

# **Developing a Services Marketing Plan for Finnish Language Courses**

## **Case Study: Laajasalon Opisto**

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## Abstract

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<p><b>Title of report</b> Developing a Services Marketing Plan for Finnish Language Courses Case Study: Laajasalon Opisto</p>	<p><b>Number of report pages and appendixes pages</b> 83+ 55</p>
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<p>This study investigates how Laajasalon Opisto can improve its Finnish language courses offered to immigrants by using services marketing concepts. The main research output is to create an implementable services marketing plan.</p> <p>The conceptual framework was based on theories on migration and services marketing. It was designed to illustrate how relevant concepts were to be used to bridge the gap between the immigrant customers' expectations and perception of Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses.</p> <p>The thesis used an exploratory single case study as its research design. The data used and analyzed were qualitative primary data collected during the fall of 2013.</p> <p>Data analysis revealed that there is very little gap between customer expectations and perceptions. Laajasalon Opisto met the general expectations of its immigrant consumers. Its consumers were satisfied with the teachers and the pedagogical methods used. To improve its services, the school is recommended to concentrate on its communication plan. It must also organize events, trips and projects that would enhance the immigrant students' integration into Finnish life.</p> <p>The final services marketing plan submitted raised all of these points as well as practical suggestions addressing the courses' weaknesses. All in all, the study's objectives were met. The commissioning party responded positively to this report.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b> services marketing, immigration, integration, education, liberal adult education, Finnish language courses, Laajasalon Opisto</p>	

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Immigrant language learning and integration in Finland have been studied many times. A quick Internet search on thesis topics related to this subject shows that it is particularly popular in the fields of linguistic studies, sociology, education, social psychology and political science. However, there have been limited attempts to study immigrant language learning and integration from a marketing perspective.

As a business student, I believe that this should not be the case. In particular, institutions offering Finnish language courses must make the effort to understand the needs and expectations of their immigrant consumers. Finnish language schools must be equipped to respond to changes in supply and demand. They need to gain enough satisfied customers, maintain relevance and, subsequently, retain funding from the state or alternatively charge high premiums for their services.

According to Statistics Finland, 31,940 persons immigrated to Finland from foreign countries during 2013. The number is 660 higher than in the previous year and the highest since Finland's independence (Statistics Finland 2014a.). Except for those who moved to Finland for work and studies, new immigrants are eligible to labor market subsidies or integration assistance.

The Finnish Integration Act (3/1999) defines integration assistance as the right of a legally registered unemployed immigrant to receive financial and institutional support to increase his/her chances for meaningful employment. In practice, this means that the immigrant must follow an action plan, which involves a commitment to learn either Finnish or Swedish intensively.

Several media outlets have reported that Finnish language courses have been in high demand in recent years. While it is true that immigrants can also study Swedish, Finnish remains the most popular choice. Most likely this is because Finnish language learners can receive state allowance. There are usually not enough Swedish language course hours to enable the employment office to grant unemployment

benefits (Camara and Syakango 2011, 28). Finnish is also the more practical choice. YLE (2014a) reports that foreign and Sami language speakers have already outnumbered the Swedish speakers in Finland.

Most municipalities and local employment offices have been unable to provide enough Finnish courses. To solve this, the national government has tapped liberal adult institutions to step up. Anderzen (2012, 1) writes that adult education institutions play key roles where the education of immigrants is concerned. They have the capacity, resources and funding to offer supplementary Finnish courses. Laajasalon Opisto, which this thesis is about, is one such institution.

## **1.2 The Case Company and Its Needs**

Laajasalon Opisto is a Finnish folk high school and is therefore categorized by the Ministry of Education as an adult liberal education institution. Liberal adult education is not degree-oriented and its content is unregulated by law. Instead, educational goals and content are decided upon by the administrators of educational institutions and organisations: municipalities, joint municipal authorities, associations, foundations or corporations (Anderzén 2012, 6).

As with most folk high schools, Laajasalo's course offerings, which include journalism, development studies, church assistant studies, performance arts, pedagogy and Finnish language, last a full academic year. According to its website (Laajasalon Opisto 2014a), the courses they offer are designed to prepare its students for working life and/or to prepare them for further studies in higher educational institutions.

One of Laajasalo's course offerings is a full-time Finnish language course offered to immigrants at the beginners and intermediate levels. Aside from teaching Finnish, the courses also aim to help immigrants integrate into Finland by organizing field trips to familiarize them with Finnish culture and working life.

The Employment Office considers Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses as supplementary courses. This means that Laajasalo does not receive direct funding from the state. Instead, the courses are funded through: (1) student-paid tuition fees

and (2) study vouchers granted by the National Board of Education to the Helsinki Deaconess Institute (Olander A. 8.11.2013). Tuition fees are payments made by individual students to gain the right to study in a specific program. A study voucher is a form of student financial aid whose goal is to facilitate the participation of certain target groups, such as immigrants, in liberal adult education (Anderzen 2012, 9).

Immigrants are charged 360€ which is significantly lower than the tuition fees charged by the school for its other programs. The tuition fee and study vouchers do not cover the program costs. The school does not profit nor break even from its Finnish courses and they intentionally offer the courses at a loss. This is because the school is under the tutelage of a non-profit organization call the Helsinki Deaconess Institute (HDL), which has mandated Laajasalon Opisto to give marginalized sectors, like immigrants, with opportunities to improve their standards of living (Olander A. 8.11.2013). The Finnish language courses are thus offered as forms of charity to immigrants (Olander A. 8.11.2013). There is no indication that this would change in the near future.

It is from this altruistic viewpoint that Laajasalon Opisto commissioned this study. It wants to make sure that the school is indeed making a positive difference in its immigrant students' lives. It wants to officially confirm if its Finnish language courses have a direct impact in its students' long-term integration in Finland. Therefore, what Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language department is asking from me as the researcher, is to make sure that it meets its immigrant students' expectations and how it can further improve its services. I intend to meet these requirements by creating a services marketing plan for Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language department.

### **1.3 Research Objectives and Research Problem**

My study's objective is to create an actionable Services Marketing Plan for Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language program. The report is expected to identify the program's strengths, weaknesses and to suggest actionable points of improvement.

This study's main research question is: How can Laajasalo Opisto improve its Finnish language courses for immigrants through services marketing?



The study's sub-questions are the following:

- What are Laajasalon Opisto's immigrant customers' expectations?
- Does Laajasalon Opisto meet its immigrant customers' expectations?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language program?

#### **1.4 Scope and Limitations**

This study is meant to zero in on creating a services marketing plan for Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses. It does not cover the overall strength of the school's service delivery processes or its brand. The reason behind this is two-fold. First, the study was commissioned specifically for the school's Finnish language courses. Second, Laajasalon Opisto's services cover a multitude of areas and markets, which I do not plan to look into. Nonetheless, the services marketing plan will inevitably touch on general points about the school (e.g. how it promotes itself via its website) when analyzing the data collected.

The general structure of the study begins with a summary of theories and concept related to the study's objective. From these, a conceptual framework will be drawn out, which will anchor the data collection process. Data collected will be collated and analyzed and will serve as input to the services marketing plan, which will be published at the end of the report. A conclusion summarizing relevant learning points will also be available in this paper.

## **2 Literature Review**

This section focuses on reviewing literature related to International Migration and Services Marketing. International Migration is chosen to help frame the customer profile while Services Marketing is meant to provide direction for understanding the nature of Finnish language courses. I believe that a cross-sectional understanding of these theories would provide a solid conceptual framework.

## 2.1 International Migration

Migration is a complicated concept (Samers 2010, 8). Tracing its origins is tantamount to tracing the history of the modern human race (King 2010, 20). Migration has existed for as long as human beings wandered for food. But international migration as we know it is a relatively recent development. Only in the 20th century was the system of nation-states, passports and visas developed to regulate the flow of people across borders (Torpey 1999 in Martin and Zürcher 2008, 3). According to Tanner (2006, 14), international migration was not traditionally associated with national security risks. However, in recent times, because of the relative ease of travel between one country to another and increased terrorist threats, modern governments have had to secure their respective countries. Migration controls had to be put in place.

Individuals migrate for many and varied reasons, but the major reasons to migrate to another country can be grouped into two categories: economic and noneconomic (see Table 1). The factors that encourage a migrant to actually move fall into three categories: demand-pull, supply-push, and networks (Windgren 2000 in Martin et al. 2008, 3-4).

**Table 1: Factors that Encourage Migration by Type of Migrant** (Windgren, 2000 in Martin et al. 2008, 4).

Type of Migrant	Demand-pull Factors	Supply-push Factors	Network/Other
Economic	Labor Recruitment	Unemployment or Underemployment	Network/Other
Non-economic	Family Unification	Fleeing War and Persecution	Communications, Transportation Assistance Organizations, Desire for New Experience

### **2.1.1 Economic Migration**

Economic migration or the movement from one country to another for economic gain has become more common. Martin and Zürcher (2008, 3, 5-6) attribute this to the fast flow of information and lowered transportation costs between countries. Mitigating factors like the steady decline of available workforce in developed regions like Europe, and the oversupply of labor in developing ones like Southeast Asia have also contributed in making economic migration a global phenomenon.

The prediction that economic immigration hurts low-skilled natives and benefits the others seems to be widely accepted, even among people who never attended an economics class. Interestingly, however, researchers have struggled to establish empirical evidence on the adverse effect of immigration on native wages and employment (Sarvimäki 2009, 12.). In reality, more theories uphold that economic migration is a driver for growth. These theories are discussed in the next sections of this report.

### **2.1.2. International Migration as Trade**

The early studies on the economics of migration grew from the analysis of international trade. This is mainly because international trade deals with the exchange of factors of production like labor, goods and capital to encourage global trade equilibrium.

Sarvimaki (2009, 11-12) claims that the influence of trade models on migration is illustrated by the fact that the curricula of virtually all economics undergraduate programs on the subject matter include the Heckscher-Ohlin Model or H-O Model, which was derived from the Factor Endowment theory (1933). The H-O Model, while flawed, still serves as the simplest and most basic of all trade models when discussing migration.

The basic insight of the H-O Model is that traded commodities are really bundles of factors (land, labor and capital). The exchange of commodities internationally is therefore indirect factor arbitrage, transferring the services of otherwise immobile factors of productions from locations where these factors are abundant to locations

where these factors are scarce (Leamer 1995, 1). This should result to price equalization.

The H-O Model, though logical, oversimplifies immigration. If there are only two factors of production (capital and labour) the model's results hold. But if there are more than two factors, then the results of factor migration being a perfect substitute for trade in causing factor price equalization is no longer true. When economies of scale in production are possible, then migration and trade may act as complements, rather than substitutes (Moody 2006a).

Leamer (1995, 3) insists that despite the H-O model's shortcomings, the model remains a popular lens to view trade and migration. The H-O model provides useful albeit basic insights when trying to understand international trade. For example, the H-O Model gives researchers a springboard to understand migration in terms of New Economic Geography (NEG). The NEG theories put geographical mobility of workers and firms at the center of explanation (Sarvimäki 2009, 13).

For economic geographers, like Helpman and Krugman (1985, in Sarvimäki 2009, 13) economic activity and migration are involved in a cyclic process of pushing and pulling each other. To illustrate, a location with a high number of people becomes attractive to a company because of the availability of labor and customers. The company's presence in the area encourages job seekers to move to gain employment. The effect then is that the area's population, available labor and potential customers aggregates further.

Davis and Weinstein argue that a conventional approach to assessing the returns from immigration only considers discrete inflows of a single factor to the economy (Moody 2006a). They believe that immigration, particularly in the United States, has a negative impact on native workers' wages. They contend that immigrants are able to access and use the technological advances of their receiving country without demanding high salaries as their native counterparts. This snowballs into an overall GDP loss for the receiving country. They are quick to admit however that they are largely unaware of other effects that immigrants bring apart from lowering native workers' wage.

### 2.1.3 International Migration in Labor Economics

Labor economics is a popular way to study migration. According to Sarvimäki (2009, 14), labor economists are primarily interested in two things: (1) the effect of immigrants on native wages and employment and (2) the labor market assimilation of immigrants.

Empirical evidence suggests that immigration has little negative impact on native workers' wages. Examination of migratory flows shows that rich countries do indeed have an immigrant population less qualified, on average, than natives. From a theoretical standpoint, the immigration of low skilled workers has an ambiguous effect on inequality (Cahuc and Zylberberg 2004, 625). Borjas (2013a) also shares that the overall impact of immigration's effect on native wages is small.

Regarding immigrant assimilation in the labor market, there is a difference between how the United States and Europe view the issue. Assimilation is a general term for a process that can follow a number of different paths. In the United States, the classical assimilation model serves as a foundation for understanding immigrant economic incorporation into mainstream American society. Assimilation is conceptualized as a necessary, unidirectional and irreversible process that leads to cultural homogeneity (Chen 2011, 4).

In Europe, integration is preferred over assimilation. Integration helps in the development of a multicultural society. It enables each group retain their original culture. Immigrant groups are considered integrated whether or not they conform to the host society's culture. People may retain their cultural background, trade it in for that of the host country, or (most commonly) create a synthesis of the two, as they wish (Hansen 2008, 3).

The European immigrant policy focuses on the socioeconomic integration of the immigrant. The state commits to provide language training, civic courses, labor market orientation and, sometimes, vocational training (Sarvimäki 2009, 21). Whether or not European integration policy is effective is inconclusive. Across Europe, the ratio of employment rates of immigrants to those of non-immigrants (that is immigrant

unemployment rates divided by the native-born unemployment rate) ranges from 1.3 to 2.6 (Hansen 2012, 5). On the other hand, in a joint essay with Kari Hämäläinen, which Sarvimäki (2009, 122) mentions in *Essays on Migration*, it is asserted that one particular European integration program, the Finnish one, has succeeded in improving the immigrants' labor market outcomes. They argue that Finland's demand for each immigrant having individualized integration plans contribute the most to the program's success.

#### **2.1.4 International Migration and Economic Growth Models**

Economic growth models advocate that international migration is a catalyst for economic growth. These models, as summarized by Moody (2006a), look at immigrants as sources of human capital that drive innovation and technological progress. These models are especially optimistic about migration where talented, educated and highly skilled workers are concerned. In general, growth models advocate controlled migration.

The European Union (EU), which practices free movement of labor among citizens and legal migrants, is a great example of this. The EU is also actively promoting immigration and integration. It is generally agreed that migrants support the European labour markets by filling gaps and by contributing to addressing the demographic challenges that the EU faces (European Commission 2014, 5).

#### **2.1.5 International Migration and the Economy**

Based on all the models and theories discussed, it seems that economists are yet to resolve the long-term effects of international migration on the receiving countries, especially in terms of immigrants' contribution to the GDP. There is a growing belief that immigrants harm native workers' wages and that immigrants siphon their new country's financial resources. However, these claims are mostly based on anecdotal evidence and have yet to be proven through long-term research and study.

## 2.2 Immigration in Finland

During the past 150 years, 1,2 million persons have emigrated from Finland to foreign countries (Koivukangas 2003, 8). However, over the relatively short period since the Second World War, Finland has changed from being a country of net emigration to one of net immigration. According to preliminary statistics for 2013, a total of 30,300 people moved to Finland, among them 7,860 Finnish citizens. The number of those leaving Finland was 13,300. As far as foreign nationals are concerned, net immigration (immigration - emigration) decreased slightly from the 2012 figures, to stand at 17,000 people (Ministry of Interior 2014a.).

The main reasons to immigrate into Finland have traditionally been either having a Finnish spouse or facing strong push factors in the home country (Sarvimäki 2009, 87). A prevailing assumption in Finland is that the rising number of foreigners is due to an influx of refugees (Vehaskari 2010, 11). However, Finnish history and statistics debunk this presumption. Sarvimäki (2009, 87) points out that early immigration into Finland primarily consisted of returning Finnish migrants and their families who emigrated at one point. Also, foreigners seeking to work or study in Finland make up the largest groups applying for residency (Vehaskari 2010, 11). Recent statistics released by the Finnish Immigration Service (2014, 1-2) show that out of 21.259 residence permit applications in 2013, 32% were for family reasons while 31% were for studies.

In a published report by the Ministry of Interior (2013a), it is stated that Finland seeks to implement an immigration policy that supports the building of an unprejudiced, safe and pluralistic society to enhance the country's international competitiveness. The official stand of the government is that immigration contributes positively to social pluralism and economic competitiveness. In practice, this means that pursuant to the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (10/1999), legal immigrants are financially supported to study Finnish full-time in order to increase job prospects.

The immigrant population in Finland is young. Statistics show that nearly every tenth of every person aged 25 to 34 is of foreign origin (Statistics Finland 2013a). In

the long run, they will positively contribute to Finland's welfare system through gainful employment. They can fill in gaps, which will be left by the retiring native Finnish population. This is especially true in the health, social and service sectors, which will need work forces by the year 2025, according to Hanhijoki, Katajisto, Kimari and Savioja (2012, 47).

Unfortunately, the immigrant unemployment rate was more than twice the level observed for the native-born population of Finland (OECD 2013a). Low level of Finnish language skills is often the cited reason. Many employers do pass over immigrants because they fear the hassle of a workplace without a common native language (Vehaskari 2009, 21).

Finland's need for a young workforce and high immigrant unemployment make immigration a highly debated issue. The discussion is fueled by the fact that, at least initially, immigrants tend to have lower earnings and to receive more public assistance than the natives (Sarvimäki 2009, 85). Since Finland has only had a short history with immigration, a lot of issues regarding immigrants and their impact to Finnish society are largely unresolved.

### **2.3 Services Marketing**

The marketing concept or concept of marketing is derived from the realization that organizations only survive if they satisfy customers (Meldrum and MacDonald 2007, 16). The central idea of marketing is to match the organization's capabilities with the needs of customers in order to achieve the objectives of both parties (McDonald and Payne 2006, 3). The significance of the marketing concept, then, is that it places duties on managers across the business to think in a certain way, to adopt a certain approach to doing business, and to foster a culture that puts customers at the heart of the organization (Meldrum and MacDonald 2007, 16).

McDonald and Payne (2006, 3) claim that, nowadays, customers look for a holistic experience when purchasing products. The desire to provide genuinely positive customer experiences has led many companies to add services to increase product sales. There is a danger, then, that services are considered mere auxiliary add-ons and not



stand-alone products in themselves. This should not be the case because as Lovelock, Wirtz and Chew (2011, 6) write services dominate the economic output of most nations. Without service companies, most economies would weaken. Thus, it is very important to acknowledge the importance of services in today's business environment.

In the next section, I will discuss the definition of services, its characteristics and the essential principles in marketing them. I will especially focus on how to market education as a service as a prelude to the findings and final output of this paper.

### **2.3.1 What is a Service?**

Service is a complicated phenomenon. The word has many meanings, ranging from personal service to service as a product (Grönroos 2001, 45). In essence, services are economic activities offered by one party to another (Lovelock et al. 2011, 19). The service itself is predominantly a process: the flight of an aeroplane, consulting with an investment adviser, haircutting, attending a university, repairing a car (Bruhn and Georgi 2006, 13).

The broad definition of service implies that intangibility is a key determinant of whether an offering is a service (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler 2013, 5). Services are perishable because processes can only be conducted and not stored. As a consequence, services are not transportable (Bruhn et al. 2006, 15).

Because services are performances frequently produced by humans, no two services will be precisely alike (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 21). Services are also co-produced by the customer because without the presence of the customer in the service process, a service cannot be produced and delivered (Bruhn et al. 2006, 15). Many services are then sold first and then produced and consumed simultaneously (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 21).

In most cases, services have tangible elements that are crucial to the delivery of the service experience. For example, education belongs to the mental stimulus processing service industry. As part of this industry, it means that education touches

people's minds and it has the power to shape attitudes and influence behavior (Lovelock et al. 2009, 17). Normally though, even in the case of virtual classes, without a course materials or presentations passed on from teacher to student, education cannot be consumed in full. Because of this, some businesses have a hard time categorizing whether they offer goods or service. Lovelock et al. (2009, 10) claim that an effective way to know whether a product is a service or a good is by measuring where more than half of the value comes from. Hence, a service can have both tangible and intangible elements.

According to Toivonen and Tuominen (2009, 2), the “fuzzy” nature of the output of service makes it much more difficult to detect a change or improvement in a service than to recognize an industrial product as a new one. Because of this, service marketers must try their best to create experiences that do not vary from one extreme to the other. While uniformity in services is impossible to achieve, it is reasonable for every service company to frame customers' anticipations within a clear range of expected service experiences.

### **2.3.2 Service Design**

Service is a holistic experience. It is both a process and a package that needs an operating and delivery system called a service design. Mudie and Cottam (1999, 44) broadly define a service design as a company's attempt to standardize its offerings to ensure that each customer interaction with the company is similar with each other. It must be thought of as a process in which the overall development is influenced by all its constituent elements (Villadas 2011, 33). However, no matter how well designed and executed a service delivery process is, every customer's experience is bound to be unique. Service providers are expected to find ways to systematically manage customer relationships.

Systematic management of customer relationship focuses upon the customer lifecycle by managing customer acquisition, retention and recovery (Bruhn et al. 2006, 118). Generally, retaining customers in the long term is vital to profitable marketing (Grönroos 2001, 243). Customers evaluate service quality by comparing what they expected with what they perceived they received from a particular supplier. If their

expectations are met or exceeded, customers believe that they have received high-quality service (Lovelock et al. 2011, 46.).

Service marketers are also expected to understand the range of customers' perception regarding how satisfactory a service experience should go. The level of expectation can vary widely depending on the reference point the customer holds. Although most everyone has an intuitive sense of what expectations are, service marketers need a far more thorough and clear definition of expectations to comprehend, measure and manage them (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 52.).

Zeithaml et al (2013, 55) conclude that a good way to manage customer satisfaction is to ensure that service experiences fall within a zone of tolerance. This is the extent to which customers are willing to accept variation in service delivery (Lovelock et al. 2009, 32). One might consider the zone of tolerance as the range in which customers do not particularly notice service performance. When it falls outside the range (either very low or very high), the service gets the customer's attention in either a positive or negative way (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 55). As an example in the education sector, Zeithaml et al (2013, 281) assert that many universities offer virtual tours of their campuses online allowing students to preview the physical environment in advance. If the virtual tour showed only a small portion of the university, the student will either be extremely disappointed or extremely pleased when on campus. Both reactions are on opposite ends of the spectrum. This means that the university failed to frame customer expectations within a zone of tolerance. There was a very big gap between what was expected and what was experienced.

Service companies can also deal with varied expectations by having a service culture within the organization. People – frontline employees and those supporting them behind the scenes – are critical to the success of any service organization (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 315). A service culture recognizes that employees are the front liners. Delivering the service as promised – reliability – is often totally within the control of frontline employees (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 319). Their competencies and behavior in contact with the customer account to a large extent for the perceived quality of the service offered (Bruhn et al. 2006, 21). For many services, providing employees with greater discretion (and training in how to use their judgment) enables them to pro-

vide superior service on the spot, rather than taking time to get permission from supervisors (Lovelock et al. 2011, 328). The strength of the customer-frontline employee relationship is often an important driver of customer loyalty (Bove and Johnson 2000 cited in Lovelock et al. 2011, 311).

Businesses with high employee turnover are often stuck with what has been termed “Cycle of Failure.” Others, which offer job security but are rule and procedure based, may suffer from an equally undesirable “Cycle of Mediocrity.” However, if managed well, there is potential for a virtuous cycle in service employment called “Cycle of Success” (Schlesinger and Heskett cited in Lovelock et al 2009, 281.).

Having the right employees should not be the end goal. Individual employees should be transformed into high-performance service delivery teams. The nature of many services requires people to work in teams, often across functions, in order to offer seamless customer service processes (Lovelock et al. 2011, 330). Teamwork helps alleviate the stress that comes with regular customer interactions.

### **2.3.3 Customer Gap Model**

Service quality has been considered as an important attribute to business but yet hard to measure due to its unique features: intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability of production and consumption. In the absence of an objective measure of service quality, customers’ perception is considered as the standard of measure. (Ling 2014, 1). One efficient way for service companies to measure their service quality is by using the Customer Gap Model, which is otherwise known as SERVQUAL. Popularized by Zeithaml et al (2013, 25), this model measures the distance between customer expectations and customer perceptions. Customer expectations are standards or reference points that customers bring into the service experience, whereas customer perceptions are subjective assessments of actual service experiences (Zeithaml et al 2013, 35).

Every service marketer’s goal should be to bridge the distance between customer perception and expectation. In order to accomplish this, it is to focus on the customer by creating and developing a relationship with them. Service providers not

only strive to keep their customers at the current revenue and profit level, they also aim at increasing the relationship intensity in order to exploit the customer relationships to the maximum (Bruhn et al 2009, 122). Service businesses should aim to maintain positive relationships with its customers and to foster their loyalty. This is tied to the idea that service businesses must rely on repeat purchases from the same sets of customers to survive and remain competitive.

