Immigrant Students in Malta and the Language Barrier

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ABSTRACT

IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN MALTA AND THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

The immigrant students’ entry in local State Schools is inevitably affecting the fabric of Maltese classrooms changing and challenging them in several ways. This multiple case study explored the immigrant students’ language-mediated experiences in State Secondary Schools. It documented the language provisions for immigrant students provided by the receiving schools in a bid to analyse these language programmes and how they were received by the immigrant students. Three State Secondary Schools were chosen as cases and data collected via non-participant classroom observations, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with immigrant students, members of their respective school’s Senior Management Team, subject teachers, and various experts on education and immigration. Findings indicated that when the immigrant students entered Secondary Education in Malta, they all faced various challenges accentuated particularly by a language barrier. An initial temporary survival kit for immigrant students was the English language, however, as the immigrant students spent more time at school, a stronger barrier emerged - that of the Maltese language. Without this, the immigrant students felt trapped in an invisible bubble, battling with school routines and unable to access the curriculum and their daily routines at school. Moreover, the various shortcomings in the language provisions provided by the schools in the absence of a national policy fuelled issues of inequity and hindered the immigrant students’ access to quality education. Recommendations are made for a national policy to address the language needs of the immigrant students in which Maltese as an Additional Language will be recognised as a subject. In acknowledging the immigrant students’ diverse language needs and providing them with adequate language provisions, the immigrant students will be able to access a quality education.

Master of Education in Applied Language Studies

IMMIGRANT STUDENTS   MALTESE AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE
LANGUAGE BARRIER     STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

May 2013
STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged.

SHARON MICALLEF CANN

30-05-2013

DATE
DEDICATION

To my niece Kim,
in whose:
deep smiling eyes, I see love
radiant smile and giggles, I see joy
little hands, I see a strong motivation to reach for the stars and chase her
dreams and
little feet, I see a precious child taking her first steps to start her journey in
the world,
a journey which in all its makings
and like that of every child
deserves to be
cherished.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr Doreen Spiteri MA (TESOL) (Lond) PhD (Lond), for her inestimable support, invaluable advice, encouragement and care in guiding me along this journey with immeasurable respect for my own learning process.

I am indebted to my family who have supported me all the time and who have been and always will be a solid pillar of support and inspiration in my life: my father Alfred - who kindled in me a passion for teaching; my mother Juliana - for her steadfast love and measureless support; my brother Bernard - who aided me on my journey and carefully guided me safely into harbour and finally my sister-in-law Rodianne - who has been an immensely inspiring and constructive voice throughout this process. I would also like to thank my colleague and dear friend Petrina for her friendship and moral support. Having you all behind me helped carry me through this odyssey with confidence and determination.

I am also grateful to all the participants of this study: the 27 subject teachers for welcoming me into their classes; the 6 members of the Senior Management Team of the three participating schools for permitting data to be collected from their schools and discussing the immigrant students’ language experiences; the 18 experts to whom I am particularly grateful who despite their busy schedules found the time to delve into the issue under study.

My heartfelt thanks must go to the 22 immigrant students participating in this study without whom the study could not have taken place. They have generously shared with me their immigration histories, challenges and experiences - moments which were precious not just for the research, but also as a rare chance for me to become genuinely immersed in the immigrant students’ world - a profound experience which helped me to better understand what it feels like to be an immigrant in a new school, and new
country surrounded by a totally new language. It is my hope that this research will contribute in some small measure towards further development of an education in Malta that values and takes into consideration the immigrant students’ experiences and lives up to the challenge of harnessing their energies by believing in their potential and working to break down the barriers that stand in the way.

Finally I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and opportunity to be able to start and complete this study. Thanks to all the people I have met and the various phases I have gone through during this journey, the following study was for me an enriching experience which has helped me grow furthermore both as a teacher and as a person.
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Chapter 1

Introduction
1.1 Background to The Study

The aim of this study is to listen to the voices of 22 immigrant students as they share their language-mediated experiences in relation to their educational experience in a State Secondary School in Malta. It also aims to explore what language provisions for immigrant children (if any), are being provided in their respective State Secondary Schools. According to Bearison (1991), it is important to listen to the children speaking in their own voices regarding issues, situations and events that are important to them. In bringing their voices to the fore and giving them a medium through which to be heard, the participants can speak to their native peers, teachers, administrators, policy makers and others so that a deeper and richer understanding of their language-mediating experiences within Malta’s Secondary Education, can be better understood, and, if necessary, developed or improved so as to provide them with an enriching and equitable educational environment. As Moore and Miller (1999) assert, it is “only when vulnerable groups receive the appropriate research attention will their care and quality of life be enhanced” (p. 1040).

1.1.1 Immigrant Students

Very often these students are sitting silently at the back of the class, shy, afraid, baffled, trapped in a world of their own, with no language-bridge to connect to, no culture-bridge to identify themselves with and no friends to share a joke with. Often they are trying hard to cope with the rupture and separation that has recently happened in their lives. In class, and at school, they sometimes seem to be in a world of their own: snobbish, arrogant, rebellious or indifferent as they slump in their chairs, get involved in fights or even as they sleep in class. Their Maltese peers smile or make fun of them when they participate in class for their English and Maltese are often marked with a particular accent and when an argument arises in class or during break, they will tell them to go back to their country or call them names such as “China”, “Russia”, “Serbian”, “Nigger” or crudely “boat people” as for them, they’ll always be, “il-barranin” (the foreigners).
In these students’ eyes one sees the pain, the struggle and the frustration at having lost all that made them who they were. Despite this, in their words one also feels the power of their determination and the motivation to make it. For some, these children in class are a burden, a source of extra work, whilst for others they are ghosts, outcasts, children in transit or a new minority group which is being ignored in the mosaic of the multiple needs of which the Maltese classrooms are composed.

1.1.2 Immigrant Students and Language

Polish, in a short time, has atrophied, shriveled from sheer uselessness. Its words don’t apply to my new experience; they’re not coeval with any of the objects, or faces, or the very air I breathe in the daytime. In English, words have not penetrated to those layers of my psyche from which a private conversation could proceed.

(Hoffman, 1989, p. 107)

The above quote taken from Eva Hoffman’s memoirs, depicts what some immigrant adolescents experienced as they either fled religious or political persecution, or, like this 13-year-old Polish girl, were “pushed out of the happy, safe enclosures of Eden” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 5) to emigrate to a new country. In this new host country of which “I know nothing” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 4), particularly its language, the new words “don’t stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue” (Hoffman, 1989, p.106).

Such a language-mediated experience not only resonates with Hoffman’s (1989) plea that, “this language is beginning to invent another me” (p. 121), but also makes it difficult for immigrant students to access the curriculum (Galea, Attard Tonna, & Cassar, 2011) and establish relationships with their native peers (Green, 2010; Petreñas, Pozuelo, & Redondo, 2011). It also undermines their equal participation in their educational process (Halkias, Parasanglou, & Golfinopoulos, 2011). In the host country, not only do immigrant students have to learn a new language, but they also have to use it in order to be able to access the main curriculum. When this is so, the immigrant students are “at a decided disadvantage in the country’s schools” (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007, p. 27).
1.1.3 Immigrant Students, Language and Malta

Although many would consider Maltese society to be a relatively homogenous one, there are a substantial number of students in our schools who come from another country, speak a different language and have a different culture and possibly religion.

(Sammut, 2004, p. 3)

Their difference is sometimes obvious from their foreign physiognomy, name or more clearly, their mother tongue. This increasing heterogeneity and rapid increase in Malta’s classrooms (Caruana, Cremona, & Vella, 2013; Galea et al., 2011), emerged from an increase in children of: irregular immigrants or “boat people” (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2008, p. 65), EU nationals, non-EU nationals who are in Malta for various reasons, including asylum, study, work, or family re-unification.

Given that immigration in Malta is a relatively recent phenomenon (Amore, 2005; Camilleri & Camilleri, 2008; European Commission, 2004a; Galea et al., 2011; Yousif, 2009), positions Malta at its “first steps towards realising and accepting its new role of an immigration country” (Amore, 2005, p. 20). Despite Malta’s infancy in such a role, the increasing numbers of immigrant pupils in Maltese State Schools are bringing about a new challenge to the education system. In a local study on ethnic minorities, Calleja, Cauchi and Grech (2010) found that much of what is being provided in schools is sporadic and that “initiatives are often initiated by individuals out of personal interest” (p. 16). This concurs with Galea et al., (2011) who in a study on young migrant women in Malta commented that, “there are no particular policies that give direction to the processes of integration of such students within Maltese schools” (p. 107).

This indicates that to prevent immigrant children from slipping through the cracks (Murphy & Anisef, 2001) there is an immediate need for Maltese schools to be equipped to teach culturally and linguistically diverse student populations (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2008). In providing the immigrant students with lessons in either Maltese or English or both, they would be empowering them for integration into the host society, help them overcome several
barriers, have a toolkit for integration and own an entrance card to both the core of school environment and to Maltese society.

Malta has two official languages - Maltese, the national language and English. However, Maltese still seems to be the main language of instruction and classroom talk (Camilleri, 2003) used in most Maltese State Schools. According to Sammut (2004), learning and speaking the Maltese language helped returned migrants be accepted by their peers. It also “served as a symbol of their being “Gozitan” and not “alien” (Sammut, 2004, p. 100). Palaiologou (2007) and Valtolina (2004) state that positive school inclusion and better peer relationships are enhanced by the child’s good use of the native language. Papademetriou and Weidenfeld (2007) assert that:

> education is not simply a set of grades and exams; it is a socialising force, crucial to the aim of a cohesive society. Unless we unlock the potential of our children, regardless of where their parents were born, we risk ‘balkanising’ our societies. We must act now, or we risk undermining all our futures.

(para. 9)

The language of the host country should not be the linguistic, social and academic gatekeeper (Allen, 2006) to immigrant students in their new host country, but a tool bridging communication, learning and integration.

### 1.2 Significance of The Study

Although locally research has been carried out on children of returned migrants (Sammut, 2004; Zahra & Zahra, 1996), non-Maltese-speaking children (Frendo, 2005; Mifsud, 2005), immigrant students (Caruana et al., 2013; Yousif, 2009), asylum-seeking children and refugees (Camilleri, 2007; Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice [JRS], 2004; Martinelli, 2006), migrant children (Galea et al., 2011; Urpani, 2008; Vassallo, 2011), minority children (Valentino, 2011), ethnic minorities (Calleja et al., 2010; Schaa, 2010), unaccompanied minors (Pace, Carabott, Dibben, & Micallef, 2009; Schlenzka, 2007), young migrant women (Galea et al., 2011) and third country nationals (Falzon, Pisani, & Cauchi, 2012), the area of these
students’ language-mediated experiences in relation to their educational experience and what language provisions (if any) are being provided locally for immigrant students in State Secondary Schools, still seems to have been minimally explored. This lacuna is what this study aims to fill.

Thus, as the literature, findings, themes, sub-themes and many arguments in the following chapters unfold, this study sought to enable various stakeholders to partake in the immigrant students’ educational journey. Through the immigrant students’ voices in this study, unique accounts of their language-mediated experiences in State Secondary Schools shall provide a better understanding of what it means to be an immigrant, residing in Malta, attending a State Secondary School and with Maltese peers where the language around them is a language other than their first. Although due to its size, this study is in no way representative of immigrant students across the entire country and no generalisations can be made, it permits a glimpse of the current situation in relation to the three cases examined.

It is hoped that this study will not only give voice to and empower immigrant students to exercise individual choices and make their reality known to the dominant culture but also provide first hand information. This could in turn enable individuals at the helm of Malta’s education system to connect with and come to know the vulnerable immigrant child and to be spurred into action.

A qualitative multiple-case study approach was adopted and data was collected via non-participant observations and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with immigrant students, their teachers of Maltese, English and Mathematics, members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), Education Officers (EOs) of the latter three core subjects, Administrative and High ranking officials in the Education Directorates, University Lecturers from the Faculty of Education, researchers, members of NGOs (Jesuit Refugee Service Malta (JRS);¹ GetUp StandUp Malta² and Peace Lab Malta),³ the

¹http://www.jrsmalta.org/
Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MatSEC) Examinations Board\(^4\) and a Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

In the following chapter, an extensive literature search and review is presented serving as a useful backdrop to the current study. The Methodology chapter elaborates on the research process, critically discussing the rationale behind the methodological decisions taken while a detailed description of the main themes which emerged from this current study is presented in the Findings and Discussion chapter. The study will conclude with an overview of the main findings and conclusions drawn, together with the recommendations and implications for research, practice and education in the field.

\(^2\)http://www.getupstandup.org.mt/

\(^3\)http://www.peacelab.org/

\(^4\)http://www.um.edu.mt/matsec/
Chapter 2

Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

Perhaps the extra knot that strangles my voice is rage. I am enraged at the false persona I’m being stuffed into, as into some clumsy and overblown astronaut suit. I’m enraged at my adolescent friends because they can’t see through the guise, can’t recognize the light-footed dancer I really am. They only see this elephantine creature who too often sounds as if she’s making pronouncements.

(Hoffman, 1989, p. 119)

This chapter starts with an overview of the centrality of language in people’s lives, how it empowers people and its importance for school achievement and self growth. It then focuses on the experience of immigration, its impact on the immigrant students and the receiving schools as they slip, cross or pass to an additional language which they need to know in order to be able to live a normal social and academic life in the new community and the school. A brief description of the different language provisions in various countries for learning the language of the host country then follows. Finally this chapter shall focus on the immigrant students and their education in Malta.

The tools used throughout this exploration were a combination of manual and computer-aided searches at the University of Malta. Several databases were consulted such as Academic Search Complete (ASC), JSTOR, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Sage pub and intercultural journals’ websites on the internet. The topic of immigrant students and the language barrier has been analysed by a range of countries. What this review intends to do is to outline the major themes and findings revealed from studies published in English, carried out in different regions of the world, mainly United States, Canada, Asia and Europe.
2.2 The Centrality of Language in life

... language is in us as much as we are in language.

(Duranti, 1997, p. 337)

Whatever people do or think, they use language. It enables people to synchronize the inner with the outer domain; to free their own thoughts, feelings and opinions and to shape with precision events in each other’s brains (Pinker, 1994).

In the myths and religions of many peoples, language is a source of human life and power. To some people of Africa, a newborn child becomes a muntu, a “person”, only by the act of learning language. According to this tradition, we all become human because we all know at least one language (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2003, p. 3). This portrays the power of the word which can be conjured by man. Nothing would live, grow, take proper shape or be freed, unless called forth by the word. Pinker (1994) states that language is so tightly woven into the human experience that it is barely possible to imagine life without it. Thus, “having a language is part of what it means to be human” (p. 404).

Language, “the most massive, complex constellation of ideas we know” (Harrison, 2007, p. vii), is extremely significant in the transmission and continuity of shared meanings (Butcher, 2008). It constitutes part of an individual’s social identity (Harrison, 2007), and is a symbol of one’s existence (Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, & Kontra, 2001). This clearly depicts the power inherent in this instrument (Butcher, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Trujillo, 2005). As Debi Prasanna Pattanayak (1988) adds, “All languages have the same potential for meeting communicational needs. It is the role and function of a language in society that give it power” (p. 383).
2.2.1 Language Diversity - Empowerment or Disempowerment?

When you lose a language you lose a culture, intellectual wealth, a work of art. It’s like dropping a bomb on a museum, the Louvre.

(Hale as cited in Harrison, 2007, p. 7)

Historically, some people were subordinated to a colonizing power. The colonized could only be accepted and “elevated” above their primitive habitat (Rassool, 2007) by imitating and adopting the superior standards of the dominant culture, with the colonial language being the pinnacle. In this way, colonial people were eroded and stripped of their cultures, social experiences and languages (Rassool, 2004) and left totally naked only to wear the superior standards’ unfitting clothes. Mohanty (2009), maintains that whilst some languages empower and buttress their speakers, others contribute to disempower, marginalise and enslave them.

Language, despite its idiosyncratic constituents, represents an important criterion for distinguishing between in-group and out-group status, thereby bonding people to their cultural group (Miglietta & Tartaglia, 2009). It is “the grassroots displays of ‘groupness’” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 393), “an indicator of heritage and roots, a symbolic and political force allowing people to proclaim their belonging to a certain group” (Alvarez Beinguer & Davis, 2007, p. 197), the vehicle for storing and reproducing society’s knowledge as well as a purveyor of culture (Roy-Campbell, 2003). In fact, in his research findings Tannenbaum (2009) reveals some of the participants’ antagonism towards the language representing the majority, for it suppressed and suffocated what for them is beautiful, important, sacred, traditional or national, a signifier in their identity - their native language. Indeed, it is through language that human communities create cultural identities, build and permeate knowledge (Mitchell, Destino, Karam, & Colón-Muñiz, 1999). Language, “an essentially perfect means of expression and communication among every known people” (Sapir, 1949, p.1) enables them to access traditions, myths, histories, wisdom, stories, epic tales, innuendoes, opinions, recipes, and other things that make them human (Duranti, 1997; Harrison, 2007).
Living in a monoethnic, monocultural and monolingual ivory tower has become utopian (Vallen & Stijnen, 1991). Different languages should not be curtailed, or represent a threat or an obstacle to the social cohesiveness of the monolingual society (Harrison, 2007) but a tool and a resource. Each language is a library and a repository of human heritage (Wurm, 2001), “an immense edifice of human knowledge, painstakingly assembled over millennia by countless minds” (Harrison, 2007, p.3) and a nest of what embodies and enriches a nation with its culture, art, music and literature. Nettle and Romaine (2000) assert that this salient criterion of humanity, language, is the source of the accumulated wisdom of all humans. Not only does each language have its own colour, pitch and vein but also its window on the world. Each language is a living museum, a monument to every culture it has been a vehicle to (Nettle & Romaine, 2000), a repository of the history of its people, and a marker of identity (Crystal, 2003). Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) argues that unlike new trees that can be planted and habitats that can be restored, murdered languages can never be resurrected. Once a language is lost, so is its heritage. All is simply lost, forever (Wurm, 1991).

The outdated melting pot approach or mushy puree of which the national language is seen to be an agent of unification, can only lead to a seething cauldron waiting to erupt (Pryor, 1992). In fact Mead’s⁵ famous quotation simply states that:

If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.

2.2.2 Language as a Gateway, or a Resource for school achievement and growth?

When a child who enters a new school system is judged “not to have language” or “not to have enough language,” a heavy ball is chained to his feet.

(Duranti, 1997, p. 332)

⁵http://thinkexist.com/quotations/if_we_are_to_achieve_a_richer_culture-rich_in/148617.html
According to Mohanty (2008), language is the enabling factor for access to quality education. Whilst Teekens (2003) and Kosonen, Malone, and Young, (2007) point out that all educational activity is linked to language, Larsen-Freeman and Freeman (2008) add that language is the tool that everyone uses in learning and teaching. They furthermore state that in schools, language is a means to an end as well as an end in itself. It is only through competence in the medium of instruction that students can access and learn content at school, be it during foreign languages or other subjects regarded as non-language such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Science, Business Studies and Physical Education. This clearly shows that, whilst for some students, language learning in school is focussed on reaching a level of academic and social proficiency in the language of schooling so that they can have access to the rest of the curriculum, for others, learning language is a companion undertaken to learning non-language school subjects (Freeman as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008). Hence, whilst some children go to school to be educated through the medium of their own language, others have access to the same intellectual baggage; yet this is accomplished only through the medium of a language in which they are still developing proficiency. They need to learn a new and additional language to be able to participate in education, something the former children do not have to do (Kontra, 2003). This disparity in the children who have not yet mastered the language of instruction, clearly illustrates Larsen-Freeman and Freeman’s (2008, p. 176) argument that despite language being a creature of schools, unlike other subjects, it is a medium. Furthermore, they assert that whilst other content areas are deictic in that they have a kind of anchoring in school, language is boundless as it has no borders, no frontiers and no confines. It is used by all and all the time, be it in court, at school, at home or at the supermarket to buy bread. This clearly marks language as a precious resource vital for our existence. It can either serve as a potent medium for integration or as a disabling and marginalising factor.
2.2.3 Are Schools actively building bridges or passively allowing barriers?

A tribal child’s first steps into school are steps into an alien world - a world she barely understands because, somewhere, as she walks into her first classroom, the ties are snapped. Her resources, languages, means of communication, knowledge of her world and her culture are set aside in a system that proudly calls itself human resource development.

(Mohanty, 2009, p. 4)

Language and school performance are deeply intertwined. Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller and Frisco (2009) maintain that it is only when the language through which the contents of the curriculum are taught and learned has been adequately mastered, that content area can begin. This clearly emphasises the need to specifically cater for students who do not have the language (medium) of instruction as their mother tongue (Kosonen et al., 2007).

Barnard (2009) argues that learners from diverse language backgrounds need to learn how to use an often newly-acquired language effectively in order to be able to cope in the mainstream classroom. If schools do not provide the adequate bridges and meet the immigrant students’ particular educational needs, they are simply allowing the barriers. According to Contreras (2002), this results in leaving immigrant children unable to fulfill their human potential, hindering them from achieving their pursuit of competitive professions, meaningful employment, and better lives. Contreras (2002) asserts that in American schools, there are far too many students, particularly immigrant students, being given watered-down versions of academic content and who are simply left to fend for themselves to sink or swim. Mitakidou and Tsiakalos (2004) add, that even when promoting the content of curriculum revisions, various stakeholders, often present a veneering reality, what they call “potemkin villages” (p. 134), for, despite all the newly-added polish and gloss, they still maintain the existent reality, condemning thousands of children to a subordinate existence, preventing them from fair access and equitable outcomes. These are children who
“basically ‘do not exist’ for the authorities” (Mitakidou & Tsiakalos, 2004, p.134), and are absolutely absent from education policies (Reynolds, 2008). Contreras (2002) elaborates on this issue and points out that immigrant students are not viewed by state policy makers as a distinct group requiring unique remedies. The quality of schooling that immigrant students receive primarily depends on the resources of the local communities which they inhabit. The situation reviewed, alarmingly presents schools as institutions advocating for a particular milieu, endangering and hindering the capabilities and opportunities of less privileged milieus (Werning, Löser, & Urban, 2008).

A two-year qualitative study carried out by Trueba, Jacobs and Kirton (1990) among Hmong students attending an elementary school in Southern California revealed that immigrant and refugee students experienced deep depression, marginalisation and panic. They reported that the students’ traumas emanated from the teachers’ expectations that they perform and show understanding of knowledge in a language still alien to them. The researchers found that the children came to believe that they were deficient, dumb and disabled. Similarly, the results of a study in the United States (Abedi, Herman, Courtney, Leon, & Kao, 2004 as cited in Abedi, 2004) involving 600 Grade 8 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and non-LEP students in Mathematics, revealed that LEP students reported significantly less opportunity to learn than their non-LEP peers and that they assumed a more passive attitude during the classroom activities when compared to their non-LEP peer. When discussing the linguistic situation in most Asian countries, Kosonen et al., (2007) add, that, since half of the world’s out-of-school children do not speak the language used at school, tens of millions of children have no access to education in their first language. All this indicates that language hinders immigrant students’ understanding of classroom instruction and blurs their content understanding. Such factors or barriers, which slow down the discovery of knowledge in the classroom (Heugh, Benson, Bogale, & Yohannes, 2007) may further on give rise to engender erroneous diagnostic information as some researchers’ analysis of school documents revealed (McBrien, 2005; McMillan, 2008) and consequently channel immigrant students towards the wrong paths.
Immigrant children are often placed in classes and groups that are not age-appropriate and/or in lower grade levels or educational tracks despite high capabilities (Allen, 2006; McBrien, 2005; Pryor, 1992; Tochon, 2009; Torres, 2001). The publication by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2009, p. 63) about children in immigrant families shows considerable cases of immigrant students being unfairly channelled. This was found in France where 17% of immigrant children were unfairly tracked; in Germany, due to lower grades in German and Mathematics than their native counterparts, they were guided towards the Hauptschule, the least intensive secondary-track whilst in Switzerland, immigrant students of immigrant families were tracked to the basic curriculum in Lower Secondary School rather than to the advanced curriculum.

Goodwin (2002) maintains that the immigrant children’s required equitable education has never been regularly and specifically addressed. Most countries have adopted an unsystematic approach or have shown a marked indifference towards this situation, an absence of adequate provision, implementation and support, which according to Kornmann and Klingele (as cited in Mannitz, 2004) is the main cause of the immigrant children’s disproportionate school failure. Goodwin (2002) advocates for an attitude towards culturally and linguistically different children that is truly accepting and filled with potential.

2.3 Immigration and Education

Luchtenberg (2004) states that migration has become one of the great challenges worldwide. This is due to the increasing numbers of immigrants in all parts in the world. Banks (2004) not only shares a similar opinion but also highlights the rapidity and the magnitude with which this is happening. This phenomenon clearly poses unprecedented challenges to many fields including education, often in countries that have viewed themselves as ethnically homogeneous. Such a point is supported by the European Commission (1994) which states that, “cultural and linguistic diversity of the public schools is becoming the norm” (p. 1). Despite this abrupt and maybe
somewhat unexpected influx, for which many receiving countries were not prepared, schools have to prepare all their students for their adult participation in society, as immigrant residents or as citizens with the full range of political rights (Mannitz, 2004).

It is the duty of all receiving countries to cater for all the children who are between 5-17, the compulsory school age. For some students, particularly immigrants, schooling is the golden ascent or the only ticket for a better tomorrow (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Unfortunately in the project carried out by Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001), many of the schools in their project that represent the kinds of schools that are populated by diverse students, were found to be “fields of endangerment” (p. 133) where concerns with survival, not learning, prevail.

2.3.1 On Learning a new Language

According to Mead (1934), when a person learns a new language, he/she “gets a new soul” (p. 156) as one cannot view a language as a pure abstraction. Inevitably, to some degree, one sees also the life that lies behind the language of a given community (Bron, 2003). Teekens (2003) argues that various constituents make the classroom a miniature country due to the teaching that takes place which is national in character. In learning the national language of the receiving country, immigrant students would be nested and provided with the powerful instrument and the valuable resource needed for integration both within the education system and also in the society of the host country. Equally important is the maintenance of the children’s own language (Hill, 2006). Learning the national language of the adoptive country does not threaten the immigrant students’ unique linguistic and cultural repertoires in favour of the national melting pot (Mohanty, 2008) but expands their horizons and facilitates their adaptation into the host society (Pulido Barrios, 2008).

This issue, crucial to the successful integration of immigrant students in State Schools, is clearly addressed in the Training 2010 Work Programme
which highlighted the need to promote equity and social cohesion mainly by addressing educational disadvantage whereby, “education and training systems should aim to ensure that all learners - including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with special needs and migrants - complete their education”. It also addressed the need for European Member States to, “provide migrants with opportunities to learn the language of the host country” (C119/9).

It is thus the responsibility of the European Member States to provide immigrant children with the educational support needed (Di Vietro & Rago, 2009), particularly when they are not proficient in the language of their host country. This will prevent them from being placed at a disadvantage compared with other children (2004/2267(INI)).

2.3.2 Different Language Provisions in various countries for learning the language of the host Country

According to Pulido Barrios (2008), every European Union member state follows its own methodology regarding language provision and the integration of immigrants. The European Union cannot rule over policies regarding language teaching for immigrant students as such policies are part of the national law. Despite this, as Maalouf et al., (2008) stated every European should learn a “personal adoptive language” which for immigrants:

should in the normal run of events be that of the country in which they have chosen to live. A thorough knowledge of the national language and the culture it carries with it is essential if they are to integrate into the host society and play their part in economic, social, intellectual, artistic and political life.

(p.19)

This mission is entrusted to the schools for they have to accompany the immigrant children along their path of integration (Ricucci, 2008), mothering and fathering them in their adoptive country.
An interesting perspective on immigrant students learning the host language is that put forth by Otterup (2004). Citing Viberg (1996) he states that learning such an additional language represents a unique and particular learning process which significantly differs from both first language and foreign language acquisition. Unlike pupils who learn a foreign language, the immigrant students must not only learn a new language at school but also use it as a means of learning other subjects at school and as an aid for further cognitive development. These facts necessitate good and efficient tuition in the teaching of the language of the host country and are also the reasons for conceiving new subjects such as the teaching of the language of the host country as a second or additional language (Otterup, 2004). Despite this and with regard to the countries’ approaches, Pulido Barrios (2008) points out that although each European country has agreed on a specific methodology for host language teaching but, whilst some countries around Europe have been implementing the same methodology for years, others are still trying to shape it, whilst the rest are passively adopting a benign neglect provision.

2.3.3 General Approaches to educating immigrant students in the language of the host Country

Baker’s (2006) wide continuum of language programmes varying from monolingual forms to bilingual, shows various approaches and provisions in reaching proficiency in Cummins’ (2000) two interacting continua: the Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The BICS refers to the conversational aspects of proficiency in the host language of the society and the CALP refers to the oral and written language skills necessary to succeed in the academic context (Cummins, 2000). It can be noted that whilst some language programmes assume that learning a new language is best facilitated when learners are immersed in the new language and given only minimal continuing support in their first language, others suggest that learning in a new language is greatly
facilitated by maintaining use and continuing content instruction in the first language during the transition period (Mitchell et al., 1999).

2.3.4 Submersion and Subtractive Teaching

It has been argued that young children do not need any special methodology to learn an additional language. It is believed that a child can acquire the knowledge of the host language without any difficulty after spending some months in a school surrounded by native speakers. Surely there is an advantage in being immersed in a school where the child is exposed to and maybe start to gradually use the additional language. But the correct knowledge of the host language comes only when it is taught (Pulido Barrios, 2008). This sink or swim (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988), do nothing, and the lack of an approach (Benson, 2009) is called submersion.

Thomas and Collier (1997) emphasize that submersion, “is NOT a program model, since it is not in compliance with U.S. federal standards as a result of the Supreme Court decision of Lau v. Nichols” (p.58). This undifferentiated method denotes a process whereby on immediate entry to school, the language minority immigrant students are simply thrown in and plunged into the deep end and expected to learn to swim in the majority language as quickly as possible without any help. Consequently immigrant children will either sink, struggle or swim (Baker, 2006). Given that in some cases, time spent in non-target language or the students’ first language (L1) is assumed to hinder the learners from achieving the goal of mastering academic concepts in the second language (L2), the learners are actively discouraged from using their L1 (Mitchell et al., 1999).

In this approach, reading material and subject-matter instruction are only available in the language of instruction or the majority language, which increases insecurity in the learners (Ellis,1994). Benson (2009) continues that such a model exists because of either unintentional (laissez-faire) or intentional (assimilationist) policies, where speakers of non-dominant languages have no choice but to attend schools in languages they do not
understand and do not receive any kind of systematic support specifically targeted at learning the language of instruction. In these approaches, there is no kind of accommodation for the child’s needs and no desire to help maintain or develop the students’ L1 (Brizuela & Garcia-Sellers, 1999).

Benson (2009) points out that submersion is simply a cruel form of schooling as it forces children to try to make sense of a foreign medium of instruction whilst devaluing their languages, cultures, identities and overall self-esteem resulting in disproportionately low educational results. Such a programme or lack of it, has a subtractive effect on the immigrant children’s mother tongue (Mohanty, 2009). It educates them to submissiveness and continually fosters feelings of unworthiness of both their cultures and their native languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010), enmeshing them in a schooling process supporting melting-pot ideologies (Canessa cited in Castro-Vázquez, 2009). These melting-pot approaches are viewed as damaging (Pryor, 1992) and profoundly harmful. They often plague the children who have suffered such forms of education throughout their lives (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010) as they view the knowledge of the different groups as deficient (Shohamy, 2006). Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) concludes that such assimilationist education is genocidal as it forcibly subtracts rather than adds to the children’s linguistic repertoire. Moreover, all this clearly adduces submersion as a springboard on which to project linguisticism - pumping a language as imperial at the expense of others. Mohanty (2009) maintains that as the minorities endure the annihilation of their mother tongue, the elites relish the superiority of their dominant languages.

2.3.5 Immersion and Additive Teaching

The myth that the target language must be kept pure in instruction endorses the idea that progression in one language may bring about regression in another (De Bot & Makoni, 2005). In focusing solely on one language, students will avoid delaying progress in it, avoid mixing different languages
(Tingbjörn, 1988) and channel all the language-related resources to the target language.

The system of classes d’accueil (welcome classes), used in Quebec since the late 1960s and early 1970s is an intensive full academic year host-language learning bath in French, imperative to entering the mainstream (Allen, 2006; Allen, 2007; Steinbach, 2010). These classes are closed, such that the students who may be enrolled at any time during the year, remain isolated from their unilingual Quebec-born peers (Steinbach, 2010) until they are deemed ready by the accueil teacher and approved by the school administration. This decision is exclusively determined by the students’ performance on a provincial exam of written French, designed for the mainstream (Allen, 2006; Allen, 2007). Failure to do well in this exam holds accueil students back for another year until their French is considered adequate.

Two studies carried out with accueil students (Allen, 2006; Steinbach, 2010), revealed that the French language became something of an enemy to the accueil students who so desperately wanted to get on with their education and their lives. Because French was used as a gatekeeper to the mainstream, Allen (2007) concludes that some of the accueil students considered French as excluding and hindering rather than including and facilitating their participation in mainstream education.

This surely highlights the benefits of implementing mainstreamed programmes for immigrant students with carefully devised systems of language support (McKay & Warshauer Freedman, 1991) alongside mother tongue education. By negating immigrant students the opportunity to interact with other children in class, educators are denying them a point of contact with the target language group (Loewen, 2004). They are also channeling them to failure, depriving them of any meaningful education, locating them “as students operating at a deficit” (Allen, 2007, p.168) and fuelling furthermore the difference between second language pupils and other members of the community (The Swann Report, 1985, p.390).
Thomas and Collier (1997; 2007) concur and refer to this impoverishment as a cognitive slowdown whereby the minority language students fall behind their continually advancing mother tongue native peers in cognitive development. This clearly shows the need for a provision to meet the needs of second language learners through integrated provision within the mainstream school even if for newcomers at secondary school level, some form of withdrawal may at first be necessary. Thomas and Collier (1997) propose peer-equivalent grade-level bilingual schooling because while:

the student is making the gains needed with each succeeding year to close the gap in performance on the tests in English, that bilingual student is not getting behind in cognitive and academic development. Once the bilingual students' average achievement reaches the 50th NCE (the average achievement level of native-English speakers) on the school tests in English, the cognitive and academic work in L1 has kept these students on grade level and they sustain grade-level performance in English even as the academic work gets increasingly complex with each succeeding year in middle and high school. (p. 47)

Rutter (2003) adds that if immigrant children are separated from mainstream classes, the sole source of target language input comes from their teacher and the probabilities of labelling are increased.

For immigrant children in the host society, reality is bilingual. In taking this fact into account, the schools can be facilitating an additive approach towards the students’ linguistic repertoire, that is, adding another “language to the students’ intellectual tool-kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically” in their L1 (Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, Mohanty, & Panda, 2009). Those students who have strong L1 academic and conceptual skills when they start learning another language tend to attain higher levels of the target language academic skills (Cummins, 2000; Mohanty, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010; Thomas & Collier, 2007). Furthermore, the length of Mother-tongue medium (MTM) education is more important than any other factor in predicting the educational success of bilingual students, including their competence in the dominant language (Cummins, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010). Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar
(2010) add that the worst educational results from students in regular submersion programmes where their mother tongue (MT) or first language (L1) are either not supported at all or where they have only had some mother tongue-as-a-subject instruction. Skutnabb-Kangas et al., (2009) maintains that if teaching is in a language that the immigrant children do not know, for the first 2-3 years they would lack much of the understanding of the teaching that has taken place. This results in pushing immigrant children to drop out of school earlier than their native peers with very limited proficiency and mastery in speaking, reading and writing in both their L1 as well as the additional language.

Similarly Cummins (2009) adds that when the school fails to transmit knowledge and develop children’s thinking abilities in their mother tongue, neither the mother tongue nor the target language develop adequately as far as literacy and overall academic skills are concerned. This is further exemplified by Thomas and Collier’s (2002) conclusions of their study of various forms of Spanish-English bilingual education in both urban and rural settings in the United States. Their findings reveal that the strongest predictor of L2 student achievement is the amount of formal L1 schooling. The more L1 grade-level schooling, the higher L2 achievement. They also declare that those students schooled bilingually, outperformed those schooled monolingually in academic achievement in all subjects. The former being “feature rich” with enhanced potential to affect student achievement and having an additive bilingual environment whilst the latter are “feature poor,” with little or no use to help English language learners (ELLs) to close the achievement gap and having a subtractive language-learning environment (Otterup, 2004). Thomas and Collier (1997) conclude that the deeper the student’s level of L1, the faster the student’s progress and achievement in L2.

All this demonstrates that the more students use their mother tongue in education, the more they perform well across the curriculum and in the target language. Heugh (2002) states that international research indicates that children need at least 12 years of learning their mother tongue or language
of their immediate environment (i.e. 12 years from birth). In a multilingual society where a language such as English is highly priced, there is only one reasonable option and this is bilingual education where adequate linguistic development is carried out in L1 whilst the L2 is gradually added. Furthermore, Heugh (2002) believes that any educational policy which in consequence deprives and strips children of their mother tongue during education, “will produce an unnecessarily high rate of emotional and socio-cultural cripples who are retarded in their cognitive development and deficient in terms of psychological stability” (p. 28). Tsui and Tollefson (2003) conclude that the children’s self-perception, esteem, security, and meaningful participation in the educational process, will also be hampered. Thus, while some schools act as abysmal cemeteries in which minority languages are premeditatedly and ruthlessly buried, others act as incubators, providing the right conditions for further growth and educational equality.

2.4 Secondary Students - A Unique Subset of the immigrant students’ population in schools

Short (2002) explains that, a subset of the immigrant students entering schools, especially those at a later age (Carder, 2008), lack English language skills, have weak literacy skills in the native language, and have also had limited or interrupted formal education. This leads immigrant students towards several grade levels below their age cohorts when placed in schools. Newcomer adolescents face various challenges in their educational experience as at the time they are entering schools, schools are emphasising rigorous, standards-based curricula and high-stakes assessments for all students. Another hurdle is time in the host country. It was found to be positively correlated with students’ language proficiency score, such that newcomers tended to demonstrate lower levels of proficiency compared to their English speaking peers. The age at which immigrant students enter schools was also found to be strongly significant (Carhill et al., 2008). Mark Patkowski’s (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1993) findings indicate that age of acquisition is highly important in setting limits on the development of native-like masters of a second language.
Moreover, secondary newcomer students have less support for language learning, more complex academic content to learn, limited time to learn the language, shorter time to study the required content courses and catch up with their native English-speaking peers before encountering gate-keeping assessments that have serious repercussions for their future (Carhill et al., 2008; Short, 2002) for they are eventually taking high-stakes tests in a language in which they are not fully proficient (Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, & Jiménez, 2005).

Studies have shown that whilst immigrant students can quickly reach peer-appropriate levels in BICS, within two years, the CALP can only be achieved within 4 to 7 years or even longer (Carder, 2008; Cummins, 2000; Heugh, 2002; Miller & Endo, 2004; Mitchell et al., 1999; Song & Róbert, 2010). This difference in the length of time is mainly due to the fact that more knowledge of language itself is required in academic situations (Bailey & Buttler, 2003; Gibbons, 1998).

Another significant point put forth by Cummins (2000) regarding the time needed for immigrant students to reach peer-appropriate levels in the language skills particularly in the academic domain, is that native speakers are not at a standstill waiting for immigrant students to catch up but are constantly pushing ahead. Every year their native counterparts gain more sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical knowledge and increase their literacy skills. Thus, immigrant students must continuously keep up with a moving target (Cummins, 2000). Thomas and Collier (1997) argue that immigrant students who have received all their schooling entirely through L2 might achieve 6-8 months’ gain each school year as they reach the middle and high school years, relative to the 10-month gain of typical native speakers. Thus, an achievement gap with native speakers becomes wider with each passing year, as typical native speakers advance by making 10 months’ gain in 10 months’ time, to maintain their average score across the years. This doubtlessly makes it even more difficult for immigrant students who enter school at a later age. In fact Collier (as cited in Song & Róbert, 2010) states that arrivals at age 12-15 experience the greatest difficulty for
even after being taught entirely in their additional language, they were projected to require as much as 6 to 8 years in order to reach grade-level proficiency.

Lightbown and Spada (1993), caution that educators and policy makers should be aware that research findings based on samples of younger children should not be uncritically applied to adolescents. Although there have been attempts to understand and address the needs of immigrant students at the elementary level, there has been a lamentable absence of efforts to do so for immigrant students at the secondary school level (Carhill et al., 2008). This certainly highlights the need to provide academic equity by adopting a different approach than that at the elementary level through which immigrant secondary students achieve the academic mastery needed in the language of instruction enabling and better equipping them throughout their educational journey.

2.5 Immigrant students in Malta

Students in class, irrespective of their foreign physiognomy, name or mother tongue are like different pieces of glass put together to form a big, colourful glass mosaic, each reflecting light in a unique way. This uniquely kaleidoscopic and prismatic montage is glued together by the language of the host country.

Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, p.3-4) stipulates that all children have the right to education. Primary education has to be made compulsory, available and free to all. Secondary education, including general and vocational education, should also be available and accessible to all. Moreover, the Refugees Act, Act XX of 2000 declares that, “Persons recognised as refugees and those granted humanitarian protection are entitled to have access to state education and training” (European Commission, 2004a, p. 3). Thus, the Maltese education system must ensure the right of every child residing in Malta who falls within the compulsory school age group (5 to 16 years), to receive education and instruction without
any distinction of age, sex, belief, economic means, status or L1 and thus constantly work hard at the “fulfillment of the potential of every person” (For All Children to Succeed, 2005, p. 30). This includes children of: Maltese citizens, irregular immigrants or “boat people” (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2008, p.65), EU nationals, non-EU nationals who are legally present in Malta for various purposes, including study, work or family re-unification, non-Maltese nationals, returned migrants, third country nationals, refugees, asylum seekers, foreigners, migrants, immigrants, minorities and children of migrant workers.

Despite the idiosyncratic semantic content and legislative significance of the above mentioned terms, for the purpose of this study, all those children who fall within the compulsory school age group (5 to 16 years) and who do not have Maltese as their mother tongue or their L1, will be the focus of this study. Therefore, the term “immigrant” children and students in this study, will refer to all children of: irregular immigrants or “boat people” (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2008, p.65), EU nationals, non-EU nationals who are legally present in Malta for various purposes, including study, work or family re-unification, non-Maltese nationals, returned migrants, third country nationals, refugees, asylum seekers, foreigners, migrants, immigrants, minorities and migrant workers since irrespective of which tags are attached to these children, they are still children who are entitled to “the school-based measures contemplated in the legislation, among them support for the learning of any of the official languages” (European Commission, 2004a, p. 3).

In a local study carried out with Non-Maltese Speaking Children in the Primary Classroom, Frendo (2005) states that the right to receive Free State Education during the years of compulsory education:

is not restricted to children who are Maltese citizens but also extends to children residing in Malta who are refugees or asylum seekers, children of migrants, returned migrants and recently, children living in Malta who are citizens of other European Union member states.

(p. 28)
Every child matters and deserves to have his/her abilities individually cultivated and nurtured (Carl Bertelsmann Prize, 2008).

As illustrated in Table 1, the influx of immigrant students in State Secondary Schools is quite steady. It is also interesting to note that like in other countries the “highest number of immigrant students (both for the girls and boys), seems to be found in the low achievers’ schools - the Area Secondary Schools.

### Table 1: Number of immigrant students in State Secondary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year:</th>
<th>Total number of students in Malta and Gozo:</th>
<th>Area Secondary Schools: (low achievers’ schools)</th>
<th>Junior Lyceum Schools: (high achievers’ schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Boys</em></td>
<td><em>Girls</em></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>151</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>179</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>158</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>161</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistics provided by the Research & Development Department - Education Directorates*

This upsurge in the State Secondary Schools of hegemonic multicultural and multilingual reality, is definitely challenging the Maltese education system in that it has to provide and ensure “equality of access to the educational system without discrimination on the grounds of ability, gender, religion, race or socio-cultural and economic background” (NMC, 1999, p. 25). The European Commission (2004b) on Integrating Immigrant Children into schools in Europe states that:
Pupils and students have always been accepted by and integrated into Maltese schools, even though no special or specific arrangements were in place. This is partly due to the fact that English is taught in Maltese schools from an early age, most lessons are carried out in English and also because all teachers can communicate in English.

It is envisaged that children who do not understand Maltese or English would be given support in the learning of one of the official languages. The actual form such support would take is still not finalized. (p.5)

Furthermore the European Commission country report (2004a) states that:

Malta has two official languages - Maltese and English. To facilitate the integration of immigrant children into both the school environment and the wider society, these languages will be taught to these pupils. During school hours, pupils will have access to the teaching of the English or Maltese language according to their needs, through a withdrawal system. (p. 7)

The report (2004a) concludes that, “Although the relevant legislation is in place, the measures for immigrant children are still at the drawing board stage. Their implementation will probably take place by May 2004” (p. 7).

2.5.1 The Language Provision for immigrant children in Malta

The excerpts above dangerously underestimate the differences of each immigrant child. English as the medium of instruction can pose an unforeseen threat to the quality of education (Teekens, 2003) to those students who, unlike others were never exposed to English. This is depicted by Elize’s experience, an 11-year-old girl from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), one of the participants in Camilleri’s (2007) local study on immigrant students:

It was very difficult. I didn’t know even how to speak English and of course no Maltese too. At least my teacher was speaking French to me because she realised I could speak French. So I speak to her in French. (p. 101)
Elize continues to relate that help sometimes was given by a classmate, and sometimes by a teacher or a support teacher/Learning Support Assistant (LSA):

It’s a bit hard. I manage English … but Maths and Maltese are difficult. Sometimes someone helps me at school … sometimes a child and sometimes a teacher [or support teacher/LSA].

(p. 103)

Camilleri (2007) adds that Elize wished she had more help, underscoring the need for an explicit policy and not a “sometimes” type of policy whereby students are simply thrown into regular classes, relying on the subjective beneficence of the assigned subject or class teacher to be given some kind of support.

The European Commission (2009) pointed out that unlike other countries, Malta is still not offering any kind of promotion in communication between schools and immigrant families. The reason being that, “such policies may be defined in the near future owing to an increase in the number of immigrant pupils” (p. 8). All this inconsistency may be due to the fact that, “Malta is still taking its first steps towards realising and accepting its new role of an immigration country” (Amore, 2005, p. 20).

Sammut (2004) in her research carried out with returned migrants in Gozitan6 secondary schools, says that:

Despite their difficulties, no special provisions are made to help returned migrants learn Maltese as a second language. As research has shown, a centralized, bureaucratic educational system like that of Malta does not adequately cater for the individual needs of the learner (Marsh, 1997; Sultana, 1997; Bezzina, 1996). It is therefore no surprise that the school often turned a blind eye to returned migrants’ diverse needs, leaving them feeling ‘overlooked’ and ‘ignored’.

(p. 66)

6Gozo being the second largest island in the Maltese archipelago.
This is aptly observed by a participant in Sammut’s (2004) study, Linda, a 23-year-old who came from England at the age of 13:

Linda: I don’t really want to say that the English system is better than here but as I said, the school I was in before, we had a lot of Italian people and whenever there was somebody that wasn’t understanding something he’d actually be taken out of the lesson and be given special tutoring. But here it was like you’re a minority, if you don’t understand it’s your problem you know and they’d just carry on. And fair enough, I don’t want to be the person to pull back the others back but you shouldn’t have to go through four years in a school and not understand anything... the fact that they didn’t focus on the problems I had, I don’t blame them, I don’t look back and say I hate them but I do wish they had tried to understand more the fact that I was suffering too, that I was being ignored.

(p. 66)

The above views echo those of Zahra and Zahra (1996) who stated that there was no organised way in which immigrant students were introduced into the local education system.

Frendo’s research findings (2005) similarly reveal, that in the two State Primary Schools, despite the teachers’ opinion that immigrant students need extra help, the majority of the teachers in both schools said that there was no support system to facilitate the integration of new pupils especially non-Maltese speaking pupils. Moreover, in one of the schools, a member of the school administration stated that remedial classes in Maltese and/or in English at school were only given “sometimes” and “if” the class teacher realised that the children were not catching up with their work. These findings portray a dangerous situation with regard to immigrant students, especially when keeping in mind comments like those expressed by one of the interviewees in Mifsud’s (2005) research who states that:

I try to translate from Maltese to English but then compared to the majority, because I have 25 students, [referring to the number of students in all], where the majority understands in Maltese, the most I emphasise mostly Maltese .... Most of the day I use Maltese.

