



Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

Students' views on voluntary reading

(voices from Finnish and Georgian students, including ones with hearing impairments)

Zhuzhuna Gviniashvili
Faculty of Education
Department of Teacher Education
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ABSTRACT

Although originally focused on the direct transmission of information for practical reasons, reading eventually greatly expanded to include a host of functions, including leisure activities. The Master Thesis in question tries to investigate students' attitudes towards reading and their path from reading intention to actual reading. The study is focusing on the perspectives of Georgian and Finnish students, including the ones with hearing impairments. The mixed method of data collection and data analysis is applied. The choice of using combined methods is strongly related to the nature of research questions. The rate of students' engagement in voluntary reading is numerical data; while the attitude towards reading are revealed through focus group interviews. Students regardless of the country and hearing impairments expressed a positive attitude towards reading. With the easiest words, we can interpret students' general beliefs about reading as the best way to deepen knowledge and enrich experience. However, as revealed, the rate of actual reading is not as high as an intention to read; an utterly positive attitude towards voluntary reading unfortunately is not proportional to actual reading engagement. Among the most common impediment factors students in both countries nominated the long school days, large amount of homework, limited free time and modalities of leisure activities such as watching movies, internet surfing and video games. In the conclusion part of the thesis certain possible measures are discussed as humble suggestions to address and solve the problem of students' poor engagement in voluntary reading.

Keywords: reading, voluntary reading [reading for pleasure], impediment factors, hearing impairment, deaf, reading modalities.

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Introduction

Although originally focused on the direct transmission of information for practical reasons, reading eventually greatly expanded to include a host of functions, including leisure activities. This research focuses on reading as a voluntary activity; my humble purpose is to find out what is the students' attitude towards reading and to what degree these attitudes influence them to enjoy reading in their free time activities. However, before specifically reviewing literature about nationwide views of reading, attitude formation and education, a brief history about the development of reading and leisure is necessary to lay the foundational background for this research.

Reading has a long history and in modern times it is often viewed as a voice of civilization (Fischer, 2003). Darnton (1986) claims that we all share reading as a common activity with our ancestors, yet due to social, political, geographical and historical changes we are polarized as types of readers. (Darton, 1986). In the ancient past reading was merely an ability of extracting the visual information from any encoded system to comprehend respective meaning. Later, reading embodied the understanding of continuous text on an inscribed surface (Fischer, 2003).

The development of writing systems undoubtedly increased the value and general function of reading. Yet, at the very beginning reading was exclusively related to religion, being perceived as a spiritual exercise (Darton, 1986). Even as late as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe, mass groups of society remained illiterate. Schooling was irregular and not universal for all, consequently reading remained a relatively isolated phenomenon. Most of the explicit teaching at the time, such as catechism for example, was still based on oral teaching and rote memorization (Ford, Owens. 2011). The invention of printing in Germany in 1450 was a huge step towards increased popularity in reading. However, initially the printed materials were limited to circulars and rather short texts; book ownership was tremendously rare and reading a book was associated with the special and memorable experience, which remained unfamiliar and inaccessible for most of the societies, except the upper class (Fischer, 2003).

As the author Mangué (1996) describes in his book, the Lutheran Church of Sweden took the responsibility of spreading literacy among the society. By 1689 services such as communion and marriage were prohibited for illiterate people; as a result, 80 percent of Swedes, including women, were literate. With such a high percentage, Sweden was a leading country in terms of literacy in Europe for almost two centuries (Mangué, 1996). By the mid-nineteenth century in most of Europe, reading was no more an elite priority, instead it became the public prerogative. As texts appeared on the street and shop signs, labeling, advertisement, reading was no longer only associated with novels or education in general, but became an everyday activity (Fischer, 2003).

The transition to a market economy was a practical declaration of the advantages and privileges of those who were literate. Moreover, industrialized revolutions all over Europe are considered to be the direct result of literacy. In modern times, literacy is given such a core importance, that it is often used as a measure of socio-economic development of a certain nation. Socioeconomic status, shows the individual's or community's access to various social or economic resources and is measured by wealth, education and occupation (Adler et al, 1994).

Nowadays, by academic definition, reading is an ability to meaningfully decode the printed symbols and connect them to previous knowledge to construct and understand the writer's message (Fischer, 2003). However, this view had been subjected to controversies. As explained by Gough and Tunmer (1986), one part of the scientists, believe that decoding is at the core of reading, while others think that decoding is only a side effect of actual reading and intensive focus on it during the reading instruction, might cause failure in literacy development (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Here we should clarify that the concept of decoding is defined variously by different researchers. Under *decoding*, some mean solely the ability to sound the printed symbol- letter or syllable. While others believe that decoding is a more complex phenomena and associates with word recognition, which is fundamentally dependent on symbol-sound correspondence (Gough & Hillinger, 1980). In my opinion the first understanding of decoding is extremely primitive, yet, it cannot be completely ignored during reading instruction. Gough and Tunmer offer synthesis, claiming, that reading must be the product of decoding and linguistic comprehension, $R = D \times C$, where comprehension is given the superlative importance over decoding, if $C = 0$, we can say that reading does not take place at all. Similarly, being confident in a spoken language (linguistic comprehension) does not necessarily lead a person to read that language without the ability of decoding the symbols, in short if $D = 0$ reading is withdrawn (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

The dilemma of symbol decoding and word recognition (e.i linguistic comprehension), has been settled in another way as well. As Raban & Mitchell (1984) describe, two theories exist on how we read. The first theory believes reading to be exclusively a linguistic or phonological process, where a reader decodes meaning letter by letter, linking them to produce larger comprehensible units. The other theory views reading as a visual -thematic process, where the reader is more focused on a graphic form of the word, either logogram (entire word) or syllabogram (syllabic sign) to produce meaning (Raban & Mitchell, 1984). Those theories are not controversial, since they take place on a different level of reading acquisition. The beginner readers apply the phonological linear process, while later, the fluent readers comprehend with visual semantic process. Consequently, fluent reading minimizes sound and maximizes the meaning.

Once mastered, reading is a beneficial, pleasant and awarding ability, but becoming a fluent reader is not an easy and short time task, as sometimes wrongly viewed by parents or even teachers. Instead, it develops along with the age relevant cognitive development. The first stage theory of reading was presented in 1925 in the USA, followed by other modified models. One of the most eminent models of reading development belongs to Chall, who divides reading acquisition into six stages from pre reading to advanced reader. Moving from stage to stage is characterized by more unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structures, difficult syntax and abstract ideas (Indrisano, & Chall, 1995).

Today reading has reached a new level. First of all, computers and the internet seem to replace the book as an instrument. Moreover the meaning of reading is enlarging, the activities such as texting, using Facebook, Twitter or social media of any kind belong to the new reading revolution. The most recent research about reading also includes extracting encoded symbols from electronic screens, including emojis (for example, see Kuzmičová et al., 2018).

Like reading, the second important aspect of my thesis, leisure has a long history. By the famous anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor leisure is referred to as "Art of Pleasure" . As Chick (2006) suggests, play and leisure are very close to each other by nature. Yet, playing

is mainly discussed as a juvenile activity, while leisure is adequate for adults also (Chick, 2006). Many researchers indeed claim that leisure is a prehistoric phenomenon and must be born in plays and rituals (for example, Huizinga, 1955).

The researcher Stebbin divided leisure activities into two broad categories such as serious and casual leisure. The biggest difference between them is the dedication of the amount of time and rewards after the activities. Participants of serious leisure are mostly referred to as amateur, hobbyists or volunteers, they integrate their knowledge, skills and experience to fulfill the leisure activity. On the other hand, casual leisure is generally viewed as a pleasurable activity, which requires no or little training to enjoy it, in most of the times it is short lasting and intrinsically rewarding to the person engaged in it (Stebbin, 1997). Stebbin suggests that casual leisure activities are divided into six interrelated broad categories, such as play, relaxation, passive entertainment, active entertainment, sociable conversation and sensory simulation (Stebbin, 1997). For example, reading a book for pleasure is an example of casual leisure discussed under passive entertainment. However, Later a person, having read a book, can engage in critical or constructive conversation with family or friends, which will already be a leisure activity under the umbrella of sociable conversation.

Another interesting issue of research on leisure is why do people engage in it and what does leisure activities serve for. Stebbin for example claims that everyone needs to escape reality occasionally, to rest from all the formal institutional obligations and to recharge to execute better quality of life (Stebbin, 1997). Debono however, highlights the possibility to generate new ideas by means of being involved in casual leisure. He argues that in modern times some of the very important informal experiments, unintentional discovery or spontaneous inventions are on account of those engaged in casual leisure activities (DeBono, 1967).

The Master Thesis in question tries to investigate the students' attitudes towards reading and their engagement in leisure activities that require reading as a skill. The study is comparative in nature, focusing on the perspectives of Georgia and Finnish students. The special attention is made to deaf students, since their qualitatively and quantitatively poor reading performance is well documented in scientific literature. Despite the fact that students with and without hearing impairments are incomparable in respect with reading comprehension, they might have similar attitudes and motivation to read.

Within the scope of this paper, under the leisure activities that require reading I mean mostly reading for pleasure (books, newspapers, journals) and watching subtitled movies. Besides, any activities that require reading and will be mentioned as a leisure activity during the focus groups will be reflected in this paper.

The terms such as "pleasure" and "enjoyment" are ultimate attributions of casual leisure, while participants of serious leisure use the terms "fulfilment" and "reward" to describe their participation in leisure activities. Consequently, within the scope of this paper, I will always address the dimension of casual leisure, even without specific reference to it.

CHAPTER 1

1.1. Problem statement

While literacy was considered as a personal good in the past, in the 21st century it gained vital importance and the ones with good literacy skills are outstandingly favored on many levels (e.g. classroom and societal). Nowadays only linguistic and cognitive understanding of reading is no longer sufficient, instead, Signorini (2004) views literacy as a cultural phenomenon. Under the autonomous frame of literacy, students have a contact with the text through the cognitive ability of encoding and decoding symbols, consequently, readers are passive receivers of information. Socio cultural explanation of literacy, on the other hand proposes, that texts, with various modalities, are cultural and political artifacts; reading and writing means acting, participation, building identities, reasoning, dialoguing etc (Signorini, 2004). This understanding of literacy is dominant in modern times and embodied in the National Curriculum of almost all developed countries. Despite such declaration and effort dedication, the scale and advantages of good literacy skills, full potential of voluntary reading and its implications on our life is yet to be realized by the young students. Teachers all over the world struggle to awaken interest and motivation for reading in students. In my opinion, very little discussion is dedicated to the social and emotional aspect of reading in schools.

Good literacy skills are vital for people with hearing impairments, as literacy is the window to the hearing world for deaf individuals. With extremely limited exceptions, the literacy level of profoundly deaf students remains incomparable with that of the hearing ones. For some deaf people, the ability of fluent reading and high literacy remains a precious and unrealizable goal, absence of which isolates and marginalizes them from the rest of the society.

In contrast with deaf individuals, hearing students usually take the ability of reading for granted, which full potential on intellectual or emotional wellbeing is undiscovered. This discovery arose an interest and motivation in me to find out how students view reading, what is their personal attitude towards it and how often do they voluntarily engage in leisure activities, which require reading, such as reading for pleasure, watching subtitled movies, etc.

The research questions can be formulated as following:

RQ1: What are the students' attitude towards reading?

RQ2: Do students with and without hearing impairments view reading differently?

RQ3: What external factors influence students' intention to either read or avoid reading?

With this paper, I do not have an ambition to give exact answers to the above questions. I do not aim to develop the strategy to increase motivation and involvement in reading, neither can I suggest ways to improve literacy. Instead, my aim is to generate more questions and motivate myself and others to search for answers and solutions.

1.2. Understanding of terms: Attitude and motivation (intention)

Great amount of research is dedicated to examining and defining what motivates people to read. Some scientists argue that reading can actually satisfy a wide range of personal needs and as Usherwood and Toyne (2002) believe, some of us might be even unaware of the fact that we read to seek satisfaction. Based on individual interviews with public library users,

the same authors identified several reasons why people read voluntarily. The most common answers were, relaxation, possibility to abandon here and now, aesthetic pleasure, reading for instruction etc. (Usherwood & Toyne, 2002). Regardless of the reasons, several psychological constructs are firmly related to reading intention in general, such as attitude, motivation and habit.

Reading attitude is the combination of beliefs and feelings, which leads an individual to engage or avoid reading activities (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Attitude as we can see, can be positive and negative. As generally believed, attitude is subjected to the development or change over time and is influenced by three main factors. First, normative beliefs, e.i. the closest network's (family and friends) attitude towards the behaviour greatly influences the individual's attitude formation in respect with the same behaviour. Secondly, beliefs about the outcomes of certain behaviour is the strong predictor for developing positive or negative attitudes. For example, if a student believes that by reading more he/she improves his/her literacy skills and also his/her social status, it is more likely that he/she will generate a positive attitude towards reading. Lastly, the previous and specific experience in a certain behaviour, also strongly influences an individual's attitude towards that particular behaviour in the long run (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). For example, a student, who due to any reason experienced failure in reading class, might generate a negative attitude towards reading in general.

Motivation is an extremely multidimensional construct, but within the context of this paper, I apply probably the simplest understanding of it: motivation is "the set of goals and beliefs that guide behaviour" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999, p. 199). Besides, it is important to mention that the term motivation is used interchangeably with intention, particularly within the context of applied theoretical framework. Like an attitude, numerous facts might have a negative or positive effect on motivation as well. For instance, the early failure in reading, incorrect instruction, improper expectations and lack of reading culture in the family might suppress the young readers' motivation to read. On the other hand, gradual progress, positive assessment of small achievements, debate -discussion of popular literature and peers' interest in reading can evoke curiosity and motivate others to read. In their article Parault & Williams (2009) list 11 dimensions of motivation particularly specific for the reading domain, among them are: self-efficacy, social recognition, challenge, task difficulty, satisfaction compliance and importance (Parault, & Williams, 2009). Generally, students are not motivated by one dimension only, but rather a combination of them, and the influence and extent of dimensions are not static. The physical or emotional change in students' life might cause the changes in priorities of dimensions as well (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). For instance, at an early age, when a child is still in the phase of reading development, mastering a certain aspect of reading or comprehending relatively difficult text results in significant self satisfaction, which increases young readers motivation to reengage in reading. Later, when peer relationship and self status comes into dominance, dimensions of social recognition and compliance become dominant in motivation (Parault, & Williams, 2009).

For the purpose of this paper, voluntary reading or reading for pleasure are used interchangeably and comprises all the reading activities which are not assigned for a class. It also takes a broad view on reading; voluntary readings include not only self-selected books, but also newspapers, magazines, social media and watching subtitled movies.

1.2. Understanding of literacy

The standardized tests are common practices to measure the literacy level of school children on national or international levels. The results are translated to empirically grounded information, mostly forwarded to policy makers to act upon (Kirsch, 2001). Standardized tests and particularly reading grade levels are given increasing focus. Consequently, for many people, literacy is solely associated with the development of language or mathematical skills within the context of schooling. In reality, the definition of literacy has changed and expanded along with the historical, economic and cultural changes, globalization, market economy, lifelong learning and other global processes. In the past, literacy could be considered as an ability to read and gain basic information, but living in the 21st century demands more than simply decoding skills.

Literacy can be classified under the four metaphors as defined by Lytle and Wolfe (1986). They see literacy as a skill, a task, a practice and a critical reflection. A combination of these metaphors can be discussed as a full literacy across a wide range of contexts.

The first metaphor, *literacy as a skill*, refers to the primary and technical skills of reading, writing and calculus. This definition of literacy can be viewed as the main gate to the rest of the metaphors, consequently it is in the center of attention of schools, teachers and parents. The second metaphor, *literacy as a task*, or functional literacy focuses on individuals' life context and refers to an effective use of reading, writing and math skills in daily life. As exemplified by the authors, a person with a high functional literacy is capable of acting in a way, which contributes to one's own and society's development. Third, *literacy as a practice*, can be explained as an ability to understand norms, protocol, the social and cultural contexts, in which the set of skills are used and interpreted. Despite the fact that in this context literacy is seen as a strongly own-culturally-bounded phenomenon, the individual needs to have a clear understanding of the varieties of cultures and values, beliefs and attitudes embodied in it. Lastly, *literacy as a critical reflection* means the individual's ability to interpret the world and identify its individual place and functions in it (Lytle & Wolfe, 1989).

