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POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES FACED IN A CRITICAL MEDIA
LITERACY PROJECT IN A 6TH GRADE CLASSROOM

Master's Thesis in Education
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Intercultural Teacher Education
2016



Faculty of Education

Thesis abstract

Intercultural Teacher Education		Author MINNA RÖNKKÖMÄKI	
Title of thesis Possibilities and Challenges Faced in a Critical Media Literacy Project in a 6th Grade Classroom			
Major subject Education	Type of thesis Pro gradu	Year September 2016	No. of pages 69+9
Abstract <p>The aim of this master's thesis was to explore what factors have an effect on a Critical Media Literacy project. The research was a qualitative research. The foundation of the project was based on the theory of critical literacy and media literacy education. Critical literacy emphasizes the individual's role in the society as an agent of social justice who should be able to discover and act against unjust systems in their own society. Media literacy education focuses on teaching students to read different medias, discover underlying messages in them and create one's own opinion on the matter. Other pedagogical theories and documents the lesson plans of the project were based on were child centered learning, Zone of Proximal Development and the basic values of National Core Curriculum for Basic Education.</p> <p>The empirical part of the study was done in a 6th grade classroom of 24 pupils in a Finnish primary school. The project was carried out together with a fellow colleague. The data was collected from 12 Critical Media Literacy lessons with the topic of integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Finland. The students learned about integration, how different medias show the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Finland and what could the students do for the integration themselves. The research methodology was classroom ethnography and the data was analyzed by using qualitative thematic analysis. Primary data included reflective journals of the teachers and complementary data consisted of the essays of the students. I acted as both the teacher and the researcher in this study, practicing investigative teaching. This was taken into account by explaining everything in detail from the beginning of the project to the end results in order to enhance transparency and the validity of the research.</p> <p>It was found that multiple factors had an effect on the outcomes of this Critical Media Literacy project. The factors could be divided into three themes: Pedagogical choices and learning, Relationships in the classroom and Practical issues. However, it was concluded that the results cannot be generalized into other learning situations as such because aspects such as the participants and learning circumstances of all Critical Media Literacy projects are unique and therefore cannot be replicated.</p>			
Keywords: classroom ethnography, critical literacy, investigative teaching, media literacy, project learning			



Intercultural Teacher Education		Tekijä MINNA RÖNKKÖMÄKI	
Työn nimi Possibilities and challenges faced in a Critical Media Literacy project in a 6 th grade classroom			
Pääaine Kasvatustiede	Työn laji Pro gradu	Aika Syyskuu 2016	Sivumäärä 69+9
Tiivistelmä <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tutkia millä tekijöillä on vaikutus Kriittisen Medialukutaidon projektiin. Tutkimus oli laadullinen tutkimus. Projekti perustui kriittisen lukutaidon teoriaan sekä medialukutaitokasvatukseen. Kriittinen lukutaito painottaa yksilön roolia yhteisön sosiaalisena oikeudenmukaisuuden toimijana, jonka tulisi paljastaa ja toimia epäoikeudenmukaisia normeja vastaan omassa yhteiskunnassaan. Medialukutaitokasvatus keskittyy opettamaan oppilaita lukemaan erilaisia medioita, löytämään niistä merkittäviä tietoja sekä muodostamaan oman mielipiteen aiheesta. Muut pedagogiset teoriat ja asiakirjat, jotka vaikuttivat projektin oppitunteihin, olivat lapsilähtöinen opetus, lähikehityksen vyöhyke ja Perusopetuksen Opetussuunnitelman Perusteiden arvopohja.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen empiirinen osa toteutettiin suomalaisen koulun 6. luokassa, jossa oli yhteensä 24 oppilasta. Projekti toteutettiin yhdessä toisen kollegan kanssa. Aineisto kerättiin kahdeltatoista Kriittisen Medialukutaidon tunnilta, joiden aiheena oli pakolaisten ja turvapaikanhakijoiden kotouttaminen Suomessa. Oppilaat oppivat kotouttamisesta, siitä miten eri mediat käsittelevät pakolaisten ja turvapaikanhakijoiden tilannetta Suomessa ja miten oppilaat itse voisivat auttaa kotouttamisessa. Tutkimuksen metodologiana käytettiin luokahuone-etnografiaa ja aineisto analysoitiin laadullisen temaattisen analyysimenetelmän avulla. Toimin itse tutkimuksessa sekä opettajana että tutkijana, harjoittaen tutkivaa opettajuutta. Tämä otettiin huomioon selittämällä kaikki yksityiskohtaisesti projektin alkuvaiheista lopputuloksiin asti läpinäkyvyyden ja validiteetin lisäämiseksi sekä parantamiseksi.</p> <p>Monella eri tekijällä todettiin olevan vaikutus kyseessä olevan Kriittisen Medialukutaidon projektin lopputulokseen. Tekijät voidaan jakaa kolmeen eri teemaan: Pedagogiset valinnat ja oppiminen, Luokahuoneen suhteet ja Käytännön haasteet. Tuloksien ei kuitenkaan uskota olevan yleistettävissä muihin oppimistilanteisiin, koska eri tekijät kuten osallistujat ja oppimistilanteet ovat kaikissa Kriittisen Medialukutaidon projekteissa yksilölliset, eivätkä näin ollen ole toistettavissa.</p>			
Asiasanat: kriittinen lukutaito, luokahuone-etnografia, medialukutaito, projektioppiminen, tutkiva opettajuus			

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Appendixes

1 Introduction

As a researcher I wanted to focus on something that I could imply to my future job as a teacher. It was important for me that theory and practice could be combined in the research like as it is being done in critical literacy. I did my bachelor's thesis on the theory of critical literacy, so it was quite reasonable to continue it in the master's thesis.

A growing need for critical literacy and adequate media reading skills in today's society played also a huge role when deciding on the topic of my study. The amount of information is growing every day, which is why the students must be taught to look at it all from multiple perspectives. This is where critical literacy can really make a difference. It is not only about critically viewing the texts though, but also about looking at things from an active socio-political context and in the end acting upon the new information that is being acquired.

A lot of times "critical" can have an instant negative connotation when it is brought up in a conversation. Critically pondering over an issue does not automatically mean disagreeing with ideas or rejecting and deviating from norms (McPeck, 1981, 13). I also believe, that being critical does not mean one has to oppose everything; one can be critical towards information and at the same time use the critical awareness as a tool to explain and back up opinions and things that are believed to be important.

Implementing critical literacy in a classroom requires a lot, but can give the teacher and the students even more. Opening students' eyes to the unequal situations and power-relations in their own society and environment is not an easy job. It often requires sensitivity, openness, trust and communication skills from all the participants, but especially from the teacher. Some subjects might touch some students more than others, which is why sensitivity is also asked from the teacher. These aspects of critical literacy education made me want to try it out in a classroom setting and to find out how it works out in practice.

The empirical research part of this study was conducted in a 6th grade classroom in a school in Northern Finland. Me and a fellow researcher, Linda Izadi, came up with a project which consisted of 12 lessons worth of teaching and interacting with 6th grade students. Linda had already done the first part of her research in the same class in the Spring of 2015. The topic of our project was the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the Finnish society. Even though research fieldwork is usually done individually, team researching has been

found fruitful by many researchers (Wolcott, 1999, 72). We found this to suit both of our interests the best. Even though we carried out the data collection together, we decided to keep the researches separate due to practical reasons and differences in our interests towards the data we gathered. We used a broad set of teaching methods during the project which will be justified later on in this paper; in short it was based on critical literacy, media literacy and other child-centered pedagogies. Linda's focus was in Service Learning which basic ideas follow the ones mentioned above. Despite the fact we individually wrote both of our theses, there might be some overlapping text in them due to the shared data.

The research question of this master's thesis changed multiple times during the research process, but was formed in the end into being the following:

1. What kind of factors have an effect on a Critical Media Literacy project?

The topic of integration of refugees in Finland came from the students, and it fit well with the media literacy project since the media was full of news about refugees and immigrants at the time. We also believed it suited the ideas of especially empowerment and taking social action, which are both goals of critical literacy education and service learning education. The Finnish Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) also states that the values we pass on to the students as teachers should include discussion on equity and respect towards human rights. Since the situation of refugees has very close ties to both, it falls into this aim of the curriculum.

According to the Article 14(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." The international refugee law is controlled by the 1951 Convention relating to the Statue of Refugees. The convention defines a refugee in the Article 1 (A)(2) as "an individual who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence who is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on his or her race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group." Asylum seeker is a person who has asked for recognition as a refugee, and if decided to meet the definition of a refugee is granted an asylum. (Asylum & the Rights of Refugees, 2016.) These declarations among the Finnish constitution give also Finland the responsibility in receiving refugees and giving them an asylum if they need it.

During the first project about refugees that Linda did with the students in the Fall of 2015, the refugee and asylum seeker crisis was all over the news. Still in January 2016 when our project started, the media was full of different kind of news about their situation in Finland. We wanted to show the students how different media sources can show refugees and asylum seekers in different light and get them to think about the importance of media and the overall picture Finnish people have about refugees and asylum seekers. Since the goal of the project was the Freirean praxis, it was also important to show the students how they can help refugees and asylum seekers themselves.

My position as a participant researcher in this study is very provident. I literally researched my own actions as a teacher, becoming an investigative teacher who wishes to improve her own skills as an educator. This is why the methodological approach that was used in this study was classroom ethnography and the data was analyzed by using qualitative thematic analysis.

At first the theoretical framework of this research will be introduced in the chapter 2. Critical literacy and media literacy education, which affected the ideological foundation of the project the most, are presented in the paper first. Because of the nature of the project, I will also take a look at how to raise critical awareness in students from the point of view of an educator and other educational pedagogies that had an impact on the lesson plans. When moving to the empirical part of the research, the methodological approach, data analysis and empirical data collection will be discussed and justified in the chapter 3, which will be followed by the validity and ethics of the research. Data analysis and the findings will be represented next, followed by Discussion and References which will be the last chapters of this thesis. In the end I have attached three Appendixes, which include the permit to attend the study, lesson plans and last an instruction paper the students used when writing their reflective journals.

2 Defining concepts the Critical Media Literacy project was based on

The starting point of an ethnographic research is preparing for the fieldwork by reading and introducing theoretically and methodologically relevant texts before starting the empirical part of your research (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 18; Syrjäläinen, 1991,). This is why this paper will give an introduction to the ideologies the Critical Media Literacy project was based on before going to the empirical part of the research. These ideologies include critical literacy, media literacy education, developing critical awareness in an individual and other pedagogies influencing the decision that were made when planning the Critical Media Literacy project.

2.1 Foundation of critical literacy education

Critical literacy is a complex theory with multiple dimensions. This paper will not try fitting it into a specific model, but rather look at the theory from various perspectives. Critical literacy lies in the foundation that *Paulo Freire, social critical theories* and *critical pedagogy* have created (Kellner & Share, 2007; Kirylo, 2013). The aim of critical literacy is to teach students to read texts in an active and reflective manner from multiple point of views in order to understand power relations, inequalities and injustices better between human relationships (Coffey, 2010; Andreotti & De Souza, 2007). By doing this, critical literacy can become a mindset where it is not only a tool for teaching, but a way for viewing and relating with the world. Critical literacy can therefore be introduced as a "philosophy that recognizes the connections between power, knowledge, language, and ideology, and recognizes the inequalities and injustices surrounding us in order to move towards transformative action and social justice". (Mulcahy, 2008, 16.)

The philosophy of critical literacy theory is based on different educational theories. Kellner & Share (2007) conclude that cultural studies and critical pedagogies are the theoretical framework critical literacy is based on and where we can start to understand and implement practices in how to transform education and the society. Authors such as Paulo Freire and others led to the creation of concepts for critical pedagogies, but the idea of fighting for social justice under oppressive powers has been around for ages (Kirylo, 2013, xix).

2.1.1 Paulo Freire's impact on critical literacy

Kirylo (2013) states that Paulo Freire has had such a big general impact on educational, philosophical and theological thought that it has made him one of the most influential educators in the past 100 years. Such authors as Freire among others have challenged us to continue the movement towards a society which is just and promotes freedom with equal opportunities for all (Kirylo, 2013). Through Freire's pedagogy, critical literacy education also understands how literacy and its practice should always be concentrated on enhancing social justice, freedom and equity. (Cervetti & al, 2001.)

In the "Pedagogy of the oppressed" Paulo Freire (1970a) presents a pedagogy where the relationship between the teacher, student and the society is looked from a perspective of critical pedagogy. One of the main focuses of Freire's pedagogy is to move further away from the simplified teaching habit of a "banking system", where the teacher expects the students to only sit silent and suck in all the information the more "knowledgeable" person is giving them. In this kind of teaching, there is usually no need for communication, but the teacher expects the students only to receive, memorize and repeat information. (Freire, 1970a, 72.)

When the relationship between the teacher and the pupils is authoritarian, the teacher often oppresses the students in all aspects of schooling (discipline, actions, content and so on). From Freire's opinion, this kind of schooling can be well suited for the oppressors of the society, since they are trying to "fit" the educated individuals into the society they have created themselves. (Freire, 1970a, 72-73.) Schooling can be seen as a way to educate the children in order for them to find their place in the societies, like Freire argues, which can become a problem if they are not given a chance to find their paths by themselves.

As an opposite for the banking system, Freire claims we should look at individuals as conscious and creative beings. He argues that knowledge only emerges when people are actively inventing new inquiries with the world and each other. (Freire, 1970a, 76.) This is an ideology which should be encouraged in education as well, since everything in the society moves around and changes form therefore challenging us to change with them. It has been taken into account in for example the new curriculum in Finland, which requires the teachers to use more phenomena based projects and teaching than before, and more importantly, involve the students in it. (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014.)

Mechanical reading or speaking is not enough for the oppressed, if they cannot “associate with the right of self-expression and world-expression, of creating and re-creating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical process”. (Freire 1970b, 12.) The pedagogical goal of Freire's critical theory is to develop a critical consciousness. This goal, which remains the same for many critical theorists, means that individuals should be able to read texts and the world critically, eventually moving beyond this criticality to become active in the transformation of oppressive situations. (Cervetti & al, 2001.)

The right to having a voice is also very important aspect of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and to act against the oppressors is a key in breaking these relations (Freire, 1970b, 12). Critical literacy also aims at this kind of *praxis* (Mulcahy, 2008), which is introduced by Freire as a concept of combining reflection and action for the purpose of transforming society (Freire, 1970a). Even though action is encouraged when teaching critical literacy, the starting point of critical literacy education can be teaching students about power relations and inequalities visible in texts, helping them to create and develop a sense of critical consciousness.

2.1.2 Social critical theories

The Frankfurt School of social critical theory is among the first to acknowledge the importance of transformation of social inequalities and injustices, as well as giving power to the controlled (Kellner, 1993; McLaren, 1998, 186). Critical literacy also shares the values of social critical theorists about the concern of mitigating human suffering and establishing a more just world by criticizing existing social and political forms of power as well as presenting alternatives for them (Cervetti & al, 2001). Similarly to Freire, social critical theorists emphasize the individual's role in the society as the "agent of social change" (Beck 2005, 393). Freire also shared the idea of language and literature as the key for social reconstruction with the social critical theorists. Social critical theory has given critical literacy the understanding of how texts are products of socio-politics and ideologies, and how they should therefore be subjected to continuous evaluation. (Cervetti & al, 2001.)