(p.49)
Again, this raises additional questions regarding the way the immigrant students’ needs are being met by Malta’s education system. A teacher participating in Frendo’s (2005) study complained that, “They just give you the pupils and that’s all” (116).

The research conducted so far in Malta, indicates that immigrant students in Malta are simply left to cope and pick up English, Maltese, both or none of them, as best they can, if they can. Changes are made so abruptly in the immigrant children’s lives that their whole life is suddenly convulsed (Zahra & Zahra, 1996). According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010) such sink-or-swim programmes, ensure that immigrant children are significantly disadvantaged and guarantee that their participation at school is neither full nor on an equal footing with their native counterparts.

Another perturbing observation is that many immigrant students indicate that they were “advised” to repeat a year or were placed in a low-ability class, resulting in the students feeling they have been treated unfairly and not given an equal opportunity to succeed (Calleja et al., 2010; Frendo, 2005; Sammut, 2004; Zahra & Zahra, 1996). This is exemplified both from the previously illustrated educational statistics 2006-2013, and also by Oliver’s experience, a 22-year-old participant in Sammut’s research (2004) who came from Canada at the age of 15. Oliver was placed in a 5B class (and not the top stream A) because of lack of proficiency in Maltese:

They were kids *li ma ridux, qishom* (that didn’t seem to want to learn). I was put with them because of the only reason that I didn’t know Maltese. It wasn’t fair to me. It wasn’t fair that just because I didn’t know Maltese I couldn’t be in A. I was good in Maths, English, Physics, everything pretty much.

(p. 111)

This clearly poses another setback to the immigrant students. In placing immigrant students in lower streams, (and in Frendo’s research the students she interviewed were in the lowest stream of all), teachers revealed that, because Maltese children in such streams are less proficient in English, during most of the time the teachers have to speak in Maltese, if not the
majority of students (who are Maltese) would not understand (Frendo, 2005). Consequently, not only do immigrant children have to face being tracked to levels which are below their potential (most of the times and without even being properly assessed (Frendo, 2005)), but also left to “learn” through the medium of a language which is completely alien to them. This according to Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010) is the mostly common and disastrous method used for educating immigrant children. It is evident, that very few teachers are able to make adaptations to suit and cater for the individual needs of immigrant students. This is either due to vast syllabi, mounting pressures to ensure students do well in the national-based end-of-year examinations or due to large classes, leaving them with little or no time to devote to immigrant students (Frendo, 2005; Mifsud, 2005; Zahra & Zahra, 1996). Moreover, according to Frendo (2005) there seems to be no formal language policy which specifically caters for the support and integration of immigrant children in our schools. This is substantiated in some of the teachers’ replies in Mifsud’s (2005) study:

as a method as such, we do not make miracles …

(p.48)

as a teacher I do not find time to dedicate to this student so that I can stay beside him and explain to him each and every single word.

(p.49)

I’d wish [referring to making some adaptations in order to help the immigrants] but … teaching a year 6 class is a race towards exams, there’s no time, no!

(p.49)

…there’s the need of a lot of resources. The teacher cannot create all the resources. The teacher has to buy everything herself … our school, to say so, does not provide these resources …

(p.49)

...funds! … At least they allot us Lm50, and you can buy books… Funds!

(p.49)
This seems to show that the lack of resources, funds, training, formal provisions and an explicit policy in the Education Act of Malta (1988) Article 3 with regards to language provision for immigrant students, presents teachers and also administrators with a daily struggle to adequately deal with the immigrant students’ diverse needs. Marguerat (as cited in Mifsud, 2005) states that unfortunately the problem is that, “we seem to think … that these people have lesser rights than we have ..” (p. 50). Sammut (2004) in her synthesis of the local situation asserts that it is a highly bureaucratic and selective education system thriving:

by picking and choosing those students who, on account of their ‘difference’ pose a hindrance to the progress of the ‘normal’ achieving pupil (Bartolo, 2001; Rotin, 1997; Sultana, 1992a). Returned migrants who do not speak Maltese well and whose academic abilities cannot be determined by the traditional means of assessment pose a threat to the smooth running of the system. Since the school cannot cater for their individual needs, returned migrants must be weeded out of the system, along with low-achievers or children with special needs. (p.77)

Mifsud (2005) adds that such classroom teaching-learning processes, illustrate the unfairness towards immigrant students as learning should be meaningful and relevant to all, irrespective of their countries of origin and L1s. She adds that immigrant students have the right to learn just as their native-Maltese peers have. After all the education of students must necessarily foster proficiency in languages of functional significance (Mohanty, 2010). For the immigrant students residing in Malta, this involves continuing to develop competence in their L1, in English and in Maltese, a trilingual situation.

2.5.2 Immigrant students in Malta’s bilingual situation

Some would simply claim that immigrant students in Malta can do well in a bilingual situation where they can continue to develop their mother tongue and also learn English, vital for international communication, higher levels of education and the economy. However, as previous research has revealed, in Malta’s State Schools much is carried out in Maltese, starting from the
school assemblies (Frendo, 2005). Also, Linda, the previously cited participant in Sammut’s (2004) study, argues that:

> Well, in the Maltese culture, everyone speaks Maltese. You can’t sit there and babble in English and tell them how you feel. You do feel different. As much as you don’t want to be, as much as you want to get on with the other people, you are different.  

(p.48)

Frendo (2005) also shows that Maltese was seen as one of the crucial factors which influenced how easily the children integrated.

The National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) recommends the use of English as the medium of instruction in subjects such as, English, Mathematics, Environmental Studies (Geography), Physical Education and Sport, Computer Studies, Expressive Arts, Technology and Design and Co-ordinated Science and to code switch in cases where English poses great pedagogical problems. English is the language of most of the examinations, the language of almost all textbooks used in schools and also the medium of nearly all reading and writing activities in the Maltese classrooms (Camilleri, 1996; Camilleri, 1997; Camilleri Grima, 2002). Despite all this, Maltese is the “major spoken means of interaction” and the language in which lengthy explanations are given by the teachers (Camilleri, 2000, p. 8).

Given that most of the immigrant students are found in lower streams, and in these streams, their Maltese-speaking peers have problems in understanding English, teachers very often use Maltese, as revealed in Camilleri’s study of Bilingualism in Education in Malta (Camilleri, 1993). According to Camilleri (1996) this code-switching enabled the teachers in her study to succeed in giving lessons.

This stresses the immigrant students’ difficult learning experience with language of instruction being one of the main predictors in their educational failure, exclusion and marginalization. Indeed, a study carried out by Zahra
and Zahra (1996) about children of returned migrants, reveals that some children felt completely left out and disadvantaged that the teaching of so many subjects was carried out in what was for them was a foreign language (Maltese):

> Sometimes the language gets in the way. Maltese - I don’t understand it at all - I understand quite a bit but not all so sometimes I have to tell the teachers I’m not understanding but, apart from this, I feel like the rest.

(Girl, 13 years, Area Secondary: UK, p.89)

They sort of forget about me when talking Maltese but other than that it’s OK … I speak Maltese now - not fluently - but I’m getting there.

(Girl, 13 years, Area Secondary: Canada, p.89)

Similarly, in Mifsud’s research (2005) on immigrant students, one of the teachers had this to say about immigrant students in class:

> …they find themselves as real strangers in class … they have to be very patient in order to stay all day long listening without understanding anything.

(p.47-48)

Thus, as also highlighted in Camilleri (2007) and Sammut’s (2004) studies respectively, one of the immigrant students’ initial and greatest problems is the Maltese language barrier. Tesfai, an Ethiopian 15-year-old boy in Camilleri’s (2007) research with young immigrants states that, “The first thing which really got to me was that I did not know Maltese” (p. 82). Such an impediment not only hinders communication with the immigrant students’ native peers, making it difficult to establish friendships and triggering rapid and strong feelings of estrangement but also prevents them from participating fully in the classroom which in turn hampers their success in academics (Mohanty, 2008). It can thus be argued that not knowing Maltese in Malta can place immigrant students at a particular disadvantage, and if this situation is not addressed, these children can become disempowered. This in turn might lead to a continued downward spiral of disempowerment - educationally, economically, socially and politically.
2.5.3 Providing the appropriate language beacons

Callahan et al., (2009) emphasise that it is not enough for immigrant children to just sit in the classroom. The focus must shift from simply keeping them in the classroom to ensuring that the time spent there prepares them for the world outside the school. Immigrant children have the right to be enabled to acquire the receiving country’s language which can help them access educational and social opportunities (McEachron & Bhatti, 2005). The fatally flawed assumption (Quinn, 2006) that integration will look after itself, that it will happen automatically or that immigrant students will simply pick up the language of instruction as best they can (Murakami, 2008; Kerr & Desforges, as cited in Sammut, 2004) is the very reason why education in these situations is failing to act as a force to include immigrants. These gaps in educational attainment are likely to accentuate the immigrants’ social exclusion (Bron: 2003; Cabau-Lampa, 1999; European Commission, 2008; Harrison, 2007) rather than their integration, with lack of language support being one of the main inhibitors. According to Heugh (2002), when there is an ailment that requires treatment, the symptoms need to be carefully examined, the cause and ailment diagnosed, a suitable remedy prescribed and administered correctly. It is only in this way, given that the appropriate remedy is prescribed, that the ‘patient’ (the education system) can ameliorate and fully recover.

Although alongside English, Maltese is the national and official language of Malta, Maltese continues to be the main spoken language (Caruana, 2006), and also the main language of instruction and classroom talk (Camilleri, 2003) used in several Maltese State Schools. As shown in a representative large-scale local study carried out by Sciriha in 1999, about the languages Maltese children are being taught and their perceptions about them, it was found that 77% of the respondents ranked Maltese as the number one language in importance on a national level and last for Maltese on a global level. Sciriha (2001), states that the former results show:

how the status of this indigenous language has rocketed from rock bottom position during the time when it was dubbed ‘the language of
the kitchen’ to the top place it now holds. Participants in this study clearly perceive Maltese to be the most important language for a Maltese living in Malta today.

(p.34)

The results obtained show the respondents’ awareness of Maltese as highly important in Maltese society but minimal in the rest of the world. This research confirms that both Maltese and English are vital for the students’ journey throughout the Maltese education system. Despite it being a study conducted solely with Maltese children, it still sheds light on the importance of both languages as vital pillars for all participants active within Malta’s education system.

If people want to reap the benefits of strong and healthy future societies and avoid wastage with regard to human resources, the potential of all children should be the foundation to build on, regardless of where their parents were born and which language they speak (Papademetriou & Weidenfeld, 2007). This is illustrated in Sammut’s (2004) research findings which show that learning and speaking the Maltese language helped returned migrants be accepted by their peers. It also “served as a symbol of their being ‘Gozitan’ and not ‘alien’ (Sammut, 2004, p.100) and enhanced their inclusion at school (Camilleri, 2007). This concurs with Frendo’s (2005) proposition that language provision in Maltese and/or English is crucial to non-Maltese-speaking pupils as it will empower them with the same opportunities in education as their Maltese speaking peers. “Improving language skills in at least one of the languages used in the school could be seen as a crucial step that would contribute to a child’s integration in school and particularly in class” (Frendo, 2005, p.137). Likewise, Busuttil (2001, p.110) states that, proficiency in the two official languages of instruction is a fundamental goal of schooling in Malta and crucial to the achievement of the aims of the curriculum in the Maltese Educational Experience.
2.6 Conclusion

Immigrant students, together with their Maltese counterparts, are today’s and definitely tomorrow’s protagonists in Malta’s education system. One cannot shelve these students’ language needs anymore and let the corrosive effects of indifference, arbitrariness and a do-nothing or sometimes-type policy consume the immigrant students’ needs only to lead them to failure. On the contrary, one must act now along this contemporary misty path by providing the adequate language beacons to guide all stakeholders, particularly children, throughout their lifelong educational journey which they have either started, will continue or shall begin, within Malta’s education system.
Chapter 3

Methodology
3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how the language-mediated experiences of newcomer immigrant students at secondary level in Maltese State Schools were explored. The main tenets of the methodology and the rationale behind the research methods selected will be the focus of this chapter.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

This research aims to explore how immigrant students at secondary level in Maltese State Schools describe their language-mediated experiences in relation to their educational experience. It also aims to explore what language provisions (if any), are being provided locally in State Secondary Schools for immigrant children.

The objectives to reach these aims are:
1. to explore the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experiences and
2. to explore whether the local State Secondary Schools are providing any kind of language support and whether such measures are providing equity of access to the Maltese educational experience.

3.3 Operational Definitions

Before setting out the methodological tools adopted in this study, the following definitions of central terms are provided:

3.3.1 Immigrant Students

Students who fall within the compulsory school age of the second cycle, the lower secondary education (11-16 years); who do not have Maltese as their mother tongue; who have lived in another country for some time before coming to Malta and who are defined in the European Commission’s report entitled Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe (2009) as:
children born in another country (within or outside Europe) or children whose parents or grandparents were born in another country. So the term ‘immigrant children’ used here covers various situations, which can be referred to in other contexts as ‘newly-arrived children’, ‘migrant children’ or ‘children of immigrant background’. Such children may be born to families with different legal status in the host country - families with full rights of residence and refugee status, asylum seeking families, or families without any rights of residence.

(p. 3)

For the purpose of this study, children of returned migrants and Form 5 students, shall not be included in this research (v. p.55).

3.3.2 State Secondary School

A single gendered, non fee-paying school forming part of the second education cycle which on a full-time basis caters for children between the ages of 11 and 16 when they reach the end of the compulsory school age. This type of State School through which the students move from primary (5 years - 11 years) to secondary level is internationally referred to as lower secondary education (European Commission, 2007).

3.3.3 Junior Lyceums / Area Secondary Schools

The following description is provided since this study was being conducted in the middle of an educational reform. Prior to the scholastic year 2010 - 2011, at the end of the first cycle, many students used to sit for a national exam, referred to as the Junior Lyceum Examination or the 11 plus examination in five main areas: Maltese, English, Mathematics, Religion and Social Studies, which had been in place since 1981 (Grima et al., 2007). Those students who succeeded in this national examination at the end of their primary education, used to move on to Junior Lyceum Schools which were a grammar type of school. These Junior Lyceum Schools used to offer a more intensive academic course than the State Secondary Schools and were the “schools for higher achievers” (Vallejo & Dooley, 2008, p. 15). Those students who did not succeed used to move on to Secondary Schools or Area
Secondary Schools, “where the curriculum is less demanding” (European Commission, 2010, p. 3).

### 3.3.4 Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL)

Throughout this study the term Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL) is used to acknowledge that for immigrant students learning Maltese is not merely the acquisition of another new/foreign language but the language they need to survive, - this because they are continually exposed to it both at school and outside, in the community.

### 3.4 The Qualitative Paradigm

This study places the immigrant children’s voices, experiences, thoughts and feelings at its centre. It aims at exploring, describing and learning about the students’ day-to-day situations while attending a State Secondary School in a country in which their native language is not the language of the country of residence. This qualitative, interpretative and naturalistic approach seeks to concentrate on the students’ educational milieus, stories, feelings, insights, meanings, understandings and ordinary pursuits, on how they are living and experiencing the language issue at school during their day-to-day realities (Woods, 1999). In order to give a wider perspective of what is actually taking place in the lives of the immigrant students at school, in class, during lessons and more, this research also explores the teachers’ opinions, perspectives, challenges and experiences of the respective immigrant students on the matter. Finally, while in also providing some experts’ viewpoints related to the topic under study, this research aims to provide and describe the wholeness of the immigrant students’ educational lifeworlds “from the inside out” (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004). The main focus of this study is to understand and examine the immigrant children’s actual and ongoing reality at school with regards to language.

Laws, legislation, official documents, papers, curriculum, school development plans, schemes of work and lesson plans can say a lot and present several
aims to reach clear objectives, yet what really goes on in the classrooms, in the immigrant students’ school experience, can only be voiced by the students themselves.

According to Li (2009), culturally diverse people are compelled to live and experience the world adversely due to the subjective nature of the human psychological functioning. Qualitative research facilitates the study of these idiosyncratic phenomena through a fairly lengthy period in the natural setting to be studied (Woods, 1999). It endeavours to holistically understand what it is like to be in a particular situation or experience (Collen, 2006) and allows the researcher to paint a vivid picture of the lived experience which aims to capture and represent the unique insights, voices, meanings, understandings, emotions and perspectives (Nesteruk, Marks & Betsy Garrison, 2009) as the situations of the people being studied unfold.

Other distinctive features of the qualitative, naturalistic research such as the accurate and faithful portrayals of the realities of the social and contextual situations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), the thick descriptions which yield “verstehen”, understanding of how things work (Stake, 2010) for the participants and shed light on their life-worlds and the panorama of various vignettes out of which significant findings emerge and are gradually borne (Flick et al., 2004; Mindek as cited in Giarelli & Chambliss, 2005), impelled the researcher to adopt a qualitative paradigm. This inductive approach is used particularly in connection with interpretivism and naturalism (Bryman, 2008), the constituents underlying the epistemology of the adopted research paradigm.

3.4.1 Case Study Approach

Case study research gives the opportunity to the researcher to distinctively explore a contemporary phenomenon or entity in its real-life context (Merriam, 1988; Simons, 2009; Yin, 1984) from which context-dependent knowledge is generated (Flyvberg, 2004). Through fine-grain detail, it seeks to meaningfully capture and vividly portray the close-up reality of a bounded
assemblage of interacting parts into a coherent unity or a functioning whole, anchored in time and circumstance (Cohen et al., 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; MacDonald & Walker, 1975). The pedigree of this type of naturalistic study (MacDonald & Walker, 1975) with one of its main hallmarks being its strength in reality (Cohen et al., 2007) of an instance in action (Adelman, Kemmis, & Jenkins, 1980; MacDonald & Walker, 1975), through its experiential understanding, evolving process and emic issues emerging from the participants of the study (Stake, 1995, 2010), collects and provides a unique example of real people in real situations (Stake, 2006; Cohen et al., 2007).

Case study has frequently been disdained and viewed with extreme circumspection. To some, this “distinctive form of empirical inquiry” (Yin, 2003a), is an ambiguous tag, label or stamp encompassing a multitude of “inferential felonies” (Achen & Snidal, 1989, p. 160). The issue of generalization has been among these faults and views. Eysench (1976) however claims that “sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases, not in the hope of proving anything, but in the hope of learning something” (p. 9). In their idiosyncrasy, case studies bear more understanding, yield to the summative public knowledge of the topic and serve as springboards for successive further inquiry and theorizing. Kothari (2004) concludes that case study begets enrichment in the generalised knowledge and “in its absence, generalised social science may get handicapped” (p. 114).

Case study is also claimed to ostensibly allow more room for the researcher’s subjective judgement and bias. Questioning this view Flyvbjerg (2004) asserts that the question of subjectivism and bias applies to all methods and that case studies have their own rigour which though different is not less strict than that of others. Williams and Morrow (2009) concur with this view and add that, “bias enters the picture as soon as a research question is asked in a particular way, in a particular setting, by a particular person, for a particular reason” (p. 579).
Finally, some suggest that a case study lacks context-independent knowledge. Given that the real world is dynamic, for a reader or reviewer to develop a clear and faithful understanding of the phenomenon under study, a meticulous and vivid portrayal of the context in which the case is situated is essential (Casey & Houghton, 2010). This complete description provides a faithful richness of the actual situation that surrounds the case and enhances its credibility (Shenton, 2004).

3.4.2 The Multiple Case Study

Yin (2006) explains that the term case study can refer to two types of case study designs: the single or the multiple case study. Unlike the single case study, the multiple case study, or collective case design (Chmiliar, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2008), involves more than one case. It explores the same research question(s) within a number of contexts, adopts the same methods for data gathering and methods for analysis in order to understand each of the single cases. Each single bounded case is then separately examined in situ, its data organised and analysed as a holistic entity through within-case analysis and finally once a full detailed account of each case is developed, cross-case analysis between the different cases, is generated (Bleijenbergh, 2010; Chmiliar, 2010; Goddard, 2010). Miles and Huberman (1994), add that when compared to the single case study, the multiple or collective case study deepens the understanding of processes and outcomes of cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994), obtains greater insights, corroborates and strengthens the results and increases confidence in the robustness (Yin, 2003a; Chmiliar, 2010).

In a multiple case study (as adopted for this research), each case is singularly and collectively instrumental: singularly instrumental because each specific entity has its uniqueness, its personality, its story to tell and is made up of many constituents for study; collectively instrumental since the particularities of each case also form part of a collection of cases of which each case is in some way linked and bound to the other cases. This presents a kind of seesaw effect between the singular importance of each case and
the collective significance of the cases forming part of the study, where the part is also important because it is part of the whole. Stake (2006) refers to this relationship amongst cases as the quintain, “the arena or holding company or umbrella for the cases we will study” (p. 6). This research’s quintain is the immigrant students’ language-mediated experiences in relation to their educational experience in the Maltese State Secondary Schools.

Figure 1: The Quintain of This Study

A crucial step in conducting a case study is to define the case, the one which has its specificity, its complexity, its functionality and its boundedness (Burns, 2000; Merriam, 1988; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006). Each case study usually has its boundaries locked in time and place. Each case study has its “heart” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). This multiple case study was initially intended to have four hearts, four cases, four State Secondary Schools: a Girls’ Secondary School, a Girls’ Junior Lyceum, a Boys’ Secondary School and a Boys’ Junior Lyceum.

According to Yin (2003a), each case or unit of analysis, “must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (p. 47). Initially the following four schools were selected: two
Junior Lyceums, one for boys and one for girls (an analysis of similar results), and two Area Secondary Schools one for boys and one for girls (an analysis of similar results) out of which two of the schools had a provision for the teaching of Maltese as an Additional Language whilst the other two had none (yielding contrary results).

Due to some time constraints and complications with the school’s administration and lack of adequate information regarding the number of immigrant students enrolled, the Boys’ Junior Lyceum had to be left out. Another complication arose when selecting the Girls’ Secondary School. Another study had recently been carried out and the researcher was advised by the school administration to opt for the second preference for the Girls’ Secondary School since the participants were going to be the same as in the previous study. Consequently, this research’s quintain shall be explored within three hearts, three cases, three schools: a Girls’ Junior Lyceum henceforth referred to as SchoolA; a Boys’ Area Secondary School henceforth referred to as SchoolB and a Girls’ Area Secondary School henceforth referred to as SchoolC.

At this point, a brief description of Malta’s education system and the ongoing reforms during the carrying out of this research shall be provided. This will yield a better understanding of the local contextual reasons underlying the researchers’ choice in selecting both Junior Lyceum and Secondary Schools and also of the transitional educational context in which this research was being carried out.

3.5 Malta’s Education System, time span of this research and the changes occurring

In Malta, education is compulsory for eleven years and starts at the age of 5. The first cycle, the primary education (5-11 years) is co-educational whilst the second cycle, the lower secondary education (11-16 years) is single gender (European Commission, 2010). Before the scholastic year 2010-2011, transition from the first cycle to the second cycle at age 11+ used
to be dependent on results obtained in the Junior Lyceum examination which channelled students who succeeded to Junior Lyceum Schools and the rest towards Area Secondary Schools.

The data collection phase for this research started on 14th June, 2010, (the day consent was given) and had to end on 16th June, 2010 (the beginning of the secondary sector schools’ annual examinations). This then continued, from 23rd September, 2010 (the first day of school) and ended on 12th June, 2011 (the start of the annual examinations).

During the time when this research was being carried out, Malta was undergoing several reforms in its education system, one of them being the phasing out of the previously mentioned examination system involving the abolition of the 11+ exam and the introduction of a “national end-of-primary benchmark in Mathematics, Maltese and English examination” (Grima et al, 2011, p. 44). Consequently, during the scholastic year 2010-2011, the schools for the second cycle no longer selected and streamed the pupils and so the Junior Lyceum and Secondary Schools changed to simply Secondary Schools whose intake relied “on the basis of catchment areas made up of a group feeder primary schools within their college” (European Commission, 2010, p. 3). The schools chosen for this multiple case study were chosen during the end of the 2009-2010 scholastic year and thus the three cases were still Junior Lyceum and / or Secondary Schools respectively. Also, all the participants involved in this research were older than 11 and thus all had gone through the selection process of the previous 11+ exam.

3.6 Sampling

Miles and Huberman (1994) assert that the researcher cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything, particularly in a multiple-case study, since each case has its subsettings. Qualitative researchers usually adopt purposive sampling whereby small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth are recruited (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
During this research, a form of funnelling sampling sequence was used as depicted in Figure 2. During the first phase, statistical and demographical data was collected in order to establish the magnitude and distribution of the population in all Maltese State Secondary Schools. This enabled the researcher to map out the localities which had the greater number of immigrant students. The second phase was characterised by using the previously obtained demographic data to adopt purposive sampling with the key criterion being which Maltese State Secondary Schools had the highest representation of immigrant students. In seeking to represent the immigrant students in their diversity, purposeful sampling and snowball or chain sampling were used. These two selective sampling strategies enabled the researcher to recruit diverse participants from each school and thus be able to portray an array of school experiences that different immigrant children had relating to Maltese and English whilst attending a State Secondary School in Malta. Meaningful participants were characteristically and purposely chosen on the basis of having the necessary requisites, knowledge and experience on the relevant data, the faculty and maturity to reflect on the topic, the ability to communicate and the time and willingness to participate. The sampling decisions vacillated between trying to explore the field as widely as possible as well as analysing it as deeply as possible (Flick, 2009).
Figure 2: The Sample of This Study

1. Target Population

2. Phase A

3. Phase B

4. Phase C

5. The Sample

1. Immigrant students between the age of 11 and 16 attending a State Secondary School between 14th June, 2010 to 18th June, 2010 and from 23rd September, 2010 to 12th June, 2011.

2. Collection of statistical and demographical data of which State Secondary Schools in Malta had the highest number of immigrant students. Figures presented via email by the Research and Development Department - Education Directorates on 25th June 2009 and updated on 7th March, 2013.

3. Adoption of purposive sampling to select the prospective cases - the State Secondary Schools from the previously recruited list of schools and the consent of the respective school administration.

4. Adoption of purposive sampling and snowball/chain sampling to select a cross section of different immigrant students found in the 3 recruited State Secondary Schools.

5. The 22 immigrant students from the 3 recruited and participating schools, all had the following qualifying criteria when this research was being carried out:
   - were immigrants;
   - were between the age of 11 and 16 (or 17 and were still attending school);
   - were attending a State Secondary School in Malta either a Junior Lyceum or an Area Secondary School;
   - were born and had lived in another country prior to coming to Malta and for whom Maltese was neither their first nor their second language but one of the two official languages of the country they were currently residing in.

The recruited participants who have as well as their parents/guardians, consented to participate in this research study consisted of:
   - immigrant minors from 14 different nationalities and 12 different native languages;
   - 4 unaccompanied minor girls attending an Area Secondary School in Form 4 from a non-EU country;
   - 1 refugee boy attending an Area Secondary School in Form 1 from a non-EU country;
   - 1 refugee girl attending an Area Secondary School in Form 5 from a non-EU country;
   - 3 regular immigrant girls attending a Junior Lyceum in Form 3 from an EU country;
   - 2 regular immigrant girls attending a Junior Lyceum in Form 4 from an EU country;
   - 2 regular immigrant girls attending a Junior Lyceum in Form 1 from an EU country;
   - 1 regular immigrant girl attending a Junior Lyceum in Form 5 from an EU country;
   - 2 regular immigrant boys attending an Area Secondary School in Form 4 from an EU country;
   - 1 regular immigrant boy attending an Area Secondary School in Form 3 from an EU country;
   - 2 regular immigrant boys attending an Area Secondary School in Form 2 from an EU country and
   - 3 regular immigrant boys attending an Area Secondary School in Form 1 from an EU country.
3.7 Inclusion Criteria
Included in the sample were 22 immigrant students, 9 boys and 13 girls, between the age of 11 and 17 currently attending either a Junior Lyceum or an Area Secondary School in Forms 1, 2, 3 and 4 at the time when the research was being carried out. Other inclusion criteria were: having lived in another country prior to coming to Malta; different manner of travel and stay (regular and irregular); different legal status in relation to their protection claim (asylum seekers and refugees); being accompanied and unaccompanied by their parents; having been born in another country within or outside Europe, and for whom Maltese was not their first language but one of the two official languages of the country they were currently residing in. Given that older students find it easier to articulate their experiences, attitudes and feelings and can better reflect critically than would younger ones (Sammut, 2004), only immigrant students in State Secondary Schools were included in this study.

3.8 Exclusion Criteria
Immigrant students in State Primary Schools and in Independent and Church Secondary Schools, returned migrants and immigrant students in Form 5 were excluded from this study. The involvement of returned migrants in this research represents a different situation from that of the newly-arrived children who had never been to Malta before or who had never been exposed to Maltese before their arrival in Malta. Similarly, Form 5 students were excluded from this study as the last year of the second cycle in Malta’s education system is characterised by a serious commitment towards preparation of the MatSEC examinations. However, the interviews of two Form 5 students recruited through snowball or chain sampling, were included since their experience was deemed uniquely interesting for the purpose of this study.

7 University of Malta. MatSEC Examination Board (http://home.um.edu.mt/matsec/).
3.9 Recruitment of a Cultural Mediator

Hennick (2008) describes language and communication as being the bedrock of qualitative enquiry. For the qualitative researcher it is an enabling tool through which accurate and truthful understanding of the human behaviour, social modus operandi and cultural meanings that carve the human behaviour are revealed. Unlike the positivist approach where language is used to gain researcher-driven or etic responses, in qualitative research, language is used as an emic perspective. In portraying and seeking to explore the social realities of the insiders’ or the participants’ perspectives and individual experiences, truthfulness of the research is enhanced (Slevin & Sines, 2000).

In seeking to give voice to and hence present a cross-section of the different types of immigrant students present in the three chosen State Secondary Schools, participants from different cultures were selected. Moreover, it was conceived not only important to the research but also an ethical obligation to include immigrants from a different culture and who were also unable to communicate either in English or in Maltese. Murray and Wynne (2001) point out that research with members of ethnic minority groups facilitates access to the ideas, emotions, viewpoints, perspectives and lived experiences of non-English speaking and linguistically diverse populations living within a different and dominant culture (Twinn, 1997).

In order to enhance rigour (Irvine, Roberts, & Bradbury-Jones, 2008) and break any linguistic and / or cultural barrier between the researcher and two of the participants who had significant problems in English and a different culture from that of the researcher, the assistance of an interpreter, a cultural mediator or a “cultural broker” (Hennink, 2008) was required. The interpreter was present, translating back and forth (Baker, 1981), acting as an intermediary between the researcher who shared neither the language nor the culture of the study participants and was thus an “outsider”, and two of the participants (Hennick, 2008; Irvine et al., 2008; Temple & Edwards, 2002).
To be able to produce accurate and truthful data, Temple and Edwards (2002) mention several matching characteristics suitable for the interpreter-interviewee match. Amongst this degree of communality between interpreters and participants (Murray & Wynne, 2001) are ethnicity/race, gender, culture, religion (Baker, Hussain, & Saunders, 1991; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Wallin & Ahlström, 2006) and native language. These shared similarities helped to increase the establishment of rapport and trust with the two participants. In the recruitment of the culturally and linguistically proficient interpreter, not only were the previously mentioned criteria fundamental but also her experience in previous qualitative studies that had been carried out in various fields with irregular immigrants and refugees in Malta. This enabled the interpreter to be already familiar with the research process.

3.10 Triangulation

Triangulation is a process whereby the researcher gathers sets of data pertaining to the same phenomenon, generated by more than one method and brought together to a coherent understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Moran-Ellis, Alexander, Cronin, Dickinson, Fielding, Sleney, & Thomas, 2006). Through this convergence of the different types of data collection, the weaknesses and biases that emerge from any single method are lessened and the flaws and deficiencies of a single method are counterbalanced by the strengths of the other, hence minimizing threats to validity (Denzin, 1978; Knafl & Breitmayer, 1991; Kopinak, 1999; Mitchell, 1986; Sim & Sharp, 1998). Hence, triangulation enhances confidence (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1991; Moran-Ellis et al., 2006), confirmation, corroboration or convergent validation (Fenech Adami & Kiger, 2005; Sandelowski, 2000; Shih, 1998; Thurmond, 2001), credibility; (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004), quality (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Knafl & Gallo, 1995), rigor (Denzin, 1994) and validity in research findings of qualitative research (Denzin, 1978; Kopinak, 1999; Silverman, 2001; Stake, 2006).
Another purpose which many have also attributed to triangulation is completeness. In adding breadth and depth, a complete and contextual portrayal of the unit(s) under study is provided such that the contribution of each source adds an additional piece to the puzzle (Fenech Adami & Kiger, 2005; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1984; Jick, 1979; Knafl & Breitmayer, 1991; Mitchell, 1986; Redfern & Norman, 1994; Shih, 1998; Sim & Sharp, 1998;).

Some argue that it is inappropriate to adopt triangulation for both convergent validity and completeness (Shih, 1998), yet throughout this research, both triangulation by method and also data (source) triangulation were deemed necessary to authentically reveal the various facets, interpretations and perceptions which different participants attributed to language in the lives of immigrant students at school. Within-method triangulation, involving the use of non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews, as well as data (source) triangulation were used throughout this study. The former involved different methods of data collection from the same methodology whilst the latter involved the use of multiple data sources with similar foci to obtain various views about the topic being explored.

This data through semi-structured interviews was obtained from 22 immigrant students, their teachers - 8 of English, 9 of Maltese, 9 of Mathematics - and the support teacher who at the time when this study was taking place, was working with the unaccompanied asylum seekers, 6 members of the school’s administration and 18 individuals whose official positions and experience, knowledge and expertise were invaluable to this study both on the educational level and also with regards the issues of immigration. These included various representatives from: the Directorate for Educational Services; the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education including the Education Officers of English, Maltese (primary and secondary sector) and as the post of Maths EO was vacant when this research was being conducted, a Head of Department; the Student Service Department; the Peripatetic Service for Unaccompanied Asylum; the Directorate for Lifelong Learning; the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta; the JRS; the John XXIII Peace Lab; the MatSEC Support Unit; the
Maltese Delegation in the EPP and also a representative of an NGO which had an English lessons project for immigrants at Marsa Open Centre, Ħal Far Tent Village, Ħal Far Reception centre, Peace Lab and Dar Liedna and were also about to launch a Maltese lessons project during the time when this research was taking place. Each source contributed partial yet equally valuable understanding to the phenomenon under exploration (Barbour, 2001) both for confirmation and for completeness purposes.

3.11 Methods of Data Collection

The quest of the researcher to view the phenomenon under study through the immigrant students’ eyes, capture and authentically portray their “lived reality” (Scott & Usher, 2011, p. 93) at school, particularly during lessons with their teachers and native peers, compelled the researcher to adopt data collection tools that incorporate the possibility of involving face-to-face interaction with the study participants. Such naturalistic methods of data collection, which are either collected from the setting or created by the participants themselves (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010) occur mainly through observation and interviewing (Schensul, 2008). Given that this study sought to get a deeper understanding and emic perspective of the immigrant students’ language-mediated experiences in Secondary Schools, to thickly document, gain more insight, understand and elaborate on such feelings, experiences, views, perceptions and to richly and thickly capture the real-life situations of these students, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation were employed. Moreover, according to Davidson (2008) such tools for qualitative measurement are frequently used in sensitive research which like this seek to explore feelings and experiences amongst vulnerable groups (Davidson, 2008) such as refugees, unaccompanied minors and irregular immigrants and are also adequate for participants from different cultures (Lodico et al., 2010).
3.11.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to garner the experiences and understand the meanings that the participants attached to the immigrants’ empirical understanding of language in their educational journey within a Maltese State Secondary School. It also enabled different perspectives from different sources to provide both a complete and also a reliable approach to the study. In this person-centred approach, the person’s experiences, views, opinions, hopes, fears and challenges were placed at the heart, such that the very soul of this study lies in being able to explore, capture fully and reveal these lived experiences and diverse insights in such a way that those outside of the studied experience are enabled to achieve a deeper understanding of what it feels like to be inside. Moreover, “these essential sources of case study information” (Yin, 2003a, p. 89) shall allow those inside, to navigate across borders and share with those outside who want to know, learn and understand more about the participants’ thoughts, feelings, experiences and life situations (Mears, 2009). In this way this “complete piece of social interaction” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 164), “co-constructed narrative of meaning and experience” (Freeman & Mathinson, 2009, p. 90), this “inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2), becomes an interpretive process whereby in the act of describing and narrating each idiosyncratic experience, is brought to being (Frish as cited in Mears, 2009, p. 18).

Gillham (2000) states that the semi-structured interview “is the most important form of interviewing in case study research” (p. 65). Through probing and prompting of the interviewees’ responses, semi-structured interviews elicit further personalised information, yield depth and proffer a truer picture of the participants’ personal experience and attitudes relevant to the study. Unlike the unstructured interview, semi-structured interviews allow for a better grasp over the topics of the interview. Contrary to structured interviews, they permit the interviewees to elaborate and expand their responses on the phenomenon underlying the study (Ayres, 2008). Ayres
(2008), adds that the allure of this type of interview format is the resulting text, stemming from an intertwining collaboration between the researcher / interviewer and the participant / interviewee.

94 interviews were carried out. Out of the 22 immigrant students participating in this study, 20 were interviewed twice due to time and syllabus constraints, availability of the participants and / or on reaching saturation point, in which case an additional interview would not have revealed new data, as the same notions kept recurring (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2010; Glaser & Strauss, 1967;). Two other students who were in Form 5 were only interviewed once due to their study commitments.

Miller and Tewksbury (2001) point out that for a researcher to understand the world from the participants’ perspectives and to be able to see how they think about their world, it is important to establish a rapport. Hence two informal meetings prior to the first interview were held between the researcher and the 22 participants, the first one requesting participation and giving all the necessary information, whilst the second one sought to establish rapport and build trust (Fontana & Frey, 2003).

Whilst for the immigrant students authenticity and accuracy of the first interview were confirmed during the second interview, those of the 27 teachers, 6 members of administration and 18 experts were confirmed by email. This confirmation with the interviewees (a second interview with the students and the verification of authenticity of the transcribed interview by email with the adults), enabled the researcher to clarify and confirm the previously elicited information, probe for more detail, and follow up on unclear, ambiguous or inconsistent knowledge (Rogers, Casey, Ekert, & Holland, 2005). In the case of the students, the second interview allowed clarification of the issues observed in class since both methods of data collection (semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation), were carried out simultaneously.
Of the 42 student interviews carried out (20 students x 2, + 2 Form 5 students x 1) (excluding the 44 informal meetings prior to the first interview), 33 (16 students x 2 + 1 Form 5 student x 1) were carried out at the school during school hours and mainly during the lessons from which the students were exempted such as Religion, Social Studies or History. Face-to-face interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis in an empty classroom or room which was always close to and clearly visible to any of the members of the schools’ administration such as the Head or the Assistant Head of School. The remaining 9 of the 42 interviews (4 students x 2 + 1 Form 5 x 1), were carried out in the vicinity of the students’ institution or home in the presence of either the cultural mediator, the support teacher responsible for their transition programme or a member of the family, at a place and time convenient to the respondents. This was due to the fact that by the time the required consent was given, the participants, despite their willingness to participate, had stopped attending school.

Also held during school hours were the interviews with the 27 teachers (9 teachers of Maltese; 8 teachers of English; 9 teachers of Mathematics and two interviews with the support teacher who at the time this study was taking place, was working with the unaccompanied asylum seekers) and 6 with the respective Senior Management Team of each school (College Principal A&B; Headteacher A; Assistant Head A; Headteacher B; Assistant Head B; Headteacher C). The interviews carried out with the 18 experts were carried out in their respective offices or places of work.

An interview schedule (Appendix 5) was designed in advance around the main themes that emerged from the literature and the aims of what this research aimed to explore. The interviewer did not always follow the guide to the letter as the participants’ story fragments, narrative accounts of their educational experiences, thoughts, insights and meanings gradually unfolded and instigated further exploration. To ensure interpretive validity, extra precaution was taken to avoid leading or close-ended questions (Ayres, 2008). The duration of the interview ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and all the
data (totalling approximately 94 hours) from the interviews was recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

The use of flexible face-to-face and single interviews as opposed to focus or group interviews was considered as appropriate since it enabled the researcher to sensitively gather in-depth data about the individual participants’ feelings, views and personal experiences which at times were rather personal and intimate. The use of single semi-structured interviews was appropriate as, not only did the researcher’s attention remain focused throughout the entire journey and provided a personal space for each of the participants, but it also helped to “humanize” and distinctly portray the understanding of what each distinctive participant actually went through, felt and was living.

3.11.2 Non-Participant Observations

In qualitative research, reality is socially constructed by each individual such that interpretation and understanding are woven into the context. In using different sources of data, light is shed on different insights across a knowledge continuum (Foss & Ellefsen, 2002). Within-method triangulation through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations enabled the researcher to combine naturally occurring data (observations) with generated data (interviews) such that a balance was achieved between the meanings and interpretations through the explanations the participants provided and the meaning which the researcher deduced and made explicit (Lewis, 2003). Moreover, in using both naturally occurring data and generated data, the researcher was provided with an “enactment” of social phenomena in their original settings and also a “recounting” of phenomena, originated specifically for the research study. Thus the researcher was presented with a better understanding “of how the events or behaviours naturally arise as well as reconstructed perspectives on their occurrence” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 38).
Each approach - and the methods within it - yields data of specific kinds, needed for both the purpose of confirmation and also that of completeness. Hence, data generated from the observations that is naturally occurring data, was regarded as an important aspect for this research. It enabled the researcher to put into context the experiences, perspectives, insights and notions shared during interviews (Freeman & Mathinson, 2009), and to attain completeness while also strengthening the reliability and the validity of the findings.

The use of this method permitted the researcher to gather “live” data from naturalistic settings (Cohen et al., 2007), to provide more details and thick descriptions on the current situation and to verify what is actually occurring in situ with regards to those students who have not yet mastered either Maltese, English or both official languages and are attending a local State Secondary School. Throughout the observations carried out, there was no interaction between the observer and the observed. Consent was given by the immigrant students, their parents/guardians, the teachers involved and the Head of School.

Non-participant observation was chosen in order to remain relatively unobtrusive and not to disrupt the normal flow of the lessons. Another important reason was to mine a rich vein of authentic behaviour (McNeill & Chapman, 2005) and capture the fabric and reality of what goes on in the classroom. In particular, the researcher observed the content and process of the lessons; the level of integration and participation of the immigrant students in class; the language(s) used - when, why and by who; and the immigrant students’ interaction with their peers and teachers of English, Maltese and Mathematics respectively. The rationale for choosing to observe lessons of English, Maltese and Mathematics only, were: because it was not possible to observe other subjects due to time constraints though it would surely have been beneficial; since both lessons of English and Maltese deal particularly with the teaching and learning of Malta’s official languages, it enabled the researcher to further explore whether during these lessons the immigrant students were being given the opportunity to learn one or both
languages; what type of language provision, if provided, was being applied to meet their language needs at schools; and finally a subject which is considered as “non-linguistic” in nature, Mathematics, in order to explore whether the language measures provided during the lessons of English and Maltese were ensuring equality of access to the Maltese educational experience of the immigrant students. Not only did the observations during English, Maltese and Mathematics lessons enable the researcher to look into the previously mentioned objectives but also to holistically explore the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language. The observations also enabled the researcher to explore in situ, the students’, their teachers’ and the experts’ insights on the immigrant students’ language-mediated experiences and how their language needs are actually being addressed during school hours.

Attempts to minimise the affected behaviour of those being observed due to awareness of the presence of the researcher or their participation in the study also known as the Hawthorne effect, were made by spending considerable time in the field.

The observations carried out were guided by an observation schedule adapted from Burton and Bartlett (2005, p. 145-150), Guilloteaux (2007, p. 243), Hopkins (2008, p. 90-98) and Waxman and Padrón (2004, p. 95-96) using preset tickbox schedules (Appendix 6 and 7). In addition, extensive use was made of field notes throughout the entire process of data collection.

A total of 96 lessons (6, 40-45 minutes lesson for each student), were observed in SchoolA (excluding Helena, who had left school since her Form 5 had just terminated), and in SchoolB. Two lessons of English, Maltese and Mathematics were observed. 42 in SchoolA: 14 lessons of Maltese; 14 lessons of English and 14 lessons of Mathematics and 54 in SchoolB: 18 lessons of Maltese, 18 lessons of English and 18 lessons of Mathematics. Five free lessons were also observed, 2 in SchoolA and 3 in SchoolB. In SchoolC no observations took place since by the time permission was granted, the students had stopped attending school. The lessons were
observed during different days of the week and different times of the day. They dealt with different aspects of the respective subjects such as grammar, literature, graphs, shapes and revision.

Moreover, several free lessons and other important activities related to the usual school life such as the school starting and dismissal time, the morning and the afternoon assemblies and the mid-morning and mid-day breaks were also observed. These observations allowed a comparison to be made between the reported experiences, perspectives and lived situations with the actual experiences, viewpoints and lived situations, hence how they all converged. The rationale of adopting such multi-layered and detailed information about the phenomena under study, entwined and refracted within themselves (Richardson, 2003), was to add rigour, breadth and depth to the study and also to enhance confidence in the validity and credibility of the research findings (Denzin, 1994; Jick, 1979; Kopinak, 1999; Silverman, 2001).

3.11.3 Piloting

Piloting a schedule or a topic guide is a critical and fundamental part of research (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003). Both the semi-structured interview and the observation schedule were piloted in a different school with eighteen immigrant students who fell under the eligibility criteria, and three teachers of English, Maltese and Mathematics during six lessons of the respective subjects. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to make sure that the research question was addressed, to get accustomed to the use of prompts, questioning and observation techniques and also to “fine tune” the observation guides before the bulk of the fieldwork took place (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003).

The pilot study proved to be very beneficial as the researcher could reflect on the mistakes and strengths of the experience. Minimal changes were needed as both schedules proved to be appropriate and adequate. However two questions were added to the interview schedule (students) because during
the piloting, the students seemed to convey their feelings, ideas and experiences about Maltese and English through the use of an analogy (Questions 19 and 20 in Appendix 5).

Following a lecture the researcher attended given by Prof David Lasagabaster of the University of the Basque Country on Trilingualism, an introductory exercise was also introduced as a remote preparation for the interview. Each participant was provided with a piece of paper on which they wrote or drew something that instinctively came to mind as soon as either of the languages being explored (Maltese and English) was brought up. Also, a slight modification in the layout of the observation schedule was needed for the sake of practicality - the four scales were added not only at the beginning of each section but also on every new page. This slight modification enabled the researcher to avoid turning the pages back and forth while ticking and thus to focus better on what was going on in the classroom. Moreover, the use of a section for the researcher’s comments in the observation schedule after each category was found to be qualitatively enriching since unique, contextual and naturally occurring happenings could also be added to the data being gathered (Appendix 6 and 7).

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Since a substantial part of this study focused on the experiences of minors (below the age of 18), specific actions were targeted towards adhering to the key ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality. Ethical approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 13), Institutional permissions from the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (Appendix 14), the respective Heads of Schools and College Principals, the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers - AWAS (Appendix 15) and from the Children and Young Persons Advisory Board (Appendix 16).

Underpinning any research, particularly with children, are a number of key principles to be borne in mind. Amongst these are: respect for persons,
equity, non-discrimination, beneficence and non-maleficence such that no harm is done to the participants, benefits maximised and potential risks minimised (Alderson 1995; Hill, 2005; Mears, 2009).

3.12.1 Involvement of children in the research

Efforts were made in order to involve the students as much as possible such as in becoming co-researchers due to their lived experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon under study, in choosing their own pseudonyms and also in leading the researcher towards other meaningful cases through snowball sampling for the purpose of the study.

3.12.2 Consent and Choice

Essential to informed consent is the understanding of what such a decision implies. Given that the students were minors, the informed consent was obtained from all the children, as well as their parents and/or guardians, after careful explanation of the research aims, process and outcomes (Appendix 2). However, Kodish (2003) states that decisions made for children by parents cannot have the same degree of authenticity as those taken by adults on their own behalf. Thus, during the first informal meeting, the students were once again informed about the research and its implications. They were provided with opportunities to discuss any queries and concerns and finally asked again for their informed consent. In some cases where the parents or the guardians had already given consent, the children themselves declined to participate. No effort was made to persuade them to participate. This ensured that only those who were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely were included.