As we can see literacy can have various and complex understandings from cultural to ideological contexts. Despite the enhanced focus on certain understanding of literacy within formal schooling, we cannot say that one component of literacy is superior to the others, instead, the combination of all components creates the powerful, free and respectable individuals.

From the definitions given above, it is obvious that the first, literacy as a skill and partially the second, literacy as a task is subjected to be developed within the educational institution and under the guidance of a teacher. While the most important aspects of literacy, such as literacy as a practice and critical reflection is achieved through self-regulated learning processes, where voluntary reading plays a core part.

Within the context of the thesis in question, the understanding of literacy is as broad as presented in this section, which should be the target for young students to reach through multiple activities, including voluntary reading.

CHAPTER 2 Literature review

2.1. Education and Reading in Finland.

Rationally speaking, reading is a tool to receive information, gain new knowledge or enhance the social status of a person. For this reason reading makes it an inevitable and core part of primary education in most countries. However, along with the development of literature, press and media, the concept of reading gained an irrational understanding: reading is a pleasurable activity, people have inner motivation to read, they are obsessed with and receive satisfaction from reading. End of the 18th century is considered to be the starting point of reading for pleasure in Europe; apparently the term "love of reading" was born then.

Finland is a particularly interesting country in terms of history of reading due to its political and linguistic peculiarities in the 19th century. As a consequence of being a part of Sweden, every important aspect of the country's life was run by a relatively small group of Swedish-speaking elite, while the majority of rural society spoke Finnish. As Mäkinen (2015) describes, producing texts in the Finnish language was extremely limited; the first discourse about love of reading in Finland appeared in a Swedish language newspaper in 1840, the article suggested opening parish libraries to promote reading among the common people. Reading was expected to eliminate and substitute harmful habits, such as drinking and playing cards (Mäkinen, 2015). The term *lukuhalu* (*love of reading*) in the Finnish language appeared five years later and it viewed reading differently from previous understanding, according to which reading was associated with a mechanical ability to decode the printed symbols and had no cultural value at all.

In Finland as well as in other European countries, the responsibility of basic education and reading instruction stood on the church. Ikonen (2004) describes different approaches in organizing mass education in Finland. In all cases, we can clearly see that basic education and particularly the ability to read had a high priority in the common society. For instance, the example of Elimäki parish school in 1769 proves the aforementioned statement. Poor and uneducated families promptly agree to pay schoolmaster's casual expenses, such as food and logging, in return for reading instructions for their children (Ikonen, 2004). However, reading in this context was only a technical skill and had practically no individual and personal benefit for a student. The first attempt to extend the understanding of reading from recognizing letters to culturally valuable acts appeared in Fort Sveaborg school, the first government-substituted school in Finland, established in 1802. In this school, best pupils were awarded with books, which demonstrates a step forward in the attitude towards valuing and promoting reading (Ikonen, 2004). The turning point for reading in Finland is related to the appearance of Johan Wilhelm Snellman, a philosopher and journalist, who initiated a linguistic-ideological campaign. Snellman's core idea was that education and culture were vital tools in the constructive process of the nation and "masses must adopt an inner motivation to gain knowledge, to educate themselves and to read" (Mäkinen, 2015, p.294). Snellman and his followers, mostly students and priests, put an incredible effort in literacy activities and reform of elementary education, without which there was no hope for love of reading in common people.

Centuries later, the OECD project, PISA 2000 turned the world's attention to Finnish education. Based on the findings from the first several rounds of PISA, 15-year-old Finnish students were ranked among the top positions in terms of reading, mathematics and science

(OECD; 2008). The news about outstanding performance of Finnish students came as a surprise to the Finnish society and teachers in particular (Hancock, 2011). Educational experts suggested different viewpoints and finally jointly concluded that only a combination of key factors, including historical and social contexts, could explain a successful outcome of Finnish education (Malaty, 2006; Andrea, 2015).

From the discussion above, we can see that the history of Finnish primary schools is relatively new compared to other European countries, in Finland schooling became compulsory only in 1921, being followed by only two other countries (Simola, 2005).

Reborn in 1917, a young independent country experienced external and civil wars and political instability as a consequence. Despite the fact that Finnish policymakers were apart in terms of political views, education had been jointly admitted to be the highest priority on the path of development of new democratic nations and society (Simola, 2005).

In modern days, the National Core Curriculum explains the importance of education from different perspectives, such as educational, social and cultural. Through education a student is expected to become a decent member of a democratic society. Undoubtedly, reading is in the center of the educational process, yet it is viewed as more than a simple technical skill. For instance, Multiliteracy is one of the seven transversal competences that primary and secondary education is founded on. Multiliteracy is an ability to comprehend, interpret or produce different texts. In this context the word “text” has multiple definitions and refers to knowledge, represented by graphical, audiographical, visual, kinesthetic and numeric symbols which might exist in written, printed or digital form (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016).

As a legacy of historical events, and in particular of Snellman, reading is a high cultural value for Finnish people; annual statistics on library visits and item borrowings, annual sales figures of books and other information related to reading makes the nationwide news and are broadly discussed among society. Finnish people are enthusiastic readers and library users. Revealed by Finnish Public Libraries Statistics, 84.5 million items were borrowed from the libraries in total in 2018, which means 15,4 items per capita (Statistics | Libraries.fi. 2020). Generally, libraries in Finland are among the top highest rated public services.

To sum up, we can see that education in Finland prepares an individual for lifelong learning and uses reading as a core instrument for that purpose. Reading is not associated only with school subjects, instead it occupies a considerable amount of free time for an adult Finnish person.

2.2. Education and Reading in Georgia

Being an ancient state, Georgia has an older and longer history of education compared to Finland. Yet, Georgia as well faced enormous political and linguistic challenges during the 19th and 20th centuries, which dramatically affected the spread of education and reading among the common population.

The scientific research on education in ancient Georgia is relatively scarce due to the fragmented resources. The first written source on rhetorical education in Georgia appears

in the works of Greek Philosopher, Themistius (317-388). The school, located in Phasis (nowadays Poti) had an emphasis on developing oratorical skills, yet, included subjects, such as literature, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy and presumably church music. Generally, based on early literature about schools, physical and intellectual training were delivered in harmony. During early centuries passive sharing of knowledge was the dominant way of teaching, while medieval educators integrated practice into the educational process (Alasania, 2007). The rich literature, created in Georgian language as early as the 4th century, makes literature one of the most important aspects of education throughout history. Nevertheless, the absolute majority of early literature before the 10th century is hagiographical and therefore, becomes part of religious studies. As in most countries during medieval times, education was delivered through the church and it aimed to prepare the further flow of educated priests (Toumanoff, P. 1943).

The concept of libraries was strongly associated with the spread of culture and education for all. Initial attempts to open libraries in Tbilisi date to the early 18th century. The first idea of a public library, with two separate parts for religious and secular literature, remained on paper as a plan due to the Persian invasion in 1795. Only in 1848, Tbilisi library received the first visitor; the idea to provide the society with the free source of books was finally accomplished (Jersild & Melkadze, 2002).

Being a member of Russian Empire, Georgia again faced the threat of losing the national language, as Russian Language became dominant first in the political arena, later in education and common life. The first non governmental organization, *The Society For The Extension Of The Literacy Among Georgians* is the legacy of such language related troubles. The society was founded in 1879 and consisted of leading Georgian intellectuals providing literacy among the rural and lower classes of the society. The society established and ran primary schools, libraries and issued sponsored Georgian language journals and magazines (Gabisonia, 2012). The 70 years of membership in the Soviet Union had the most devastating effect on the development of reading and education in Georgia. By observing the educational process during Soviet times, we can clearly see that promoting reading and improving literacy has not been the ultimate goal of education. Reading is still viewed as a technical skill to decode information, and less and less effort is made to work on texts through reading comprehension and critical thinking (Lomaia, 2006).

Due to the combination of numerous reasons, including above mentioned historical and current socio-economic ones, Georgian students are ranked below average in reading comprehension in PISA. Between 2008-2015 students showed improvements in all subject domains of PISA, namely, reading score improved by 27 score points. Another international research PIRLS 2011, also indicated that Georgian students have trouble in reading comprehension (PIRLS.2011). The local researchers nominated different factors to explain low literacy in Georgian students. Along with the dissatisfying school environment, disadvantaged socio-economic background, inappropriately planned preschool programs and lack of reading strategies, she highlighted the lack of early reading traditions in Georgian families (Chkotua & Tarashvili, 2016).

The ongoing educational reform, launched in 2004, tries to address and eliminate such superficial understanding of reading. Despite the fact that there is no assigned reading specialist or reading initiatives in Georgian schools, the national curriculum is designed in a way that reading as a tool, serves to accomplish all learning, social and communicative goals of education (Ministry of Education and Science, National Curriculum of Georgia).

Rich and outstanding traditions and history of education and literature, formed the nationwide opinion that education is a matter of dignity and ability of reading is a means to respect our past. However, the understanding of education and reading is still very technical and old fashioned. According to the UNESCO statistics, in Georgia adult literacy rates are 99.7 and 99.8 for women and men respectively, net enrollment rate in primary education is 100% (UNESCO; 2009). Unfortunately, such dedication does not always reflect the quality of educational outcomes.

2.3. Education and literacy of deaf people

2.3.1. Education of deaf people

The Education of deaf children, in general, is famous for a long-existing ‘‘war of methods’ between manualists and oralists¹.

Before the mid-20th century, the education of deaf people was implemented solely based on the teaching methodology developed by the Swiss doctor Cornard Amman (1669-1724), which strongly favoured sound and was focused on speech development. According to his approach, silent language (sign language) would never compensate for the deprivation of speech, particularly in literacy development (Fullwood & Williams, 2000). Described by Siisiäinen (2016) Amman’s general assessment of deafness was embedded in religious context which sounds very unhumanistic to modern society. However, his religious justification is not surprising as Christian Church separated Deaf² from the rest of the community since middle ages, Amman believed that through speech development deaf people could be ‘‘humanized’’ (Siisiäinen, 2016). This movement is known as German school of deaf education or *oralist approach*.

During oralist practice of education in the 20-th century, the attitudes of psychologists and educators towards sign language was sceptical and its use for educational purposes was considered unacceptable. They believed that vision and visual signs are limited to concrete phenomenon and, consequently, absence of hearing and spoken language vigorously limits the ability of deaf people to think abstractly and conceptually (Siisiäinen, 2016). Instead, reading was given core importance in language acquisition (Power, 2000). For example, Bell, one of the most influential educators of deaf people, believed that young deaf students would benefit from reading a text, even without understanding the meaning of the words. He believed that reading must be the means of learning language, instead of language, being a tool to read a book (Bell, 1929).

Until recently, most of the advocates of oralist education agreed and followed Bell’s ideas about reading. The researcher Groht, was one of the first who disagreed and claimed that

¹ Oralists underline the importance of speech, lipreading and residual hearing, saying that abstract thoughts are based on articulation and vocal language. Manualists, on the other hand, identified a sign language as a natural language of deaf people.

² In the English language literature about Deaf, scientific or fiction, Deaf with an uppercase ‘‘D’’ refers to members of community or culture, while deaf with a lower case ‘‘d’’ is an audiological description of people with hearing loss (Brice & Strauss, 2016)

reading needed to be built on the language. He argued that a child must know the meaning of the words before encountering them in print (Power, 2000).

By the mid-19th century sign language was allowed to be used in educational institutions in Scandinavian countries. Meanwhile, oralist methods gained more secure positions and popularity in Germany, which led them to spread rapidly in Norway and Sweden (Siisiäinen, 2016). From 1860 onwards Finland had a period of profound transformations of elementary education. The eminent educators and teachers, such as Uno Cygnaeus and Hendell have been particularly attracted by the German schools for Deaf. They intensively studied the bases of German pedagogy and brought them to Finland, which was successfully launched into practice in 1874 in Kuopio. Simultaneously, the demonization of sign language took place with full force (Siisiäinen, 2016). Despite the fact that sign language was considered a natural language of deaf people, it was still discussed as proof of primitive, and defective nature of deaf people. Similarly, teaching speech and lip reading was acknowledged as a dramatically effortful, painful and almost violent activity, yet it was viewed as the only means to humanize and socialize deaf people (Krausneker, 2015).

After World War II, Germany lost its ultimate position as a locomotive of pedagogical ideas for Finland, the methods and ideas of American educators started to have increasing impact. Unfortunately, in the case of deaf education, Finland adopted the approaches and thinking of John Tracy, who approved the advantage of oral language over signs, but assigned the task of language teaching to the parents of deaf children (Salmi & Laakso, 2005). Not surprisingly, the oralist method of deaf education remained in the lead until the 1970s. Only in 1995, within the broader context of reforms of basic human rights, sign language was given legal recognition (Siisiäinen, 2016).

Education in Georgia, as a member of Soviet Union, was implemented under the huge influence of Russian pedagogy. Vital concepts, such as equality in education were understood as “sameness”, and consequently, students’ individual needs and differences were completely ignored and muted. Only students with mild disabilities were accepted in mainstream schools, with extremely limited attention to their actual needs, they were formally moved from grade to grade until the end of compulsory education (Gvaramadze, 2010). Deaf students were educated in special schools under the Russian “medical model”, which aimed to cure deafness, by means of putting huge emphasis on speech development and lip reading (Makharoblidze, 2012).

Vigotsky was one of the first educators, who declared that the acquisition of spoken language was almost a waste of time for deaf students and it had a dramatic impact on their ability to learn reading and writing. After a decade of working on this issue, Vigotsky claimed that spoken and written languages are fundamental, yet sign language has an auxiliary function in education of deaf students (Jamieson, 1994). For the first time, bilingualism was acknowledged as an inevitable and only means to develop productive and functional education for Deaf (Zaitseva, 1999). However, during the consecutive years, Vigotsky’s ideas not only were rejected, but purposefully contradicted. Later socio-political developments and cultural changes all across the world, resulted in increased awareness about sign language. Deaf community itself often referred to Vygotsky’s works during the struggleful demonstrations and debates for sign language recognition and its legitimate use in education.

In 1980-1990, when the fundamental changes happened in understanding literacy as a concept, it became obvious that oralist methods and meaningless decoding of text needed to change. Besides, Deaf social movements for sign language recognition was another accelerator to move on to a manual approach, also known as bilingual education for Deaf. Bilingualism in the context of deaf children justifies the deaf children's exposure to sign language as their most natural first language (Gibson, Small, & Mason, 1997).

2.3.2. Literacy of deaf children

Deaf students across the world face enormous problems in mastering reading and developing literacy. For example Allen (1994) reports that over half of school graduate students in the USA reach only fourth-grade-level reading comprehension (Allen, 1994). The researchers of this nature have been conducted later as well, showing little improvement (for example, Cuculick, & Kelly, 2003).

Difficulties in literacy development among deaf children have been explained by the impact of deafness (Lederberg et al., 2013). However, the historical failure of Deaf education might have various explanations.

In the 20th century, Weiner and Cromer (1967) tried to establish the reasons for reading failure among children and offered us a four model theory. Despite the fact that the model was developed through the studies and observations of hearing children, it can be applied to describe reading failure among deaf children. According to the model, the factors such as *defect*, *deficit*, *disruption*, and *difference* can explain reading failure.

The *defect model* considers the problems of a certain organ to be an answer for insufficient reading proficiency. The *deficit* model focuses on the lack of phonological and syntactic information. Since deafness itself is a profound sensory impairment (*defect*), which leads to the lack of phonological and syntactic information (*deficit*), the combination of these two models can explain the deaf students' struggles in reading comprehension.