### **2.3.4 Services Marketing Tools**

When making marketing plans for consumer goods, marketers usually utilize a strategic toolbox called the marketing mix. The marketing mix is the name given to the main demand-influencing variables that are available to the organization (Meldrum et al. 2007, 10). The traditional marketing mix is composed of the four P's: product, place (distribution), promotion, and price (Zeithaml et al. 2103, 25). In services marketing, an expanded version of the 4Ps is used. In addition to the traditional four P's, the services marketing mix includes people, physical evidence, and process (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 26).

In brief the 7Ps of services marketing are:

- Product refers to the product or service being offered.
- Price or the fees charged and the terms associated with sale.
- Promotion is the communications program associated with marketing the product or service.
- Place is the distribution and logistics involved in making the product/service available (McDonald et al. 2006, 26.).
- People refer to all actors who play a part in service delivery and thus influence the buyer's perceptions: namely the firm's personnel, the customer, and other customers in the service environment.
- Processes are the procedures, mechanisms and flow of activities by which the service is delivered – the service delivery and operating systems.
- Physical Evidence is the environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, as well as any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service (Zeithaml et al. 2013, 26-27.).

## **2.4 Marketing Education as a Service**

The marketing mix can be used in a variety of combinations to create competitive advantage. Effective marketing management welds these variables into a coordinated whole in the market place in exactly the right combination and positioning for the targeted customer (Meldrum 2007, 4).

The education service sector should use at least four elements in their marketing services plan. These elements are product, process, people and promotions. Other marketing mix factors like price, place and physical evidence cannot be tackled on a general level or at the very least for this study's particular case. For example, I believe that discussing about the school's physical environment is counterproductive because I am only concerned about improving the Finnish language courses of Laajasalon Opisto. Discussing the school premises and atmosphere would require a bigger research involving the school's other departments and study programs, which is beyond my scope. I am, thus, concentrating on the marketing elements that are useful for this thesis.

### **2.4.1 Product and Process**

Education as a product is also a process. Traditionally, education has been viewed as the means by which past and current wisdom is passed to future generations through instruction designed by teachers and for which students were to be eternally grateful. In that environment, the teacher possessed all the knowledge, which students required to prepare them for life after school (Maringe and Gibbs 2009, 29.). These days, education is encouraged to be a more interactive process. The role of the student in relation to teachers is changing to that on par with an equal collaborative partner (Auvinen 2008, 9). Maringe and Gibbs (2009, 29) reason that this is because the education sector experienced a significant shift, which now sees and acknowledges students as collaborators of the learning process.

Educational institutions are still expected to put the students at the center of the service process. Without students, they have no service to render. Nowadays,

schools are under pressure to create safe, orderly, and effective learning environments where students can acquire social as well as academic skills that will allow them to succeed in school and beyond (Husu 2006, 85). Schools' service designs must aim at increasing the student's propensity to learn and increasing customer satisfaction. In education, this orientation becomes more relevant given the increasing involvement of students in contributing monetarily towards their higher education experience (Maringe et al. 2009, 163).

#### **2.4.2 People**

In an educational setting, the student is the main partner while the teacher performs the service. However, whether the educational service given is satisfactory or not is not entirely dependent on the teacher. The students and the teachers are considered as co-creators of the service experience. As co-creators they are equally responsible for service quality and satisfaction.

All participants in educational undertakings are socially interdependent and to a certain extent, should participate together in discussion and decision-making (Husu 2006, 97). Effective customer participation can increase the likelihood that their needs are met and that the benefits the customer seeks are actually attained (Zeithaml 2013, 354). The students' active participation leads to higher satisfaction because they are expected to learn more by active participation.

Education is more fundamental than meeting customer wants and needs. Education attempts to bring customer and provider expectations and desires together in ways which seek to promote the subject/discipline of study while empowering the students to take their places in society both competently and effectively (Maringe et al. 2009, 35).

Educational institutions must outline ways to enhance customer participation. Students as customers are not always right (Maringe et al. 2009, 37). The nature and level of customer participation in the service process are strategic decisions that can impact an organization's productivity, its positioning relative to competitors, its service quality, and its customers' satisfaction (Zeithaml et al 2013, 360). In developing

strategies for addressing customer involvement in service co-creation and delivery, the organization first determines what type of participation is desirable from customers and how the customer wishes to participate (Zeithaml et al 2013, 360). A key consideration in identifying what and how to teach effectively to any group of students is to thoroughly understand the students in terms of how they learn most efficiently or how they prefer to be taught (Maringe et al. 2009, 163).

In educational settings, teachers have the most personal contact with the students. This makes them responsible for meeting the majority of the customer's expectations. Teachers represent the school, and in extension, the national educational system of which their school is a local manifestation (Seeberg 2006, 56). Tuomi (2006, 133) posits that teachers' main role is to instruct. They are expected to have the skills and competencies to facilitate and manage student participation. Teachers must understand that student needs are not static. A teacher can no longer be focused only on teaching his/her subject, but he/she should also give guidance in learning, create useful social networks, develop learning environments and implement working life-based study modules (Auvinen 2008, 13).

The customer-provider dynamics between a teacher and a student is unique. Their relationship is an organic process that requires a lot of intuition, communication and attention. Both parties must participate in creating positive service experiences. In order to do this, Maringe and Gibbs (2009, 38) suggest that the educational institution should spell out negotiable and non-negotiable aspects of the service. Examples of non-negotiable issues include means of assessment and graduation. On the other hand, teaching and delivery modes to meet student expectations are considered negotiable.

### **2.4.3 Promotion**

Educational institutions are in fierce competition with one another. Open borders and available scholarships allow high-potential students to choose from a number of good schools especially since they are aware of the benefits of graduating from a good school. A number of studies in the field of educational choice and decision-making have shown that institutional reputation is one of the strongest influencers



of people's decisions when it comes to study destinations and subject or course choices (Maringe 2009, 135). Gutman and Miaoulis in a paper published in 2003 also show that students choose their school based on the benefits they expected to get from being in a particular university (Gutman and Miaoulis 2003 in Bruhn et al. 2006, 280).

Educational institutions are challenged to build their brands. The focus on brand creation is on awareness, meaning and equity of the company (Zeithaml et al 2013, 425). It connotes the building of a lasting image about a product or service which consumers or customers will be eternally proud to be associated with (Maringe et al. 2009, 133). It is also beneficial to develop an image that gives the organization a focus since there are many variables working against the projection of a cohesive image (Mudie et al. 2006, 188).

Once the benefits to the consumer are established, branding brings several well-documented benefits to the organization in reverse (Maringe 2009, 133). Branding is often the best way of sustaining competitive advantage (Mudie 2006, 195).

To communicate the brand, educational institutions should create an integrated communications plan. Through communication, marketers promote and explain the value proposition that their firm is offering (Lovelock 2009, 170). Establishing why and how an institution's product differs from that of its competitors creates a sound basis for distinguishing organizational brands (Maringe 2009, 134).

All educational institutions are advised to have marketing communications plans. All functions, departments and teachers should be aware of their roles in the service delivery process. There are a number of forms of communication referred collectively as marketing communication mix (Lovelock 2009, 177). This mix includes, but is not limited to, advertising, word-of-mouth, publicity, sales materials, sales events and online presence. The key to reach customers is through use of appropriate communication channels (Maringe 2009, 65). Any company that disseminates information through multiple channels needs to be certain that customers receive unified messages and promises. These channels are not only marketing communication mes-

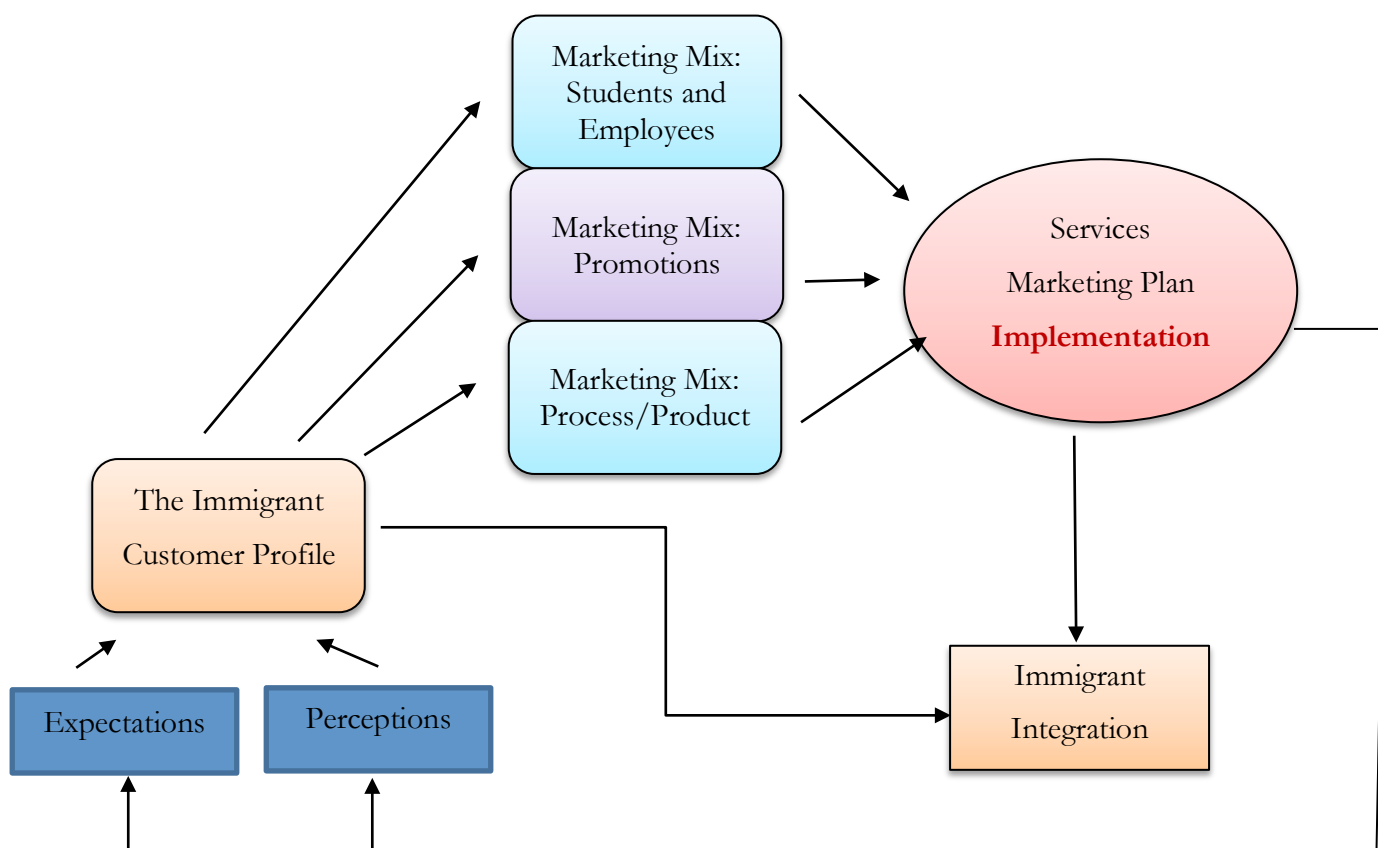
sages that flow directly from the company but also personal messages that employees send to customers (Zeithaml et al 2013, 413.).

The ultimate goal of any marketing communications plan is to inform the customers on what to expect during the service experience. Service companies must educate their customers (Zeithaml et al 2013, 417). If expectations can be managed so that customers have more realistic expectations of service delivery then their expectations are more likely to be met (Mudie et al. 2006, 184).

### **3 Conceptual Framework**

A study's conceptual framework is a central part of the research process because it provides coherence to the study. It visually links the research questions, relevant theoretical concepts and the expected output.

Miles and Huberman (2008) assert that a good conceptual framework has the following features: (a) it identifies who will and will not be included in the study; (b) it describes the relationships among logic, theory and/or experience; and (c) it enables the researcher to group general constructs into intellectual "bins" (Miles and Huberman 1994 in Baxter and Jack 2008, 553). Sekaran and Bougie (2010, 80-81) confirms this by stating that the framework must clarify how different theories interact and affect each other.



**Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework**

In light of this, my study's conceptual framework (Figure 1) shows how the services marketing plan and its subsequent implementation cannot exist independently from the expectations and perceptions of immigrant customers. It also shows that the overall goal is to come up with a service plan that is supportive of immigrant integration.

The framework also visualizes how I intend to derive my suggestions. First, I want to create a picture of the typical Laajasalon Opisto immigrant student. I also want to discover his or her expectations and perceptions of the school's Finnish language courses. From there, I intend to go deeper by determining how the immigrant sees and participates in the following marketing mix elements: people, promotions, process and product.

These steps would enable me to do holistic analysis of how Laajasalon Opisto meets its immigrant customers' needs and expectations. By doing so, I am able to write a services marketing plan that is actionable, practical and useful.

## **4 Research Methodology**

This section explains the reasons behind my study's philosophy, approaches, design, data gathering and data analysis methods in order to initially address concerns regarding research validity and reliability.

### **4.1 Research Philosophy**

All research has philosophical foundations. To interpret and understand the world we are living, we certainly need 'ways of viewing' and 'ways of interpreting' to grasp the surrounding facts, ideas, and events (Limpanitgul 2009, 5). The chosen research philosophy allows the researcher to defend his or her choices throughout the research process. This is because, according to Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill (2009, 108), the research philosophy contains assumptions on how the researcher views the world.

The research philosophy of this study is constructivism. Constructivism recognizes that all our knowledge is "constructed." It does not reflect any "transcendent" realities, but is contingent on convention, human perception and social experience (Oulasvirta, Tamminen and Höök 2005, 99). This paradigm recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject outright some notion of objectivity (Baxter et al 2008, 545). Hence, as a researcher my ontological premise is that reality is subjective. The subjectivist view is that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (Saunders et al 2009, 111). Practically this means that research participants interpret situations according to how they perceive things to be. It is my job as the researcher to collate the ways all participants construct the world and present it to the readers.

Because I must contextualize the data, I am part of the research process. I cannot be separated from what I am investigating for all findings are according to my interpre-

tation. My epistemological responsibility, then, is to give meaning to collected data, especially those collected from human subjects in certain social contexts. According to Saunders et al (2009, 116), I must enter the social world of the research subjects and understand their points of view. One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller 1999 cited in Baxter et al 2008, 545).

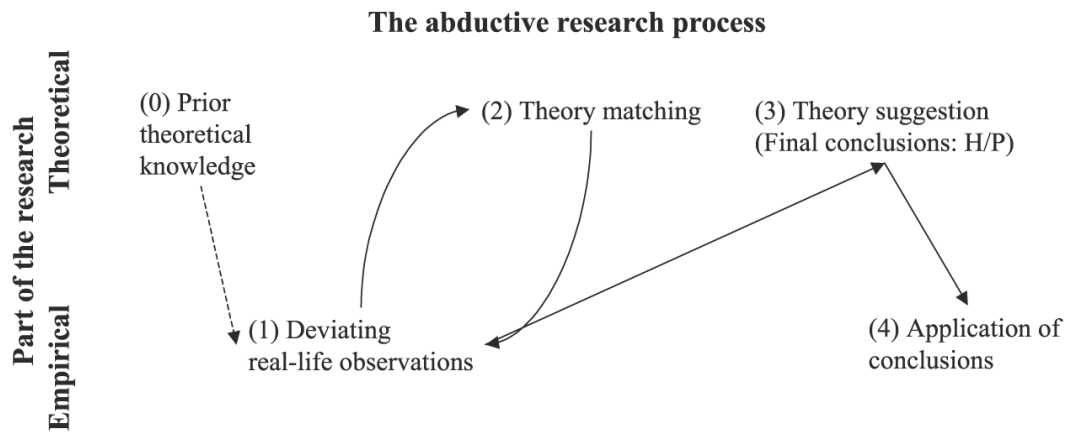
During the research process, I debated between realism and constructivism. In the end, constructivism was adopted. The philosophy of realism is that there is a reality quite independent of the human mind (Saunders et al 2009, 114). It assumes that reality is an objective phenomenon and that it could exist outside of everyone's observations and perceptions. Since I believe that my study's outcome is a summary of collected opinions, realism could not have been my research philosophy.

## **4.2 Research Approach**

The study's research approach is co-related to its research philosophy. Its definitive feature is defined by the researcher's attitude on how theories and data interact. In general, one needs to choose from among the following approaches: inductive, deductive or abductive.

According to Saunders et al (2009, 124-126) the inductive approach focuses on building theories based on data collected while the deductive approach tests known theories through a structured methodology. Meanwhile, abduction is a hybrid of deduction and induction (Figure 2).

The abductive approach stems from the insight that most great advances in science neither followed the pattern of pure deduction nor of pure induction (Kirkeby, 1990 and Taylor et al., 2002 in Kovács and Spens 2005, 135). Rather than focusing on generalizations and/or their specific manifestations only, the abductive approach is concerned with the particularities of specific situations that deviate from the general structure of such kinds of situations (Danermark 2001 in Kovács and Spens 2005, 136).



**Figure 2: The Abductive Research Process (taken from Kovács and Spens 2005, 139)**

Based on the above definitions, abduction best describes my research approach because my study is deductive, inductive and instinctive all at the same time. My study is partly deductive because the conceptual framework that guided data collection and analysis was tapered from vast amounts of literature. The inductive aspect manifests itself through the fact that I am neither testing a new hypothesis nor am I guessing why or how a phenomenon happens. In fact, I am quite unsure whether collected data would lead into themes and patterns. Additionally, some of the inferences that I have are based on creative logic and reasonable intuition. All of these descriptions fit into the abductive way of thinking.

### **4.3 Research Design**

Research design provides an overall guidance for the collection and analysis of data of a study (Churchill 1979 cited in Limpanitgul 2009, 5). In the most elementary sense, the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions, and ultimately, to its conclusions (Yin 2009, 26). Hence, the design is affected by whether the research question is descriptive, explanatory or exploratory.

This study's the main research question concentrates on how Laajasalon Opisto can improve its services to immigrant students. It is obvious that I will explore possible

answers to the question. So, I chose to do an exploratory single qualitative case study research design.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 2009, 18). My study is limited to studying only one organization making it a single case study. As an exploratory one, Yin (2003) describes that this type of case study is applied in situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin 2003 in Baxter and Jack 2008, 548).

Although my study is exploratory, this does not insinuate that it is aimless. What it does mean is that the focus is initially broad and becomes progressively narrower as the research progresses (Saunders et al 2009, 140). Furthermore, the qualitative nature of my research (which is clarified later in Chapter 4.5) forces me to deal with an abundance of data. The same data sets are filtered to come up with reasonable conclusions. This perfectly fits the case study's exploratory nature.

#### **4.4 Time Horizon**

In a research, Saunders et al (2009, 155) advice that the researcher should determine the study's time horizon regardless of what research strategy has been chosen. There are two basic time horizon choices that a researcher must decide on – cross-sectional or longitudinal. If the research is a snapshot taken over a period of time, then it is a cross-sectional study. On the one hand, if the thesis is a representation of multiple events over a given period, it is longitudinal.

The time horizon for this thesis is cross-sectional. A cross-sectional study is an observational one. Saunders et al (2009, 155) describe it further as researching on a particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time. Since I do not intend to conduct the same study over several periods of time, the cross-sectional time horizon is appropriate. One of the benefits of a cross-sectional study design is that it enables to compare different variables at the same time but it will not provide explicit information about cause-and-effect relationships.

My research proper (which comprises of data gathering, analysis and preliminary results presentation) was completed within a year.

#### **4.5 Data Collection Techniques**

My thesis is a qualitative single case study. Qualitative data are less structured, content-rich and non-quantifiable. In many researches, they often come in the form of interviews. Primary data, as defined by Saunders et al (2009, 598), is data collected specifically for the research project undertaken.

Multiple methods were employed to gather primary qualitative data. For this study, an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix 2), a group interview (Appendix 3) and two one-on-one interviews (Appendices 3 and 4) were used. I chose these methods because I trusted that the data from each mode would enable me to mine and determine common themes, which could be translated into service marketing action points.

On the subject of sampling, Saunders et al (2009, 234) suggest that I do not need to use any. They claim that when data can potentially be collected from the entire population, which for this study is largely true, there is no need to sample.

At some point during the research planning, I considered using quantitative techniques like closed surveys to numerically measure how the immigrant customers view Laajsalon Opisto's Finnish language courses. However, I decided against employing these methods primarily because I believed that the data produced would be a rigid representation of customer satisfaction. Thus, I would have needed to limit, define and frame the questions and possible answers myself. I did not want to do so because I wanted to gather content-rich and participant-sourced data.

In the end, I recognized that quantitative techniques simply did not fit with this study. Patton and Appelbaum (2003, 64) assert that quantitative researchers are usually those pressed for explanation and control by searching for cause and effect rela-



tionships between a small number of variables, which describes neither my research approach nor my research design.

## 5 Research Proper

Primary data was collected from Laajasalon Opisto's immigrant students during the fall of 2013, a former immigrant student and one of the Finnish courses' teachers. The data collection was done in three phases. Each phase served as a springboard for the next phase. During Phase 1, the immigrant customers' general sentiments were collated through an open survey. A group interview with current students was held during Phase 2. Finally, two one-on-one interviews were conducted for Phase 3.

### 5.1.1 Data Collection: Phase 1

Phase 1 consisted of creating a 5-open question survey questionnaire given 40 students present at Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses on October 2013 (appendix 1). The questionnaire was designed to understand the school's immigrant customers' needs. The survey was in Finnish as it was the immigrant students' common language. To increase participant access, I wrote a brief introduction that mentioned my full name, where I study, what I study and the purpose of the survey. None of them were required to fill it in.

Out of 40 students, 29 or 72.5% of the entire populations freely handed in their response. I deemed that the response rate was good. It was sufficient to represent the students' general sentiment.

In the survey, the following questions were asked:

1. Why did you move to Finland? (*Miksi sinä muutit Suomeen?*)
2. Do you have to study Finnish? Why? (*Pitääkö opiskella suomea? Miksi?*)
3. How did you find out that Laajasalon Opisto had Finnish language courses? (*Miten sinä tiesit että Laajasalossa on suomen kielen kurssi?*)
4. Did you apply to another Finnish course? If yes, where? (*Haitko myös toiselle suomen kielen kursille? Jos kyllä, mihin?*)

5. Write down 1-3 good things about Laajasalo and your Finnish course. (*Kirjoita 1-3 hyvää asiaa Laajasalosta ja sinun kurssista?*)

The students were also asked their age, nationality and profession to build a customer profile. None of the participants were asked to mention their names for two reasons. One, I wanted to guarantee participant anonymity. Two, I did not want data analysis to be unduly influenced by my personal perceptions of each respondent.

### **5.1.2 Data Collection: Phase 2**

I organized a group interview in English with current students following the open survey collection. I decided to hold a group interview for practical reasons. I believed that the quality of the output would not change significantly whether the discussion was made on a one-on-one basis or in a group. Because the research was exploratory, I did not have a specific question in mind.

An invitation letter (appendix 2) was sent to all 40 students. The invitation letter indicated that I needed additional input to help with my Master's Thesis about Laajasalon Opisto's service offering to their immigrant students. The letter also pointed out that the interview would last an hour and all conversations would be recorded for data analysis. The letter was intended to establish trust, and to make the participants aware of what was required of them. As Saunders et al. (2009, 179) point out: "Asking for access and cooperation without being specific about your requirements will probably lead to a cautious attitude of their part since the amount of time that could be required might prove disruptive. It is also likely to be considered unethical." In the end, eight volunteered to be interviewed.

The group interview took place within the school premises after the students' classes. It lasted one hour and six minutes. I could not prolong it due to the participants' request.

I prepared several sets of questions to anticipate themes that might emerge during the conversation. My first question to the students was: Describe your ideal Finnish class. The conversation flowed freely after that. I merely asked exploratory and/or

clarification questions, when points were unclear or repetitive. There were moments when I had to intervene. For example, I suggested words when an interviewee could not express his or her thoughts in English clearly. I also had to break up the conversations when the participants were talking at the same time. It occurred to me that my comments could be construed as interviewer bias. This is where the comments, tone of non-verbal behavior of the interviewer creates bias in the way the interviewees respond to the questions being asked (Saunders et al 2009, 326). Nevertheless, I am of firm belief that the quality of the data collected was not compromised since I did not inject ideas that were of my own. This can be confirmed by examining the group interview's audio file and/or transcript (appendix 3).

### **5.1.3 Data Collection: Phase 3**

After going through all the data, I decided to conduct two one-on-one interviews. I wanted to explore the themes and suggestions, which surfaced. The first interview was conducted with a former Finnish language student who is currently studying to be a teacher's assistant in Laajasalon Opisto. The interview took place in the participant's home and lasted for half an hour. I prepared a set of questions based on the group interview to aid the conversation. I did not acquire too much data from this particular interviewee. Thus, I deemed it best that the interview would not last any longer than it did.

