



Shifting trends in communicative English language teaching in Icelandic compulsory schools

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This paper maps shifts in English language teaching in compulsory schools since curricular changes in 2007 and again in 2011/2013. The primary purpose of the current study is to examine the status of English language teaching from the perspective of active teachers. The secondary aim is to inform the development of teacher education programmes at the University of Iceland and improve English teacher preparation for those entering or working in the compulsory education system. When earlier surveys were conducted – a large-scale ministry survey in 2005/2006 and a smaller follow-up survey in 2007– teaching English was heavily influenced by the preparation of students for the final state exams, with a strong focus on reading comprehension, writing, and grammar. The National Curriculum Guide 2011/2013 introduced the fundamental pillars of education and competences as the base for teaching and assessment. Through a quantitative survey carried out in 2022, the researchers collected responses from 7th- and 10th-grade teachers about their access to, and usage of, teaching and learning materials, teaching practices, approaches to assessment, teachers' professional development, and the use of English in the classroom. The response rate was 53% and a total of 156 teachers participated. The results show that traditional, textbook-based teaching methods are still prevalent, although oral communication skills receive increased emphasis. Cultural competences and learning skills need to receive substantial attention if they are to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum 2011/2013. The use of the target language (English) in the classrooms should increase, while the purposeful use of L1 Icelandic is still relevant in foreign language classrooms. Overall, communicative language teaching seems to be gaining ground.

Keywords: communicative language teaching, English, assessment, competences, compulsory schools, curriculum

Introduction

Recent research on English teaching at the compulsory school level in Iceland has been limited despite an extensive education reform resulting in new curriculum guides for all levels of schooling (see Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti [Ministry of Education, Science and Culture], 2014). The last comprehensive surveys amongst English language teachers in Iceland took place in 2007 and were published soon thereafter (Lefever, 2007, 2008, 2009). These studies were informed by the Ministry of Education's evaluative survey on English language teaching (ELT) that took place in 2005/2006 (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2006). Although additional research on ELT in the Icelandic educational context has been conducted since (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2018; Ingvarsdóttir & Jóhannsdóttir,

2018; Jóhannsdóttir, 2022), comprehensive research investigating whether English teaching practices have changed in response to the guidelines set forth in the National Curriculum Guide (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014) remains scarce. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the status of English language teaching from the perspective of active teachers, and secondarily, to inform the development and focal points of teacher education programmes offered by the School of Education at the University of Iceland. The survey used in this study was designed to collect data related to English language teachers' pedagogical practices in grades 7 and 10, serving as a general follow-up to earlier surveys conducted on ELT in Iceland. This study is intended as the first in a series of articles aimed at developing a framework for future qualitative inquiries concerning compulsory level English teaching in Iceland.

The status of English teachers' practices is reported on in detail alongside a discussion of implications for English teachers' professional practice. The discussion draws on communicative language teaching (CLT) principles (Brown, 2007) embedded in the competences for foreign language learning in the Icelandic national curriculum. First, we provide a brief overview of the background and context of English language teaching in Iceland. This includes a description of the role and impact of CLT on the 2007 National Curriculum objectives for English as part of foreign language teaching and the introduction of subject competences (Icel. *hæfniviðmið*) in the 2011/2013 National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools. The Methods section describes the survey goals and design, participant recruitment, data collection, and subsequent analysis of the survey data. In the Results section we report on the survey findings with specific attention to teaching methods and materials, English language usage in the classroom, and assessment approaches commonly employed in the teaching and learning process. In the Discussion section, we evaluate and interpret the results with respect to the research question, and their implications for teachers' professional development.

Historical background & ELT policy and practice in Iceland

The focus of the 2007 National Curriculum for English teaching was based on learning objectives (Icel. *námsmarkmið*) and grounded in the principles of CLT. The communicative approach adheres to the belief that the purpose of language learning is to be able to use the target language (in this case, English) for communication in authentic situations. CLT further places emphasis on engaging learners in the pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of language in real contexts (Brown, 2007). In order to communicate effectively, students must gain proficiency in the four core skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). CLT methods focus on the use of the target language for interaction in the classroom, and the role of the teacher is to facilitate communication between the teacher and the students and collaboratively between students (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Savignon, 2002). The role of learners is to actively participate in the language learning process, striving to negotiate meaning, make themselves understood, and understand others in the target language. Classroom practices should support learners in their use of the target language through, for example, role play, information gap activities, language exchanges, simulation, discussion, games, and group and pair work. Teaching materials should be relevant and appeal to the learners' interests (Richards, 2006). In terms of assessment, CLT addresses both accuracy and fluency while formative and summative assessment methods emphasise communicative functions (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

The 2007 National Curriculum Guide for foreign languages at the compulsory level followed general CLT principles and emphasised the teaching of all four skills and integrating grammar and vocabulary with skills-based instruction. Other changes introduced in the 2007 National Curriculum included the lowering of the entry level for English instruction from grade 5 (age 10) to grade 4 (age 9), allowing schools the option of introducing English in grades 1-3. This was, in part, due to growing pressure from parents who believed in the benefits of early language learning of English as a global language (Lefever, 2009).

The 2007 curriculum listed a set of final objectives and expected outcomes for students upon completion of their studies at the compulsory level (grade 10). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) was used as a guideline to align English learning in Iceland with European standards. The curriculum also outlined learning objectives for each grade beginning with grade 4 and extending to grade 10. In the earlier grades, emphasis was placed on instilling positive attitudes towards learning English and building students' confidence as language learners. In line with CLT principles, the focus of instruction was to provide students with opportunities to use and understand simple English in situations relevant to daily life. In the upper grades, learning objectives gradually changed from an initial emphasis on listening and speaking to an increased focus on reading and writing for a variety of communicative goals and purposes. Other objectives focused on increasing students' awareness of learning styles and strategies, and taking responsibility for their own learning, i.e., a focus on supporting and developing learner autonomy (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 2007). Various teaching approaches were suggested in the 2007 curriculum, such as theme and project work, games, role play, and integrating English teaching with other subjects. Teachers were expected to increase their use of English during instruction and use it exclusively in grades 9-10 (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 2007).

A number of research studies which were carried out following the implementation of the 2007 National Curriculum Guide examined English teaching in Icelandic schools (for a review of previous research see Lefever, 2009). These studies showed that, in general, teachers tended to use traditional, textbook-based teaching methods that chiefly focused on listening and reading in English, often through workbooks and an emphasis on grammar teaching. The implementation of communicative language teaching methods as recommended by the 2007 National Curriculum Guide was generally absent from the data. Similarly, the use of English during instruction was considered limited in many classrooms, despite recommendations regarding increased target language usage appearing in the 2007 National Curriculum Guide (Lefever, 2009).

In 2008, new legislation was passed for compulsory school education (Lög um grunnskóla [Compulsory School Act] nr. 91/2008) which called for a revision of the National Curriculum Guide. A revised Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for compulsory schools (General Section) was published in 2011, followed by an amended version covering specific subject areas in 2013 (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014). The 2011/2013 National Curriculum Guide brought several changes. Significantly, six fundamental pillars of education were introduced: literacy (in the widest sense), sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality, and creativity, all of which are intended to be integrated into all aspects of teaching from preschool to upper secondary level.

A substantial divergence between the 2011/2013 reform and the 2007 curriculum is the designation of competence criteria (Icel. *hæfniviðmið*) for each subject area. Competence criteria for foreign language learning are defined at three levels and describe which competences should be attained by students upon graduation from grade 10 (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014). At the completion of compulsory school, pupils are expected to have reached Level 3 in English and to have fulfilled most of the criteria described at the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages self-evaluation framework¹ (Council of Europe, 2001). As in the 2007 National Curriculum Guide for foreign languages at the compulsory level, emphasis is on the four skills and integrating grammar and vocabulary with skills-based instruction. Uniquely for the foreign language subject area, the revised curriculum added recommendations regarding competence levels independent of grade level, with implications for managing mixed proficiency levels in the language learning process. The foreign language competences of cultural literacy and learning competences, i.e., applied learning skills, were also added and described in detail. The curriculum guide further emphasised that the preferred teaching methods, study materials, and assessment approaches selected for individual school curricula should be closely aligned with the stated national competence criteria (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014).

¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

A survey carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti, 2020) looked at the implementation of the 2011/2013 National Curriculum for compulsory schools. Consisting of focus group interviews with parents, teachers, students, and school administrators in eight compulsory schools, a relevant finding was the discrepancy between school principal and teacher perspectives regarding effective implementation. Over 60% of school principals reported that implementation of competence criteria for foreign languages (English and Danish) had gone well or very well. However, the teachers who participated in the focus group interviews felt that implementation of the 2011/2013 National Curriculum had been difficult and support or follow-up from the Ministry of Education had been non-existent. Many of the teachers experienced difficulties with adapting to the new competence and assessment criteria and struggled with integrating competence criteria, assignments, and assessment (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti, 2020).

The description of teaching methods in the 2011/2013 National Curriculum Guide (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014) emphasises a communicative approach to foreign language teaching that reflects the principles of CLT. Integrated skills and theme-based projects are encouraged to develop linguistic competence and advance the social aims of education related to the six fundamental pillars. In particular, the description in the National Curriculum Guides refers to ‘... methods such as individual oriented studies, cooperative learning, pair work, group work, peer teaching, portfolio education, carousel learning, story-telling method, outdoor education and learning stations’ (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014, p. 135). CLT has therefore been an integral part of English language teaching policy in Iceland for over 15 years and reinforced in the current National Curriculum Guide competences for foreign language teaching. However, findings from previous surveys on English language teaching in Icelandic compulsory schools suggest that policy has not been reflected in teachers’ classroom practices (Lefever, 2009).

Assessment broadly refers to a variety of formats and methods that (language) teachers apply in their classrooms to evaluate, measure, or document learners’ progress, denoting students’ knowledge and skill acquisition throughout the learning process (Brown, 2004). Teachers and students alike benefit from assessment when a variety of methods are combined to measure proficiency, guide instruction, provide feedback, motivate learners, and inform curriculum development. The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014) stresses the important role of learner autonomy within the assessment cycles throughout the school year. Students are expected to engage in ‘realistic self-evaluation’ by monitoring their study progress, supported by formative assessment, targeted feedback, and a varied array of assessment methods coordinated by their teachers. Specifically, teachers are asked to design and engage students with assessment formats involving ‘oral, practical, written and pictorial assignments, also short specific exercises and more thorough studies, individual and group work, projects carried out within a limited timeframe and with unlimited time, and additionally, various types of examinations’ (p. 56).