Difference model refuses the oral language competence to be the absolute must for reading mastering, this model enables us to view deaf readers not as defective or deficient, but rather a different learner. The disruptive model restricts typical reading development in children regardless of hearing status, as emotional problems, maladjustment and other disruptive behaviours affect the reading comprehension generally (Gormley & Franzen, 1978).

Literacy as a phenomena combines various skills of different levels, such as word recognition, spelling, whole text comprehension and/or composition (Kirsch, 2001). Scientific literature distinguished various models of literacy development, yet all of them acknowledge the inextricable connection of written and spoken languages. For example, in the supermodel of literacy development, at the initial level of word reading when a child learns to link words to meaning, the main components of literacy are sound, letter and meaning. Similarly, on the higher, text level of literacy process, knowing the sound system of the language plays an important role in literacy development (Breadmore, Vardy, Cunningham, Kwok & Carroll, 2019). Even only based on such a limited overview on literacy, we can clearly see that the lack of phonological component of language leaves deaf learners out of the realm of literacy. Even though the oralist approach of Deaf education is nowadays

considered conceptually wrong, as Watson claims, spoken language competence is still the predictor of high literacy level of profoundly deaf students (Watson, 1999).

Despite the fact that the insufficient reading progress and illiteracy of deaf people is an old challenge, in the 21st century Deaf community faced enormous problems, since literary skills are in extremely high demand. Poor literacy skills affect not only perspectives of higher education and employment, but also interpersonal communications and socialization, accessibility to the news and public services. Until today, Deaf community in Georgia remains one of the most marginalized groups. Well documented problems in schooling and particularly low literacy skills restricts them from higher education and further employment. According to the statistics of the last decades, not a single deaf individual applied for the University in Georgia and only a few deaf students are studying in vocational institutions (Tsuladze, 2015).

CHAPTER 3 Methodology

3.1. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework helps both researchers and readers on different stages of their action. For the researcher it is an instrument to organize and plan the research, also to present the results in a coherent way in line with selected theory. For a reader, instead, the theoretical framework makes the connection between hypothesis and results more clear and in some cases even more credible.

Traditionally, theoretical frameworks are the attribute of quantitative research and they are developed or selected before the data collection. On the contrary, qualitative research has less structured frameworks, which usually emerge through the data analysis process (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

The integrative model (IM) was chosen as a theoretical framework for this study. The model was proposed in 2000 and represents the latest formulation and sequential development of previous two models by Fishbein and Ajzen (Montano et al. 1997): *the theory of reasoned action* (Fishbein, 1979) and *theory of planned behaviour* (Ajzen, 1991).

Both theories mentioned above were developed as a critical response to previous studies, which claimed low or zero correlation between attitude and behaviour. However, it should be mentioned that in early studies, attitude was measured mostly towards the object (Fishbein, 1993). For example attitude towards a book as an object, would have been observed to predict the engagement into reading. Fishbein was the first to challenge this approach and claim that measuring attitude towards the behaviour itself could give more realistic possibility to predict behavior performance (Montano et al. 1997). Such critical thinking and discussions lead to the development of theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behaviour.

In order to provide a clear understanding, applicability and justification for using the integrative model, I will briefly explain the two preceding theories and their limitations for my purpose.

The theory of reasoned action focuses on any behaviour of voluntary nature and views the intention (motivation) as a core predictor for behaviour performance. Within the theory the intention is considered to be the direct result of an individual's own *beliefs*, *attitude* towards the behaviour and *subjective norms* - the individual's perception of his or her close network's attitude and view on the behaviour (Hale, Householder & Greene, 2002). More precisely, if the individual holds a strong *belief* that the behavior in question has a valuable outcome, he/she will develop a positive attitude towards that behaviour and most likely will engage in it when applicable. Similarly, the belief about negative outcomes translates into negative attitude and less probable behaviour performance.

On the other hand, the *subjective norms* are determined by an individual's perception of how strongly the referent members of his/her close networks will support or oppose the behaviour performance. When an individual thinks that he/she is expected to either conduct or avoid a

certain behaviour, he/she is strongly motivated to meet the expectations and acts accordingly (Montano et al. 1997).

The application of the theory of reasoned action is limited for educational studies, since it excludes any behaviour which requires skills, opportunities or resources of any kind. It strongly appeals to the behaviours which are completely spontaneous, voluntary and neglectable (Hale, Householder & Greene. 2002). Besides, the phenomena in focus of this study, reading for pleasure, might be affected by various environmental or individual restrictions and constraints, which are completely ignored by the theory of reasoned action.

The insufficiency of theory of reasoned action for any behaviors which are less voluntary in their nature, led Fishbein and Ajzen to develop **the theory of planned behaviour**. As compared by Madden et al, (1992) This theory is an extension of the previous model, and it pays attention to other factors, which may have a positive or negative effect on behavior but are outside the individual's control (Madden et al., 1992). Consequently, *perceived behavioral control* was added as an additional factor determining the intention. This addition was practically based on previous ideas by Ajzen that motivation (intention) and ability in combination can predict the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). *The perceived behavioral control is understood* by Fishbein and Ajzen as the individuals' beliefs about their own resources and opportunities, the possession of which should have a direct or indirect influence on behavior through intention. Considering the nature of the behaviour, the resources include, but are not limited to money, time, skills, support from others, environment, supplies etc (Yzer, 2012). The lack of focus on performing skills and environmental constraints can still be nominated as the main limitations of theory of planned behaviour for my purpose.

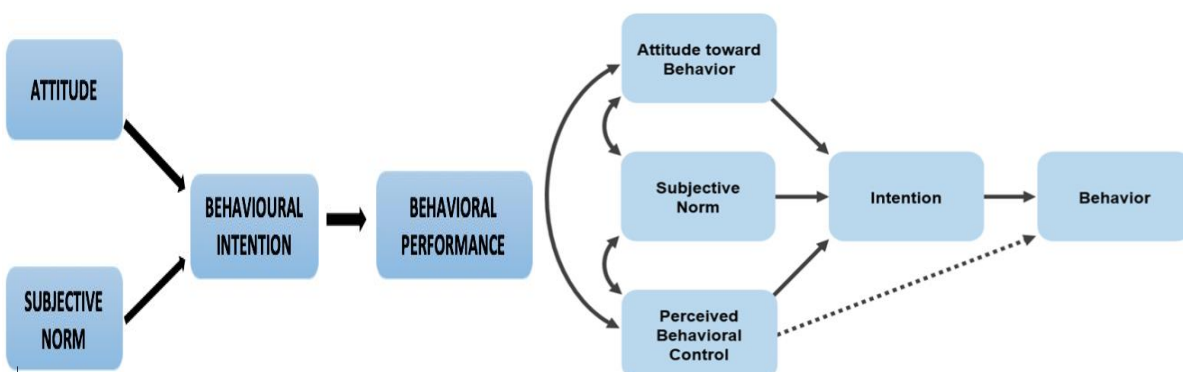


Figure 1.1 The theory of reasoned action

Figure 1.2 Theory of planned behaviour

Being the direct successor of the previous two theories, **integrative model** as well, considers intention as a spinal determinant of behavioural performance and takes a close look at the factors affecting intention directly or indirectly (Yzer, 2012). According to the model, intention is determined by three main factors: *attitude*, *perceived norms* and *personal agency* (Montano et al., 1997).

The first factor is attitude towards behavioural performance. The model distinguishes *experiential* and *instrumental attitude*. Under an *experiential attitude* Fishbein considers the individual's emotional response to the behaviour, either positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable. Logically, a positive or favourable attitude is expected to be translated into actual behaviour more than negative and unfavorable one. *Instrumental attitude*, on the other hand, is based on cognitive reasoning about the presumed outcomes of behavioural performance (Fishbein, 2009). In the context of this study, I assume that students have

various emotional responses towards the act of reading, ranging from positive to negative, vital to time consuming, beneficial to boring, etc. On the other hand, they might consider extended knowledge, gained intelligence and improved literacy skills as an outcome of reading. The extent of both aspects of attitude, experiential and instrumental, and the degree of other factors, such as environmental constraints, should determine the magnitude of relationship between intention of reading and actual reading.

The second determinant factor of intention is *perceived norms*, described as an individual's perception of societal pressure to perform the behavior in question (Yzer, 2012). The perceived norms are also divided into two different dimensions: *injunctive* and *descriptive*. *Injunctive norms* consider the degree of the support provided to the individual by the society and close network to either perform or refrain from the behavior. Conversely, *descriptive norms*, focus on the members of society and close network, performing the same behavior themselves (Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin. 1997). Perceived norms play an important role in students' intention in reading for pleasure. Being of high cultural value in both societies, Finnish and Georgian, reading is considered to be one of the most important achievements of historical development of humanity (Simola, 2005; Alasania, 2007). Undoubtedly, a great deal of emotional investment and unintentional pressure is set over new generations to perform reading activity at as high rate and quality as possible. On the other hand, the degree and nature of reading, performed by the close network, such as family and friends, serves as a behavioral model and has a fundamental influence on individuals' rate of reading intention and engagement.

The final factor affecting the intention is personal agency. It consists of two elements - perceived control and self-efficacy. Perceived control views one's own control over behavioural performance, while, on the contrary, self-efficacy shows the degree of one's perceived capability to perform the behaviour (Montano et al., 1997). For the purpose of the study, I leave the segments of personal agency out of the discussion for several reasons, which are broadly discussed in limitations

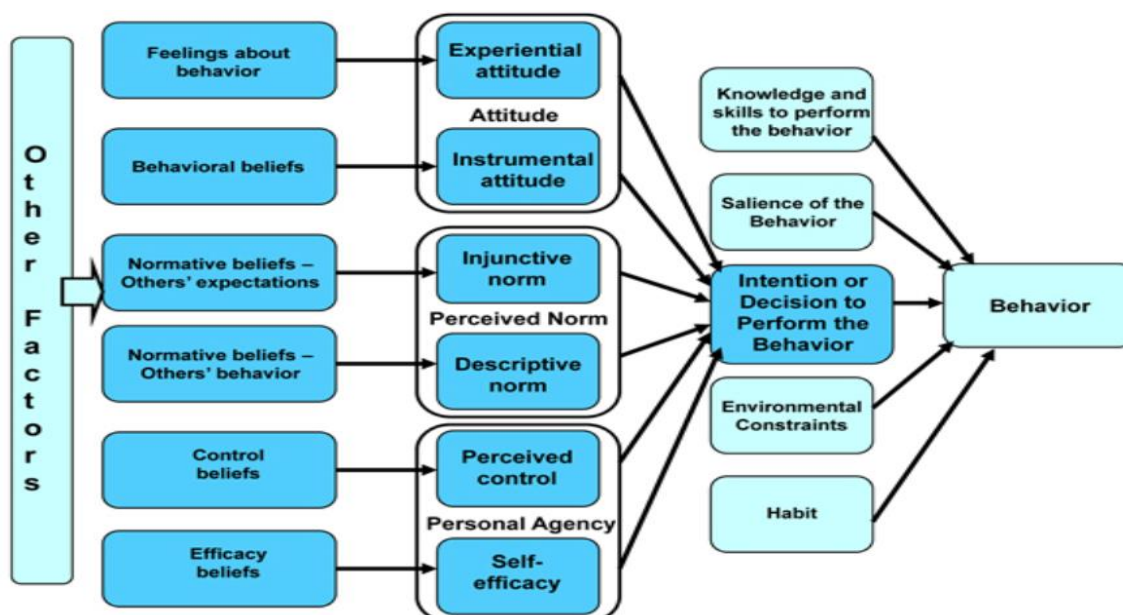


Figure 1.3 Theory of integrated model

The most notable distinguishing element of integrative model in contrast with the two previous theories is the directed attention to knowledge, skills and environmental factors, which noticeably affect the transition from behavior intention to behavioural performance (Yzer, 2012).

The integrative model also pays attention to background variables as a potential source of indirect influence on behavioural intention. Considering the nature of behaviour, such factors can be gender, age, socio-economic background of the individual, cultural norms, stereotypes related to behaviour etc (Fishbein, 2009). The integrative model of behavioral prediction applies to any voluntary behaviour, rational or irrational. Its limited use in educational sciences can be explained by the obligatory nature of the educational process itself. For example, the model cannot explain the students' classroom attendance through the intention and its determinant variables, since it is a compulsory activity and is regulated not only by cultural and social norms, but also legislation. However, for the purpose of study in question, the model is fully applicable, since my interest - reading for pleasure is a voluntary activity.

3.2. Research design

To guide my investigation, I have decided to combine qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis. In research literature, such practice is referred to as "mixed methods", "multiple methods" and "multimethod designs" (Kalle & Buchholtz, 2015). Though defining the exact and specific term to label this approach is the subject of ongoing scientific discussion, it is gaining popularity in modern research practice. The growing popularity of mixed methods can be explained by natural reasoning of the researcher that limitations and weaknesses of one method (either qualitative or quantitative) can be minimized by combining and complementing it with another type of methodology (Ivankova et al., 2006).

My personal choice of using mixed methods is strongly related to my research questions. One of the three questions is seeking to establish the rate of students' engagement in voluntary reading. The rate can only be measured through quantitative methods since this information is explicitly numerical. On the other hand, the attitude towards reading can be revealed through qualitative research. Within the qualitative part, the thesis in question adopts the constructivism paradigm, where social reality is built based on individuals' experience.

Despite the challenges associated with mixed methods, this approach has exclusive benefits as well (Ihantola & Khin, 2011). The notable distinction of qualitative research is the subjectivity of the researcher. Undoubtedly, researchers approach the topic with pre-existing knowledge and expectations. Besides, being an instrument of investigation, they are personally involved in it. Therefore, it is expected that researchers can influence the flow and outcome of the research (Maxwell, 2013).

Both kinds of research are aimed to find out and explain certain phenomena or patterns of action, yet they are very different in nature. Sometimes, the value of qualitative research among students and audiences is underestimated and consequently, the preference is given to quantitative research. Due to the oversimplification of qualitative research, very little is known about its advantages. For me, one of the most important features of qualitative

research is a rich textual description, which very clearly presents the experiences of the people in the focus of research. Similarly, Becker (1996) discusses the differences between the two types of research and says that quantitative research reveals the interaction effects and relationships between variables, but he views the researchers of qualitative research as the fieldworkers who are interested in how the certain phenomena is viewed, explained and responded by the people involved in it (Becker, 1996).

For more clarity, we can divide the research in question into two parts: part I - the quantitative and part II - the qualitative research.

3.3. Quantitative part

3.3.1. Instrument

The survey, developed for this study is based on Adult Survey of Reading Attitudes (ASRA) developed by Smith (1991). However, the modifications were made based on the study conducted by Walberg & Tsai (1985), who stated that the students' positive attitude towards reading can be directly dependent on four main aspects: positive outcomes of reading, enjoyment, relevant self-confidence as a reader and the favorable home environment for verbal interactions about the books (Walberg & Tsai, 1985).

The students' ideas about the possible outcomes of reading was decided to be captured through the focus group interviews, while the rest enjoyment, self-confidence (perceived difficulty) and environment (social factor) of reading served as base of questioner modification.

Originally, the survey consisted of fifteen statements, categorized into three variables: 1) reading enjoyment (*eight items*), 2) anxiety and difficulty (*five items*) and 3) modality (*two items*) (Subashini & Balakrishnam, 2013). For the purposes of the research in question the modality variable was removed and the social aspect of reading was added. Moreover, the amount of questions were equalized within categories, which is believed to increase the reliability of the instrument. Since the survey was designed to account for participation of young deaf students, the statements were kept relatively short and linguistically simple. To validate the instrument, the survey was reviewed by the supervisor several times and all necessary changes and corrections were made, until the final approval was obtained. The survey was pre-tested, upon which the minor linguistic remarks were taken into consideration. The finalized survey consists of 29 statements, measured by a 5-point Likert scale. Three questions collected background information about the participants, such as gender, school and grade. (see. Appendix. 1 Survey). The first page of survey included general information about the researcher, purpose of the study and general contact information (see Appendix 2. Student consent form). The survey was translated into Georgian language to be used in Georgia. During the translation process, I had consulted several Georgian Sign Language specialists to avoid using obscure or unfamiliar terms. The only word, which raised a discussion in this regard was the term ``*anxious*`, which in Georgian survey appears as ``stressed, nervous``.