The second and final individual interview was with one of the Finnish language teachers in Laajasalon Opisto. I did not interview both teachers of the Finnish courses because one of them is related to me. I avoided getting any data from him for ethical reasons.

This interview lasted for an hour and was not held in school. The teacher was asked several times if she wanted to be interviewed at school or at her own home but she declined. During this conversation, I focused on finding out what her opinion is of their school's Finnish language classes. I did it in order to compare her perspectives with those of the current and former students.

Both participants agreed to have the conversations recorded and transcribed (appendices 4 and 5).

## 5.2 Data Interpretation

As in any qualitative study the data collection and analysis occur concurrently (Baxter et al. 2008, 554). Data collection, data analysis and development and verification of propositions are very much an interrelated and interactive set of processes (Saunders et al. 2009, 288).

My main strategy for data analysis was to condense all the data from the surveys and the interviews together. The information proved to be richer and more valid collectively. Subsequently, I grouped all emerging themes or categories into appropriate boxes in my conceptual framework. I did this because Yin (2009, 130) insists that for case studies, the first and most preferred strategy is to follow the theoretical propositions.

There were essentially two ways I used the data. Some of the survey questions provided clear-cut answers. For example, the question on whether the students applied to other Finnish language schools yielded yes and no answers. Common sense dictated that those answers can be counted and categorized straight into concepts from the conceptual framework. In this case, the yes and no answers were placed under “Marketing Mix: Promotions.”

However, some answers in the open survey and the interviews were related so I synergized them. I could cite, for instance, that replies on the role of student motivation in one’s learning surfaced in the surveys and all the interviews. This was the reason why I read the collected data several times. After reading, I marked answers that could be sorted under concepts in the framework.

I propose this interview transcript as an example: *“We are motivated. Because actually they say, who wants to stay for this raise your hand, yeah we can stay one more hour and participate and we want to participate and we are motivated. But there is a group of people, that they don’t have the same motivation. And it would be nice, it would be good for you to talk to them and say you know*

*they maybe they have a completely different idea of what we, what we are thinking.*” I decided that this statement fell under the concept “Marketing Mix: People.”

After assigning statements into concepts, I re-read the data and discovered general themes. Drawing from the previous example, I determined that it could further be placed under a general theme of “The Role of People.” Because one single statement was not conclusive, I chunked related statements together and counted the number of times they were brought up. I counted the following statement as a similar statement to the one above: *“In our course, almost everybody is working, with small exceptions but if you don’t want to study, nobody can force you to. If you want to go on Facebook all the time it’s like, not participate, it’s your own choice but (inaudible) people are really active.”*

The next step was to assign a category to similar statements. For the given examples, I classified them by using this descriptive sentence: “The students know their role as co-creators making them supportive of each other.” I then created charts to visually represent my findings for easy reference. Below is an example of a theme and a category chart:

**Table 2: Example of Theme and Categorization Chart**

*Theme: The Role of People in the Services Marketing Mix*

Category	Times Mentioned	Example Statement
The students know their role as co-creators making them supportive of each other.	29	“You should be self-motivated. I know what I’m here for. I know what I want to do. I have, you have to plan your life...”

Overall, this thematic exploration and categorization exercise generated 3 themes and 7 categories, which can be found in appendices 6 to 10. The chart in the following page (Table 3) briefly presents all the results:

**Table 3: Themes and Categories of the Study**

Theme	Category
Theme 1: Student Expectations	Category 1: The students want to be integrated into Finland.
Theme 2: Student Perceptions of the Product / Process	<p>Category 2: The students are happy with the general teaching method and strategy</p> <p>Category 3: The class atmosphere is fun, relaxed and enables learning.</p> <p>Category 4: The students are happy they learn to speak Finnish during the course.</p> <p>Category 4: Some trips are counter-productive</p> <p>Category 5: The immigrants feel separated from the Finnish students and would like more opportunities to work with them.</p> <p>Category 6: The school should provide additional resources and/or optional projects for motivated students.</p>
Theme 3: The Role of People in the Services Marketing Mix	<p>Category 7: The teachers are good.</p> <p>Category 8: The students know their role as co-creators making them supportive of each other.</p>

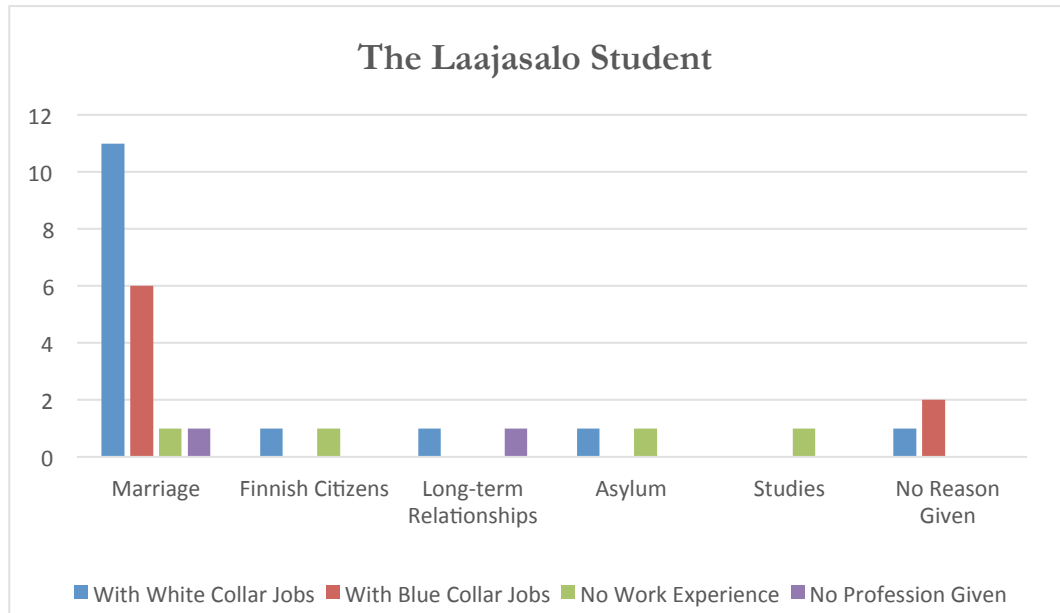
## 6 Presentation of Findings

This section concentrates on interpreting the data collected. The findings are presented in four blocks. The logic behind the grouping, as explained in chapter 5.2, was based on the conceptual framework found in chapter 3 of this study.

The first block of analyzed data will focus on Laajasalon Opisto's immigrant customer. I will expound on what the data says about its average consumer, his needs and his expectations. The second block will concentrate on the strength of Laajasalo's external marketing or promotions. Here, I will seek to understand how effective the school has been in promoting itself and how its reputation fares against competition. The third block will present how the immigrant customers positively and negatively perceive the Finnish courses. Finally, the fourth block will clarify if the students understand their roles as customers in service delivery. Likewise, the students' opinion on the Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language department, which is the service provider, will be included in this part.

## **6.1 Customer Profile**

When the data was collected in the autumn of 2013, Laajasalon Opisto's typical Finnish language student was a young immigrant with working experience. Of the 29 respondents, 23 were practicing professionals in their native countries. 15 students had white-collar jobs (e.g. accountants, nurses, IT professionals and office assistants). 8 were blue-collar workers (e.g. drivers, construction worker and elevator repairman). The respondents' average age was 32 years old.



**Figure 3: Laajasalo Immigrant Student’s Work Background Cross-Referenced with Reasons for Migrating to Finland**

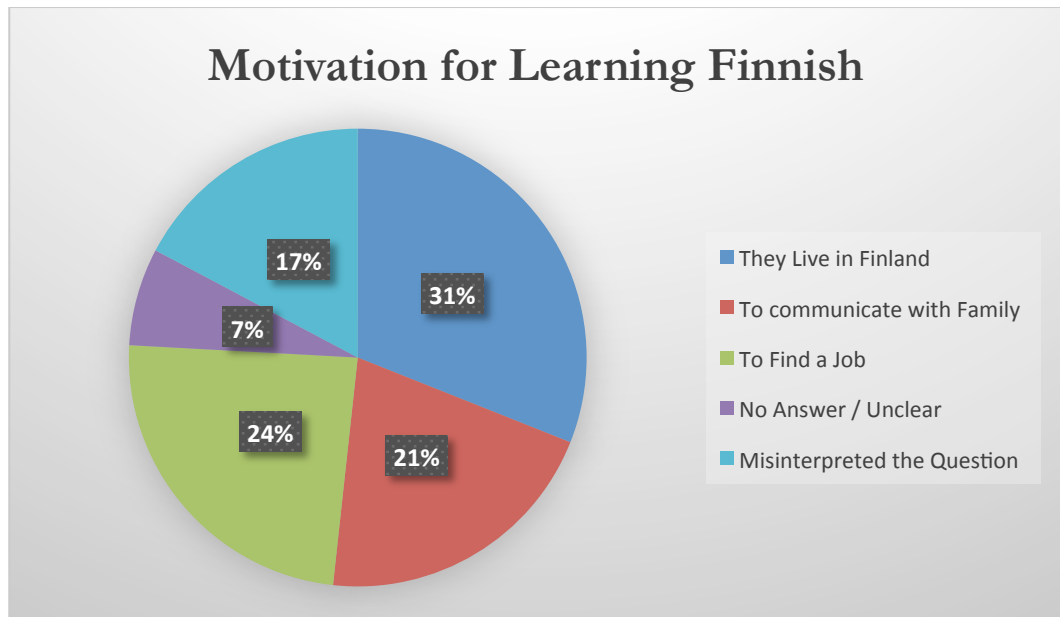
Marriage, family and personal relationships were the dominant reasons for coming to Finland. When I cross-referenced a student’s reason for immigrating versus their previous work experiences, I saw that a majority of those who moved for family reasons were once practicing professionals (Figure 3).

Based on this customer profile, I was able to qualify the customer expectations, which will be discussed in a later section.

### 6.1.1 Customer Motivation

When asked in the survey why they needed to learn Finnish, 76% indicated their intention to live and to be integrated into Finnish society. While the specific motivations vary, the immigrant customers see Finnish language as a must for their daily activities (Figure 4).





**Figure 4: Laajasalo Students' Motivation**

17 percent of the survey respondents misunderstood the question so I could not take their reply into account. The original question in Finnish was: *“Pitääko opiskella Suomea? Miksi?”* As written in the data collection section, the question should have been translated as *“Do you have to study Finnish? Why?”* I did not foresee that some students would translate it into *“Do you like Finnish? Why?”*

In retrospect, I realized that the Finnish verb *pitää* has several meanings. It can either mean “must or should” or “to like something” depending on the context. As an example how a student mistook the question, one respondent replied: *“Kyllä! Koska se on erilainen kieli.”* (Yes! Because it is a different language.)

Despite the mix-up, a majority of the respondents answered the question according to its original intention. Many wrote replies similar to the following examples:

*“Kyllä, se auttaa minua puhun poikkani kanssa.”* (Yes, it helps me speak with my son.)

*“Joo, se on tärkeä jos asut Suomessa.”* (Yes, it is important if you live in Finland.)

*“Kyllä. Koska kun asun Suomessa, haluan puhua suomea suomalaisista kanssa. Haluan löydä hyvä työpäikkä Helsingissä.”* (Yes. Because when I live in Finland, I want to speak in Finnish with Finns. I want to find a good workplace in Helsinki.)

Therefore, I am confident that I am neither misrepresenting nor misinterpreting the students’ motivations. Furthermore, during the group interview, the participants validated that their main reason for learning was to find jobs and/or integrate into society. Some examples of statements that confirmed the students’ general motivation for studying Finnish were:

*“I think, for me this is an ideal course. The one they teach at Laajasalo because, uh, learning Finnish here is not just about the linguistic aspect. It’s not just about the language. It’s about life. So by learning Finnish you are learning to be in Finland. It integrates both the, the, everything that goes around you, about learning the language and about living in the country. So, integration, yeah? It’s yeah. Taking the Finnish language outside of the classroom. That’s why I like it here.”*

*“For example before this course, I didn’t speak in Finnish at all. I didn’t want to. Even though I have Finnish husband, I was too shy to speak in Finnish. And when I started to come to this course, after one month, I started to speak Finnish with all my husband’s mother’s friends and everybody was really, uh, surprise that I’m speaking and it’s good and in fact clear and everybody was really happy with me and I felt happy as well.”*

### **6.1.2 Customer Expectations**

Through both the data sets presented, I inferred that the immigrant students’ main expectation from enrolling in an intensive Finnish course was to learn Finnish as a way to integrate into Finnish society. The group interview, one-on-one conversation with the former student and the open surveys confirm this (appendix 6).

Though it seems obvious that immigrants enrolled in a Finnish course want to learn the language, such assumptions cannot be considered factual until confirmed by data. What the survey and the interviews show is that the immigrants are not enrolled in the courses so that they can get the social welfare benefits. Their primary intention is to be contributing members of the Finnish society in the long-term,

whether as working professionals, stay-at-home parents or as spouses of Finnish residents.

## **6.2 Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish Courses External Branding**

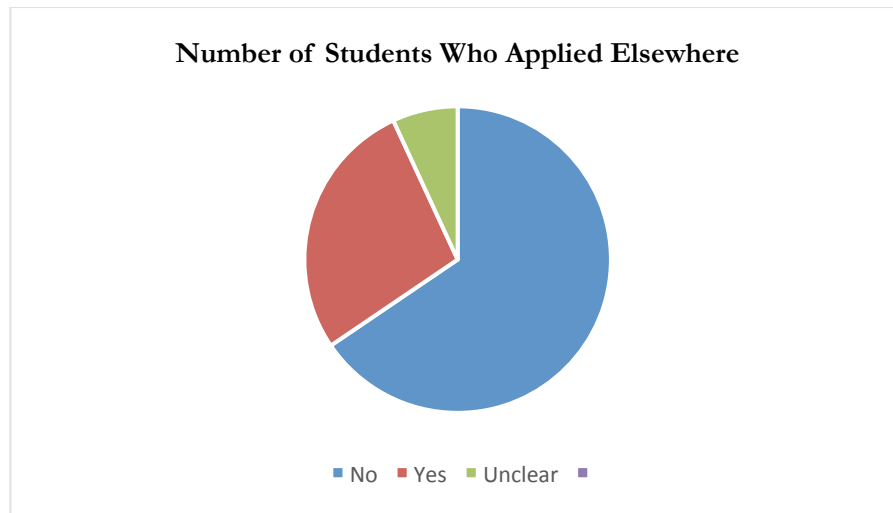
After establishing the customer profile, motivation and expectations, I sought to find out why the students chose Laajasalon Opisto. My chief target was to establish how the school's Finnish courses are branded externally.

The first step I took was to determine if competition played a role in a student's decision to enroll, and if did, which schools or courses can be considered as direct competitors. My second step was to ascertain how the students found out about the Finnish courses.

I used the open survey to get all these information since I asked the respondents how they found out about Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish courses and whether they applied to other schools. The group interview did not yield sufficient data to add to the survey results.

### **6.2.1 Laajasalo and Competition**

When asked if the students applied to other courses apart from Laajasalo, eighteen answered no and eight students said yes (Figure 5). The competitors mentioned were Berlitz, Helsinki University and the Employment Office's official courses.



**Figure 5: Laajasalo's Competition**

After some thought, I decided not to explore the subject of competition further. First, I realized that among the organizations mentioned, the Employment Office's courses can be considered as Laajasalon Opisto's only real competition. My decision was based on the fact that these courses were the only ones that were full-time and thus targeted registered jobseekers.

This inference was qualified when I talked with the one of Laajasalo's Finnish language teachers. She considers the official courses offered by the Employment Office as their courses' main competition (Olander, A. 8.11.2013). Second, the data I collected did not provide sufficient information on the competitors' service quality. I could not generalize nor qualify which institution gave better service.

What the data affirmed was that there was a market for supplementary Finnish courses or courses which were not directly funded nor promoted by the Employment Office. This was also supported by previous research like that of Anderzen's (2010, 20), which pointed out the great demand for self-motivated Finnish courses in different adult educational institutions.

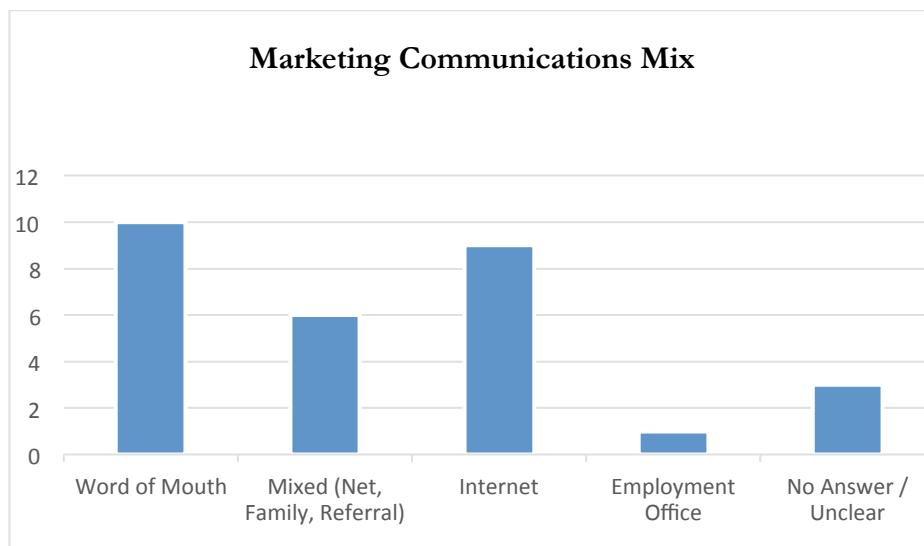
Through these data, I concluded that Laajasalon Opisto has a great advantage and opportunity to be a market leader in offering Finnish supplementary courses. In particular, it could be a trailblazer among other Finnish folk high schools. I say this

because after I visited the Finnish folk high school association's search website in the called Kansanopisto (2013a), I confirmed that only Laajasalo offered supplementary Finnish courses in Helsinki.

### 6.2.2 Laajasalo's Current Marketing Communication Mix

After examining Laajasalon Opisto's direct competitors and the lack thereof, I focused on finding out which marketing communications channels were utilized by its immigrant customers. I wanted to examine the Finnish courses' marketing communication mix as well as how its target customers behaved in this area.

Based on survey responses, I came to know that the immigrant students used their personal networks, the Internet or a combination of both to look for Finnish courses (Figure 6).



**Figure 6: How Students Found Out About Laajasalo's Finnish Courses**

The students described an organic search process where they primarily sought for school referrals from friends and family. Internet search was the second most used way. None of them relied on traditional media like newspapers, TV or radio. Notably, only one mentioned being referred by the Employment Office although most of them, according to one of the Finnish teachers (Olander, 8.11.2013), were registered jobseekers.

Therefore, it should be of prime importance for the school to ensure that it concentrates on using the correct channels when finding and targeting future immigrant students.

### **6.3 The Finnish Courses as a Product or Process**

After the customer profile, motivations and expectations as well as the Finnish courses' external brand established, the next step was to analyze the students' opinions of Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses. In particular, I wanted to identify the courses' weak and strong points to make sure that the final services marketing plan would be rich with practical and student-centric input.

#### **6.3.1 The Finnish Courses as a Process or Product: Strong Points**

Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses has two strong points (appendix 8) based on the group interview the interview with a former student and the open survey.

The first of Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish courses' positive feature is its pedagogical methods. The students thought that the teachers were able to successfully transfer knowledge to the group by allowing them to be comfortable with the language before teaching grammar. Below are statements from the group interview that capture this sentiment:

*“To speak. You don't want to speak because you don't feel to speak. And she said the same thing when she went to this school then she starts to speak because before, we're Estonian, we understand every word. She understood a lot but she said I didn't speak a word.”*

*“For example the course from Finnish to Finnish not in any other language. That's it. Make it more effective. For example from Finnish to Finnish.”*

The pedagogical method of Laajasalon Opisto, according to one of its Finnish language teacher, was to teach Finnish in Finnish. The courses' main goal was to im-

merge the immigrant students in the new language by making them talk, listen and read only in Finnish.

By doing this, the teachers emphasize the language's functionality. They hope to instill that mastering grammar is secondary to learning how to communicate. They also desire to impart that even though mistakes are initially made, the students should not be embarrassed. In fact, making mistakes are natural consequences of learning a new language. Because of this philosophy, the teachers also make it a point not to correct nor interrupt the immigrant students as long as they are able to express themselves.

Olander (Interview 8.11.2013) describes that their pedagogical technique begins with teaching the students some key Finnish phrases. Gradually, the students are taught more phrases and vocabulary. At some point in the process, grammar would be delved into to explain the logic behind the language.

Let's say the students were initially taught to say the following: *"Minä olen Erica. Minä olen Filippiiniläinen. Minä olen tyttö."* which when translated into English means "I am Erica. I am a Filipino. I am a girl." The immigrant students generally catch on that "Minä olen" means "I am." From there, they would continue using the phrase and even making mistakes like *"Sinä olen"* (or "you am"). After a certain period, the teachers would instruct them on grammar and reveal the reasoning behind the phrase. In this case, the students would be taught the nuances of the Finnish verb *olla* (which in English is the verb "to be") and Finnish personal pronouns like *minä*, *sinä* and so forth.

From the group interview and the survey answers, it was clear that the students appreciated this method. They did not mind the low emphasis on grammar. They appreciated the courses' conversational focus. Since learning grammar was not the central goal of the lessons, the students were able to freely express their thoughts in Finnish without concerning themselves with making grammatical errors. Below are some student sentiments that I discovered from the interview and the open survey:

*"Pidä ei nopeasti." (I like that it is not fast.)*

*“Beside from what S3 say it’s good to know grammar but what I like he already mentioned many of them but, uh, in the beginning of this we are not more focusing on the grammar. That’s very good because we don’t scare or we don’t embarrass to start speaking. So we can speak, like (snaps) child. And then when we know somehow we will be corrected. For example we have been saying stuff until today “minä asun Suomessa kaksi vuotta ensin” for example. But that’s not the right way, the right way is asunut Suomessa kaksi vuotta. So, it helped. We will be correct. It’s good at the start. We are not more grammar first.”*

*“Laajsalon kursseja on erittäin ystävällisiä, ja me olemme löytäneet suomalaisen kulttuurin. Me olemme opiskelleet kieltä askel askelella, ilman kiirettä ja tämä auttaa meitä rentoutumaan.”*

The second strong point of the course was that its students learned Finnish to speak very quickly. Some might find it ironic that even though the students describe the course as relaxed, they still learn swiftly. I believe that the students learned the language at a good pace because of the pedagogical methods described earlier. The students were able to enjoy the learning process. They got into the habit of speaking in Finnish. They began to understand that it was better to construct awkward sentences in Finnish over knowing grammar in theory but not in practice. Some statements supporting this argument from both the surveys and the interviews are the following:

*“Nyt mä voin puhua.” (Now, I can speak.)*

*“...So I went into a meeting where all the people there, there was a Finnish man. They speak Finnish. They speak. So it wasn’t difficult for me to cope up. You know, to study the Finnish language is a big thing for me. Yeah.”*

### **6.3.2 The Finnish Courses as a Process /Product: Weak Points**

The students identified three weak points (appendix 8). First, they did not find much value in all of the organized cultural trips. They recognized that some trips were valuable because it familiarized them with the Finnish culture. However, other trips (like going to the zoo) were seen as counterproductive. They felt that there was a



failure to contextualize them within their Finnish language learning process. Though the teachers gave them on-site tasks, the students found them superficial. Below are statements that capture the students' sentiments:

*"Like go to the zoo. It's very nice to go to the zoo with one, together. It's very nice day. Three hours. It's good to go. Don't take it very bad. It's good to go. Yeah, some of us, we have never been to the zoo and that's the chance to go to the zoo and it's okay. But it could be much better, those kind of days, it's very, something more again mixed with Finnish."*

*"That is true. For some people it can also work as a demotivational factor. Ah, we are going to the zoo. Oh that is nice but then they are coming with some exercise. You know, I can go there, I can read those signs and I want to try to understand myself or with my friends or I have my dictionary. For example, you know? Or there is this tour guide that you have to listen to otherwise. It can also work demotivation. It's too much."*

The students suggested ways to enhance language learning during trips. One would be for the teachers to pair students who have no common language other than Finnish. They admitted that as adults, they were prone to irrelevant chatter with friends. Another suggestion was to employ a Finnish-speaking guide so that hear variations of the Finnish accent. Some suggested that students from other Laajasalon Opisto programs (like those studying to be teachers' assistants) could join them for the trips and serve as their temporary tutors.

The second improvement point was the lack of interaction between immigrants and the native Finns within Laajasalon Opisto's premises. They raised this point even though they were aware that part of their curriculum is to have planned interactions with the Finnish students. For them, these encounters were superficial. For example, the immigrants were asked to plan a cultural event with the native Finns. The event was successfully executed but the two groups did not work together. Initially, the two groups had common planning sessions. These meetings were not facilitated well and each group ended up meeting on their own. In the end, the immigrants and the Finns simply carried out their own tasks.