Critical educational theory, or critical pedagogy, brings the ideas of social critical theorists into practice. It shares the objectives of Frankfurt school of critical theory concerning transformation and empowerment of people and societies (Beck, 2005, 393.) It is a philosophy that is meant to empower students with the way they think and foster decisive actions which

do not take neutral positions when examining various forces impacting requisites for humanity. If these forces are oppressing, dehumanizing or marginalizing people, critical pedagogues should act as humanizing agents resisting and calling for a more democratic world. Inside critical pedagogy there are multiple smaller theories which together aim for this kind of justice. (Kirylo, 2013.)

Critical pedagogy examines the schools' tendency to reproduce inequality and social injustices, but also how it can be used as an arena for teaching about critical consciousness and taking action. (Beck, 2005, 393). It might seem as if these goals have been met in the "western" world already, but there are still work to be done with equality between genders, marginalized groups and the mainstream students, as well as the inequality of ethnicities to name a few.

Critical pedagogy aims at providing educators with more thorough understanding of the role schools have in the society divided by class, ethnicity, gender and so on (Mclaren, 1998, 189), but they also need tools which they can use when trying to create this kind of understanding. Critical social theorists claim that the inequalities surrounding these challenges can be exposed and reconstructed through language (Cervetti & al, 2001). These tools can include using critical literacy practices and exercises in classrooms as teaching methods.

2.1.3 Orientations of critical literacy education

With learning over all, there should not be only right answers for questions. Every student should be given a chance to exploit their different kind of learning processes and patterns in their own way. Students should also be able to discover connections between the texts and their own lives at the same time constructing different meanings for literature (Meier, 2009, 76). Problematizing these connections is a crucial factor of critical literacy, since it seeks to understand and solve problems and complexities rather than accepting essential views (McLaughlin & DeVgood, 2004).

By practicing critique, problem posing and transformation students can also be taught to interrogate social structures surrounding for example race, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. They can therefore question relations between these issues in a way that positions them as readers, consumers and sociopolitical beings. (Mulcahy, 2008.) Meier (2009, 76) also describes how reading can be used both to empower, but also to indoctrinate students. Reading

and interacting with text is not neutral, and it usually reflects an ideology. This can be seen in for example text books in school, which are often presented as the genuine truth (Meier, 2009, 76), unless the teacher suggests otherwise. This is why we made a conscious choice during the project in trying to choose different kind of sources for the students to get familiar with.

It has been argued that there are no permanent customs for examining the techniques promoting critical literacy, but teaching should be dynamic and ready to adapt for certain contexts. It is essential for the teacher to assess students' responses when he or she wants to make sure the educational goals of critical literacy education have been met. Considering multiple perspectives of literature is an essential aspect of critical literacy along with expanding students' beliefs, norms and positions. (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, 54-55.)

Critical literacy can also be divided in various ways depending on the goals the author is looking for. Janks (2000, 176) introduces four orientations to critical literacy education, which all have different realizations of the relationship between power and language; domination, diversity, design and access.

The *domination perspective* helps examine how social and political positions are maintained with the help of language. Language can also be used when creating social identities, which is the purpose of the *diversity perspective*. With *design perspective*, students are encouraged to use different sources and create various meanings by binding them together and reconstructing them. *Access perspective*, in the other hand, provides admission to the dominant language and language structure while upholding and valuing the minority group's use and access to their own language and its structure. (Janks, 2000, 177-178.)

Janks emphasizes that all these orientations are meant to work together, not individually. In order to reach the goal of equity and social justice, the orientations should be balanced and used properly. Dominant orientations should therefore be changed according to the need. Overall critical literacy should take an approach where dominant languages, literacies and genres are presented and taught, while at the same time diversity is being used as a source for reconstructing social positions and the future. (Janks, 2000, 178.)

When Janks focuses more on the use of language in relation to critical literacy education, Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys (2002, 383-384) divide critical literacy into more practical factors. They show how teachers can introduce critical literacy and engage in different topics

with the students in a deeper level. There are multiple ways for implementing critical literacy education in a classroom (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004), which is why we decided to take the dimensions in our lessons that suit our goals for the project best, and leave others out.

The first dimension introduced by Lewison & al (2002, 383-389) is the *disruption of commonplace*; in other words, confronting and challenging students' usual beliefs and viewpoints on certain issues and connecting students' worlds and the texts. Second dimension consists of *interrogating multiple viewpoints*, where students are encouraged to think whose voices are heard in the texts and whose are not. An important viewpoint to this is to try to understand how did the people feel about the text themselves. Third dimension focuses on *sociopolitical issues*, where students are taught about different power relations and sociopolitical issues, in other words, introducing them to the fact some have more power in our societies than others. *Taking action and promoting social justice*, the fourth dimension, requires the use of "praxis" and using critical literacy when trying to change already existing directions in the power relations and injustices in the students own societies and surroundings.

The authors do not stress the chronological order of these dimensions, but it seems as if it would be easiest to start from the first one. These four dimension are in close relation to Freire's image of liberating education, where students are encouraged to actively engage in dialogue, problem-posing, discovering social oppression and understanding the world they live in (Mulcahy, 2008). The challenging aspect of implementing Janks's orientations and Lewinson, Flint and van Sluys's dimensions is to come up with projects and learning situations that make students understand the reason behind the exercises so they are not just thought of as another exercise without meaning. Transparency with the aim of all learning situations can perhaps help diminish this problem.

2.2 Media literacy Education

Critical literacy education was the foundation that our project and the lesson plans were based on, but given the circumstances and time of technology and media having a big part of our lives today, we decided to take media literacy into the project as well. When textbooks were the most important text to be critical towards at school before, nowadays internet and other sources of media are the ones influencing young students the most. When the project

was implemented in January 2016, there were a lot of news about refugees and asylum seekers in all sources of media which is why we thought it would be beneficial and easy to take media education into the project.

Critical media literacy is a favorable way of teaching media education in schools. It has been presented as a tool for involving critical inquiry from multiple perspectives, addressing social issues and a possibility for producing alternative counter medias. (Kellner & Share, 2007.) Critical media literacy in practice can help students when navigating through multiple sources of information, thinking critically about embedded messages in different texts and creating their own texts (Meyer, 2010, 364).

Critical media literacy also includes texts other than the usual printed versions of information that we receive broadening the concept of text to digitalized material as well (Kellner & Share, 2007). This broad understanding of text is also shared by critical literacy, since songs, conversations, pictures, movies, novels and all similar types of media are considered as texts in the context of critical literacy. (Coffey, 2010, 1). In our project the literacy materials consisted mostly of different sorts of news - however, I would consider the discussions we had together as a group as very important tools we also used and learned from.

De Abreu & Mihailidis (2014, xxviii) argue that media literacy education has the responsibility to prepare people in facilitating their lives inside the digital media culture. In their opinion media literacy education should not be an option anymore but rather a priority. Media together with information communication technology can be suggested to be used as tools for empowering people who are in the minority or marginalized, and for the dominant group critical media literacy can be used to engage them with social realities that most of the world is experiencing (Kellner & Share, 2007).

McDougal (2014, 9) sees it exceptionally important that media literacy education is being taught in an interactive way where students and teachers are redistributing power through collaborative pedagogy in order to free it from old pedagogies. A distinctive feature of media education is to encourage the students to think critically about media in order to understand how media systems work in different contexts such as social, political and economic environments (Jolls, Walkosz & Morgenthaler, 2014, 12). It is important to remember to address the complex issues of media literacy, and to teach *about* media rather only *with* media, critically, with student-centered and process-oriented teaching methods (Jolls, Walkosz, & Morgenthaler, 2014, 12).

Some suggest media literacy should be taught as a separate subject or otherwise it will be marginalized, even though at the same time they acknowledge that interdisciplinary approach has been noticed to work the best (Jolls & al, 2014, 16). Media literacy skills are in no doubt very important in today's world, but it is a quite adjustable subject which can perhaps be integrated in other subjects rather easily and on an everyday basis if wanted to. There can also be the concern that media education in schools is being done only for the sake of using technology; however, with media education just like in any other subject it is important to have clear pedagogical aims first, and only after that to decide on the tools which to use.

According to a study, professionals in the field of media education from 18 different countries shared a view that a synthesis between media education and media criticism is both possible and a necessity in order to effectively develop people's critical thinking skills. However, according to the findings the use of these methods are not yet very popular in these 18 countries that took part in the study. (Fedorov & Levitskaya, 2015.) It is interesting how they draw a conclusion that in order to enhance critical thinking skills one needs to be acquainted with critical media education, unless they consider media as a broad umbrella for all types of texts which in that case would make sense.

An important aspect that surrounds both media education and technology education is that we must understand that those who lack the opportunities and technological skills will be excluded from the society if they are not able to exercise the rights and responsibilities of the new "Information Age" and will in the end be denied their full citizenship (Holloway & Valentine, 2009, 68). This idea or thought can divide a lot of teachers – others are all in with teaching of Information technology and media education, while others can be strongly against it.

Both sides of this perspective can be supported by great arguments, but no one can deny the importance media and technology plays in the children's lives today. If the teachers want to use something that is already one of students' strengths, media literacy education must be part of their lessons. Kist (2014, 57) refers to an ad where a little girl asks Google how many miles is the trip from Earth to the Moon before going on an outside voyage – according to Kist, even though this ad can be seen as a way to deceive the ones who worry about technology separating and dividing us, it also might represent a future of hybrid reality, where media tools are integrated into our daily lives. Based on this argument, it can be claimed that since technology is and will be a part of the students' everyday lives, the school can and should

take responsibility of showing them how to use it responsibly and in adequate amounts. Kist also points out numerous world changing events that happened in social media - Arab spring, presidential elections - where people all around the world can take part, make arguments and act for a cause they believe in (Kist, 2014, 57).

This global community is something the students should be able to be a part of if they want to, and again they need necessary skills in order to take part in these sort of events and discussion in responsible and respectful ways. On a macro-level, media literacy education should and does address the issues of socio-structural issues of power, such as the divide between rich and the poor, and corporate media interest where data is collected to define and target people by their consumption habits (Fry, 2014, 131-132). Furthermore, since technologies and media keep expanding globally, we must educate the students from a global perspective about the various roles of media (Mihailidis & al, 2014, 59). What this global perspective then could be is a whole other matter.

Engaged citizenship can be the broad umbrella which covers all media literacy activities. No matter the topic, the goal is to help enable stronger, critical and analytical voices in active citizens. (Mihailidis & al, 2014, 123.) Drawing inspiration from authors such as Paulo Freire, Fry (2014, 127) proposes that activist media literacy education can introduce the potential of media as truly democratizing – that teachers could give the power of taking responsibility, understanding and acting on their mediate environments to the students and the communities themselves. Teachers must be media literate in order to expect them to be able to efficiently teach students about media literacy; they should also be equipped with enough teaching resources (Jolls & al, 2014, 13-15).

There is a shallow division between the advocates for feeling anxiety towards the reliance on media and those opposing this view. The underlying assumption from the protectionist group is that media is bad and should be protected from. Because of the raising numbers in different social media sites, use of smart phones, information resource and so on a lot of people are confused and fearful about what this means for our future, which is for a good reason. Interested parties have encouraged this atmosphere by focusing on only negative outcomes from illuminating only a narrow range of youth digital media use such as cyber-bullying and internet safety, while at the same time ignoring the larger communication field and a holistic way of looking at digital communication. (Fry, 2014, 128.)

Fry also argues that the protectionists do not have enough knowledge about media literacy education and they also ignore the reality where digital media and internet contain most of our public and private communications. (Fry, 2014, 128.) It is not, however, enough to state that only because things are the way they are, it should be accepted and moved on. The reason most of our communications are on a digital media platform is enough for calling safety measures for keeping this kind of information safe, which is a reasonable claim from the protectionists' side.

The concerns that various groups have against media and especially the internet, can be vastly reduced by suitable media literacy education. The youth should be taught to use media responsibly, protecting their identity and personal information, at the same time taking part in a global movement for empowerment. With right aims, techniques and amounts media literacy education and technology can most likely be a great asset to teachers.

2.3 Developing critical awareness

Because one of the aims of the project is to help the students develop a sense of critical awareness towards both media and how the media is talking about refugees and asylum seekers, critical thinking is also introduced shortly in the theoretical framework. Learning how to think critically is to understand when to question something and what kind of questions to ask in those situations. It also calls for the use of reflective skepticism at the right time. (McPeck, 1981, 7.) The goal of critical thinking is to improve students' ability and skills with reasoning, analyzing and evaluating, as well as expressing their thinking in a manner of rationality and clearness. Critical literacy on the other hand, aims at revealing social inequalities, identifying their roots and taking social action for transforming the society. (Mulcahy, 2008, 15.) Despite their differences, critical thinking skills can be argued to be essential before or while starting with critical literacy education.

In order to effectively use this reflective skepticism, one must know about and be able to engage with the topic in question; being even an expert in the specific field. Claims have also been made that exercise alone could make someone a critical thinker. A person might be able to critically think about one area and not be able to do so in another. (McPeck, 1981, 7-9.) It is understandable to believe that being an expert on some issue is the only option for critical evaluation since it is essential that thoughts and opinions are backed up by some real knowledge. However, it is possible to deeply engage in discussion of a certain topic from

multiple points of views without knowing absolutely everything about the issue. It is also quite narrow thinking to believe exercise could not enhance these skills; it can be stated that exactly exercise and teaching can help in becoming a critical thinker.

Another view expresses exactly this side of critical thinking. Critical thinking is looked at as being a form of learning where generating new knowledge is done by processing existing knowledge and ideas by using tools for manipulating knowledge such as analysis, understanding and synthesis. Finding evidence in order to make a judgement, as well as evaluating, reflecting and understanding the issue at hand are in the core of this angle of critical literacy. (Moon, 2008, 33.)

Some authors also believe that the "study of media" should not solely focus on creating media texts, but also on providing students with skills to be able to engage with different theories and perform complex text analysis. Bleazby (2014) criticizes practices which do not give enough attention to the development and support of formulating coherent questions, good thinking skills and meaningful class discussions which are connected to critical text analysis. She argues that one of the reasons for failing in this might be the teacher's lack of capacity in formulating questions which would help develop these skills. (Bleazby, 2014, 86.)

Bleazby calls the first level of questions *lower-order questions*. These questions do not even try to evoke deeper analysis of texts, but focus mainly on memorizing and comprehending their basics. This is because the students must first be able to remember and comprehend texts before they can critically evaluate and analyze them. It is also the reason why these questions are needed in the beginning of the process. (Bleazby, 2014, 86.) These lower-order questions can play a significant role in the start of critical literacy education, but once it gets started it could be thought that the students would start to pick up on memorizing and comprehending even without such questions.

What is more beneficial to what were tried to accomplish during this project are more connected to the *higher-order questions* Bleazby talks of. If teacher's aim is to enhance students' deeper understanding of texts and higher-order thinking skills, low-order questions will not get them there. After having had the students familiarize themselves with the text, the teacher can move on to the higher-order questions. They require students to evaluate, discuss, voice their opinions and critically examine, compare and justify their opinions by examples. (Bleazby, 2014, 87.)

The advice is also to use caution when asking too general questions from the students if the aim is to analyze a specific part of the text. When formulating the questions, the teacher can scaffold the learning in order to facilitate it instead of only testing their prior knowledge. This should happen after the students have been equipped with skills to analyze texts in detail. (Bleazby, 2014, 88.) This calls for the teacher to know the students and understand where they are with text analyzing skills before right questions can be formulated. The issue of formulating coherent question in our project will be discussed further in the analysis chapter.

