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**PERCEIVED INEQUALITIES BY IMMIGRANT
STUDENTS IN CZECHIA**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defence: 2018

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on

Kristýna Strnadová

References

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Abstract

The Diploma thesis presents how teenage students from third countries understand their daily life problems and difficulties which happen to them as a consequence of being a foreigner in a host country. Based on an analysis of ten semi-structural interviews, it is shown that students face several types of problems. The situations mentioned reveal a lack of recognition of their position in the Czech Republic; however, students perceive problems this way rarely. Even though students describe relatively large amount of language and scholastic difficulties, and problems with classmates and unpleasant encounters outside of the school environment, they tend not to see them as inequalities but rather as inevitable situations connected to their status of being a foreigner. They also often understand the problems as individual experiences which do not happen collectively, they see these problems as exceptions and bad luck or as the same problems that Czechs have. Sometimes the problems are seen as inexplicable by the students. Only when an experience is strong enough, they perceive it as a racist behavior or discrimination. Despite the fact that students sometimes demonstrate an inability to react to such behavior, they create several strategies on how to avoid them and how to deal with them. What crystallized from the interviews is that the strategies used in certain situations depend on how the students perceive this situation.

Keywords

Students-immigrants, inequalities, recognition, coping strategies

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce představuje, jak mladí studenti z tzv. třetích zemí chápají každodenní problémy a obtíže, které se jim dějí v důsledku jejich postavení cizince v hostitelské zemi. Na základě analýzy deseti polostrukturovaných rozhovorů je ukázáno, že studenti čelí mnoha různým problémům. Zmiňované problémové situace poukazují na nedostatek uznání pozice cizince v České republice, nicméně, přestože studenti popisují relativně velké množství jazykových a studijních obtíží, problémů se spolužáky a nepříjemných střetnutí mimo prostředí školy, mají tendenci je vnímat ne jako nerovnosti, ale jako nevyhnutelné situace spojené s jejich pozicí cizince. Také je často chápají jako individuální zážitky, které se nedějí kolektivně, či jako výjimky, smůlu nebo stejné problémy, s nimiž se potýkají i Češi. V některých případech jsou studenti-cizinci problémy vnímány jako něco nevysvětlitelného. Pouze je-li zážitek dostatečně silný, je vnímán jako rasistické chování či diskriminace. I přes to, že studenti někdy tvrdí, že na takovéto chování není možné nijak reagovat, vytváří si řadu strategií, jak se těmito situacím předem vyhnout a jak se s nimi vyrovnat. Z rozhovorů vyplynulo, že to, jakou strategii daný student v určité situaci zvolí, je ověřeno tím, jak ji jako celek vnímá.

Klíčová slova

Studenti, imigranti, nerovnosti, uznání, strategie

Název práce

Nerovnosti vnímané student-imigranty v Česku

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Research problem

The phenomenon of migration is spread worldwide. Although the Czech Republic is according to EUROSTAT one of the three least targeted country by immigrants, there are still lots of foreigners settling down, either temporarily or permanently (EUROSTAT, 2015). The current data suggests that there are more than 500 000 documented foreigners living in the Czech territory, mostly from Ukraine, Slovakia, Vietnam and Russia (ČSÚ, 2017). The reason of their arrival may differ; however, being a foreigner in the Czech Republic may mean a lot of difficulties. Due to different institutional, economic and also personal barriers, foreigners tend to struggle with finding a stable and legal job which would correspond to their reached education or qualification level (EUROSTAT, 2015).

Being unemployed or struggling at the poverty line may, on the one hand, might lead to the welfare state dependency, a loss of social status or an emergence of psychological problems. On the other hand, it may support prejudices, racism or social exclusion from the host society (Leontiyeva, Pokorná, 2014). At the same time, only the fact of being a foreigner means to be entitled to fewer rights than the citizens. Foreigners are also often looked down at and have fewer possibilities in many different areas (Klvačová, 2007:61).

These are the main and the most heard problems connected to the status of aliens. Nevertheless, most of them are connected to (and studied on) adult working foreigners in the Czech Republic. Among all documented foreigners there were in

fact more than 78 000 individuals studying at Czech schools during the school year 2015/2016, from which almost 9 000 young people study at Czech high schools (ČSÚ, 2016).

Current researches concerning foreign students at Czech high schools are focused mainly on topics of integration, specificity of teaching students from different backgrounds or overcoming the language barrier (e.g. Nazarenko, 2013; Schebelle, Horáková, 2012; Hána, Hasman, Kostelecká, 2017). Few of the studies are focused on how adult immigrants perceive different types of inequalities (e.g. Pokorná, 2014; Klvačová, 2007); nevertheless, I did not succeed in finding any about inequalities perceived by teenage foreign students, neither in the Czech Republic, nor in other countries. Thus, my question is, if foreign students experience any situations in which they are given different treatment or they feel being disadvantaged compared to their peers. In my diploma thesis, I will focus on the subjective perception of social and cultural inequalities of foreign high school students in the Czech Republic.

Theoretical background

There are many ways how to understand socio-economic inequalities. One of the current trend is to look at them as one phenomenon caused and/or emphasized by people's categorizational way of thinking. In other words, people tend to judge others through simplified categorization which continuously re-establish unequal position of certain groups of people (for instance, according to their class, gender, ethnicity, age etc.). As Šanderová explains, this approach helps to identify what is common to different types of inequalities by focusing on the everyday interaction of affected individuals and the barriers they feel in their daily living. (Šanderová, 2007:14).

In my thesis I will join this approach which can be classified as poststructuralist. Work of the theorist like Frazer, Tilly, Collins and Sayer help me to settle down the interpretation context for inequalities connected to a fact of „being a foreigner“. By choosing young foreigners as a target group I will contribute to the current knowledge of experienced inequalities on a microlevel.

Methodology

The research will be based on semi-structured interviews with foreign students. About 10 respondents from high school environment will be interviewed, however I will do as many interviews as possible until the answers will start to repeat. Students should be foreign born individuals who come to the Czech Republic in later age (after elementary school).

Chosen schools will be contacted by e-mail together with a phone call about the research and I will request forwarding my research offer to suitable individuals. The type of the high school is not a selection criterion; nevertheless having respondents from different school background might suggest the un/importance of a school type to perception of ones experienced inequalities. Schools will be chosen randomly in the capital city of Prague using a list of all state secondary school in Prague (Atlasskolstvi.cz).

After reaching few of the first respondents, they will be also asked to recommend some of their friends in similar situation. In other word, I will use a combination of two methods to reach required respondents – random selection of schools followed by a snowball method. Even though snowball method contributes to distortion of results, in this case it is hardly possible to reach required respondents in other ways and snowball method may thus pay as a helpful tool.

I will focus mainly on daily situations in which the unequal treatment might appear as well as on their felt position at school as it is an essential part of a teenager's life. Therefore, my two main research questions are:

1. *How do migrant students perceive inequalities which happen to them?*
2. *How do migrant students react to these inequalities?*

The first aim of this work is to get a better understanding of meanings which migrant students ascribe to these inequalities, how to they explain them to themselves and what role do they play in their lives. The second point of this thesis is to find out which practices do migrant students use to cope with these disadvantages. I ask whether they have any specific strategies to deal with them or not.

With respect to what was said before, it is possible to hypothesize that there are inequalities connected to “being a foreigner” in Czechia. However, among students they might appear more on a symbolic level than on an economic level as the youth do not usually work. To reveal the answers, I will use semi-structured interviews with open questions, giving respondents space to express themselves while keeping them within the bounds of the topic. For preparing the open questions, I will do one test interview and adjust the questions afterwards to maximize their potential.

A supposed nature of the interview is to make them recall their own experiences with unequal treatment or disadvantaged position and then elaborate on these exact situations. For start I would ask a question: “Can you recall any moment when you felt that you do not get a treatment that you deserved, that you felt disadvantaged?”, eventually offering them different contexts (at school/among your peers/at a city office/at the doctor's/in a store/at public places etc.). Once they come up with an example, I would focus on meanings which they attribute to what

happened and how they acted in these situations with questions like: Why do you think it happened like this? What was your reaction? How did you feel about it? What do you think is the main problem which caused it? What do you do in situations like this one?

By asking these question I will elaborate on each of the examples which my communicate partners recall. Clearly, the topic is subjective and by questioning a certain number of foreign adolescence I will not be able to cover the whole phenomenon of lived inequalities from migrant's point of view in our society; nevertheless, it is important to get a better understanding of how migrant teens feel about their situation to be able to focus further research and social and political aid more precisely.

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Introduction

Ever since people start to migrate, host countries, as well as immigrants themselves, have to deal with many changes. New people enter labour markets, join schools and settle down in neighborhoods. It all leads to a development of migration policies, both on the national and international level. Many support and anti-organizations emerge and people who are, more or less, involved act and react. The whole process of migration is very complex and raises a lot of questions. Thus, to understand it as good as possible, it is necessary to study its parts from different points of view. In this master thesis, I focus on one specific aspect which is connected to the fact of “being an immigrant”. That is the understanding and dealing with inequalities from the immigrant’s perspective.

There is no doubt that immigrants, predominantly from the so-called third countries¹, experience injustice or mistreatments in host countries from time to time. Many current studies have found economic inequalities between original inhabitants of the host country and immigrants [more in Nowotny 2012; Pořízková 2008; Strielkowski & Weyskrabova 2014], inequalities in schooling systems [more in Hána et al 2017], or have proven unequal treatment of immigrants by the government institutions [more in Tollarová 2006; Pokorná 2014; Leontiyeva, Pokorná 2014] or by native citizens themselves [more in Klvačová 2007]. In general, experiencing different types of inequalities seems to be closely connected to immigrants’ position, regardless of their origin, extent, or the way inequalities are manifested. Nevertheless, it is crucial to specify how we approach them to understand the results we get.

One of the current trends how to understand inequalities is to examine them as a certain phenomenon which is caused and emphasized by people’s everyday interactions and their symbolic behavior. As Šanderová explains, this perspective is nowadays known as a “cultural trend” in researching inequalities as it broadens its interest by adding the cultural aspect to the current research. It also helps to find

¹ By the Czech Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, a person is a citizen of a third country when this country is not a member of the European Union, except Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland [MVCR 2018].

what is common to different inequalities by focusing on them at the micro level [Šanderová 2007: 14]. The main aim of this thesis is to uncover the typical everyday situations in which socio-economic inequalities appear and to understand how they are perceived by immigrants and how they respond to them.

Clearly, immigrants do not represent a homogeneous group of people. From this reason, I focus on a specific category of immigrants – high school students – and that in the case of the Czech Republic. This group was chosen on purpose as the current research in Czechia is mostly conducted on the subject of adult and working migrants leaving the youth rather neglected. Even though there are almost 9 000 individuals among documented foreigners who study at Czech high schools [ČSÚ 2016], most of the studies deal with their integration into society, specificity of teaching them or overcoming a language barrier [more in Nazarenko 2013; Schebelle, Horáková 2012; Hána et al 2017]. Following this, students' very own experiences with inequalities are hardly documented.

To fill this gap, I ask two main research questions: How do immigrant students perceive inequalities which happen to them? And how do they react to these inequalities? To answer these questions I conducted 10 semi-structural interviews with teenage students from several third countries who live and study in the Czech Republic. From the thesis proposal I differ only slightly and that in a way of reaching my communication partners. Instead of contacting selected schools I reached them through a non-profit organization.

The thesis is built on using the current research and theories which enable to understand the results from my research. Therefore I firstly present the chosen theory of socio-economic inequalities, specifically the concepts of cultural turn in researching inequalities. Secondly, I discuss some of the factors and influences which contribute to the disadvantaged position of immigrant students and thirdly, I focus on a current situation in the Czech Republic, discuss results of public opinion polls on immigrants and conducted studies with immigrants. Finally, I present the methodology of my research and analyze the results. The students experiences several types of problems connected to both, their school-time and time outside of school. Even though the intensity of them decreases through time, they create

strategies how to deal with them and how to avoid them. Which strategies are used in which situation is affected by the way how they perceive the particular situation.

1 Theory

In the first part of the thesis, I introduce the theoretical concepts which frame my own research. In the first chapter, I follow the work of social inequalities scientists who represent the cultural turn in sociology of inequalities. I choose this perspective on purpose as it pays more attention to the cultural and symbolic aspect of inequalities. It may be assumed that teenagers will feel these disadvantages more than economic ones. I also describe several concepts of possible reactions of people to inequalities by Sayer, Allport, Kaiser, Miller and Tollarová. In the second chapter, four possible sources of inequalities and their reinforcement are discussed, among them stereotypical thinking, migration policy in the Czech Republic, language barrier and environment of schools. In the last chapter, I analyze the situation of immigrants in the Czech Republic. I look at the general immigration data, opinion polls of Czechs about immigrants as well as immigrant's ideas about their situation in the host society. I also have a look on current studies about immigrants in the Czech Republic.

1.1 Inequalities and reactions to them

1.1.1 Cultural turn in research of social inequalities

During the last third of the 20th century, the so-called cultural trend also known as cultural turn started to appear in the research of social inequalities. As it was mentioned before, it focuses on the cultural aspect of a re/production of social inequalities. Along with that, it emphasizes *recognition* as an important key to clarify the situation. This “turn” diverges from the previous predominant focus on the economic explanation of inequalities which was closely connected to *redistribution* of sources [Šanderová, Šmídová et al 2009: 7-9]. In cultural trend, the predestination of inequalities as well as objectivistic and economic understanding of social

stratification started to be criticised and more emphasis was placed on cultural and symbolic causes. Yet, these two approaches are not exclusive but rather complementary and may very well support each other [ibid: 10]. It would be thus incorrect to say that cultural trend in researching inequalities replace the previous research focused more on economic disadvantages. These authors only shift more attention to cultural aspect of them.

The cultural trend looks at social inequalities from a different point of view. At its simplest, we tend to make sense to the world by thinking in categories about others. One of the authors who deal with the process of categorization is Richard Jenkins. As he says, the world would be impossible to understand without any type of categorization [Jenkins 2000: 8]. Due to people's tendency to think in categories and behaving according to them, the unequal positions of specific groups of people (e.g. immigrants, women, the poor, the elderly etc.) are constantly re/established. Categories are also hierarchized which means that some of them are considered better or worse than others and, consequently, it leads to the fact that different groups of people do not have equal positions in society [Šanderová 2007: 10, 11-12].

It is crucial to realize that not only we categorize other people, but also that we are identified and thus categorized by others. Jenkins explains that these two processes establish and recreate our social identity. On the one hand, *we*, as a group, need to identify others as somehow different to be able to define who we are. On the other hand, the ways how "others" perceive "us" influence our self-definition [Jenkins 2000: 8]. In addition, the author emphasizes that also institutions affect how people define themselves and categorize others. Thus, the categorizations which are typical for certain societies are, at least partly, institutionalized. Moreover, social categories may be, to a certain extent, influenced also by using these categories in state law, policies and administration, media and other organizations [ibid: 9-11].

To apply this theory on migration issues, settling down the criteria for who can or cannot stay in the Czech Republic, get Czech citizenships, enter the labour market and so on, have an impact on how Czech citizens perceive immigrants and how immigrants identify themselves in this host country. Picture of migrants in media also plays a role, although there are some long-standing disputes about the extent of this impact [more in McCombs 2009; Gunho 2005]. Needless to say, all of these

processes are important for better understanding of re/production of social inequalities as they shape the way of people's acting.

As a result, the ways of conducting a research also moved from solely quantitative (or *case-oriented*) methods to qualitative (or *valuable-oriented*) methods. The cultural-approach-theorists focus their interests on everyday lives of people, their imminent interactions and communications [Šanderová, Šmídová et al. 2009: 25-27]. In sum, they focus on a micro level of society. Thanks to this change, researchers are able to better understand mechanisms which lead to disadvantages or emphasize it and, furthermore, it helps to reveal strategies for overcoming these unpleasant situations. As Šanderová emphasizes, rather than to conscious strategies it refers to how people themselves deal with disadvantages and how they understand them [ibid: 15]. Let me now ask a simple question, what does it mean to be disadvantaged? The understanding of that differs among social scientist. In the following chapter I briefly summarize few of them.

1.1.2 What is to be disadvantaged

As it was mentioned above, the cultural trend moved from solely economic inequalities towards cultural and symbolic ones. Nevertheless, the question of importance of focusing on each of them is still discussed. One of the famous polemics about this topic was held between two authors, Axel Honneth and Nancy Frazer, who even though they cannot be considered as representatives of cultural trend present similar ideas and their concepts are still vivid.

Honneth explains that the main reason for all peoples' dissatisfactions is their unfulfilled expectations to get a sufficient recognition from others. Recognition is a basic need of every one of us and if it is not met, one is not fully free. All protests fight primarily for recognition, however, the result may be a fight for material redistribution. He adds that recognition is gained in 3 levels – self-confidence (recognition by ones' family), self-esteem (feeling of respect and equality in the public sphere) and self-assessment (work recognition) [Frazer, Honneth 2003: 142-143, 150]. Frazer, on the other hand, sees that both redistribution and recognition are, to a certain extent, tied together and cannot be solved one without the other. Frazer

uses a two-dimensional scale to show that the disadvantaged groups are not disadvantaged only because of either lack of redistribution of sources or lack of recognition. She says it's combined and one of the sides dominates. To give an example, she claims that race-based disadvantages contain both approximately in the same ratio, the race inequality deeply rooted in economic structure and labour market, and less respect and lower statuses. Thus to understand inequalities, it is possible to remember that there is no redistribution without recognition and vice versa [Frazer, Honneth 2003: 19-26].