The interviewees emphatically discussed this issue. They felt that within the school, there were two groups of students, which were strongly segregated. They felt no connection with the Finns. Here are some descriptive statements related to this point:

*“There was this Kultturitori you know we were integrated with some, with this group over there. The people. And then suddenly there was this group of people, who were doing their studies about the, the, what is it? Human welfare or something which is in that other room. They were also suddenly there. We were, I was a bit like, who are those people? I never saw them during any, any of those meetings that we had.”*

*“And also these guys, we went to the theater on Friday, you know, you know those guys that were in school today. What they can do in response to that, let them come by to class and let them, let us interact. I went to say to them you know, sorry that we left halfway because you were really good but no one understand any, anything.”*

The interviewees gave suggestions to improve the situation. The ideas included making documentaries together and sitting in each other's courses. They brought up that the Finns would also benefit from these meetings and projects. The immigrants were experienced and educated professionals. They have knowledge that could help especially the Finns who had neither working experiences nor university degrees.

They also wanted the interactions to highlight that not all immigrants take advantage of the Finnish welfare system. Rather, they represent able foreigners who are able and willing to learn the language and find a job. They wished to showcase how immigrants enrich Finnish culture and society.

The students also hoped that the teachers could organize language tandems between Finns and immigrants. This could be considered as a project where students can get study credits. The language exchange can very well evolve into an expertise exchange since some immigrants have work experience in the fields that the students are studying.

The suggestions and opinions mentioned are represented in the following statements:

*“Some people, some people are thinking like that. That is just like, you know when the course starts, organize some events that people just show the details like why are you here, that they know, like hey that’s the guy, he is studying Finnish, he is now here. Of course you don’t have to have hours of introduction and they have to know your lifestory but even if it’s like some, some, that they make a book. You know like hey you are starting your Finnish course here, in two sentences, why are you here, how you are and where you are from. And then they make a list or a poster that they hang there in the hallway or something. That they know, that hey, that’s the guy from Spain. I would like to go to Spain to study to do my journalism major. I can ask him. Where are you from?”*

*“I know about politics but I know about that. That was my life, my previous life. And now I’m here because I’m married with a Finnish. You know? But they can use, I mean, I can give them a chance and I’m sure they can, I know not everybody will be willing to that but I think some will be willing to, to go, to integrate, to find, to find a way to participate and integrate with them.”*

The third and final improvement point was the unavailability of extra resources like books in the school. The interviewees hoped to have these resources in school for self-access. They were aware that public city and university libraries have abundant resources. Nonetheless, they argued strongly that extra resources would encourage those who have the motivation and the time to study further.

In relation to this, they pointed out the need to stimulate students who have the ability, opportunity and willingness to learn outside of the classroom. They suggested that the teachers should give extra assignments or projects to those who were willing to study harder. Some suggested that a project could be a good alternative to those who do not want to participate in some of the organized trips. Two example statements highlighting these suggestions are the following:

*“In that sense, I think, in that sense, compare with other schools that I have in learning languages I think there are many alternative things here, uh, to learn Finnish. You can have small library. You know? With children books, movies or with something that will encourage people to take this kind*

*of books to take them and try to read them. And I'm sure there must be many, you know, many kinds of books with translations. Like you know the French and the Europes, they have these books with one language on one side and another language on the other. You know there's a lot of, of material that you can use and here I don't have that. I remember once I asked for that. I said you know I would like to have some books to, to, like, like, easy books to read to my level and they say we don't have."*

*"Another idea is to have this going out, for example, in the afternoons. For example, (the teacher) gives us, you have two weeks to go with the, divided into groups and we go to the zoo after the school for example. Or not just go somewhere. Couple, three, hours. And the next day we come back here and in Finnish, we talk about it. Rather than spending the whole day and not, not getting a class. For example, I don't know, sometimes. You know? Yeah. Just to do it outside class hours and for couple hours, three hours. Or like project. Or another project. Guys, you wanna go see a movie one Wednesday per month, they are for free so if you want, that Wednesday, go see a movie and the next day, you come, and you tell us what the movie was about. You know? Things like that. Instead of doing it when we should be there."*

#### **6.4 The Role of People in Laajasalon Opisto's Service Delivery**

As determined earlier in the Literature Review, both the customers and the service providers play a role in a satisfactory experience. Although the primary responsibility does fall on the provider's shoulders, it is crucial that customers participate in the service experience willingly and positively. Hence, I sought to find out whether the students knew of their role in service delivery and what their opinion is of their teachers (appendix 9). I derived data from the survey, the group interview and the one-on-one conversation with the former student.

##### **6.4.1 The Students as Co-creators**

The immigrant students were aware of their role as co-creators of the service experience. Together with the teachers, they fostered a learning atmosphere, which encouraged personal responsibility. As adults, they accepted that every student's motivation and personal goals were different. They did not want to pressure their classmates to go beyond their personal goals. For them, mastering Finnish was a personal

responsibility. They made a point of each student being an adult who acted according to his or her own accord. Each student was expected to concentrate on his or her own learning path. They emphasized that no one, not even the teachers, can force individuals to do their tasks or assignments.

During the group interview, the participants did not mention nor allude to the need for stricter classroom rules. They agreed, as can be shown in some example statements below, that an immigrant student in Laajasalon Opisto gained Finnish proficiency only if he or she were willing to participate actively in the process:

*“You should be self-motivated. I know what I’m here for. I know what I want to do. I have, you have to plan your life. Like this is like, I was working back home and I have a very stressful for me, because no working and always staying at home is something. So, I always want to study, always want to learn. I’ve been having a special book for translating my, my job, um where’s from English to Finnish. That one I have my two hours to do. I go there. I know what I’m going to say, what I’m going to speak. So first of all you yourself must be the first thing.”*

*“To have a competence, in a good way, in a positive way. We are competing. Wow, sometimes I think I want to understand everything that my classmates are saying. That helps me because I want to understand everything so that means I study and actually this motivation comes from within. Really. From outside it’s just a plus but it comes from within. So one thing that was good this term is for example we had this presentations about our culture. Or was it last term?”*

Because they were aware of their role in creating a good learning environment, one inevitable result was that they had positive images of their class atmosphere. To them, the learning ambience in Laajasalon Opisto was friendly, fun and relaxed. They stated that such a light class atmosphere was conducive to learning a new language. There were many inferred reasons behind the good atmosphere. However, I traced that it can be explained by the great camaraderie among the students. The students also appreciated that the class was diverse. Here are some testimonials, which can be found from both the open survey and the group interview:

*“Koulun kaverit ovat hyvä.”* (My school friends are nice.)

*“Kursissa on kiiva ryhmä. Se on erilainen ja mielenkiintoinen.”* (In the course is a good group. It is different and interesting.)

*“Also, it depends from course to course. You never know what kind of students who would be spending 25 hours a week. This course, personally, is very good. I mean, I like my classmates. We are very different. We think different but we are kind of responsible. In our class, in our course, when I was with S6 in other course, I think it was a good course too. I think there were a few people who were not as responsible as this course. You see? It depends because we are from so many different countries.”*

The students' awareness of their role in service delivery is a positive feature of Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish courses. As established, when the customers cooperate with the service provider, the service experience is predominantly positive. Therefore, I consider this discovery as one of the course's strong points.

#### **6.4.2 The Teachers as Service Providers**

The students found that both of Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language teachers were very good. This was confirmed multiple times in the surveys and in the interviews with current and former students. For example, in the open survey, it was mentioned 16 times that the teachers were assets to the courses.

The former student I interviewed during the third phase had even compared her experience in one of the Employment Office's official courses versus Laajasalo's. To her, the teachers in Laajasalo were much better as one can read from an excerpt from our conversation below:

*Researcher: What about this Stadin Ammattiopisto? What was your experience?*

*Interviewee: I feel it's a little bit, uh, boring because I was studying in Laajasalo for one year. So when I go there I feel like it was different school from I use at, and I feel like it's different system and everything was different so I was preferring to be in Laajasalo more.*

Based on these pieces of information, I concluded that the teachers were effective service providers. They delivered quality service experiences. They knew their re-

sponsibilities and worked hard to meet student expectations. They appeared competent and in-charge. They were described as fun, youthful, pleasant and nice. They were not complacent and were sensitive to customer needs.

## **6.5 Summary of Findings**

The results of data analysis show that Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish courses' main strengths are its pedagogical methods, its teachers and its students. As a product, the school's Finnish courses are good and easily marketable for they have been effective in improving the Finnish fluency of its immigrant students. Though there are minor flaws to the delivery process, they are could not be considered threats to the overall quality of the course.

The courses' value becomes especially pronounced when considering that Laajasalon Opisto's immigrant students become fluent Finnish speakers within the courses' duration. Fluency in the Finnish language gives the students a fighting chance to integrate well into Finland. This becomes especially true when putting the students' average profile into perspective. As immigrants who are mostly young and educated professionals, they have the skills, capability, personal networks and youth to find meaningful work in the future.

The findings also show that Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish courses do not have direct competition. Since the courses are categorized as supplementary ones, they could not be directly compared to the Employment Office's fully-subsidized courses. It is largely true that Laajasalo could compare its courses with those offered by other liberal adult institutions. However, those offered by those schools are not full-time.

Laajasalon Opisto has a great opportunity to become a market leader in providing supplementary Finnish courses. This is mainly because the school of two things: (1) it fulfills the general expectation of its immigrant students to learn the Finnish language and (2) it has no real direct competition.

I used all this data to create a viable services marketing plan. Ultimately, two main issues were addressed – the courses’ external communications and the service delivery process. I will expound on this inference in the next section.

## 7 Services Marketing Plan

A marketing plan is a detailed plan for a product or brand that assesses the current marketing situation and outlines marketing objectives, a marketing strategy, action programs, budgets and controls (Armstrong and Kotler 2005, 59). It is a core component of any organization, which seeks to satisfy its customers. It is a template for addressing what an organization needs to focus on in order to correctly allocate resources. Essentially, what the services marketing plan will address is the gap between what the customer expects and what the customer perceives.

The way I designed the services marketing plan was influenced by what McDonald and Payne (2006, 39) refer to as the marketing planning model. I tried to find optimal solutions to defined problems. I also used a sequence of processes in order to zero in on the challenges, highlight the positives and provide suggestions. The steps I took in making the services marketing plan could be visually summarized by looking at the illustration below (Figure 7).

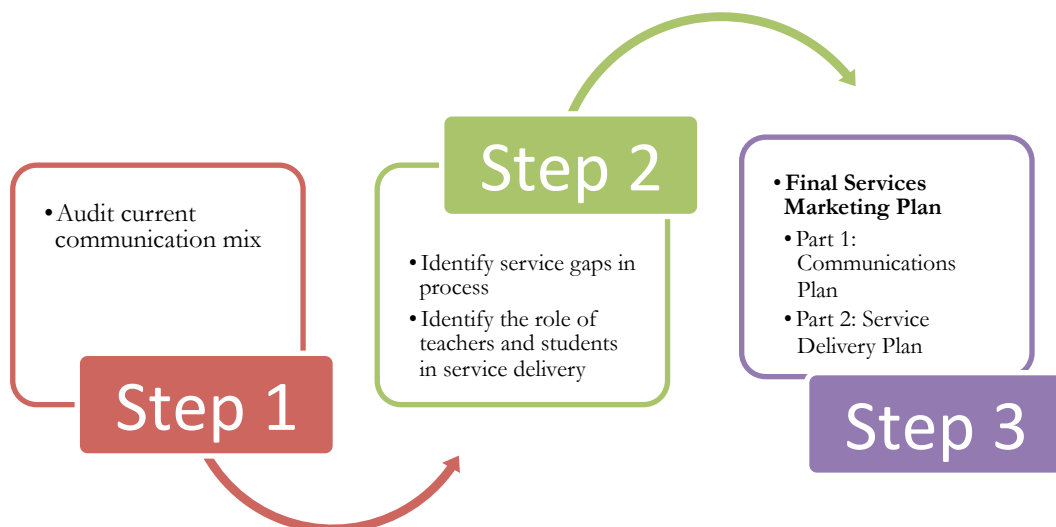


Figure 7: Service Marketing Planning Process



As you can see, the services marketing plan for Laajasalo's Finnish courses was done in three blocks. The first step I took was to audit the courses' current communication mix. The second step consisted of identifying service gaps and clarifying the role of the providers and students. The last step was to combine all findings to write the final Services Marketing Plan, which can be found in Chapter 7.1.

## **7.1 Service Marketing Plan Implementation**

Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses' Services Marketing Plan consists of two parts: the communications plan and the service delivery plan. The communications plan seeks to break down the school's marketing communication mix. Its main concern is to understand how well Laajasalon Opisto communicates its Finnish courses to its target market. Likewise, it deals with assessing the school's marketing communication mix, identifying known weaknesses and providing solutions.

Meanwhile, the service delivery plan addresses how to improve the courses in order to improve customer satisfaction. This part provides insights on the service gap between the customers and the provider, how the courses can be improved and how the actors in service delivery can contribute to improving the service experience.

### **7.1.1 Communications Plan**

Business communication is any information the company distributes to the public, either about the organization itself or their products and services. A well-thought out communications plan not only defines the target audience, but also focuses on how to reach it effectively (Nation 2014a.).

Paul Baeyer (2005a) outlines that successful communications campaigns start with a current audit of the situation to assess how well an organization is communicating itself. After getting a grip of the situation, clear objectives must be set. This is followed by a planning phase where action points are listed down.

It is with this in mind that I re-examined what I learnt in the data gathering and analysis process to see how the courses can improve their communication.

## 7.1.2 Communications Audit

In Chapter 6.2.2, I discussed how the students found out about Laajasalo's Finnish courses. To summarize the findings, the students knew of the courses through their personal networks and the Internet. I also unearthed that the school cannot rely on the Employment Office for referrals.

Customer satisfaction plays a very big role in word-of-mouth marketing or personal referrals. Since personal networks were prominently used by the study participants, I investigated whether this trend had the potential to continue. I did this by re-examining data presented in Chapter 6.3.1 where the courses' strong points were raised.

Based on those findings, I could confidently conclude that Laajasalon Opisto's immigrant customers were satisfied. Their positive experiences and personal networks can be counted on to market the courses in the future.

Unfortunately, there was no way to presently assess the impact they have in marketing the Finnish courses. I was not able to ask about how the immigrants behaved. Some questions that I could have asked were the following: Do you have social media presence? Do you belong to any organizations here in Helsinki? How big is your social network in Helsinki? Do you have immigrant friends outside of your course?

If I asked questions such as those listed above, I would have had a conclusive way to explore how the students could potentially and organically promote the course to their networks. However, since I did not find these out, I could not present sufficient and relevant evidence regarding word-of-mouth marketing.

However, as written earlier I assessed the methods by which the students found the course. I established that the second most used promotional avenue was the Internet. This led me to investigate how the participants might have done the search. I decided to use Google as my search engine because according to Pearson CMG (2011, 6) it is the leading search engine in Finland.

My first step was to type the keywords “Finnish Courses in Helsinki.” The first non-advertised option that popped up was [www.finnishcourses.fi](http://www.finnishcourses.fi), which is Infopankki’s Finnish courses website. I then used the website’s own search engine. I narrowed the search by using their drop-down search options. As of June 2014, Laajasalon Opisto’s courses did not appear on the first five pages. In fact, even when typing in Laajasalo on the site’s search engine, the school’s Finnish courses did not show up.

On its own, Laajasalon Opisto’s own website was not among the top two pages in Google’s search results. Furthermore, even when I typed in “Laajasalo Finnish courses,” Laajasalon Opisto’s website was not even part of the options. Instead, I was once again led to the Finnish courses’ website.

To examine the school’s marketing communication mix further, I went to Laajasalon Opisto’s website. I found the site by typing the keywords “Laajasalon Opisto” in Google. The website was outdated in terms of usability and graphic design (Figure 8). The entire website, including course descriptions for the Finnish courses, was in Finnish. This suggests that immigrants with no Finnish language skills will not be able to navigate the site easily nor will he be able to find information that the school offers Finnish language courses. There is low probability that their website visit would be converted into enrollment in the future.



Figure 8: Laajasalon Opisto’s Website as of 25 June 2014

### **7.1.3 Summary of the Communications Audit**

All survey results combined with my personal investigation of the school's communication channels gave a picture of how weak the school's communication is. In particular, its Finnish courses are not well advertised. Without referrals from their personal networks, most of the participants would not have found out about Laajasalo's Finnish courses, which is reflective of how badly promoted the courses are.

The Internet and social media are not being maximized by the school to reach out to potential immigrant customers. The school website was not user-friendly specifically to immigrants with no or low Finnish skills. This is unfortunate since the school can potentially be a market leader for supplementary Finnish courses in the Greater Helsinki Area as established in Chapter 6.2.

The courses also have zero presence in popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. This was also revealed from my Internet search. The school's non-presence in social media is troubling since as mentioned my research showed that the students found out about the school from their circles of family and friends. Social media presence is not a substitute for word-of-mouth marketing. However, top companies nowadays are expected to utilize multiple channels on the Internet to transform digital advertisements into personal endorsements.

The school must also put effort in utilizing the students' personal networks to promote the school's Finnish courses. Perhaps, the teachers can ask their students to systematically refer friends to Laajasalon Opisto.

All in all, the communications presence of Laajasalon Opisto is very poor. It is crucial that the Finnish department addresses this issue as soon as possible.

### **7.1.4 Communications Strategy and Action Plan**

One of my suggestions is that Laajasalo's Finnish courses would have a separate website hosted in one of the most commonly used blogging platforms. Sites like

Wordpress, Blogspot and Kotisivukone come to mind. These sites can be used for free or can be paid for as low as 18€ a month. In this case, I suggest that Laajasalon Opisto invests financially and buys the paid services.

A blogging platform was suggested because it is easy to use and to access. This makes it possible for the teachers themselves to update the website. If Laajasalo pays for the service, it can benefit from the auxiliary services that the sites offer. The amount gives them access to on-site support help.

Also, most of these blogging platforms were coded to optimize the websites they host. For example, they suggest paying customer which keywords to use so. This simple move often pushes the site up on the first two pages of popular search engines.

These platforms are likewise equipped with online analytics tools, which allow website administrators to understand how online visitors behave. Some of the data that can be fished are the search words that led users to the site, the amount of time a user stays on the site, popularly viewed posts and the geographical source of online traffic.

The proposed website must have very clear information about the course and Laajasalon Opisto. The site should highlight the course's best assets -- the teachers and the methods used. Laajasalo's teaching methods should also be made clear in the website to encourage those that wish to speak Finnish on a relatively faster pace to enroll. Since students have to pay for the course, the school should communicate that the enrollees are paying for a good product.

In connection with this, their immigrant student's past and present experiences while learning in Laajasalo should be a big part of the marketing narrative. One of the best ways to communicate the service's effectiveness is by highlighting the students themselves. Future students would be encouraged to go to the school and pay the price if they read about the immigrants' positive experiences. Since personal networks are also crucial, these stories could also be linked to relevant social media accounts and other immigrant blogs.

I suggest that the school's Finnish teachers (in cooperation with IT personnel) would be in-charge of this project. If the school lacks the current human resources to do such a website and social media strategy, I suggest that it contacts reputable vocational schools and/or Universities of Applied Sciences for student trainees or thesis workers. By using students, the school can also benefit from their updated knowledge of social media and web trends. In particular, they can utilize the students' time, skills and education to measure, which digital marketing efforts are worth investing into. The timeline for the website and suggested thesis project should be no more than one year.

Regarding word of mouth marketing, I suggest that Laajasalon Opisto would also commission a study on how it can capitalize on its students' social networks to gain customers. This study can be tied to creating a social media strategy because nowadays one of the natural ways consumers share their experiences are via online networks.

## **7.2 Service Delivery Plan**

One of the greatest challenges of service firms is to ensure the continuous service quality to the customers (Mahapatra 2013a). Thus, most service firms have to create and implement a services marketing plan to ensure that customers have positive experiences during the delivery process.

For Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish courses' service delivery plan, I am going to utilize what is known as the Customer Gaps Model in Services Marketing. As touched upon the literature review, this model measures the distance between customer expectations and customer perceptions. Closing the gap between what customers expect and what they perceive is critical to delivering quality service – it forms the basis and the starting points for the Gaps Model (Mahapatra 2013a).

I will compare the service provider's perspective with those of the students. Then I would address how wide the distance is between these differences of opinions. After which, I will specify ideas on how the service can be maintained and/or improved.

All suggestions will be addressed to Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language department.

### **7.2.1 The Service Gap**

In Chapters 6.3 and 6.4, I listed down the courses' strong and weak points according to the participants. To summarize, the courses' strong points are the pedagogical methods used, the fast pace of students' learning, the good teachers and the students' understanding of their roles in the service delivery process. On the other hand, the weak points include poorly chosen cultural trips, low interaction between the immigrants and the native Finns on-campus and lack of extra resources for motivated learners.

Knowing these, I wanted to discover whether the service provider, represented by one of the Finnish teachers, was aware of these customers' perception. I examined the interview transcript and searched for the teachers' perspective on the issue. I then compared the students' opinions with that of the teacher's (appendix 10). All of my discoveries are explained in the next chapter.

### **7.2.2 Service Gaps Analysis**

I saw that the teacher, who was also the one of the main service providers, had a clear understanding of most of the Finnish courses' strengths and weaknesses. Particularly, the teacher was aware that their pedagogical methods were effective. She was also aware that the students found both teachers effective and professional. She knew as well that the students understood how diverse the Finnish classes and thus cannot completely put the burden of class atmosphere and learning pace on the teachers.

She voiced her confidence in their pedagogical methods. She trusted that they were effective which is evidenced by their students' fast pace of learning. She mentioned that her contacts in the Employment Office affirmed that Laajasalon Opisto produced Finnish language learners who communicated more proficiently than those enrolled in other courses (Olander, A. 8.11.2013.).

She also affirmed that immigrant students were satisfied with the class atmosphere and the overall quality of teaching. Often, her students would tell her how at Laajasalon Opisto, they managed to gain fluency in Finnish whereas in previous classes, like at the University of Helsinki, they did not succeed (Olander 8.11.2013.). Below are some examples of statements that encapsulate how aware the teacher was of their strengths:

*“Well, I think, uh, it makes me happy that some people haven’t survived in other courses like at the university or so and they say that this is the first course where they actually feel that they are learning or they say that this is the first time that they can actually speak Finnish and people love it that we are speaking so much and that they appreciate it. And some of the students who have more experience in teaching and pedagogy they say that it’s a good method that we are not starting with the grammar and writing but that we are doing things. And it’s, it’s practical.”*

*“Because we have noticed it if we do it the other way around, first teach, I’ve done that as well unfortunately. That first teach the grammatical subject and then we start using in dialogues or so. So the students become very, like, very, what’s that conscious of their language and their speaking is not free because they are thinking about the ending of the word or something like that and they are correcting themselves all the time and they put all the focus, not on the communication but on the grammar. And, they, so, they actually stop communicating. That’s what happens. And for some of them, it’s too difficult also.”*

Regarding the weaknesses identified earlier, she was aware that students were disappointed over some organized trips. Nonetheless, she claims that not all the trips have been received negatively. She described successful visits to the Finnish Parliament and local sports halls as positive experiences. She enthused that such social meetings were good because it mirrored Finnish life and culture. She did not go into specifics as to which trips did not work. She did understand that maybe some trips might not have been received very well. However, because of their departmental constraints in budget and resources, they could not be too ambitious. They did their best to come up with creative ideas on how to showcase Finnish culture and life without using too much money and time (Olander, A. 8.11.2013.).



Here are some examples that encapsulate her understanding of student feedback related to the trips:

*“Yeah. So it has formed during the years. We have tried different kinds of places and some of them haven’t worked that well. Some of them, uh, well, ah what could I say? We use our contacts and, it, of course money matters. We cannot go somewhere that is, that, very expensive and, and we try to, uh, now I think, we really would like to have where they can go also without the teacher not just the sites or museums like everyday places to give them possibility, like, outside home so that they wouldn’t be stuck in their homes like we’ve been doing sports, more sports and that sort of things and I think it’s useful to introduce them places where they can actually spend their time in Finland wisely.”*

*“Yeah, that is interesting because actually I’d like to. I don’t know. I think we should consider our strengths more and I’m really happy that you are doing this work because it’s part of the process. I see it as, as, for us, something that is very valuable because we should consider what are our strengths and, and, and work more on the direction of those strengths and not to compete with the very basic Finnish courses but really like, because we have the community of Finns around us. We should use that advantage more and we should really because now we got this feedback from the Employment Office that our students are learning really fast for some reason. They are slow learners but still they are learning faster than some other students. So, we should really, uh, think why is it like that and can we enforce the aspects that makes our students learn fast. So we would need some time to think about it and I think that we should have more, ah, cooperation with the working life. Like they should have trainee periods or some kind of like trainee, I don’t know what you call that but...”*

On the suggestion of having common projects between the immigrants and the Finns, I discovered that such activities were done before. Cooperation projects were not implemented during the term when the study was done mainly because of the native Finnish students’ busy course schedules.

