EFL instruction as a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools: Teachers' perspective

Valek, Nives

University of Zagreb

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English, TEFL Section

Department of Pedagogy

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Master's thesis

Nives Valek

Supervisor: asst. prof. Stela Letica Krevelj, PhD

Co-supervisor: associate prof. Marija Bartulović, PhD

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Nives Valek

Mentorica: dr.sc. Stela Letica Krevelj, doc.

Komentorica: dr.sc. Marija Bartulović, izv. prof.

Zagreb, 2024.

Examining committee:

associate prof. Renata Geld, PhD

associate prof. Marija Bartulović, PhD

asst. prof. Stela Letica Krevelj, PhD

Contents

1. Introduction 1
2. Theoretical background 3
2.1. Refugees in Croatia 3
2.1.1. Terminology 3
2.1.2. Croatian laws relating to refugees 5
2.1.3. Displacement crises and refugees in Croatia 6
2.2. Refugee inclusion in schools 8
2.2.1. Inclusion in schools explained 9
2.2.2. Factors that influence refugee inclusion in schools 11
2.2.3. Refugee children and their rights and needs 12
2.2.4. Inclusion policies and practices in response to the rights and needs of refugee children 15
2.2.5. Refugee inclusion in schools in Croatia 16
2.2.6. Inclusion, inclusive education, and intercultural education 20
2.3. Intercultural education in schools 21
2.3.1. Refugees and intercultural education 22
2.3.2. Teachers and intercultural education 22
2.4. EFL instruction from an intercultural perspective 24
2.4.1. Language, culture, and the inclusion of refugees in schools 25
2.4.2. Refugees, language learning and a multilingual pedagogical approach in the EFL classroom 26
2.4.3. Intercultural pedagogy in the EFL classroom 29
2.4.4. Previous research on EFL instruction and refugee inclusion in schools 30
2.4.5. EFL instruction and intercultural refugee education in Croatia 32
2.5. EFL teachers' perspectives 33
2.6. EFL instruction and its potential for refugee inclusion in Croatia 34
2.6.1. Providing language training and support 35
2.6.2. Encouraging an inclusive learning environment 39
2.6.3. Providing opportunities for identity construction 41
2.6.4. Supporting friendship-building 42
2.6.5. An interconnected process 44
3. The study 44
3.1. Aim 44
3.2. Participants 45
3.2.1. Choosing and finding the participants 45
3.2.2. Information about the participants 46
3.3. Methodology 47
4. Ethical aspects of the study 48
5. Results 50

5.1. General information 50
5.2. The importance of prior English knowledge 51
5.3. Providing language training and support 54
5.3.1. Benefits 54
5.3.2. Challenges 57
5.3.3. Strategies used by EFL teachers 60
5.4. Encouraging an inclusive learning environment 62
5.4.1. Strategies used by EFL teachers 63
5.5. Providing opportunities for identity construction 65
5.5.1. Strategies used by EFL teachers 67
5.6. Supporting friendship-building 68
5.6.1. Strategies used by EFL teachers 69
6. Discussion 70
7. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research 73
8. Conclusion 74
References 76
Appendices 85
Appendix A - Protocol in English: 85
Appendix B - Protocol in Croatian: 86
Appendix C - Information letter and informed consent: 88

Abstract

Following the 2015 European refugee crisis and the Ukrainian refugee crisis which started in February 2022, the Croatian education system has been faced with a pressing need to include refugee children into Croatian schools. While some attention in research has been given to what the best ways for refugee children to acquire Croatian in schools are, no attention has been given to how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction can be used as a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools. This paper aims to determine in which ways five EFL teachers support the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system by researching their perspectives on refugee inclusion in their classrooms through a semi-structured interview. The results of the study show that the EFL teachers believe EFL instruction has potential for the inclusion of refugee students. They also provide insight into what benefits the participants believe learning English can have for refugee students and what challenges they face when teaching refugee students English. Further, the study resulted in an overview of strategies that EFL teachers use to provide language training and support to refugee students, to encourage an inclusive learning environment, to provide opportunities for identity construction of refugee students, and to support friendship-building between refugee students and Croatian students. Overall, the results show that multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices are sometimes addressed by the participants but are still not widely adopted and practiced by the interviewed EFL teachers, which could be attributed to the reaction of the Croatian education system to the arrival of refugees in Croatia.

Key words: EFL instruction, refugee children, refugee inclusion, teachers' perspectives, intercultural education, multilingual education

1. Introduction

With the frictions still happening in the Middle East and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, many people are forced to leave their places of origin and have to seek a new home in a place where their lives will not be in danger. *The UN Refugee Agency* (n.d.) reports that there are currently 108 million people worldwide who are forcibly displaced, 29,400,000 of whom are refugees, i.e. "people who have been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence" (USA for UNHCR, n.d.). These numbers show that the displacement of people is a truly serious occurrence which is not easy to overlook. As it seems, many more will be faced with this reality in the future as people continue to have to flee their countries due to the tensions and conflicts happening in the world.

Children below the age of 18 are an especially vulnerable group of forcibly displaced or stateless people, especially of refugees. An even more vulnerable category are children who are of the age to be elementary school students. The first thing refugee children are usually faced with when arriving in a new country of their settlement is the school system. Before refugee children can be included in society, they need to be successfully included in the school system (Poarch & Bialystok, 2017).

Inclusion of refugee children in schools has many factors, and it is a complicated process with many layers to it. Refugee children not only have to adjust to a new language of the country they settled down in and to the new culture, but they usually have to overcome the lack of prior education, which is often missing due of their turbulent lives, disruption of family networks, mental health issues due to trauma they face, housing instability, poverty, harmful stereotypes, and discrimination (Block et al., 2014). This is where schools have an essential role. Even though schools alone cannot completely be responsible for the inclusion of refugee children in society, they can at least create an environment which will help refugee children feel welcome and included by caring for their well-being and meeting their needs (Block et al., 2014).

Croatia, as a member state of the European Union, provides shelter for refugees. Since the English language is known as the global language, and in Croatia, English as foreign language classrooms are considered spaces where the intercultural communicative competence[1] is to be developed and multilingualism is to be supported, as the new English curriculum from 2019 (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2019) states, English as a Foreign Language

[1] An individual's ability "to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society" (p. 565).

instruction has a huge potential to serve as one of the tools for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools.

While there have been some studies on how refugees acquire Croatian in Croatian schools (Cvitanušić Tvico, 2022; Đurđević & Podboj, 2016; Ocvirk et al., 2022; Perić & Merkaš, 2020; Podboj, 2016), as it is important that refugees learn the language of the host country, not much attention has been given to the potential that the English language and EFL instruction can have for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools.

It is possible that refugee children arrive in Croatia, and they already know English because they were in contact with it either in their schools and their environment before they had to leave their places of origin, or they learned it along the way while being resettled from one country to another. This gives EFL instruction an excellent chance to be used as a tool for refugee children's inclusion in schools. It can encourage communication between students, can serve as a first step towards the refugees' contact with Croatian and the society in general, and can make it easier for refugee children's voices to be heard. At the same time, there may be refugees who do not know English when they arrive in Croatia. Still, as stated in the 2019 English curriculum by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, EFL instruction should be a process supportive of intercultural education[2] with which equity is promoted and different ethnic and cultural identities are openly accepted and talked about. It should also be a process supportive of multilingual education, making linguistic diversity a positive phenomenon.

As the people who are in contact with the students the most, teachers, in this case EFL teachers, are interesting to research. Borg (2006) states that teachers' perspectives and thought processes influence their actions and their pedagogical decisions. Further, their practices and attitudes directly influence the students they teach and interact with (Borg, 2006). Therefore, the current perspectives of EFL teachers who teach refugee students should be studied, to gain insight into current practices.

While intercultural education and its implementation into instruction is not the teachers' accountability alone and the whole system needs to be of help, it is important to see what the teachers' perspectives are, especially since the teachers are in direct contact with refugee

[2] "An educational approach based on respect for and recognition of cultural diversity, aimed at every member of society as a whole, that proposes an intervention model, formal and informal, holistic, integrated and encompassing all dimensions of the educational process in order to accomplish a real equality of opportunities/results, to promote intercultural communication and competency, and to overcome racism in all its expressions" (Aguado & Malik, 2001).

children. One cannot efficiently interact with people who are of a different cultural and linguistic background than the majority population without being aware of what intercultural education truly is, especially since that interaction is of a pedagogical nature. Adding to intercultural education, EFL instruction can also give refugee children the opportunity to use their full language repertoires during classes, further proved by the nature of the English curriculum which promotes multilingualism (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2019).

Teachers' perspectives on EFL instruction as a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools are a concept worth researching. Since the aim of this paper is to determine how English language teachers support the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system, EFL teachers should be interviewed to see if they are aware of the potential that EFL instruction can have for the inclusion of refugee children and if they use any of this potential. The study will also shed light on some strategies that EFL teachers use to provide language training and support, encourage an inclusive learning environment, provide opportunities for identity construction, and support friendship-building while also seeing if any of these strategies belong to multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices. With these questions being answered, insight might be provided into how teachers use both their intercultural competences, their knowledge about language acquisition, and their knowledge about English and its benefits to fully include refugee students and support them, all the while overcoming the challenges they face.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Refugees in Croatia

Before proceeding with this paper, it should be explained how the term *refugees* is defined, what *migrants* and *asylum seekers* are defined as, how their inclusion is supported legally, what relevant causes for refugees' displacement we have today and how Croatia is handling the situation. If one wants to look at how specific instruction influences and can influence refugee education and their inclusion, it is relevant to first look at the nomenclature related to refugees and at the bigger picture of the country being researched.

2.1.1. Terminology

UNHCR's glossary (n.d.) states that "there is no universally accepted definition for a **migrant** and that the term is not defined by international law." They also write that, traditionally, a

migrant has been thought to be a person who chose to move from their country of residence or origin across international borders but not "because of a direct threat of persecution, serious harm, or death, but exclusively for other reasons, such as to improve their conditions by pursuing work or education opportunities, or to reunite with family" (UNHCR, n.d). According to UNHCR (n.d), migrants can be migrant workers and smuggled migrants, as well as others whose status or means of movement is not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. UNHCR (n.d.) also writes that the term *migrants* should not be used to refer to refugees or to asylum seekers.

As expressed in the introduction, **refugees** are "people who have been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence" (USA for UNHCR, n.d.). UHNCR (n.d.) also states that refugees are people "outside their country of origin who need international protection[3] because of fear of persecution, or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder[4]."

It is necessary to know that using the terms *migrants* and *refugees* as synonyms, as they are sometimes wrongly used, might take away from the struggles that refugees face and the distinct status and legal protection that refugees need. It is also significant that when the term *migrants* is used as a supercategory to which the term *refugees* belong to, it can also endanger the status of refugees and their particularities (Đurđević & Podboj, 2016). While refugees have been forced to leave their countries because their lives are in danger, that is not always the case for migrants. While there is no internationally accepted definition of a migrant (UNHCR, n.d.), a migrant might still have a chance to return to their place of residence even though that might not always be the case if the situation (economic downfall, political unrest, gang violence, natural disasters…) of the place they come from is unsalvageable (*Amnesty International*,

[3] International protection according to UNHCR (n.d.): "The protection that is accorded by the international community to individuals or groups who are outside their own country, who are unable to return because they would be at risk there, and whose own country is unable or unwilling to protect them. Risks that give rise to a need for international protection classically include those of persecution or other threats to life, freedom or physical integrity arising from armed conflict, serious public disorder, or different situations of violence. Other risks may stem from famine linked to situations of armed conflict; disasters; as well as being stateless. Frequently, these elements are interlinked and are manifested in forced displacement."

[4] UNHCR (n.d.) also writes something else that is relevant to know: "Under international law, a person is considered a refugee as soon as they meet the relevant criteria, whether or not they have been formally recognised as a refugee. A person does not become a refugee because of recognition, but rather is recognised because they are a refugee."

2022). Still, not separating the terms *refugees* and *migrants* might be harmful to refugees since it might lessen the difficulties they face.

At the same time, Crawley and Skleparis (2018) argue that using the categories *refugee* and *migrant* to distinguish between people who have for one reason or another needed to leave their country can be used to justify policies of exclusion and containment and to enforce binary, static and linear understandings of migration. Similarly, Long (2013) states that since the signing of *the 1951 Refugee Convention*, with which the identity of refugees was clearly separated from that of migrants, many have used this separation to exclude both from discussions about their rights. So, while a difference should be made between refugees and migrants, one must be wary and not fall into the trap of dichotomies and categorizations of people whose rights are being violated. What matters the most in the end is to listen to everyone's voices and to be aware that everyone is entitled to basic human decency and protection.

Asylum seekers also need to be mentioned. UNHCR (n.d.) defines asylum seekers as all people who are seeking international protection. So, in Croatia asylum seekers are refugees who have applied for international protection and a refugee status but have not been granted it yet[5]. It is also crucial to note that not every asylum seeker will be acknowledged as a refugee in the end, but every refugee is an asylum seeker at the beginning when seeking asylum in the country they are in (UNHCR, n.d.).

Having all of this in mind, this paper uses the term *refugees* to refer to "people who have been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence" (USA for UNHCR, n.d.) and who have been given the status of either asylum seekers, temporary protection, subsidiary protection or the status of asylees[6] in Croatia. While asylum seekers are refugees in everything but their legal status and while refugee children should also start going to school maximum 30 days after claiming that they need international protection, that process is often skewed in Croatia and lasts much longer (Ćuća, 2021).

2.1.2. Croatian laws relating to refugees

Croatia has a law regulating the status of people in exile and refugees[7] and a law on international and temporary protection[8]. After a refugee in Croatia is considered for international protection,

[5] https://www.zakon.hr/z/1837/Zakon-o-statusu-prognanika-i-izbjeglica
[6] See 2.1.2. for explanations.
[7] https://www.zakon.hr/z/1837/Zakon-o-statusu-prognanika-i-izbjeglica
[8] https://www.zakon.hr/z/798/Zakon-o-me%C4%91unarodnoj-i-privremenoj-za%C5%A1titi

one of the four statuses can be given to them according to these laws - the status of an asylum seeker, of temporary protection, subsidiary protection, or the status of an asylee.

Asylum seekers are already defined under section 2.1.1., but the Croatian law defines them as people who have shown an interest in applying for international protection until the results of the application are given[9].

Temporary protection is granted to people who have been forced to leave their countries and cannot return due to the dangerous situation happening in that country[10]. The status of temporary protection lasts three years at most[11].

Subsidiary protection is given to people who do not qualify to have the status of an asylee given to them but have the right to protection because it is known that they will suffer injustice if they return to their country, and they do not wish to have the protection of such a country[12].

An **asylee** is a person who has received asylum in the country where they have requested international protection and has the right to stay in Croatia for as long as they want to[13].

Besides the two laws, there are also some regulations and handbooks which elaborate how refugees are to be included into the Croatian education system which Ćuća (2021) lists in her article. Among other things, they include rules and guidelines on how to adapt the Croatian language subject and the history and culture subject for refugees, how to assess them for these two subjects, how to act if they do not know Croatian at all or if they know it insufficiently, and how to act if they do not know the language and culture of their country of origin.

2.1.3. Displacement crises and refugees in Croatia

UNHCR (n.d.) defines **migration** as "a general term referring to the movement of people away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border (international migration) or within a state." They state that what refugees go through is not migration, but **displacement** because they "have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence (whether within their own country or across an international border)." That is why this paper will use the term *displacement* in the context of refugees from now on.

[9] Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti (2015), article 4
[10] Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti (2015), article 78
[11] Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti (2015), article 79
[12] Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti (2015), article 21
[13] Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti (2015), article 4

In the past ten years there have been two displacement crises that have had a big influence on the Croatian education system which can be seen by the origins of people in the data that The Croatian Ministry of Interior publishes every three months about people asking for international protection[14]. The first is the 2015 European refugee crisis also known as the Syrian refugee crisis which still has an impact on Croatia today. The second one is the Ukrainian refugee crisis which started in February 2022 and is still ongoing.

The Syrian refugee crisis happened after millions of people from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries influenced by the wars and the political unrest in the Middle East reached the borders of European countries. Some refugees decided to settle down in Croatia and seek asylum, and even though their number was not overwhelming then[15], the crisis still has an influence on the Croatian education system today because refugee children affected by this crisis are still in the Croatian education system and new people affected by the crisis keep settling down in Croatia.

From the start of *the Ukrainian refugee crisis* in February 2022, many people have been forced to leave their homes. Since then, Croatia has been taking in refugees affected by the crisis. The number of refugees in Croatia registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes had been 21,640 on 7th April 2023 as recorded by UNHRC (n.d.2). The website named *Croatia for Ukraine* made by the Croatian Government (n.d.) reports that from 25th February 2022 to 31st December 2022 22,407 Ukrainian refugees have settled down in Croatia, 7,443 (33,3%) of whom were children. This shows that the topic of the inclusion of refugee children into the Croatian education system is a truly relevant topic.

The Croatian Ministry of Interior (2023) reports that from 1st January 2023 to 30th September 2023 54,482 asylum seekers in Croatia have asked for international protection and that the most asylum seekers in that period were from Afghanistan (17,359), Turkey (7,027), Russia (6,313), Morocco (5,316), Pakistan (4,153) and Iraq (3,076). It can be seen that a lot of the people asking for international protection are the people influenced by the two above mentioned displacement crises.

Eighteen people have been granted the status of asylees from 1st January 2023 to 30th September 2023 while one person has been granted subsidiary protection which is also reported by the Croatian Ministry of Interior (2023). Seven of those people were children under the age

[14] https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234
[15] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asydcfsta/default/table?lang=en

of 14. Since 2006 only 919 people have been granted asylum in Croatia and 139 have been granted subsidiary protection. This shows just how difficult it is to get asylum in Croatia. With that, as Đurđević and Podboj (2016) state, refusing to give asylum to refugees can greatly negatively influence their lives.

The same is, of course, true for refugee children and their inclusion in schools. Because of this, it is crucial to try and make their inclusion as suited to their needs as possible. One thing that can help with that is making use of EFL instruction, so this paper aims to ascertain where current EFL teachers of refugee students stand and what their perspectives on EFL instruction as a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools are.

