maslow, 1943, pp.370-396; Noltemeyer et al., 2012, pp. 1862-1867). Only if both the physiological and safety needs are at least moderately fulfilled, then the needs for love, affection and belongingness arise (Maslow, 1943, pp.370-396). Which, if fulfilled, lead to esteem needs, that is to say to needs such as self-respect, self-esteem and esteem of others for which every individual in society craves for (Maslow, 1943, pp.370-396). The fulfillment of these needs is crucial for a person’s success and confidence, as well as for meeting “the desire for reputation or prestige” (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). However, according to Maslow (1943, pp.370-396), even if all these four groups of needs are pleased, every person still desires to do something which makes her or him happy, and that is when the self-actualization need becomes vital.

Evidently, the fulfillment of all these needs as well as the recognition of the level of needs at which immigrant children might suffer deficiencies should be taken into consideration when
analyzing and elaborating parental involvement collaboration for immigrant children, in addition to the requirements for the development of the ego and superego of children at this age as defined by Freud and the successful passing of all four developmental stages as elaborated by Erikson (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2).

4.4 Second Language Acquisition
In addition to the so far mentioned key aspects, requirements and goals of parental involvement according to the theories and models outlined in sections 4.1 and 4.2, and the requirements of immigrant children in education according to Freud’s Theory on Psychosexual Stages and Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory (see section 4.3), further theoretical concepts on second language acquisition (in the following: SLA) of children are needed in order to elaborate suitable parent-teacher collaboration for the acquisition of Finnish as a second language in the context of this research.

In the last decades, increasing attention has been paid to SLA research and numerous books provide comprehensive accounts on SLA, such as the work of Ellis (1985), Spolsky (1989), Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) and Cook (1992). The main reason for this abundance of scientific work on SLA is that often the goal or purpose of language teaching differs in each society, since teaching within each educational system usually follows and fulfills governmental and societal objectives (Cook, 1992). Accordingly, in Finland, for instance, “The objectives of preparatory instruction are to promote pupils’ Finnish/ Swedish language skills, balanced development and integration into Finnish society and to provide them with the capabilities required to move on to basic education” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2009, p. 6).

4.4.1 Acquisition-Learning Distinction Hypothesis
As a result of this abundance of scientific work which has been elaborated in different research settings, at different times and places, also the concept of SLA itself is contested. Krashen (1982), for instance, makes a distinction between Second Language Learning (SLL) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). According to his Acquisition-Learning Distinction Hypothesis, SLA can be compared to the ways a child learns its first language through a subconscious process, which means that the language acquirer is only aware of using the language for communication but not of actively learning the language (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). SLL, on the other hand, is understood as a conscious way of acquiring a new language, which
means that the language acquirer provides of knowledge of the second language, is aware of its linguistic rules and is able to talk about them (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Furthermore, according to Krashen (1982, p. 10), “Some second language theorists have assumed that children acquire, while adults can only learn”. That is to say, that SLA applies, arguably, only to children, and SLL to adults. Ellis (1999b), in turn, refers to the terms “Incidental” vs. “Intentional Acquisition” to underline that differences in learning a second language do not only comprise different forms of “attention”, i.e. learning through a conscious or subconscious process (Ellis, 1999b, p. 35). Instead, in line with Schmidt (as cited in Ellis, 1999b, p. 35), Ellis argues that consciousness to a certain extent is involved in incidental learning “when the learners notice new items and rules in the input” (Schmidt as cited in Ellis, 1999b, p. 35). One example given by Ellis (1999b, p. 36) illustrates that no matter how much learners try to acquire new vocabulary deliberately, and no matter how good they are in memorization, the factor of time does not allow them to learn all the vocabulary intentionally. Therefore, they need to learn most of the new vocabulary incidentally instead, for instance through extensive reading (Ellis, 1999b, p. 36). Rather rejecting thus the strict distinction between SLA to describe the process of second language acquisition of children exclusively and SLL for that of adults, Ellis (1999a; 1999b) seems to apply the term SLA for the learning process of both children and adults within his Interaction Hypothesis. Accordingly, as researchers in the field of SLA can chose from vast range of theories, methods and techniques according to the specific research context, within this research, the term SLA is used based on the understanding and conceptualization of Ellis (1999a; 1999b).

4.4.2 Interaction Hypothesis (IH)

At the core of Ellis’ Interaction Hypothesis (IH) is the assumption that the learner learns a second language through the process of interaction (Ellis, 1999a, p. 3). This assumption is based on the above-mentioned observation that SLA is rather incidental than intentional, as well as on the theory that active engagement in interpersonal oral interaction when problems occur and are negotiated facilitates the acquisition of a new language (Ellis, 1999a, p. 4). Ellis’ initial version of the Interaction Hypothesis was roughly related to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, claiming that learners acquire better when they are motivated and not nervous (Ellis, 1999a, p. 3). To be more precise, according to Krashen’s (1982) Input Hypothesis on acquisition (not learning), learners improve when they receive a form of input which is one step beyond their current level of competence. For instance, if the learner’s level is ‘i’, the
acquisition occurs when s/he receives comprehensible input that contains ‘i+1’ (Krashen, 1982, pp. 20-23; Ellis, 1999a, p. 5).

4.4.3 Socio-Psychological Theory, Interaction & SLA
This view on interaction and its relationship to SLA has, however, been challenged from various sides, especially from a social or socio-psychological point of view (Ellis, 1999a, p. 16). In line with Firth and Wagner (as cited in Ellis, 1999a, p. 16), Ellis points out that “there exists a tension in SLA research between acknowledgment of the social and contextual dimensions of language and acquisition on the one hand and of the internal, cognitive processes of the individual on the other hand“ (Ellis, 1999a, p. 16). In consequence, Ellis argues that research in SLA is restricted and unbalanced if researchers favor one aspect (psycholinguistic) over the other one (social). Instead, more attention should be paid to the understanding of language acquisition as a “social phenomenon” by studying how second language is used “interactively” in various contexts and with differing intentions (Ellis, 1999a, p. 16).

Following Ellis’ (1999a, p. 17; 1999b) line of argument, research in the field of SLA such as the present research on parent-teacher collaboration in Finland need thus to focus on both the world inside learners’ head and the actual outside social world (Ellis, 1999a, p. 17). Also for that reason, out of the wide range of possible research methods, I decided to resort to qualitative narrative research methods in order to gain deeper insights into immigrant children’s as well as their parents’ and teachers’ understanding of parent-teacher collaboration, as outlined in detail in the following section.
5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is based on the main research question: How can parent-teacher collaboration support the acquisition of Finnish as a second language by Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking elementary school children with immigration background in Finland after their first preparatory year in school?

To answer my main research question, the following sub-questions were focused on:

1. Positive experiences related to Finnish language acquisition and Finnish educational system:
   - Which positive experiences have immigrant children and their parents made in Finnish schools?
   - Which positive experiences have Finnish teachers made working with immigrant children?

2. Challenging experiences related to Finnish language acquisition and Finnish educational system:
   - Which challenging experiences have immigrant children and their parents encountered in Finnish schools?
   - Which challenging experiences have Finnish teachers encountered working with immigrant children?

3. Which solutions were mentioned by immigrant children, their parents and Finnish teachers, to overcome the challenges as well as to improve existing parent-teacher collaboration in general?

Furthermore, this research aims at recommending a practical implication to support parent-teacher collaboration to enhance Finnish language acquisition for immigrant elementary children based on the findings gained through the answers to above questions.
6. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

6.1 Qualitative Narrative Research Methods

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?” (Kvale, 2007, p. 2).

The main goal of the current qualitative narrative research is to gain an insight to positive and challenging experiences of immigrant children and their parents related to Finnish language learning in Finnish schools and Finnish teachers’ experiences with teaching immigrant children and collaborating with immigrant parents. The basic form of human interaction is through conversation. We talk with each other, ask questions and answer questions, while getting to know each other better through this communication by learning about each other’s experiences, feelings, hopes, fears, school or work situation and social life in general (Kvale, 2007, p. 2). According to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (2011, p. 7), “People are storytellers by nature”, and one’s experiences and thoughts of one’s “inner reality to the outside world” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 2011. p. 7) can be shown, negotiated and communicated through narratives. As in different situations and life events narratives simply link all essential aspects by giving them meaning and providing explanations, narrative knowledge is omnipresent between, for instance, teachers and students, doctors and patients, managers and subordinates, etc., and narration as a common mode of communication is used to entertain, teach, and learn (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004, pp. 17-20). Consequently, Czarniawska-Joerges proposes the twofold perspectives of “seeing narrative as a mode of knowing and narration as a mode of communication” (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004, p. 17).

Narrative research simply is any study that analyzes or uses narrative materials. (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 2011, p. 3) Narrative research can be applied in various fields of studies to diagnose psychological problems or learning disabilities, to hear unheard voices of ethnic points of view, etc. And children’s narratives are used, for instance, to study their cognitive, social and language development (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 2011, pp. 4-5). Moreover, according to Czarniawska-Joerges (2004, pp. 55-56), there are at least three different ways to apply narrative research methods within scientific research projects:

(1) By collecting primary data in the form of narratives
(2) By narrativizing gathered scientific data
(3) By analyzing narratives as specific kinds of texts, e.g. as narratives of interviews
Within my research, I resorted to the first two possibilities to incorporate narrative research methods by way of collecting narratives from both adults (parents and teachers) and children as primary data in interviews and by keeping a reflective diary during field research, as well as by narrativizing the data gained through the collection and analysis of these narratives within this thesis.

To be more precise, for the actual gathering of narratives required for my research, I proceeded as follows.

6.2 Sampling for Collecting Narratives

In order to gather narratives, I decided to limit the number of potential research participants by focusing on Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking participants. Initially, I had planned to include only Farsi-speaking parents since my mother tongue is Farsi, making it thus easier to communicate with parents and especially with children. However, since Joensuu (Finland) is a small city with few Farsi-speaking inhabitants, I decided to interview Dari-speaking parents and children as well, mainly also because I have no difficulties in understanding Dari since Dari and Farsi represent two dialects of the same language. As during one of my school visits in Joensuu a teacher working with immigrant children mentioned Arabic-speaking children’s challenges as well, I got interested whether there are differences in learning Finnish between Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking children. As a result, I decided to focus on Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children.

Furthermore, in order to incorporate several perspectives on parent-teachers collaboration to support the Finnish language acquisition of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children in Finland, I decided to gather narratives from all three main parties involved in this process, that is to say from Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant parents, their children, as well as their teachers. For finding participants, I asked friends, university professors, coordinators of university projects for asylum seekers and immigrants like Opinsauna, Global Friday, organizations in Joensuu such as Jomani, Yhteisötila Aava, Joensuun Perheentalo, the reception center in Kitee and in Facebook groups for contact details of potential research participants. For that, an invitation letter was prepared in four languages of Arabic, English, Farsi and Finnish (see appendices 5, 6, 7, 8).

Despite this help in my search for potential research participants, finding participants took me longer than expected, since I was searching very specifically for parents with children in
elementary school who have not been living in Finland for more than three years, and since Finnish preparatory education teachers were also quite busy to give me time for an interview. Finally, however, I managed to find through non-random snowball-sampling (Kvale, 2007) an equal number of participating Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-native speakers and to interview Finnish teachers. In total, I conducted interviews with three Arabic-speaking parents plus four children, five Dari-speaking parents plus four children, and four Farsi-speaking parents plus three children. Moreover, as the focus of the study is on learning Finnish as a second language making teachers’ perspective thus equally essential, I conducted interviewes with four Finnish teachers as well, who mainly work with immigrant children in the preparatory education called “Valmistava Opetus” in the early years after their arrival to Finland.

6.3 Eliciting Stories in Semi-Structured Interviews

After having obtained the contact details of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant parents, children and their teachers, invitation letters to parents for participating in my research were prepared in four languages: in English and Persian, as well as in Finnish and Arabic which were translated by students of the UEF with good command of English whose mother tongue is Finnish or Arabic. If not sent directly via email to my research participants, the invitation letters were sent to the in section 6.2 mentioned university professors, coordinators of university projects for asylum seekers and immigrants, organizations in Joensuu, etc., and I visited Joensuun Perheentalo as well as the reception center in Kitee in order to find and talk to potential participants face-to-face. Children as research participants were found through their parents. And in the case of teachers, I contacted them personally via email, informing them about my research project and inviting them to participate.

In preparation of the actual conduct of the semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 2007), I established a first draft of interview questions in November 2017 and piloted (Cohen et al., 2013) with a befriended Farsi speaking immigrant mother in Joensuu. After the feedback from the pilot interview and the subsequent consultation with my supervisor, the questions were revised to reach the highest possible validity and reliability of the data. As due to only minor changes the data gathered during the pilot interview turned out to be valuable, it is included in this research.

Assuming that teachers can speak and understand English, their interview questions were prepared in English exclusively (see appendix 9). The interview questions for parents, in turn,
were translated into Persian (Dari/ Farsi) and English by me as native speaker of Farsi, as well as translated into Arabic by a native Arabic-speaking UEF student with good command of English (see appendices 10, 11 and 12). The interview questions were sent through emails or social media to parents and via emails to teachers at least a day before the interview to allow them to get familiar with the questions. Only once there was no possibility to send the questions to one parent in advance due to the spontaneous arrangement of the interview. Instead, the questions were printed and given to the parent in person with some time to read them before the beginning of the interview. For the interviews with children, the questions were translated into Farsi and English by me (see appendix 13). In addition to that, I obtained the schools’ permissions to interview children and teachers in line with Finnish law, and I asked all parents for their consent and permission to interview their children.

For the eliciting of stories, I conducted individual, semi-structured face-to-face interviews (Kvale, 2007) in order to gain insights into the participants’ experiences and opinions on school days and on incidents related to their education and language learning. With the exception of the pilot interview, all interviews were conducted between April 2018 and May 2018, and mostly in person in Joensuu and Kitee. Only two interviews were conducted through skype calls since one mother and her son were living in Tampere. The duration of interviews varied between half an hour to two hours (see appendices 2, 3 and 4), and the presence of an interpreter was needed for the interviews with two Finnish teachers and some of the Arabic speaking parents and children. To gain in depth insights, the questions focused on positive as well as challenging experiences regarding children’s Finnish language acquisition of all three groups of parents, teachers and children. Their hopes and wishes on how to improve the current parent-teacher collaboration were part of the closing questions of the interviews. However, despite the fact that I had prepared the interview questions in advance and that the interview sessions were guided by those, I tried not to strictly stick to these questions exclusively, but provide my interview partners with leeway to talk about different aspects related to my research that were important according to them. Therefore, as an interviewer, I tried to be attentive and to be a good listener, to ask precising and guiding questions, etc. And overall, I am truly grateful and deeply happy that my interview partners were eager to talk enthusiastically about their experiences and opinions, as they seemed to have the feeling that the interviews would allow them to let their voices being heard.
In total, I had thus 27 interview partners. The 4 interviews with teachers were held at two different schools in Joensuu and one in one of the UEF library meeting rooms. Among these interviews with teachers, one interview was conducted with two teachers at the same time, since both teachers preferred to be interviewed together because of them working and teaching together as well. The interviews with 9 parents and 11 children, in turn, were mostly conducted at their homes or in the reception center in Kitee. Only one of the interviews with a parent took place at the UEF library, and, as already mentioned, one with a parent and one with a child was conducted in the form of a Skype call. Some of the parents were single mothers, divorced or widows/widowers, so that interviews were conducted individually. In the case of couples, however, both mothers and fathers usually preferred to be interviewed together in one interview session. And only two fathers were interviewed alone, since one of them was more comfortable in communicating in English than the mother of the child, and since in both cases the children were very young and needed the care and attention of their mother while their fathers were interviewed.

The children whom I interviewed were, in turn, between 7 and 13 years old, and thus used to go to school and learn Finnish as their second or third language at school in Finland. Rich (1972) highlights that treatment interviews for children “allow them to develop a different attitude owing to changes in their own thinking” (Rich, 1972, p. 12). That is to say, in supportive treatment interviews with the children, the interviewer listens carefully, and encourages and sympathizes if needed (Rich, 1972, p. 12). Consequently, in my interviews with children, I tried to be considerate regarding the three aspects of a good interviewer-interviewee-relationship described by Rich (1972, p. 12) as “warmth and responsiveness”, “Permissiveness” and “freedom from pressure”. Moreover, I tried to be an attentive listener and to give the child the feeling that “we” are talking rather than “you and I” (Rich, 1972, p. 39).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed through using Express Scribe Transcription Software. The software enables the user to slow down, rewind and pause the recordings, which makes it easier to listen and type simultaneously. To protect the anonymity of the interviews, I transcribed the recordings myself and used pseudonyms for each interviewee.