In the Icelandic compulsory school context, assessment is explicitly linked to *competence criteria* held in common by all subject areas, including English (foreign language) learning. The stipulated criteria for assessing these competences are:

- Pupils’ competence to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions orally, in writing, or in another manner. Competence to communicate their knowledge and skill and express themselves clearly and in an understandable manner, and to take part in conversation and discussion.
- Creative thinking and initiative in presentation and processing of material.
- Competence to use knowledge and skill, to draw conclusions, confidence to seek new solutions and use critical thinking and reasoning.
- Competence to work independently, in cooperation with others, and under supervision.
- Competence to use various media in seeking, processing, and communicating knowledge, and in using information in a responsible, creative, and critical manner.

- Pupils' competence to be responsible for their education and to evaluate their work methods and performance. (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014, p. 54)

In addition to the key competences that all Icelandic compulsory-level teachers are expected to support and promote, the framework of the National Curriculum Guide also specifically refers to foreign language competences that are linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) which provides international guidelines for describing language learners' competences in language acquisition and usage (Council of Europe, 2001). As described in the 2011/2013 National Curriculum Guide, these foreign language competences are intended to 'facilitate the organisation of individual-oriented studies, where the pupils' competence within the key competences varies' (p. 127). These language-specific competences represent skills that develop throughout learners' compulsory-level educational experience, namely: reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, listening, spoken interaction, spoken production, grammar, cultural literacy, and learning competences. Cultural competence addresses key cultural characteristics of the culture and speech community being studied, allowing for awareness of what is similar and different from students' own circumstances (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014, p. 133–134).

The use of students' first languages (L1) in foreign language classrooms has been somewhat controversial in research on classroom practices. Depending on the nature of reasoning, the opinions range from forbidding the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom, to combining it interchangeably with the target language, towards purposeful use of L1 to promote students' learning (Bruen & Kelly, 2017; Marsella, 2020; Shin et al., 2020). The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014) states that 'it would be most advantageous if both teacher and pupils used the foreign language in all their interaction in class' (p. 136). It further states that:

... From the beginning of their language studies, pupils should get used to hearing the language and understand how it is used in real situations and have ample opportunity to do their best at using it themselves in a meaningful context and on their own terms. (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014, p. 135–136)

Besides the teacher using the target language in the classroom, this refers to various audio and video resources and interactions with people other than the teacher. Beyond these brief lines, there is no more mention of the use of the target language in a foreign language class, only indirect messages about how to organise teaching of foreign languages. For example, 'Tasks and teaching methods should be suitable for the age and maturity of the pupils' (p. 135); 'Studies should be comprehensive and reflect real usage' (p. 135); 'It depends mostly on the teacher to create the atmosphere and environment that has been described here' (p. 135). Thus, it seems that the National Curriculum Guide does not impose the use of the target language on English teachers, nor does it strongly encourage them to use English in the language classroom. Rather, it stresses the use of authentic materials, available resources suitable for the learners, and the teachers' responsibility to create an appropriate atmosphere in the classroom.

According to teachers' responses in the Ministry's 2005/2006 survey (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2006), teachers were not fulfilling their role of using English for classroom interaction and communication, and students were not provided with ample opportunities for authentic and creative use of English (Lefever, 2009). The teachers' responses were consistent with the students' answers. A little less than half of the teachers said they mostly used English during instruction while most teachers said they used English and Icelandic interchangeably during instruction (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2006). In another 2006 study, 48% of teachers reported that they used English 'very often' in the English classroom and 11% answered that they 'seldom' spoke English when teaching. Less than 4% of the teachers 'always' used English in the classroom (Sigurjónsdóttir, 2006). Findings from the 2007 study (Lefever, 2009) indicated that teachers at mid-level (grades 5–7) used English more often in the classroom than the teachers at the youngest level (grades 1–4). Sixty-four percent of mid-level

English teachers used English from 20% - 60% of the time during lessons, while 51% of teachers in lower-primary levels used English less than 40% of the time in class. In the 2007 study, it was clear that teachers were aware of the benefits of using English in the class.

Current Inquiry

The primary purpose of the study is to examine the current status of English language teaching from the perspective of active teachers, and secondarily, to inform the development of teacher education programmes and identify areas of improvement when preparing English teachers in the compulsory education system. The research question guiding the present study is:

How have compulsory school English teachers' classroom practices changed since the curricular reform of 2011/2013?

The research question is answered through teachers' responses to a quantitative survey of English teachers conducted in 2022, with data collection focused on English language teachers' pedagogical practices in grades 7 and 10. In the next section, we present the methodology and procedures used to generate findings from the most recent survey on English language teachers' classroom practices.

Methods

In an effort to address the limited data on English language teaching (ELT) in compulsory schools in Iceland since the educational reforms described above, four teacher educators responsible for administering, designing, and teaching courses at the University of Iceland's School of Education assembled a survey as a follow-up to previous studies (see Appendices A and B for all survey items). Survey questions were drawn from items appearing in earlier surveys of English teachers in Iceland, but the responses comprise a unique dataset particular to the most recent curricular reform in 2011/2013.

Participant recruitment and data collection

In April 2022, an email was sent to introduce the survey and its goals to 144 school principals representing all the primary schools in Iceland. The principals were asked to provide email addresses of English teachers in grades 7 and 10 in their schools. In addition, follow-up telephone calls were made to schools to ask for the names of English teachers. In total, 299 teachers were invited to take part in the survey via their school email address. The survey was opened in late April and closed on 15th June. The link to the survey was also shared in a Facebook group for English teachers called *Félag enskukennara á Íslandi*, commonly referred to as FEKÍ.

A large portion of the questions in the current survey for grade 7 teachers (Appendix A) and grade 10 teachers (Appendix B) were taken from the 2007 survey (Lefever, 2009) and slightly modified for the new study to allow for meaningful comparison. The review of teachers' practices in the 7th and 10th grades of compulsory school was intended to allow for comparison with earlier studies while also providing an overview of what has shifted or stabilised over the past decade and a half in English language teaching. Survey questions specifically targeted information about teachers' (1) access and usage of teaching and learning materials, (2) teaching practices, (3) approaches to assessment, (4) professional development, and (5) the use of English in the classroom. Qualtrics survey software was used to collect, analyse, and summarise the survey responses.

Participation was completely voluntary. In total, 156 participant responses were received, mainly drawn from direct email contact and nine arriving through the open link on Facebook. The overall response rate was 53%. Participants were not required to answer all the questions, and some questions were specific to teaching at either the grade 7 or grade 10 level. As such, the response rate per question sometimes varied according to grade level taught and depending upon participants' decision to answer or skip a question.

Eighty-four percent of teachers who responded to the survey cited Icelandic as their primary language, while 9% cited English as their mother tongue and 7% mentioned other mother tongues. Slightly over 50% had taught English for six or more years, while 34% had taught English for one to five years, and 12% had taught for less than one year. Eighteen percent of the teachers estimated their proficiency in English as level B1 or lower on the scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The scale has six levels: A1-A2, B1-B2 and C1-C2, with A1 being the lowest level of proficiency and C2 the highest level. Twenty-nine percent of the teachers estimated their proficiency as level B2, 39% as level C1, and 13% as level C2. The distribution of teachers' self-assessed proficiency levels is noteworthy because teachers' proficiency in the target language influences the amount and quality of English usage in the classroom (Nunan & Richards, 1990).

Data analysis

By design, survey findings offered direct insight into three core areas of interest: teaching materials and practices, assessment approaches, and use of English in the classroom. Four researchers at the School of Education collectively analysed the data during monthly meetings. The results section presents the survey findings, and the discussion section draws on relevant literature for analysis of these. The survey results and their implications for teaching are then discussed and interpreted in relation to the research question.

In the results section, we predominantly present the aggregated findings from both 7th and 10th grade teacher responses to construct an overview of the shifting trends currently at play in compulsory level English language teaching. In instances where findings are influenced by grade level, for example, when different textbooks are used or when different curricular goals are specified, we report on seventh- and tenth-grade teachers' responses separately. Overall, there were no major divergences in the aggregated percentages even when data was split by grade level, allowing for the survey results to be summarised and compared to previous studies in the context of teaching English at the compulsory school level in Iceland.

Limitations and ethical concerns

Ethical rules in research were observed throughout the process of collecting, analysing, and presenting data. Information about English teachers that was collected for the survey dissemination purposes was stored safely in accordance with Act No. 90/2018 on Data Protection and the Processing of Personal Data. There were no issues related to anonymity or confidentiality because of the way that the survey was designed and implemented. Additionally, the Research Institute of the School of Education mediated the data collection by sending out the survey, collecting answers with Qualtrics tools, and presenting the results to the researchers. Limitations of the research could be perceived as solely depending on quantitative data from the survey, yet as this is the first in a series of papers, it provides a foundational overview that can be explored in more detail through future qualitative studies.