3.3.2. Sampling and location

The sample for the study was recruited in both countries - Finland and Georgian. For the purpose of the quantitative part a combined method of convenience and purposeful sampling was adopted. Convenience sampling is a way of choosing the target population, who meet certain criteria (Etikan, 2016). Its most commonly stated advantages are its affordability and easy availability (Etikan (2016). The survey was developed in English, which is not a native language of either country Finland and Georgia. Consequently, linguistic criteria were applied to the mainstream schools and only those schools where the educational process is organised in English were chosen. Besides, the survey was conducted in two special schools for students with hearing impairments. This method of sampling is known as purposeful, namey, homogeneous sampling, through which the information is gathered from the population who share the specific characteristic (Etikan, 2016), hearing impairments in respect of this study.

Gaining legal and ethical permissions to conduct a study, also obtaining field access and parents' consent, is critically important for the research (Gall, 2007). In Finland the access to the schools was obtained through the online application and interview with the school principals. Upon the approval of the access, the parents' consent was secured by the class teachers through the WILMA application (see Appendix 3, Parents Consent Form). In Georgia, the access has been gained through the interview with principals and class teachers.

3.4. Qualitative part

3.4.1. Focus group interviews

For the purpose of identifying the students' attitudes towards reading within the qualitative part of this study, the focus groups interviews were arranged. By definition, a focus group is an interactive discussion within a group on a certain topic (Morgan, 1996). I have decided to use this particular method, because my research question does not look for individual answers on particular phenomena, rather I am interested in identifying the common affecting factors, norms and attitudes of students towards reading.

Kitzinger (1994) identifies the several advantages of the focus group. This method allows the researcher to observe the participants' reflections on each other. Besides, the questions or comments that participants might give to each other might as well be the source of information. In addition, the researcher can explore the arguments against or in favor of each other between the focus group participants (Kitzinger, 1994). Similarly, Lähteenmäki considers the naturalistic environment and social interaction as a powerful aspect of focus groups. However, participants' possible influence on each other, possibility of extremely dominant or regularly silent individuals, limited confidentiality and lack of skillful moderator are discussed as the most common weaknesses of focus groups (Lähteenmäki, 2013).

Since all the samples within each focus group were referred from one school, I had a reasonable expectation that the group members knew each other. This approach is known

as 'pre-existing groups' and it has advantages and limitations as well. The conversations and flow in pre-existing groups are more naturally occurring. On the other hand, being open and honest on a particular issue is at risk within such groups (Gill et al., 2008).

The questions for the focus group were developed based on the guidelines identified by Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin (1997) (see appendix 4. Focus Group Questions). The first suggestion regarding conducting the interviews using the framework of integrative model, is to provide individuals who have already performed the behaviour in question, or have the strong intention to do so and the ones with no or limited history of behaviour performance. Applying the focus groups naturally guaranteed the diversity of individuals in terms of intensity of behaviour performance or intention; besides, based on the scientific literature, the group of students with hearing impairments were expected to engage into voluntary reading less than students without the hearing impairments. The questions for the focus group were developed under the three categories: 1. General feelings about performing the behaviour (experiential attitude or affect). 2. Influences from individuals, close network or society (perceived norms), 3 situational or environmental restrictions affecting the behaviour performance (skills, knowledge, resources, other factors). The category of self efficacy and controlled beliefs were removed. In order to enlarge the area of voluntary acts, which require reading skills, I have asked them about watching subtitled movies and other free time activities where students have to read.

3.5. Data analysis methods

Within the **quantitative** part of the study with the SPSS 26.0 statistical Package, the descriptive method was used to analyse the data obtained through the survey. The quantitative descriptive analysis is suitable to be performed when variables are not divided as dependent and independent, but instead, they measure the differences across the groups (Thompson, 2009). Descriptive statistics such as mean, median, mode and frequency (high, medium, low) were calculated. In our case, reading enjoyment, perceived difficulty and social aspects were observed and calculation outcomes are used as a basis for comparison between the participants from different countries and hearing impairments. The cross tabulation was used to analyze the relationship between variables.

Cumulative index for each variable (enjoyment, difficulty and social aspect) was measured by combining three questions each. Descriptive analysis of three variables is considered sufficient to presume the students' engagement into voluntary reading.

Within the context of the **qualitative** part of my study thematic analysis was chosen because of its flexibility. Many researchers view thematic analysis as a non-independent method to analyze the data, but rather a set of generic skills to use across various methods. For example, thematizing the meaning, identifying common patterns, ideas and views, examining the frequency and nature of phenomena in question are considered as core elements of qualitative research. However, As Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest, thematic analysis is not only a completely independent method itself, but also one of the most powerful, yet poorly acknowledged methods of qualitative data analysis. The authors consider this approach as a fundamental method and they think that knowing and mastering steps and structure of thematic analysis, enables the researcher to gain a wide range of proper skills of other types of data analysis as well (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Due to the pre-existence of thematic framework, a deductive way of analysis is adopted, meaning that the process, including coding, is driven by a selected framework. Thematic analysis, as described by Scharp & Sanders (2018) consists of six-steps, which I followed using NVIVO software. The first and most important step in thematic analysis is to familiarize oneself with the data through repetitive and deep reading. This step is followed by creating coding categories and subcategories. During the following phases the themes were generated (3), reviewed (4) and labelled (5) and finally the report was produced.

3.6. Reliability and trustworthiness of the study

Mixed methods have enormous advantages to offer to the researcher, such as instrument fidelity, different source of information, variety of sampling within a study, multi design of data analysis etc. In return however, the mixed methods proffers the pool of challenges in which the complex validity and reliability issues are broadly presented (Ihantola & Khin, 2011).

Internal validity and credibility, are the most essential indications of validity, which occurs during the whole process of the research. The biggest threats to internal validity can include lack of knowledge, contradictions in logic, instrument and researcher bias (Polkinghorne, 2007). The risk of insufficient knowledge and illogical flow was attempted to be mitigated by reviewing large amounts of literature and/or having personal communication with the people working in the fields for many years. The survey used for the quantitative part was a slight modification of Adult Survey of Reading Attitudes (ASRA) by Smith, 1991 (Subashini & Balakrishnan, 2013). Several other studies, which modified and used the same survey, were reviewed. The questions for the focus group were designed based on the theoretical framework, in order to guarantee the capture of all important aspects of interest (Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin, 1997). The focus group transcripts were coded by myself and my former colleague through the pair programming using online working software. The disagreements, different ideas or unclear cases were discussed and acted upon. researcher bias might be very difficult to control in some cases, yet, these procedures in combination with the fact that no hypothesis or expectations regarding students' attitude towards reading and their engagement in voluntary reading were formulated the data analysis is as free from personal bias as possible.

External validity, or transferability of the results is the fundamental aspect of all research quantitative or qualitative (Ihantola & Khin, 2011). Similarly, according to Marshall & Rossman (2011) a quality and goodness of qualitative research is evaluated by several factors among which transferability of findings is one of the most important one. The external validity refers to the potential of generalizability of results on three fundamental elements: population, time and environment (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Some aspects of the external validity of this research might be considered under risk. Quantitative part of the study is focused on students' views on reading through the tree variables: enjoyment, difficulty and social aspect. The views on reading is closely related to the reading proficiency, previous experience, expectations and general reading culture around the student. Consequently, the educational system and instructional methodology applied in the country, as well as the social-economical and cultural background of the students play a spinal role to develop the reading ability and the view on reading.

Nevertheless, the qualitative part of the study is expected to compensate for such risk, by focusing not on students' efficacy or reading comprehensions, but only their attitude towards reading and factors affecting their engagement into voluntary reading. Despite the fact that attitude also differs in various cultural and social contexts (Ellsworth, 1996), I have strong expectations that the findings about the pattern of attitude formation and factors affecting voluntary reading will be easily generalizable over different populations and environments. The reliability of the study refers to the consistency between a set of variables and the phenomenon they are intended to measure. The reliability can be measured by addressing three facts: 1) whether the results will be the same if the study is repeatedly conducted by another researcher, 2) whether the same subjects will be observed in repeated study and 3) transferability of the data (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Like validity, reliability as well is subjected to several threats, which needs to be mitigated or controlled by the researcher throughout the study. Lähtemäki (2012) identifies four general threats to reliability, which was considered and controlled during the data analysis process. The participants error, refers to the fact that an unfamiliar environment, settings or different part of time might affect the participants normal behaviour or thinking. This threat was controlled by the decision to conduct all the surveys and focus groups in the school buildings, at the same time of five consecutive days. The second threat, participant bias, occurs when in the fear of negative consequences or judgement participants answer less honestly. In the case of this study this threat is relatively high; since a person with good literacy skills and sufficient general knowledge is appraised in the society, students might be ashamed or unwilling to discuss their low interest in reading with the presence of fellow students. In respect with this threat, the anonymity and confidentiality is fully guaranteed and the non judgemental nature of study is explicitly explained to the participants. The last two threats focus on researcher error and researcher bias, which can be resulted from inexperienced and unqualified researchers (Lähtemäki, 2012). I believe extensive reading and regular meetings with supervisors will contribute to control these threats, yet, I am aware that using the mixed method, I strongly challenge myself, but on the other hand, I see my MA thesis as a perfect possibility to try it out, face the difficulties and learn from my own mistakes.

3.7. Concerns and limitations

Ethical commitments during the data collection and processing processes are concerning issues for both- researcher and participants. The MA thesis in question will not be published and it is not subjected to be reviewed by an ethics committee, yet it does not liberate me from being very careful and extremely ethical, when working with young children and their parents and particularly with those of certain disabilities. As Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong (2007) report, researchers, who are working on sensitive issues, should be aware of its possible impact on participants and their closest community members, such as family and friends. The literature and instructions regarding the ethics are explicitly focused on fundamental aspects such as guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, but Behi & Nolan (1995) believe that ethically conducted research represents the individual dignity of participants and aims to produce benefit from data analysis for the society rather than harm or agitation (Behi & Nolan, 1995).

The first limitation appeared while designing the focus group interview questions in connection with the theoretical framework, from which I decided to leave the aspect of self efficacy out of his research. In my personal opinion, when the researcher is interested in behavioural performance, measuring self efficacy about any skill requires it to be checked

against the actual use of the skill in question. I had high expectation that most of the participants would consider themselves confident in reading skills, enough to engage in age-appropriate voluntary reading. Besides, since being a good reader is a sensible issue, I thought young students would not talk about their struggles with reading openly in the format of focus groups.

Another biggest concern and limitation regarded the data gathering from deaf individuals during the focus groups. Personally, I have extremely limited skills in sign language, that enabled me to have direct communication with participants. Most of the participants used sign language, which was translated to verbal Georgian by a professional translator. Another concern regarded the recording of focus groups. Deaf individuals use facial expressions extensively, as a linguistic remarks during their own speech or commenting on others (McCullough, Emmorey & Sereno, 2005). Such remarks might include important information, which is practically lost when the interview is recorded audically.

A significant limitation of my thesis lies in sampling deaf individuals for either survey or focus group. Both countries aim to provide education for all in the same environment within the frames of inclusive education³. Students with minor hearing impairments, hard of hearing or with cochlear implants are integrated in mainstream schools. Since the search for hearing impaired student in mainstream schools would be absolutely infeasible, the sample used for the study was selected from special schools for deaf in Turku and in Tbilisi. The nominated schools serve students with severe deafness, lateral mental or physical disabilities or in the case of Georgia the ones under the poverty line. All these factors might independently be interesting variables to integrate into the data analysis, but the extremely individualistic cases within the limited number of participants made it impossible.

³ Finland provides inclusive education from 2007, upon the Special Educational Strategy document, which on the other hand is the result of reforms started in 2004 (Thuneberg et al, 2013).

Georgia started inclusive education from 2013 upon the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations (MES, 2018).

Chapter 4. Focus group data analysis

The data from focus group interviews are divided into five broad themes around engagement in voluntary reading: functions of reading, social aspects of reading, influences in reading choice, impediment factors for voluntary reading and reading modalities. To maintain the structure and coherence, the above mentioned themes are discussed into three contexts: Finnish, Georgian and students with hearing impairments.

4.1. Finnish context

4.1.1. Functions of reading

“ [...] you cannot learn everything at school, many things you discover in literature...”

Through the first question of the focus group, what students were thinking to be the primary purpose of reading, I tried to find out what are the most common beliefs about the functions and purposes of voluntary reading. Participants were explained that the notion of voluntary reading refers to self-selected literature, which students read during their free time.

Almost all the Finnish participants claimed that one of the most significant and primary purposes of reading is learning. Most of the students claim that they learn about the world and people through voluntary reading. Generally, Finnish students view reading literature as a personal gateway to the world; several students mentioned that voluntary reading prepares them for a future life with sufficient knowledge not only about science and nature, but also about society and its rules. Through literature, they claimed to learn about society as a whole, yet pay particular attention to the individual and its place within it.

Finnish students pointed out the importance of learning about other cultures from literature, as a cultural artifact of different nations. They expressed the belief that literature is a trustworthy source for cultural learning in an informal environment. Finland is a country with increasing internationalization. Consequently, multicultural competence is one of the central objectives in Finnish national curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016). The value of the literature has always been acknowledged in education, yet, globalization and multiculturalism gave it an additional and fundamental advantage as materials, with enormous potential to develop cultural competence among young readers. Literature can be used not only for learning and understanding home or other cultures through the differences and similarities, but also has the potential to awake critical self-awareness, attitudes, tolerance and other personal features (Gómez Rodríguez, 2013).

The fact that the amount of reading correlates with the quality of spoken language is well documented (for example, Kim & Krashen, 1997). In the past however, the decoding proficiency was considered to be mediated between reading and vocabulary. In other words, an individual with good decoding skills was expected to read more and encounter complex words in various contexts, which in return would result in learning the multiplex nature of language: semantics, morphology and syntax.

In 1998 however, Cunningham and Stanovich revealed that improvements in spoken language can be achieved from sufficient amounts of fiction reading, independently from other controlling variables, such as intelligence and decoding ability (Cunningham &

Stanovich, 1998). Naturally, such evidence based scientific findings is not known for young students, yet based on self or general observations, they nominated the improvement of verbal language skills as one of the most important functions of voluntary reading. Finnish students expressed cogent knowledge that by reading more they can increase their vocabulary and improve their ability to construct syntactically and morphologically complex sentences:

“ [...].....reading is very important for the development of spoken language. especially, nowadays, when good verbal skills are essential for many professions..”

Apart from didactic purposes, students mentioned that voluntary reading serves them as a means of entertainment and relaxation. Many focus group participants mentioned that by reading literature they create their own world, forget the reality, communicate with imaginary friends, become the main character etc. Despite the fact that none of the participants used the term escapism, I dared merging all above mentioned ideas under that term. Suggested by Usherwood & Toyne, the term escapism should be used with particular prudence, because in many contexts it might have contradictory and negative connotations (Usherwood & Toyne, 2002). By society in large, stress and pressure is believed to be an exclusive attribute of adults, and consequently many voluntary activities might indeed serve them as an instrument to escape the stressful everyday life. Based on overall content and discussion of focus group interviews, we can clearly see that school life also includes stresses for young students, such as large amounts of homework, limited free time, exam-focused approach of learning, social isolation and increasing cases of bullying cases. The quotes from the focus group interview with Finnish students probably justifies my decision to use the term escapism in relation with young readers' intention to read literature:

“ [when I read]...I create my world, [...]...sometimes, I just want to be far from reality and forget what happened to me...”

[...]...in the world that book opens in front of you, you can be anyone, you can forget completely who you are and in what reality you live....”

Relaxation, as a motivation for reading, was mentioned mostly by Finnish participants. Interestingly, reading as a means of relaxation was only discussed in combination with the relaxing nature and holiday. Despite the fact that relaxation is a daily need for any individual and is not necessarily limited to a specific environment, young students could not associate reading at home with relaxation.