2.2. Refugee inclusion in schools

Students in schools come from many different cultures, language environments, socioeconomic backgrounds, and family structures and they have a wide range of abilities which is why it is significant to provide quality education for them all in a context where they feel included (Amer et al., 2009). When one speaks about inclusion in schools, the first thought might be the inclusion of children with disabilities through inclusive education. While the idea of inclusive education started from the inclusion of children with disabilities (UNICEF, n.d.), today inclusive education is related to the inclusion of all children, as Polat (2011, p. 52) writes, "regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, socio-economic status, and any other aspect of an individual's identity that might be perceived as different." As UNICEF's web page on inclusive education (n.d.) states: "inclusive education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all" making it obvious that inclusive education involves all children. Since refugees are usually not of the same background as the rest of the students in Croatian classes, it is significant to properly include them in the classrooms, but inclusion is usually a slow progress that includes effort from the entire system (UNICEF, n.d.). Teachers and their perspectives are one of the factors that can impact the quality of inclusion, and that is why it is pertinent to see what the perspectives of the teachers are. Before looking at how teachers' perspectives can influence inclusion, the factors that impact refugee children and families should also be explained. It is also necessary to see how to adapt inclusion practices to refugees since they have rights and needs specific to them, what refugee inclusion is currently like in Croatia, and how inclusive practices should be a stepping-stone towards a full intercultural education.

2.2.1. Inclusion in schools explained

Houtkamp (2015) states that at the time of the writing of his article many European states aspire to an assimilation ideology aimed at teaching immigrants the language of the host country and what they consider to be the highlights of the dominant culture (e.g. important national norms and values and historical events). At the same time, they refer to these ideologies as integration even though what they view as integration differs from the original definition of integration where an individual engages with both their heritage and the host country's culture (Houtkamp, 2015). That is why Houtkamp (2015) believes that a new concept may be more suitable, and here is where *inclusion* comes into play.

Even though inclusion is used in many fields, and it is hard to properly define it, Houtkamp (2015, p. 80) states that there is one thing certain about inclusion and that is that it "entails a degree of adaptation of the majority group, be it a company, the army, the political community, or society, to accommodate members of the minority." Most of the time, *inclusion* refers to efforts made by society to let minorities participate. That is what makes it different from simple integration which only rests on the individual. With inclusion minorities are required to adjust to their host country to a certain extent, without resorting to complete forced assimilation. At the same time, society is obliged to help the minorities both adjust to the new culture and keep their heritage.

Looking at the education system, the shift from the term *integration* to *inclusion* happened after the 1994 Salamanca Statement by UNESCO. With the Salamanca Statement it was decided that education for all, also known as inclusive education (then with a focus on education for children with disabilities), needs to be promoted and everyone's individual needs need to be met in a way that gives priority to the participation of all students. With the new idea of inclusion for all it was obvious that the concept should not be mixed with integration anymore because of the many different connotations it carried by that point and the different interpretations people had for the term (Vislie, 2010).

To help with the understanding of inclusion and how it is different from integration, the Salamanca Statement (1994, p. 3) names five principles that should be considered when implementing inclusive beliefs and practices:

1. Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
2. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.

3. Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.
4. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.
5. Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system.

Vislie (2010, p. 21) states that Sebba and Ainscow (1996) write that integration and inclusion need to be separated and name the following features of inclusion which should help separate it from integration:

Inclusion is *not*:

- focusing on an individual or small group of pupils for whom the curriculum is adapted, different work is devised, or support assistants are provided;
- about how to assimilate individual pupils with identified special educational needs into existing forms of schooling.

Inclusion:

- is a process (rather than a state), by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals;
- regards inclusion and exclusion as connected processes; schools developing more inclusive practices may need to consider both;
- emphasises the reconstructing of curricular provision in order to reach out to all pupils as individuals;
- emphasises overall school effectiveness;
- is of relevance to all phases and types of schools, possibly including special schools, since within any educational provision teachers face groups of students with diverse needs and are required to respond to this diversity.

2.2.2. Factors that influence refugee inclusion in schools

When refugee children arrive in a new country, they all already have their experiences which shape their actions and feelings upon arrival and their stay in the new country. Those experiences also influence how the refugees' inclusion will look like in schools and what their new experiences in society will look like. The society and schools also have their own characteristics which will influence the inclusion of refugee children. Dodd et al. (2021) name five factors which influence the school experiences of refugee families and children after their review of literature on Syrian refugees. While their review of literature is only about Syrian refugees in Canada, it could be argued that the factors mirror experiences of refugees in general. The five mentioned factors are: *pre-arrival factors, mental health, social support, lack of preparedness of teachers and schools* and *language acquisition*. Dodd et al. (2021) point out that these factors intersect and influence one another, but it is important to understand what each one includes separately too.

Pre-arrival factors include the experiences refugees have before they depart their country of origin, the ones they have when they are fleeing the country and their experiences when they get their first asylum in the new country (Merali, 2008). These include experiences of war, violence, separation from loved ones, disrupted schooling, food shortages, unemployment, language difficulties, mental health, overall health concerns (Yohani et al., 2019) and also their stay in either apartments or other types of housing versus in temporary structures in refugee camps (Clark, 2017).

Dodd et al. (2021) state that **mental health** is both a pre- and post-arrival factor for refugees. Due to exposure to armed conflicts, displacement, separation from loved ones, or threats to personal safety, refugee children and their families can develop mental health conditions and they can show symptoms of psychological trauma (Hadfield et al., 2017). Because of that they can experience sleep disturbances, issues with attention, show signs of aggression and separation anxiety (Hadfield et al., 2017 and Yohani et al., 2019) which can all have influence on their school performance and their inclusion.

Refugees need **social support** if they are to be included in society properly. Dodd et al. (2021) names five social support resources which could help refugees feel more included and they are: *1) extended family, 2) sponsors, 3) communities, 4) friends, and 5) school*. Since refugees are usually separated from their extended families, it is on the other four social support resources to help refugees feel connected to the society (Yamashita, 2018). Having sponsors can provide refugees with basic support such as various registrations, housing, finances, skill support, and

orientation in the local community (Hadfield et al., 2017). Similarly, communities help refugees build relationships, not only personal ones, but also ones connected to culture, ethnic and religious communities, and language classes (Yohani et al., 2019). Friendship can help refugees develop a sense of belonging and can help with learning the language of the country (Clark, 2017). It can also help children adapt to new school environments (Yamashita, 2018). Finally, positive school experience can help with children's social, emotional, and academic growth and empowerment and their inclusion in society (Hadfield et al., 2017 and Yohani et al., 2019) which is significant for this paper.

The last two factors, **lack of preparedness of teachers and schools** and **language acquisition**, might be the most significant ones for this paper. It is crucial that educators are aware of the social, political, and cultural contexts from which refugee students come so they can understand the children's identities and support their transition to the classroom with curricula and practices that support the inclusion of refugees (Clark, 2017). That is why it is important to research what their perceptions are and what practices they employ in their teaching.

Language is a huge part of everyone's life and refugee inclusion policies often give the most priority to refugees learning the language of the host country (Dodd et al., 2021). Yamashita (2018) points out that it is vital that the refugee children's first language is maintained, and second language is acquired as well, which was English in the case of Yamashita's paper. The question that one must ask themselves is what happens when refugees arrive in a country where the official language is not English and they have to learn their first language, the language of the host country, and English as well, as is the case with Croatia.

2.2.3. Refugee children and their rights and needs

Refugee children, apart from having needs that all other human beings have, also have needs which are specific to their experiences which are usually the product of a turbulent life they have lived up until they settled down in a country which is safe for them and then to the experiences in the country of settlement. With that, they also have rights which need to be respected with proper policies and practices meant for refugee children and which include the right to a personal life, survival, and development; the right to education; the right to health and well-being; the right to safety and protection and the right to participate in the community (Lawrence et al., 2019).

Arnot and Pinson (2005) identified a holistic model[16] of education of refugee children in the UK. With this model refugee students are seen as students with multiple, complex needs (learning, social, and emotional needs) that all need to be met. Taylor and Sidhu (2012) also identify a holistic approach where learning, social, and emotional needs are being taken into consideration when researching the inclusion of refugee students in schools in Australia.

Taking those two studies into account, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development or the OECD's Lucie Cerna (2019) proposes a holistic model for the educational integration of refugee children which serves as a good framework for this paper. Even though the word *integration* is used, it is still a good starting point for research on refugee needs and the term *inclusion* will be used instead of *integration* from now on because of the previously explained reasons.

According to this model refugee children have learning, social, and emotional needs which all (or at least most of them) need to be addressed before educational inclusion takes place. As far as learning needs go, refugee children need to both develop their mother tongue and learn the host country's language at the same time, overcome interruptions in schooling or their limited education, and adjust to the new school system of the host country. As for the refugee children's social needs, they need to have an opportunity and ability to communicate with others, feel a sense of belonging and bond with the community, and develop a strong personal identity. Finally, refugee children need to feel safe, and be able to cope with loss, grief as well as separation and/or trauma for their emotional needs to be met (Cerna, 2019). Table 1 shows the holistic model for the educational integration of refugee children (Cerna, 2019) and what needs should be met for the model to work.

Table 1

Holistic model for the educational integration of refugee children - needs (Cerna, 2019)

Learning needs	• language learning • catching-up on schooling • adjustment to the new educational system
Social needs	• communication

[16] Pinson and Arnot (2010) write: "Holistic education is likely to have a broader focus than teaching academic skills, addressing the whole – the spirit, mind and body – of the child. Individual academic achievement as well as the child's well-being, emotional, personal and social development becomes the focus of holistic educational provision (Martin, 1997)" (p. 256).

	• sense of belonging and bonding • strong personal identity
Emotional needs	• safety • coping with separation, loss and/or trauma

Similar to Dodd et al. (2021), Cerna (2019) also lists three different types of factors which can all influence the needs of refugee children. These factors include individual, interpersonal, and institutional (school-level) factors. Cerna (2019) also mentions that the factors are shaped by a variety of targeted policies and practices. Some factors which are mentioned here coincide with the five factors mentioned by Dodd et al. (2021) and discussed above, but a more systematic overview is given in Table 2.

Table 2

Holistic model for the educational integration of refugee children - factors (Cerna, 2019)

Individual factors	• language proficiency • physical and mental health
Interpersonal factors	• connection with peers • family support and social networks
School-level factors	• learning environment • school engagement • student/teacher interaction • assessment in schools • extracurricular activities • family involvement in school

These factors and needs are important for refugee children, but they might be different for each refugee child since all their experiences and skills are personal and differ from one another. So, for example, one child might need bigger support with their social needs, while another might need more help with their language learning. Therefore, being familiar with each individual and their experiences and skills and adjusting practices to individual refugees when working with them should be one of the priorities for teachers.

2.2.4. Inclusion policies and practices in response to the rights and needs of refugee children

Since refugee children have their needs and rights, it is crucial to respond to them. The two most significant stakeholders here are the host country and the schools which the refugees go to (Cerna, 2019). The country and the school and its employees should support refugee students to the best of their abilities, the country by making policies and the schools by implementing proper practices. Cerna (2019) provides an overview of all the policies and practices that OECD member states have implemented to respond to the unique needs of refugee children. These policies and practices are all presented in Table 3 with the addition of a syntagm *needs and rights* since only needs are used in the original document, but the author of this paper believes it also encompasses the rights.

Table 3

Practices and policies that OECD member states have implemented to respond to the needs and rights of refugee children (Cerna, 2019)

Responding to learning needs and rights of refugee children	• giving refugee children access to education • providing an early assessment and individualised study plan • providing introductory/welcome classes and transition to mainstream classes • providing language training and support • providing mother tongue tuition • encouraging an inclusive learning environment • training teachers and other school professionals to support refugee children's specific needs
Responding to social needs and rights of refugee children	• implementing whole-school and whole-community approaches[17]

[17] Whole-school and whole-community approaches include "fostering links with parents, local agencies and the wider community, and working with welfare agencies" and were identified "in some countries like Australia and the United Kingdom" (Cerna, 2019, p. 44).

	• providing opportunities for identity construction • supporting friendship-building • offering extra-curricular activities • engaging parents and families
Responding to emotional needs and rights of refugee children	• promoting well-being • providing mental health support

While different countries have different perceptions of how to respond to refugee children's needs and rights, and their policies and practices sometimes differ, there are some practices and policies which are sure to be considered important for every policy maker and school. Before anything else, it is necessary to give refugee children access to education as soon as possible, even though practice shows that even that is not always guaranteed (Cerna, 2019) and refugee children do not have access to school due to long waiting periods, language barriers, accessibility in terms of distance, insufficient guidance for families, lack of information provided on such opportunities, low allowances for asylum applicants to cover expenses, and the treatment and integration of traumatised children (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017 as cited in Cerna, 2019). It is also evident that providing language training and support, encouraging an inclusive learning environment, providing opportunities for identity construction, and supporting friendship-building are all important for the education of every refugee and every educator should try to support all of the mentioned things, even if the policy makers are not giving them much attention. What the best way to go about the mentioned practices is remains uncertain and there is no single or best inclusion model (Cerna, 2019), but there are some methods which should help with the inclusion[18]. That is why training teachers and other school professionals to support refugee children's specific needs should be one of the first steps countries take when responding to refugees' rights and needs.

2.2.5. Refugee inclusion in schools in Croatia

Even though Croatia is not a member of the OECD, the above-mentioned Table 3 serves as a good reference point for the analysis of which policies and practices for responding to refugee children's rights and needs Croatia has implemented and how successful they are.

[18] Some of the methods will be discussed later under section 2.6. while looking at the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugees.

Croatia, like any other country which is a member of the UN, has the obligation to follow *the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) which defines every child as a person who, among other things, has the right to education, the right to engage in play, the right to leisure time, the right to cultural activities, the right to be informed, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of expression. In accordance with that, *The Croatian Law on International and Temporary Protection* has an article which secures the right to education for all refugee children (article 58). In this article it is stated that:

1. A child who is an asylum seeker has the right to elementary and secondary education under the same conditions as a Croatian citizen.
2. An asylum seeker who has gained the right to secondary education from point 1 of this article will be able to continue secondary education even after coming of age.
3. The right from point 1 of this article will be given to the child who is an asylum seeker within 30 days from the day of submitting a request for protection to the implementation of the decision of a return.
4. If the child who is an asylum seeker does not know or insufficiently knows the Croatian language, they will be allowed to attend preparatory classes or supplementary classes of Croatian, as well as supplementary classes in certain subjects, if there is a need for it.

Further, article 70 of the same law states that the right to elementary, secondary, and tertiary education is guaranteed to asylees and people under subsidiary protection.

As previously mentioned (section 2.1.2.), the Ministry of Science and Education has also published some regulations and handbooks which include rules and guidelines on how to adapt the Croatian language subject and the history and culture subject for refugees, how to assess their Croatian language knowledge and their knowledge of Croatian history, how to act if they do not know Croatian at all or if they know it insufficiently, and how to act if they do not know the language and culture of their country of origin. For example, *The Croatian Language, History and Culture Learning Program for Asylum Seekers and Foreigners under Subsidiary Protection for Inclusion into Croatian Society* (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2014) includes pointers to teachers on how to teach Croatian, how to teach refugees some learning strategies that they can use, how to teach them grammar, which materials to use for instruction, how to assess language knowledge and how to promote interculturality while also giving eight units with objectives, outcomes and content which teachers can teach refugees. Those units are: *Croatian in everyday life, Food and drinks, Numbers and time, Characteristics*

and health, Clothes and shopping, Housing and travelling, Work and leisure time, and Nature and the environment. In the program it is also stated that upon completion of the program, the H1.0 level of Croatian knowledge is acquired, which enables the most basic communication in the Croatian language. It is also written that acquiring a foreign language depends on many factors such as characteristics of the mother tongue and other languages that a person knows, the context of learning, motivation, and individual characteristics of a learner and that the effect of affective factors is especially important because of the experiences of refugees. This is of interest to us because of the topic of this paper.

There is also *The Rulebook on the Implementation of Preparatory and Supplementary Instruction for Students Who Do Not Know or Insufficiently Know the Croatian Language and Instruction of the Mother Tongue and the Culture of the Student's Country of Origin*[19] which states that preparatory instruction of the Croatian language is supposed to be organised for one or two classes a day for 70 classes in total and that students need to be tested for their Croatian knowledge first. Refugees who do not know Croatian are one of the groups of students for who this preparatory instruction is organised in schools.

However, authors who have written papers on the situation after the 2015 refugee crisis (Ćuća 2021; Đurđević & Podboj, 2016; Podboj, 2016) all point out that while the legislative framework about learning Croatian and the inclusion of refugee children into schools is in action, in practice there are a lot of barriers and challenges that exist. The mentioned authors also point out that mistakes which prevent quality inclusion of refugee children are being made. These mistakes include late inclusion of refugee children into schools, the absence of a standardised procedure on how to choose an adequate class depending on the child's age and previously acquired knowledge, badly thought out Croatian preparatory classes, the absence of standardised textbooks, no mental health support for refugee children and their families, etc. Ćuća (2021) also points out that most of the difficulties stem from the fact that the importance of intercultural education is still not recognised in the Croatian education system.

Considering the ongoing Ukrainian refugee crisis and the obligation of all EU states to give the refugees from the affected areas the status of temporary protection, the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (2022a) had written a notice on how to include refugees from Ukraine

[19] https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_02_15_252.html

into the education system right away in 2022 when the crisis first happened[20]. The notice was delivered to all principals so refugee children could swiftly be included into Croatian schools. It was said that all elementary and secondary schools need to ensure that the refugee children from affected areas can:

- participate in preparatory classes of Croatian without being tested for prior Croatian knowledge;
- be included into classes and subjects according to their abilities and capabilities;
- be provided with a final grade and certificate when the school year ends.

The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (2022b) also published a reference booklet for teachers and other workers in the education system on how to include refugees since they are an especially vulnerable group of students[21]. Throughout this reference booklet, the English language is mentioned several times. It is mentioned that teachers should try to communicate with refugees through the medium of English if the refugees know it and that when refugees first arrive, they should be given the opportunity to learn basic English vocabulary. This shows that there is an awareness that English can be used as a tool for refugee inclusion in the beginning stages of their inclusion, but still there is not any research in Croatia about refugees and English instruction or any official document that specifically examines its relevance and which maps out to what extent English should be used so it does not hinder the acquisition of other languages including Croatian.

