

DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES FOR MINORITY LANGUAGES IN ESTONIAN SEPARATED LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract. According to the database of the population census from the year 2000 (Eesti ... 2000), there are representatives of 142 ethnic groups living in Estonia, speaking a total of 109 native languages. At the same time, the database does not state which languages are spoken at home. The material presented in this article belongs to the research topic “Home Language of Basic School Students in Tallinn” from years 2007–2008. The goal of this project in Estonia was to determine what languages are spoken by students from the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school at their home in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. At the same time, this problem was also studied in other segregated regions of Estonia: Kohtla-Järve and Maardu. It was determined what language is dominating in everyday use, what are the factors for choosing the language for communication, what are the preferred languages and language skills. This study reflects the actual trends of the language situation in these cities.

Keywords: language domination, viability of language, language skills, language repertoire, language selection, minority languages

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1. Introduction

One of the most characteristic features of the 20th century is the wide-scale migration on nations across national and geographic borders. Among other things, the focus of solving the problems regarding immigration must be the unavoidability, the mechanisms facilitating language preservation and language death, and also models and strategies used for preserving and developing languages among future generations who are born in host countries (Schwartz 2008:400).

It is estimated that the number of languages in the entire world is somewhere in the range of 6,000 to 7,000 (Crystal 2000:4). The dominating majority of the world's population speaks only four percent of these languages. It is possible that in the 21st century we will see 90% of all languages dying or being predetermined

for death (Krauss 1992). Language death is the last stage of language shift, whereas it starts with a decrease of the number of people speaking the target language, bringing about a loss of language skills or a decrease of the usage of the language in various fields (Baker 2006:75). Maintaining language, on the other hand, means a continuing use of the language, fighting a regionally and socially more powerful language, and a stable persistence of the language on the basis of the people speaking the language, the language skills (among both adults and children) and preservation of the language (i.e. both in the field of home and religious use and also outside home, e.g. in the school environment) (ibid.). Conklin and Lourie (1983) have stated political, cultural and linguistic factors that help preserve a language or expel it. In summary, these factors are as follows:

- **Political, social and demographical factors**, e.g.
 - Contact with home country and visiting the home country should be available;
 - Identity of the ethnic group should be preserved instead of taking on the identity of the majority group.
- **Cultural factors**, e.g.
 - Institutions using the native language must exist (i.e. schools, community organisations, broadcast media, recreational activities);
 - Cultural activities and religious traditions must be conducted in the home language;
 - Ethnic identity must be strongly related to the home language.
- **Language factors**, e.g.
 - Native language must be standardised and must exist in a written form;
 - Home language must have an international status;
 - There must be written skills in the native language, used in the community and in the home country.

Many cultures and languages of the world – especially those with a smaller population – are in danger of being assimilated by other, dominating languages and cultures. Thousands of languages have already vanished within the last couple of centuries. There is a global trend of pressure towards homogeneity, concerning both national assimilation and economic globalisation (Edwards 2002).

Almost all languages spoken by 1,000 people or less are endangered, although even languages spoken much more widely are susceptible to the same pressure. Among these small languages, many have experienced the stage of near extinction, because only the remaining elderly people are still speaking them (Crystal 2000). These languages have not been passed along to the younger generation for a long time and thus, as the older generation will die out in due course, these languages will not be spoken any more. Together with losing languages, much knowledge, many beliefs and values also become lost that were kept by the community, or they at least diminish in time: they will be more and more replaced by the knowledge and values of the dominating language and culture (Edwards 2002).

Most of such languages are not written, they are not officially recognised, their use is limited to the local community and they have a function only in the field of

unofficial language use, especially at home and within family. Also, a very small group of people is speaking those languages – this reflects the balance of power of the global market (Rannut 2009). C. Baker (2006:89) has stated the definition of linguistic imperialism; a part of this definition is the fact that the English language is currently thought of as the universal utility language of the world and this trend is becoming more and more entrenched.

Postmodern information societies and language environments are affected by the globalisation processes, bringing about a wide-scale migration of the employable population and also the related benefits and services. This new situation has created the need for a global communication network via potential consumers and at the same time this ensures higher technological achievements. Thus this need increases language contact and facilitates multilinguality (Rannut 2009). Gal (1979) also highlights the fact that social changes (industrial development and urbanisation) have caused changes in social networks and relations between people and have also affected language changes within communities. V. Edwards (2002) has expressed a thought that language change and language shift are a reflection of pragmatic thinking and desire to be socially and professionally mobile. Language can vanish very quickly if it is forbidden by law from being used in schools and if the language transfer mechanism at home is not working anymore. Revaluing language via school is a very slow process. A decrease of language use can take just a couple of decades, but it will take much more time before the same language emerges again from seeds, and the spreading of such language will take even longer (Baker 2006).