6.4 Narrative Thematic Analysis

As interviews are usually extremely rich in data, the through this process gathered narratives required careful analysis after their recording and transcription. According to Kvale (2007, p.
narrative analyses focus on meaning and linguistic forms of texts” (Kvale, 2007, p. 112), allowing thus for at least four different types of narrative analysis as defined by Riessman (2008):

1. Thematic analysis,
2. Structural analysis,
3. Dialogic/Performance analysis,

Within my research, I opted for thematic analysis, which focuses on the content by primarily paying attention to “what” is said rather than to “how” and “to whom” (Riessman, 2008, pp. 53-54). To be more precise, within thematic analysis, the spoken or written narratives in this research are interpreted based on prior theories, and the communicated content of a narrative is examined rather than its structure (Riessman, 2008, p. 73). As can be seen in the summary in section 7, I analyzed the gathered narratives based on my defined categories, which are anchored in the outlined theoretical framework. Trying to be accurate in delivering participants’ voices, some direct quotes are mentioned in section 7 ‘Research Findings’. The information of whom the quote belongs to whether a parent, child, or teacher is provided next to each quote. The age of children is also added to children’s quotes.

6.5 Ethical Considerations

Furthermore, since this application of narrative research methods required me to rather get involved into the lives of my research participants by listening to and analyzing their personal experiences and opinions, my research was guided by several key ethical considerations. In this regard, I mainly referred to the three areas of ethical research principles as stipulated by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (2009, p. 5):

1. Respect of the research subject’s autonomy
2. Avoidance of harm
3. Privacy and data protection

Accordingly, participation in my research was completely voluntary. All interview partners were asked for their verbal informed consent before the beginning of the interviews, and parents were asked for their permission and consent to me interviewing their children. As according to the Finnish constitution all children must be treated equally by adults and respected as an individual human being (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, 2009,
p. 6), each child was, naturally, asked for her/his verbal informed consent in order to make sure each child is willing to participate in the research. Moreover, all interview partners were asked for permission to record the interview and were informed that they could ask me to stop recording or refusing to answer any questions they might not feel comfortable with at any time. In this regard, only one teacher asked me twice to pause the recording as we were at school and got interrupted by her colleagues due to school issues requiring clarification.

Furthermore, to avoid any social harm, all participants were asked to choose the location and time most suitable for them for the interview, with the result that I travelled to Kitee, parents’ flats or teachers’ schools in most cases. In the case of children, I asked their parents if it would be all right for their child to have an interview with me alone or if their child would feel safer with its parents’ presence during the interview, leading to the presence of parents during two interviews with a child. However, despite of me trying to carefully chose and formulate my questions depending on the specific interview conditions, I had two cases in which one father and one child got highly emotional, since talking about their lives as asylum seekers in Finland represented a sensitive topic for them. In both cases, I tried to comfort and calm down my interview partner, and made sure that by the end of the interview they considered the interview as a positive experience despite of having talked about a for them highly sensitive topic.

Recognizing the personal and sensitive character of the narratives I was told, I also assured all participants of the confidential and anonymous use of their provided data by resorting to pseudonyms within this research. Suitable pseudonyms were found through websites offering a range of common Afghan, Arabic, Finnish and Persian names (Megerdoomian, 2009; BellyBallot 2017; Campbell, 2018; Familyeducation, 2018; Megerdoomian, 2008). In addition to that, to make it easier to distinguish between the three groups of interviewees, all parents are addressed by Mr. or Mrs. plus surname, all teachers by Ms. plus surname, and all children by first names. Moreover, in order to guarantee the protection of the provided data as stipulated by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (2009, p. 12), all voice recordings, transcriptions and entries in the reflective diary will be deleted after completion and revision of this research.

Having thus been aware and tried to take care of ethical considerations within my research, I hope of having been able to avoid the causing of any social harm, and, far more, of having
been able to analyze in-depth parent-teacher collaboration in Finland with the help of my interview partners.
7. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As already pointed out in section 6.4, the narratives of parents, children and teachers that have been collected in the form of interviews, are analyzed with the help of identified categories derived from the theories and theoretical models outlined in section 4. As can be seen in the Summary, based on this identified categories, the analysis is divided into three steps (see appendix 1):

1. Identification of positive experiences of immigrant children, their parents and Finnish teachers related to children’s Finnish language acquisition and Finnish educational system
2. Identification of challenging experiences of immigrant children, their parents and Finnish teachers related to children’s Finnish language acquisition and Finnish educational system
3. Identification of solutions mentioned by immigrant children, their parents and Finnish teachers to overcome the stated challenges related to children’s Finnish language acquisition

Based on these categories and three steps in the analysis of narratives, the following section 7.1 focuses on children’s perspectives on existing parent-teacher collaboration, starting with their positive experiences, which is followed by challenges they have encountered so far and possible ways to overcome those. The same structure is adapted for section 7.2 on parents’ perspectives on parent-teacher collaboration as well as for section 7.3 on teachers’ perspectives.

7.1 Children’s Perspective on Parent-Teacher Collaboration

7.1.1 Children’s Positive Experiences

Regarding parent-teacher collaboration, there are several aspects that children mentioned which they considered as highly beneficial for their education in Finland in general as well as for their Finnish-language acquisition in particular.

In this context, from the point of view of children, the first positive experience related to the Finnish educational system represents moving to Finland where they **experience a different learning environment and educational system.** Thus, all children who previously studied in their home countries highlighted that studying in Finland is a pleasant experience, since for them it means studying in a less stressful environment without any kind of force or pressure:
“I like everything, it’s like for example they don’t force you to study, for example in Iran they force you to study, they say you have to study, but here they say you should study yourself and you need to work harder, [...] and if you don’t understand something or don’t do your homework, they (teachers) don’t get angry.” (Mani, Child, Age: 12)

And experiencing kinder, better, and more supportive teachers was a common opinion of children, as expressed by Aram, Mani, Lila, Nura, Khalil, and Rihanna:

“I like the teachers because they, they, they speak with us like our second mother, they don’t what I, me... I like teachers and, and all in that Finnish schools because it's nice and they’re better than our school in Iraq because in Iraq the teacher always angry. Finnish schools are the best not the better the best.” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13)

Part of this perceived more supportive educational environment at schools refers also to for children apparently *easier and more accessible ways of teaching* due to the usage of appropriate teaching methods such as scaffolding, which seem to enable pupils progress and higher level of independence in their learning process, as expressed by Lila:

“She [Lila] likes her [teacher] character and the way she teaches. She says easy way, she teaches in an easy way, she teaches her little by little.” (Child, Age: 10)

And this positive and more supportive educational environment includes, evidently, the *absence of physical punishment* in the Finnish educational system as well, as pointed out by mostly Arabic speaking children (and Arabic and Dari speaking parents) such as Rihanna (Child, Age: 13), Lila (Child, Age: 10) and Rafiq:

“Big big difference between studying there in Iraq. There, only, they’re only using violence and they hit students but here: no. [...] in Iraq, they (teachers) explain only one time and the second time if you don’t know, they hit, they hit, beat you, [...] if you don't know something [here], you just need to raise your hand and then the teacher is next to you to explain to you.” (Rafiq, Child, Age: 12)

Moreover, unlike most parents who complained that children are not given enough homework in Finland (see section 7.2), almost all children stated that even though they have less homework compared to their previous schools in their countries of origin, they considered it as a *sufficient amount of effective homework*, as expressed, for instance Aram:

“They teach well here and for example in Iran, it's by force, we had to do a lot of homework but here, it is less and they give us both easy and difficult ones so that it is not by force for anyone” (Aram, Child, Age: 10).

Hence, children were usually not only satisfied with the amount and character of their homework as one aspect of the Finnish teaching strategies, but also with the teaching...
approach of learning through games and interactive activities with peers and the use of ICT, as implied by Aram’s explanation of learning activities she liked:

“Like games that Finnish is written on the cards and like that or like Math games for example” (Aram, Child, Age: 10)

and Khalil:

“We play with tietokone [computer] and I like kahoot” (Khalil, Child, Age: 9)

Storytelling/storymaking sessions, games in math classes, watching cartoons, computer games, doing handicraft, and painting, were also among the commonly liked interests and favorite activities at school that all children mentioned.

In addition to that, according to children’s opinion, another beneficial aspect of both the Finnish teaching strategies and parental educational support refers to positive reinforcement (Skinner, 1974) as the key to their educational success and to the boosting of their motivation in studies. In consequence, they loved being encouraged by both their teachers and parents through verbal feedback and praising or by prizes. “They give us things, they give us chocolate, they give us everything, if I do my studies well, they give me chocolate, they give me ice-cream” (Arya, Child, Age: 7). More precisely, Rihanna, for instance, sees her parents’ encouragement as a crucial factor for her success in learning Finnish and settling down in Finland:

“ My father always tell me go and do your homework or if I didn't have homework he'd say go and read in the Finnish language or write something in the Finnish language and my mother speaks with us in the Finnish language but not always, yeah, she does that in the Finnish language. They want to, we can speak so this Finnish language because we want to stay in Finland we don’t want to come back to Iraq.” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13)

Furthermore, regarding their parents’ support in their education, although children are in the process of learning to act independently from their parents, as highlighted by Arya (Child, Age: 7): “I don’t like that they [parents] help me, just in the case that I don’t know something, I’m good at Math and I don’t need help because I know it myself”, all children had trust in their parents and teachers that if they need help, they are present to assist and they considered parents’ involvement as essential:

“ She [my mother] doesn’t know Finnish, but for example when I have a question in Math, I can always ask her, for example how is this, how I can solve this.” (Aram, Child, Age: 10)

“ She said sometimes when she doesn't know, she doesn't know some words or some sentences, her mother tries to find a synonym or translate it maybe into
Arabic [...] it was her mother's advice that go to YouTube and try to hear how this alphabet, it sounds.” (Lila, Child, Age: 10)

“I will tell her [my teacher], tell her that I didn’t know that thing and she will come and say to me you have to do like that and then she tell me some things, and I can do my homework but in home if I can’t do my homework, I can write “I don’t know”, and second day, tomorrow I tell to my teacher I can’t do it and my teacher would help me.” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13)

7.1.2 Children’s Challenging Experiences

However, in addition to these positive experiences related to the Finnish educational system and the Finnish language acquisition, children encounter(ed), evidently, also challenges. In this respect, immigrant children are in particular sensitive towards their parents’ fears and concerns regarding their status and life as migrants or refugees, making them worried about their future and affecting their daily routine. As a result, Rihanna, for instance, fears to be deported, having then to face the loss of her father and to say goodbye to her dreams since she believes her father will be executed in case they have to go back to Iraq:

“I want to say to Finland, don't tell my family come back to Iraq because if I came back all my dreams didn't come, because the, when we come back to Iraq my father die and we don't have home to live [she got emotional and cried]. Because in Iraq if some, some person didn't have hand or he have he have or he didn't have foot, all people didn't play with him and he thinks he is, he is not, they are the best and he is… Now if we come back to Iraq, all people didn’t play with my sister and my sister was think she is not good girl or like that.” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13)

In line with these worries, most children claimed that they did not want to go back to their previous schools in their countries of origin, but that what they would miss a lot would be their beloved ones who they had left behind, such as their grandparents or friends:

“I didn't like anythings, but I, I miss, I missed my friends so much, yeah, and I didn't have them, their number phone […] So I'm missing. But in Iraq school, I didn’t miss anything, yeah, and here I am just with my family, I didn't have cousin or friends anymore.” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13).

In consequence, making friends in Finland as part of getting adapted to their new social environment was, even though opinions varied, seen by none of the children as a problem or an unsolvable issue but rather as a process of adapting to the new environment. Some considered it an easy process:

“ Interviewer: “Was it easy for you to make friends?”
Farid: “Yes.”
Interviewer: “What did you do?”
Farid: “In one of the times that we play football, for example, I ask him to pass the ball to me and then when he says “OK”, or in another game we play together, after that we make friends.” (Farid, Child, Age: 8)

While some found it very difficult, like for example Lila:

“ She said most of the time she plays only with Iraqi students. She play with Iraqi more than Finnish. She doesn't know why. She only knows it's difficult [to make Finnish friends].” (Child, Age: 10)

And for Rihanna, in contrast, it was simply a process in which children needed time to get to know each other:

“ The first years when we are in the Finland and they didn't speak with me and they say to me bad, bad things, yeah but last years and this year they are my friend and they and I have them phone number” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13).

In addition, communication was, according to Roya, not an issue in the process of making friends despite of at the beginning lacking Finnish language skills, since she would not just rely on language to make friends:

“ We talked with sign language, for example we would show by acting or pointing to the game and say for example ‘let’s play together’, that’s how.” (Roya, Child, Age: 9)

However, instead of this, in most cases, absence of problems in making friends and adapting to the new social and educational environment due to lacking language skills, a challenge that some of the children seemed to have faced at Finnish schools in this regard represents bullying. Eventually, not all children experienced or wanted to talk about it, but still many suffered from having the feeling of not being wanted or integrated. The reactions towards bullying varied from child to child, and maybe boys were more aggressive and girls a bit calmer in general in these cases, as highlighted by the statements of Rihanna and Rafiq:

“ Interviewer: “Why do you think they said bad things to you in the first year?”
Rihanna: “Because they tell me, ‘you are like this and shut up’, wants something like that because they didn't know who I am, they think, they think, I am a bad person or like that. But last years and this years they know who I am, I want to be them friend and like that they was my friend.” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13)

“They tease each other sometimes and they take his books and he fought, they’re teasing each other and hit, he doesn’t like it.” (Rafiq, Child, Age: 12)

In addition to these challenges in adapting to their new environment, all children mentioned difficulties in different areas in their process of Finnish language learning as well, such as in
reading, writing, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. The mentioned difficulties varied from one child to another, making it thus impossible to reach general assumptions on difficulties of Arabic speakers, Dari speakers or Farsi speakers, which should be taken into account in parent-teacher collaboration. Instead, based on the children’s statements, it would rather be required that each child’s needs have to be assessed individually in order to elaborate proper solutions and teaching strategies remedy for its unique challenges in learning Finnish. Thus, Rafiq, for instance, considers the pronunciation of the Finnish alphabet as challenging:

“How to pronounce some alphabet, Finnish alphabet, vowels ‘ö’, ‘ä’, ‘u’, […], and so reading, specially some words he doesn’t know what the meaning is.”

(Rafiq, Child, Age: 12)

Whereas Mani referred to vowel sounds in different languages:

“Finnish grammar is difficult, […] well, we have so many sounds in Farsi or Kurmanji that we don’t have in other languages but for example ‘ö’, ‘y’, we don’t have neither in Farsi nor in Kurmanji, so I always mix them up like in the word ‘kymmenen’”

(Mani, Child, Age: 12)

And Rihanna points out the high number of synonyms in Finnish:

“This so difficult but because I like Finnish so I have to like them language. They have many things for one things, many names for one thing, like I don't know, what, they have many names for one thing, no, the hair and they want to say, they would say ‘hiukset’ and ‘tukka’, like that”

(Rihanna, Child, Age: 13)

While Arya looks at the challenges in language skills holistically:

“Writing, speaking, and the time when we should read, that is difficult, […]. She [the teacher] says I should read, I should write, I will learn, she says these all the time”

(Arya, Child, Age: 7)

At the same time, to find answers to the third question in my research regarding solutions offered by participants, children also offered possible solutions to the problems and challenges they have encountered in their education in Finland.

7.1.3 Solutions Offered by Children

All children considered their caretakers and educators as their role model. Consequently, when I asked them to imagine to be a teacher or a parent themselves trying to help their child/pupil in learning, the solutions stated by every child reflected the so far applied and experienced strategies of their parents or educators in helping them. More precisely, all children referred to characteristics of teachers or parents in their role as educators, such as
that they would be a kind, patient and disciplined teacher who doesn’t use physical punishment or doesn’t get angry fast:

“I say that they [teachers] shouldn’t get angry a lot and for example hit [children] that they did in Iran, but they [teachers] shouldn’t be too kind that the student thinks to her/himself that I won’t study anymore because my teacher doesn’t care or doesn’t say anything to me.” (Mani, Child, Age: 12)

Regarding both parents’ or teachers’ characteristics and **parent-teacher collaboration,** Rihanna mentions, for instance, that in case a child does not do its homework, the teacher can be strict and ask the child to stay longer in order to finish her/his homework:

“I have to say to you what is Finnish like ABC in Finnish and I will give to you homework, you have to write this in your notebook and tomorrow I will see if you did. You know, I will give you, if your, if your friends go to home, you will stay in the school one hours and then you have to go home. And about the game, I don't know, I will, I will joking with the children and I will speak with them, don't want to be angry because if I am angry the children didn’t understand anything.” (Rihanna, Child, Age: 13)

Moreover, as already mentioned in section 7.1.1, with regard to language learning techniques, children found the use of different **games** like Quizlet, Kahoot, puzzles, etc. effective, and they usually preferred offering their pupils interesting activities to prevent them getting bored. Similarly, all children agreed upon resorting to **scaffolding**, to the **splitting of a word into syllables**, and to **body language** for teaching basic Finnish vocabularies:

“Well, for example, I start from simple things like sitting, standing, and these things and then when you learned all that, I would teach her how to speak.” (Aram, Child, Age: 10)

“If you don’t understand what I say, I take your hand and guide you to show what I mean by pointing or physical movement. Or for example you don’t know Finnish, I take your hand and I show and I say this means ‘sit down’.” (Arya, Child, Age: 7)

“For example, I’ll give you books and tell you how to read, for example, “aurinko”, like the one on the wall [pointing to the word on the wall], and I’ll draw three lines so that you don’t have to read fast, like “au”, then “rin”, after that “ko”.” (Roya, Child, Age: 9)

In regard to teaching strategies, studying in classes with fewer number of pupils and in which pupils are quiet was mentioned by children as a beneficial learning environment in general as well.
In addition to that, further possible means to support the learning of the Finnish language that were mentioned by children, referred, for instance, to trying to use the Finnish language as much as possible with the help of peers and Finnish friends. And also extensive reading of bilingual books in Finnish and any other language that children are familiar with (either English or their mother tongue) seemed, according to children’s opinion, essential for the learning of Finnish:

“ He said he gave you some books in your mother tongue and Finnish that you can know what it means.” (Rafiq, Child, Age: 12)

“ Well, you should find Finnish friends so that you could speak Finnish with them. Or there are a lot of Finnish books. Or, for example, you can, I have seen a book in the library which is in Finnish and in English as well, you could buy both; first you can read the Finnish one, for instance you read one page in Finnish and then ask yourself what it was, after that you read the English one. I know English very well. I looked at the English one, and for example I can check what was not correct. The school’s educational books are also very good, you can read them at home.” (Mani, Child, Age: 12)

By that, and as can be seen in the following sections, children’s assessment of their positive experiences, challenges and possible solutions in parent-teacher collaboration for their learning of the Finnish language were, overall, rather in line with those of their parents.