Croatian authors started writing about refugee children in the 1990s because of the war happening in Croatia (Ajduković & Ajduković, 1993; Kuterovac et al, 1994; Magličić, 1996; Prica & Povrzanović, 1995 as cited in Perić & Merkaš, 2020) and that is the first literature on refugee children that exists in Croatia. After that, a surge of literature on refugee children happened because of the 2015 refugee crisis with a strong focus on learning the Croatian language (Cvitanušić Tvico, 2022; Đurđević & Podboj, 2016; Ocvirk et al. 2022; Perić & Merkaš, 2020; Podboj, 2016). Today, because of the above-mentioned refugee crises and the fact that many children who come from the affected areas may already know English, it would be useful to draw on the fact that EFL instruction can help them feel included in classrooms and schools. That is why it will be interesting to see how aware ELF teachers who have worked or

[20] https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Ukljucivanje%20djece%20i%20ucenika%20izbjeglica%20iz%20Ukrajine%20u%20odgojno-obrazovni%20sustav%20Republike%20Hrvatske.pdf

[21] https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Smjernice-upute-preporuke-prijedlozi-aktivnosti-osnovnim-srednjim-skolama-za-inkluziju-ranjive-skupine-ucenika-izbjeglica.pdf

work with refugee children are of the potential that EFL instruction has for the inclusion of refugee children and what they do to put this potential into practice.

Looking at Cerna's (2019) practices and policies that OECD member states have implemented to respond to the needs of refugee children (see Table 3), Croatia's focus is strongly on responding to learning needs of refugee children which could partly be due to the fact that a lot of importance is given to the academic part of education in Croatia, while the emotional and social needs tend to be overlooked. The potential of instruction to develop certain values also tends to be inferior to learning new academic material. Still, the above-mentioned booklet also provides guidance on how to respond to refugee's social and emotional needs, which means there is at least some progress.

From everything mentioned, it seems that authors (Ćuća, 2021; Đurđević & Podboj, 2016; Podboj, 2016) believe that the level at which Croatia is right now could at best be considered one of integration of refugees. What it should be striving for is total or full inclusion of refugee children and the recognition of the importance of intercultural education.

2.2.6. Inclusion, inclusive education, and intercultural education

Inclusive education implies that everyone's individual needs need to be met, all students must be given the right to participate, and their individuality needs to be respected. Following inclusive education, as already stated above, society is obliged to help the minorities both adjust to the new culture and keep their heritage. If one goes further and looks at critical pedagogy of education and acknowledges its idea that education cannot be neutral (Giroux, 2010) and that oppression is prevalent in our society (Freire, 1996), one has to be ready to actively work on achieving social justice by transforming society and working on emancipation. When one detects and becomes aware of the oppressive social relations and that a transforming and active approach is needed in education so society can move towards a state of justice, one can be a teacher who practises intercultural education (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). That realisation can only happen if a teacher is aware that their role in educating someone is to support their students in their process of self(education) by making sure their students become self-aware, active, and responsible citizens. It can also only happen if a teacher is aware that education is not happening in a vacuum, but depends on the context, and accordingly acknowledges the context in their teaching (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). Therefore, following this recent line of thought which developed through critical pedagogy, intercultural education is a step further from the idea of inclusive education because it involves an active transformative approach. Still,

it is crucial to point out that in this paper the concept of the inclusion of refugees will be considered as a process which can be achieved through the medium of intercultural education. This way it should be easier to avoid the misunderstandings and confusion which may arise if one were to separate inclusion and intercultural education as inclusive and intercultural education are sometimes separated. Inclusion and inclusive education are two separate notions, and inclusion can be achieved through many separate ideas, one of which is intercultural education. The main goal of intercultural education is to provide all students with quality education - not with regard to or in spite of their differences, but so that we take these differences as the basis of the authenticity and purposefulness of the educational process (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). Therefore, the inclusion of refugees in schools falls into the sphere of intercultural education and can be more successful if one is familiar with intercultural education and its practices.

2.3. Intercultural education in schools

When the education of refugee students is observed, it is important to mention *intercultural education*. The goal of intercultural education is to give quality education to all students (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). Many falsely believe that intercultural education is just for "culturally different" students. Intercultural education is for all people who are active participants in society since one of its goals is the transformation of society (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). Making a distinction between "culturally different" students and the rest of society is a form of discrimination in itself. Learning about different cultures, learning to respect them, living in interaction with them and being ready to act to stop discrimination, racism, and other forms of oppression in our society are all things that everyone in our society should strive for. Teachers and all other educational workers can benefit from being aware of intercultural education and its idea that everyone can work towards the transformation of society.

Interaction of different cultures happens when refugee children arrive in Croatia and when they arrive in Croatian schools. The gap between cultures will depend on how similar the host country's culture is to the culture of refugees. That is why it is good for teachers who are in an interaction with refugees to be aware of intercultural education and practices that are intercultural so they can react and adapt their practices to the individual characteristics of the newly arrived students.

2.3.1. Refugees and intercultural education

Since the goal of intercultural education is to give quality education to *all* students, it is imperative to respect the uniqueness of each student and define pedagogical principles and goals that respond to that student's unique needs (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). Therefore, the same goes for refugee students. Each teacher needs to recognise their individual characteristics and needs and then respond to them in a manner that is appropriate.

Bartulović and Kušević (2016) point out that each student should be given the right to develop the sense of human dignity, civic identity, self-esteem, empathy, and autonomy. However, the results of studies show that their identity markers such as their race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status have an influence on the development of the mentioned factors and are the cause of inequality and discrimination in education (Brint, 2006). This is where intercultural education makes it its goal to find the causes of the inequality and discrimination and to develop pedagogies to overcome them, which is where teachers play a huge role (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016).

2.3.2. Teachers and intercultural education

UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education (UNESCO, 2006) report that the aims of intercultural education are:

- the reduction of all forms of exclusion;
- the furthering of integration and school achievement;
- the promotion of respect for cultural diversity;
- the promotion of understanding of the cultures of others; and
- the promotion of international understanding.

The guidelines also report that intercultural education's implementation in the educational context touches upon:

- curriculum;
- teaching methods;
- teaching materials;
- language teaching;
- school life and governance;
- the role and training of teachers; and
- the interaction between school and society.

Therefore, teachers have a huge influence on the implementation of intercultural education in schools because they can influence most of these factors which are important for its implementation. Similarly, Banks (2013, pp. 36-41) points out that intercultural education includes the following dimensions:

- content integration - deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalisations, and theories in their subject area or discipline;
- the knowledge construction process - relates to the extent to which teachers help students to understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it;
- prejudice reduction - focuses on the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and how they can be modified by teaching methods and materials;
- an equity pedagogy - exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups, this includes using a variety of teaching styles that are consistent with the wide range of learning styles within various cultural and ethnic groups;
- an empowering school culture and social structure - grouping and labelling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, and the interaction of the staff and the students across ethnic and racial lines are among the components of the school culture that must be examined to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.

Teachers need to be aware of these five dimensions to be able to properly implement intercultural education. Even though they will not be able to implement it fully if they do not have the support of the whole system, it is still important to try for the good of the students (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016).

When talking about intercultural education, the intercultural competence (IC) is often mentioned too. Intercultural competence refers to an individual's ability to function effectively across cultures, or as Whaley and Davis (2007) state, "to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society" (p. 565). In other words, IC is an individual's ability to function when encountering different cultures. Teachers often know that it is necessary to be interculturally

competent, but they do not know how to use intercultural education in everyday practice. Bartulović and Kušević (2016) write that it is not enough to just talk about differences, discrimination, prejudices, social justice, and forms of resistance, but that they need to be incorporated into instruction too. Authentic intercultural education needs to be made authentic by the teacher and their beliefs and practices that follow those beliefs. What follows are some ideas about how EFL instruction can be viewed from an inclusive and intercultural perspective.

2.4. EFL instruction from an intercultural perspective

Education for all, or what is going to be referred to as intercultural education from now on, also has its part in English language instruction. Liddicoat (2011) states that:

> An intercultural perspective in language teaching and learning has become prominent over the past two decades, and is variously known in English as Intercultural Language Teaching, or Intercultural Language Learning, or Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning. It has at its basis the understanding that the role of language education is to prepare language learners for meaningful communication outside their own cultural environment and to develop in language learners a sense of themselves as mediators between languages and cultures. (p. 837)

Language and culture are inevitably in interaction and inseparable from one another (Buttjes & Byram, 1991). Once someone starts to learn a new language, they come in contact with the culture of the people who speak that language too (Mazari & Derraz, 2015), but that is not all. If one starts to come in contact with different cultures, there is a big possibility that they will also start to see the world in a different way and develop an intercultural capability which will make them able to decentre from their own culture and situate themselves to see from the perspective of another (Liddicoat, 2011). That can only happen if there is a deliberate process of teaching which leads the students to decentre themselves from their own culture. Also, if there is the development of skills and knowledge that can help the decentring process (Liddicoat, 2011). Therefore, foreign language classrooms are places where this process of decentring can happen more easily than, for example, in a Maths classroom, because they are places where many cultures and languages can come into contact, especially if one looks at EFL classrooms and English's global status. They are also places where teachers can implement a pedagogy which promotes intercultural education.

This gives EFL classrooms a lot of potential for the inclusion of refugee students since they are often from a culture different than the one of the majority of the class or they at least have some

different characteristics which separate them from the majority and which are determined by their status of refugees. If intercultural education is promoted in EFL classrooms, it will be easier for the refugee students to feel included since other students and the teacher will understand them more and be open to learning about diversity. It will also be easier for the refugee students to understand the life of the majority while continuing to develop their own identity.

2.4.1. Language, culture, and the inclusion of refugees in schools

Since language and culture are in interaction, Liddicoat (2011) states that there are two beliefs about how culture should be taught in language education: the cultural orientation and the intercultural orientation. While a cultural orientation "implies the development of knowledge about culture that remains external to the learner and is not intended to confront or transform the learner's existing identity, practices, values, attitudes, beliefs and worldview" (Liddicoat, 2011, p. 837) an intercultural orientation "implies a transformational engagement of the learner in the act of learning" (Liddicoat, 2011, p. 838). The transformational engagement of the learner means that learners do not simply become aware of the culture of others through education but that they also have to act and continuously interculturally learn through experience and critical reflection, therefore their identity, practices, values, attitudes, beliefs and worldview all change as they learn; with that, culture is not just about information and knowledge, but about actions and understanding too (Liddicoat, 2011). This coincides with the above-mentioned definition of intercultural education.

Kramsch (2004) points out that "language as communicative practice is tied to a person's position in time, space, social and historical relations, and his/her social and emotional identity" (p. 249). This means that each person's language repertoire differs from other people based on how they have lived their lives up to that point. When a person from one culture encounters a different culture, this is especially visible. For a refugee, whose life is influenced by all the above-mentioned factors (Cerna, 2019; Dodd et al. 2021), language learning is a very complex process that requires special attention. On top of language learning, refugees also have to develop social relationships in a completely new environment and at first English may be the language through which they develop them. They also need to continue to develop their identity in an environment which is different from the one they lived in up to that point (Cerna, 2019) which makes their inclusion an even more complex process. Since culture and language are interconnected, so are multilingual and intercultural education. Knowledge about multilingual

and intercultural education is needed to make the process of refugee inclusion a better experience for all parties.

2.4.2. Refugees, language learning and a multilingual pedagogical approach in the EFL classroom

Refugee children, upon their arrival in Croatia, have access to at least three languages. They are in contact with their home language, the host country's language and the foreign languages learned in the education system. They also encounter a culture different from their own. If the teachers who end up teaching the refugee children are aware of multilingual and intercultural values and practices, they can capitalise on the refugee children's exposure to different languages and cultures and teach in a way that is beneficial to everyone involved in the teaching process.

Clark and Dervin (2014) point out that the intercultural and the multilingual are not separate from one another and there is often overlapping between the two, since culture and languages are interconnected, which is why it is crucial to consider them both when teaching refugee children.

In 2003, UNESCO named three principles which are common to all UNESCO documents and agreements:

1. UNESCO supports *mother tongue instruction* as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers. (p. 31)
2. UNESCO supports *bilingual* and/or *multilingual education* at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies. (p. 32)
3. UNESCO supports language as an essential component of *intercultural education* in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights. (p. 33)

UNESCO (2003) goes further to add to the third principle:

> The 'educational rights of persons belonging to (...) minorities, as well as indigenous peoples should be fully respected, through: the implementation of the right to learn in the mother tongue and the full use of culturally appropriate teaching methods of communication and transmission of knowledge; and the teaching of and through, not

> only the mother tongue, but also the national or official languages, as well as global languages of communication, so that minority and indigenous peoples have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the larger community. Education should raise awareness of the positive value of cultural (and linguistic) diversity, and to this end curriculum (should be reformed) to promote a realistic and positive inclusion of the minority or indigenous history, culture, language and identity and the cultural component of language teaching and learning should be strengthened in order to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures; languages should not be simple linguistic exercises, but opportunities to reflect on other ways of life, other literatures, other customs. (p. 33)

This makes it clear that respecting all languages is part of intercultural education and that refugees in a host country have the right to language learning like any other student, but one must consider that refugees do not share the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the majority and that needs to be considered when teaching them languages. First, it is important to know what multilingualism truly means.

Franceschini (2011) defines multilingualism as:

> various forms of social, institutional, and individual ways that we go about using more than one language. Included are not only varieties such as national languages but also regional languages, minority languages, migrant languages, sign languages, and, in the broadest sense, dialects. (p. 1)

Haukås (2016) points out that:

> multilinguals demonstrate superior metalinguistic and metacognitive abilities, such as the ability to draw comparisons between different languages and to reflect on and employ appropriate learning strategies. However, a number of researchers emphasise that multilingualism does not automatically enhance further language learning; for example, when learners are not literate in their home language, when learners are not aware of the benefits of multilingualism and when children are not encouraged in the school situation to rely on their different languages and language knowledge as positive resources multilingualism may not provide an advantage. In fact, the general view within the field seems to be that learning multiple languages is best enhanced when learners are encouraged to become aware of and use their pre-existing linguistic and

> language learning knowledge. Moreover, in the school setting, the language teacher is the key facilitator of learners' multilingualism. (p. 1)

Thus, being multilingual can be beneficial for students, in our case refugees, only if the teachers encourage the students to become aware of the languages they know and how those languages are structured and coexist with other languages in their minds. Research has shown that languages are not separated in the brain, but that they are dynamic, connected and influence one another (Bialystok, 2001).

English teachers in Croatia, as teachers of language and as practitioners whose goal should be to promote intercultural education, have a good opportunity to promote multilingualism as well. English teachers who teach refugees in Croatia should be aware of both intercultural and multilingual values and practices that they can adopt and the benefits they can have for all of their students.

For refugee children to feel included, a multilingual pedagogical approach should be implemented by the teachers. According to García (2012), multilingual pedagogical approaches refer to teaching practices that "acknowledge the hybrid practices of bilingual people" (p. 232). Multilingual pedagogical approaches aim to implement these hybrid practices of bilingual (and multilingual) people and the full use of their language repertoires into language instruction (García, 2012). These hybrid practices are not shaped and developed only by the languages that an individual speaks, but also the contexts they are a part of (García, 2012). That is why intercultural education needs to be considered for the inclusion of refugee children as well.

Based on previous research, Haukås (2016) states that language teachers should be able to meet several requirements to promote a multilingual pedagogical approach in the classroom:

- They should be multilingual themselves and serve as models for their learners.
- They should have a highly developed cross-linguistic[22] and metalinguistic awareness[23].
- They should be familiar with research on multilingualism.
- They should know how to foster learners' multilingualism.
- They should be sensitive to learners' individual cognitive and affective differences.

[22] "(…) cross-linguistic awareness, that is the third language learners' awareness of the links between their language systems expressed tacitly and explicitly during language production and use" (Jessner, 2006).
[23] "Metalinguistic awareness may be defined as an individual's ability to focus attention on language as an object in and of itself, to reflect upon language, and to evaluate it" (Thomas, 1992).

- They should be willing to collaborate with other (language) teachers to enhance learners' multilingualism. (p. 3)

Being sensitive to learners' individual cognitive and affective differences is of great importance for teachers of refugee students. Refugees have unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds and specific experiences, so teachers have to respond to them in ways they think are the best for each refugee. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the ideas behind intercultural and multilingual education and be ready to learn about the background, experiences, and other individual characteristics of their students to teach them in a quality way by taking their unique needs into consideration.

2.4.3. Intercultural pedagogy in the EFL classroom

Liddicoat (2011) states that intercultural language teaching and learning does not amount to a single language teaching "method" and that "there is no single set of pedagogical practices that can be considered to constitute intercultural language teaching and learning" (p. 840). Rather, intercultural language teaching and learning is seen as a "stance", or as "positions teachers and others take toward knowledge and its relationship to practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 289). Liddicoat (2011) further writes that:

> This means that intercultural language teaching and learning is best considered as a set of shared assumptions about the nature of language, culture and learning that shapes an overall understanding of what it means to teach language and to do this in an intercultural way. It is a perspective from which language educators construct practice rather than a set of practices to be adopted. In this way, intercultural language teaching may be considered as a "post-methods" pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) in that it consists of a theoretical orientation that frames options and principles that are to be adapted by teachers in their own location specific practice. (p. 840)

What this means is that there are no specific rules on how practices should be conducted, as that would go against the idea of intercultural education and its goal to respond to every unique individual and their needs. However, there are some beliefs that all intercultural practitioners which teach language hold: that language, culture, and learning are integrated; that the language classroom is a cultural context in which "teachers' and learners' experiences and expectations are shaped by the linguistic and cultural backgrounds that each brings to the classroom"; and that knowledge is something that each individual views and constructs differently (Liddicoat,

2011, p. 840) which also partly coincides with Banks' (2013) dimensions of intercultural education.

2.4.4. Previous research on EFL instruction and refugee inclusion in schools

While there is research on teachers' perspectives on EFL instruction from an intercultural perspective (Ghavamnia, 2020; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Larzén-Östermark, 2008)[24] and even some research on EFL instruction from an intercultural perspective in Croatia (Breka & Petravić, 2015; Knežević, 2017; Rajić & Rajić, 2015), research on EFL instruction and its potential for the inclusion of refugee children is currently non-existent. Still, there is some research on EFL instruction and refugee inclusion in other non-English speaking countries. Gözpinar (2019) writes about EFL instruction and refugee inclusion in Turkey, while Dahl et al. (2018) write about EFL instruction and refugee inclusion in Norway.