The functions we discussed above, show that students select voluntary reading for some purpose. In other words, they might engage in reading to improve language skills, entertain, learn something new or escape from reality. However, young students also mentioned that reading is a culturally valuable act and one with good literacy skills and rich general knowledge can secure the respected place in society.

4.1.2. Influences in reading habits

Generally acknowledged, a child is an object of influence of multiple sources from the first day of the birth. For young children imitation is a key method to discover and learn about the world. The basic skills and functions such as talking, eating and using objects are taught

through imitating the closest family members (Zmyj et al., 2010). These examples can be viewed as the first and basic influences on a child. Later, with the increase of the age, the influential factors are expanding dramatically, consequently not only behaviours, but also beliefs and values can be subjected to influences from friends, family, teachers, society, TV, media, books etc. As argued by Blake et al., the intensity of influence and aspect of life to be influenced varies from culture to culture and from individual to individual, yet none of the culture or individual is completely free from it (Blake, Corbit, Callaghan & Warneken, 2016). Participants from Finland proved the impact and influence of social media, family, close friends and teachers on their personal choice of a book.

Based on the data analysis, social media, particularly Facebook was ranked as the greatest influential tool of the book choice. This can be explained by the amount of time spent on social media. Reported by American Academy of Pediatrics, 22% of teenage students login to their social media more than ten times per day; 25% of cell phone owners use the phone more for social media, rather than its fundamental functions, such as texting and calling (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Considering that nowadays over 75% of students have their own smartphones, this means constant connection to social media and unimaginably huge influence from that source.

After social media, friends have been reported to be a powerful influence in general attitude towards reading as well as a book choice. Very few students mentioned their parents as a reader individual, who could serve as a model for a child to perform the behavior. Most of the students discussed parental influence in an advisory context, they admitted that their parents are usually giving them advice and/or commands to read certain books. The supervisory approach of parents was perceived as an obligation and practically changed the voluntary nature of reading for pleasure.

4.1.3. Social aspect of reading

Social aspect of reading is focused on readers' interaction with other people based on a certain book or general reading. The social aspect of learning and reading as well, can be best explained by the entire works by Vygotsky, who placed the social interaction as a milestone of child's cognitive development. According to Gambrell et al., reading has a social aspect which can hugely increase young students' motivation to engage in voluntary reading and also can become a very important auxiliary mechanism for students to improve reading skills (Gambrell, Mazzoni, & Almasi, 2000).

Participants of focus groups from Finland mentioned that they engage in conversation with their friends on daily bases; the mostly discussed topics among boys are sports and video games, while girls talk more about celebrities and fashion. Most of the participants could recall at least one case, when they engaged into conversation about the book or a movie with their friends. In this case girl participants reported to discuss the characters and environment, while boys had the tendency of discussing the plots in general. Finnish students claimed that they discuss home assignment texts more often, which they have to read for a certain subject matter; students justified that such discussions help them to understand text, clarify misunderstandings or difficult parts of it and memorize the content better. As participants discussed, such conversations are usually short and during the school

breaks, rarely after school hours or on social media. The structure of interaction is spontaneous dialogue and mostly unstructured.

The social interaction of peers about the books have several advantages, for example Fish (1980) believes, that social interaction between peers about the text is a perfect potential of knowledge creation, since individuals engaged in conversation are unconsciously interpreting the information and combining them with different pre knowledge they possess independently (Fish, 1980).

The social interaction about the book or reading in general is noticeably scarce within young students and family members. Most of the participants claimed that the interactions with parents about the book is not discussion, but rather receiving recommendations and instructions. In the rarest cases of discussion of a book, the dialogue is child-driven, where the parent becomes a passive listener. One participant from Finland explained this phenomenon assuming that parents read the same classical books long ago and the time distance probably makes it impossible to remember the details and emotions; similarly the discussion of contemporary books is also difficult, due to the insufficient content knowledge by the parents.

Within this context, several participants admitted that since occasionally the whole family watches TV together it is easier to discuss movies or certain TV programs. In that case knowledge, emotions and thoughts are fresh which guarantees the equal participation of everyone into conversation and gives it a flow. This declaration goes in line with the idea from Irwin, who claims that decrease in reading can be explained by the unsocial nature of silent reading. Silent reading poorly corresponds to the multitasking lifestyle that we all live. The end of stressful days needs to be spent with family members, carrying out an activity which allows verbal interaction not only afterwards, but also during the process, such as watching TV (Irwin, 2009).

4.1.4. Impediment factors

So far as we could observe, students demonstrated overly positive attitudes towards reading, they proved to be aware of socio-cultural and economical benefits of being literate. All participants, regardless nationality or hearing impairments inherited the value of reading as a cultural act. Nevertheless, as we see, actual behavioral performance is alarmly low, less and less students allocate their free time to reading literature. The next phase of focus group interviews students were given the broadly open question about what they think refrains them from voluntary reading.

The most frequently reported factors which impede students' engagement in voluntary reading were long school days and massive amounts of homework. This declaration from Finnish students was surprising, since the success of Finnish educational system abroad is often explained by shorter school days and minimal amount of homework assigned for students (Andere, 2015). Yet, all the Finnish participants claimed that they have exhausting long days at school and huge amounts of homework.

Generally, participants from both countries talked about extensive time commitment for the homework within a negative context. However, homework itself as a concept was viewed rather positively. Focus group participants had different opinions about what the homework

is needed for; Some of the Finnish participants, for example, claimed that homework have very short term benefits, they believed that homework are effective only ``here and now``. Others viewed homework as a useful tool for the teacher to evaluate students' performance and participation; they said, by presenting homework students simply demonstrate what they are aware and capable of. One participant expressed the idea that in his point of view, homework most likely is the tool to test and develop the sense of responsibility of the students rather than anything else.

Reading-unfriendly home environments were mentioned by students regardless of the country. Yet, Finnish participants referred to it less than Georgian peers. Under the reading-unfriendly environment students consider noise, helping younger siblings and/or parents, absence of own room, poor access to books, watching TV with the family etc. Finnish participants claimed that not having a book at home can be a significant drawback, when it comes to the spontaneously triggered interest through film or social media. Yet due to the access of online books, sufficient school libraries and culture of library visits in general, makes the book access less dramatic obstacle to voluntary reading for Finnish students. It should be mentioned that the effect of home environment is only partially understood by interview participants; under the reading unfriendly home environment students reported limited space for isolation and reading, helping parents or siblings, lack of books etc. Yet, beyond the students' knowledge, home environments have further influences on the attitude formation and actual reading habit. What they refer to, is captured within the frames of injunctive norms, e.i how a certain environment can support or oppose the implementation of a behavior in focus (Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin. 1997).. This explains only half of the reading friendly environment. The second half, though descriptive norms, focuses on parents as a reader model for their children (Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin. 1997). Parents' reading habit has neither been asked, nor spontaneously mentioned by any individual. However, another very important indicator of a friendly home environment, though parent-child interaction and communication about reading or literature, has been proved to be limited, superficial and irregular.

The focus group participants claimed that the active cell phones and computer games are not a direct barrier to reading, but they commonly cause reading interruptions, which on the other hand results in attention distraction and affects the reading negatively. The explanation of this cycle by Finnish student is given below:

“ [...]....sometimes I start reading a book, and my phone bounces every three minutes, I receive messages and notifications. Even if I do not answer the message I need to shift my attention from the book to a phone screen to see what I got... if I need to answer it takes more time and usually after answering the message I am out from the book content, I have to read the interrupted sentence or paragraph again .. and if it happens more than three times I lose interest and get distracted, I simply stop reading. . . . ”

Participants affirm that during the evening they receive messages and notifications approximately every 5-10 minutes. Such instance messaging among friends on social media or through phone was explained differently in both countries. In Finland, for instance as revealed by focus group interviews, students preferred to discuss certain issues distantly since messaging does not require immediate response and students keep the perceived control of what they say.

Despite the easiest solution of turning the cell phones off or putting them aside during voluntary reading, none of the participants reported doing that, because as one of the students said: "when you turn the cell phone off, you are disconnected to all". Finnish participants claimed to be practically incapable of disconnecting with digital devices, as they read more online, using the same device for reading and social media. The use of e-books have been mentioned only by Finnish participants, which can be explained by the generally more advanced technologized environment at schools or at homes.

Another reason to interrupt voluntary reading, particularly among boys, is the invitations to interactive computer games. If in some cases of instant messaging a student could resist answering and kept reading, the invitation for computer games is regularly responded positively. Every single participant admitted to stopping reading when a friend sends them a playing request.

4.1.5. Modalities of reading

By the end of focus group interviews, we discussed the alternative ways of voluntary reading, which could be considered proportionally as enriching and valuable as voluntary reading itself. Finnish students promptly nominated watching movies as an alternative to reading, yet not complete substitution. Despite the fact that students previously underlined the importance of imagination while reading, talking about movies they referred to advantages of visualization of the text. The evidence of this thinking is presented below, from the Finnish participant:

.... "Sometimes it is very difficult to read a book which was written centuries ago, or simply describes the events from such a far past.. Usually languages in this kind of book are different, also we do not know how life was. In films instead, a lot of professionals work to set the time-relevant environment, like clothes and buildings, this helps me to understand the story and enjoy it. Reading is nice, but sometimes it is enough if you know the facts and facts you know better by seeing them.. "

Several participants mentioned that reading a novel and watching a film are completely different activities and either of them can trigger an interest for another, i.e. reading an interesting book can lead some students in watching the film based on that novel or vice versa. Reading subtitles during watching was not considered as a reading activity by any Finnish participants. The explanation for this can be borrowed from the study conducted by d'Ydewalle et al., claiming that when people are familiar with subtitles from an early age, eye movement from visual image to text underneath will be effortless by the time they start reading them for purpose (d'YDEWALLE et al., 1991). On the other hand, most of the participants from Finland were native or fluent English language speakers, for whom subtitles are not needed, unless the rarest occasion, when they watch non-English films or programs.

4.2. Georgian context

4.2.1. Functions of reading

Similarly with Finnish students Georgian participants nominated learning as one of the most important functions of reading. However, unlike Finnish peers, who view reading as an opportunity to learn about themselves, Georgians showed a tendency of reading literature to learn about others' experience and perspectives.

Georgian participants focused their attention on the importance of learning about the past. Argued by Gotfredsen, argue that the past plays an important role in an individual's identity and vision formation (Gotfredsen, 2014). This is particularly applicable in Georgian context as an ancient country with powerful past and unfavorable present conditions. In such cases, past experience is often used as a basis to develop a certain vision to the future, and in the case of unsuccessful unification of past and future the nations develop nostalgic approaches to the idealized past. Gotfredsen differentiates two different kinds of nostalgies - restorative, focused on rebuilding the past and reflective - learn from past experiences and accept it as a past (Gotfredsen, 2014). Since this discourse was out of the context of the study, I did not explore particular reasons of Georgian students who are strongly willing to learn about the past. We can only hope that young students' interest in exploring the past experience through literature has reflective purposes.

Reading literature was nominated as a learning tool and preparation for higher education by Georgian participants. This phenomena can be explained by the nature of University entrance exams. Apart from faculty related subject matters, Georgian students have to pass the aptitude tests, which is the combination of syllogisms, logical exercises, critical review of a passage and questions of general knowledge (Lomaia, 2006). Despite the fact that there is no official and straightforward link between voluntary reading and preparation for entrance exams, it is generally acknowledged that students with broader general knowledge on national or international literature have an asset during the competition.

The Georgian participants mentioned voluntary reading in English language as the second best instrument for foreign language acquisition, only after moving to an English language country. In their view, reading in foreign language improves not only spoken language, but also the quality of other components of language such as reading comprehension, speaking, writing and listening.

Those ideas and beliefs generated by students should become the basis for designing and planning educational programs, particularly the ones aiming for verbal improvements in either native or foreign languages. Many resources and efforts are spent to improve the verbal skills of students. Programs include pre-selected materials, special exercises, homework and obligatory attendances. Giving students the possibility to read self-selected literature in a self-preferred environment and self-regulated time, I think might result in the same progress as targeted by curricula. The same might apply to foreign language acquisition, as proved with the study conducted by Mason and Krashen, S. (1997). The Japanese students of foreign languages were divided into two groups and offered different instructions in reading class. The first group followed the traditional classes, with homework, class exercises and mid-term exams, while another class was given a task to read 50 books in a semester and keep the diaries about their personal feelings, opinions and progress (in Japanese). Not surprisingly for the authors, the students for the second class outperformed

the ones from the first group not only in reading comprehension, but also in writing, speaking and listening (Mason & Krashen, 1997).

As discussed previously, literature in Georgian society constitutes the dominant culture. Being literate in that respect is seen not only as a personal benefit or capital, but as a responsibility of dignified adults. Such spirit was noticeably strong with Georgian participants, who particularly underlined the importance of knowing ``own roots``. Several students mentioned that not reading Georgian classical literature would be shameful and embarrassing if revealed. This approach came as no surprise to me; Georgia is a small nation with ancient, unproportionally rich and staggering literature, which needs to be recognized and respected by every Georgian.

In this regard, when talking about literature, Georgian society is explicitly teleological, meaning that Georgians unanimously have assumed a goal - to transmit the respect towards culture, in this case literature across the generations. As described by Smagorinsky (2001), within teleological society individuals adopt didactic and deliberate practices to teach and transmit an attitude towards a certain phenomenon. (Smagorinsky, 2001). This description perfectly applies to Georgian way of forming an attitude towards national literature among youngsters. In my personal opinion, the idealization of one's own culture is a common characteristic of a small nation, which lives under constant threat of ``disappearing``, ``assimilating with others`` or ``losing the identity``. Nevertheless, despite the students' shared respect and understanding of the value of classical literature, they did not show any particular interest or diligence to read them. This indifferent attitude can also be explained by the age of focus group participants.

Entertainment and relaxation was poorly associated with reading by Georgian participants. Only a few participants, particularly boys, find it exciting to read fantasy books, since ..*``translating the text to the mental images...(FG.03)``* is a great source of self-entertainment. Discussing classical literature as a means of entertainment revealed an interesting tendency in both countries: participants particularly in Georgia showed the strong position that classical literature should be read for learning or esthetic pleasure and entertainment might only be the lateral effect. Relaxation, as a motivation for reading, was mentioned mostly by Finnish participants. Only one participant from Georgia mooted to read every evening for the purpose to rest and relax.

4.2.2. Influences in reading habit

Students in Georgia, as well as elsewhere are subjected to multiple sources of influences, even without being aware of it. Due to the cultural peculiarities, lifestyle and communication model applied in Georgia, it was expected that Georgian students would confirm stronger influence. Probably due to the slightly negative connotation of the word ``influence`` in Georgian language, most of the participants denied it with respect with the amount of voluntary reading or book choice. Yet, they approved to accept the recommendations and advice from friends. While talking about the book choice, several students referred to the generally acknowledged age appropriate books, suggested by the bookstores or internet sources, while others counterpart and claimed, that age is no longer an absolute determinant for the book choice, a single friend's advice and recommendation might trigger the interest in another:

“ [...]...if a certain book is very popular among the students of my age, or my interest, it does not necessarily mean that I will be interested in it, but if my good friend suggests a book that he enjoyed, I might read, even if this book is completely unknown and unrecognized by others..”

This model of thinking goes in line with Urberg, who claimed that adults are more likely to be influenced by the close friends with whom they have stable relations, rather than a group of peers (Urberg, 1992).

Almost every participant of focus groups admitted to liking and following at least one facebook page related to books, such as *1000 books you must read before you die*, *famous quotes from books*, *the most read books of all times* etc. Mentioned by participants, the pages, which post quotes on cards and posters and receive likes and comments are easier to follow, rather than review based pages. Unsurprisingly, the number of likes and the amount of positive comments are more likely to have an impact on an individual's book choice. Several students claimed the positive effect of finding the comments from someone familiar or famous.

4.2.3. Social aspect of reading

Claimed by Oksman & Turtiainen, we are contemporary witnesses of developing the new culture of communication among people through mobile devices. (Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004). Despite its form - face-to-face or through screen, interaction with others is still the fundamental demand and function of human beings.

