

Second Language Education for Immigrant Children in the Netherlands

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Abstract

As the number of immigrants to the Netherlands has grown substantially, providing education for immigrant children has become an important issue. Through a literature study, this thesis attempts to answer the question what the best policy is in providing education for immigrant children in the primary school age – whether these children should enter regular education, or whether they need to learn Dutch through a specialized program such as transitional or immersion education before enrolling in regular classes. Literature consistently shows that specialized programs for language-minority children are most effective in providing these children with education; both to learn Dutch and to learn curriculum content. If possible these programs should be bilingual, as continued development of the children's L1 facilitates second-language learning. Second language education should not just focus on language acquisition, but also on acquiring academic language and literacy skills. Apart from linguistic and cognitive factors, the social context should also be taken into consideration: specialized programs should be integrated within mainstream schools in order to give immigrant children the chance to interact with native peers and help them to fit in. Additionally, teachers should be affirmative of the children's identities. These social factors are beneficial for immigrant children's second-language acquisition and overall academic achievement as well.

Samenvatting

Gezien de substantiële stijging van het aantal immigranten in Nederland, is het onderwijs voor kinderen van immigranten een belangrijk probleem geworden. Door middel van een literatuuronderzoek probeert deze scriptie een antwoord te geven op de vraag wat het beste beleid is voor het geven van onderwijs aan immigrantenkinderen – of deze kinderen in moeten stromen in het reguliere onderwijs, of dat ze eerst Nederlands moeten leren door middel van een gespecialiseerd programma zoals 'transitioneel' onderwijs of immersie-onderwijs voordat ze naar een reguliere klas kunnen gaan. Het onderzoek wijst uit dat gespecialiseerde programma's voor kinderen uit een taalminderheid het meest effectief zijn om deze kinderen van onderwijs te voorzien; zowel om Nederlands te leren als om het schoolcurriculum te leren. Indien mogelijk moet dit onderwijs tweetalig zijn, omdat voortgezette ontwikkeling van de L1 van de kinderen het leren van een tweede taal vergemakkelijkt. Tweede-taalonderwijs moet niet alleen de focus leggen op taalverwerving, maar ook het verwerven van academische taal en leesvaardigheid. Naast taalkundige en cognitieve factoren moet ook rekening gehouden worden met de sociale context: gespecialiseerde programma's zouden geïntegreerd moeten zijn binnen reguliere scholen, om immigrantenkinderen de kans te geven contact te hebben met sprekers van het Nederlands en hen te helpen erbij te horen. Daarnaast moeten leerkrachten de kinderen bevestigen in hun identiteit. Deze sociale factoren zijn van belang voor de tweedetaalverwerving en algemene schoolprestaties van immigrantenkinderen.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Overview of existing programs and research.....	6
2.1 Submersion education.....	6
2.2 Immersion and transitional education	8
2.2.1 The United States.....	9
2.2.2 The Netherlands.....	13
3. Linguistic and cognitive factors	15
3.1 The role of the L1.....	15
3.2 The role of the L2.....	17
3.3 Level of language proficiency	19
4. Social factors	22
4.1 Issues of immigrant and refugee children.....	22
4.2 The role of identity	24
4.2.1 Identity and sociocultural orientation	24
4.2.2 Identity and segregation	26
4.3 Role of the teacher and the learning environment.....	27
5. Discussion and implications	30
5.1 Summary of findings.....	30
5.2 Policy implications	31
6. Conclusion	34
7. References.....	35

1. Introduction

In the past year the number of refugees coming to the Netherlands has grown substantially. According to the IND, the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst, 2016), in 2015 a total of 43.090 people requested asylum in the Netherlands for the first time – which is twice the amount of people who requested asylum in 2014. Additionally, around 13.850 immigrants came to the Netherlands to be reunited with their family in 2015. Of course, not all of these immigrants can be classified as refugees, but many are from war-torn countries: for instance, around 44% of people who were in asylum seeker centres on March 22, 2016 were from Syria (Stichting Vluchtelingenwerk, 2016). It is estimated that around 13.000 of all refugees who came to the Netherlands in 2015 are children (Baars, 2016). These children and other immigrant children should all be able to receive education in the Netherlands. However, a major issue here is that education in the Netherlands is in Dutch, and in order to provide these children with education, they need to learn Dutch as well. Of course, learning the majority language is not only important to receive education; it is also important that these children have the opportunity to succeed in education and overall in society.

There are several ways in which education can be provided for refugee, immigrant and other language-minority children; the three main ones being submersion education, immersion education and transitional education (e.g. Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2005). In submersion education, children simply enter regular mainstream classes, usually the class where they belong according to their age (Glenn & De Jong, 1996). Immersion classes are usually aimed especially at second language learners, but similar to submersion education, only the second language (L2) is used for instruction. In bilingual immersion, the same strategy is used, except there is some support from the children's first language (L1). In transitional education, then, at first mainly the L1 is used for instruction, and the L2 is introduced gradually. The exact content of both immersion and transitional education differs per program. According to Appel (1984), these programs can be based on two models: the pluralistic model and the assimilationist model. In the first model, linguistic pluralism is seen as a good thing and the minority language is just as important as the majority language; therefore the minority language can be used at school, even in later grades. In the assimilationist model, the minority language might be used in the earlier grades, but eventually children have to integrate into the majority culture and speak the majority language only. Often, these beliefs are based on ideological and political ideas rather than on scientific evidence for either of these views, and as a result, the programs and policies used in education for immigrant children are as well (Appel, 1984). However, much research has been done on the effectiveness of several policies and

the characteristics of a successful second language program, and these programs can and should be based on linguistic evidence instead of politics.

In my thesis, I will attempt to answer the question what program is most effective in providing education for immigrant children in the primary school age: should they be submersed in regular education, or should they receive second language education through a specialized program before entering regular primary schools? Through a literature study I will research in what ways this issue has been tackled in other countries and what has formed the scientific basis for a specific policy. I will focus mainly on the United States where schools in areas with many Hispanic immigrants face similar issues, but I will include research from several other countries as well. The aim of this study is to advise the Dutch government, who requested that this topic would be researched, on the best way of providing education for immigrant children.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. In the next chapter, I will give an overview of research on and comparisons of several submersion, immersion and transitional programs. In the third chapter, I will describe the linguistic and cognitive factors involved in second language education for immigrant children and discuss the characteristics of programs that have been proven to be successful. In chapter four I will focus on the social context of second language education for immigrant children. Chapter five addresses the implications of the findings of this thesis regarding the policies in second language education for immigrant children. Finally, chapter six will contain the conclusion.

2. Overview of existing programs and research

In this chapter I will give an overview of several programs and policies in existence to provide education for second language learners, as well as the research done on these programs. Most of these studies are not about immigrant children specifically, but about children whose native language is not the language of the country that they live in and therefore, not the language in which mainstream education is provided. Most of these articles speak about 'Limited English Proficiency' children, 'English Language Learners', or language-minority children. I will mostly adopt the term the article itself used, but I will occasionally use these terms interchangeably.

2.1 Submersion education

One of the ways in which education can be provided for language-minority students is to simply have them enter mainstream classes even when they have little to no knowledge of the majority language yet. This is called submersion education (Tago & Ots, 2010). Glenn and De Jong (1996) call this the "sink or swim" approach: there is no support for immigrant children and the expectation is that they will simply pick up the language all by themselves and eventually catch up with the content. Glenn and De Jong (1996) mention that in some countries, such as France, a distinction is made between immigrant children who start schooling there at the normal age to start school in France, and children who start school in France at a later age – the former are often placed in regular, mainstream classes, whereas the latter are enrolled in special programs focussed on their needs. However, even children who are born in the host country might not have the language skills to succeed in mainstream classes; and if schools are not prepared to provide the education these children need, this might result in academic under-achievement and social isolation of immigrant children (Glenn & De Jong, 1996).