3.12.3 Possible Harm or Distress

Since this research aimed to voice the immigrants’ experiences and opinions regarding the two official languages of the host country and their impact on their educational experience, caution was taken to heed Fratter’s (1996) warning, that researchers should not “open up painful or distressing areas”
(p. 75), unless adequate support was available to the child. The participants were not pressured in any way to share or talk about particular experiences that they were not ready or comfortable to talk about. However, if at some point in time signs of distress were noticed, the interview was brought to an end and with the students’ consent, appropriate support from the School Counselling Service was offered. However, none of the participants to whom it was offered, felt the need to make use of this service.

3.12.4 Privacy and Confidentiality

Hill (2005) mentions three breaches of confidence out of which two were applicable to this study: public confidentiality and social network confidentiality. In public confidentiality the research participants’ identity will be kept private and confidential throughout the entire process of the research. From the start, the participants were informed that their anonymity was assured and that the use of pseudonyms was going to be used in reporting the findings. Also, in two cases where the students presented drawings, portraying their feelings, perceptions and opinions regarding the English and Maltese languages (Figure 7, 8, 10 and 11 in Appendix 9), extra care was taken in order to try and eliminate any kind of particularities which might lead to the student’s identity and make them recognizable.

In social network confidentiality, the information or gathered data is not to be passed to family members, friends, teachers, members of the school administration or significant others. When in some cases the teachers or members of the administration asked about the students’ feedback on certain issues going on in the school with regards to language and the language provisions in place, confidentiality was maintained.

3.13 Reflexivity

One of the central tenets of research is reflexivity, that is, the continuous process of reflecting and analysing how the idiosyncratic “lens” with/from which the researcher makes data (Emond, 2005, p. 126) affects either
intentionally or unintentionally the research process and its makings. This cognizance of the individual outlook and social position and of the effect that these may have on the phenomenon under study, involves the recognition of the researcher not as dichotomous but as part of the social world under study. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that most qualitative researchers embrace the notion of reflexivity since they will be affected by what is heard and observed while they are in the field. Jootun et al., (2009) assert that complete detachment is an unrealistic aspiration that can limit the qualitative process. By including their social selves and engaging with participants, the quality of the research will be enriched.

Throughout this research, the stance of the researcher, as a teacher of Maltese in a girls’ Junior Lyceum for the past fifteen years, enabled the researcher to undertake this research in a familiar context, that of a school and to better understand the students’ experiences particularly those relating to specific syllabus content. Despite this, measures were taken to avoid any pre-conceived ideas about the school, the participants and the researcher. Such measures included the choice of schools with which the researcher had no previous contact. This avoided bias both on the researchers’ side towards the research participants, and vice versa.

To avoid misinterpretation of the voices of the participants and provide verbal accuracy, the interviews were directly transcribed and the field notes updated on the day, or the following day, that the interview or the observation took place. Furthermore, the transcribed interviews of the students were taken for confirmation during the second interview whilst the ones carried out with the adults were sent by email for confirmation. During the second interview or email respectively, the issues provided in the previous interview were fed back to them in order to confirm the researchers’ interpretation of the data and also to explore the same issues in different ways. This produced an accurate account of the participants’ experiences, viewpoints and perspectives of the notions explored. During the months spent in each school, the participants became more relaxed in the researcher’s presence and the data collected grew richer. According to Bryman (1988) in such
situations the data are more likely to be honest and valid. A concerted effort was done to “tell it as it is” and during the interviews and the observations, the researcher employed every opportunity to convey a non-judgemental stand about what had been observed or revealed. The use of a diary or a reflective journal which assisted the researcher throughout the entire journey regarding “what is going on” while researching (Koch & Harrington, 1998), also permitted the researcher to achieve reflexivity.

3.14 Credibility, Dependability, Trustworthiness and Rigour

Credibility refers to whether the researcher has faithfully and accurately portrayed the participants’ thoughts, feelings and actions. In qualitative research, what matters is the accuracy with which deep pictures of the research setting and participants are yielded (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006). It is the “believability” of the study or as it is better known, its trustworthiness (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

Throughout this study, the researcher spent several months in each school visiting the respective sites three or four times a week, sometimes even more than once a day since the researcher had to balance her own teaching timetable with that of the participants who were in different classes and had different timetables. Given that this study was constrained to collecting the data during school hours and the researcher herself had her own duty as a full-time teacher to follow, the initial and ongoing stage of data collection proved very hectic and time consuming. Besides, the initial stage was characterised by the recruitment of the participants involved, going through long lists of names, meeting several immigrant students (who had already given consent to participate), until the sample from the population of each school was carefully and purposefully selected (Figure 2). The Sample of this study). Another time-consuming phase occurred when planning and conducting the co-ordination and the carrying out of the observations with the three teachers of English, Maltese and Mathematics of each participant.
This prolonged engagement in each school, engendered a rapport of trust which permitted a better understanding of the context and established a trusting relationship with the participants, particularly with the students. The more time was spent at school and with the students, the longer and more meaningful became the conversations. Indeed the second interview with the students was always richer than the first. Moreover, during the observations carried out, both the students and the teachers got used to the researcher going into different classrooms, hence lessening the Hawthorne effect.

Credibility was also featured in the involvement of ongoing discussions and sharing of opinions regarding the methods used for the data collection that took place with some colleagues and a volunteer who for the past 10 years has voluntarily worked with irregular immigrants at the Detention Centre in Ħal Far. This ongoing consultation minimised any bias and enhanced the credibility of the methods of data collection.

Another aspect of credibility and trustworthiness was facilitated by respondent validation procedures or member checks such that the researcher shared with the study participants their understandings, points of view expressed during the previous data collection. The participants, in turn clarified, confirmed and provided necessary feedback, at times even more in-depth information on their previously narrated accounts. This kept faith with the participants’ reality and provided emic understanding thus enhancing a more authentic portrayal of the participants’ experience and their school life.

The use of two digital recorders facilitated the recordings of the interviews that were directly transcribed verbatim in their original language (Maltese or English respectively). This permitted the researcher to listen to the data gathered and double-check the content both whilst transcribing and also during data analysis. Intensive engagement with the data and the use of verbatim examples of the participants’ comments were carried out during the written accounts of the findings.
The use of triangulation and generation of different sets of data, enhanced the authenticity of the evidence presented and the robustness of the understandings about the multiple-cases explored. The thick description and level of detail featuring each case brought the multiple-cases under study to life. This added credibility to the cases under study and increased their potential applicability in other contexts (McGinn, 2010). Finally, the use of a reflective diary was made in order to document the whole of the research process and record all the strategies, processes, challenges, feelings, rationale, reflections and decisions taken or abandoned throughout each phase of this journey. This researcher’s main and faithful companion - the audit trail - added rigor to the study’s approach and also enhanced its dependability and confirmibility. Finally, it is hoped that the readers will be able to travel easily through the worlds of the participants and the researcher of this study, and decide for themselves whether this journey with all its makings, is believable.

3.15 Data Analysis

Once all the data was collected (Figure 3) and the interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher, data analysis followed. Miles and Huberman’s (1994) model and the six phase guide of performing thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) were the framework guiding the analysis of data in this research.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that there are three conjoining flows of action in this procedure: data reduction which enables data to be simplified and more manageable; data display which refers to the way in which data is organized, and thirdly conclusion drawing and verification. For the data reduction process, the first five steps of thematic analysis presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) were adopted: familiarisation with the collected data; generation of initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes and defining and naming themes.
After the 94 interviews were transcribed verbatim in their original language (Maltese and English) by the researcher in order to be faithful to the participants’ narration, this data was linked to the observation notes taken during the 96 lessons observed. This familiarisation process provided the researcher with the opportunity to start focusing and analyzing. In addition the reflective journal was referred to several times in the process, in order to further enrich the collected data with the details, thoughts and other happenings in class and at school at the time of data collection. This information was then organised into general codes. Categories of data were allocated to each code and meaning units were identified for each category. Different categories, themes and patterns were constantly sifted, reviewed, rearranged and examined until finally, two major themes emerged. Data display then followed after which conclusions could be drawn (Miles & Humberman, 1994).

In this multiple case study, each case was analysed separately - also referred to as within-case analysis (Table 2, Table 3 & Table 4). Then data sets were compared and a display of the cross-case analysis was formulated (Figure 4).
Figure 3: Data Collection

Local Political Representative: A Maltese MEP

Local University Immigrant Graduate: Illa, an immigrant who graduated from the University of Malta teaching course.

Local Ministry of Education and Employment Representatives:
- High ranking official in the Education Directorates (1)
- High ranking official in the Education Directorates (2)
- High ranking official in the Education Directorates (3)
- High ranking official in the Education Directorates (4)
- Administrative official in the Education Directorates (1)

Local University Lecturers and Researchers' Representatives:
- Local subject expert - Maltese
- Local subject expert - Lifelong Learning
- Local subject expert - MatSEC

Local Ministry of Education and Employment Subject Representatives:
- Education Officer - Maltese (1)
- Education Officer - Maltese (2)
- Education Officer - English

In the absence, then of an Education Officer for Mathematics, a Head of Department was interviewed (Secondary)

Local Non Governmental Representatives:
- Representative from the JRS Malta school outreach project (NGO 1): http://www.jrs.malta.org/
- Representative from the Peace Lab (NGO 2): http://www.peacelab.org/
- Representative from GetUpStandUp (NGO 3): http://www.getupstandup.org.mt/
### Table 2: Within-Case Analysis School A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 1 SCHOOL A</th>
<th>THE CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS VIS-À-VIS LANGUAGE</th>
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<td>Challenges and Experiences Related to Peers</td>
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<td>Challenges and Experiences Related to Language</td>
<td>English – as an Initial Survival Kit</td>
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<td>Maltese – Language Barrier</td>
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<td>Maltese – as a Permanent Armour</td>
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<td><strong>SUBCATEGORIES</strong></td>
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<td>Initial/Assessment</td>
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<td>The Function of Malta’s Official Languages</td>
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<td>Specific Provisions</td>
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<td>Challenges and Experiences Related to Language</td>
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Table 4: Within-Case Analysis School

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Figure 4: Cross-Case Analysis Display

THEME 1
The Challenges and Experiences of Immigrant Students vis-à-vis Language

Table 1

Table 2

Table 3

Table 4

Table 5

Table 6

Table 7

The Challenges and Experiences Related to English Language Learning in State Secondary Schools in Malta

The Function of Malta’s Official Languages

Provisions provided by State Secondary Schools in Malta

THEME 2

THEME 3

THEME 4

THEME 5

THEME 6

THEME 7

Provisions for Immigrant Students in a Multilingual Language Setting

The Function of Maltese and English in Schools

Impact of Language on Educational Performance

The Role of English in the New Reality

A Pareto Analysis of the Impact of Language on Educational Performance

School A

School B

School C

School D

School E

School F

School G
Figure 4 illustrates the second phase of the analysis, being the cross-case analysis. The tables 1, 2 and 3 in Figure 4 represent the categories, subcategories and codes of the first theme that emerged from this study, while tables 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the same figure indicate those of the second theme (each table of Figure 4 is fully portrayed in Appendix 1). In each of these categories, subcategories and codes, the shapes - triangle, square and circle - represent the three school cases. They indicate which school or schools have alluded to each particular category, subcategory and code within that particular theme in order to illustrate similarities and differences between cases. The three figures in the middle represent the immigrant children who were the focus of this study throughout, while language permeates the various components of this multiple case study.

During the last phase of the thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), excerpts were selected to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme whilst discussing the findings and their meaning in relation to the aims and objectives of this study. These issues will be discussed further on in the Findings and Discussion chapter and summarised in the Conclusion. Moreover, in this study excerpts were provided both in the original language of the interview, that is Maltese as well as in English. This would enable the readers to view and follow how the interaction is constructed in the course of the research and thereby judge the credibility of analysis. The excerpts were translated into English by a person who is proficient in the language and translated into their original language by the researcher, a teacher of Maltese, in order to ensure quality of translation. The back translated interviews were compared to the raw data and any differences were looked into and corrected accordingly by the English expert and the researcher. Only minimal changes were necessary.
3.16 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a description of the methodology undertaken by the researcher in this qualitative/interpretivist/naturalistic multiple case study. It aimed to explain the processes fuelling decisions in attempting to answer the research questions and accomplish the aims of this study in a credible, dependable, trustworthy and rigorous way. A rationale was given for all the steps, strategies, procedures and actions taken to meet the pertaining purpose of this study, such as the qualitative paradigm, the multiple-case study approach, the recruitment of the sample and the cultural mediator, the methods for data collection, the ethical considerations and also the trails in collecting and analysing the data. This dynamic vehicle mediating between researcher/writer and reviewer/reader (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002) shall now proceed to the next chapter where the findings are presented.
Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion
4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present a vivid and faithful picture of the main findings which emerged from this multiple case study. This study focuses on the immigrant students’ language-mediated experiences in the Maltese schools within the State Secondary sector.

Analyses of data obtained from the interviews and observations seem to reveal that besides the small particularities found between the three participant schools, two major themes emerged strongly. They have proven to be the most significant in terms of answering the research questions and in turn providing a better understanding of the immigrant students’ educational experience in Malta and the language barrier:

1. the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students, vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experiences and
2. the language provisions provided by the local State Secondary Schools.

To respect their right to privacy and to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used albeit typical of the immigrant students’ country of origin. This enabled some of the most meaningful excerpts given by the participants to be presented. The complete findings of this study, which could not be included in this chapter to respect the word limit, are included in Appendix 8, 9, 10 and 11.

4.2 Socio-Demographic Information

Three State Secondary Schools - those with the highest number of immigrant students - were chosen for this study: School\textsuperscript{A}, a Junior Lyceum for girls (8 girls), School\textsuperscript{B}, a Secondary School for boys (9 boys) and School\textsuperscript{C}, a Secondary School for girls (5 girls). All were implementing some kind of language provision for the immigrant students.
A sample of 22 students (n = 22); 13 girls (8 immigrants, 1 refugee and 4 unaccompanied minors) and 9 boys (8 immigrants and 1 refugee), participated in this study (Table 5). The age of the participants ranged from 11 to 17. The length of residence in Malta ranged from 6 months to 10 years. The sample was chosen to encompass a mixture of gender, age, length of residence, legal status, ethnicity, country of origin within and outside Europe, native language/L1 and Form (Form 1, 2, 3 and 4). Moreover, 27 teachers and 18 local key experts in the field were also interviewed (see Tables 5 & 6). This purposeful selection in choosing the schools and the participants was carried out in order to capture a more vivid picture of the mosaic linguistic and cultural situation present in some of the Maltese State Secondary Schools.

The following tables (Tables 5 and 6) outline a summary of the participants’ characteristics - immigrant students and various persons occupying positions in schools and other institutions related to this study.
Table 5: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants in Schools\textsuperscript{A,B,C}

\textsuperscript{1}Gender: \textit{M} = Male \textit{F} = Female

\textsuperscript{2}Status: \textit{R} = Regular \textit{RFG} = Refugee \textit{UM} = Unaccompanied Minor

\textsuperscript{3}Type of school: \textit{JL} = Junior Lyceum \textit{AS} = Area Secondary School

\textsuperscript{4}Superscript: \textsuperscript{A} = School A \textsuperscript{B} = School B \textsuperscript{C} = School C

\textsuperscript{5}N: Number of days absent from a total number of 169 school days

\textsuperscript{6}College Median: \textit{MLT} = in Maltese \textit{ENG} = in English \textit{MTS} = in Mathematics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>\textsuperscript{1}Gender</th>
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<th>\textsuperscript{2}Status</th>
<th>Length of stay in Malta</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>\textsuperscript{3}Type of school</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Teachers\textsuperscript{A,B,C}, College Principal\textsuperscript{A,B} and Senior Member Teams\textsuperscript{A,B}. The numbers refer to the particular teacher of Maltese, English or Maths. \textsuperscript{N = 169}</th>
<th>The annual marks of 2010-2011</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ieva\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{A1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{A2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alena\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{A2}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{A3}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishbel\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{A2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enya\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{A1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{A2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{A1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{A2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{A2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{A2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>JL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoyan\textsuperscript{B}</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timotei\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerwin\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakiv\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kjell\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mihai\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radko\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoran\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1}</td>
<td>Ms. English\textsuperscript{B2}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Length of stay in Malta</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Teachers\textsuperscript{ABC, College Principal\textsuperscript{A&amp;B} and Senior Member Teams\textsuperscript{A,B&amp;C}. The numbers refer to the particular teacher of Maltese, English or Maths.}</th>
<th>The annual marks of 2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yonas\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{b3}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbilia\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{c} (Unaccompanied Minors Support Teacher), a support teacher in the Peripatetic Service for unaccompanied minors deployed by the Department of Student Services within the Directorate for Educational Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aziza\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrihet\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freweini\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merhawit\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The letters \textsuperscript{A}, \textsuperscript{B} or \textsuperscript{C} next to either the students, the teachers or the members of the Senior Management Team represent the participating school: \textbf{School\textsuperscript{A} = Case A}; \textbf{School\textsuperscript{B} = Case B} and \textbf{School\textsuperscript{C} = Case C}.
Table 6: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants Occupying Positions in Various Institutions Related to this Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Political Representative:</th>
<th>Local Ministry of Education and Employment Representatives:</th>
<th>Local Ministry of Education and Employment Subject Representatives:</th>
<th>Local University Lecturers and Researchers’ Representatives:</th>
<th>Local Non Governmental Representatives:</th>
<th>Local University Immigrant Graduate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Maltese MEP</td>
<td>High ranking official in the Education Directorates $^1$</td>
<td>Education Officer for Maltese $^1$</td>
<td>Local subject expert for Maltese</td>
<td>Representative from the JRS Malta school outreach project (NGO$^1$): <a href="http://www.jrsmalta.org/">http://www.jrsmalta.org/</a>).</td>
<td>Ilsa, an immigrant who graduated from the University of Malta teaching course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High ranking official in the Education Directorates $^2$</td>
<td>Education Officer for Maltese $^2$</td>
<td>Local subject expert for Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>Representative from the Peace Lab (NGO$^2$: <a href="http://www.peacelab.org/">http://www.peacelab.org/</a>).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High ranking official in the Education Directorates $^3$</td>
<td>Education Officer for English</td>
<td>Local subject expert for MatSEC</td>
<td>Representative from GetUpStandUp (NGO$^3$: <a href="http://www.getupstandup.org.mt/">http://www.getupstandup.org.mt/</a>).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High ranking official in the Education Directorates $^4$</td>
<td>In the absence, then of an Education Officer for Mathematics, a Head of Department was interviewed (Secondary).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative official in the Education Directorates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^1$ High ranking official in the Education Directorates
$^2$ High ranking official in the Education Directorates
$^3$ High ranking official in the Education Directorates
$^4$ Administrative official in the Education Directorates

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4.3. Theme 1: The Challenges and Experiences of the immigrant students, vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experiences

4.3.1 Challenges and Experiences related to transition - New Country

Throughout this research, all the immigrant students stressed the differences between what life was like back home, how different “here” is from “there”. For some, this was a significant challenge because they had to “forget everything and just learn to live the way they live here” (levaA). These feelings of dissonance and ambivalence between the old and the new are linked to the process of immigration and the ongoing need for adaptation from one’s nest to a new environment (Anderson, 2004). This is evident in the following excerpts.

It was hard because when I came, everything was very different and I guess it’s the differences that I had to cope with, which was probably the worst or the biggest challenge. That was the hardest thing, fitting in with the people.

(levaA)

It’s very hard for a foreigner to move over and just start a whole new life and have to make new friends, like a new place to live, new school, learn a new language like new everything basically so…

(EnyaA)

Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco and Todorova (2008) state that, “migration is not for the faint of heart. It almost inevitably involves feelings of dislocation, an at least, temporary loss of status, difficulty in communicating, and most significantly, leaving behind loved ones” (p. 30). This loss or separation from the immigrant students’ significant others is depicted in the following excerpts.

8For each verbatim quote there will be the following abbreviations: the pseudonym of the student, teacher or member of the Senior Management Team with the letter/s A, B or C in Superscript representing the participating school/case.
I don’t really have any family over here so it’s like some days I prefer being over there where I’m near my family ...

(Alena^)

I just came, started school, left all my friends and family behind me and had to make new friends, new school, new everything … I didn’t know if I had to speak Maltese or if anyone would speak English. All I knew, that I was starting a new school and that was it. And that was really scary.

(Enya^)

For Abrihet^C, coming to Malta also meant the loss of her original name. As Hoffman (1989) points out, it is with such “careless baptism”, “new appellations” and “names that make us strangers to ourselves” (p. 105) that the journey of some immigrants begins, or rather continues as they make their way into a new country.

Before me name was like this Abrihet (she wrote her name on a piece of paper), then when I come in Malta, Maltese no understand me name … when Malta coming, “what name?” “Abrihet”. No write Abrihet, they write Brigitte. All people here write like this, so I become like this Brigitte for here, before my name like this (pointing to the piece of paper she had previously written her name on), now ID (Identity Card) card like this.

(Abrihet^C)

To heal the wounds of separation and to accept the demanding task of creating a new world, these children had to find a balance between school, the heritage they bring and the reality they encounter in their new country (Ada, 1995). Most of the teachers were quite empathetic and considerate of the challenges and experiences faced by immigrant students in their classes and respective schools. Among the challenges the teachers mentioned were: leaving one’s roots, coping with a different language, lifestyle and culture.

Sometimes I feel they have no sense of their own identity. Since they would have moved from one country to another, they never feel any sense of belonging anywhere. This is a very difficult situation for these children … they feel they belong neither to their native country, which
they have left, nor here. No matter how much time they spend here, they will always feel outsiders.

(Ms. Maltese<sup>B3</sup>)<sup>9</sup>

Although the effects of change and transition were a common issue among all of the participants, the interviews point strongly to the fact that refugees and asylum seekers were faced with a worse scenario prior to their arrival to Malta which could have a psychological influence on the entire experience. Frater-Mathieson (2004) pointed out that not only is migration a challenging and a stressful experience but also when it “co-exists with the often traumatic and violent pre-migration, trans-migration and post-migration experiences of refugees, the stress commonly surpasses an individual’s or family’s natural coping capacities” (p. 12).

Abrihet<sup>C</sup> mentions a series of countries she travelled through and personal tragedy as “….my mother, my father died….”. Mr. UMST<sup>C</sup>, a Support Teacher in the Peripatetic Service for unaccompanied minors tells horrific stories of travels on trucks lasting a year and where “… if you fall off, they’re not going to stop”. Bourgonje (2010) shows that the legal conditions, the no-way-home, the post-war traumas and the aforementioned migration experiences, make asylum and refugee seeking children, the most vulnerable group. The representative from GetUpStandUp (NGO<sup>3</sup>), adds that as a result of such experiences, many refugees face significant physical and psychological problems. However, she adds that their journey is driven by “a deep desire to succeed” and “make themselves a better life which is not possible in their country”.

<sup>9</sup>Original quote in Maltese: Xi drabi nasal nghid bla identità. Tant naħseb imxew minn pajjiż għall-ieħor li qishom qatt ma hassew li huma jappartjenu għal xi pajjiż partikolari. Hija sitwazzjoni diffiċli għal ħafna minn dawn it-tfal ... qishom mhuma ta’ mkien, la ta’ pajjiżhom għax telqu u lanqas t’ħawn għax jghaddi kemm jghaddi ż-żmien qishom jibqgħu dejjem barranin. Qishom they belong to nowhere. (Ms. Maltese<sup>B3</sup>)
4.3.2 Challenges and Experiences related to transition - New School

For the 22 immigrant students participating in this study, the school experience in Malta was another challenge they had to cope with. The participants mentioned the daily routine at school, the subject content, the learning levels and also their relationship with their native peers. Even the school gate can prove disconcerting. Kjell\textsuperscript{B} relates how in Sweden the grounds were “open and everyone can come in and everyone can go out” but in Malta he “…got a bit scared” when the gates were locked. Kjell\textsuperscript{B} also explained that initially he felt extremely isolated because he “wasn’t having friends … and some boys don’t like to speak with foreigners”.

For Abrihet\textsuperscript{C}, the difference lay in the fact that “When teacher she’s coming, they sit and talk talk; no like this in Ethiopia”. Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} added that when the four immigrant girls were asked to comment about their school experience, they said that they would introduce corporal punishment in Malta so that the students would not even utter a word in class.

Some of the male participants pointed out some positive differences experienced locally when compared to the schools in their home country.

… in Bulgaria school is different … there we have chalk and blackboard and not with boards and markers… In Malta Physics, Science … are different because I go to the laboratory in Malta but in Bulgaria it’s in the same class … in Malta it’s different and I learn more.

(Timotei\textsuperscript{B})

In Ukraina … we have ground but it’s near old school and it is not with the turf like here. They are with the rocks, old cars, like this things … The teachers there was more like shouting and hitting, here the teachers are nice; the subjects, here the subjects are more easier …

(Yakiv\textsuperscript{B})
4.3.3 Challenges and Experiences related to peers

The findings in this study also indicated that for some of the participants, interacting with Maltese peers was quite a challenge. As depicted in Appendix 8 this was mainly because some of the Maltese peers looked down on the immigrant students, made fun of their accent or bullied them particularly when like Yonas, they had a different skin colour. According to Ms. English, picking on vulnerable students such as immigrants, makes some boys “feel that wow, that confidence”. In contrast, several participants commented on their positive experiences with peers. Such positive happenings bore mutual symbiosis from which both the immigrant and the Maltese students benefitted. In situations where each others’ unique diversity was appreciated and where they complemented each other, both the Maltese and immigrant students’ educational and social experiences were enriched. Among such experiences were those instances where the Maltese peers acted as the immigrants’ buddies:

It was difficult but my friend, Maltese, was always in the same class with me and she’d always see that I’ll be sat there not understanding so she’ll come up to me and she’ll explain it to me and help me with it ...

(Elizabeth)

As the local subject expert for MatSEC explains, “it’s a godsend that immigrant students mix with Maltese students” because “it is immensely beneficial for our students culturally, intellectually and also for their cognitive process” (The local subject expert for MatSEC).

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10Original quote in Maltese: għall-grazzja t’Alla, għax din għall-grazzja t’Alla, illi studenti barranin jithalltu ma’ studenti Maltin.

11Original quote in Maltese: kulturalment, intellettwalment u anki fil-proċess kognittiv tal-istudenti tagħna nemmen illi huwa ta’ fejda, huwa ta’ importanza enormi.
4.3.4 Challenges and Experiences related to language

In congruence with literature (Abedi, 2004; Bourgonje, 2010; Garrett & Holcomb, 2005; Green, 2010; Mohanty, 2009; Safia Mirza, Meetoo, & Litster, 2011; Sammut, 2004; Sood and Mistry, 2011; Valentino, 2011; Von Grünigen, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Perren, & Alsaker, 2012; Wallen & Kelly-Holmes, 2006), for all the participants in this study, language was a main challenge. They all stated that being in a school surrounded by a language totally different from your mother tongue, can be quite exhausting. Alena commented that this new language situation which she ran into, frustrated her so much that, she often asked “...why Maltese, why English why not Russian?”.

...when I came I wasn’t fluent in English and I didn’t know Maltese at all ... and some terms like ‘biro’ and ‘PE kit’ were new to me and they were used a lot and it’s like I had to follow the language that I don’t fluently speak and that I don’t understand completely which was English and Maltese, Maltese I didn’t understand at all...

(leva)

4.3.4.1 English as an initial temporary survival kit for immigrant students in Malta

For the participants, English was an important tool particularly in the beginning, because it was their only bridge towards learning other subjects and for integration. As high ranking official in the Education Directorates, pointed out, a language in common “is the most crucial tool for communication; it is the most frustrating thing, both for the students and the school, when a student in class is not able to communicate in either English or Maltese ... One is at a loss how to communicate ....” (High ranking official in the Education Directorates).12

The importance of English as an initial survival kit was mentioned by most of the teachers. Mr. Maltese explained that those immigrant students who are not

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12Original quote in Maltese: (il-lingwa hija l-ghodda jiġifieri dik hija) l-aktar ħaġa kruċjali biex jikkomunikaw ghax l-aktar ħaġa frustranti kemm għat-tfal kif ukoll għall-iskejjel meta jiġi tifel fil-klassi ma jafx jghid kelma la bil-Malti u la bl-Ingliż, ma tafx kif se tikkomunika.
able to communicate in English, are definitely at an impasse. Ms. English added that:

It frustrates them and me too, seeing that I cannot communicate. I ask him ‘take out your copy book’, the simplest and most basic thing, but the poor student does not understand even if I repeat it ten times. I mime and whatever, then slowly perhaps he gets the message. But obviously it’s frustrating for them.¹³

As Gerwin commented, without a common language it “feels like you’re lost and you don’t have a map. Finding your way out, seems impossible really”.

Unfortunately, most of the participants came to Malta without being able to understand or communicate in English. Some students like Yakiv only knew “hello, cat, dog” whilst others like Timotei claimed that “I know only yes or no”. Likewise, Radko who had been in Malta for a few months said that, “When I come Malta, English small, very small”. Elisa says this evoked feelings of loneliness, as without a common language, the world around her started to drain of its colours, meanings and significance, what Hoffman (1989) refers to as, “the loss of a living connection” (p. 107).

… when I came here, I didn’t know English and Maltese. I didn’t know nothing, so I didn’t know what they were telling me. I tried to understand what they were telling me but I didn’t know because when I came here in Malta I knew only Italian ... I feel alone.

(Elisa)

High ranking official in the Education Directorates, pointed out that in the secondary level, this language barrier poses greater challenges. As Mohanty (2008) states, this will impinge on the students’ learning of school content and concepts which would be slow from the beginning and consequently lead to a cumulative learning problem. The findings in this study seem to show that the

¹³Original quote in Maltese: It frustrates them and it frustrates me wkoll li jiena dan ma nistax nikkomunika mieghu bl-ebda mod, qed nghidlu take out your copybook l-aktar oggett semplici u bajiku u dan miskin take out your copybook, nista’ nghidhielu ghaxar darbiet. I mime and whatever imbaghad forsi b’xi mod naslu imma obviously it’s frustrating for them.
participants needed English to be able to bridge the gap between the content of the previously learnt subjects and the new, as seen in the following excerpt:

If you don’t know English you will don’t know Maltese because to study Maltese you need English because my Ms. of Maltese she wrote in Maltese but she told us in English what it means and what we have to do so if you don’t know English you don’t know what you have to do in none of the subjects you will not know and you will need help…

(MihaiB)

Furthermore, in accordance with Dooley (2009), data from this study seems to imply that asylum seekers and refugees were at a greater disadvantage than their immigrant counterparts mainly due to little or severely interrupted formal schooling. This was evident both in the case of the four unaccompanied minors at SchoolC as well as in the case of the refugee at SchoolB. After assessing the performance of the four girls in the exam papers set for State Secondary Schools (Vassallo, 2011), Mr. UMSTC, found out that the girls' English level was extremely poor. Despite their chronological ages (ranging from 15-17), academically they were still at primary level. MerhawitC herself confirms this, that “only one word I know in beginning”. Similarly for YonasB, the six years of schooling in Malta seem to have been practically useless since, “I don’t know how to read. I don’t know how to write”.14

YonasB commented that this language barrier entrapped him in a situation where he could neither read any books nor even use a computer.

I have many books.... I can’t read... I can’t go on the computer if I can’t read! Mummy wanted to buy me a computer but I refused because I can’t read. What good is it to me if I can’t read?

(YonasB)15

14Original quote in Maltese: Ma nafx naqra. Ma nafx nikteb.

15Original quote in Maltese: Ghandi ħafna kotba .. ma nafx naqra .. ma nistax nara minn fuq il-kompjuter jekk ma nafx naqra! Il-mummy kienet ħa tixtrili kompjuter imma ma ridtx ghax ma nafx naqra. Kif se nużah jekk ma nafx naqra?
The importance of English as a key tool for newcomer immigrant students in Malta, was highlighted even further by the four asylum seekers and the refugee: for Yonas, echoing his mother’s plea, “If you learn English you will feel more content and in the future you will have an office”; for the girls, English was perceived as their only “realisation of a better life”. In fact, Merhawit explains that “we need only English, English is all we need”.

Whilst they stressed that “we need more, more, more, more English” because “we want to grow our English as we can’t communicate with another people” (Merhawit), Freweini also wished for English CDs as according to her, “CDs help us more because every day we can study more even after teacher go”. Despite being provided with a two-hour lesson a week by volunteer teachers at the Residential Home where these minors were living, Merhawit still stressed that, “one word is all we need: English learning, because we can’t explain to all so if you want us to talk, we need English. You can’t know about us if we have no English, no one can”. A striking fact was that when Merhawit was speaking about the English language, she did not wait for the cultural mediator to translate but she spontaneously spoke in English. It was very evident even from her body language, that learning English was something she desperately needed.

Really, sometimes I feel disappoint you know, just I cry and pray “God, make me no give up”. I want to live by hope. Everything I can do, I do. I am alone. I have only God. I live by hope. I want to learn to be educate. I want English learning. It’s my one wish, my one hope, my one prayer. (Merhawit)

The girls at School felt helpless because, despite their yearning to learn English, unlike most of the other immigrant participants, they were unable to have additional help. In fact most of the immigrants in School (Ieva, Alena,

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16Original quote in Maltese: Jekk titghallem l-Ingliżi (Ingliż) aktar tkun kuntent u tajjeb u meta tikber tkun ikollok office.
Elisa and Helena) and in School\textsuperscript{B} (Timotei, Gerwin, Yakiv, Kjell, Mihai, Radko and Zoran), prior to or during their current schooling, had received private tuition in English.

Surprisingly, even those immigrant students that had mastered English, or for whom English was their native language, felt that there was something important missing in order to be able to cope both socially and academically at school - the Maltese language.

4.3.4.2 The Maltese Language Barrier

Despite being able to communicate in English, most of the participants affirmed that as time passed by they still felt different and lonely because they were still unable to communicate in Maltese. In fact, both Alena\textsuperscript{A} and Gerwin\textsuperscript{B} felt that the Maltese language barrier highlighted their foreignness as it was a distinctive indicator of their not being Maltese.

Ieva\textsuperscript{A} explained how being unable to communicate in Maltese was like a continuous barrier around her. It blocked her from understanding, expressing herself and also from joining in conversation. It was of some consolation that even when sitting in class or in between lessons, “they all speak in Maltese and if you understand, even if you’re not part of their conversation but you understand, you don’t feel so left out”.

Similarly, Elisa\textsuperscript{A} explains that without Maltese she felt as if “I was like out the world, like in space, far”. For some of the immigrant students, this lack of fitting in was so hard to handle that like Mbilia\textsuperscript{C} and Aziza\textsuperscript{C}, they preferred to stay at home rather than go to school. Kjell\textsuperscript{B} still went to school, but he continually longed for the bell to ring,

… I remember the first weeks, the first three months it was really hard. I feel and wait and wait when the bell rings? When the bell rings so I can
go home. The first three months because you are new, they do not know especially if you do not know Maltese they will stay away from you.

Such strong feelings of frustration are echoed by Alena\textsuperscript{A} who explains that the more she needs to know Maltese, the more she fails to master it. Despite having been in Malta for 8 years, she was still unable to speak or understand Maltese. Moreover, being in Form 3, she felt pressured that the O'level exam was approaching and she still did not feel competent enough to sit for this exam especially when she compared her level to that of her native peers.

\textit{Difficult because I don't know Maltese and it just doesn't come to me just like that. Maltese people know it from birth. For them it's a lot easier. It would be a lot easier for me to just speak Russian because that just comes to you naturally, this I have to force myself to learn it and learn it by heart and everything and I do not speak Maltese so it's even harder for me.}

\hspace{1cm} (Alena\textsuperscript{A})

\textit{... at the same time I feel a bit angry; you say to yourself \textit{only I wish if I could only speak that language so that I can understand what they're saying}. It pushes you to a point where you say I want to learn the language.}

\hspace{1cm} (Mbilia\textsuperscript{C})

Thus, when one looks into this situation, as Ms. English\textsuperscript{A8} (85-90) adds, with the Maltese language barrier, the immigrant students “are not facing a challenge but are at a disadvantage”.

Interestingly, the same negative feelings were expressed even by those participants whose first language was English. Ishbel\textsuperscript{A} says “it’s like I don’t feel part of whatever it is that is going on in class” while Enya\textsuperscript{A} experienced homesickness:

\textit{... before I used to get really homesick and the language was a big thing. It used to make me homesick because I couldn’t speak the language so I used to get worried and stuff in case people were saying things that I didn’t know. So it just used to make me think I want to go home you}
know; I know their language over there so I can speak that and that will be fine...

(Enya^A)

Elizabeth^A and Kate^A whose native language is English, also tell how without Maltese, “I don’t feel like I’m part of Malta” (Elizabeth^A) and that it feels as if “I’m a stranger” (Kate^A). Looking back Zoran^B explains that in the beginning, “the language made me feel foreign”. In addition, findings from this study seem to show that the Maltese language barrier has also affected the immigrant students’ participation in the mainstream class.

4.3.4.3 Participation in class

The reluctance to participate and interact in the mainstream class was an experience and a challenge mentioned by most of the participants in this study. Many of the immigrant students were passive and refrained from asking questions, since they did not want to “disturb all the class” (Elisa^A) and because “she (the teacher) is not going to spend a whole lesson on me” (Alena^A). Gerwin^B also explained that it is a common thing for immigrants to “just sit quietly” since none of them “want to make that much of trouble for the teacher or extra work”. Moreover, Gerwin^B adds that “we’ve seen how the class reacts and prefer to just stay quiet”.

Most of the participants explained that they rarely ask questions in class as they do not want their peers to think, “..that I don’t belong in that class if I can’t understand it, like I’m of a lower level” (Kate^A). Similarly, for Mihai^B having to continually remind the teachers to translate, “if they don’t remember that they say to me in English” is a rather daunting task such that, “when I ask, my head is bumping”. He was also very concerned that his peers might think, “that I’m stupid or that I don’t know how to study, because I ask them always, always...”. Mihai^B stressed that, “I ask because I want to understand”.

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Some of the teachers were aware of this particular situation among the immigrant students. Ms. Maths\textsuperscript{B10} said that most of them are afraid to ask questions, “but even more they are afraid of being made fun of by the class if they use one word for another. So they hold back…”\textsuperscript{17}

Yonas\textsuperscript{B} recalled with sadness those situations in class when he was asked to read in class. The anxiety and anger could be easily detected through his verbal and non verbal cues, such that when asked if he read in class, he explained that, “I’m afraid, my heart begins to move a lot … because the other students start to laugh ha ha”\textsuperscript{18} and shout “he cannot read”.\textsuperscript{19} He explained that every time this happened, “I get very angry and I feel like throwing a chair at them…”\textsuperscript{20} however “… I keep quiet because Mummy tells me, ‘If you fight I’ll give you a punishment…’ and so I don’t fight”.\textsuperscript{21}

These strongly expressed feelings stemming mostly from the immigrant students’ entrapment “in helpless silence by their inability to communicate in the dominant language” (Igoa, 1995, p. 38) or fear of being ridiculed by their native-Maltese-speaking peers, were coherent with the findings obtained from the 96 lessons observed, the observation schedules, extensive fieldnotes and the reflective journal (Appendix 11). It is also worth mentioning another emerging finding from this study: the immigrant students’ motivation to learn and their eagerness to make it. This pushed them to overcome some of the abovementioned drawbacks. Ms. English\textsuperscript{A8}, commented that the immigrant students try harder because they realize they need to do so: take Elisa\textsuperscript{A} who

\textsuperscript{17}Original quote in Maltese: Jibżgħu jistaqsu però aktar jibżgħu mill-kummenti tal-ohrajn fil-klassi li forsi jgħidu xi kelma b’oħra u jwaqqgħuhom għaċ-ċajt l-ohrajn, għalhekk jibqgħu lura.

\textsuperscript{18}Original quote in Maltese: Noqgħod nibża’, qalbi toqgħod tiċċaqlaq ħafna … minħabba t-tfal għax jooqgħdu jidħku ha ha.

\textsuperscript{19}Original quote in Maltese: ma jafx jaqra.

\textsuperscript{20}Original quote in Maltese: Ἠfaṇa nIRRabja u nkun irrID inwaddbilhom siġġu ...

\textsuperscript{21}Original quote in Maltese: ... imma noqghod kwiet għax il-‘mummy tghidli ‘Jekk tiġgieled intik punishment ...’ u jien xejn ma niġġieled.
“sits in the front to make sure she does not miss anything” or Mihai who “like to finish first. I like to do it faster and I like to do more exercises than the others. The others are very slow for me.” He added that as soon as the teacher gives them a task “teacher say start and vimvimvim (he made the sound of a car) and finish”.

Ms. English explained that the immigrant boys “in my class are eager to learn, that’s why they come to school”. Headteacher even said that the immigrant girls at his school, were so motivated, “that some of our Maltese girls especially the Maltese girls that I know at School, should look up to them to see what motivation is really like”. This motivation and yearning for learning is evident in the following words by Merhawit:

I want more learning education, education is very important because if you wherever you go wherever you are you have to be educated you know, everything influenced of learning. If you don’t know like ignorant; you can’t do anything really; so the more important is to educate the person. Sometimes I give up because I didn’t get enough school; sometimes myself I encourage by myself because when I go out I can communicate a bit, a bit, not more what I want but a bit you know; so sometimes I don’t know even to explain something, I feel something, sad in here because of I don’t have school. Please try to bring English you know, somebody and I will say grateful. I will say very grateful.

One may argue that, as key players in education, those teaching immigrant students need to understand how their uprooting experience from all that is familiar particularly the language, to all that is unfamiliar, affects the ongoing process of teaching and learning and consequently their participation in class. Often, as the findings in this study seem to suggest, the immigrant students’ passiveness in class or seeming indifference is not an indication of their unwillingness to cooperate or to learn, but as Igoa (1995) and also Ms. English explain (for further discussion kindly see Appendix 8), these children are grappling with the hurdles and challenges of learning a new language and a

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22Original quote in Maltese: li għandi jien iridu jitgħallmu, jiġu għall-iskola biex jitgħallmu.
new culture. Hence, they are persons in process, not persons with problems (Igoa, 1995).

4.3.4.4 The English Language Barrier for Maltese students, another challenge for immigrant students

Another challenge referred to by both by the immigrant students and the teachers was that the Maltese students too had a language barrier - English. The language that was a bridge for the immigrants was a barrier for the Maltese and the language that was a bridge for the Maltese, was a barrier for the immigrants.

As most of the participants pointed out, some of the Maltese students seemed to have difficulties with understanding English. This in turn, represented another challenge for the immigrant students who were unable to speak Maltese.

They understand Maltese better than English so sometimes there’s a problem between…. Because like they know Maltese more than English so it’s more comfortable for them to be learning everything in Maltese than English.

(Alena^A)

Assistant Head^A stated that the immigrant students, particularly in the beginning, find it hard. This is mainly due to this language-related discord that arises because some Maltese students tend to shy away as they find it hard to speak in English and most of the immigrant students do not understand a word of Maltese. In fact Yakiv^B claimed that:

... Even in school there are the students who don't like English, English words. They are not my friends. I am not their friends. Some of them don't like to speak English and some of them even don't know English.

Several teachers in Schools^A&B, like Ms. Maltese^A1 strongly agreed that, "A Maltese child will automatically speak to his peers in his mother tongue, more
so since we don’t have many students who speak English in this school”. Mr. Maltese explains, “if Maltese is a language they are being exposed to, not only from quarter past eight in the morning to almost quarter past two in the afternoon, but I would add more” then, Maltese is surely a barrier for all those immigrants who have problems understanding it.

Many of the teachers explained that Maltese is the medium that guarantees understanding, participation and a good teacher-student relationship. This poses a bigger challenge to the immigrant students for whom Maltese is an additional language. For the Maths teachers, switching from one language to the other is a coping strategy to this language-mediated experience.

Ms. Maths explained that, “since we are in Malta, my priority is towards the Maltese (students), so I give the lesson in Maltese, then I translate a little bit for the benefit of the immigrants”. Ms. Maths also noted that if she had to teach Mathematics in English, for the boys it would appear as if she is not teaching them any Mathematics particularly because,

They get confused because they would be daydreaming, they would not be following what I am saying. They get very distracted. They don’t consider listening to English as revision. I am doing Maths not English, and for them Maths is Maths and English is English. Once I switch to English, it’s as if I am not teaching them Maths any more.

Original quote in Maltese: Malti awtomatikament ha jitkellem bil-Malti ma’ shabu particularly since ma tantx ghandna studenti li jikellmu bl-Ingliż f’din l-iskola.

Original quote in Maltese: Il-Malti huwa xi ħaġa li dawn it-tfal qed jghixuha mit-tmienja u kwart ta’ filghodu ma nghidlekx sas-saghtejn u kwart, nghidlek oltre.

Original quote in Maltese: Ahna qegħdin f’Malta, allura jiena l-priorità tieghi hija lejn il-Maltin allura l-lezzjoni naghmilha bil-Malti mbaghad naqleb f’tit ghall-barranin.

The juggling continues since according to the Mathematics teachers in Schools A&B, the Maltese students are not doing well in Mathematics because of the English language barrier. This compels teachers to juggle the English of the textbooks to the Maltese explanation for the students.

I teach the weaker classes, and they can’t read the exam paper because it is in English. The questions I give them are always in Maltese, I do the Maths lesson in Maltese. I even give them the notes in Maltese. I also change certain words literally into Maltese. Even a problem about angles has to be translated into Maltese. That way we make headway. They can’t follow in English, what can I do?

(Mr. Maths)27

4.3.4.5 Maltese as the Permanent Armour

An interesting finding that emerged from this research was that even when the immigrant students had mastered English, they still felt that there was something missing. Without Maltese, they were unable to get a complete education. Moreover, establishing meaningful friendships with their Maltese peers seemed rather difficult. Findings seem to point to the fact that the immigrant students soon realised that there was still an important irregularly shaped interlocking piece missing from their jigsaw puzzle language situation - the Maltese language.

4.3.4.6 Enabling a complete education in Malta

The findings of this study seem to illustrate that unless the immigrant students learn Maltese, they would not be profiting wholly from their educational experience in Malta. This was corroborated by the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the three participating schools. Due to the Maltese language barrier the immigrant students were being given a reduced tailor-made sort of

curriculum or partial education. They concluded that if immigrant students wanted their education in Malta to be complete, they must learn Maltese.

Headteachers\textsuperscript{A,B&C} added that if immigrant students were to be exempted from learning Maltese, this would have further repercussions since they would not be able to benefit from those lessons where Maltese is the language of instruction. Furthermore, during these lessons, Headteacher\textsuperscript{A} explained that “they have to stay in the classroom and naturally they will be giving trouble if they don’t have any structured syllabus of something going on at that time”. Headteacher\textsuperscript{A} concluded that “it’s not enough to read a book or to do something else because this constitutes quite a high percent of the school curriculum”. All the SMT were concerned about the present situation where, as the local subject expert for Maltese pointed out, “there exists a lacuna in the policy in this respect and some teachers leave it in the hands of the (immigrant) students who choose not to participate”.\textsuperscript{28}

Headteacher\textsuperscript{B} complained that,

... they (the immigrant students) seem to assume they have a right to a tailor-made curriculum and default position is ‘I don’t need Maltese, and since I don’t know the language, I will not do that subject, that subject, or that subject’.\textsuperscript{29}

Consequently, College Principal\textsuperscript{A&B} commented that without some sort of structure, immigrant students will “become frustrated when they cannot follow; they don’t pay attention and disrupt the class.”\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28}Original quote in Maltese: Peress li hemm vakum ta’ policy f’dan l-aspett, xi ghalliema j’halluha f’idejn l-istudent u l-istudent jagħżel li forsi ma jippartećipax.

\textsuperscript{29} Original quote in Maltese: ... huma jassumu li ghandhom dritt illi jkollhom kurrikulu ppersonalizzat al la carte u default position hija ‘jiena m’għandix bżonn il-Malti’ u allura la ma nafx il-Malti dak is-suġġett, dak is-suġġett u dak is-suġġett ma nagħmlux’.

\textsuperscript{30} Original quote in Maltese: meta dawn ma jibdewx jifhmu, ikunu ffrustrati, ma jooqghdux attenti u jibdew jiddisturbaw.
... because ultimately ... if we don’t cater for these children, that would mean trouble because issues of behaviour would arise and the immigrant children, won’t be integrating into the school and they would group among themselves and yes problems would arise into the school, issues of emotional behaviour disturbance would definitely arise, they would rebel and cause problems.

(Headteacher\(^A\))

As a matter of fact, Assistant Head\(^B\) explained that when the Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL) class was implemented, the aforementioned challenges were successfully addressed. Not only were the immigrant boys occupied during Maltese lessons, but because they were learning Maltese, they were also able to participate more in other lessons. Also, the rivalry and divide between the immigrant and the Maltese boys decreased radically.