Results

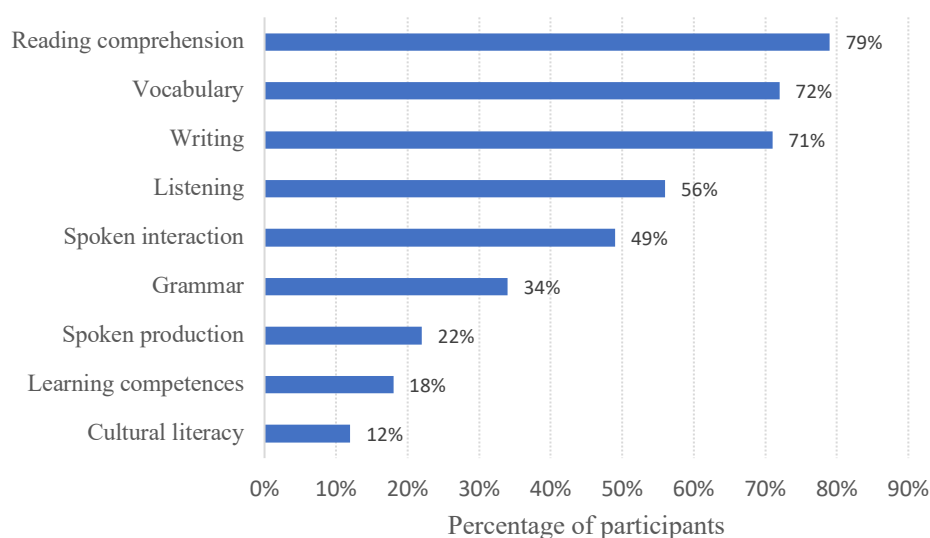
Teaching methods and materials

Participating teachers responded to a multiple-choice question about which skill areas they emphasised most in their teaching (see *Graph 1*; each bar represents the % of responses from all participants). The list of skills consisted of all the competence areas listed in the 2011/2013 National Curriculum: listening, reading comprehension, spoken interaction, spoken production, writing, cultural literacy and learning competences, along with vocabulary and grammar. The skill most emphasised by both grade 7 and 10 teachers was reading comprehension (79%) followed by vocabulary (72%). At grade 10 this was followed by writing and vocabulary, while at grade 7, vocabulary and listening. About

50% of the participants in both grades placed emphasis on spoken interaction or learning to orally communicate in English. Less emphasis was placed on grammar (34%), which featured highly in previous surveys (Lefever, 2007, 2008, 2009). Interestingly, spoken production, learning competences, and cultural literacy were the least emphasised skills amongst grade 7 and 10 teachers (see *Graph 1*). Although not shown in the combined *Graph 1*, results per grade level showed that emphasis on cultural literacy was almost non-existent for grade 7 teachers, while 21% of grade 10 teachers reported emphasising this skill.

Graph 1

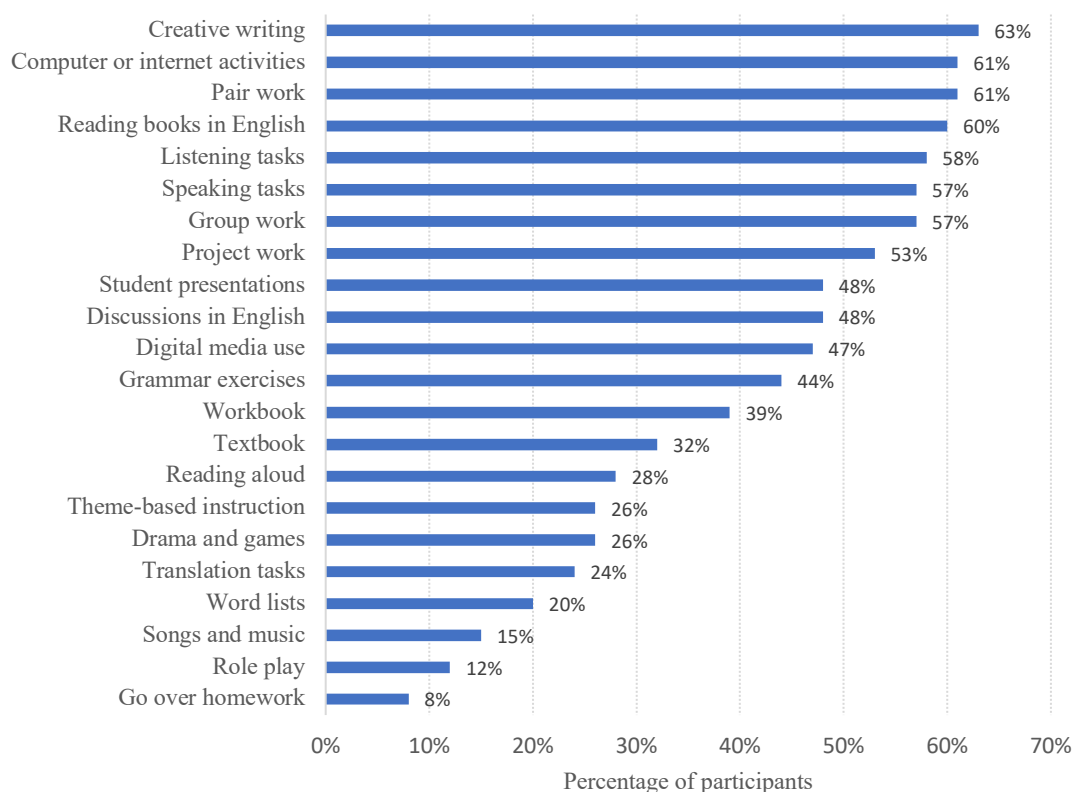
Which skills do you emphasise most in English teaching? Choose 1-5 skills. Combined results for grade 7 and 10 teachers.



The current survey further asked teachers to identify the types of teaching activities that they emphasise most in their teaching practice. The list included twenty-two activities and practices commonly used by language teachers; results for this multiple answer question are presented in *Graph 2*.

Graph 2

Which of the following teaching activities do you emphasise most in your English teaching? Choose all that apply. Combined results for grade 7 and 10 teachers.

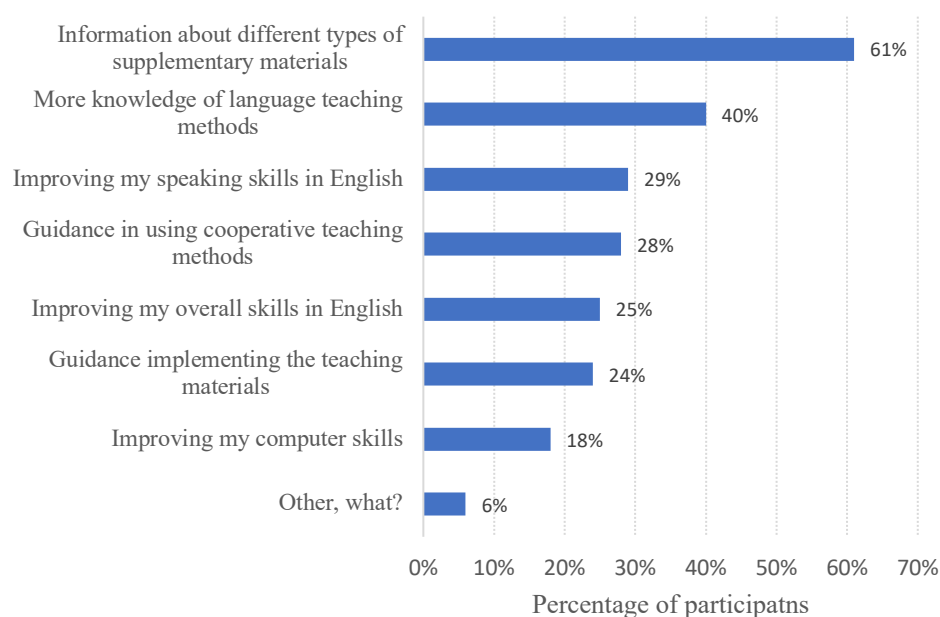


Broken down by grade, reading books in English followed by creative writing are the most popular activities at grade 10, and listening tasks and computer/internet activities at grade 7. In particular, student presentations and discussions in English were ranked considerably lower by grade 7 teachers than by those teaching grade 10.

Teachers were asked about the kind of support they felt that they needed to effectively implement the National Curriculum Guide. The survey results in *Graphs 3* and *4* below show separate results for grades 10 and 7, respectively. A higher percentage of grade 10 teachers (29%) wanted to improve their speaking skills in English as compared to grade 7 teachers (12%).

Graph 3

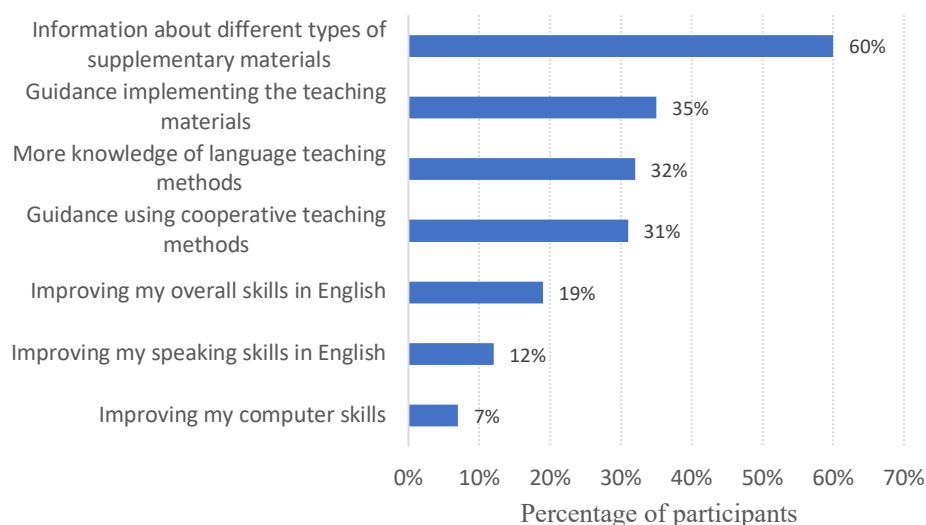
Grade 10: What kind of support would help you to effectively implement the National Curriculum Guide in English?



When *Graph 3* is analysed in relation to data from *Graphs 1, 2, and 4*, it seems that grade 7 teachers tend to focus on reading and writing activities not because they lack the confidence to develop students' oral production skills, but more likely because reading and writing are skills that have traditionally been the main focus of English language teaching. As indicated in *Graph 4*, grade 7 teachers asked for more support in technical aspects of English language teaching, such as information about different types of supplementary material, guidance for implementing the teaching materials, and more knowledge of language teaching methods, rather than improvement in their own English language-related skills. Over 25% of grade 10 teachers and less than 20% of grade 7 teachers are interested in improving their speaking and overall skills in English. However, both grade level teachers asked for more guidance in using cooperative teaching methods (grade 10 – 28% and grade 7 – 31%), suggesting that teachers want to use more CLT approaches but seem unsure how to go about this.

Graph 4

Grade 7: What kind of support would help you to effectively implement the National Curriculum Guide in English?