7.2 Parents’ Perspective on Parent-Teacher Collaboration

7.2.1 Parents’ Positive Experiences

Consequently, all parents appreciated the absence of physical punishment in the Finnish educational system, with the result that their children are studying in a more supportive, calmer and less stressful environment: “A positive point is that under no circumstances, no circumstances, no one has the right to use even the slightest violence against children, under no circumstances, and this is also my own heart’s desire because children don’t know what’s right and wrong, a child is just a child” (Mr. Malik, Parent). Similarly, almost all parents were happy to see that their children’s basic needs are met in the form of experiencing a clean classroom, warm food, safe environment, etc. and that they are motivated to go to school:

“ Because they are go in Iraq to school and go here to school and they are see what the different between this schools, here in the school they can play, they can talk with teacher, They can, that's clean, that’s everything playing, and have good place, my children like school, they are don’t said we don't like to go to school, no, they are sad if they have holiday.” (Mr. El-Amin, Parent)

“ Here, they try to repeat what they say until the child learns, they don’t teach via violence, they act like a friend and they behave friendly, they are not treating
children like teacher and student. Or, for example, they take care of them at school, they have a doctor at school, now in Arya’s school, there is a health center and in case something happens, the doctor is present at the school. Or, for example, they serve them with lunch so that the child is not going home with an empty stomach or the children won’t starve and face some problems [...]. I also try to encourage Arya to study by promising buying things if he studies hard.” (Mr. Aryanpour, Parent)

“Even Finnish people say that, for example, because you’re from war-torn or conflict-torn countries or cities, the children didn’t feel free to go outside, or since it was always with fear, for example, don’t go to the street, don’t go out at noon, for example don’t go far, or if you go somewhere you shouldn’t go further. These were all just fears. Then when they [children] come here, everything, well, even the mothers and fathers say you can go anywhere as long you can find the way back and don’t get lost. Well, maybe, that’s because of here’s freedom and security, that’s why, for example, they, for example that’s why for example they are more interested in everything.” (Mrs. Golzar, Parent)

In contrast to that, parents’ opinions differed in regard to learning Finnish language through games and the use of ICT. Thus, some considered the use of technology as very effective and necessary for learning:

“They have everything here, all kinds of facilities, they have computers [...] and they teach them everything.” (Mr. Samin, Parent)

And in seeing that their children are enthusiastic to learn through games, parents found it fruitful and motivating in their children’s learning process, as highlighted by Mrs Golzar mentioning some mobile phone games that she had installed on her mobile phone as well:

“Her teacher told her [my daughter] to install a game relating to learning grammar. There were different levels in the game and she would gain more credits by playing more. At that time, she would also show her points to her teacher the next day.” (Mrs. Golzar, Parent)

, and by Mr. Malik claiming that

“When you like doing something, then it is easier to learn than when you are forced.” (Mr. Malik, Parent)

Consequently, almost all parents were well aware of the effectiveness and efficacy of high levels of motivation on children’s success in language learning. Nevertheless, very few parents also disagree with the use of ICT in teaching:

“They have a good educational system but the only missing thing is to ask kids to practice the lessons at home. I don’t know, I think they teach with iPads at school. I personally don’t like studying with iPads, because they also have a website and every night she [my daughter] calling it studying, she just plays in that website. I don’t like it very much, and I think working with pens and paper is better than
working with a computer. And, I don’t know why, although they have a good educational system, why they should give iPads to children and not give them pens and paper.” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

Moreover, in addition to the positive experiences mentioned by children (see section 7.1.1), most of the parents highlighted their gratitude towards the Finnish educational system for helping and teaching their children to be independent:

“The biggest difference is that she’s independent now, and she’s finding her way through. Well, she’s still too young to find her way completely but I have noticed her growth in some aspects compared to her friends back in Iran. In the way she talks I can see a sense of independence, sense of motivation, especially when she talks to her friends. Her friends in Iran seem lost, they are not sure maybe like us at the time when we were in Iran. They [my daughter’s friends in Iran] can’t even talk properly and this is so precious.” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

“They [teachers] teach them [children] how to stand on their own feet and to be independent, so that even a pre-school pupil can serve food for her/himself and then take the dishes back to the canteen. Everything is taught, even how to eat or how to take food.” (Mrs. Golzar, Parent)

Consequently, all parents expressed their gratitude to the teachers and were very thankful of how teachers behaved with their children:

“Every time I said thanks for teachers.” (Mr. El-Amin, Parent)

“Their teaching methods are good; their behavior with children is good. That is what all mothers expect, so that their children learn through better techniques. And they entirely transfer what they know to children. When they give away all the knowledge they have to our children for free, we do not pay any money to them. With all, for example, trouble that the children make for them, what else we can expect more? Actually, always, for example, we can just say thanks, we have nothing more, we are really grateful and satisfied with them.” (Mrs. Golzar, Parent)

7.2.2 Parents’ Challenging Experiences

However, as in the case of their children, also parents did not only provide of positive experiences, but had encountered some challenges and problems in the Finnish educational system as well. Hence, in spite of the fact that most parents felt welcomed at school and had the feeling of being treated with respect compared to their previous experiences in their countries of origin, they all agreed upon that they did not know much about Finnish schools and that in their case there would be no close relationship between school and home. Consequently, almost all were unhappy about not being sufficiently informed on their children’s progress, on the time when their children would be allowed to leave school and return home, on parent-teacher meeting sessions, etc.:
“They don’t give us any records of their exam. I don’t know when they have exams, when they don’t, they don’t give us any course reports and I don’t know whether my child is good at math or not very much good at physics or geography, nothing I know. I didn't even get to know about the results of her second grade, her average, scores, I didn’t see anything. I just got to know that she went to the third grade [...]. They would just say she’s progressing and after about 8 months, she was transferred to her school. I would like to see that what kind of grades she has or the transcript [annual records]. I would like to be informed and know what happens after 3 or 6 months of school.” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

“They don’t tell us if something has happened and your child might be late, they should inform parents. Of course they say it’s safe here. When we came first from Iran, he had to call me to say he arrived school. Of course it’s not similar here, there are background and cultural differences. We are anxious, but you also know that it’s safe here and there is no problem when they are at school. For them [Finnish parents] it might not be an issue but we are full of stress. There should be more meeting sessions especially for newcomers, I mean, it’s better if they report every month. It might not be needed for Finnish kids to have a report every month but for the newcomers and the ones who are new to the language, their challenges are different.” (Mrs. Pezeshk, Parent)

“No, it takes a long time, it takes about a month or a month and half or maybe more, if we want to make an appointments with the teachers. Approximately it might take twenty days to one month until our appointment is confirmed, because of course it is also a bit difficult to find an interpreter.” (Mr. Samin, Parent)

Another closely connected challenge for immigrant parents is their lack of information about the Finnish educational system. Of course, as stated by teachers (see section 7.3), all parents are informed about the Finnish educational system, laws and regulations, Wilma, etc. during general information sessions in the first months after their arrival in Finland, but how informative and effective those sessions actually are varies:

“But for someone who don't know about education system, they are not in educational field, it is difficult. The connection between home and school should be more and they should inform the parents what is going on school and how they can encourage children for the education of children.” (Mrs. Pezeshk, Parent)

In consequence, even though almost all parents claim that they like the Finnish educational system and are happy about their children’s studies and outcome, they have the feeling that they are not involved in their children’s education. Therefore, they would prefer a closer connection between school and home, as well as the support and guidance of teachers in helping their children in their learning process:

“They haven’t said anything. They just say they’re satisfied with him and he’s good at his studies, he’s well behaved, he behaves well at school. They just asked and said these but regarding how to help him at home, they didn’t say anything. They don’t say because we also don’t know the language, that’s why they don’t tell us how to help him.”
“Interviewer: “Are there any other skills that you would like your child to be taught but hasn’t yet happened?”

Mrs. Golesorkhi: “No, everything goes really well, beyond the expectations.”

Interviewer: “How do you see the school-home collaboration, are you involved?”

Mrs. Golesorkhi: “Not really. They don’t involve parents at all. I don’t really know, but they don’t count on families at all and it is just child-oriented. There are many events in school and they just inform and ask for permission, but we’re not part of it at all. I don’t know, maybe this is the right way.”” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

This perceived lack of information and interaction between schools and home seems sometimes also, at least partly, to give rise to parents’ fear of not being loved and appreciated by their children. To be more precise, many parents thought that in this, for them, new educational environment in Finland, their children would lose their respect towards their parents and as a result care less about the value of family, since their parents’ role as (co)educators of their children seems to have become obsolete:

“They [teachers] are really patient, they spend a lot of time with her, they truly do. I mean, when I say one word, then I tell her to write and then she writes for two times, ten times, or a page, and after, if I see that she has written it wrong again, I will shout at her that “why don’t you understand, are you stupid, don’t you understand?” This is the level of my patience. But these [teachers]: no, they say it again that “no, you should write it in this way.” Just shout, she will understand faster [laughs]. Well, we learnt in this way, we grew up in this way. For example, we grew up with beating and for example we learnt by shouting. But they, they even tell us we do not have the right, you are not allowed to hit the children at all, not at all, even though we are the parents. Even I say, I even have a complaint, the only thing [complaint] that I have from here is that they shouldn’t say it in front of the kids that the parent are not allowed to hit you, or you are allowed to when you reach a certain age. I only have this problem that, for example, they bring them up in a way that they would want to be independent and be in charge/power when they are 18. The only problem I have, it’s not about the language, not about, the only problem is that the children will become impudent. I mean, they will honor family less in the way that they say you shout a lot, you put a lot of pressure on us or something like that. We always say, for example, “mama, mama”, we say “mama” for ten times for no reason and then you shout “what? Shut up”, but they [teachers] say “what do you want to say?”, or they just walk closer and ask “what did you say? I didn’t hear you, say it once more.” Then I say “why do they do this?” They make children be imprudent. Once, their teacher came for a visit and all children jumped to hug, if a mom or dad arrives, the child is not like that and doesn’t jump, they see both every day, and there is no difference, they meet/see the parents and also them [teachers], but I think they are more important.”” (Mrs. Golzar, Parent)

However, as one outcome of this perceived crucial role and in most cases positive experiences with teachers in the Finnish educational system, only few parents had struggled with and actually experienced teachers’ injustice, which represents nevertheless one important factor
for parents feeling welcome at school and gaining the impression that their children are educated in a beneficial educational system:

“He [my son] says, the teacher is not good with me. Whoever teases me, and I tell the teacher, she says ‘no, you yourself are impolite’. And I asked him, she didn’t say anything else, he [my son] said ‘no’.” (Mr. Malik, Parent)

More concise challenging experiences with teaching strategies in Finland refer to most parents’ impression of their children having hardly any homework to be done at home, but instead a lot of free time, which they use for playing with computers and iPads provided by the school and which represent, arguably, an unnecessary extra, as stated by Mrs. Golesorkhi (see section 7.2.1) and by Mrs. Pezeshk (Parent):

“For sure, the methods that they [teachers] have used are good, but, I, if, if they ask them [children] to do more homework, is better. They have lots of free time at home, they don’t study some of the lessons, especially boys. But if they have a bit more, it’s better for their language.”

Regarding the learning of the Finnish language, and in line with most of the children’s opinion, parents usually also agreed that reading and pronunciation represent the biggest challenges in Finnish for their children, as expressed by Mrs. Golesorkhi (Parent):

“Reading is a challenge for her because she thinks her Finnish is not good enough to be able to answer the questions in the school”, and Mrs. Saab (Parent): “similar words like ‘tuli’, ‘tuoli’, ‘tuulī’, ‘kolme’, ‘kylme’, ‘kylmā’ sound the same but different.”

In addition to these challenges in home-school-interactions and teaching strategies, parents also expressed their worries about too much pressure on their children. That is to say, most parents had mixed feelings, since, on the one hand, they were happy and proud of their children being motivated, eager to learn and wanting to be integrated and make friends, while on the other hand they were worried about the thus resulting pressure on their child.

“She wanted to fit in Finnish groups fast and it was a motivation for her to learn fast. Other kids would exclude her and it was a reason she wanted to learn fast. And on our first months of arrival, she would stay up until 1/1:30 a.m. and she would memorize words. They used to give her some paper. For example, one day was all about animal names, colors, and she would stay up until late and she used to say, “I have to memorize”.” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

Consequently, recognizing in particular the importance of their children making friends in order to adapt to their new social environment, most parents’ concerns were also related to how they could support their children in making friends, and their desperation about having the feeling of being unable to influence anything in this regard. Unlike their children depicting the making friends in most cases as a process, for parents it seems to constitute a
bigger problem and they were thus expecting teachers to intervene and to help their children in making friends faster:

“...At the beginning, she couldn’t communicate with Finnish children. They seemed not to welcome strangers to their groups and they wouldn’t accept her in their groups, and she was lonely and she didn’t want to go to school until little by little about a month she tried to fit herself in, but they were difficult to accept her. I do not know much about the Finnish culture, but in my idea, teachers should teach other children to accept strangers in their groups. Because when I talked to the teachers here that other kids do not accept Aram, teachers told me not to interfere and she [the teacher] wouldn’t interfere as well. I tried at first to back her up and give her self-confidence and tell her to be patient, but maybe another mom doesn’t know how or isn’t able to give confidence to her child and then the child will dislike school when no one in school would talk or play with her/him or does not have friends.” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

In consequence, overall, parents’ positive experiences and challenges seem thus, at first glance, similar to those of their children, and they expressed a few solutions as well.

7.2.3 Solutions Offered by Parents

In this regard, however, unlike their children who would provide me with ideas on how to teach Finnish, parents often had self-doubts which prevented them from making any suggestions, resulting in them often simply expressing their trust in teachers’ work and their satisfaction with their children’s language learning outcome. As in most cases they considered themselves as not knowledgeable and experienced enough to comment on this issue, parents suggestions were mainly limited to extra Finnish classes, extracurricular activities, being exposed to the Finnish language as much as possible, and only two moms mentioned emotional support as one effective solution for their children’s language learning:

“...Aram goes to Finnish classes. They need to sit in pairs in class and teachers pair her up with Finnish pupils. Sometimes when she doesn’t know something, she says it in English but the teacher asks her to say it in Finnish as well. Her teacher recommended joining the theater because they can play together and talk and she can learn Finnish better. Since we have come, Aram is a member of Joensuu’s theatre group and everybody knows her.” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

“...In first year, I bring it TV, because I think, I, the children like cartoon, cartoon film. I put the cartoon in the Finnish language, and Finnish channel, TV channel. I see what time that start, I tell the children “Stay, watch the TV, watch the cartoon”, because I think that's good because they are need to hear. The second things, I, I told them to go to here to the center because some people, Finnish people girls and the boys come here to play with children and they are learning the children, and that's good, that's very good idea from SPR [Finnish red cross].” (Mr. El-Amin, Parent)
“I did everything I could. From the first year that we arrived, I registered her in a kind of club where she used to go from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. after school, and she played with kids. And of course it helped with her Finnish and I could only just like now help and support her emotionally.” (Mrs. Golesorkhi, Parent)

“We would like to support but we can’t. For example we are only able to make a peaceful environment or prepare any facilities that are needed for her studies […]. Well, we are not educated, we can only encourage her with prizes. Other than that, there is nothing else we can do.” (Mr. Golzar, Parent)

Overall, except for their suggested solutions, parents’ and children’s assessment of their positive experiences and encountered challenges in the Finnish educational system differ thus at first glance only slightly, in contrast to the in the following outlined experiences, challenges and solutions mentioned by teachers.