While discussing the nature of disadvantages, other authors explore people's own explanations of inequalities. One of them is Scott R. Harris who based his research on how people define in/equality on daily basis and, subsequently, how these definitions affect their everyday interactions. The author strongly believes that inequalities are far from being objective or innate, in fact, it is quite the opposite. Harris claims that people behave in accordance with their ideas and visions of equality (nevertheless, that is only in those cases when they consider equality relevant), hence the definition of in/equality is created and constantly modified during everyday interactions. Inevitably, equality is a social construct [Harris 2000: 378]. The recognition of this reveals that we cannot objectively define what is equal and what is unequal as it differs according to a certain context and one's personal understanding. This particular idea of one's personal understanding of in/equalities is what this particular work is going to focus on.

Some authors explain that people's behavior in certain situations depends on the values and norms "hidden inside them". In other words, our reactions and communications are influenced by the society and culture we live in. Michèle Lamont calls it *cultural repertoires*, or specific ways of using culture to somehow orientate in the world, for instance how people in different societies construct their visions of "us" and "they". By doing so, people unintentionally create symbolic boundaries between different groups and later behave differently in day-to-day interaction with them [Lamont 2000: 6-9, 242-244]. Additionally, Andrew Sayer thinks that people do what they do because they feel a sense of a so-called *commitment*. This commitment is kind of a personal inside voice of what is good and moral. Anyone can have a different sense of this commitment but it is mostly

unconscious unless someone violates it. Therefore, people tend to react to inequalities in the plane of their own morality [Sayer 2005: 40-43]. Let me now have a look at this side of socio-economic inequalities – how can people react to them.

1.1.3 Reactions to inequalities

What do people do when something “not fair” happens to them? The answer is not easy as it has been already stated that different people understand the concept of equality and morality differently and have different cultural backgrounds. Despite that, some authors notice patterns in reactions of the disadvantaged to unequal treatment and divide them into several categories.

To continue with Sayer’s perception, the author divides 4 types of strategic reactions to inequalities. The division contains 4 types of reactions: firstly, egalitarianism which is one’s effort to show that we are all equal; secondly, a requirement of recognition of one’s dignity, as all people have certain characteristics they want to be respected for; thirdly, a class pride which is one’s pride of being a member of a certain socio-economic class or group and finally, the construction of moral boundaries which is one’s attempt to define yourself as morally higher than are others [Sayer 2005: 185-186]. Even though his concept is focused on class-based inequalities, I believe the categories may be helpful to other types of inequalities as well. Having, let’s say, a desire to be respected by others is far from being connected only to class-based disadvantages.

Also, Gordon Allport presents possible reactions to inequalities. Even though he does not primarily focus on socioeconomic disadvantages, he looks at people’s reaction to frustrating situations caused for example by discrimination, prejudices or lack of respect. According to him, there are 2 types of reactions – the ones in which people “blame the outer cause of this handicap” and the ones by which they “take responsibility (...) for adjusting to the situation” [Allport 1958: 156-157]. The first category includes reactions like obsessive concern and hypersensitivity, slyness and cunning, strengthening in-group ties, ego-defence, prejudices against other groups, aggression and refusal to let it go, enhanced striving. The second one

includes behavior like identification with a dominant group, denial of a membership in own group, in-group aggression, self-hate, withdrawal and passivity, clowning and self-directed humour, sympathy with other out-groups, striving for symbolic status, neuroticism [ibid: 139-153]. This exhaustive example of possible reactions may help to understand whether a person perceives certain inequality as a fault of himself or somebody else.

Miller and Kaiser made another division of reactions to stressful situations and discriminatory behavior. The authors differ between *voluntary* and *involuntary* reactions. They claim that not all reactions have necessarily an aim of coping with stress, only the voluntary ones lead to dealing with it [Miller, Kaiser 2001: 77-78]. They further divide the intentional reactions to *engaged* and *unengaged* ones. In the first category are primary reactions by which people try to take control over the situation (e.g.: control of their emotions or group solution of the problem) and secondary reactions which help people to deal with a problematic experience (e.g.: thinking about something else, highlighting one's own talents and capabilities, or acceptance their disadvantaged position as their deed). The second category covers people's behavior to avoid situations in which possible problems could appear. Consequently, people tend to meet with those who are in similar positions or with those who proved not to show prejudices against them. People also tend to react to minimize or completely reject prejudices and discrimination, like not complaining about their position or simply trying to change the situation for the better [ibid: 79-84]. As for the *involuntary* reactions, the authors again divide them to *engaged* and *unengaged* ones. The first set of reactions is physical and emotional anxiety or acceleration of their pulse. The second ones are unconscious missing of a problem, not perceiving the situation as problematic, which originated as a consequence of a long-term habit [ibid: 85-86].

To add also a more recent concept, which is at the same time focused directly on immigrants, Blanka Tollarová expands current knowledge with findings from her qualitative research and presents several immigrants' reactions to unequal treatment. Tollarová finds few attitudes and reactions which repeated in respondents' answers. Firstly, she divides 3 approaches (1) downplaying of their worse social position, (2) emphasizing the absurdity of their worse situation and (3) accepting their situation

as normal. She also presents 4 reactions to specific unequal situations: (1) relieving the situation with humour, (2) refusing or confronting the inequality, (3) using a Czech mediator for dealing with the unpleasant situation and (4) an effort to prevent the situation [Tollarová 2007: 80-82]. A good example of the last reaction is given by Sokačová who finds out that immigrants tend to do a „czechification“ of their names to sound less foreign, not telling their nationality or simply changing stores or service providers in case of previous bad experience [Sokačová 2013: 26-27].

The contexts in which these authors identify one's reactions slightly differ. Also one's reactions and strategies may be combined together and are chosen according to the type of situation in which the person happens to be. There is no consensus about describing people's reactions to disadvantages and problematic or discriminatory behavior. Similarly, there are differences between people's understanding of which situations are and which are not results of prejudices, discrimination or other factors. Yet, together these concepts and divisions bring to light some patterns in one's behavior when exposed to difficulties. Clearly, there exist many variables which may contribute to one's disadvantaged position. It is important to clarify at least few of the most visible ones which may influence the situation of immigrants and immigrant students in host societies.

1.2 Sources of inequalities and their reinforcement

There is no doubt that there are plenty of problems which may occur while living in a host country and that there are plenty of sources and causes of these problems. I do not intend to make a list of all the possible barriers; neither do I try to find solutions for them. I am also aware of the fact that the reluctance is not only on the side of the host society but immigrants themselves may not be willing to integrate into the new society. Thus the requirements for successful integration lie in both, immigrants and a host society. Here I present few obstacles that to some extent enhance the status of being an alien and may contribute to one's disadvantaged position. I chose these “sources of inequalities” on purpose as they affect the situation of immigrant *students*. I also do realize that the nature of them

differs and they work “on different levels”. The first two subchapters focus more on factors related to the host country and its citizens and the other two are more connected to the personal skills of an immigrant and the importance of environment of his daily life.

1.2.1 Stereotypes and prejudices

People are influenced in the way they think from many different sources. One of the very first ones is an influence from parents. It has been estimated that children take over the attitudes of their parents up to the age of 12 years old. Their own attitudes are formed, as Allport explains, in adolescence when teens start to question things around them and are more affected by their peers [Allport 1958: 282-285]. Hence, the high school age is important for forming ideas, opinions and attitudes and it is crucial to whom one speaks and respects. Průcha also points out that the attitudes are determined culturally [Průcha 2006: 78].

Stereotypes are specific opinions and attitudes towards others, either positive or negative. They are simplified and repeated ways of thinking and acting often taken over from others due to lack of personal experiences and are hard to be changed [Průcha 2006: 80]. In terms of race and ethnicity, stereotypes often highlight one main feature or characteristic of a certain group and omit the others. This helps people to quickly orientate in the world [ibid].

Yet, stereotypes are not re/produced just in everyday actions. According to Burton and Jiráček, mass media appear to have a lasting effect on strengthening stereotypes and social categories. Sometimes, they can even co-produce them. That is because mass media are primarily focused on masses of different people. To make them all understand the news, it is necessary to simplify the message and stereotypes work flawlessly as “shortcuts” to the wanted meaning [Burton, Jiráček 2001: 189]. Therefore, the individuality of foreigners is suppressed in favour of stereotypical thinking about a whole race or ethnicity. And this does not apply only one way, also the immigrants have stereotypical thinking about the locals.

Finally, prejudices are “stronger versions” of ideas about others. These fixed opinions are final and not critical at all. Once they are embraced, says Nakonečný,

they help people to justify their actions against others. Closely connected to prejudices is discriminatory behavior and xenophobia which, in some cases, may end up with social exclusion or frustrations [Nakonečný 2009: 240-241]. Shebelle and Horáková add that foreigners who experienced discrimination tended to distrust Czechs much more than those who did not [Shebelle, Horáková 2012: 26]. The image of Czechs' opinions on foreigners is further discussed in Chapter 1.3.2.

1.2.2 Migration policy

Let me briefly outline the influence of migration policy and the whole state approach to immigrants. Understandably, the way how a host country deals with migration indicates, to a certain extent, the nature of their entry and the course of their integration [Czaika, de Haas 2013: 504]. There are several issues which are directed by states, for instance requirements for entering the country, obtaining residential and working permits, nostrification of education and recognition of qualification, attribution of rights and obligations, etc. How the state approaches these issues creates the official background for their integration.

Nowadays, the situation in the Czech Republic is called, as Barša and Baršová say, neo-restrictive. The state tends to limit the number of foreigners and explains this position with claiming that they increase Czechs unemployment and criminality. The current policy is also criticized for not being transparent, coordinated or stable [Barša, Baršová in Kušniráková, Čížinský 2011: 498], which is a result of no historical systematic approach in creating migration policy, as Drbohlav et al. explain [Drbohlav in Kušniráková, Čížinský 2011: 498]. At the same time, he sees current policy as relatively advanced in comparison to other Middle and Eastern European countries [Drbohlav 2011: 415].

Migration policy also covers rules and rights for immigrant students. According to the Czech legislative, which is summarized by Titěrová, students have the right for education. In Education Act from 2008 it is stated that all student regardless their nationality, race, religion or language have equal access to education, however, this apply to EU citizens only. When it comes to students from third countries, the entry is conditional on obtaining a residence permit [Titěrová 2011: 7-

8]. Unlike EU citizens, students from third countries do not have guaranteed being placed in a Czech language class before joining a school [ibid: 10]. Language barrier thus become one of the main problems foreign students have to face.

1.2.3 Language barrier, cultural and social capital

When people think about the main problems of integration of immigrants, the language barrier is one of the most frequently mentioned. The knowledge of a host language is crucial for a living, working, obtaining education and getting acquainted with locals. A host language thus represents one of the keys of socialization into a new society and not being able to speak it may lead to acculturation stress, as Průcha points out [Průcha 2010: 58]. For adolescents, not knowing the host language properly may be even more frustrating as, according to Erikson, they face the life stage of “finding themselves”, detaching from parents and socializing with peers [Erikson 1968: 158-159]. Even though most of the students seem to be able to communicate in a host language after a relatively short time, Kostelecká et al. emphasize that this basic knowledge is not sufficient enough to meet demands of a school [Kostelecká et al. 2013: 8].

However, not only knowing or not knowing the host language makes the conversation between migrants and locals more difficult. Průcha explains that also a different cultural background, values, preferences and communication habits may hinder the conversation, which he calls „intercultural communication” [Průcha 2010: 16]. To be able to overcome this barrier, it is necessary to gain sufficient cultural and social capital. Brugemann, for instance, points out that a different cultural orientation of immigrant students may put them in a disadvantaged position resulting in their feelings of guilt [Brugemann 2008: 55]. A disadvantaged position may result also from insufficient social contacts. The importance of having social ties and interaction with others was discussed by Hooghe and Stolle, as it increases one’s trust in others, activity engagement and enables to ask for help in case of need [Hooghe, Stolle 2003: 24-26].

In other words, lack of cultural and social capital to some extent reinforces the disadvantaged position of an immigrant. In school's environment it is even more visible as it plays an important role in student's life, which is discussed below.

1.2.4 Education system

Until this point, general variables which contribute to re/production of disadvantaged positions were discussed. Rarely has research studied immigrant adolescents, even though this age is quite important in one's life. In the following few paragraphs I present the importance and influence of school environment to young immigrant's lives.

Placing immigrant children and youth into an education system of a host country plays an important role in their overall integration. On the one hand, several empirical studies indicate that school environment can help to create "*a firm sense of belonging to society*", which is crucial for successful integration [Crozier & Davies in Hána et al, 2017: 38]. On the other hand, there is much evidence that immigrant students are disadvantaged in most schooling systems, that they reach lower academic scores and are less likely to continue to university [Chesters 2015: 198].

One of the main reasons for that is their different social origin together with their lack of ability to speak the new language [Hillmert 2013: 9], which were already mentioned before. However, as Hillmert argues: "The relative position of migrants in education can be attributed not only to the individual and family-related characteristics but also to macro-level conditions in particular societies." [Hillmert 2013: 7]. For instance, he explains the possible influence of immigration policies, educational policies or approach of institutions [ibid]. Similarly, by reflecting upon countless studies, Chesters summarizes that: "inequality in educational attainment is derived from structural inequalities within society, and in particular, within education systems." [Chesters 2015: 198].

In a nutshell, there are many influences which re-produce inequalities in education systems. Nevertheless, this paper is not primarily concerned with the explanation of their origin but rather focus on their nature. In the following chapter,

I further present the immigrant's situation in the Czech Republic and further elaborate the difficulties apparent in Czech secondary schools.

1.3 The situation of immigrants in the Czech Republic

Before getting to the analytic part of my thesis, I would like to devote few pages to the current migrant situation in the Czech Republic. There are many different ways how to look at, study or even understand migration. Many types of migration have been determined by length of stay, final destinations, reasons for moving etc. Therefore, there are lots of types of migrants as well, from economic or political migrants, migrants who want to rejoin their families or search for education to refugees and asylum seekers. Migration is not a simple concept and in many ways, it is not simple to be a migrant too.

From what was said before, it is clear that there are many barriers which migrants have to face. Let me now have a look at the current migrant situation in the Czech Republic. Firstly, I present the official numbers of immigrants living in the Czech Republic. Secondly, I summarize several studies about public opinions about immigrants, images of them in mass media and their own experiences with inequalities. And thirdly, I focus on the Czech school environment for immigrant youth.

1.3.1 Immigration in the Czech Republic

Among all European Union member states, the Czech Republic is, based on the most current available data from Eurostat, one of the 3 countries with the least number of immigrants per 1 000 inhabitants [EUROSTAT 2015]. The number of immigrants in the Czech Republic, nevertheless, grows constantly each year to current almost 500 000 foreigners. In 2016, more than 270 000 immigrants stayed in the country as permanent residents, 221 484 individuals were approved for long-term residency and almost 3 000 people received a status of asylum seekers [ČSÚ 2016]. Among the 3 biggest minorities are Ukrainians, Slovaks and Vietnamese which together create more than 55% of all immigrants' nationalities. They are

followed by Russians, Germans, Polish, Bulgarians, Romanians, Americans, British and others [ČSÚ 2017]. It is visible, that immigrants come to the Czech Republic predominantly from the neighbour states and from countries like post-communist countries and from Vietnam, which have historical ties with Czechia regarding economic migration.

Even though the economic reason is the most common cause for people to come, not only adults come to the Czech Republic. Immigrants bring their families to the host country as well, sometimes immediately; sometimes they settle first and invite the rest of the family a few years later. Anyhow, kids and teenagers joining Czech education system is a fact. As stated by ČSÚ, in the school year 2016/2017, there more than 9 494 foreign children attending Czech nursery schools, 6 549 foreign children attending elementary schools and 9 063 foreign children attending high schools. Out of these high scholars, more than 6 000 come from non-EU countries [MŠMT 2018]. In comparison to Czech native children, these numbers are very low as they make only 2-3% of the total number of children in each school type [ČSÚ 2017]. Even though it is not specified what is the official migrant status of these kids (whether they have short-term, long-term or permanent resident status) or from which countries they are from, it suggests that non-native students start to appear in the Czech education system, which is predominantly Czech.

1.3.2 Public opinions towards immigrants

In the first and most current research organized by CVVM, there is a visible negative approach by Czech citizens towards immigrants. In 2016, about 55% of Czech population considered immigrants as a problem for the country. By 2017 this number grew to almost 64%. Around 67% of respondents also believe that immigrants who stay in the Czech Republic as long-term residents are responsible for a higher level of criminality and may jeopardize “the Czech way“ of living. Consequently, the majority of people would not provide any type of long-term stay to foreigners. It is important to emphasize that these opinions relate to the whole Czech Republic. When it comes to questions about one’s neighbourhood, the number of Czech who see immigrants as a problem decline to 25%. Moreover, around 26% of respondents also confirmed that there are no immigrants who live in their vicinity.

In comparison with the research from 2016, the numbers are more or less similar. Surprisingly, respondents' age became a less important factor of their opinions. The highest achieved education, however, still plays a key role [CVVM 2017: 1-3].