Tago and Ots (2010) researched the academic achievement of language-minority students in submersion education in Estonia. They used a sample of 657 children who were in fourth grade and between 9 and 12 years old; this was a representative sample of all students in Estonian primary schools. Of this sample, 93,9% was monolingual and only spoke Estonian at home, the other children were bilingual and spoke either both Estonian and another language, or only another language at home. Tago and Ots (2010) tested their mathematics skills as a measure of academic achievement, their comprehension of Estonian as measured with a Test of Estonian as a First language, and their intelligence. Some social factors were tested as well, such as the social preferences of the teachers, the social preference among classmates, and home supportiveness. They hypothesized that if a child feels excluded by either the teachers or other students, and/or does not receive much support at

home, this will impede their academic achievement. The results showed that bilingual students score significantly lower on mathematics and language skills. Moreover, proficiency in the study-language influenced overall academic achievement – which means that for students whose primary language differs from the language used in school, it is more difficult to learn other skills. As expected there was no significant difference in the distribution of intelligence levels; but while for monolingual children high intelligence predicted high achievement, this was not the case for bilingual children. The tested social factors did have some influence on the level of achievement of all children as well: if children were less socially preferred among their teachers or classmates, and received less home support, they tended to perform worse on the tests. However, since bilingual children tended to score lower on social preference and have less home support, they also tended to have lower language proficiency and lower academic achievement than monolingual children. Tago and Ots (2010) concluded that in submersion education, it might be difficult to achieve supportive circumstances for children who do not speak the school language at home.

Aarts and Verhoeven (1999) researched literary achievement among Turkish children living in the Netherlands. They received education in a submersion context, although most of them had Turkish language instruction for two or three hours a week. The participants of the study were all in the last grade of primary school and were between 11 and 14 years old. Their socio-economic background was very low, and a fairly large part of the parents had not finished primary education – around one-third of the fathers and two-thirds of the mothers. Some of the students were born in Turkey but all of them had started school in the Netherlands. Because both Turkish and Dutch literary proficiency were tested, Aarts and Verhoeven (1999) used a control group of monolingual native Turkish speakers living in Turkey and a control group of monolingual native Dutch speakers. To measure Turkish literacy the Turkish School Literacy Test was used, which tested word decoding, spelling, reading vocabulary, syntax and reading comprehension. To assess Dutch literacy two subtasks of the Eindtoets Basisonderwijs were used: grammatical abilities and discourse abilities. Apart from these tests, Aarts and Verhoeven (1999) also developed a Functional Literacy Test, in which children had to answer questions on written items commonly found in Turkish and Dutch households, such as the front page of a newspaper, a page of a TV guide or a map. Lastly, they developed questionnaires for the students and the teachers to gather data about the children's background and about their behaviour and attitude towards both Dutch and Turkish language and culture. The results show that on Turkish literacy, the control group in Turkey scored significantly better on spelling, reading vocabulary and syntax but not on word decoding and reading comprehension. Overall, the control group in Turkey also performed significantly better on the Turkish Functional Literacy Test – the only subtask on which Turkish children living in the Netherlands did significantly better was the test using the map. On the Dutch literacy test, the Turkish children

had about half of the answers right, whereas on average the monolingual Dutch population had 70% right. On both of the subtasks this difference was significant. The monolingual Dutch children also did significantly better on the Dutch Functional Literacy Test, except for the task involving the letter, on which Turkish children performed significantly better. Aarts and Verhoeven (1999) also found some correlations between the background of the children and their performances in the tasks: especially their self-esteem, home stimulation in literacy and the motivation the parents had for their children's education seemed to influence children's literacy achievement in both Turkish and Dutch. The children's sociocultural orientation – to what extent they identified with the minority and majority culture – seemed to play an important role in L2 development. Although the control groups and the research group did not match perfectly due to differences in the Dutch and Turkish school systems, Aarts and Verhoeven (1999) conclude that the Turkish children living in the Netherlands do not have native-like proficiency in either language. However, when it comes to functional literacy, Turkish children in the Netherlands were not too far behind the monolingual Dutch children. Lastly, the researchers found that literacy achievement in Turkish and Dutch were interrelated, indicating that literacy in the L1 can have positive effects on literacy in the L2.

Both Aarts and Verhoeven (1999) and Tago and Ots (2010) show that the academic performance of language-minority students enrolled in regular classes is significantly lower than that of their language-majority peers, even when they receive some home language instruction. A result of this might be that these students do not develop a native proficiency in any language: this is called semilingualism (Appel, 1984). These results indicate that submersion education might not be an effective approach to provide education for immigrant children and will impede their academic development. Based on an overview of research done on English language learners in schools in the United States, Genesee et al. (2005) also conclude that these students are more successful in programs that are focussed on their needs than in regular classes.

2.2 Immersion and transitional education

Two programs that are focussed on the needs of immigrant students and other language-minority students are immersion and transitional education. In immersion education, all instruction is usually in the L2, whereas in transitional education the L1 of the students is used as well, and instruction in the L2 is introduced gradually. There are also bilingual immersion programs, in which the L1 is used for a small amount of time a day. Many immersion programs make use of “sheltered content classes”, where the use of the second language is adapted to the students' proficiency (Gersten & Woodward, 1995). Much research has been done on all of these programs (Genesee et al., 2005); in this section I will give an overview of several of these studies.

2.2.1 The United States

Ramirez (1992) did a longitudinal study in which Structured English-Immersion Strategy, Early-Exit, and Late-Exit Transitional Bilingual programs were compared. This study was mandated by the American congress in order to research which program was most successful in the acquisition of English and the development of English language arts, English reading and maths. Over 2000 elementary school students, who were largely born in the United States but had immigrant parents, were followed for four years. The children in this study were all from Spanish-speaking minorities, and it was made sure that factors such as socio-economic background, education of the parents and number of years in the US of the students in the programs were comparable.

Ramirez (1992) defines the three programs as follows:

- Structured English-Immersion Strategy: all education is in English, and the primary language of the child is only used if needed to clarify instruction. It takes two to three years before the child is mainstreamed; which would be after first or second grade if the child starts school in kindergarten.
- Early-Exit program: 30 to 60 minutes of instruction a day are provided in the child's primary language, usually to introduce basic reading skills; other use of the primary language is only for clarification. By the end of grade two, all instruction is in English. Just like in the immersion program, the child is mainstreamed after two or three years.
- Late-Exit program: at least 40% of instruction is in the child's primary language, including content areas such as reading, math and sciences. The children remain in the program until sixth grade, regardless of their proficiency in English.

In all these programs, the learning environment did not provide the children with many opportunities to produce complex utterances in English. Teachers were the ones speaking most of the time, creating a passive environment in which children's higher cognitive skills were not stimulated, nor their active language skills. Otherwise, the instruction in all programs was largely the same, although in immersion programs the amount of time spent on English language arts was higher, followed by early-exit and late-exit programs. Late-exit programs differed in that the children received more homework and the parents were more aware of the fact that their children had homework, helping them more often with it. Ramirez (1992) attributes this to the use of the first language of the children in the classroom. Another difference between late-exit programs and the other two is that late-exit teachers more often had a similar language and cultural background as the students. Although in both immersion and early-exit programs children officially get mainstreamed after two or three years, in reality they often stayed in the program for at least the first four years.

According to Ramirez' (1992) comparison of the effectiveness of the programs, the achievement in English language skills, English reading skills and mathematics is comparable between immersion and early-exit students. However, in the late-exit programs the students did not all have the same achievements for these three skills at the end of grade 6. The mathematics skills of the students in the programs where native language instruction was consistently around 40% were significantly higher than the skills of the students in the program where an abrupt transition into English instruction took place. For English language and English reading skills, at the end of grade 6 the students performed best in the program where both native language instruction was consistent and the language and reading skills by the end of grade 1 had been the highest. However, the growth in English language and reading skills was the same across all late-exit programs; only for mathematics the growth of the students who abruptly transitioned into English was lower. The growth curves for students in all late-exit programs also suggested that their growth continued much faster in grade 3 to 6 than that of the norming population to whom they were compared, whereas for other programs their growth slowed down in these grades, similar to the norming population. Overall, however, the children in all three programs performed similarly to the general population and acquired English language, English reading and mathematics just as fast as or faster than this group. Yet, the differences indicate that students who have received a substantial and consistent amount of instruction in their primary language learn these skills faster than students who abruptly transitioned into English-only instruction. Furthermore, it seems that the use of the students' first language does not slow down the development of their English skills. The most important implications of Ramirez' (1992) study are that a Structured Immersion program and an Early-Exit program are both equally effective when it comes to mathematics and English language and reading skills; and that homework and parental involvement seem to be important factors in the effectiveness of a program, since those were the highest in the Late-Exit programs, where students performed better in some areas than in the other two programs.