The teacher also mentioned that one factor why it has been hard to schedule such join activities because of the native Finns’ tuition fees. Other courses charge, like the journalism students, charge as much as 4.000e per school year. As a response, the teachers in-charge of these courses want to make sure that the students are com-

pletely satisfied with the education they are getting. Sometimes this means that the teachers do not want to take time away from their curriculum, especially for projects that appear inorganic to the subject matter.

Here are some interview snippets that can give light to the issue:

*“Yes. That has been our goal during this year and sometimes it has been more successful and sometimes less but we do have activities like this cultural festival that we make together and some, some lessons. And, and the Finnish journalism students have been interviewing our students and, this, sort of things. And I think the Finnish students, they really like it. Like I’ve been, I’ve been teaching these school assistants students and they’ve been working with our Finnish learners and everybody liked it especially the Finnish students. But what is to get other, other teachers convinced that it’s worth. Because these other teachers they are very strict about their own curriculum. They don’t want to have any extra activities and this is something that they consider extra. So, so sometimes it’s hard to convince them that we should do this together.”*

*“Yes, well we’ve been, we have this, ah, singers class. I don’t know how to call it but, so, we, one year we had like, uh, them teaching songs in Finnish our students. So that was nice. But they really have such a tight schedule so that was difficult. And then we have this like acting or theater students and we had, like, um, some games and some funny activities with them and that was loved by all but they also have a tight schedule. And then with the journalism students we, they made the interviews about our students and then there has been some, some with media students, some videos made. And, what else? And with the, what’s that, the disabled students we’ve been just having some class together. Like they were following H’s class and I don’t know if they had some games or talks together.”*

That being said, the Finnish language teacher herself affirmed that they should put more effort in organizing shared activities between the Finns and the immigrants. She was of the idea that one of Laajasalon Opisto’s core strengths was its community. The school’s physical space and atmosphere allowed for natural interaction between the groups. She thought this was not the case in other schools where Finnish is taught to immigrants. To her, Laajasalon Opisto has an advantage that should be capitalized on.

The main difference of opinion between the teacher and the students were on the subject of the integration between the Finnish and the immigrant students. She thought that the immigrant students felt integrated with the Finns, which as mentioned earlier was not the case. For example, she enthusiastically said the following in the interview, which was not shared by her students:

*“And, and people love the small community. This school and where it is, its environment, and the, the Finnish students, the activities with them and the fact that many teachers know them and greet them and also they like it that both teachers know them. So, they like that they have two Finnish teachers just two, but still they have and not just one. And, and I’ve heard that some people feel that the teachers understand them well or are supported to their life and that makes me happy. Yeah because I think we are.”*

On the issue of providing extra resources for motivated learners, unfortunately the topic did not surface in the interview. She was cognizant that some students, particularly those who learn have high educational degrees, experience moments of frustration with the courses’ structure. She said more educated students usually desire more grammar. However, as described earlier, she was of the opinion that teaching the Finnish language’s functionality was a much better approach than nitpicking on grammar.

In any case, she did seem to not find the issue of providing added resources too relevant. There was no indication that she welcomed the idea of providing extra materials for the students. Instead of concentrating on recommending extra study tools to the students, she believed that the Finnish teachers should simply concentrate on improving the materials they provide for their students. Her opinions are succinctly expressed in the following statements:

*“Yes, we’ve been changing it, like, ah, during the years. When we start, when I started by myself I was kind of lost because we still didn’t have any book so I could, so I just wrote down some everyday matters like food, health, weather. And then I just put them in some order and started teaching and then we, we were working together with Heikki and we decided, okay we have to do something more structured. And we tried to put the grammatical material and the, the everyday subject together in like, uh, logical pairs but it was kind of artificial as well. We didn’t. It was not so good. So, in the*

*end, we just described it quite freely like what, what are the things that they have to know after they finish and then we just started with something and then kept in mind that these things still have to come. And now we have a book so I think we both, we follow more or less the structure of the book like only if the book is introducing food vocabulary we also do something like, something about that. But we the grammar we don't follow the book because the book is grammar based and it doesn't work out really well with our students except for other kinds of students."*

*"Funding and yes, and have made some materials that are open on the Internet. But they are quite lame. Really. They are quite lame. Well, I don't know. Well, I don't want to be like, ah, yeah but I have to say that they are not so innovative. They are very traditional like they give you a text like this is what you speak in a daycare like they nicely think about the life of an., an immigrant who has a family here yes. But then, then it's like this is the, this is the dialog in the daycare. And, and, and this is the grammar thing that we study in this chapter. So it's, it doesn't really challenge you to, I don't know. I don't need this kind of sometimes we've been thinking that we should make our own material with like ideas for the teachers. Because many teachers, they lack ideas on how to teach this thing. Because, you, for small students you really have to, if you have one new thing like apartment, like stuff in the house. You cannot teach like you need lots of different kinds of exercises to get it through. And, so, you have to be innovative because they all have to be different because otherwise it's really boring. So so this kind of ideas about this games and surprising stuff like competitions and, and quizzes and I don't know. This. Like new ideas. That is what is..."*

### **7.2.3 Summary of Service Gaps**

I concluded after this exercise that the service providers understood their consumers. For almost every point raised by the students, the teacher had a ready answer though she was not made aware of the feedback beforehand.

The chart in the next page (Table 4) represents how well-matched the students' and teacher's opinions were:

**Table 4: Summary of Service Gaps**

<b>Student Perspectives</b>	<b>No or Very Little Service Gap Exists</b>	<b>A Big Service Gap Exists</b>
Teachers are good	x	
Methods are effective	x	
Students are aware of roles	x	
Class atmosphere is good	x	
Some trips were counter-productive	x	
No integration with Finnish students		x
Need for extra materials		x

Because most of perspectives matched, I am confident that the service gap between the students and the service provider is very minimal. The school's Finnish language department was generally able to meet the students' demands and expectations. Although there seemed to be no systematic way of collecting student feedback, there was a good consensus between the two groups. It is true that differences of opinions exist. However, I am of the opinion that they could be easily addressed by implementing minor changes in the service delivery plan.

Therefore, after taking all these into account, I conclude that Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language department is able deliver quality services to its immigrant students.

#### **7.2.4 Service Delivery Plan**

This service delivery plan can also be considered the internal services marketing plan. It is meant to zero in on improving customer satisfaction through the maintenance and improvement of service quality.

The service delivery plan should not be misconstrued as a curriculum design. Curriculum designs are concerned about specific teaching techniques and methods, which this plan does not cover. What it does discuss are suggestions related to service operations, service experience, service outcome and service value or what Johnson and Clark (2001 in Goldstein, Johnson, Duffy and Rao 2002, 123) as the service concept.

### **7.2.5 Service Outcome**

The service outcome simply refers to the service's benefits to the customer. Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language department main goal should be to help its immigrant students fit into Finnish society. It can achieve this through effective Finnish language instruction and well-planned activities that enhance interaction with the immigrants' local environment.

### **7.2.6 Service Operations**

According to Johnson and Clark (2001 in Goldstein et al 2002, 123) service operations are concerned with how the service is being delivered. For this particular aspect, I believe that Laajasalon Opisto's service delivery mode has already been established and does not need any changes at the moment. By this I mean that having full-time instruction inside a physical location does not need to be changed. The data from this study shows that the customers are happy with this arrangement.

### **7.2.7 Service Experience**

Laajasalo's immigrant customers' general service experience has been positive. However, in order to maintain and improve service quality as well as to meet the service outcomes, I make the following recommendations.

First, I recommend that a service design must be done by the current teachers. The design should be a short yet clear document. There should be guidelines on what should be taught by the middle and the end of the Finnish courses. Necessary trips that are a must every year must be identified. More importantly, the current teachers

should list down who their contact persons for the trips are. As it is, many trips are dependent on the teachers' personal networks (Olander A. 8.11.2013).

This should not be mistaken as a curriculum design. The main objective of the service design is outlining what the service outcome is (which in this case is Finnish fluency and increased integration to Finnish society) and how they can be met by the school. Meanwhile, a curriculum design usually comprises of a course's detailed and planned content. In this situation, it would have specifics of what knowledge transferred to the students. In my opinion, the lesson's curriculum should be decided on by individual teachers based on the students' profile and could not be generalized. For example, a curriculum can be altered if the teachers find that most of their students are educated and are thus more interested in advancing faster in grammar over another.

In relation to the service design, it should be updated yearly. It would be a smart idea to involve the students in the process. There are various ways to gather feedback. The teachers should devise ways for students to speak freely and honestly. It is true that Finnish culture is very honest and open but not all cultures share the same values. Some are averse to correcting or opening up to authority. This is why I advocate that the teachers would leave the room when the students discuss their opinions of the course. The students can summarize their discussion through a written report.

Second, I propose that the immigrant students are given the chance to plan and execute one to three of the class cultural trips. This is in response to the first improvement point that the students identified, which was the need to contextualize the trips into their Finnish language learning process.

The benefits of this are manifold. The students can actively participate in their learning by doing personal research on Finnish culture. They can choose to go to places that are of interest to the group. They can also tap into their existing social capital.

I raise this point because I observed that the teacher overlooked the students' social leverage. As pointed out earlier, Laajasalo's customer profile were adults with profes-

sional competencies who also have family ties in Finland. Thus, there are resources at their disposal. By making immigrants arrange the trips, the school prods them to activate their own networks and apply skills useful for job hunting.

Finally, I propose that the Finnish language teachers mutually beneficial activities between the native Finnish students and the immigrants. I suggest this to address the sentiment that the immigrants felt separated from the native Finns. An illustration of one such activity could be that immigrants cooperate with students who are studying to become actors. According to the school's website, part of their yearly curriculum is to prepare a play. The immigrants could be asked to sell one ticket each. In exchange, the Finnish students have to talk with the immigrants about the play. This collaboration could spark natural friendships and connections. The time spent together would likewise be purposeful for both parties.

All these, I trust, would help Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses to improve their services to its immigrant students.

### **7.2.8 Service Value**

The benefits that the students get from the Finnish language courses they participate in qualify the service value. This study does not cover how to measure the actual value the students get from participating in Laajasalo's Finnish courses. Thus, I advise that the Finnish department finds way to quantify its courses' value.

They can do this by once again tapping into thesis workers from Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences. I particularly recommend students studying Business-related degrees. The study can cover and measure how well-integrated its immigrant alumni are in Finnish society. In practice, this can mean determining how to measure integration. Some suggested indicators that could be used are whether the immigrants have gained employment, found a study place and/or participate in Finnish activities like playgroups (for those with children). Through this, I hope that the school can qualify and quantify its Finnish courses value and perhaps, be able to implement a better price scheme for the courses if they wish to do so.



### **7.3 Follow Up and Future Research Topics**

The services marketing plan revealed that Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish department must focus on two things. First, it needs to focus on improving its communications plan. Second, it needs to maintain its service quality.

The implementation of the mentioned suggestions will take between 5 months to one year depending on how efficient the Finnish department is. I emphasize that even without much resources that the Finnish department implements some of the action points given as soon as possible. It does not overthink the recommendations. For example, the teachers can allow the students to plan their own cultural trips at any point during the school year.

It would be ideal that the entire process of improving the service and communication designs begin during the school year 2014-2015. Laajasalon Opisto must get in touch with Helsinki-based UAS like Haaga-Helia, Arcada and Metropolia so they can find thesis workers as soon as possible. I suggest that this is done at the latest on September 2014.

There are a number of natural follow-up topics that can spring from this study. Some prominent suggestions have already been mentioned in the Services Marketing Plan. Additional research topics could be a follow-up on whether the proposals raised improved service quality and coming up with a better price scheme for the Finnish language courses.

## **8 Laajasalon Opisto's Feedback**

Going back to the research objectives, my main task was to understand the customer's needs and to evaluate the course's strengths and weaknesses. To review here are the study's research questions:

This study's main research question was: How can Laajasalo Opisto improve its Finnish language courses for immigrants through services marketing?

As a non-employee of Laajasalo, it was not within the scope of the research to implement the services marketing plan. Nonetheless, I submitted my findings in writing to Laajasalon Opisto in May 2015. In response, the principal, Juha Matti Holopainen, wrote the following:

*‘I am delighted and gratefull to receive Erica Kononen’s thesis on our Finnish language courses in Laajasalon opisto. She has done some valuable research which will help us to improve our courses. I am also happy to hear that her research confirms the high quality of our courses and the competency of our teachers. This results in that the students are generally happy with our services which comes up in her report, too.*

*In Laajasalon Opisto our goal and vision is to help the needy of the society. I appreciate Erica’s suggestions on how to improve the interaction between the language learners and the native speakers from other courses. This will benefit both parties; on one hand having networks and contacts with the locals helps the immigrants integrate faster. On the other hand our other courses can benefit from the language students knowhow and skills. We emphasize and encourage cooperation and teamwork among our different study lines.*

*I also want to note that through her research Erica has pointed out our strengths and weaknesses of which we have been aware and which thus were confirmed. All in all I thank Erica for her time and effort to research on our courses and for her clear and thorough report.”*

His reply confirmed that I was able to fulfill this study’s purpose. Though it is beyond my control whether they act on my suggestions, I am hopeful that some of the points I raised would come into fruition.

## **9 Validity and Reliability**

Validity is another word for truth (Silverman 2005, 210). All researchers recognize the need not only for being accurate in measuring things but being logical in interpreting the meaning of those measurements (Stake 1995, 108). Validity is required to establish the trustworthiness of a research’s data and its subsequent interpretations. Good validity strengthens research quality.

Case studies are often criticized especially researchers those fond of quantitative researches. Skeptics often point out that cases have weak validity. Specifically, case studies are accused of being subjective, lacking rigor and yielding findings that cannot be generalized across settings (Patton et al 2003, 65).

In response to possible criticism, I took several steps in order to uphold my study's validity. One, I wrote the process of data collection and research in an online blog. I decided to do this because Yin (1994, 120-122) suggested that a case study researcher must keep a record of why certain theories were explored, why actions were chosen and how conclusions were derived to establish causal building. The blog also allowed me to have moments of introspection to demonstrate how my collective knowledge and experiences were influencing the thesis. According to Cresswell (2003, 182), such honest acknowledgement of personal biases helps uphold the research's integrity because it shows the maturity, openness and honesty of the researcher.

Two, I made sure I collected data from several sources. A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy that also enhances data credibility (Patton 1990; Yin 2003 cited in Baxter et al. 2008, 554). The case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence –documents, artifacts, interviews and observations (Yin 1984 cited in Patton et al 2003, 63). Each data source is one piece of the “puzzle,” with each piece contributing to the researcher's understanding of the whole phenomenon. This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case (Baxter et al. 2008, 554.).

Three, the research methodology, findings and project scope were written descriptively. Cresswell (2003, 196-197) advises that a qualitative research must be written this way in order to substantiate the researcher's interpretation to make the reader understand how assumptions were derived. The quality of the context description, creating links back to the literature and triangulation will all play a crucial role in determining the validity of the research (Patton et al 2003, 67). Hamel also notes that the degree of detail in the description of the case study thus serves to ensure that the

representativeness of the case under investigation has been defined in a manner that is clearly apparent (Hamel 1993 cited in Patton et al 2003, 66).

Four, with regards to generalizability I argue that my goal was never to create statistical generalizations but to expand theories. As Patton and Appelbaum (2003, 65) point out, the key is to build a proper case with analytic sophistication rather than to create something that can be replicated time and again. I believe that through the final services marketing plan, I was able to prove that services marketing can be used to improve immigrant language learning.

Five, on the subject of biases, I admit that this study was subjective. However, it was only because most qualitative case studies require that the researcher plays a vital role in the outcome. Qualitative designs call for the persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgment, analyzing and synthesizing, all the while realizing their own consciousness (Patton et al 2003, 68).

Six, I made my identity known to the research subjects explicitly. I also made it a point how I came up with certain generalizations, conclusions or interpretations when I presented the findings. Undoubtedly, the researcher's subjectivity does intervene, but to the extent this intervention is clearly stated, it then becomes objectified into an object that is clearly the researcher's point of view (Hamel 1993 cited in Patton et al 2003, 69). In relation to this, I also made sure that by using the first person when presenting the findings, I am able to distinguish my interpretations from the data collected. Through this, I hope that the discerning reader would be able to separate my personal analysis of the data from the data itself.

Seven, I acknowledge that the respondents' answers to the survey and interview questions were anchored on their personal comprehension of the questions. Their biases were based on their diverse cognitive, behavioral, educational, cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds. This can cause some doubt as to whether the data received were consistent enough to produce reasonable conclusions. Moreover, both the respondents and I had limited Finnish fluency, which led to some problems expounded on in Chapter 6.1. However, I negate all possible doubts by raising the

argument that as this thesis used a constructive worldview. It was necessary that I used the respondents' perceptions to create the reality from which I derived my findings. Moreover, data collection was done intentionally in several phases, which means I had the chance to correct mistakes in interpretations by gathering more data. I trust that the presumptions I made were fair, sensible and logical.

On the subject of reliability, Silverman (2005, 224) defines it as the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer in different occasions. For reliability to be calculated, it is incumbent on the scientific investigators to document their procedure and to demonstrate that categories have been used consistently.

Reliability, then, was the main logic behind anchoring all decisions on data collection, categorization and analysis on the conceptual framework. It was my compass to avoid deviation. Further, my analysis was grounded and categorized based on the main categories in the said framework. This was done in the hope that my findings, interpretations and conclusions would stand the test of reliability.

I also kept all my notes during the research process. All interviews were transcribed, recorded and saved as electronic files. The many drafts of this study were also saved electronically. I did this to give light on my thought processes. It also allowed me to reflect and to check every now and then whether my interpretations at different stages of analysis were radically different from each other. Fortunately, I discovered that my initial conclusions were close to the final ones. Though there were additions and subtractions, particularly based on my adviser's feedback, my overall output remained the similar.

## **10 Conclusion**

Laajasalon Opisto offers quality services to its immigrant customers via its Finnish language courses. I can confidently assert that Laajasalon Opisto does not waste its resources by offering these courses to immigrants. The school's aim to help the marginalized members of Finnish society is definitely achieved through the Finnish courses because the immigrant students are able to survive daily life in Finland.

The course's main strengths are the teachers, the pedagogical methods employed, the mature way the students approach their studies and the class atmosphere. The combination of these factors enables the immigrant students to learn Finnish at a fast pace. Their increased fluency in language increases their possibilities to experience full integration into Finland.

Laajasalo's main improvement point in terms of service delivery is related to the activities which the school chooses to organize and participate in. There is a slight dissatisfaction with the quality of trips and events which students are required to attend. This is mainly due to the fact that some trips do not appear aligned to the course's overall objective. The immigrant students also want to have more common activities with the native Finnish students than other Laajasalon Opisto courses.

One of the Finnish courses' weakest points is its external brand communications. The Laajasalon Opisto website is outdated and hard to find. Potential immigrant students would particularly find the website frustrating because all the text is in Finnish.

Through the services marketing plan, I addressed all the points, which were raised. Specific suggestions were brought into light to ensure that the Finnish department maintains and improves its services quality and overhauls its communications plan.

I found it very useful that I used services marketing to investigate how well the immigrants are being served on a micro scale. It was interesting to see the shift in my personal perspective when I applied services marketing to Finnish language teaching and immigrant integration. My former approach would have been focused on improving policies on immigrant education and integration. However, this research enlightened me that, perhaps, a more efficient way of helping immigrants would be to see the immigrant as a customer. This way of thinking certainly yielded more practical suggestions.

It was a sensible choice to use case study for my research design. I was able to collect the needed data in time. I also got a good number of participants, which con-

tributes positively to this research's validity. Collecting qualitative data gave me rich materials for analysis. In retrospect, using quantitative techniques alone might have been just as useful in assessing some aspects of service quality. However, certain recommendations might not have been effectively derived without qualitative data.

There is a wealth of future research topics on the improvement of Laajasalon Opisto's Finnish language courses. A natural spin-off from this thesis would be a follow-up on my suggestions. Additionally, researches on the Finnish courses' effective price points as well as suggestions for future funding can be helpful to the school. On a larger scale, I believe that each of Laajasalo's courses and Laajasalo itself will benefit from having marketing plans. A brand audit could also prove helpful for the school. These suggested studies will enable the school to remain competitive and relevant.

On a personal note, the entire process has been at times frustrating mainly due to the wealth of information, time constraints brought about my personal life and lack of initial direction. However, the entire process has been character building. I improved my time management skills. I was able to adapt to changes. I also showed resourcefulness when gathering data. I was patient and deliberate when finding useful literature for this thesis. I also practiced humility and willingness to improve throughout the writing phase. I believe that the skills gained and personal traits improved are more valuable than any numerical grade.

In the end, the experience of doing this kind of research has been pleasurable. I found the entire study challenging and exciting. To the best of my knowledge no similar research has been done on immigrant integration using business theories.

I find that this study reached its research goals and can be counted as a success. It also allowed me to explore my potential as a researcher and has made me a better person in the process.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Open Questionnaire

Hei. Olen Erica Kononen ja minä olen kirjoittanut minun gradua Laajasalon suomenkielen kurssista. Minun pitää tehdä markkinointin suunnitelman Laajasalon suomenkielestä kurssista. Toivoisin että sinä voit auttaa minua. Kiitos. 😊

Sukupuoli: \_\_\_\_\_

Ammatti kotimaassa: \_\_\_\_\_

Ikä: \_\_\_\_\_

Miksi sinä muutit Suomeen?

Pitääkö opiskella Suomea?

Miten sinä tiesit että Laajasalossa on suomenkielen kurssia?

Haitko toisesta suomen kielen kurssista? Jos kyllä, mihin?

Kirjoita 1-3 hyviä asioita Laajasalosta ja sinun kurssista.

## **Appendix 2: Open Letter to Students for Group Interview**

Hello! I am Erica Kononen and I am doing my Master's Thesis for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. My research topic is on how Laajasalo can improve its service to its immigrant students.

I will conduct a group interview on 2 November 2014 from 14:00 in Laajasalo. I would like to invite you to participate so I can come up with good suggestions for your teachers. I would need between 8-10 people for the interview.

The interview will last about one hour. After there will be snacks for those who participated.

Please note that the interview will be recorded.

Please tell your teachers if you are willing to participate.

Thanks and hope to see you!

### Appendix 3: Group Interview Transcript

Researcher (R): Um, hello. Thank you for being here. I'm Erica. I don't know who you...

Student 1 (S1): I'm S1

R: S1. I know S2. He's from my church.

Students: S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8.

R: Okay. The first question is how would you describe your most ideal Finnish class in terms of from start to finish. What would be the factors that would make a very, very good Finnish course?

S5: Course or one class?

R: Well, from beginning to end so including...

S5: One day or the whole course?

R: The whole year. What would the most ideal if you had to...

S6: Every week. I want it every week.

R: Every week, yeah.

S2: Everyday of the week. The working day. Not only Mondays, Tuesdays. I want it five days. Intensive course.

S5: And if we achieve some results. Visible results.

R: So, what do you mean by visible results?

S5: For example before this course, I didn't speak in Finnish at all. I didn't want to. Even though I have Finnish husband, I was too shy to speak in Finnish. And when I started to come to this course, after one month, I started to speak Finnish with all my husband's mother's friends and everybody was really, uh, surprise that I'm speaking and it's good and in fact clear and everybody was really happy with me and I felt happy as well.

R: Any other...um, you can answer in terms of teachers, students?

S6: For example the course from Finnish to Finnish not in any other language.

That's it. Make it more effective. For example from Finnish to Finnish.

R: So you mean it's only in Finnish.

All: Yeah.

S6: Only in Finnish. Yeah.

S2: Lots of homeworks and tests.

R: Really?

S2: It keeps you on your edge, like you don't know when the test, so you are keeping on your edge. You always want to...everybody.

S8: And you want to see results too like how it went.

S7: I think, for me this is an ideal course. The one they teach at Laajasalo because, uh, learning Finnish here is not just about the linguistic aspect. It's not just about the language. It's about life. So by learning Finnish you are learning to be in Finland. It integrates both the, the, everything that goes around you, about learning the language and about living in the country. So, integration, yeah? It's yeah. Taking the Finnish language outside of the classroom. That's why I like it here.

R: You mentioned life in Finland. How does this support integration into Finland?

S5: For example, we study about hospital and if somebody steals something from our apartment.

S6: Call the police.

S5: Yeah. Something that can really happen in our lives. The next time we go to hospital, we can call.

S2: Just call then speak.

S5: And it's known situation already. It's not like, I don't know.

S7: But not only stealing in your house. Haha.

S2: Yeah.

S1: I had a campaign.

R: I'm sorry you had a what?

S1: A campaign. So I went into a meeting where all the people there, there was a Finnish man. They speak Finnish. They speak. So it wasn't difficult for me to cope up. You know, to study the Finnish language is a big thing for me. Yeah.