7.3 Teachers’ Perspective on Parent-Teacher Collaboration

7.3.1 Teachers’ Positive Experiences

In general, all teachers clearly expressed their interest in learning about cultures and languages, and felt happy about having the opportunity to work with immigrant children as well as to see how fast children improved in their learning of the Finnish language. As a result, they found working with immigrant children exciting since usually each working day differed and would not be repetitive:

“Pupils are eager and happy to learn and they are willing to learn and yeah, through learning development is so fast that you see how they succeed. And the kids are sincere, and the parents often are thankful for, for teachings of kids.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

“I'm interested in cultures and meeting new cultures and languages, it's interesting.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

“The days are never the same and also because I've been doing this work for 23 years, the cultures are never the same, so I have to learn. I'm always, I'm, I as a teacher, I mean a learning process every day; have to learn a new culture, a new language. Then also when we get the students are very different, some come with their whole family, they come like their fathers come, their mothers come to study in Finland, they come with their whole family from a peaceful situation now I have a new situation of learning how to deal with children coming from war situations or for who have been being refugee way for two or three five years. So it is always a learning process. I always learn something new that's what the best about it. But yeah, it's never the same.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

“I liked that the classrooms are multicultural, that’s something from my childhood I liked. I feel boring if I had just Finnish, Finnish, Finnish kids who have same religion and so on.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)
Due to the often varying cultural as well as educational background of their pupils, teachers noted as well that immigrant children whose educational background focused on memorization are, naturally, good at learning by heart, which turned out to be highly useful for the learning of the Finnish language:

“They benefit which I see in children coming from the Islamic countries is that very, many, not all, but most of them have this learning by heart ability because you have to learn the Quran in the Madrase [school] and so on. So it's very strong. So it's been trained very. So many of them are able to learn by heart things and they, and they remember them very well. They don't always understand what they've learnt, but they know they can produce, so it gives sort of you know, it gives them, how to say, they're more brave to use “‘ok, I’ve learnt this: ‘paljonko maksaa, paljonko maksaa, paljonko maksaa, se maksaa, se maksaa’; ok, I know it.” And they’re using it when from a different kind of school background. But a Russian kid will be going like: “‘maksaa’ - verbi typpi yksi; what, what is it?” Yeah, so that's one difference, for example, in learning: which background is causing which is sort of helping in learning. Yeah. And then the… then I get this side that you learn by heart, but you don't understand what you’ve written, which comes in for example in doing tests.” (Ms. Hännin, Teacher)

In addition to that, all teachers seem to continue being motivated in working with pupils from different cultural and educational backgrounds, since they have the feeling that their work is appreciated by parents and that they are loved by their pupils:

“In my experience, I can say that immigrant parents trust the system a lot and the teachers a lot, and they are thankful for what we do. (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

“For me it's positive because I can see that these kids, they are, immigrants kids, they are mostly, they are more active and they are more, they are not shy to make connections with the teachers. They are quick to say positive things. And I remember one boy, when he asked me teacher: “why you Finnish kids, they don't say ‘thanks’, ‘thank you’ after lessons?” And I like: “ooh”, surprised, and then I understand that really every day, every lesson, after my lesson he say to me like: “thank you, teacher, bye bye.” And it was so positive, even though in the lessons maybe I need to say for him like: “concentrate on!”,” don't speak!” Like also I'm not always kind […]. When the kids, they, we see like in the morning, when they come to school, the refugee kids usually come near the windows of teachers’ room, and they just wave the hands: “hey!”, “bye!” Like they want to say: “morning!”, “good morning!” to every teachers. So this is something so positive, and I feel that school, they have get more positive energy for that also because of immigrant kids.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

“I would suppose they have enough trust. […] when we meet, we do talk about different subjects, and they ask and, and I tell them how the school works and, and how or what are our systems. And it seems that, it seems that they do trust the Finnish schooling system. I have to be careful what you say that way. I mean that we haven't had, I haven't had a parent who hasn't felt that the school is doing,
trying to do the best for their child, but maybe they talk something else behind our backs if you don't know. At school, yeah, I think they mostly do, they trust.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

In addition to that, with regard to specific positive experiences with immigrant children’s language learning progress, teachers as well as children (see section 7.1.1) mentioned teaching through games, learning by doing and integrating immigrant children in other school subjects such as handicraft sessions and sports as soon as possible as highly beneficial.

In line with the assumption of educational scientists that “Whatever the subject, all knowledge-building in the school context involves working with language” (Beacco et al., 2010, p. 5), teachers noted that the learning of the Finnish language does not just happen in language classes, but that children learn Finnish during all classes independent of the school subject since they are surrounded by the Finnish language everywhere:

“ So right away they [teachers] integrate the kids in the Finnish groups, but they start from arts and gymnastics and handicraft and music, pretty much, pretty quickly, they also integrated for example English, English classes. “ (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

Furthermore, with regard to Finnish language acquisition and in line with Piaget’s theory, as “Experiences that do not encourage the children to make meaning from their learning will quickly be forgotten” (e.Teaching, 2016, p.1), authentic learning represents another positive experience of teachers as well as parents. In general, authentic learning is defined as a way of learning in which pupils can apply knowledge that has been taught at school in real life contexts and situations, allowing them by that to connect what they learnt with “real” world problems and issues: “learning experiences should mirror the complexities and ambiguities of real life” (e.Teaching, 2016, p.1). Accordingly, teachers such as Ms. Valli made positive experiences with integrating authentic learning into their teaching strategies for immigrant children in the form of “outdoors” activities:

“ And we try to leave the school building as much as possible. We go to the center or the libraries or the situations that they have to use language themselves. And when the children learn that it's fun to go, they also ask their parents to go with them.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

7.3.2 Teachers' Challenging Experiences

However, similar to children and parents, teachers did not only make positive experiences in the teaching of Finnish as a second language to immigrant children, but also encountered several challenges. In this regard, the differing cultural and linguistic background of their pupils, which makes teaching highly interesting for teachers, might also result in cases of
\textbf{racism} at school that teachers need to face and deal with, since, naturally, the feeling of being unwanted and rejected affects a child’s behavior as well as academic outcome at school:

“One time, one kid came to school and he have candies: “My birthday!” And then he say, [laughs], say that “I will give this candies to Finnish kids just.” And teacher say “Okay, you have birthday, but if you just give it to Finnish kids, what's the point?” “My father say that, my father say that I can, that I can give the Finnish kids.” So the teacher say “Okay, if you want to give any candies, you give to all or you don't give to anyone, like we don't have this kind of…” So that it was young kid, and he didn't maybe feel anything when he say it like that, because it's just parents they said so something so weird.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

As cases of racism can not only occur among children in the class room but might also be perceptible among teachers, school staff, Finnish and immigrant parents alike, as also mentioned in the previous quote of Ms. Tervo, teachers are required to elaborate strategies to deal with expressions of racism from various sides:

“Challenges are with relationship in the school between kids, Finnish kids and asylum kids, seeker kids, and how they find friends. How we, are we ready to see racism and are we ready to stop this? Or just we accept something because in Finland you have right to say what you want? So I had, I had some little. I had challenges also with students and teachers in the autumn when I said for them I feel like this is racism. But some teachers, they feel that: “okay, but they have right to say what they feel if they say ‘I don't want immigrants to Finland’.” So, it's my opinion, is okay you can speak that in your family, with your family, and at home, but don't say direct to the kids who are here.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

“There is some Finnish families who didn't have so open feelings to the immigrants. And this is so little village in the east Finland, like so close community, and they didn’t have a lot of immigrants there. And suddenly they have a lot, and everything is because of scare, and that's only because of feelings, and something new. And then there is some kids to get the feelings from the home. And I feel that it happens like that there is some 5-10 kids who have very negative opinions, attitude, and they try to share these attitudes. And then there is some kids who are open-mind but maybe shy, and teachers they didn't have time or feelings or understood to help these kids who are open-mind to be friends and to be, to work against the racism and to against discrimination and to try to make connections with these kids. Like, how you can make friends with kids who don't speak the same language. We don't, we need just football, nothing else. But then I feel that these kids who had negative attitude, so they feel like someone attack to our school: “why you are here?” “why you came here?” “you don't know the rules of football, you don't know the rules of our games!” And nobody wanted to explain them, like new kids, like if we have some games that they like to do outside in the break time. And this Finnish kids, they have many years they have played same game and they have rules [roles] and they know everything. And then this immigrant kids, they come to check or what is that and they try to jump in. They need to be strong, they need to be proud - no proud, brave I mean - to come in. And then suddenly they make some mistake and then this negative kids they open mouth and they say: “hey, why you don't, why you are, why you are liar!” Or something like that. And then other feel: “okay, they are liars.” Because
kids, they need help from the adults, like: “hey, keep, keep calm!” Now, you can see the situation is that some of us they don't know the rules. How we can teach, we cannot teach the rules in Finnish language if someone don't know, but we can show. But like step by step. There is a lot of misunderstandings. And then the immigrant kids who are new, they feel, they start to feel: “hey, everybody hate us!” And then someone do something by mistake, they become, they have so much angry inside, and they kick or hit. So there was a lot of fights in last year, but in this year not so much anymore because the kids, they learn Finnish. They know also they can, how they can say if they are angry, what they can say, what like, what they feel, so then they don't need to use hands or kicks [...]. Just it's forbidden now, don't make like this kind of situation that Finland against Iraq, there is no any point and idea. So sometimes I went with them to play, and I feel that in this time they didn't fight a lot.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

Central to cases of racism are, according to teachers, **lacking information on migration** in general as well as in Finland in particular, only slowly growing **research on adequate teaching strategies** for multicultural classes, as well as the **ethical dilemma** for teachers between tolerance towards cultural particularities on the one hand and respect of Finnish law on the other hand. That is to say, from teachers’ point of view, challenges arise from lacking knowledge, (cultural) tolerance, strategies to tackle these as well as lacking communication among pupils, teachers and parents likewise:

“Immigration is a phenomenon, is pretty new in Finland, so not all teachers have encountered immigrant pupils. But luckily our curriculum is now going towards more linguistically aware teaching.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

“I think one of the biggest difficulties is that, or might be that we want to be very tolerant in our culture, and we want to tolerate. But we don't know where to put the wall in a way that: “okay, we tolerate certain things like in religious belief and cultural beliefs, but where our law comes in, for example, we do not.” We, and we don't need to tolerate, where we can ask people that you have to start to integrate: you have to start to, start to change your way of behaving when you live here. So I think that is one, one big problem that we have to learn, to put the borders in a way in ending in children. I'm not talking about country borders, I'm talking about issues with people: then you say “okay, that, this is acceptable; this isn't.” But there are also things where we have to sort of also change. It's not just a one way to change or so. We as Finnish people have to learn to moderate our way of thinking. Sometimes, when people are very tolerant at the same time, the tolerance go… how would I explain it… For example a young person, my students who, who are in their teens and they're looking around and seeing: “What is there? A whole culture. And what is the culture from, from Finnish culture?” They see the culture at school corridors, and of course those which are the most drastically different, they see that. And, and then, sometimes children are, all young people are starting to sort of misbehave at home, and they say: “no, this is the Finnish culture!” And, and things like that. And to learn how to support families, the parents in this situation and how to support the children also to have a safe, safe way to grow up so that they find the balance between their own culture and this new culture, and understanding that whatever, what they see on
the school corridors or stuff like that, it's not accepted. Also by, for example boys and girls, a girl and boy kissing, the Finnish culture doesn't accept it either. But these young people are breaking the rules, but they think that the Finnish culture is so free that you can do whatever you want. And, yeah, to find… So, sometimes we Finnish people, and I think it's the same in any other culture, that if a young person embraces our culture very strongly, likes our music, dresses like our, our, of young people, behaves like of our young people, we salute, we sort of salute or find it very good and we support the young person in that; not understanding at the same time that the cost for that young person is very big, that by sort of, by very strongly supporting a young person to misbehave according to their own culture, we are breaking up his or her family ties. And what we are causing, we are causing that young person to be alone because our culture is a very individual culture, so there will not be a group of family taking her or him here, and that young person is losing their home. […] What I'm trying to say, that we in our culture, we have to discuss, also how much we in our school culture, how much we accept or how much we support a different culture of a young person. Do we go to the French way that you're not allowed to wear a scarf in school? You're not allowed to. But at the same time, are we already ready, to pray, to pay the price that we are not allowed to wear a cross on our necks if you have because we are Christians. So what do we want actually in this multicultural system? I think that's one thing which is in school is quite difficult or sort of a process, which hasn't even begun.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

In addition to that, not only their pupils varying cultural background might cause challenges for teachers, but immigrant children’s often differing educational backgrounds as well. As some might have been excellent pupils in their previous schools in their countries of origin while others might never have gone to school before moving to Finland, this variety of educational backgrounds of their pupils makes it quite challenging for teachers to find the most appropriate teaching strategy:

“ They come from very diverse educational backgrounds, and some come in the middle of the war, and maybe some fifth grader has never been to school before, and those kinds of challenges there are.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

“ All the students, whatever language background they have, they are, the better they know their own mother language… it's straight away you can sort of see in in the way they learn the new language and how they learn the vocabulary and how they are able to sort of connect things, everything is not new, the concepts are not new. You will talk about mathematics: they understand straight away if you say plus and minus, and I think they don't, you don't have to teach them […] [in contrast to] children who have just very strong spoken language ability but not the written or they don't have a school background […]. The better they know their own language, the better they are in school in their own country, the better they read their own language and write it, the quicker they learn Finnish, a new language. And then, if […] Finnish is their first language, which they're learning to read and write, then it's a very slow process for most of them.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)
Independent of their pupils’ educational background, however, motivation represents, from the teachers’ point of view, one additional key factor in the acquisition of Finnish as a second language of immigrant children, which needs to be fostered in the respectively applied teaching strategies. In this regard, to find the right way to motivate children might be challenging, since their motivation to learn the target language might differ: while some might feel the urgent need of becoming integrated and therefore to learn Finnish fast, others might consider Finnish as useless for their future and thus block learning it:

“Dari speakers, which I’ve had as students all come from very varies different backgrounds, one was […] from a family where the whole family was in Finland for a certain time, they were only here for two years because of the parents studying here in the university so their, their way of behaving and dealing with things were very different, because they were returning back to home to Iran. So they knew exactly when they're going back, and they were just here for a certain period and they're going back so the students focused very strongly for the mathematics and physics and chemistry, but they were not interested in learning the language that much. They studied English but not Finnish, so they did have this sort of difference. But they were very good in school, very strong, very strong school abilities. Then I have for some of these are refugee background, and some have come with their family and have got a permanent visa in Finland already, but some are still waiting, they are still in the process, so the situation is not so stable.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

In addition to motivation as one key factor in the process of Finnish language acquisition, and in line with parents’ and children’s perspective (see sections 7.1 and 7.2), teachers considered Finnish pronunciation as in particular problematic as well:

“Vowels [ä-u-ö- ei-oi-ai] and diphthongs and pronunciations is difficult.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

However, all of them were far from finding it a huge, unsolvable problem, asserting instead that time is simply needed to master in it. Interestingly enough, in the case of writing and reading in Finnish, teachers usually did not notice any difficulties of their pupils (between 7 to 13 years old) in writing and reading in the right direction, that is to say from left to right, instead of from right to left as in the case of Arabic, Dari and Farsi. The only issue in this regard mentioned by teachers referred to slight challenges for Arabic speaking pupils in Mathematics due to a differing way of counting in Arabic:

“So the direction, for example, affects more the technical side of writing, not so much learning. For example, if you write N, you have to start it from the right direction, so you can easily fluently continue writing and you don't have to change. And in math, there is some challenges in Arabic: they say, for example, 22 in a different way than in Finnish. So that affects their mathematical thinking also. At first, you can require them to calculate in their head, then on paper, it's better.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)
The varying educational backgrounds, levels of motivation and challenges in pronouncing, writing, reading and calculating in Finnish of their pupils affect, naturally, the everyday working hour and workload of teachers as well. As it is usually considered one key advantage of the Finnish educational system that each child has its individual learning plan and that there is not one single prescription for all pupils, it is often difficult and time-consuming for teachers to pay attention to all this unique requirements of their pupils when elaborating their learning plan and appropriate teaching strategies. Since it also requires teachers in getting familiar with their pupils’ backgrounds, teachers also seem to struggle with keeping the balance between getting involved with children and parents, and keeping a professional distance:

“ There are a lot of challenges every day, and the fact that we have kids from 7, from age 7 to 13 and each of them have their individual learning plan, and the situations change all the time, and you have to kind of have them on your glimpse and planning takes time also. And you especially have to take into account their families and their religion and, what else did you say, and the culture. I always think about the whole family when they move here in Finland and how they feel, not only the child, but also the situation for the whole family, and I think about if they have hobbies or any kind of network here. And as a teacher, you have to kind of keep the limits your… Sometimes parents ask a lot of things from them [the teachers] and for example once some family asked if she [the teacher] could look after her [the parent], their child, children when they [parents] are somewhere else for two weeks, so you have to keep the limits of your professionalism.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

“ You have to work for finding the ways to cooperate. And sometimes they [parents] think that, well, school is school and home is home. […] We also have to take into consideration, consideration that they have, they don't necessarily have resources themselves, they may be tired, the parents, and we have to acknowledge this, they don't have resources [e.g. interpreters] to cooperate the way.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