Gersten and Woodward (1995) also did a longitudinal study in which they compared transitional bilingual education and bilingual immersion education. They followed 228 students in El Paso, Texas from grade 4 till 7 and measured their English skills with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Additionally, they interviewed both students and teachers about their experiences with the programs. Their research is similar to Ramirez' (1992) study, but Gersten and Woodward (1995) write that their study differs in that it was conducted within one school district, and the programs were comparable in resources, length of the school year, class size etc. All children had Spanish as their primary language and they had limited English proficiency before starting first grade. In this study, the transitional bilingual program initially uses the children's primary language for all content areas and starts English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in first grade for one hour a day, which

focuses on developing language skills. At the end of the second grade they gradually introduce academic instruction in English, and when the English skills of the students have reached a certain level, they start teaching content areas in English as well. This usually does not happen until fourth or fifth grade. The bilingual immersion program uses English for all instruction, although in grades one to four Spanish is used for 90 minutes a day and then gradually lowered to 30 minutes a day in grade four. Contrary to the programs in the Ramirez (1992) study, students in this program have plenty of opportunities to formulate their thoughts in English and develop higher thinking skills. When they use Spanish they are not corrected, although the teacher will always use English to answer and explain things.

Gersten and Woodward (1995) found significant differences between the programs for language skills in grade 4, 5 and 6: the children in the bilingual immersion program performed slightly better. However, in grade 7 no significant difference was found. In the transitional program, students had a significant growth between grade 4 and 6, which can be explained by the fact that they did not start English-only instruction until grade 5 or 6, whereas students in the immersion program started full-day English instruction in grade 3 or 4. There were no significant differences found for vocabulary skills, although in both programs students performed lower than the norm. By 6th grade, 99% of students who were in the immersion program were in mainstream classes, contrary to only 65% of students who were in the transitional program; this was a significant difference. The responses from teachers on the questionnaire also differed significantly on most items: for instance, around 75% percent of the bilingual immersion teachers felt that their students would succeed in a mainstream class, that the program helped students acquire oral English skills, and that it motivated the students to learn English; whereas only around 30-40% of the transitional bilingual education teachers believed these things. The only item on which the teachers did not differ significantly was the belief that their program developed and maintained the student's Spanish skills. Teachers of the transitional program also often named Spanish as the best feature of their program (43%), however, 38% thought it was the greatest weakness. Other concerns of teachers in this program were that the students stayed in the program too long, and that they were separated from native English speakers. Of the teachers in the immersion program, 16% said the Spanish component was the greatest strength, whereas 24% named the rapid acquisition of English. The biggest concerns of teachers in the immersion program were the materials used and the lack of structure. Gersten and Woodward (1995) also interviewed 30 students from each program who had completed it and were now in their second year of a mainstream English class, most of them in grade 6 but some in grade 5. No significant differences between the programs were found, although some students from the transitional program indicated that they found it confusing to learn in two languages, and some of students in both groups had difficulty with the reading material in the mainstream classes.

Because by 7th grade, there were no significant differences between the skills of students in the two programs, Gersten and Woodward (1995) conclude that both bilingual immersion and transitional bilingual education are viable pathways for students to acquire English, although the results suggest that both programs fail in adequately teaching all students English reading skills and vocabulary: only one-third of all students performed at or above the norm on both skills. However, they also state that standardized tests such as the ITBS have clear limitations when it comes to testing the skills of language-minority students; and the methods used might be more important than the program: “[...] program labels appear to be less important than the nature of instructional interactions” (p. 236). Furthermore, since teachers were so much more positive about the bilingual immersion program, Gersten and Woodward (1995) cannot exclude the possibility that these teachers might see academic performance and growth in their students that tests cannot measure.

The overview by Genesee et al. (2005) also supports the findings that both programs can be effective: the studies they reviewed consistently show that students who were in a program designed specifically for second language learners, whether this was a bilingual program or a transitional ESL program, did catch up to or even surpass the achievement levels of their peers in mainstream classes. Additionally, English language learners (ELL's) who apart from English instruction also had long-term instruction in their L1, performed better than students who did not receive instruction in their L1 or only short-term. ELL's who did not receive any specialized education performed the worst and were more likely to drop out of school. This is supported by the findings of Thomas and Collier (2002) who researched the effectiveness of several different submersion, immersion and transitional programs in the United States by measuring the academic achievement of ELL's from kindergarten until twelfth grade. They found that the most effective programs were both one-way and two-way bilingual immersion programs where around half of the instruction was in English and half of the instruction in the home language (in this case Spanish), and bilingual transitional programs where 90% of the instruction was in English and 10% in the home language. However, students in all transitional and immersion programs performed significantly better than students who were submersed in the mainstream, indicating that any specialized program is better than submersion. Although the results of all these studies have some clear implications about which programs are most effective in providing education for language-minority children, Genesee et al. (2005) state that it is difficult to compare programs because often programs with the same name are not actually the same instructional program. For example, some programs were called “structured English immersion” when in fact, these were mainstream classes with no specialized support for children who had limited English proficiency. Therefore, Genesee et al. (2005) mention that some caution is necessary when drawing conclusions from these studies.

2.2.2 The Netherlands

Appel (1984) studied the effectiveness of a transitional bilingual program in the Netherlands which started as an experimental program in the school year 1977/1978. Up until then, immigrant children were usually placed in regular Dutch classes with some extra Dutch language instruction, or they were placed in a 'reception class', which was a one-year immersion program after which they were placed in regular classes. In the experimental transitional bilingual program, Moroccan and Turkish children were placed in respectively a Moroccan class with a Moroccan teacher and a Turkish class with a Turkish teacher, within a regular Dutch primary school. During the first year all instruction was in the minority language, and Dutch language lessons by a Dutch teacher were given for one hour a day. When the children understood and spoke some Dutch they joined regular classes for lessons such as gymnastics and music. In the second year, content instruction in Dutch was introduced for about half of the time, and after this year the children were mainstreamed into regular education.

The aim of Appel's (1984) research was to see to what extent minority-language teaching influences the proficiency in the second language. In order to answer this question he compared the Dutch language proficiency of the group of children in the transitional program and a group of Turkish and Moroccan children who were in regular classes. The type of initial education of the children in the control group differed, but they all received minimal to none instruction in a minority language, and they received specialized second-language instruction for around 20% of the time. The experimental group started out with 24 children and the control group with 33; by the end of the third year they consisted of respectively 20 and 26 children. The children were tested three times: once after the first year in the program, once after the second year, and once after having been in regular education for a year. Several different tests were used to measure the children's oral language proficiency, among them Mean Length of Utterance in Words (MLU), Percentage of Subordinate Clauses/Subordination Index (SI), Percentage of Coordinate Clauses/Coordination Index (CI), Number of Different Words (NDW), and several morphological variables such as use of articles, conjugation of verbs and pluralization of nouns. Comprehension was also tested, as well as a word association test to measure vocabulary. Written language proficiency in Dutch was measured as well after the second and third year with a so-called 'cloze test': in a text several words are left out and the participants have to fill in these missing words (Appel, 1984).

The results show that after the first year, the experimental group scored slightly better on three of the tested oral language proficiency variables: SI, article and copula. The control group had a better score on the use of coordinate clauses. However, none of these results were statistically significant. After the second year, the experimental group scored better on six variables, half of which were statistically significant. On all other variables, including written language proficiency, the experimental group and the control group scored equally. After the last year, this trend was

continued: the experimental group now had better scores on nine of the spoken language variables, although only one of those was significant. However, this time the experimental group did perform significantly better on the written language proficiency test. In conclusion, Appel's (1984) study seems to support the idea that a specialized program for immigrant children which makes use of their L1 is more effective than submersion education. However, Appel (1984) notes that for some of the children in the Moroccan class their first language was a Berber language, not Moroccan-Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic which was taught in class. Therefore, it is possible that the positive results of the transitional bilingual program are due to socio-psychological factors as well, such as being in a class with people and a teacher with the same cultural background, making it easier to transition to a new culture.