Gözpinar (2019) researched the challenges and experiences of secondary school EFL teachers and newly arrived refugee students in five different schools in Turkey. The study also aimed to find out what suggestions for the improvement of education, particularly language education, EFL teachers have. Gözpinar (2019) stated that when new refugees arrive in the classroom, the teacher will often reach out to greet them in "a common language" that is often English, and that the use of other languages should also be encouraged in these situations so refugee students can benefit from the fact that they know more languages[25]. The study found that EFL teachers think they are not responsive enough to the individual needs of refugees because they lack training, and that only three of the eighteen participants had extra training on the topic of refugee education. Some teachers stated that they believed the Turkish Ministry of Education should provide workshops and create a website through which teachers can get in touch and share experiences. It was also found that the teachers had no knowledge about the cultural backgrounds of the students and that they thought the teachers' intercultural awareness should be increased. They also stated that the materials used for teaching refugee students should be appropriate to refugee students and not cause them a culture shock, but they are often not due to the teachers not having enough time and energy for the adaptation of materials to the refugee children's needs. The teachers also stated that the administrators should be strong leaders able to take a constructive approach to refugee education so that the teachers could fulfil their

[24] Also see Iswandari and Ardi's systematic review of the Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL settings published in 2022 for more.
[25] Comes from the idea of *translanguaging* (García, 2009; Vogel & García, 2017). More on the concept of *translanguaging* later under section 2.6.

educational role. This was not the case for the teachers who were interviewed, and they ended up having to do extra paperwork on top of their educational role, causing them stress.

Some of the eight refugee students who were also participants in the study pointed out that they wanted to learn the host country's language better but that they cannot do so if some teachers do not change their attitude towards them and treat them as newcomers and not outsiders. They also pointed out that ELF instruction helped them in inclusion, and they had positive experiences with the many activities that EFL teachers organised, while the teachers agreed and said refugee students were successful and motivated in English classes. Gözpinar (2019) concluded that EFL classrooms were unique, neutral, and safer spaces for refugee students because the teachers often encouraged active participation of both refugee and local students during the classes. He claimed that:

> The classes both give language support and meet the social and emotional needs of refugee students. They lower the students' stress level in this situation because they learn to communicate and to get to know each other in a neutral language. It helps to ameliorate social tensions as they get to know each other in this neutral terrain (so it can be good for society also). Their interaction through English both boosts the student's level of confidence and makes them feel special. Teachers also provide students with the opportunity to form cross-cultural friendships based on common core values. (Gözpinar, 2019, p. 158)

This shows us that EFL instruction can indeed be a tool for the inclusion of refugee children and that teachers and their perspectives on refugee education have an important part to play, even though it is not just on the teachers' shoulders, but administrators and other leaders need to be of help as well (Gözpinar, 2019).

Dahl et al. (2018) tried to "examine how refugees and their teachers in schools in two small communities of Storbu and Laksvær perceive the role of English in their educational and employment opportunities" (p. 107). Even though the study deals with adult refugees, it has some relevant findings. English in Norway is often needed for higher education and employment, but its importance is still not given much attention in refugee education programs. Dahl et al. (2018) found out that the monolingual majority language ideology, with most importance given to Norwegian, is maintained through the actions and attitudes of everyone involved in education, including the teachers and the refugee-background students as well. English is marginalised and proficiency in English is not seen as an important goal for the

education of refugees even though them not knowing English could lead to refugees not succeeding in certain areas of life such as finding a job. This is similar to the refugee education programs in Croatia, as discussed under section 2.2.5. While English is the most far-reaching foreign language in Croatia, not much attention is given to how refugees should acquire it or what strategies should be used in the EFL classroom to foster multilingual values and the benefits they bring.

All in all, previous research on EFL instruction and refugee inclusion from an intercultural perspective is not extensive, but it still brings forth some results which are useful for this paper. Previous research has found that EFL teachers and refugee students are faced with many challenges when English learning and teaching is concerned (Gözpinar, 2019), that English is marginalised in refugee education (Dahl et al., 2018), and that the teachers believe they lack training and intercultural awareness needed to respond to individual needs of refugee students (Gözpinar, 2019). While EFL teachers and refugee students are faced with many challenges when English learning and teaching is concerned, EFL instruction can still be a tool for the inclusion of refugee children and has great potential (Gözpinar, 2019).

2.4.5. EFL instruction and intercultural refugee education in Croatia

EFL instruction in Croatia, like the instruction of all other subjects, is organised following the national subject curriculum. The new English curriculum from 2019 for elementary and high schools names and describes three domains which make a balanced structure of the entire EFL curriculum, and which are the starting points for defining outcomes of EFL instruction (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2019). Those three domains are: communicative language competence, intercultural communicative competence, and autonomy in acquiring and using language. It is stated in the curriculum that:

> The mentioned domains derive from the basic competences, the conceptualization of the language-communication field and the purpose of the subject. Their inseparability stems from the interdependence of the English language, culture, and the autonomy in learning as a prerequisite for the lifelong development of the communicative and intercultural competence. (p. 8)

While all three domains are connected and it is important to develop them all, the domain about the intercultural communicative competence is of the biggest interest for this paper. The curriculum recognises that life today is life in a multilingual and multicultural setting. That gives the education system an obligation to include the development of interculturality into

English language learning in order to emphasise the importance of developing the students' awareness of themselves as individuals and social beings interested in getting familiar with diversity and learning about it. The curriculum also states that during the educational process, the development of attitudes and awareness and the acquisition of knowledge and skills about other cultures are encouraged in order to develop intercultural competence and better understanding and respect for different cultures. It goes further to state that interculturality implies understanding and communication between English speakers of different cultural origins and names what it means for a student to be interculturally competent. If the outcomes of this domain are well established, a student becomes interculturally competent which means that they are:

- able to perceive and interpret similarities and differences between cultures;
- empathic, adaptable and open to understanding, accepting and appreciating English speakers and their cultures;
- ready for the acceptance of literature in English and to roughly know its most important forms;
- able to communicate effectively and appropriately to the context with native and non-native speakers of the English language, which leads to the mutual satisfaction of interlocutors of different cultural identities and the building of harmonious intercultural relations;
- and ready to reject prejudices and prevent discrimination while practicing non-violent conflict resolution. (p. 10)

Therefore, EFL instruction can be a process of expanding and deepening the students' views of the world. This makes EFL classrooms great spaces for supporting the inclusion of refugee children. While EFL instruction is of course not the only subject which can help with the inclusion of refugees and it can help with inclusion only to a certain extent, it can still be a part of making the inclusion easier since even its curriculum sets it out to recognise interculturality and multilingualism. That is why EFL teachers need to be aware of intercultural and multilingual education and the values and practices which they incorporate. It remains to be seen where Croatian EFL teachers who work with refugees stand and what their perspective is.

2.5. EFL teachers' perspectives

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) defines a perspective as "a particular attitude towards something; a way of thinking about something." According to Pickens (2005) attitudes

are “a complex combination of things we tend to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviours, and motivations” (p. 44). What a person thinks naturally influences what they do and Pickens (2005) claims that attitudes are “a mindset or a tendency to act in a particular way due to both an individual’s experience and temperament” (p. 44). The same is true for EFL teachers. Their perspectives and thought processes influence their actions and their pedagogical decisions (Borg, 2006). Researching what EFL teachers think about the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools and what strategies they use to use this potential should be the first step of research on EFL instruction and refugees in Croatia. It is necessary to see what the current situation is like and that is best done by starting from the perspectives. Once the perspectives are put into consideration, it can be researched how such perspectives are formed. A person’s attitudes towards something do not just exist in a vacuum, but they are formed throughout life as a result of learning, modelling others, and our direct experiences with people and situations (Pickens, 2005).

2.6. EFL instruction and its potential for refugee inclusion in Croatia

Wanting to see what EFL teachers’ perspectives on EFL instruction as a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools are implies that there is some potential for the inclusion in question. It is difficult to separate the potential that EFL instruction can have for refugee education into categories since the goal of intercultural education is to respond to the needs of each individual. The potential should be looked at from the perspective of what can be done for each individual, but there are still some categories that can be considered as something that relates to all refugee students and their rights and needs. Looking at Cerna’s (2019) practices and policies that OECD member states have implemented to respond to the needs of refugee children, it can be said that at least four practices can be supported during EFL instruction by teachers even if the whole country has not implemented them and the policy makers have not stated that EFL teachers have a good opportunity to support them. Other practices like promoting well-being, offering extra-curricular activities and engaging parents and families can be done in collaboration with the rest of the school staff. The four practices which can definitely be supported by EFL teachers during EFL instruction and make the inclusion of refugees less challenging are: providing language training and support, encouraging an inclusive learning environment, providing opportunities for identity construction, and supporting friendship-building. These four categories are certain to make refugee children’s inclusion a less challenging process while taking the refugee children’s rights and needs into consideration.

2.6.1. Providing language training and support

Following Cerna's (2019) distinction, providing language training and support corresponds to the refugees' need to learn the host country's language and to sustain knowledge of their mother tongue. Cerna (2019) writes that literature that was studied while writing the OECD document states that refugee children need support for developing both the language of the host country and for sustaining their mother tongue which is achieved differently depending on the country. Further, Cerna adds:

> Language can be a considerable barrier for refugee students. Particular language classes should not take place in isolation, but need to be designed to accommodate the learning and language needs as well as cultural norms of the refugee students. With sufficient resources, instruction in the language of the host country could be combined with encouragement to develop mother tongues to facilitate co-operation and communication with classmates. (p. 52)

Going one step further, this paper proposes that the multilingual pedagogical approach (Haukås, 2016) is a practice which can provide the best language training and support for refugees because they usually become multilingual after coming to the host country if they were not multilingual already. In Croatia, they have to learn at least Croatian and English, which means they can benefit from the multilingual pedagogical approach. EFL instruction, as a foreign language instruction, provides many opportunities for putting the multilingual pedagogical approach into action. EFL teachers can provide refugees with language training and support not only by teaching them English but by partly supporting the host country's language acquisition, supporting the development of the mother tongue, and teaching them about language acquisition and use in general. They can also make all students aware of how different languages are structured, how they came to be, and support the development of their metalinguistic awareness. They can do that by being aware of what the multilingual pedagogical approach means and what strategies it includes. Haukås (2016) writes:

> A multilingual pedagogy should be regarded not as a unified methodology but as a set of principles that are used to varying degrees in different approaches depending on the teaching context, curriculum and learners (Neuner, 2004, p. 27). (…) Thus, rather than attempting to maintain learners' languages in isolation, teachers should help learners to become aware of and draw on their existing knowledge. Second, learners should draw on experiences from previous language learning when learning a new language. Learners should become aware of which learning strategies they have used previously

> as well as reflect on, test, and evaluate the extent to which those strategies can be transferred to a new language learning context (Neuner, 2004). (Haukås, 2016, p. 2)

So, for a multilingual pedagogy to be applied it is first and foremost important to be aware that languages that a person knows are not kept in isolation but are all connected at all times and that experience from previous language learning is used for learning a new language. Kalocsányiová (2017) points out that current schemes for language education of refugees and migrants are dominated by monolingual instructional practices[26] that are not in line with the current understanding of how people learn (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2007; García, 2009; Le Nevez, Hélot, & Ehrhart, 2010) and of how the multilingual mind functions (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011; Jessner, 2006). Cummins (2007) writes how three monolingual instructional assumptions are still very prevalent in language education, even though there is no empirical evidence to support them. These assumptions are:

1. Instruction should be carried out exclusively in the target language without recourse to students' L1 (their mother tongue).
2. Translation between L1 and L2 (first foreign language) has no place in the teaching of language or literacy.
3. Within immersion and bilingual programs, the two languages should be kept rigidly separate. (pp. 222-223)

Cummins (2007) then goes to show that these three assumptions are problematic because they are not supported by empirical data, are not in line with what is currently known about the workings of the bi- and multilingual mind and says that they operate to exclude opportunities for L2 learning and use in the classroom. These three assumptions are what language teachers who teach refugees need to be careful not to succumb to and they need to overcome the monolingual norm by supporting multilingual education.

Both students and teachers come to the EFL classroom with diverse language resources (Kalocsányiová, 2017) and refugees come to the host country with different levels of language knowledge. For example, they might speak their mother tongue but not read or write it, they might read and write English but not speak it very well, they might speak the host country's language but not know how to write it. These are just some examples, but it is obvious that refugee students can have a very wide language repertoire which is always specific to the

[26] Come from what Howatt (1984) named the monolingual principle or the idea that the mother tongue or the person's L1 should be kept from the target language (TL) being learned so there will be no interference from L1.

refugee. Kalocsányiová (2017) states that when refugees arrive to the host country, their complex language repertoires are often neglected, and all the focus is given to them just learning the dominant languages of society. This means that their teachers, especially their language teachers, need to be aware of their linguistic repertoires, of which languages they know and how much they know them so they can respond to their specific language needs and draw on their previous knowledge of languages and language learning strategies. Teachers also need to be familiar with at least the basic structural make-up of the learners' mother tongues to know how the students will perceive English (Motschenbacher, 2016), and Croatian in the case of this paper.

In multilingual pedagogy there are some practices which could be of interest to EFL teachers who teach refugees. These are not all practices that can be used for multilingual education of refugees, but they offer a good start for further research. These practices include *translanguaging* (García, 2009), *translation* (Cummins, 2007; Hélot, 2011; Manyak, 2004) and *language biographies* (Busch, Aziza & Tjoutuku, 2006).

Translanguaging, a term proposed by García (2009), draws on the idea that there are no clear-cut boundaries between languages and what exists in the brains of bi- and multilingual speakers is a languaging continuum that is freely accessed when they are communicating. So, translanguaging is not centred on languages, but on the practices of bi- and multilinguals which are readily observable, and which should not be marked as unusual but seen as a normal mode of communication that characterises communities all around the world. García (2009) points out the following:

> For us, translanguagings are multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds. Translanguaging therefore goes beyond what has been termed code-switching, although it includes it, as well as other kinds of bilingual language use and bilingual contact. Translanguaging for us extends what Gutiérrez and her colleagues have called "hybrid language use," that is, a "systematic, strategic, affiliative, and sense-making process" (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Alvarez, 2001, p. 128). (p. 82)

Therefore, translanguaging in the context of multilingual education stands for a multilingual person flexibly using linguistic repertoires in different contexts to communicate with others. For refugee education, this would mean that teachers do not force refugees to use only English or the host country's language but allow them to naturally use their full language repertoires as

the situation sees fit and support their multilingual development. This also goes for teachers, they can use all the languages they know, or even learn some words in a language they know a refugee or other students speak and use them during classes to fully promote the concept of translanguaging. For example, to support their multilingual development, the EFL teacher can ask refugee students what languages they speak at home, learn some words in those languages needed for giving instructions and give instructions in those languages after giving them in English (Van Viegen, 2020). Giving incentive to other students to freely communicate with refugee students is also almost certain to open up a space for refugee students to start teaching the other students their language and the students to start teaching the refugees the host country's language in turn (Van Viegen, 2020), in this case Croatian. The teachers can further show they enjoy these linguistic exchanges by repeating words that the refugee students have used, by writing them on the board (especially if the script is not the same), making posters in different languages or giving students tasks where more languages which are spoken by students in a class are used or need to be used by the students. Following these practices, all the students will be encouraged to *translanguage*.

Translation, which Cummins (2007) states many assume has no place in the foreign language classroom, can have an important role in the education of refugee students. Cummins (2007) paraphrases Manyak's (2004) claims on the benefits of using translation in the classroom as follows: translation promotes the acquisition of English, translation promotes biliteracy development and translation promotes identities of competence. Therefore, using translation in a fun way in an EFL classroom can give the students who do not know English well the incentive to use English, it can encourage the use of more languages and the development of literacy in both languages simultaneously, and it can encourage the students to view bilingualism or multilingualism as a highly esteemed ability in the class (Manyak, 2004). By using translation, EFL teachers can enable newcomer refugee students to actively participate in instruction and translation is a good tool for developing language and literacy skills and increasing the metalinguistic awareness of all students (Cummins, 2007). Students can be encouraged to draw mind maps where translations in different languages are used (Cummins, 2007), they can be given texts and books to translate and then analyse the differences so they encounter linguistic and cultural diversity (Hélot, 2011), or they can simply be asked what a certain word is translated to in their language.

Writing and presenting **language biographies** can offer a good opportunity for teachers to get familiar with the refugees' linguistic backgrounds, raise the multilingual and cultural awareness

of both refugees and other students in the class (Busch, Aziza & Tjoutuku, 2006), and make the class environment become more communication friendly (Kalocsányiová, 2017). Teachers can give their students a task to write and present a simplified version of a language biography where the students share which languages they know, how they acquired them, which languages they are studying, where they are with their studies, which languages they speak at home, and which languages they use in some specific contexts. Teachers can also show the students their own language biographies as examples and say they are ready to always add new languages, so they promote a culture where multilingualism is seen as a competence which is useful.

As seen from their descriptions, these three practices are often interchangeable and do not exist separate from one another. They provide a good framework for further research and good ideas on how EFL teachers can use them to provide language training and support to refugees. Still, one needs to be critical while using them and always think about what is in the best interest of refugee students and students in general.

One problem which could appear when trying to apply any of these methods is if a refugee student, the other students, and the teacher do not yet share a common language. That would make it challenging to communicate the tasks, but in those cases a teacher can try to start from finding out how much a refugee student knows, adding to that knowledge slowly, taking initiative to learn some words in the language that a refugee student understands, and showing everyone in the classroom that linguistic diversity has benefits.

2.6.2. Encouraging an inclusive learning environment

Cerna (2019) states that an inclusive learning environment is an environment that recognises diverse voices and perspectives and can offer a curriculum tailored to a wide range of students so that all children feel included and contribute (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). An inclusive learning environment needs to be provided to respond to refugees' needs for learning, their need to adjust to a new learning environment and a new school culture and to ensure their safety while providing safe spaces for new encounters, interactions, and learning environments (Cerna, 2019). This paper proposes that an inclusive learning environment can best be encouraged by the teachers supporting intercultural practices in the classroom, but teachers cannot do it alone. Support from the country's policy and the system, of the school headmaster, other school staff, and other agencies that support education is needed for creating a fully inclusive learning environment (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

Since it is significant to listen to diverse voices and perspectives and respond to refugees' individual needs, the teachers cannot project their desires and ideas onto the students, but they must ensure that the students' individual needs are met. A caring teacher-student relationship means avoiding the danger of attributing needs to the student and instead engaging in dialogue with the student and their family to find out what the student is going through and how they can help (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). That is the first step in creating an inclusive learning environment. To create an inclusive learning environment, teachers, in the case of this paper EFL teachers, also need to be aware of the previously mentioned Banks' (2013) five dimensions for the adjustment of their materials and methods for teaching and assessment[27] so discrimination does not occur, and all students are aware of how to react in face of diversity.