As a teacher, there are a lot of things and some ethical rules to keep in mind when aiming for the enhancement of critical thinking. The teacher should respect arguments and be cautious when interpreting and paraphrasing them. When giving feedback, the teacher should avoid trivial criticism and criticism that is not relevant to the argument. (Assali & Bierman, 1996, 147-149.) Giving room for the diversity of thought is also essential when trying to change students' thinking processes. (Gainer, 2010, 373).

2.4 Other educational pedagogies shaping the lesson plans

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the distance between a level where the individual can get with independent problem solving and a level where the individual can get with guidance in problem solving from an adult or in collaboration more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, 86). Learning happens when the student is helped to the next level by a more knowledgeable person. ZPD has later become a synonym for scaffolding. (McLeod, 2012.) *Constructivist learning theory* on the other hand holds a position that learning happens through processes where knowledge is built on prior knowledge, and learning is thus a result of experiences and ideas. Constructivist learning pedagogy is composed of teaching methods which focus on active learning of students. (Krahenbuhl, 2016, 97-98.) In the project these pedagogies were used widely and during most of the lessons.

There are multiple authors who have argued for *child-centered learning* in the past. Steiner called for experience-based learning where education's goal is to help children develop into free individuals, whereas Montessori believed independent discovery was the way to teach children. Reggio Emilia pedagogy on the other hand sees children as active partners of their own learning experiences and environments. (Widger & Schofield, 2012, 29-30.) The ideol-

ogy of child-centered learning was not taken as far as some of these authors have done because of the circumstances such as lack of time, but when it was possible the students were given freedom and responsibilities of their own learning.

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) states that the teachers should encourage and teach students to handle ethical issues with compassion and justice. Seeing multiculturalism as richness and something to learn from is seen important in the curriculum as well (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014.) This was an important ideology that was one of the underlying core values of my own teaching throughout the lessons.

The conception of learning in the National core curriculum is found on a notion of seeing the student as active learners. This includes learning how to work independently and in a group, reflecting one's own learning and feelings, and most of all learning together with the environment (teacher, other students, other people connected to the school environment). The students should be encouraged to think about different issues from multiple points of view and to contemplate contradictory and unclear information. Cultural diversity should be taught as a positive asset, and how the diversity affects the society around us. The students should also be lead to think about what kind of things cannot be tolerated based on human rights. (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014.)

The students must be taught to read and interpret different kinds of texts in order to understand the world surrounding them. According to the core curriculum, learning numerous ways of interpreting literacy supports the development of critical thinking and learning skills. (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014.) Learning different kind of literacy skills was connected in our project with media education, and emphasis was put into for example looking for the underlining messages in different types of news

Knowing how to use different types of technology is counted as a basic citizenship skill in itself in the Core curriculum. Basic education should make sure that all students have a possibility and access to develop in the area of technology education. It is important to discuss why these skills are important nowadays in both personal and working life with the students. They should also learn how to interpret the media and how it influences people. (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014.) We used multiple types of technology during the project and discussed the use of media with the students.

Being part of the society and participating in its activities has been included in the basic skills that should be taught to the students. The basic education should create a possibility for raising interest towards their own school environment as well as the society as a whole. The students should be included in planning their own education such as lesson planning and choosing the learning environments. They should learn how to express themselves constructively and with justifications. (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014.) This aim of getting the students to actively be part of their society and help them reflect on what had been discussed was in the core of our project. The aims are also similar with critical literacy and media literacy.

3 Empirical application and methodology

This chapter will introduce the methodology of classroom ethnography which was used in this research along with explaining the choices made during the analysis. The chapter explains where, how and with whom the project of this research was done. Data in this study was drawn from the reflective journals and students' reflective essays, which are opened up more when primary and complementary data are discussed. The lesson outlines are also included in this chapter 3.6 in order to give the reader a brief overview of what was done in each lesson before the analysis. The steps which were taken in the analysis part are explained as well, and the last chapter 3.7 explains the validity and ethics of this research.

3.1 Classroom ethnography

In this research it was decided to use classroom ethnography as the methodological approach because of the school setting, my own role as one of the teachers in the research and the students' involvement in it. Classroom ethnography, clearly, shares a lot of common characteristics with traditional ethnography, but the focus is in adapting it to a classroom setting.

Ethnography's origin is in early anthropology (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 5; Pole & Morrison, 2003, 11; Collin & Paloniemi, 207). The early anthropologists from the 1800's already wanted to understand different cultures and their ways of living (Collin & Paloniemi, 207). Social research established by the Chicago School of sociology, which had a similar approach to research than those of the early anthropologists, has also had an impact in the early reform of ethnography. The Chicago School of sociology's approach gave way for the phrase "participant observation", which is sometimes used as a synonym for ethnography. The significance can be seen in how the ethnographic research is being focused in the modern day ethnography. (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 11-12.)

When doing classroom observation, the researcher must adopt a cultural interpretation of that classroom in order to correctly understand the culture (Fetterman, 2010, 16). The processes and culture of classrooms have generally been in the center of school ethnography. The classroom itself is already naturally part of a bigger cultural group which is consisted of educational institutions and policies, curriculums and the community of the school. (La-helma & Gordon, 2007, 17-19.)

Anthropological roots mean that ethnography's basic structure already contains ontologies, methodologies and epistemologies that can be located within the tradition of anthropology. The anthropological background of ethnography focuses on the use of language and language as a resource; it is to be used, deployed and exploited by humans and thus consequential for us. Language is also always related to the context and thus part of the social structure and social relations. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 5-7.) Furthermore, ethnography has always been associated and meant for studying culture (Wolcott, 1999, 66).

When it became more popular to do research in classrooms, the researchers had to come up with new kind of research methods in order to better understand and respond properly to the unique environment of a classroom (Syrjäläinen, 1991, 33). Classroom ethnography is an ethnographic research method with traces of sociolinguistic and discourse analytic methods which studies for example behavior, activities, interaction and discourses in formal or semi-formal classroom or other teaching environments. Classroom ethnography emphasizes the sociocultural nature of teaching and learning processes, containing participants' perspectives on their own behavior. (Corson & Hornberger, 1997.) Critical ethnography and critical pedagogy have been closely linked together in many ethnographic studies due to their crossing interests. Both of their manners of approaches question the order of society and aim at change. (Lahelma & Gordon, 2007, 19.)

Ethnography aims at researching everyday events and is concerned with the meanings and actions of the insiders, revealing a subjective reality of those who are constructing and constituting in the social situation that is being researched (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 5, Fetterman, 2010, 1). It has the ability to challenge already established views and to question norms and expectations, taking them as problems rather than facts. The objective of ethnography is the opposite of simplification and reduction of complexities; the aim is to see all the multiple and layered meanings behind actions. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 11.) The aim of ethnographic research is to describe what happens in an operational environment and more importantly how do the people in it see and interpret their own and other participants' actions.

In an ethnographic research all the participants, the researcher included, can have a very active role concerning the research and its outcome (Syrjäläinen, 1991, 39). In my research, I have decided to take almost the most active role a researcher can. I will be interpreting my own and Linda's observations of the teaching methods as well as focusing on students' pre-conceptions of the project as a whole. Therefore, my attitude towards the research will most

definitely be to a great degree subjective since I am also subjective with critical literacy as a teaching method. However, since I am aware of this I will do my best to objectively analyze how the project went on during the analysis. Recognizing this subjectivity is the best way to increase the validity of the research. (Syrjäläinen, 1991, 41).

The researcher must make a conscious choice to adopt an ethnographic perspective on the fieldwork which therefore will guide the research into an ethnographic one (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 16). Yet this was not done completely by the book in this particular research, since when going to the field I had not yet decided upon using ethnography as my methodology. However, the data collection was such that it fits right into classroom ethnography and therefore allowed me to use it properly in the analysis.

The epistemological and methodological principles include agreeing that the findings of the research will not claim to be a representative of the population, nor can it be replicable under identical circumstances. The data will be affected by all these factors and therefore will not be “uncontaminated” since it will be gathered from the point of view of the researcher and will therefore be subjective in nature. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 16-17.) Accepting and stating this subjectivity and how it plays a role in constructing the objectives of the study must be stated for the reader; in other words, the ontological views of the researcher must be represented in the study (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 66; Syrjäläinen, 1991, 41). How this is evident in the data collection is that the fieldwork material consists of the researcher’s subjective reflection of the reality, influenced by real contextual factors. After this it is the task of the researcher to then use this subjectivity (most importantly the situated knowledge they have gathered) and convert it into objective accounts. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 66.)

Ethnography has been criticized in particular when in the descriptions the focus has been more in describing and characterizing events rather than quantifying them. It has also been accused of subjectivity, and the findings have been seen more as interpretations of a specific social action from the perception of the researchers in a style of journalism more than science. The lack of possibilities for generalization has been seen problematic, and it has been questioned whether there is anything to gain from concentrating on a discrete location or social action when trying to understand wider social issues. These should be looked at as epistemological challenges towards the knowledge ethnography yields. The findings of ethnography do not need to be precise, objective or generalizable, however. Furthermore, if the

ethnographer does not claim to achieve any of the goals above, these challenges are rather irrelevant. (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 15.)

Blommaert & Jie (2010) look at the issue of generalization from a different point of view. They argue that in ethnographic research the researcher follows the data, which then suggests particular theoretical issues and can be understood as an inductive science. The data becomes cases of larger categories where one can apply theoretical models to. The essential point of this is to understand that despite this generalization is possible because the unique situations and events the researcher has observed also reveal a lot about the big picture of society. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 12-13.) Pole & Morrison (2003, 3) point out however, that while doing research it is more of importance to focus on the complexities of the discrete event or setting than aim for generalizations.

3.2 Thematic analysis

The data in this study was analyzed by using qualitative thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is very commonly used in qualitative research, but the analysis process is rarely stated to be thematic analysis or clearly explained how the process was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006: Tuckett, 2004). The analysis process in thematic analysis relies on interpreting various features from the data, often emphasizing the context (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013, 399). Ideally, thematic analysis does not only count for frequencies of codes in the data but looks at them in the context of the research, adding the element of discovering different nuances and complexities from the data which is characteristic to qualitative analysis (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, 57).

The aim of thematic analysis is to find codes which will answer the research question; this includes noting the patterns from the data by dividing it into more clarified and detailed contents. When distinctions have been made between different features of the text, they are put into categories. The codes can then be used in qualitative analysis, where the focus can be in verbally describing the patterns. (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, 59, 63.) A researcher can also determine whether to use the entire data set in their research or to select only a certain data set to be used. By using the entire data set the researcher can give the reader a deep, overall description of the data where repeated patterns have been found across the whole data set. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 83, 86.)

Thematic analysis can be very flexible, which is one of the benefits when using it for analysis when analyzing data. This flexibility is evident in, for example, the researcher's freedom to determine the themes in a number of ways. Because thematic analysis is not bound into any already existing theoretical framework, it gives it the freedom to be used in multiple kinds of theoretical frameworks. What is important to remember is that the themes that rise from the data are always an interpretation of the researcher; they would not have emerged as such if the researcher was someone else, thus they reflect the epistemological views and decisions of the researcher. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 78-83.)

The data in this study was analyzed by using a constructionist perspective of thematic analysis, which means that the focus is on investigating the sociocultural contexts and structural conditions, and the meaning and experiences discovered are socially produced. The latent aspect of the analysis means that the researcher attempts to find and examine underlying ideologies, assumptions and conceptualizations from the data that shape it and give it meaning. Therefore, latent thematic analysis involves interpretive work to be done during the analysis. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 84-85.)

In a thematic analysis it is important for the researcher to state what counts as a theme in the data set they have chosen to use. Usually the refinement will in the end result in sub-themes within themes as well. One key aspect of a theme is dependent on whether it includes distinctive features connected to the research question or not. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 82) In my study I use the word theme as a bigger concept for the factors found from the study, and these themes will be divided into categories (sub-themes) to make the distinction between different factors more clear and easier to follow.

Tuckett (2004, 78) briefly identifies reading, coding, writing and theorizing as key elements of thematic analysis. These elements are evident in the analysis of this study which follows more precisely a structure of thematic analysis introduced by Braun & Clarke (2006, 87) which has six different steps.

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes

6. Producing the report

The steps will be introduced in more detail together with the analysis process of this research in the chapter 3.5.

3.3 Classroom setting and the participants

Typical characteristics for ethnographic research include focusing on a certain event or location, therefore usually being a case study (Gobo, 2008, 12; Pole & Morrison, 2003, 3). This study also represents a case, since the data collection was done at a specific 6th grade at a certain time. The culture that will be studied in this research is thus of this 6th grade. Like all classrooms, this one was also a unique one with unique students and teachers affecting the sub-culture in it.

Stating the object (situated event) as well as the micro-contexts (the contexts defining the situation) and the macro-contexts (social, cultural, historical, political and institutional contexts) of the research is essential in explaining why the object has the features it has and why it lacks others. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 18.) By telling the context of the research the writer also enables the reader to trace the history and the progress of the research and keep track on how and why decisions were made during the research. They all affect collection and analysis of the data and help diminish risk concerning the research. (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 109-110; Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 18.)

The main participants of the study consisted of two teachers, me and Linda Izadi, and a Finnish 6th grade class of 24 students. There were other people participating in the project as well (the visitor, class teacher, people at the places we visited) but their actions, opinions or discussions will not be included to this study. 23 of the students were so called native Finnish, and one student had an immigrant background. The students were observed as a group and the focus was mostly in how the group functions as a whole, not about the students individually. The culture of the classroom in comparison with the project outcome was therefore looked at from a holistic point of view. The students' reflective essays were, however, looked at individually. The main learning environment of the project was the classroom together with the places we visited during the service project.

The situations and environments in ethnographic research are real and the relationships between the researcher and the subjects are fundamentally subjective in nature as well. The

nature of ethnographic research is interpretive, which aims at demonstrating complexities and hypotheses that can be tested in same kind of, not similar circumstances. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 16-17.) Doing a long and extensive fieldwork is the most typical element of ethnographic research (Fetterman, 2010, 8; Tolonen & Palmu, 2007, 89). This research may not fully qualify as ethnographic research, since the time spent on the field was not as long as it usually is. However, if the work is conducted in a culture close to one's own, it is possible to apply ethnographic techniques in a more limited timeframe (Fetterman, 2010, 8-9). This is why I considered the three months as a long enough time to get a clear picture of how the cultural group in question worked during this specific project.

When I decided I wanted to do a critical media literacy project with a classroom, I already knew it would be preferable to have either a 6th grade or a 5th grade who have already researched the internet before in order for the project to be meaningful to both my research as well as the students. Also, because I wanted to know how critical media literacy works in practice it was obvious it was needed to be done in a real classroom setting. When I held my first presentation of my master's thesis in our seminar, Linda was there and she suggested we make a project together. She had already done one project with this class in the autumn 2015, and had agreed with their class teacher that she would come and do another in the beginning of the year 2016. She had also been teaching this same class a year before, so she had very close relationship with the students which really made a difference towards the outcome of the project.

Not only was it beneficial that Linda knew the students very well, but she was also working at the same school during our data collection which enabled us to inform the parents very flexibly. The class teacher was also in close contact with us when making preparations and deciding on the timetable, but did not participate in the project in other ways. Because of the nature of Linda's previous project with the students, they were very adequate in researching the internet and were used to getting into deep conversations as a whole class. The trusting environment is one of the key aspects of a successful critical literacy project, which is also why this class was very suitable for this research.

3.4 Primary and complementary data

Ethnographic fieldwork data is usually a diverse set of data (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 6; Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 60; Lahelma & Gordon, 29, 2007) and can range from actual things

to subjective notes, recordings and so on. The data tells about the field, but also about the researcher and what he or she found about themselves while in there and of the process as a whole. When observations are used as data, the focus of them depend on the topics the researcher already has in mind when entering the field. This will guide his or her attention when observing, but at the same time the researcher should observe indiscriminately in order to get a full image of situations. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 30, 60.)