Literature has a great potential of being used as a topic of conversation among people. The information, ideas, facts, style, personal emotions, likes and dislikes, agreement and arguments that one can experience from reading, enables the reader to build the interaction from different perspectives. Same way, Mackenzie (1979) argues, that two or more individuals discussing the text already means two or more different perspectives, different meanings, understandings and conclusions, which can lead to new ideas, and constructive criticism. Besides, through discussion of texts young readers might understand the existence of various reading and metacognitive strategies (Mackenzie, 1979).

Georgian students claimed to rarely participate in discussions about the books with their friends. One participant raised the issue of insufficient school environment for long and deep discussions. He referred to short breaks between classes (*5 min, which is mostly used to move from one class to another for upcoming lessons*) and school policy not to allow students to stay within the school premises after the lessons. Another students on the other hand, discussed the inappropriateness of discussing the books for different reasons

“ [...]... It is difficult to find a friend who reads the same book at the same moment, but if some of my friends reads a book and wants to discuss it with me it might be a spoiler, it's enough to simply suggest if the book is good to read...”

Social interaction about the books with family members was revealed to be extremely limited, most of the students mentioned to receive technical support from adult family members, such as information about volume sequence (if such), general advice, defining unfamiliar concepts if such etc.

4.2.4. Impediment factors

Similar to their Finnish peers, Georgian students as well claim that several external factors impede them from voluntary reading.

'[...]...I want to [read], but there are so many reasons why I can not read...' - claimed one of the participants. Most factors which dramatically affect young students' engagement in voluntary reading are related to school life. The absence of free time due to extremely large amounts of homework was mentioned by practically all the participants.

The essence of homework has been the topic of contradictory discussion in many countries (Letterman, 2013). In Georgia, where the educational system is not completely free from the inheritance of soviet education, homework is still viewed as an instrument of fundamental importance to measure the knowledge. In the countries with more developed educational models, the homework has two general functions: firstly, it serves as a source of independent practice for students and secondly, it is a linking ring between school and home environment; homework enables parents to work with their children on the issues discussed in the school (Letterman, 2013). None of the listed functions are perceived to be important for Georgian students, they proved the strong belief that homework measures their knowledge and success in the academic year. The only problem according to participants is the lack of communication between teachers in respect to the amount of homework they assign to students individually, without considering other subjects and other external subjects:

'[...] for example history gives two pages of homework, which is not a lot, but so does mathematics and Georgian literature, English language and social studies,... and this happens every day, I spend up to four hours daily to do all the homework'

By external factors and limitation, I assume Georgian participants meant private tutoring, which is an informal supplement of Georgian schooling; almost all students take private tutoring classes at least for two or more school subjects. As defined by Butchman, Condrón and Roscigno the popularity and inevitability of private tutoring is the result of an ineffective schooling system, poor teaching methodologies and drawbacks in curriculum (Butchman, Condrón and Roscigno, 2012). Despite the massive educational reforms since 2004, Georgian school system still struggles to meet the EU criteria for quality education. Bregvadze (2012) identifies two major reasons why private tutoring is massively presented in Georgia. The first is the attempt to compensate for the poor quality of school education offered in Georgia and second, to receive the additional knowledge, which school fails to offer the young learners (Bregvadze, 2012). To these factors, I would add the function of private tutoring as an additional guarantee to obtain a place in higher educational institutions in Georgia. However, despite the good intentions, parents are unaware of the negative aspect of such load for their children. Such intense *''formal''* education and homework practically leaves Georgian students without any free time not only for voluntary reading, but for peer communication or any leisure activities.

Overall, despite the fact that the correlation between homework and students' success is not categorically clear, in my personal opinion homework is the core element of schooling and learning experience in general. When talking about the homework I think teachers

should keep the balance between time constraints and ability of a student not to create the tension in between (Burris & Snead, 2017).

Chaotic home atmosphere as an obstruction to voluntary reading was nominated mostly by Georgian participants. Noise, people, shared room and lack of books were discussed as the characteristics of chaotic home atmosphere. Chaotic home environments in Georgia can be described by two general factors. The first is economical, when the certain home environment is the direct result of families' poor economic background. Second factor is cultural, when several generations of the families live together, which is associated with regular foot traffic, noise, limited separate and calm space for school children and extra need for help in household issues. Despite the fact that these factors are completely different in nature and probably have effects of different magnitude, for the ethical issues I have not asked participants to describe specific details. Even though cultural explanations of chaotic home environments are more positive than economical ones, they have the same impending effect on young readers to engage in voluntary reading. Besides, as studied by various researchers, a chaotic home environment might have an indirect effect on young students reading performance through less attentive parents. Parents in a busy and crowded families are reporting to use minimal verbal or behavioural stimulations for their children to promote voluntary reading (Anna D. Johnson et al., 2008).

Naturally, we can assume that chaotic home environments, caused by families' low income and financial struggles, have a more devastating effect on young readers. Notwithstanding the fact that child labour is strictly prohibited in Georgia, this does not liberate them from the responsibility to substitute adults in the house works when they work late or night shifts. Besides, the poverty and its associated elements, such as low level of parental education, small number of accessible books, extremely rare library visits and absence of child-parent reading tradition affects not only poor experience of voluntary reading but also poor development of reading skills in general (Bracken & Fischel, 2008).

Access to the books was discussed within the context of home environment by Georgian participants, since book ownership was nominated as the most principal and easiest way to book access. Every school in Georgian has a functional library, however, none of the focus group participants except two, has ever visited the school library for any reasons. City libraries are not very popular among Georgian students as well, particularly in the small cities, where our focus group meetings were conducted. Several participants justified that borrowing time limits is an unpleasant experience when taking a book from the library. Unfortunately, the official statistics about the school or city library visits by young children do not exist to have the broader picture in this regard. Book borrowing however, is a common practice among friends.

The extensive use of digital devices, particularly mobile phones have been admitted, but not perceived as an impediment factor to voluntary reading by Georgian participants. The participants were practically divided into two groups, the ones who claimed to prefer using mobile phones rather than voluntary reading and others, who claim to engage in voluntary reading and being active on social media. Mostly female participants reported that they can continue reading a book and being actual respondents of messages. This declaration probably is based on falsely believed notions about multitasking, digital nativeness or "natural adaptation" of various cognitive tasks with the use of digital devices, including watching TV and listening to music. In their research on multitasking abilities, Bowman et al. refer numerous studies, which demonstrate that mental capabilities in terms of attention

is limited and what students think is multitasking, is actually fast attention shifts from one task to another, which undoubtedly negatively affects the quality of both activities. The same authors argue that not only actual message receiving can destroy the students' attention, but also high expectation for the messages to come as well (Bowman et al., 2010). Georgian participants claim that by instant messaging with friends they compensate for the limited communication in real time due to short breaks between classes and after school private lessons.

4.2.5. Modalities of reading

Before moving to another topic, the essence of reading modalities were explained to Georgian participants. Some students perceived reading modalities as a way to compensate for the physical restrictions of skills to perform the reading act. This discussion emerged from kinesthetic modality, referring to the Braille shift for blind students. However, further discussions clarified that all the students use various modalities of reading to receive certain information in different times.

After such clarification, Georgian participants were first to address the audio books as a way to occasionally replace reading a book. The very general and superficial perception of advantages of audio books by participants was that listening is easier than reading. While several students also mentioned other favorable features of audio books, such as environment variety in which audio books can be used. In his article *Reading audio books* Irwin discusses the several positive aspects of audio books. First of all he refers to the appropriateness of multiple environments for listening, such as driving, running, being in a dark room etc. Audio books can be listened to in parallel with other activities, such as cooking, knitting, cleaning etc. But what he considers one of the most significant advantages of listening to audiobooks over reading, is that fiction in audio books is usually performed; intonation, rhythm, pauses and other non verbal expressions help the listener to understand the text and probably enjoy it more (Irwin, 2009). Notwithstanding the declared attractiveness and easy accessibility to audio books, they are not popular with everyone. One reason for that as observed on focus group participants is a simply skeptic attitude. Besides, as revealed by Miller and Smith, the preference between silent or oral reading (which can be now paralleled with audio books) correlates with the competency level of the reading (Miller & Smith, 1989).

By Georgian participants watching subtitled movies was unanimously mentioned as a way to improve English language listening skills. Most of the students use subtitles as a follow up control of their listening comprehension. None of the students approved to watch a foreign movie or program completely based on subtitles. Despite the fact that Georgian participants proved to watch and discuss movies more than books, still in the discussion they undervalued movies in respect with literature; several students justified their preference for movies with the shorter time commitment, same basic content, visual representation and easy access

[of course].. it is easier to watch Jaqo's dispossessed (Georgian novel, first published in 1925- researcher's comment) than reading it. First of all the film lasts for two hours, the book you need to read for one month or more and at the end, watching or reading you know the same things. ...`

Only one participant claimed, the movies and literature might be complementary to each other, since books describe the thoughts, intentions and emotions that are impossible to show in movies, while films represent the visual aspects better.

4.3. Students with Hearing impairments

Numerous studies document the deaf students' poor performance in reading. Deafness, as limited access to hearing language explains the difficulty deaf students face while learning to read. Reading many articles about Deaf education or cognition, it is easy to conclude that deaf and hearing students are incomparable, particularly in respect with reading. However, the study conducted by Parault & Williams reveal that despite the difficulties, deaf students have higher motivation to read than their hearing peers. The authors also claimed that deaf students reach higher levels of satisfaction when mastering reading, consequently, unlike the hearing peers, challenges in reading show less correlation with decreasing reading motivation. Within the same study deaf students scored higher in reading for curiosity (Parault & Williams, 2009).

Neither the aim of this study was to compare hearing and deaf individuals, instead, my aim is to find out what is reading for students with hearing impairments. Due to some ethical considerations or appropriateness of the context, the focus group interview questions were modified. Practically, deaf individuals were given the time simply to discuss the topic, my personal intervention was minimal, with only transferring direction from one topic to another.

4.3.1. Functions of reading

Hearing people very often associate deafness with an individual's condition of hearing. In reality, being deaf among many other peculiarities, means being part of a different community, having different history, values and culture.

Voluntary reading was nominated as an important learning tool by the students with hearing impairments. They admitted that difficulties in comprehension significantly decreases their opportunities to learn from books. Undoubtedly, reading literature could serve deaf individuals to explore the world and extend their general knowledge about it. For deaf individuals the literature is a crucial source to develop intercultural competences. Even in relatively "monocultural" societies, such as Georgia, deaf individuals live in two cultures - culture of Deaf and hearing communities and very often this cultural coexistence happens on such a micro level as family. Statistically 90% of deaf children are born in hearing families (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). Born deaf, they automatically belong to Deaf community, sharing their culture, behavioural norms and values, while being a citizen, members of society and family they step in hearing culture. Deaf students emphasized the role of literature as an important mediator between the cultures; they believe that books can transfer the message about the lives of hearing people to them, as much as hearing people could learn about the Deaf through literature. As concluded by one of the participants, literature has the potential to serve as a window for deaf individuals to the hearing world.

While most of the students referred to the facts, history and culture to learn from literature, others also underlined the possibility of learning new concepts, words and expressions. It is important to mention that all groups mentioned language improvement as a function of voluntary reading. Under the language improvements, hearing students in both countries mostly considered the ability to produce impressive speech (verbal fluency), while students with hearing impairments were more focused on word recognition in different contexts or speeches produced by others.

None of the participants with hearing impairments claimed to relax or entertain by voluntary reading. This can be easily explained by the effort they put in reading. Several students mentioned enjoying looking at intensively pictured books such as encyclopedias, books about plants or animals, but they admitted to read only titles (names) and rarely content. In such cases voluntary reading requires help from teachers or from other students whose sign language is better.

Students with hearing impairments nominated mobile phones and the internet as the ultimate source of entertainment and relaxation. The development of technology and media is undoubtedly a progressive step in communication for everyone regardless of hearing impairment, but people with hearing loss benefited from the development of the short message service (SMS) and instant message (IM) most of all. As reported by Bakken, SMSes and IMs for deaf people created the stable opportunity to communicate more effectively with each other or with hearing people. Not surprisingly, deaf individuals use SMS and IM services approximately 10 times more often than hearing people (Bakken, 2005). Such intense messaging was viewed by focus group participants not only as a method of communication but also as entertainment.

4.3.2. Influences on deaf individuals' reading habit and social aspect of reading in their life

As in case of hearing children, the family is the first and major influence of deaf individuals. Yet, there are huge conceptual differences in the nature of impact and consequences for the child. First of all, right after the birth of a deaf child the parents need to take the decisions which might have the lifelong impact on children. Such decisions include but are not limited to choice of using assisting technology (hearing aids or implants), implying sign language or not, school (institution) choice, support child's early involvement to Deaf community etc (Brice & Strauss, 2016).

The influences are dramatically different not only between deaf and hearing children, but also within deaf children depending if they are born in hearing (~90%) or deaf (~10%) families. Children who are born in deaf families have early access to sign language, which is absolutely equivalent with the linguistic development of hearing children. On the other hand, in case of hearing-mother & deaf child, the communication is extremely limited, the first language acquisition is delayed and early parent-child reading tradition is completely omitted - emergent literacy is missing (Lederberg & Mobley, 1990).

When talking about the technical help from friends, focus group participants regularly referred to two individuals, later as explained by teachers, both of them were born in deaf families and their sign language proficiency was noticeably high. Discussing the advice

about books, recommendation or technical help in respect with reading, participants nominated solely teachers, guardians and friends. The same group of people were nominated in the context of the social aspect of reading, i.e. people with whom deaf students mostly discuss their readings. Peer interaction was the dominant way of communication compared to hearing participants either in Finland or in Georgia. This can be easily explained with the fact that the participants of the focus group are from boarding school, where they spend not only schooling hours with their classmates, but also share the loggings.

4.3.3. Impediment factors for deaf students to engage in voluntary reading

Except the students with hearing disabilities, none of the focus group participants in either country reported the lack of any skills as an impediment factor for reading in native language. On the other hand, literacy related problems are openly and intensively discussed within deaf community; young participants unanimously approved the lack of reading skills as a barrier to voluntary reading and expressed willingness to talk about it.

Every single participant with hearing impairments claimed that speed of reading, encountering unfamiliar words and complex grammatical structures are the biggest obstacles for them to read long texts. Besides, several students reported the challenge to distinguish and identify the correct meaning for graphically similar words (*for example for: bed, bad, band, bend etc..*). Participants recalled the story, when the whole class watched one Georgian movie, based on a famous novel. The movie impressed them deeply and their teacher decided to help them to read it. Despite the shared turns in reading and intense support from teachers, participants failed to read the novel to the end. Students explained that Georgian Sign Language is relatively new and noticeably poor to read linguistically rich texts. [KV3] The absence of sign for many concepts, as well as expression of synonyms with only one sign limits their understanding of natural language flow.

As discussed above, being aware of culturally valuable literature, national or worldwide, is a highly respected feature in the society. Deaf students expressed sadness that making them aware of nationally valuable literature stents solely on the teacher's shoulders (providing students with technical help such as simplifying text, explaining unknown words or simply telling the plot). Limited accessible materials and low literacy makes deaf students marginalized and puts them in an awkward position, which might be an undeliberate act, yet harmful reality. The solution for this gap must be inside and outside the school; along with propitious instructions, communication-based clubs and format available materials should be created for deaf individuals.

All these problems stated by participants are related to lack of phonological awareness and poor reading fluency. The National Reading Panel (2000) identifies reading fluency as a critically important skill for the child to engage into voluntary reading, which by its nature should be a pleasurable and effortless act. With the easiest definition, reading fluency is the combination of aspects, such as time (speed of reading), correct word reading and awareness of syntax. it serves as a fundament to comprehend recognized words, phrases and sentences and put them together coherently. Some researchers use the term fluency interchangeably with automaticity, as the latest also refers to using the skill with minimal effort and attention (The National Reading Panel, 2000).