Adding to the five dimensions from Banks (2013), there are specific strategies which could encourage an inclusive learning environment and which teachers can employ. For example, Szente, Hoot and Taylor (2006) list the following practices which teachers and counsellors recommend, and which are cited exactly as written by Szente, Hoot and Taylor:

- Teach children about basic emotions such as happy, sad, mad, and angry by playful activities utilising **drawings and pictures**. Children can mimic facial expressions from the pictures, and both adults and children can take turns role playing feelings.
- Utilise basic **Sign Language symbols** such as ‘‘friendship,’’ ‘‘peace,’’ ‘‘love,’’ and ‘‘caring’’ within and outside the classroom.
- **Display positive body language**.
- **Smile**.
- Design various **art and dance activities** which allow children to communicate feelings, experiences, and their knowledge regarding certain concepts.
- Engage in **social games** such as Peek-a-boo or Hide-and-seek. Rules such as taking turns can be reinforced by modelling and non-verbal directions.
- Provide children with **sand and water-table activities** that may help them start communicating as well.
- As a professional development opportunity for teachers, **presentations or in-service workshops** are recommended which introduce the native culture, language and traditions of refugee students. In addition, **some simple words in the child's native**

[27] See Banks (2013) and Bartulović & Kušević (2016) for practical ideas on how to support intercultural education in the teaching practice.

language such as for ‘‘hi,’’ ‘‘come,’’ ‘‘good,’’ or ‘‘thank you’’ are believed to make the child feel safer and more comfortable.

- Teachers can utilise **children’s literature** to help non-refugee children learn about the experiences of refugee children. Such children’s books also allow refugee children to identify with the pictures even if they are not able to understand the actual words. When refugee children start communicating in English, they can be encouraged to share their experiences through words and pictures as seen in the books (a list of books is included at the end of the 2006 article by Szente, Hoot and Taylor).
- **Translators or interpreters** are essential when (preferably prior to) a refugee child joins a classroom. Such resources enable teachers to learn more about the student as well as to establish an avenue for communication. Unfortunately, such services may not be available or cost too much money for the schools. Participants encouraged schools to search out international students at local colleges/universities who speak the student’s native language or seek out international agencies that may be able to provide more cost-effective services.
- Teachers suggest that it is best **not to assume anything regarding the child’s previous experiences**. For example, teachers should not assume that the child has had prior experiences with school materials even if the child is older.
- Teachers should **work together** with the school administration to establish meaningful policies for grading and testing refugee students’ academic achievement.
- **Peer group and pair learning experiences** for teaching and tutoring refugee children have been found very effective even in the silent period of English language learning.

Most of these strategies can also be used during EFL instruction, but it is significant that Banks’ (2013) dimensions are considered and promoted through the activities and strategies being used. For example, if children’s literature is being used as a strategy of inclusion of refugee students, it is necessary to talk about prejudice reduction or it can be used for teaching the students how knowledge is constructed in our society and how that is reflected in the literature. That is how a true inclusive learning environment is encouraged.

2.6.3. Providing opportunities for identity construction

Cerna (2019) points out that to respond to the need of refugee children for a strong personal identity one needs to provide opportunities for identity construction. This according to Cerna (2019) includes navigating between their home and host cultures and finding the right balance

between them. This paper proposes that identity construction of refugee children includes more than finding a balance between their host and home cultures. One's identity does not just include race, ethnicity and the languages spoken[28] as identity markers, but also gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and disabilities which are all not static and can change over time and which can all mean different things to different people (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to not just look at refugee students through their ethnicity and race but be aware that other identity markers also form their identity.

The goal of teachers and the school when identity construction is concerned is not to be aware of every student's identity markers and to point these out separately. Their goal is to support the students' self-discovery of their identity by teaching the students what identity is, what identity markers exist, how different identity markers can be perceived by people and how that can be dangerous and lead to discrimination and to give the students opportunities for their voices to be heard while they are speaking about their experiences (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016).

EFL teachers, like all teachers, can use *art and drawing, reading and discussing literature, texts or storybooks* and *speaking activities* to help refugees in their journey of identity self-discovery (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016). Whether it is reading a text which can be used as a backdrop for discussing someone's identity or for drawing one's own idea of what someone's identity is or simply answering the question "Who am I?" when the opportunity in the curriculum presents itself, there are ways for students to develop their identity through EFL instruction. There are also the before-mentioned *language biographies* which can help students discover their linguistic identity and *productive communication* with other students which can also help them discover their identities (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016).

2.6.4. Supporting friendship-building

According to Cerna (2019) supporting friendship-building responds to refugee children's need for communication with others, language learning and sense of belonging. It also helps with their psychological needs and helps make refugee children feel safe in the new environment.

Friendship between refugees and their peers from the host country is something that is thought to influence the quality of their inclusion and something that is beneficial to their sociocultural and psychological adaptation (Berry et al., 2006). While that is true, it is not always easy to form inter-ethnic friendships because for friendships to evolve there needs to be some kind of

[28] EFL teachers might be interested in how exactly identity, language, and social change are in interaction, so I recommend reading Norton and Toohey (2011).

similarity, affinity, and common experiences between peers (McPherson et al., 2001). Friendship is even more difficult to develop when there is a linguistic barrier between the students because that might lead to difficulties in communication and social interactions (McBrien, 2005).

In this case, the role of teachers is to provide opportunities for students to work together, strike up a conversation and find some kind of similarity that will lead to the formation of a friendship. That should already be facilitated by the existence of intercultural and multilingual values and practices in a classroom, but there are some methods that EFL teachers could use to support friendship-building. This potential for forming friendships during EFL instruction is further emphasised by the fact that English is today a global language and there are big chances that the refugees will be at least familiar with it (Motschenbacher, 2016). Two methods that EFL teachers can certainly use for supporting friendship-building during EFL instruction are *pair work* and *cooperative learning*.

Pair work assumes that two participants carry out joint activities in hopes that they will solve a task that was given to them (Irkinovich, 2021). When choosing which students to pair together it is important to know what the goal of the activity is (Irkinovich, 2021), which is in this case primarily forming friendships, but that does not mean that the linguistic aspect is completely overlooked. EFL teachers can try to pair students which they already know share some similarities or they can often change pairs so new students end up working together and new similarities are found. Activities can be organised with the linguistic aspect in mind after the best method for finding pairs is chosen and decided on. It is also recommended that the students are asked for their opinion on how they would like to be paired up (Hyde, 1993) because it is possible that they already found some similarities and want to spend more time together or there are some differences that they believe would hinder their work.

Slavin (2015) defines **cooperative learning** as "teaching methods in which students work together in small groups to help each other learn academic content" (p. 5). It is good to think of activities which can strike up conversations and further research on topics being discussed and can even develop into a project (Kaldi, Filippatou & Govaris, 2011). Slavin (2015) points out that it is useful to set group goals while learning cooperatively "to motivate students to take responsibility for one another independently of the teacher" (p. 12) which could also help with developing friendships.

For these two methods, it is possible to partly use topics about multilingualism, interculturalism, identity formation and friendship-building mixed with the linguistic aspect to further help with the inclusion of refugees through EFL instruction.

2.6.5. An interconnected process

Since Cerna's (2019) distinction of recommended ways how refugee students' needs should be met is based on a holistic approach, the four above-mentioned practices of how EFL instruction can help support the inclusion of refugee students in schools are all interconnected and there are some areas which overlap as can be seen from their descriptions. For example, encouraging an inclusive learning environment at least partly includes supporting friendship-building in the classroom or providing opportunities for identity construction includes being familiar with the languages that the refugee students speak. Still, for the purpose of this paper they have been categorised into four categories for easier analysis of the results that the study will show.

Using ideas from intercultural and multilingual education, EFL teachers in Croatia can use EFL instruction to provide language training and support, encourage an inclusive learning environment, provide opportunities for identity construction, and support friendship-building by adapting their practices to each individual. This is just part of the process of the full inclusion of refugees and EFL teachers cannot do much without the support of the whole system, but it is still beneficial to be aware of what they can do to support refugees in the EFL classroom on their own. It remains to be seen what EFL teachers in Croatia think about these ideas and if they use any of them in their instruction.

3. The study

3.1. Aim

The aim of this study was to determine in which ways English language teachers support the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system. Four research questions were posed to achieve this aim:

RQ1: *Do English language teachers provide language training and support for refugee students and how?*

RQ2: *How do English teachers encourage an inclusive learning environment?*

RQ3: *How do English language teachers provide opportunities for identity construction?*

RQ4: *In what ways do English language teachers support friendship-building among their students?*

The research questions follow Cerna's (2019) distinction explained in the theoretical analysis above, and they reflect the four practices which can be supported by EFL teachers to make the inclusion of refugee children less challenging. These four practices are: *providing language training and support*, *encouraging an inclusive learning environment*, *providing opportunities for identity construction*, and *supporting friendship-building*. The overall analysis of these research questions should answer if EFL teachers use the potential of these four categories for the inclusion of refugee students in their classroom, and if they do, which strategies they use to nurture this potential. It should also provide the answer to the question if EFL teachers of refugee children in Croatia use practices which could be considered part of intercultural education and if they use any techniques from the multilingual pedagogical approach during EFL instruction. With this, some insight into the current state of EFL instruction and the use of its potential for the inclusion of refugee children into the Croatian education system will be given.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Choosing and finding the participants

Before the study it was decided that the participants would be EFL teachers who have either worked with refugee students or work with them at the time of the study. The participants were chosen to be those *EFL teachers who teach students from grade 5 to grade 8* for several reasons. First, there are more solid opportunities to make the content of EFL instruction in these grades intercultural and to promote multilingual education looking at the 2019 EFL curriculum in Croatia (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2019), which could make the answers of the participants more insightful and provide more strategies. Then, the refugee students aged 10-15 (which are usually the ages of students in Croatia who are in grades 5-8) were thought to already be familiar with the English language enough to make the potential that EFL instruction can have for the inclusion of refugee students stronger by being able to communicate amongst each other. This was sure to make the EFL teachers have some insight into the potential of the instruction. The next reason was purely practical. It was more practical to contact EFL teachers that teach grades 5-8 due to the nature of the Croatian school system in which it is possible that EFL teachers from grade 1 to grade 4 might be teachers with different qualifications. Finally, the participants were not to be high school teachers because of the ambiguity of the Croatian

high school system. There are too many different types of high schools, and it would be difficult to decide which EFL teachers to study and to find EFL teachers who have taught or teach refugee students. It was also decided that the participants will be found through the *snowball method* by the researcher contacting different schools and organisations and looking for teachers who have worked with refugee students.

Since the numbers of refugee children in Croatia are the highest in Zagreb because of its status as the capital, the study was conducted in elementary schools in Zagreb. The researcher sent an information letter (see *Appendix C*) about the study to organisations which are known for their work with refugees in Croatia and to the City Administration of Zagreb. They provided information on schools that might be interested, and the researcher then contacted the schools and their principals. Five EFL teachers who were willing to participate in the study contacted the researcher after the schools where they teach received the information letter. While all five participants taught students from 5th grade to 8th grade, so they fit the criteria, they also sometimes taught students from 1st grade to 4th grade, so it is good to be aware of that because they spoke about children that were in grades 1-4 too sometimes during the interviews.

3.2.2. Information about the participants

The five EFL teachers who participated in the study were given pseudonyms by the researcher during the coding process for easier analysis of the results and the protection of their identities. The pseudonyms were given to the teachers in alphabetical order following the order of the semi-structured interviews, so the first participant's pseudonym starts with *A*, the second participant's with *B* and so on.

First, the EFL teachers were asked how long they have been working as EFL teachers to see if their years of experience somehow influence their perspectives (see *Results*). The information on EFL teachers and their years of experience as EFL teachers can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

EFL teachers and their years of experience as EFL teachers

EFL teacher's pseudonym	**Years of working as an EFL teacher**
Anna	19
Bella	22

Colin	1
Daisy	10
Eva	5

The EFL teachers were also asked how many years they have been working with refugee children and what territories the refugee children were from. These questions provided insight into the teachers' work with refugee students. While Anna, Daisy and Eva all had more than five years of experience in working with refugee children, Bella and Colin only had one year of experience. As a result of that they also worked with refugee children from less territories than the other three participants. The participants mostly worked with refugee students who were from Chechnya, Iran, Iraq, Russia, Syria, or Ukraine. Table 5 shows how many years EFL teachers have been working with refugee children.

Table 5

EFL teachers and how many years they have been working with refugee children

EFL teacher's pseudonym	**Years of working with refugee children**
Anna	7
Bella	1
Colin	1
Daisy	6
Eva	5

While the teachers were also asked how many refugee children they were working with at the time of the interview and what territories the refugee children they were working with at the time of the interview were from, the author of this study chose to omit that information because it might reveal too much information about the identity of the participants and the students.

3.3. Methodology

Since the aim of the study was to determine in which ways English language teachers support the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education

system, *a qualitative approach* was used to find out the needed information. The research questions were all of a qualitative nature and they were researched through *a semi-structured interview* in Croatian with the participants. The questions were all open-ended to allow the teachers to fully express their views and opinions. Original data was collected during the semi-structured interviews with the EFL teachers by recording the interview audio. The process of collecting data stretched through two weeks, and the participants were encouraged to choose a date and time that suited both them and the researcher for the interview. The interviews all happened in schools the participants worked in and lasted 20 minutes on average, even though the information letter stated it would be 45 minutes (which is one school period) so the teachers could take their time to prepare and ask any questions they wanted to before and after the interview. The collected data was then transcribed, coded, and finally descriptively analysed by the researcher. The transcription process lasted a day for each interview with additional follow up reviews to make sure everything was transcribed properly. The coding process consisted of finding similarities and differences in the perspectives and practices of the participants in the transcribed data and making categories that best show them. While the research questions were the framework for coding, all subcategories were coded inductively because they emerged from the data itself instead of the researcher starting with codes that were pre-made. All the data is being kept in a secure place and will be destroyed a year after the publication of this paper.

The interview protocol (see *Appendix A* and *Appendix B)* consisted of three questions which were constructed to find out general information about the participants. After questions about general information which provided context on the work that the EFL teachers have done so far, the protocol included four categories of questions following Cerna's (2019) distinction. The categories were designed to provide insight into how EFL teachers provide language training and support for refugee students, how they encourage an inclusive learning environment, how they provide opportunities for identity construction of refugee students and how they support friendship-building between refugee children and their peers from Croatia.

4. Ethical aspects of the study

Some ethical aspects that needed to be considered by the researcher will be mentioned in this section. First, the researcher will recall how principals of schools, and later EFL teachers, were informed about the study and the ethical aspects of the study. Then, the researcher will state what measures the researcher had to take during the interview process and the analysis of the

data to ensure that the participants could not be identified by anyone. Finally, it will be mentioned what precautions were taken for the collected data to be kept safe.

First the researcher contacted principals sending them an information letter about the study so they could send it to the EFL teachers in their schools. The letter contained information about the study, its goal, its benefits, its risks, what rules the researcher is obliged to follow and about any ethical issues that might arise from the study. The information letter also included a copy of *informed consent* (see *Appendix C*) that the participants signed before the interview after going over it one more time with the researcher to make sure they were aware of everything their participation in the study implied.

The information letter covered the responsibilities of the researcher and the researcher guaranteed that the participants had the right to refuse to answer questions they did not want to answer or to stop their participation in the study completely at any point before the publication of the thesis. The researcher also guaranteed that the collected data would be used only for the purpose of the thesis, analysed as objectively as possible and that it would be stored safely before being destroyed a year after the publication of the study. The anonymity of the participants was also guaranteed. The information letter, the informed consent form, and the interview protocol were all approved by the thesis supervisor and co-supervisor before being used.

The ethical issues the teachers were notified of before the interview focused on the fact that the topic of the study included refugee children. Although the focus of the research was on the actions of teachers, refugee children were still indirect participants in this research because teachers talked about their work with them during the interview. Therefore, the teachers were informed to be careful not to mention the children's names during the interview and to not recount the interview to third parties who might recognise the children talked about in the interview.

The interviews were all conducted in places within the schools where there were no other people. This was done to make sure the participants were comfortable speaking about their views and practices openly and without being interrupted and so no one else would be able to identify them later if they came across the study. When it was time to analyse the data collected during the interviews, the five EFL teachers who participated in the study were given pseudonyms by the researcher to protect their identities. The researcher also decided that it was better to omit the answers to some questions because they gave away too much about the

participants. During the interview the teachers were asked how many refugee children they were working with at the time of the interview and what territories the refugee children they were working with at the time of the interview were from. The author of this study chose to omit that information because it might have revealed too much information about the identity of the participants and the students and endangered them. To further protect the identity of the participants and the refugee students the participants worked with, the author took extra care to not mention the countries of origin and grades of the students mentioned in the examples. During the interview process, the participants sometimes spoke about the refugee children that they were teaching at the time of the interview. The author of this study decided to use the past tense when quoting the participants, even if they spoke about their present experiences, to further protect the anonymity of the participants and the refugee students they taught at the time of the interview.

Since the topic of the study included refugee children, cultural and linguistic sensitivity was also needed when analysing the results of the interviews. The researcher and the teachers that were interviewed are a part of the host country's culture, so the researcher tried to be aware that that might influence how they view certain things and tried to be as objective as possible when analysing the results.

The transcribed interviews and their audio recordings are being kept on a USB flash drive which is stored in a locked drawer at the researcher's home to make them as safe as possible. The audio recordings of the interviews will be deleted from the USB flash drive one year after the publication of the study as was promised to the participants with the information letter.

The participants were also notified that they can ask to be sent the study once it is published and can contact the researcher at any time. If they do contact the researcher, the researcher will make sure to later delete the evidence of correspondence as it might serve as a means of identifying the participants if the data is somehow leaked.

5. Results

5.1. General information

The first three questions which gave information on the EFL teachers' experience with teaching and working with refugee students were constructed to find out if years of experience have any easily detectable influence on the answers that the teachers give to other questions. They also served as a means of seeing how many different languages and cultures they encountered during

their work with refugees. Finally, information about the current numbers and origins of refugee children they were working with made it easier for the researcher to follow what their current work looked like when they were talking about the strategies they use. To protect the identity of the participants and the refugee students they worked with at the time of the interview, the countries of origin and grades of the students will not be mentioned in this study.