The second set of studies by STEM agency mostly confirms what has been said above. The proportion of people who feel growing tension between Czech citizens and immigrants has risen in the last few years to 67% [STEM 2016]. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of Czechs also disagree with a statement that long-term immigrants should have the possibility to achieve Czech nationality or should be able to practice their traditions. The growing numbers mirror the 2016 refugee crisis in Europe; however, as the authors point out, the situations may be less dramatic than it looks [STEM 2016]. Leontiyeva, for instance, points out that there is a significant difference between Czech's attitudes towards foreigners as individuals than to migration as a phenomenon. Czechs tend to approach individuals in a more positive way than they consider migration in general [Leontiyeva 2017]. When it comes to the question of living next to an immigrant in the same neighbourhood, nationality and ethnicity of immigrants play a significant role. A vast majority of Czech would not have a problem to live next to foreigners from Western countries, as well as Slovakia. As for the biggest minorities in the Czech Republic, 48% of people would have a problem with living next to Vietnamese, 50% next to Russians, 59% next to Ukrainians and 85% next to Arabs, Syrians or Romas. Consistent with the CVVM's research, STEM's study also confirms influence of the education-variable but the age-variable has rather no impact [STEM 2016].

The third study by Havlík relates mostly to xenophobia, however, it is not an original research of the author but a secondary research. Even though the study is less recent than the ones above, it completes the picture of the development of Czech attitudes towards immigrants. According to Burjanek, the Czech Republic is above the European's average level of xenophobia against immigrants and foreign workers [Burjanek in Havlík 2007: 2]. As confirmed by Gabal, the "opening" of Czechs to foreigners, in general, is very slow and moderate. Also, Czechs show mostly distrust to foreigners, and that is visible predominantly to people from the former Soviet Union and Asia. Immigrants from Western countries are in general considered as "not problematic" [Gabal in Havlík 2007: 2-3]. In an international

research Mechanismy I., it is concluded that Czechs do not see many benefits of immigration to the economics of their country or in discovering new cultures [Mechanismy I. in Havlík 2007: 3].

Clearly, by summarizing these studies, rather negative opinions towards immigrants and foreigners, in general, are visible. The examples discussed show that the development of public attitudes does very much from year to year, yet in some cases numbers of negative answers continuously grow. Nevertheless, when it comes to personal experiences of interaction with immigrants, people are less likely to be so strong in their negative attitudes. Let me now zoom in one specific area which may contribute to Czech's opinion on foreigners in general – media.

1.3.3 Image of immigrants in Czech media

Media have, to some extent, influence on how people perceive immigrants. As McQuail points out, mass media have the ability to mediate events which people cannot or do not experience themselves (for instance, in our case, meeting immigrants). And they do so by focusing on some specific information, omitting other, evaluating etc. [McQuail 2009: 114]. In other words, the media construct their own “media reality” which, according to Jirák and Köpplová, affects how people look at the “real reality” [Jirák, Köpplová 2009: 286-287]. Although the level of media's influence is under discussion, to some extent they determine about which topics and issues people think and which attributes they tend to ascribe them.

From previous research in Chapter 1.2.1 we have to bear in mind that media also partially reproduce stereotypes. They simplify information about certain race or ethnicity as a whole which results in stereotypical thinking about foreigners. Several authors have indeed shown that this statement is valid. A significant part of the media research is focused on Muslim or Roma minorities who are seen as problematic and maladjusted [more in Křížková 2006; Zalabáková 2012] but to outline how Czech media present also other major Czech minorities, let me look at two studies recently conducted.

Firstly, in Newton media research Saková summarizes how major Czech newspaper and internet media inform about 8 foreign nationalities, namely

Ukrainians, Slovaks, Vietnamese, Russians, Poles, Moldovans, Mongolians, Bulgarians and Chinese, in the Czech Republic. In this comprehensive research of more than 5 000 articles, she finds out that most of the articles were presented either in a neutral way (51%) or showed foreigners as problematic (44%). Only 5% of them had an actual positive tone. Interestingly, only 8% of all articles mentioned specific persons, in the remaining articles it was written only about nationalities as a whole. Saková further focuses only on the content of articles concerning 2 minorities – Ukrainians and Vietnamese. She shows that almost 90% of these had negative connotations as they concerned topics like immigrant's illegal stay, illegal jobs or criminality. Remaining 10% dealt with immigrant's hard work and politeness, learning Czech language or employer's good experience with foreign employees [Saková 2009: 3-6].

Secondly, Šafránková Pavlíčková pays attention to immigrant workers of any nation. She notices a high binary division between “us” Czechs and “them” foreigners. In her content analyses of 200 articles in several Czech national newspapers she reveals that unlike „us“, foreigners are connected to terms like illegality, poverty and criminality [Šafránková Pavlíčková 2009: 4]. What is even more alarming is that immigrants tend to be shown primarily as human labour. The author reveals that foreigners are often dehumanized and perceived rather as „economic tools“ than as human beings [ibid: 6]. Despite the only exception she mentions (media picture of highly qualified immigrants) these articles represent a sufficient example how Czech media construct foreigners as a potential risk for „our“ country in case of losing their jobs [ibid: 8]. Even though this research is focused on economic migrants, therefore adults, by the logic of reproducing stereotypes it casts a negative light on foreign youth as well.

To sum up, the image of immigrants in Czech mass media is rather negative. People tend to accept these images as they help them to orientate and act. Nevertheless, not only Czech citizens perceive them but also foreigners themselves are aware of these bad images. In the following section, I focus on the immigrants' perspective and how they stand on the issues discussed.

1.3.4 Opinions and attitudes of immigrants towards the Czechs

To create a complex picture of immigrant's situation in Czechia, it is now important to show how immigrants themselves feel about Czech citizens and the Czech Republic in general and how do they react to the media pictures. Hence, I begin with several studies conducted in both quantitative and qualitative way to outline immigrant's perspective about their host country.

Multiple data sources were used to examine long-term immigrant's opinions and attitudes. For instance, Sokačová analyzed more than 400 questionnaires and over 130 deep interviews with long-term immigrants from both EU and non-EU countries. She looked at 3 major arenas – labour market, experiences with discrimination and acquiring a citizenship. As I primarily focus on immigrant students, I skip the whole issue of immigrant's un/employment and possible difficulties connected to this matter. Although it is a „hot potato“ issue worth dealing with, it would be necessary to dedicate a whole new diploma thesis to this topic [more in e.g. Sokačová 2013; Schebelle, et al. 2015, Nowotny 2012, Strielkowski, Weyskrabova 2014]. As for prejudices, discrimination or unfair treatment based on their foreign nationality, almost 50% of the respondents admit they experienced it from Czechs. Mostly, it relates to the context of the labour market, housing, health care and other services [Sokačová, 2013: 25].

Sokačová is, however, not the only one revealing these inequalities. Schebelle and his colleagues find out quite similar results in their quantitative study of 741 questionnaires from Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Russians. Almost one-half of their respondents feel disadvantaged in their access to the labour market, to decent employment and in dealing with state offices. Around 38% then feel the same way about health care and getting a residence permit. When it comes to media image, about 22% of respondents did not consider the information released as truthful. [Schebelle et al. 2015: 67-69; 76].

To balance the general opinions of Czechs on immigrants, Schebelle and his colleagues offer immigrant's attitudes on Czech citizens as well. When asked about preferences in who they would like (or like not) to have as a neighbor, Czechs seem to be the most wanted group of people [Schebelle et al. 2015: 63-64] and that is even though Czechs were, in case of evaluation their features, connected mostly with

behavior like jealousy, stinginess, laziness or selfishness [ibid: 79; 86]. Clearly, there is an effort of immigrant's to integrate with natives. Nevertheless, the second most wanted group for living in a neighbourhood was fellow countrymen which indicate the compulsion of staying in touch with people of their own nation as well. The authors also find out that 73% of their respondents feel a pressure from Czechs to fully adapt to "the Czech way of living" [ibid: 66]. Besides immigrant's opinions on others, Schebelle et al. focus on immigrants' evaluation of their own lives. About 22% of them feel like they cannot manage their lives as they want. Whereas this number is lower for Russians and Vietnamese, Ukrainians seem to feel less capable of influencing their own lives [ibid: 54-56].

The recognition of what has been said above reveals that immigrants do feel some inequalities and do notice Czechs tendency to change their lifestyle. It shall be noticed that in both of these studies, the respondents were vastly adults who came to the Czech Republic for economic reasons. Also, in either of these cases, respondents were contacted using the snowball method and by reaching the respondents through nonprofit organizations, which may have lead to a certain research sample bias. Despite this fact, the number of respondents is in both cases high enough to use their results as a sufficient picture of immigrant's general opinions about their own position in the Czech Republic and about Czech citizens.

Not many studies were made about immigrants' reactions and strategies to their disadvantaged position. Tollarová and Klvačová, however, conducted 5 focus groups with long-term adult immigrants about their integration. They found out that the immigrants tried to fulfil some expectations of the host society but did not feel to have enough space or opportunities to really do so. Consequently, they create several strategies on how to deal with their positions mentioned in Chapter 1.1.3 [Tollarová 2007: 74]. These expected norms and resulting strategies create and confirm boundaries between the majority and minorities.

In the research, Tollarová also realizes the differences between the norms and rules created by the state and the expectations of the people. The respondents felt that the expectations of others are more difficult to fulfil than the official state requirements [ibid: 75-77]. This means that even after accomplishing all the state

demands they still have not „win“ as they face the other demands which are not officially defined or written, they are just somehow felt.

At the same time, Tollarová figures that by realizing the expectations and accepting the more difficult position, the immigrants actually maintain the inequalities. They, by the author's words: "set up as normal that the immigrant's position is in comparison to Czechs' position disadvantageous." [ibid: 79]. Their position, however, changes through time, adds Klvačová. As two main milestones for this change, she considers an acquisition of long-term residence permit and mastering the host language [Klvačová 2007: 63]. Learning the Czech language is extremely important for immigrant students, as well as they have to use it during their daily studies. The characteristics of Czech school environment are discussed below.

1.3.5 Czech school environment

What is happening in traditional Czech schools when it comes to immigrant students? In Kostecká's et al. research about foreign students in Czech elementary schools, they found out that schools significantly differ in their practices and requirements in accepting new foreign students [Kostecká et al. 2013: 54-55]. Also placing a new student into grades differ from one example to another, some school choose a classroom according to students age, another decide on language skills, class teachers, number of students in a classroom or their nationality composition [ibid: 57]. Same division occurred in an evaluation of foreign students and school's integration efforts and activities [ibid: 59-61]. When it comes to special study programs for teachers focused on integrating and teaching foreigners, only small number of schools provided them for their staff [ibid: 68]. Although the research was made at elementary schools, it is possible to assume that same diversification appear on Czech high schools as well as current laws do not specify the process in detail but rather offer recommendations.

Hána, Hasman and Kostecká find out that immigrant students achieve lower educational outcomes than Czech students. This gap is also much higher than it is in other European states [Hána et al. 2017: 38-39]. By analyzing PISA results they

realize that socio-economic background of immigrant youth plays a role but not as important as, for instance, poor conditions at classrooms [ibid: 49].

The possible negative environment in a classroom may come from either teachers or classmates. In Jarkovská, Lišková and Obrovská research, teachers' approaches to ethnically heterogeneous classrooms were studied. The authors explain that Czech education system has always been almost exclusively ethnically homogenous and: „despite the growing number of migrant pupils, a typical Czech school remains homogenous and teachers keep approaching their students as identical despite the existing differences.“ [Jarkovská et al. 2015: 633]. At the same time, Jarkovská and her colleagues realize that in teachers' narratives they still use the term „ethnicity“ as a significant difference between these students and their Czech peers [ibid: 638-639].

To put it another way, teachers are not willing to understand ethnicity or nationality as something that should affect the way how they approach their students; that it is something that makes these students any different from Czech ones. The authors call it “*sameness despite difference strategy*” [ibid: 639]. When any problem appears, it is automatically ascribed to their individual characteristics or financial situation of their families. Therefore, the teachers fail to see different ethnicity as something which (may) put foreign students into disadvantaged position and symptomatically, they preserve the current homogenous and unequal educational environment [ibid: 647, 651].

It is important to clarify that these results were found out by interviews, focus studies and ethnographic observations at several schools in three different Czech towns. Many of the interviewed teachers were in a higher age, which mostly means that they started teaching during the Soviet era when the number of immigrant students was minimal. Even though the results are limited and cannot be generalized to the whole republic, they provide a sufficient picture of how Czech teachers deal with having a foreign student in their classroom and what may be the consequences of this approach.

Under these circumstances, immigrant students experience many inequalities. As it was said before, not much research was conducted with high school foreign students. Two diploma theses, however, focused on the classroom background and

reactions of Czech schoolmates. Ustsinava analyzed Czech's perception of foreign students at three different high schools and she realized that Czech students considered foreigners as new fresh element in a classroom, which brings new culture and perspective and, at the same time, they connect immigrants in general with negative connotations like criminality and unemployment [Ustsinava 2007: 66, 77, 87]. This may suggest that students feel the general negative perspective on immigrants but when it comes to their own environment, they see rather benefits. The difference appears, however, when they are asked to name specific benefits of having a foreigner in their class.

Fousková claims that most students tend to see their classroom as multicultural and thus beneficial but they fail to name examples of what it gives them [Fousková 2009: 38-39]. Czech students, according to her case study, also felt the necessity to speak good Czech. Unexpectedly, they were passive in helping them overcome the barrier, they tend to leave the efforts to a foreigner and if they saw he or she tried to communicate, they „took him in“. If a foreigner was rather shy and passive, they did not put much effort into communicating with him or her either [ibid: 31-32]. Finally, she mentions the ambivalent relationship with foreigners and their talking about home countries. Czech students mentioned they were happy and curious to learn about a foreign country, yet when a foreign kid used this topic too much during lessons, they became annoyed by it [ibid: 40].

These all are examples of a school background. As it was said before, not much research was conducted with teenage immigrants and their daily lives not only at school but also elsewhere. In the next part of the thesis, I present my research which was focused on problems and difficulties that young immigrants face, not only at school but also anywhere else.

2 Analysis

In the following chapter, I present my research, the research methods which I was using during data collection and data analysis. I explain all my steps from interview's preparation to the final analysis of them.

2.1 Data and methods of the analysis

2.1.1 Research questions

The main goal of this thesis is to get a better understanding of young immigrants' daily experiences with inequalities. As proved before, immigrant students may find themselves experiencing different treatment than their Czech peers. To be able to find out and understand the meanings which the immigrant students ascribe to inequalities, it is necessary to examine this problematic from the student's perspective as well. Therefore, I ask two main questions:

- 1. How do immigrant students perceive inequalities which happen to them?*
- 2. How do immigrant students react to these inequalities?*

In my research, I do not intend to ask these questions directly. I use many questions (more detailed below) to get the answers. For me, it means to get to know what are the forms of inequalities immigrant students face, which of them are the most insidious, which strategies they use to cope with them. To be able to answer them, it is possible to use different research methods.

2.1.2 Deep interviews

I decided for the qualitative approach from several reasons. First of all, as the matter of interest is one's personal understanding of events and reactions to them, the qualitative approach may reveal lots of details and answers which would

have been left out from the quantitative-based data analysis. Secondly, the inequalities which immigrant students deal with are mostly of cultural or symbolic nature. Thus, the qualitative perspective which is also often used by cultural-trend researchers enables to focus on the micro level. Finally, the reason for choosing qualitative approach is also practical. The target population of immigrant students is not at all easy to reach. For instance, to collect enough questionnaires would require more time and resources than are in power of this work.

Because of all these reasons I decided for deep semi-structured interviews with open questions. In Švaříček's and Šed'ová's eyes, this type of interview enables to keep the respondent's narration "in line" with the topic of questions as the interviewer can decide when to move to another question. At the same time, however, it allows respondents to use their own expressions and to decide what to talk about, where to start in their narration etc. [Švaříček, Šed'ová et al. 2007: 159-161]. Interestingly, Šmídová adds that although the words spoken by respondents can differ from their real actions, it is not a concern of a sociologist to find out „the truth“. Both, talking about something and doing it are types of a construction of a one's reality and in this case, it is not possible to see the real interactions in a field. Instead, the point of interest is a narrative representation of respondent's values, norms and ideas about how the reality looks like [Šmídová 2009: 61-64].

Researchers influence on the interview's flow is, nevertheless, one of the possible limitations of this research method. The interviewer uses nonverbal communication, may need to interfere and change the subject or may need to express own opinions to create a pleasant environment for the communication partners. Among others, these actions to some extent influence the interviewed. In Chapter 2.2.6 I elaborate more on how I could have affected my respondent's answers. Firstly, I introduce who my respondents are.

2.1.3 Criteria for communication partners

It is important to clarify that I focus my research only on immigrant students who came to the Czech Republic in higher age (at least 14 years old) and joined

a Czech state high school (not elementary school). In other words, the communication partners were chosen by 3 criteria:

(a) *Being an immigrant* – I primarily focus on students from third countries because the immigration policy towards them is different than to e.g. EU members or countries with special bilateral agreements. I also did not include anyone with a status of refugee as their situation is dramatically different from other immigrants. The main reason for moving into the Czech Republic (economic, educational, family reunion etc.) was not relevant to the research.