Both grade 7 and 10 teachers reported that they make use of textbooks, although grade 10 teachers less so, as indicated in *Graphs 5 and 6* below. These show 79% of grade 7 teachers reporting that they use *Action* textbook and 75% the *Action* workbook, while only 43% of grade 10 teachers use *Spotlight*. In both grades, the preferred materials are those issued by the Directorate of Education (Icel. *Menntamálastofnun*). Although *Spotlight* is the preferred textbook in grade 10, less than half the teachers said it was their main teaching material.

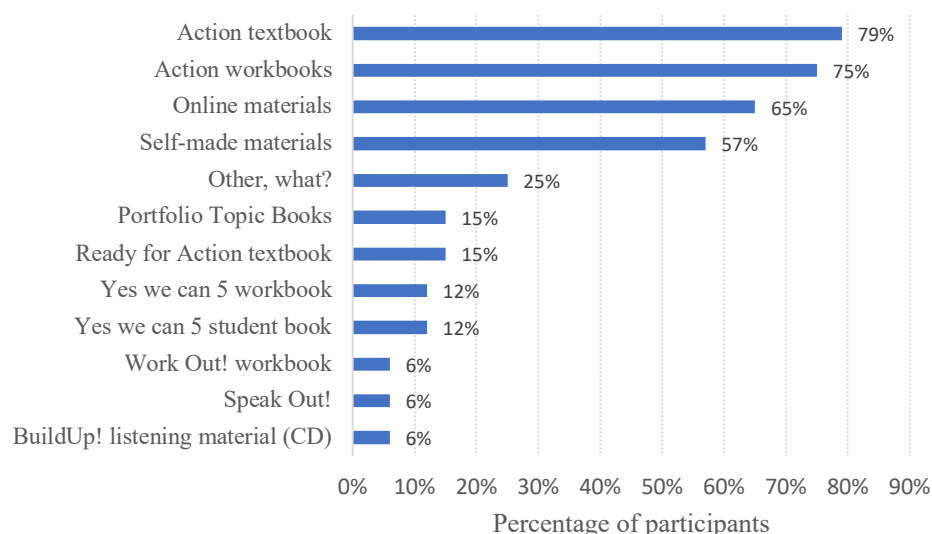
Over two-thirds of the participants report that they also use supplementary materials (65% of grade 7 teachers; 73% of grade 10 teachers). The use of online materials and self-made materials also ranked high, and this was substantiated by the examples of supplementary materials referenced by the teachers in the survey. Grammar exercises and worksheets, often taken from the internet, were frequently mentioned, as well as additional online resources such as YouTube, TED talks, films, videos, Kahoot, Quizlet, and educational websites.

This is an indication that teachers of English in Iceland devote considerable time to searching for and creating appropriate teaching materials to compensate for the outdated materials currently recommended by the Directorate of Education. Well over two-thirds of the teachers use supplementary materials, and often the materials are self-created or found online. A wide variety of digital materials are being used in English teaching, according to survey responses.

It seems, however, that teachers are not using online materials to develop spoken production, as indicated in *Graph 1*. The use of student presentations and student discussions also rank relatively low amongst both grade 7 and 10 teachers, as indicated by *Graph 2*, which shows less than 50% of teachers using these activities. This correlates with *Graphs 3 and 4*, which show the preferred type of support requested by teachers to effectively implement the National Curriculum Guide to be information about different types of supplementary material, guidance implementing the teaching materials, and more knowledge of language teaching methods.

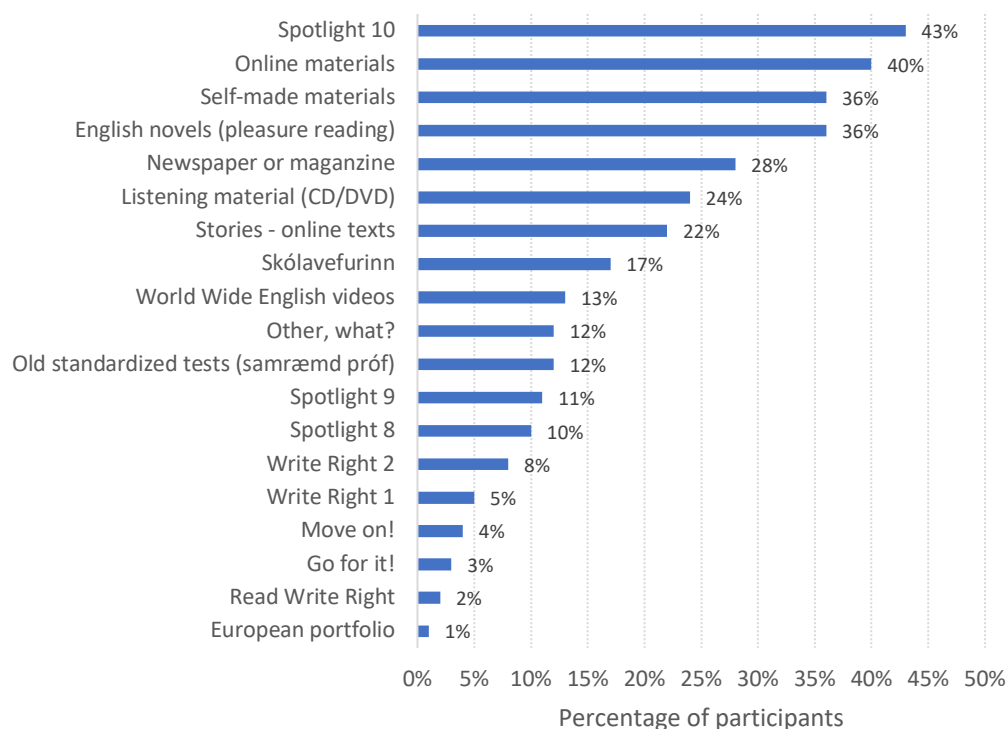
Graph 5

Grade 7: What do you currently use as your main teaching materials in English?



Graph 6

Grade 10: What do you currently use as your main teaching materials in English?



When asked about the suitability of their teaching materials, most teachers in grades 7 and 10 combined felt that materials were very suitable (26%), suitable (62%), and unsuitable (12%). However, when asked to provide examples of what was missing in regard to materials, teachers referred to speaking and communicative activities, spelling, grammar and vocabulary exercises, and a wider range of materials suitable for mixed abilities. Teachers also mentioned a shortage of culturally responsive teaching materials and materials that are challenging, relevant, and aligned with students' interests. Despite using *Spotlight 10*, as indicated in *Graph 6*, teachers report that the Spotlight ma-

materials are outdated and irrelevant and they felt that the current materials did not adequately address current issues such as cultural competences.

Teachers at the compulsory school level are using more participatory and student-centred approaches, such as pair work, group work, project work and speaking activities. They are also using more computer-based and online activities to supplement the textbooks that they use. However, spoken production and cultural literacy are neglected skills in English language teaching, and teachers at both grade levels asked for more guidance in using cooperative teaching methods, different types of supplementary material, and more knowledge of language teaching methods. Grade 10 teachers requested more attention to be paid to their own speaking skills while grade 7 teachers referred to more guidance implementing the teaching materials.

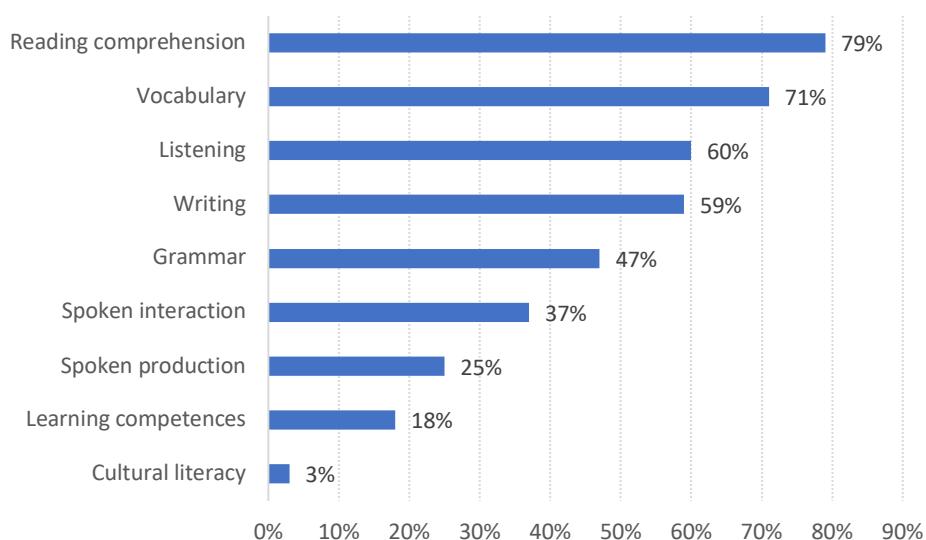
Assessment in English teaching

At the intersection of teaching and learning, the assessment processes involved are woven together to capture and convey what has been learned and how it was achieved. Survey participants responded to questions about the attainability of assessment criteria described in the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide, the assessment methods they apply in practice, and the skills they emphasise in the assessment process.

The combined results from the current survey suggest that seventh- and tenth-grade English teachers' assessment approaches predominantly emphasise reading comprehension (79%) and writing skills (69%), whereas learning competences (21%), i.e., learning how to learn, and cultural literacy (8%) receive far less emphasis. Similar to findings preceding the introduction of the 2011/2013 curriculum, the attention given to assessing reading and writing skills underscores the reduced role of, and attention to, interactive and integrated communication skills, both receptive and productive, and which are generally captured in the reciprocal actions of listening and speaking (Astorga-Cabezas, 2011). The current survey results show that assessing listening and assessing spoken interaction receive almost equal attention – 49% and 46%, respectively. Yet assessment of spoken production is one of the least emphasised skills (see *Graph 7*) despite the emphasis placed on criteria relating to oral interaction skills, particularly in terms of communicating knowledge and understanding, as described in the competences for foreign languages in the National Curriculum Guide 2013 (see pp. 130–131).

Graph 7

What skills do you emphasise when you assess students' English? Choose 1-5 skills. Combined results for grade 7 and 10 teachers.