Interestingly, years of working as EFL teachers and years of working with refugee children did not seem to have any influence on the answers to the other questions. The five EFL teachers who were interviewed all faced similar challenges, named similar benefits, and the strategies they used were all interchangeable with each other with only slight differences in practices and opinions, which will be discussed throughout the paper. That is not to say that it would be the same if there were more participants that were interviewed or if the questions were not so open-ended and instead focused on nuances of their work.

5.2. The importance of prior English knowledge

When asked what they think *how refugee children feel about learning English*, all of the participants started off by saying that everything depended on the refugee children's prior knowledge of English, showing just how important they found it. It is known that learning anything involves integration of new knowledge with prior knowledge, and the same is true for language acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Gass and Selinker (2008) state the following:

> Prior knowledge is to be interpreted broadly and can include knowledge of the native language, knowledge of other languages, existing knowledge of the second language, world knowledge, language universals, and so forth. All of these play a role in a learner's success or lack of success in interpreting language data, in that they ultimately determine whether a learner understands and what level of understanding takes place. Precisely how these factors ultimately determine acquisition has been a question central to acquisition research over the past decade. (p. 483)

So, the participants all agreed that prior language knowledge played a role in how refugee children felt about English, as it did in their further acquisition of English and their ability to feel included during EFL instruction and in the community in general. Since the participants all pointed out that prior English knowledge of refugee children was extremely important for their overall feelings towards English, and that the feelings towards a language greatly influence the whole process of learning said language, Table 6 shows their full answers to the question *What*

do you think how refugee children feel about learning English? so their opinions can be compared in detail.

Table 6

Answers to the question "What do you think how refugee children feel about learning English?" (translated from Croatian)

Anna	Well, my experience shows that it all depends on what kind of prior knowledge the child arrives with. So, if a child has good prior knowledge, English is no bogeyman to them. Moreover, they already know the language to some extent and so it's their main means of communication in the beginning until they learn a little Croatian. So, there's no fuss and it's much faster… Let's say they don't know - I mean they definitely don't know Croatian, right? - but if they don't know English, they will learn some basic words in English much faster, from the English language, because the environment... I won't say conditions them to speak in English, but it's easier for them. They can communicate more easily... For example, they pick up some English words from their parents who may know a little more about it. Except, of course, it depends… Of course, it also depends on the age of the child, so it's not a problem. Now, as for the school program itself, there can be problems there. I'd say depending on what prior knowledge the child came with. There are cases where children do not know English well enough to follow the English language teaching programs. However, this is completely normal and slowly, as in everything, they get into it as well.
Bella	Well, I think it's a safe option for them because they studied English in (name of the country of origin)… What I'm saying is, the (number of grade) grader I taught… The girl, she arrived with very poor knowledge, but English did help the boy (I taught).
Colin	Well, I think it depends a lot on the situation, on how they arrive… i.e. with what prior knowledge they potentially arrive with. Because I had a situation, let's say, with the (origin of the refugee student) who, upon arriving in Croatia, did not know a single language except, of course, (their mother tongue). They use a different script, so they need to learn the Latin script when they arrive too. So, I feel like with them it's the same whether I'm speaking Croatian or English in a situation where they don't really understand anything.

	I mean, I literally have the feeling that I am only confusing them further by adding another language to the story. They should just start with, with Croatian, with the language of the community. So, as far as they are concerned, I don't know how necessary it is, how much it is necessary now (to learn English). But for these situations when they come with certain prior knowledge, I think that in that situation it is very useful because then they pick up English faster. Given that they don't have to start from scratch and then it actually allows them to integrate into the community, to integrate into the class, into the school. So that they can find some common ground and communicate in some way with other students and with teachers, and with everyone, with everyone in the school. So, I think that in that situation when they don't start from scratch, it's not that it's just useful, but that it's crucial for them to be able to become part of the community.
Daisy	Well, I would say that it depends on their prior knowledge. Yes... Well, there are different examples in practice. In general, my impression is that they consider it useful, but that, let's say, they come from countries… Let's say this girl from (name of the country of origin) or specifically, excuse me, I taught a girl from (name of the country of origin), who both had no prior knowledge. They don't see any benefits here, at first, because it's just the beginning. Will they make it happen later, I hope they will, especially this little girl from (name of the country of origin) who is interested. For those who already have some prior knowledge, I think it makes it easier for them and they like that additional multiculturalism. Right? I think it's definitely easier for them in English classes than to follow mathematics.
Eva	Well, I think they feel good. Before, children mostly came with some knowledge of English, from Iraq, Iran, Syria. Now these children who come from Russia, Chechnya, they have weaker knowledge, very often almost nothing. From Ukraine, they know something. I think it's quite good because... It's easier for them to communicate than in Croatian, so... I think it's good because it's the class where they most often understand something. The only problem is, for example, this student I had, she came with no knowledge. The poor girl sat and hardly understood anything because we were already on past simple, and she didn't even know the basics.

The participants all agreed that *good prior English knowledge* can contribute to the inclusion of refugee children. They saw it as something that can serve as a bridge between refugee children, Croatian children, the teachers, and the community as they can use it to communicate. This makes it contribute to their inclusion. They also stated that English classes can be the only classes they can follow when they still do not understand Croatian (Daisy, Eva). Additionally, the participants believed that *weak prior English knowledge* can greatly influence the feelings the refugee children have towards learning English and might even make their feelings negative. They might not see any benefits of learning English (Daisy), they might be confused upon learning another language on top of Croatian (Colin), they might just sit in the class not understanding anything (Eva) or have trouble following the lessons (Anna) which can all contribute to them feeling uncomfortable and frustrated. Still, some of the teachers pointed out that the knowledge will come with time and then their feelings might change into positive ones (Anna, Daisy).

On the other hand, Anna still saw a positive influence that English can have even on those refugee children that have weak prior knowledge. She pointed out that due to the nature of English and its prevalence in the community, they tend to pick it up faster than Croatian, which can somewhat help them with inclusion.

5.3. Providing language training and support

Researching how the participants provide language training and support to refugee children gave insight into what *benefits* they believe learning English can have for refugee children, what *challenges* they face when teaching refugee children English, and what *strategies* they use to teach refugee children English as a language.

5.3.1. Benefits

The benefits that EFL teachers thought that learning English can have for refugee children can be sorted into four categories: *social benefits*, *linguistic benefits*, *emotional benefits,* and *benefits that arise from English being a global language*. It is important to note that these benefits sometimes refer to refugee children with weak and sometimes with good prior knowledge, so the teachers believed that social and emotional benefits are mostly there only when refugee children had good prior knowledge, while linguistic benefits and benefits that arise from English being a global language were also seen as beneficial for refugee children that might have weak English knowledge currently, but will learn more of it in the future.

Social benefits arise from the teachers believing that English can serve as a bridge between refugee children, Croatian children, the teachers, and the community since it is an extra tool of communication on top of the refugee children's mother tongue and Croatian which is the language of the host country. Teachers pointed out that *if the children's prior knowledge is good*, it can help them break into the social world, can be the first step of inclusion, first language of communication and can help refugee children find friends (help them with friendship-building or social inclusion) or help them communicate with the teachers and the community in general. Here are some quotes from the participants, showing examples of the social benefits that knowing or learning English can have for refugee children which have good prior knowledge of it:

> I just wanted to share something about a little boy from (name of the country of origin). How English actually saved him. So, he was from (name of the country of origin), he couldn't communicate with the teacher, his homeroom teacher, she didn't know English (…) English meant a lot to him. He- and the children knew a little bit of English too. (…) And he knew it, he spoke so fast and fluently that he, in fact, with him, the other children started to use English more too. (Bella)

> I had a situation in my class (…) that a boy who came with already, with certain knowledge, a solid knowledge of the English language… and then immediately based on that, he succeeded, managed to find friends in the class and join the class as such. Could immediately actively communicate with them, could participate without problems… and during instruction, of course, too. (Colin)

> Teachers, from grades one to four, teach a lot of children. I see that English is widely used in the corridors. So, English is the easiest way for us to communicate with them, until they master the basics of Croatian. (Eva)

It is very interesting how Bella pointed out that the refugee child communicating using English would also help other children use English more, which could be seen as more than just a social benefit and considered a benefit that is also of **a linguistic nature** since it includes the use of language and the improvement of said language. There is also Anna who pointed out that using English might contribute to the refugees learning Croatian quicker. Van Viegen (2020) says that giving incentive to other students to freely communicate with refugee students is almost certain to open up a space for refugee students to start teaching the other students their language and

the students to start teaching the refugees the host country's language in turn while they all also learn English which is something that Anna also recognised:

> …and then through this group work, they also talk to them in English, since the default topic is related to the English language and is dealt with in English, but when they work with each other, of course, they don't speak 100 percent in English, but they also speak in Croatian, so both languages are developing there.

Emotional benefits refer to the fact that children might consider English a safe middle ground since it is not their mother tongue or the language of the host country. The participants pointed out that it is a common or a shared language with the other children in classes and they might feel safe using it since they already know it. They also pointed out that having at least one language that they can communicate in gives them an opportunity to be understood, to express themselves and be accepted as well as to not feel dissatisfied or unhappy contributing to their whole experience in the school. Emotional benefits often overlapped with social ones when the participants gave their answers, which could be attributed to the fact that both depend on communication and to the fact that social inclusion is important for someone to feel accepted and welcome in any kind of environment. So, social and emotional benefits are often connected as can be seen in these quotes:

> It's (English) simply a communication tool that allows them an easier way to become friends with their peers... and with other people, and with professors, and all of that is simply for them... an additional... besides learning the Croatian language, is an additional opportunity to communicate in some way, to be understood, to express themselves and thus be accepted, which is extremely important. So, that moment of acceptance is crucial. Without it, the child doesn't learn anything. I mean, almost anything. They are dissatisfied, unhappy, lack confidence and then everything is extremely hard, so that, that, is the key moment. (Anna)

> I think that it is actually an excellent first step in inclusion as such, that they feel more accepted. That after all, the students can learn more about them through communication in that common language, accept them and actually create some kind of more inclusive environment in general. So that they feel better, that they can say something about themselves, that they can learn something about others and that they can create some kind of community together, together with other students, with others at the school. (Colin)

Finally, there are **benefits that arise from English being a global language**. The teachers shared that English could serve as a gateway to the global world and knowing it could be an asset for anyone in further education and in life, and the same goes for refugee children. Even if they do not decide to stay in Croatia in the future and might go to some other European countries, English will be useful to them as a tool of communication and as an academic and economic asset. As already stated above, Anna also said that due to the status of English as a global language and it being prevalent in many areas of life, the refugee children that have *weak prior knowledge* or no knowledge of English at all might learn some basic words in English faster than Croatian ones, which can also be useful to them for inclusion in schools and in the community.

5.3.2. Challenges

The challenges that EFL teachers face during their work with refugee children can be categorised into two categories: *child-related challenges* and *Croatian system-related challenges*.

Child-related challenges refer to challenges that the teachers thought depend on the individual characteristics of the refugee children, their origins, and prior experiences. These include the already mentioned weak prior knowledge of English and the emotional and psychological trauma that the refugees have faced which influences their further experience in school and in life. The teachers stated that the refugee students came from a different education system and often a different culture than that of the host country. This influenced their English knowledge and their ability to follow classes, making it more difficult for them. They were also sometimes unable to attend classes and participate during them. This might have been due to a lack of knowledge of English, due to their other obligations like online classes and extra classes where they learned Croatian, or they simply did not want to participate because of their situation.

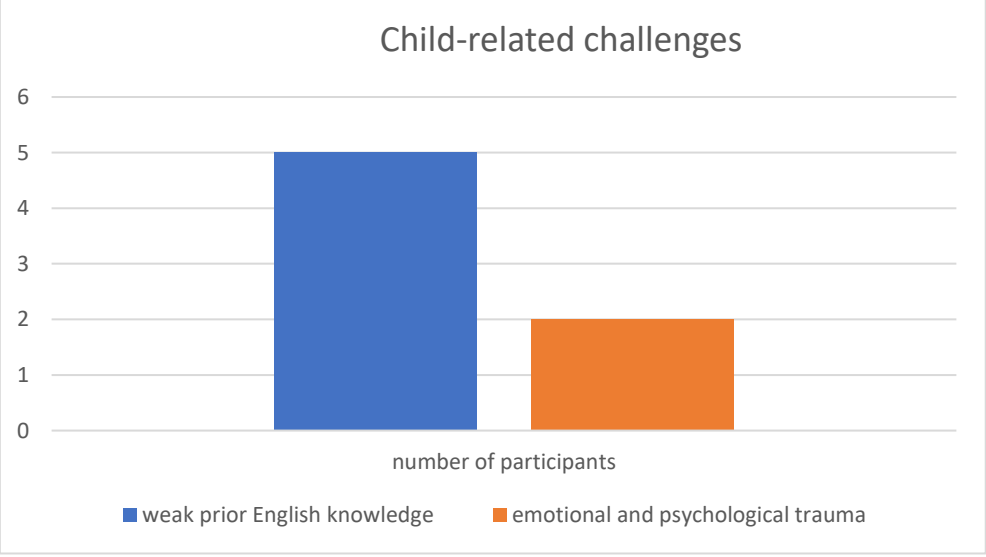
Croatian system-related challenges are those challenges that exist due to the reaction of the Croatian school system and the policy makers to the arrival of refugee children into schools and due to how the school system is structured. The teachers said that there were not enough courses of Croatian and English organised for refugee children before they arrive at the schools, and that volunteers have to organise courses themselves so it all rests on the shoulders of individuals. So, when they arrive, the refugee children cannot follow classes and feel dissatisfied when they have to just idly sit and they do not understand what is being said before they pick up some Croatian and English. There is also the problem of the lack of time and

teachers having too much work which makes it impossible to give refugee children the attention they deserve. Eva pointed out that the teachers often do not get any information about the background of refugee children, and they just arrive to their class one day without them even being notified. Finally, there is a lack of information on how to work with refugee children provided by the Ministry of Science and Education, so the teachers have to make do with finding literature themselves, listening to seminars, and attending workshops organised by volunteers. This lack of information on how to work with refugee children also leads to the teachers adapting materials and assessment strategies following the *Guidelines for working with students with disabilities* (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2021), which will be discussed later in the section about encouraging an inclusive learning environment.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show how many out of the five EFL teachers named each challenge as something that influences their work with refugee children. The researcher decided to quantify these results to see which challenges the interviewed EFL teachers mentioned the most. This provided more insight into their views and practices.

Figure 1

Child-related challenges that influence the work of EFL teachers with refugee children and data on how many participants mentioned each challenge

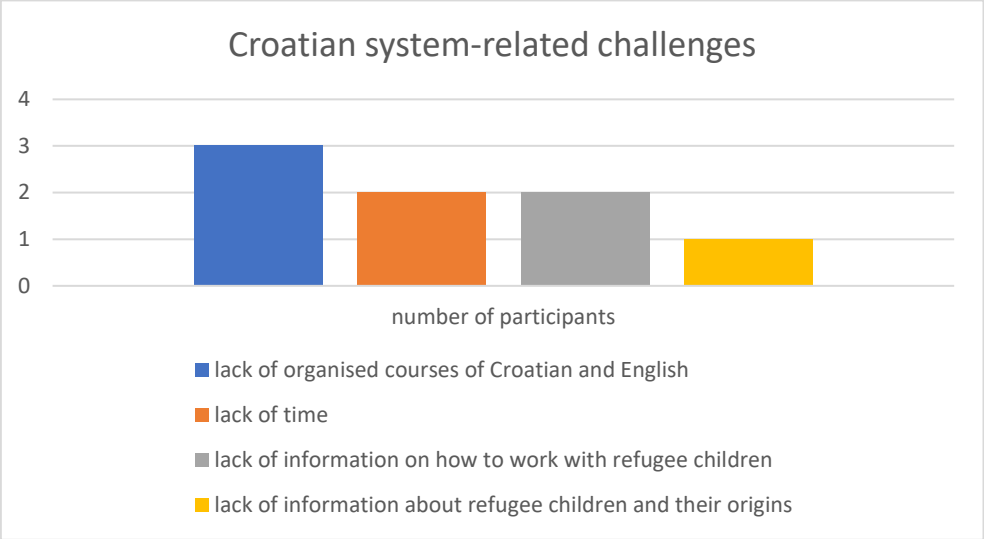


It can be seen from Figure 1 that all the participants mentioned weak prior English knowledge as a challenge. This could be attributed to the fact that teaching English is what they considered their primary duty. When asked about challenges, Anna was the only participant who began her answer by pointing out that refugee students' emotional well-being is very important. Bella also

mentioned emotional distress that some refugee students felt. The other three participants put their focus on the learning challenges that refugee children faced, mentioning weak prior English knowledge. They mentioned that since refugee students come from different education systems and cultures, it is difficult for them to follow the curriculum. The participants also mentioned that refugee students did not participate during classes sometimes which may be due to different reasons, but mostly due to a lack of knowledge of English. They also pointed out it might be due to their other obligations like online classes and extra classes where they learned Croatian or because they simply did not want to participate because of their situation.

Figure 2

Croatian system-related challenges that influence the work of EFL teachers with refugee children and data on how many participants mentioned each challenge



When considering Croatian system-related challenges, lack of organised courses of Croatian and English before the arrival of refugee children in schools was mentioned by the most participants, once again showing that the EFL teachers have a focus on the linguistic aspect of teaching. Furthermore, Anna specifically pointed out that she had to make use of the document *Guidelines for working with students with disabilities* (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2021) because there was no information given by the educational system on how to work with refugee children. The other participants also pointed out that they followed the guidelines for children with disabilities confirming the lack of information indirectly. It is important to note that while they did follow the guidelines for children with disabilities, they all pointed out that they tried to adapt the materials to each individual and their individual needs

showing that they were aware that refugee children have their own needs that are different from children with disabilities and that each individual is also different in their own way.