(b) *Coming to the Czech Republic in high school age* – The experience with problems and the whole process of joining a new school may differ substantially between teenagers and small kids. Langmeier and Krejčířová mention that teenage is crucial for one's process of socializing as it is the age of accepting and embodying social and cultural norms [Langmeier, Krejčířová 2006: 143]. Having a young person who moves from one country to another in this age, the social change may be experienced more vividly. Especially, when the student joins a school where everything is taught in Czech, which brings me to the third criteria.

(c) *Joining a Czech state high school* – I intentionally eliminate private schools as their approach to both, teaching in general and foreign students may be in many ways different than on Czech state schools. My goal is to reveal immigrant student's perception of the problems they face under „traditional Czech high school settings“. However, few of the respondents joined a primary school first (the last year or its part) to adapt to new environment before starting a Czech high school.

Under these criteria, there are inevitably also some limitations to the study. The results are hardly to be generalized. For me, however, this was never an aim

of the research. I primarily value the possibility of taking a look at the perception of daily experiences of disadvantaged individuals in a teen age.

2.1.4 Reaching communication partners

Let me now look at the ways of reaching the communication partners. In the very beginning, as written in my project of this thesis, I wanted to contact randomly chosen high schools in Prague. Through their management, I was about to get in touch with appropriate students for this research. After some thinking, however, I changed this method, mostly because it is very slow and not much efficient.

To get communication partners more quickly I decided to join several Facebook pages which gather foreigners of different nations in Prague, as well as groups of mothers, Prague schools, nonprofit organizations working with immigrants etc. To give an example, I became a member of groups like: Asians in Prague, Pragtaki Türkler, Srbi u Pragu, School kids in Prague and Czech Republic, Mothers in the Czech Republic and so on. The list goes up to 24 groups which I was approved to join. These groups were chosen by judgement; I tried countless variations of different nations in combination with the city of Prague or the whole Czech Republic. I then publicly asked whether anyone knows any students who would fit the research.

To be completely honest, getting respondents through Facebook pages was not helpful at all. I chat with dozens of people who wanted to help me but either studied at Czech Universities or came to the Czech Republic as small kids. I also got a contact to a Russian headmaster of a private high school in Czech who was willing to help but unfortunately her school was partially international and the school's background was thus significantly different from Czech state schools. Finally, I got a contact to the Center for Integration of Foreigners in Prague and asked them for help with reaching the respondents. Luckily for me, the Center was just finishing a long-term project with teenagers and agreed to cooperate with me.

Basically, the Center provided Czech language courses during summer holidays in 2016 and 2017 for newcomers who were about to join Czech high schools in Prague in the following September. Since then the Center was not in touch

with them. One of the conditions for me to get contacts to these students (24 people in total) was to write an evaluation of these two courses. I thus add few questions about the language courses into the interview to be able to fulfill this agreement. The exact questions are introduced later in the text. The other condition was to sign an agreement with the Center about not using and forwarding personal data of these students. After that, the Center sends e-mails to students' parents with the information that I am going to contact them about this research. Through the parents, I then got permission as well as phone numbers to reach the actual students and interview them.

Thanks to these circumstances, I managed to gather 10 communication partners (3 girls and 7 boys), from 7 different countries (3 people from Ukraine, 2 people from Turkey and the rest from Mongolia, Moldavia, Indonesia, Yemen and Syria), at the age from 16 to 20 who were willing to give me an interview. They all go to different high schools in Prague, which focus on majors like economics, electrical engineering or transportation. While I realize that 3 of my communication partners come from a Ukrainian background, I also do not forget that they do not represent a homogenous racial or ethnic population.

Also, I bear in mind that the situation for my communication partners may differ from the teens who did not participate in these Czech courses before joining high schools. However, all the students have to learn Czech somewhere, whether in organized courses, with private teachers or just by joining a school and repeating one school year twice. Either-or, the course is the only connection between my respondents as they come from different backgrounds and joined different schools. In the next chapter, I introduce the interviews which I have done with these students.

2.1.5 Preparation of interviews

Švaříček's idea of preparing an interview is by creating a scheme of topics which would lead to answering the main research questions. On each of these topics, he prepares a set of possible questions. Thanks to this strategy, it is possible to avoid asking the communication partners the research question directly, which is often difficult to answer [Švaříček, Šed'ová et al. 2007: 162]. In my research, I combine

Švaříček's way of listing possible themes (in my case specific places and contexts in which the respondents could experience unequal treatment) with open questions.

Šmídová argues that the more open the questions are (respectively the more we offer only topics to talk about rather than direct questions), the better we can understand what is relevant to respondents and how they contextualize it. Not to mention that interviewer's impact on this narration is minimal. On the other hand, no interfering with respondent's narration can make it more difficult to compare it with others [Šmídová 2009: 69-70]. Consequently, I do not ask respondents directly about their experiences with inequalities, quite the opposite. I let them recall any problems or difficult situations which they experienced in the past and after further elaborate on these specific cases.

Even though having the interview's structure is one step to reach the goal, it is of great value to do a "dry run" and correct the possible mistakes or reformulate the questions in case they do not work as expected; especially, when the topic of interest is as sensitive and complex as somebody's experience with inequalities. For that reason, I did one pre-research interview, which was conducted only to see the effectiveness and validity of questions asked. This trial interview was made with one Ukrainian who did not exactly fit into my research population (as he currently studies at a Czech university) but was the first one to volunteer. He replied to my Facebook post about this research so I made an interview with him and asked him to give me a feedback about the questions. I did not include this interview into my results but I add few extra questions (Have you ever felt sad here?/Is there anything you have done in your home country which you cannot or do not do here, or the opposite?/Do you try to somehow prevent this kind of situations?). The final structure is explained below.

2.1.6 Structure of interviews

The final structure of my interviews is as follows:

(1) I begin with an open narrative question about respondent's moving to the Czech Republic and entering the school: "*Can you please briefly tell me your*

story of coming to the Czech Republic, when did you move, what did you do and so on?”. According to Schütze, with this question a researcher defines a topic or direction of the whole interview and, in the ideal case, an interviewee continues to talk on his own [Schütze 1999: 2-5]. I use this concept in the first part of the interview to “break the ice” and show my interest in my partners’ life story.

(2) Sometimes it may be difficult for respondents to talk freely, not to be nervous. I thus decided to ask questions about the Czech language course before moving to the topic of inequalities which may in some cases be very personal. As the students already knew that I reached them with the help of the Center, I felt like starting with a topic which is familiar to them may help me to „talk them out“. The questions required by the Center were: *„Did you find the course helpful for your studies and why? Was there any problem regarding the course? What would you change about it? Are you still at the school which you went to after the course and if not why? Do you still study Czech?“* These questions are more of informative nature and together with the introduction part took up to 15 minutes.

(3) After getting to know my respondents’ background I proceed to my main subject of interest. I asked the students to remember any problematic situation from their lives: *“Can you recall any problems which happened here, any situation when you felt that something is wrong?”* Answer to this question may seem intuitively obvious, but when students did not recall any situation, I offered them some contexts (at school/during school trips/among peers/at a city office/at the doctor’s/in a store/in a restaurant/in a pub/at public places/while traveling abroad etc.) to guide them. Most of the respondents came up with few situations on their own, however, suggesting places proved to be a very helpful tool to make them remember.

(4) After determining the problematic situation, I asked additional questions like: *“Why do you think it happened like this? What was your reaction? How did you feel about it? What do you think is the main problem which caused it? What do you do in situations like this one? Do you do anything to prevent this situation?”*

How do you think your friend would react in the same situation? In this case, who did misbehave and why?". These questions were used in most of the cases; just few times some of them did not fit into the situation described. When one situation was exhausted, I asked about another one and repeated the process until the respondent did not recall anything else.

Two of the communication partners were a little bit nervous from the very beginning so my prepared additional questions actually seemed to help them to lose the stress and start talking on their own. In general, however, the interviews went smoothly. The interviews were conducted in the Czech language as the respondents were used to speak Czech (even though with mistakes), only in one case we did the interview in English at respondent's request.

2.1.7 Data collection and methods of analysis

In the end, I made 8 one-to-one interviews and 2 two-to-one interviews. Two of the Ukrainians were friends and asked me if they can do the interview together, the other two were siblings from Turkey. In both cases, the presence of a close friend seemed to help them to recall more situations. All of the interviews took place in a quiet cafe in Prague. I asked for a permission to record them and got it from all respondents. The shortest interview was 47 minutes long; the longest one took 92 minutes. I then transcribed them in their full length into MS Word documents. I did not omit anything, even the situations which at first sight looked as something unimportant, just to be sure I would not lose the opportunity to find some broader contexts or links. The full length of all interviews comprised 75 standard pages. Once the interviews were transcribed, I read them several times and used text editor to (1) label codes and (2) divide them into categories related to my questions. To give an example, I used codes like "vulgar behavior against a foreigner", "not understanding Czech jokes", "using sports as a meeting point", "time pressure connected to higher age" or "understanding the situation as normal" and categories like "personal problematic experience with Czechs", "school-related problems", "reaction to a problem", "coping strategy", "avoiding strategy" etc.

Later, when translating some citation from Czech to English, I did not keep the grammar mistakes.

As for the analysis itself, I combined two methods: (1) method of constant comparison and (2) analytical bracketing. Švaříček, Šed'ová and their colleagues explain that constant comparing and searching for similarities in an interview itself and between all interviews leads to creating a typology of cases and finding their causes of origin [Švaříček, Šed'ová et al. 2007: 224]. With the second method, it is enabled to clearly distinguish between what is going on and how. By distinguishing two dimensions – substantive (what) and constructive (how) – the researcher can firstly focus on the “objective” reality, what is happening, what is the respondent talking about, where is it, etc. Secondly, the researcher seeks out the reality which is re/produced by the interviewer, how he describes the reality, how does he define it and himself, etc [ibid: 224-225]. Following this logic, I was at the same time able to pay attention to the subjects which the respondents mentioned and the reasons why they mentioned them.

2.2 Results

In this part of the thesis, I focus on the analysis of problems which my respondents mentioned and reactions to them. I am interested in the way they understand these problems, their perception of them and their reactions to them. To be able to analyze these, I firstly divide different types of problematic situations which my communication partners mentioned because reactions to problems differ according to their nature. Most of the situations repeated in the interviews, however, there were also few exceptional ones. Secondly, I closely analyze how students behave and whether they have any strategies to deal with them and to avoid them. Finally, I look at their perception of these problems and the way of their reactions to them. Before doing so, let me briefly introduce my communication partners to see the circumstances of their arrival and Czech studies.

2.2.1 Communication partners

Even though all of these respondents attended a Czech course in the Center for Integration, either in 2016 or in 2017, it does not necessarily mean that it was a year of their arrival. As the course was designed for students before joining a high school, some of them joined it after their elementary school years, some of them immediately after their arrival. What is common to all of them is that they started studying at Czech high schools while they spoke poor or no Czech.

Dmitro from Ukraine

18 years old Dmitro came to the Czech Republic to join his mother who has been working here for many years. He started studying a secondary vocational school of auto mechanic at the age of 16. He did not repeat the first school year and is now in the second one. Dmitro had a calm and decent impression.

Yaroslav from Ukraine

Yaroslav's parents have been both working in the Czech Republic so he agreed to join them at the age of 16. He started going to an electrical engineering high school but failed in many subjects after the first year and decided to find a new high school. Currently, at the age of 17, he is in a first grade at electrical engineering and mechanics high school. Yaroslav was very funny and open-minded.

Olena from Ukraine

At the age of 16, Olena came to the Czech Republic with her younger sister to join her parents. She started studying at a high school of cosmetics and hairdressing. Now as a 17- year-old student, she repeats the first school year again. Olena was a very chatty adolescent even though her Czech was on a little bit lower level than the others.

Eren and Hakan from Turkey

Twin brothers Eren and Hakan were born in the Czech Republic. However, they grew up in Turkey with their mother while their father has been working in Czechia. At the age of 14, they moved here and joined the last few months of the 9th grade of elementary school. Now, few weeks before turning 16, they both study at a business academy. As the youngest respondents, their father who wanted to ensure that I do not work for the government accompanied them to the interview. He had left before the interview started and picked boys up afterwards. One of the brothers did not talk much because of his worse Czech.

Barlas from Mongolia

19 years old Barlas came to the Czech Republic to join his parents and little sister. At the age of 17, he started studying at a high school of transport and did not have to repeat the first grade. He is now in the second school year. Barlas is very sporty, smiley and polite young man.

Vesna from Moldavia

Vesna is a dashing 19 years old student. She came to the Czech Republic with her brother to join her parents who have been working here for many years. She started studying at business high school at the age of 17. She did not have to repeat the first school year and she is currently in the second one. Vesna said she was shy at the beginning but she became very talkative.

Setiawan from Indonesia

Setiawan came to the Czech Republic when he was 15 together with parents, as his father received an invitation from one of the Czech universities. He joined an elementary school to repeat 9th grade here after which he did not pass the entrance exams to a gymnasium and continued to a Business Academy instead. He is now in the first year at the age of 16. Setiawan was a very ambitious young man.

Hassan from Yemen

Hassan moved to the Czech Republic with his father and Czech mother because of the Saudi-Arabian-led intervention in Yemen in 2015. He arrived at the age of late 17 and started a Czech high school at the request of his mother. He had to join the first grade as his school certificate was not recognized by the school, he then failed in many subjects and decided to change to an English private school where he joined the third grade. He is now 20 years old, in the last grade and applying for a university. Hassan was the only one who asked to do the interview in English. He was extremely talkative.

Malva from Syria

Malva's father and uncle had been working in the Czech Republic for many years. However, her family (mother and 7 siblings) joined them because of the ongoing war. At the age of 14, she joined the end of the 7th grade in an elementary school. After the 8th grade, she switched to a different elementary school because she did not feel good. She then continued to a Business Academy, which she left after 1 month

due to several reasons. She is now, at the age of 16, taking care of her baby sister, deepening her Czech knowledge and preparing for a high school of nursing, which she is about to join in September. Malva was a very decent and beautiful young lady. Even though her Czech was the poorest of all respondents, I felt that she did not have many opportunities to talk in Czech these days and was keen to talk.

2.2.2 Experienced inequalities, disadvantages and stereotypes

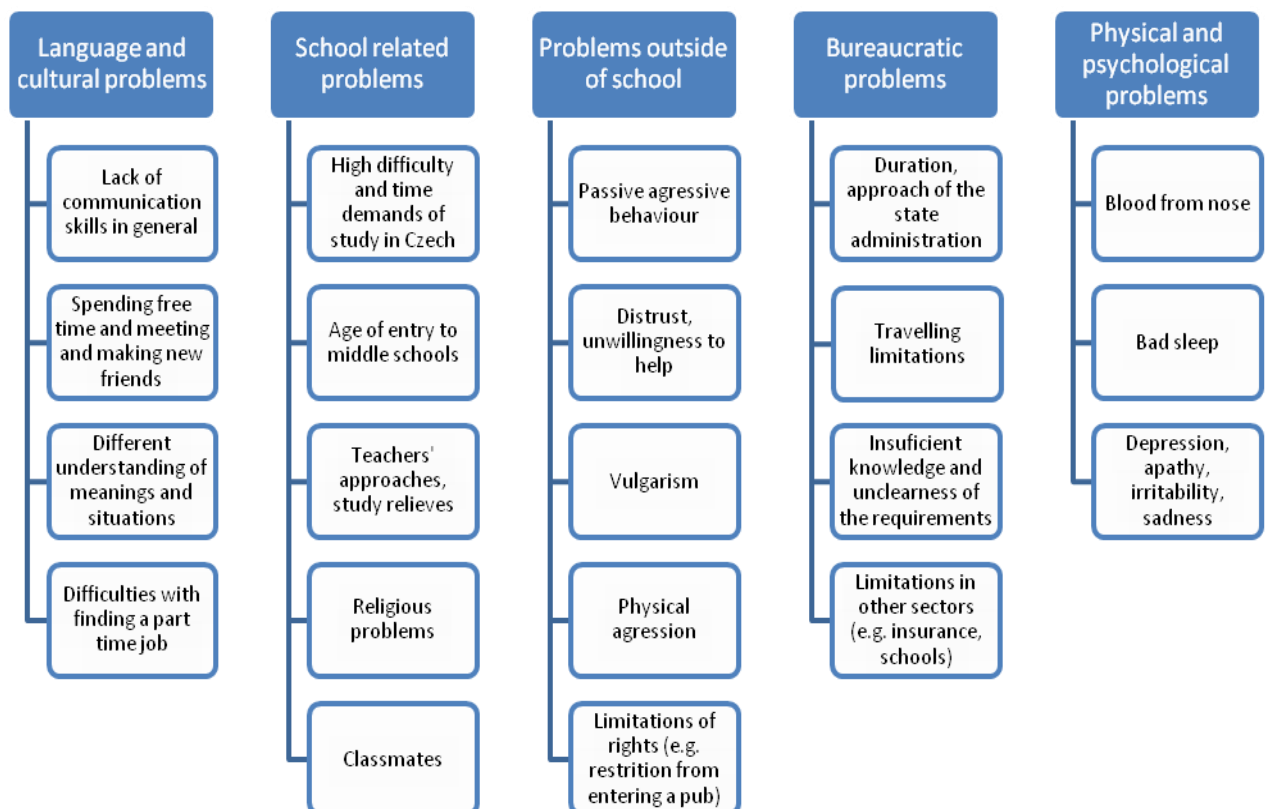
When I asked my respondents to recall any problematic situation which happen to them, the first reaction was mostly that something probably happened at the beginning of their stay here but it was a long time ago and it is alright now. Moreover, two of the students claimed that they had never had any problems here at all. Despite that, later in the conversations all of them started recalling quite many situations from their everyday lives, some of them more than the others depending on their nationality and skin colour, religion, Czech language skills and so on. In general, it was visible that students tend to ease these situations and show that they are over it now.