R: Is it everyone's goal to integrate into Finland, in the society or would you all want to have a job after?

All: Yeah. Absolutely. Definitely.

S8: And the people who have been this school got the good jobs after that.

R: What stories do you know of people who had good jobs after?

S8: Uh, two of my friends were at this school and they were both very good students.

R: Yeah.

S8: And after that one got, right after this school when he, she finished this school in December and in January she got a good job in office.

R: In an office?

S8: Yeah.

R: Yeah, so...

S8: And she said like, uh, she could speak Finnish before she got this school and now she's speaking very good Finnish.

R: So what methods have worked so far in your opinion?

S8: To speak. You don't want to speak because you don't feel to speak. And she said the same thing when she went to this school then she starts to speak because before, we're Estonian, we understand every word. She understood a lot but she said I didn't speak a word.

R: Do you mind that there is not too much grammar?

Most: No.

S8: Sometimes I would like to have more.

S5: Yeah, yeah. Me too. Sometimes it's good because if you don't know the grammar you cannot talk. For example, we studied today this grammar. We cannot say, I was in Paris or I've been in Paris before if we haven't studied the grammar today. So it's very important. Grammar, exercise and speaking to be all together.

S4: If I must say in a sense of methodological point of view, I think to have different kinds of activities like visiting the museum or watching some small tape or all these different things they have here, it's useful. On the other hand, on the grammar aspect, I think it's also important. Even though grammar is sometimes is not very popular it's, if you know the grammar, you can be independent. Create your own structures. You know, just to know the basic structure and you can just change verbs, follow this structure. I know this is very difficult in Finnish. I know they have so many essential step. In that sense you co-develop by yourself more and build more, more vocabulary and more sentences in grammar.

S5: But sometimes when the grammar is very difficult and unknown for example Finnish in Finnish for me it's very easy to make the connection in English because it's really easy to understand because you know it in different language and yeah like today's. We studied *imperfekti* and *perfekti* and this is like past simple tense in English and present perfect in English. So you speak English or Spanish it helps. Universal. Languages. So it's very easy. Heikki was trying to explain that it's very difficult to explain this so, we already know it in different languages so we get it already.

R: But do you, do most of your classmates understand why there is not too much focus in grammar?

S8: We understand but yeah.

S3: Beside from what S3 say it's good to know grammar but what I like he already mentioned many of them but, uh, in the beginning of this we are not more focusing on the grammar. That's very good because we don't scare or we don't embarrass to start speaking. So we can speak, like (snaps) child. And then when we know somehow we will be corrected. For example we have been saying stuff until today "*minä asun Suomessa kaks vuotta ensin*" for example. But that's not the right way, the right way is *asunnut Suomessa kaksi vuotta*. So, it helped. We will be correct. It's good at the start. We are not more grammar first.

R: What about the, um, co-students? Your classmates? You think that everybody is helping in co-creating the atmosphere or is it just maybe five people and then one is there (points to the corner)?

S5: In our course, almost everybody is working with small exceptions but if you don't want to study, nobody can force you to. If you want to go on Facebook all the time it's like, not participate, it's your own choice but (inaudible) people are really active.

S7: Also, it depends from course to course. You never know what kind of students who would be spending 25 hours a week. This course, personally, is very good. I mean, I like my classmates. We are very different. We think different but we are kind of responsible. In our class, in our course, when I was with S6 in other course, I think it was a good course too. I think there were a few people who were not as responsible as this course. You see? It depends because we are from so many different countries.

S8: The culture is so different. We don't know where they came from.

S2: One thing I like about this course personally for me, everybody has wife, husband. Because it's always like difficult when someone has different kinds of problems and then you try to bring it in the class. So people like irritating like to talk with him and everything. So that's what I like about this class. As she said everybody's like trying to (inaudible) and focus. Because we know why we are here so that is one important thing about this course. Because I've been in one place because of the way the people were, I didn't like the place. I left the place (inaudible).

R: So, I just have one question about this course again, about the expectations of everybody. Do you think everybody went into the course having the same expectations that it will more for everyday Finnish or are some people in the class really aiming to learn a certain group of words and vocabulary like some people want to be teachers after, I don't know. Would it help if everybody wants to be a teacher at the end of the course for example or is it good that everybody has different directions?

S2: Yeah it's good that everyone has different goals.

S5: It is pretty basic information what we study. It's not like special terminology or anything. It's everyday situations, in this course, the spectrum.

S8: I think that everybody has a different end. Who wants a bit more, he or she can learn more, find out how to learn more.

S2: Some people wants to go more higher. Some people wants to get the basic thing. They can move on with their life.

R: Does the school provide methods or things for those that want to go faster?

S2: I don't think this school provide everything. I think you provide solutions.

S3: Yeah because it has to be given everybody chance but you can make your pace as fast as you can by your own plan.

S2: Yeah it's motivation.

S4: In that sense, I think, in that sense, compare with other schools that I have in learning languages I think there are many alternative things here, uh, to learn Finnish. You can have small library. You know? With children books, movies or with something that will encourage people to take this kind of books to take them and try to read them. And I'm sure there must be many, you know, many kinds of books with translations. Like you know the French and the Europes, they have these books with one language on one side and another language on the other. You know there's a lot of, of material that you can use and here I don't have that. I remember once I asked for that. I said you know I would like to have some books to, to, like, like, easy books to read to my level and they say we don't have.

S5: Yeah but we went to library with the school and take library card and it was our homework to take a book or movie or something and then present it in school. At least in our group, I don't know if your group has done the same. But now you, if you have been that day, you now have library card and you can have unlimited access to all kinds of books. So it provides if you want.

S3: Yeah, but you know.

S4: Yes, there are places where you can rent them.

S5: No, from library it's for free.

S3: No, also for free. I mean, but the thing is, if you have things here in school, it will be somehow more approachable.

All: Yeah, yeah.

S1: Resources.

S5: If I know that I can, you know I can borrowing a movie, you know I will do it here. Maybe I can go to the library but I will be you know...

(Everyone talking at the same time.)

S7: I think Bosco's idea is excellent. To have a little library. This is, at the end of the day, is also a language school. It makes perfect sense. Of course, yeah, they took the library...

S1: Or a list of reading that say that could be good.

S8: It can be like ten or fifteen books or...

S7: Not too many. Just a little bit.

S4: Movies or cartoons or all these things. I can find them outside this place but just to have them here would be somehow...

S7: Motivating. We could stay in the afternoons as well. Oh I am staying in the afternoon in that little room studying Finnish, making my homeworks, it gives...

S1: I can also understand if the school doesn't want to take responsibility for the, buying books and renting them or like, uh, giving them out to students because there are persons, that they don't come back so you know. I think then also, also motivating and encouraging your students to go into the library, to go into the Finnish life to say you know these are these books that you want to read, you know? Go to the library, it would help you with life.

S4: In that sense, you know, even for I like to do it, you know?

S1: Hmm.

S4: I go to the library, to the university library. It is a very scary thing, you know? I mean, even when I'm looking for English books but if I go there to look for an easy Finnish book to read is not so...

S1: It's not easy. True.

S4: It's not easy.

S5: You can ask...

(Everyone talking at the same time.)



S4: Of course you can get all that things outside but the thing is if you want to make this school or the idea of this school is to offer a better service and to be competitive against other schools, to have this service, it would be good. You know? They cannot have it. They can just say to us, you know, there's the library, you can go there and you know, that's it. But if they want to be competitive with other schools or they have, they want to have this nice service it will be very nice, to know that here, I could have some books and you know that there is that section, if you have been studying Finnish for one month that section, is for you. In the second month, you can just go to the second level. In the fourth month, you can just that level of books, movies, I mean, books and movies. You have all this selection of cartoons so you have been here two months you can see all these cartoons. You have been eight months, you can see this. It will be somehow very motivating to students, to approach to them.

S1: It's also results. That's also results.

S8: And the other thing, they don't have to be new. People can donate them. They have like. I'm sure that you have like a bunch of children's books which you didn't read anymore or somebody else or whatever. They can just donate them to school.

S7: The students themselves. *(everyone talking at the same time)* Ask other students.

S3: Because when we went to the library, we were asked to choose books, I chose children books. But when I came home, this is not children's books cause the words were difficult knowing that okay, I'm choosing easy, but it was difficult. So I had to Google. This might teaching me how to do translate but it was very stressful thinking it was easy but it wasn't easy. So like, the teachers know our problem. They know where we know and where we assess to so they can put the books there and they know our level. Okay, so this is the words we do know then they put the children or adult books.

R: Now, that we have been talking more about motivation because these kinds of materials basically about motivation. How do you find the motivation of the whole class? How can students be more motivated to go to class everyday knowing that not everybody is actually required to be here everyday.

S3: You should be self-motivated. I know what I'm here for. I know what I want to do. I have, you have to plan your life. Like this is like, I was working back home and I have a very stressful for me, because no working and always staying at home is something. So, I always want to study, always want to learn. I've been having a spe-

cial book for translating my, my job, um where's from English to Finnish. That one I have my two hours to do. I go there. I know what I'm going to say, what I'm going to speak. So first of all you yourself must be the first thing.

R: But how can the teachers or the school support everybody's motivation?

S2: He, he, once Heikki called us. He's been calling us one by one and asked what do you want to do, what do you want and I said this is what I want to guide you and we have been coming people from *työhojajas* like, oh, I know there is *oppisopimus* so I don't need to go to all these schools all the way again. So it's like...

S6: Also for the program for the week because he will tell us for the week program so for example in the middle it can be like little bit trip or something or some fun and learning maybe prepare for the program.

S1: Okay, like me, something that motivate me is like I saw some student who are very good in Finnish so that motivate me.

S5: Me too.

S7: To have a competence, in a good way, in a positive way. We are competing. Wow, sometimes I think I want to understand everything that my classmates are saying. That helps me because I want to understand everything so that means I study and actually this motivation comes from within. Really. From outside it's just a plus but it comes from within. So one thing that was good this term is for example we had this presentations about our culture. Or was it last term?

S6: Last term.

S7: Last term and this term. For example, I talked about Nicaragua, my culture and everybody did. I think that was good because it motivates us somehow to present who am I, who am I to the people that I'm studying with. So to this kind of things that come from within you know? To, I don't know how to explain, target yourself so that you can blossom to come out.

S4: Something that most likely would be interesting in the sense of having motivation, like I agree with S6, it's like, mostly it must be inner motivation to come. But, um, I have the impression that here, I don't know how the relation with the other students, the Finnish students that are here. Um. And that's my particular experience here but we don't mix really with them, you know? Um, I don't have, I don't have the chance to speak to them. I know that I can approach them and I can ask them things and you know like I could comprehend them but. Somehow if there were some activities that somehow they were forced to talk to us or to have this, this

change, you know, of trying to talk, trying to, to explain something to them and they explain something to us. Because it's a shame that they are here and we don't really, it's like two, what I perceive, I don't know...

(3-4 students talking at the same time)

S4: It's like two, it's like two different groups of people and when they have, even when we have, when they have, I think when they have these activities together, um, it's just, it's anyway two worlds apart because they do speak Finnish very well, of course and we do not speak Finnish so this interaction, it's very difficult. We try to have, we need to do certain things like to present something or you know, and we have to do it so we say, let's just move to English. You know? And what happens is they start doing something, you know? And there is no really this, this...

S2: Communication.

S4: Communication and integration and I don't know 'cause I'm not. I don't know the situation of these students, how the situation of the, of the school you know, the director of the school. But to have one-to-one with the Finnish student. (*noise*) You know, what I understood is that they are, they are learning to be assistant teachers. We are, we are like kids in Finnish, you know? So they can practice with us, with games for kids. I mean, I will be okay to learn the colors in a game for kids.

S2: Yeah

S4: And I would be happy when a Finnish student tries to explain me that ask with verbs with a game, you know? I mean it will be so easy and they will, they will know that we don't have the level to talk to them about how to present my country because they imagine that, that someone that doesn't speak English, you know, comes and tries to say you know, we have to present my country. Wow!

S7: That is a good idea.

S4: The vocabulary would be so high.

S2: I believe what you're saying but in a, in a sense, this school can't provide everything. So sometimes, those people you can talk, ay, you can have it direction with them. Remember last time we were coffee, coffee. Some of them like to talk, some were a little bit shy. So all you need to do, from there is, is start the conversation.

S4: I know, I know. I said it. I know you can do those things by yourself. I can just approach them and try to have a conversation and some of them are nice but like a systemic thing from the school...

(*Three students say yeah.*)

S4: ... You know, like a systemic thing for all students and it will not depend on how is my behavior there. From a systemic point of view to have this, forced relation with Finnish students, it will be, I think much better for the whole... (*noise*) they will not be afraid to talk to Finnish students. They will know that our level is very low and they will, they will come with the mind that they are here to teach us. You know? And we can develop and after that we can have this relation as friends.

S6: Yes.

S4: And we can just go from learning colors to talk about how, how did you find the country.

R: Your life.

S8: Yeah.

S4: And you know how and if there is no really, if they are not forced. I don't know forced. There must be this...

S2: Introduction.

S4: This introduction. To have this once a week. You know, if once a week we have this one hour or two hours with one Finnish student trying to explain something that we learned during the week or she or he is trying to teach us in his own way what we saw during the week that will help and that will motivate us some of us to come especially to this school.

S7: Yeah exactly. I think that is a very good idea for the first course and we could even go beyond for example our course at the moment we should be able to, to interact more with people. So for example, what we can do for this course is we can have a placement. Because the other day, Erika was saying here that they teach photography, they teach theater. They teach so many things. So for example we could have like a calendar that everyday, us, who are in the second course can go to one other courses to listen. But for example, we can make a presentation, ten minutes presentation who we are and then be with them whole day. For example we stay with the theater people, we interact with them, we are with them. And we can do it because there are many, many different departments here. So the teacher, Heikki, can divide us so we spend one day in their class and before. And then they get to know us personally and we get to know them...

R: Would it be based...

S7: ...And we get to do what they do and we learn Finnish one day for example.

R: Would it be based on your interest or would be based on Heikki's recommendation?

S7: Well, here they have art, they have handcraft, they have music. Yeah. They have many things.

S2: It doesn't have to be, to be based on interest. It's so many different areas.

S7: Yeah.

S2: In every area you will learn something.

S7: But for example if you like singing, you would choose that one, if you like theater, if you like photography, graphic design. If you don't like anything, well, take...

R: Something.

S7: ...Closest.

S8: ...Good if they speak to you too. It's not like I'm going there, sit there, like, stranger.

S7: If you make a presentation at the beginning, a powerpoint presentation and that helps you to study. Finnish people are really nice and they would, and they know that you, but they know that you came that day to be with them. They will not leave you alone.

(Everyone talking at the same time.)

R: Go ahead.

S6: About this issue, because it's good for example, we speak each other and definitely I understand what S7 say, we understand what we, because our level more or less the same. But when we speak, if we speak with a Finnish man, we are always learning, not only to understand, we are always going to learn because they speak way and then I listen and it's more practical and I will learn more. But of course, sometimes they are very shy. For example, one lady she asked me, um, interview, to interview me. I say okay it's fine. She say it's good if I send it through email and if you send it through email. You know. It's will be better if she just come, of course, I'm good in email. But at the same time we will interact, I will learn something and she will get what she want in the interview.

R: Yeah.

S6: Yeah, you know, it's, uh.

R: Yeah because there are journalists in this...

S6: No, she's not from journalist, I think she's from assistant teacher.

S1: Yeah.

S6: Teacher's assistants, yes. So how can she, if she be, she might be shy but it's good to interact with them.

R: It's also good for them actually. That's the point.

S6: It's good for them. Yeah. Half, half.

S4: You are one who is doing the marketing plan.

R: Yeah.

S4: But as a competitive advantage for this school to have this integration once a week, it would be an enormous advantage comparing to other schools. Because that is something you are looking for if you are in a language school. I mean, you go there, you try to learn the language but the most important thing is that you are waiting, hoping, is to get to know local people. You know? If I go to one, one language course in, in Italy. I want to be there, you know, learning. My other classmates from all around the world but what I actually need from there, what I actually want is to speak with Italians. You know? And if I had to choose two schools and one school said, now you will have five hours lesson, this is structure, you know, it will be very nice, blah, blah, blah. And then the other school you know show me, you know, you will have three hours or lessons and then you will be one hour, one day in one classroom, uh, S6 said. You know with Italians or with Finnish, listening and trying to make friends with them. And the next day you will interact with one student that is learning how to teach Italian to kids and he will teach you or she will teach you for. I think I will choose or a lot of people will choose the second option instead of the first option even though I will you that in the first option, you know, I would believe in the second option, I would learn more. And here, you have that option because this is not just a language school. They have all these different courses and if they say optional, like I can choose at the beginning of the course, you know, you can take three hours of lessons and you choose, theater, photography, journalism. Okay, at the beginning you will not understand a word of that. You will just be sitting there but that's the way, you know? And after some months, I will myself improvement. *(Two or three making side comments in agreement.)*

S4: Every week just sitting there, listening. Maybe the first weeks and months, I will not interact too much but in the second semester I will.

S7: And, and, and it again motivates you to study a bit because next week I will go with the Finnish people.

S8: Yeah.

R: But, but what about the activities outside of the school because I know that they arrange some trips. Do you have any suggestions?

S4: If I? I don't know or sometimes it's a waste of time.

S7: Yeah honestly.

S4: I will say, sometimes, it's a waste of time. (*noisy background*) I prefer staying in the classroom. Sometimes I mean it's nice to go outside and if I am not really motivated it's fine because I have to stay off but if you are, if you really want to learn and I hear that in the classrooms, it's a waste of time.

R: Can you give examples?

S4: Like go to the zoo. It's very nice to go to the zoo with one, together. It's very nice day. Three hours. It's good to go. Don't take it very bad. It's good to go. Yeah, some of us, we have never been to the zoo and that's the chance to go to the zoo and it's okay. But it could be much better, those kind of days, it's very, something more again mixed with Finnish.

S8: Yeah.

R: Can you give suggestions?

S4: Like go. I know. When I was studying French in Mexico, when the French students came to my hometown we took them to the zoo. And it was one Mexican and one French together.

S6: Tour guide or something.

S4: And they were just trying to chat and you were forced. And French students, and it was like half day, half day. So the French student, before 12 o'clock, he was not able, oh, he was not allowed to speak French and the Mexican knew that he would now have to speak Spanish but after 12 o'clock the French was not allowed. So we were forced to.

S7: Another idea is to have this going out, for example, in the afternoons. For example, Heikki gives us, you have two weeks to go with the, divided into groups and we go to the zoo after the school for example. Or not just go somewhere. Couple, three, hours. And the next day we come back here and in Finnish, we talk about it. Rather than spending the whole day and not, not getting a class. For example, I don't know, sometimes. You know? Yeah. Just to do it outside class hours and for couple hours, three hours. Or like project. Or another project. Guys, you wanna go see a movie one Wednesday per month, they are for free so if you want, that Wednesday, go see

a movie and the next day, you come, and you tell us what the movie was about. You know? Things like that. Instead of doing it when we should be there.

R: So you mean some people go the movies for that day and some people can go...

S7: But after the school.

R: Ah after school.

S7: Not spend one day from 9am to 3pm because what do we do? I spend my time with S6 and S8 and we speak English.

S4: That's true.

S7: We don't learn anything.

S5: The trip days, it's like most of the time only half a day they are occupied with teacher. But like it's supposed to be the whole day, only two, three hours. In the end, it's like, it just ends.

R: But trips are not necessarily bad?

All: No, no, no!

S8: It's good for Finnish culture and everything.

S7: We agree with everything. We do it. Or just reduce the time or do it as a project.

S3: It's good for this trip. All of them. But it have to be included also we are also language student. For example, if we go to a zoo some guide speaking in Finnish, just explaining and interacting with us. For example, if she is going to Africa department, she goes, oh, is it from your country? Where? Is it the northern part? Where is this animals is found?

S5: You know the teacher can do that.

S3: Yeah. And where we have to interact. Otherwise, I will hold my friend's hand and we talk about something.

*(All talking at the same time.)*

S4: Or you can just walk and put your headphones on.

S2: Some people always would, you know they had the exercise, they had some exercise when we went to the zoo...

S7: Ah, yeah.

S2:...You could go, you could go do that exercise. You know? You could stay with Heikki or Anni and you could still talk with them about the things you see. It's what you see yourself. You can stay with your friends and talk to them.

S4: I agree. The thing is you are talking about what you can do by yourself.

S2: Yeah.



S4: And the idea, the idea of what I think for her is not what you can by yourself but what you can do as a system of the school.

S2: That is definitely true but you know the school can provide everything, you know, like little children but still we are adults. You want to learn the language.

S4: I know. I know in that sense the school doesn't provide everything. You know? Buy if she's, she's trying to do a market strategy for the school and if she wants to differentiate this school from other schools, this kind of little things can make a difference.

S7: A huge difference.

S2: That is true. For some people it can also work as a demotivational factor. Ah, we are going to the zoo. Oh that is nice but then they are coming with some exercise. You know, I can go there, I can read those signs and I want to try to understand myself or with my friends or I have my dictionary. For example, you know? Or there is this tour guide that you have to listen to otherwise. It can also work demotivation. It's too much.

*(All talking at the same time.)*

S3: That's why I really why I before I came to this school, I went with (a student) because they do not speak English. So, every time you go to the shop, ah I want my size first, I didn't understand because I've been here for ten months and my first school only lasted for one month or so. So when I came with them, every time I went to the shop with (names other students), (student) speaks, ah, Spanish, (student) speaks, ah, French. I speak English. So, you must have to know only Finnish to speak with them. Sometimes we get to the shop like well. In the zoo, she was the one I paired with because when we go to the monkey she just said, she doesn't read this, she doesn't read English so when I read English, what does it mean? I have to explain it into Finnish, easy Finnish that I do. First, you can pair with other people who speak other language, it shouldn't only be with your friends. That's why someone *(incomprehensible)* is the best. Because I came here, I came here, many of them could speak English. I could pair with them one but I said to myself if I speak with S6. S6 speaks English and I must, when I don't get it, I must speak English with S6. But because I choose to always go with (a student) because she only speaks French not English.

S4: Yeah that's good to hear.

S7: Yeah and that's why, that's how the school, or, or the Finnish teachers could influence by, by, for example for the people who always want to be, who always want to be with people who speak English, we could have a project. Tomorrow, I am going with S2 to Kamppi to have coffee and well, you speak English. For example, Iran, English and then French. So that we are not forced to go to the movies. They could say. Please talk to each other. Heikki makes the trios and then we could decide what to do.

S8: We could do the project.

S3: Well (a student) talks to me and I don't understand and I told her we were together but your friend from Iran came and always you speaking to her in Iran, you sit by her, I was like. (Student) sitting here and I was like not understanding so sometimes, um, when I don't understand I just ask her. So I change here, came to (a student's) place. Now if I don't understand, she checks it in French. She tells me in French and I don't understand so I ask to check it in English. It's like, we don't understand so when she asks what does it mean, I'm like, oh then I have to try and try to get a Finnish word which is easy for her to understand.

S8: The project thing is good idea.

R: The project thing?

S8: Yeah. Heikki can give us like the idea what we can do.

S7: Yeah.

S5: I think the idea of this school is that although work is done at the class which goes like 4 hours and a half and it's like many people are having their own families and children. They can, I'm busy after school, so we stay here 5 hours and we do all the job here. Because no one will do homework if we have project. It's like no...

S7: When I said project, I was also thinking we are very busy. I am really busy after school. Actually sometimes my days start at 2 o' clock. That's why I said we will have two weeks and those projects can include for example S6 has two children and she is very social. It can include going to S6's house to have sauna, going with S6 to pick the children up. We can be flexible and we can adjust so that's why we have two weeks. It can include going with you with what you need to do. For example, today I need to do this.

S5: People will never think about doing it.

S7: That's why, that's the idea. Not everybody wants to school everyday because if we always start thinking not everybody wants, things can never be done. If we think

not everybody, we are so different. But the idea is to put the thing. You first start it. Make the system. You put it there. You try it and then you see if it works or not but the most important thing is to try.

S6: The most difficult thing is for the language school. People came from different country, different background, different things.

R: Everything.

S6: Everything is different.

S7: I agree.

S6: So, maybe, now, what we are, more or less we have the same idea in the classroom where we are studying. We cannot categorize at all because we are very different. Some people at all they don't want to come any of trip, any activity. They don't say anything like for example as a plan, next week this is the plan. They don't say anything but they don't come. So sometimes, it needs, of course it's a lot of job for the teacher but give a lot of (*inaudible*).

R: I'm sorry, give him a lot of?

S6: Give him a lot of options. We are like, we are afraid we have most things are common. I agree exactly what S7 has said or he, but the other might not agree.

S8: Yeah.

S6: You know, some they want to come to school. They want to study five hour grammar or what, nothing speaking. They want to go home. So, like, as we mentioned for example, to integrate with the Finnish is very excellent idea and at the same time we have to divided, because, something, because everybody I'm sure doesn't want to go.