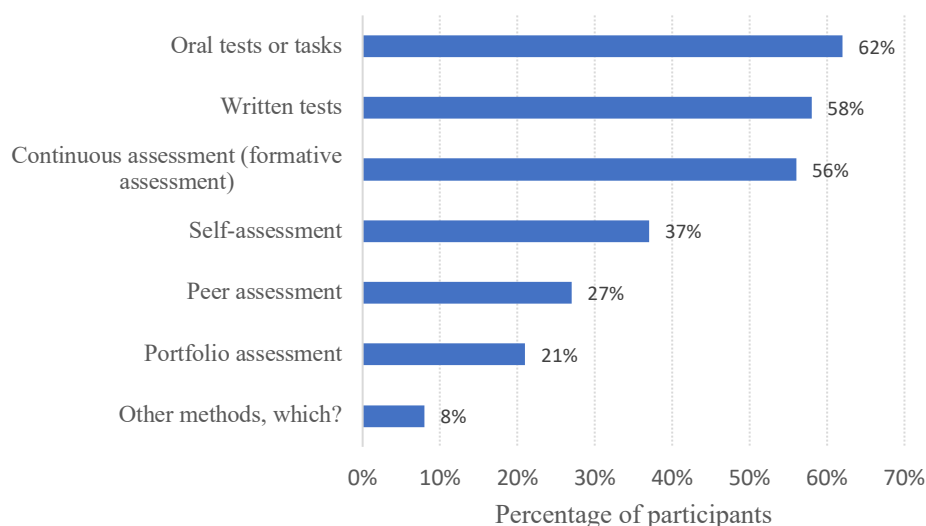


Survey results indicate that the variety of methods applied in seventh- and tenth-grade teachers' practice show a sustained preference for traditional methods of assessment, specifically tests and task-based assessment, yet *oral tests/tasks* was the most frequently reported method of assessment (see *Graph 8*, which shows the combined responses for grade 7 and 10 teachers). Current survey results indicate a pivotal shift with oral tests/tasks reported as the main form of assessment (62%) followed by *written tests* (58%) and *continuous/formative assessment* (56%). These results contrast with earlier findings from studies looking at English teachers' assessment practices (Lefever, 2009), which showed a heavy reliance on written tests and very little use of oral tests or tasks. Similarly, a survey of eighth-grade English teachers conducted by Jóhannsdóttir (2008) showed a strong preference for written tests and scant use of oral assessment activities, such as oral exams, conversations, or presentations. That was possibly due to the pressure to prepare students for the standardised exams (Icel. *Samræmd könnunarpróf*), which no longer existed by 2022.

The survey results also indicate that alternative assessment options have been gaining ground over the past decades, as shown in *Graph 8*. Formative assessments are used more than half of the time for classroom assessment. Self-assessment was the most popular (37%), followed by peer assessment (27%), and portfolio assessment (21%). A handful of other assessment formats were mentioned by a small portion (8%) of the teachers, such as project and thematic work, guided writing, feedback surveys and oral feedback sessions, spelling and vocabulary challenges, journaling, podcasts, participatory discussions, presentations, text/chapter review, and formative pop quizzes. While the results of the current survey indicate that oral tests and tasks and written tests are applied almost as frequently – 62% and 58%, respectively – the results shown in *Graph 8* suggest that there is still room for improvement in terms of increasing the frequency of 'alternative' assessments.

Graph 8

What assessment methods do you mainly use in English teaching? Combined responses for grade 7 and 10 teachers.



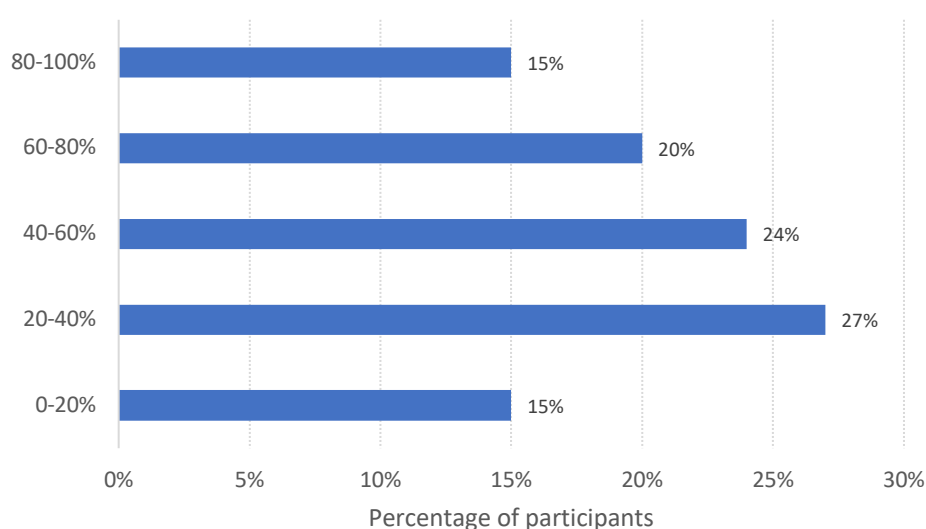
In summary, this section on the assessment practices of grades 7 and 10 English teachers shows that the assessment goals set forth in the revised Icelandic National Curriculum Guide are, for the most part, considered attainable. While varied skill assessment plays a critical role in the language learning process by combining both formative and summative evaluation, English teachers currently tend to overemphasise reading and writing skills and underemphasise interactional and communicative skills, particularly spoken production and cultural literacy. Alternative assessment methods are gaining ground in classroom assessment, although written tests are still highly favoured.

Use of English in the classroom

According to teachers responding to the survey (*Graph 9*), only 15% of teachers in grades 7 and 10 used English 80-100% of the teaching time, 70% of teachers used English partially, and 15% of English teachers did not use English at all or less than 20% of the time. These results are comparable with the answers from previous studies. It is also typical of the current study, as well as previous studies, that teachers in higher grades use proportionally more English than teachers in lower grades. When results are separated, they show that teachers in grade 10 reported using English 67% of the time, while teachers in grade 7 reported using English only 47% of the class time. This raises the question of whether students received sufficient opportunities to hear and use the target language in the class in communication with the teachers and with other students.

Graph 9

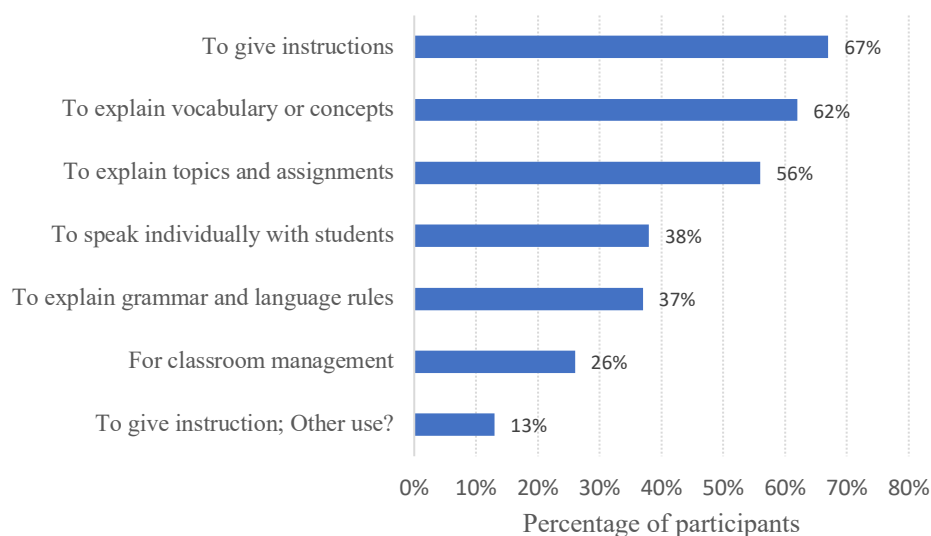
How much English do you use during English lessons? Combined results for grade 7 and 10 teachers.



Teachers reported using English for multiple and varied purposes in the classroom (*Graph 10*). These results indicate that English is used first and foremost for giving instructions (67%), followed by explaining vocabulary or concepts (62%), and explaining topics and assignments (56%). Teachers use English considerably less to speak one-on-one with students (38%) or to explain grammar and language rules (37%), and least for classroom management (26%).

Graph 10

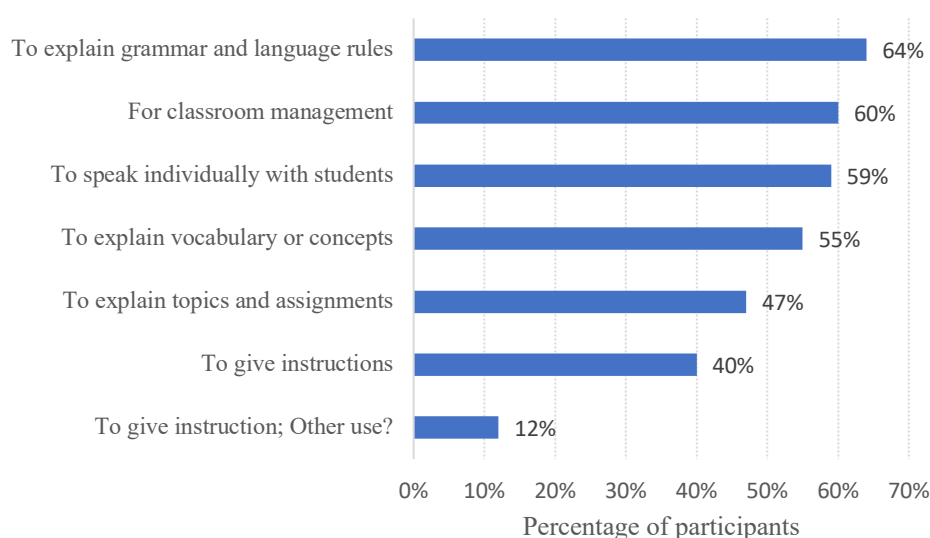
In what ways do you use English instead of Icelandic during lessons? Combined results for grade 7 and 10 teachers.



As *Graph 11* shows, teachers used Icelandic primarily to explain grammar and language rules (64%), for classroom management (60%) and to speak with individual students (59%). Other reported use of Icelandic in English classrooms for explaining vocabulary, concepts, topics, assignments, and instructions also scored relatively high, suggesting learning opportunities to communicate and negotiate meaning in English were missed, particularly in higher grades.

Graph 11

In what ways do you use Icelandic instead of English during lessons? Combined results for grade 7 and 10 teachers.