Until the 1970's, when this study was conducted, there were no long-term specialized programs for immigrant children in the Netherlands at all (Appel, 1984). Consequently, research done on this subject in the Netherlands is scarce in comparison to the United States. However, Appel's (1984) study supports the evidence of the previously discussed studies in other countries; namely that specialized programs, especially those that make use of the children's first language, are most effective in providing education for language-minority children.

3. Linguistic and cognitive factors

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are many different programs and policies when it comes to the issue of teaching second language learners the majority language of a country and providing them with education. It is clear from the research on and comparisons of these programs that some of them work better than others. However, as Genesee et al. (2005) pointed out, there are programs that have the same label but in fact have a very different content – and even programs that do have the same content might use very different methods to teach the children who are in these programs. For instance, in the programs researched by Ramirez (1992) teachers were the ones talking the most, and pupils were not stimulated to practice their active language skills or develop their higher cognitive skills; whereas in the programs in the study by Gersten and Woodward (1995) students were encouraged to speak English themselves. In this chapter I will discuss what the characteristics of an effective program are, specifically regarding the linguistic and cognitive factors involved in second language acquisition.

3.1 The role of the L1

One of the most important factors in second language acquisition is the role that the native language plays. Research on immersion and transitional education shows that language-minority children generally perform better in the L2 if part of the instruction takes place in the L1, allowing them to develop their L1 further while acquiring a second language (e.g. Ramirez, 1992; Gersten & Woodward, 1995; Genesee et al., 2005). One of the possible reasons for this could be interdependency between the L1 and the L2, formulated by Cummins (1979) in the developmental interdependence hypothesis. This hypothesis says that the competence in the L2 is “partially a function of the type of competence the child has developed in L1 at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins” (Cummins, 1979, p.233). In other words: developing competence in the L1, specifically the competence that is usually learned at school, also develops a certain deeper linguistic proficiency, such as literacy skills and learning strategies (Cummins, 2008). Having these linguistic skills helps with acquiring the L2, because the skills that are learned through the L1 can transfer to the L2 (Cummins, 1979; Cummins, 1991). However, if the L1 competence of a child is not developed very well, being exposed to only the L2 might impede their L1 development, which in turn might impede the development of L2 skills (Cummins, 1979). In this context, extended instruction in the native language of a child will help achieve a higher competence in the second language. This interdependence hypothesis is supported by a variety of scientific evidence. For instance, Cummins (1991) points to research finding that previous education in Finnish helped Finnish children in

Sweden acquire Swedish faster (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukoma, 1976 as cited in Cummins, 1991), and studies that found significant correlations between Spanish and English reading skills among Hispanic students in the United States (e.g. Carlisle, 1986 as cited in Cummins, 1991). Related to the interdependence hypothesis is the threshold hypothesis, which says that there is a certain threshold level that bilingual children need to reach in both languages in order for bilingualism to have cognitive advantages (Cummins, 1979). In the light of this hypothesis, it is also important for children acquiring a second language to keep developing their L1 as well in order to reach additive bilingualism rather than subtractive bilingualism (Cummins, 1979).

Genesee et al. (2005) state that skills such as phonological awareness and most importantly literacy in the L1 cross over to the L2, making students able to learn to write and read in the L2, even when their oral proficiency in the L2 is not very well developed yet. Therefore, learners who have strong literacy skills, phonological awareness and knowledge of a cognate vocabulary are faster learners of literacy in the L2 than students who do not have this knowledge in the L1. Genesee et al. (2005) explain this by saying that students use certain metacognitive skills acquired through their knowledge of their native language to learn these things in the L2 as well – in other words, they use the deeper linguistic proficiency that Cummins (1991) talks about. A study by Collier and Thomas (1989) seems to support the interdependence hypothesis as well. The purpose of their research was to find out how much time limited-English-proficiency children required to acquire academic competence in English, depending on age of arrival and amount of previous education in the native language. All students in the researched sample were at or above grade level in their native language, and therefore considered 'advantaged'. They were not in specialized programs but in mainstream classes, although they did receive instruction in English as a Second Language. They were tested in grades 4, 6, 8 and 11, not just on language and reading skills but also on mathematics, social studies and science. Collier and Thomas (1989) found that children who arrived between age 8 and 11 performed the best on all tests, because of transfer from their native language skills, implying that at least two years of education in the native language will positively influence academic achievement in the second language. A later study by Thomas and Collier (2002) also found that previous education in the L1 seemed to be the strongest predictor of achievement in the L2. Moreover, Swain and Lapkin (2005) found that education in the L1 can not only help develop the L2, but also the L3. In Canada, there are many French immersion programs for native speakers of English; however, according to Swain and Lapkin (2005), a growing number of immigrants whose native language is not English are enrolling in these immersion programs as well. They found that the immigrant students who have had education in their native language, more specifically those who learned literacy skills, had the highest competence in French – suggesting that even when a third language is involved the interdependency hypothesis might still apply.

Swain and Lapkin (2005) also provide another argument for L1 maintenance, based on the idea derived from sociocultural theory that speaking and writing are not just language skills, but also cognitive tools that people use to learn. If certain subjects that people are learning are too complex to understand in the L2 or the L3, they fall back on their L1 knowledge to understand, learn and solve these issues. This applies to subjects such as mathematics and science, but also to learning another language itself. This is illustrated with the example of Sue, a French immersion student: by verbalizing her thoughts in English about a certain aspect of French she was studying, she realized that she did not understand this aspect yet. Swain and Lapkin (2005) write about this that “her speaking was a tool through which her thinking was articulated” (p.181) and that this made her able to reflect on her thoughts and eventually help her develop a second language. Swain and Lapkin (2005) also point to several other studies where children in immersion education did tasks better when they were able to use their first language while solving them, than when they were forced to use the second language only (e.g. Behan & Turnbull, 1997 as cited in Swain & Lapkin, 2005). In the light of this theory, speaking and writing are tools that mediate learning and therefore, being able to use your native language and having developed cognitive skills in this language will help develop a second language and help understand instruction in the content areas in a second language as well. Swain and Lapkin (2005) conclude that even in contexts in which children bring many native languages to the classroom that are not the official language of instruction, allowing children to use these languages to solve tasks in the target language will help develop the L2 or even the L3.

3.2 The role of the L2

It is clear that having a good competence in the L1, especially literary skills, and developing the L1 further, are beneficial for learning a second language. However, the question remains how much exposure to the L2 is needed to acquire it properly. This question is relevant especially for bilingual education where some of the time is reserved for instruction in the L1 of students and less time remains to focus on the second language. Other relevant issues here are to what extent students need to be able to practice their active language skills; how much contact with native speakers is needed, specifically in the context of specialized programs for immigrant children; and how the L2 can be implemented in the program in such a way that children both learn the language and do not delay their academic development.

Genesee et al. (2005) argue that exposure to English is, of course, a necessary condition to acquire English successfully, but by no means is it a sufficient condition. However, it is first and foremost important for second language learners to develop oral proficiency in the L2. If their oral proficiency increases, they will be able to use the language and talk to native speakers, which in turn

will cause their oral proficiency to increase even more. Having good oral competence in the L2 will also help develop literary skills in the L2, although this mostly applies to more academic aspects of proficiency: for instance, there is a relation between the number of unique words used during an interview by second language learners and their reading achievement (Genesee et al., 2005). Within the classroom, interaction with teachers might be of more importance than interaction with their peers; however, the use of the L2 outside the classroom helps develop language proficiency as well (Genesee et al., 2005). When it comes to language use within the classroom, the findings suggest that programs where students have opportunities to practice their active language skills indeed are most effective to acquire the L2 and develop cognitive skills required for academic achievement.