Eventually, students brought to light quite many situations which they considered somehow problematic, unpleasant or unfair. The problems mentioned can be divided into five categories according to their nature. For a better clarity, I created a diagram of them (Diagram 1). The first type of difficulties are those connected to a language and cultural barrier, the second one are problems connected to studying, teachers and classmates, the third type of problems are those which happened during interactions with Czechs outside of a school environment, the fourth one is bureaucratic and the last type is personal-related problems.

This diagram is thus used as a tool for clarification. The categories are based just on the interviews. These categories are not at all rigid, some of the problems overlap from one category to another, and most of them are more or less connected to language difficulties. The majority of the problems were also experienced during the first year of their living in the Czech Republic and the situation got better since then.

In the analytical part of my thesis, I firstly present the difficulties which students faced. Secondly, I look at the students' reactions and strategies how to deal with them and how to avoid them, and finally, I present 5 models of students' perception of these problematic situations and their reactions to them.

Diagram 1 - Problematic situations



2.2.2.1 Language and cultural problems

The very first problem which all of the students mentioned was difficulties with overcoming a language barrier. The insufficient understanding was obviously the biggest obstacle from the very beginning of their arrival. All the students mentioned how hard was it to join a school while understanding just the very basics. All three girls mentioned that they cried a lot at the beginning of their study years,

which confirms Miller's and Kaiser's physical and emotional reactions to stressful situations [Miller and Kaiser 2001: 85-86].

During the first months, to overcome a language barrier between them and Czechs, they often used gestures to express themselves or spoke in English but not all Czech students were capable of having a conversation in English. Hassan, for instance, felt that there was no point in talking: *"They hardly spoke English but they were speaking so I could understand a little bit but mostly we couldn't understand so there was no point to talk. And that's it, I'd say hello, how are you, then go home together to metro or something. I mean I didn't really hang out with them too much."* When he tried to speak Czech, he did not understand answers and when he switched to English; his peers were not able to respond. Malva, Eren and Hakan agreed on feeling lonely during breaks as all the students talked together or went outside the building and they stayed alone in the classroom.

Additionally, as 9 out of 10 students arrived to the Czech Republic during summer months; they spent their first summer rather lonely as they did not know anybody. They either tried to hang out in their neighborhood and meet their peers or they simply spent their free time by playing PC and playstation games. Only Malva explicitly considered this situation as problematic: *"This was a problem that I did not have any friends. And there was this one girl at school with whom I was sitting and I talked to her and she always said that she didn't like talking. So I stopped talking to her and then her and other girls just left the school without me because I couldn't speak Czech well."* Nevertheless, they all considered it as a part of being a foreigner in a new country, something which was very difficult but unavoidable. Four respondents said they were quite active in getting to know each other with classmates; the rest was rather shy at the beginnings. This resulted in weaker ties with Czechs than with other foreigners.

"I don't have a Czech best friend... I have some but not the best, simply just friends. (...) my best friend is Ukrainian from the Czech language course." (Barlas, 19 years old)

"Yes, I have Czech friends, but my best friend is from Spain" (Setiawan, 16 years old)

“I have Czech friends too, but mostly I am friends with Moldavians, Russians or Ukrainians and so (...) I like talking to someone who is also foreign like me, who doesn't speak good Czech too. Czechs are fine though.” (Vesna, 19 years old)

“I liked it at the second elementary school the most because I had there a friend from Ukraine that was better because we were sitting together. She was also foreign, we both didn't know Czech.” (Malva, 16 years old)

“I have a Saudi guy, an Iranian guy, South african...” (Hassan, 20 years old)

Only Ukrainian respondents preferred talking to Czechs at school rather than to other Ukrainian students (more discussed in Chapter 2.2.3). In either of these cases, hard beginnings and preferences of friends did not necessarily mean that the environment in their classrooms was problematic or unfriendly. Even though some of the respondents had some bad experiences with their classmates (more in the following chapter), the Czechs were considered mostly curious and friendly. Olena, for instance, said that one of her classmates “talked” to her for about 40 minutes after the school by using a Google translator app.

At the time of my interviews, all the students were able to communicate in Czech on quite a good level (even though Hassan preferred talking in English), some of them were already very confident in Czech. Despite that, Vesna mentioned she felt bad when she needed to ask her classmates to explain what or whom they were talking about because she did not know Czech celebrities or places that good. And as it happened quite a lot, she eventually stopped asking them because she felt she was being annoying. Hakan, for example, remembered a situation with his football coach when he did not understand the meaning which was said indirectly.

“He tells something... I don't know how to explain it... if you want to say something but you won't tell it directly but in a nicer way, I would not understand the right meaning, you know what I mean? Like if he “goes around” what he really wants to say. I just stand there and not understand. It happens a lot.” (Hakan, 15 years old)

His brother who added that he did not understand Czech jokes felt the limits of understanding the meaning as well. These examples suggest that students lack language and cultural capital, which then makes them misunderstand both, true meanings, jokes and irony or social and historical connections between famous people or places, which suggests difficulties in „intercultural communication“ present by Průcha [Průcha 2010: 16].

Another example could be different understanding of social contexts, sometimes the students mentioned that they were used to a different behavior (mostly from students to teachers), they expected something different (for instance, more interactive lessons and discussions based on their home country) or they had a different perception of something. To give an example, Vesna said her classmates mistook her for a teacher on the very first day at her high school because she wore traditional Moldavian long skirt and heels, which were required in Moldavian schools. She laughed while telling this story but at that time it was rather embarrassing for her. Additionally, Setiawan said he loved to play the guitar; however, he did not want to join a guitar course because hobby courses were not common in Indonesia and people who joined them were considered weird. *“My friends would laugh at me if I join one”*, he added. The class environment was also considered „too free“, they felt that Czechs lacked respect to teachers and the school institution itself by, for instance, smoking on toilets or disturbing during classes.

Finally, few respondents mentioned also difficulties with finding a part-time job due to their poor Czech, Hassan was mad that he was not hired to McDonald’s, even though they had signs everywhere saying that they needed new stuff. Malva was the only one who could not look for a part time job these days because of Ramadan.

2.2.2.2 School-related problems

Difficulties connected to studying were quite common as well and widely shared between the interviewees, as studying at school takes up the most time out of student’s days. In studies, a disadvantaged position of foreigners compared

to Czechs is clearly visible. However, none of the students considered themselves as a bad student or as achieving less education than their classmates. All of the students realized the high difficulty of studying, mostly because they came to a high school with a basic knowledge of the language. They had problems with writing notes during lessons, reading or understanding test exams, learning other languages through Czech. The Ukrainian boys agreed on writing down words which they thought they heard from a teacher but in fact they were just nonsense. Three of the students mentioned the necessity of learning Czech sentences by heart to pass tests but in fact they did not understand the meaning. In case of their absence, they felt it was difficult to catch up with lessons. Under the circumstances of being new in a country, they understood the situation as inevitable and the only way how to overcome it was to study harder.

“In the first grade I knew Czech just very poorly. I almost did not talk at all. In the first semester I was evaluated 5 in 3 subjects but I did not have to repeat the year because I started to get better and by the end of the year I only had one 5, which I managed to fix and get 4. I had to learn a lot. Firstly, you have to understand what you are reading and secondly you have to understand the meaning, right? So I was home and study more and more.” (Barlas, 19 years old)

Consequently, they spent a lot of time studying in their free time. Half of the students mentioned that due to the necessity of studying at home or having a private Czech lessons, they had to give up hobby courses like football, basketball, dance or aerobic. The process was very similar in all cases, signing up for a new hobby course, attending for a few months and termination for time reasons. Giving up these hobbies was also not considered as a disadvantage, it was a logical thing to do for getting better at school.

Half of the respondents mentioned problems with their higher age at high schools. The intensity of feeling the problem rose with their age. Vesna, for instance, felt difficulties to connect with her classmates as their interests were different. The oldest Hassan had even arguments with his mother about starting a high school all over again.

“I wanted to finish my 2 years at school but my mum said no and so we were leaving for the Czech Republic. Ok, so we were leaving. And then we came here and I was arguing with my mother because I wanted to go back to finish my school. Actually, it was one and a half year and we traveled like... in the middle of the year and I wanted to go back but she said no. So i said ok, I will study here. (...) I am in last year now. Most of my friend they are like making fun of me that I am still doing high school!” (Hassan, 20 years old)

The reason why Hassan had to start a high school from the beginning was that his school certificate from a Yemeni high school was not recognized by the Czech school which he joined. Later he went to another school, a private English one, where his certificate was recognized and he was put immediately to the third grade. From the respondents, only Eren, Hakan and Setiawan joined their high schools at the age of their Czech classmates.

At some point in their studies, most of the students experienced a problem with some of their teachers. Mostly, they felt that high school teachers did not take into account their language disadvantage (unlike at elementary schools) and were not willing to help them in their studies any more than to Czech peers. This would suggest that Jarkovská's et al. idea about “sameness despite difference strategy” of teaching still persists [Jarkovská et al 2015: 639].

The situation was slightly different when it came to Czech teachers. All of the students agreed on having some kind of relief on the subject. Nevertheless, it was only during an elementary school or the first year at a high school. Also when changing from one school to another, the students mentioned different experiences with Czech teachers, some positive and some not so much. Therefore, the situation highly depends on the personality of the teacher or the school's approach again. None of the students, however, had any relief now.

We shall notice that students were glad for having any relief at the beginning and, at the same time, they mostly did not care about having them now. Only Setiawan mentioned that he would prefer any relief in Czech because he would not get a commendation at the end of the year just because of a bad evaluation from

the Czech language. He also failed an entrance exam to a Czech gymnasium, as he said: *“I wanted to go to gymnasium but I had to do the entrance exams. I was here for only 10 months and I had to pass the same exam as Czechs. (...) I would prefer an interview in Czech, or something more easy for me or something like that. Math test was totally OK for me but Czech exam... I didn’t have a chance to do it.”* The preference of being treated differently than Czech peers was only connected to a case when the student tried to achieve something. In this case, the student knew from the very beginning that he had a disadvantaged position and that this disadvantage was so enormous that his chances to overcome it were minimal.

According to my respondents, schools’ and teachers’ approaches differed from one institution to another, from one’s student’s narrative to another. Three of the students even experienced approaches of more than one school.

“I didn’t understand that, my physics teacher always asked me and she always gave me some assignment or asked me something and I just didn’t understand it at all and when I asked her about it, when I told her that I don’t know it, she told me that I have to somehow learn it by myself. And I was like how can I learn it by myself, when I don’t understand it? And she replied that I somehow have to study it on my own. There was no effort from the school to somehow help us, they were just saying that if you are at a high school that you already have to know it. But I came from a foreign country and I simply didn’t know it. Everything is a little different, even the letters, simply everything, and I didn’t know what to do. So they didn’t want to help me. But then I changed to the second high school and it is alright now.” (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

My research in this topic confirms that Kostelecká’s et al. idea about significant differences between Czech elementary schools’ behavior towards foreigners [Kostelecká et al. 2013: 54-55] could be applied on Czech high schools as well. As mentioned, the same discrepancies were visible also when it came to teachers’ approaches, age of student’s entry, etc.

Let now focus more on the class environment and classmates’ behavior. Probably the biggest problem was the one that happened to Malva who is Muslim

and wears hijab. She experienced religious-connected problems on both, institutional and personal level. Firstly, she did not apply for a school she wanted.

“Because at the beginning I wanted to be a nurse but my friends told me that Business Academy is better. And yeah, I wanted to go to a Medical school but they wanted me to take off my hidjab. And I didn’t want to take it off and that’s also why I applied for the Business Academy instead. And when I stopped going to the Academy, my mum told me that I’d go to that Medical school and I’d take my scarf off. (...) I feel bad about it, I wear it for a long time and I wear it on my own, I want to wear it. I don’t know how it’s gonna be, I’m not looking forward to it.” (Malva, 16 years old)

When I asked her how she felt about it, she explained to me that the school said they did not have a problem with her religion but with expressing on public whether she was Muslim or Christian, they wanted all students the same. She explained it as: “*that is how it is here*”, even though she noticed that similar case was discussed in news earlier. She did not talk about it as about discriminatory behavior but as a state of things to which she had to get used to. Accepting the situation as normal is one of immigrant’s approaches to inequalities found by Tollarová [Tollarová 2007: 80-82]. It appears later in other interviews as well and it is discussed more in Chapter 2.2.3.

Apart of the school’s requirements for wearing hijab, Malva experienced also some religious-connected problems from schoolmates in the first elementary school. Every day one of the boys in her class was telling her “Allahu Akbar”. She did not tell it to teachers and in the end went to a different elementary school.

“There was a man, oh a boy, he was doing like he said something Arabic, like Allahu Akhbar, he did not respect our religion, or he was saying like... oh that’s also the reason why I didn’t like school. And also that I didn’t have many friends, it was difficult at that school and I didn’t like it.” (Malva, 16 years old)

Malva's problematic experiences connected to her religion at school could be partly explained by negative ideas of Czechs towards Arabs and Muslims [STEM 7.4.2016] and by a negative media image of Muslims and Islam in general in the Czech Republic [Křížková 2006; Zalabáková 2012]. Malwa herself also realized that by saying: *"People have bad ideas about Islam. Because on YouTube, strange people who don't know Islam make a bad video about Islam and people here think about it this way, they believe it."* She adds that also some Czech politicians and president do not welcome foreigners here which may affect people's attitudes as well.

All of these examples show that Malva suffered from lack of respect to her religion. None of the other student, however, had problems with their religion, even though Hassan was Muslim as well. He explained it by not being "visible" at the first sight like Malva in hijab. Christianity, as a religion of most of the respondents, is the major religion in the Czech Republic; from that reason being Christina was probably not connected to any prejudices. Barlas said his family was Buddhist but not as strict believers. They did not pray or worship any Gods. Eren and Hakan were atheists.

Leaving the religion behind, Vesna said that her classmates used to be vulgar at her. The Ukrainian boys mentioned that classmates made fun from their names because they could not pronounce it right or they created nicknames from them. For instance, a surname of one of these boys was similar to a Czech word for stone so the kids started calling him Ukrainian stone. Yaroslav also remembered a situation in his first high school when his classmate made fun of him in front of others.

"We had sport class so we went to a gym and then we had to change our clothes and when I put my shoes on, one of my classmates pretend that he was going to sit on my head and fart. I didn't notice him at first but when I realized that, I got up and when he turned to me to see what I was doing, I started to do like this (*he spread his arms and made an angry face) and he got afraid and his glasses fell down to a bin. And since that time he called me nicely that I am his Ukrainian brother, that he wouldn't say anything bad to me anymore, that he'd stop making fun of me as well. Yeah, it was like that at the beginning, that I am Ukrainian, that I am

a foreign person, they wanted make fun of me but it did not work in the end.”
(Yaroslav, 17 years old)

Yaroslav felt that he had to gain his classmates trust first because they did not believe Ukrainians. Vesna felt that her classmates were not much helpful when she missed few days at school and asked them for help. She thus had to use Google and find the information on her own. Setiawan remembered student’s ignorance about his nationality; he got irritated every time somebody from the school asked him whether he was Chinese or Vietnamese even though he did not look like one. Olena claimed that a small group of her classmates did not want to talk to her so they started ignore each other.

Over all that, the respondents were mainly optimistic about their classmates, they felt that only small number of them were to some extend unfriendly, which they explained by saying it was a either bad luck or that the person was just odd. Barlas and Turkish twin brothers said they had never experienced a bad behavior from schoolmates, neither connected to their religion, nor to the fact that they were foreigners. Mostly, they were surprised how curious their new classmates were and they were satisfied at the schools where they currently study.

“I feel good, satisfied.” (Setiawan, 16 years old)

“It is good in general, there are good people there.” (Barlas, 19 years old)

“It is a really good school, they organize lots of activities and I like that.” (Vesna, 19 years old)

“I feel good at the new school, classmates are fine too.” (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

“It’s normal.” (Eren, 15 years old)

2.2.2.3 Problems outside of school

Disparities were visible when talking about problematic situations outside of school environment. Four of the respondents claimed from the very beginning of the interview they did not experienced any problems outside of school since they

moved to the Czech Republic. Later in the interview they remembered some situations when they did not feel good or when something unpleasant happened to them but mostly they were convinced that it was an exception which does not happen anymore. The rest were able to remember several problematic situations except the language barrier and studying difficulties.