In summary, this section on use of English in the classroom applied by grades 7 and 10 English teachers has revealed that teachers use English mostly to give instruction, and explain vocabulary and concepts, while they use Icelandic for explaining grammar and language rules, classroom management, and for individual communication with students. Teachers in grade 10 use English more than teachers in grade 7.

Discussion

The research question guiding this study was: *How have compulsory school English teachers' classroom practices changed since the curricular reform of 2011/2013?* Overall, survey results drawn from the responses of 156 teachers revealed that there has been a shift away from teacher-centred and grammar-based approaches evident in earlier surveys (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2006; Lefever, 2007, 2008, 2009). Earlier surveys indicated that teachers tended to neglect productive speaking skills (Sigurjónsdóttir, 2006), but currently, English teachers' classroom practices are steadily developing towards communicative language teaching since reforms in 2011/2013 in Iceland, in line with international trends (Brown, 2007; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Savignon, 2002).

English teaching methods and materials. Survey results indicate a positive shift in preferred teaching methods from textbook and workbook-based activities to more interactive communicative approaches. According to the findings, creative writing and computer or internet activities are the activities most emphasised by the teachers. The popularity of computer or internet activities is encouraging, and perhaps expected, given the immense increase in information technology and digital media use in schools and society over the past decades. Teachers also put emphasis on interactive activities such as pair and group work and speaking activities, suggestive of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (Brown, 2007). Nevertheless, games, music, drama activities, and role play – all of which are also communicative activities – are among those receiving the least emphasis from English teachers, along with reviewing homework. One notable divergence is that there is little indication of teachers spending considerable classroom time checking homework, which was a popular practice reported in the Ministry's 2005/2006 survey (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2006).

Previous research (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2006; Lefever, 2007, 2008, 2009) has shown that English teachers at the compulsory level in Iceland tend to use traditional, textbook-based teaching methods with emphasis on reading, listening, and grammar teaching. Much less emphasis was put on communicative activities. The results of the current study show that the top three skills emphasised both in teaching and in assessment were reading comprehension, writing, and vocabulary. This is not surprising since these skills are given prominence in the 2013 National Curriculum Guide. Oral communication skills – namely spoken interaction and spoken production – receive some emphasis, but less than the aforementioned skills. This is notable given the heavy emphasis on CLT underpinning the current description of foreign language pedagogy in the national curriculum. Additionally, writing is emphasised more in grade 10 than in grade 7, which could be an indication that teachers are aware of the importance of academic writing in English for study at the upper-secondary level. This implies room for improvement, such as increasing emphasis on spoken production and the metacognitive skills that support general learning competences.

Research suggests that students in Iceland have strong English language oral competency at young ages because of early exposure to the internet and social media (Jóhannsdóttir, 2022; Lefever, 2010). At higher grade levels, students need higher level English skills to prepare for the transition to upper secondary school, where English is one of the three core subject areas. This may explain why 29% of grade 10 teachers want to improve their speaking skills in English compared to 12% of grade 7 teachers. Low confidence regarding teachers' own levels of English compared to that of their students may impact teachers' choice of activity because of insecurity and negative consequences on teachers' self-efficacy (Bateman, 2008; Fraga-Cañadas, 2010). This can negatively impact on the students' whole learning process (Chambless, 2012; Valmori & De Costa, 2016). Additionally, studies on the use of CLT amongst teachers indicate that challenges of application include neglect of explicit

grammar and vocabulary instruction, student unpreparedness for formal writing and exams, and over-emphasis on fluency at the expense of accuracy (Qasserras, 2023).

Assessment in English teaching. In addition to the positive shift in teaching methods towards more interactive communicative approaches, there seems to be a similar change in assessment methods. A growing number of teachers include oral tests or tasks in their assessments, although emphasis on reading and writing still tends to dominate assessment practices despite curricular recommendations for interactive, communicative assessment. Formative assessment methods, such as self- and peer assessment, are increasing in classroom practice.

Increasing teachers' knowledge about curriculum-based assessment procedures – which measure what a student knows, what needs to be learned, and identifies the instructional starting point with the larger curriculum – offers a non-standardised assessment approach that can support pre- and in-service English teachers (Spinelli, 2008). This approach focuses intentionally on assessing goal mastery, objective attainment, and competence criteria embedded within the school and national curricula. In other words, there is an emphasis on progressive mastery of skills and competences based on frequent evaluation of learners' performance *using the language in meaningful ways* in an adaptive manner that is representative of students' evolving skills rather than in comparison to other students or at punctuated moments in time. Curriculum-based approaches have been shown to strengthen academic gains in reading and writing (Fewster & MacMillan, 2002), and these language skills can be supported by assessment methods that include interactive speaking-and-listening in the ongoing learning process.

An important dimension of good language assessment, regardless of method or design, is to capture language usage in real-life, i.e., authentic use of the English language, by highlighting the role of *communicative competences* showcasing a learner's

...ability to express and respond to pragmatics use of language, ability to tolerate potentially unfamiliar language varieties, ability to negotiate to mean and avoid communication breakdown, ability to communicate with interlocutor from different language background and culture, ability to use appropriate discourse data whether in spoken or written text. (Yuzar, 2020, p. 12)

Performance-based assessment measures capture what students know and can actually do, by relying on 'meaningful, naturalistic, context-embedded tasks that are hands-on and collaborative and link directly to instruction' (Spinelli, 2008, p. 108). When designing assessments that emphasise competences described in the national curriculum, prominent features of both task and assessment design should target communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, and self-regulation and responsibility.

English usage in the classroom. Using English in the classroom may be a challenging task for many reasons. For example, teachers' target language proficiency and their ability to utilise their proficiency to promote students' learning influence teachers' language use in the classroom. Teachers generally need a high level of proficiency in the language they teach (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017). Richards (2015) categorises teachers' target language proficiency into a set of competences. These are: providing good language models, maintaining use of English in the classroom, giving explanations and instructions in English, providing examples of words and grammatical structures, giving accurate explanations of meanings of English words and grammatical items, using and adapting authentic English-language resources in teaching, monitoring one's own speech and writing for accuracy, giving correct feedback on learner language use, providing input at an appropriate level of difficulty, and engaging in improvisational teaching (p. 113). We can infer from responses to the current survey that the 18% of teachers who reported their English proficiency to be on B1 level or lower have difficulty using English to fulfil the functions that Richards (2015) and Van Canh and Renandya (2017) have put forward.

Although a considerable percentage of teachers reported having a B1 and B2 level of English, which may influence the quantity and quality of their modelling of English, the extramural exposure to English in Iceland can to some extent substitute for the limited exposure to the target language in the classroom. Purposeful use of Icelandic in the classroom can, for example, serve to balance the emotional needs of students with the least English proficiency, as well as enhance students' understanding of complex concepts and grammar. This means that the use of Icelandic by teachers ought to be conscious and purposeful, rather than a consequence of their own limited English proficiency. The use of L1 Icelandic should be judicious and temporary, serving as a bridge to an increased use of the target language (English).

Although general English proficiency affects the classroom use of English, the pedagogies practiced by teachers are equally important for facilitating student learning (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017). Teachers' use of a common L1 can be a conscious, justified decision, with the purpose being to facilitate a reduction of cognitive overload and of learner anxiety. Concretely, that can be done by using the L1 to explain complex terminology, concepts, and grammatical structures and to create a relaxed classroom. This is in line with the results from the current survey which indicate that Icelandic, the L1 in this case, is widely used for explaining grammar and language rules (64%) and vocabulary or concepts (55%) (see *Graph 11*, which presents combined responses of grade 7 and 10 teachers). These results comply with Marsella (2020), who found that teachers' talk often employs L1 to save time, or for more efficient communication; for example, to help students to gain knowledge about a subject, to manage the classroom, and to build interpersonal relationships. Results from the current survey show that teachers frequently use Icelandic for classroom management (60%) and speaking one-on-one with students (59%). They also use it for explaining topics and assignments (47%).

As stated, it is important that the decision to use L1 in the classroom is made purposefully, and not only as an easy option (Bruen & Kelly, 2017). As Shin and colleagues (2020) point out, the use of L1 in a foreign language classroom is natural for many reasons, particularly for purposeful use of L1 to promote and support L2 learning. This extends the L1 concept from one language serving as the shared school language towards classrooms where inclusion of diverse L1s is accepted and student plurilingualism is the norm. Other factors influencing language choice include students' age and target language proficiency, the choice of materials, i.e., bilingual dictionaries, and institutional policies on language use. While conscious use of L1 in the English classroom can be useful, teachers should still encourage English use in the classroom. Studies suggest that the target language should be used 90% of the time in the classroom and that teacher talk should be comprehensible and include frequent monitoring of students' understanding (Shin et al., 2020).

Call for action: emphasis on cultural competences. The foreign language competence of cultural literacy, which was introduced in the 2011/2013 curriculum, still receives little attention. Teachers in grade 10 place some emphasis on cultural literacy, but it was almost non-existent in grade 7. The teaching of cultural literacy needs to be considered in connection with recommended teaching materials. Teachers mentioned a shortage of culturally responsive teaching materials and materials that are challenging, relevant, and appeal to students' interests. Specifically, grade 10 teachers felt that the recommended textbook materials were outdated and irrelevant and did not adequately address current issues such as cultural competences. Future directions for improving cultural literacy include added attention to assessment design that aligns with culturally relevant teaching. If cultural literacy is not integrated into existing teaching materials, it is not surprising that it receives little attention in English teaching.

The negligible attention paid to cultural competence suggests that teachers are not making connections between these competences and other skills in terms of integrated skills development. Such skills can easily be integrated into reading comprehension and vocabulary development, the two top skills addressed by teachers at both grades 7 and 10. It is evident that the teaching of cultural literacy needs to be considered in connection with teaching methods and materials. If cultural literacy is not an integrated component of teacher education, it will continue to receive little attention in English

teaching and the opportunity to use English language teaching as an intercultural tool may be lost. Given that teachers tend to focus on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and writing, using children's literature is a method that can enhance intercultural learning (Bland, 2020). In addition, awareness of the impact of the teachers' pedagogical choices on student learning needs to be better addressed in teacher education. Matz & Römhild (2021) argue for language teaching: that is relevant to the learners' life-worlds; that has a high degree of self-reflection and an awareness of one's own position and subjectivity in relation to current crises such as climate change and human rights; that addresses socio-environmental issues through meaningful and complex tasks, involving problem-posing and communicative action orientation; and that uses multimodal materials and texts to offer multiple perspectives on a given topic.