In order to develop proficiency in the L2, it is also important for immigrant children to have contact with native speakers of this language. Valdés (1998) followed two Hispanic girls for several years who immigrated to the United States around the age of 12 and were enrolled in a transitioning English as a Second Language program. She found that at this school, children hardly ever transitioned to mainstream classes. Because of this, English language learners (ELL's) only communicated with each other and with their teachers, but hardly ever with native speakers. This decreased their chances to acquire English successfully and as a result, it was also very hard for them to be academically successful. Yet, English language learners who are enrolled in mainstream education together with native speakers perform worse than students in specialized programs (e.g. Thomas & Collier, 2002). Genesee et al. (2005) note that in many programs for English language learners there is some integration of ELL's and native speakers of English. However, in order to give ELL's opportunities to learn from native speakers, simply grouping them together is not enough, but the kind of tasks they do together and the proficiency level of the ELL's play an important role as well (Genesee et al., 2005). Again, exposure to a second language and contact with native speakers are, although necessary, not sufficient conditions to acquire English. Additionally, studies such as Gersten and Woodward (1995) show that both a transitional bilingual program and a bilingual immersion program can be viable ways to provide education for immigrant children, suggesting that the exact amount of English used in a program might not be as relevant as other characteristics of the program.

In most instructional programs, second language learning happens at least partially through content-based instruction. Thomas and Collier (2002) found that in an all English program, it takes several years for immigrant students to acquire English well enough to be able to do work on their grade-level, which is similar to interrupting their schooling for one or two years. However, Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson and Woodworth (1995) found that there is no need to wait with providing immigrant children with a content curriculum until they have mastered English. Collier and Thomas (1989) also state that although bilingual programs are the most effective, in cases where this

is not possible, content instruction through the second language is a good alternative and should be started as early as possible. Of course, it is important to ensure that this instruction is understandable for second language learners. One of the ways to do that is through sheltered content classes, where the level of the second language used is adapted to the level of the students (Berman et al., 1995). Usually, in these programs speech is slower and more clearly enunciated, there is more use of visuals and other supplementary materials, it includes targeted vocabulary and more interaction between students, among other things (Ecchevarria, Short & Powers, 2006). However, Ecchevarria et al. (2006) note that all these strategies are often used inconsistently and not implemented into a coherent effective sheltered language model. Therefore, they developed and tested one sheltered content ESL program, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). All schools in their study used the same curriculum for their sheltered classes as for regular classes, but the content was adapted in such a way that it was more understandable for English Language Learners. The proficiency of the ELL's in these classes ranged from knowing no English at all to a fairly advanced level. Ecchevarria et al. (2006) measured the ELL's literacy achievement with a standardized test that rated their writing skills and compared them with the achievement level of a control group of English Language Learners who did not receive sheltered instruction. Five different factors were analysed: language production (i.e. the degree of language acquisition), focus (i.e. the clearness of the main idea), support or elaboration (i.e. the explanation of the main idea), organization (i.e. logical structure) and mechanics (i.e. grammar, spelling, etc.). Students made the same test twice: once in the first six weeks of starting the SIOP model, and once within the last six weeks of the course. Ecchevarria et al. (2006) found that students who were in a SIOP class performed worse on the pretest, but on the posttest they performed significantly better on writing achievement overall and on three of the subtests, namely language production, organization and mechanics. The results of this study seem to suggest that sheltered instruction, at least through a coherent model such as the SIOP, helps students to achieve better second language skills, and overall cognitive skills.

3.3 Level of language proficiency

The aim of both transitional and immersion programs is usually to prepare language-minority children for regular education and mainstream them when their level of second language proficiency is high enough. The question that comes up, then, is what level these children exactly need to reach in order to be able to enter regular classes and to be successful at school, and how long it takes to reach this level. In this section I will attempt to answer both of these questions.

In order to be successful in school, children do not just need to learn the second language at a communicative level, but they need to learn academic language as well. However, according to Valdés (2004) there is no agreement on what ‘academic language’ means exactly. She states that in the United States, the term ‘academic English’ is usually defined differently within mainstream English classes and English as a Second Language classes. In the latter, English instruction often focusses on using correct grammar and can be defined as the language used to interact in the classroom, to discuss and process the subject content and academic knowledge. In mainstream English classes, however, academic English moves beyond that and is focussed much more on literacy, being able to present opinions and argumentation – here, academic English is mastering the language and literacy skills that are required for higher education. Valdés (2004) argues that, for language-minority children to succeed in school, it is important to focus on those aspects of academic language as well within specialized programs. Woods (2009) argues as well that second language programs should not just focus on language acquisition, but also on literary skills, especially in the case of immigrant children such as refugees who might have little to no previous schooling and may not be literate at all yet.

Collier and Thomas (1989) researched how long it would take for students with no knowledge of English who were enrolled in mainstream classes with part-time ESL instruction to reach an academic level of English. They define academic English as the language and cognitive skills needed to be successful in all different subject areas in both secondary and university education. They gathered longitudinal data on a group of 2014 language-minority students. They found that it took students who arrived in the United States between age 8 and 11 on average five to seven years to catch up to grade-level norms, although they already performed as well as native speakers on standardized mathematics tests after two years and on a low-level English as a second language test after three years. Students whose age of arrival was between 4 and 7, however, had not reached the norm yet within the six years of the study, and Collier and Thomas (1989) estimate it would take them between seven to ten years to catch up to grade-level norms. As already discussed in the first section of this chapter, this is most likely due to the fact that the older students already received some education in their home country, whereas the younger group of students did not. It should be noted that all students in this study were seen as quite ‘advantaged’ by Collier and Thomas (1989) because in their home country they had been from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds, and they performed at or above grade level in their native language. Therefore, they were expected to catch up to the norm within a relatively short amount of time, and the number of years needed is a minimum even for the best students (Collier & Thomas, 1989).

However, the amount of time needed for students to reach grade-level achievement differs per program. A later study by Thomas and Collier (2002) found that English Language Learners who

have had at least four years of schooling in their native language can catch up to performance at grade level norms within a minimum of four years – and students who were in bilingual programs were even able to perform *above* grade level in all subjects after a minimum of four to a maximum of seven years. However, students who were not schooled in their primary language were generally not able to reach grade-level achievement in the L2 in early-exit programs, and neither were students with interrupted schooling in their home country, who after arrival in the US received schooling in English only (Thomas & Collier, 2002). Ramirez (1992), based on his comparison of bilingual immersion, early-exit transitional and late-exit transitional education, argues that students should receive at least six years of language support, unless they already demonstrate having the skills to function in a mainstream classroom. However, he does not elaborate on what he means by language support and if there is any difference between the programs in the number of years it takes to catch up to the norm.

In conclusion, acquisition of a second language at an academic level is a long process that cannot be expected to happen quickly. Children who are enrolled in transitional or immersion education will most likely not have mastered the language at grade-level norms yet by the time they enter mainstream classes, and their language development will continue in these classes (Collier & Thomas, 1989). However, in a later study Thomas and Collier (2002) found that students who are in segregated, remedial programs with little to no opportunity to practice their English language skills, are not able to catch up to the norm after being mainstreamed. Therefore, they argue it is important that the language proficiency and academic achievement of the students is as high as possible before they are assigned to a mainstream class. Genesee et al. (2005) also mention that the results were generally better when students stayed in the program longer. This does not only apply to language skills and academic achievement: the drop-out rates were also lower and even the attitudes of these students towards school were better.

4. Social factors

Apart from the psycholinguistic factors involved in second language acquisition and second language education, it is also important to take a look at the social context in which immigrant children, and more specifically refugee children, receive education. These children might be affected by several issues such as interrupted or no previous schooling and trauma. Additionally, they might face difficulties in adapting to a new culture. In this chapter I will discuss these issues and other social factors that affect the acquiring of a second language, and what role these factors play in the policy for providing education for immigrant children.

4.1 Issues of immigrant and refugee children

Glenn and De Jong (1996) mention that there is a lot of variation in the situations of immigrant children. The Victoria Ministry of Education in Australia identifies six different groups of immigrants (as cited in Glenn & De Jong, 1996):

1. Children starting school at the normal age who have had little to no exposure to English.
2. Students starting school after the normal age who have had no previous formal schooling.
3. Students starting school after the normal age who have had disrupted schooling.
4. Students who have had equivalent formal schooling before immigrating.
5. Students who have had schooling in the host country or were born there to immigrant parents, but have difficulty with the required language skills in mainstream classes.
6. Students with another language background who have learning difficulties.