Firstly, I give some examples of situations where passive aggressive behavior towards foreigners was noted. Vesna mentioned that she went to a grocery shop and could not find a product which she wanted: *“Sometimes it happens that those people who complement the goods... when I ask them and they say ,You can’t see it by yourself or what!?”* Hassan mentioned a similar experience when staff in electronics store were sending him among themselves because neither of them wanted to spend time with a customer who spoke poor Czech until he got tired of it and left the store without solving the issue. Dmitro and Yaroslav were buying tram tickets and a shopkeeper refused to borrow them a pen to fill in these tickets because she did not trust Ukrainians. So they had to go buy one and come back with it. Barlas felt that one of his co-players in basketball team did not want to pass him a ball during games. Clearly, in these examples, lack of recognition of respect and trust was expressed.

Some of the problematic experiences included vulgarism and aggression as well. Setiawan, for instance, met a woman who started shouting at him in Czech to go back to his country and not to reproduce more. The same experience had few times also Malva.

“When traveling in a bus or a tram, sometimes they talk angrily and vulgar, they talk about me but I don’t understand much, I don’t even want to. (...) They talk very fast and almost yell, for instance about how I look. It doesn’t happen much when I get off or when I walk a street, that’s not too much.” (Malva, 16 years old)

Even though Malva felt that outside of a public transport these kinds of situations did not happen much, she adds one when, while waiting in a queue in a shop, a child asked his father who she was and the father answered *“a cow”*.

Hassan and Olena both experienced vulgar behavior from their neighbours, in both cases elderly people who were angry with them living in “*their house*”.

When it comes to physical aggression, Vesna and her friend from Tunis were pushed back by a Czech adult man in a queue while waiting for payout in her part time job. Malva was not allowed to get out of a bus when a Czech adult man who was vulgar pushed her back. Malva also had an experience when a Czech adult man spit on her in front of her school. Dmitro went to a bar with his friends and was the only one who was not allowed to get inside by a member of security because his ID was Ukrainian. Vesna’s brother was restricted to get inside a bar based on his Moldavian passport as well. These examples contain prejudices or discriminatory behavior from Czech citizens which are closely connected, as Nakonečný explains [Nakonečný 2009: 240-241]. The students as well considered them discriminatory or at least racially evoked and they tended to explain this behavior as a bad personality or stupidity of the actor.

These situations were extreme cases, most of the respondents experienced none of them or it happened just few times. However, it is necessary to say that all of them (except Eren and Hakan) claimed they knew somebody (from their families or friends) who experienced such a situation, from verbal vulgarity and showing a middle finger to hitting with a shopping cart, pushing out of a tram with a support stick or burning an arm with hot water in a café and calling the police. Four of the communication partners also realized other problems which their parents faced, like difficulties with finding a job or an apartment, different treatment in a hospital or problems with gaining a permanent residence permit.

2.2.2.4 Bureaucratic problems

Although students mostly did not deal with state offices, it appeared that they felt some of the limitations connected to their foreign status. The most often one was an inability to travel during the time of waiting for having all of their papers done. Students did not consider it as a problem as such; it was more of a necessary inconvenience connected to the whole process. Once their papers were approved and they passed all the requirements, they could travel abroad without any problems.

Student's parents mostly arranged the process of going through the bureaucratic system. Only Setiawan experienced it on his own, as his mother did not speak Czech. He thus had to join her when it was necessary to go to the Czech state office and translate to her. He also mentioned the unclearness of requirements and obligations and annoyance of stuff at the office. Eren and his brother did not experience the face-to-face interaction with Czech state representatives but they agreed on the difficulties and unclearness about the process of getting the permanent residence permission.

E: "Unfortunately, we both got a letter that something is missing again. And daddy has to go to an immigration police tomorrow at 6 a.m.; he has to give it to a lawyer now so that he can have a look what is missing and give us the right paper. We have to care about it."

H: "You know they don't tell you where the mistakes are, and daddy doesn't know that so he has to go to see a lawyer." (Eren and Hakan, 15 years old)

Even though their father paid a Czech mediator to have everything correct, their papers were returned without saying what was wrong with them and now the whole family was uncertain about what to do next. That was also the reason why boys father required meeting me and making sure I did not work for the government. The rest of the respondents did not consider the process problematic.

Vesna mentioned long duration of getting the Czech personal identification number, which led to difficulties with obtaining her health insurance. Because she did not have this number, she was not permitted to get a full insurance and she got only a limited one. Nevertheless, she was not concerned with it as much as her mother was. As for the personal identification number, Dmitro mentioned his classmate who also waited for it for quite a long time and because of that had difficulties with applying for a high school.

The rest of the students did not felt any problems with the bureaucratic process, mostly because their only obligation was to sign a paper or convert evaluation from a high school at their home country to a Czech one. Additionally,

none of the students mentioned bureaucratic problems unless I offered “*a state office*” as a possible place where they could experience problems.

2.2.2.5 Physical and psychological problems

The last category of problems is the personal ones. When thinking about the first months of their stay in the Czech Republic, the students said they felt quite lonely, did not know what to do with their time and missed their friends in their home country. Hassan summarizes it quite nicely.

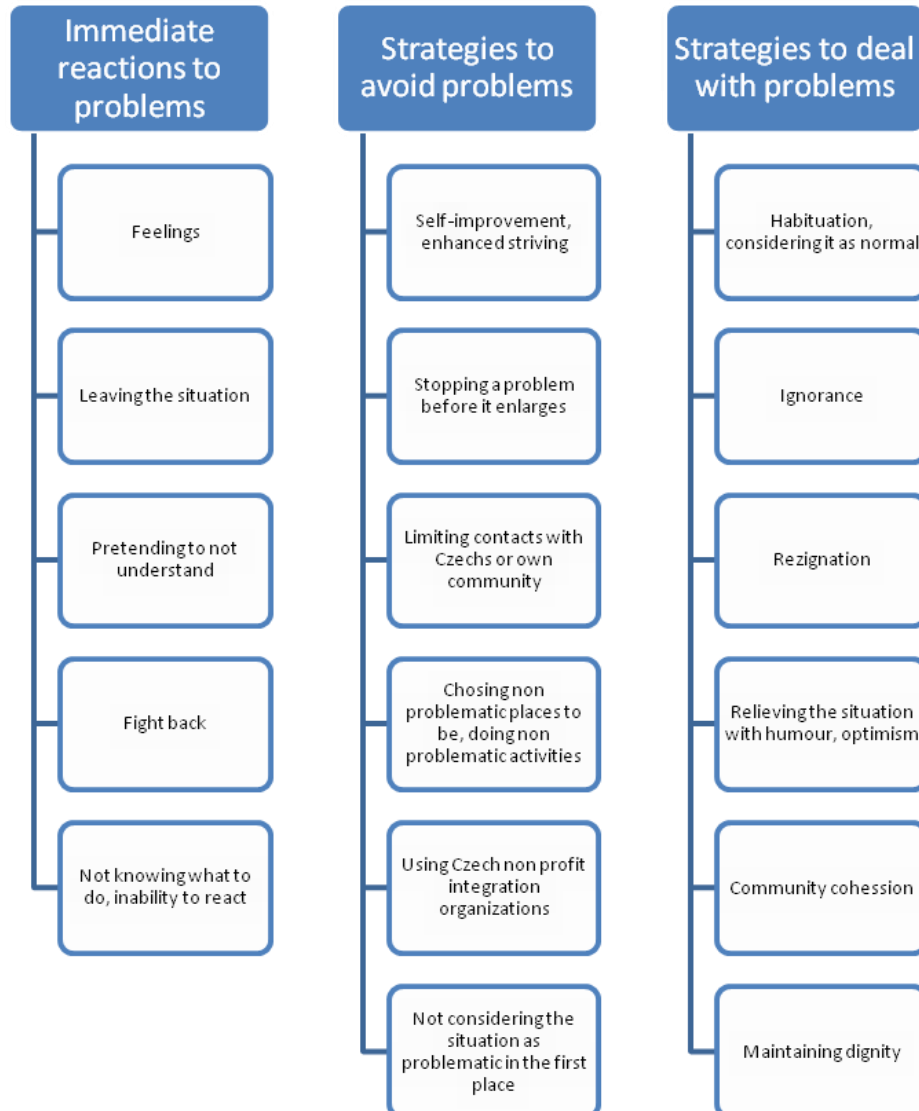
“I came here and I had nothing, I didn’t know what to do, I studied Czech, I came from like... it was like I had a daily routine, I studied Czech from 9 to 10, then I came home, nothing, I had my PC... I don’t know, I started watching YouTube videos a lot. I think I was depressed a little. My mother was worried, I was always saying just ‘I don’t know what to do’ and then... because I really don’t know where is like some... how to spend time here, I didn’t know anything, I didn’t know anybody, so I was kind of surviving.” (Hassan, 20 years old)

Other 4 students felt sadness and loneliness. Olena also added that she felt apathetic, she could have gone out but she stayed home instead. She also felt more irritated by things that never mattered to her before. Moreover, Yaroslav had problems with bleeding from his nose and headaches because of the change of environment from countryside air to more polluted Prague. Dmitro could not sleep well and always wake up very early in the morning. These physical reactions to stressful situations are described by Miller and Kaiser as engaged involuntary reactions which happens spontaneously rather without possibility to change them [Miller and Kaiser 2001: 85-86].

2.2.3 Ways of overcoming inequalities and dealing with them

To the situations mentioned before, students reacted differently according to the type of a situation and the context where it happened. In the next chapter, I present possible ways of reacting to them based on conducted interviews and concepts mentioned in the theoretical part of my thesis. Not all reactions to problematic situations can be, of course, explained as one's strategies. Nor all the strategies solve all the problems. I thus again created a diagram for a better clarity (Diagram 2) by dividing the behavior into immediate actions, strategies to avoid a problem and strategies to deal with a problem. Later, in the following chapter, I show several ways in which these types of behavior are connected to certain perceptions of one's problems.

Diagram 2 - Reactions and strategies



2.2.3.1 Immediate reactions

When I asked students how they react in a certain situation, the first thing they said was mostly how they felt. Sadness, anger or crying were quite common feelings.

“I was sad, yeah, I was lonely a lot.” (Barlas, 19 years old)

“When they made fun of me, I felt bad of course, I felt bad because they thought that I am an alien whom they can’t trust.” (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

Several possibilities about what to do next, how to respond or react, crystalized in the interviews. The easiest reaction was to leave or to pretend not to understand.

“We left and went to a different bar.” (Dmitro, 18 years old)

“I was telling her I don’t understand but I actually understood her and I left. But it was alright.” (Setiawan, 16 years old)

“What can you do? I just left without saying anything.” (Olena, 17 years old)

Leaving the problematic environment happened also on a more serious level – school. Hassan, Yaroslav and Malva left their schools and started studying at different ones because they did not feel good at the class collective. The change helped in all three cases.

A possible reaction was also to fight back. When Yaroslav’s classmates pretended to fart on his head, he fought back to show them that nobody could treat him like that: “*I stood up, I showed him not to do that, that he’d not do this to me. I raised my voice and I was angry. And after I did this, he never treated me like this again.*” Also, Vesna did not let her classmate offend her: “*He said something like hey you and a vulgar insult. And I replied ,Like really? You are calling me this?’*”. In one particular situation, when Dmitro and Yaroslav were buying tram tickets fighting back had a form of a secret retaliation. Boys who were forced to go buy their own pen to fill tickets, did not know their postal codes and decided to fill wrong address numbers on purpose: “*We didn’t know it so we made it up and that’s how we*

paid her back.” Allport identifies fighting back or militancy as a refusal to “take it”, which results from one’s frustration [Allport 1958: 151].

Malva eased her frustration once in her head by thinking about the man who called her “*a cow*” that he was “*an idiot*”. In reality, however, she did not react because she did not want to cause any troubles. In one situation, when a man aggressively pushed her in a bus, she mentioned calling the police, which, unfortunately, did not result in solving the problem. Once she and her father only pretended to call a police, which made the aggressor stop. None of the other students mentioned calling the police, which could be explained by both, fewer experiences with situations like this and lower intensity of the problem.

Nonetheless, the vast majority expressed that there is nothing they could do in situations when others treat them badly or unfair. Some of them claimed they did not know what they should do or that the situation happened unexpectedly and they were not able to react. So the actual result was to do nothing, in particular, just to let it go.

“I was really mad but I let it go, what should I do?” (Olena, 17 years old)

“I didn’t do anything, like what should I say? You can’t do anything, you can’t prove anything... It doesn’t happen too often though, just sometimes.” (Dmitro, 18 years old)

“I told him something but what should I do? I don’t really know.” (Vesna, 19 years old)

“What should one say? It is just like this, I think it’s odd, I don’t understand it.” (Hakan, 15 years old)

“What should I do? (...) If it happened in Ukraine, I’d tell her something.” (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

2.2.3.2 Coping strategies

Experiencing problems may be stressful. It is thus a natural reaction to relieve the stress somehow and deal with what happened. Several strategies appeared in the interviews, some of them more frequently than others. The most common was unambiguously passive behavior like habituation, resignation or ignorance.

Getting used to the fact that some situations are not going to change, like occasionally being an object of derision or insults, was very visible, as well as resignation on trying to fight back because it would not bring any results.

“I don’t mind it anymore, I got used to it.” (Dmitro, 17 years old)

“But I am used to the way how my classmates behave now.” (Vesna, 19 years old)

“It used to bother me but not much now anymore. And there are people like this in Indonesia as well, I am a Christian and they are Muslim and some of them didn’t like us.” (Setiawan, 16 years old)

“It is easier to let it be, I’d have to say something all the time otherwise!” (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

“When you are in a foreign country, you just let it be. If it was in Ukraine, I’d tell her something.” (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

Interestingly, also Malva said she would be OK with not wearing hijab at her new school next year, even though she was not looking forward to it and it was one of the reasons for applying for a different high school first. She both, resigned from “fighting back” and got used to the situation in the Czech Republic where hijabs are not sometimes allowed at schools.

Hand in hand with it appeared also an ignorance of these problems and forgetting about them. Vesna interestingly mentioned, at the end of the interview, that she was glad she could not remember any other problem.

Me: "Do you remember any other situation like that?"

V: (thinking)

Me: "If not then it's only good!"

V: "I rather say no."

Me: "And why 'rather'?"

V: "Well... because if there was anything then I am glad I forgot about it."

While talking, the students also compared the situation of their arrival to their situation now when the experiences were not that often or strong. They also tried to ease the situation by using words like "*but it's OK*", "*but it was a long time ago*", "*it doesn't matter*". Tollarová calls this reaction downplaying and sees it as immigrant's tendency to present him or herself without problems [Tollarová 2007: 80-81].

Another type of a coping strategy was simply staying positive and to take the situation with humor. Alina, for instance, laughed when she described not having a proper health insurance: "*I don't care about it that much. But if something worse happened to me then we'd have to pay more for the hospital bill. So nothing wrong has to happen (laugh). At least I have some insurance!*". Malva was optimistic about her better future at a medical school, Eren and Hakan felt optimistic thanks to their membership in a football team. And Olena made fun of herself struggling with the language barrier at the beginning. Self-directed humor was described by Allport as one of the response to one's handicap [Allport 1958: 144].

When something unpleasant happened, it was just logical to turn over to people who experienced the same. Community cohesion was thus another type of strategy. To give an example, Malva and her Syrian friend supported each other while starting a high school or Vesna preferred being around foreigners rather than Czechs for their similarities in life experiences.

Not only the students turned to their own nationalities or other foreigners, some of them also used the opposite strategy and turned to Czechs instead. Eren and Hakan, for instance, were atheists, which they used as a symbol for being more European than other Turks: "*Turkey is from 75% Muslim and from 20 or 25% atheist. And we don't believe in God or so. Muslims have Ramadan now and we*

don't, we are like Europeans, the same. They don't eat pork and we do, we cook it." Allport classified this behavior as identification with a dominant group [Allport 1958: 147] and both brothers used it to show that there are more differences between them and an unpopular group of Muslims than between them and Europeans.

Last but not least, the students tried to maintain their dignity by showing they were proud to be themselves. Setiawan felt proud to be from Indonesia, Olena was proud of her ability to sew like her mother and grandmother which was something her mean classmate could not. Vesna was glad she did not fall to a level of a vulgar classmate and stayed calm. Dmitro and Barlas highlighted their polite behavior in comparison to Czechs. Yaroslav maintained his dignity differently, by not letting his classmate to made fun of him. They all picked their own ways how to prove that they were in some ways better than the members of the majority. Sayer describes this kind of reaction as a requirement to be respected for one's abilities and knowledge. He also mentions a tendency to be pride of being a member of certain socio-economic group, which could be adapted in this case to being pride about one's nationality or abilities connected to their cultural background and, finally, he mentions constructing oneself as morally higher than others [Sayer 2005: 185-186] like not decreasing to a level of some Czechs.

2.2.3.3 Avoiding strategies

Several strategies on how to avoid problematic situations from happening appeared as well. It is, however, necessary to say that in some cases students showed despair over how to react or what to do when they could not possibly know what would happen to them. Vesna summarized it by saying: *"How can I prevent a situation if I don't know that it's going to happen? When he was vulgar to me, I can't possibly know why and how and when... I didn't do anything to him, I don't cause problems or misbehave or so. I smile a lot and I am friendly."* On the other hand, some situations were more common and the students created several ways how to avoid them.

In many situations, students blamed themselves from having problems, mostly because of their insufficient Czech or unknowingness of "how the thing works".