One could sense resentment, at times downright racism. To be honest we’ve had trouble, at times, the children even became violent... then we decided to start teaching them Maltese to help them integrate more easily; we realised it was basically this lack of communication. One student says something in Maltese and the other doesn’t understand ... our students would use bad, hurtful language even. The immigrant student would somehow realise the comments are far from complimentary, and retaliate in his own language. This strategy has solved the problem, and in time we realised that it was having a beneficial effect.

(Assistant Head\(^B\)\(^3\))

4.3.4.7 Breaking The Barriers and Building Bridges

For those participants who, after some time, were able to communicate in Maltese, a strong sense of freedom was kindled. In being able to understand Maltese, they could start building their little bridges of friendship.

\(^3\)Original quote in Maltese: Kont tinnitus ċerta għira, barra minn hekk kien ikun hemm min ghandu qisu r-razziżmu biex inkun eżatt u kellna ċafna inkwiet, ġieli nqala’ xi ġlied pereżempju ... imbagħad iddecidejna li nippruvaw nghallmuhom il-Malti biex jinjentegrass iżjed ġhax ċafna minnhom kienet kwistjoni ta’ lingwa, li ma kinux jiftiehmubejniethom. Wieħed jghidilu xi ħaġa bil-Malti l-ieħor ma jifhmux ... kienu anki jużaw kliem ħażin, joffenduhom u ma jkunux jafu u l-ieħor forsi jifhem li qed joffendih u joffendih bil-lingwa tieghu. Imma sibna li din hija soluzzjoni tajba ċafna u meta ġhadda ftit żmien irrealizzajna li kienet qed taħdem, li kienet qed taffettwa.
For the participants who persevered and spoke Maltese regardless of the local students' taunts about their accents and their bad Maltese, gains were immediate as they attracted their peers' positive attention. Since the immigrant students started to use a little bit of Maltese, Kjell\textsuperscript{B} observed that he had more friends as “a lot of people they get more happy if you speak their own language”. He also pointed out that if immigrants speak in Maltese, they get 100% attention from their peers, but if they speak in English they get only half as much.

If I say ‘lest’ (\textit{ready}), if I say ‘stenna’ (\textit{wait}) they will OH! and I think, did I do something bad as they all look at me … With the teacher, teachers are teachers I can speak with them in English. But with the boys sometimes if I say a word in Maltese they look at me fast and surprised.\footnote{32\textit{Original quote in Maltese: It-tfal, il-Maltin jikkumentaw jghidu 'istra, kemm jaf!'}.}

(Mihai\textsuperscript{B})

Mihai\textsuperscript{B} also observed that, when the other immigrants spoke in Maltese they were more accepted by the Maltese, thus, “if I speak a little bit Maltese good, they are my friends too and they accept us like a friend”.

Many of the immigrant students explained how knowing Maltese gave them more independence and enabled them to get out of the invisible bubble and helplessness they were imprisoned in. This “learning-Maltese-getting-closer” notion was also confirmed by most of the teachers. Not only did they note a sense of pride among the immigrant students who were learning Maltese, but they also sensed a feeling of appreciation by their Maltese peers. In fact Ms. Maths\textsuperscript{B12} pointed out that, “the Maltese students exclaim and say ‘Wow, how much language he has acquired!’”.\footnote{32\textit{Original quote in Maltese: jużaw il-Malti anke apposta biex jogħġbu lill-Maltin u l-Maltin jieħdu pjačir jaraw lil xi hadd barrani qed jitkellem bil-Malti.}} Mr. Maths\textsuperscript{B11} also noticed that sometimes the immigrant boys “speak Maltese in order to please their Maltese peers who are naturally happy to see an immigrant speaking their language”.\footnote{33\textit{Original quote in Maltese: jużaw il-Malti anke apposta biex jogħġbu lill-Maltin u l-Maltin jieħdu pjačir jaraw lil xi hadd barrani qed jitkellem bil-Malti.}}
In fact our students are fascinated as well as happy to hear them speak Maltese even though they might laugh, as when they hear the Chinese boy speaking. But at the same time they marvel at how much they have learnt. In fact, they remark on how much they would have picked up in a year. To them it's something amusing. This breaks the barrier and our students no longer think of the others as snobs, who refuse to speak our language...

(Ms. English)\(^{34}\)

The immigrants often used short words and fillers in Maltese during the lessons such as: “ħi” (dear/my friend /mate), “ta” (you know), “mela” (so/well/of course), “mexxi” (move on/get on) and “ħaffef” (hurry up). Ms. English\(^{34}\) tells how Yakiv\(^{B}\) enjoys using little words like “‘ħi’, ‘ta’, ‘mela’ ... because he wants to show that he can be part and parcel with the class and to look cool also”. Similarly Mr. Maths\(^{B}\) mentions Timotei\(^{B}\) who during his lessons often “repeats certain expressions I use, such as ‘mexxi’, ‘ħaffef’”.\(^{35}\)

Being able to communicate in Maltese, has also served Zoran\(^{B}\) to get closer to his Maltese peers and be accepted “like I am Maltese”. Zoran\(^{B}\) adds that it also helped “me to have Maltese girlfriend”.

**4.3.4.8 A Source of Confidence and Empowerment**

Zoran\(^{B}\), who has been in Malta for 7 years and who uses only Maltese in every day life said that his peers who were unable to communicate and understand Maltese often told him, “we are like airbags just flying around”. This differs radically from his situation. Even Zoran’s teachers commented on how “...the

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\(^{34}\)Original quote in Maltese: Fil-fatt il-Maltin jaffaxxinaw ruhhom u jieħdu gost u jidhku meta jisimgħuhom pereżempju jitkellmu bil-Malti, jew iċ-Ċiniż jitkellem bil-Malti jgħidu ‘ara dawn kemm tghallmu’. Fil-fatt jgħiduli ‘Ms. taf kemm tghallmu dawn f’sena!’ jiġifieri it’s something amusing for them. Qisu jinqata’ dak id-distakk ġħax huma dawk il-Maltin psychologically jgħidu, ‘Qed tara mhumiex dak it-tip snobs li ma jridux jitghallmu l-lingwa tagħna’, Ģiva ġieli qaluli.

\(^{35}\)Original quote in Maltese: juża l-aktar ċertu affarrijiet li nghid jien bhal ‘mexxi’, ‘ħaffef’.
fact that he has mastered Maltese gives him a certain feeling of superiority” (Ms. Maltese[^3]).[^36]

Kate[^A] found it even amusing to sort of “tune in when you knew that before you couldn’t”. She is also proud of her progress as she said,

I didn’t get a head start. My mum doesn’t speak Maltese. I don’t do Maltese ever at home and I was in a school where they barely ever did proper Maltese and then I went into a primary for I don’t know 6 months and I learnt Maltese that other people could understand and now I’m in a secondary and I’m sort of coping. And I feel happy that I could do it ...

Zoran[^B] proudly asserted that “everyone can learn English but not everyone can learn Maltese. I feel proud that I can speak it”.

Assistant Head[^B] confirmed this and noted that “... any foreigner who is able to carry out a conversation in Maltese shows a certain amount of self-confidence and superiority”.[^37] Also, just as Wallen and Kelly-Holmes (2006) pointed out in a case study of practice in teaching English as an Additional Language to students in Western Ireland, knowledge of the Irish language is important for understanding many cultural and other aspects of everyday life in Ireland. The representative from the JRS (NGO[^1]) adds that in learning Maltese, immigrant children “would understand more in depth the values and norms of the society and would interact more with the locals if they speak Maltese”.

4.3.4.9 The Language of Power and Access

Enya[^A] explained how she could stand up for herself and not rely any more on her friends to translate all that was being said. Enya[^A] like Zoran[^B] also pointed

[^36]: Original quote in Maltese: Il-fatt li hu jaf il-Malti jti ċertu arja, ċertu poter hekk ġhossu ftit superjuri.

[^37]: Original quote in Maltese: ... min ikapa anke konverżazzjoni jkompliha bil-Malti, barrani qed jikellem ma’ shabu, ninnota li juri ċerta kunfidenza u superjorità.
out that since she had learnt Maltese, “I hardly ever speak English in school so now I use Maltese”.

I feel better because if you want to stand up for yourself you can, if you want to speak and just have a normal conversation with somebody it’s easier, all is a bit easier than if you don’t know the language so it’s good to learn Maltese …. sort of you’re more independent ... for me, Maltese makes it easier just for everything.

(Enya\(A\))

Yes I feel of course much better now that I can speak Maltese. Everywhere I speak I speak in Maltese, English I’m going to forget it.

(Zoran\(B\))

According to Ms. English\(A^6\), Maltese is needed “for survival”, whereas for Ms. Maltese\(A^1\) knowing Maltese could prevent people taking advantage of the immigrant students’ language barrier. In fact Enya\(A\) recounted that very often her mother is overcharged at the market since she is unable to understand and speak Maltese but since Enya\(A\) has learnt Maltese, she is trying to teach it to her parents too. In the meantime she acts as their “secret translator” to ensure fairness.

…it feels better and it’s good to let people know that they can’t do what they want because there’s someone that knows everything in their language right beside them. So mum and dad feel a bit better when they’ve got someone that can translate secretly for them next to them.

(Enya\(A\))

This idea that speaking in Maltese gives one power and more access was also pointed out by Kate\(A\). She noted that very often in class, if she shouts in Maltese, she’s instantly taken notice of. Her Mathematics teacher - Mr. Maths\(A^{14}\) - pointed out how Kate\(A\) very often uses Maltese in class such as, “stenna sir” (Wait Sir), or asks “mill-irqiq jew mill-Ħxoxn sir il-hw” (the thin or thick copybook for homework?)\(^{38}\).

\(^{38}\)Original quote in Maltese: ‘stenna sir’ jew pereżempju ‘mill-irqiq jew mill-Ħxoxn sir il-hw’.
Sometimes if I don’t understand something, if I stay asking in English … often they ignore me but if I suddenly say like … “stenna” (wait) or something in Maltese even if I say it from the back of the class he thinks “oh someone needs my help”. It’s like he’s tuned into Maltese but English not so much.

(Kate)

4.3.4.10 Fostering a sense of belonging

Some of the students explained that Maltese is the language “I need to know, because I live in Malta and Maltese is their national language and just… my future..” (Alena). According to the students, “we’re basically living here; we need it”, without Maltese, “you’ll just be stuck all the time” (Kate). 

I don’t know how you can live in Malta without knowing any Maltese! It’s quite hard if you do ‘cause without Maltese here, you’re always going to feel out of place, you’re not going to feel part of society.

(Leva)

All 22 participants felt that it was only once they were able to communicate in Maltese, that they had a sense of belonging and felt “normal”.

If you’re living here you want to feel part of the country, you don’t want to feel like an outsider for the rest of your life. Like that’s been 4 years since I’ve been here and now because I know the language, I finally feel part … now it feels normal because I can think in Maltese, speak Maltese. If anybody asks me anything in Maltese I can just answer back. So that’s why it’s normal now but back then it wasn’t normal.

(Enya)

This view mirrors that of the local subject expert for Lifelong Learning, who points out that while immigrant students who are attending Maltese State Schools can survive by knowing English, especially since Malta is a bilingual country, yet “to get to the heart of the people, to get to be accepted as part of a community, to be part of the larger circle, larger than the immediate school, learning Maltese is a must”. Failing to do so, the local subject expert for Lifelong Learning continued, will condemn immigrant students to be always looked upon
as the foreigners, the others. In fact Kate explained that “you can’t really mix with Maltese people if you don’t know their language”. She added that,

... if I don’t learn it and I grow up here I’m never going to get anything that good here. I’m going to be the foreigner, the odd one out if I don’t learn it. And also ... when I speak to people in Maltese they like me immediately if they think that I’m trying. Then they are nice to me.

4.3.4.11 A Social Tool

Most of the teachers agreed that Maltese is a socially needed tool. As Ms. English said, that although some Maltese students speak to the immigrant students in English, they speak to each other mainly in Maltese. Ms. English argued that, “I don’t know which is the more important for the boys at school, the academic-English or the social-Maltese aspect?”. According to all the teachers, immigrant students need both, because as Mr. UMST added, Maltese “helps them to be more independent”.

According to Ms. English, the socio-linguistic situation in Malta implies that to be able to live a completely healthy social life, in Malta, the immigrant students have to learn Maltese. Assistant Head added that learning Maltese and English “is not a luxury but a necessity”. This necessity was also highlighted by high ranking official in the Education Directorates - who insisted that according to Malta Legal Notice 259 of 2002 (13.09.2002),

... children of migrant workers ... are to be given state education and will be given support in the learning of the official languages alongside the learning of their language and culture (Malta, Legal Notice 259 of 2002 (13.09.2002). Now this referred to migrants but now applies also to immigrants. The law is crystal clear...you are bound to teach them the official languages, that is Maltese and English.

Thus, the findings seem to confirm the explanation regarding the linguistic situation in Malta, of the Educational Officer for Maltese. He pointed out that Maltese and English morph into one another. Culture blurs, binds and conjoins
the two. It is more than compoundness. It is more than hybridisation. It is, as if the two are “partnering” into each other.

We speak Maltese. We write in English. We translate from English into Maltese, as if we do not understand English. We teach in Maltese and use English power point presentations. At the same time, running through our 'Malteseness' and our 'Englishness', there is always a new paradigm coming about. Linguistic boundaries are all the time receding and at the same time 'colluding' and 'imploding' into one another. At the same time for 'surface' purposes we remain the proverbial 'ambivalents' - Maltese for oneness/uniqueness/identity; English for otherness/outwardness/the undecipherable. The two sides of the same oneness, however, are all the time merging, converging, diverging, building up our mind-maps, universe of meanings, the whole plethora of language-games, which make us the island-mainland-society we are.

(Educational Officer for Maltese) 

4.3.4.12 A sign of respect towards the Maltese people and the Immigrants’ new host country

Another overtly emphasized point by all the participants was that, “it’s like it’s a duty for me to know the Maltese language ... because I live here” (Ieva). Kate added that some teachers think that “this is their island” so “if someone foreign comes to live here, they should at least bother to learn Maltese”. She thinks “it’s a sign of respect if you learn their language”. Kate’s perception was confirmed by Ms. English and Mr. Maths:

... if you’re going to come into my country and stay here, I expect you to have the courtesy to learn my language, after all you’re staying here, you’re working here so why shouldn’t you integrate with the rest of us?

(Ms. English)

We are doing more than our fair share to accommodate them; now that they are here, it is their duty to learn our language.

(Mr. Maths) 

39 Original quote in Maltese: We are doing over and above fuqha din il-biċċa tax-xogħol u la qegħdin hawn, dmirhom li jittgħallmu l-lingwa tagħna.
Appendix 9 gives a complete overview of the participants’ perceptions of the Maltese language. It was interesting to note both the analogies they used to describe the Maltese language and also the paintings by Kate\textsuperscript{A} and Radko\textsuperscript{B}. For some, Maltese was perceived as a barrier (a bubble, a house they are unable to enter, a hard nut, a box with a big red lock, chains, a massive rock), for others as different (babies speaking, foreign music, old necklace, history, people/twisted, a whiteboard, rocket science, the sea) and for the rest, particularly the boys, as tough (legs, a backflip, an athlete/warrior, a wrestler, a body builder, a knight and a phoenix). They all indicated a strong motivation for learning Maltese.

All this clearly underlines the fact that for the immigrant students, learning Maltese seems vital. Irrespective of whether they will stay in Malta for 6 months, 10 years or forever, it can help them to be a happier person. By breaking the language barrier which imprisons them, they can reveal the wealth of their inner worlds and share this with their Maltese fellow students.

4.4 Theme 2: The Language Provisions provided by the local State Secondary Schools

Apart from the immigrant students’ challenges and experiences in their everyday educational experience, this study looked into the language provisions provided to these children by the local State Secondary Schools. Factually, throughout this second theme and its sections, each of the participant schools’ language provision for immigrant students shall be described. As these descriptions unfold, issues of whether such provisions are enabling equity of access to the local State Secondary Schools shall arise. It is hoped that these descriptions will not only turn attention to a lot that is already being done by the stakeholders, but also to hear the participants’ testimonies in this regard so as to improve equity of access.
4.4.1 The Wave, The Influx - The New Reality

According to Educational Officer for Maltese\(^1\), globalisation has spared no one. Malta is no longer “an island”. It has become part of the mainland and migration has followed. This mobility from one state-country-town to another is undoubtedly adding more colours to the Maltese classrooms which according to the 27 interviewed teachers “is increasing drastically” (Mr. Maltese\(^{B1}\))\(^{40}\) such that “each year we are getting more and more foreign students” (Ms. English\(^{A8}\)). Mr. Maltese\(^{B2}\) explained how, “in the last five years, there has literally been an explosion of immigrants”\(^{41}\)

The local subject expert for Lifelong learning, pointed out that because there is ghettoisation, this influx of homo-heterogeneous local-immigrant student population is not evenly distributed amongst the Maltese schools. In fact the College Principal\(^{A&B}\) asserted that in this college,\(^{42}\) the number of Maltese students is decreasing whilst the number of immigrants is increasing. In a similar vein, high ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^1\) also noted that, whilst in some schools “you might find just one ... nationally we have about 900 immigrants”.\(^{43}\) High ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^1\) added that this influx was also noted in Gozo.

In Gozo, at Gharb, a Norwegian had just joined the class; what I mean is that this is the reality. The number of Chinese students in schools in Gozo: there, too, we are faced with the same reality. As I’ve pointed out, where the number is small, the schools have a freer hand and they have

\(^{40}\)Original quote in Maltese: qed jiżdied drastikament.

\(^{41}\)Original quote in Maltese: dawn l-ahħar hames snin kien hawn letteralment splużjoni ta’ barranin.

\(^{42}\)In 2007, the phasing in of Colleges which started in October 2005 was completed. Ten Colleges in Malta were set up. Each college is composed of a number of feeder Primary Schools where children attend Primary Schools in their town or village and then proceed to Secondary Schools within that particular network (European Commission, 2010).

\(^{43}\)Original quote in Maltese: forsi jkollok wahdiet ... ghandna nazzjonalment mad-disa’ mitt barrani.
the necessary resources to cater for the needs of the children. The challenge lies where the numbers are bigger.

(High ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^1\))\(^{44}\)

Despite this growing presence of immigrant students in the rather homogenous Maltese classrooms, according to the Educational Officer for Maltese\(^2\), “we are ignoring them”\(^{45}\)

… I think it is still a number which many do not consider that important, not enough to influence ... They are increasing bit by bit, but I think we are still ignoring them; when you have one, two, three in a class of twenty-five, it is still a force we are not discussing. I think it is time we took stock of the situation to see what steps need to be taken.

(Educational Officer for Maltese\(^2\))\(^{46}\)

4.4.2 The General Provisions provided for immigrant students by Schools\(^{A,B&C}\)

The following section will focus on the general provisions at each of the three participating schools. Further details of these general measures employed by the three schools to support the immigrant students are reported in Appendix 10. The following section distils from that analysis the areas for improvement.

4.4.2.1 The Reactive and Makeshift Coping Approach

Calleja et al., (2010) found that the support and provision provided locally is often localised in the school and is thanks to the initiatives of a Headteacher or

\(^{44}\)Original quote in Maltese: Tmur Għawdex, l-Għarb kien għadu kif beda tifel Norveġiż, jiġifieri dawn huma r-realtajiet. In-numru perezempju ta’ tfal Ċiniżi li qegħdin fl-iskejjel tagħna Għawdex; jiġifieri anke hemmhekk għandna r-realtà qed tolgotna. Kif għedt fejn in-numru huwa żgħir, l-iskejjel huma flessibbli biżżejjed u għandhom riżorsi biżżejjed biex jaraw il-bżonnijiet tat-tfal. Fejn ghandek in-numri huma akbar, hemmhekk qieghda l-islida.

\(^{45}\)Original quote in Maltese: Qed ninjorawhom.

\(^{46}\)Original quote in Maltese: ... naħseb li xorta għadu numru fejn ħafna nies iqisuh bħala mhux daqstant importanti, mhux daqshhekk li jista’ jinfluwenza .... Qegħdin hemm jiżdiedu ftit fit imma naħseb li għadna qed ninjorawhom jiġifieri dan li jkollok wieħed, tnejn, tlieta fi klassi ta’ ħamsa u għoxrin xorta mhumiex forza li qed nikkunsidrawha. Naħseb wasal iż-żmien li nibdew naraw daqseguejn is-sitwazzjoni x’inihi u x’tehtieġ.
group of teachers. Since there is no official policy to date regarding the language provisions for immigrant students, if and when there is a change in either the school administration or the teachers implementing such “voluntary basis” provisions, everything falls apart and the immigrant students are left to fend for themselves. One may argue that long term planning and discussions to devise an official policy regarding the language provision for immigrant students in Malta’s State Schools would be an asset. High ranking official in the Education Directorates added that in some situations, it is only when something is official and binding that it begins to be taken care of.

Unless it is properly structured, certain teachers will ignore it. If it is official it becomes a policy, so when we have audits that must be included in the School Development Plan (SDP), the school Curriculum. If it becomes a policy and as such is binding, then during audits this will start to be checked. If there are immigrant students, what are you providing for these children? How are they being integrated? How are they following lessons? Is the school providing education for all? And the issue is the language. It all boils down to the language issue.

(High ranking official in the Education Directorates)

Both the Malta Education Act and Malta Refugee Act state that all children residing in Malta including refugees, asylum seekers, returned migrants and children living in Malta who are citizens of other European Union member states have the same rights as Maltese citizens to receive free state education during the years of compulsory education (Frendo, 2005). Having said that, the participants’ declarations seem to imply that sometimes due to a number of reasons such as the language barrier, the absence of an official language policy for immigrants and the seemingly reactive and crisis-management provisions, they were not provided with the right opportunities to advance and progress like their native peers.

47Original quote in Maltese: Jekk ma tkunx strutturata, ċerta nies ma jagħmluhix. Jekk mhijex uffiċjali ghax jekk tkun uffiċjali, hija policy and it’s binding mela meta jsiru l-audits, dik trid tidhol parti mill-SDP (School Development Plan), the school Curriculum ghax jekk tidhol policy u tiġi binding dil-policy mela meta jkollna l-audit tibda tiġi ċċekkjata. Jekk hemm tfal barranin what are you providing for these children? How are they being integrated? How are they following lessons? Is the school providing education for all? And the issue is the language. It all boils down to the language issue.
4.4.2.2 The Initial Assessment of newcomer immigrant students

It appears that in Schools\textsuperscript{A&B}, there was no systematic way in which immigrant students were introduced into the local education system. The situation with regard to the four unaccompanied asylum seekers in School\textsuperscript{C} (as shall be discussed in the following section for the specialised provision at School\textsuperscript{C}) was different. However, excluding them, the other 18 students, including Mbilia\textsuperscript{C}, had not been initially assessed. Consequently, most of them were sent to an Area Secondary School (a low achievers’ school) and placed in the lowest streams. These findings are congruent with those found in Calleja et al., (2010), Frendo (2005), Sammut (2004) and Zahra and Zahra (1996).

4.4.2.3 Class Allocation

In the following paragraphs Enya\textsuperscript{A} and Zoran\textsuperscript{B} narrated their initial sporadic provisions. Enya\textsuperscript{A} mentioned how initially, she was sent to a lower class because she did not know any Maltese, “... they just judged me because I don’t know how to speak Maltese so I just got in the lower class”.

I didn’t really understand it but then I started like seeing the people in class 6a, like their standards. I knew that I could just be the same as them if I could speak Maltese so I was in a lower class with people that you know were still a lot slower and I didn’t think it was fair that I had to be with all of them because I knew that I could do better than that but I still had to stay in that class.

(Enya\textsuperscript{A})

This also happened to Zoran\textsuperscript{B} who says “actually I’m 17 and still in school (Form 4)”. After having taken a seemingly inadequate test (in English and Mathematics), he was initially sent to a year six primary class and due to the language barrier he kept changing from one year group to another. He noted that “in the beginning it was a lot of going from there to here. No one knew in which class to put me”.

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English I was so and so but Maths, the exercises they gave me, we did them in our country in year 2 and it was easy a lot. Then they put me in year 6, we asked them for year 5 because it was too hard the English ... and then they put me year 2 and for one year.. then in one year they wanted to put me in year 5, then in one year I skipped all the classes of year 3 and year 4 with how I improved English and then I started normally.

(Zoran[B])

4.4.2.4 School Allocation

Being a newcomer immigrant implies automatically going to an Area Secondary School.

Immigrant students are definitely not enrolled in Junior Lyceums. They first go to an Area Secondary School. They can’t go to a Junior Lyceum straight away, no.”

(College Principal[A&B])

College Principal[A&B] explained that if the students then wish to go to a Junior Lyceum School, then by the end of Form 1, they will either sit for the Junior Lyceum exam (they will be exempted from the Maltese, Religion and Social Studies, since these are in Maltese) or else they can take the Form 1 annual exams of the Junior Lyceum. They have to pass in seven subjects, two of which have to be Maltese, English, Mathematics or Science.

College Principal[A&B] explained that in Malta it is useless for immigrant students to be only good at Mathematics. They also need to be proficient in the language of instruction.

It is useless telling me he is capable of doing Maths in his language .... When he comes to Malta he has to read the problems in English and, no matter how clever he may be in Maths, he will find it difficult, because sometimes he wouldn’t even have mastered the basic level. So I send

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48Original quote in Maltese: Junior Lyceum barranin żgur ma jidhlu. L-ewwel is-Secondary. Ma jistgħux imorru l-Junior Lyceum mill-ewwel le.
him to the Head, who tests him to find out his level, and then he decides that this student can cope with a Form 2 level, for example.

(College Principal\textsuperscript{A&B})\textsuperscript{49}

It was observed, and some of the teachers in School\textsuperscript{B} agreed, that many of these immigrant boys were fast and bright when compared to their native peers. According to Ms. Maths\textsuperscript{B12} “we are slowing them down” because these immigrant boys are not being provided with the right challenges at School\textsuperscript{B}.

I think that most of them end up at this school because of the language problem. They are misplaced here ... academically they are far better than the other students. I often come across students whose level shows it is not that of our students, that is, not of this school, because it is much higher.

(Mr. Maths\textsuperscript{B11})\textsuperscript{50}

There are many who are quite bright .... you just can’t cope with the others, many seem to spend time waiting for the others. I had a class of 20, among them two immigrants - the Maltese students were unable to understand a problem, the immigrants working fast on their own, and me struggling to make the rest understand.

(Ms. Maths\textsuperscript{B12})\textsuperscript{51}

This was confirmed by Kjell\textsuperscript{B} who described his frustration in class because very often he has to wait for the rest and listen to the same explanation over and over again:

… we learn very fast ... Now in the lesson I don’t like when they say the same things a lot of time … we often just sit in the lesson like this (with

\textsuperscript{49}Original quote in Maltese: Billi tghidli dan jaghmel ħafna Maths fil-lingwa taghhom ... imma meta jiġi Malta dan se jkollu jaqra bl-Ingliż biex islovli l-problems tal-Maths, bravu kemm hu bravu fil-Maths jekk mhux se jkun jaf l-Ingliż ha jbati għax ġieli lanqas biss ikollu l-livell bażiku. Allura nibagħtu ghand il-Head, il-Head jagħmillu qisu test biex jinduna x’lillvelli għandu u jghid dan tajeb ghall-Form 2 pereżempju.

\textsuperscript{50}Original quote in Maltese: Naħseb li ħafna minnhom jiġu f’din l-iskola minħabba l-lingwa u ma jkunx posthom hawnhekk jiġifieri akkademiamenti huma aħjar mit-tfal l-oħra. Jien kemm-il darba nara minn dawn l-istudenti li jkunu jidhru li l-livell mhux tat-tfal taghna, jiġifieri ta’ din l-iskola għax ikunu aħjar.

\textsuperscript{51}Original quote in Maltese: Ghax ikun hemm ħafna li jkunu bravi ... ma tkunx tista’ tlaħhaq mal-oħrajn qishom ħafna mill-hin joqogħdu jistennew lill-oħrajn. Issa fil-klassi kelli 20, tnejn barranin, il-Maltin ma jifh mux..problema dawk jiġru u l-oħrajn jaqilghuli fwiedi.
hands across like waiting whilst looking at the watch to see when they about to start something new) because like it takes like 2-3 weeks before we change the chapter.

4.4.2.5 Initially sent to The Core Competences Support (CCS) Programme Class

Some students, in particular the newcomer boys and the four unaccompanied minors at School\textsuperscript{C}, were not only sent to a low academic school but also to the Core Competence Support (CCS) class, formerly known as the Basic Skills Class.

A controversial issue during this study was the CCS class provision for the immigrant students. While some teachers and members of the SMT commended such a provision particularly during the initial stages, others deemed it inadequate. Headteachers\textsuperscript{A&B} argued that the language needs of an immigrant child differ from those of a Maltese child in a CCS class. They emphasised that for the immigrants, “it must be a programme which is tailored for them” (Headteacher\textsuperscript{A}). Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B5} agreed and explained that when newcomer immigrants come to Malta, they need a class which specifically caters for the acquisition of a new language.

You can’t use the same methods with these immigrants, because they need a specific syllabus, a form of structure for their needs and a different method of teaching. It is one thing teaching Maltese to a native who is weak, quite another teaching it to a foreigner who is intelligent but is in a Basic Skills (CCS) class; he feels frustrated, becomes disruptive because the pace in that class is too slow; I mean it has to be something completely different....these immigrants have different needs from those in a Basic Skills (CCS) class.

\textsuperscript{B5}Original quote in Maltese: Ma tistax tuża l-istess għall-barranin għaliex l-istudenti barranin jeħtieġu sillabu għalihom, jeħtieġu struttura għalihom u tagħlim differenti hafna. Inti mod qed tghallem Malti, il-lingwa tiegħu għax batut u mod qed tghallem bniedem barrani, intelijenti li ħafna drabi titgħu fil-klassi tal-\textit{Basic Skills} (tal-Programm tal-Kompetenzi Ewlenin) u jkun iffrustrat, jagħmel hafna storbju għax l-andament tal-lezzjoni mhux se toghġbu għax hemmhekk ir-ritmu jkun slow wisq jiġifieri trid tkun xi ħaġa kompletament differenti. ... il-barranin xi ħaġa differenti mill-\textit{Basic Skills}.

\textsuperscript{52}
Two of the teachers who have taught a CCS class, commented that the Maltese students in the CCS class are completely different from the immigrant students who need to learn Maltese as an Additional Language.

The students in the Basic Skills (CCS) class are not as competent as the immigrant students. The latter... grasp things much more easily than Maltese students ... Definitely they shouldn’t be lumped together ... it was really difficult trying to cope with teaching Maltese to the immigrants and at the same time ensuring that the Maltese students worked at their own pace. It was clear that the two groups were completely different.

(Ms. Maltese)\textsuperscript{B3}\textsuperscript{53}

Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B4} added that rather than befitting, the students “lost a lot and they have practically wasted a year”.\textsuperscript{54} According to Headteacher\textsuperscript{B}, “it is degrading for one to end up in a Basic Skills class (CCS) just because he’s an immigrant”.\textsuperscript{55} He added that, “how come if for example I wanted to learn Spanish, you put me with people who are illiterate? I need to learn a new language not to be taught how to read and write”.\textsuperscript{56} Headteacher\textsuperscript{B} concluded that the CCS class is not the right solution for the newcomer immigrants because learning a new language requires a specific methodology, pedagogy and training which differs than from that for literacy. This is because as Education Officer for Maltese\textsuperscript{2} and high ranking official in the Education Directorates\textsuperscript{3} pointed out, the aim of a CCS class is to specifically help those students who have literacy problems and not to teach them a new language. Ms. English\textsuperscript{A8} explains that unlike the immigrant students who have the ability to

\textsuperscript{53}Original quote in Maltese: L-istudenti tal-\textit{Basic Skills} (tal-Programm tal-Kompetenzi Ewlenin) mhumiex kompetenti daqskeimm huma l-istudenti barranin. L-istudenti barranin ... jixorbu l-affarijiet ħafn’aktar mill-Maltin ... M’għandhomx jintefgħu flimkien assolutament ... Vera kienet difficli meta kelli nipprova nlaħhaq mal-barranin biex jitghalilmu l-Malti u mal-Maltin biex jimxu bil-pass tagħhom. Dehret ċara li kienu żewg gruppi totalment [enfasi] differenti.

\textsuperscript{54}Original quote in Maltese: nahseb li lifu ħafna u Prattikament hlew sena.

\textsuperscript{55}Original quote in Maltese: Jiena nahseb li hija degradanti, nahseb jiena li tqeghedni fil-\textit{Basic Skills} għax barrani.

\textsuperscript{56}Original quote in Maltese: Dan kif jiena mmur biex nitgħallem l-Ispanjol pereżempju u tqeghedni fi klassi ma’ min hu illitterat? Jien nitgħallem lingwa ġdida għandi bżonn mhux kif nikteb u naqra.
learn, the Maltese students “who come to us after Primary School and cannot even write their name and address”, surely have some deficiency. She stressed that consequently the immigrant students cannot be placed in the same class as these children because “their needs are of a totally different nature”.

You can teach the alphabet to the foreign students, they’ll learn it quickly but you can’t teach the same thing to the Maltese students who have taken such a long time and still can’t grasp the idea of the alphabet. No it’s not the same ... they have their own needs and the Maltese have their own needs and you can’t leave them together.

(Ms. English\textsuperscript{A6})

However, despite as indicated in a letter circular (Appendix 17), which stated that “Learners with foreign language needs but who do not have basic skills needs... are not to be included in the Basic Skills set class in Form 1” (QAD 07/2012), Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B3} added that often, as was the case with last year’s CCS class in Maltese, whenever there are undiagnosed students, students with special needs or immigrants with foreign language needs, they are all sent to the CCS class. Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B3} argued that it is as if the CCS class is a class that contains “a hotchpotch of students who end up there for no apparent reason ... they are sent to the Basic Skills class (CCS) either because they are different or unable to cope”.\textsuperscript{57}

As Harry and Klingner (2006) explain, very often culturally and linguistically diverse students have been inappropriately identified as having disabilities. The local subject expert for Lifelong Learning, who together with other researchers carried out a local research on education and ethnic minorities in Malta, commented that:

What we found in this study is that the only provisions that we have in our schools are basically ... the provisions which are given normally to special needs students ... these children that have problems with

\textsuperscript{57}Original quote in Maltese: Il-klassi tat-nilqit.. fejn ikun hemm tfal li huma differenti jew li ma jistghux jaqbdy art x’ghandhom, ‘mela iftaghhom Basic Skills’.
communication etc because of their foreign origin, because they are foreigners they are being provided with the same provision that we give to children with special education and very often these children are perceived as special education children which is problematic because these could be very intelligent … so it’s problematic when you perceive them like that.

Furthermore, high ranking official in the Education Directorates highlighted the importance of using the right terminology because very often the words “inclusion - integration” and “disabled children - immigrant children” are used interchangeably. High ranking official in the Education Directorates asserted that such “improper” terminology is the reason why the immigrant students' needs were never adequately addressed because they have always been associated with children with special needs.

That is why I disagreed with the word ‘inclusion’, because that meant they were being classified with disabled children....it has taken us long to begin as we are still putting them with children with disabilities, so when they refer to inclusion that is incorrect. They do have special needs but of a different type. They are still being classified with disabled children with special needs who are slow learners. This is not the case with these immigrants.

(High ranking official in the Education Directorates)

4.4.3 The Idiosyncratic Function of Malta’s official languages

Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) argue that adolescent second language learners are still developing their proficiency in academic English. Hence, while they are learning English, they are simultaneously studying core content areas through English. “Thus, English language learners must perform double the work of native English speakers in the country’s middle and high schools. At the same

58Original quote in Maltese: Ghalhekk ma qbiltx li tintuża l-kelma inclusion, ghax kienu għadhom qed jidħlu fil-kategorija tad-disabled children ... domna ma bdejna ghax għadna qed indahħluhom mat-tfal li għandhom disabilities u għalhekk meta jghidu inclusion hażin. They do have special needs, different special needs imma. Għadhom qed jiddaħlu f’dik il-kategorija ta’ special needs ta’ tfal bid-diżabilità li huma slow learners which is not the case.
time, they are being held to the same accountability standards as their native English-speaking peers" (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Similarly, the participants of this study, not only needed to be competent in English, a language which for some was a foreign language, but they also needed to learn and know Maltese because as shown earlier, Maltese is the primary language of the school. Fortunately, the newcomer immigrants in Secondary School, are enrolled at an age beyond which the initial components of language are usually provided to students and most teachers are absorbed in teaching complex subject content. In fact, all the participants of this study felt that they were not benefitting fully from the lessons precisely because of the language barrier.

Ieva explains that, “in every subject the teacher speaks to the students in Maltese”. Gerwin also adds that “most of the time ... I have to ask extra for the English explanation”, a situation which simply blocks “you from learning and thinking”. According to Gerwin, in such a situation,

It feels like you have to work twice as hard sometimes because you need to learn everything that all the other students are doing and then you need to learn twice as much as their language because you wouldn’t understand anything. It’s quite difficult.

So as to fully understand this phenomenon, the following section will outline the function of both English and Maltese in the local Secondary School as narrated by the participants and seen through observed lessons.

4.4.3.1 The function of English

Timotei explains that “I need the four, both the hands (English) and the legs (Maltese)” in order to be able to climb up the ladder of a succesful educational life in a local State School. Education Officer for Maltese agrees and stresses that ideally any person residing in Malta should know Maltese as well as English since both languages complement each other. “They mutually determine one
another. Hence their dual importance is paramount” (Education Officer for Maltese).

The findings from this study indicate that both Maltese and English are needed in the immigrant students’ lives since each of these two languages has its particular function. What the following section intends to portray is the function of English.

4.4.3.2 English - the language for girls

For some of the participants, particularly the boys, English is the language of the girls, the softies and the weak. Such findings were also found by Portelli (2006). In his research in an all boys’ Church Comprehensive Secondary School in Malta, English was regarded as “a soft option not suited to them as males, since it does not really deal with the ‘heavy’ stuff” (Portelli, 2006, p. 413).

Enya narrated that when she was back in primary, only the girls used to speak in English, the boys spoke only in Maltese because they perceived English as “girls’ stuff”. Ms. English commented that in School, if someone spoke only English, it was the first step to unpopularity. She added that during the English class, if the immigrants used Maltese “well, he’s normal, we don’t focus on him. Let’s look for someone else to pick on”.

Ms. English pointed out that for the boys in School, speaking English was a sign of weakness. For them “it’s like tal-‘pepe’ (snobbish) or they feel like sort of silly and ‘girlie’ sometimes using English”. Using Maltese implied power, authority, control, being cool and looking tough. Once again these findings concur closely with those of Portelli (2006). Ms. English also pointed out that, for the boys, “the fact that you’re teaching English and that you’re not as proficient in Maltese is perceived as a sign of weakness”.

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Moreover, as Portelli (2006) illustrated speaking, English at school does not allow boys to acquire any male power over their peers because:

there is a strong local masculinity linked to a political ideology with an emphasis on national pride which regards the speaking of English as involving, to some degree, the taking on of British identity and British culture, greatly associated with British colonizers.

(p. 428)

This might explain why it was only the boys who as depicted in Appendix 9, compared Maltese to something tough, difficult and hard such as doing a back flip, “a very fast running man” (MihaiB), a professional wrestler like David Michael Battisa Jr, a bodybuilder, a knight or as depicted in Radko’s painting, a big phoneix which is “fire yellow and red” (RadkoB) he is eagerly trying to control. Particularly among the boys in SchoolB, there was a strong motivation to learn Maltese as it dissolved their foreignness and provided them with the armour of the insider.

4.4.3.3 The Switch “that means they are speaking to us”

Many participants commented that, “whenever the teachers speak in English, that means they are speaking to us…” (ElisaA).

Some teachers give me the attention they speak in English just because of me.

(AlenaA)

The sir of Maths he speak in Maltese and later he translate for me and my friend Bulgarian.

(RadkoB)

Some immigrant students appreciated this language switch. However, when it was not done discreetly, ElisaA commented that it made her feel very uncomfortable.
I don’t like they say *Now I have to explain in English for Elisa* because … the girls think that the teacher have to talk in English just for me, because everyone is looking at me, *thanks Elisa now we have to listen in English* like this, like I said to the teacher to talk in English, or you talk in Maltese and then you just switch to English, don’t say *ok I have to talk in English because of Elisa*. Why you have to talk in English just for me? There are a lot of girl who don’t understand Maltese why just me?

(Elisa\(^{\text{A}}\))

This seems to indicate that whilst Maltese is the language teachers use to interact with the Maltese students, English is the language teachers use to interact with the immigrant students.

### 4.4.3.4 English - the language of academics

According to Camilleri Grima (2000) English “is understood by the Maltese population as a necessary window to the field of world knowledge” (p. 7). Bonnici (2010) adds that it is the main language for higher education, textbooks and other academic resources. This fact did not go unnoticed by the students who commented that “the books are written in English” (Enya\(^{\text{A}}\)) and if “the teachers are writing on the board, they write in English but if they speak, they use Maltese” (Yakiv\(^{\text{B}}\)).

This local Maltese-talk English-write situation was observed and confirmed during all the observations carried out during the Mathematics lessons (32 lessons: 14 in School\(^{\text{A}}\) and 18 in School\(^{\text{B}}\)). The teachers used English for technical or content-related words or when reading from the textbook or a past paper. Some of the teachers regarded this situation as a bonus for the immigrants because, “when you are discussing a diagram, all technical words are in English” (Mr. Maths\(^{\text{A9}}\)).\(^{59}\) thus Mr. Maths\(^{\text{A9}}\) concluded that, “even if leva did

\(^{59}\)Original quote in Maltese: jekk qed tiddeskrivi diagram inti allavolja qed titkellem bil-Malti, il-kliem tekniku kollu bl-Ingliż qed isir.
not understand a word of Maltese, she would still be able to follow the explanation”.  

4.4.3.5 The language that goes beyond Gudja Airport and Marsamxett Grand Harbour

As illustrated in Scirha (2001), a common perception which was expressed by some of the participants, is, that whilst Maltese is convergent, English is divergent (Figure 6 and 9 in Appendix 9). This is because English takes them beyond Malta’s airport or its Grand Harbour. For Timotei\(^B\) it is good “to know Maltese if you live in Malta, but not if you go to America”. Ms. English\(^B\) points out that “they only need Maltese in Malta; they stop needing it once they are at the airport”.

This notion of insularity was also expressed by the Education Officer for English who explained that some immigrants perceive Maltese as “the language of an island people”, the language of a small people, whilst “English is a lingua franca which will take them practically anywhere” and grant them a better life. This was perceived as such by the four girls at School\(^C\). For them English was regarded as the Education Officer for English explained, “a sort of gateway for the life of work and for more opportunities”.

... here we are not living ok; we have been here about two years but because we didn’t know English and we can’t get work and we can’t get nothing. Now because now ok because we improve a little bit but we need more and more English, English can make better life.  
(Freweini\(^C\))

In Appendix 9, the participants revealed several perceptions towards the English language. It was interesting to note, both from the analogies they used to describe the English language and also from the paintings by Kate\(^A\) and

\(^{60}\)Original quote in Maltese: anke li kieku leva ma tifhimx il-Malti, peress li t-terminoloġija kollha bl-Ingliż, hi xorta tkun qed tifhem.
Radko, that while for some, English was seen as the language of school (a pen, a book, a computer and a desk), for others as the language which promises a better life and is a link to the world (an elephant, money), by most it was perceived as something natural and refreshing (a glass of water, water, rain and air), a perception which contrasts largely with most of the participants’ perceptions regarding Maltese.

4.4.3.6 The function of Maltese

For many of the participants, Maltese goes beyond just being a subject on a timetable. It is the cornerstone in the immigrant students’ construction of their new life at school. This function was very well illustrated in Kate’s analogy when she said that for her, “Maltese is the backbone of the school”.

It’s not like you’re going to come here and say, “Well Maltese is only a subject. You learn Maltese in a class and then you go out and you speak another language!” It’s a way of communicating. You need it. ... if I say, “I don’t want to do Maltese”, then am living in Malta, I won’t be able to communicate with people. It’s more than a subject, more important. You need to learn it unless you want to be the only one who doesn’t know it.

(Kate)

4.4.3.7 State Schools and their language orientation

Some of the participants pointed out that “because it’s a Government School” unlike an Independent School, “it’s more Maltese here” (Ishbel). This also seems to be the perception of some of the teachers. Kate recalled how a teacher once told her, “if you don’t know any Maltese, why are you in a State School?”. 

Kate and Gerwin also referred to their previous school experience in an Independent Primary School, where the language of instruction was English. Kate explained that in such a school where the parents are rich, “it was English they were supposed to learn because it was like a royal language”. They all
used to “think that English is better...”. This perception seems congruent with Bonnici (2010) who points out that Independent Schools are “historically known for their English orientation” (p. 55).

### 4.4.3.8 The language mostly used at school on a daily basis

During the interviews held with the students, they were asked to roughly indicate the percentage of the usage of Maltese and English respectively in a normal school day. They were asked to consider both the formal situations - such as the lessons - and also the informal hours, such as breaks and in between lessons. These percentages were not meant to be exact but to roughly portray the students’ perceptions regarding the amount of Maltese and English used during a typical school day.

#### Table 7: Daily usage of Maltese and English at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Citations</th>
<th>Maltese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ieva&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>...about 95% would be Maltese because the other 5% are the few foreign students that speak in English among themselves.</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alena&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>75% Maltese and the rest English</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishbel&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>... for the whole day I would say about 70% or 80% Maltese.</td>
<td>70-80%</td>
<td>30-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enya&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Maltese, 80% even more 85% ...</td>
<td>80-85%</td>
<td>20-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>About 70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>70% because a lot of person prefer to talk in Maltese.</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>I think it will probably be 95%.</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoyan&lt;sup&gt;B&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Well, 45 % English and 55% Maltese.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerwin&lt;sup&gt;B&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>The main language in the school is Maltese. It’s around maybe 80%, 20% is English.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakiv&lt;sup&gt;B&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>99%, nearly 100 because 1% I hear English. There are Serbians, there are Italian, there are from Japan, China are the one percent. The 99 are Maltese and speak Maltese.</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kjell&lt;sup&gt;B&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>During the day 93% Maltese then 7 % ... even the breaks are like that because in the break they just speak Maltese the boys..</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbilia&lt;sup&gt;C&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>I would say 85-90% Maltese.</td>
<td>85-90%</td>
<td>15-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aziza&lt;sup&gt;C&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>English is 30 or 40% and the rest is all Maltese.</td>
<td>60-70%</td>
<td>30-40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is evident that Maltese is the language used mostly at school on a daily basis. This further accentuates the immigrant students’ challenge to overcome this barrier since as the students’ percentages portray, Maltese is the main medium of school.

4.4.3.9 The language used during assemblies

Many participants of this study revealed that “for assemblies they use Maltese mostly” (IevaA), but “we are in Malta so…” conceded one of the students (EnyaA). GerwinB narrated an instance when during one of the morning assemblies, they were being given several instructions regarding the oral exams. Since all was communicated in Maltese, he was unable to understand what was being said.

All the information that goes on in the Assembly like what’s going to come up, what we’re suppose to do and all that, is in Maltese. I’ve got no idea what’s going on and they could tell me off for doing something which I didn’t know we weren’t allowed to do. It’s like punishment for not knowing. It hasn’t happened but it might actually happen.

(GerwinB)

4.4.3.10 Maltese across The Curriculum

Analyses of data seem to reveal that the use of Maltese across the curriculum is hindering the immigrant students’ learning process and progress in various subjects. In fact AzizaC maintains that without Maltese she is unable to get “proper education”. She compared the subject content of various lessons with water and the Maltese language to a saucepan or a container. Without it, the water is simply wasted.

It’s bit like trying to catch water. I try to get the Maths or other subjects and what is being taught but all is like water, it goes away fast. Because of the language, I cannot grab them at all. Maltese is like a saucepan or container, only with it I can catch something and be able to see and understand it. If there is no container, there is no water. It is wasted. It goes away.

(AzizaC)
Some teachers confirmed Aziza’s analogy and said that many times, language is a glass wall blocking off everything. This seems to accentuate as also illustrated in a visual metaphor of the plight of immigrant students (Appendix 12, Figure 12) adapted from Malone (Kosonen et al., 2007), the inequity of the immigrant students’ access to education.