S8: Yeah.

S6: They go to home. Sometimes, some it's like a...they want to do some grammar or something at class. Some can voluntary can go and practice that and then...

R: Some extra for, that is not extra. I understand that...

S6: Like option, you know? Because we are totally different, it's very difficult to be a teacher.

S7: And for those people who want to learn, oh I don't want to go, I don't want to go to Kamppi, I don't want to go to sauna, I don't want to go watch a movie, I want to study grammar. Let's find a home, a project, for that, for that trio that will include grammar.

S8: Yeah.

S7: Have many options.

S4: And two things. One is the, the, um as S6 says I think, the ones that we are here, you are leaving, uh, you're leaving aside a lot of people that will be very important for you to consider.

R: Yeah.

S4: That are those that they don't want to come because the ones that are here they are the ones who are...

R: Are motivated.

S4: We are motivated. Because actually they say, who wants to stay for this raise your hand, yeah we can stay one more hour and participate and we want to participate and we are motivated. But there is a group of people, that they don't have the same motivation. And it would be nice, it would be good for you to talk to them and say you know they maybe they have a completely different idea of what we, what we are thinking.

S6: Yeah.

S8: Yeah.

S4: And the other thing, this, this, this integration with the Finnish. Even though there is on Wednesday this café...

S5: Tuesday.

S4: Tuesday to speak with the Finnish in our own languages. And I remember the first and the second week, all my class was there waiting for them to have a coffee and none of them showed up. And all of them were there. I remember we were all very excited and we were all down, downstairs, in the dining hall, waiting for them. You know? And they, they didn't show up.

S5: Because they're not motivated to show up.

S4: Because they are, as I told you, two separate groups.

S6: Yeah.

S4: And I will tell you something that maybe politically incorrect.

S2: Uh oh.

*(laughter)*

S4: For instance, they don't mix us with the Finnish. We went to the theater there was a session, there was a play for us and we were with another group of Finnish students but there was the handicapped Finnish students. You know? So, I don't

have any problems because I have a, a cousin, it has Down and it's fine for me and you know?

R: Yeah.

S4: But it's just such weird you know. It's like weird that they are sending this play, this special play is for those who are learning Finnish and those who have...

S8: Handicapped.

S4: Who are handicapped.

R: It was a bit weird.

*(Several commenting.)*

S4: I mean maybe I noticed it because I am sensible to that kind of things you know for them. It was very nice that we are together. I have no problems. I am not offended because of that but that's the only situation to, to...

S3: To pair us.

S4: To put us.

R: Is it the only time you have been with Finnish students?

S7: No, it's not the only chance.

*(Several students talking.)*

S8: ...with the handicapped people.

S7: And also, and also, and also they came to see our presentations. One day when we were doing these presentations about our countries, it was about what we liked. They came, they, the group of, they came and they sat here. And actually that was not very good of Heikki because Heikki did not tell us beforehand. That day when we were already nervous about making a presentation, for example, myself, I was already nervous. Yes, I like to speak but I get nervous. That nobody can say, you speak well, whatever and I get nervous. But to know that there were, uh, ten handicaps here, the worst thing was when I was talking one of them started shouting I was fine with it but my heart was boom, boom, boom, boom, you know? I wasn't told about it before. It's like what S4 say, I'm okay. My sister has cerebral palsy and she is lying in bed for 34 years, she is handicapped. No problem with that. But it's that thing about foreigners and the handicapped.

*(Some laughter.)*

R: Okay.

S7: Why didn't they, why didn't they bring, uh, a bunch of journalists to come and listen to our presentation?

S4: Yeah. I don't want to be sensitive in that sense.

S7: But yeah.

*(Everyone talking at the same time.)*

S2: But that is going beyond, I think. I think that is more communicational issue between teachers because the *kulttuuritutori* where we were mixed with Finnish people there the other students didn't show up because the teachers happened to plan some other stuff during the day even though they knew it was there. There, I think, it was organizational issue but it is true...

S7: There is something about it. I think it is not on purpose.

S4: I know but...

S2: But I really, like what you said about the like going to zoo and being, those are the things like going to zoo, going to museum, those are the places where they can use those guides, those people who are studying that, those teachers, being teachers' assistants. Those places, those they can mix, you know? Teach us in basic Finnish like what is a lion like, how, you know? Yeah, this is a lion. *(Some noise)* Things like that. You know? Teach. Try.

S3: Like last time they, they interviewed one of us. Two people said if it was our program, you wouldn't come. Why should I come? So they just left.

S7: What do you mean?

R: What do you mean?

S3: They were supposed to interview us. One of the students about something if you want. Two people in this class said, if it was my program, you wouldn't have participated so they just told me and left because if it was our *esittely* they wouldn't have come. They have their own. Why should we visit them?

*(Phone ringing. Voice inaudible.)*

S4: On the other hand, I think here in the school, the, the, the...

*(lots of noise)*

S4: ...The principal, the...

S7: *Lehtori.*

S2: *Lehtori.*

S4: They could check see CVs.

S7: Yes.

S4: They could check and see CVs of the students they have here. And I think it will be very interesting for them because they can take advantage of the people they have here. To talk even in English and it could be something we could, you know?

R: For the other students or...?

S4: For the Finnish students. And...

S2: That is true.

S4: They could see and they could check, you know, we have a guy from Cameroon. He can talk, he can help the journalist guys to, to make um....

*(Students suggesting something at the same time.)*

S4: Or we have a girl from Latin America and he knows how to sing and dance, just take her to the theater.

S7: Yes! Yeah! Things like that.

S4: So that will, you know, increase the, the...

S5: Interaction.

S4: Interaction and that will put so, so much, um, international things to this school.

S2: That is true.

S4: Just the amount of knowledge that the students will have...

S7: Hmm. It will be amazing.

S4: You know? Because I have here, in my, maybe she's a Russian girl that she's expert or she studied Art.

S8: What?

S4: Arts. She knows about art. She's a specialist in art. It happened that she's here because she married a Finnish guy.

R: Yeah.

S4: I know about politics but I know about that. That was my life, my previous life. And now I'm here because I'm married with a Finnish. You know? But they can use, I mean, I can give them a chance and I'm sure they can, I know not everybody will be willing to that but I think some will be willing to, to go, to integrate, to find, to find a way to participate and integrate with them.

S2: That is definitely true.

S7: Yeah.

S2: And also these guys, we went to the theater on Friday, you know, you know those guys that were in school today. What they can do in response to that, let them come by to class and let them, let us interact. I went to say to them you know, sorry

that we left halfway because you were really good but no one understand any, anything.

S3: Anything!

S4: They should come. I mean one of these guys should come here and should...

S2: You know?

S4: ...Explain what you saw.

S7: Before you go, what you would see and then we are more ready for the sex positions.

*(Everyone laughing.)*

S7: You know, actually, Anni, Anni after the show, Anni told me that this is a way that was introduced by a theater director in the 50s to show everything with your bodies. Imagine if someone would have come beforehand to tell us that? That would have been...

S2: Yeah.

R: Yeah, yeah, there's a lot of communication.

S7: ...But we just go there and they start, ah, ah!

*(All laughing out loud.)*

S2: But then, even, afterwards, you can also go talk with them, hey yeah, you know, we saw that you were really good but what was it about?

S7: Yeah!

S2: No one understood anything!

S5: In class, Heikki said it was about three sisters.

*(All laughing.)*

S6: Three sisters and I find many boys are coming. What the hell is going on? You know?

*(Laughter.)*

S2: That was the thing. You know? Small stories and you know the play isn't to be understood but more to provoke some reactions. You know? Please tell that. Have conversation with us about what we think.

S7: ...To know the objectives of the activity or why we are being sent there. Why we are encouraged to go.

S4: We can ask them directly.

S7: Yeah.



S4: As, as, as, I'm sorry, S2 said think that they are here! It's not like they are so famous. They are here.

S2: They have been whole day here in the hall.

*(Lots of comments.)*

S4: ...One of them here or...

S2: Yeah. Or let them come to speak.

S4: It's really, I think the possibility of this school to integrate, as it happens. Because there is like two separate groups, really. Like the Finnish and then the foreigners.

And we, we get together in. We get together..

R: In superficial...

S4: During the...

S2: Archive. In the archive. And during lunch.

*(Laughter.)*

R: In the archive?

S2: In the archive. All the names are there together but there is not much interaction.

S4: There is not much interaction.

S2: There was this *Kultturitori* you know we were integrated with some, with this group over there. The people. And then suddenly there was this group of people, who were doing their studies about the, the, what is it? Human welfare or something which is in that other room. They were also suddenly there. We were, I was a bit like, who are those people? I never saw them during any, any of those meetings that we had.

S7: Yeah.

S8: They didn't want to speak with us so much. There was the one day well, I had the child with me, with the car. Oh, they weren't like willing to talk to you, what you can do.

S3: Or they can play.

R: Ah, I understand. The assistants. The teacher's assistants.

S6: Yeah, because they will make us, from the language point of view, to help us at the same time we would know about Finland because we are foreigner, I know, I imagine how Finland look. She imagine. Everybody imagine. Of course we live but when we are not acting so much. Of course, we have Finnish spouse. It's not so easy like, uh, you can interact and you know the culture. How it's going on. It makes it

easy not only, uh, by each other immigrant and immigrant. Maybe I know about Nicaragua.

S7: Yeah, because we share.

S2: It's also about, about, for them maybe it's like give, give a clear view or a clear expectation of what is the level of the people who are here, what kind of people who are here. Because maybe they see us all as refugees or people who come here, coming here, coming here...

S7: That's what we have been talking about.

S2: ...We are just coming here to study for free.

S7: Exactly. That we are not paying for our lunch.

S2: Takes our money. But you know I am married to a Finnish woman, you are married to a Finnish man, you have a Finnish boyfriend. You have?

S8: Estonian.

S2: You have Estonian. You are here for free money.

*(Laughter)*

S2: You are married to a Finnish wife. You are married to a Finnish husband. You know maybe they don't know that! You know. There is something which they don't know.

*(All talking at the same time.)*

S7: You know some of us that some us eat, that some of us eat, that some people go to lunch. They don't pay for lunch. That's what they know. This foreigner, they don't have to pay for their lunch.

S2: Yeah, this foreigner just there, getting from the social system, doing nothing.

*(All talking at the same time.)*

S6: Because foreigners, this KELA, it gives some extra money. Of course, I know how much they give. They think, of course, I don't want to generalize. Some people they think foreigner are studying, taking money, just because they get free money but they don't know our background. Maybe we can do much better...

S7: Some Finnish people. They do think like that.

S5: From our school?

S7: Not from our school but in general.

S2: Some people, some people are thinking like that. That is just like, you know when the course starts, organize some events that people just show the details like why are you here, that they know, like hey that's the guy, he is studying Finnish, he is

now here. Of course you don't have to have hours of introduction and they have to know your lifestory but even if it's like some, some, that they make a book. You know like hey you are starting your Finnish course here, in two sentences, why are you here, how you are and where you are from. And then they make a list or a poster that they hang there in the hallway or something. That they know, that hey, that's the guy from Spain. I would like to go to Spain to study to do my journalism major. I can ask him. Where are you from?

S7: I think it's important what S2 says. It's not like, about Hello! I'm a foreigner but I'm somebody in life. It's about doing it but strategically like that.

S2: Yeah, it's about creating.

S7: Yes. Another idea would be having a Language exchange in Laajasalo. Because I know many people who speak other languages in Laajasalo and this can be something freely. We can have tables here whatever from 2 o'clock in the afternoon and if you want to practice, I used to do this in, in Belgium. If you want to practice, you speak half an hour in Finnish.

R: The tandem.

S7: If the person wants to practice Spanish, half an hour. Within Laajasalo because like S4 said we have the world here. We have Finland here.

S4: If I can, I can. I will disagree with S7 a little bit on that one. In the sense that, I will agree then disagree.

S2: That's cool.

S4: I will agree first, I will agree first that activities must be very well, uh, thought because you can have activities thinking that they are you know doing this connection. Like for instance, let's go and interview the guys that are from Mexico. So, the guys from journalists, they come, they interview and then they go. That's not really integration. We are there. We talk. But that's it. You know? So, the activities must be really thought, really think what kind of activities they can be involved in and then the activities must be real, that's the point I will disagree with her, the activities must be real activities.

R: Real?

S4: Real. In the sense that like meaningful activities in the sense that they come here just to practice the language because in certain moments it's boring. You know.

S3: Yeah it's true.

S4: I mean, it might be interesting for those who like, who like languages, for those who want to improve but it can be boring. But if for instance, the guys from journalism, you know, say you are going to do this together from one guy from Nicaragua. You're going to talk about this and you have to work in English but also you have to talk one hour, you have to teach, to teach S6 words in Finnish. She doesn't know, she doesn't has, have the level to have conversation about Nicaragua politics but she can do a rapport?

R: Report?

S7: Like a documentary.

S4: A documentary about Nicaragua in Finnish. You will work in English. That's the assignment and during the process, S7 will have to learn some words in Finnish. You know. That's a real thing and it's a real assignment. They will not just come here and okay, I will talk about Spanish or for instance, I can teach them how to do certain things. You know? And I can maybe teach them in English but then we will have to do that in Finnish or some of them can teach that in Finnish so I will learn the vocabulary of something I know. So that's the real integration like that's the thing that will enforce.

S7: We could have something, for example, a language exchange, it would, that could be something more like coming from the system. This could be an optional thing.

R: Like there is an advertisement saying I would like...

S7: Exactly. Advertisement over there on the paper. Even if it's one person activity and it enriches the whole, whole community.

S2: There doesn't have to be a teacher or whatever involved.

S7: Yeah, yeah exactly.

S4: There should be assignments and there should be the head. I mean systemic that the head who wants to do this. It must be a systemic thing and should come from the top. The journalist guys should come and say, you know, now this is the assignment. There's a bunch of foreigners, you have to do, you have to go and interview them. You have to really plan a nice documentary about their countries and they could help you with your Finnish and will interact and you will have three hours every week and you will have two week.

R: Hey, thank you for your suggestions because I promised some time. But thank you. I think I got enough and you will read the final report and I'm very sure of that. We have some food if you are willing to stay.

## Appendix 4: Transcript of Interview with Former Student

R: Okay, can you please tell who you are and where you are originally from and what you do now.

I: Yes, I'm U.D. I'm from Palestine but I was born in Syria and what's the last question.

R: What are you doing now?

I: I'm studying in Laajasalon Opisto.

R: Ok. What are you studying?

I: Like teacher assistant.

R: Hmm. Ok. So my first question is how would you describe your experience when you took the Finnish course and uh when did you take the Finnish course?

I: Yes. Um from one and a half year I start to study Finnish language. One year I study in Laajasalon Opisto and half year I study in, la, ah, *mikä, Stadin Ammattiopisto*. This like *MAVA kurssi* for like, like uh, for continuing studying Finnish language.

R: And uh how would you describe your experience in Laajasalo and uh maybe you can compare with this MAVA kurssi?

I: Yes, it was a bit difficult because we are speaking another language so it's totally different language for us so it was at first difficult. Yes. It is. But uh like we have good teachers, Heikki and Anni. (*laughs*)

R: I make them listen.

I: Yes so that helps also like.

R: What about this *Stadin Ammattiopisto*? What was your experience?

I: I feel it's a little bit, uh, boring because I was studying in Laajasalo for one year. So when I go there I feel like it was different school from I use at, and I feel like it's different system and everything was different so I was preferring to be in Laajasalo more.

R: What was the good things about Laajasalo?

I: Uh, like you like you have friendly, uh, teachers and like the student have been so good also, like, I haven't seen same of them like outside even I didn't study outside too long.

R: But comparing from *Stadin Ammattiopisto*? What are you studying now? Can you please tell again.

I: Yes, I'm studying like, uh, teacher assistant in school and kindergarden. I can be working in the future.

R: So why did you choose to study that?

I: Hmm. I choose that because first I don't have so good language so I feel that I can't study in university or ammattikorkeakoulu lilke ammattikoulu can be good for me. So same thing like I was thinking like I would like some short school, some short course that I can graduate from it like if I want to study something else that can help in that I don't have to study such a long time and same thing I study *psykologia* so I feel like I'm going to that education section. So I prefer that like it was like good chance for me.

R: So back in Syria you were a psychologist?

I: Yeah, yeah but I just study for two years but I didn't continue it because I came here.

R: Can I ask what your reason is for coming?

I: Yes I can tell. First, I didn't think about that but like it suddenly happened that I get pregnant so we thinking that because we are Palestinian we don't have any nationality so I was thinking that I want my kids to have some nationality and...

*(Laughter.)*

I:... Something like at least like you don't feel like you are from Mars or from the moon because I was really tired from that because for me I'm still like looking for Finnish nationality. So it was like we have here that in Finnish that you can get nationality if you born here. I feel like it was good time to come and yes.

R: So you came here because of the Finnish citizenship?

I: Yes, that's the most thing, the most reason for that.

R: Okay, I have to check. Yeah how would you describe your Finnish course like what adjectives can you associate with the Finnish course that you had with Heikki and Anni?

I: What you mean like?

R: Like is it fun, serious, happy like any adjective that you can come up with.

I: Yes, Yes, it's all in same time. You have but at same time you don't feel like it's too serious like you study but in relaxed, like you don't have too much exercises or homework or something like at least what we have now. So you feel like and even if you feel like you, you pass, what is that?

R: Pass, yeah, or fail?

I: Pass in that or not it's not like a big problem. Like you study the language like...

R: As much as you want?

I: Yes, yes.

R: Was it fun to have those activities? Cause I know that in the Finnish course you have some activities, was it a good thing for the course for you to go to the zoo or go to the movies?

I: Yes, but sometimes there is some students have been a little bit angry from that. I feel that it's good for foreigners to know a little bit about Finnish *kulttuuri* and like uh to see the places because most of the people that, they don't know many places here.

R: Yeah. Sorry.

I: You can.

R: But now you are studying in Laajasalo again. Was it influenced by your experience with the Finnish language course? Like did you choose Laajasalo because you studied there before or were there other reasons why you choose Laajasalo now to do your teacher assistance education?

I: Ah, I don't know but it was like some, hmm, by accident it happening like that. Because I was looking for short time. Short time studying. But I'm not sure about that MAVA *kurssi* where I have study there is like *labihoitaja koulutus* and I was thinking about that but then I feel it's like it's not my professional. So if I want to study like nurses or something and same time I was thinking if I'm studying for two and half year or three years and then this is not my profession. It's just because I want to like, to improve my language it would not be so good after three years like, yes it was like by chance.

R: But are your classmates from this Laajasalo Finnish course, what are they doing now? Would you know what some of them are doing now?

I: Of our?

R: Yes.

I: Yes, I know, I know of one of them. He study *labihoitaja*. I think that next year he will have *oppisopimus* and, uh, most of them like, there's two, they pack to the. One of them she's now working, she's now secretary in some places. Some place. There is one she's back to Estonia. There is one she back to Russia. So...

R: They came back?

I: Yes, I think for some reason. I don't know. But I think that everyone has to choose his way in this life so, yeah.

R: And then I have one more. Now that you are studying this teacher's assistance do you think there's possibility that your course can join with the, the Finnish language course like you can teach those Finnish language students something as part of your program? Will it help you?

I: Like if I can help to learn Finnish language?

R: Yeah, yeah. Because some suggestion that came up was that teachers' assistants would go to the Finnish language course sometimes to teach them how to speak or they can go to the zoo...

I: I feel like, I feel like if like, like, if like Finnish people it can be more good I feel like for me not so good idea. When we have this practicing next week, our teacher has said for us there is place with Anni and Heikki that you can teach for, to be like assistant there. But I was thinking about that. I feel like it is not good idea to learn somebody the language which you are not ready about that. Maybe you can learn something wrong in that.

R: But for Finnish students you think it's a good idea?

I: For Finnish. Maybe, it's good idea cause maybe they can correct for us if you say something wrong because I think like that but I haven't, I don't know if it's a real idea or not. (*Giggles.*)

R: And then I have one last question. If you were now to suggest based on your courses after the Finnish courses like now you are studying this teachers assistance, in *Stadin Ammatiopisto*. Maybe there were good things there that they didn't do in Laajasalon Opisto Finnish language courses. Can you think of one or two suggestions?

I: Hmm. I don't know. Because every teacher have the way to learn the student. I think that also. That those teachers can have the, the experience to know the good way to learn this Finnish people or, or, or the foreign people how to learn this language. But it's better like, that I say than what I have in my brain.

R: So what do you mean? I don't understand completely.

I: Like I don't have any idea or anything.

R: You think it was a good course?

I: Yes it was a good, easy, not so many information but same time, they want to help us and let us know. Like I have seen many foreigner like they go to the courses but



they don't learn too much. I feel like it's a little bit this Laajasalo course is more special course but I don't know what the difference is because I haven't been in other courses.

R: So you mean in Laajasalo they actually learned Finnish?

I: Yes, more than other schools.

R: From what you have seen?

I: Yeah but also it depends on the student.

R: Yeah of course but from general observations?

I: Yeah, yes.

R: Alright, thank you.

*(Laughter.)*

## Appendix 5: Transcript of Interview with the Teacher

R: Okay, okay. Now. Hi. Can you please introduce yourself and what you do in Laajasalo?

A: My name is Anni Olander and I'm teaching the Beginner's Course in this Finnish Language and Culture.

R: Yeah and you have a second course taught by Heikki.

A: Yes, yes. Heikki's teaching the second level.

R: So how many students do you have now?

A: At the moment we have 21. I think we started with, uh, I think 26 or 27 even but for different reasons people have left the course. The reasons have been mainly that the Employment Office, uh, advised them to go to another course that is supported by them and, and, one student left because he got work. Those were the reasons.

R: So your, the employment office doesn't support your course.

A: No. They will support it so that, uh, that, uh the students will get this benefit. They call it *kotoutumistuki* this benefit. They will get it if they join our course and come there regularly. They will get it as well if they go to this other course but what they don't do is that they don't buy our courses so that these students have to pay for the course but if they take these other course, courses by the employment office then they don't have to pay and that's why these are preferred and they are the official courses and our courses are, they are called something like, what is that? It would be like *omaehtoinen* like self. I don't know what but, but it's like yeah, you don't understand, you understand the difference. That these are, the other courses are the official courses and our courses are supplementary.

R: Yeah. And so. How do you choose the students that you take into your course?

A: Yes. Ah. So we have interviews with every student, every applicant and then we have this, this test. And we test their accuracy in Latin alphabet and reading. Writing with Latin alphabet and reading. They don't need to speak any Finnish to join my course. With Heikki's course, they would need to have this certain level but we choose the students who are able, able to read Latin alphabet and write it and who are not above a certain level of Finnish. So then we advise them to go to another course. And also those who are willing to study everyday. We try to be quite strict with that like you have to be able to attend everyday otherwise if we find out that

they have a work or they have a child at home then we advise them to find another course.

R: So what are your course objectives that by the end of the year, what are they supposed to achieve?

A: Ah, yes. So, they, in my class, after this four months, they should acquire this level A1.3 minimum which means that you have to be able to survive in very basic situations in Finnish like you have to be able to list shopping list in Finnish, make a simple phone call to say that you are sick and you cannot come for example. Buy a bus ticket or survive in a shop, yeah or dentist. Basic stuff. You can make mistakes but you have to survive. You have to be, you, we try to make them familiar with the city and the Finnish lifestyle so that they would find something meaningful to do here and understand the system like what are their possibilities and that, that they would understand their own, own skills also, would be able to describe their own skills and advertise them, themselves in the working market.

R: So what they should achieve after Heikki's course?

A: The level of Finnish should be a little bit higher minimum A2.1. That's still quite low. Many of them are better after one year of studying but, but that means that you can already have a little discussion in Finnish like on, on basic subjects like your family or, ah, your house or maybe. I think the difference is that, ah, you should be able to, ah, tell, ah, about your opinions and then why. If you have something, why you, I don't know the word in English but you have to be able to...

R: Justify?

A: Ah, yeah! Why you think like this. You really see that this is the difference between my students and Heikki's students that they really acquire the (*snaps*). And they should their, like, some official documents like CVs and job, uh, what's that?

R: Ah, applications?

A: Applications and this fill-out forms, this kind of, on the internet. So they are, ah, even more independent in the Finnish society.

R: Are your lessons grammar heavy or more not grammar heavy?

A: No, especially from the beginning they are very, like we press the functionality of the language. It doesn't know if you know *partitiivi* or *genetiivi* but what matters is you are able to communicate and get your message through. So what we do is that we, in the beginning we start phrases and you learn mechanically some phrases and some like expressions and then we use them as much as possible to get the confidence that

I can speak Finnish and then, uh, and also we just fill the students with vocabulary and then we start to, like, see the structures of the language like what I hope is that the students would figure out themselves. Like I give them some text or some matter, material like video where people use t-plural for example. Then I, we discuss the t-plural and I hope that the students see some like patterns or some logic in it. And, and quite often they do. So then we take the grammatics when they understand, they pick it up themselves but I won't start like writing like on the board *partitiivi* and then teach it and then use it but the other way around. We use it and then we teach it. So they've actually used it already without knowing it's this. And then.