One group of scientists consider deafness as a major cause of literacy problems of deaf children. While others view them as simply different learners and blame methodology and instruction for the poor performance of reading (Lang, H. G. 2010). The sizable number of researchers nowadays try to identify the recommendations to improve fluency of deaf readers. Some offer teachers to redesign instructional practices, others suggest that repeated and intensive reading can help deaf students to become fluent readers, since such deliberate practice of rapid reading proved to be effective intervention with hearing students (Luckner & Urbach, 2011).

4.3.3. Modalities of reading

Under the modalities of reading we explicitly discussed the TV and internet use among deaf students. Generally, the Internet and social media surfing was broadly discussed by focus group participants as a source of information and entertainment as well. Yet, in Georgia, videos, programs or movies are not perfectly suitable for deaf students due to the absence of Georgian language captions; only certain talk shows and programs streamed to national TV have simultaneous sign language translators. Such programs were unanimously mentioned as a replacement of voluntary reading.

Already as early as 1986, Koskinen et al. discussed the captions on TV as a new source of reading materials and they had high expectations of them to enhance reading and language proficiency of deaf students. Yet originally developed to provide information access for Deaf community through TV, captions or subtitles, argued by the authors, have potential to improve reading skills of anyone regardless of hearing impairment. The captions multisensory characteristics, combining visual, sound and text - helps students to connect the meaning of the word to the sound and image of the same concept (Koskinen et al., 1986). The potential of subtleties for deaf students are undoubtedly massive, yet not in full force in Georgia due to the extremely limited numbers of captions available. Besides, when designing the captions for a certain program, many factors need to be taken into account, such as age of viewer, the most realistic linguistic abilities of viewers, etc. The degree of subtitles editing and presentation rate need to be based on such information (characters or words per second, appeared at once, subtitle fixation rate, text and visual change synchronization etc..) (Szarkowska et al., 2016). Besides another important aspect of subtitles and their appropriateness to young deaf students is the languages involved: participants claimed, that for example, if the verbal text is in Georgian and so are the captions, this help students to integrate text and lip reading (when applicable); on the other hand, if the program is in another language and the captions in Georgian, students found it more difficult to follow the text.

Chapter 5. Descriptive analysis

Despite the centuries long history, the most recent progress of ICT caused rapid changes in reading attitude and particularly in reading habits. Increasing number of people claim to use the internet to get more precise information in a short time (Shahriza Abdul Karim & Hasan, 2007). Many people are concerned about the decreased reading engagement and consider the ICT as a main responsible for it; while some scientists assume that the development of ICT might only affect the approach or design of instruments (e-book, audio book), while reading as an act remains as crucial as before (Irwin, 2009). Furthermore good literacy skills become even more important in the 21st century, the era of multiple sources of information.

Voluntary reading is ultimately associated with reading enjoyment. In the literature it appears as reading for pleasure, recreational reading, self-selected reading etc. (Kucirkova et al., 2016). Overall, the purpose of voluntary reading is to satisfy one's own need or purpose. More specifically, students' perceived purposes for voluntary reading are discussed within the focus group interviews.

The survey used in this study focused on three general aspects of voluntary reading: enjoyment, perceived difficulty and social aspect. The social aspect of reading, for example, measures the extent to which the individuals' view reading as a social practice that is shared with family/friends as a topic of conversation, reflection or discussion. Similarly enjoyment and difficulties aim to measure the extent of an individual's own enjoyment and difficulties experienced while practicing reading. The level of these aspects, as well as combination of them can be seen as facilitators of an individual's actual reading engagement. These variables are reviewed among the sample groups based on countries (Finland and Georgia) and hearing impairments (see also table 2.1). The results of the survey can serve as auxiliary information regarding the group specific reading attitude and engagement in connection to the literature review and the focus group interviews. Deeper understanding of reading attitudes, intention and factors that refrain students from voluntary reading are best captured in focus group interviews.

	Enjoyment	Difficulty	Social Aspect
GEO-HI			
N	22	22	22
Mean	3.3227	3.1914	3.4667
Std. Deviation	.70549	.45858	.87254
FI-HI			
N	20	20	20
Mean	2.9333	2.2850	3.2000
Std. Deviation	.61748	.40946	.45422
GEO-NHI			
N	38	38	38
Mean	3.4123	2.5368	3.7053
Std. Deviation	.89353	.61002	.71997
FI-NHI			
N	31	31	31
Mean	3.0376	2.3032	3.3935
Std. Deviation	1.12522	.59075	.70329
TOTAL			
N	111	111	110
Mean	3.2036	2.5560	3.4800
Std.Deviation	.90203	.63379	.72248

Table 2.1. General descriptives for enjoyment, difficulty and social aspects of reading

5.1. Enjoyment

The enjoyment of reading was measured by 7 items from the survey. The Cronbach's alpha was checked for the items within the enjoyment and $\alpha = .86$, and the means for the four subgroups can be observed in Table 2.1. Comparison between places though one-way Anova did not show a significant difference in enjoyment between the groups ($F(107)=1,79$, $p=.153$).

For individual questions, besides the mean, median and mode can also be observed. All of them reveal different kinds of averages; mean represents the average value, while median and mode shows the middle value of ordered numbers and the values which appeared most often respectively

	FI-NHI	FI-HI	GEO-NHI	GEO-HI	Total
<i>I spend a lot of my free time in reading</i>					
1	10	3	8	6	27
2	7	12	14	9	42
3	7	4	7	3	21
4	6	0	7	2	15
5	1	1	2	1	5
<i>Total</i>	31	20	38	21	110

Table 2.2 I spend a lot of my free time in reading -Place crosstabulation

Among the individual questions, the question ``I spend a lot of my free time in reading`` stood out because of its low mean, median and mode. This finding highlights an interesting issue: despite the fact that the question strongly related to reading enjoyment, this question measures engagement in reading rather than enjoyment; when viewed from that perspective, the low means indicate an overall tendency of lower engagement of students in voluntary reading compared to their enjoyment. Cross tabulation of the answers to the question *I spend a lot of my free time in reading* and place, shows that students do not read much in general, 69 answers out of 110 (63%) were disagreement for the statement; yet, slightly students with hearing impairments read less than hearing ones (see also table 2.2 Place crosstabulation). A similar pattern was observed for the related question ``when I am at home I read a lot`` that was also answered negatively by more than half of the participants; 57 students (51%) disagreed on this statement. These figures are in line with the findings from focus group interviews with respect with to low involvement in actual reading.

The frequency analysis of separate questions with respect to places disclosed another interesting pattern in relation to the two questions about watching movies (*I enjoy watching movies/series with subtitles* and *I enjoy learning new things from movies/series*). Georgian students regardless of hearing impairments showed less positive attitude towards watching movies with subtitles and learning new things from movies compared to their Finnish peers. More specifically within the groups, more Georgian students without hearing impairments agreed to enjoy learning new things from movies, while more deaf students disagreed to that statement. Finnish students with hearing impairments were noticeable more positive towards subtitles and none of the students disagreed on enjoyment of learning new things from movies.

5.2. Social aspects of reading

Similarly to enjoyment, the reliability for social aspect of reading was checked ($\alpha=.65$; means in Table 2.1). Oneway Anova was run to compare the places in respect with the social aspect of reading and no significant difference was observed ($F(106)=2,48, p=.07$).

The frequency descriptives for the individual questions disclosed interesting findings, which are in line with the opinions expressed by students during the focus group interviews. The set of two questions were selected to identify whether the students are communicating more about books or movies (questions: *I like to talk about the books I read with my family/friends* and *I like to talk about the movies/series I watch with my family/friends*). The findings suggest that movies are more popular as a topic of conversation regardless of the place and hearing impairments (see table. 2.3).

	I like to talk about the books I read with my family/friend	I like to talk about the movies/series I watch with my family/friend
GEO-HI		
N	21	21
MEAN	3,10	3,48
MEDIAN	3,00	3,48
MODE	2	4
Std. Deviation	1,338	1,030
FI-HI		
N	20	20
MEAN	2,45	3,90
MEDIAN	2,00	4,00
MODE	2	4
Std. Deviation	.826	.718
GEO-NHI		
N	38	38
MEAN	3,63	4,13
MEDIAN	4,00	4,50
MODE	4	5
Std. Deviation		
FI-NHI		
N	31	31
MEAN	2,61	4,13
MEDIAN	3,00	4,00
MODE	3	4
Std. Deviation	1,145	.922

Table 2.3 Frequencies of social aspect of reading across the places

More specifically within the groups, frequency descriptives show that Georgian students with hearing impairments express little difference for conversation preference between books and movies, yet they are likely to ask more questions rather than talk. On the other hand, Finnish students with hearing difficulties show little difference between talking or asking questions, but the difference between books and movies as a means of conversation is large in favour of movies (*I like to talk about the books I read with my family/friends* ($M=2,45$), *I like to talk about the movies/ series I watch with my family/friends* ($M=3,90$), *I like to ask questions about the books with my family/ friends* ($M=2,55$) and *I like to ask questions about the movies/ series with my family/ friends*). Georgian students without hearing impairments show preferences to talk about movies over books and asking questions. Finnish students with no hearing difficulties also proved to prefer talking about movies than books and are noticeably less likely to ask questions (*I like to talk about the books I read with my family/friends* ($M=4,13$), *I like to ask questions about the movies/ series with my family/ friends* ($M=3,68$)).

5.3. Difficulty

The reliability for the difficulty was checked for all the items (10) and $\alpha=.67$. Anova showed a significant difference between the groups ($F(106)=13,83, p< .001$; see table 2.4.) that can be solely attributed to Georgian students with hearing impairments having more difficulty in reading than others. This also shows in the individual questions, for example, the mode for the question “I try very hard but I cannot read very well” is strongly disagree for all the students, except the hearing impaired ones from Georgia (mode for Geo-HI is 4; agree). Besides, Georgia students regardless the hearing impairments proved to watch less movies with subtitles than their Finnish peers. Georgian students did not express difficulty in subtitle reading, yet proved that they almost never watch movies with subtitles. This can be explained by the fact, that in Georgia, programs and films on TV are dubbed, subtitles in Georgian language are extremely rare, the internet offers English language captions which is a foreign language for every Georgian participants, consequently, the speed of subtitle reading Georgian students’ experience of watching subtitled movies was expected to be low.

		Sum of squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Difficulty	Between Groups	12,346	3	4,115	13,830	,000
	Within Groups	31,840	107	,298		
	Total	44,186	110			

Figure. 2.4 Anova - Difficulty

To sum up with descriptive analysis of quantitative part of the study, we can clearly see, that most of the findings are in line with the opinions expressed during the focus group interviews. Georgian students (with and without hearing difficulties) express higher enjoyment in reading and in its social aspect, though these differences were not statistically significant. Actual reading is related to enjoyment, but found to be considerably lower than enjoyment. Movies are more popular as a means of communication compared to books among all groups and Georgian deaf students experience more difficulty in reading than any other groups.

It is important to note that the independent use of this particular survey would probably not have revealed these findings in the absence of the interviews. The reliability of .86 for enjoyment for instance would probably not have solicited looking closer at individual questions in the absence of information from the interviews. Yet, in combination with the interviews this provided additional and supportive information to affirm the students’ voices from the interviews.

Chapter 6. Summary and concluding remarks.

Discussing a child's reading ability and interest, Conlon et al. (2006) first of all refer to phonological and orthographic processing of the information. However, these factors alone cannot completely explain the variance in reading performance and interest. Sizable body of research is dedicated to investigating factors affecting reading comprehension among students, focusing on a wide range of variables ranging from genetics to environment.

Similarly, the reading domain of deaf students is extensively studied, yet as stated by Paul, the affective domain of reading, i.e. motivation and interest among deaf individuals is practically ignored (Paul, 2003). The relatively poor reading engagement of hearing impaired students has been explained mostly by general implications of deafness on developing reading proficiency (Watson, 1999). Particularly, affected areas of reading such as poor word recognition and fluency have been considered as a determinants of low reading enjoyment. In case of the Georgian sample, lexical scarcity of Georgian sign language, which is in the process of developing, could also be viewed as one of the factors of low reading enjoyment and engagement among deaf students (Makharoblidze, 2016).

The purpose of the study was to go beyond these more “technical” explanations and to identify students’ attitudes towards voluntary reading and find out what external factors they consider to affect their reading interest, intention, engagement or avoidance. Despite the fact that the study included conceptually different groups, the study did not aim to compare those groups and claim the superior position of either one. In fact, the whole process with the interviews and the questionnaire revealed more similarities between those groups and cultures than would have been expected based on the literature.

When analysing literature about reading engagement, gender is usually among the most significant predictors of reading habit - how much and how often do students read. Gender issue in literacy and comprehension is broadly discussed within the contexts of PISA, PIRLS, PIAAC (*Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies*) and other international or national testings (for example see: Solheim & Lundetræ, 2016). Demographics, including gender, are discussed in the theory of integrated models as an important source of attitude formation. Girls usually report to read more, as well as having a more positive attitude towards reading. However, within the focus group interviews for this study, reading was not viewed as a gender specific activity by any group of participants; moreover, students could not fully comprehend the question whether reading was more male or female activity for them. In every focus group interview, students unintentionally direct this question towards the discussion about the genres, among which some were believed to be more male or female appropriate than others. The descriptive analysis of survey on reading attitude did not show significant difference among gender as well. This reasoning goes in line with the findings by Shahriza Abdul Karim & Hasan (2007). Authors claim that despite the previously established opinion, they did not find any correlation between the gender and time spent on reading; gender has an effect on certain types of reading materials, males showed the preference of reading newspapers, magazines and web pages compared to girls. The same research indicates no gender difference in reading attitude (Shahriza Abdul Karim & Hasan, 2007).

Before each focus group, participants were explained the difference between voluntary and compulsory reading. Most of them, including as young students as 6 graders, not only understood the distinction between these two types of reading, but already had formed different attitudes, which they could clearly explain. Elder students could also differentiate the divergent reading strategies they apply to voluntary and compulsory readings. Most of the students, including ones with hearing impairments, claimed a positive attitude towards voluntary reading. Recreational reading is strongly believed to be beneficial, interesting and enriching. On the other hand, reading as a class assignment was viewed as tiring, obligatory, stressful and sometimes not interesting. One of the most compelling explanations, offered by a focus group participant, on how voluntary and compulsory readings differ from each other is presented below:

``...[somehow] when one reads for his own pleasure it is so effortless, one can imagine characters, voice, smell; one can forget everything and be absorbed by the story. On the other hand, school reading is all about memorizing, not imagining but being precise and not absorbed, but remaining critically awake not to miss details... ``

This tendency of idealizing voluntary reading and demonizing the compulsory one can be explained by two major factors: firstly the voluntary activity of any kind, including reading, is a personal choice and responds to a child's natural and individual interest. For example, Krashen, one of the most eminent advocates for voluntary reading, claims that the self selected materials to read, personal decision of continuing or abandoning a certain book and controlling time dedicated to it makes the voluntary reading more attractive for young readers (Krashen 2004). His ideas are strongly related to the notion of perceived control, which means an individual's belief of being capable of controlling his own feelings, behaviours or states (Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin. 1997). The second factor is the inevitable nature of compulsory reading and extended time spent on it. For example, the study conducted by Mokhtari, Reichard and Gardner showed that students favored voluntary reading over TV and internet use, while reading for assignments was listed at the very bottom of their favorite activities. In contrast, compulsory reading consumed most of their time, while reading for pleasure consumed the least (Mokhtari, Reichard & Gardner, 2009).

Students regardless of the country and hearing impairments expressed a positive attitude towards reading. With the easiest words, we can interpret students' general beliefs about reading as the best way to deepen knowledge and enrich experience. In respect with the theoretical framework, this claim relates to one aspect of attitude. Students view reading as a valuable and favorable activity, resulted in exalted emotional state and self satisfaction, which is the characteristics of experiential attitude.