I believe that knowledge of the language of whatever the country is an essential tool for a student to cope. Imagine going to a country where you are unable to speak the language. Imagine being in a school in China or Japan to learn Maths! You can’t follow the explanation because you can’t understand what is being said, which is not the same as saying you are no good at Maths.

(Ms. English\textsuperscript{B9,61})

Elizabeth\textsuperscript{A} and Kate\textsuperscript{A} showed their frustration and disappointment in this regard. The former claimed that, “in Biology I don’t feel that I’m getting enough of the content because of the language” (Elizabeth\textsuperscript{A}) and the latter because during ICT, the teacher “speaks only in Maltese” (Kate\textsuperscript{A}).

... It makes me angry because I’m doing private lesson in English to pass the exam but the woman that she explain the lesson to me, she don’t understand ICT so when I go to the lesson of ICT I want that the teacher talks in English not in Maltese. I cannot do private lesson of all the subject.

(Elisa\textsuperscript{A})

Stoyan\textsuperscript{B}, Mihai\textsuperscript{B} and Abrihet\textsuperscript{C} explained that during the Italian lesson, the teacher often code-switched from Maltese to Italian. Consequently “I couldn’t understand when she was speaking in Maltese or when it was Italian” (Stoyan\textsuperscript{B}). Similarly Timotei\textsuperscript{B} adds that Maltese is “in front” as “it does not let me know Science”. Surprisingly as both the teachers of English and some of the participants explained, Maltese is also used during the English lessons. Alena\textsuperscript{A} explains that although during the English lesson you have to speak in

\textsuperscript{61}Original quote in Maltese: Jiena nemmen li lingwa f’kwalunkwe pajjiż hija ghodda essenzjali biex l-istudent ikampa. Int immaġina tmur f’pajjiż fejn il-lingwa ma tafhiex. Tmur iċ-Ċina jew il-Ġappun u jitgħuk goli-iskola biex titgallem il-\textit{Maths}! Inti mhux neċessarjament ghax il-\textit{Maths} ma tafux imma jekk inti ma tkunx qed tifhem l-ispjegazzjoni, ma tkunx qed tifhem x’qed jinghad.
English, “still the teacher sometimes switches back to Maltese”. This situation fuelled resentment and frustration particularly in ElisaĂ because, “if we’re doing an English lesson, why you should talk in Maltese?”.

An interesting detail noted during the observations carried out is that, textbooks and other audio-visual aids which are mainly in English, were often used as a tool to either engage students in thinking, to introduce a topic, to revise or highlight something which had already been explained in Maltese. Moreover, during some of the lessons observed, most teachers hardly ever wrote anything on the board. This definitely added an extra burden on the immigrant students whose only link to understanding the subject content, relied solely on their listening skills. In view of these findings, one may argue that the language barrier is creating inequity in learning among immigrants, because it is also affecting other subjects.

This language barrier was also noted during Mathematics lessons, where most of the content is conveyed mainly by the teacher through oral language (Veel, 1999). During the 32 Mathematics lessons observed, all the mathematical concepts were explained orally by the teachers and in Maltese. English was only used for numbers, reading, writing and technical words. This echoes Farrugia (2003) and Caruana (2007) and that as EnyaĂ noted “the writing is all in English but then the explanation is always in Maltese”.

Yeah because obviously when something is in English it’s in your native language you don’t need to worry about anything apart from Maths in Maths. But when the teacher is speaking Maltese you have to worry about understanding that, then actually understanding the sum or whatever it is ... I had to worry about translating what he was saying to my language then what kind of problem he was giving us.

(EnyaĂ)
4.4.3.11 The Hallmark of Detail, the main explanation and secured subject content

Data revealed that not only was Maltese used continuously in various subjects but it seemed to be the hallmark of the main explanation and the conduit of information between the teacher and the Maltese students. Ieva^A pointed out that teachers “just switch to Maltese because they know that the students are only going to understand ... everything well, if they speak in Maltese”.

Enya^A added that, “teachers speak Maltese as this is the number one language over here”. Thus, “You can’t go through the whole schooling without knowing any Maltese because you won’t do well. That’s just how it is” (Enya^A).

According to some participants, when teachers use Maltese in class, they secure subject content understanding and learning. This was confirmed by Assistant Head^B who commented that, “the teacher’s main concern is that the students grasp the concept, which is why they explain in Maltese”.62 Ms. Maths^A10 feels that to make sure she gets through to the students she uses Maltese; to her it is unfair to put the interest of one (immigrant) student before that of the 29 (Maltese) or so other students in the class. In fact she concludes that the harder the concept, the more she feels the need to use Maltese.

I explain in Maltese to make sure they grasp the more difficult concepts. With a really good class I can afford to deliver the lesson in English. But this is the exception not the rule.

(Ms. Maths^A10)63

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62 Original quote in Maltese: l-ghalliema biex jaċċertaw ruħhom li l-istudenti qed jifhmu, jużaw il-Malti.

Certain words that I cannot explain in English in another way, so I actually translate to Maltese. Sometimes even instructions something which is very important to make sure that they understood...
(Ms. English\textsuperscript{B\textsuperscript{8}})

Ms. Maths\textsuperscript{A\textsuperscript{10}} reiterated that “since explaining in Maltese helps them to understand better, that is what I do”,\textsuperscript{64} after all as Farrugia (2003) states, “if the use of Maltese is ‘permissible’ then the teacher has more linguistic resources at his or her fingertips to convey the meaning...” (p. 12). Camilleri Grima (2000) adds that this continual interaction between the written text in English and the oral explanation-discussion in Maltese, enables students to understand the written text in such a way that this bilingual reality in class becomes:

...a pedagogically efficient way of communicating, of solving the difficulty of making sense of a ‘foreign’ new and academic text in English, by liberally and uninhibitedly discussing it in one’s native language.
(Camilleri Grima: 2000, p. 11)

Hence, one may argue that if this linguistic hybridisation in Maltese classrooms is so strong and present as was also pointed out by Farrugia (2003), and if language proficiency affects the degree to which students feel connected to what goes on in classrooms (Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996) and determines their academic performance, is not this situation a source of inequity for the immigrant students?

4.4.3.12 Maltese as a subject

All the immigrant students of Schools\textsuperscript{A\&B} particularly the girls in School\textsuperscript{A} continually spoke about their worries regarding this “General”, “Proper” or “Regular” Maltese, its content and summative assessment. All wanted to do well. However, most of them were frustrated in their efforts. Some, particularly the girls, felt that they were unprepared for mainstream Maltese. Despite the

\textsuperscript{64}Original quote in Maltese: la bil-Malti se jifhmuni aħjar, immur għall-Malti ghax wara kollox l-importanti li jifhmu.
gap in proficiency in Maltese between the immigrant students and their native counterparts, they all had to go on the same journey towards the same end - the annual exam or the Maltese SEC level.

..they are like race..they are more forward like I didn’t have the chance to learn it the way they did as their own language so it’s different for me than for them.

(Alena^A)

But I don’t have time. I don’t have time. I’m fourteen and I’m in Form 3 so by Form 5 I need to know it and I don’t.

(Alena^A)

The teachers of Maltese insisted that the immigrant students were unable to cope with mainstream Maltese. They all suggested a different type of exam for the immigrant students that would take the form of either a use of language paper (Paper 1 only of Maltese MatSec) or a foreign language paper which though different from the Maltese Ordinary level, still leaves the immigrant students with something to show that they have attained proficiency in the Maltese language.

I don’t think it is fair on these students to have to follow the Maltese lesson, considering the syllabus to be covered. I feel there should be a special syllabus to cater for their needs, then their ‘O’ level certificate could indicate the level of competence in Maltese they would have achieved.

(Ms. Maltese^A1)\(^65\)

None of the teachers or the SMT of Schools\(^A&B\) thought that \(^66\) the current Maltese syllabus was suitable for the immigrant students. In fact, the MAL


\(^66\)The Maltese MatSEC syllabus was changed in 2013. It is important to note that at the end of compulsory education which is the end of the fifth year of secondary education, the students usually sit for the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examination. This examination is set
support programmes in Schools\textsuperscript{A&B} were designed specifically because it was deemed impossible for any immigrant to follow a mainstream class for Maltese without any kind of prior language support. As Headteacher\textsuperscript{A} stated, “the Maltese syllabus is tailored and caters for native speakers and definitely some help must be given before that programme can be tackled by foreigners”. Headteacher\textsuperscript{A} argued that such a provision “is already happening on a school level, so why not on a national level?”.

It was interesting to note that most of the participants were taking private lessons in Maltese as they could not cope otherwise. This surely puts into doubt the equity of the current language provisions at school for the immigrant students, particularly those who come from a low social background and thus are unable to afford private lessons.

On the same issue, Kate\textsuperscript{A} and Helena\textsuperscript{A} commented that this situation was rather unfair as it could affect one’s future, particularly since the Maltese Ordinary level is a pre-requisite for further education. By not addressing the immigrant students’ language needs Kate\textsuperscript{A} added that, “they’re denying them the opportunity of learning a new language” and that because of this “it will be like they are handicapped for the rest of their life”.

Enya\textsuperscript{A} and Kjell\textsuperscript{B} pointed out that being unable to have the same qualifications as their native peers, could also affect their job opportunities in Malta since, as Enya\textsuperscript{A} points out, “O’levels are obviously qualifications for the rest of your life and Maltese people can also get one more”. In fact, Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B3} recounted an instance where a newly-qualified immigrant teacher named Ilsa who had just completed a Teaching Course at the University of Malta was not allowed to teach, because she did not have an O’level in Maltese. Later, when interviewed, Ilsa confirmed this episode and claimed that, “they never mentioned that at the

\footnotesize{by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MatSEC) Board of the University of Malta, “and/or to a lesser degree the General Certificate of Education Examination, Ordinary Level, set by British examining boards” (European Commission, 2010, p. 5).}
end of the course you should get an O’level in Maltese language in order to be able to get the permanent warrant”.

When we finished the course, the other students were telling us, ‘you will not find work ... because you don’t have Maltese O’level language’. But this was not a prerequisite when we entered the course. Nobody told us anything about this otherwise we wouldn’t have started it.

(Ilsa)

Furthermore, Kjell argued that the immigrant and the Maltese students who sit for the “big exam in Form 5” are not on an equal footing because, “I started now in Form 1 learning Maltese, the other boys they started before”, yet when they apply for a job, they both have to present all their qualifications and for the immigrants, “not having the Maltese O’level is a disadvantage and that’s not fair for me”.

This unpreparedness for and foreseen failure in the Maltese O’level was also pointed out by Enya and Zoran, the two who were able to speak Maltese fluently. They strongly felt that they were still at a disadvantage compared to their Maltese peers. Cummins (2000) explains that whilst oral proficiency or conversational fluency (Wallen & Kelly-Holmes, 2006) can be developed within a few years, the level of language skills necessary to compete with native-born peers in the classroom or the academic language proficiency (Wallen & Kelly-Holmes, 2006), takes on of average five to seven years to achieve. As Enya points out, “maybe some are just not good enough for that type of exam but they could be good enough to do an easier one and pass it”. She added that at least “they would have some qualification. They say that they’ve got the Maltese O’level - but the foreigner’s one”. In this way, they would have some “proof that they did something because there are some immigrants who work hard yet they are still unable to do the current Maltese MatSEC” (Ms. Maltese).

67 Original quote in Maltese: turija li dawn ghamlu xi ta’ ħaġa għax ikun hemm min jirsisti u jaħdem imma ma jkunx ta’ livell biex jaqtelm l-eżami taċ-ĊES.
I wish there was different exam as it’s not fair because I’m here for 7 years like they can say he has to learn, but I think it’s impossible for me to do like they do Maltese … At least if we are not good to do the big paper of Maltese but another; at least we have something like we say ok we did something of Maltese, Maltese exists in them not like the Maltese of the others in school but they know a little bit. Even for work you show that Maltese you know but in easier way but we have something to show at least, some proof that for seven years I learn it.

(Zoran B)

The data presented in this section reported first hand information on the general situation faced by the immigrant students in the three participating schools. The following section delves into the specific language provisions provided in Schools\(^A,B,C\).

4.4.4 The Specific Language Provisions provided to immigrant students by Schools\(^A,B,C\)

In the following section the specific Support Language Programmes of each of the three schools will be described. The one in School\(^C\) will be described separately since it is different from those in Schools\(^A,B\). This is mainly because it is a transition programme which specifically familiarises the unaccompanied minors from the Home to a smooth transition to School\(^C\). Further details of the specific measures employed by the three schools to support the immigrant students are reported in Appendix 10.

4.4.4.1 Profiles of The MAL Support Language Programmes for immigrant students in Schools\(^A,B\)

It was found that in Schools\(^A,B\), immigrant students were specifically being provided with a language support programme for Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL). In School\(^C\) there was no such programme for immigrant students and therefore will be discussed separately. Word limit constraints did not allow the researcher to present the benefits and advantages of such provisions, which can be accessed in Appendix 10. Thus, the following section
will focus mainly on the areas for improvement. Table 8 provides a general profile of the MAL programmes in Schools\textsuperscript{A&B}.

\textbf{Table 8: The Profile of the MAL Programmes of Schools\textsuperscript{A&B}}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School\textsuperscript{A}</th>
<th>School\textsuperscript{B}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim:</strong></td>
<td>To prepare the students so that at the beginning of Form 4 they will join mainstream Maltese. However, if the immigrant students do well in the MAL annual examination paper, they are able to join mainstream Maltese even before Form 4.</td>
<td>To learn Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL) where the immigrant boys are taught “basic things useful in everyday life” (Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B2}).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of the MAL Programme</strong></td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form 1 Form 2 Form 3</td>
<td>Form 1 Form 2 Form 3 Form 4 Form 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekly lessons</strong></td>
<td>3 (40-45 minutes) lessons per week</td>
<td>4 (40-45 minutes) lessons per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher/s responsible for the MAL Programme</strong></td>
<td>One teacher of Maltese: Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A3}</td>
<td>All teachers of Maltese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summative Assessment</strong></td>
<td>2 MAL examination papers are prepared per Form by the MAL teacher (one for the half-yearly examinations and another for the annual examinations).</td>
<td>2 MAL examination papers are prepared per Form by the respective MAL teacher (one for the half-yearly examinations and one for the annual examinations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syllabus</strong></td>
<td>Decided by the MAL teacher</td>
<td>Decided by each MAL teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{4.4.4.2 Too much diversity}

One of the things that some students as well as Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A3} mentioned was that the MAL class is composed of so much diversity. leva\textsuperscript{A} mentioned the fact that this class was “a bit mixed up sometimes” as there were students of different age, nationalities and levels. Moreover, leva\textsuperscript{A} added that new students
joined the class all year round and whenever this happened the teacher had to slowly teach them “their first Maltese ... (while) we were just sitting there doing nothing cause we’ve already done these things”.

...those who have mastered Maltese, and so have no difficulty understanding, feel frustrated when you repeat in English; it’s as if he wants to say ‘haven’t I already understood?’ But what else can you do if there is still a girl who has not yet understood?

(Mr. Maltese\(^{A3}\))

**4.4.4.3 MAL lacking subject status in The National Curriculum**

As all the MAL teachers of Schools\(^{A&B}\) explained, teaching Maltese as an Additional Language was a totally different way of teaching and learning Maltese and none of them had been trained for either during their teaching course at university or at any inservice course. The result was a trial-by-error or a hit-and-miss approach. They all learnt “how” to do it as they went along. As Ms. Maltese\(^{B4}\) pointed out “my training was for Maltese to Maltese native speakers”\(^{69}\). All teachers of Maltese in both schools explained that as soon as they got to know that they would be teaching MAL, they were reluctant to engage in this new terrain.

… a completely new experience. When I first came here and started to teach these immigrants, my approach had to change, all was different. The thing is that you don’t go to class to teach Maltese per se, but rather than teaching the subject you teach them something for life; so that they can fend for themselves and communicate. I tried to teach them the vocabulary they would need in their daily life.

(Ms. Maltese\(^{B4}\))

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\(^{68}\)Original quote in Maltese: ...dik hija parti mill-frustrazzjoni ta’ min ikun tajjeb fil-Malti minnhom dawn it-tfal illi jkun diġà fehmit x’ghedt bil-Malti allura meta toqghod tirrepeti bl-Ingliż, speci jghidiek imma jien mhux diġà fhimt imma x’ha taghmel jekk ghandek tifla fil-klassi li ghadha ma fehmitx?

\(^{69}\)Original quote in Maltese: it-taħriġ dejjem kien Malti lill-Maltin.

\(^{70}\)Original quote in Maltese: ... xi ħaġa komplemant ġdida. Meta ġejt hawnhekk u bdejt nghallem lil dawn il-barranin, il-mod kif tghallem differenti. Il-biċċa ħi li ħafna drabi mhux tiġi biex tghallem il-Malti bħala Malti, ħafna drabi qisek aktar milli ghallimtilhom is-suġġett, ghallimtilhom
Regarding this lack of training from the University of Malta, the local subject expert for Maltese commented that the course offered by the Faculty of Education is in line with how the State defines the subject of Maltese. According to these parameters, Maltese is regarded as a native language, the mother tongue and so, the teachers of Maltese are trained accordingly. The local subject expert for Maltese continued that when “the State begins to recognise Maltese as a foreign language the Faculty will, in all probability, cater for this need”. 71 The local subject expert for Maltese added that at present “we are not considering any of this at all because it is not the way the State of Malta defines Maltese”. 72

On the other hand, the local subject expert for Maltese argued that “it is unacceptable to have someone teaching a foreign language without proper training” 73 particularly since the teaching of a language as such is a totally different specialization which involves a four-year course at University. Hence, failing to have professionally qualified teachers teaching Maltese as a Foreign or Additional Language would be shortchanging the language learners with a low quality education.

Regarding an in-service training course dedicated to teaching Maltese as a Foreign or Additional Language, Education Officer for Maltese1 explained that the designations “teaching as a Foreign or Additional language” and “teaching as a native tongue”, “are not the very best of designations to treat a language
which should be seen not in view of outward blanket umbrella terms as the above, but as the result of the inferential mode of understanding language”.

Education Officer for Maltese\textsuperscript{1} added that,

language, as has been seen by the Maltese 'department' has always been as the underlying dynamic of on-going dialectic, with which and through which all students express themselves, in their various learning styles, as a result of the exposure they get in the Maltese-language scenario - a scenario which is multilingual, and this is especially the case not only with regard to Maltese, English and Italian, but also with regard to other languages to which the Maltese population is exposed, not only in the school environs but also in the outer world.

Education Officer for Maltese\textsuperscript{1} pointed out that, in view of the above:

all of the in-service courses organized by the 'department' of Maltese have always seen language in neurological, linguistic, psychosocial terms, with the 'learner' as the very essence of this very same interactive way of learning. No a priori stances of native/mother or foreign/outside binary oppositions were applied. In fact, all the data, information and resource material used during the in-service courses have been gleaned from multivariate sources with the aim of getting a good understanding of what is language in phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactical terms, with the aim of being in the best of positions to make the language experience as fruitful and beneficial as possible to all and sundry, irrespectively of native versus foreign ways of understanding reality.

Education Officer for Maltese\textsuperscript{1} concluded that the department of Maltese\textsuperscript{74} has up to now “been driven by a learning culture of language ‘learning’ rather than the native/foreign way of understanding this reality”.

\textsuperscript{74}According to article 18 of the Education Act (https://www.education.gov.mt/EducationAct.aspx), as an Educational Inspectorate it seeks to provide support in guiding, monitoring, inspecting, evaluating and reporting on the teaching process of Maltese, “on the application of the curriculum, syllabi, pedagogy, assessment and examinations, and on the administration, and on the assurance and auditing of quality in Colleges and schools” (p. 11).
4.4.4.4 No Syllabus - lack of structure and direction

From the symbiotic relationship between the inconsistencies of whether Maltese as an Additional Language should be recognised as a different subject or not and the immediate needs of MAL teachers to provide content to their MAL students, stems a serious shortcoming - no syllabus.

About MAL, Gerwin\textsuperscript{B} felt that “it’s not really structured”, they don’t have a book to learn from and “the teacher just does a random lesson on something” such that “we don’t know what it is associated with what or how”. He added that “there should be a proper curriculum (meaning syllabus) for Maltese for foreigners” as “there’s really no structure, no aids, it’s like Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B3} doesn’t seem to know how to do it”. In a nutshell Gerwin\textsuperscript{B} explained that “it’s rather random, it’s not like it’s gradual, there’s no structure. You have no idea where all is leading to”.

I also think a teacher teaching foreigners needs to use different methods, they need more patience than usual and I think you need more experience and different ways of teaching with teaching Maltese to foreigners.

(Gerwin\textsuperscript{B})

One may argue that Gerwin’s observations are quite valid. In fact for MAL there is no syllabus, no guidelines and no targets such that the syllabus of each teacher teaching MAL is fragmented and unstructured, - a reactive and makeshift coping approach which according to Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B4} makes it even harder to build across the years since each teacher does different things. The ex-MAL students in School\textsuperscript{A} explained that although the MAL programme was crucial for their experience at school, particularly at the beginning, they still felt that it did not prepare them adequately to “slide in” to the mainstream Maltese class as the gap was too big. According to Alena\textsuperscript{A} the MAL programme “keeps you behind and normal Maltese is too hard to cope with”. The girls at School\textsuperscript{A} who underwent the transition from the MAL class to mainstream Maltese felt that, “here, everybody is more advanced”, they felt “like a level lower than they”
and “a bit torn away from the others, like I’m not part of the class” (Ieva\textsuperscript{A}) particularly when “they start and they keep going and going and going…” because as Ieva\textsuperscript{A} explains “they don’t need extra explanation because they’ve already gotten it in Form 1 and 2”. This happened even more during “prose and poetry, in fact these lessons were the worst…” (Ieva\textsuperscript{A}) because they had never done any literature before.

I just gave up on it because … there was no foreigners in my class at all so I wasn’t on the same pages like anyone. They were all up here and I was down here and I had to try and get up to there by the exams and it just wasn’t happening for me. It was just a disaster.
(Enya\textsuperscript{A})

Ieva\textsuperscript{A} explains that “I couldn’t do anything, I felt helpless back then” and Helena\textsuperscript{A} even thought that her two years in the MAL class had been useless because the “… lessons were very very basic. They were Primary School stuff and then when you go to Form 3 … you automatically have to do poetry…”. None of the ex-MAL students in School\textsuperscript{A} felt prepared to cope with the mainstream Maltese syllabus.

Similarly, the teachers of mainstream Maltese in School\textsuperscript{A} felt that ex-MAL students were not reaching the required levels to be able to cope with mainstream Maltese. Although the main aim of this support language programme is to enhance equity, this approach seems to be failing, because when in mainstream, the immigrant students,

… couldn’t cope. In fact the following year many had to return to the MAL programme. But they seemed to be a year behind - those who sat for the exam either left out half the paper, of simply gave up a blank script…. They feel insecure... for three years they felt comfortable because the syllabus was tailored to their level; suddenly they were faced with the Form IV syllabus in preparation for O’level. They were completely lost.
(Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{A4})\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{75}Original quote in Maltese: Xhin ġew biex ikomplu mal-klassi n-normali ma kampawx. Fil-fatt uhud minnhom regghu kellhom jirritornaw għall-MAL is-sena ta’ wara imma kienu qishom tilfu sena għax jew l-eżami prruvaw x hallew nofs il-karta vojeta jew m’għamluh xejn … hemm qabża kbira … allura dawn filli qegħdin komdi għax tliet snin kienu jagħmlu affarijiet għal-livell
There is no set syllabus, and very often they keep repeating the same basic things from one year to the next; then in Form 4 they have to fend for themselves…. They are taught very basic grammar; and I feel that in three years they should go beyond that.

(Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{A4})\textsuperscript{76}

In order to be able to overcome all this, all the teachers of Maltese emphasized the need for “the Department to issue some guidelines or some other form of syllabus” (Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A3})\textsuperscript{77} particularly for teachers of Maltese teaching “in schools like ours and in these areas where the influx of immigrants is continually on the increase” (Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B2})\textsuperscript{78}. This would provide more systematic teaching both on a college level as well as on a national level. The MAL teachers of Schools\textsuperscript{A&B} added that for this to happen “there is no need to spend millions” (Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B2})\textsuperscript{79} or to provide “a rigid syllabus which I feel cannot be done, but a simple structure that would offer some guidance and direction” (Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A3}).\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{4.4.4.5 The Examination Papers}

The fact that MAL is not yet a recognised subject, has another ripple effect - the examination papers. Some of the participants commented that the exam papers they were sitting for were not suitable. Stoyan\textsuperscript{B} commented that he would like to be “more properly assessed” as he is “trying hard and studying and wish to see

\begin{itemize}
\item taghhom u filli jidhlu fis-sillabu tal-\textit{Form 4} li huwa sillabu għall-O’level. Dawn sabu ruħhom ma jafux x’ha jaqbdu jagħmlu.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{76}Original quote in Maltese: M’hemmx sillabu speċifiku u ħafna drabi qed jirrepetu minn sena ghall-oħra l-istess affarijiet bażiċi u wara fil-\textit{Form 4} jintefghu f’bahar jaqdu għalihom ... jagħmlu affarijiet bażiċi taf inti bhall-grammatika imma affarijiet veru bażiċi u jiena naraha li fi tliet snin għandhom jagħmlu ftit aktar minn hekk.

\textsuperscript{77}Original quote in Maltese: Id-Dipartiment għandu johloq linji gwida forsi fuq kif wiehed ghandu jimxi jew ghajnuniet sewwa, xi tip ta’ qafas.

\textsuperscript{78}Original quote in Maltese: fi skejjel bħal tagħna u f’dawn l-\textit{areas} fejn dejjem u kontinwament qed jiżdied l-influss tal-barranin.

\textsuperscript{79}Original quote in Maltese: m’hemmx ghalfejn jintefqu l-miljun ta’ liri biex issir dil-ħaġa.

\textsuperscript{80}Original quote in Maltese: ma jsirx sillabu strett li ma nabsbx li jista’ jsir imma almenu jojfru qafas sempliċi li permezz tiegħu jojfru ftit għajnuna u direzzjoni.
what I can get” as “I want to see how much I know in Maltese”. He pointed out that “they don’t give us the exams for Form 3 Maltese, they give us the exams for Form 1”. He added that “it’s not a paper for foreign students, it’s just the Maltese paper of Form 1 easy set”. In fact he got 90%. Stoyan argued that “it should be a paper for Form 3 and for foreigners not for Form 1 and Maltese low set”. Given this lack of structure in the MAL subject, one of the teachers commented that for the annual exams, some schools are providing the immigrant students with a Form one CCS exam paper (levels 4-5).

Data revealed that Maltese is perceived by the State as a native language and not also as an Additional Language. Consequently, there is no official syllabus for the teaching of Maltese as an Additional Language and no professional training is given to teachers of MAL by the University or by the Education Directorates. Thus, it seems that despite the two schools’ genuine efforts, they are seemingly failing to ensure equity of access to the immigrant students learning MAL and therefore there is room for improvement.
4.4.4.6 Profile of The Transition and the Mainstream Programme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers at School\textsuperscript{C} - A general description

Figure 5: The Transition Programme for entry into School\textsuperscript{C}

Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} explained that through simultaneous preparation done both at the Home with the girls and also at school with various stakeholders it became clear to all stakeholders that “these students don’t have special needs or some kind of disability but different needs...”. When the four girls were ready to start their formal education, they were placed in the lowest - mainstream classes and
followed the entire school timetable except for Religion since they had a different religion. There was no withdrawal system in place at the school.

… we have a number of Maltese students who still lack basic skills, so the immigrant students joined those classes. Remember we have setting so during the Maltese lessons they joined our students in the Basic Skills Class.

(Administrative official in the Education Directorates)

4.4.4.7 Unable to cope in the Mainstream

The only negative outcome that was pointed out regarding this transition and the mainstream programme for unaccompanied asylum seekers at SchoolC is the immersion policy that was employed. The girls were placed in the CCS class for the main subjects (Maltese, English and Mathematics). According to Mr. UMSTC this was not effective because “the teachers were finding it difficult to teach them since their level was very low when compared to the Maltese group in spite of the fact that the class was the lowest stream”.

This caused some difficulty for the teachers because they had to give a lesson within another lesson in order to cater for both the Maltese and also for the asylum seeker girls. Mr. UMSTC explained that a common perception among teachers in the girls’ school was that, “if there had been a separate group, it would have been easier to teach content” as the teachers had to ignore the rest of the group to explain to the four girls.

These findings seem to reveal that although the transition programme was beneficial for the unaccompanied minor girls, yet the immersion programme implemented at SchoolC did not seem to ensure equity of access. For, despite the fact that the teachers “who cooperated so much that they offered to give them extra lessons in English and Maltese to help them catch up with (the formerly referred to as) Basic Skills classes (now CCS)” (Administrative official in the Education Directorates), the girls still did not seem to cope in the
mainstream. Their levels differed drastically from those of their peers and it seems that being in mainstream did not really address their specific language needs. Headteacher commented that “you don’t simply dump them in a class with the other students and say this is the lesson, take what comes”. They have particular needs that should be addressed.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the main findings which contributed to a better understanding of the immigrant students’ daily language-mediated experiences in Maltese State Secondary Schools, the language provisions being provided by each of the participant schools and the equity of such provisions.

Data from this study showed that the challenges faced by immigrants in the Maltese State Secondary Schools hinged on the language barrier. Findings from this study also indicated that, for the immigrant students to be able to integrate with the rest of their peers in class and during break and to get a quality education without any disadvantage, they need to learn both official languages of Malta. However, as Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2009) maintain, it seems that “newcomer immigrant students enter an education system shaped by school reform policies that fail to consider their particular needs or realities” (p. 328). Some overarching concerns present throughout this study are that, despite the language provisions provided by each of the tree participating schools, these have all been primarily reactive and crisis-management provisions. Furthermore, they did not provide the immigrant students with the right opportunities to advance and progress like their native peers. In the light of these findings, recommendations for practice, education and research will be presented in the next chapter together with a summary of the study and its strengths and limitations.
The findings in this study give but a glimpse into the immigrant students’ local language experience. In focussing on some areas that, according to participants can be improved, it is hoped that future provisions will enhance the quality of the immigrant students’ educational experience and its equity. It seems that what these children really need is not to be seen or regarded simply as passers by or guests who stay here for a while being provided with provisions until they can move on, but to be given appropriate provisions which would enable them to access a quality education, an education which is for life rather than for a phase.
Chapter 5

Conclusion
5.1 Summary of The Study and Findings

What this study aimed to explore was the language experience of 22 immigrant students as they embarked on their educational journey in Malta and what language provisions (if any) were being provided by their respective State Secondary Schools.

In capturing these experiences and in listening to “how the foreigners feel… the Maltese person can understand how we feel” and “that we have feelings, we’re not like a fish that don’t cry” (Elisa³). Elisa³ concludes that, “here with you (the researcher) I can say my opinion and they can understand on their own. I can never go to other people direct and tell them how I feel. They will not want to hear me”. Kjell⁶ adds that “every foreigner should have like this opportunity to speak because we can talk, speak and you hear us, what we feel, what we need”. Merhavit⁷ adds that, “only if you hear us, our wants, you could help us..”. Consequently, as the immigrant students’ voices are given a platform, the researcher hopes that their words will shed light on their situation and contribute towards a quick and better quality education for the immigrant students residing in Malta because as Kjell⁶ added, “we need the changes direct. We can’t wait 3 years, 4 years because … then it’s time for us to go (finish school)”.

I really have enjoyed this experience because like you are understanding and you actually care what we think, cause like you ask us what we think and you’ll say what we thought not what you want us to think cause I know that you would, cause you are interested in our experience. No one ever cares what we think or bothers to ask us anything. It’s nice to have someone come into your class and speaking to you and asking you what you think instead of just having people always ignoring you.

(Kate³)

Findings from this study have shown that the journey of the immigrant students does not end the moment they enter a new host country, but it continues. Upon their arrival in Malta, the immigrant students start to face new challenges daily, both during their initial post-migration phase and also later on during their adaptation-integration phase. During the initial
post-migration phase (the first few weeks and months), immigrant students especially unaccompanied minors and refugees experience significant hardships. This is mainly due to pre-migration and trans-migration (Frater-Mathieson, 2004) factors which impact further on their process of adaptation. Findings from this study suggest that this is an extremely vulnerable and difficult phase for the immigrants since they start to feel that in this new country, everything and everyone is different and that all that they had and known seems atrophied, particularly their language - the bridge that previously connected them with everything and everyone. Starting a completely new life is not easy particularly when, as was the case with the participants in this study, they came to Malta after having spent between 9 and 14 years in another country and had already started to build a life there.

Moreover, this study’s findings indicate that the immigrant students soon come to realise that for their native peers, diversity is perceived as a form of inferiority or deficiency. Thus, they reckon that to gain access to and to be able to fit in among their peers at school, they have to forsake their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and “melt” into the Maltese society. In so doing, they become “carbon-copy personalities” (Igoa, 1995, p. 44).

Similar to this was their school experience, particularly in the first few months, where they felt out of place, disoriented, unhappy, lonely and shackled due to the language barrier. As Hoffman (1989) explains, “this language is beginning to invent another me” (p. 121) because the language of the present is no longer the immigrant students’ “language of the self” (p. 121).

This study found that without English - an initial temporary survival kit - the immigrant students were unable to embark on their educational journey and to communicate with their teachers and native Maltese counterparts. After some months and years in Malta, as the immigrant students gradually moved on to a more adaptive and integrative phase, without Maltese - the permanent armour - they felt disadvantaged, alien and different among their peers at school and in class. Although by this stage they could understand,
speak, read and write English, most of them were still unable to do so in Maltese. This evoked strong feelings of frustration, homesickness and foreignness. Similar to previous research carried out locally (Camilleri, 2007; Frendo, 2005; Mifsud, 2005; Sammut, 2004; Zahra & Zahra, 1996) research findings in this study indicate that not only is Maltese the backbone of State Schools since it is the language mostly used on a daily basis in both formal and informal situations, across the curriculum and the hallmark of detail in lessons, but it is also obviously the language of the people around them. Consequently, the Maltese language barrier not only hindered the immigrant students’ participation in class and affected their academic success but also cut through their relationships with their native peers even more since for most of their native peers in class, English was a barrier such that some even protested when teachers continually switched between English for immigrants and Maltese for Maltese.

Findings point to the situation in class where most of what goes on there and at school formally and informally is mainly carried out in Maltese. Consequently unless the immigrant students know Maltese, they are academically at a disadvantage and socially restricted. The findings in this study seem to be in parallel with those found locally by Camilleri (2007) and Sammut (2004). They clearly indicate that for an immigrant student living in Malta, learning Maltese is both an academic and a social need. In fact, among the 22 participants, those immigrant students who had learnt Maltese claimed that they were happier at school, felt valued and confident, participated more in class, did better at school and integrated more with their native peers than the other immigrants who did not. This was confirmed both during the lesson observations and also by the immigrant students’ teachers and members of the SMT.

For those immigrant students who did not learn Maltese, this language barrier seemed to widen the gap and affect their relationships with native peers. They were often bullied by the Maltese and regarded as being odd, weird, different and inferior particularly during the initial post-migration phase since without Maltese, an important tool for integration and peer-acceptance,
they were even more vulnerable and unable to defend themselves. The findings reveal that as the immigrant students learnt Maltese, they slowly reestablished a sense of self-worth and gradually bridged both the academic and also the social gap.

It was also interesting to note that the immigrant students formed little groups among themselves and preferred to stay together particularly during school breaks. Having been uprooted from their homeland and being an immigrant at school with a different biography, culture and language, provided a commonality on which friendship and a peer grouping could be based. In fact, all the participants, particularly those of Schools A&B, commented that one of the main reasons why the specific language provision provided for the immigrant students at school - the MAL class - was so important for them was because in it they felt secure, accepted and it enhanced a sense of belonging and self-worth. There they no longer felt isolated and different but were mutually supportive and encouraged to live through this learning experience. In the MAL class, or the language support provided, the immigrant students could understand what each one of them was going through and they could connect to each other. This deep connection with each other was highlighted particularly since it was often absent with their native peers in the mainstream classroom.

Findings from this study, particularly from the 96 lessons observed in two of the three participant schools (Schools A&B), show that when in mainstream classes the immigrant students were passive, timid and detached, particularly when they were the only immigrant in class. Conversely, when in the MAL class, they participated more and were extremely motivated. Dr. Igoa (E. Igoa, personal communication, November, 24, 2012) explains that:

The reason the immigrant children “prefer to stay together” is because they have been uprooted from their homeland. They feel uneasy in the new country. They have lost all familiar signs and symbols of social communication. They are disorientated. They may experience culture shock as well when they first arrive in a new country. Many are
afraid or hesitant to speak with the “mainstream children” for fear that people will laugh at them so they remain silent or stay close to other children with similar experiences...Immigrant children find comfort with each other. Their bonding has less to do with their cultural differences, but more about their psychological inner worlds. They experience similar feelings - fear to speak, sadness, loneliness and confusion. They are insecure and afraid they will not be accepted by the children of the host country. So together they find “common ground”.

Learning the language of the host country seems to be a key factor in any immigrant’s successful integration biography. This study suggests that although the two official languages were regarded by all the students as important, they each had their own idiosyncratic function. As the immigrant students gradually continued their journey and from the initial phase moved on to the adaptation-integration phase, they started to build their perceptions on the two official languages in Malta. Similar to Sciriha’s (2001) findings, for all the immigrant students participating in this study Maltese was deemed as insular and highly important for any immigrant who is living in Malta whereas English was perceived as the most important language for and in the world.

The term national language, is “far more emotionally charged than official language”, and according to Beacco and Byram (2003) “may become a factor of identity, i.e. of belonging to a national community” (p. 52). For the immigrant students in this study, Maltese enabled them: to feel part of the class, the school and Malta; to show their respect towards the natives since in the language of the people lies their soul; to have a healthy social life; to have better local career opportunities and to feel “normal”, less foreign and an “in migrant”. Moreover at school, particularly if it is a Government School, it permitted immigrant students to follow the main explanation in class, secure subject content and interact both with the teacher and with their peers. For the participants in this study, learning Maltese was perceived as an empowering tool for their integration and well-being which permits an immigrant student residing in Malta to be fully functional and independent.

Schools’ efforts in this situation are to be lauded. However, it is necessary to evaluate and improve. It is “good” to react, but it is professional to evaluate
and improve. Evidence from this study seems plentiful in underlining the need for immigrant students to learn Maltese. However, findings similar to those reported by Calleja et al., (2010), Camilleri (2007), Frendo (2005), Mifsud (2005), Sammut (2004) and Zahra and Zahra (1996) also indicate that despite the language provisions in the three schools, it appears that the schools still fail to adequately address the language needs of the immigrant students. This is because they are still adopting a continuous reactive and makeshift coping approach rather than a proactive one mainly due to the following: there is no policy regarding the education of immigrant students in Malta and the learning of the host country’s official languages; there is a sporadic absent initial assessment for newcomer immigrants so that as in France, Germany and Switzerland (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2009) the immigrant students (as also indicated in Table 1) are being sent to low achieving schools and placed in the lowest settings; lack of recognition of a subject-language which they need - Maltese as an Additional Language - and the consequent lack of syllabus or any guidelines for the teachers currently teaching MAL; no official training for teachers of Maltese who are currently teaching Maltese to immigrants; no resources and no benchmark assessment such as an annual examination or an ‘O’level examination paper in MAL which the immigrant students can sit for. It seems that these incongruencies and this arbitrariness are holding immigrant students back from a quality education and equity of access. Maltese is for each immigrant child in Malta a beacon, lighting their way forward. Failing to adequately provide this means limiting the “in migrants’” prospects of a better, equitable and qualitative education and of a better life in Malta.

5.2 Limitations of The Study

The adoption of a multiple case study is this study’s strength and also its weakness. In including three different schools, a better and deeper understanding of the immigrant students' language experience was obtained particularly since each single bounded case had its uniqueness and personality.
A strong limitation in this study is the presentation of the copious data that was collected. The two semi-structured interviews held with each of the 22 participant students, the 27 semi-structured interviews with their respective teachers of Maltese, English, Mathematics, with the Senior Management Team members of each school (5 in total) and also with a number of exponents from different fields related to education and immigrant students (18 in total), also the two lesson observations carried out in each of the three subjects per student (excluding the five participants in School C), have generated a massive amount of data, some of which could not be included in this study to keep in line with the required word limit.

This study could have been strengthened had the Maltese students and the immigrant students’ parents/guardians been interviewed. These would have permitted other perspectives and further understanding on the immigrant students’ language experience at school and in class.

One other limitation is the researcher’s bias. It is a factor that needs to be considered in any type of study. As a teacher of Maltese, the present researcher certainly holds personal opinions regarding the teaching of Maltese to immigrant students. However, it is hoped that the triangulation, the considerable time spent in all three sites and the keeping of a reflective journal on a daily basis with detailed field notes which included reflections on their subjectivity, ensured a more objective data collection and analysis procedure.

Finally, although the recruitment of a cultural mediator and a translator (Maltese-English) who have had previous experience in other qualitative studies enhanced rigour, the translation back and forth during the interviews was sometimes also a limitation for it affected the flow of the conversation between the immigrant and the researcher.
5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for Practice And Provision

This multiple case study has tried to unveil part of the landscape that makes up the language experiences of the 22 immigrant students as day after day they sit in classrooms in Malta’s Secondary Schools. The data indicates that due to their catchment area, the number of newcomer immigrant students in the participating schools’ yearly intake is on the increase. This relatively new influx and different segment of the students population within the schools, is posing new challenges to the immigrant students and also to the receiving schools. The experiences of all 22 immigrant students participating in this study demonstrate that for the immigrant adolescents to effectively benefit from a meaningful educational experience in Malta and to be able to follow a full curriculum, several requirements still need to be met and in an expedient manner. The following recommendations stem mainly from the 22 immigrant students’ voices and their teachers. As Murphy and Anisef (2001) explain, “It is their voices that inform us and suggest policy considerations for producing positive change” (p. 5).

5.3.1.1 A national policy and strategy for the education and language needs of immigrant students in Malta

At present, there is no policy which addresses the education and language needs of immigrant students in Malta. Consequently, every school decides what to do and what not to do. Just as discussed previously, most of the SMT members, particularly of Schools A&B, explained that some schools even decide not to do anything about it and passively adopt the benign neglect provision leaving the immigrant students to sink or swim. This evident lacuna clearly highlights the need for a policy and a strategy to specifically address the education and language needs of immigrant students in Malta. Such a language strategy could be similar to that being used for the attainment of Core Competences. State Secondary Schools can set up a Language Support Programme in Maltese as an Additional Language and if necessary,
also in English, for Forms 1 and 2 immigrant students so that by Form 3 the students can be integrated into mainstream Maltese and English.

5.3.1.2 Addressing the immigrant students’ particular language needs by recognising Maltese as an Additional Language

From the findings in this study, it emerged clearly that Maltese in Malta is only recognised as a native language. It follows that any immigrant is bound to either follow the current mainstream syllabus or do nothing at all. This stresses the immediate need to acknowledge this new segment of the State Secondary School student population and address its language needs by providing a new subject: Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL). This new subject would address the immigrant students’ immediate language needs and equip them academically and socially to receive an effective educational experience.

5.3.1.3 A syllabus for Maltese as an Additional language

The current Maltese syllabus is intended for native speakers and as the findings in this research have shown, immigrant students are unable to cope with its breadth and depth, particularly in the literature component. Clearly, the need for a syllabus for MAL is strongly felt for despite the efforts of those teaching Maltese to immigrant students, only sporadic and ad hoc content is being provided since there are no guidelines or direction. Another recommendation related to a syllabus for Maltese as an Additional language is for it to be based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001) so that partners would be able to: “..describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards, tests and examinations in order to facilitate comparisons between different systems of qualifications.” (CEFR: 21). Thus, given that the Maltese MatSEC Paper B is equivalent to the B1 of the CEFR (Independent User - Threshold), such a language support programme in Form 1 and Form 2 should be structured in a way that by the end of the two-year language support programme,
immigrant students would have at least completed levels A1 and A2 (Basic User - Breakthrough and Waystage).

5.3.1.4 A Maltese as an Additional Language class through a withdrawal approach

To adequately learn the type of Maltese needed by immigrant students, a withdrawal approach ought to be adopted. It is recommended that students are assigned to a mainstream classroom so as to avoid what happened with the system of classes d’accueil where they would receive additional help in Maltese as an Additional language in a pull-out period with a Maltese as an Additional language support teacher. The need for such MAL classes to be composed of a small number of immigrant students was alluded to by all the participants and also by their teachers of Maltese. This would enable MAL teachers to effectively address the immigrant students’ diverse language needs. Where the number of immigrant students in a particular school is small, it is recommended that a peripatetic teacher of Maltese within the entire college, carries out weekly lessons in Maltese as an Additional language.

5.3.1.5 Provide the learners of Maltese as an Additional Language with the adequate resources

For any subject to be successful, it has to have the right tools - resources. The students in this study as well as the teachers of MAL Maltese emphasised the need for textbooks and other teaching aids specifically aimed for the teaching of Maltese as an Additional language rather than as a first language.

5.3.1.6 A benchmark or another kind of summative assessment for Maltese as an Additional Language

All 22 immigrant students participating in this study, particularly those students who had recently settled in Malta and had not yet completed their three years in a local State School, felt the need to sit for an exam in Maltese
as an Additional Language at the end of Form 5. Not only did all the participants and their teachers of Maltese feel the need for a different Maltese language exam for immigrants to be able to assess their proficiency and progress, but also to equip them for better academic and equal future job opportunities as their native peers.

5.3.1.7 Training of teachers of Maltese to teach Maltese as an Additional language

A very strong recommendation stemming mainly from the teachers and the SMT members is to train teachers of Maltese to teach Maltese as an Additional language. Both the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, and also the Education Directorates must acknowledge the reality some teachers of Maltese are facing, one which urgently requires the proper training. It is only through training that the teachers of Maltese can effectively teach Maltese as an Additional language to immigrant students.

5.3.1.8 Providing a supported integration approach for the immigrant students in mainstream

Judging from the students’ experiences, what emerged is that teachers of all subjects should be sensitised to provide a little more personal attention to the immigrant students in class. Another recommendation is to have a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) or a language support teacher in the mainstream classroom in order to help immigrant students with their language needs across the curriculum (LAC) particularly in the beginning.

5.3.1.9 Immigrant student and parent representatives in the students’ and school councils respectively

It is recommended that the immigrant students have a student representative in the students’ school council and also an immigrant parent in the school council. Each representative elected by the immigrant students and the immigrant parents respectively, would be able to create greater awareness and promote respect for the immigrants’ cultural and linguistic diversity.
In giving voice and listening to the immigrants’ needs and opinions, the stakeholders would be contributing to a global reality, an enriching experience for all the students. In encouraging immigrant parents to participate in schools, Maltese and immigrant children would be able to celebrate diversity and regard the various differences in cultures, languages and more, as a source of wealth. Dr. Igoa (E. Igoa, personal communication, November, 24, 2012) commented that:

Today we are moving towards a global reality where in many countries there are people of many languages and cultures and they try to live together amicably. They work together for the greater good. In my present school District in California, there are over 100 languages and cultures in the schools and we all work together to get along, to learn and to contribute to society.

5.3.1.10 Establishing a point of reference at school

It is recommended that in schools and colleges, particularly where the number of immigrant students is considerable, there should be a teacher, an Inclusive Education Coordinator (INCO) or a college coordinator who acts as a point of reference for the immigrant students and their parents. This person would conduct regular monthly meetings and encounter groups of immigrant students, thus enabling the students to discuss and share their difficulties and experiences at school without feeling judged. In this way their needs would be addressed, progress monitored, and integration at school facilitated. A buddy system might also facilitate the immigrant students’ integration at school.

5.3.1.11 Implementing a transition programme for newcomer immigrants

It is recommended that there should be a transition programme of six months/semester for newcomer immigrants, either in each college or in one particular school. During this period all newcomer immigrants in Malta would be adequately assessed and provided with the support needed. Throughout this transition programme, immigrant students and in particular refugees and
unaccompanied minors, would be continuously supported by cultural mediators, social workers, counsellors, psychologists and language teachers of Maltese and English in order to address the pre-immigration and post-immigration challenges and to also prepare them for a smooth transition to the receiving schools. Each college would have its own immigrant coordinator to facilitate the immigrant students’ transition from the transition programme to the respective State School. Once in the State School, the immigrant students would still be provided with the necessary language support programmes in both Maltese and English as recommended previously. However, they would also participate in mainstream lessons and integrate with their native peers for the rest of the subjects. They would be continually monitored and encouraged to attend monthly meetings with the respective college coordinator.