R: Yeah.

A: Because we have noticed it if we do it the other way around, first teach, I've done that as well unfortunately. That first teach the grammatical subject and then we start using in dialogues or so. So the students become very, like, very, what's that conscious of their language and their speaking is not free because they are thinking about the ending of the word or something like that and they are correcting themselves all the time and they put all the focus, not on the communication but on the grammar. And, they, so, they actually stop communicating. That's what happens. And for some of them, it's too difficult also.

R: So how do you design the curriculum in the end? Do you have any basis?

A: Yes, we've been changing it, like, ah, during the years. When we start, when I started by myself I was kind of lost because we still didn't have any book so I could, so I just wrote down some everyday matters like food, health, weather. And then I just put them in some order and started teaching and then we, we were working together with Heikki and we decided, okay we have to do something more structured. And we tried to put the grammatical material and the, the everyday subject together in like, uh, logical pairs but it was kind of artificial as well. We didn't. It was not so good. So, in the end, we just described it quite freely like what, what are the things that they have to know after they finish and the we just started with something and then kept in mind that these things still have to come. And now we have a book so I think we both, we follow more or less the structure of the book like only if the book is introducing food vocabulary we also do something like, something about that. But we the grammar we don't follow the book because the book is grammar based and it doesn't work out really well with our students except for other kinds of students.

R: So what kind of students do you have?

A: I would describe them, well, they are very heterogenic group of course.

R: Yeah.

A: But still they are not the, most of them are not the, very educated or they don't, uh, they are not the ones that Finnish society is like waiting to have in the work market as soon as possible. Some of them are. They are there in this group but most of them are slow learners because of the background or because of different reasons but they, they don't have any extra problems like any learning problems or so necessarily. But, uh, they prefer the, the slower pace.

R: But do the faster students complain of the pace?

A: Sometimes, there have been, especially in Heikki's group where the level is higher. There the differences are bigger. So I think some of them have been complaining or Heikki has been finding it difficult to decide whether to follow the slow ones or fast ones. So he has more of this trouble because of the level. But in the beginner's, I think, everybody's beginner. So they are all so scared of speaking Finnish so they, they say themselves that they are all on the same level in the very beginning. So of course when the course continues they will see that other people have ability to learn fast and others don't and others have Finnish spouses for them it's easy. But I don't know. One way I really like it that it is a mixed group in the beginner's level especially so I like that the focus is on the slower ones but still I would have a group that is fully like uh just the very slow learners because they really, um, it's really useful for them to, to have these fast learners with them.

R: So they challenge each other?

A: Yes, yes and, and also for the fast ones I think, uh, sometimes the fast ones are the ones who are really tight in the grammar book and have difficulties speaking although they can write perfectly. So for them it's good to, like they cannot study grammar because other people are not capable of that so they really have to speak So I think it's good for them as well.

R: So how do you choose the trips that you go to because you mentioned that you integrate them into Finnish life.

A: Yeah. So it has formed during the years. We have tried different kinds of places and some of them haven't worked that well. Some of them, uh, well, ah what could I say? We use our contacts and, it, of course money matters. We cannot go somewhere that is, that, very expensive and, and we try to, uh, now I think, we really would like to have where they can go also without the teacher not just the sites or

museums like everyday places to give them possibility, like, outside home so that they wouldn't be stuck in their homes like we've been doing sports, more sports and that sort of things and I think it's useful to introduce them places where they can actually spend their time in Finland wisely.

R: So, what has been the feedback? Which places have gotten positive feedback?

A: Yes, um, they loved the parliament because it tells very much about Finnish society that it's so open and that you can actually, you're an immigrant and you can just walk into the parliament and speak to the members of it and we are all on the same level. And, and, it's a good, it's a great experience for everybody and I'm really proud of it and students have loved it. And then, well, it's kind of, the opinions are different because some people are really, la, uh, have found like, if we do sports, they are almost in tears saying like I haven't been able to play football in ten years. So now I feel alive again. And some are like, this is Finnish course, and it's not about football so it's really different people like different things. But everyone likes sauna and playing in snow. They are suspicious at first but then they really appreciate this genuine Finnish experience.

R: Yeah, yeah. Uh, so what have been the good feedback about your course in general?

A: Ah, I love telling this. (*laughs*) Well, I think, uh, it makes me happy that some people haven't survived in other courses like at the university or so and they say that this is the first course where they actually feel that they are learning or they say that this is the first time that they can actually speak Finnish and people love it that we are speaking so much and that they appreciate it. And some of the students who have more experience in teaching and pedagogy they say that it's a good method that we are not starting with the grammar and writing but that we are doing things. And it's, it's practical. And, and people love the small community. This school and where it is, its environment, and the, the Finnish students, the activities with them and the fact that many teachers know them and greet them and also they like it that both teachers know them. So, they like that they have two Finnish teachers just two, but still they have and not just one. And, and I've heard that some people feel that the teachers understand them well or are supported to their life and that makes me happy. Yeah because I think we are.

R: Yeah. Is it, um, how do you say this? Do you? What does the rest of the school think of your course? Do you have activities with the other courses or the other teachers?

A: Yes. That has been our goal during this year and sometimes it has been more successful and sometimes less but we do have activities like this cultural festival that we make together and some, some lessons. And, and the Finnish journalism students have been interviewing our students and, this, sort of things. And I think the Finnish students, they really like it. Like I've been, I've been teaching these school assistants students and they've been working with our Finnish learners and everybody liked it especially the Finnish students. But what is to get other, other teachers convinced that it's worth. Because these other teachers they are very strict about their own curriculum. They don't want to have any extra activities and this is something that they consider extra. So, so sometimes it's hard to convince them that we should do this together.

R: What have the activities, what activities have you done together with the Finnish teachers assistants?

A: Ah. The school assistant students?

R: Yeah, yeah.

A: So, I, I give them this course on multiculturalism and immigrant work. So first we have this theory and then we practice with the immigrants so that, that they are one day together. Just like getting to know each other so they are split into small groups and they have to, ah, they will have to get to know their group and then they have to perform a song in one of the languages they choose. We try to build some kind of like group feeling and we have played games together like concentration games and, uh, uh, name games and so on. And then we prepare this festival together so it's lots of organizing in, in multi-cultural groups and, and then my students, my Finnish students they have made this, their presentations about, uh, how is child, children's education in the immigrant home country. So they pick up one country and they interview the, the immigrant that comes from there about the matters how children are brought up in their culture and then they send it to the other Finnish.

R: So they have to interact?

A: Yes.

R: Yeah, yeah, and then, um, yeah, um, you mentioned about the other teachers. What other courses does Laajasalo offer that can, can work with your Finnish students? What ideas did you have?

A: Yes, well we've been, we have this, ah, singers class. I don't know how to call it but, so, we, one year we had like, uh, them teaching songs in Finnish our students. So that was nice. But they really have such a tight schedule so that was difficult. And then we have this like acting or theater students and we had, like, um, some games and some funny activities with them and that was loved by all but they also have a tight schedule. And then with the journalism students we, they made the interviews about our students and then there has been some, some with media students, some videos made. And, what else? And with the, what's that, the disabled students we've been just having some class together. Like they were following Heikki's class and I don't know if they had some games or talks together.

R: But this hasn't been every year?

A: It hasn't been really regular like every year we have something but uh not everything every year. And this year we haven't had like that much unfortunately I think. It's just kind of tiring. We gave up. I'm sorry about that. We should be more active.

R: Why did you give up?

A: Because it has been so difficult with the schedules and with the, the busyness of the Finnish groups because they have this training periods and they have exams, and, and, um they pay for their courses a lot so they need like value for their money. They just cannot play games because their targets are different from ours and yes, it has been so difficult to find the time that is the basic.

R: But the teachers are willing otherwise?

A: Some of them are but some of them don't really see the value.

R: Which courses are more friendly?

A: I think the acting, the acting, theater class. They are more open in like...

R: Yeah, yeah.

A: And then we have this, uh, development studies. It's a new course and their teacher has been active. We would like to plan something with them. And then of course these school assistants and also the disabled.

R: What do the disabled students study?

A: Well, they are, they are a small group of young adults and they study how to survive in everyday life by their, on their own. How to live an independent life.



R: Yeah, yeah. And who teaches this? I've never heard of this course.

A: Matias who is this young, young man who has this background in like teaching in primary school.

R: Yeah okay and what have been your improvement points from your students' perspective when you read the feedback.

A: Oh what should we improve?

R: Yeah, yeah.

A: Hmm. Well, I think our students come from a culture where it is not a good idea to criticize your teacher or her methods. So, we have found it quite difficult to get, this, ah, feedback from these students. I'm sure they have these points. A lot of them. But they are not, not so willing to share it with us because they think that it will affect their, their grades or something I think. Or it's not just their, their culture so, so I, there haven't been so many things actually. Some of, some of them, some of the fast students, uh, not this year but the past year, they have criticized the amount of trips. They would have liked to stay in the classroom and just study, study, study and they haven't seen the value of like going out and what else? Ah well some, hmm, sometimes some students they haven't written this in their feedback but it has understood this through our conversations that they would, they think that Finnish teachers, at least me and Heikki we are too, too kind or too soft and they would like to have teacher with more authority like so that sometimes they see that there is too much discussion going in the classroom and they would like the teacher to tell everybody to shut up and study. And uh they would like, because we try to give the, uh, the authority to the, more to the students but they would like to give it back to the teacher because that's what I think they are used to. So they, they find themselves comfortable. Some of them.

R: When they, they start the class do they know what to expect? Or is it a surprise in the end?

A: Well, we try to explain because in the beginning we were not really careful. Like we didn't explain it so much so some students quit because they didn't understand maybe because of that. So now we have tried to explain but sometimes, during the interviews, we still don't have a language in common with the applicant. Really. Like, we can only talk very basic stuff so we're not able to explain fully what is going on. But actually with the fast students, it's even more important to explain how it is so if

they expect, expect grammar course, they will not get it so with them we want to really make it sure. With them it is usually easy to explain in English for example.

R: In the beginning you already do that?

A: Yeah during the interview we will say like okay this is like a practical course and this is not a grammar based course and you have to be everyday and trips are part of this course and we consider them important and you have to interact in Finnish and that's our goal, that's the main point. And then they accept it or then they don't and they will just not, not appear to course.

R: Are, are, would you know if there is a lot of competition for Finnish courses like yours in Helsinki?

A: Yes, well actually, I think well our main competition are these employment office courses that are paid for the students that's hard to beat. Uh, but otherwise, I think it's still so there's more need than courses but some students have difficulty paying. Our course is not expensive and it doesn't cover the expenses, not at all. But still, for some people, they find it too expensive. I think.

R: By the way, you mentioned a book, what book do you use?

A: We use this *Suomen Mestari*. It's a new series.

R: Is it a good material or do you come up with your own material?

A: Ah, yes. I think we have like 50% the book and 50% our own material. Even more. I don't know. We have to use a lot our own material because it's, the book is really, it only covers very narrowly this everyday subjects and we give more. It's a good book. It's best that I've seen so far. And there are many good points like the layout is nice. It's not as grammar based as, as the older ones. But it's made by teachers of the University of Helsinki and it's, I think it's for their own need. Like for the students who come to the university to study Finnish. And you can actually see that. So it doesn't, it's not like the characters in book, in the book, they are students and, and sometimes I would like to have more of this feel like settling down in Finland and living here as an immigrant family. It doesn't give this perspective. Yeah, you can really see for whom it is made. It is not really for our students.

R: And there are no books that are for your students?

A: No. They are like big, bigger schools or organization that have made, got, like European Union ah...

R: Funding.

A: Funding and yes, and have made some materials that are open on the Internet. But they are quite lame. Really. They are quite lame. Well, I don't know. Well, I don't want to be like, ah, yeah but I have to say that they are not so innovative. They are very traditional like they give you a text like this is what you speak in a daycare like they nicely think about the life of an., an immigrant who has a family here yes. But then, then it's like this is the, this is the dialog in the daycare. And, and, and this is the grammar thing that we study in this chapter. So it's, it doesn't really challenge you to, I don't know. I don't need this kind of sometimes we've been thinking that we should make our own material with like ideas for the teachers. Because many teachers, they lack ideas on how to teach this thing. Because, you, for small students you really have to, if you have one new thing like apartment, like stuff in the house. You cannot teach like you need lots of different kinds of exercises to get it through. And, so, you have to be innovative because they all have to be different because otherwise it's really boring. So so this kind of ideas about this games and surprising stuff like competitions and, and quizzes and I don't know. This. Like new ideas. That is what is...

R: Missing.

A: Is missing. Yeah.

R: You were talking about the funding, ah, the price of the course. How? Why are you offering it at such a low price?

A: Well, it's because of the competition again. If it would be any higher I think the students wouldn't come because for them it's already a big money if you consider the amount that they get for a month if they are not working. So, so it's, I think it's the highest sum that they can actually pay.

R: Yeah, yeah for the Finnish course. And is it actually, is it possible for you to get, um, money from the government. I mean from the employment office or not?

A: From the employment office, no because they will, they fund this other certain courses that only big schools can offer this because they buy the whole, you know, the whole bunch of courses you know from one, one house so you really, we wouldn't be able to offer like five levels or something like that. So we cannot compete, we cannot take part of this competition but then they choose the best offer and they buy it from this school. Ah, so from there no. But the government has this system that is called this, *opintosetteli*, which means that they, they give this money for, uh, for this purpose but they never, you can apply for like, you can tell how much

money you spend on these courses and you can apply to get that but we will get like one tenth of what we need. And that's a problem because actually this year we got less than ever. Like we got, because before we got something like 30 thousand and, and it was already too little, way too little. But this year, we got half of that like 16 thousand euros and that's, it doesn't cover anything.

R: So why did your school have a Finnish course if they were going to be on a loss?

A: Yes. Uh, I think it's because, ah, our background organization are these Christian. Christian. How do you call this? *Diakonia*, *Diakonialaito* *okensaatio*. It's like, they are like this Christian charity organization something like that and they have certain values. And we have to follow those values. Our school cannot be about business and about teaching like arts but it has to, because one of the values of this, this background organization is that you have to help those that are weakest in this society. So, I think, we have to, we have to have something for some margin, marginal group in this society. So this is, uh, what we are doing at the moment. But it can change in the future if they, if the school board will not think that immigrants are not anymore kind of this weak group or they, they might want to support more heavily the disabled or so. At the moment, moment, it's like this. But that's the reason that we, or we could offer courses as well for those who can really pay but like, like those who want to learn fast or can pay or come from the diplomat families or so but it wouldn't be according to the, the values.

R: So when we talk of the other courses, they can cover their expenses when they pay for their courses?

A: Hmm.

R: For example the journalists, their tuition fees cover their?

A: Yes, yes. They pay like lots more and I think it more or less it covers and it covers what, what the other students are paying covers for the, you know because for there are some expenses that like about the bureaucracy and about the housing or how do you call that, the infrastructure of the school. So these other courses actually, at the moment, they cover all that. So our course doesn't have to, to pay or take part in this expensive, expenses.

R: Yeah.

A: At the moment it's like that.

R: But is your course in any danger if it doesn't get enough money?

A: Yeah. Actually we don't know because they are always telling me and Heikki that you know we you are on this like, ah, like, I don't know if we can continue this because it's not our boss who is saying this but it's someone else who is in charge of the money. She's saying that all the time like we don't know like we really need money or we cannot continue like this but, but then when we ask like okay is this in danger like and then she says like no. Well no. Not at the moment. So I think they have to balance between this values of the background organization and between this like, uh, the, the economical facts. So they really, I don't see like, any, any immediate danger.

R: But how do you see the future of your courses?

A: Yeah, that is interesting because actually I'd like to. I don't know. I think we should consider our strengths more and I'm really happy that you are doing this work because it's part of the process. I see it as, as, for us, something that is very valuable because we should consider what are our strengths and, and, and work more on the direction of those strengths and not to compete with the very basic Finnish courses but really like, because we have the community of Finns around us. We should use that advantage more and we should really because now we got this feedback from the Employment Office that our students are learning really fast for some reason. They are slow learners but still they are learning faster than some other students. So, we should really, uh, think why is it like that and can we enforce the aspects that makes our students learn fast. So we would need some time to think about it and I think that we should have more, ah, cooperation with the working life. Like they should have trainee periods or some kind of like trainee, I don't know what you call that but...

R: Yeah, yeah, internships-

A: Yeah, internships. So, so with, if we would be able to show the connection between studying in Laajasalo and being successful in the job market that would be awesome. That would be, because that's exactly what the government wants and that's what is good for the students because that's what they want. And that would be effective and I think that we could achieve that if we would like build the contacts.

R: Do you know what your former students are doing?

A: No. It's like. Of course I know what some of them are doing but we haven't got a system yet that we follow them and we should have. That's something that we

should build as well. To be able to show how they have been. How is their success in Finnish world. But, um, yeah, maybe we just know the success stories really because these are the students that keep in touch with the teachers. But yeah, some of them are doing quite nice. Quite well I think. Yeah, they are part of, I've been there five years but still they I know many of my students who are now actually they have a job in Finland and they survive just as anyone.

R: Can you give me one example? No need for names.

A: For example there is this one young Somalian woman who had like lots of trouble with her, life, like her situations, situation was really demanding. She was, she was still studying hard and was really impressing us with her like attitude but not like, ah, not like a very fast learner or anything. She hasn't been anything like almost at all in her own country. But now she, after us, she got this degree on, on like, social assistant or something. And now, now she is working with the elderly and really liking that job and, and being able to totally support her family and that's a good story because I think she's really very, very happy with her life. And, and, and yeah they don't need to be anything, it doesn't need to be anything great and they are not even aiming at anything spectacular just to be able to support their families and have a normal life here.

R: Yeah. I think that's it. Thank you.

## Appendix 6: Student Expectations

Category	No. of times mentioned	Example Statement
The students want to be integrated into Finland.	9	“I think, for me this is an ideal course. The one they teach at Laajasalo because, uh, learning Finnish here is not just about the linguistic aspect. It’s not just about the language. It’s about life. So by learning Finnish you are learning to be in Finland. It integrates both the, the, everything that goes around you, about learning the language and about living in the country. So, integration, yeah? It’s yeah. Taking the Finnish language outside of the classroom. That’s why I like it here.”

## Appendix 7: Student Perceptions of the Product / Process - Positive Points

Category	Times Mentioned	Example Statement
The students are happy with the general teaching method and strategy.	22	“Beside from what S3 say it’s good to know grammar but what I like he already mentioned many of them but, uh, in the beginning of this we are not more focusing on the grammar. That’s very good because we don’t scare or we don’t embarrass to start speaking. So we can speak, like (snaps) child. And then when we know somehow we will be corrected. For example we have been saying stuff until today “ <i>minä asun Suomessa kaks vuotta ensin</i> ” for example. But that’s not the right way, the right way is <i>asunnut Suomessa kaksi vuotta</i> . So, it helped. We will be correct. It’s good at the start. We are not more grammar first.”
The class atmosphere is fun, relaxed and enables learning.	11	“Yes it was a good, easy, not so many information but same time, they want



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to help us and let us know. Like I have seen many foreigner like they go to the courses but they don't learn too much. I feel like it's a little bit this Laajasalo course is more special course but I don't know what the difference is because I haven't been in other courses."

The students are happy that they learn to speak Finnish in the course.

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"For example before this course, I didn't speak in Finnish at all. I didn't want to. Even though I have Finnish husband, I was too shy to speak in Finnish. And when I started to come to this course, after one month, I started to speak Finnish with all my husband's mother's friends and everybody was really, uh, surprise that I'm speaking and it's good and in fact clear and everybody was really happy with me and I felt happy as well."

## Appendix: 8: Student's Perceptions of Product / Process - Improvement Points

Category		Example Statement
Some trips are seen as counter-productive.	14	“Like go to the zoo. It’s very nice to go to the zoo with one, together. It’s very nice day. Three hours. It’s good to go. Don’t take it very bad. It’s good to go. Yeah, some of us, we have never been to the zoo and that’s the chance to go to the zoo and it’s okay. But it could be much better, those kind of days, it’s very, something more again mixed with Finnish.”
The immigrants feel separated from the Finnish students and would like more opportunities to work with them.	27	“I know about politics but I know about that. That was my life, my previous life. And now I’m here because I’m married with a Finnish. You know? But they can use, I mean, I can give them a chance and I’m sure they can, I know not everybody will be willing to that but I think some will

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<p>The school should provide additional resources and/or optional projects for motivated students.</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>be willing to, to go, to integrate, to find, to find a way to participate and integrate with them.”</p> <p>“Yeah and that’s why, that’s how the school, or, or the Finnish teachers could influence by, by, for example for the people who always want to be, who always want to be with people who speak English, we could have a project. Tomorrow, I am going with S2 to Kamppi to have coffee and well, you speak English. For example, Iran, English and then French. So that we are not forced to go to the movies. They could say. Please talk to each other. Heikki makes the trios and then we could decide what to do.”</p>
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## Appendix 9: The Role of People in the Services Marketing Mix

Category	Times Mentioned	Example Statement
The teachers are good.	20	“Yes, it was a bit difficult because we are speaking another language so it’s totally different language for us so it was at first difficult. Yes. It is. But uh like we have good teachers, Heikki and Anni.”
The students know their role as co-creators making them supportive of each other.	29	“You should be self-motivated. I know what I’m here for. I know what I want to do. I have, you have to plan your life. Like this is like, I was working back home and I have a very stressful for me, because no working and always staying at home is something. So, I always want to study, always want to learn. I’ve been having a special book for translating my, my job, um where’s from English to Finnish. That one I have my two hours to do. I go there. I know what I’m going to say, what I’m going to speak. So first of all you yourself

## Appendix 10: Comparing the Consumers’ Perspective with the Service Provider’s

The Category	Teacher’s Perspective Example
The students are happy with the general teaching method and strategy.	“Well, I think, uh, it makes me happy that some people haven’t survived in other courses like at the university or so and they say that this is the first course where they actually feel that they are learning or they say that this is the first time that they can actually speak Finnish and people love it that we are speaking so much and that they appreciate it. And some of the students who have more experience in teaching and pedagogy they say that it’s a good method that we are not starting with the grammar and writing but that we are doing things. And it’s, it’s practical.”
The class atmosphere is fun, relaxed and enables learning.	“Because we have noticed it if we do it the other way around, first teach, I’ve done that as well unfortunately. That first teach the grammatical subject and then we start using in dialogues or so. So the students become very, like, very, what’s that conscious of their language and their speaking is not free because they are thinking about the ending of the word or something like that and they are correcting themselves all the time and

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they put all the focus, not on the communication but on the grammar. And, they, so, they actually stop communicating. That's what happens. And for some of them, it's too difficult also."

The students are happy that they learn to speak Finnish in the course.

"Yes, yes and, and also for the fast ones I think, uh, sometimes the fast ones are the ones who are really tight in the grammar book and have difficulties speaking although they can write perfectly. So for them it's good to, like they cannot study grammar because other people are not capable of that so they really have to speak So I think it's good for them as well."

Some trips are seen as counter-productive.

"Yes, um, they loved the parliament because it tells very much about Finnish society that it's so open and that you can actually, you're an immigrant and you can just walk into the parliament and speak to the members of it and we are all on the same level. And, and, it's a good, it's a great experience for everybody and I'm really proud of it and students have loved it. And then, well, it's kind of, the opinions are different because some people are really, la, uh, have found like, if we do sports, they are almost in tears saying like I haven't been able to play football in ten years. So now I feel alive again. And some are like, this is Finnish course, and it's not about football so it's really different people like different things. But everyone likes sau-

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na and playing in snow. They are suspicious at first but then they really appreciate this genuine Finnish experience.”

The immigrants feel separated from the Finnish students and would like more opportunities to work with them.

“Because it has been so difficult with the schedules and with the, the busyness of the Finnish groups because they have this training periods and they have exams, and, and, um they pay for their courses a lot so they need like value for their money. They just cannot play games because their targets are different from ours and yes, it has been so difficult to find the time that is the basic.”

The school should provide additional resources and/or optional projects for motivated students.

“Sometimes, there have been, especially in Heikki’s group where the level is higher. There the differences are bigger. So I think some of them have been complaining or Heikki has been finding it difficult to decide whether to follow the slow ones or fast ones. So he has more of this trouble because of the level. But in the beginner’s, I think, everybody’s beginner. So they are all so scared of speaking Finnish so they, they say themselves that they are all on the same level in the very beginning. So of course when the course continues they will see that other people have ability to learn fast and others don’t and others have Finnish spouses for them it’s easy. But I don’t know. One way I really like it that it is a mixed group in the beginner’s level especially so I like that the focus is on the slower ones but still I would have

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a group that is fully like uh just the very slow learners because they really, um, it's really useful for them to, to have these fast learners with them.”

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