When I entered the field, my main focus was in how the teaching methods worked in this particular class. However, soon after the first lesson, I realized it was important to report everything that we found out about during the lessons in our reflective journals, and to collect as much material as possible from other sources (lesson plans, teaching material, material the students produce and so on). By adding all the material into one huge description of an event or situation, a holistic and more objective picture of them can be constructed than if the data were to describe events or situations from only a partial point of view. A huge pile of material can also help the researcher remember and recall all features and details crucial for understanding what went on. Data that first seemed as irrelevant, can in the end become essential to the research. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 58-59, 64.)

Despite the importance of having multiple kinds of data is important to an ethnographic research, I will be using mine and Linda's reflective journals as my primary set of data. They can also be called fieldnotes, which tells a lot of not only what the researcher witnessed in a situation, but how they witnessed it. Fieldnotes work as the material memory of all that happened during the day. The most important thing is to write everything down that can be remembered, and it can and should be exactly the way you express it at the moment; fieldnotes do not have to be objective or for an audience. They can be used as data by grouping, cataloging and converting them like one would do with other kind of data as well. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 37-40.)

We wrote one reflective journal after each lesson we had with the 6th grade, usually together, and sometimes separately due to circumstances. We tried to write everything down we remembered from the lessons, focusing on especially the discussions, students' realizations and our own thoughts of the teaching methods and how well they worked. We wrote the journals in a way that the one who had the "responsibility" of that certain lesson started the reflection and wrote most of it. The journals consist mostly of descriptions of what we did, what the students for example said during the lessons and how did we think the lessons went.

Then, if there was something the other one wanted to add, they could change the color of the font and write down their reflections and observations from the lesson. Even though we have given each other permits to use the reflections as a whole in both of our researches, we thought it would be beneficial and clearer if we were still somehow to identify who thought of and what after each lesson. There are also things we discussed in person and then wrote down to the reflection journal which will be marked just as black writing.

However, during some of the lessons we faced problems of changes in schedules due to illnesses and unexpected work-related timings. This is why during the lesson 6, 8 and 11 I was not present but was still given permission by Linda to use her reflective journals. Similarly, Linda could not attend lessons 9 and 10 but she has all of our reflection journals available for her research. This is quite uncommon and definitely a reliability issue in the research; how can I analyze observations that I did not personally experience? This sort of borrowing fieldnotes is not, however, unheard of. Lappalainen (2007, 131) writes about researchers who have lent their observation notes to others and who have been writing an entire study based on other's observations. I was confident in doing so, because by the time the lesson arrived that I was not able to attend, I was already familiar with my colleague's teaching style as well as her way of reflecting which is why I could "trust" what she had been observing.

These sort of fieldnotes can be difficult to prove to be scientific, because they contain texts that are very personal, and for some does not show any so called hard facts. However, they contain a lot of valuable material which will influence and are crucial for the scientific goals of the research. For example, features of other people's character or behavior can be essential when analyzing a specific event and even though it is seen only from your perspective, these kind of observations are valuable data. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 64.)

The complementary data of this research consists of the students' reflective essays, which they wrote in the end of the critical media literacy project. The essays were written in Finnish, so I have translated the citations from them myself into when I used them in the analysis. Students were given instructions for this, and one-week time to write it. We wrote the instructions to give them a chance to reflect on the project individually and for us a chance to get feedback as well as the type of data we felt was needed for both of our researches. The instruction paper is attached in the end as the Appendix 3. Lesson plans and other material

discussed before also complimented the primary data giving a deeper understanding of situations and lessons when it was needed. In order to follow the steps we took as teachers during the project, the lesson plans are attached in the end of this paper as Appendix 2.

3.5 The analysis process

In this chapter I will explain starting point and process of the data analysis in this research. The epistemological starting point to the study was determined by the theoretical framework and ethnographic methodological foundation, but the analysis process was conducted by using thematic analysis.

A starting point to data analysis is to acknowledge what is only the own thoughts of the researcher and what could have been observed by others as well. Some events would have occurred whether the researcher was there or not, but how they interpreted the event (for example if they felt uneasy because of something) is their subjective view of it. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 67.) Another challenge can be the large volume of data collected, as well as epistemological issue of having such a wide range of approaches available for representing the meaning and interpretations that can be used in ethnographic analysis. However, usually all ethnographers have an interest in organizing their data into patterns, categories, units and themes. (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 73-78.)

The analysis of ethnographic data is an interpretive analysis which draws on interdisciplinary analysis methods. Therefore, some of the analysis (interpretation) has usually been written already in the fieldnotes during the data collection. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 63-64.) This could be seen especially in the end of writing the reflective journals, when the thought processes had already been evident for some time and they were even interfering with the reflections of a certain lesson; that is to say, sometimes I found myself analyzing what we had done during the lessons in comparison to writing about the actual events and situations which had occurred. Sometimes in educational ethnography when the conceptual framework is put on the field to be tested like here, it is justified to argue that the earliest stages of analysis happen before the fieldwork even begins. (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 75.)

The kind of situations that make the researcher wonder why something happened the way it happened, is the starting point of an ethnographic investigation and data analysis. These situations mean that the boundaries of one's own sociocultural codes have been bumped into

and something new has been found. (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, 40-41.) During the data collection there were multiple times when I, still a beginner in teaching, found out about things that affect teaching I had never even thought about. As mentioned before, another important factor affecting the data analysis was the written feedback we got from the students in their journals.

The analysis process of thematic analysis can be non-linear as well (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013, 399), as it was in this study. What affected my analysis the most was the long time period in which we collected our data. What was supposed to be two months took three, and changed my timing completely. Even though I tried to first be the teacher and then the researcher who analyses the data, it turned out to be impossible in the end. I started to catalogue the broader concepts which I already saw as my main themes before I had even started officially going through the data. This is of course, not ideal, since it is preferable not to have any presumptions about the data but I could not overlook all the analysis that had happened before I actually started the mechanical analysis.

The first step in a thematic analysis according to Braun & Clarke (2006, 87) is to *familiarize with the data*, read and re-read it and to take notes if necessary. I started the systematic analysis of the data by printing out our journals in order to better work with them. The categories (codes) I had come up with during the project were *Motivation and learning*, *The role of discussion*, and *Timetable management*. They were the clearest factors affecting the project which is why I thought of them first. Other categories and the main themes rose from the data after I had printed out all of our journals and started to go through them consistently. *Generating initial codes* from the data is the second step of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 87), which is why I color coded the already existing three categories, and found out more after going through the data multiple times. This is where the first and second step of the analysis overlapped. The third step of thematic analysis is to *search for the themes* inside the codes after which they should be *reviewed* (fourth step) and a thematic map can be made out of them (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 87). By this time I had 9 different categories under three different themes identified from our reflective journals. The themes stayed the same after the fourth step of the analysis, and they are the following: *Pedagogical Choices and learning*, *Relationships in the Classroom* and *Practical Issues*. Some categories inside these themes belong to two different themes because of an overlap in their aims. The categories will be introduced in more detail in the chapter 4.

After I was done with our fieldnotes I printed out the students' reflective essays in order to do the same for them. I therefore sort of did the steps 1-4 of the analysis separately to the primary and complementary data. I decided to do this in order to not get confused about what concepts came from where and when. The essays were given a letter and a number (S1, S2, and so on) so they could be identified during the analysis. With the essays I also color coded the categories in order to keep better track of them and to make finding the quotations easier. The students had been asked to think about whether their values or ways of thinking had been changed, what they had learned and what was interesting/frustrating in the project among other things as can be seen in the Appendix 3. At First, I had to read through the journals without thinking about themes or categories, but as a way to get feedback about the project as a teacher. Only after this I could start to look for categories and themes inside them as a researcher.

There were a lot of different aspects in the students' essays that could have been used in this study, but only the factors that had an impact on the learning processes and the project outcome were taken into account. This included for example how did the students feel like working with different people, their motivation for learning and what values and/or attitudes do they think they learned and what might have an effect on how they conduct themselves in the future. Most of these factors were compared with the already existing categories such as *Motivation and learning*, *Timetable management* and *The role of discussion*, but I also found a new category called *Value education* from reflective essays that I placed under the theme *Pedagogical Choices and learning*.

Defining and naming themes is the fifth step of the analysis which means refining the specifics of each theme and telling the overall story of the analysis. The last step called *producing the report* includes giving examples, relating back to the literature and the research question. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 87). I did the last two steps when I started to write out the analysis making me to be more precise and having to explain the choices I had made when choosing the themes. At this time, I also made a figure (Figure 1 in chapter 4.4) where I gathered the results of my analysis.

3.6 Outlines of the lessons

In this chapter I will be introducing each lesson in written form in order to increase the transparency of the research and to make it easier for the reader to follow the process that

happened during the project. The lessons consisted of four different parts – Introduction (Lesson 1), Media project (Lessons 2-5), Service project (Lessons 6-11) and Reflection (Lesson 12).

I will be separating different lessons by giving all of them a number (lesson 1, lesson 2 and so on) in order to keep track of what happened and when. Next I will explain briefly what happened during each lesson we had. I will use the pronoun “we” meaning myself and Linda in the lessons we attended together and “I” when Linda was not present and “she” or “Linda” when I was not present in a class. This division will also be used further in the analysis part of the text when pointing at who said or thought what. I understand this kind of division is highly unusual in academic writing, but I believe it underlines the circumstances of myself and Linda acting as both the participant and the researcher in this study.

These descriptions of the lesson plans differ a little bit from the original lesson plans because of circumstances, but the lesson plans itself are attached in the end as the Appendix 2. where the reader can check the goals and exercises we had planned for each lesson.

Lesson 1. *Introduction*

The first lesson was an introductory lesson into our topic. The students had chosen the topic of refugees and asylum seekers since they had gotten themselves familiar with it already in a project in autumn. We set goals for the whole project in groups and then put them together as a whole class. We then combined the goals with Linda and got the following.

Knowledge:

- How do the refugees experience their life in Finland? How does it compare with their home country?
- Are they content/happy?
- What do they do in their free time?
- What efforts is Finland making in order to integrate refugees?
- What efforts is Finland making in order to educate refugees (kids)

Qualities/Attitudes:

- Patience
- Friendliness

- Courage
- Unprejudiced mind
- Inquisitiveness

Skills:

- Understanding refugees
- To learn how to teach refugees sports, cooking and languages

We also got ourselves familiar with human rights that are connected with refugees and which ones were perhaps not fulfilled in their home countries and which are not fulfilled in Finland.

Lesson 2. *The game: Kovat Kertoimet*

We played the game “Kovat kertoimet” which is a game made by the UNHCR about all the things a refugee has to face and deal with from the moment they need to flee their home country all the way to the point where they are integrating into their new society. We let the students play it individually at their own pace. We asked couple specific questions they should be thinking about when playing the game to make them think about how it would feel like in the shoes of a refugee or an asylum seeker.

Lesson 3. *Visitor in the classroom*

We had a visitor come in from a reception center who had been working with refugees and asylum seekers for a long time. The students had made up questions at home which were then asked from the visitor. The students could ask him whatever questions came to their minds during the interview as well. I wrote our reflective journals at the same time while Linda helped out with keeping the conversation on topic and moving.

Lesson 4. *Introduction to critical media literacy*

We started the lesson by thinking of all the things that had an effect on our own opinions and wrote them down. The students could compare their own results with their friend’s results, after which we tried to put them in order from the most important to least. Next we looked at the conceptions of subjectivity and objectivity first as an introduction to the topic of media and integration of refugees and asylum seekers by using Linda as an example (full exercise in the Appendix 2). We then talked about different media we would be looking into

during this project, and had a discussion on them. The most crucial point was when we gave the students homework, which was very challenging; they had to choose a source where they had to gather 3-5 pieces of news about integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the society. Then they were asked to try to color facts and opinions from the news as well if they could and if not we could do it together in the next lesson.

Lesson 5. Facts and opinions

We went through the news the students had gathered in small groups, and colored facts and opinions from them together, since we had thought already it was a quite difficult task for them to do at home by themselves. A lot of the students had not done the homework saying it had been too difficult or they did not have had enough time. Linda helped them to find news in the class while I gave new instructions to the others. We asked the students to pick 3-4 news from each group of four, and place them on a board which we had divided in four different directions: X-axel was for Less facts and More opinions, and Y-axel was for Promoting integrating and Delaying integration. We did this together with the whole class and it included discussion on why the news went to the places they did.

Lesson 6. Integration

This was the first lesson where I was not present, and Linda was the only teacher there. For this lesson we had asked the students to look for news which are about someone or something that has come up with practical ideas for integrating refugees or immigrants into the society. It was the first lesson for planning the service project for integrating immigrants. Linda discussed which of the news sound interesting and what they could do themselves in order to help out with integration. They wrote two sections on the board: "What is already being done" and "What is needed/what we could do". This class included a lot of discussion.

Lesson 7. Review lesson

Second part of planning. We went back a little bit with the topic and discussed what we have learned. We showed the students a slide show on what has already been done in Finland for integration and who are the ones doing it. This included a lot of discussion. We then gave them a homework, that they were to decide in groups where they would want to go and have a little learning session with immigrants to teach them something from the Finnish culture.

It could be anything from sports to language teaching. We also urged them to think about what they could learn from the immigrants.

Lesson 8. *Planning the visits*

This was the second lesson I could not attend and Linda did it herself. During this lesson the students finalized their own lesson plans. They all shared the plans with the whole class, and then started to think about the places where they wanted to go to. They discussed who wanted to go and where, and decided on possible dates.

Lessons 9. *Visiting Finnish as a second language class*

I took four students to a Finnish as a second language class in a middle school. The students had planned to play soccer with them and one student wanted to create discussion with the S2-students. The atmosphere was a little shy in the beginning, so we decided with their class teacher to go and play soccer first. The game went well, and in the end we separated the students into two different groups to create a better chance for discussion. We divided the students in a way that we thought would enhance open discussion the best.

Lesson 10. *Visiting a preparatory class*

I took four students to a preparatory class in an elementary school. Because of shortage of students due to illnesses, we did not do everything the students had planned but we decided to play games and do paper planes as planned by one of the groups in order for it to be more of a natural encounter. Some students played a board game while others made the paper planes and continued with another game. There were natural associations between the students I brought to the class and the preparatory class students.

Lesson 11. *Visiting a language center*

Linda took 10 students to a language center where they held their lesson plans to a class of 8 immigrants. They started by having a candy tasting with Finnish candy and learning different words for flavors. Next they all learned what did “friend” mean in each other’s languages. One group had made their own board game which they went and played in the corridor with a couple of immigrant students. The rest of the group discussed how it was for the

immigrants in Finland, what do they do in their free time and how was the culture in their own home countries.

Lesson 12. *Reflection*

The lesson 12 was our last lesson and we decided to have a reflection lesson even though the students were to write a reflective essay of the project as well. In the beginning I asked a couple of general questions about how they felt the project had gone, and there were so many answers we decided to make a big circle and let the discussion flow. Students pointed out quite honestly what they thought had worked and what had not been fun or exciting. We had little time in the end where Linda took out two trees where we tried to collect things that create refugees and things that are in the way of integration. The other tree presented things decreasing the number of refugees and asylum seekers and positive actions for their integration.