As implied by this quoted statement of Ms. Valli, teachers often consider the language barrier as one of the biggest challenges for involving parents in the education of their children in general. Thus, similar to parents themselves, teachers seem to tend to neglect the importance of parents’ supervision by believing parents could not contribute significantly to their child’s education due to their inability of speaking Finnish. This assumption, however, is met by all children interviewed in this research considering their parents’ involvement in their education as crucial and unchallenged even though their parents might not speak Finnish very well or not at all:
“We try to involve the families. It can be hard because they don't speak, speak the language. It can be hard to help with homework, for example, but at least they would supervise that they do their homework. And, for example, they have these cards that they put the homework here, and then the parent has to sign that they have listened to, for example, if it's a reading, reading homework, it doesn't matter if they don't understand but just that they listen to and supervise that they do them. It's also important for the parents that they have the feeling that they can be involved, and the roles of the child and the parents don't get upside down.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

Moreover, unlike parents finding parent-teacher meetings insufficient, several teachers considered the so-far existing and realized parent-teacher meetings as efficient and of not requiring extra meeting sessions, since all children seem to progress under the given teaching and parental involvement strategies, whereas others found it not enough but believed lack of time as one of the main reasons why more meetings were impossible at the moment:

“I should do it more often, it's not enough, it's not. It's just a question of time and energy, yeah, it's just a question of that and putting an extra effort. Yeah, it's been a bit difficult getting the parents motivated to come to school.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

“I think this is enough, and we have decided about this ourselves, so there is nobody saying how many times we should meet. But I think the official ones is enough and all, always, if we have something, we contact them [parents] and we talk, and we always say to the parents that “if you have anything, please contact us”. And there is a low threshold to being a contact.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

“And about twice a year, we have this family, family evenings when they come here and there the general information for them. And that is not that much because we are in contact all the time, many times a week. These ones that we mentioned there were the official, but of course we call the parents and we see them at school and we talk with them here. And they have booklet that they write things, what's happening at school, if they have any trips and so on. The parents can also write in the booklet if they have something to say to them [teachers].” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

“I feel that the teachers, they are so tired, just doing the basic teaching, so they don't have time or they don't have mood to sit down and speak together what, how we can help this multicultural coming to our school good way.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

In this regard, also the lack of human resources seems to make the parent-teacher meetings rather exhausting for all parties concerned:

“Evening of parents, so they came there all and we give them information about the school. And it was together with Finnish and immigrant parents, and of course we need a translator a lot, I need to translate to Arab and Dari, and because we didn't have Dari translator, so he translated to someone to Turkish and he translated to Dari, so it takes a lot of time. And the Finnish parents, they became
frustrated about that, like “why we have to wait always, ta da da dadaaa…”, and just like to complain after that, so I feel they […] just feel like “hey, I lose my time here because we need to translate so much!” So, of course, school could make more about with this, like to explain to the Finnish parents also that so important that all the parents here they understand what's the system. But later we made other meeting with in camp just. And we explained just for, just to the immigrant parents about some main points of school and homework, or if somebody do something bad what we need to do then. It was better.’’ (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

7.3.3 Solutions Offered by Teachers

Similar to children, all teachers suggested various solutions for these perceived challenges in the Finnish language acquisition of immigrant children at school and at home. Thus, all teachers highlighted the importance of a **safe environment at home** for children to study efficiently, as well as of the preservation of the children’s respective **mother tongue** and its effects on learning Finnish. Consequently, teachers recommended parents to work on and improve their children’s language skills in their mother tongue at home:

“ What I would want the parents to take care of is to have a safe home environment and to keep up, keep their own mother language, and in a way to be proud of their own culture and their own language because this builds a strong identity. And when the child has a strong sort of, has a healthy identity, it always helps integrating because you don't have to be, you don't have to fear everything around you. You can be yourself and that that goes straight with learning. So I think the parental role is more to be parents, and if they have skills too, they can help with mathematical stuff like that, depending on their own schooling background. Then we have illiterate parents who can't read or write. Well, they can help by trying to speak their own language well and trying to teach their children what they know about their own culture. So yeah, it's process it's also process with Finnish parents, so the same thing.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

“A child learn a time faster, if the parents take very good care of their own mother language. So the more of the child reads in their own language, the more the child speaks good, good of their own mother language, the better the child handles everything in their own language, the better they do it in Finnish. So, of course, it's not always possible that they don't… you don't have children's books in all the languages, you don't have TV programs, you don't have internet programs that a child can sort of up keep their own language, but, but it goes hand in hand. So the better the skills in their own language, the better the skills in the new language or the faster the child learns. Of course there are children who have to learn Finnish without having skills in their own language, but if it's possible, it always goes hand in hand.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

Moreover, in line with children’s and parents’ opinions, teachers recommended children being **exposed to the Finnish language** as much as possible and **teaching through games** as well. Regarding the particularities of children’s amount and character of homework and
learning efforts, however, opinions differed, which could be due to the lack of communication between parents and teachers, with the result that parents were often not convinced of the learning efforts and tasks of their children for the Finnish language acquisition:

“Teaching has been visual and sensory based, so we teach, yeah, we use a lot of sensories. And they [teachers] have been learning sign language, so they use signs and also pictures. Through songs you learn Finnish very well. Usually, we play a lot and there are a lot of games. And, for example, in the beginning of the week, we have a few new words that we play with for the whole week. But we also want to courage them to visit libraries and watch kids TV shows and to have hobbies [...] They [teachers] try to give homework that they have to use language a lot, for example taking videos or taking pictures of the places that you use Finnish. But sometimes parents don't think that it's homework.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

“We try to leave the school building as much as possible: we go to the center or the libraries or the situations that they have to use language themselves. One thing that sometimes parents wish more homework, and specially Russian parents, they expect more homework, and we say that it is more important, it’s important that, interaction is more important. Not always that we give tasks or homework, what interaction like going to the library and talking to a librarian more than giving assignments.” (Ms. Valli, Teacher)

“We have own language parental meetings now and then. Not often enough, but we do have like for Arabic speaking parents, we have their own, we invite them to school and we discuss topics and, and for example we just tell them about the school system. For example, there is homework every day the whole in the Finnish. The Finnish system, we have a very weird homework system which is reading. You don't have to do some exercise, but you just have to read a certain chapter for example. And, and then we encourage the parents to, for example, just make sure that the children read to them even though they can't don't understand the language and they don't know what's happening, but they make sure that kids, their kid sit, sits down and they sit beside their child and they say “okay, read to me what you learn in school today, for example, or show me what you've done today at school”. So the child knows that the parents are checking out. We have the Wilma system, but it's very difficult for the parents in the beginning. Wilma is an internet way or internet system where the teachers sort of put information but how the day has been. But for many immigrant families, it's first two years, it's almost absolutely impossible to use it after the parents have been started Finnish language courses. Then slowly, slowly start to use.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

There seems, however, to be consent, that **scaffolding** is necessary for teaching and learning the Finnish language efficiently, and teachers support children in reaching a higher level of skill acquisition:

“ I try to make sure that we are discussing things that they all need or will need in the future or are studying right now. So that is my aim, trying to find that the common factor of what we are, what is necessary. And the lesson might be Finnish as a second language lesson.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)
“[...] because if they are with others in big group and you give them history book, four pages in one lesson or something like that, they cannot get it the point. So I, we had decided that “okay, I teach them some vocabulary.” Yeah, and also like I, even though we have the books, but I see and they also feel that they cannot get anything if they read the book, so all the lessons I write, we write together one page or something like the main points about the text, and then we speak about. And I draw and sometimes I show the videos, but it's difficult also because of the language, so sometimes I act what happened there.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

In addition to scaffolding, teaching strategies should, from a teacher’s point of view, also provide for a **peaceful study environment** with a **fixed daily routine at school** in which children have the feeling of being listened to in order to enable children to concentrate on learning and thus to study efficiently:

“ Somebody who has been learning very well may suddenly stop learning and completely and enough. Just seeing news on TV might be the reason why a child stops learning for two or three weeks completely. Yeah, if you see your home bombed, for example, you see something, that child is, you can’t do anything in the class. The child will not be able to concentrate on learning at all. So I haven't got any special strategy, my idea is that a school has to be a safe place. I don't allow misbehaving, I don't allow fighting or shouting or screaming in my class, I demand respect for one another because when you move to a foreign country to another life is chaotic already enough at home, in the mind, so it is one place where everything is the same and doesn’t change is school. They know when they come in the morning, I'll ask what day it is, what is the date and you know start with that, okay, and take out your book and take out a pencil… It's very safe, it's very, there's no surprises [...]. And I know she'll ask me the words then and so it's just getting, try to create a place where the children feel safe and a place where they, I hope they feel that they are heard because parents many times don't hear their children in this kind of situation, they don't have the energy to hear what the children are saying. So I hope they feel they're heard, somebody hears them what they have to say, and also that they know that they can make mistakes that in my, in my class, you can make mistakes. Even the teacher makes mistakes, I have to use the rubber, I say “Oops, I wrote that wrongly, let's just…” you know, so you can make mistakes and nobody laughs that you're making mistakes, and, and everybody has to try. Otherwise I don't have any fancy theory. I believe in drill, doing the same practicing in writing, yeah.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

And, evidently, according to teachers as well as parents and children, **patience** represents one cornerstone of such a peaceful study environment and an essential characteristic of a teacher:

“ You need to have passion to explain everything so clear. I mean patience, be calm, like… And I see for example in our school that sometimes we teachers, we don't remember the situation of specialty asylum-seekers, so sometimes the kids, teachers are frustrated like: “Aagh! They don't understand! Why they don't do homework?”” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)
In addition to that, from teachers’ point of view, teaching strategies should focus on integrating children at school as fast as possible, which would assist immigrant children in learning Finnish in an authentic context and in making progress in Finnish more rapidly:

“The children start with me and we evaluate on the first year to see how quickly we can start to put them straight in the Finnish language classes with help or without help. So, the preparatory year is maximum nine months and, and during that time, we sort of evaluate. And the better the background, of course the easier it is to sort of start to integrate the students into Finnish groups. So that's the way, that's the way we separate them. Those who haven't got a school background, it's quite difficult to integrate them into a Finnish class, so we look, we try to find the group where they can integrate, like sports and technical works and handicrafts and stuff like that. But then they do they do the basic mathematics with me, for example, or things like that. Yeah, so depending individually, yeah, we have a sort of individual plan for everyone, we try to figure out what is the best way for the child [...]. You have to get into the Finnish classes because your language will not develop. I understand my students very well, they understand me, but when they go to the class, they don't understand anybody. So in that way it's very necessary that they go out to the class and they learn to hear different kind of Finnish language.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

Central to immigrant children’s integration and thus to their Finnish language acquisition is, evidently, the possibility of making friends. As it can be challenging for some, teachers should, from a teacher’s point of view as well as according to parents (see section 7.2.2), try (more) to find groups into which the immigrant child could fit best and which is open to newcomers:

“It's a time when getting friends is very difficult: it depends on the class we have, classes which are very good, where the students are very open and where they, they’re taking the newcomer. And we have classes which are horrible, that there's some student who cause a little troubles in the class. So we try to choose classes, which are positive when we integrate the students into the groups. That's why I was saying that we, I talked with the teachers and we discuss and we say “ok, which group would be a group to come in?”” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

“For younger children it is easier and for boys. For example, they play football together. For the girls, it's really hard. And even though you [teacher] organize acting clubs or something, they [children] go there once but then they drop out. And you have to work hard. Puberty effects and friendship can be very superficial. Only at school and when you don't want to deepen it, it's hard. The older the child, the more difficult is to make friends and to, also for Finnish people, Finnish students too. It's not about willingness, but maybe they are shy [...]. But sometimes also you can see how well they integrate, and it's wonderful to see how well it goes. Well, the Finnish students are eager and they want to, they are interested. But, for example, if the parents don't know each other, it’s… and language can be one main influencer. We want to support that. And sometimes she [the teacher] has gone and picked up some girls to attend their acting club, but when the support lessens, it necessarily doesn't last. And the, for younger children, we have supported them or encouraged them to attend the club,
the acting club, and also the Arabian speaking assistant is going there.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

In order to provide the basis for immigrant children to integrate as well as eventually to facilitate their making friends, teachers also considered the teaching of ethics and human rights to their pupils in class as essential. However, due to lacking communication between parents and school, parents are often not properly informed about the concise learning content, disagreeing therefore with what is taught to their children (see also section 7.2.2):

“Of course, I tell my students you talk about that your fathers cannot beat you and, and their, and your mums cannot smack, smack you, there's not accepted in Finland according to our laws and, and things like that.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

“If they have religion lessons, so Islam kids, they go there; and Orthodox, they go there; and Lutherans, they go there; and there is some Buddhism and atheist people that go there. And what they are speaking there in the classes, they speak how, what is like about ethics, what is right, what is wrong, what/ how we have to be together, how we have to understand each others. And all of them they are separated in groups. So, of course it's better that they are together and we speak about racism or discrimination or understood about other religions.” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

For preventing these kinds of misunderstanding as well as other issues due to lacking communication between home and school, teachers mentioned family clubs and trip traditions as possible ways to foster parent-school relationships and to provide parents with more teaching-related information:

“I wish we had funding, that it was compulsory to have like this parent, this parent school, which they have in that, which we have here in Joensuu. I wish we had sort of this funding around all of Finland, because I think it's a very good way of dealing with parents and helping the parents out, because it's a multilingual group and they have… It's been going for I think three years already, so they have the topics quite, they know what they have to deal with, and there's time to individually deal with, with the parents, for example. Using of Wilma, for example, that in the school system we don't have time for that and don't have energy.” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher)

“We have a family club on Mondays, and there, parents can get to know each other. But also together, they can also go around Joensuu to see places and visit places. And there also given, families are also given information about Finnish school system and how to use Wilma, for example. The family club is really important. It has been created just for this. And also the assistant who can speak their language, he or she usually is the mediator between the school and families.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

“We have a new tradition: once a year, we all go, families and teachers together go to Koli, with this class and there is also one preparatory class in Noljakka that
does this. And last Christmas, we had families came here. And there is this, children sang the songs that we have been saying here, and we baked together, families baked at home and they had a potluck here.” (Ms. Mäkelä, Teacher)

In this regard, the non-awareness of the two parents living in Joensuu of these gatherings as well as the negative feeling of one parent about family clubs seems also to underline the necessity to provide more information through strengthened school-home-interactions.

Moreover, in order to enhance the communication between immigrant parents and Finnish parents as well, one of the teachers suggested the organization of more and improved parents-teachers days:

“ I feel that we could make some kind of days that we have immigrant parents and Finnish parents, we have maybe some kind of food day together, we make food or we share the music or something like that. That we do something together and in this day [...] we had many different activities there, in some place we make open fire and we make “pulla” [...]. It was good, but in this day I see, I feel that they didn't have connection together. They maybe do something together, but, or they do something with their own child in the same place, but they don't have any relationship. I feel that. So I feel that we should to do more, more often and also I feel like immigrant parents, they feel themselves a little bit shy, that “okay, I’m coming now here, and who of them are racist and who are not, who of them they like we come, who want that we go back?” So it is so difficult to go and say “hello, who are you? Fine, nice to meet you.”” (Ms. Tervo, Teacher)

Consequently, as outlined in this section 7, immigrant children, their parents and teachers have made numerous positive experiences with parent-teacher collaboration for children’s Finnish language acquisition, but encountered as well several challenges and have ideas on how to solve these. The question is thus raised which lessons can be learnt for parent-teacher collaboration to support the acquisition of the Finnish language by immigrant children in Finland overall?

7.4 Practical Implications for Parent-Teacher Collaboration

7.4.1 What are positive experiences with parent-teacher collaboration that should be maintained?

As it can be seen in section 7 as well as in the Summary, teachers, parents and children have made so far numerous positive experiences with parent-teacher collaboration, which it seems thus recommendable to maintain in parent-teacher collaboration to support Finnish language learning among, Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children in Finland in the future.
Pursuant to the theories on children’s learning process as outlined in section 4, these positive experiences comprise, at first, the learning through games, learning by doing and authentic learning in line with Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory. Similarly, following Vygotsky’s ZPD theory, scaffolding was highlighted by both teachers and children as highly efficient, and regarding Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, teachers and children marked as positive the learning with peers in pair and group work as well as the experience of kind and highly supportive teachers. Consequently, in line with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, teachers and children confirmed an overall positive and encouraging learning environment and educational system, due, inter alia, also to teachers’ interest in different cultures and languages, and parents’ feeling of being respected and welcomed in this educational setting. Closely connected to that is parents’ gratitude towards teachers, resulting also in teacher’s feeling of being appreciated by parents and loved by their pupils, in addition to parents’ contentment to their children’s educational success and children’s feeling of being encouraged by rewards as well as by learning with the help of their favorite activities, pursuant to Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s Parental Involvement Model. In line with Ellis’s Interaction Hypothesis, these favorite activities include children learning in a fun way based on their interests and with the help of ICT, interactive activities with their peers and being provided with a sufficient amount of effective homework. As a result, parents confirm their children’s motivation to go to school every morning, while teachers are delighted of experiencing diverse and thus more exciting and non-repetitive school days, of having pupils with good memorization skills in their classes, and confirm their positive experiences with individual learning plans tailored to the specific needs of every pupil. This positive learning environment also comprises the absence of physical punishment in line with Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory, as well as the fulfillment of children’s basic needs such as warm food and a clean and safe environment for learning efficiently. In this regard, pursuant to Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement, parents also mentioned their attempts to provide a peaceful home environment for their children which was confirmed by children referring to a safe and quiet atmosphere at home. In addition to that, following Freud’s theory on psychosexual stages and Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory, positive experiences such as a smooth integration, making friends, acting independently, having trust in adults and seeing them as role models were mentioned as well.
As a result, almost all teachers, parents and children were delighted of these positive aspects of parent-teacher collaboration, and emphasized that these should definitely be pursued in the future as well as supplemented by solutions to the challenges they had been facing in this regard.