Summing up. Results from the 2007 survey of English language teachers indicated that there were numerous discrepancies between the objectives set forth in the curriculum and teachers' actual classroom practices (Lefever, 2009). The 2020 survey carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti, 2020) showed that teachers found implementation of the National Curriculum competences challenging because of the lack of support or follow-up from the Ministry of Education. The current survey indicates the need for teacher education to include cultural literacy as a core component of its programme, and to reconsider how CLT approaches can be better organised to: emphasise communication in and through authentic and relevant situations, focus on integrated skills development, and create a balance between accuracy and fluency through critical engagement with the language as well as through cultural and social considerations. Discrepancies between curricula demand and classroom practice have, to some extent, decreased for English teachers in grades 7 and 10. Encouragingly, the majority of responding teachers (70%) consider the attainment of the National Curriculum competence criteria attainable/highly attainable.

Although the findings indicate that participatory and student-centred learning activities are present in practice, such as through pair work, speaking tasks, group work, and project work, it is not clear from the survey results to what extent these are aligned with CLT principles in terms of designing authentic contexts, ensuring integrated skills development, or activating student participation to develop fluency as well as accuracy. While the competence criteria are formulated clearly and account for a complex integration of learners' knowledge and skill development over time and across grade levels, notable challenges persist, as indicated by 22% of teachers stating that criteria were either not very attainable or not at all attainable, and nearly 10% being unsure of the prospect.

It is important to acknowledge the work required to adapt recommendations to actual classroom practice, including English usage in the classroom and specific assessment methods. Assessment practices often differ widely within and between schools in Iceland. Professionally speaking, teachers need to adjust practices, whether holistic or analytical, in relation to their specific learning contexts and performance goals, and in response to the number of students and various language proficiency levels present, despite the institutional constraints present (Astorga-Cabezas, 2011). However, responsibility for improved practice should not rest only in the hands of teachers – teacher education also plays a significant role in shifting trends in English teaching.

Conclusions

In conclusion, English teaching in Iceland (at the compulsory level) is increasingly shifting towards CLT, as required by the National Curriculum Guide 2011/2013, but there are still dimensions such as cultural literacy and learning competences that need to be better integrated into the teaching and learning of English. This implies that teacher education and development offered in Iceland need to address these issues specifically and mediate them for future language teachers. Keeping in mind the interdependent feedback loop between teachers' practices and teacher education, professional development initiatives can target the areas emphasised above to better inform practicing teachers and better prepare beginning teachers for the demands of 21st century English teaching. Such adjustments draw attention to changes in educational policy and prompt modifications to teacher

education programmes so that what is offered responds directly to the reported needs of teachers. Strengthened alignment between teacher preparation initiatives and the day-to-day practices of teachers offers a pathway forward for improving English language teaching and learning outcomes in compulsory schools across Iceland.

Breytingar í átt að samskiptamiðaðri enskukennslu í íslenskum grunnskólum

Þessi grein kortleggur breytingar á enskukennslu í grunnskólum síðan námskrá var breytt árin 2007 og aftur 2011/2013. Megintilgangur núverandi rannsóknar er að kanna stöðu enskukennslu frá sjónarhorni starfandi kennara. Annar tilgangur rannsóknarinnar er að stuðla að þróun kennaranáms á Menntavísindasviði Háskóla Íslands og bæta undirbúning enskukennara fyrir þá sem eru að hefja störf eða starfa í grunnskólum. Þegar fyrri kannanir voru framkvæmdar – stórtæk ráðuneytiskönnun árið 2005/2006 og minni eftirfylgniskönnun árið 2007 – var enskukennsla mjög undir áhrifum frá undirbúningi nemenda fyrir lokapróf, með mikla áherslu á lesskilning, ritun og málfræði. Aðalnámskrá 2011/2013 innleiddi grunnþætti menntunar og hæfniviðmið sem grundvöll kennslu og námsmats. Í megindegri könnun, sem framkvæmd var árið 2022, söfnuðu rannsakendur svörum frá kennurum í 7. og 10. bekk um aðgengi þeirra að kennslu- og námsgögnum og notkun þeirra, kennsluhætti, nálganir að námsmati, faglega þróun kennara og notkun ensku í kennslustofunni. Alls svöruðu 156 þátttakendur, en svörun var 53%. Niðurstöðurnar sýna að hefðbundnar, bókmiðaðar kennsluaðferðir eru enn ríkjandi, þó munnleg samskiptahæfni fái aukna áherslu. Menningarlæsi og námshæfni þurfa að fá verulega athygli ef uppfylla á kröfur aðalnámskrár frá 2011/2013. Notkun markmálsins (ensku) í kennslustofum ætti að aukast, þó að markviss notkun á íslensku (móðurmálinu) sé enn viðeigandi í kennslu erlendra tungumála. Að jafnaði virðist samskiptamiðuð tungumálakennsla vera að ná fótfestu.

Lykilord: samskiptamiðuð tungumálakennsla, enska, námsmat, hæfni, grunnskólar

Um höfunda

Charlotte E. Wolff (cwo@hi.is) er dósent við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. Hún hefur þverfaglegan bakgrunn í hagnýtum málvísindum, mannfræði og menntasálfræði. Hún undirbýr kennaranema undir að takast á við faglegar áskoranir tungumálakennslu í síbreytilegu samhengi. Rannsóknir hennar á skilningi kennara og þróun sérfræðipækkingar kennara fela í sér samstarf við fjölbreytt net rannsækenda, kennara og starfandi kennara.

Renata Emilsson Peskova (renata@hi.is) starfar sem lektor við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. Núverandi rannsókn hennar Fjöltýngdar kennsluaðferðir í fjölbreyttum bekkjum kannar hvernig nemendur og kennarar geta byggt á tungumálaforða sínum til að efla nám og kennslu þeirra. Aðrar rannsóknir Renötu snúast um fjöltýngi, tungumálastefnur, móðurmálsnám og tungumálasjálfsmyndir.

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 Shifting trends in communicative English language teaching in Icelandic compulsory schools
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<http://netla.hi.is/greinar/2024/alm/16.pdf>
 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24270/netla.2024/16>

Appendix A

Survey items for the inquiry into seventh-grade English teaching – conducted spring 2022

Background questions

1. What is your gender? ☐¹ Female ☐² Male ☐³ Other

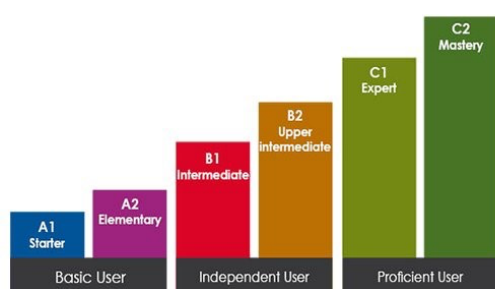
2. What age group do you belong to?
☐¹ 20-29 years ☐² 30-39 years ☐³ 40-49 years ☐⁴ 50-59 years ☐⁵ 60-69 years

3. What do you consider your mother tongue (primary language)?
☐¹ Icelandic ☐² English ☐³ Other

4. Where is your school located?
☐¹ Capital region
☐² Southern peninsula
☐³ West
☐⁴ Westfjords
☐⁵ Northwest
☐⁶ Northeast
☐⁷ East
☐⁸ South

5. How long have you taught English? _____

6. What do you estimate your overall English competences to be on the CEFR scale?
☐¹ A1 ☐² A2 ☐³ B1 ☐⁴ B2 ☐⁵ C1 ☐⁶ C2 ☐⁷ I don't know



Education

7. Please mark your highest level of education. Choose only one answer.

- ☐¹ M.Ed. or MT with foreign language teaching as an area of specialisation
- ☐² M.A. in English plus teacher certification (60 credits)
- ☐³ M.A. in English
- ☐⁴ M.A. in another subject than English
- ☐⁵ B.Ed. with English as an area of specialisation
- ☐⁶ B.Ed. in another subject than English
- ☐⁷ B.A. in English
- ☐⁸ High school diploma (Stúdentspróf)
- ☐⁹ Other, What? _____

Teaching materials

8. What do you currently use as your main teaching materials in English in grade 7?

Dropdown menu --

Action textbook

Action workbooks

Ready for Action textbook

Yes We Can 5 student book

Yes We Can 5 workbook

Build Up! Listening material (CD)

Speak Out!

Work Out! workbook

Portfolio topic books

Online materials

Self-made materials

Other (what?) _____

9. Do you use supplementary materials? ☐¹ Yes ☐² No

If yes, what materials do you use? Give some examples. _____

10. How suitable are the English teaching materials that you are using?

☐¹ Very suitable

☐² Suitable

☐³ Not suitable

☐⁴ No opinion

What is lacking in the teaching materials, if anything? _____

Teaching practices

11. How many minutes per week are allocated to English teaching in grade 7 in your school?

12. How would you describe students' interest in learning English?

☐¹ Very interested

☐² Fairly interested

☐³ Not very interested

☐⁴ No interest

13. How much English do you use during English lessons?

☐¹ 0% - 20% ☐² 20% - 40% ☐³ 40% - 60% ☐⁴ 60% - 80% ☐⁵ 80% - 100%

14. How are you using English during lessons (for what purposes)? Give some examples.

15. How much English do your students use during lessons, in your opinion?

☐¹ 0% - 20% ☐² 20% - 40% ☐³ 40% - 60% ☐⁴ 60% - 80% ☐⁵ 80% - 100%

16. In what ways do you use Icelandic instead of English during lessons?

- ☐¹ To explain vocabulary or concepts
- ☐² To explain grammar and language rules
- ☐³ To give instructions
- ☐⁴ To explain topics and assignments
- ☐⁵ To speak individually with students
- ☐⁶ For classroom management
- ☐⁷ Other uses? _____

17. Which skills do you emphasise most in English teaching in grade 7?

Which skills do you emphasise most in English teaching in grade 7?	Very much	Much	Not much	None
Listening				
Reading comprehension				
Spoken interaction				
Spoken production				
Writing				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Cultural literacy				
Learning competences				

18. your opinion, how important is learner autonomy in English teaching in grade 7?