5.3.1.12 Providing State Schools in Malta with multicultural educational and intercultural learning programmes

It is recommended that the local schools, including all stakeholders such as SMT, teachers, parents and Maltese students should be provided with a multicultural education and intercultural learning programme. It should be part of all the schools’ School Development Plan (SDP). This would encourage all local schools to embrace diversity and also to facilitate the newcomer immigrant students’ integration following the previously mentioned transition programme.

The voices of the 22 immigrant students participating in this study have been the basis of these recommendations. In listening to the immigrant students’ actual words, “to please help us” (MerhawitC), these recommendations aim to encourage all stakeholders to act now - today. “We depend on them so we can’t do learning by ourselves, we are under them so we can’t do what we want. We have to wait for them only. We don’t have choice...” (MerhawitC).

When asked to draw what breaking the language barrier would mean for them (Appendix 9, Figure 6 and 9) the immigrant students said it would
enable them to burst the bubble (Alena^A) and enter the house (Yakiv^B) to be able to stay next to their native peers, break open the nut (Elizabeth^A) and unlock the big red box (Helena^A), remove the chains (Alena^A) and the massive rock (Gerwin^B) as they run like an athlete (Mihai^B), fight like a wrestler (Yonas^B) and tone up like a bodybuilder (Zoran^B). In breaking the language barrier, the immigrant students would become knights (Kjell^B), able to tame their phoenix (Radko^B) - the Maltese language and enjoy the beauty of building bridges.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Further Research

This multiple case study has raised various issues and themes around the immigrant students and the language barrier in three State Secondary Schools. Thus, a descriptive survey based on these findings is suggested to explore the immigrant students and the language barrier on a larger, and national scale including both Malta and Gozo.

This study has explored the immigrant students and the language barrier specifically in schools where there was a language provision in Maltese going on. It would be useful to replicate the study amongst immigrant students in schools where there is no language provision in Maltese in order to explore to what extent these language-mediated experiences are similar or divergent.

This study has focused on the immigrant students and their language barriers in a particular school term. A longitudinal study exploring whether the immigrant students’ language barriers change over time is also recommended.

A comparative study of the effects of the language barrier on immigrant students in State Primary Schools is recommended in order to compare them with those of secondary students.
5.4 Personal Thoughts and Immediate Implications

As a professional experienced teacher of Maltese, I have always tried to be open to the different needs of all the students in my class and to provide them with the necessary tools and care in order to enable them to continue with their journey and overcome possible barriers to their education. Surprisingly however, factors emerged from this study to which I had never really given much attention. For instance, the struggles and efforts that so many teachers and SMT members voluntarily carry out on a daily basis in the absence of a policy and a structured language programme to provide and try to meet the language needs of the immigrant students. Moreover, through this in-depth journey with the participants, I came to realise the uniqueness of the immigrant students’ daily educational experiences which were fraught with challenges in which language plays a central role. I realised the loneliness, frustration and sadness they experience in class and at school, the inner void when they remember all they had left behind as they pace their way in this new realm where they are and maybe always will be, the “foreigners”. They struggle to be accepted by their native peers and work hard to do well at school. However, the bridge which could enable this is a strange and new language which they are not being adequately taught. Some are resilient and manage to cross the border, others never do and remain entrapped in a solitary and wordless world.

I hope that this study, like those before and others that follow, contributes towards improving the immigrant students’ educational journey in Malta. In faithfully giving voice to the 22 immigrant students it is hoped that this study has breached the walls of the immigrants’ inner world and drawn them out of their silence and invisibility. Having listened to the experiences of these students in the Maltese classrooms, we are now in a better position to meet their language needs, so that instead of struggling with obstacles and running into barriers, they will be able to cross the bridge from their previous education to the new, an education which is based on equity and quality for every child, this, regardless of colour, nationality, religion, traditions, culture or language.
References


Laws of Malta Education Act of Malta XXIV of 1988 Chapter 327.


Appendices
Appendix 1
Cross-Case Analysis Display Tables 1-7
### CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES RELATED TO TRANSITION - NEW COUNTRY -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Physical appearance</th>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Away from relatives and friends</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Upbringing</th>
<th>Safety in the country</th>
<th>Previous experiences</th>
<th>Customs</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Living in an institution</th>
<th>Change in one's name</th>
<th>Previous traumatic experiences (war-torn countries, travelling)</th>
<th>Religion</th>
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### CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES RELATED TO TRANSITION - NEW SCHOOL -

- Education system
- Syllabi
- Subject levels
- Textbooks
- Teaching resources
- Approaches
- Pedagogy
- Teachers
- Subjects
- School uniform
- Discipline
- Co-Educational
- Previous local State Primary School experience
- Previous local Independent Primary School experience
- Transition from the MAL class to mainstream Maltese
- School gate - unable to go out during the break
- Formative and Summative Assessment
- Type of food provided by the school canteen or tuck shop
- Type of school canteen or tuck shop
- Duration of lessons and school day
- Hijab/Veil
- PE kit
- Male teachers at school
- Timetable (it changes daily)
- Different classrooms according to the various subjects
- Unfamiliarity with school routine
- Familiarisation transition programme from the Home to the school

▲ = School A
■ = School B
◆ = School C
**CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES RELATED TO PEERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive experiences</th>
<th>Negative experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With other immigrant peers</td>
<td>With native peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural activities</td>
<td>Ganging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddy system</td>
<td>Clashes during lessons</td>
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<td>Language</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
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<td>Support</td>
<td>Submissiveness</td>
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<td>Hairstyles</td>
<td>Superiority Complex</td>
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**Figure 3.4: Table 2**

△ = School A
■ = School B
〇 = School C
### Figure 3.4: Table 3

**CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES RELATED TO LANGUAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English as an initial temporary survival kit for newcomer immigrant students in Malta</th>
<th>The Maltese language barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A lifebuoy when immigrant students first come to school</td>
<td>Participation in class ▲ ■ ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It links the past/old/known with the present/new/unknown</td>
<td>Interaction with native peers ▲ ■ ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>English language barrier for the Maltese peers ▲ ■ ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maltese barrier across the curriculum ▲ ■ ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial education ▲ ■ ●</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Code-switching ▲ ■ ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration ▲ ■ ●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![School A](▲)  
![School B](□)  
![School C](●)

**Maltese as the permanent armour**

| | Complete education in Malta ▲ ■ ● |
| | Breaking the barriers ▲ ■ ● |
| | Source of confidence ▲ ■ ● |
| | Power ▲ ■ ● |
| | Sense of belonging ▲ ■ ● |
| | Social help aid ▲ ■ ● |
| | Independence ▲ ■ ● |
| | Integration ▲ ■ ● |
| | Less foreign/different and more Maltese/like us ▲ ■ |
| | Translator for parents ▲ |
| | Popularity □ |
## Figure 3.4: Table 4


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A recent phenomenon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influx</td>
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<td>Catchment area</td>
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<tr>
<td>On the increase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly intake</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influx</td>
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<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catchment area</td>
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<td>On the increase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly intake</td>
<td>▲</td>
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▲ = School\(^A\)  
■ = School\(^B\)  
● = School\(^C\)
Figure 4: Cross-Case Analysis Display - Table 5

Figure 3.4: Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The reactive and makeshift coping approach</th>
<th>School allocation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sporadic provision</td>
<td>Sent to an Area Secondary School</td>
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<td>Reaction</td>
<td>(a low achievers’ school)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping strategy</td>
<td>Issues of inequity</td>
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<td>Crisis-management provisions</td>
<td>School familiarisation transition</td>
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<td>Issues of inequity</td>
<td>programme for unaccompanied minors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support teacher for unaccompanied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>minors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial assessment of newcomer immigrant students</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>▲  □  ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately diagnosed</td>
<td>▲  □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haphazard</td>
<td>▲  □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of inequity</td>
<td>▲  □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School familiarisation transition programme for unaccompanied minors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Teacher for unaccompanied minors</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class allocation</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placed in the lowest streams of mainstream</td>
<td>▲  □  ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of inequity</td>
<td>▲  □</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Competences Support Programme</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initially sent to the Core Competences Support Programme</td>
<td>▲  □  ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of inequity</td>
<td>▲  □</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▲ = School^A  
□ = School^B  
● = School^C
Figure 3.4: Table 6

THE FUNCTION OF MALTA’S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The function of English</th>
<th>The function of Maltese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender difference</td>
<td>State Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switch</td>
<td>Language mostly used daily at school (formal and informal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for writing</td>
<td>Across the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International language/lingua franca</td>
<td>Hallmark of detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important for the world</td>
<td>Maltese as a subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guarantees a better future</td>
<td>Important for Malta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▲ = School A
■ = School B
● = School C
## Figure 3.4: Table 7

THE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE PROVISIONS PROVIDED TO THE IMMIGRANT STUDENTS BY SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maltese as an Additional Language Support</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A point of reference</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and grammar only</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A point of reference</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No subject status</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No syllabus</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No teacher training</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpreparedness of teachers</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No official annual exam</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nest</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td>■</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>One teacher of Maltese</td>
<td>▲</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-year language support programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To move into mainstream Maltese in the beginning of Form 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All teachers of Maltese</td>
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<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-year language support programme</td>
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<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn Maltese as an Additional Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Teacher for unaccompanied minors</td>
<td></td>
<td>■</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. 1 or 2 months preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(at the Home)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School familiarisation transition programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic spoken Maltese and English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Competence Support Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn literacy skills in Maltese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▲ = School A
■ = School B
● = School C
Appendix 2
Parents’/Guardians’ and Students’ Consent Form
Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Teacher of Maltese, currently reading for an M.Ed in Applied Language Studies at the University of Malta. I am carrying out a research project 'Immigrant Students in Malta and the Language Barrier'. This study aims to explore:

1. the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experience,
2. whether the local State Secondary Schools are providing any kind of language support and
3. whether such measures are providing equity of access to the Maltese educational experience.

As part of my study I will be interviewing immigrant students and conducting several observations during the English, Maltese and Mathematics lessons. I am requesting your permission to carry out both the interview and the observations with your daughter/son to find out how s/he is coping with English and Maltese while at school. Each participating student will also be asked to give her/his consent (kindly see attached Consent Form).

Participation in this research is voluntary and therefore your daughter/son is free to refuse to be in this study or to withdraw at any point. Your daughter's/son's identity will remain anonymous and the information collected will only be used for my dissertation. At the end of the study, all the recorded interviews will be destroyed.

If your consent, as well as that of your daughter/son is given, I will be interviewing your daughter/son twice, - at school and during school hours. I will be recording the interview (on a digital voice recorder only) in order to analyse it afterwards. If both your consent and that of your daughter/son is granted, it shall also permit the
researcher to conduct a minimum of six observation lessons during Maltese, English and Mathematics.

If you agree that your daughter/son participates in this study, kindly fill in the attached form, which is to be returned to the Head of School from whom I will personally collect it.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.
Thank you in anticipation for your co-operation.

Regards

____________________
Sharon Micallef Cann
E-mail: XXX
Mob: XXX
Statement of purpose of the study:
The purpose of the research is to explore:
1. the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experience,
2. whether the local State Secondary Schools are providing any kind of language support and
3. whether such measures are providing equity of access to the Maltese educational experience.

Methods of data collection:
Semi-Structured Interviews
Non-Participant Observations

Use made of information:
The data collected will only be used for my dissertation and will be destroyed once research is completed.

Guarantees:
I will abide by the following conditions:
1. Your real name will not be used in the study at any time.
2. Only the supervisor and examiners will have access to the data.
3. You will remain free to quit the study at any point and for whatever reason. Should you withdraw, all the records and information collected will be destroyed.
4. There will be no deception in the data collection process.
5. If you would like to receive information on the findings gathered from this research this can be communicated to you either verbally or in writing.
I agree to the conditions.

_____________________
Name of Student

_____________________
Signature of Student

_____________________
Name of Parent/Guardian

_____________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date: __/___/2010

_____________________
Sharon Micallef Cann
(Researcher)

_____________________
Dr. Doreen Spiteri
(Research Supervisor)

Date: 24/01/2010
Appendix 3
Teachers’ Consent Form
Teachers’ Consent Form

Dear Teacher,

I am a Teacher of Maltese, currently reading for an M.Ed in Applied Language Studies at the University of Malta. I am carrying out a research project ‘Immigrant Students in Malta and the Language Barrier’. This study aims to explore:

1. the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experience,
2. whether the local State Secondary Schools are providing any kind of language support and
3. whether such measures are providing equity of access to the Maltese educational experience.

As part of my study I will be interviewing teachers teaching immigrant students and conducting classroom observations. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is voluntary. However, your participation will be highly appreciated as it may give an indication of various issues with regards to language support and immigrant students. You are free to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without providing an explanation. If you consent, I will be recording the interview (on a digital voice recorder only) in order to analyse it afterwards. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and I also assure you that your name and identity will not be revealed throughout the research process. All the recorded interviews will be destroyed on successful completion of the study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.
Thank you in anticipation for your co-operation.

Regards
Sharon Micallef Cann
E-mail: XXX
Mob: XXX
Statement of purpose of the study:
The purpose of the research is to explore:
1. the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experience,
2. whether the local State Secondary Schools are providing any kind of language support and
3. whether such measures are providing equity of access to the Maltese educational experience.

Methods of data collection:
Semi-Structured Interviews and Classroom Observations.

Use made of information:
Your responses will be kept under strict confidentiality and I also assure you that your name and identity will not be revealed throughout all the research process. The data collected will only be used for my dissertation and will be destroyed once research is completed.

Guarantees:
I will abide by the following conditions:
1. Your real name will not be used in the study at any time.
2. Only the supervisor and examiners will have access to the data.
3. You will remain free to quit the study at any point and for whatever reason. Should you withdraw, all the records and information collected will be destroyed.
4. There will be no deception in the data collection process.
5. If you would like to receive information on the findings gathered from this research this can be communicated to you either verbally or in writing.
I agree to the conditions.

_________________________________________  _______________________________________
Name of Teacher                                      Signature of Teacher

Date:  ____/____/2010

_________________________________________  _______________________________________
Sharon Micallef Cann                                   Dr. Doreen Spiteri
(Researcher)                                             (Research Supervisor)

Date:  24/01/2010
Appendix 4
Head of School’s and College Principal’s Consent Form
Consent from Head of School

Dear _______________________.

I am a Teacher of Maltese, currently reading for an M.Ed in Applied Language Studies at the University of Malta. I am carrying out a research project ‘Immigrant Students in Malta and the Language Barrier’. This study aims to explore:

1. the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experience,
2. whether the local State Secondary Schools are providing any kind of language support and
3. whether such measures are providing equity of access to the Maltese educational experience.

As part of my study I will be:
1. interviewing the school management including the School Principal and the Head of School;
2. interviewing the teachers of Maltese, English and Mathematics who teach immigrant students;
3. interviewing immigrant students and
4. conducting observation of a selection of lessons (Maltese, English, Mathematics) in classrooms in which there are immigrant students to acquire data on real-life settings.

The identity of the school, the teachers and the students will remain anonymous and the information collected will only be used for my dissertation.

If you approve this research, kindly sign below. This approval shall be sent to the UREC (University of Research Ethics Committee) together with all the relevant Consent and Permission Forms.

Thank you in anticipation for your co-operation.

Sharon Micallef Cann
E-mail: XXX
Mob: XXX
Consent from the College Principal

Dear _________________.

I am a Teacher of Maltese, currently reading for an M.Ed in Applied Language Studies at the University of Malta. I am carrying out a research project ‘Immigrant Students in Malta and the Language Barrier’. This study aims to explore:

1. the challenges and experiences of the immigrant students vis-à-vis language in their everyday educational experience,
2. whether the local State Secondary Schools are providing any kind of language support and
3. whether such measures are providing equity of access to the Maltese educational experience.

As part of my study I will be:
1. interviewing the school management including the School Principal and the Head of School;
2. interviewing the teachers of Maltese, English and Mathematics who teach immigrant students;
3. interviewing immigrant students and
4. conducting observation of a selection of lessons (Maltese, English, Mathematics) in classrooms in which there are immigrant students to acquire data on real-life settings.

The identity of the college, schools, members of the administration, teachers and students will remain anonymous and the information collected will only be used for my dissertation.

If you approve this research, kindly sign below. This approval shall be sent the UREC (University of Research Ethics Committee) together with all relevant Consent and Permission Forms.
Thank you in anticipation for your co-operation.

Regards
Sharon Micalef Cann
E-mail: XXX
Mob: XXX

_____________________
College Principal

_____________________
Signature of the College Principal

Date: ___/___/2010

_____________________
Sharon Micalef Cann
(Researcher)

_____________________
Dr. Doreen Spiteri
(Research Supervisor)

Date: 24/01/2010
Appendix 5
The Interview Schedules
Interview Schedule
(Students)

*Guidelines for both Interview 1 and Interview 2.*

1. Could you describe your school experience so far?
   - in your country
   - in Malta
   - is it different? how and in what way?
   - age of arrival
   - which school/s have you attended since you have been in Malta?
   - which admission criteria were used for your entrance in this school?
   - did you do any language (proficiency) test/s in English/Maltese before entering the school in order to establish your level in English/Maltese?

2. Do you understand and speak English?
   If yes, how did you learn it?

3. Do you understand and speak Maltese?
   If yes, how did you learn it?

4. Have you ever been given any type of support/help in either Maltese or English?

5. Do you think you need it or not at all? Why?

6. Could you describe the activities you have during a typical school day..
   - assembly
   - classroom
   - form teacher session
   - attendance
   - lessons
   - group work
   - class work
   - relationships
   - discussions in class
   - friends
   - break
   - extra curricular activities: sports ...
   - homework

7. In which language are most of these daily things like assembly, form teacher, lessons, group work etc...carried out?
   How do you feel about that?
8. If you had to give a rough percentage indicating the amount of Maltese/English used during a typical day, what would that be? By:
   - the Head,
   - the Assistant Heads,
   - the teachers,
   - instructions,
   - students/peers in class,
   - lessons
   - prize day
   - outings ...

9. In which language/s are the following subjects mostly carried out:
   - Mathematics
   - English
   - mainstream Maltese..
   - Science/Physics
   - Physical Education
   - Geography
   - History
   - PSE
   - Computer...

10. In which language are the following carried out during the lessons mentioned above:
    - the explanation of the teacher...
    - the questions she/he asks during the lesson to check whether students have understood ...
    - the answers/questions asked by your class mates/difficulties ...
    - group work during a lesson...
    - projects/presentations by peers...
    - homework and classwork ...
    - class correction
    - questions/answers/comments
    - discussion ...
    - How do you feel about this?

11. What is your level of participation in all of the above?

12. Do you understand all that is going on during class? Why?

13. In which subject/s do you feel most comfortable? Why?

14. In which subject/s do you feel most uncomfortable? Why?

15. When you have a difficulty or you do not understand something what do you do?
    - you ask the teacher,
    - your friends,
    - you leave it? why?
16. What do you do during English lessons? How do you feel about it?
   - participate?
   - follow?
   - do the work given?
   - find any difficulties?
   - are you happy with the situation?
   - do you think some things can be improved?
   - if yes, how and in what way?

17. What do you do during Maltese lessons? How do you feel about it?
   - participate?
   - follow?
   - do the work given?
   - find any difficulties?
   - are you happy with the situation?
   - do you think some things can be improved?
   - if yes, how and in what way?

18. Now let’s imagine that from tomorrow you’ll be the Head of this school.
    Amongst the students of your school you have several immigrant
    students from various countries. Not all of them can speak English or
    Maltese. What would you do?
    - introduce a new subject
    - additional help/language support/language programmes
    - withdrawal/pull out
    - mainstream
    - same syllabus/textbooks/tests/exams
    - specific help/voluntary
    - who provides support/help?
    - teachers’ role
    - classmates’ role

19. What do you think about English?
    - If you had to compare it to an object/thing/person... whatever..., what would it be?
    - Why?

20. What do you think about Maltese?
    - If you had to compare it to an object/thing/person... whatever..., what would it be?
    - Why?

21. Do you think that immigrant students should or should not learn English?
    Why?

22. Do you think that immigrant students should or should not learn Maltese?
    Why?

23. What do you understand by the word language? Is language important
    for us human beings? Why?
24. Which languages do you mostly speak, where and with whom?
   - at school
   - with the Head/Assistant Head
   - with the teachers
   - during break
   - with your class mates
   - with your friends (do you have friends? Maltese/Foreigners....)
   - outside school (family, other friends ... not school ones) ...

25. Which language do the Head, Assistant Head, Teachers, classmates mostly use when speaking to you?

26. Is there something in the school you would like to change/add/do if you had the power?
   - lessons
   - subjects
   - teachers
   - language support
   - support in Maltese/English - if yes...in mainstream/separate?

27. When you look back to your experience in Maltese schools, is there anything that you wish that was different or that you wish to change? Why?

28. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Interview Schedule  
(Teachers)  
Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers of Mathematics  

Guidelines for the Interview.

1. Many believe that linguistic diversity in state schools is becoming the norm due to an influx of immigrant children. What do you think about Malta’s present situation, is it becoming the norm?

2. Does having more immigrant students in our schools pose any challenges to the schools particularly to the teachers teaching them?

3. What challenges or implications does having immigrant students in class have for you as a teacher of Mathematics?

4. Is teaching a class in which all the students are Maltese different from one in which there are both Maltese and immigrant students?

5. Should immigrant students be in the same class with Maltese students or should they be in a separate class (together)?

6. Which do you think is the language of instruction in this school? English/Maltese (a rough percentage).

7. Which language do you think is mostly used by teachers in this school when giving an explanation? (teacher pupil interaction)

8. Which language do you think is mostly used by students in this school when they are addressing the teacher or discussing something amongst themselves (group work)? (pupil teacher interaction and pupil pupil interaction)

9. Is it important for immigrant students to learn English? Why?

10. Is it important for immigrant students to learn Maltese? Why?

11. Despite Mathematics being a subject which is dominated by numbers, is language important, if yes why and in what way?

12. If you had to choose the language/s which ought to be used during Mathematics, which language/s would you choose and why?

13. Does knowing/not knowing English affect Mathematics?

14. Does knowing/not knowing Maltese affect Mathematics?
15. When you carry out your explanation or correct work, which language do you use?

16. When the students ask questions or need clarifications which language do they use?

17. Despite having textbooks, technical terms and exams in English, is Maltese used during your lessons? If yes by whom and for what? (what occasions)

18. Should Maltese be used in Mathematics? Why?

19. What do you think about teaching Mathematics in Maltese, having textbooks, exam papers... in Maltese?

20. Which language do you encourage your students to use (both in speaking and also in writing) during your lessons and why?

21. Do you see any difference during your lessons and in your subject between Maltese students and immigrant students (their level of participation, their academic level..)?

22. Do you think knowing only English is enough for immigrant students to do well in your subject?

23. Do you think knowing only English is enough for immigrant students to do well at school?

24. What do you think about immigrant students and the Maltese language? Do you think immigrant children should learn Maltese? Why?

25. Do you think that learning Maltese will enable them to do better in Maltese only or will it also affect them academically in other subjects including Mathematics?

26. Are immigrant students being given any kind of support in this school particularly during your subject (English/Maltese, different handouts ...)?

27. If a student is having difficulty in catching up with Mathematics due to a language barrier, what provisions are there?

28. When you look back to your teaching experience, what is your opinion regarding immigrant students in Malta? Are the provisions provided enough/adequate? Do you think that they find it easy to cope?

29. Is the topic "immigrant students" being tackled enough at school? Should it be tackled more like for example during SDP sessions?
30. If you had to choose an object or a scene which represents the experience of the immigrant students as they make their way through Malta’s education system what would that be?

31. Is there anything in the school or in the system you would implement/change vis-à-vis immigrant students and their integration in schools?

32. To summarise, if you had to choose a word/objectscene… that describes your experience as a teacher of Mathematics teaching a classroom in which there are Maltese and immigrant students, what would you choose?

33. Before we end the interview is there anything else you would like to add regarding immigrant students and language?
Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers of English and Maltese

Guidelines for the Interview.

1. Many believe that linguistic diversity in state schools is becoming the norm due to an influx of immigrant children. What do you think about Malta’s present situation, is it becoming the norm?

2. Does having more immigrant students in our schools pose any challenges to the schools particularly to the teachers teaching them?

3. What challenges or implications does having immigrant students in class have for you as a teacher of English/Maltese?

4. Is teaching a class in which all the students are Maltese different from one in which there are both Maltese and immigrant students?

5. Should immigrant students be in the same class with Maltese students or should they be in a separate class (together) for subjects such as Mathematics, Science..?

6. Which is the language of instruction in this school? English/Maltese (rough percentage)

7. Which language do you think is mostly used by teachers in this school when giving explanations? (teacher pupil interaction)

8. Which language do you think is mostly used by students in this school when they are addressing the teacher or discussing something amongst themselves (group work)? (pupil teacher interaction and pupil pupil interaction)

9. What role does language occupy in the holistic quality education of students?

10. Is it important for immigrant students to learn English/Maltese? Why?

11. Do you think that knowing English/Maltese will enable immigrant students to do better in English/Maltese or will it also affect them academically in other subjects such as Mathematics, Science, ICT, Home Economics …?

12. From your experience which style is best for the teaching of English/Maltese to immigrant students:
   a. sink or swim
   b. closed classes (isolated from their Maltese peers)
   c. mainstream + withdrawal system (pull-out)?

13. Are immigrant students being given any extra help/support in order to be able to learn English? What do you think about this?
14. If yes, could you kindly describe it.

15. If no, are there any planned language provisions for immigrant students?

16. When you carry out your explanation or correct work, which language do you use?

17. When the students ask questions or need clarifications which language do they use?

18. Is English/Maltese used during your lessons? If yes by whom and for what?

19. Do you see any difference during your lessons and in your subject between Maltese students and immigrant students (their level of participation, their academic level..)?

20. Are immigrant students being given any kind of support in this school particularly during your subject (simple English/Maltese, different handouts, different exam …)?

21. If a student is having difficulty in catching up with English/Maltese due to a language barrier, what provisions are there?

22. Do you think knowing only English is enough to do well at school?

23. Is it important for immigrant students to learn Maltese? Why?

24. When you look back to your teaching experience, what is your opinion regarding immigrant students in Malta? Are the provisions provided enough/adequate? Do you think that they find it easy to cope?

25. Are teachers being given any extra help/support/professional training/resources in order to be able to teach English to immigrant students? What do you think teachers of English/Maltese need? Do teachers of English/Maltese teaching immigrant students have specific/particular needs?

26. Is the topic “immigrant students” being tackled enough at school? Should it be tackled more like for example during SDP sessions?

27. If you had to choose an object or a scene which would represent the experience of the immigrant students as they make their way through Malta’s educational system what would that be?

28. Is there anything in the school or in the system you would implement/change vis-à-vis immigrant students and their integration in schools?
29. To summarise, if you had to choose a word/object/scene… that describes your experience as a teacher of English/Maltese teaching a classroom in which there are Maltese and immigrant students, what would you choose?

30. Before we end the interview is there anything else you would like to add regarding immigrant students and language?
Interview Schedule
(Senior Management Team)

Semi-Structured Interviews with members of the Senior Management Team

Guidelines for the Interview.

General Information about the School:
1. Many believe that linguistic diversity in state schools is becoming the norm due to an influx of immigrant children. What do you think about Malta’s present situation, is it becoming the norm?

2. Do you have any immigrant students in your school? And if yes, could you indicate the approximate percentage of the school population, immigrant students occupy?

3. Amongst these immigrant students are/were there any refugees, unaccompanied minors or asylum seekers?

4. Throughout the years, have the number of immigrant students at your school increased or decreased?

5. What are the implications or challenges of such an increase for the school? Did the school have to make any particular adaptations so that the immigrant students feel welcomed and helped to integrate with their native peers?

6. When you address the students (during assembly/talks/Prize Day/Sports Day…), which language do you use?

7. Is there a language policy in this school, if yes could you kindly describe it? Which is the language of instruction in this school (during morning assemblies, Prize Day, Talks, Information given by the Assistant Heads../circulars/applications/information sent home/certificates for both good and bad behaviour..)?

8. Which language do you think is mostly used by teachers in this school when they are explaining?

9. Which language do you think is mostly used by students in this school when they are addressing the teacher or discussing something amongst themselves (group work)? (pupil teacher interaction and pupil pupil interaction)
The English language:
10. Is it important for immigrant students to learn English (if it is not their native language)? Why?

11. Do you think that knowing English will enable immigrant students to do better in English only or will it also affect them academically in other subjects as well such as Mathematics, Science, ICT, Home Economics?

12. Are immigrant students being given any extra help/support in order to be able to learn English?

13. If yes, could you kindly describe it.

14. If no, are there any planned language provisions for immigrant students who come to Form 1 and are not proficient in English?

15. Do you think knowing only English is enough for immigrant students to do well at school?

The Maltese language:
16. Is it important for immigrant students to learn/study Maltese? Why?

17. Are immigrant students being given any extra help/support in order to be able to learn Maltese?

18. If yes, could you kindly describe it and the reasons for such a programme? If no, are there any planned language provisions for immigrant students?
   - Who came up with the idea of a programme such a programme for Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL)?
   - When was it started?
   - Why did this programme originate? (reasons for its introduction)
   - What are the aims of such a programme?
   - Will this programme still be in place if there is a change in administration?
   - Is this programme a school based decision or an Education Division decision?
   - Which inclusion criteria are being used when selecting students for MAL (marks, permission from parents, consent from students..)?
   - Are the students attending the MAL class given any books/resources or do they have to buy them?
   - What are the strengths of such a language programme?
   - What are the weaknesses of such a language programme?
Would you recommend such a programme to other State Schools which like this school have quite a high number of immigrant students amongst their school population? Why?

19. Do you think that knowing Maltese will enable immigrant students to do better in Maltese only or will it also affect them academically in other subjects such as Mathematics, Science, ICT, Home Economics or otherwise?

20. If there were Maltese students who had some problems in Maltese, would you consider asking them to join the MAL class? Why?

The immigrant students:

21. When the immigrant students are placed in classes, are there any particular criteria taken into consideration such as not being alone/or being with other immigrant students or is it just marks like with the rest of the Maltese students?

22. Are there any subjects which the immigrant students are exempted from and when this is done, who decides? (the students/their parents/their guardians/the MAL teacher/the school administration)

23. Are teachers being given any extra help/support/training/resources in order to be able to teach English to immigrant students? What do you think teachers of English need? Do teachers of English teaching immigrant students have specific/particular needs?

24. Do you notice any difference between Maltese students and immigrant students (their level of participation in both curricular and non-curricular activities, their behaviour, their academic level..)?

25. Is the topic “immigrant students” being tackled enough at school, like for example in the SDP or other PD sessions?

26. Besides MAL are there any other provisions for immigrant students (such as the School Council representatives…)?

27. Is there anything in the school or in the system you would implement/change vis-à-vis immigrant students and their integration in schools?

28. Before we end this interview is there anything else you would like to add regarding immigrant students and language?
Appendix 6
The Observation Schedule
## A. Seating Position in Class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1ST TIME</th>
<th>2ND TIME</th>
<th>3RD TIME</th>
<th>4TH TIME</th>
<th>5TH TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Seating position shows integration with peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Seating position shows segregation from peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Body language of the student conveys exclusion from peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Body language of peers conveys integration of the student.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments - Seating Position in Class:**

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

## B. Interaction with Peers during the Lesson:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 HIGHLY EVIDENT</th>
<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Interaction of the student occurs only with Maltese peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Interaction of the student occurs only with immigrant student peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Interaction of the student occurs with both Maltese and immigrant student peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. THE CONTENT OF THE LESSON AND THE STUDENT’S UNDERSTANDING:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 HIGHLY EVIDENT</th>
<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Shows interest during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Shows no interest during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Is attentive during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Is distracted during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The student shows comprehension of what is being said by the teacher (reacts/smiles to jokes …).</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The student does not show comprehension of what is being said by the teacher (does not react).</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Makes eye contact with the teacher and the pupils when they intervene.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Does not make eye contact with the teacher and the pupils when they intervene.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The student follows the instructions given by the teacher instantly (open the book on page …).</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The student follows the instructions given by the teacher after consulting with his/her peers.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The student simply follows the instructions given by the teacher by doing what his/her peers do (copying their actions).</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Asks for help immediately when something is not clear.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Asks for help or clarification reluctantly/timidly when something is not clear.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The student is asked questions for clarifications in class by his/her teacher.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Asks some of his peers for help or clarification when something is not clear.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Does not ask any questions at all.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Shows signs of enthusiasm in presentation of tasks.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Responds immediately to praise.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Responds immediately to corrections by the teacher.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Active participation in class.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### D. Interaction with Peers during the Lesson:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>3 Highly Evident</th>
<th>2 Somewhat Evident</th>
<th>1 Not Evident</th>
<th>0 Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30. Average participation in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Passive participation in class.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Regularly comments and gives his/her contribution in class.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Rarely comments or gives his/her contribution in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Never comments or gives any contribution in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. The student only participates when prompted by the teacher.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments - The Content of the Lesson and the Student’s Understanding:**

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

### E. Level of Integration with Peers during Classroom Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>3 Highly Evident</th>
<th>2 Somewhat Evident</th>
<th>1 Not Evident</th>
<th>0 Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36. During group formation, the immigrant student is eagerly asked to join in by his/her peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. During group formation, the immigrant student is reluctantly called to join in by his/her peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. During group formation, the immigrant student is not asked to join in by his/her peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. During group formation, the teacher intervenes so that the immigrant is able to join a group in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Throughout the classroom activities the immigrant student is fully integrated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Throughout the classroom activities the immigrant student is partially integrated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Throughout the classroom activities the immigrant student is completely left out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. During group work s/he contributes actively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. During group work s/he rarely contributes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. During group work s/he does not contribute at all.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments - Level of Integration with Peers during Classroom Activities:**

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

234
### F. LANGUAGE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>3 HIGHLY EVIDENT</th>
<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46. When the student participates during the lesson, s/he uses only Maltese.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. When the student participates during the lesson, s/he uses only English.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. When the student participates during the lesson, s/he code switches between Maltese and his/her L1.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. When the student participates during the lesson, s/he code switches between English and his/her L1.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. When the student participates during the lesson, s/he uses only his/her L1.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. When the student intervenes during the lesson, his/her peers react positively towards the accent/language used.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. When the student intervenes during the lesson, his/her peers react negatively towards the accent/language used.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. When the student intervenes during the lesson, his/her peers do not react at all towards the accent/language used.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### COMMENTS - LANGUAGE:

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

### G. FEEDBACK OF THE IMMIGRANT STUDENT’S CONTRIBUTION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54. When s/he contributes in class receives positive comments from the teacher (signs of understanding).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. When s/he contributes in class receives negative comments from the teacher (signs of lack of understanding).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. When s/he contributes in class receives positive comments from his/her peers (relevant contribution).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. When s/he contributes in class receives negative comments from his/her peers (irrelevant contribution).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### COMMENTS - FEEDBACK OF THE IMMIGRANT STUDENT’S CONTRIBUTION:

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
### H. DIFFERENT TREATMENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 HIGHLY EVIDENT</th>
<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58. The student is given more attention by the teacher than his/her peers.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. The student is given the same attention by the teacher as his/her peers.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. The student is given different work.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. The student is given the same work as his peers.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. The student is provided with extra help.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. The student is not provided with extra help.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. The student seems happy with the support provided.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. The student seems unhappy with the support provided.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMENTS - DIFFERENT TREATMENT:**

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

**Additional Comments:**

*General thoughts about the lesson…*
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

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Appendix 7
Sample of an Observation Schedule with Data Collection
OBSERVER: MS. SHARON MICALEF CANN
DATE: XXX
NO. OF STUDENTS IN CLASS: 16+1 (17)
DAY OF THE WEEK: XXX
FORM: 3xxx
TIME: XXX
STUDENT OBSERVED: XXX

TEACHER: XXX
SCHOOL: XXX
SUBJECT: MATHEMATICS
LESSON: 6TH
TOPIC: XXX
LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 45 MINUTES
NATIONALITY: XXX

WHEN OBSERVED:

MARK ACCORDINGLY:

A. SEATING POSITION IN CLASS:

1. Seating position shows integration with peers.
2. Seating position shows segregation from peers.
4. Body language of the student conveys exclusion from peers.
5. Body language of peers conveys integration of the student.

Teacher’s Desk

Comments - Seating Position in Class:

[Diagram of seating arrangement with student positions marked as empty or Immigrant student]
As the class plan portrays, XXX was not only seated at the very back but physically detached from all the rest and surrounded by empty desks. This instantly attracted my attention. As I was filling in the information about the class and counted the number of students and instinctively I wrote...16+1...because the seating position was so striking that it made me count like that....and I have left it so. Later on I will explain what made me count the number of students in such a way. There was never any eye contact with her peers. It was as if she was not there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B. INTERACTION WITH PEERS DURING THE LESSON:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Interaction of the student occurs only with Maltese peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Interaction of the student occurs only with immigrant student peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Interaction of the student occurs with both Maltese and immigrant student peers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMENTS - INTERACTION WITH PEERS DURING THE LESSON:**

As mentioned above she was simply left on her own, completely detached from all..including the language. Had English been used, it would have shown that she was part of the class, that she can participate. English was not used at all except for numbers and technical words. Explanation and revision..in Maltese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C. THE CONTENT OF THE LESSON AND THE STUDENT’S UNDERSTANDING:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Shows interest during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Shows no interest during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Is attentive during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Is distracted during the lesson.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The student shows comprehension of what is being said by the teacher (reacts/smiles to jokes).</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The student does not show comprehension of what is being said by the teacher (does not react).</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Makes eye contact with the teacher and the pupils when they intervene.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Does not make eye contact with the teacher and the pupils when they intervene.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The student follows the instructions given by the teacher instantly (open the book on page …).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The student follows the instructions given by the teacher after consulting with his/her peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The student simply follows the instructions given by the teacher by doing what his/her peers do (copying their actions).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Asks for help immediately when something is not clear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Asks for help or clarification reluctantly/timidly when something is not clear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The student is asked questions for clarifications in class by his/her teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Asks some of his/her peers for help or clarification when something is not clear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Does not ask any questions at all.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Shows signs of enthusiasm on presentation of tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Responds immediately to praise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Responds immediately to corrections by the teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Active participation in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Average participation in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Passive participation in class.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Regularly comments and gives his/her contribution in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Rarely comments or gives his/her contribution in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Never comments or gives his/her contribution in class.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. The student only participates when prompted by the teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMENTS - THE CONTENT OF THE LESSON AND THE STUDENT’S UNDERSTANDING:

She was neither asked anything by the teacher nor her peers. Throughout the entire lesson XXX simply stood quiet, writing and presumably trying to do two tasks - trying to understand Maltese in order to be able to follow Mathematics. The rest of the class had to concentrate only on one task - Mathematics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. LEVEL OF INTEGRATION WITH PEERS DURING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:</th>
<th>3 HIGHLY EVIDENT</th>
<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36. During group formation, the immigrant student is eagerly asked to join in by his/her peers.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. During group formation, the immigrant student is reluctantly called to join in by his/her peers.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. During group formation, the immigrant student is not asked to join in by his/her peers.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. During group formation, the teacher intervenes so that the immigrant is able to join a group in class.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Throughout the classroom activities the immigrant student is fully integrated.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Throughout the classroom activities the immigrant student is partially integrated.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Throughout the classroom activities the immigrant student is completely left out.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. During group work s/he contributes actively.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. During group work s/he rarely contributes.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. During group work s/he does not contribute at all.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMMENTS - LEVEL OF INTEGRATION WITH PEERS DURING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

No group work was carried out in class. The whole group in class discussed and worked out the given tasks together. With regards to XXX she was totally ignored. None of her peers looked at her or asked her whether she was following etc. She does not participate at all. Extremely passive. Not included by either the teacher or her peers.

E. LANGUAGE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 HIGHLY EVIDENT</th>
<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46. When the student participates during the lesson, s/he uses only Maltese.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. When the student participates during the lesson, s/he uses only English.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the student participates during the lesson, s/he code switches between Maltese and his/her L1.

When the student participates during the lesson, s/he code switches between English and his/her L1.

When the student participates during the lesson, s/he uses only his/her L1.

When the student intervenes during the lesson, his/her peers react positively towards the accent/language used.

When the student intervenes during the lesson, his/her peers react negatively towards the accent/language used.

When the student intervenes during the lesson, his/her peers do not react at all towards the accent/language used.

**COMMENTS - LANGUAGE:**

During this lesson XXX was a totally different person from the one I’d seen in the previous English lesson. Here she was alone, at the back, unnoticed. Language was definitely the only tool to get to Mathematics. She kept working on her own. I noticed that her peers intervened about 8 times, and when they did, they always spoke Maltese.

The teacher spoke Maltese throughout. XXX was extremely passive. Even if she had had a difficulty, the situation in class would not permitted her to ask for clarification as English was just used for terminology/simple words, so both comprehension and participation were hampered. Maltese was the main medium of instruction during this lesson.

**F. FEEDBACK OF THE IMMIGRANT STUDENT’S CONTRIBUTION:**

When s/he contributes in class receives positive comments from the teacher (signs of understanding).

When s/he contributes in class receives negative comments from the teacher (signs of lack of understanding).
56. When s/he contributes in class receives positive comments from his/her peers (relevant contribution).

57. When s/he contributes in class receives negative comments from his/her peers (irrelevant contribution).

COMMENTS - FEEDBACK OF THE IMMIGRANT STUDENT’S CONTRIBUTION:

She was never asked anything by her teacher or by her peers. Nothing, not even when they were given several tasks to complete on their own. The teacher simply went round the first two or three students in front then suddenly moved on, since one of the girls eagerly shouted, “lest” (ready).

G. DIFFERENT TREATMENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 HIGHLY EVIDENT</th>
<th>2 SOMEWHAT EVIDENT</th>
<th>1 NOT EVIDENT</th>
<th>0 NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58. The student is given more attention by the teacher than his/her peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. The student is given the same attention by the teacher as his/her peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. The student is given different work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. The student is given the same work as his peers.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. The student is provided with extra help.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. The student is not provided with extra help.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. The student seems happy with the support provided.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. The student seems unhappy with the support provided.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMMENTS - DIFFERENT TREATMENT:

In this case, I really wish XXX was treated better i.e. if only someone in class (the teacher/the rest of the students) would bother to remember that there was an immigrant student and that English was her bridge-language..the only way for her to communicate, understand and participate. Now after having reflected on what I observed today, I think that I can explain why I wrote 16+1. From what I observed today, XXX is not part of the class, she is that +1, still not part of the 16.
**General thoughts about the lesson...**

I must say that this was a very interesting lesson to observe though I must admit that it made me very sad. This followed immediately after the English lesson. I am glad I did because observing XXX in two different lessons enabled me to have a different perspective. After the English lesson as I was walking down the corridor with her teacher of English I could see XXX walking away from her class for Mathematics. XXX waited outside the Maths classroom and it was only when the Maths teacher came in that XXX entered the classroom. I found this rather odd but soon realised the reason...

During this lesson she sat right at the very back almost beside me..but it seemed to be her usual place. The lesson was carried out entirely in Maltese. The rest of the class ignored her presence and kept asking questions in Maltese. Not one of them spoke English. It showed me that this student not only might have difficulty in understanding the explanation and questions of her peers, but also, given the situation in the class, if she had asked a question she would have done so in English. It would have sounded odd since the rest spoke only Maltese. She kept **copying** all that the teacher wrote on the board and remained quiet at the back. I guessed for XXX and other immigrant students this situation was part of their daily routine. Later I realised why, during her interview, she compared her situation to a balloon with people inside where she is the needle trying to pop it, but despite her struggles, she can’t.

**Comments about the student observed:**

Well, XXX sat quietly at the back for the entire lesson. The teacher kept explaining, giving examples and discussing the various difficulties always in Maltese. English was only used for technical words such as: “value” “equation” “numbers such as one, six …” “substitute” “plus” “minus”. A reflection on what I observed:
If English is her only bridge to Mathematics, how will she get this? It's not just a Maths lesson, but also a Maltese lesson for unless one knows Maltese, one is totally unable to follow anything.

Could it be that she came in immediately after the teacher because she had no friends in class and thus avoiding coming in class early as she was alone?

During the lesson she only copied (reproducing what was written) what the teacher wrote on the board.

Though she does understand a bit of Maltese, it was too fast at times, even for me as a native speaker, let alone for an immigrant student trying to grasp the content, the explanation of a subject which was being totally delivered in Maltese. It was as if in class she was like a ghost, present yet totally unnoticed. I will see next week..I really do hope that things get a bit better for XXX.

It is true that as most teachers explained in their interviews, the rest of the students are Maltese, they are in their country, the teacher has a vast syllabus to cover in quite a limited time, but it seemed to me that this class was very bright..the brighter they are, the faster they go..less time to repeat in English. Granted the teacher kept asking repeatedly."kulħadd orrajt?" (Understood?) but even that was in Maltese! In using a little bit of English XXX would surely have been made to feel part of the class. In using just Maltese they are excluding her. The language used implies inclusion/segregation. English meant in this case...you're in, Maltese..kept her out of all that was happening in class.

This lesson was an eye-opener. I still feel sad even though am still writing these notes late at night. I still can feel the pain of being left out. Immigrant students must work and struggle hard. Being unable to communicate in a language which is like air at school, used naturally all the time, must make them feel as XXX herself explained in her interview last time: frustrated/helpless. Their school experience is definitely not an easy one.

(23rd March, 2011 23:14 pm)
Appendix 8
Complete Findings of The Study 1 of 4 - Challenges and Experiences related to Peer Relationships
Challenges and experiences related to peer relationships

Surely, one of the essential underlying dynamics of the human journey is the making and cultivation of meaningful relationships. They form a shield against life’s battering waves. Yet, as shall be depicted in the following section, sometimes the immigrant students’ peer relationships did not act as a breakwater outside each of the immigrant students’ harbour and so very often these little harbours were left exposed to the forces of the strong waves.

With Maltese Peers

For some of the adolescents participating in this study, their new experiences at school were marred by the peer relationships with the native-born peers. Feelings of unwantedness constituted an important challenge that affected their adaptation at school particularly in class and among their native peers. Very often they were ostracized or ignored by the native-born or more acculturated students. This triggered several reactions from both foreign-born and Maltese-born students, giving rise to the inferiority and superiority complexes that increased and further accentuated the immigrants’ foreignness. As seen in Stodolska’s interviewees, “isolation and the resulting loneliness seemed to be a particularly important problem for the recently arrived interviewees” (Stodolska, 2008, p. 216). Despite this, some of the immigrants related instances when they were helped by their native peers who acted like a buddy in facilitating their adaptation and integration into the new class and school.

With Maltese Peers - Negative

Befriending Maltese peers did not seem to come about easily for many of the participants in this study, particularly since most of the Maltese students in their class as Kate noted, “have had friends before, of the years before, that they knew.. I was on my own”.
This strong longing of trying to fit in, “in an already established group” as “they think their group is reserved” was for Kate\textsuperscript{A} a big challenge. She relates that very often her Maltese peers, “... think they are better because they are all Maltese and you are only one who is different so they must be better” (Kate\textsuperscript{A}). Consequently, she added that she had been quite lonely. So, when an immigrant met other immigrants they instantly stuck together, although this too was problematic:

...if we don’t, we’d never get a friend who is Maltese if we don’t stick together. It doesn’t make us very clever if we stay, if we always stay the foreign students together but if we don’t, we never get a friend. (Kate\textsuperscript{A})

Some of the participants like Kate\textsuperscript{A}, explained that “we’ve had experiences they don’t have; we’ve seen snow, we’ve gone to different countries, most of them haven’t sort of travelled that much” yet, “they don’t find it interesting, they don’t want to be like uh look let’s ask them what it’s like”. In fact, the participants felt that to gain access to their native peers, they had to gradually lose their distinctiveness to “blend in” or “melt” into the Maltese society. This echoes Baffoe (2011: 480) who asserted that, “the message that gets communicated to these newly-arrived visible minority children in the schools … is that it is assimilation, rather than integration, that is required in order to fit in and be accepted”.

Most of the time it has been hard. People think you’re not interested in anything because you’re foreign and they think you got different ideals like ‘cause I’m not a Christian and I’m foreign most people shun me, they do not want to speak to me … most of the time they sort of ignore me as if I’m some kind of do not know someone to avoid, an alien or a freak. (Kate\textsuperscript{A})

During some lessons a feeling of hostility could be sensed when “…a lot of the Maltese students used to like get really angry” because “they wanted the lesson in Maltese and the English-speaking student didn’t want any Maltese, she wanted just in English...” (Enya\textsuperscript{A}). Enya\textsuperscript{A} narrated an incident when,
Last year … there was one girl who refused to do anything in Maltese so the teacher used to have to speak in English, but a lot of the other students used to get really angry.