3.7 Research ethics and validity

In this research I am both a researcher and a participant of the project, which is why the reliability issues have to be stated clearly. Most of my analysis includes analyzing and reflecting on my own actions as a teacher, which is why the results of this research are greatly influenced by my epistemological and ontological views on the issues at hand. My aim was to be as objective towards the data as possible and reveal the mistakes I made as a teacher which had an impact on the outcome of the project with transparency and honesty; however, I cannot claim they were totally non-biased, because after all I am researching myself.

The aim is not to make up anything generalizable, but to explore and discuss the factors that have an effect on the end results of the project. With ethnographic perspective in mind, this cultural group is also unique and cannot be replicated. In other words, the same kind of project cannot be made in different circumstances, since all people who have participated in it have had an influence on the outcomes and the process as whole. With different teachers, and with the different lesson plans and with different students, the discussions would have had a different emphasis.

Keeping this in mind, in order to disturb the outcomes of the research as little as possible, the researcher should still be able to blend in and be accepted by the social actors inside the event or location and act as flexible as the situation demands. (Pole & Morrison, 2003, 11.)

This is why I did not want to start the official analysis of the data until the lessons were all carried out properly. However, as mentioned before, it felt natural to categorize the fieldnotes already beforehand. The categories were still based on the fieldnotes though and they were compared to all the data in order to get unbiased results.

Also, it is important that in order to get authentic data, the observations must be written down as soon as possible if not at the moment, and as accurately as possible (Wolcott, 1994, 349, 354.) We always aimed to write the fieldnotes either in the class while everything was happening, right after the class or during the next day. Some notes were added later but they were all written as soon as possible. We could have been more accurate with the timing, and we always wrote the fieldnotes truthfully and did not leave any negative thoughts out from the text. When analyzing the data, the most critical part was to reflect truthfully to mine and Linda's actions as participant teachers of the study. It is not always easy to identify challenges and errors which happen because of your own actions, but it was essential for the whole project and data analysis.

After reading the reflective essays of the students for the first time, I realized I had hit a major challenge. First of all, I was again reminded of the importance of being neutral about my data since most things the students criticized were things I had been either planning or executing. To step into the shoes of the student and reflect on a project that you yourself have made was not the easiest task. It is a totally different perspective towards the whole project, and it was also quite disturbing to think at a lot of times "I wish I had known this before", two months after the project was over. Another difficulty was to choose an approach on what to look at in the essays and from what point of view. Would they be looked at as opinions on what the students liked or disliked about the project, guidelines on what was the outcome of the project (hence what did the students learn), or what seemed to be the overall feeling that the students were left with once the project was over?

The choices made in data sampling and illustrating patterns or findings in the report must be made on the basis of theory and the entire data set rather than an instance of an event or interaction. (Corson & Hornberger, 1997). Using quotations from the original data when presenting the findings also strengthens the credibility of the work (Fetterman, 2010, 10.) The quotations used in this study are either from the reflective journals of me and Linda or the students' reflective essays. I use the number of lesson in the quotations of the journals to show the reader where they are from, and if it is relevant I state whether it was me or Linda

who said it. We wrote our journals in English, so there was no need to translate them. The students' essays, however, were in Finnish so I translated them into English as accurately as possible. The quotations from the essays have been marked with a letter and a number which was given to the essays when analyzing them (for example S1).

We were very honest with the students from the moment we started to work with them. They knew what kind of research it was we were wanting to do, and they were told clearly what their role in it was. At times, it was definitely difficult to draw the line between being a teacher and a researcher. When we had difficulty in the end of the project with organizing a place to visit for all the students, I was looking at the issue from the point of view of a teacher rather than a researcher. I might have not taken the challenges that we had so hard if I had not thought about the disappointment the students would feel hadn't we not been able to arrange enough visits rather than just thought of it as a possible result of the research. Even though all the visits were in the end settled and took place, not every student got to attend one of the three visits we did because they fell ill.

What I believe we failed as teachers to point out to the students was that most of the people we saw during the visits were in fact immigrants, and not refugees. This does not affect the issue of whether the visits had an impact of the integration process or not, but it affects the picture the students got about refugees or asylum seekers. Almost of the students only talked about refugees in their essays, and even though we mentioned to the students not all of the people we saw during the service projects had been refugees we did not explain the difference of a refugee, asylum seeker and immigrant to them clearly enough. This is why it was understandable for the students to get confused. The difference was explained in the game *Kovat kertoimet*, but not officially on the board or in another way. This major issue of creating a false picture for the students of the situation of refugees in Finland should have been addressed, if for example some of them might think that there are refugees coming from Spain to Finland because of it.

A permission to attend the study was asked from the students' legal guardians in the beginning of the project, where the aim and purpose of the study was explained and permission to use especially the reflective essays of the students was asked. It was also explained that everything will be used anonymously, and the materials and essays the students produce during the project will be kept safe. The permission paper for this research is attached to this document as the Appendix 1.

This study will not be aiming at generalizations of any kind, since the classroom setting is unique and cannot be duplicated in other circumstances. It could be that some of the factors represented in the analysis will in some ways be relatable to other classroom cultures, but as a whole it cannot be fully implemented in a different environment.

4 Factors affecting the outcome of a Critical Media Literacy project

With ethnographic research, it is customary to produce or develop an overall cultural interpretation during the analysis, which represents the group's characteristics and how the group works; it also includes the themes related to the theoretical framework of the study. The results should reveal how the culture-sharing group works and functions. An overall interpretation of the analysis is commonly presented as well. (Creswell, 2013, 92.)

I collected 3 themes and 10 categories from my primary and complementary data that I believe had an effect on this Critical Media Literacy project we did. They are all factors that affected especially the way the participants functioned during the project, influenced the classroom culture and therefore had an impact on the pedagogical choices made and the learning environment of the participants. In the end I have drawn a conclusion of them all and made a figure representing their importance and connection to the project itself (see Figure 1).

The *micro-culture* of this classroom consisted of the students, the class teacher and us as the visiting teachers. The classroom culture again was a part of the school community which consisted of the school and all the other students, teachers and staff in it, which can be called the *macro-culture* of the class. This study will be looking at the micro-culture of the class and the *actions, behavior and opinions* of people inside it.

4.1 Theme 1: Pedagogical choices and learning

The first theme which was combined consisted of 5 different categories – *Motivation, Learning and pedagogy, Giving responsibility to the students, Asking adequate questions* and *Value education*. The aims of the pedagogical decisions made were to increase and maintain students' motivation, enhance their critical literacy skills and sense of empathy.

4.1.1 Motivation

From the very beginning it was evident that without the right amount of motivation there would be no learning or outcomes we had hoped for in the beginning of the project. In the 1st lesson, all students were very motivated and ready to start the project, most likely because they had had a great experience about the previous project Linda had done half a year before

with them. At the beginning we also believed they had all wanted to continue with the same topic of refugees and asylum seekers integration because the majority of them had expressed it out loud after the previous project.

During many of the lessons, the students voiced very clearly if what we were teaching was not understood or some things had been left unclear. Especially during the media literacy part these events occurred frequently. Even though there were these different levels of motivation clearly to be seen from the students, the overall image of learning was positive and we only heard opposition of doing tasks if the students did not know what or how to do something. As mentioned earlier, when the tasks were unclearly stated (as happened sometimes when I was in charge of the lessons) the students informed us of this situation instantly. It would either come as loud “what do you mean” or “why are we doing this” or as restless behavior and wondering eyes.

Lesson 4:

“There were some questions from the students that why are we doing this and how it is related to the project, and we assured with Linda that we will get to it soon.”

It could also be seen quite easily that when the aim of the lesson was not transparent, the lack of motivation hit the group. Yawning and random discussions burst from the group and keeping the control of the class became more difficult.

Lesson 4:

“We noticed it was very important to tie each exercise we do to the main project, because this keeps the kids motivated. It was wonderful to see how honestly the kids expressed themselves when they did not get the point. They liked the exercise (Subjective vs. objective) but they did not understand it at first, how it related to the issue at hand.”

After realizing this, we always tried to make sure the students knew why we were doing certain exercises and show how it was connected to the project, since it seemed to motivate the students the best.

Lesson 4:

“She (Linda) also always linked learning the concepts (of subjectivity and objectivity) to our topic by stating it out loud to the students what are the reasons why we are learning about these things. For example, the reason why we are teaching the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity are that these concepts will be very useful to you in the future, and we must bear in mind that reporters should stay objective but some might choose not to.”

However, with the project being new and myself still being an unexperienced teacher, remembering to keep the aim of the lesson transparent was forgotten on some lessons.

Lesson 5:

“With this kind of exercises (media literacy part) when the goals aren’t so clear (or they aren’t being stated by the teacher clear enough) the students don’t maybe feel so motivated. Even though Linda pointed this out last time I (Minna) did not implement it fully.”

Transparency is important when motivating the students (if one does not know why something is happening, it is difficult to keep focus), and therefore the teacher must address this in the beginning of the lesson as well as during the lesson. In the beginning it should be stated clearly what it is we are learning during this lesson, so the students will know what to expect. Since they often have a tendency to forget things when the lesson continues and different tasks are being given, asking specific questions throughout the lesson can boost and focus their concentration into the direction suitable for the topic of the lesson. It also keeps up the motivation, when the students know what the teacher is asking from them.

Giving the students a rather difficult homework after the lesson 4 which included exploring the news by themselves at home and looking for opinions and facts from them was a demanding task. However, about one third of the class had not done this homework by the 5th lesson because they either had had no time for it or they had not known how to do it.

Lesson 5:

“There were quite many who had not found articles, some had forgotten to print them, one had been really busy over the weekend and another’s phone had broken which is why I think around 1/3 of the students did not have articles with them. We had thought about this possibility that there would be students who did not have an article but there were still more of them than we thought. An important reason for not doing it was that some had not been able to do any; as Linda stated later, in an ideal situation we should have showed them beforehand how to find articles you need”

We concluded with Linda in our reflection after this lesson that we should have gone through the research part with the students step by step in class so we could have ensured all the students really understood it before giving it as homework. At the same time lack of motivation could have been because the task was so demanding and not all students were capable of doing it.

Lesson 5:

“One kid, who usually shows a lot of enthusiasm was not showing enthusiasm this time. He was tired and was exhibiting similar behavior that he does in “normal” class. He said it was “boring”. Finally, when he got into it, he was really excited.”

At this point the external and internal motivation could really be seen in the students. *External motivation* can be said to be non-educative, because the activities that are being done through external motivation are usually ones that student does because of for example pressure from the teacher or because of positive or negative sanctions. *Internal motivation* can appear when a task is seen personal or one finds a reason to, in this case, learn because the motive was found in oneself. (Dewey & Wheeler, 2009)

The only time during the project when a student’s background had an influence on the outcome of the project was with motivation. A student who himself had been an immigrant coming to Finland had clearly internal motivation for everything we did during the project. He also started to attend discussions in the class even though he was known not to attend general discussions before. When we went to the school with his group, he was the most motivated to start up conversations with the students with an immigrant background. Rest of the class’ motivation was harder to pin point though. There were students who were usually active during discussions, but did not show that much enthusiasm during individual or group work. Then again, some students did not take part in discussion a lot but worked well when the class was divided in smaller groups.

During the lesson 3 when we had the visitor, all students were very eager to listen – they knew the person who was in the class was very close with refugees who had just come into the country and they all wanted to hear first-hand information on what they were like and what they thought about Finland. This also created an atmosphere where it was easy to ask questions and participate if one wanted to.

Lesson 3:

“We believe that he created an atmosphere where everyone felt comfortable, at least in the end, to ask questions they had in mind.”

Lesson 4:

“One boy said he thought everything he (the visitor) said was important. Another one thought it was nice that he was joking so much. I (Rönkkömäki) asked if he made it feel easy to ask questions because he was so relaxed and there were a lot of nodding from the students.”

The visitor was among the three most favorite lessons that the students also wrote about in their essays. On other lessons the students liked were the game Kovat Kertoimet and visits to different places.

S16:

“The nicest thing about the project was when (the visitor’s name) came to a visit and when we went to (the place’s name) to out our project into practice.

S15:

“(Visitor’s name) came to our class as a guest and he was funny.”

S13:

“I thought the game Kovat Kertoimet was fun and told its function well.”

S12:

“I remember best from the project the game Kovat Kertoimet, because in that game you could have a look at how it feels like to come from your home country to another country as a refugee. Another interesting thing was when (visitor’s name) came to tell us how it feels like to work at a reception center.”

S7:

“The visit to (place’s name) was fun, and interesting.”

S6:

“From the project I remember when we went to (place’s name) and had a candy tasting for the refugees.”

S5:

“(Visitor’s name) was also nice and funny!”

Of course we cannot draw straight conclusions into a successful learning experience from the students only saying something was nice or fun, but when the students are still only in the age between 12-13, it is important for motivation that they liked things we were doing. There were also things in the project that the students felt did not work. Some students felt they had not learned a lot or anything during the project, or who otherwise had negative experiences from the project.

S2:

“I learned to understand refugees. I did not learn anything else, because I was not involved with them (refugees) because I was sick.”

S11:

“I did not learn anything from the project.”

S4:

“I did not learn any skills during the project.”

S1:

“But in reality this project was completely useless.”

“This project was exactly like the previous project we did. Same kind of nonsense about refugees. Pondering, planning and doing = procrastinating the same things than in Autumn.”

“This wasted our free time and lessons, when we could have been learning about things that actually have an effect in this world.”

“I have not enjoyed this project at all.”

S17:

“The trip (to the service place) was quite negative for me, because I did not get to my aims.”

S11:

“I thought this essay was difficult to do, because I was not involved in the service project”

Some of the students stated why the project failed (for example they had not been able to attend the service project) but others did not express their frustration further. The essay S1 was probably the most intriguing, because even though the student explained first she had learned some things and the service project had been nice, in the end she crushed the whole idea of the project and said she had not enjoyed it at all. There can be multiple kind of analysis made to why she felt like this since it did not reflect her attitude in the classroom setting at all, and it appears she had kept it inside during the whole project.

This underlines the importance of trying to get any kind of feedback from all students during learning units in order to discuss possible issues and getting everyone on the same page. At the same time the students' age and capability to understand important issues at the moment should be taken into consideration. For some students the meaning of the project could open up after some time has passed, without the teacher even knowing about it. As a teacher it is important to try to open up the importance of especially these kind of ethical dilemmas and challenges that critical media literacy usually tackles. McLaughlin & DeVogd (2004, 54-55) emphasize that this is essential if the teacher wants to make sure the educational goals of critical literacy education have been met.

4.1.2 Learning and pedagogy

Already on the second lesson, there were frustration in the air that could be seen and felt from the students. The exercises were not just looking for so called “easy information” about refugees and asylum seekers that could be found from the internet without much effort: we wanted them to go into deeper analysis of the reasons for refugees coming to Europe and how had it been when they had fled their home countries (for example with the game Kovat Kertoimet). We also challenged the students to think about more where the information was coming from and what kind of voice it has been given. We therefore confronted their usual beliefs and viewpoints, which was advised by Lewison & al (2002, 383-389) as the *disruption of commonplace* in their four dimensions for critical literacy.

During the lesson 2:

“Asking the students to think about how it feels like to be in the shoes of a refugee, what do they base their decisions on (while playing the game) and what does the other people’s actions feel like (in the game)”

During the media part of the project, we used the second dimension of Lewison & al (2002, 383-389) *interrogating multiple viewpoints*. We tried to make the students think whose voices are heard in the texts, whose are not, and how have these people possibly felt like who are being talked about.

It is impossible say exactly what exercises or discussions triggered the reflections on students’ reflective essays, but many of them had quite deep insights and reflections on the issues of integrating refugees and the problem of so many people having to flee their country. As mentioned before by Meier (2009,76) though, the students should be able to construct multiple connections between texts and their own lives even if it has not been expected of them.