This classification makes it clear that immigrant children may come from very different backgrounds, especially with regard to previous education. Especially refugee children might have severely disrupted schooling because of war or the time spent fleeing from one country to another (Goodwin, 2002). Many immigrant children even have no previous education at all because of these reasons, or they never went to school because of poverty or certain cultural beliefs – especially girls often have received no previous schooling because of beliefs about gender roles (Goodwin, 2002). Even children who did receive education in their home country might still face problems similar to those with interrupted schooling, because the educational standards and the curriculum might be very different (Goodwin, 2002). However, Goodwin (2002) states that there are immigrant children who are very highly educated too, and simply no generalizations can be made. Yet, the number of children who received little to no education and have no literacy in their native language is very high among refugee children. A second language program that does not take this into consideration might not be

effective in providing these children with education, resulting in low achievement, high drop-out rates and later in life, unemployment rates (Olliff & Couch, 2005).

A second issue that immigrant children face is that of dislocation (Goodwin, 2002). Goodwin (2002) states that having to leave behind one's home, family and friends is a traumatic experience for children, even when the immigration happens voluntarily. In the case of refugee children, traumatic experiences are often much worse: they involuntarily had to leave behind their home country, often escaping circumstances such as war, persecution, genocide and starvation, and they might even have witnessed the death of family members. These children bring all this trauma with them to the host country, where they might also face what Goodwin (2002) calls cultural disorientation: the host country often has an entirely different culture than their home country and they have to deal with understanding how, for instance, immigration laws, health care, public services and education work in their new country. They are also often the subject of political debates on immigration, and might face racism and discrimination (Goodwin, 2002). A language barrier is most definitely not the only problem immigrants face when integrating into a new country, and Goodwin (2002) argues that these issues need to be taken into consideration when educating immigrant children.

De Heer, Due, Riggs and Augoustinos (2016) studied the experiences of immigrant children from age 5 to 13 who had moved to Australia and were in an Intensive English Language Program (IELP), an Australian program to teach immigrant children English in a period of 6 months to a year before entering mainstream education. Often, the centres that provided IELP were at the same location as the mainstream school, and some schools had integrated IELP and mainstream classes in subjects such as sports and games, making it easier for immigrant children to have contact with peers in mainstream classes. Like Goodwin (2002), De Heer et al. (2016) note that in order to provide these children with successful language education, it is important to look at the broader social context in which they live. Often, they are part of marginalized ethnic groups and may experience racism and difficulty connecting with children who were born in the host country. De Heer et al. (2016) interviewed 15 immigrant children before and after transitioning into a mainstream class about their experiences at school. Several of these children had past experiences similar to refugee children, such as trauma and a lack of previous education. The recurring themes in their experiences were that going to school was generally a positive experience both before and after transitioning, that the transition process itself was hard, and that friendships had a strong influence on how they perceived the transition. The children often reported being anxious that their English would not be good enough to understand the instruction in mainstream classes and to make friends; however, after the transition to the mainstream, their language proficiency was hardly mentioned as a problem. None of the children reported any experiences with racism or discrimination. Yet, they did find it hard to make friends, and often befriended other minority children from their own cultural background due

to a shared sense of identity. However, it should be noted here that most children who stayed in the same school as before they transitioned indicated that they made friends with children they already knew from the program, not necessarily because of a shared cultural background.

4.2 The role of identity

Identity does not only play a role in making friends, it is also a factor that is very important for second language acquisition and education of immigrant children. As Tago and Ots (2010) already pointed out, many language-minority children are low in the social ranking of a class, which might impede their language development and overall academic achievement. Having friendships with people in the majority group, then, might help a child to fit in and be more successful in school. On the other hand, De Heer et al. (2016) state that being friends with children from a similar language and cultural background might make them feel more comfortable, especially when transitioning to regular education. These two things seem to be at odds with each other: on the one hand, maintaining and reinforcing the cultural identity of immigrant children seems to be important, on the other hand, it is important for them to integrate in the new society.

4.2.1 Identity and sociocultural orientation

Appel (1984) points out that identity, attitude towards both the minority group to which the learner belongs and the language-majority group, and motivation are often seen as strong factors in predicting second language achievement – in other words, the sociocultural orientation of immigrants determines how successful they will be in learning the second language. Appel (1984) notes that this results in the idea that in order to learn the language of the host country, the immigrant will have to completely identify with and adopt all the cultural values of the new society, and give up their own identity. However, Appel (1984) mentions that the research previously conducted on this subject shows neither a causal, nor a correlational effect of sociocultural orientation on the successful acquisition of a second language. Appel (1984) himself researched whether Turkish and Moroccan children with a good second-language achievement in Dutch were more oriented towards Dutch society than children who had a poor achievement in Dutch. He gave all children a Language Proficiency Index (LPI) score based on their proficiency in Dutch measured by several language tests (as described previously in section 2.2.2.), and assessed their cultural orientation with semi-structured interviews. In these interviews, children were asked questions on the topics school and social contacts, religion, food, market/shops, and clothing. Their cultural orientation was then translated into a score from 0 to 4, 0 meaning a strong orientation towards Dutch culture and 4 a strong orientation towards Turkish or Moroccan culture, based on only three questions from the interview: whether they ate pig meat, whether their mother wore traditional

clothes, and whether they actively practiced Islamic religion. This test was done twice: once when the children had been in the Netherlands for almost two years and once again a year later. The results of both tests show that there were no statistically significant differences in Dutch language proficiency between children who were strongly oriented towards the minority culture and children who were more oriented towards Dutch culture. However, in the first test children who had the strongest orientation towards the minority culture had a slightly higher proficiency, whereas in the second test children who were more oriented towards Dutch culture had a higher proficiency, but neither of these differences were significant. Appel (1984) concludes that there is neither a positive nor a negative relation between the sociocultural orientation and the second-language proficiency of second-language learners.

Cummins (2008), however, notes that identity is an important factor in second language acquisition and overall academic achievement. Involuntary migrants often have more trouble fitting into the host society and do not perform as well in school as voluntary migrants do, especially when faced with discrimination and other societal power relations such as segregation in schools. Therefore, Cummins (2008) argues that instruction in schools must be affirmative of the identities of immigrant students. Allowing them to use their first languages can not only help with acquiring the second language, as discussed in chapter 3, but can also help to affirm these students in their identities, whereas prohibiting the use of their L1's will only reinforce the idea that the minority group is inferior to the majority – which might make it more difficult for them to fit in and do well in school. Swain and Lapkin (2008) also state that the allowance of the use of multiple home languages in class is affirming of the ethnic identities of the children, even in immersion classrooms where the language of instruction is the L2 only. Cummins (1979) adds to this idea by stating that in submersion education, limited proficiency in the L2 is often equated to limited intelligence and academic ability, whereas in an immersion classroom, where the minority language and culture is valued instead of seen as inferior, success rather than failure is emphasized. Although Glenn and De Jong (1996) state that the evidence for the enhancing effect on immigrant children's self-esteem of the use of the L1 in bilingual classrooms is weak, they note that within schools bilingual programs are often looked down upon. This perceived inferiority of bilingual programs is detrimental for the self-esteem of the pupils who are enrolled in these programs. Therefore, Glenn and De Jong (1996) argue that it is important that the languages and cultures of these children should not only be valued within a bilingual program, but in the entire school. Another argument Glenn and De Jong (1996) provide for home language maintenance is that it prevents attrition of the L1 and therefore allows children to communicate better with their parents and grandparents who might never learn the language of the host country as fluently as the children. In addition, the use of the first language might also result in

more parental involvement – creating a better relationship between the school and the parents (Glenn & De Jong, 1996).