7.4.2 Which solutions to current challenges should be incorporated into parent-teacher collaboration in the future?

As it can be seen in light of the in the previous section stated positive experiences, overall all research participants were pleased and satisfied with the progress in children’s Finnish language acquisition. In consequence, challenges mentioned with regard to language acquisition were usually considered as simply part of the overall language learning process and therefore not as unsolvable: “How somebody learns the language is a mystery to me. It is a mystery because learning languages is not, it’s not a smooth sort of curve at all, there are ups and downs” (Ms. Hänninen, Teacher). This general perspective on language acquisition in the Finnish educational systems seems thus to be in line with findings in educational sciences such as of Chumak-Horbatsch (2012, p. 25) that “second language learning is not a simple soaking-up process. Being bilingual or multilingual needs two supportive and loving environment that is to say school and home with notable exposure of each language“, as well as of language learning representing a lifelong learning process with the result that social and contextual practices influence language use and behavior according to Vygotsky’s theory. That is to say, challenges in the language learning process can not only be solved through appropriate education and teaching strategies alone, but need to be supplemented by solutions from various sides to tackle problems that affect directly or indirectly immigrant children’s Finnish language acquisition and occur in their social environment in general. Consequently, even though most of parent-teacher collaboration adopted in the Finnish educational system seem so far to successfully take care of immigrant children’s cognitive abilities, as confirmed by the multitude of positive experiences, parent-teacher collaboration for Finnish language acquisition need to pay attention to these general social influences as well.

In this regard, one main challenge which seems to affect several aspects of children’s learning process, is the often claimed lack of sufficient and effective parent-teacher meetings. Even though some teachers considered the number of parent-teacher meeting sessions as sufficient in addition to parent’s possibility to contact them whenever needed, parents claimed that information provided during and outside of the meetings sessions were not enough and that
they were still unaware of some basic school rules. They stated that they had been given some general information about the Finnish educational system in the first year after their arrival in Finland, that they were merely asked to attend one meeting at the end of the preparatory year as well as sometimes at the end of each school year, and not more, and claiming that they are even uninformed about the beginning of their child’s next grade. Consequently, the effectiveness and number of these meeting sessions and how much immigrant parents are capable of understanding the first time they are acquainted with the Finnish educational system should, in my opinion, be taken into consideration. That is to say, for a parent who has studied him/herself within the Finnish educational system, one meeting per year might be enough to be informed about the child’s progress since the parent provides already of certain background information, in contrast to immigrant parents for whom everything they hear is mostly new. Similarly, in contrast to Finnish-native speakers, in most cases immigrant parents are also unable to use the Finnish-language-based system of Wilma which usually serves as information platform between parents and teachers.

In addition to that, as immigration is a huge step in both parents and children’s lives for asylum seeker, refugees or immigrant students alike, immigrant parents and their children need more support and help:

“Now, here, it’s the case that parents themselves need support. I can only behave well with Farid, [but] I can’t support Farid at all.” (Mr. Malik, Parent).

As a result, this lack of information contributes to parents’ feeling of being an outsider, of being no longer involved in their children’s life and study progress. As parents also have the feeling that their children know Finnish better than they themselves, it increases their impression that there is nothing they can help their child with, affecting thus negatively their perception of being capable of getting involved in parent-teacher collaboration to support their child at all. This is also confirmed by the fact that although parental involvement was evident by all children stating that they felt their parents’ involvement in their education and in their lives, most of the parents had very low self-esteem and little understanding on how they could help in their child’s learning process, resulting in parents fear of losing the close connection to their child and, at the end, their child’s love because of them, parents, being useless in their lives. More meeting sessions and information to familiarize parents with their child’s educational situation and needs would thus be essential in many regards. In addition to that, teachers can play an important role in boosting immigrant parents’ self-confidence by illustrating that even without Finnish language knowledge there are ways for
them to help their child in its learning process, for instance by supervising homework, providing for a safe and quiet study environment at home, helping in other school subjects such as mathematics, spending time with their children to foster their language skills in their mother tongue, etc. Interestingly, even though these aspects were mentioned by teachers, they might have been neglected since parents did not know about them, eventually also because for teachers this possibilities to support seemed too obvious to be explained in detail or repeated to parents several times. In this regard, it might be helpful to keep in mind that when dealing with children, as educators we usually repeat over and over again, but sometimes act differently when working with adults although adults are in need of repetitions for learning almost as much as children. However, in this case, this might be impeded by the language barrier and lack of resources in the form of time and interpreters or translators, as also stated by teachers.

Strategies to tackle this problems need thus to be found, such as, for instance, in the form of fostering closer cooperation between schools and universities to establish better communication channels, or eventually to create opportunities for interested university students to volunteer or work part-time as translators and interpreters, or to create a network of students and parents with suitable language skills who could help out in case of need, etc. A positive example of such a close and fruitful cooperation between schools and universities to strengthen parent-teacher collaboration in the educational system represents research conducted by the Miami University. Studying communication barriers between teachers and parents and possible solutions to remove them in order to improve school-home communication, the research findings of the Miami University (MiamiUniversity, 2010) could, in my opinion, be partly also applied for a better understanding and for the development of possible solutions for the here analyzed case of the challenging communication between teachers/schools and immigrant parents in Finland. Hence, regarding the mentioned feeling of parents of having nothing to offer, which is defined as the “Not-Valued”-Barrier, it is highlighted that learning about parents’ interests and abilities as well as considering their unique experiences and talents as beneficial for school will contribute to them feeling more welcome, since “everyone has something to offer.” (MiamiUniversity, 2010). In this respect, I also believe that knowing parents’ talents and abilities will help teachers in providing parents with guidelines on how to help their children in learning at home as well.
Moreover, since, as already mentioned, most of the interviewed parents are according to Han’s Immigrant Involvement Theory ‘cultural learners’ who would like to participate in school activities but are in need of translators or interpreters, providing them with resources will help them to integrate and to contribute faster, and by that to overcome the so-called “Don't-Know-How-to-Contribute”-Barrier (MiamiUniversity, 2010). For that, talent surveys could help figuring out the talents of parents and ways to apply them beneficially, instead of waiting for parents to offer help by themselves (MiamiUniversity, 2010). Similarly, since, as already mentioned, most parents do not understand the Finnish educational system and ways to be involved at schools or teaching strategies in general in Finland, it results in some parents disagreeing with the use of technologies such as ICT at school based on their own educational backgrounds and understanding of education, and contributes to the “Not-Understanding-the-System”-Barrier in parent-teacher communication. In addition to the already suggested solution of more parent-teacher meetings to decrease worries of parents and to discuss critical aspects and educational benefits, parents’ understanding of the Finnish educational system could also be deepened by offering handbooks in different languages comprising the rules, procedures, answers to typical questions in the Finnish educational system (MiamiUniversity, 2010). These handbooks could also comprise contact information of people who are able to answer further questions if necessary (MiamiUniversity, 2010; Ozmen et al., 2016, p. 31). By that, the language barrier in providing parents with information on the key points of the educational system could be avoided, as well as parents’ impression of remaining outsiders. However, as there are also parents who are illiterate and therefore able to read neither such a handbook independent of its language nor educational newsletters and brochures that are sent home in general (“Low-Literacy-Level”-Barrier), face-to-face meeting sessions, telephone calls or video messages in different languages could be offered to those parents in addition (MiamiUniversity, 2010).

In addition to that, parent-teacher collaboration seem to be hampered by boundaries of cultural identities as well, since differing cultural and educational backgrounds entailing, eventually, diverging worldviews can cause conflicts and misunderstandings. As explained in section 7, for instance, the absence of physical punishment at school was appreciated by all parents. Nevertheless, some parents did not like the fact that teachers told their pupils that even parents should not hit their children. Likewise, although, on one hand, parents were delighted to see the newly learned independence of their children, they did, on the other hand, not like the idea of their children being too independent and the sole decision-makers of their
life when getting older. These misunderstanding can, of course, roughly speaking, be traced back to differing educational and cultural backgrounds, which can be best solved by parents and teachers discussing them jointly. However, these differing cultural backgrounds, in turn, can also provide the ground for bordering practices, i.e. processes of “othering” based on perceived cultural differences between groups of people. This happened, for instance, in the case of the in section 7 mentioned distinctions made between “Finnish pupils” to whom candies were offered, and “non-Finnish pupils” who should not get candies according to the opinion of one pupil. That is to say, these cultural distinctions can also contribute to acts of bullying, as well as to the in section 7 mentioned fear and rejection of immigrants due to their perceived “otherness” in Finnish society. To counter-balance these tendencies, some of the interviewed teachers suggested discussing these topics openly with their pupils in class. However, since schools are not the only place where children acquire knowledge and make lasting experiences, as educators we need, in my opinion, to go one step further than that by offering information on topics such as cultural diversity, interculturalism, tolerance, the roots of racism, past and current migration in Finland, etc. not only to children but to parents and teachers as well to prevent labeling, stereotyping, nationalism, bullying and cases of racism as far as possible. This could be done, for instance, in the form of informative teaching sessions or workshops open to children, parents and teachers as well as to the public, as suggested by Ozmen et al. (2016, p. 31).

Closely linked to these aspects of cultural identities are in particular parents’ and teachers’ concerns on immigrant children partly forgetting their language skills in their mother tongue since they usually do not have the possibility of taking classes in their mother tongue at schools, with the exception of eventually offered classes in Arabic. Consequently, during my interviews with Dari and Farsi speaking immigrant children, I noticed their struggle in finding equivalent words in Dari/Farsi for certain words they knew in Finnish, in particular those related to their school life such as school subjects, languages and countries, which they were usually encouraged to say in Finnish: “If you do well, not only the teacher will get happy, but also gives you ‘tarra’ [stickers]” (Farid, Child, Age: 8). Both Finnish and children’s respective mother tongue are thus used simultaneously to facilitate communication. At first glance, this aspect seems therefore not to represent a challenge to parent-teachers strategies to support the Finnish language acquisition of immigrant children, as the usage of both languages (if possible) simply serves as a tool to improve the communication between teachers and children and eventually among the pupils themselves. At second glance,
however, it shows that difficulties might arise in case that a person to whom children are talking does not know both languages, resulting eventually in the child’s frustration on being unable to communicate properly in at least one of the two languages it knows. Likewise, it might contribute to parents’ impression that they can no longer properly communicate with their own child due to it combining words of its mother tongue with Finnish. Moreover, this eventual, gradual inability of children to express themselves properly in their mother tongue might also have direct impacts on children’s Finnish language acquisition, since “the two languages of a bilingual child work together and there is a strong connection between them” (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012, p. 27). As the two languages “operate through the same central processing or cognitive areas of the brain” (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012, p. 27), they interact and reinforce each other by sharing and transferring certain skills acquired in one language to the language skills in the other language (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012, p. 27). Consequently, immigrant children who are competent in their native language might learn Finnish easier compared to children who are not, since they can, for instance, directly link a word or a grammatical rule they know in their mother tongue to the meaning of a Finnish word or to the Finnish grammar they are learning. Therefore, as mentioned by Ms. Hänninen (Joensuu, Apr. 2018) “the better they know their own language, the better they are in school in their own country, the better they read their own language and write it, the quicker they learn Finnish.” The experience that some immigrant children are partly forgetting their language skills in their mother tongue in the years of their education in Finland, can thus negatively affect their progress in learning Finnish as well. To prevent this, one of the most obvious solutions would be to offer more language classes in different languages and especially in those spoken by respectively many immigrant children at school: as I did not notice any Finnish words used by Arabic-speaking children while talking to them, it could be considered as one indicator that their Arabic language classes at school helped them to preserve their language skills in their mother tongue. While Dari- and Farsi-speaking children for whom classes in Dari/Farsi could not be offered at school were sometimes rather struggling with expressing themselves in Dari/ Farsi. However, it is often impossible for schools to offer language classes in many different languages due to lacking financial and human resources. For that reason, another solution, which was also mentioned by some teachers and parents, could be that parents practice their mother tongue with their children at home. By contributing thus to the preservation of their children’s language skills in their mother tongue and to their learning of the Finnish language (Opetushallitus, 2018), parents could also (re-)gain the impression of being involved in their children’s education in Finland as well. Also in this case, however, efficient communication
channels between parents and teachers are required to inform parents about this opportunities and specific strategies to contribute to their children’s Finnish language acquisition.

In addition to that, also children’s different migratory backgrounds can affect their learning progress in general as well as their Finnish language acquisition in particular in different ways. In this regard, teachers and parents mentioned, for instance, immigrant children’s fear of losing their parents, of getting deported, having to return to their previous school abroad, as well as them missing their loved ones back in their country of origin, which has, naturally, a huge impact on their studies and emotional stability. In addition to offering children to talk with them about their worries, teachers argued that fixed daily school routines in which the child feels safe and protected can contribute to the child’s emotional stability and general well-being under these stressful outer conditions.

This unique situation and specific needs of every immigrant child, in turn, have to be taken into consideration in the drawing-up of individual learning plans for every pupil as well. In this regard, teachers’ efforts in designing individual learning plans for their pupils can clearly be considered as a positive and favorable endeavor which is appreciated by parents and children likewise. Thus, even though the preparation of these plans requires a lot of time, their value and effectiveness for children’s learning progress and development seems undeniable.

Moreover, these individual learning plans highlight that the Finnish educational system incorporates aspects of equity as well as of equality to achieve the overall goal of meeting every pupil’s unique needs as far as possible. Equality, in this regard, means that people receive the same treatment independent of their individual needs, whereas equity entails that each person is given what s/he needs to be successful depending on her/his individual needs (Caldwell, Shapiro and Gross, 2007, p. 16; Moskal and North, 2017, pp. 105-106). In the field of education, equity aims at the boosting of social unity, cohesion and trust through fairness by taking into consideration every individual’s personal and social circumstances, as well as through inclusion since a minimum of basic education is provided for all (OECD, 2008, p. 2).

In this regard, however, some of the parents have argued that even though the so far incorporated aspects of equity might have been sufficient for meeting the needs of pupils in more homogenous classes, higher levels of equity would be required to meet the needs of immigrant children:

“Let’s imagine that my leg is broken and you are in a perfect health. Then someone comes and wants to help both of us equally to walk. Another person wonders about that and says [to the first person]: “Hey, THIS guy’s leg is
broken!” And the first person replies: “No, I don’t differentiate between people, I treat everyone equally!” It’s ridiculous. Of course from my point of view it’s ridiculous. So I’m just saying there should be more understanding. When you know about someone’s past and who, for example, wasn’t in a good condition back then, then this way of treating everyone equally - I don’t agree with it, I don’t believe in it.” (Mr. Malik, Parent)

That is to say, according to Mr. Malik (Parent), the needs of immigrant children diverge highly due to their differing migratory, educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, requiring therefore more individual teaching strategies to support them in their learning process than is needed by non-immigrant pupils. However, no specific supplementary measures to increase the level of equity in the Finnish educational system have been mentioned by parents, teachers or children. What is more, it is also questionable whether Finnish schools provide of sufficient additional human and financial resources to incorporate more individual and by that more time-consuming measures tailored to the specific needs of every individual immigrant child. Therefore, it might be helpful to raise parents’ awareness of already existing measures to meet their children’s individual needs by providing them with detailed information on the strategies and goals of equity in the Finnish educational system. Based on that, opportunities and strategies could be discussed jointly by parents and teachers exchanging information on immigrant children’s individual needs, present strategies of schools to meet those, as well as on additional possibilities.

Consequently, overall, closer relationships and communication channels between school, teachers and parents seem to be required in the Finnish educational system to foster parent-teacher collaboration for supporting immigrant children in their Finnish language acquisition, since it must be possible to negotiate and inform parents, teachers and children likewise on central issues. However, evidently, all this cannot be done by teachers alone. It also needs the support of Finland’s board of education in providing teachers with appropriate, efficient and sufficient teaching material and resources as well as information on migration. Thus, according to the statements of teachers, there are, for instance, not yet many educational materials available to teach Finnish as a second language compared to information on teaching English, since immigration is often considered as a new phenomenon in Finland. In addition to that, it seems evident that many immigrant parents have high expectations on themselves regarding their parental involvement and consider the language barrier as a huge obstacle to their involvement in their children’s education. Therefore, they need to be reminded that at first glance very simple and basic things such as encouraging their children, providing of a safe home environment, supervising homework, being active at school,
practicing the mother tongue of their children, etc. have noticeable impacts on children’s development and educational improvement. Consequently, they need to believe in themselves and see themselves as role models for their children, as which they are usually already seen by their children.
9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Reflective Summary

The multitude of positive experiences and offered solutions to improve the Finnish language acquisition of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children that were analyzed in this research highlights the central role of parent-teacher collaboration in children’s process of learning Finnish. As children are in need of support from both sides, that is to say at home and at school, the collaboration between parents and teachers to support children can accelerate significantly their learning of the Finnish language. Consequently, assessing the different components that are mounting up to the overall applied parent-teacher collaboration is essential for being able to adapt these educational strategies to the constantly changing outer social conditions and challenges in order to foster immigrant children’s success in learning Finnish.