S4:

“I learned, that from the refugees you need friendliness, so they can adjust and get to know people in the new country. From the receiving country’s people, you need open-mindedness, so they will get along with the refugees.”

S14:

“We could learn to understand refugees through sports and their culture.”

S7:

“Everyone could, depending on their own abilities, take part in for example volunteering work.”

S7:

“In order to promote integration we could be more tolerant and open-minded.”

Some also reflected on the issue on a personal level, or from a learning point of view.

S17:

“When I was looking for information I looked for both negative and positive information. First I thought it was best to only research media, until I realized I could also ask from parents or someone else.”

“One who is prejudiced, is not fully open. What links with this is that one also has to be honest. Because in order to understand refugees first you have to be honest from both our and their side. We have to learn and remember, that being a refugee is very difficult. It is also important for us that we understand their problems, and how we can help them equally. This can only happen through mutual cooperation.”

S5:

“I learned various things about asylum seekers, what it would be like to be a refugee, about objectivity and subjectivity. I also learned new words and about working together and how to do research.”

S12:

“It was also nice to see how media affects us and for example if there are only bad things in the news we might be left with that kind of bad feeling too.”

S13:

“After the project in Autumn I had a lot of positive thoughts about refugees. However, when the project started in the Fall I noticed that some of my prejudices had come back. While the project proceeded my mind changed again and when the service project began I thought I would not have any prejudices towards the people we were going to go and teach. When we started to discuss with the people they knew Finnish very well. Then I thought, that we had come to teach people who had been learning Finnish for a long time. Then I heard, that many of them had been learning Finnish only for couple of months. Again I realized, that I still had prejudices towards them even though I had not even realized it myself.”

Why this was surprising for me was probably because I have not been a participant in this kind of thought provoking project before and thus did not know what to expect. The students kept on surprising me with their deep thoughts of the issue throughout the project all the way to the last essay I read during the analysis. For example, a student pointed out a flaw me and Linda realized after the media part that we had brought on the students from the beginning, without us ever having been discussed the issue with them.

S17:

“A lot of times when we had to do all sorts of tasks from the project, it was so that we had to search, write and talk about things positively. This was frustrating to me. Because no one can expect that also refugees are always excited and positive. Not me or anyone else can be expected to be always positive. But if we are open and honest, we can still work well together with refugees even if one of us is negative sometimes.”

It was also important that the students could feel like they had made a real difference, as it is both beneficial for their learning and also one of the main aims of critical literacy education which end result is praxis (Lewison & al, 2002; Mulcahy, 2008). Not a lot of the essays pondered on this issue, but various kind of opinions could be found from some of them.

S1:

“And a little less than 30 people cannot change the world or the opinions of refugees that is just a fact. I mean the only idea here was for the refugees to see normal Finnish 6th graders.”

S13:

“I think the most beneficial and interesting thing was to go teach Finnish, because then both participants learnt something.”

“Service learning was a lot of fun and the idea is great, because you get so much out of it yourself and you can help others as well.”

S12:

“I thought the project was really beneficial and fun.”

4.1.3 Giving responsibility to the students

Especially with older students, it is important to give them responsibility of their own learning. It can possibly increase motivation and help them out when they are getting into higher grades. The first responsibility we gave them was creating goals for our project in groups. Every group had their own goals, which we took and put together for goals for the whole class.

We also gave them a lot of independent work to do, first time with the game on the 2nd lesson when we asked them to do it individually. When we had the visitor in our class, we expected the students to actively participate in the conversation and come up with questions which came to their minds. We also tried to give the students as much independence when choosing what we were going to do; we started out small, with for example letting them choose what news they wanted to search in their homework.

The kind of responsibility we gave the students frequently had to do with the types of tasks we did during the lessons and homework. The usual types of exercises were done in groups quite freely and also a lot of decisions were done in groups.

Lesson 5:

“After lunch we first explained them we wanted them to come up with 1-3 words which describe their own news and after that we wanted them to explain the idea of their news to others in their group (using these words)”

Lesson 6:

“I (Linda) asked them then to share their ideas on what we could do as a service-project. Then I asked the groups to choose between two of these to write on the wall.”

Lesson 7:

“A task for the students: To meet up and come up with a plan for what they want to do (in the service-project). We come up with the places with Linda and the pupils will decide that they want to do with the people.”

Lesson 8:

“I (Linda) said I would make initial contact about the dates, but that each group should send an email message telling the place who they are, what they would like to do on their visit, and suggest a date.”

As can be seen, we gave the students responsibility in certain things, but when we thought it was necessary we made some choices for them. For example, the groups for the service project were already chosen by the tables they were sitting in; we thought it was more important at this time for them to learn how to work with people who are not your best friends. two students also expressed this in their reflective essays.

S9:

“I still learned to do work together and in groups. – Sometimes we had difficulties in planning or writing something, but in the end they went still well. Sometimes we could not come into an agreement, because a lot us had different opinions. We agreed on decisions or made compromises, which fit.”

S1:

I learned friendliness from having to work with so many different people/different types of people.”

We also suggested places to visit to them since we did not have enough time to research this with them together. In return, we gave them a full independence in choosing what kind of exercises they wanted to do in the places once they got there. This was important so that they

would feel motivated and also take responsibility for their lessons that we believed they could handle.

Because of the limited time we had for the project, we had to give the students different kind of homework after almost every lesson. Most times a majority of the students took the responsibility seriously and had done their homework, while at times some had not done them for various reasons as discussed earlier. The biggest homework was writing the reflective essay in the end of the project, in which we had to motivate some of the students since they argued it was too hard to write. Here we could pause and think about what are the connections behind motivation and keeping up with the responsibilities as a student you are given?

Giving the students the responsibility of their own learning can increase motivation greatly. However, if the tasks given are not clearly stated and connected to the project, motivation is likely to decrease. At the same time, if individual tasks (such as homework) are too difficult, it would require plentiful of motivation from the student to get it done without scaffolding.

4.1.4 Asking adequate questions

Because of my lack of experience when it comes to teaching and especially teaching 6th graders, it was difficult for me all through the project to remember to ask specific questions from the class at specific times. Linda reminded me of this after the lesson 2, which is when I realized their importance for the first time.

Lesson 2:

“I (Linda) also feel the questions could have been a little more precise, for example asking a specific question for each specific unit, or maybe one or two units (from the game Kovat Ker-toimet)”

I started to focus on this question formulating in the lesson 4 about the same game, and the difference could be seen right away.

Lesson 4:

“I asked specifically how it had felt like to leave your friend to the border: some said it was necessary because he did not have any papers, others were wondering if it had been possible to drive through the border without stopping. A boy was wondering if it were nicer in another country’s prison that maybe it would even be worth it to get there.”

In order to get the students’ focus on the important aspects of the news, information or other topics it was essential to ask the right questions. The higher-order questions which were

introduced by Bleazby (2014, 87) earlier require students to reflect on their opinions and critically evaluate, discuss and voice them. This kind of question formulating came quite naturally to Linda, but for me it took more effort and sometimes I realized what I should have asked in that moment while I was writing the reflective journal. Sometimes I could tell during the lesson that the questions were too broad or difficult for the students to understand when I did not get any kind of response to my questions. However, this did not stop the students from reflecting issues with the skills they already had, but rather could have enhanced it even more.

Another thing that would have helped with asking them the right questions was knowing their exact skill levels when it comes to critically analyzing texts and voicing their opinions. We tried to overcome this by first asking a more advanced question to see if anyone will pick up on it, and then gradually changing the questions and examples into more understandable form for the students. When I was having my lessons I wrote down questions I wanted to students to think about in order to remember them while teaching since sometimes the situations would take over and the original plan and aims would get unclear.

When we got the questions right, the discussion would bloom and the students would start thinking about the issues in question from many point of views. One time was when a student started to think out loud, how the refugees feel when the news always calls them as “refugees”.

Lesson 1:

“One student wondered about how the refugees feel when they are only called “refugees” because it gives a feeling that are they even human.”

On another account we discussed on how tablet news present the same news versus the public news channel. One student laughed, and gave an example.

Lesson 4:

“A student - Yes, kind of like if a refugee goes to Turtles (a local pizzeria) and orders a pizza and then Iltalehti (A Finnish tablet news) has a headline - Refugees are snatching all of our pizzas!”

Other students did not understand the reference, so Linda gave them another example. She made up a story how a refugee had gotten a job, and then the public news congratulates them on finding work and integrating to the society, while Iltalehti might point out how refugees are taking jobs from the regular Finns. This was of course, a quite exaggerated example but

it was interesting to see how to students were nodding their heads implicating they understood the reference.

4.1.5 Value education

Because we wanted to teach the students empathy and give them a chance to put themselves in the shoes of refugees, in a lot of times during the lessons we started the questions by asking “What do you think they feel/felt when...”. We also asked to write about learning new values in their reflection essays according to the goals we had set together in the beginning of the project. I chose to take a closer look into the value education and how the students thought the project had changed them on a personal level, because it has a link to how they will act and behave, thus having an effect on the classroom culture as a whole.

In the beginning of the project the students had to choose aims for attitudes and qualities they wanted to learn from the project. A lot of them had reflected on these aims in their essays by stating what attitudes and values they thought they had learned.

S17:

“I learned a virtue, which was an inquisitive and curious mind.”

“While doing service project, I also learned patience”

“I learned to be more curious about being more open to different things”

S13:

“I think I learned most about open-mindedness from the project, again.”

“During the project I learned to be open for many point of views and opinions.”

“The project had the most influence towards thoughts about my own future by giving me a less prejudice attitude and I believe it will help me out in life a lot.”

S14:

“I was more brave than in the last project. My prejudices were big in the last project and now they were quite small.”

S10:

“I from refugees that they are just normal people, like us Finns. I was patient with the refugees, because without patience integration will not work. I was also brave, because I had the courage to help and play with refugees.”

“I learned best from the project how nice they (refugees) are.”

S9:

“I learned open-mindedness from the project, that not everything is what it seems to be.”

S8:

“Courage and kindness appeared during the project”

S6:

“I learned to understand how well we have things in Finland compared to some countries where they have wars etc.”

S5:

“I learned to be a little braver when talking in front of the class.”

“I also learned to be more patience during the project, because we had to wait to be able to go to (place of the service project).”

S3:

“I learned to be more open/curious towards foreigners.”

Many of the essays also stated how the students had learned how to understand refugees. This caught my eye during the analysis, because a lot of the essays used the same model for addressing this.

S16:

“During the project I learned to understand how the refugees feel like living in Finland”

“I learned football and understanding refugees from the project.”

S10:

“I also learned to understand refugees”

S7:

“It is important to learn how to understand them (refugees).”

S6:

“I learned to understand how difficult it could have been for them (refugees) in their home country.”

S12:

“The project had an impact on my thoughts in a way that now I know how much they need education and how they are in a big need when they come to Finland.”

After taking a look at the Appendix 3 where the task paper for the essay was I understood why so many of them had stated this. One of the question asked what skills did you learn during the project, and since we did not do a lot of the other examples mentioned below it, many students most likely simply chose the option “understanding refugees”. They might

have also thought it would look good for me and Linda since that was one of the aims of the projects from the very beginning. Of course, this project could have and probably did help them understand the refugee situation better but we cannot make a reliable statement that all of the ones who wrote this actually meant it since the task paper was leading.

There were also students who did not express in their essays that the project had had any impact on the way they thought or behaved. Some also expressed it clearly in their essays.

S4:

“The project did not have an effect on me or my thoughts in any way.”

S13:

“Otherwise I do not think the project had impact on my thoughts about the future, because even though the topic is important, I do not think I would be capable of helping someone integrate more than I am now.”

4.2 Theme 2: Relationships in the classroom

For the next theme of *Relationships in the classroom* I chose also three different categories. The aim was to find out which factors affect the way the participants behave when they encounter with each other and which of these have an effect on the project and most of all the learning of the students. This theme was assembled from the categories of *Open atmosphere*, *The role of discussion*, and *Giving responsibility to the students*. The latter will not be discussed here further since it has already been introduced, but will be added to the Figure 1 linked to both themes.

4.2.1 Open atmosphere

A big part of this class' culture was openness and a trusting atmosphere. The class teacher seemed to be fair and open with the students, which had resulted in a very relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. Since Linda already knew the students well, and was clearly liked as a teacher, it was easy for us to continue with this trusting environment. The fact that the students felt comfortable in voicing their opinions and thoughts was very important especially because of our topic. Refugees and asylum seekers integration into the Finnish society has been a much debated topic in the media and we wanted to know everything the students had to say about it and more importantly what kind of thoughts they had on the issue.

Another reason why it was essential the students felt comfortable in starting discussion was that it was the most effective way to know what they had learned and what interested them during our lessons. Even though there were some students who did not express themselves until the reflective essay as mentioned before, overall there was a feeling in the classroom that students were being honest with their feelings and emotions with us.

Of course, since the class was made of 24 pupils, there were also students who were not taking part in the exercises we did together with the class. We tried to take them into consideration as well by usually asking if there is anything that was left unclear or needed to be repeated. Even the ones who were not always taking part of the conversation raised their hands every now and then and took part in the conversations which is why I believe it is valid to say it was a result of this trusting atmosphere. No one was ever laughed at because of what they said, but everyone's opinions were respected and heard.

Lesson 7:

“The safe and trusting environment of the class and how it feels like everyone can (if they want to) express their own opinions and just throw questions at the teacher most likely affects the outcomes of the project we have had in the project so far. Of course, the ones who usually “throw” questions at the teacher are very active and “brave” anyways, but this feeling comes from other students' behavior as well.”

“What effects (what mentioned above) is that what (name of the class teacher) has done with the whole class in order to create a trusting atmosphere, Linda is already familiar with this class and that Minna came in with a relaxed way of teaching.”

During the service projects all students acted bravely and took charge of the lessons according to their lesson plans. Many students themselves also included this in the virtue they had learned about the most. Even though on the lesson 9 and 10 the lesson plans were not implemented exactly the way the students had planned them, they seemed to go to the places with an open mind and heart. On the lesson 11, the students were active and respectful towards the new people they were meeting.

Lesson 11:

“The first group stood in front of the class and quite bravely explained what would be done.”

“Throughout the discussion the students were learning how to ask questions in a more understandable way and make sure carefully that everyone understood.”

4.2.2 The role of discussion

With this specific class it was evident from the very beginning that discussion was going to be a big part of our lessons. We had sometimes written it in our lesson plans, but most of the time it came from the students and we let it flow for as long as it was still connected to the topic. Me and Linda are also both quite verbal, so we also made the discussions longer from our part. Sometimes, however, our own enthusiasm for the topic took too much room from the students' discussion.

Lesson 1:

“We must remember to give room for the student voice as well: it might take them longer to respond, but it is important for the thought process.”

Because of this very verbal and respectful atmosphere in the class I could say it was more or less a unique culture for a 6th grade classroom. In that age the students can be quite insecure which can result in either silence or impolite actions towards other students. Also, the students can be used to not having a lot of discussion during their lessons which would have been difficult to encourage in such a short time we spent in the classroom.

Lesson 1:

“From my (Rönkkömäki) opinion the class was quite advanced with especially discussion: most of the time they kept it inside the theme and almost all were very active (when discussing) in the small groups.

This openness and a habit for giving feedback right away was a distinctive feature of the class when asked for feedback as well as a normal lesson. During the lesson 12 where we had thought of doing some last exercises with the topic, we could not go through with these ideas because the students had so much they wanted to discuss about the project as a whole. Linda even said before the lesson that we most likely do not have to have a regular reflective discussion about the project because they have written it all down in their journals, but it was very clear they had a lot of things to say about the project after we asked them if there was something about it they wanted to tell us in person.