5.3.3. Strategies used by EFL teachers

The answers to the question *What languages do you use during class?* shed light on some strategies that EFL teachers use to teach refugee children English. All teachers said they used both English and Croatian during EFL instruction. Further, the researcher asked them the question *What about the refugee children's mother tongues?* to get more insight because only Bella mentioned the refugee children's mother tongues on her own when asked about what languages she used. The teachers can be divided into two categories: those who said they used the mother tongues of the refugee children during the classes and those who said they never did. The use of the refugee children's mother tongues during EFL classes can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7

The participants and their use of the refugee children's mother tongues during EFL classes

EFL teacher's pseudonym	**The use of the refugee children's mother tongues during EFL classes**
Anna	YES
Bella	YES
Colin	NO
Daisy	SITUATIONAL
Eva	NO

Eva said she did not use the refugee children's mother tongues during EFL classes, because she did not know the languages so she could not use them. This shows that she might have been unaware that the refugee children's mother tongues did not need to be used by her, but that she needed to make sure that the refugee students had the space and means to use their own mother tongues during classes. Colin stated that he never used the refugee children's mother tongues during class because he did not think using the mother tongue would have been useful since using it in situations where the child did not know English and attempting to use both English and the mother tongue would not have resulted in anything due to the lack of their English knowledge, so he just carried on with classes as such. Still, he pointed out that he used *Google*

translate to communicate with them outside of class and that he was aware that there should be a responsibility to start teaching the refugee students English from scratch and giving them materials in their mother tongue, but the number of duties the teachers had did not allow it. He also said if there would be a situation where the child knew some English and they needed help to understand something better, he would be willing to translate and use the mother tongue, but such a situation had not happened yet in his one year of work.

Daisy mentioned that she used the child's language when it was the language she knew, and that is why her use of child's L1 was labelled as situational. The example provided by Daisy suggested that she used **translation** as a strategy in her work with the student:

> …it's great for me with (the name of the common language), when she came to extra classes, then we combined. I brought her English-Croatian (worksheets), then we translated into (the name of the common language), so we had all kinds of variants.

She also emphasised that she allowed students to use any language they wanted during classes, which means they could use their whole language repertoires. This shows that she understood the idea of translanguaging even if she was not aware of it in theory.

She allowed the use of different languages, and she provided space for the learner to introduce their language and show their knowledge:

> We had workshops… the student introduced us to the (name of the script) script (…) We did a presentation on that topic, and the student had a part about the script, so we listened.

This strategy serves as a good way of boosting the refugee child's confidence and showing appreciation for the child's culture and identity.

A good example of **translanguaging** can also be seen in the following quote from Anna:

> …the students in the class are encouraged… for example, if the child is from Syria, we try to get familiar with their way of writing, with some of their basic words. Now that we have students from (name of the country), we made a small booklet with basic terms, especially related to school, such as *pencil*, *bag*, *friend*, *mom*, *dad*. Then we learned their words, and they learned ours, so that the child feels good, accepted, and to show the child that we are interested in their culture, especially when it comes to different cultures.

Getting familiar with the scripts of refugee children's mother tongues and showing interest in some basic words and terms in their languages is sure to help with the inclusion of refugee children since it can boost their confidence and serve as a means of showing appreciation for the child's culture and identity. It can also make the students who are part of the host country's culture aware of multilingualism and its benefits. This can also help with the inclusion of refugee children since it increases their visibility by making the other students aware the refugee students can be multilingual and that being multilingual has benefits.

At one point, Bella also mentioned that she recently became aware of the benefits of using multiple languages during class and the benefits that technology can have for learning languages. She became aware of this when she attended a seminar on how artificial intelligence like *ChatGPT* can be used for language learning.

Daisy also recognised that the exchange of languages can enrich the students, showing that she was aware that the use of multiple languages during classes has benefits:

> I always like to emphasise diversity and multiculturalism in my class. (…) That exchange, I always like to emphasise how wonderful it is. That they can hear this language and that language and this one all in one class, and then they are enriched by it.

5.4. Encouraging an inclusive learning environment

When faced with the question *What do you think the role of English in encouraging an inclusive learning environment is, especially one that is inclusive for refugee children?* the teachers' answers all corresponded to the benefits that they already named. So, they pointed out that since the focus of English classes is on communication, the classes can be a bridge between refugee children and Croatian children. Further, they said that English can contribute to social inclusion, help with friendship-building, make the refugee children who have good knowledge of English feel more welcome and help them express themselves since they can talk about who they are and where they come from.

The teachers also recognised that the role of English in encouraging an inclusive environment is *somewhat different from that of other school subjects*. Participants shared that English is not just a subject but a medium of communication and you can talk about many different things during English: art, history, geography, biology, or any other subject. This gives it an advantage because topics can be chosen following the interests of the students and used to help with

inclusion since it opens a space for the refugee students to share things about their cultures, their way of life or their interests in general. Daisy said the following:

> English is such a language that the things that are learned… that, that it's a wonder. It doesn't have that… it's not strict. If we're talking about dishes then we include, I don't know… some things from here, then some things from there. So, in all possible ways, we mention... or for example the mosque... to include the children, if they are good at talking, so that they tell us something about that topic and that intrigues the students.

This means that due to the nature of English as a subject, since the topics are not strictly defined because it is a language, it is possible to pick many different topics and include the students in different ways when they get interested.

5.4.1. Strategies used by EFL teachers

When describing what they do to create an inclusive learning environment for refugee children, all five teachers brought up **the importance of letting them share things about their culture**:

> Inclusive environment. Well, we try to find out as much as possible about them, about the countries they come from. We try to find out as much as possible about the culture, in the way that *they* present it to us (…) we used some games, so to speak, where we got to know, as I said at the beginning, the culture of the child, the culture, of course, from which they come. They (the other students) learned about their country, about them, their family, about their way of life there. (Anna)

> …whenever we learn some cultural content, we always compare English customs with Croatian, and in the same way with Ukrainian and so on. (Bella)

> …when students had the opportunity to talk about their own cultures, for example. I think they felt very satisfied in those situations. That it helped them a lot and that the other students found it interesting. Something that is completely unknown to them. (…) This can be, for example, if we do some kind of projects. I let everyone make a short project, some kind of short presentation. It can be related to, to some topics like, I don't know, music, fashion or movies. Then they focus, of course, on their interests. Then they can bring up some interests that are, of course, close to them. Which maybe to us, i.e. to other students, is maybe something completely new, and again in that way they build their own, i.e. they strengthen, I have a feeling, their own, their "I" and their identity. (Colin)

> … we had workshops (…) this difference in culture should be made aware of. We had workshops (…) the student introduced us to the (name of the script) script, and then we played games that the student came up with. (Daisy)
>
> So, try to include them whenever possible. If something is related to culture… well, if we compare Croatia and English-speaking countries, then if they can express themselves well enough, then we try to include them somehow... or if it is reading or if they want to participate. (Eva)

The strategies which the teachers use when creating opportunities for the students to share things about their cultures, which can be found in the quotes above, include:

- not assuming anything regarding the child's previous experiences (Anna);
- creating workshops about different cultures and languages (Daisy);
- playing games of the children's choosing where they get to share their cultures and languages (Anna, Daisy);
- projects and presentations about the students' interests and experiences (Anna, Colin);
- comparing cultures (Bella, Eva);
- encouraging the refugee students' participation during classes in everyday situations (Anna, Colin, Eva).

It can be seen in these answers that all teachers also recognised the importance of letting the refugee students speak themselves, giving them a chance for their voices to be heard. While the strategies range from comparing cultures, creating workshops, playing games, or simply encouraging the refugee students' participation during class and trying to find out more about them through everyday communication and conversation, what is prevalent through all strategies is letting the students decide what and how much they want to share but still giving them opportunities to share if they wish it.

Even though finding a balance between the home cultures and the host countries of refugees is very important, it is important to not only look at refugee students through their ethnicity and race (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016) but as individuals who also have other identity markers that form their identity[29]. This is something that Colin recognised when he said he let the students talk about their own interests when talking about music, fashion, or movies and so did Anna when she said that they also learn about the refugee students' families and them (the students)

[29] More on refugee students, EFL instruction and identity under the section about providing opportunities for identity construction.

as such. While all the teachers brought up differences in cultures showing just how important they consider them, Colin and Anna specifically mentioned that just **making them feel included, accepted and a part of something** is already a big step in creating an inclusive environment as can be seen in the following quotes:

> I try to include them in the lessons, so that they don't feel left out when some activities are carried out. When maybe there is some kind of group work or work in pairs and the like. To make them feel like a part of that class. To feel that they are part of something and that they can help as much as they can. So, I try somehow to make sure that they are not separated. (Colin)

> So, that moment of acceptance is crucial. Without it, the child doesn't learn anything. I mean, almost anything. They are dissatisfied, unhappy, lack confidence and then everything is extremely hard, so that, that, is the key moment. (Anna)

Another topic that should be considered when talking about creating an inclusive learning environment for refugee children is **the adaptation of materials and assessment strategies**. As already mentioned, all participants said they used *Guidelines for working with students with disabilities* (The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2021), and adapted them to each individual and their needs when creating materials. As far as assessment is concerned, first, when two cycles of preparatory classes of Croatian are underway, the teachers use formative assessment. While the teachers make sure to adapt their tests once the summative assessment starts after two cycles of preparatory classes of Croatian are done, it is not ideal to do so following the guidelines for the adaptation of tests for children with disabilities. Ideally, if one looks at Banks' (2013) dimensions of intercultural education, specifically the dimension of *an equity pedagogy*, teachers should modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups (or any other groups). This is not fully possible when following guidelines for working with children with disabilities, since these guidelines have a focus on children with disabilities and their needs. Still, since there is no official detailed document in Croatia on how to adapt materials and assess the English knowledge of refugee students, the teachers end up having to manage with what is available and try to adapt it to the individual needs of every refugee student as best as possible.

5.5. Providing opportunities for identity construction

When faced with the question *How do you think English instruction can be used for the identity construction of refugee children?* Anna, Colin, and Daisy felt it was necessary to point out that

the refugee children already come with an identity, and it is important that they keep what they came with while also getting used to the new environment they are now in, showing that they are aware that inclusion refers to both adjusting to the new culture and keeping the heritage of refugee children:

> I won't say they built their identity in the sense that they came without an identity, but they successfully managed to integrate their identity into the new environment, the new situation, through the English language. That is, through the use of the English language. Through the possibility to express it in that way too. This certainly contributed to the further development of the child's identity. (Anna)

> Well, (EFL instruction) allows them to show off their identity. So, they can bring their culture, their customs, maybe their music, movies, whatever, from their own countries, closer to the students here. Generally, that they can feel like their identity is somehow theirs, and that they can show it as it is… and then build upon it with this, with, with parts of the community in which they are now. Somehow that they feel themselves, that they feel their own, that they feel accepted and that they can be who they are and then, along the way, accept what's new, what's around them, so that they can combine it all again and be themselves. (Colin)

> ...I think they already come with their own identity somehow, right? And now this can only perhaps help them somehow strengthen their culture. (...) I mean, acceptance of some differences as well, but also I would say that those children who come, as they mostly come from those areas that are culturally different from ours, yes, I think that it is just as important to them that they keep their "settings", so to speak. For them to adapt, of course you have to adapt to the environment you are in, but I also think that it is very important for them to have what they came with, that is, to keep their identity, in the end. (Daisy)

It can also be seen from these three quotes that the three mentioned participants found EFL instruction useful for the development of the refugee children's identity as it allows them to first express and show off their identity (Anna, Colin), to strengthen it and develop it further (Anna, Colin, Daisy), and also to adapt to the new environment they find themselves in (Anna, Colin, Daisy). Daisy also pointed out that EFL instruction can help with the acceptance of differences which is interesting to consider because this belief points towards the awareness of the existence of intercultural education.

Anna also recognised the importance of the English language in the development of the identity of children in today's world outside of EFL instruction, showing just how much knowing English can influence one's identity:

> Especially today when the English language and content in English to which children are exposed… I'm talking about elementary school, right? Those are, in my opinion, unfortunately, but that's how it is, *TikToks*, various *YouTubers* and so on, influencers. So, all of this is more or less in English, so if the child wants to develop an identity in any direction, we will not go into what is good and what is not now, but the English-speaking areas are important and can contribute a lot to the fact of the child building themselves up and somehow finding themselves.

The other two participants (Bella and Eva) said that they believe EFL instruction can help with identity construction, but that their strategies are more informal, and they do not do anything particular to specifically develop the identity of the refugee students except maybe compare the cultures when the opportunities present themselves, and that the identity of their students is developed through everyday activities. When comparing cultures, it is important to do it in a way that does not make the other students view the refugee students as separate from the Croatian society which could make their inclusion more difficult. The other students must be taught to decentre themselves from their own culture (Liddicoat, 2011) and become aware of what is usually hidden in society for the comparisons to have benefits.

5.5.1. Strategies used by EFL teachers

It is not surprising that strategies, which the three teachers who did point out specific strategies they used to provide opportunities for identity construction, mostly correspond to those for encouraging an inclusive learning environment since according to Cerna (2019) providing opportunities for identity construction includes navigating between the refugee children's home and host cultures and finding the right balance between them and all five participants brought up the importance of letting the refugee students share things about their culture as a part of encouraging an inclusive learning environment. When talking about strategies that provide opportunities for identity construction, they mostly just add to those they already mentioned. So, strategies that Anna, Colin, and Daisy named as ones that contribute to the identity construction of refugee students are:

- workshops about different cultures and languages (Anna, Daisy);
- drawing and later describing the drawings (Anna);

- creating projects about the interests of the students (Anna, Colin, Daisy);
- playing games of the children's choosing (Anna, Daisy)
- group and pair work (Anna, Colin).

When talking about workshops, Anna said it is significant that the children themselves choose what interests them and are asked if they want to participate because if they are forced to participate, the workshops might have the opposite effect of the desired one. She also gave an example of a workshop she organised as an extracurricular activity in collaboration with other school staff which is important to mention even though it is in Croatian, and not English:

> …she (the refugee student) stood there and presented her work (…) but now they found out something else about her. Now, maybe it will be even easier for them to talk to her and make some closer contact with her than before. So, it is absolutely important to include them in all activities. Of course, if the child wants, nothing against their will. For them to be a part of the team, for them to be part of the new team and for them to feel accepted, and little by little, that fear and that discomfort they feel begin to fade.

With workshops like this one, not only do the children get the opportunity to show their identity and develop it, but they are also able to create new friendships after maybe finding some points of interest with the other workshop participants. The same can be done during EFL classes.

5.6. Supporting friendship-building

When asked about friendship-building, the participants all acknowledged that encouraging interactions between refugee students and the host countries' students is an important part of their work and that the refugee students always need to feel like they are a part of what is happening and the class they are in. Anna and Colin pointed out that they always make sure that everything is done together. They are careful not to separate refugee students from the other students under any circumstances and they make sure that the refugee students are included in any activity they wish to be included in. Anna said: "So: together, together, together. That is the key." when she was describing that her students always do everything together from doing projects, making posters, presenting them, and participating in workshops where new friendships often bloom. Eva pointed out that the students themselves are willing to always help the new refugee students and they quickly become friends most of the time even before any additional incentive is needed, but she still employs strategies like group and pair work to help with friendship-building. Anna also stated that she liked to take the opportunity every time there was something about friendship in the textbooks and make the students learn about the deeper

parts of friendship too, like what a friend does and what they should not do, making them aware of what friendship is as a concept, and encouraging them to make new friends.

Friendship-building was a prevalent topic throughout the whole interview, as the importance of social inclusion often came up during the discussion about benefits of knowing and learning English, creating an inclusive environment and identity construction. Still, it is important to name some strategies that the EFL teachers recognised as strategies that contribute specifically to friendship-building.

5.6.1. Strategies used by EFL teachers

First there is **encouraging empathy** through everyday conversations. Bella, Daisy, and Eva said that if they are aware that a new refugee student will arrive, they encourage empathy and work on creating understanding by saying sentences like "put yourselves in their shoes" and "imagine how you would feel if you were suddenly a part of a completely new environment" and that that helps the host country's students understand the newly arrived refugee students better. When using this strategy, it is important that the teachers do not make assumptions about what a refugee child's situation may be because sharing the assumptions which may not be right might influence the way the host country's students view refugee students and create an uncomfortable situation for them.

Then there is **group work** and **pair work** which were mentioned by Anna, Bella, and Colin. Bella pointed out that they are both great ways to create cohesion. Sometimes the teachers create *games* and make the students play them in pairs or groups. This also contributes to the students finding what they have in common and that helps them develop friendships. Anna mentioned that her students write essays about a friend from class and then create a game where everyone else in class has to guess who the essay is about. Bella mentioned that she uses the *Think-Pair-Share* method. The teacher asks a question, the students first think about it and then they discuss it with a person they are paired with before sharing their opinion with the class. She also said that she always makes sure the pairs and groups are not the same to better connect everyone in class.

Workshops and projects about friendship, which both somewhat fall into the category of group work, are sometimes organised by the teachers themselves during EFL classes and sometimes in collaboration with other school staff. The teachers acknowledged that friendship can be developed through other workshops and projects as well, such as the ones mentioned above under the section about encouraging an inclusive learning environment and providing

opportunities for identity construction, since the students learn about each other while participating in them which then makes it easier to approach one another.

While **extracurricular activities outside the school** are not part of EFL classes, Anna and Colin pointed out that they are also a good way of bringing the students together and that they often organise them in collaboration with other teachers and librarians of the schools. Colin pointed out that since the environment and atmosphere during them are different than in schools, different as in not so constricting, it is easier to naturally develop friendships. The extracurricular activities mentioned by the teachers include going to the theatre, the cinema, going to city parks, going on walks, or searching for monuments or similar things throughout the city.

6. Discussion

The results of this study confirm the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system. They also confirm that the EFL teachers in this study were aware of this potential. EFL teachers tried their best to develop strategies to help with the inclusion of refugee children even though they were faced with challenges which arose from the slow reaction of the Croatian education system to the arrival of refugees. One such challenge includes the lack of a document which would contain guidelines for work with refugee students. Challenges also arose from the specific individual needs of the refugee elementary school students who are an especially vulnerable group of children. The EFL teachers also recognised that English and EFL instruction could be beneficial for refugee students depending on how good their prior knowledge of English is.

Cerna's (2019) four categories which were chosen as a way of operationalising the potential that EFL instruction may have for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system were confirmed to be an interconnected process, as stated in the theoretical part of the paper. The strategies used by the teachers were: providing language training and support, encouraging an inclusive learning environment, providing opportunities for identity construction, and supporting friendship-building. These are all interconnected which could be seen from the description of the strategies that the teachers used when working with refugee students. While strategies for providing language training and support were analysed through a multilingual approach and *translating* and *translanguaging* practices were looked at, these practices are carried out through the means of *workshops*, *projects*, *group* and *pair work,* and *games.* The mentioned strategies are also used for encouraging an inclusive learning

environment, providing opportunities for identity construction, and supporting friendship-building. These strategies are the most prevalent ones throughout the whole study, with the occasional additions based on the distinctiveness of each category like *encouraging empathy* and *organising extracurricular activities outside the school* to support friendship-building, *drawing* for providing opportunities for identity construction or *not assuming anything regarding the child's previous experiences* and *encouraging the refugee students' participation during classes in everyday situations* for encouraging an inclusive learning environment.