In this regard, as highlighted by the analyzed experiences made by Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children, their parents and teachers, teachers at Finnish primary schools are currently struggling to adapt their so-far successful parent-teacher collaboration to the increasing number of pupils with varying cultural and educational backgrounds in their classes as a result of the in the last few years in general growing number of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants arriving in Finland. In consequence, at the example of Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking immigrant children, this research attempted to point out the current state as well as difficulties encountered by parent-teacher collaboration to support the Finnish language acquisition of immigrant children, which can eventually be applied to parent-teacher collaboration for immigrant children in general in Finland.

Based on the overall research question of how parent-teacher collaboration can support the acquisition of Finnish as a second language by Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking children with immigration background after their first preparatory year in Finland, this research comes to the conclusion that:

1. Children, parents and teachers have made many positive experiences with different aspects of current parent-teacher collaboration, which should thus be pursued in the future;
2. Children, parents and teachers encountered several challenges related to current parent-teacher collaboration, for which possible solutions should be introduced to supplement the so-far existing parent-teacher collaboration;
At first, parents, teachers and children alike are usually delighted by the effectiveness of the present strategies to foster children’s language learning process, which they ascribe to specific positive aspects of the parent-teacher collaboration. This refers in particular to teachers’ efforts in applying new teaching methods based on the Finnish curriculum for basic education such as teaching through games, authentic teaching, interactive teaching, scaffolding, the use of ICT, encouraging children through rewards, fairness and a no-punishment-strategy, as well as by elaborating individual learning plans tailored as far as possible to the specific needs of every pupil (see also sections 7.1.1, 7.2.1 and 7.3.1). As parents, teachers and children are thus usually glad about children’s overall achievements in their acquisition of Finnish which they attribute to parent-teacher collaboration, these beneficial aspects of the currently applied parent-teacher collaboration should be preserved.

In order to further improve and guarantee the efficiency of the applied parent-teacher collaboration to support immigrant children in their Finnish language acquisition, also in light of the very likely growing number of pupils with varying cultural backgrounds in the future, solutions need to be found and integrated into the present parent-teacher collaboration to overcome current difficulties as well. In this regard, for instance, parents clearly expressed their desire to be involved in their children’s education, while teachers underlined their need of parents to help them in supporting their children in their education. As a result, additional measures need to be taken to guide and inform parents about their possibilities to get involved into their children’s education despite the often existing language barrier. A higher number of efficient parent-teacher meeting sessions and workshops could be useful to inform parents on how to get involved, as well as providing extra information on the Finnish educational system in the form of brochures, and the creation of closer communication channels between teachers and parents in general to guarantee their information exchange. In addition to that, it could be advisable to organize events and workshops for children, parents and teachers related to issues such as interculturalism, racism and bullying, and to constantly draw children’s awareness to their currently safe social environment at home and at school, as also outlined in detail in section 7.4.2.

9.2 Research Strengths and Limitations

According to Niemi and Nevgi (2014, p. 133), teacher researchers who consider themselves
as knowledge creators learn different ways to improve their work, reflect and gain feedback through research studies. As a teacher researcher, this research was a rich and fruitful experience for me. Not only I grew academically but also personally which led to gaining a holistic understanding of the topic as well as being a better teacher. Furthermore, as claimed by adult participants (parents and teachers), I believe this research was enriching and gratifying for them as well, since it gave them the feeling that their voices were heard and not neglected. However, there are limitations in every scientific research. Perhaps the major limitation lies within my chosen methodological approach. In line with the key criteria of scientific research as highlighted by Churton and Brown (2010), my research findings could be considered as highly valid on one hand and quite low in reliability, generalization, representativeness and being affected by personal opinions on the other hand. Despite the fact that establishing close and trustful relationships with participants allows for more ethically correct research, it might also have increased the risk of getting involved deeply. Due to the limitation of my research participants, my research might be considered as low in representativeness even though I tried gathering narratives by including immigrant families originally from three different countries. Overall, I hope I was able to offer one new in-depth insight into parent-teacher collaboration related to Finnish language learning among children with immigration backgrounds.

9.3 Recommendations for Finnish Teachers

Based on the findings presented in previous chapters, I am glad I could achieve the goal of my research. Various positive experiences of both immigrant parents and children express their great satisfaction and gratitude towards Finnish teachers as well as Finnish educational system. The key role of parents in children’s academic progress is undeniable and teachers stand in the core of enhancing parental involvement. Immigrant parents are in need of significant and effective guidance and support in order to be confident enough to help their children in their school life.

Based on the findings of this research, I designed an infographic brochure comprising positive experiences of immigrant parents and children in Finnish schools, Finnish teachers’ positive experiences in working with immigrant children, challenging experiences of immigrant parents and children in Finnish schools, Finnish teachers’ challenging experiences in working with immigrant children, and some recommendations for Finnish teachers to boost parent-teacher collaboration (see appendix 14-15).
9.4 Recommendations for Further Research

As teachers and parents usually pointed out that most of the encountered challenges in parent-teacher collaboration arise out the varying cultural and educational backgrounds of pupils in one class, which will very likely continue to be the case or even increase in the future, they are well aware of the need to conduct further research to define (more) suitable teaching strategies in this regard. Consequently, as this present research focuses on immigrant children between 7 and 12 years old, its findings should, for instance, be supplemented by future research on how immigrant children’s cognitive, social emotional and language skills develop in the course of their education in order to assess the efficiency of parent-teacher collaboration in the Finnish educational system in the long run. Similarly, it could be supplemented by findings of future research on immigrant children other than Arabic-, Dari- and Farsi-speaking ones, and by research focusing in particular on the efficiency of parent-teacher collaboration depending on the specific migratory background of children. In this regard, based on the emotional reactions of some of my interview partners (see also section 6.5), I noticed that their specific migratory status in the form of being asylum seeker, refugee, or migrant with residence and working permit affects, of course, the emotional stability of parents as well as children and by that children’s ability to learn, too. What is more, it has an impact on teacher’s involvement with a child’s education as well, since, consciously or subconsciously, s/he will rather apply long-term learning strategies when feeling sure that due to the child’s parents’ migratory status the chances are high of it continuing to live in Finland, in contrast to when being convinced of its imminent return to its country of origin. As an additional focus on the impacts of differing migratory backgrounds of immigrant children and their parents would, however, have gone beyond the scope of this research, it will hopefully be subject to future research.
REFERENCES


## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Findings in Detail

- Positive experiences, challenges and solutions in regard to Finnish Language Acquisition mentioned by immigrant children and parents and their Finnish teachers in Finnish schools
- Source: own representation based on the theoretical framework outlined in section 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Positive Experiences</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory</td>
<td>Suitable activities and resources provided by adults</td>
<td>Teachers/children: games, interactive activities, cartoons, story-making</td>
<td>Teachers/children: teaching through games</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Parents: TV, extra classes, cartoons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Children are able to solve hands-on problems logically; learning by doing (see also Ellis)</td>
<td>Teachers/parents/children: learning Finnish through handcraft, doing sports</td>
<td>Children: Learning by doing, extensive reading of bilingual books</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning by experiencing</td>
<td>Teachers/parents: Learning through authentic experiences (e.g. outdoor excursions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory</td>
<td>Interaction between adult and child or between peers during problem-solving activities</td>
<td>Teachers: pair work, group work</td>
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<td>Children: interacting with peers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scaffolding (simplifying tasks into smaller, manageable ones)</td>
<td>Parents/children: kinder and more supportive teachers, learning with peers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Teachers/parents/children: easy explanations</td>
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<td>Teachers: scaffolding</td>
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<td>Children: body language, splitting words into syllables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory</td>
<td>Interaction between family, school or classroom, group or community</td>
<td>Teachers: interest in learning about cultures and languages</td>
<td>Parents: teacher’s injustice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Events happening in the child’s setting</td>
<td>Parents: feeling welcomed</td>
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<td>(e.g. parents’ workplace, the media)</td>
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<td>Teachers: disturbing events in home country seen on TV</td>
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<td>Children: fears of getting deported</td>
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<td>Theory</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Positive Experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Social and cultural values, worldviews, law, political and economic systems, customs</td>
<td>Teachers: interest in learning about cultures and languages</td>
<td>Parents: punishment of children</td>
<td>Teachers: teaching ethics and human rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events and transitions in the course of life, (e.g. school, graduation, marriage)</td>
<td>Parents/children: different learning environment and educational system</td>
<td>Children: leaving the loved ones behind</td>
<td>Teachers: fixed daily school routine Children: lower number of pupils in class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Secure learning environment at home</td>
<td>Parents/children: having a peaceful and safe home to study</td>
<td>Parents: lack of information, lack of support and guidance from teachers</td>
<td>Teachers: safe environment at home, taking care of their mother tongue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Two-way communication channels between home and school</td>
<td>Teachers: efficient parent-teacher meetings Parents: introductory parent-teacher meetings</td>
<td>Teachers: language barrier, lack of human resources and time Parents: distant relationship between school and home</td>
<td>Teachers/parents: more teacher-parent meetings</td>
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<td>Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement</td>
<td>Recruitment, organization and training of parents in voluntarily work at school</td>
<td>Teachers: language barrier</td>
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<td>Information and instructions for parents on how to support children at home</td>
<td>Parents: annual individual parent-teacher meetings</td>
<td>Teachers/parents: language barrier Parents: lack of information, support and guidance from teachers</td>
<td>Teachers: parent-teacher days</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Families’ incorporation into schools’ decision making processes</td>
<td>Teachers: language barrier</td>
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<td>Teachers: family clubs and trips, parent-teacher days</td>
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<td>Community activity</td>
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<td>Hoover-Dempsey’s and Sandler’s Parental Involvement Model</td>
<td>Parents’ motivation, perceptions of invitations, life experiences</td>
<td>Parents: not knowledgeable enough to help in child’ education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feeling welcome at school and needed by children</td>
<td>Teachers: feeling appreciated by parents and loved by children Parents: gratitude to</td>
<td>Parents: fear of not being loved and appreciated by children</td>
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<td>Theory</td>
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<td>teachers, feeling welcomed</td>
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<td>Parents’ interests in children’s learning</td>
<td>Parents: happy about the learning outcome and school success</td>
<td>Parents: feeling of not being involved</td>
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<td>Parents’ perception of their knowledge, ability to teach</td>
<td>Children: seeing adults as role models</td>
<td>Parents: not knowledgeable enough to help</td>
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<td>Children’s perception of being encouraged by parents</td>
<td>Children: being encouraged by their favorite food or prizes</td>
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<td>Children’s interests and capabilities</td>
<td>Parents: motivated to go to school</td>
<td>Children: learning through their interests and favorite activities</td>
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<td>Han’s Immigrant Involvement Theory</td>
<td>Cultural Survivors: focus on basic needs</td>
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<td>Cultural Learners: integration in school activities with the help of interpreters and translators</td>
<td>Teacher/parents: meeting sessions with the help of interpreters</td>
<td>Teacher/parents: lack of interpreters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Central role of Cultural Connectors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Leaders as voices of immigrant families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freud’s theory on Psychosexual Stages</td>
<td>Children’s need of feeling socially accepted</td>
<td>Teachers: sometimes smooth integration</td>
<td>Teachers: racism among children and adults</td>
<td>Teachers: integrating children at school, helping in making friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children: making friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher/parents: pressure on children to be integrated and make friends, experiencing racism</td>
<td>Children: making friends, being bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s desire of being independent</td>
<td>Children/parents: learning to act independently from parents and at school</td>
<td>Teachers/parents: conflicting cultural perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: discussing these topics with children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory</td>
<td>Attentive bonding between child and caretaker, belief that others will help in case of crisis</td>
<td>Children: having trust in adults to help, seeing adults as role models</td>
<td>Teachers: patience</td>
<td>Teachers: kind, patient, disciplined, strict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Positive Experiences</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td><strong>Categories</strong></td>
<td><strong>Positive Experiences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td><strong>Solutions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children learning to act independently from parents, trust in their own capabilities</strong></td>
<td>See Freud</td>
<td>See Freud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feeling accepted by peers and social environment</strong></td>
<td>See Freud</td>
<td>See Freud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance between modesty and competence, sense of mastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fundamental needs such as air, food, shelter, clothing</strong></td>
<td>Parents: clean classrooms, warm food, safe environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of safety</td>
<td>Parents/children: absence of physical punishment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: peaceful study environment, fixed daily school routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for love, affection and belongingness</td>
<td>See Freud &amp; Hoover-Dempsey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem, desire for reputation or prestige</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ellis’ IH</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge acquisition through motivation</td>
<td>Parents: children’s motivation to go to school, learning through games and ICT, encouragements</td>
<td>Parents: learning through ICT, spending a lot of time playing</td>
<td>Children: teaching through games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved learning through input which is one step beyond learners’ current level of competence</td>
<td>Teachers: no challenges with writing directions, individual learning plan</td>
<td>Teachers: differing educational background, individual learning plans, ethical dilemma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in a conscious and subconscious way at school and in everyday life</td>
<td>Teachers: not repetitive schools days, good memorization</td>
<td>Teachers: all four skills of language learning (reading, writing, pronunciation/grammar, listening)</td>
<td>Teachers: individual learning plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children: sufficient amount of effective homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Positive Experiences</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli’s View of Socio-Psychological Theory</td>
<td>SL used “interactively” in various contexts and with differing intentions</td>
<td>Children: learning through interactive activities with peers, through their interests and favorite activities</td>
<td>Teachers: lack of teaching strategies and material for immigrant children</td>
<td>Teachers: Children’s exposure to Finnish language Parents: extra Finnish classes, extracurricular activities, exposure to Finnish language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: List of Interviewed Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Language of the Interview</th>
<th>Place of the Interview</th>
<th>Date of the Interview</th>
<th>Duration of the Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hänninen</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>13.04.2018</td>
<td>01:06:20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Tervo</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>05.05.2018</td>
<td>1:51:18 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Valli</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>English (with interpreter)</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
<td>01:05:57 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Mäkelä</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>English (with interpreter)</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
<td>01:05:57 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: List of Interviewed Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Child’s Pseudonym</th>
<th>Mother’s Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Language of the Interview</th>
<th>Place of the Interview</th>
<th>Date of the Interview</th>
<th>Duration of the Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mrs. &amp; Mr. Aryanpour</td>
<td>Arya</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>15.04.2018</td>
<td>00:46:06 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mrs. Golesorkhi</td>
<td>Aram</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>21.11.2017</td>
<td>00:24:15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mrs. Pezeshk</td>
<td>Mani</td>
<td>Farsi/English</td>
<td>Skype Interview/Tampere</td>
<td>04.03.2018</td>
<td>00:57:58 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mrs. &amp; Mr. Golzar</td>
<td>Roya</td>
<td>Dari/Farsi</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>05.04.2018</td>
<td>01:02:54 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mr. Malik</td>
<td>Farid</td>
<td>Dari/Farsi</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>05.04.2018</td>
<td>01:38:38 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mrs. &amp; Mr. Samim</td>
<td>Nura &amp; Khalil</td>
<td>Dari/Farsi</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
<td>00:57:07 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mrs. Amjad</td>
<td>Najwa</td>
<td>Arabic (with interpreter)</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>10.04.2018</td>
<td>01:11:22 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mr. El-Amin</td>
<td>Rihanna &amp; Rafiq</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>05.04.2018</td>
<td>00:39:37 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mrs. Saab</td>
<td>Lila</td>
<td>Arabic (with interpreter)</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>05.04.2018</td>
<td>01:01:31 hours</td>
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### Appendix 4: List of Interviewed Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudo -nym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age/ Grade</th>
<th>Parents’ Pseudonym</th>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Language of the Interview</th>
<th>Place of the Interview</th>
<th>Date of the Interview</th>
<th>Duration of the Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Aram</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10/ 3rd</td>
<td>Mrs. Golesorkhi</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>25.04.2018</td>
<td>00:13:56 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Arya</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7/1st</td>
<td>Mrs. &amp; Mr. Aryanpour</td>
<td>Kurmanji / Farsi</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>15.04.2018</td>
<td>00:20:02 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Mani</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12/6th</td>
<td>Mrs. Pezeshk</td>
<td>Kurmanji / Farsi</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>Skype Interview/ Tampere</td>
<td>15.04.2018</td>
<td>00:28:52 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Farid</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8/1st</td>
<td>Mr. Malik</td>
<td>Dari</td>
<td>Dari/Farsi</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
<td>00:33:51 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Nura</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11/4th</td>
<td>Mr. Samim</td>
<td>Dari</td>
<td>Dari/Farsi</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
<td>00:19:54 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Khalil</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9/2nd</td>
<td>Mr. Samim</td>
<td>Dari</td>
<td>Dari/Farsi</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
<td>00:19:54 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Roya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9/3rd</td>
<td>Mrs. &amp; Mr. Golzar</td>
<td>Dari</td>
<td>Dari/Farsi</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>13.04.2018</td>
<td>00:23:09 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Lila</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10/2nd</td>
<td>Mrs. Saab</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English (with interpreter)</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
<td>00:33:21 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Najwa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12/6th</td>
<td>Mrs. Amjad</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English (with interpreter)</td>
<td>Joensuu</td>
<td>28.04.2018</td>
<td>00:37:02 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Ri- hanna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13/6th</td>
<td>Mr. El- Amin</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
<td>00:29:49 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Rafiq</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12/4th</td>
<td>Mr. El- Amin</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English (with interpreter)</td>
<td>Kitee</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
<td>00:26:43 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Parents’ Invitation Letter in English

Dear Parents,

I am a student at University of Eastern Finland and my master’s thesis is related to early language education in Finland among immigrant elementary pupils but from teachers’ and parents’ perspective.