Even problematic behavior from Czechs or teachers was sometimes explained as being caused by their lack of communication skills. To prevent such situations from happening, they were convinced they had to study harder and spent more time learning Czech. Mastering the language was considered as a possible solution to their problems. Malva even forced one of her Syrian friends to sign up for high school: *“She never wanted to study, sometimes she said yes, sometimes no, but I told her, you have to study here if you want to live here, otherwise you won’t make it well.”*

At the same time, they believed that polite behavior and preparedness could also help them avoid problems. To give an example, Barlas mentioned: *“I can’t misbehave here (laugh), I don’t know how to say it... I have to take care of myself, be aware because I’m not in my country, I’m from third country, I have to be decent.”* Yaroslav behaved more politely to his teachers so that they would not let him fail the subject. Hassan added that he had always his traveling papers done before he left the country. This enhanced striving, how Allport calls it, is in Western cultures a highly valued response of the disadvantaged and is also one of the most common ones in minority groups [Allport 1958: 152].

Another strategy on how to avoid problematic situations from happening was to stop them before they happen or grew bigger. Dmitro mentioned that sometimes he asked somebody to do something for him so that he would not have to face the interaction with a Czech shop assistant. Malva prefers not answering out loud (and rather just thinking the response in head to prevent a problem. Another good example of that was Yaroslav’s showing to his classmates not to mess with him so that the conflict would not repeat and grew bigger.

The students also intentionally chose people to spend their time with. In general, limiting certain contacts and choosing people was a strategy for all of the students, whether it was directed to or against Czechs. As it was mentioned before, except three Ukrainians, the respondents tend to spend time with other foreigners because they felt more comfortable around them. They also stayed in touch with friends from their home countries via the Internet. Kaiser and Miller described such a behavior as unengaged intentional one by which they try to minimize difficulties [Kaiser, Miller 2001: 79-84]. Olena, Dmitro and Yaroslav, however, showed a tendency to limit their interactions with other foreigners, mostly Ukrainians.

“I don’t have many foreign friends. I am the only foreigner in our class so I have just Czech friends. I also talk to few Ukrainian girls in my neighborhood but I like my classmates more.” (Olena, 17 years old)

“In our class, we are 4 Ukrainians. I am a friend with only one of them but with all Czech I classmates have a good relationship, better than with the Ukrainians. (...) I rather talk with Czechs because when we are, for example, four Ukrainians standing together, it looks weird, like some kind of a gang.” (Dmitro, 18 years old)

“I also like Czechs more. When there are more Ukrainians people may be scared. My mum told me to rather talk with Czechs.” (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

The behavior of my Ukrainian respondents could be explained by two factors. The students, as the biggest minority in the Czech Republic, were aware of their unpleasant picture in the eyes of the majority [STEM 2016]. They thus tried to prevent being exposed to well-known prejudices. At the same time, the Ukrainian language is quite similar to the Czech one. Learning it to a sufficient level for a conversation with Czechs probably took less time than to the respondents from more exotic countries and a full conversation with them could be achieved earlier.

Another possibility was to choose only specific Czechs to talk to, like Olena who hang out with her Czech friends who she knew that would defend her in case something happened. Hassan, on the other hand, preferred to talk with Czechs separately to prevent difficulties in conversation: *“I never went to a whole group, when I saw a bunch of people talking, I always just stopped one and talk to him, one, one, one... because when there were more of them, I could understand but couldn’t reply, it was too difficult. It’s still like this little bit yeah.”*

Rather an extreme strategy was to limit the contact with Czech to the minimum. Malva preferred being home in her free time rather than hanging out with others because she felt safer there. Her experiences were, nevertheless, the most discriminatory as well. Vesna, after few unpleasant conversations, rather used Google instead of asking their classmates for help. Eren and Hakan described how they did not spend their free time with Czechs because their father would always pick them up every day after school and took them home or to a football field. When

asked whether it was their decision or father's they explained they did not chat with Czechs often anyway and that they did not mind that. When spending time outside, they preferred going to a shopping center to McDonald's where the stuff was used to meet foreigners.

Choosing non-problematic places was thus another avoiding strategy. Not only Turkish brothers did so, Hassan and his friends as well preferred going to restaurants and clubs in which they knew that nothing would happen. The same applied to Dmitro who after his experience with not being allowed to enter a club avoid the place.

A place where students felt comfortable was for all of them the Centre of the Integration. Later, some of them used other non-profit organizations to either filled their time with or learn more Czech. Olena and Tulga, for instance, found out about META organization and its program, Hassan cooperated with an organization called InBáze and had a Czech "buddy" to help him with his studies and homework once a week. Setiawan also mentioned Facebook pages for foreigners where he could find other people who organized trips or events.

Finally, the last strategy on how to avoid problems was for some not considering the situation as problematic in the first place. For instance, Yaroslav explained how he was on top of things during the first year of his studies: "*Some of the teachers understood that I didn't understand Czech much but some of them didn't. I didn't mind that, at home, we said that I'd just go there, that I'd learn to go to school and we simply wanted me to get used to it, so it didn't matter much that I failed in the end.*" The same strategy had Vesna as well. A tendency to not consider certain situations as somehow problematic may be explained by Kaiser's and Miller's concept of unengaged involuntary behavior like unconscious avoiding the problem [Miller and Kaiser 2001: 85-86].

2.2.4 Models of perceiving inequalities and reacting to them

Once the situation was considered somehow problematic, students tended to explain these problems in several ways. In only a few of the situations, students explicitly said that they felt disadvantaged. The vast majority of them were perceived as something normal or as personal difficulties, which were mainly caused because of their own fault. They also perceive them as the same problems as Czechs have, as something that happened out of nowhere as a bad luck, as something unexplainable or, finally, as something caused by Czechs on purpose. These types of perceptions are similar to Allport division of “taking own responsibility for them” and “blaming outer causes” [Allport 1958: 156-157].

What follows are 5 models of these perceptions in combination with (a) nature of problems and (b) strategies of behavior connected to them. I created these models which show how certain types of problems (on the right) are perceived by these young immigrants (in the middle) and how do they react to them (on the left). Some types of problems, for instance, connected to interactions with Czechs or studying at schools, were explained in more ways than one. That is how they appear in more than one model. In each of them, I present some examples to see the differences.

(1) Inevitable problems and/or individual problems

Very many problems were seen as something inevitable, something which happens naturally because of their position of a foreigner. These difficulties were mostly the once connected to insufficient language skills, misunderstandings, impossibility to express themselves and, consequently, troubles in schools, difficulties in learning, making new friends etc. To this category belong also bureaucratic problems as students mentioned them as something which you have to go through to be allowed to live here.

“My mum mostly did everything for me but I remember that one time they wanted something from us, some paper or confirmation from school or something and we had to travel back to Ukraine to get it. You know, back to my school because it had to be an original document and so... It’s a long way you know. But at least I met

with my grandmother and... yeah, so we had to go back but after that everything went smooth. I understand it, it is like this here so we had to do it.” (Olena, 17 years old)

Accepting their situation as normal mentions, for instance, Tollarová, who explains that immigrants tend to see an inequality as rationally justified and logically explainable [Tollarová 2007: 82].

Some of these problems were sometimes highly individualized, students tended to see them as something which was connected only to their personality. In other words, they did not perceive the problem as collective, which would happen to other foreigners as well. To give some examples, not understanding jokes or misreading the situation were the most mentioned. Also physical problems and bad moods, passivity or apathy were considered as something personal, which happened only to them because of their loneliness at the beginning, even though it was the case of all respondents.

S: “I thought... I was a bit moody the first month but then it got better. I think it was because I didn’t know many people here and the moving was kinda long and, well it was, also my internet didn’t work well so I couldn’t chat with my friend much so I was grumpy sometimes.”

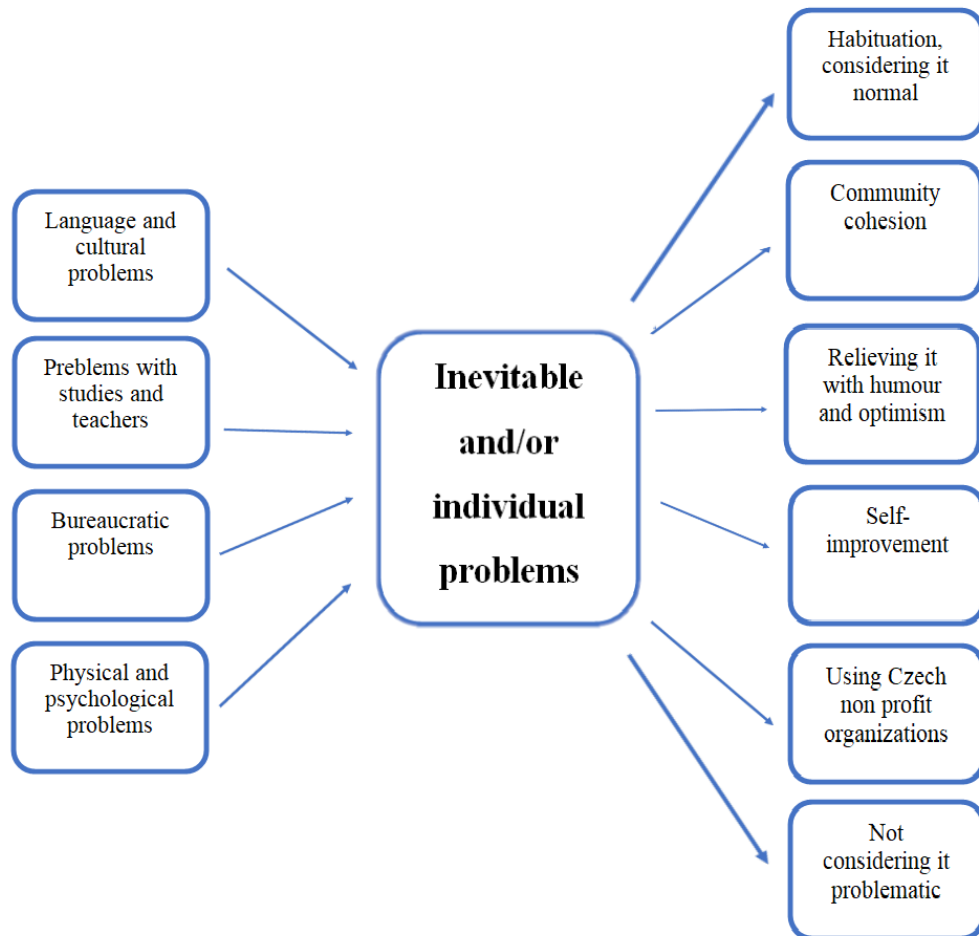
Me: “Do you think it’s normal?”

S: “I mean... like maybe but I don’t know about anyone. I didn’t go to any Czech course or... or school or something at the beginning so I didn’t know anybody. But I think others have it figured in advanced, maybe by their parents, they meet people so they don’t have to feel lonely.” (Setiawan, 16 years old)

To these problems which were perceived as something inevitable, personal or combination of them, students showed several different strategies how to avoid them and how to deal with them. In Model no.1 all the mentioned strategies are shown. As for the avoiding strategies, either the students worked on themselves, learn Czech and were well prepared or they joined some non-profit organizations to overcome them or they simply did not consider it problematic at all. To deal with

these difficulties better, they simply got used to it, tried to ease the situation with humor or they turned to other foreigners or friends of their nationality to talk to.

Model 1 - Inevitable and/or individual problems



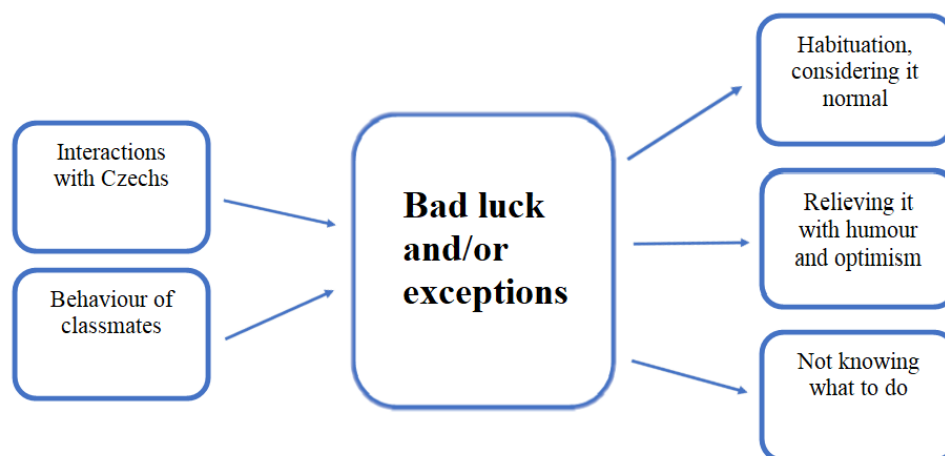
(2) Bad luck or exceptions

The second type of understanding problems was to attribute it to chance, see them as exceptions which do not occur very often or just having a bad luck that time. This happened mostly in situations when some locals started calling them names or behave unpleasantly to them, both at a school and outside of it. The same explanation appeared also when explaining an unproblematic situation. Barlas had

troubles remembering any at the beginning of the interview, which he explained by saying: *“I think I am just lucky, I must be lucky or I don’t know”*.

When reacting to these situations (Model no.2), students either got used to these “exceptions”, talked about them with optimism or they simply did not know how to behave as it happened unexpectedly.

Model 2 - Bad luck and/or exceptions



(3) The same problems which happen to Czechs as well

Some of the situations were seen as problematic but with the idea that a same problem happens to Czechs as well. To give some examples, staff at shops may not be helpful for both, Czech and foreign customers or some teachers were very strict also to both, Czech students and foreigners. Their disadvantaged position was not reflected much, the emphasis was placed on the sameness with Czechs students.

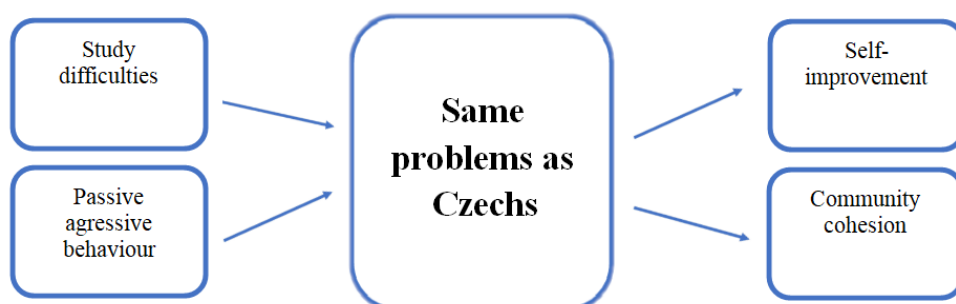
“Yeah I remember one but I think it was normal. When I was at Czech school, there was a harsh teacher, everybody was afraid of her, I was even more afraid because I couldn’t understand what she was saying. She was teaching me German, she was

explaining in Czech but I could understand something, I don't know I felt like... I don't know how... she was explaining in Czech, I couldn't often get it but it was difficult to read and stuff. She was like you did something wrong in the class and she started shouting, everybody was afraid of her. I prepared everything always if you'd forget she was crazy! But it happened to everybody, she yelled at all of us.”
(Hassan, 20 years old)

Interestingly, the sameness was sometimes also directly required. Eren mentioned that he was glad not to be treated differently because it could have changed the way how his peers look at him. In fact, he intentionally preferred being treated the same way as Czechs even though it meant not to have any relief in his studies.

To cope with same problems as Czechs, two strategies were used (Model no.3). A student had to improve his or her skills, spent more time studying not to provoke the teachers and thus reduce the number of such situations. Or, when dealing with the same problems as members of the majority, students talked about other similarities which they have with them and assigned to “the same group” with them.

Model 3 - Same problems as Czechs



(4) Czechs personality and discriminatory behavior

Once the situation was in any way more intense, like examples of physical aggression and vulgarity from Czechs, either in a school environment or outside of it, students tended to explain it as racism or a discriminatory behavior. At the same time they tended to perceive it as one's personal characteristic, bad features or opinions to which they cannot react in any way.