(Enya\(^A\))

This conflict was also referred to by several teachers in School\(^A\). They commented that “very often our students feel frustrated because they feel they are being forced to use English in their own country for the sake of a minority of outsiders. It irritates them and that is why they rebel” (Ms. Maltese\(^A\)).\(^{81}\)

Now when I go to class and begin the lesson in English you’ll see their reaction: They raise their hand and tell me “Switch to Maltese,” I’m not understanding,” There is an uproar every time. It is the same every time and since the majority want the lesson in Maltese I cannot refuse.

(Mr. Maths\(^A\)).\(^{82}\)

Having friends is an essential part of growing up and several immigrant students commented that, “I’m sure that if I knew Maltese I wouldn’t make so much friends with the foreigners but I would be able to make friends with the other girls in my class more”. (Kate\(^A\))

Language is very important for school because it helps the children to communicate like some might want to play with you but they feel drawn away by your language cause they do not know what to say to you so they leave you alone.

(Mbilia\(^C\))

The boys in School\(^B\) also commented on similar challenging situations which simply got worse during break. Kjell\(^B\) added that in the beginning, in order to play with the others, “Maltese was like a barrier to join”. Gerwin\(^B\) said that, “all of them talk Maltese” and this makes him feel left out. Kjell\(^B\) added that,

\(^{81}\)Original quote in Maltese: Ἁףنا ḫраби ḫHexStringohom ffrustrati l-Maltin ukoll ṣeqħdin go Malta, il-maġgoranza tal-klassi huma Maltin u qed jispiċċaw jqqogħdu jużaw l-Ingliż jew jippruvaw jifħmu bl-Ingliż minħabba dawn it-tfal. Naħseb ħ XSS HashSetom xi fît urretsi u għaletθekk kultant jirribellaw.

\(^{82}\)Original quote in Maltese: Issa kif inkun fil-klassi nibda l-lezzjoni bl-Ingliż ḡa tara x'jghidu t-tfal; jaqbdu jgħollu subgħajhom “aqliib li għall-Malti”, “ma rridx bl-Ingliż”, “m’jien nifhem xejn”… pandemonju jaqligħu. Kull darba li nibda nitkellem bl-Ingliż, jibdew jgħidu li mhux qed jifħmu u allura jekk il-maġgoranza jridu bil-Malti jien mhux ḡa nghidilhom le.
“in the break they just speak Maltese the boys and that is why, we which are foreigners we go away and play for ourselves...”.

As Ms. English\textsuperscript{B7} and Ms. English\textsuperscript{B9} remarked, Maltese goes beyond any kind of subject and “to get by, a certain basic competence in the local language is essential. Otherwise they are stuck” (Ms. English\textsuperscript{B9}).\textsuperscript{83}

**Looking down on immigrant students - being different, being inferior**

Many of the immigrant students in this study felt that for their Maltese peers, being different implies being inferior. Kate\textsuperscript{A} commented that “they’ll always say that their ideas are better than yours just because they are Maltese” and that “if you’re foreign, it has to be inferior”. Furthermore, she emphasised that it is “sort of their country not ours; they’ll try and make you seem stupid just so that they can be better”.

... they think that we should be really submissive and like bow down to what they tell us and just accept everything they say as the truth just because they were born and live here. I mean we live here too but they’re the ones that were born here, and bred here, they think that we should just shut up and let them do what they want. They don’t think it really matters what we think.

(Kate\textsuperscript{A})

This attitude was confirmed by Ms. English\textsuperscript{B8} who noted that “they look down on them as if they were inferior” and “the Maltese feel superior to them” such that when the Maltese address the immigrants, “they speak to them in a rough way” (Ms. English\textsuperscript{B8}).

... they are very rough I noticed with the foreigners. Maybe because they’re not confident in English and the tone they use is a bit rough. They want to feel superior to them, they don’t want to feel that the foreigners are taking over I think sort of you know.

(Ms. English\textsuperscript{B8})

\textsuperscript{83}Original quote in Maltese: biex tghaddi, ċertu kompetenza bażika fil-lingwa tal-pajjiż ghandek bżonnha ghalhekk dawn mingħajr il-Malti qishom imwahhlin.
“Making fun of my accent or my bad Maltese”

Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008, p. 79-80) explain that learning is an intensely social act. Whilst social supports can serve “to fan the embers of learning”, feeling ashamed for not knowing or understanding can shut the process down. The latter was common among the participants of this study. Many mentioned the fact that there were several instances in class where they were laughed at since they either had a particular accent or were still “bad at Maltese”. These situations evoked pain and affected their self-esteem. It also hampered their confidence in further learning and practising Maltese and discouraged friendships.

I remember trying really hard so I get them to stop laughing at me and making fun of me. ‘Cause some words have the accent and I couldn’t say them properly so I have them laughing at me ... they just thought it was something to laugh at.

(Elizabeth Å)

Like to me sometimes they joke like they talk like you know that I (exaggerated accent), like this, like I’m stupid.

(Elisa Å)

This mimicry and taunting was also, as confessed by Elizabeth Å, one of her greatest pains. In fact she cried while narrating these episodes.

Some of my friends in my old school used to laugh at me ‘cause I couldn’t speak Maltese so that made me upset (crying). It hurt me a lot. It made me angry as they would laugh at me every time I try to speak it.

(Elizabeth Å)

Kate Å argued that if being accepted by Maltese peers meant making fun of the others’ attempts, then she did not want to become accepted among the Maltese at all.

Sometimes I want to learn Maltese for myself not for other people but when other people act like that and make fun of our mistakes and stuff, that makes me not want to learn Maltese and not want to be their friends because I do not want to be like them just cause I’m
Maltese; I do not want to be accepted into that group that says stuff to everyone who isn’t them.  

(Kate^A)

**Intolerance and bullying**

All the immigrant boys in School^B had experienced some kind of bullying. In School^A, it was only Elizabeth^A, Kate^A and Elisa^A who referred to such instances. Yet, most of the teachers in School^A, commented on the immigrant girls’ attitude of superiority mainly towards their Maltese peers and anything that was related to Malta, including the educational system.

It seems that for most of the participants in this study, “they will always bully you because you’re not Maltese” (Elisa^A).

They used to bully a lot, the children the old ones when they used to go out play football. They used to bully me and I used to cry but I used to be afraid to tell my father … but I used to cry all the time.  

(Zoran^B)

Kate^A narrated episodes where she felt that the Maltese overreacted to something such as when she accidentally tipped a little bit of water on a girl’s bag. She could not understand how all of a sudden, “ten other people started coming and shouting at me because of a little bit of water”. Kate^A added that dealing with her peers’ attitude has been one of her biggest challenges, as “they’re kind of cruel sometimes”. This feeling was so strong that, “I remember times when I did not want to come to school”.

Kjell^B too narrated similar incidents where some Maltese boys played “jokes” on him. He also recalled situations where they locked his Chinese friend in the pitch, threw nuts at him during lessons yet “he thinks that they are his friends but they only make him get exclusions” and “have punishments for nothing...”.

Several teachers from both School^A and School^B confirmed these “overreactions” and “jokes”. Ms. English^B7 said that some “manage to
overcome being bullied half way through the year”.84 Others did not like the Italian boy who, “was bullied so much ... that he had to leave this school” (Ms. EnglishB7).85

I have a coloured boy in class. When his classmates tease him, though not unkindly, I still find it offensive. They do so because they seem to think that, being a foreigner, he has no feelings.... I think they consider them outsiders; we can tell them what we like, as it is more than enough that we are putting up with them, this is the attitude of the Maltese. The way they address these people leaves much to be desired.

(Ms. MalteseB3)86

Ms. EnglishB7 pointed out that in SchoolB, “immigrants coming to the school are given a hard time initially”.87 She added that “it could be because the locals in this area have many social problems. They are incapable of welcoming a foreigner, rather it brings out the worst in them” (Ms. EnglishB7).88 Unfortunately this situation impacts on the students, because “you have to change; it is either adapt or die .... they make your life hell if you don’t stand up to them” (Ms. EnglishB7).89

I’ve noticed that when our students see an immigrant at the beginning of the year, they make his life hell. The message seems to be: we are Maltese, you an outsider, so we can pick on you. Haven’t other teachers mentioned this to you?

(Ms. EnglishB7)90

84Original quote in Maltese: jirnexxilhom jirbħu l-bullying, half way through the year.

85Original quote in Maltese: tant kemm ġie bullied jiġifieri ... li kellu jiltaq minn din l-iskola.

86Original quote in Maltese: Jien għandi student iswed fil-klassi, anki jekk dak li jgħidulu biċ-ċaqt jiena nħoss li hu ftit goff ... miegħu jiċċajtaw b’mod aktar għax qishom mingħalhom li għax barranin mhux se forsi jweqgqghu... Naħseb jahsbu li dawn qegħdin hawn barranin, nghidulhom x nghidulhom ok għax speci diġà qed nagħmiulhom pjaċir li nħalluhom jooqghdu hawn, qishom hekk, jiġu jagħtu u jqumu l-Maltin minnhom. Ma jagħtux kas kif ikellmuhom.

87Original quote in Maltese: kull meta jiġi barrani fil-bidu jtuħ naqra hard time.

88Original quote in Maltese: speċjament li l-Maltin ta’ dil-area, peress li hija naqra area with many social problems, ma jafux kif barrani jalqghuh, anzi toħrog kważi l-kattiverja fihom.

89Original quote in Maltese: you have to change; speċi ta’ adapt to us or die ... they make your life hell jekk toqghod kwet qisek najxu.
Ms. English continued her story. She narrated an incident that occurred during one of her lessons at the end of the scholastic year, when all the Maltese boys in class “rose against the immigrants… a whole class against Hai (another immigrant student from China not participating in this study), Kjell and Mihai.” They spat out words like “go back to your country, why did you come to Malta?”.

In view of these happenings, Ms. English argued that it is not “fair to bring immigrants into class half way through the year, without any kind of preparation.” There needs to be some sort of transition or reception programme where the newly-arrived immigrants are prepared to enter mainstream and the Maltese students helped to respond positively to diversity.

Unfortunately, many Maltese, on encountering foreigners, lack the social skills to get to know them; instead they think it’s smart to make fun of them… the mentality is, I am Maltese and you the outsider, what are you doing here? I feel this is due to the influx of irregular immigrants we have, as this is how they refer to these immigrants…you are taking our jobs, what are you doing here? Go back to your country, and they also use offensive language…!

In the face of all these negative peer relationships, some immigrants try very hard not to show what they are going through. As Ms. English explained, it would make them appear weaker and so they simply hide their feelings. However, as was the case with Stovan (another immigrant in her class not participating in this study) who never speaks, she is not sure if “it’s because…

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90. Original quote in Maltese: Jien naraha li meta jaraw barrani ġdid fil-bidu tas-sena, they make his life hell normalment ghax hekk speci ta’ ahna Maltin, inti barrani, naqbdu miegħek. Qatt ma qaluhielek teachers oħrajn?

91. Original quote in Maltese: Letteralment rewwixta l-Maltin kontra l-barranin… qed nghidlek klasxi shiħa kontra Hai, Kjell u Mihai.

92. Original quote in Maltese: mhux fair li jaqbdu u jġibbu barrani hekk u jiftgħuh ġo klasxi f’nofs ta’ sena mingħajr ma jkun hemm naqra preparamenti qabel

93. Original quote in Maltese: Il-mentalità Maltija hija li xi kultant xħin jaraw barrani m’għandhomx l-iskills so that they get to know him better, jaraw aktar kif ġa’ jaqbdu miegħu. … Malta vera issa għandna hafna kulturi differenti però għadna bil-mentalità li ‘Jiena Malti u int barrani, x’qad tagħmel hawn?’ … li naħseb ġejja mill-kwistjoni tal-immigrazzjoni irregolari ghax hekk jghidulhom lill-barranin … ‘Qed teħdulna postna, X’qad tiġu tagħmlu hawn? Go back to your country’ u jghajruhom eh …!!
he feels embarrassed or because he will be bullied” by his Maltese peers. Once, he could not stand any more that he just got up, and broke out in anger (Ms. EnglishB8).

He didn’t use any language. He just went all red and almost became violent. But he stopped, he controlled himself. I notice that they keep back. They keep back. They are not totally themselves. They do not feel comfortable expressing themselves as they wish. Sheng Li (an immigrant not participating in this study), I notice, he too feels threatened. They keep back and especially in that class, they are afraid, you can say, of the bullies in that classroom.

(Ms. EnglishB8)

Sheng Li, he is Chinese. He is bullied so much (picked on) because of his accent. I feel very very sorry for him but he doesn’t show that he’s unhappy. I know and I feel bad for him ... But I think it does frustrate them a lot and they try their best not to show it; they try their best not to show their anger.

(Ms. EnglishB8)

All this clearly illustrates the importance of intercultural education both for teachers (Francalanza & Gauci, 2009) and Maltese students. It is only with education that one can heal the man-made wounds of society.

The skin colour phenomenon - another experience, yet another challenge

The Maltese MEP pointed out that for many years, the Maltese have been living in a “white bubble”. Until recently some Maltese had never come into contact with a coloured person. With the arrival of these immigrants this bubble has been burst, and in our society “we now have a number of people of a different skin colour”.

Podda Connor (2007, p. 57) explains that Malta is “a shocked host society which is reluctantly working, interacting and ‘socializing’ with dark-skinned individuals”. In agreement with this, the representative from the Peace Lab
(NGO\textsuperscript{2}), noted that very often, dark-skinned immigrants do not find it easy to integrate with their Maltese peers at school.

Our students are confused because they are usually influenced by their parents’ prejudices, “Don’t sit near a black child,” mother admonishes. But children play with each other irrespective of race or colour. “I don’t want you to play with that one, he is dirty, a thief, he’ll pinch your things, they are all thieves,” - these are the warnings of parents.

(Representative from the Peace Lab, NGO\textsuperscript{2})\textsuperscript{94}

According to some teachers, this attitude was prevalent among some of the boys in School\textsuperscript{B}. Ms. English\textsuperscript{B7} pointed out that, “if you have a fair complexion, it’s an advantage, you cannot be labelled ‘black’”.\textsuperscript{95} Some boys consider “being coloured, a misfortune” (Ms. English\textsuperscript{B7}).\textsuperscript{96} This attitude was also noticed during one of the observation visits, when a Maltese boy told Mihai\textsuperscript{B}, “Move! Or I’ll turn you into an Arab from a Rumanian. You nigger”.\textsuperscript{97}

Ms. English\textsuperscript{B9} added that a student “like Yonas stands out more because of his darker complexion; and because the media give so much coverage to these irregular immigrants, he is bound to attract more attention” (Ms. English\textsuperscript{B9}).\textsuperscript{98} As his teachers confirmed, Yonas\textsuperscript{B} was always alone and often bullied at school. Assistant Head\textsuperscript{B} commented that “Refugees are intrinsically different, more modest and timid”.\textsuperscript{99} However when they manage to learn Maltese they slowly start to break down this barrier.

\textsuperscript{94}Original quote in Maltese: Li jbatu meta joqoqdu jdaħħluhom dal-flieles f’rashom ‘tpoġqix fil-bank ħdejn iswed’ imma ommhom mxux it-tifel, it-tifel jilghab ma’ tifel iehor, għalih ma taqħmilix differenza..ommhom jew missierhom jghidulhom ‘Ma rridekx tlighab ma’ dak, dak maħmuq, dak halliel, dak jisirqek, dawn kollha ħallelin’.

\textsuperscript{95}Original quote in Maltese: jekk inti għandek il-complection bjonda, diġà għandek vantaqg għax issuperajt il-fatt li m’intix iswed.

\textsuperscript{96}Original quote in Maltese: għalihom tkun iswed qisu tkun xi diżgrazja.

\textsuperscript{97}Original quote in Maltese: Ersaq għax Gharbi ngibek mxux Rumaniż. Ja iswed tuta.

\textsuperscript{98}Original quote in Maltese: bħal Yonas li għandu karnaqgjon aktar skura u peress li għandna l-media hafna ghagha fuq l-immigranti irregolari, qisu jkun aktar fil-mira.

\textsuperscript{99}Original quote in Maltese: Ir-refugjatiifferenti ħafna, min-natura tagħhom jiżifieri aktar misfijin, aktar joqoqdu lura aktar mill-oħrajn.
Refugees differ slightly from other immigrant students. Why? They are more timid. They take longer to integrate and remain so till they manage to pick up some Maltese. This is how I can best describe them. Unlike the Serbs and Bulgarians, refugees are usually less off, and this sort of makes them feel inferior...

(Assistant Head)

Ms. Maltese recalled an episode regarding Yonas, which is typical of his continual struggles and challenges.

The fact that they keep away from the rest in the yard shows they have not yet become integrated. Yonas is a case in point. Poor thing, he is always on his own. Once, a Maltese boy pulled down his trousers, and that for Arabs is a grave offence. Yonas was about to throw a huge stone at his attacker, but held back. Then he ran up sobbing uncontrollably... unfortunately certain students tend to bully those who they see on their own.

(Ms. Maltese)

One Headteacher related an incident where in another school, one of the Maltese boys said, “We’re going to end up like a box of nugget, with all these blacks around”. Similarly, one of the teachers in an informal conversation commented that these students “are not part of the Maltese landscape, they are not Kunċett u Marinton, they just do not belong”. These statements are not only alarming but also highlight the importance of intercultural education and programmes for all stakeholders including Senior Management Team (SMT), teachers and students. Education is a life-long process. In embracing this new reality, immigrant students can facilitate access to a new learning opportunity for all local stakeholders.


102 Original quote in Maltese: Ċa nispiċċaw qisna kaxxa tan-nugget b’das-swued kollha.

103 Two famous female characters in popular Maltese literature.
Newcomer immigrants and bullying

The findings in this study seem to suggest that bullying is more common in the boys’ school than in the girls’ school.

Ms. English\textsuperscript{B6} and Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B4} pointed out that from their experience it seemed that Maltese students picked on immigrant students if they were unable to speak Maltese and if they were better than them.

For example Spinel (\textit{an immigrant boy not participating in this study}), he is really disciplined, he’s not careless, the others are and because he’s not, they pick on him... they say, he is repulsive and start laughing and passing comments in Maltese, while the poor boy looks on uncomprehending.

(Ms. English\textsuperscript{B6})

Gerwin for example ... there’s the element of money. Gerwin is very rich so it’s not because he’s a foreigner but because he’s rich that they pick on him ... even for example when he got a football to school, they made sure that a teacher took it away from him.

(Ms. English\textsuperscript{B6})

According to Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B4} “these immigrants excel in sports, are very lively, smart and intelligent; and that is why the Maltese students refuse to accept them”.\textsuperscript{104}

Bullying newcomer immigrants to enhance one’s self-esteem

Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B4} explained that immigrants struggle to integrate but the Maltese take advantage of their vulnerable situation.

Unfortunately, our students very often repulse these immigrants, even though the latter do their utmost to be accepted. But our students are crafty, they see if they can get anything out of them before accepting them...

(Ms. Maltese\textsuperscript{B4})\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{104}Original quote in Maltese: Huma tajbin ħafna fl-i-sports, ħafna fuq tagħhom u abbiltà tajba; għalhekk ma jkunux iriduhom.

\textsuperscript{105}Original quote in Maltese: Ma jaċċettawhomx sfortunatament ħafna drabi, l-istudent imbagħad barrani jrid jagħmel minn kollox biex ikun aċċettat imma għalxejn għax imbagħad
Ms. English\textsuperscript{B8} pointed out that the Maltese boys in School\textsuperscript{B}, bully the newcomer immigrant students because they have very low self-esteem. It makes them “feel that wow, that confidence”. She added that bullying newcomer immigrants is more common “because they know that they are more confused than the Maltese or more vulnerable”. They know that for the immigrants, it is harder and that “in general the foreigners are at a disadvantage, so they know they’re more vulnerable and they pick on them because of that” (Ms. English\textsuperscript{B8}).

\textit{The other side of the coin - School\textsuperscript{A}}

\textbf{Superiority Complex towards the Maltese or anything that is Maltese}

Whilst most of the teachers in School\textsuperscript{B} mentioned experiences of bullying, racism or intolerance towards the immigrant boys, many teachers in School\textsuperscript{A} mentioned what Headteacher\textsuperscript{B} called “racism in reverse”. Various teachers in School\textsuperscript{A} noted the attitude of superiority most immigrant girls had towards anything that is Maltese.

We tend to be racist, but there exists a type of racism in reverse. These immigrant students usually gang together, and sort of make it obvious that they are here against their will, or because their parents make them come. So our students are not the only culprits.

\textsuperscript{(Headteacher\textsuperscript{B})\textsuperscript{106}}

Some teachers commented on the immigrant girls’ antagonism towards anything that is Maltese. Ms. English\textsuperscript{A5} said that “sometimes they are aloof” because some of them “they do look down on us, they don’t integrate”. Others, as Assistant Head\textsuperscript{A} remarked, feel that “their education was much better than here so they have a sort of superiority complex”.

\textsuperscript{106}Original quote in Maltese: Xi kultant aħna nkunu razzisti imma hemm razzżmu in reverse ukoll ghax dawn għandhom tendenza li jiggangjaw flimkien u bħal speċi jagħmluha ovvjja li qegħdin hawn jew kontra qalbhom jew ghax jegħluhom il-ġenituri jiġifieri d-dnubiet mhumiex mill-parti tat-tfal tagħna biss.
Anke Fedrowitz (A. Fedrowitz, personal communication, August, 27, 2010) commented that often, immigrant parents do not reveal to their children that they are about to leave their country and so they find themselves living in a new country without having had the chance to bid farewell to their country, relatives and friends. Sometimes this backfires and the “immigrant children take revenge with one weapon: their native language”. In class, they would only speak in their native language and rebel towards anything related to the new host country, particularly its language. This antagonistic attitude was also referred to by high ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^1\) and high ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^2\) who described some immigrant students as not having “the readiness to learn nor the desire to be here” (High ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^1\)).

They are children who are here against their will; plus the fact that they cannot communicate. Their negative attitude might stem from certain grievances which kill every desire to learn any language, be it Maltese or English. This is the reality in a number of our schools. (High ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^1\))\(^{108}\)

Mr. Maltese\(^{107}\) confirmed this and added that it is particularly students of British descent who do not have this readiness to learn Maltese. This was noted whilst conducting observations during the MAL class in School\(^{A}\), where a British girl continually misbehaved and wrote on her copybook in capital letters “h8Maltese..h8Maltese & Malta”.

Ms. English\(^{107}\), argued that this attitude of superiority or at times even of rebellion might simply be a way of protecting oneself from the dissonance felt in being in a completely different country surrounded by new people and situations, struggling hard to reestablish oneself and one’s social networks.

\(^{107}\)Advisor for intercultural learning, teacher trainer, courses on intercultural learning at the University of Osnabrück and author of several articles in this area and book “Deine Türken werden ganz schön frech”.

\(^{108}\)Original quote in Maltese: Tfal li assolutament ma jixtiq, ikunu ġew kontra qalbhom, spicċaw hawnhekk u li ma kiniż ix-xewqqa tagħhom, dik hemmhekk apparti li ma jafux il-lingwa għandek ukoll attitudi negattiva, negattiva mhux għax huma jiddeċiedu hekk, imma jista’ jkun hemm anke ċertu weġghat u allura m’hemmx lanqas id-disponibbiltà biex jlgħallimu l-ebda lingwa kemm il-Malti u kemm l-Ingliż. Din hija r-realtà f’numru tal-iskiejel tagħna.
Moreover, she maintained that unfortunately their culture is not well represented in the school.

I think that most foreign students do not integrate because there isn’t much effort from their classmates and even from teachers to help them to integrate. I think some of them might look snobbish because they feel that they do not belong to this world. Because after all, we follow obviously Maltese traditions ... we follow Catholic religion and other religions are never acknowledged ... Sometimes we do not give them enough reason to want to integrate within Maltese society or let’s say within the Maltese school system.

(Ms. English^7)

**Culture dissimilarity**

Igoa (1995) points out that as an uprooting experience, immigration awakens survival instincts. The greater the culture dissimilarity between the child’s original country and the host country, the more intense these emotions. She also compares the immigrant child’s uprooting experience from all that is familiar into an unfamiliar foreign land, to a gardner transplanting a plant from one soil to another. Although this process has its perils, with the gardener’s care, some plants survive and so do immigrant children in schools when the teachers, like gardeners, help immigrant children strengthen and expand their roots in new soil.

Both College Principal^{A&B} and Headteacher^{C}, pointed out that the schools’ and the system’s greatest and immediate challenge is when immigrant students come from very different cultures. They both highlighted the need to have a different kind of programme for all those students who for some reason or other cannot follow a normal curriculum to the full.

I mean we still have foreign students who can’t follow a normal curriculum to the full ... so the problems are not tied to the Sub-Saharan, the problems are not tied to the black-Africans, the problems are tied to any students who culturally are not Maltese and we have to think of these. I mean even people who do not opt for the Catholic Religion because of personal beliefs, it is not fair that they should simply waste three quarters of an hour... These people have to be occupied otherwise they get into mischief.

(Headteacher^{C})
Different cultures, different religions - different rules?

Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} explained that among the four girls at School\textsuperscript{C}, “the Muslim girl wanted to go to school all covered up from head to toe”. In Malta the schools have uniforms and they are without veils. So far Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} added, there was no girl who wanted to go to a State School wearing traditional religious dress. The particularity of this experience was that, on one hand Aziza\textsuperscript{C} refused to go to school without her hijab as in so doing, “You are making me sin against God” and on the other it was a dilemma for the SMT of the school since the veil went against the dress code of the school. Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} added that after several discussions, the request to go to school wearing the veil, was granted.

Headteacher\textsuperscript{C} commented that although at first the veil created some curiosity, it was largely accepted by one and all. Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} noted that the Somali girl still came under pressure from her male counterparts living in the Home:

This Somali girl would leave home wearing a long dress which she would remove on arriving at school, but would keep the veil on..... This created pressure on her, and that is why it took her some time to join the class...

(Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C})\textsuperscript{109}

Another incident related to difference in culture involved the hairstyle of the immigrant students. Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} explained that tradition demands they wear their hair in thin plaits. The Maltese students considered it a fashionable hairstyle and many girls were asking the unaccompanied minors to do their hair in plaits. However, this hairstyle broke the school rules.

Suddenly they were plaiting the girls’ hair free of charge. The Head was at his wits’ end because it was not permitted... of course our girls were thrilled to have their hair done for free, but they knew the rules...

(Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C})\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{109}Original quote in Maltese: Din kienet titlaq mid-dar with a long dress imbagħad kienet tneħħiha kif tiġi l-iskola ... Jċċifheri hi kienet tilbes l-uniformi u fuq l-uniformi kienet tilbes a long dress u velu u kif tidħol l-iskola tinża’ din il-libsa twila u tibqa’ bil-velu ... and that was one of the pressures u għalhekk damet anke biex tidhol damet.
The issue of culture dissimilarity made the Maltese girls curious about the veil, the students’ cultural and religious beliefs and also their hairstyles. It is this approach and open attitude that makes for acceptance. In opening a window out of curiosity rather than closing it because of fear or threats, the fusion of the outside with the inside light can bear symbiosis. Furthermore, such culture dissimilarities will no longer remain singular given the immigration phenomenon, thus the need for a national policy regarding the integration of immigrants in schools, where also the uniform/dress code has to be considered.

**Immigrants’ positive experiences with Maltese peers**

The experiences of the immigrant students participating in this study with Maltese peers were not always negative.

When interaction between immigrant and Maltese students takes place, it can be an enriching experience for both. Some of the participants, particularly the girls, mentioned a buddy, or a class mate who helped them when language cut them off from everything that was going on in class or at school.

I would always ask my friend “what does that mean?” “what does that mean?” I can’t ask the teacher all the time “what does that mean?” “what does that mean?” she’s busy taking care of other students…

(Mbilia C)

Some teachers also commented that acting as a local buddy could help the Maltese students learn and practise their English (Ms. Maltese B4) and this would also “help curb our intolerance towards immigrants” (Ms. English B7).111

The existence of diversity in Maltese schools was acknowledged by all local political, educational and non-Governmental representatives as a positive

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110 Original quote in Maltese: Dawn f’daqqa wahda bdew jagħmlu ta’ kulħadd free of charge u ġennewwh lis-surmast ghax dak mhux suppost ... Il-Maltin ħadu gost ghax it was free of charge imma l-Maltin kienu jafu li mhux suppost.

111 Original quote in Maltese: forsi wkoll tingħeleb ftit din l-intolleranza lejn il-barranin ukoll.
rather than a negative experience for all stakeholders. High ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^1\) stated that “this enriching heritage is a result of the developments in the world and is an opportunity we should welcome. It is not something that will take us back years”.\(^{112}\) Educators and administrators should not see this as a stumbling block but as an opportunity to enhance Malta’s education system.

Having children from different cultures in our schools is a good thing and further enriches the educational experience.

(High ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^3\))\(^{113}\)

The representative from the JRS (NGO\(^1\)) noted that, “in today’s world of communication and globalisation, it is very enriching that students are growing up in a diverse community” because as the local subject expert for Lifelong Learning explained, normally “we go to the world to see different cultures, now we have the world coming to us”. Moreover, as high ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^3\) pointed out, the word immigration implies “in migration” and people are called immigrants because, “they are in-house and in-house already implies that they are with us, they are not foreign, they are with (emphasis) us”. High ranking official in the Education Directorates\(^3\) said the preposition “in” makes all the difference because it implies “they came to us and one can’t put them in a ghetto. They are in our country with us”.\(^{114}\) This point should enable receiving countries, societies, schools and classrooms to adopt a different attitude towards the immigrants, for once they are “in”, they are with “us”.

In view of these findings one may argue that whilst for the “outsiders” of the school context, immigrant students and the diversity that they bring were perceived as sources of enrichment and powerful assets for sustaining

-\(^{112}\) Original quote in Maltese: wirt sabiħ li wirtna issa mill-iżvilupp tad-dinja tagħna u hija opportunità li għandna nieħdu gost biha. Mhix xi haġa li tibghatna lura.
-\(^{114}\) Original quote in Maltese: ġew magħna, ma tistax tagħmilhom f’ghetto. They are in the country, magħna.
growth, the “insiders” - the 22 immigrant students participating in this study - strongly felt that their “diversity” was regarded as a deficit and a shortcoming. This is borne out in Kate’s plea:

I am happy that I can speak like this here so other people, Maltese people can get into our situation and really get to know that foreign people are not just freaks and they might actually contribute too. We’re humans, we’re intelligent and have feelings as well. We’re not aliens or stupid, we’re just from a different country. I’ve been hurt and it hasn’t been easy for me. I just wish that I was treated like a normal human being.

(Kate)

*Peer relations with other immigrant peers*

Although restarting an educational experience in another country was a long uphill climb, this being together for the immigrants, was like having an invisible rope. Should someone slip or slide downhill, the others would help him/her pull him/herself up towards the summit (Igoa, 1995).

*With other immigrant peers - positive*

In setting up or joining a group of other immigrant students, the immigrant students created their own breakwater protecting them and reinforcing their newly-built harbours. In being together they felt secure, protected, stable and valued for who they are. Among themselves no one felt stupid or different. This sense of ganging, sticking together was found in all three schools.

*Feeling secure when other immigrants are around*

Similar to Suarez-Orozco et al., (2008), all the participants in this study spoke about the importance of their peers as they acclimatized to their new school. Peers acted as important conduits of emotional support to the disoriented newcomer students both during lessons as well as during break. “I help her and she helps me” as Alena described it, while Gerwin said, “we can support each other” because “we’re kind of on the same wavelength”.

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...being together really helps ... because I don’t feel like I’m the only one struggling now. I know it sounds nasty but I know that other people are struggling too ... it just helped me to be more confident about it.

(Elizabeth)

..since I made friends with Alicia (another immigrant student not participating in this study) and we sit next to each other, it’s ok. Even if they say stuff to me ... or tell me stuff; I don’t care because Alicia is my friend and she’s the only friend I need ... I feel lonely when she’s not there.

(Kate)

Stoyan felt that “between the foreigners, there is like team” because although everyone is from a different country, they can still “understand each other more and feel accepted without having to change or fight”. Kjell remarked that while “sometimes the Maltese are angry to you and sometimes they are happy with you”, his immigrant friends “are always ok with me”. This bond among the immigrant peers was so strong that all participants (from Form 1 to Form 4), expressed the wish to be in the same class with another immigrant peer the following year.

I don’t want to be the only foreigner in the class because I feel different. I speak different than them English and they have different, they love some things and I love others.

(Stoyan)

All the teachers agreed that it is academically and emotionally beneficial for the immigrants to have at least another immigrant peer with them in class. According to Ms. English when they are together in class, “there’s like a partnership, they’re united and they’re more confident”. Ms. English elaborated that “it is a coping mechanism. When you are in a country where you cannot communicate in either Maltese or English, having a compatriot will result in your clinging on to that person”. Ms. English concludes that:

Thankfully there is more than one ... they are in pairs even threes. I don’t know what would happen if they were alone in class ... So I’m

115 Original quote in Maltese: It’s a coping mechanism għax jekk inti qiegħda f’pajjiż fejn la taf Ingliż u la Malti u tinżerta persuna li hija mill-istess pajjiż tieghek, obviously you’re going to cling onto that person.
thankful, I don't know why it's just an instinct that they can relate to someone else in class.

(Ms. English)

This bonding was also noted during breaks. According to the majority of the teachers, “they usually form little groups” and do not mix with other Maltese students (Ms. English).

...here we have sort of gangs, the senior English gang and the junior one.....they don’t mix...they stick to the same groups and stay in the same spots...they’re always together.

(Mr. Maths)

We had 4 new comers, 3 Eritreans and 1 Somali; the curious thing was that both these four and the Maltese students kept to their separate groups, despite the fact that our students did try to approach them... it’s quite natural to stick to your compatriots... and the bigger the group became, the more difficult it became for them to integrate.

(Mr. UMST)

This situation which was prevalent in all three schools, worried Ms. Maltese as she pointed out that this segregation during breaks showed that they were still “far from being integrated into the school system” (15-16).

It is only the few who have learnt to speak Maltese, even better than myself, who find it easy to mix. But those who have only been here a year or two, still stick to their small groups.

(Ms. Maltese)

---

116Original quote in Maltese: ...hawnhekk hawn qishom il-gangs, hawn il-gangs tal-Ingliż tal-kbar u taż-zgħar ... Ma tantx jamalgamaw ... dejjem ikunu jiġru filimkien; ikunu fl-istess post. Anke l-area fejn ikunu ... dejjem qegħdin hdejn xulxin ... Huma jfitt xu ‘l xulxin.

117Original quote in Maltese: Meta ġew 4, it-3 Eritreans u one Somali l-interessanti kienet li dawn baqgħu ghalihom is-Somali u l-Eritreans u l-Maltin ghalihom imma mhux it-tort tal-Maltin għax il-Maltin they still tried imma dawn they kept to themselves. ... Ghax trid u ma tridx kulħadd jogħodu mal-grupp tieghu, qisu it’s natural ... u aktar ma l-grupp kiber, aktar qishom imqatgħu ghalihom.

118Original quote in Maltese: wisq ‘il barra mill-integrazzjoni totali fi ħdan l-iskola.

119Original quote in Maltese: Ma tantx jithalltu ħlief għal xi tnejn li ilhom hawnhekk tghallmu l-Malti aktar milli nafu jien naħseb u jithalltu imma l-bqija l-barranin li forsi ilhom sena, sentejn jinqatgħu ghalihom f’ħafna waqtiet, tarahom gruppi gruppl.
Appendix 9
Complete Findings of The Study 2 of 4 - The Perceptions immigrant students have of the two official languages of Malta: Maltese and English
The perceptions immigrant students have of the two official languages of Malta: Maltese and English

As immigrant students pace their way through any education system, they struggle among other things, to learn a new language through which they also need to learn other subjects and interact with their peers. Moreover, for those immigrant students who enroll in a school at an older age, there is less support for language learning and more complex academic content to be learnt. Time is against them and catching up with their native-speaking peers seems like an impossible task. Very soon they will also encounter gatekeeping assessment that will have serious consequences for their future (August & Shanahan, 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). In most countries, immigrant students need to learn one language. That is already a daunting task. However, what are the immigrant students’ perceptions when additional to all this, their new educational situation is bilingual such that they are faced with learning two languages, Maltese and English which according to Camilleri (2000) and Caruana (2007) constitute the spoken/written distinction respectively?

In the following section the students’ opinions, ideas and analogies portray these perceptions. Two of the participants (Kate and Radko) have also presented two paintings each depicting their perceptions (Figures 7, 9, 10 and 11).

Thus, as the immigrant students’ perceptions of Maltese and English unfold, through their metaphors and drawings, they reveal the qualities they attribute to both languages, and in so doing also depict how and why these perceptions were construed, and why thus providing a fuller picture of their language-mediated experiences.
Perceptions and attitudes towards Maltese

Among the participants, Maltese was perceived mainly as a difficult language. Three main perceptions emerged: Maltese as a barrier and immobiliser, Maltese as different and unpredictable, and Maltese embodying the traits of an athlete and a warrior.

Figure 6: Summary of the students’ perceptions of Maltese
**Perception 1: Maltese as a barrier and an immobiliser**

For five of the participants (Figure 6), Maltese was regarded as a barrier and immobiliser. It blocked them from being with others, from accessing information and from moving on. It was interesting to note that this perception was common among the older participants and who were either struggling in mainstream Maltese lessons or who did not seem to be quite happy and content with the language provision provided during the Maltese lesson. The main characteristics which constituted their perception of Maltese were its impenetrability and its obstructiveness, and the separation from the others.

Alena\(^A\) and Yakiv\(^B\) perceived Maltese as a sort of invisible wall or barricade which divided them from their peers. Whilst Alena\(^A\) compared Maltese to a “bubble” that she is “unable to pop”, Yakiv\(^B\) compared Maltese to a big house in which:

> ... there are the children, their fathers, mothers ... and if you don’t know the language you like out from the house. You feeling like away and you stay and just stare and you don’t listen... nothing it feels like you are not from here.

Both these perceptions bring out the students’ frustration and futile struggles.

Elizabeth\(^A\) perceived Maltese as “one of those really hard nuts that you can’t open...” while for Helena\(^A\) it is:

> a box...a medium one with a big lock on it because when I think Maltese, I think of something that you just can’t get into ... I think that I relate the lock to my inability to open up the box and get all the contents.

While for Alena\(^A\), Yakiv\(^B\), Elizabeth\(^A\) and Helena\(^A\), Maltese was perceived as a barrier denying them connectedness with others and any type of access, for Alena\(^A\) also and Gerwin\(^B\), Maltese was perceived as an immobiliser. The former speaks in terms of “definitely the chains ... because it just holds me back from
everything else like the subjects, the exams and just behind, just the way it is..” (Alena\textsuperscript{A}) while Gerwin\textsuperscript{B} sees it as:

a big massive rock because it is blocking your way because you cannot move it so you will be stuck there like a barrier pretty much. It is in front of you or you are carrying it because it slows you down and you cannot do much.

Clearly these perceptions reveal the students’ struggles and frustrations together with a strong motivation and urge to learn Maltese. Despite the schools’ efforts, they still perceived Maltese as a barrier. Given that the length of stay in Malta of the five participants was as much as 8 years long, still they felt blocked and immobilised in their educational journey due to their unpreparedness in Maltese and this throws into grave doubt the efficacy and adequacy of the provisions in place, whether they are truly addressing and meeting the language needs of the immigrant students.

**Perception 2: Maltese as different and unpredictable**

The following eight participants (Figure 6) perceived Maltese as different and unpredictable. While for most of the students these two distinctive characteristics of the Maltese language were deemed interesting and valued, for Ieva\textsuperscript{A} these singularities stamped the deformity of the Maltese language.

This is how Enya\textsuperscript{A} describes first hearing Maltese: “Em I just used to think it was funny” such that in the beginning “I thought it was like babies speaking because they don’t speak proper words and sometimes they make strange sounds too … but I was intrigued. I always liked this language”.

For Mbilia\textsuperscript{C} it felt like, “you’re listening to music actually … ‘cause, when I listen to foreign music I don’t know what they’re talking about but I do like the beat”.

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Rarity for Ishbel\textsuperscript{A} and Elisa\textsuperscript{A} is another characteristic that lends value to their perception of Maltese. For both, Maltese is the hybridisation of something rare and precious, old and new and diverse and unique. Whilst Ishbel\textsuperscript{A} perceives Maltese as a sort of jewel for in its uncommonness lies its value, for Elisa\textsuperscript{A} Maltese is perceived as something old weaved into something new, because in its multifariousness lies its uniqueness just like the history of the island.

A very different language. Had never heard something like it before. ... it is something that you don’t see a lot cause you don’t hear it, like if you’re not in this country you don’t hear it like you hear other languages like French ... it’s something rare like a necklace which is nice to hear but it’s also strange cause it doesn’t sound like the English language. Maltese is like a rare jewel, an antique one.

(Ishbel\textsuperscript{A})

Maltese it’s like the story of Malta; it’s a little bit old and very different ... It take a lot of language to do Maltese language and that is a new thing because not a lot of places they do this thing and so Maltese it’s something old because it represents a lot of people from different place that came here in Malta and it’s something new because for me Maltese language it’s something really new that we learn that is different from other language.

(Elisa\textsuperscript{A})

In marked contrast to the perceptions above, for leva\textsuperscript{A} Maltese “would be an object which you’d find in many places pretty much everywhere” something “which is a little bit twisted; it’s kind of a rare object it’s a strangely made object but you find it everywhere”. She then conluded that, “People are quite twisted and they are everywhere ...”, thus the best representation for Maltese rather than an object would best be a person because,

People are very complicated, everyone I mean every person is complicated and they are everywhere so I guess that’s the perfect thing that comes to mind when I think of Maltese. So ... something twisted and common I mean in Malta, common in Malta. People are twisted aren’t they? So..

(leva\textsuperscript{A})
For Stoyan\textsuperscript{B}, again Enya\textsuperscript{A} and Kate\textsuperscript{A}, this difference of the Maltese language was perceived as a form of unpredictability. In fact for Stoyan\textsuperscript{B}, Maltese was similar to “… the white board because they always write words and everything else on it and that’s why … it’s always different and new stuff like Maltese”. For Enya\textsuperscript{A}, Maltese is like “…rocket science because obviously you don’t know what any of it means … It just seems impossible at the start which rocket science to me seems impossible as well”. For Kate\textsuperscript{A}, Maltese is like the sea. It is unpredictable because with Maltese “it’s never that easy at the start” because “if you fall in the sea, you don’t go from shallow until you get deeper but you go straight into the deep” and thus “you have to work out how to get out”. It is:

all the time changing. It is like you can look at the sea, one minute you see it calm and the next minute you look at it and it is rough. It is like that. You do not know what is going to happen next. You cannot predict.

(Kate\textsuperscript{A})

For me Maltese, like the sea it’s fun because if you use the sea, if you are nice to the sea; I know it sounds strange but it doesn’t hurt you. You can use the sea. It’s nicer. It’s always moving so it can move you as well … It’s useful, it’s helpful. … you can swim in the sea and you’ll never see the bottom.

(Kate\textsuperscript{A})

In the following drawing (Figure 7), Kate\textsuperscript{A} depicts her perception of Maltese. There are two ships, one on top of the wave and the other at the bottom of the sea. According to Kate\textsuperscript{A} the one on top represents all those people who are able to understand and speak Maltese effectively, the one below represents people for whom Maltese is an additional language and so are sunk.

Sometimes I’m in the calm but more often I’m underneath. I can’t exactly say I ever ride the wave. … Sometimes i wish to ride the wave … So for me, when I think of Maltese I say that it was a bit difficult because I didn’t have any previous lessons or training in it. So that’s why I really found it difficult.

(Kate\textsuperscript{A})
The previous perceptions noted above except for Ieva’s, showed a readiness and a positive attitude towards Maltese, a fundamental element in the acquisition of a new language (Gardner & Clément, 1990; Baker, 1992; Huguet, 2006). It might seem that such a positive attitude towards Maltese stems from the fact that there is a provision in place. However, although as mentioned previously, one needs to evaluate its suitability to the immigrant students’ needs, it might still be helping in the promotion of positive perceptions and attitudes towards the language. The following perceptions differ from the previous one as for some of the participants Maltese is associated with either an athlete or a warrior.
**Perception 3: Maltese as tough**

In a local case study carried out by Portelli (2006) in an all-boys’ Church Comprehensive Secondary School, it was found that in many boys’ eyes, whilst English is perceived to be a soft or a female language, Maltese is associated with being cool, tough, and so it is a “male” language. This interesting finding matches the main attitude of the male participants in this study. Despite not being Maltese, they also shared the same perceptions as the local boys. In the analogies that the following six participants used (Figure 6), they associated Maltese with either an athlete or a warrior, both implying strong traits such as endurance, fitness and power which according to them are needed to learn Maltese. On completion of this “tough” task, that is, on learning Maltese, they would have acquired similar traits to those of athletes or warriors and thus are able to “maybe” get closer to the dominant group at school - the locals, and detached from the subordinate group at school - the others, the different, the FOREIGN-ers.

According to Portelli (2006) the hidden curriculum transmits a number of influences that impact on the gendering of students. To some extent this also applies to the language issue in the school. It is worth noting that, among 17 of the immigrant students’ teachers of Maltese and English (excluding the five at SchoolC and HelenaA), out of 9 teachers of Maltese, 3 were males and 6 were females. With regard to the teachers of English, all the 8 teachers were females. As Portelli (2006, p. 423) concludes:

…”the prevalent mentality in the school is that English, as a language, is more appropriate for females whilst Maltese is more for males. An imbalance in the teaching force where these subjects are concerned may have repercussions.

TimoteiB perceived Maltese as a distinctively enabling mobility factor, comparing it to “legs, two legs (smiling) ... because the legs are important to move to up, to when I study it makes me go up and I know. Unlike the chains (AlenaA) or the
rock (Gerwin\textsuperscript{B}), for Timotei\textsuperscript{B}, Maltese was perceived as an enabling factor rather than a stumbling block or an immobiliser.

For Kjell\textsuperscript{B}, Maltese was perceived as something really hard to do yet “cool” like “a backflip, it is like you jump and make like a roll in the air, something hard to do because Maltese language is a bit hard … but then when you do it, in the air it feels cool”.

This athletic element tagged Mihai\textsuperscript{B}, Yonas\textsuperscript{B} and Zoran’s\textsuperscript{B} perception of Maltese as it reminded them of someone who is fast, strong and fit like an athlete.

Maltese language is like fast man, trrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr a very fast running man.

(Mihai\textsuperscript{B})

The Maltese language resembles Batista (\textit{David Michael Batista Jr, a professional wrestler and bodybuilder}). He wrestles because some of it \textit{is like a man. I think of Maltese as a strong man, clever, smart…. nobody will stop me using Maltese; if anybody does so I will challenge him to a boxing match.}

(Yonas\textsuperscript{B})\textsuperscript{120}

..to learn Maltese you need time and patience but then when you get it, you are like a bodybuilder. You need time, sacrifices and training but then after you get it, it pumps you up hehe (smiling).

(Zoran\textsuperscript{B})

Kjell\textsuperscript{B} added that Maltese reminded him not just of a back flip but also of a knight: “because everyone can learn Maltese and everyone can be a knight but then to be a good knight you need to be strong, you need to be fast and careful”.

\textsuperscript{120} Original quote in Maltese: Malti bħal Batista (\textit{David Michael Batista Jr, a professional wrestler and bodybuilder}) li jiġġieled fir-wrestling ghax fitt minnu qisu raġel. Narah qisu raġel b’saħħtu. Jitterjna, b’saħħtu, tajjeb, bravu, pulit... Jien il-Malti ħadd ma jehoduli, min jehoduli nghidlu eija nilaghbu boxing, niggieldu, dak tiegħi.
… to be a knight you can’t be a knight alone, you need to train, you need to get skills, you need to get speed, it’s not something easy, then once you are a knight if someone comes and attack you, you know where you have to protect you … so a knight knows where he should protect himself. To be a knight you need to train to know Maltese you need to train like a knight. In Malta if you know Maltese you become like the knight.

(Kjell\textsuperscript{B})

This rather combat-like and mythical association of Maltese was also similar to Radko’s\textsuperscript{B} perceived Maltese as a phoenix which is big, “fire yellow and red”. Red because “it is like hard colour just like the phoenix is hard and big for me and I do not can drive it … He is strong and hard to drive” (Radko\textsuperscript{B}). However, despite the phoenix’s majesty, Radko\textsuperscript{B} was eager to tame the phoenix as he himself explained about the painting (Figure 8).