It is important to nurture children’s communication skills so that they are capable of expressing themselves confidently in their everyday life; that is, language and communication are closely linked. Therefore, the aim of my research is to find out the possible challenges of Finnish language learning among immigrant children whose mother tongue is Farsi, Dari, and Arabic and to see how parents and teachers can support the acquisition of Finnish as a second language.

I would like to collect data about your experiences, views, opinions and suggestions concerning your child/children’s language learning at schools in the form of individual face-to-face interviews in Finland.

Your help in my data collection is truly appreciated. All collected narratives and data will be used confidentially, anonymously, and for research purposes only. If you are interested to participate, or you have any further questions regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me: (farzank@student.uef.fi) or inform your child/children’s teacher in order to agree on time and place for the interview.

Kind regards,

Farzaneh Kamali-Vinne
Hyvät vanhemmat,


Ystävällisin terveisin,

Farzaneh Kamali-Vinne

Appendix 6: Parents’ Invitation Letter in Finnish
Appendix 7: Parents’ Invitation Letter in Farsi

با سلام خدمت والدین عزیز،
من دانشجوی دانشگاه بروکسل ویل‌هال و موضوع پایان‌نامه فوق لیسانس من مرتبط با آموزش زبان به دانش‌آموزان مهاجر مقطع ابتدایی در کلی‌های سونالاند و دیگر کلی‌های زبان و معلمین است. به‌طور کلی، بهبود و تقویت مهارت‌های ارتباطی کودکان نقلی به سزایی در عملکرد مستقبل آنها در برخوردار ارتباط با دیگران در زندگی روزمره‌ی دارد و می‌تواند نقشی بسزایی در زبانی رابطه بسیار نزدیکی با هم دارند. هدف این پژوهش تحقیقی بررسی چالش‌هایی احتمالی موجود و همچنین بررسی نتایج والدین و معلمین در بانگگردی زبان فنلندی در میان کودکانی است که زبان مادری آنها دری، فارسی و یا عربی است.

به منظور جمع‌آوری اطلاعات دیگر، با کمک میل تامین دارم به تجربیات، نظرات و پیشنهادات شما در رابطه با پدیده زبان کودکانی در مدارس فنلند، بصورت حضوری یا وسایل ارتباطی بالقوه. کمک شما در پیش‌بینی این تحقیق بسیار ارزشمند است. تمام اطلاعات جمع‌آوری شده بصورت ناشناخته و محروم خواهد بود و فقط به منظور اهداف تحقیقی به کار برده خواهد شد. در صورت تمایل به همکاری و یا هر گونه سوال مربوط به تحقیق می‌توانید به تلفن یا ایمیل (farzank@student.uef.fi) تماس بگیرید و یا از طریق ملایم فیزیکی نامه‌گذاریتان با سید فراوان.

ارادتمند,
فرزانه کمالی وین
أعزائي أولياء الأمور،

انا طالبة ماجستير في جامعة شرق فنلندا ورسالتي عن التعليم الأساسي في فنلندا للتلاميذ المهاجرين من منظور المعلمين وأولياء الأمور.

من المهم تنمية مهارات التواصل عند الأطفال حتى تتعزز لفهمهم في أنفسهم في المواقف اليومية. ومن المعروف أن اللغة وال التواصل هما وجهان لعملة واحدة، لذلك فإن هدف من البحث هو إيجاد الصعوبات المحتملة التي تواجه التلاميذ المهاجرين في تعلم اللغة الفنلندية.

بصلى يخص التلاميذ الذين لغتهم الأم هي الفارسية أو الدارية أو العربية. كما أثمر على وجه الخصوص بمساهمة كيفية توجيه ودعم أولياء الأمور والمعلمين للتلاميذ في تعلم اللغة الفنلندية كلغة ثانية.

احتاج لجمع بعض البيانات لتحري عن خبرات وتجارب، جهات نظرة، آراء ومقترحات تخص تجربة أطفالكم في تعلم اللغة الفنلندية.

وأثمر على مريق من خلال مقابلات شخصية في فنلندا.

مساعدتهم في بحثي تعليمي الكثير. كما أنني سلم التفاعل بخصوصية وسرية تامة لكل البيانات وسيتم استخدامها فقط لأغراض البحث.

إذا كنت مهتما بالمشاركة أو لديك أي استفسارات عن هذا البحث من فضلك لا تتردد في التواصل مع عبر بريدي الإلكتروني (farzank@student.uef.fi).

تحياتي،

فرزانة كمال وين
Appendix 9: Teachers’ Interview Questions

Dear Teachers,

Here are some potential interview questions relating to topics that are interesting for me to inquire into. If you would like to you can go through the questions before the interview in order to get a feeling about the character of the interview questions. Thank you very much in advance for your time and help.

1. How long have you been teaching? What subjects do you teach? How long have you been working with immigrant children?

2. Could you please share your experiences regarding your classes with immigrant children? According to your experience, what do you enjoy most about working with immigrant children? Have you had any challenging experiences? How do you deal with them?

3. My focus in my research is on Arabic, Dari or Farsi speaking children, could you please tell me more about your experiences with this group of children concerning learning abilities (in general vs. Finnish language acquisition), cultural or behavioral issues, etc.? Do you find any similarities or differences within this group or have you noticed any similarities or differences compared to other immigrant children, for example Russian speaking children, etc.?

4. Have you made any positive experiences with any specific learning strategies or tools that helped children to improve or fasten the acquisition of Finnish language?

5. Could you please share your experiences regarding parental support in language learning and also adaptation to the new environment?

6. Could you please share your experiences regarding Farsi/Dari and Arabic speaking parents-teacher cooperation in supporting language acquisition especially in learning Finnish?

7. What expectations do you have regarding parental help related to Finnish language acquisition? How important do you think it is?

8. Is there anything that you as a teacher would like to change, add or organize in regard to cooperation between home and school and parents-teachers relationship relating language learning?

9. What hopes and needs do you have for language education in school for immigrant children? If you had the power and opportunity, how would you change children language acquisition at elementary school? Why?
Appendix 10: Parents’ Interview Questions in English

Dear Parents,

Here are some potential interview questions relating to topics that are interesting for me to inquire into. If you would like to you can go through the questions before the interview in order to get a feeling about the character of the interview questions. Thank you very much in advance for your time and help.

1. Did your child go to preparatory school? How was it? Could you please share your experiences (positive / challenging aspects ...)?

2. Could you please share some of your experiences that you made in Finnish schools compared to schools in your home country?

3. Do you think your mother tongue has effects on your child/children’s Finnish language acquisition? How? (For example anything regarding Farsi/Dari/Arabic letters or writing from write to left,...)

4. How effective do you find the preparatory year? Do you think one year is enough for your child to be integrated with native speakers?

5. Have you made any positive experiences with any specific learning strategies or tools that helped to improve or fasten the acquisition of Finnish language?

6. What experiences have you made with teacher support? How supportive do you find the teachers and school system in Finland? What are some ways that the teacher has tried to involve you in your child/children’s education at home? Does the school provide enough information and help for you to know how to be involved in your child/children’s education? (If not, what kinds of things would you like to know more about?)

7. Describe your ideal language teacher in primary school. What do you hope of your own child’s/children’s teacher in primary school? How close is the current situation to your ideal?

8. If you had the power and opportunity, how would you change your child’s/children’s language learning at school? Why? What hopes and needs do you have of language education in school for your own child/children?

9. If you had the power and opportunity, how would you change / add / organize cooperation between home and school / parents and teachers related to your child’s/children’s language learning?
والدین عزیز،

جوانه تماشای دارید قبل از جلسه مصاحبه آشنا مختصری با سوالهای مربوط به یپایان نامه و داشته‌اش باتی‌بود، لطفاً نگاهی به سوالهایی که در زیر آمده بی‌بی‌بی‌بی بیشتر پیش‌بینی از همکاری و وقت شما سپاسگزارم.

۱. لطفاً در مورد سال اول و شرایط مدرس مدرسه فرزندتان توضیح بدهید؟ کدام مدرس‌های آمادگی را گذارده‌اید؟

۲. چه‌گونه درس‌های آمادگی به‌بار داده‌اید تا بتواند در سنین کنونی کار به صورت مستقل کنند؟

۳. کدام مدارس در منطقه فعال‌ترین مدارس می‌باشند?

۴. نتایج انسداد کردن با مدرس‌های کلی ممکن است انتخابات چالش‌هایی باشد.

۵. چه‌گونه در سال‌های آینده می‌توانید نگران شوید؟

۶. چه‌گونه در صورت کمبود درس‌های مرتبط با متون علمی می‌توانید به کمک کننده‌هایشان کمک کنید؟

۷. چگونه در صورت کمبود درس‌های مرتبط با متون علمی می‌توانید به کمک کننده‌هایشان کمک کنید؟

۸. چگونه در صورت کمبود درس‌های مرتبط با متون علمی می‌توانید به کمک کننده‌هایشان کمک کنید؟

۹. چگونه در صورت کمبود درس‌های مرتبط با متون علمی می‌توانید به کمک کننده‌هایشان کمک کنید؟

Appendix 1: Parents’ Interview Questions in Farsi
Appendix 12: Parents’ Interview Questions in Arabic

أسرة المقابلة الشخصية

أعزائي أولياء الأمو،

في ما يلي بعض الأسئلة التي تتعلق بالمقابلة المحتملة المرتبة بالمواضيع التي تهمني للاستفسار عنها. وذلك من أجل تكوين فكرة عن نمط المقابلة قبلها. شكرًا جزيلًا على وقتكم ومساعدتكم.

1. هل ذهب طفلك إلى المدرسة الإعدادية؟ كيف كانت؟ هل يمكنك أن تشارك تجربتك (الجوائز الإيجابية / التحديات...)؟

2. هل يمكنك مشاركة بعض تجاربك التي مررت بها في المدارس الفنلندية ومقارنتها بالمدارس في بلدك؟

3. هل تعتقد أن لغتك الأم لها تأثيرات على اكتساب طفلك / أطفالك لغة الفنلندية؟ (على سبيل المثال أي شيء عن الأحرف الفارسية / الدارية / العربية أو الكتابة من اليمين إلى اليسار...).

4. ما مدى فاعليتك السنة التحضيرية؟ هل تعتقد أن سنة واحدة تكفي لدمج طفلك مع الأطفال الفنلديين؟

5. هل أجريت أي تجارب إيجابية مع أي استراتيجيات أو أدوات تعلم محددة ساعدت على تحسين أو تأمين اكتساب اللغة الفنلندية؟

6. ما هي الخبرات التي قمت بها لدعم المعلم؟ ما مدى دعمك للمدرسين والتنظيم الفردي في فنلندا؟ ما هي بعض الطرق التي حاول المعلم من خلالها إرشدتك في تعليم طفلك/ أطفالك في المنزل؟ هل تقدم المدرسة معلومات كافية تساعد على معرفة كيفية المشاركة في تعليم طفلك / أطفالك؟ (إذا لم يكن الأمر كذلك، ما هي الأشياء التي ترغب في معرفة المزيد عنها)؟

7. صف مدرس لغتك المثالي في المدرسة الابتدائية. لماذا تأمل في مدرسة طفلك الابتدائية؟ ما مدى قريب الوضع الحالي من مطالبة؟

8. إذا كان لديك السلطة والفرصة، كيف يمكنك تغيير طريقة تعلم طفلك / أطفالك اللغة في المدرسة؟ لماذا? ما هي الأمل والاحتياجات التي لديك لتعليم اللغة في المدرسة لطفلك / أطفالك؟

9. إذا كانت لديك السلطة والفرصة، كيف يمكنك تغيير / إضافة / تنظيم التعاون بين المنزل والمدرسة / أولياء الأمور والمعلمين المرتبطة بعلم طفلك / أطفالك للغة؟
Appendix 13: Children’s Interview Questions in English

1. Icebreaking Qs: What is your name? How old are you? What grade are you in? What is your favorite game at home / at school? Which day is your favorite day at school? Why?

2. What do you remember from your school in Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan? What did you like most about it? (friends/ teacher/ what was the school like? /homework) Can you tell me some of the similarities /differences?

3. Do you like going to school in Finland? What do you like most about your school? Is there anything challenging at school? Can you please share some of good memories of school life in Finland with me?

4. Are you learning Finnish now? Do you like your Finnish language classes? What do you like most about learning Finnish? What was the most difficult thing for you in learning Finnish (writing/ speaking/ making friends)? If you don’t know something, how would the teacher help you? What kind of tasks do you have? What do you usually do in your Finnish class? What kind of nice things have you done in your Finnish classes? Were there any memories that you don’t like? Can you tell me?

5. What’s the biggest difference between this year and last year? (for children who are no longer in preparatory year)

6. What was difficult for you when you couldn’t speak Finnish? How would you communicate with other children? (How did you play with other children?) Do you have any memories to tell me?

7. Do you like your Finnish teacher? What do you like most about your Finnish teacher? How does your teacher help you with your Finnish studies at school? Is there something you would like your teacher to do in Finnish classes? Imagine you are a teacher, how would you teach Finnish? Who is the best language teacher in your opinion? Why?

8. How do your parents help you with your Finnish studies at home? Is there something you would like your parents to do at home to help you study better? Imagine you are a father/mother now, how would you help your child to learn Finnish?

9. Is there something more you would like to share with me and add?
Appendix 14: Immigrant Parents’, Children’s, and Teachers’ Positive and Challenging Experiences in a Nutshell

Parent-Teacher Collaboration to Support Finnish Language Acquisition

Positive Experiences of Arabic, Dari and Farsi Speaking Immigrant Parents, their Children and Finnish Teachers in Finnish Schools

- Treatment adults to help if needed
- Sufficient amount of homework
- Kinder and more supportive teachers
- No physical punishment
- Less stressful environment
- Learning through games
- Teaching methods
- Learning to act independently
- Receiving positive feedback

Children

Parents

Teachers

Challenging Experiences of Arabic, Dari and Farsi Speaking Immigrant Parents, their Children and Finnish Teachers in Finnish Schools

- Receptive and productive Finnish language skills
- Making friends
- Fear of deportation
- Missing family and friends back home
- Being bullied

Children

Parents

Teachers

More information, see Kamali-Vinne, F. (2019). “We would like to support, but well, we can’t.” Parent-teacher collaboration to support Finnish language acquisition among Arabic, Dari and Farsi speaking elementary immigrant children based on positive and challenging experiences in Finnish schools, University of Eastern Finland. Master’s Thesis in Education.
Appendix 15: Recommendations for Finnish Teachers on Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Parent-Teacher Collaboration to Support Finnish Language Acquisition

Various positive experiences of both immigrant parents and children express their great satisfaction and gratitude towards Finnish teachers as well as Finnish educational system. The key role of parents in children’s academic progress is undeniable and teachers stand in the core of enhancing parental involvement. Immigrant parents are in need of significant and effective guidance and support in order to be confident enough to help their children in their studies. To accelerate Finnish language acquisition among immigrant children, closer communication channels are required between immigrant parents and Finnish teachers. Here are some practical recommendations for Finnish teachers to involve immigrant parents to the utmost in their children’s Finnish language acquisition.

Practical Recommendations for Finnish Teachers:

- Set up workshops for immigrant parents to teach web interfaces used at schools like Wilma to enhance their involvement in their children’s studies
- Offer parent-teacher meeting sessions regularly for instance on monthly basis to help parents get familiar with Finnish Educational System
- Boost parents’ self confidence by making them feel needed in their children’s Finnish language progress through:
  - supervising children’s homework
  - providing safe and quiet study environment
  - helping their children in other school subjects like math
  - practicing their mother tongue with their children
- Find out about parents’ practical talents and skills to involve them in school life as much as possible
- Prepare handbooks in different languages about most common questions asked to explain information like Finnish Educational System, school life, school rules, study procedures, etc.
- Plan and hold workshops for both Finnish and immigrant parents to talk about interculturalism to prevent stereotyping and nationalism

More information, see Kamali-Vinne, F. (2019). “We would like to support, but well, we can’t.” Parent-teacher collaboration to support Finnish language acquisition among Arabic, Dari and Farsi speaking elementary immigrant children based on positive and challenging experiences in Finnish schools, University of Eastern Finland. Master’s Thesis in Education