- ☐¹ Very important
- ☐² Important
- ☐³ Not important
- ☐⁴ I don't know

19. How much emphasis do you place on the following? Mark the items which best describe your teaching. You can add additional items in the spaces provided at the bottom.

	Very much	Much	Not much	None
Pair work				
Group work				
Workbook				
Textbook				
Drama and games				
Speaking tasks				
Creative writing				
Songs and music				
Listening tasks				
Reading books in English				
Reading aloud				
Digital media use				
Discussions in English				
Grammar exercises				
Role play				
Theme-based instruction				
Project work				
Student presentations				
Computer or Internet activities				
Word lists				
Reviewing homework				
Translation tasks				

20. Would you like to change anything in your English teaching? ☐¹ yes ☐² no

a) If yes, what would you like to change? _____

21. How frequently do you refer to the National Curriculum Guide for guidance in your English teaching?

- ☐¹ Often
☐² Sometimes
☐³ Seldom
☐⁴ Never

22. How attainable are the National Curriculum Guide competence criteria for English teaching, in your opinion?

- ☐¹ Highly attainable
☐² Attainable
☐³ Not attainable
☐⁴ I don't know

Comments: _____

Assessment

23. What assessment methods do you mainly use in English teaching in grade 7?

- ☐¹ written tests
☐² oral tests or tasks
☐³ portfolio assessment
☐⁴ self-assessment
☐⁵ continuous assessment (formative assessment) consisting of:
☐⁶ Other methods:_____What skills do you emphasise when you assess students' English in grade 7?

	Very much	Much	Not much	None
Listening				
Reading comprehension				
Spoken interaction				
Spoken production				
Writing				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Cultural literacy				
Learning competences				

Professional development

24. How well-prepared do you feel for teaching English in grade 7?

- ☐¹ Very well
☐² Well
☐³ Not well
☐⁴ I don't know

25. What kind of support do you feel you need to effectively implement the National Curriculum guidelines in English? (Choose as many options as applicable.)

- ☐¹ I need to improve my speaking skills in English.
- ☐² I need to improve my overall skills in English.
- ☐³ I need more knowledge of language teaching methods.
- ☐⁴ I need guidance implementing the teaching materials.
- ☐⁵ I need guidance in using cooperative teaching methods (group work, pair work, theme-based instruction, project work).
- ☐⁶ I need information about different types of supplementary materials.
- ☐⁷ I need to improve my computer skills.

Other support: _____

26. Have you taken part in professional development courses for English teachers in Iceland? If so, what type? (You may choose more than one answer.)

Dropdown menu –

Courses sponsored by the English Teachers' Association (FEKI)

Courses sponsored by the Language Teachers' Association (STÍL)

Courses sponsored by University of Iceland Continuing Education (Endurmenntun HÍ)

Courses offered at the University of Iceland or University of Akureyri

Online courses

Conferences on English or language teaching

Workshops on English or language teaching

None

Other: _____

27. Have you taken part in professional development courses for English teachers offered outside of Iceland?

Dropdown menu –

Online courses

Conferences on English or language teaching

Workshops on English or language teaching

None

Other: _____

8. Please include any additional comments or suggestions you might have regarding English teaching:

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B

Survey items for the inquiry into tenth-grade English teaching – conducted spring 2022

Background questions

1. What is your gender? ☐¹ Female ☐² Male ☐³ Other

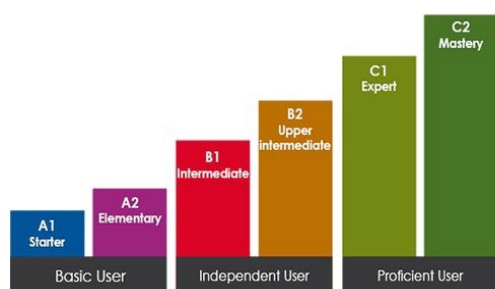
2. What age group do you belong to?
☐¹ 20-29 years ☐² 30-39 years ☐³ 40-49 years ☐⁴ 50-59 years ☐⁵ 60-69 years

3. What do you consider your mother tongue (primary language)?
☐¹ Icelandic ☐² English ☐³ Other

4. Where is your school located?
☐¹ Capital region
☐² Southern peninsula
☐³ West
☐⁴ Westfjords
☐⁵ Northwest
☐⁶ Northeast
☐⁷ East
☐⁸ South

5. How long have you taught English? _____

6. What do you estimate your overall English competences to be on the CEFR scale?
☐¹ A1 ☐² A2 ☐³ B1 ☐⁴ B2 ☐⁵ C1 ☐⁶ C2 ☐⁷ I don't know



Education

7. Please mark your highest level of education. Choose only one answer.

- ☐¹ M.Ed. or MT with foreign language teaching as an area of specialisation
- ☐² M.A. in English plus teacher certification (60 credits)
- ☐³ M.A. in English
- ☐⁴ M.A. in another subject than English
- ☐⁵ B.Ed. with English as an area of specialisation
- ☐⁶ B.Ed. in another subject than English
- ☐⁷ B.A. in English
- ☐⁸ High school diploma (Stúdentspróf)
- ☐⁹ Other, what: _____

Teaching materials

8. What do you currently use as your main teaching materials in English in grade 10?

Dropdown menu

Spotlight 8

Spotlight 9

Spotlight 10

Stories, enskir lestextar og verkefni

World Wide English fræðslumyndir

Write Right 1

Write Right 2

Read Write Right

Go for It!

Move On!

European portfolio

Online materials

Skólavefurinn

Newspaper or magazine articles

Listening material (CD/DVD)

Old standardised tests (samræmd próf)

English novels (pleasure reading)

Self-made materials

Other (what?) _____

Do you use supplementary materials? ☐¹ Yes ☐² No

If yes, what materials do you use? Give some examples. _____

9. How suitable are the English teaching materials that you are using?

☐¹ Very suitable

☐² Suitable

☐³ Not suitable

☐⁴ No opinion

What is lacking in the teaching materials, if anything? _____

Teaching practices

10. How many minutes per week are allocated to English teaching in grade 10 in your school?

11. How would you describe students' interest in learning English?

☐¹ Very interested

☐² Fairly interested

☐³ Not very interested

☐⁴ No interest

12. How much English do you use during English lessons?

☐¹ 0% - 20% ☐² 20% - 40% ☐³ 40% - 60% ☐⁴ 60% - 80% ☐⁵ 80% - 100%

13. How are you using English during lessons (for what purposes)? Give some examples.

14. How much English do your students use during lessons, in your opinion?

☐¹ 0% - 20% ☐² 20% - 40% ☐³ 40% - 60% ☐⁴ 60% - 80% ☐⁵ 80% - 100%

15. In what ways do you use Icelandic instead of English during lessons?

- ☐¹ To explain vocabulary or concepts
☐² To explain grammar and language rules
☐³ To give instructions
☐⁴ To explain topics and assignments
☐⁵ To speak individually with students
☐⁶ For classroom management
☐⁷ Other uses? -----

16. Which skills do you emphasise most in English teaching in grade 7?

	Very much	Much	Not much	None
Listening				
Reading comprehension				
Spoken interaction				
Spoken production				
Writing				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Cultural literacy				
Learning competences				

17. In your opinion, how important is learner autonomy in English teaching in grade 10?

- ☐¹ Very important
☐² Important
☐³ Not important
☐⁴ I don't know

18. How much emphasis do you place on the following? Mark the items which best describe your teaching. You can add additional items in the spaces provided at the bottom.

	Very much	Much	Not much	None
Pair work				
Group work				
Workbook				
Textbook				
Drama and games				
Speaking tasks				
Creative writing				
Songs and music				
Listening tasks				
Reading books in English				
Reading aloud				
Digital media use				
Discussions in English				
Grammar exercises				
Role play				
Theme-based instruction				
Project work				
Student presentations				
Computer or Internet activities				
Word lists				
Go over homework				
Translation tasks				

19. Would you like to change anything in your English teaching? ☐¹ yes ☐² no

a) If yes, what would you like to change?

20. How frequently do you refer to the National Curriculum Guide for guidance in your English teaching?

- ☐¹ Often
☐² Sometimes
☐³ Seldom
☐⁴ Never

21. How attainable are the National Curriculum Guide competence criteria for English teaching, in your opinion?

- ☐¹ Highly attainable
☐² Attainable
☐³ Not attainable
☐⁴ I don't know

Comments: _____

Assessment

23. What assessment methods do you mainly use in English teaching in grade 10?

- ☐¹ written tests
☐² oral tests or tasks
☐³ portfolio assessment
☐⁴ peer assessment
☐⁵ continuous assessment (formative assessment) consisting of: _____
☐⁶ Other methods _____ What skills do you emphasise when you assess students' English in grade 10?

	Very much	Much	Not much	None
Listening				
Reading comprehension				
Spoken interaction				
Spoken production				
Writing				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Cultural literacy				
Learning competences				

Professional development

24. In general, how well-prepared do you feel for teaching English in grade 10?

- ☐¹ Very well
☐² Well
☐³ Not well
☐⁴ I don't know

25. What kind of support do you feel you need to effectively implement the National Curriculum guidelines in English? (Choose as many options as applicable.)

- ☐¹ I need to improve my speaking skills in English.
☐² I need to improve my overall skills in English.
☐³ I need more knowledge of language teaching methods.
☐⁴ I need guidance implementing the teaching materials.
☐⁵ I need guidance in using cooperative teaching methods (group work, pair work, theme-based instruction, project work).
☐⁶ I need information about different types of supplementary materials.
☐⁷ I need to improve my computer skills.

Other support: _____

25. Have you taken part in professional development courses for English teachers in Iceland? If so, what type? (You may choose more than one answer.)

Dropdown menu –

Courses sponsored by the English Teachers' Association (FEKI)

Courses sponsored by the Language Teachers' Association (STÍL)

Courses sponsored by University of Iceland Continuing Education (Endurmenntun HÍ)

Courses offered at the University of Iceland or University of Akureyri

Online courses

Conferences on English or language teaching

Workshops on English or language teaching

None

Other: _____

26. Have you taken part in professional development courses for English teachers offered outside of Iceland?

Dropdown menu –

Online courses

Conferences on English or language teaching

Workshops on English or language teaching

None

Other: _____

Please include any additional comments or suggestions you might have regarding English teaching:

Thank you for your participation!