4.2.2 Identity and segregation

The issues regarding identity discussed in the previous section are closely tied to issues of segregation and integration. Many of the specialized programs for immigrant children such as immersion and transitional education are separated from mainstream classes, and are often seen as an inferior type of education (Glenn & De Jong, 1996). Although research points out that academically, immigrant children perform better when they are in programs that are focused on their needs, Valdés (2004) argues that segregation in classrooms does not offer linguistic minority students the chance to participate in discourse with native speakers of the second language and therefore limits their chances to develop academic language and the social practices associated with it. Giving immigrant children the education that they need should not result in segregation and exclusion from society – if these children and the education they receive are seen as inferior, this could affect their motivation to learn, and as a result will not provide them with the education that they need at all (Glenn & De Jong, 1996). Furthermore, as suggested by De Heer et al. (2016), it is beneficial for students to have the opportunity to develop friendships and connections before transitioning to mainstream classes, because already knowing people and having some familiarity makes the transition easier. Integration with mainstream classes prior to transitioning, then, will help immigrant children to establish connections with native speakers and to fit in easier. As Tago and Ots (2010) point out, social relations at school do not only have an influence on the identity of the students, but also on language proficiency and overall academic achievement.

As an illustration of the consequences of segregation in schools, Valdés (1998) describes the cases of Lilian and Elisa, two girls of respectively 12 and 13 years old at the start of the study, who immigrated from Mexico and Honduras to the United States and knew virtually no English at arrival. They were in an all-English transitional ‘English as a Second Language’-program with a beginner, intermediate and advanced class, where students hardly ever transitioned to mainstream classes, nor to another level of ESL classes. The ESL program was entirely separated from the mainstream, resulting in English Language Learners only communicating with each other and their teachers, never interacting with native speakers or immigrant students who already spoke English. Students had very little opportunity to hear English from peers and most of the time in class was spent on trying to explain the students what to do instead of encouraging them to use English – often they were told they needed to be silent at all times unless called upon. Because in addition to the above issues the classes were too big, the children did not receive the support they needed to function in class. The English proficiency levels of the children varied greatly, because the learning environment was not

supportive at all. Elisa was highly motivated to learn English and did relatively well, but Lilian never made much progress and became very uninterested in school. She eventually dropped out of high school and never had many opportunities, although she wanted to go back to school. Elisa did a lot better: she eventually managed to enrol in mainstream classes on another high school. However, because of her past in segregated ESL classes, she could not enrol in regular college classes unless she would finish several more ESL courses. These two stories illustrate that segregation in schools will only decrease the opportunities of immigrant children to speak the second language with native speakers and acquire the language successfully. In turn, this will decrease their chances to academic achievement, and eventually decrease their chances to succeed in higher education and society in general.

4.3 Role of the teacher and the learning environment

It is clear that not only the linguistic and educational context, but also the social context in which immigrant children receive education influences the way they acquire the language taught at school and their academic success. The social context thus partly determines how effective a certain program for immigrant children is. It is therefore important for teachers to understand the issues that immigrant and refugee children face at school and in society, and to create the most optimal learning environment for these children.

Goodwin (2002) states that teachers should take into account the fact that many immigrants and especially many refugee children often have little or disrupted previous schooling and face issues of dislocation and cultural disorientation, as discussed above in section 4.1. There is a lot of variety in the experiences of these children, and teachers should be aware that they form a heterogeneous group, just like any classroom. Goodwin (2002) argues that teachers need to give immigrant children the support that they need and help them adapt to the requirements of education in the host country. Additionally, Woods (2009) argues that these children need help understanding how the Western education system works and what is expected of them in the classroom. Regarding language-related issues, teachers should be aware of language acquisition theories and the interdependence between the L1 and the L2 – this holds not only for teachers of specialized programs for language-minority children, but also teachers in the mainstream classes that these children transition to (Goodwin, 2002). Another issue is that many of these children might not be literate in any language, so an emphasis on literacy is needed as well (Woods, 2009). When it comes to issues of segregation, teachers should be aware of stereotypes and biases surrounding language-minority children and language-minority education – for instance, not equating the deficits in their English skills with deficits in their learning abilities (Goodwin, 2002). Lastly, Goodwin (2002)

emphasizes the importance of working with the families of these children and immigrant communities and establishing a good relationship between the parents and the school. This is supported by Woods (2009) who argues that schools should not just work with established communities, but should also help building a community through contact with the parents. Additionally, she argues that schools are not just places to learn, they are also places to acquire social and cultural capital. Therefore, schools should help students learn cultural content and not just curricular content, in a way that allows them to reconcile the culture of their home country with a new culture. In doing so, schools play an important role in helping these children overcome previous trauma and start a new life, succeed in school and eventually, participate in society (Woods, 2009).

As discussed previously (see section 4.2.2.), to create a supportive learning environment in which immigrant children can learn the language, curricular content and cultural content, it is important that the education they receive is not segregated. Glenn and De Jong (1996) elaborate further on the several approaches in which language-minority education can be integrated instead of segregated. They state integrated education is based on three principles: a whole school approach, in which all staff members are responsible for all pupils in the school; a cooperative approach, in which curriculum content and instruction are coordinated; and an integrative approach, in which the environment is supportive of the pupil's languages and cultures. Although in a mainstream regular classroom children are 'integrated' with native peers, a classroom which is not adapted to the needs of language-minority children is not an integrated classroom according to Glenn and De Jong (1996). Because immigrant children will often not be able to understand the language input in these classes, they may 'tune out', as Glenn and De Jong (1996) call it, which might result in disengagement and children becoming uninterested in school. As shown in the previous chapters it was already clear that interaction with native peers is important for language development, but Glenn and De Jong (1996) emphasize that it is important as well for social reasons: being in the same classroom without interaction might still result into segregation. Additionally, they stress it may be important for immigrant children to be grouped with other children that have the same home language as them so they can use each other as a resource. Secondly, Glenn and De Jong (1996) stress that teachers of a specialized program and teachers of the mainstream classes should collaborate so that the language-minority program is not separated, but the curriculums are coordinated – transitional programs should have a clear goal and prepare for mainstream education. Lastly, like several other studies (e.g. Genesee et al., 2005), Glenn and De Jong (1996) argue that teaching language through the content is an important way in which language-minority education can be provided. One way through which this can be done is sheltered content instruction, as discussed before in chapter three (e.g. Ecchevarria et al., 2006), but Glenn and De Jong (1996) state that cooperative learning, having students work together in small groups, is also an effective approach for language-minority students.

This way of learning improves academic achievement and allows more interactions between native speakers and immigrant students, and as a result will improve the language development of language-minority children (Glenn & De Jong, 1996). Finally, De Heer et al. (2016) note that for language-minority education to be integrated, it is beneficial that these classes are on the same location as a mainstream school. This makes it easier to have integrated classes such as sports and music, and children of different backgrounds will meet each other on the playground. This interaction with native speakers helps them not only learn the language, but also helps them acquire the social capital they need to succeed in mainstream classes after transitioning. It is clear that an instructional program for immigrant children needs to be both specialized and integrated to provide these children with the education that they need.

5. Discussion and implications

In the previous chapters I have given an overview of studies on several existing programs that provide education for language-minority children, and I have discussed what linguistic, cognitive and social factors are involved in second language education for immigrant children. In this chapter I will summarize the findings, and discuss their implications regarding the right policy to provide education for immigrant and refugee children.

5.1 Summary of findings

Research consistently shows that submersion education, simply putting immigrant children into regular, mainstream classes and hoping they will pick up the language, does not work. In submersion education, immigrant children are significantly behind on their native peers and will never catch up to grade-level performance (e.g. Tago & Ots, 2010; Aarts & Verhoeven, 1999). Immigrant children need a program that is adjusted to their needs and that gives them enough support. Both transitional programs and immersion programs can be viable options to provide education for immigrant children: students in both programs were generally able to catch up to the norm, or even surpass it (e.g. Ramirez, 1992; Genesee et al., 2005).

However, that does not mean every transitional or immersion program is equally successful. Bilingual programs in which students received instruction in their native language for a certain amount of time a day seemed to be the most effective (e.g. Genesee et al., 2005; Appel, 1984). This is most likely due to the interdependence hypothesis: the idea that developing competence in the L1, especially competence learned at school such as literacy, will develop a deeper linguistic proficiency that can transfer to the L2 (e.g. Cummins, 1979). This means that continued development of the L1 in a second-language program can help immigrant children develop proficiency in the L2. Exposure to the L2 only might even impede children's L1 development, and consequently, their L2 development (Cummins, 1979). Additionally, since speaking and writing are not only language skills but also cognitive skills that children use to learn, being able to fall back on their first language will help them to learn the second language faster and help understand content areas in the second language as well (Swain & Lapkin, 2005).