When I asked the pupils how they had felt about the project and is there something they want to share with everyone, a huge conversation burst out and pupils started to talk over each other. We gave a look at each other with Linda and decided in that moment we would form a circle and give the students time to express everything they had to say to us about the

project. During this last discussion the same atmosphere that had been felt throughout the whole project surrounded the conversation. Everyone who had something to say, had their hand up and sometimes someone was so eager to talk they forgot to raise their hand and wanted us to hear their opinion right away.

It was not until during this lesson that some of the students admitted they would have wanted to have another topic for this project.

Lesson 12:

“Students: This was boring. Can we make (a project) from another topic next time. Another topic would have been nice, because this was the same topic as last time. Nice topic but would have wanted to change it.”

Two students also stated this in their essays.

S2:

“I thought it would have been more interesting to do it from another topic, because we did (a project) about refugees last year.”

S1:

“To put it in short. The problem of the project was the topic.”

Linda asked them if they remembered why this topic had been chosen, and they said because we wanted it. Then we made a vote and asked pupils who did not have wanted to take this topic the second time to raise their hand, and 11 out of 23 raised their hand. Almost all of them agreed it had still been an interesting topic, but could have also been changed.

Even though discussions were already great with this group and worked well, I feel like we should have encouraged discussions even more. Also, we could have done so much more with the discussion culture of the classroom if we had been ready to change the lesson plans more radically after realizing the potential the students had for discussion.

Lesson 5:

“During this lesson I (Minna) also realized how much more effort I could have put into the discussions with the kids since this class is very verbal and there are a lot of opinions and thoughts wanting to come through. By emphasizing this, we could have all gotten a lot more out of the lessons.

However, not all students wanted to take part especially when the whole class was participating, which is good that we also had other types of exercises included in the project. If

discussion would have been emphasized even more, it should have been done in small groups or even in pairs at first in order to take all kinds of learners and personalities into account.

What the students could have also benefitted from were ethical talks over refugees, their situation back at home as well as in their new home country. These were, naturally, the topic of most of our discussions but there was so much potential in the students to go even deeper to the topic by discussion. We sometimes leaned too much on gathering new information with them that we forgot the knowledge they already have of the topic and especially with this topic which creates all sorts of feelings and emotions having more ethical discussions could have been worthwhile.

4.3 Practical issues

Naturally, when this kind of project is being done in a classroom the factors effecting everyday teaching situations are practical issues. If there are no suitable technology for a media project, rooms available for group works or enough time for exercises it will have an effect on the outcome of the project. We faced many practical issues which will be explained in the categories of *Timetable*, *Resources* and *General challenges*.

4.3.1 Timetable

After almost all of our lessons we concluded that we would have needed more time to fully get the students understand the concepts we had been going through.

Lesson 3:

“Overall, time is limited every time which is why there is a feeling of leaving things unfinished at times.”

Lesson 6:

“Most of our time went to the media project. We would have needed twice as much time to do this project thoroughly.”

During the lesson 4 we did not have time to properly go through the homework, which then backfired on us in the lesson 5 as mentioned before.

Lesson 5:

“An important reason for not doing it (the homework) was that some had not been able to find any; as Linda stated earlier, in an ideal situation we should have showed them beforehand how to find articles you need to.”

“There were some students who had been able to color facts and opinions from their articles; some said it had been easy and some said it was hard. This was also something we were aware of since we did not have time to go through this in the last lesson.”

When realizing the issue of not having enough time, we perhaps should have also been ready to change our plans radically in order to better correspond with the goals of the project and not overwhelm the students with too difficult concepts in such a short time.

It could be that when the teacher is as passionate about the topic he or she is teaching as we were about this topic the feeling of not having enough time in our hands will always be present. Linda pointed out after the lesson 6 that if this class had been our own, there would have been so many more things we could have covered with them and deepened their understanding of the issue of integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

Lesson 6:

“Another thing to consider is, that because we are not the class teachers, we have very limited time with the students.”

“If we were the class teachers of this group, and had less limitations on time, we would definitely have preferred to do the searching of the articles in class, so we could discuss any news that the students found disturbing or interesting, help them looking for articles with new types of search words, etc.”

As pointed out before, this class was big on discussions which also changed the outline of the lessons multiple times. Part of a child-centered teaching is to give the students a possibility to explore things that they find interesting, which is why tried to give room for this as well, thus resulting in longer periods of time spent with some exercises than others. This kind of flexibility can be seen essential when keeping up student’s motivation during lessons; at least I consider it as an important aspect of my teaching and wish to continue it with other groups as well. This was sometimes not fully implemented though, since there was still the feeling of having to go through certain topics since we as teachers thought of them as important. With more teaching experience I believe these situations could have been better balanced and the truly essential tasks and conversations would have been more easily identified and therefore carried out.

Another challenge we had with time was that our lessons were quite scattered and continued from the beginning of March all the way to the end of April. We were supposed to be done soon after May, but it turned out to be difficult to adjust the timetables suitable for everyone. Since in the end we had to bring together four different timetables (mine, Linda's, the classes, and the places we went for a visit) the time frame kept on becoming longer and there were a lot of changes with the timings. This is why during some lessons only me or Linda were present, and not all students got a chance to visit the place of their choosing.

One incident which resulted from these timetable changes was that we had one extra lesson for planning the service project which turned out to be very important. It gave the students a chance to better prepare their own lesson plans and therefore perhaps feel more confident when going to the so called "field" themselves.

Lesson 7:

"The time changes we had to do which resulted in one more extra lesson and the division of one lesson into three different ones we could already see the impact it had compared to beginning of the project when time was running out every single time. – More importantly we feel it was essential more time was given for the project at this point, because the action phase is perhaps the most important part of the process as a whole."

During the lesson 12 when we asked the students to tell us what they had thought of the project as a whole, one student pointed out that it would have all been easier if the lessons had been closer together, and there had not been two weeks in between like there had been now. We agreed with him, and concluded that it would have been more beneficial for all if this had been the case. I believe the students would have been able to keep the focus and motivation up better also if the lessons would have been closer together.

4.3.2 Resources

A big resource that I did not even thought of before the project was the presence of the class teacher. Even though the class teacher did not play any role during our lessons, his commitment to the project cannot be undermined. First of all, he had given Linda the permission for having this project in his class in the first place. Second, he was usually present during our lessons and if needed, helped us with the class management like in the lesson X. Other than that, he rarely took part in what we taught or talked about with the students. He was more than flexible with all the timetable changes we had to make, and also always reminded the students of what was going to happen and when at times when we were not present. This

could be seen from the blackboard, where he had put papers we gave out to the students as a reminder, as well as from writings on the side of the board where it said for example where and when the students were supposed to on their visit days.

Another huge resource was that on almost all of the lessons we had two teachers present. As mentioned before, this enabled us to have the one teacher teach the lesson and the other to act as a person for scaffolding, that is helping the students to another level of learning by being the more experienced person (McLeod, 2012). The teacher who was not in charge of the lesson could also help out with classroom management and handing out for example materials.

On some lessons, since Linda had the whole class in control, I focused on writing our reflective journals in order to get first hand fieldnotes from the lessons. This enabled me to focus on student responses for certain tasks and discussions, which was important for both of our data. When I was teaching, Linda was a huge help when keeping the lessons organized, the aims transparent, focusing on keeping everyone on the same page and resolving possible misunderstandings that I did not always catch because of my lack of experience. Even though on my lessons I had the responsibility to be the leader teacher, Linda was the one keeping the purpose clear for everyone, including myself.

Another important feature when starting with a critical media literacy project is the access to equipment and technology needed for reading the media for example. We used multiple types of technology during our lessons such as computers, smartboard and white board of the class. Me and Linda provided other materials such as figures on a cardboard paper, sticky notes for the students to write on and the table with y- and x-axis we needed for the news to be put in.

The school, the classroom and the places we visited provided us with the learning environment we needed for making the project happen. These factors can be so ordinary for the schools in Finland that one does not even think about them as a feature affecting the outcome of the project but they are one of the starting elements for a successful project. This learning environment also includes other teachers in the school who for example looked after the rest of the class when the class teacher was with me and four students during the lesson 10, and all the people we saw during the service projects.

Multiple students wrote in their essays how nice the people we saw during the visits had been and how it had changed the way they thought about refugees. Whether to call the other people in the project as resource can be argued about, but I thought they fit in this section the best because they were an essential part of the service project part which was about offering meaningful services to others and without their participation this project could not have been possible.

4.3.3 General challenges

Because we were not part of the original culture of this class but we still acted as the teachers of the project, it was sometimes difficult to deal with class management and practical issues concerning the project. The class was usually well behaving, but at times excitement or frustration took place and made it more difficult to get the students to listen to instructions. It should also be acknowledged, that I came to the class as a total stranger without ever having seen the students which most likely had an effect on how they acted together as a group when we were there. My inability to for example remember their names was sometimes difficult when there was a deep conversation going on, but at these times Linda usually covered for this.

Another big general challenge was informing the parents and looking after homework. This would have been extremely tiring on the class teacher if Linda had not been a teacher in the same school with access to the database where she could send messages to both parents and the students. It obviously would not have created any sort of difficulty if we had been the class' actual teachers, but in this project it could have been an issue. Making sure the students had done their homework connected to the project or whether their parents had signed the permission papers or not was mostly on the shoulders of the class teacher since we were not there every day to ask the students about them.

4.4 Results of the data analysis

The results that were conducted from this study cannot be applied to a different cultural setting as such. It does not mean, however, that I would not take things I learned as a teacher from this project and apply them into my future career and engagement with different classes. Some things, for example my tendency to not be specific enough when giving instructions will most likely affect the next class I will be teaching the same way it did this class,

therefore being one of the things I will constantly try to approve in my teaching. I do not, however, feel comfortable in drawing conclusions applicable for all teachers and all classrooms from this study since the relationship of everyone involved can vary a lot from these circumstances and therefore affect the pedagogical choices that will be made.

The results were put into Figure 1. “Factors affecting the outcomes of our Critical Media Literacy Project” in order to give the reader a clear picture of how certain factors were seen as having an effect on the project outcome.

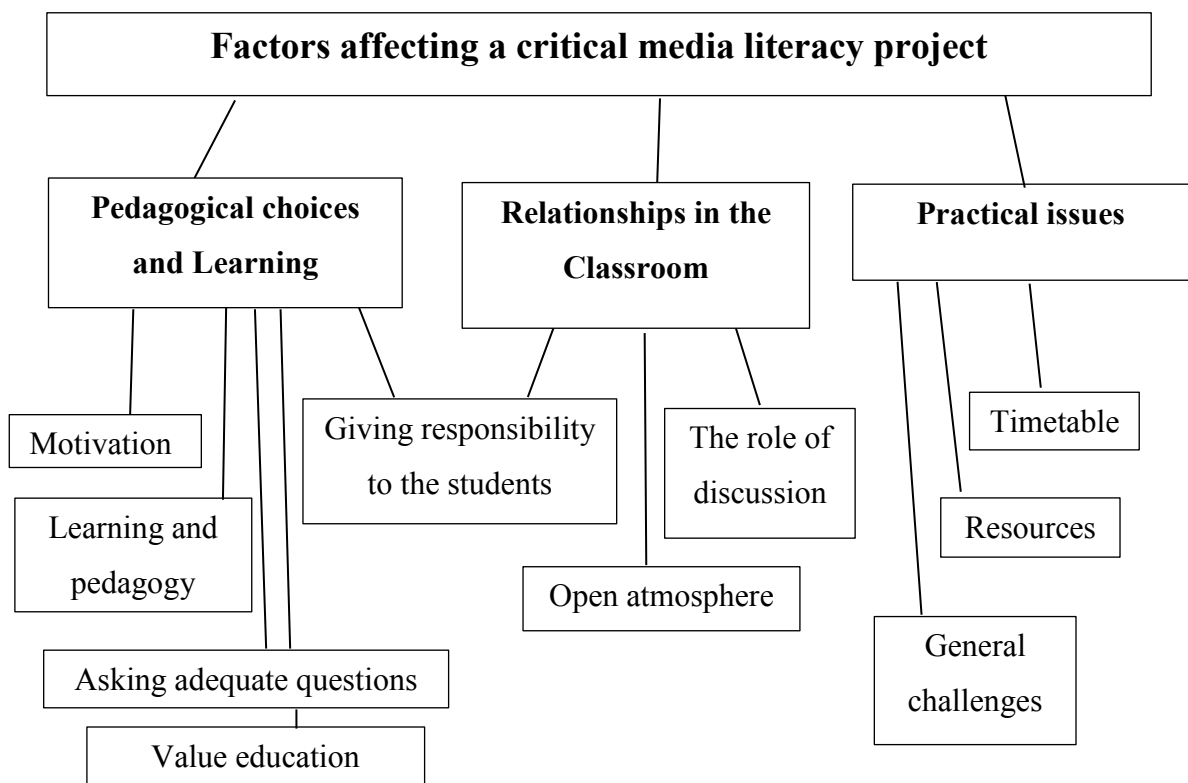


Figure 1. Factors affecting the outcomes of our Critical Media Literacy project

The data analysis answers the research question which was the following: “What kind of factors have an effect on a Critical Media Literacy project?”. The categories found from the data were put into 3 different main themes, and under these themes into 10 different categories. The categories cannot be clearly divided into challenges or benefits, since they depend on the features of the classroom culture and the participants. Whether it becomes a challenge or a possibility on the other hand, is up to the teacher and other participants of the project to determine. For example, some people get disturbed when things do not go the way they were planned, while others work better in circumstances which are not set on stone. At the same

time, something that might seem as a challenge at first might end up bringing new learning situations into the project which therefore becomes a possibility.

Since we did not evaluate the students' learning during or their level of knowledge before the project in any official way, the outcome of the project relies on the feeling I was left as a teacher and what the students seemed to have learned based on their reflective journals. In order to indicate whether the project was a success or not, it would have been preferable to also have had a hypothesis, presumptions or/and an evaluation of the situation before the project started. There were some aspects from critical media literacy education though that I can claim we achieved. Different medias were looked at from multiple perspectives, and according to the essays many of the students engaged with the issue of integration of refugees and asylum seekers on their own levels and therefore had achieved some level of critical awareness. We also carried out the action part of critical literacy, praxis, by visiting places that work with integration.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this project was to find what factors have an effect on a Critical Media literacy project, as well as how the impact of them appears during the process. The study accomplished to emphasize the sociocultural nature of teaching and learning processes containing participants' perspectives on their own behavior, which can be one outcome of classroom ethnography. By acting as an investigative teacher in the project I benefitted and learned a lot more from it than I would have if I were to have followed another teacher participating in a Critical Media Literacy project.

With this kind of project, it is not possible to know in advance what factors will have an effect in the outcome since there are so many things influencing the classroom and circumstances of the project. After the data analysis it was discovered that multiple factors had an effect on the outcome of this Critical Media Literacy project. These factors were closely linked to the micro-culture of the classroom and the participants of the study. However, no clear line can be drawn whether the factors were considered as a challenge or a possibility towards the project outcome, since there can be features of both in one category.