"Maybe he was racist. Like... any person has his own opinion, he didn't make a mistake when he doesn't like it, it is his opinion." (Setiawan, 16 years old)

"Maybe it was because I am foreign, that's why, he was racist. (...) but what I should I tell him, I don't have anything to say." (Barlas, 19 years old)

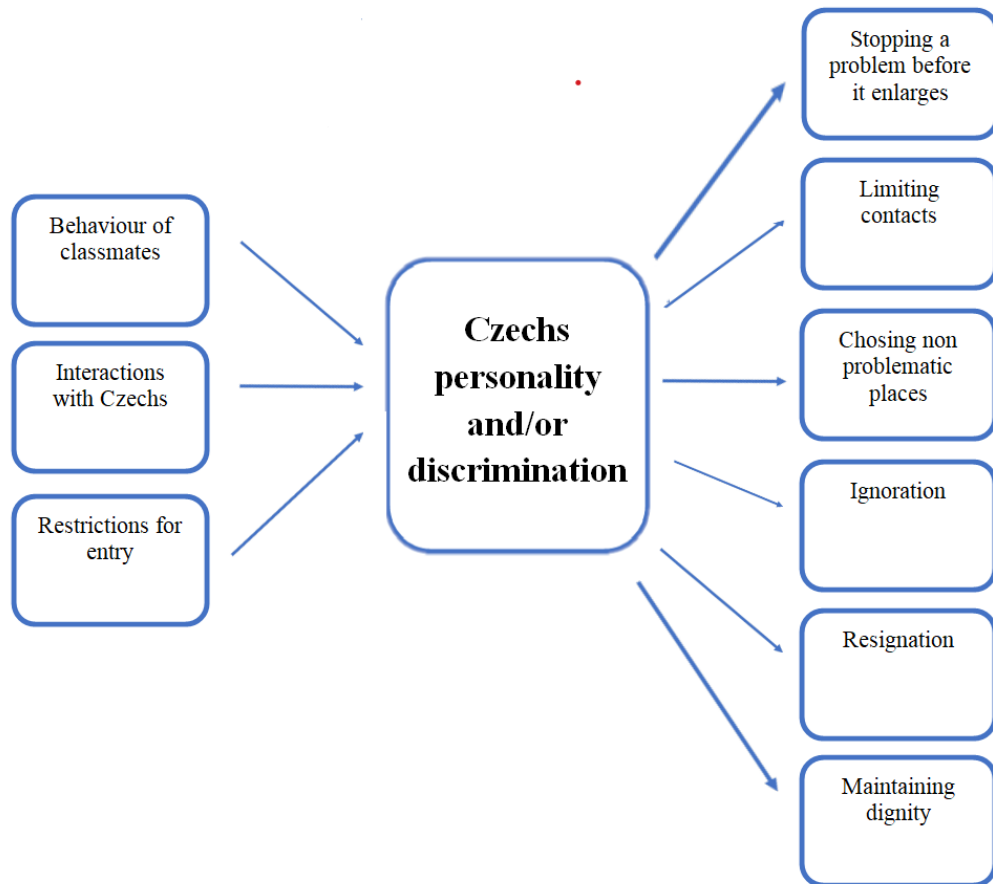
D: "This is simply cannot be like that, this is racism." (Dmitro, 18 years old)

Y: "It is racist, but what to do here? You just go somewhere else." (Yaroslav, 17 years old)

Another example could be Malva's thinking about YouTube videos about Islam which are made by people who lack education about her religion or not allowing Dmitro to enter a club in the evening. In these situations, students used several strategies (Model no.4). It is possible to assume that confrontation with people who show, in any way, disrespect to you is not pleasant or enjoyable. Therefore, the students used more types of strategies on how to avoid them and deal with them.

When something happened, the students either put some effort to stop the problem from enlarging in the future (like Yaroslav's story in Chapter 2.2.2.1), or they began to limit contacts with problematic people and chose who they want to spend their time with. Additionally, they avoided places where they experienced the problematic encounter and, conversely, chose the tried and tested places to be. To deal with the experience, they ignored it, resigned on doing something and accept it or tried to maintain their dignity by comparing their qualities to Czechs or being proud to not fall to their level.

Model 4 - Czechs personality and/or discrimination

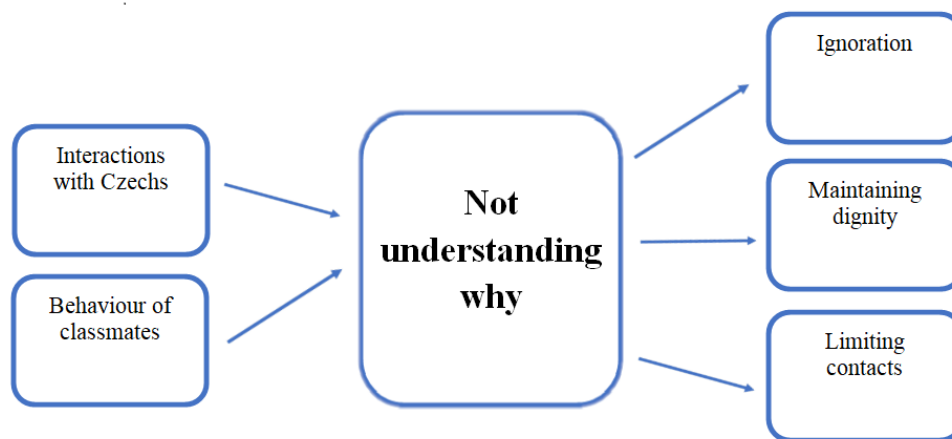


(5) Not understanding why a problem happened

Finally, in some cases students were not able to explain the causes or the nature of the problem. They simply did not know why the situation happened. This unknowingness happened only in some cases of interaction with Czechs, like vulgarism or rude behavior in trams. Yaroslav also expressed this unknowingness when his physics teacher did not want to help him in his studies. Ignorance, maintaining dignity, limiting and choosing contacts were the used strategies again.

“Why would he do that, you know? I just don’t get it, really... it was like... but whatever, I stopped talking to him anyways. He wasn’t worth it.” (Olena, 16 years old)

Model 5 - Not understanding why



2.2.5 Conclusion

To sum up the analysis, I follow the structure of it. It is undeniable that immigrant students face several types of problems in their daily lives. Those are language difficulties, problems connected to their studies, teachers and classroom environment, problems with Czechs, bureaucratic problems and physical and psychological problems. Rather than economic inequalities, these could be described as the cultural and symbolic ones as they are connected to their language, cultural and social capital, their abilities and overall knowledge of the system. The only exception is the physical and psychological problems which may be understood as the bodies’ reaction to stress.

None of the students mentioned, in any way, the economic situations of their family; none of them expressed being treated differently due to lack of financial resources. It is important to clarify that any particular question about their economic status or feelings on potential lack of resources was not asked. As Harris (2000)

explains, people create certain beliefs about inequalities and behave according to them. When the students thought about their problems, they either did not feel any in this area, or they chose not to talk about them. In the second case, it does not necessarily mean that the results are invalid, only that there is space for further research.

While students referred to cultural and symbolic inequalities, the cause of them appears to be lack of recognition in most of the examples. Usually, the students explicitly mentioned a lack of trust from their peers or service workers, disrespect from people on streets or in public transportation, intolerance to religion and so on. The inequalities were thus primarily, as Honneth (2003) sees as well, explained by lack of recognition. Honneth also divides 3 levels of recognition from which two of them were met in the respondents' narration. They felt the necessity of recognition in public as well as work, respectively in their studies at schools. Only the requirement of the family's recognition was not mentioned which may suggest that the students were already respected by their families.

In this case, Frazer's (2003) vision of inseparability of recognition and redistribution doesn't fit well. Her concept would probably describe the adulthood of immigrants better as they are in a close connection to a labor market, solve financial situations for themselves and their families and sometimes struggle with unemployment or poverty. Even though the socio-economic background of the families also plays role in the student's achieved education, as Hána et al. (2017) discover, the students did not reveal that.

To answer one of my research questions: "How do the students react to these inequalities?", they seem to either react immediately without any strategic intentions, or they behave strategically to avoid the situation from repeating and to deal with the situation once it has happened. As shown in Chapter 2.2.3, the students used several different strategies, some of them more often than the others. In some cases, more than one strategy was used or they overlapped. At first glance, it may not be visible but the strategies used by the students differ according to the way they understood the problem.

Five types of perceiving the problem appeared – inevitable and/or individual problems, bad luck and exceptions, same problems as Czechs, Czechs personality

and/or discrimination or not understanding why something happened. This is, thus, an answer to the other research question “How do immigrant students perceive inequalities which happen to them?” In summation, they explained the problems by this categorization, however, it is necessary to mention, that before doing so, they had a tendency to claim that they do not experience, do not remember or do not feel the problems anymore. Yet, all of them came up with some examples in the end, some of them more and some of them less.

The most exposed individual to disadvantages seems to be Malva, a Muslim girl from Syria who wears hijab. The person with the least problems claimed to be Barlas, a light Buddhist Mongolian. In Malva’s case, the situation could be explained by Czechs unfriendly and prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims discovered by STEM (2016), Křížková (2006) or Zalabáková (2012). Nevertheless, the trigger appeared to be a visible symbol - her scarf as the other Muslim student, Hassan, did not feel anyhow disadvantaged due to his religion. Barlas’ situation, on the other hand, could be explained either by his “luck” as he himself claimed, or by his extreme self-education, good choice of school, friendliness, etc. When it comes to the Ukrainian respondents, they all experienced the classical stereotypes from the majority, such as, lack of trust or making fun of their pronunciation, name calling and so on. At the same time, they showed the same stereotypical vision about Czechs.

Finally, a close connection appeared between perception of problems and reactions to them. The coping strategies were not used in all situations, quite the contrary. It was apparent that students decided how to react according to the way they perceived the exact situation. To give some examples, when the problem were seen as inevitable or as bad luck, they tended to relieve it with humor, got used to them or simply considered them normal. When the problems were understood as caused by Czechs’ bad personalities, they rather limited contacts with them, chose non-problematic places to be or tried to ignore these problems. The perception of such problems thus influences the reactions to them.

2.2.6 Limits of the research and discussion

The research brought to light some interesting points about how immigrant students perceive the inequalities which happen to them and how they react to them. It is, however, necessary to mention limits of the research itself. First of all, as it is a qualitative study based on a small sample of respondents, it is not possible to see the results as final and the only correct one. Nevertheless, as I stated before, I do not intend to create an all-embracing theory, rather have a deep view of one's daily life. My main goal is to ascertain a perception of these inequalities by the disadvantaged themselves and to do so, the chosen method worked satisfactorily. Furthermore, I focused my attention (for practical reasons) on Prague only. The situation in the countryside and small town may look different as Czech residents there may not be used to seeing foreigners very often.

My identity as the researcher could also have an influence on the interviewees. By the Center of the Integration I was introduced as a university researcher and I was in touch with their parents first. Together it could have painted a very official picture of me. Despite that, I tried to create a pleasant and informal atmosphere at a very calm café, I used rather an informal language and wore casual clothes.

Some authors have also discussed the validity of the cultural trend itself. They see it as a possible threat which may lead to a loss of interest in economic inequalities and macro-level studies. In this case, however, I see the advantage of studying the micro level, daily life experiences of the respondents and focusing on the problematic lack of recognition which they demonstrate. None of the students mentioned any economic problems and personally, I did not ask about them. My aim was not to find the source of the inequalities or to what extent they were caused by lack of recognition or lack of redistribution. Thanks to this perspective I was able to find connections between certain perceptions of problems and strategies and the reactions to them. In other words, I focused on what follows after a difficulty appears in one's life.

I believe the research enabled me to see which inequalities the young immigrants face, how they understand them and how they react to them. Thanks to the results, the actual help with foreigners' integration can be focused more precisely; for instance, schools and teachers can adjust their policies and approaches

and make them more efficient. Overall, the thesis could be understood as a pilot study which maps a terrain for a larger and more comprehensive research. Not only is it a little-mapped area of study, but it is also an area with a lot of potential for further research.

3 Summary

In the thesis I looked at the ways teenage immigrant students in the Czech Republic perceive inequalities which happen to them and how they react to them. I focused on their daily problematic experiences, both at schools and outside of it. The analysis was based on 10 semi-structural interviews with students of 7 different nationalities.

In general, the students encountered several types of problems which were similar in nature but differ in details. These problematic situations were related to language and cultural differences, studies and class environment, interaction with Czechs outside of a school, bureaucracy and personal well-being. Even though the students recalled plenty of these situations, they had a proclivity not to see them as inequalities or disadvantages. Only when situations escalated to extremes such as spitting, physical aggression or expressions of distrust, the students attributed it to racism and discrimination. The rest were seen as inevitable problems which “are just there” because of their status as a foreigner; as something that happens only to them individually and not collectively to all foreign students; as bad luck and exceptions which do not happen often or anymore; as the very same problems which happen to Czechs as well; or finally, as something unexplainable.

During their stay in the Czech Republic and in Czech state schools, the students developed many strategies on how to avoid these situations and how to deal with them once they happen. Among the avoidance strategies prevails self-improvement, as the students believed that many of the problems were caused by their insufficient knowledge of the Czech language. To avoid unpleasant situations, they also strategically chose whom to talk to, which contacts to limit, where to spend their time, etc. They also tried to stop a problem before it grew larger

or they turned to non-profit organizations which helped them. Finally, sometimes they even refused to see a situation as problematic.

Nevertheless, there were cases when students could not prevent such a situation from happening simply because it is difficult to anticipate that “something unfair is going to happen”. To deal with those, the students either both got used to them and considered them normal, or they ignored them or resigned on solving them and fighting back. Sometimes they relieved them with humor and optimism. In some cases, community cohesion appeared to help them overcome such problems. And finally, they had a tendency to maintain their dignity by not behaving in the same way as the aggressors or by showing their own personal abilities and skills.

It is necessary to point out that all of these strategies were not used in all the situations. Students’ perception of problems influenced the way how students reacted to them and which strategies they used to cope with them or avoid them.

Overall, the majority of the problems mentioned were not considered somehow essential, limiting or disadvantageous. Rather they were seen as something that simply happens because of their foreign status. At the same time, the students emphasized that most of their experiences happened during their first months or year of living in Czechia with a gradual reduction of such situations. Despite that, some of the experiences were shocking and prove their disadvantaged position in the Czech Republic.

To sum up, the research showed that the immigrant-students do experience problems due to their foreign status in a host country. This area is, however, rather neglected which reflects also non-uniform policy connected to this topic and chaotic behavior on the part of the schools. This thesis could thus serve as a starting point for more comprehensive research.

4 Shrnutí

V této práci se zabývám způsoby, jakými mladiství studenti-imigranti v České Republice vnímají nerovnosti, které se jim dějí, a jak na ně reagují. Zaměřuji se na jejich každodenní problematické zážitky, a to jak v prostředí školy, tak mimo ni. Provedená analýza je založena na deseti polostrukturovaných rozhovorech se studenty sedmi různých národností.

Obecně lze říci, že studenti zažívají několik typů problémů, které se sobě povahově podobají, ale liší se v malých detailech. Tyto problémové situace se týkají jazykových a kulturních odlišností, studia a školního prostředí, interakcí s Čechy mimo školu, byrokracie a osobního zdravotního stavu. Přestože si studenti vybavovali poměrně velké množství takovýchto situací, měli tendenci je nevnímat jako nerovnosti či znevýhodnění. Pouze v případech, kdy situace vyeskalovala do extrémů jako například plivání, fyzické agrese či výrazů nedůvěry, připisovali je studenti rasistickému chování a diskriminaci. Ostatní případy byly vnímány jako nevyhnutelné problémy, které se „prostě dějí“ kvůli jejich statusu cizince. Také je měli tendenci vnímat jako něco, co se děje pouze jim osobně, nikoliv jako kolektivně se dějící problém všem studentům-cizincům, či jako smůlu nebo výjimku, která se neděje pravidelně či se dělá pouze dříve. Někdy byly problémy chápány jako stejné, které zažívají i Češi samotní, či je studenti brali jako něco nevysvětlitelného.

Během jejich pobytu v České Republice a na českých školách si studenti vytvořili mnoho strategií, jak se takovýmto situacím vyhnout a jak se s nimi vyrovnat ve chvíli, kdy se stanou. Mezi strategie předcházení těmto problémům patří především sebezdokonalování, neboť studenti věřili, že mnoho problémů bylo způsobeno jejich nedostatečnou znalostí češtiny. Dále si studenti sami vybírali, s kým si budou povídat, komu se raději vyhnou a na kterých místech budou trávit svůj volný čas. Také měli snahu zastavit problém před tím, než vůbec vznikne, či se snažili předejít jeho dalšímu zvětšování. Někteří se také obraceli na neziskové organizace. Nakonec, někteří ze studentů odmítli situaci vnímat jako problém již od počátků.

I přes tuto snahu studenti nemohli či nedokázali vždy problémovým situacím předejít, jednoduše proto, že je obtížné předvídat, kdy se něco nespravedlivého má stát. Aby se s těmito zážitky vypořádali, studenti si na ně buď v průběhu času zvykli, začali je považovat za „normální“ či je ignorovali a rezignovali na jejich řešení. V některých případech studenti zlehčovali situaci humorem a optimismem, jindy se obraceli na další cizince či členy své komunity. Nakonec studenti vyjadřovali také tendenci zachovávat si svou důstojnost nesnížením se na úroveň agresora či poukazováním na své osobní kvality.

Je nezbytné zmínit, že tyto strategie nebyly využívány ve všech situacích. To, jakým způsobem studenti reagovali na dané problémy a jaké strategie volili k jejich překonání, bylo ovlivněno jejich vnímáním konkrétní situace. Většina zmiňovaných problémů nicméně nebyla studenty vnímána jako nikterak zásadní, limitující či znevýhodňující. Spíše je považovali za něco, co se jednoduše děje a musí být, neboť jsou cizinci v jiné zemi. Zároveň studenti dávali důraz na fakt, že většina těchto zkušeností se stala během prvních měsíců či prvního roku žití v Česku a postupně se jejich množství snižovalo. I přes to však byly některé z případů šokující a dokazují znevýhodněné postavení studentů-imigrantů v České republice.

Tento výzkum ukázal, že studenti-imigranti z třetích zemí zažívají v České republice různé problémy z důvodu jejich postavení cizince. Tato oblast je výzkumníky nicméně stále spíše zanedbávána a její zanedbání je viditelné i v nejednotné politice zabývající se tímto tématem či v chaotickém jednání ze stran škol. Tato práce může sloužit jako odrazový můstek pro další, obsáhlejší výzkum.

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