Of course, enough exposure to the L2 is needed as well to learn the language, but mere exposure is not a sufficient condition. Active practicing of language skills, contact with native speakers and content-based instruction are important factors in acquiring the L2 successfully (e.g. Genesee et al., 2005). Additionally, in order to reach a language proficiency that is needed to function in mainstream classes, immigrant children need to acquire academic language, not just

communicative proficiency (Valdés, 2004), and there needs to be a focus on developing literacy as well (Woods, 2009). Acquiring a language at an academic level is a long process: it takes immigrant children at least four, but sometimes up to ten years to catch up to the norm in all academic areas (e.g. Thomas & Collier, 2002). Several studies suggest that the longer students stay in a program, the better their achievement and the lower the drop-out rates (e.g. Genesee et al., 2005).

However, it is also important to take the social context in which immigrant children receive education into consideration. Apart from language problems, immigrant and more specifically refugee children often have traumatic experiences, and in their new country face issues of dislocation and cultural disorientation, and sometimes racism and discrimination (Goodwin, 2002). Factors such as identity and segregation also play an important role in second language acquisition and overall academic achievement. Although sociocultural orientation seems to have no influence on second-language proficiency (Appel, 1984), it is beneficial for immigrant children to have friendships both with children from a similar language and cultural background, as with children from the majority group – this will help them feel secure in their identity and will help them to feel like they fit in (e.g. De Heer et al., 2016). Both of these factors influence their second-language development and overall academic achievement (e.g. Tago & Ots, 2010; Cummins, 2008). Schools should provide environments which are affirming of the identities of immigrant students, for instance by letting them use their first languages and not equating limited language proficiency with limited intelligence (Cummins, 2008). Additionally, education programs for immigrant children should not be segregated, but give these children the opportunity to interact with native peers (e.g. Valdés, 1998). Teachers should be aware of the issues that immigrant children face and help them to adapt to the requirements of education in the host country (Goodwin, 2002). An effective program for immigrant children does not only teach them the language, but also the curricular content and the cultural content (Woods, 2009). This program should be specialized for immigrant children, but also be integrated within regular schools, make use of the same curriculum, be supportive of the children's languages and cultures, and prepare them well for mainstream education (Glenn & De Jong, 1996).

5.2 Policy implications

The implications of all findings for the best way to provide education for immigrant children are as follows.

1. Immigrant children should not be placed in mainstream classes (submersion education), but in a specialized program that is focussed on their needs and will prepare them to transition to mainstream education at a later point. Both transitional education and immersion education are viable program options.

2. If at all possible, the program should be bilingual – that is, make use of the native language of the children for at least some amount of instructional time a day. This will facilitate second language learning and overall academic performance in two ways:
 - a. It will positively influence L2 acquisition because of interdependence between the L1 and the L2.
 - b. It will affirm immigrant children in their identities, which might help them to feel confident and to fit in, and consequently, have the motivation to do well in school.
3. If a bilingual program is not possible and an immersion program is the only option, children’s use of their first language should not be prohibited. Children should be able to build on their native language skills in order to acquire Dutch and do tasks in Dutch. It could be beneficial for children to be grouped with at least one peer who speaks the same language in order to be able to build on their native language, and to facilitate friendships with people from the same language and cultural background.
4. There is no consensus on how long either transitional programs or immersion programs should be. Evidence suggests that students in late-exit programs perform better and that it takes at least 4 years to catch up to the norm in all subject areas; however, several studies also suggest that keeping students in a separated program, without interaction with native speakers of the second language and without ever being mainstreamed, is detrimental for their language development. The right balance needs to be found between giving immigrant children a basis that is strong enough to enter mainstream classes and keep up with the content, while not segregating them from native peers for too long.
5. Language acquisition in these programs should not just focus on communicative skills, but also teach the academic skills that students need in order to be successful in Dutch education.
6. Apart from language acquisition, a focus on literacy is highly important. The development of literacy skills in the L1 will positively influence second language acquisition, and development of literacy skills in the L2 is needed to understand the textbooks and function well within Dutch education. Especially for children who have had little, disrupted, or no previous education and who do not have literacy skills in their home language, it is important that they learn these skills, preferably in their home language as well.
7. Programs should not just be focussed on the development of language and literacy, but also on teaching the children the school curriculum, either through home language instruction or sheltered content classes. Having to learn Dutch should not mean that children have to fall behind on the content curriculum that is taught in regular classes. Specialized classes should fully prepare immigrant children for the curriculum of mainstream classes.

8. Immigrant children in these programs should be able to practice their active language skills, and interact with native peers and other immigrant children who already speak Dutch. Both are needed for successful language acquisition.
9. Having contact with Dutch peers is not just important for language acquisition, but also to help children fit in and have social contacts. This, in turn, will also be beneficial for language acquisition and overall academic achievement.
10. Where possible, education programs for immigrant children should be integrated within a primary school. This will:
 - a. Make it easier for teachers of these programs and teachers of mainstream classes to cooperate and make sure the curriculum of both programs is largely the same.
 - b. Make it possible for a transitional/immersion class to be integrated with a mainstream class in subjects where this is possible, such as music, sports and crafts.
 - c. Make it easier to have contact with Dutch peers – not just in these integrated classes, but also on the playground.
11. Sheltered content instruction, cooperative learning and creating active language environments seem to be effective methods for second language acquisition while learning content curriculum at the same time. However, many methods that a certain school or program may use are more pedagogical than linguistic in nature, and therefore beyond the scope of this study.
12. Teachers should be aware of the social issues that immigrant children face and help them to feel safe at school in order to help them do well in school and learn Dutch. This applies not only to the teachers in language-minority education, but also the teachers who will have immigrant children in class after being mainstreamed. They should:
 - a. Teach immigrant children about Dutch society and culture and help them find their way in a new country.
 - b. Be affirmative of their identities – they do not have to give up their former identities and languages to integrate into Dutch society.
 - c. Actively fight stereotypes and biases surrounding immigrant children and language-minority education.
13. After entering mainstream education, the language proficiency of immigrant children will still develop, so it is important that they will still have access to language support if needed.

6. Conclusion

Providing education for immigrant children is not an easy task. There are many linguistic, cognitive and social factors that have to be taken into consideration. The aim of this literature study was to answer the question whether immigrant children should be placed in regular classes, or learn Dutch first. The answer to this question is clear: if immigrant children are submersed in Dutch without knowing the language, they will stay behind on children whose primary language is Dutch and they will never be able to catch up to the norm. In order for immigrant children to be successful in school, and eventually in society, they need to be enrolled in a specialized language-minority program that will not only teach them the language but also the curricular content, and that will help them find their place in Dutch society, before entering mainstream classes. Although there are many different programs that can be effective if implemented in the right way, the most successful programs have been found to be bilingual.

Still, there are many questions that cannot easily be answered, such as how long a specialized education program should last to get the best results. Additionally, the exact instructional methods that are used have a huge influence on second language acquisition as well, but as this is more pedagogical than linguistic in nature, this is mostly beyond the scope of this study. More research, either through a literature study or experimental research, needs to be done to provide the answers that this thesis cannot give at this point. Of course, the implications of the study have several limitations as well. The implications regarding bilingual education were mostly based on studies in the United States where most children had a Hispanic background. Although the implications of the use of the L1 remain true for children from other backgrounds, realizing an environment in which children from several different backgrounds can all use their first languages might prove to be very difficult. Additionally, many schools and teachers might currently not have the expertise to implement a policy based on these implications, and many other changes might still need to be made in order to create an ideal learning environment for all children – however, this is also beyond the scope of this study.

Despite its limitations, I hope this study has provided insight in what an effective second language program, mainly regarding the linguistic factors involved, for immigrant children looks like, and what implications this has for the policy regarding education for immigrant children. Although it is important to remember that every child is different and what works for one child might not necessarily work for another, the learning environment should be as supportive as possible for every single immigrant child to help them learn Dutch, and give them the same opportunity to succeed in school and society as children who were born in the Netherlands.

7. References

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