EFL teachers recognised that there were ways *to provide language training and support* to refugee students during EFL instruction, but the results showed that there is unused potential in this category. Anna, Bella, and Daisy showed some awareness of the existence of multilingual pedagogies by mentioning that they used the mother tongues of refugee children, let the children use them during EFL instruction or they organised workshops where refugee students talked about their languages. Colin and Eva showed that they were not fully aware of the potential that using someone's whole language repertoire can have. They said that they did not use the refugee children's mother tongues during classes either because they did not know them or because they believed it would not be useful since using the mother tongue when the child does not know English and attempting to use both English and the mother tongue would not result in anything due to the child not knowing English. One needs to be careful with views and opinions like that because they might lead to the teachers blindly following the monolingual majority language ideology, putting only the development of the host country's language in focus, which is Croatian in this case. The same could happen with English if the teachers focused too much on its development, and if they allowed the students to use only English and no other languages during class. That could be harmful for the refugee students since it could hinder the development of other languages and make them uncomfortable if they felt like they cannot freely and naturally use their full language repertoires. Writing and presenting language biographies could provide a good starting point when trying to implement multilingual pedagogies into EFL instruction. With language biographies, the teachers can get familiar with the refugee children's linguistic backgrounds, raise the multilingual and cultural awareness of both refugees and other students in the class (Busch, Aziza & Tjoutuku, 2006) and make the class environment become more communication friendly (Kalocsányiová, 2017). If both multilingual and cultural awareness of the teachers and students are developed, it is easier for translanguaging practices to become a part of EFL instruction.

When it comes to *encouraging an inclusive learning environment*, the teachers gave the most attention to letting the refugee students share things about their culture and to the adaptation of materials and assessment strategies. Since there is no official detailed document in Croatia on how to adapt materials to the needs of refugee students, how to assess their English knowledge, or on how to work with them in general, the teachers are left to their own devices and need to adapt the strategies they use to the needs of every refugee student as best as possible. This may result in the teachers using strategies wrongly. For example, if they make the refugee students compare their cultures with the host country's culture, but the other students in the class are not able to decentre themselves from their culture (Liddicoat, 2011) and are not aware of how and why stereotypes and prejudices are formed (Banks, 2013), it might make the process of inclusion more difficult for everyone involved.

Looking at *identity construction*, the participants all first mentioned the importance of finding a balance between the refugee students' home country and the culture of the host country showing that they might view race, ethnicity and the languages spoken by the refugee students as the strongest identity markers. While this might be the most identifiable difference, one needs to be careful and know that intercultural practices can be put into practice if one is aware that other identity markers such as gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and disabilities, which are all not static and can change over time and which can all mean different things to different people (Bartulović & Kušević, 2016), are all also a part of refugee children's identities.

All participants agreed that *supporting friendship-building* between refugee students and the host countries' students was an important part of their work. It is important to mention that friendships should be easier to form if multilingual pedagogies and intercultural strategies are used during instruction.

While multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices are sometimes talked about in the study, they are still not widely accepted concepts and not widely used by the EFL teachers. Multilingual pedagogies can be seen in the use of translanguaging by Anna, Bella, and Daisy, while Colin and Eva do not recognise them, at least not enough to bring them up themselves as something they use. Intercultural practices are recognisable in the fact that the teachers approach each refugee student as an individual, try to not make assumptions about them, try to reduce exclusion and promote empathy, promote respect for the cultures of refugees and make sure to not make assumptions about them without asking first. Still, looking at Banks' dimensions of intercultural education, from what they mentioned during interviews, EFL teachers mostly use *content integration.* That can be seen from the fact that they sometimes use

examples and content from different cultures to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalisations, and theories by asking the students to compare cultures, but they barely mention actively promoting the transformative moment of education. This, if one is not careful and does not also help the other students decentre themselves from their culture (Liddicoat, 2011), could end up being counterproductive and make the other students view the refugee students as separate from the Croatian society making their inclusion more difficult. Since there is no official document in Croatia to help the EFL teachers with how to work with refugee students, it is not unusual that this is the case when the use of multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices is in question.

All in all, this study found that EFL teachers of refugee students believe that there is potential that EFL instruction has for the inclusion of refugee children and that its potential may even be greater than that of other subjects because of its focus on communication and because of the status of English as a global language. It also shed light on some strategies that EFL teachers use to provide language training and support, encourage an inclusive learning environment, provide opportunities for identity construction, and support friendship-building while also discerning that some of these strategies do belong to multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices, even if their number is not overwhelming.

7. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

There are some factors that might limit this study. First, there were only five participants since finding willing participants was difficult due to the very specific category of participants that was needed for research. Even though the plan was to find EFL teachers that teach refugee students only from 5th grade to 8th grade, some of the participants also work with younger students and their answers included examples from their work with younger elementary school refugee students too. Since there were only five EFL teachers who were interviewed in this study, it would be interesting to see what the results would be like if there were more participants and how their strategies and perspectives would be similar or different from the ones found in this study. One thing that could be further researched is what influences the perspectives of EFL teachers, since the only thing that was researched here was what their perspectives were and not how they came to be.

Since the aim of the study was to find out in which ways English language teachers support the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system, the questions were very open-ended on purpose so insight is given into the current

situation of the practices and perspectives of EFL teachers. Studies could be conducted to find out more details about the strategies the teachers use and the perspectives they have about each of the four categories (providing language training and support, encouraging an inclusive learning environment, providing opportunities for identity construction, and supporting friendship-building) that were researched here.

It was only briefly analysed which multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices the teachers mentioned, so that is an area that could also be further researched, be it in relation to EFL teachers and their work with refugee students in Croatia, or to their work in general. When mentioning multilingual pedagogies, it would also be interesting to research to what extent and how English should be used when refugees first arrive in Croatia so it does not hinder the acquisition of other languages including Croatian.

Considering the fact that there is scarce research on refugee students in Croatia, except for some research on refugee students and the Croatian language (Cvitanušić Tvico, 2022; Đurđević & Podboj, 2016; Ocvirk et al. 2022; Perić & Merkaš, 2020; Podboj, 2016), it would be beneficial to study how different school subjects, and not only EFL instruction which was researched here, can contribute to their inclusion and how the refugee students themselves feel about different school subjects.

Finally, it is important to mention that the chosen method of research was a semi-structured interview, and the coding and analysis of the interviews were done by only one researcher. So, it is possible that the results and their interpretation are not completely objective, even though the researcher tried to be as objective as possible.

8. Conclusion

Even though it is very important to make sure the refugee children that arrive in Croatian schools learn Croatian, which is the host country's official language, making use of EFL instructions and the English language can still have benefits for the inclusion of refugee children, especially when they first arrive in Croatia. That is why it was valuable to study the perspectives that EFL teachers have on how EFL instruction can be a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools.

Following the aim of this study, which was to determine in which ways English language teachers support the potential of EFL instruction for the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system, this study found that EFL teachers of refugee students believe that

there is potential that EFL instruction has for the inclusion of refugee children. It also uncovered some strategies which EFL teachers use to provide language training and support, encourage an inclusive learning environment, provide opportunities for identity construction, and support friendship-building which are all practices that help with the inclusion of refugee students into the Croatian education system.

While EFL teachers do face some challenges due to the reaction of the Croatian education system to the arrival of refugees and due the specific individual needs of the refugee elementary school students who are an especially vulnerable group of children, EFL teachers have still developed and keep developing strategies to help with the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools. Some of these strategies do correspond to multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices, but multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices are still not widely accepted and not widely used since there is no official document providing guidelines for such practices when working with refugee children in Croatia. The lack of an official document on how to work with refugee students could also make the teachers feel lost and stressed, reducing their work quality. Further, the teachers might unknowingly use strategies which hinder the inclusion of refugee students, instead of supporting it. The teachers might fall under the influence of the monolingual majority language ideology, might make the other students view the refugee students as separate from the Croatian society making their inclusion more difficult, or might focus too much on the ethnicity of the refugees and the languages the refugees speak and forget about their other identity markers. For the potential of EFL instruction as a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools to be fully utilised, the whole system needs to show support to EFL teachers, because they cannot wholly implement multilingual pedagogies and intercultural practices on their own without any guidance.

Since there are currently no studies on the potential that English language teaching can have for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools, the author hopes this study can provide an insight into the current situation in schools and into the thoughts of EFL teachers about how their subject can contribute to inclusion. This study can serve as a basis for further research on the potential of English language teaching for refugee inclusion, as well as on the potential of other subjects. It can also serve as a first step towards a recommendation on how to use English language teaching for the inclusion of refugee children and how to teach refugee students English, which currently does not exist in Croatia.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Protocol in English:

General information:

How long have you been working as an EFL teacher?

How many years have you been working with refugee children? What countries (or territories) and cultures were they from?

How many refugees are you currently working with? What countries (territories) are they from?

RQ1 – Providing language training and support

What do you think how refugee children feel about learning English? (Do they find it different than other subjects in any way?)

What benefits do you think learning English can have for refugee children?

What challenges do you face when teaching refugee children English? (What languages do you use during class?)

RQ2 – Encouraging an inclusive learning environment

What do you think is the role of English in encouraging an inclusive learning environment, especially one that is inclusive for refugee children?

What do you think how the role of English in encouraging an inclusive learning environment can be different from other subjects?

What do you do to encourage an inclusive learning environment for refugee children?

RQ3 – Providing opportunities for identity construction

How do you think English instruction can be used for the identity construction of refugee children?

Have you developed any strategies, methods or do you use any materials that could provide opportunities for identity construction of refugee children?

RQ4 – Supporting friendship-building

How do you support friendship-building between refugee children and their peers from Croatia?

Are there any strategies you have developed to encourage contact between them?

Appendix B - Protocol in Croatian:

General information – Opće informacije

Koliko dugo radite kao nastavnik/ica engleskog jezika?

Koliko godina radite ili ste radili s djecom izbjeglicama? S kojih teritorija (ili država) i iz kojih kultura su bila?

S koliko djece izbjeglica radite trenutno (ako radite)? S kojih su teritorija (iz kojih su država)?

RQ1 - Providing language training and support - Pružanje jezične obuke i podrške

Što mislite što djeca izbjeglice misle o učenju engleskog/kako se osjećaju kada uče engleski? (Smatraju li da se nekako razlikuje od ostalih predmeta?)

Što mislite koje koristi učenje engleskog jezika može imati za djecu izbjeglice?

S kojim izazovima se susrećete kada djecu izbjeglice podučavate engleskom? (Koje jezike koristite tijekom nastave?)

RQ2 - Encouraging an inclusive learning environment – Poticanje inkluzivnog okruženja za učenike

Što mislite koja je uloga engleskog jezika/predmeta Engleski jezik u poticanju inkluzivnog okruženja za učenje, posebno onog koje je inkluzivno za djecu izbjeglice?

(Što činite kako biste poticali inkluzivno okruženje za učenje za djecu izbjeglice?)

Što mislite kako se uloga predmeta Engleski jezik u poticanju inkluzivnog okruženja za učenje može razlikovati od drugih predmeta?

RQ3 - Providing opportunities for identity construction - Pružanje mogućnosti za izgradnju identiteta

Što mislite kako se nastava engleskog jezika može koristiti za izgradnju identiteta djece izbjeglica?

Jeste li razvili kakve strategije, metode ili koristite li kakve materijale koji bi mogli pružiti mogućnosti za izgradnju identiteta djece izbjeglica?

RQ4 - Supporting friendship-building – Podupiranje stjecanja prijatelja

Na koji način podupirete izgradnju/razvijanje prijateljstva između djece izbjeglica i njihovih vršnjaka iz Hrvatske?

Postoje li strategije koje ste razvili kako biste potaknuli kontakt među njima?

Appendix C - Information letter and informed consent:

INFORMATIVNO PISMO

o sudjelovanju u istraživanju

Poštovani,

zovem se Nives Valek i studentica sam diplomskog studija anglistike i pedagogije na Filozofskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. U svrhu izrade diplomskog rada provodim istraživanje pod mentorstvom doc. dr. sc. Stele Letice Krevelj i izv. prof. dr. sc. Marije Bartulović.

U ovom informativnom pismu za sudjelovanje u istraživanju objašnjava se zašto i kako se istraživanje provodi te koji bi mogli biti rizici i dobrobiti sudjelovanja u istraživanju.

Vaša pomoć je nužna te Vas ovih putem pozivam na sudjelovanje u istraživanju. Ako se odlučite sudjelovati u ovom istraživanju ili imate pitanja, molim Vas da mi se javite (podaci za kontakt priloženi na kraju pisma).

Naslov istraživanja:

"EFL instruction as a tool for the inclusion of refugee children in Croatian schools: Teachers' perspective"

ili

„Nastava engleskog jezika kao alat za inkluziju djece izbjeglica u hrvatske škole: Perspektiva nastavnika" (u hrvatskom prijevodu)

Sudionici istraživanja: Nastavnici predmeta Engleski jezik učenicima od 5. do 8. razreda koji podučavaju ili su podučavali djecu izbjeglice

Cilj istraživanja: Utvrditi koja su razmišljanja nastavnika engleskog jezika o tome kako se njihovim predmetom može pridonijeti inkluziji učenika izbjeglica u hrvatski odgojno-obrazovni sustav.

Opis procesa istraživanja:

Podatci će biti prikupljeni medijem polu-strukturiranog intervjua. Mjesto i vrijeme intervjua biti će dogovoreno prema preferencijama sudionika. Intervju će se snimati (audiosnimka) kako

bi se tijekom intervjua istraživačica mogla bolje usredotočiti na razgovor i kasnije osigurala što veću točnost podataka kod analize.

Predviđeno trajanje intervjua: 45 minuta ili jedan školski sat

Mogući dobici nakon završetka istraživanja:

U Hrvatskoj trenutno ne postoje istraživanja o potencijalu koji nastava engleskog jezika može imati za inkluziju djece izbjeglica u hrvatske škole. Ovo istraživanje trebalo bi pružiti uvid u trenutno stanje u školama te u razmišljanja nastavnika engleskog jezika o tome kako se njihovim predmetom može pridonijeti inkluziji. Nakon što se dobije uvid u trenutno stanje i nakon što se vide razmišljanja nastavnika, ovo istraživanje može služiti kao temelj za daljnja istraživanja o potencijalu nastave engleskog jezika za inkluziju izbjeglica, kao i o potencijalu ostalih predmeta za isto. Istraživanje također može poslužiti kao prvi korak prema pisanom dokumentu o tome kako koristiti nastavu engleskog jezika za inkluziju djece izbjeglica, a koji u Hrvatskoj trenutno ne postoji.

Rizici koji se mogu pojaviti tijekom istraživanja:

Iako je fokus istraživanja na djelovanju nastavnika, djeca izbjeglice su neizravni sudionici ovog istraživanja jer će se rad s njima spominjati tijekom razgovora. Zato treba paziti da se tijekom intervjua ne spominju imena djece. Intervju se također ne smije prepričavati trećim osobama koje bi djecu mogle prepoznati te jedino sudionik/ica i istraživačica smiju biti svjesni što je izrečeno.

Na kraju, istraživačica garantira sljedeća **načela**:

Načelo dobrovoljnosti

Sudjelovanje u istraživanju u potpunosti je dobrovoljno. Ako se sudionici odluče na sudjelovanje, u svakom trenutku imaju pravo odbiti odgovoriti na pitanja na koja ne žele bez navođenja razloga odbijanja ili u potpunosti prekinuti sudjelovanje. Također mogu odbiti objavljivanje svojih odgovora i nakon intervjua, a prije objave diplomskog rada.

Načelo povjerljivosti i privatnosti

Svi prikupljeni podaci biti će korišteni isključivo u svrhu izrade diplomskog rada. Nitko osim istraživačice neće imati pristup snimkama i transkriptima, a imena nastavnika i škola u kojima rade neće biti spomenuta. Snimka razgovora biti će uništena godinu dana nakon objave diplomskog rada.

Načelo pravednosti i istinitosti

Istraživačica garantira da će tijekom procesa intervjua i analize podataka biti pravedna i poštivati načelo istinitosti. Pravedno i jednako će postupati prema svima bez pristranosti te će kritički i profesionalno pristupiti analizi podataka.

Podaci za kontakt:

Ukoliko se odlučite sudjelovati u istraživanju, imate pitanja prije istraživanja, ako ćete željeti vidjeti rezultate istraživanja, ili htjeti da se Vaše sudjelovanje u istraživanju povuče i nakon intervjua, molim Vas da mi pošaljete mail na e-mail adresu ----.

Također sam dostupna na broj mobitela ----.

Zahvaljujem na suradnji,

Nives Valek, studentica

INFORMIRANI PRISTANAK

za sudjelovanje u istraživanju pod naslovom „Nastava engleskog jezika kao alat za inkluziju djece izbjeglica u hrvatske škole: Perspektiva nastavnika“ studentice Nives Valek

„Svojim potpisom izražavam svoj pristanak za sudjelovanje u istraživanju i potvrđujem da:

- sam informiran/a o svrsi istraživanja, procesu istraživanja, o mogućim dobicima i rizicima;
- da sam obaviješten/a da je moje sudjelovanje u istraživanju dobrovoljno, da imam pravo odustati u bilo kojem trenutku, da znam da je istraživačica obvezna pridržavati se etičkih načela istraživanja i da je dužna zaštititi tajnost podataka;
- da sam informiran/a da će se intervju snimati diktafonom, a pristup audio zapisu imati isključivo istraživačica;
- da sam informiran/a da će snimke intervjua biti uništene odmah po transkripciji, dok će se transkripti u anonimiziranoj formi čuvati 12 mjeseci nakon pohrane diplomskoga rada u repozitorij, nakon čega će biti uništeni;
- da sam suglasna/suglasan s time da se pojedini dijelovi intervjua citiraju/parafraziraju u diplomskome radu, uz strogo poštivanje načela anonimnosti i povjerljivosti;
- da sam informiran/a kako tijekom intervjua sve podatke o drugim osobama mogu iznositi samo na način koji ne ugrožava njihovu anonimnost;
- da sam obaviješten/a da se za uvid u rezultate istraživanja mogu javiti na adresu elektroničke pošte: ----.“

mjesto i datum _____

ime i prezime (tiskanim slovima) _____

potpis sudionika _____