Another aspect of attitude, instrumental attitude, is formed based on individuals' perceptions about the outcomes of the behavior in question. Focus group participants discussed the positive outcomes of voluntary reading in a various context, starting from enriched imagination to society's increased sympathy towards them as good readers. Participants in both countries linked the positive outcomes of reading with their future plans. For Georgian students high literacy skills and acquiring general knowledge is an additional asset during the heated competition for a place in tertiary institutions. While Finnish students discussed positive outcomes of reading in a broader context of perspective for lifelong learning, career planning, fast adaptation to the constantly changing world and personal satisfaction. Deaf participants however, expressed no connection between reading and their future plans. This can be explained by the fact that unfortunately, for several decades none of the deaf students continued in higher education in Georgia (Tsuladze, 2015). Recent changes in vocational education offer various opportunities for them, yet, voluntary reading was not associated neither with success during admission, nor with further studies.

Voluntary reading was unanimously nominated as a perfect tool for learning about the world around us; students were particularly aware of reading being an effective instrument for language learning/ acquisition. This finding went in line with the view supported by Kim and Krashen, who confirmed the high correlation between the extensive reading practice and good writing style, sufficient vocabulary and general language proficiency (Kim & Krashen, 1997). The understanding of reading as a core instrument to gain knowledge is neither new, nor surprising in the context of educational institutions (Shahriza Abdul Karim & Hasan,

2007). Yet the view on voluntary reading as a learning opportunity is getting more attention during recent years. For example, as reported by Bautista & Marulanda using self selected literature in extensive reading programs increases students' motivation and enjoyment in reading. Besides, voluntary reading opens more attractive learning opportunities for students as it combines multiple layers of information, starting from syntax and lexicology (students encounter words in different contexts that expands their language learning) to general environment or cultural peculiarities in focus of a certain book (Bautista & Marulanda, 2018). Students' natural reasoning about reading as a tool of learning is in full compliance with numerous scientific literature. For example, Cunningham and Stanovich argue that voluntary reading has a long list of cognitive consequences and noticeable impact on individuals' general knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Besides, as widely acknowledged, learning occurs daily in various environments while using various materials as a source of learning; in this context voluntary reading can be viewed as a form of informal learning based on metacognitive and self regulated learning skills.

In both countries, yet more in Georgia, reading national literature was viewed as a debt of the new generation to the old one to be paid as a means of respect and gratitude. Showing low interest in national classical literature was judged negatively in both cultures. The parents' inclination to represent national literature as exclusively valuable and provide their children with ownership of such books can be explained by Foucauldian understanding of cultural capital (Sullivan, 2001). Since literature in Georgia constitutes the dominant culture and it is easily accessible to all social classes, it is viewed as a basic form of cultural capital affordable for all. Despite the fact that the spread of those idealized views of local literature might seem pressing, none of the students brought any arguments against it, moreover, they all claimed to feel proud about rich literature traditions and expressed intention to read most of them in undefined future.

The results from survey descriptive analysis revealed an interesting aspect of reading attitude and engagement, which was not fully captured by the focus group interviews. First of all, in contrast with students' ultimately positive attitude towards reading expressed during the focus group interviews, reading enjoyment did not gain significantly high value; reading was not seen as a source of enjoyment for students regardless the place and hearing abilities. Despite the fact that Georgian participants ranked higher in reading enjoyment, the difference between them and their Finnish peers was extremely minimal.

However, as revealed from the interviews, the rate of actual reading is not as high as an intention to read; an utterly positive attitude towards voluntary reading unfortunately is not proportional to actual reading engagement. Despite the loudly expressed positive attitude and perceived outcomes, most of the students admitted to procrastinate voluntary reading for the future. This finding is in compliance with the results of descriptive statistics. The positive attitude was not consistent with the results of reading engagement. Most of the participants regardless of the place and hearing abilities proved not to spend their free time in reading.

One intriguing contrast between the findings in the interviews and the questionnaires relates to the relation between reading and watching movies/series. In the interviews students indicated that watching a movie could substitute reading as it fulfills the same role for learning new things. The results from the questionnaire add another perspective to this overall view and suggest that while this may generally be the case, watching is perceived as a more social activity than reading.

This transaction phase from intention to actual performance can be affected by several factors as suggested by the applied theoretical framework. Exactly the existence of such factors distinguishes the theory of integrated models from its two precursor models - theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behaviour. Discussed by Fishbein and Ajzen, among other factors, the knowledge and environment are playing a crucial role in the path from intention to actual reading performance. It should be mentioned that the impediment factors are viewed and perceived differently by parents, teachers and students themselves.

Among the most common impediment factors students in both countries nominated the long school days, amount of homework, additional private classes, internet or digital devices and reading-unfriendly home environment. Within this context it should be mentioned that none of the students discussed homework and compulsory reading as unnecessary or exclusively negative concepts; but they did discuss the amount of compulsory reading and time spent on it as a biggest source of anxiety, tiresome and stress. They preferred to have more free time, which would allow them to engage in sport, hobbies or self-regulated learning based on their own interest. The long school days and limits in free time were nominated as the major impediment factors for voluntary reading by US college students; the study revealed that most of the students enrolled in any academic institution, postponed the engagement in voluntary reading for the vacations (Shahriza Abdul Karim & Hasan, 2007).

Nominating internet and digital devices as an impediment factors for voluntary reading, are in compliance with other researchers, who claim the students' decreased engagement in voluntary reading, particularly, those of "digital natives". There is a consistent tendency in the literature to blame the exposure of technologies for the decreased reading practices among young students (Subashini & Balakrishnam, 2013). Besides, Gilbert and Fister (2011) think, this tendency is logical and can be explained by the multichannel stimulations of young students' attention (Gilbert & Fister, 2011).

It should be mentioned that the effect of home environment is only partially understood by interview participants; under the reading-unfriendly home environment students reported limited space for isolation and reading, helping parents or siblings, lack of books etc. Yet, beyond the students' knowledge, home environments have further influences on the attitude formation and actual reading habit. What they refer to, is captured within the frames of injunctive norms, e.i how a certain environment can support or oppose the implementation of a behavior in focus (Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin, 1997). The second half, though descriptive norms, focuses on parents as a reader model for their children (Montano, Kasprzyk & Taplin, 1997). Parents' reading habit has neither been discussed, nor spontaneously mentioned by interview participants except one girl. However, another important indicator of a reading-friendly home environment, through parent-child interaction and communication about reading and literature, has been proved to be limited, superficial and irregular. Descriptive statistics in respect to the social aspect of reading also showed the low score value, besides across the sample, communicating about the movies proved to be more popular than about the books. This findings relates to ideas from Irwin, claiming that reading books is no more a social act.

The difficulty in reading has not been widely discussed by the participants except the ones with hearing impairments. During the focus group interviews however, none of the hearing participants in either country referred to the poor reading skills as the impediment factors of

voluntary reading. This might be explained by two major assumptions, first it can be the age of participants, who still view reading as a technical decoding skill; and second, as high literacy skills are considered to be highly valuable, participants revealed the information which they believe to be socially acceptable and unjudgeable. However, neither the descriptives analysis revealed difficulty as a significantly powerful factor for reading impediment. The highest value was shown by Georgian deaf participants, followed by Finnish students with hearing difficulties.

Having a look at the literature on students' poor engagement in voluntary reading we can see that families often accuse schools for the child's low interest and engagement in voluntary reading. Insufficient instructions, incorrect motivational directions and poor promotive classes are among the most commonly discussed missing pillars. Schools, on the other hand, blame global external factors such as computerization, unlimited access to the internet etc. Irwin, for example reports, that ``people read less today, partly because reading silently is not social activity`` (Irwin, 2009, p.358). Others, claim, the development of electronic media is proportional to decline of extensive reading. The possibility of skimming and browsing the internet to search for the desired information is believed to have undesirable effects on deep, sustainable and prolonged reading (Shahriza Abdul Karim & Hasan, 2007).

Society has long realized the ultimate goal of education, in the easiest manifestation it is to prepare the individual for life, where social interaction is presented as a major part. Yet the importance of peer interaction and free discussions are not emphasized or supported by schools; usually this aspect of students' life is viewed as extracurricular and voluntary activity, and it is transferred somewhere else outside the school premises.

Argued by Maloch, the communication about literature within the school premises in major cases is still led by the teacher. This interaction pattern, that starts with teachers giving directions and clarifications followed by students' responses and teachers' evaluation is aimed to increase the understanding of literature and its technical characteristics (Maloch, 2002). Students are not welcome to discuss the emotional impact, critical point or personal opinions about literature. Adult-led discussion models seem to be applicable in home context as well. Based on focus group interviews and informal discussion about the social aspect of reading, students proved that parents and teachers' attitudes are alike, giving directions, instructions and adjusting the focus of discussion about the literature. In such an instructional model we can clearly see the students as passive participants; unfortunately, teacher guided discussions on literature, extremely limits inter-students communication. However, in recent years the popularity and effectiveness of student- led discussion groups attracted the attention of educators. More and more teachers design their literature classes based on a scaffolding approach, where students are given the possibility to design and guide discussion among themselves (Maloch, 2002).

The model of social interaction about the cultural artifact, such as texts, must develop at school through various projects or activities. Otherwise, I think that the tendency of test-oriented education would limit the peer interaction on ``what did you learn`` context which will gradually eliminate ``what do you think`` discussions and the knowledge creation process. Similar concern is expressed by Hmelo-Silver, Duncan and Chinn (2007), when they state that focus on achievement tests steals all the possibility for students to engage in self-directed learning and collaboration-communication processes, which are more important aspects of lifelong learning (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan & Chinn, 2007).

Providing diversity of materials, reading modalities and methods could be an important step to support students' engagement in voluntary reading. Various reading and interaction promoting programs can be designed by teachers with the minimal self involvement, giving students the whole stage to design, discuss and conclude the dialogues and discussion. For example, reading modalities, particularly, such as e-books, TV and internet is usually discussed negatively by parents and teachers. In reality the tool which has the possibility to present multiple forms of coded information simultaneously, such as print, sound and visual, can become a successful educational tool, particularly through TV or Internet as a popular medium.

For example, in his article *Reading an audiobook*, Irwin (2009) claims that in the past, the Western literature was mostly read out loud; first it has the form of performance, but later, even after the invention of printed books, the book reading was mostly group activity. The reader used to read certain passage, which was followed by discussion and debates. Irwin believes that the audio books can be successfully used as an occasional substitute of book reading to promote discussion within the class. Listening to an audio book, with all the dramatic expressions can trigger an interest, which can later successfully be switched on reading or vice versa (Irwin, 2009). Similarly, for the students who need visual representation of the text, or simply for presenting a variety of materials, the comic books, provide a context-rich story environment. Comic books can present a wide range of genres and satisfies audience of different ages. Discussed by Smetana et al., comic books can be particularly interesting for generations, which grow up with TV and computer games and which are used to get information which combines the visual and textual elements. Besides, comics help young readers to stimulate their metacognition and even without special reference can explore about important social issues, such as terrorism, human trafficking, discrimination, stereotyping etc. (Smetana et al., 2009).

Unfortunately, responsibility to engage in voluntary reading stands solely on students' shoulders; teachers and parents involvement and support is limited and going in the wrong direction. By parents, teachers and organizers of reading promoting programs voluntary reading is mistakenly perceived as an endangered activity, which needs to be saved. However, having a close look at young students' beliefs, perceived functions, interests and attitudes towards voluntary reading, we can clearly see, that reading for pleasure is still considered as one of the most valuable and interesting acts. That students nominate school as a major impediment factor for voluntary reading sounds illogical, and is alarming. If we believe that recreational reading is a very important aspect of education in the broader sense, then, instead of pointing out factors that impediment voluntary reading, it would be more beneficial if school, parents and students take shared responsibility for creating the conditions in which their shared appreciation of reading translates into engagement in reading that matches this appreciation.

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Appendices.

Appendix 1. Survey on students' attitude towards voluntary reading

(modification of Adult Survey of Reading Attitude (ASRA) by Smith, 1991)

1. Place

◆ Turku International School ◆ Hannunniittu Koulu ◆ Other

2. Gender *

◆ Female ◆ Male

3. Grade *

◆6 ◆7 ◆8 ◆9

4. Reading is one of my favourite activities.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

5. I read when I have the time.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

6. I get a lot of enjoyment from reading.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

7. I spend a lot of my free time reading.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

8. When I am at home I read a lot.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

9. I want to have more books of my own.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

10. I enjoy watching movies/ series with subtitles.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

11. I read subtitles very easily.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

12. I enjoy learning new things through reading.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

13. I enjoy learning new things from movies/ series.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

14. I quickly forget what I have read even if I have just read it.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

15. I try very hard, but I just can't read very well.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

16. I get upset when I think about having to read.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

17. Encountering unfamiliar words is the hardest part of reading.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

18. When I read I usually get tired and sleepy.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

19. I often feel anxious when I have a lot of reading to do.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

20. I need a lot of help in reading.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

21. I can not read subtitles very fast.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

22. I hardly ever watch movies/series with subtitles.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

23. I like to talk about the books I read with my friends/ family.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

24. I like to talk about the movies I watched with my friends/ family.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

25. I get interested in a book/movie through my friends.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

26. I like to ask questions about the book my friends/family read.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

27. I like to ask questions about the movies/series my friends/family watched.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

28. I feel comfortable if I get technical help in reading.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

29. I do not know if my friends enjoy reading.

strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)

Appendix 2. Student consent form

Survey Participation Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Zhuzhuna Gviniashvili, an MA student of Education and Learning at the University of Turku.

The purpose of the study is to find out more about students' general thoughts and feelings towards reading and how often they engage in free time activities that require reading, for example, reading for pleasure, watching subtitled movies etc. The study will focus on students from grades 6 to 9.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the process of filling in the survey.

The survey is completely anonymous and therefore you can not be identified individually based on the information collected through the survey. The research report will only present the combined information of the students.

The filled surveys are only accessible to the researcher and her supervisor.

You can also choose to fill in either electronic or hard copy versions of the survey.

The finalization of the report is targeted for June 2020, and everyone can have access to the report upon request.

If you have questions or remarks you can contact me (zhgvn@utu.fi) or my supervisor Koen Veermans (koevee@utu.fi)

Appendix 3. Parents consent form (used only in Finland, through Wilma app).

Dear parents

A student from the University of Turku, the faculty of education is conducting research about students' attitudes towards free time reading. For the purpose of the study, she is collecting the data through questionnaires from 6th grade students from different schools in Turku. For that purpose she is coming to our class on Thursday, March 12, the questionnaire will be filled electronically and will take 5-10 minutes. It is completely anonymous and taking part in that is voluntary. Please inform us if you do not want your child to take part in it. Thank you for collaboration.

You can see the attached questionnaire to have a clear understanding of the study nature, but please do not discuss it with your children before data collection.

Heivanhemmat !

Opiskelija Turun Yliopiston kasvatustieteen laitokselta tekee tutkimusta opiskelijoiden asenteesta lukemista kohtaan vapaa-ajalla. Tutkimusta varten hän kerää

aineistoa kyselylomakkeella turkulaisilta kuudennen vuosikurssin oppilailta. Tämän vuoksi hän on tulossa luokkaamme torstaina maaliskuun 12 päivä. Kyselylomake täytetään netissä ja sen tekeminen kestää 5-10 minuuttia. Se tehdään nimettömästi ja siihen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Pyydämme ilmoittamaan jos ette halua lapsenne osallistuvan ja kiitämme yhteistyöstä.

Kyselylomake on liitteenä mikäli haluatte tutustua siihen paremmin, mutta toivomme että ette keskustelisi siitä lapsenne kanssa etukäteen.

Appendix 4. Focus group interview questions

Questions for focus group interviews.

1. General feelings about performing the behaviour (experiential attitude or affect).
 - What do you think is the purpose of voluntary reading?
 - What do you think the extended voluntary reading results in? /outcome/
 - How do you view voluntary reading?
 - What is your general attitude towards reading?
 - How do you feel when you think about reading?
 - How often do you read?
2. Influences from individuals, close network or society (perceived norms),
 - Who influences your choice of a book?
 - How often do your family members or friends read?
 - How often do you discuss the books or literature with your friends/family?
 - What reading modalities do you perform (for example: audio books, movies, drama, etc).
- 3 situational or environmental restrictions affecting the behaviour performance (skills, knowledge, resources, other factors).
 - How often do you have an intention to read?
 - How often do you actually read?
 - What external factors impede you from reading?