This is me (referring to the boy riding the phoenix), this is Maltese (referring to the phoenix) - it is a phoenix and I don’t can drive because I don’t can speak Maltese and for me it’s very hard and again driving the phoenix is hard. ‘Cause phoenix is not like cat, you can do everything with cats it’s not something problem for you, the cat come here and you put it again on the floor but come one phoenix and step here, it’s difficult to control the phoenix. Maltese I don’t can ride it and that’s why I am not near computer (for him it represents the English language) because I am busy with phoenix. It is something hard for me. Sometimes phoenix make me small angry because I don’t can speak Maltese and I try and I try and I try but I don’t get but I try again. I want to tame it. If I tame him, he help me. He is important for me.

(Radko\textsuperscript{B})
This last perception of Maltese as an athlete or warrior is singularly interesting. Despite labelling Maltese as a difficult language, the six boys felt challenged and motivated to learn it. They did not perceive Maltese simply as a barrier, a hindrance or an unpredictable force but also as a challenge. In the difficulty to overcome or get hold of it, there lies satisfaction and pride. This reflects a positive cognitive-affective orientation towards Maltese which appears to indicate that these students possess a strong motivation to learn Maltese.

**Perception of English**

In her case study Ennser-Kananen (2012) found that for seven high school senior students in a suburban U.S. American German foreign language classroom, English was considered to be the default language in school and in the classroom context. They ascribed to English the role of the most powerful
language in the classroom. In Malta’s State Schools although as Frendo (2005) and Sammut (2004) have revealed, much is carried out in Maltese, English is the medium of all reading and writing activities in the Maltese classrooms (Camilleri Grima 1996; 1997; 2002; Angermann, 2001). McBrien also found that for some Somalian refugees in USA, the desire to learn English was a major theme. They valued education and the need to know English as a way to better their situations (J. Lynn McBrien, 2011). Furthermore, English has become the primary language of international communication, the lingua franca of the world (Grenier & Nadeau, 2011). All three main points were clearly illustrated by the participants. Their perception of English ranged from it being the language of school, the language that enables a better future and the vehicle with which any person can move freely in the world and communicate with many peoples at various stops. Moreover, English was also perceived as something refreshing and natural (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Summary of the students’ perceptions of English
Perception 1: English as the language of school

For most of the participants, English was mainly related to school. Stoyan pointed out that English reminded him of a pen, “the marker of the board, because you always write with it. In English you have to write a lot and that's why”. English reminded Kate of a book, “because it has many like old words that people don't understand or use and it has many new like not proper words that people use all the time and some people would use different words”. Kate’s explanation of the painting representing English is clearly illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Kate’s perception of English

Because it’s sort of it's like you can just keep on reading it and it will never end and then you just keep reading it and I like books. Yeah, it's like it comes without you realising, it’s sort of natural. Sometimes like in English if it was in a wave then I’d be on top so it’s like for me it’s easy but for some people they don’t find it easy so like it’s different to everyone’s point of view.

(Kate)
An interesting perception is Radko’s - a computer and a computer desk. This is portrayed in his drawing (Figure 11). There is no one near the desk. When asked why, he simply replied that he is busy taming his phoenix (Maltese) because unlike the phoenix (Maltese) which takes up all his time, English is easier so he does not need to spend so much time on it.

**Figure 11: Radko’s perception of English**

I am not here because it’s easy and I’m somewhere else. The computer, it’s easy for me and I leave it, it’s not very easy but it’s not like Maltese. Maltese I don’t can ride it this and that’s why I am not near computer because I am busy with phoenix. It is something hard for me. Here what I do (referring to the pc) is study what I know; I know this and I study. Here I waste time, here, here (referring to the pc/English). I want speak Maltese more more more. Here I want to speak English but English is not like hard like Maltese. Computer easy, phoenix hard so I stay more with phoenix.

(Radko)
Aziza\textsuperscript{C}, perceived English as the language of school and:

All the schools should be changed and use English during the lessons. I will speak with my people my language but when I am at school I want to concentrate on English to do good at school.

(Aziza\textsuperscript{C})

**Perception 2: English enabling a better life**

For Yonas\textsuperscript{B} mother and grandpa, English is the hope for a better tomorrow: “My grandfather …encourages me to learn English, to learn more”.\textsuperscript{121} He adds that his grandfather teaches him English whilst singing:

\begin{quote}
(singing) hey Joseph, mouth and tooth and ear and nose and eye and mouth. I am body, this is arms, this is hands, this is finger, this is leg, this is toes, and this is shat.
\end{quote}

(Yonas\textsuperscript{B})

To Yonas\textsuperscript{B}, English is “a woman, because parts of it are soft (meaning easy) and parts are not; ..... smart and friendly, steady like a chair, strong not faint, (showing that whilst holding on to the chair he was steady).\textsuperscript{122}

For Freweini\textsuperscript{C}, English is important “to get better life; to get a job. We need to improve our English and we need to learn more and we can get a work”.

**Perception 3: English as the language of the world**

Similar to Sciriha’s (2001) findings, the findings in this study seem to also indicate that among all the participants, Maltese was deemed as highly important for any immigrant living in Malta and English as the most important language in the world. For Kjell\textsuperscript{B}, Timotei\textsuperscript{B}, Yonas\textsuperscript{B}, Aziza\textsuperscript{C} and Freweini\textsuperscript{C} this is an advantageous characteristic of English as it can be used as a short-cut to

\textsuperscript{121} Original quote in Maltese: In-nannu tieghi … joqghod jghidli tghallem Ingliżi (Ingliż) halli tkun bravu.

\textsuperscript{122} Original quote in Maltese: mara għax ftit minnu soft, ftit minnu mhux soft … pulita u orrajt u b’sah nëthta bhas-siġgu, ma taqax, hekk soda soda.
communicating with all peoples. For every immigrant it is the link from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

Kjell explains that English is something “all must learn” as it is the “language where in all the world they speak it”. He added that it is impossible to learn all the languages of the places he visits so “if I know English, I can still communicate with only one language”. Similarly Timotei said that “English is the popular language of the earth … all countries speak in English” and with it, as Freweini points out, “we can communicate with all peoples”.

The idea that English is the key to the world was also expressed by Mihai and Yakiv respectively. Whilst for Mihai English is like a big elephant because of its size, for Yakiv it is like money because with it one can do everything.

"...much of the population of the earth they speak English, most of them. So English for me is something big like an elephant because this language is big and is spoken in most of the countries even in Romania, even in Malta, in Italy, in most countries they speak English."

(Mihai)

"English to money because if you don’t have money you can’t do anything but if you have money you can do anything; if you know English you can do anything but if you don’t have English you stay alone."

(Yakiv)

**Perception 4: English as a very natural language to learn and to use**

The previous perceptions highlight the importance most of the participants attribute to English. For some, English is considered as something natural both to achieve and also to live with. This contrasts largely with most of the participants’ previous perceptions regarding Maltese where for most of them, learning Maltese entailed some kind of effort, perseverance, endurance, stamina and power. This could also be attributed to the fact that since English was already a familiar language in their home country whilst Maltese was not.
Helena^A, Zoran^B, Kjell^B, Gerwin^B and Timotei^B all perceived English as something natural and refreshing. Quite interesting was the fact that three of the five students associated English with water/rain mainly because of its fluidity. For Helena^A, English was something refreshing like a glass of water, for Zoran^B as something natural and for Kjell^B it was like the rain which falls naturally.

English I think might be a glass of water. English seems to me at least, it seems clear and it’s just free, refreshing.

(Helena^A)

Because with homeworks and all, it came like very natural, like water.

(Zoran^B)

English is like rain; something that, now we say that rain you can’t decide when it comes but you know that it will come. You don’t know when but you know if I think I will never say no this year it will never rain because it must rain for the...

(Kjell^B)

... it’s because you know if you go in another country and you don’t know the language like I did, I speak English because you know everyone in most of the countries know English and that’s why it’s like rain, it’s something natural that you learn it, it’s good to learn it. It’s everywhere the same.

(Kjell^B)

A similar idea to that of the rain, is Gerwin’s^B perception of English as air.

English for me it’s very easy, it’s like the air, for me I can use without knowing like when you breathe, you simply don’t think about it but you do it all the time. It’s easy for me I can walk through it.

Timotei’s^B perception of English added to this idea of naturalness, the notion of usefulness. In fact, for him English is like “hands because … with hands I can read the books and go up more”. Despite the importance of English, he also added that to be able to move, “I need the hands and legs as with hands and legs I can go up but only with hands or legs only, I cannot. I need the four, both
the hands and the legs”. He added that without hands or legs, “I cannot walk, I cannot read, I cannot touch, I cannot move, I cannot sleep… I need all four”.

Through the metaphors and drawings the immigrant students have tried to convey their perceptions of the Maltese and English languages. In doing so, they have tried to give a fuller picture of their language-mediated experiences and to show how what they have experienced has affected the way they perceive these two instruments of power and empowerment. According to Igoa (1995), there is a very important difference between power and empowerment. Whilst people use power to control others, people can only empower themselves. One hopes that immigrant students in Malta are “empowered” and not “caught in power” by Malta’s two official languages.
Appendix 10
Complete Findings of The Study 3 of 4 - General Provisions in Schools^{A,B&C}: Examples of Good Practice
General Provisions in Schools<sup>A,B&C</sup>: Examples of Good Practice

*The immigrant, a voice at school*

The amount of time spent by the researcher in each of the three schools enabled her to observe the life of each school. In School<sup>A</sup> it was noted that there were flags of the different countries, the word *Welcome* was written in different languages and also a note on the teachers’ table as a reminder that in class there were English-speaking students. Such simple gestures surely help immigrants feel part of the school. It was also interesting to note that in School<sup>A</sup> there was an immigrant student representative on the School Council.

Yes, in fact, even in the School Council they have a representative, a foreign representative ... So, every year there is a foreign representative and like that, they feel more integrated.

(Headteacher<sup>A</sup>)

Another positive provision adopted by School<sup>C</sup> was putting an Assistant Head in charge of the four unaccompanied asylum seekers. According to Mr. UMST<sup>C</sup>, this Assistant Head was “a reference point” for the girls at school. Unfortunately, at the time this study was being carried out, she was transferred to another school and it was impossible to include her opinion in this study. Most of the immigrant students felt the need of such a “reference point” or support teacher with whom they could share the difficulties they encountered daily.

They should take for example a teacher who is Maltese but cares especially about the foreigners maybe like you. I like when you take us here to talk, that we just speak about us, every foreigner should have like that because sometimes they need more attention than a normal boy especially if they just changed; for example for me when I went to Sweden, I say why I came to Malta? In Sweden everything was better; in the school I was having friends, I had no problem to understand, to talk.. I was happy there then I came here alone, all was different...

(Kjell<sup>B</sup>)

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Although in Schools\textsuperscript{A&B} there was no teacher as a point of reference for the children, it was noted that often, the MAL teacher acted as a mediator between the other teachers and the immigrant students.

... when I was having these problems that I couldn’t catch up I went to my teacher of MAL and told him to help me. .. he told me that he would speak to her to help me ... Now when she’s dictating and there’s a hard word, she writes it on the board. She knows that I might have trouble writing ...

(Ieva\textsuperscript{A})

Because I teach MAL, teachers of certain subjects often approach me and ask me about them.

(Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A3})\textsuperscript{123}

Similar to the findings in Calleja et al., (2010), another positive provision in two of the schools was the buddy system. The aim was to help newcomer immigrant students have a smoother entry to school. Thus, whilst in School\textsuperscript{B} the buddy was a former immigrant who had got accustomed to the life at school, in School\textsuperscript{C} a Maltese girl was the buddy of the unaccompanied asylum seekers, “she was taking care of them” (Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C}).

If the student is Bulgarian we first try to find another boy of the same nationality; so he can explain to him the procedure of things, what he needs to do and not do; in this way he gets used to the system. And so, because of the language barrier, he won’t find it that difficult at first.

(Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{B1})\textsuperscript{124}

These general provisions provided by the three schools, seemed to help in the promotion of equal opportunities for the immigrant students. The following section deals with the provisions at the classroom level.

\textsuperscript{123}Original quote in Maltese: Fil-fatt ġieli jkellmuni u jistaqsuni fuqhom peress li jien ngħallem MAL l-ghalliema ta’ ċertu sugġetti.

\textsuperscript{124}Original quote in Maltese: L-ewwel li nagħmlu jekk hawn student li huwa Bulgaru nippruvaw insibu student li huwa Bulgaru biex jibda jfiehmu l-affarijiet kif imorrux, x’ghandu jaghmel u ma jaghmlix biex anke hu jidra s-sistema kif inhi. U qisu hekk anke ghall-ewwel ħabba l-lingwa, ma jħosshiex daqshekk bi kbira.
The immigrant, another student in class

Throughout this study, most of the participants mentioned several general provisions in class which enabled them to access education in Malta. Amongst these were: the bilingual adaptations by most teachers; some individual attention; the teachers’ support; writing on the board during the explanation; appreciation of the immigrant students’ native language and use; the setting up of a Core Competences Support Programme (CCS), and the willingness of the school to integrate them. According to the participants, in the “littleness” of these provisions, lies their “greatness” for they narrow the gap and facilitate the immigrant students’ learning opportunities.

Translations

When they translate and include me, I feel like I am part of the class.

(Elisa\textsuperscript{A})

All participants appreciated the efforts various teachers made during their lessons. Many teachers often translated while explaining; “During Geography they talk in English that’s a good thing, Ms. Geography talks in English, she remembers” (Elisa\textsuperscript{A}), whereas others specifically provided them with bilingual notes and adapted the exam papers: “Social studies I do it in English. Our teacher do for me and my friend, a photocopy in English” (Elisa\textsuperscript{A}).

A little bit of individual attention

It was emphasised by the students that when some of the teachers gave them even a little bit of attention, such as “he comes and he says to me, ‘Kate, do you understand?’” (Kate\textsuperscript{A}) and “Sir says, ‘You want me to translate you?’” (Timotei\textsuperscript{B}), this helped them enormously. Kjell\textsuperscript{B} also commented that during his English lessons, the fact that his teacher “comes near us… it’s more personal like that”.
It also prevented him from being laughed at by his peers, “maybe because I say something wrong”.

The teacher of English helps me because she guides my finger over the page; she reads and my finger moves along with the words”. 

(Yonas)\textsuperscript{B}\textsuperscript{125}

**The teachers’ support**

The teachers’ support and continuous encouragement seem to be the best help any child can get. Zoran\textsuperscript{B} points out how “the teacher matters” because when last year he was in mainstream Maltese, where “they read as we are talking, fast and they don’t wait, they are the best class”, his teacher used to encourage him so much that “I used to run, run for his lesson because his support is unlimited”. Zoran\textsuperscript{B} explained how “he pushes you, pushes you ... but the way he pushes you, you just start loving the language”. He also mentioned another teacher of Maltese and showed his appreciation since she “knew how to support us and help us differently”.

**Writing on the board during an explanation**

Another aid which was often referred to by the students was when teachers complemented their explanation by writing on the board. This helped the learners understand and follow better. Stoyan\textsuperscript{B} said, “it helps when teachers write on the board as I can see what she explain” and Mihai\textsuperscript{B} that, “I understand a little bit better”.

**My language is important too!**

Some students, mainly in School\textsuperscript{B}, commented that some teachers often greeted them in their native language and occasionally permitted them to use

\textsuperscript{125}Original quote in Maltese: Il-Ms. tal-Ingliżi (Ingliż) tghinni ghax toqghod taghmilli subghajja hekk fuq il-karta u hi toqghod taqra u subghajja jimxi mal-kliem.
their mother tongue for homework. For some students, this has definitely proved constructive. It also highlights the importance of adopting an additive approach towards the students’ linguistic repertoire (Phillipson, Mohanty & Panda, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010; Tannenbaum, 2009). In acknowledging their first language and enabling them to use it at school, feelings of worthiness of both their cultures and native languages are fostered (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010). Learning, for the immigrant child in Malta and elsewhere, should be gentle enough to nourish their growth without destroying their roots.

... then I was really happy of the teacher of Music that he said you can make it in your own language and so when I was writing about an instrument I write it in Italian ... I was happy and when I told my father, he was happy too. He always tell me to practise bit Italian so I don’t forget it. (KjellB)

Yesterday, we have free lesson and sir of Maths take out one paper and he write in Bulgarian. It make me happy that teachers know small Bulgarian ... I study their Maltese, it makes them happy, I’m happy because some teachers want to study my language, it is important too (RadkoB).

**Setting**

The setting of students for different subjects according to their marks is a provision for all students attending a State School in Malta, and the immigrants benefitted from it too. Initially, some of the students, particularly the boys, were sent to the lowest sets. By time, through the setting system, the immigrant boys in SchoolB were able to change classes and fit into a more appropriate level. This mobility encourages students to work harder and to be motivated by their progress.

Jasper was in the foundation class but because he was showing exceptional improvement, from 1C they put him in 1A. (Ms. EnglishB6)
They are with the Maltese students; you see, we have setting; we set students according to the result obtained in the exam he would have sat for... it is an incentive to work harder to move up to a higher level, where he will be with students who are more or less of the same level.

(Assistant Head$^{B}$)

As Ms. English$^{B9}$ explained, setting in School$^{B}$ enabled all students to have their needs adequately addressed. So for immigrants, there was another set for Maltese as an Additional Language (MAL). Having a subject whereby immigrant students can be taught the native language of the host country implies that their particular language needs are being acknowledged and they are consequently part of the school. Ms. English$^{B9}$ added that sometimes immigrant students start in the Core Competences Support (CCS) Programme class which serves as a stepping stone for the first few weeks. However, once they master the language, the gap between them and the locals in the CCS Programme class widens and the need to move to another set arises.

In fact we notice this: the first year he is here he might start in 1D (the lowest stream/set), then as soon as he masters the language, Maltese or English, he makes great strides and moves up to 1B or 1A; because he would have overcome the barrier, the obstacle; you see, it is important to monitor the progress of these students; they shouldn’t be left to follow the Basic Skills Programme to the end, because after a while, sometimes even a few months, they can join the others, they would have caught up.

(Ms. English$^{B9}$)

$^{126}$Original quote in Maltese: Qegħdin mal-Maltin u għandna s-setting jiżfieri u s-setting aħna nagħmuh skont ir-riżultati tal-eżami li jkun għamel qabel ... iniżjattiva biex jahdem izjed biex jogħla, biex is-setting tieghu jįjibu 'l quddiem u jkun m’oħrajn li bejn wieħed u ieħor ghandhom l-istess livell.

$^{127}$Original quote in Maltese: Fil-fatt din ninnutawha għax jekk fl-ewwel sena li jkun qiegħed hawn ikun 1D, imbaghad f’kemm il-nghihekk kif qaqqad il-lingwa, Malti jew Ingliż imbaghad mill-ewwel jisparalek u jittagħlek 1B jew 1A; għax imbaghad hu jkun issupera l-barrier, l-ostaklu jiżfieri ghalhekk dawn it-tfal trid issegwihom u mhux thallihom fil-Basic Skills sal-ahħar għax wara ftit taż-żmien ġieli anke ftit xhurst, tarahom ħdejn l-oħrajn, qishom jisparaw imbaghad.
Starting off in a Core Competences Support (CCS) Programme class

Ms. English’s remark about the usefulness of monitoring these students is highly important. This once again stresses the need to have a point of reference at school so that the immigrant children’s progress can be continuously assessed. As Ms. English explained, to be left in the CCS Programme class for a long time can be harmful rather than beneficial for some students. Headteacher seemed to share Ms. English’s viewpoint in that for some immigrants, particularly as was the case with the unaccompanied asylum seekers, the CCS Programme class was the most commendable provision. He added that these students would likely be candidates for a CCS Programme class, not because they are less or different, but because their needs set them apart from the rest of the students.

The readiness to integrate immigrant students in schools

Having so many immigrant students at school and in class is a relatively new phenomenon (Calleja et al., 2010). What was striking was that although this reality was sudden, it did not numb or anesthetize the school teams, but it stimulated them to react constructively. This was appreciated particularly by Kjell who commented that, “this school has been very good for me. They helped me with everything”.

I think one has to adapt, this applies to both staff and Maltese students. We do adapt; let me tell you, that I have been teaching here for some time now and we teachers have always tried to help them. At the beginning of the year we make sure they understand, we explain to them what they need to get, from where they can buy things. Sometimes, because of the language barrier, we use signs and so we get the message across. As a staff we try very hard.

(Ms. English)\(^{128}\)

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We opted for setting so we can adapt the teaching of the subjects. We went for setting specifically to adapt to the needs of all our students in all levels. Shouldn’t we, therefore, adapt the teaching of Maltese for these immigrants?

(Assistant Head\textsuperscript{B})\textsuperscript{129}

It was noted in previous sections, how important it is that the immigrant students have a readiness to learn. Undoubtedly, schools also must have the readiness to integrate the immigrant students. By readiness to integrate immigrants, one means to provide them with the right provisions.

**The specialised language programmes - Examples of Good Practice**

*Profiles of the Maltese Support Language Programmes for Immigrant Students - A General Description*

**School\textsuperscript{A}**

In School\textsuperscript{A}, there is an MAL support programme for immigrants from Form 1 to Form 3. It is a three-lesson-a-week programme where only one teacher, who is “a point of reference for them” (Headteacher\textsuperscript{A}) is wholly responsible for teaching the content chosen, and monitoring and continuously assessing the enrolled students. At the half yearly and annual examination stage, the students sit for a special paper in MAL, a school-based paper prepared by the teacher in charge. The aim of this three-year Maltese language support programme is to prepare the students so that at the beginning of Form 4 they can join mainstream Maltese classes. However, if the immigrant students do well in the MAL annual examination paper, they are able to join mainstream Maltese even before Form 4.

They needed something else to be able to catch up later on in Form 3 and Form 4 maybe with the other children. But before learning literature in Maltese, they had to have some basics which they lacked.

(Headteacher\textsuperscript{A})

\textsuperscript{129}Original quote in Maltese: Ahna għamilna s-setting biex naddattaw it-tagħlim tas-suġġetti fejn għandna s-settings, għamilnijieh bis-setting apposta biex naddattaw ghall-istudenti tagħna kullha ta’ kull livell, allura ma naddattawx il-Malti għall-barranin?
I try to give them simple things, even as regards writing. I literally begin with the alphabet, some vocabulary, a few adjectives, the most basic verbs; in Form 1 I do the numbers, time, very basic things that might facilitate communication. Then in Form 2 I introduce items from the syllabus of Form 1 and 2, such as grammar, but I do not do any literature.

(Mr. Maltese\textsuperscript{A3})\textsuperscript{130}

\textbf{School}\textsuperscript{B}

In School\textsuperscript{B}, the MAL support programme for immigrants is provided from Form 1 through to Form 5. It is a four-lesson-a-week programme where all teachers of Maltese are responsible for the syllabus, monitoring and continuous assessment of the enrolled students of a particular form/set - their own. At the end of each term (half yearly and annual), the students of each form/set sit for a special paper in MAL which is school based and prepared by their respective MAL teachers. Unlike the language support programme in School\textsuperscript{A}, the aim of this five-year MAL support programme is not to prepare the students to enter mainstream Maltese but to teach Maltese as an Additional Language.

Every year the numbers continued to grow, and we managed to involve all teachers of Maltese. There were immigrant students in every class. Naturally the classes were small, as it should be, when you are teaching these types of students. You can't have a big class; they begin with basic stuff and move on gradually ..... some of them did really well in the Maltese exam we gave them.

(Assistant Head\textsuperscript{B})\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{130}Original quote in Maltese: Nipprova nagħmilhom affarijiet ħfief kemm jista’ jkun anke bhala kitba. Nibda litteralment mill alfabet, fit vokabularju, daqsxejn aġġettivi, il-verbi l-aktar bażiċi, nibda daqsxejn Imperfett forsi fil-\textit{Form 1}, numri, ħin, affarijiet bażiċi hekk biex forsi wiehed ikun jista’ jikkomunika ghall-ewwel; imbagħad \textit{Form 2} nipprova ndahħal affarijiet li qegħdin anke fis-sillabu tal-\textit{Form 1} u 2 pereżempju speċjalment fejn tidħol grammatika ta jiġifieri letteratura ma ndahħalx.

\textsuperscript{131}Original quote in Maltese: U kull sena n-numru kien qed jiżdied u stajna ninteġraw lill-ghalliema kollha tal-Malti. Kulħadd kien ikollu klassi b’dawn il-barranin. Sintendi klassijiet żgħar u hekk tridhom għal dawn it-tip ta’ tfal. Ma jridx ikollok klassi kbira u dawn jibdew bl-affarijiet bażiċi u jibqgħu sejrin ... xi wħud minnhom illum fl-eżami tal-Malti li tajnjehom, tassew ghamlu suċċess.
... with these immigrants it’s different. You are forced to tackle the simplest items, you can only go one step at a time - basic things useful in everyday life. It took me time to adapt, but it is a great satisfaction to see that what this boy knows is due to my efforts.

(Mr. Maltese$^{132}$)

**Positive aspects of the MAL programmes in Schools$^{A&B}$**

**The right level**

All the participants commented that the MAL class provided them with the right level of support. Ieva$^A$ explained that “it’s like a ladder” and for Stoyan$^B$ the fact that, “here I’m in my level” makes “me like Maltese more as I can follow. I’m more confident like this.” According to Enya$^A$ “it’s a lot easier if you learn small parts at a time than just jumping straight at a Maltese that people have been learning their whole life”. In fact Stoyan$^B$ explained that the MAL teachers start “from the beginning … the alphabet” and because “you learn from the simple to the hard it’s much easier”. Enya$^A$ even suggested that “they should definitely have an MAL programme in every school” because in this class, “it’s more slowly” (Timotei$^B$), and the teacher “adapt to how we are, what we need” (Kjell$^B$).

**Being in a small group - More Individual Attention**

Elisa$^A$ and Mihai$^B$ explained that because they were a small group in the MAL class, the teacher was able to “help the other girl with the things more difficult for her and help me that I know less Maltese” (Elisa$^A$). Moreover the “Miss she takes the time to understand us” particularly since “every boy is in different level” (Mihai$^B$). According to Mihai$^B$ being in a small group, was “more personal” and the “boys can learn faster because if you are 5 or 6 they can speak … and you learn a lot”. Kate$^A$ added that in this class the teacher, “has more time for you” and throughout an entire year, there wasn’t a lesson “that I have not been asked anything”. The teacher “always asks us questions each and we all have

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132 Original quote in Maltese: ... Trid taghmel l-aktar affarijiet sempliċi pass pass trid timxi. Affarijiet bażiċi u li se jiġu bżonnhom kuljum. Ħasseeżni differenti ħafna. Imma nahseb is-sodisfazzjon huwa akbar, ghax dan it-tifel ma jaf xejn, dak kollu li jaf, ghallimthulu inti.
our time to practice”. Put simply, in this class, Kate\textsuperscript{A} says that “we’re not ignored, we learn ... we get more attention”.

*Fostering a sense of belonging and self-esteem - feeling happier at school*

Elizabeth\textsuperscript{A} maintained that the MAL class “helps us before we have to go into the proper Maltese. It gives us more of a kick start to learning it”. For most of the participants it was the favourite lesson of the week and “the most that’s helped me here” for “it has made me happier at school (Stoyan\textsuperscript{B}). This was also noted during the observation lessons where they had fun and worked hard. Stoyan\textsuperscript{B} explained that “I like going to the Maltese lesson” as did Mihai\textsuperscript{B} who said that in the “Maltese lesson I’m very happy”, “I study it every day”.

For me the MAL class is something of different, something good for me, happy, good, something that help the children who come to Malta to feel good and not bad, sad and alone.

(Elisa\textsuperscript{A})

I’m really happy that the Ms. take care of us with speaking Maltese because we are small class and can learn Maltese and I’m really happy that the Miss takes us foreigners, before it was more but then the other boy went away. I’m really happy that she wants to help us even if sometimes it’s difficult but it’s very important to learn a language if you are in a country where they speak that language.

(Mihai\textsuperscript{B})

Mr. Maths\textsuperscript{A}\textsuperscript{13} also noted that this provision is surely a plus as not only did it enable them to follow better the local curriculum and “make better progress”\textsuperscript{133} but it also fostered a sense of belonging as they could “make more friends and be happier. I also notice this during the Maths lessons, they participate more”.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{133}Original quote in Maltese: qed jitghallmu ħafna ahjar.

\textsuperscript{134}Original quote in Maltese: imorru ahjar, jagħmlu aktar ħbieb, ikunu aktar ghal qalbhom, fil-lezzjonijiet jien ġieli naraha wkoll fil-Maths din, jipparteċipaw aktar.
With this programme they integrate better, I mean we tried it. We have quite a number of foreigners over here, and we have seen its positive effect both on the foreign students and also their integration with the Maltese students.

(Headteacher^A)

"It is not a complete success story but close"

Mr. Maltese^B2 said that, it is not a complete success story but close, because “when you take account of the motivation of these children and also ours as their teachers, then yes, all this makes it a success story”.

I believe in it ... After five years of following such a programme, I can say that it was positive. In fact it is on our plan for next year again.

(Headteacher^A)

I find teaching them extremely rewarding; I feel very happy with them this year, they look forward to the lesson,' what time do we have Maltese today Sir? How much time to go for the lesson?’... They used to go to the Assistant Head and tell her about the new things they were learning ... This is a great satisfaction, seeing them motivated and interested.

(Mr. Maltese^B2)^135

The SMT of Schools^A&B recommend such an MAL programme because it has proved beneficial both for the immigrants and also for the Maltese students. They “integrated more and the previous dichotomy, that rivalry stopped” (Assistant Head^B).^136

The effect was felt in more ways than one. It has drastically reduced the trouble and friction we had; the division that existed at the beginning of the year was unbelievable.... this was one of our biggest headaches, immigrants versus Maltese; but once we started these classes for

[^135]: Original quote in Maltese: Jien is-sodisfazzjoni li ghandi bhala ghalliem hija xi ħaġa kbira; inħossni vera sodisfatt magħhom din is-sena li tarahom ħerqanin, ‘Għandna l-Malti llum. Fi x'ħin sir?, Kemm fadal għal-lezzjoni?’ ... Kienu jmorru pereżempju għand l-Assistant Head u jgħidulha x' qed jitghallmu fil-Malti ġdid ... dan huwa tip ta' sodisfazzjon, tarahom motivati u interessati.

[^136]: Original quote in Maltese: integrax aktar u dik id-dikotomija li kienet teżisti qabel, dik ir-rivalità spiċċat.
Maltese and they began to understand and communicate .... things improved, they integrated better with the Maltese students.

(Assistant Head\textsuperscript{B})\textsuperscript{137}

Though our success rate isn't 100%, it's quite promising. Obviously it was something we tried and after evaluating what was done during the experimental stage, this year we implemented it right through. In my opinion it was beneficial. We felt the need, the opportunity presented itself, the teachers’ teaching load was favourable, we grasped the opportunity and it worked.

(Headteacher\textsuperscript{B})\textsuperscript{138}

**Positive aspects of the transition programme at School\textsuperscript{C}**

*It enables access to schooling and aims to provide equity*

Whatever is available for our Maltese students is available for them, even more because we got a teacher there purposely to see and help them with their needs.

(Administrative official in the Education Directorates)

Both Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} and the administrative official in the Education Directorates commented that this transition programme was intended to bring about equity. Most of these unaccompanied asylum seekers had been through a lot. Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} explained how sometimes many of these unaccompanied minors “feel abandoned, but they are not! But that is how they feel. They left everything for a better life, and you can imagine what they would have gone through”\textsuperscript{139}.

\textsuperscript{137}Original quote in Maltese: Affettwathom minn kull aspett għax anke dak l-inkwiet u dak il-ġlied li kellna, naqas drastikament, naqas hafna ghax tistaghżeb x’firda kellna fil-bidu ... dan kien wiehed mill-inkwiet li kellna, il-barranin kontra l-Maltin imma mbagħad meta bdejna dawn il-lezzjonijiet tal-Malti u bdew jifhmu u jitkellmu, naqas hafna dan l-inkwiet, integraw iżjed mal-Maltin.


\textsuperscript{139}Original quote in Maltese: Ħafna minn dawn l-unaccompanied minors iħossuhom qishom abbandunati, mhumiex abbandunati ta!! Imma huma hekk iħossuhom. They left everything for a better life imbagħad you can imagine a lot of things minn xiex jghaddu.
This is like the American Dream, you actually believe it, but it doesn’t turn out that way. They would have given up everything, and done their utmost hoping for a better life, but that is not how things seem to be turning out.

(Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C})\textsuperscript{140}

Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} maintained that whatever the immigrants' status or country of origin, Malta should provide quality education because it is the key for a successful society be it if they settle here or elsewhere. He added that “Education should compensate for the social deprivation and financial problems of these children”.

Some people seem to share the belief that, since the irregular immigrants and the unaccompanied asylum seekers are guests who stay here for a short time or because they make up a very small number of the student population in Malta, then it is not worth investing in their education. Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} and the administrative official in the Education Directorates challenged such opinions because according to them, education is not a national investment but an international one.

It is not wise to invest only in your country, what about Europe and the world? Do we invest only in those citizens who remain in Malta? What about those doctors who are giving their services abroad, didn’t we invest in them? So, it’s the same with these immigrants...

(Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C})\textsuperscript{141}

Mr. UMST\textsuperscript{C} was, for the unaccompanied asylum seekers, an important point of reference. This was also noted from the meetings held during this study between the researcher, the support teacher and the girls.

\textsuperscript{140}Original quote in Maltese: Din bħall-American Dream temmen verament but, it doesn't function like that. Huma jkunu taw kollox u għamlu kollox for a better life u qisu ma jkunx qed jigihi hekk.

\textsuperscript{141}Original quote in Maltese: Ma tistax tghid tinvesti ghall-pajjiż tieghek biss, u l-Ewropa allura, u d-dinja? Mela aħna ninvestu fin-nies li jibqghu Malta biss? U t-tobba Maltin li hemm barra investejna fihom u qed igawdu pajjiżi oħra..allura it's the same for these immigrants.
I serve as a point of reference between the school, the children and the Administration at the Home because, after all, this is not a family but an institution. There must be someone they can turn to, otherwise, they feel lost (like a fish out of water). I try to create a family environment, little things which help because there is personal contact; they are not abandoned. I am neither employed by the Home, nor by the school; the government employs me to look after these children in a holistic way.

(Mr. UMST)\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{142}Original quote in Maltese: \textit{I am sort of the point of reference hux bejn l-iskola, it-tfal u l-administration ta’ XXX (the name of the HOME), ghax wara kollox dan mhux a family, it is an institution.. hemm bżonn li jkollhom lil xi ħadd ghax inkella jhossuhom like a fish out of the water hux. I make it happen just like as if you are in a family hux. Dawn huma affarijiet żgħar which help ghax hemm il-kuntatt uman hux. Mhumiex mitluqin waħedhom u jiena la jiena impjegat ma’ XXX (the name of the HOME) u lanqas mal-iskola, qisni jien nieħu ħsiebhom b’mod ħolistiku, għalhekk qed iħallasni l-Gvern, xogħli nieħu ħsiebhom.}
Appendix 11
Complete Findings of The Study 4 of 4 -
Integration/Participation in Mainstream vs.
Integration/Participation in The Specific
Language Provisions Provided in Schools A,B&C
Integration/Participation in mainstream vs Integration/Participation in the Specific Language Provisions provided in Schools\textsuperscript{A,B&C}

Schools\textsuperscript{A&B} had a Maltese as an Additional Language support programme (MAL) specifically aimed for the immigrant students. Although each varied, both adopted a withdrawal approach whereby for Maltese, the students were taken out of the mainstream classroom and provided with additional help in a pull-out period with a teacher of Maltese. In each of these two settings, among other immigrant peers and with the Maltese peers, their participation and integration in class were completely different.

From the 96 lessons observed (32 in Maltese, 32 in English and 32 in Maths), it was noted that the majority of the immigrant students, participated more in the MAL class than in mainstream. Moreover, it was noted that where the immigrants in mainstream classes were with another immigrant peer, their participation was much better than when they were alone. It was clear during all of the observation lessons that, whenever an immigrant student was the only immigrant student in class they were passive and did not participate at all unless they were specifically prompted by the teachers. This was also revealed by their seating position. When alone in mainstream they were always seated at the very back of the classroom, when with other immigrants they were either in the front rows or in the middle.

Integration/Participation in the Maltese as an Additional Language Support Programme

Most of the participants commented that in the MAL class they participated more and felt more accepted. It also was for them a point of reference such that although they were in this class because they were “different”, none of them felt different or “an alien” (Kate\textsuperscript{A}). Together they felt valued, safe enough to ask and confident to make mistakes. Throughout the observation lessons carried out in the MAL class in Schools\textsuperscript{A&B}, the students appeared happy, participated all the time, interacted with the teacher and with each other.
Ieva\textsuperscript{A} explains how in this class she participated more because she did not feel uncomfortable reading or speaking in Maltese. For Enya\textsuperscript{A} this class instilled confidence in her and enhanced her self-esteem. She never felt as if she was meant to do something which was far beyond her capabilities. As Elisa\textsuperscript{A} stated, this class is “something that help the children who come to Malta to feel good and not bad, sad and alone”.

As Stoyan\textsuperscript{B} explained in such a class “you can fit in easier and you understand more”. Moreover, the smallness of their group encouraged participation and permitted more individual attention. During observation of the classes in Schools\textsuperscript{A&B}, the students were motivated and although sometimes it was a bit noisy, all participated eagerly and were positively involved. Kate\textsuperscript{A} added that “unlike in the big class”, in the MAL class she was not shy to say “I don’t understand ” as “no one would think that I’m stupid if I say I don’t understand”.

In the normal class, I wouldn’t want to put my hand up every other second literally. But in the MAL class I will ask him maybe thirty things every lesson and he always answers so he doesn’t make me feel embarrassed to want to know an answer to something or to ask a question...

(Kate\textsuperscript{A})

Finally, many participants commented that in this class, “I’m in my level” (Stoyan\textsuperscript{B}), “it’s slower, the Miss take the time, she adapt to how we are, how we feel…” (Kjell\textsuperscript{B}) and you “can study in the beginning” (Timotei\textsuperscript{B}).

Interesting to note that in School\textsuperscript{B}, where the students were learning Maltese as an Additional Language, the boys seemed calmer and had a more positive outlook towards the subject-language. Unlike the girls in School\textsuperscript{A} they were not terrorized by “proper” Maltese and anxious about the challenge of having to compete with native speakers in doing a syllabus which is intended for native speakers. One may question whether preparing immigrant students for mainstream Maltese should be the aim of such language support programmes in MAL.
Participation in mainstream lessons

In mainstream classes most of the participants acted differently. Particularly during the English lessons one could not help but notice some “strange” attitudes on the part of some of the participants. Ieva was indifferent as “she stoops and tries to give the impression that she’s above this, this is too simple for me” (Ms. English). According to Ms. English, Alena would “ask a question to make sure that I knew the answer and if you didn’t sort of answer her, properly she’d ask again” She would sometimes even contradict her and according to Ms. English say, “Didn’t you say last time that...” . Enya, on the other hand “always speaks to me in Maltese” (Ms. English) yet her teacher adds that she does so because “she wants to show that she’s a bit tough”. Finally Ms. Maths said that when Zoran wants to be funny in class, he tells her, “I didn’t understand, explain in English please”.

Ms. English commented that some immigrants like Kate, do not participate in class because, “she is always afraid that she might make a mistake”, students like Yonas do not participate because as his teachers pointed out, “to him every letter is like a piece of drawing” (Ms. Maltese). He practically “draws every letter, actually he copies them” (Mr. Maths).

No, I don’t know how to read anything. I can’t read anything. I don’t know the alphabet. Nothing.

(Yonas)

I can’t read! I draw. I prefer drawing to writing. I am better able to draw.

(Yonas)

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143Original quote in Maltese: Ma fhimtx, explain in English please.

144Original quote in Maltese: Għalih kull ittra qisha tpinġija.

145Original quote in Maltese: Ittra, ittra jpinġi u kif jaraha, jikkuppjaha.

146Original quote in Maltese: Le xejn ma naf naqra. Ma nista’ naqra xejn. Ma nafx l-alfabett. Xejn.

Appendix 12
Figure 12: A visual metaphor of the plight of immigrant students
Figure 12: A visual metaphor of the plight of immigrant students
An illustration by Sue Flask, 2013 which was adapted by the researcher
from Malone (Kosonen et al., 2007, p. 7))
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001507/150704e.pdf)
Appendix 13
Ethical Approval (U.R.E.C)
Dear Ms Micallef Cann,

This is to inform you that your ethics proposal - EDU/066/10 - *Learning Maltese as a foreign language: Enhancing the integration of foreign students in state schools* - was approved by UREC. Hence, you may start your research.

Regards,

Please consider your environmental responsibility before printing this e-mail.
Appendix 14
Permission from the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
B. Tutor's Approval (where applicable)

The above research work is being carried out under my supervision.

Tutor's Name: Dr. Seline Signature: ____________________________

Faculty: EDUCATION Faculty Stamp: ____________________________

C. Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education - Official Approval

The above request for permission to carry out research in State Schools is hereby approved according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the University of Malta Ethics Committee.

Assistant Director (International Research)

Date: 16/06/2020

Official Stamp: ____________________________

Conditions for the approval of a request by a student to carry out research work in State Schools

Permission for research in State Schools is subject to the following conditions:

1. The official request form is to be accompanied by a copy of the questionnaire and/or any relevant material intended for use in schools during research work.
2. The original request form, showing the relevant signatures and approval, must be presented to the Head of School.
3. All research work is carried out at the discretion of the relative Head of School and subject to their conditions.
4. Researchers are to observe strict confidentiality at all times.
5. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to withdraw permission to carry out research in State Schools at any time and without prior notice.
6. Students are expected to restrict their research to a minimum of students/teachers/administrators/schools, and to avoid any waste of time during their visits to schools.
7. As soon as the research in question is completed, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education assumes the right to a full copy (in print or C.D.) of the research work carried out in State Schools. Researchers are to forward the copies to the Assistant Director, International Research, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.
8. Researchers are to hand a copy of their Research in print or on C.D. to the relative School's.
9. In the case of video recordings, researchers have to obtain prior permission from the Head of School and the teacher of the class concerned. Any adults recognisable in the video are to give their explicit consent. Parents of students recognisable in the video are also to be requested to approve that their siblings may be video-recorded. Two copies of the consent forms are necessary; one copy is to be deposited with the Head of School, and the other copy is to accompany the Request Form for Research in State School. Once the video recording is completed, one copy of the videotape is to be forwarded to the Head of School. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to request another copy.
10. The video recording's use is to be limited to this sole research and may not be used for other research without the full consent of interested parties including the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.
Appendix 15
The Agency for The Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS)
Good morning. I am writing to confirm that Ms. Micellef Cann can make arrangements with you to meet with the youths in question in order to confirm the given data.

Kind Regards,
Appendix 16
The Children and Young Persons Advisory Board
Hello Sharon,

Kindly be informed that the Advisory Board has given you the go ahead.

Thank you & Good Luck.

Regards,
Appendix 17
Quality Assurance Department
Letter Circular
QUALITY ASSURANCE DEPARTMENT

Letter Circular

Tel: 25982492  
Fax: 25982493

Information: X  
Date: 16th January 2012

Action Required: X  
Ref: QAD 07/2012

To: All Heads of State Primary & Secondary Schools and Sections

From: Quality Assurance Department

Subject: Guidelines for Classification of BS Form 1 Classes as from 2012-13

The following Guidelines, based on schools' feedback, are to be used by state secondary schools in the classification exercise for the formation of basic skills classes in Form 1 on the basis of the Benchmark results, with effect from 2012-13. Certain aspects are also relevant for primary schools.

In determining the classification of Basic Skills set classes in Form 1 for Maltese, English and Maths, HoS of state secondary schools are to be guided by the following considerations:

1. Learners with SEBD and/or disciplinary issues but who do not have BS needs as per guidelines below are NOT to be included in the Basic Skills set class in Form 1.

2. Learners with foreign language needs but who do not have BS needs as per guidelines below are not to be included in the Basic Skills set class in Form 1. The respective EOs will provide support on how to adapt teaching/learning to address foreign language learning needs. Learners with BS as well as other needs maybe included.

3. BS learners that are eligible for entry into the Form 1 BS set class are defined as having BS mastery not higher than Year 2 primary level

4. Prior to starting the selection process for the Form 1 BS set classes as per guideline below, schools need to consider the status of learners who were ‘Exempt’ or ‘Absent’ for the Benchmark:

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1 Also defined as Checklist 2 level, that is being used in primary schools in the context of basic skills acquisition. For more information you may wish to refer to: https://www.meeff.gov.mt/MediaCenter/Docs/1_Core_Competencies.pdf
• ‘Exempt’ and ‘Absent’ learners with a Statement of needs are to be assigned as indicated in their IEP/transition documentation, if necessary after further discussion with the INCOs.

• In the case of ‘Exempt’ and ‘Absent’ learners without a Statement of needs, schools are to strive to gather information from the feeder primary schools to determine whether the learner would benefit most from being placed in a BS set class. In the case of feeder primary schools in the state sector, these shall proactively inform the secondary schools by email or of such information, under the direction of the College Principals. Such information shall normally be based on the Year 6 mid-year or Year 5 annual exams, and the informed opinion of the Year 6 teacher. However, Year 6 teachers may not be obliged to give this opinion if they feel uncertain doing so.

For Maltese and English:

5. Apart from point 4 above, learners are be selected for the Form 1 BS set class according to the following order of preference, until the maximum allowed class size of 13 is reached:

- **1st preference**: Learners who achieved 5 marks or less in each of the four components of the Benchmark for the language in question. Please note further guidance in point 6 below.
- **2nd preference**: Learners who achieved 5 marks or less in each of the Reading and Writing components for the language in question.
- **3rd preference**: Learners who achieved 10 marks or less when the marks for the Reading and Writing components are COMBINED for the language in question.
- **4th preference**: Learners who achieved 6 or 7 marks in each of the Reading and Writing components for the language in question.

6. In the case of 1st Preference learners, the school needs to check the Benchmark results for the other language. If these results indicate that the learner is a candidate for the BS class in that language because s/he qualifies as a 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th Preference learner, classification is confirmed. If learner does not even qualify as a 4th Preference candidate in the other language, the school needs to consider the possibility that the learner has foreign language needs rather than BS needs. Thus, before confirming the placement of the learner in the BS class, the school needs to check on the language needs of the learners with the feeder primary school. This is essential because placing a learner in a BS learning environment when the learner has only foreign language needs is likely to be highly detrimental to the class and the learner, since the teaching/learning strategies may vary significantly.

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3 ‘Absent’ also means students who attended a primary school that did not participate in the Year 6 Benchmark, and who did not sit for evening session of the Benchmark exams available for such students

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Ministeru tal-Edukazzjonijiet u l-Koghol - Ministry of Education and Employment
7. Learners who do not even qualify as 4\textsuperscript{th} Preference learners should NOT be placed in a BS class.

8. If the maximum BS class size of 13 has not been reached, and the Head of School has an objective reason, after consultation with the INCO, to consider that particular borderline students (i.e. students whose marks are just above the 4\textsuperscript{th} Reference Level) may benefit from inclusion in the BS class rather than the next level class, the Head of School may exercise due discretion. This decision shall be reviewed with the INCO at the end of the 1\textsuperscript{st} term.

For Maths:

9. Apart from point 4 above, learners are be selected for the Form 1 BS set class according to the following order of preference, until the maximum allowed class size of 13 is reached:
   - 1\textsuperscript{st} preference: Learners who achieved 10 marks or less in the global mark for Maths.
   - 2\textsuperscript{nd} preference: Learners who achieved 15 marks or less in the global mark for Maths.
   - 3\textsuperscript{rd} preference: Learners who achieved 20 marks or less in the global mark for Maths.

10. Learners who do not even qualify as 3\textsuperscript{rd} Preference learners should NOT be placed in a BS class.

11. If the maximum BS class size of 13 has not been reached, and the Head of School has an objective reason, after consultation with the INCO, to consider that particular borderline students (i.e. students whose marks are just above the 4\textsuperscript{th} Reference Level) may benefit from inclusion in the BS class rather than the next level class, the Head of School may exercise due discretion. This decision shall be reviewed with the INCO at the end of the 1\textsuperscript{st} term.

Sandro Spiteri  
Director  
Quality Assurance Department