Defining the ideologies which the project was based on was important in order to know what was the ideological foundation of the project. Since the aim of critical media literacy is very ideological, it is difficult to interpret whether the students felt empowered or understood powered relations inside their culture especially since those were not the features that were studied here. However, the thought processes that could be seen in the reflective essays of the students suggest that the project had an impact and made them reflect on the way they saw the issue of integration of refugees, which falls in the frame of Freire's pedagogical goal of creating a critical consciousness. Media literacy's aim of encouraging students to critically evaluate media in order to understand how it works in different contexts (Jolls, Walkosz & Morgenthaler, 2014, 12) was also put into practice and can be argued was reached on different levels in this project.

Having been the teacher participating in my own research was not the easiest task I have done, but it certainly played a huge role in how I see myself as a teacher now and what kind of aspects I will be focusing on in my teaching in the future. The biggest challenges for me were to balance myself with being the participant and the researcher of the study. However, I believe I achieved this to the best of my ability. The greatest benefit the project gave me

was the confirmation of what kind of teacher I want to become. Graduating from an Intercultural Teacher Education program I will anyhow be involved with the ideological issues that were introduced by Critical literacy, Paulo Freire but after this project the center of my agenda will be introducing them to the students as something we can all have and should have an impact on.

What I would like to study further is how the trusting culture had appeared in the classroom. Was it a result of a combined result of having those certain students and a group involved, or was it more of an outcome of their class teacher's way of teaching and communicating with his or her students. Another interesting aspect concerning especially critical media literacy would be to study how the students' critical thinking, argumentation, deeper analysis and other learning abilities were to change after a project like this.

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APPENDIX 1



OULUN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY of OULU

TUTKIMUSLUPA-ANOMUS

14.3.2016

Huoltajan lupa tutkimuksen toteuttamiseen

Nimeni on Minna Rönkkömäki, ja olen tekemässä Pro gradu- tutkielmaa Oulun yliopiston kasvatus-tieteelliselle tiedekunnalle. Teen tutkimukseni aineistonkeruun yhdessä Linda Izadin kanssa, joka toteutti ensimmäisen osan omasta tutkimuksestaan jo viime syksynä.

Aiheeni käsittelee kriittistä lukutaitoa, jonka tarkoituksena on löytää (tässä tapauksessa) oppilaita tai heidän yhteisöään käsiteltävistä aiheista mahdollisia epäkohtia tai muita seikkoja joihin voisimme itse vaikuttaa, ja lopulta toimia sen mukaisesti saadaksemme yhdessä aikaan positiivisen muutoksen yhteisössä. Kriittisen lukutaidon opetusmenetelmien avulla voidaan luoda oppimisympäristö, jossa käsitellään erilaisia tekstejä mahdollisimman monesta eri näkökulmasta.

Keskityn tutkimuksessa pääasiassa oppilaiden kokemuksiin käyttämistämme opetusmenetelmistä, ja aineistona käyttäisin omia havaintojani tutkimuksen aikana, kaikkea materiaalia jota teemme oppilaiden kanssa yhdessä sekä heidän itse kirjoittamiaan refleктоivia oppimispäiväkirjoja.

Tämän vuoksi tarvitsisin teidän lupanne käyttää lastenne kirjoittamaa aineistoa tutkimuksessani. Kaikki aineisto tullaan analysoimaan tutkimuksessa nimettömänä, eikä lastenne henkilötietoja tulla mainitsemaan tai edes muuten keräämään. Tulen mainitsemaan tutkimuksessa pelkästään lastenne luokka-asteen, mutta en koulun nimeä. Säilytän aineistoja kotonani, eikä niihin pääse käsiksi kukaan tutkimuksen ulkopuolinen henkilö.

_____ kirjoittamaa aineistoa saa käyttää nimettömänä

tutkimustarkoituksiin.

Aika ja paikka _____ / ____ / ____

Huoltajan allekirjoitus _____

APPENDIX 2

Time & Topic & Responsible Person	Goals of the Lesson	Contents of the Lesson
<p>Lesson 1. Monday 14.3.2016 60-75 min Linda</p>	<p>Service learning phases + unit schedule (review)</p> <p>Introduction to “integration” of refugees (kotouttaminen)</p> <p>Setting our goals together.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition: What was service learning and going through the unit schedule. • Topic: Refugees from the point of view of integration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking a look at the human rights – webpage. Explaining what is a refugee, looking at rights that are not fulfilled if one is a refugee. Maybe making human rights- cards so it would be easier for the students. • What do we already know of the topic? Doing a mind-map together. • Making the goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goals of the mind: What do we want to learn from integration of refugees? - Goals of the heart: What attitudes do we want to enhance? - Goals of skills: What kind of skills do we want to train? • Introducing Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs • Come up with questions for the visitor on Thursday.
<p>Lesson 2. Monday 14.3.2016 45 min Minna</p>	<p>Playing the game “Kovat Kertoimet” with emphasis on integration (parts 2-3).</p> <p>Creating a possibility for the students to put themselves in the shoes of a refugee</p>	<p>- Introduction - what is the idea of the game?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To put yourself in the shoes of a refugee • What kind of decisions will you be making? • What do you base your decisions on? The wellbeing of yourself or opinions of others?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the results of other people's actions just? Why or why not? • What kind of feelings do you get from the people your character meets in the game? <p>- Everyone must register with their own name so they can finish the game at home. The game should be played individually but if there are not enough computers can also be played together with someone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play the game from game 2 of part 2. • Homework: Play the whole game.
<p>Lesson 3. To 17.3.2016 45- 60 Linda</p>	<p>Visitor coming to the class from a reception center.</p>	<p>- Possible questions for the visitor. Letting him and the students determine the style and phase of the lesson though.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What aspects might influence a refugee's integration? 2. How does integration or the lack of it influence a refugee's life? How does integration or the lack of it influence society? 3. How can a regular Finn contribute to integration? How does the visitor contribute to it? 4. Student's own questions.
<p>Lesson 4. Friday 18.3.2016 45min Minna</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the Finnish media write about refugees? How can it influence integration of refugees? 2. Giving instructions to article collection. 3. Identifying how to use media criticism when reading about refugees. 	<p>- Goal of this media project: how does Finnish media write about refugees? How does this influence our opinions? How does this influence the integration of refugees? What sources can we trust?</p> <p>- Going through homework: Was there anything you didn't get answered yesterday? What are your feelings from the game Kovat Kertoimet?</p> <p>-Intro-game: What affects our opinions in general? What affects our opinions on refugees? (Post-its)</p> <p>-Can we ever be totally objective?</p> <p>- Let's put Linda in the middle of the class. If we look at her from only our point of view, we are being subjective. We do not wish to see the other side of her, because it might be enough for us to stay put and look her from only one side.</p>

		<p>- When wanting an objective view of her (or another thing we are getting ourselves familiar with) we have to move around her and see all the other sides of her as well in order to get the whole picture and different perspectives.</p> <p>- But still, in the end we are all looking at her through our own lenses: we all like her, so if she was to do something bad, would it be possible for us to stay objective or would we let it slide because she is our friend?</p> <p>- Or if she was someone we did not like, could we then see all the good things in her despite our own feelings?</p> <p>- The same applies to reporters. If I as a reporter am not trying to be as objective as I can, I can pick information from a certain thing from the perspective I wish and ignore the rest. Don't like refugees? Let's acknowledge only the bad information I receive and not inform the public of the positive things I might have information on as well.</p> <p>- By being aware of this "everyone looks at things behind their own lenses" is important since it is the start of being objective.</p> <p>- Introduction to media types and their goals (iltapäivälehdet, blogit, uutismedia yms.), concepts of subjectivity and objectivity.</p> <p>- Media types on a word document side by side: what do we know of them already + new information Media criticality: How can we know something in the news is based on facts or opinions? Discussion.</p> <p>- Dividing students into groups according to media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iltapäivälehdet, Kaleva & YLE, refugees' own media, Politics' blogs • Possible topics: New ideas for integration, work, education, language, friendships with Finns, living conditions, hobbies, Finns' opinions on the topic
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		<p>- Demonstration of coloring facts vs. opinions from an article and a mielipidekirjoitus. On data projector.</p> <p>- Giving homework: each group member finds 3-5 articles about their subject, and color codes facts and opinions from each article. Print articles latest by Monday! Write where and when it was published, and by who! Agree on what colors to use?</p>
<p>Lesson 5. Tuesday 22.3.2016 105 min Minna</p>	<p>1. To sort the articles on the wall.</p> <p>2. To analyze the articles.</p>	<p>- Reflection in groups/together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did everyone find news? • Was it difficult/easy? • Was there anything they found disturbing? <p>- Coloring opinions and facts: Asking the students first how this was understood and were they able to do it at home or not. Asking them if they want to do one article together on the projector.</p> <p>- Then since there will most likely be students who haven't done it, they can start doing it in pairs: if both have done it, they can already introduce the articles to each other and even to the whole group of four. Giving time for this about 15 minutes.</p> <p>- Introducing the wall to the students and explaining how it works, placing my news on the wall together.</p> <p>- Choose 5 articles per group (or 1 per person in a group? More clear and everyone's "panos" will be taken into an account?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write next to each article 3-5 words that describe the article's attitude towards refugees. • Order the articles from top to bottom: which article do you think is the most conducive to integration? Which the least? Discuss in your group, why? Another 15 minutes. <p>- Going to the wall one group at a time and representing their findings. Discussion with the whole class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does everyone agree what section the news should go to? • Do we have to make compromises?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the piece of news go to more than one section on the wall? <p>- Homework: Find articles that describe an innovative idea to integrate refugees. - - Come up with one idea we could do as a class! This can also be done in the end of the lesson if there is time left.</p>
Lesson 6. Monday 4.4.2016 75 min Linda	1. To summarize the ideas we got from newspapers. 2. To come up with initial ideas of what we could do.	- Go into your groups and show what articles and ideas you came up with. - Discuss, which article was the most interesting/useful idea, that you would like to share with the class. - Discuss (or vote) which of your own ideas you would like to do as a group. - Present articles and post on the wall. - Present the different ideas for what we can do. - Decide as a class which idea is most doable. - Plan the action part! Agree on dates (mid-end of April).
Lesson 7. Friday 8.4.2016 45 min Linda + Minna	1. To summarize what has been learned so far. 2. To look at different organizations that are working on integration. 3. To design a project that we can do. 4. To divide groups, roles and tasks.	- Slideshow about kotouttaminen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why it is so urgent? • What Oulu is doing? • What organizations work in Oulu? - What are some elements of culture that would be useful to know about Finland? Mindmap! - Where shall we do this? Suggestions from the teachers - preparation classes, Villa Victor, refugee centre? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding who will do what. Groups. • Instructions for homework until next Friday. Work in groups, after school, in the library etc!

<p>Lesson 8. Friday 15.4.2016 45 min Linda</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To decide when each group will do their service project and where. 2. To decide which adults will be present. 3. To look up the route to each location. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each group will first share what their plan consists of, on paper. - I will show the places that are willing to accept them to do a visit. - We pair up each group with a location. - We decide on three possible dates for each place. If there is time, each group writes an email explaining what they would like to do and offers the dates. - We review the plans
<p>Lesson 9-11. Various times Minna & Linda</p>	<p>To offer meaningful service for the integration of refugees.</p>	<p>Depends on the group in question.</p>
<p>Lesson 12. Thursday 26.5.2016 45 min Minna & Linda</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To look back at our learning goals. 2. To reflect on what we learned. 3. To think of possible future projects? 	<p>2 trees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kotouttaminen, Issues creating refugees fleeing & factors on the way of refugees integrating (dying tree), issues stopping refugees from fleeing & things helping with integration (living tree) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are in the roots of integration? • Human statue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone are given the word “kotouttaminen” - Come up with three words connected to “kotouttaminen” - Create a human statue using your own bodies to reflect these words the best

APPENDIX 3

Pohdintakirjoitelma pakolaisuus-projektista

Kirjoitusohjeet

- Älä huoli, pakollisia kysymyksiä on vain viisi, vaikka näyttääkin että niitä olisi paljon.
- Jos kirjoitat käsin, kirjoita vähintään 2 sivua konseptipaperia. Jos kirjoitat koneella, kirjoita vähintään 1 sivu fonttikoolla 12 ja rivivälillä 1,5. Lähetä kirjoitelmasi osoitteisiin linda.izadi@eduouka.fi ja olli.ojala@eduouka.fi. Linda lähettää kirjoitelmat myös Minnalle. Palauta viimeistään keskiviikkoon 25.5. Mennessä.
- Etsi kirjoitelmalle otsikko. Muista kirjoittaa myös oma nimesi.
- Pohdi alla olevia kysymyksiä avoimessa kirjoitelmassa kokonaisilla lauseilla. Ei tarvitse laittaa kysymysnumeroita.
- Jos et muista, mitä kaikkea olemme tehneet projektin aikana, toisella puolella on lista.
- Emme arvostele sitä, mitä olet oppinut (sehän on jokaisella eri), vaan sitä, miten osaat pohdita ja perustella ajatuksiasi ja oppimaasi.

Kysymykset

Alla ovat yhdessä asettamamme tavoitteet ja niihin liittyviä kysymyksiä. Vastaa kaikkiin kolmeen kysymykseen parhaasi mukaan.

1. Tieto ja ymmärrys. Kirjoita mahdollisimman laajasti, mitä opit näistä kysymyksistä.

- Miten pakolaiset kokevat elämänsä Suomessa? (Esim. minkälaista on elämä Suomessa verrattuna kotimaahan? Ovatko he tyytyväisiä? Mitä he tekevät vapaa-ajalla?)
- Mitä Suomi tekee edistääkseen pakolaisten kotoutusta?
- Mitä Suomi tekee edistääkseen pakolaisten opetusta/koulutusta?

2. Hyveet ja asenteet. Valitse 1-2 hyvettä, joista koet oppineesi eniten projektin aikana.

Mitä/miten opit niistä? Alla asettamamme hyvätavoitteet esimerkiksi.

Ennakkoluulottomuus / avoimuus. Tutkiva ja utelias mieli. Kärsivällisyys. Ystävällisyys. Rohkeus.

3. Taidot. Mitä taitoja opit projektin aikana? Voit kertoa myös taidosta, joka ei ole listalla.

- Oppia, miten voimme oppia yhdessä pakolaisten kanssa:
 - Urheilua, ruoanlaittoa ja leipomista, kieliä (suomi/arabia/muu?).
- Oppia ymmärtämään pakolaisia.
- Oppia heiltä kulttuuria, tapoja, kieliä tai tarinoita.

Muut kysymykset. Vastaa ainakin kahteen.

4. **Mitä muistat projektista parhaiten? Mikä oli mielestäsi hyödyllisintä/mielenkiintoisinta?**
5. **Oliko projektissa jotain joka oli mielestäsi turhauttavaa/epämiellyttävää/vaikeaa?**
6. **Mitä haluaisit vielä oppia kotouttamisesta?**
7. **Mitä muuta voisimme tehdä yhdessä tai yksin kotouttamisen edistämiseksi?**
8. **Miten projekti vaikutti sinuun ja ajatuksiisi omasta tulevaisuudestasi?**

Mitä teimme projektin aikana? Muistilista.

Johdatus aiheeseen - Ihmisoikeudet ja pakolaisten kotoutuminen

Tavoitteiden asettaminen projektille

Kovat Kertoimet - peli

Vierailija Yrjö Mikkonen (vastaanottokeskuksen vapaaehtoistyöntekijä)

Mediaprojekti

- Objektiivisuus ja subjektiivisuus
- Miten media vaikuttaa meihin
- Artikkeliseinällä jaottelu: edistää vai hidastaa pakolaisuutta? Faktoja vai mielipiteitä?

Palveluprojektin suunnittelu ryhmissä

Palveluprojektin toteutus

Pohdinta (tämä kirjoitelma + torstaina 26.5. yhteiskeskustelu)