The rebirth of a language in education starts not from small students, but instead needs a priori the specific training and availability of teachers, because it is in their power to revitalise a minority language via the education system. Thus, teachers need to co-operate with parents, language activists and language planners in order to save a language. K. Hyltenstam and C. Stroud (1996) add that when analysing language shift, the individual and personal level is also very important for preserving a language, besides the social dimension and the dimension of the community of language speakers.

It has been found that the self-respect and language skills of people increase and intellectual capabilities improve when they have facilitated access to education in their home language. These skills are easily apparent upon transferring to another language (majority language) (Baker, Jones 1998:517). An alternative viewpoint is that the school system should encompass the home language and culture of minority groups with sufficient flexibility where possible (*ibid.*).

2. The links between the choice of language and identity

It is generally well-known that a child's mother tongue has a strong impact on the child's choice of language, while the father tongue has not been found to have such a great role (Bayley, Schecter 2003:18), yet mother tongue does not

necessarily coincide with the home language (Baker, Jones 1998). The term 'home language' has been preferred by some linguists to refer to characteristic dialects and languages often used solely in the home context, and these languages may in many cases be transferable to succeeding generation only in oral form (Moon et al. 2000:775). On the other hand, linguistic minorities can be defined as individuals in whose homes a language other than the one used by the majority in the society is actively used and who thus have the opportunity to raise the level of their linguistic proficiency in the language that is socially in widest use (Goldenberg et al. 2006:21). The term 'dominant language' is used to refer to a language of which the speaker has the best knowledge or which he or she uses the most (Baker, Jones 1998). Language proficiency is the ability of an individual to create and understand language (proficiency is usually assessed by evaluating the proficiency level in four component linguistic skills) (Baker 2006).

Social pressure from a majority group may make the choice of language a pragmatic one (Suarez 2002), influencing the vitality of linguistic heritage. Usually a typical consequence is a language shift toward the dominant language (Bright 1992). On the other hand, language loyalty reflects individual and social efforts to preserve ethnic identity through the continued use of the natal or heritage language (Wiley 1996), loyalty to some language is the means of maintain. Vitality of ethnic groups has been defined as something that makes a group of people act in a manner distinct from others and causes them to stress collective identity in dialogues between groups (Giles et al. 1977:308).

As language is one of the most marked individual characteristics, it consequently represents and mediates a determining element of human identity (Hoffmann, Ytsma 2004). Linguistic identity – the linguonym – makes up one of the most important parts of a person's social identity (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). In mutual interaction between groups, similar values arise, which influence the ethnic identity of these groups (Iskanius 2005). The linguistic self-perception depends largely on proficiency in the official language and the frequency of interaction with speakers in the majority language group (Rannut 2005).

Linguistic identity is self-identification with some definite language (Iskanius 2005). The linguistic identity of minority groups has been viewed as the adoption of an unofficial language as a mother tongue or home language (Li 2001:137). This does not mean that those who identify with an unofficial language as their mother tongue or home language, necessarily feel a strong feeling of belongingness to that group (ibid.). It is however clear that retention of a minority language as the mother tongue or home language contains a so-called added component in the structure of ethnic minority's identity and that people who hold on to their mother tongue have a stronger linguistic ability to tie themselves to their ethnic community than others who do not attempt to retain that language (Baker 2006).

Still, Richmond and Kalbach (1980) assert, drawing on earlier census data, that in general new immigrants tend upon arrival in a foreign country to use their mother tongue either solely or to a greater extent, but that later this tendency decreases more and more. This has been attributed to the fact that better con-

formity to the demands of the workforce market (among other things, proficiency in the official language) brings monetary gain (Shapiro, Stelcner 1997). It follows that the workforce situation does not contribute in any way to the preservation of minority languages. The labour market is one of the strongest factors influencing linguistic changes and views; it also has an effect on linguistic choices, and linguistic identity as well (*ibid.*).

Without a doubt, however, a number of other factors impel people either to switch or retain a minority language. For example, ethnic groups that emphasize family ties appear to have a strong effect on their children's views when it comes to learning and using their own ethnic language at home (Gans 1997). Their family as a group of people has remained an important institution in the attempt to retain languages. This gives rise to complex relationships between the parents' views towards language, impacts on children's everyday use of language and teaching of vocabulary in their home language (Schwartz 2008:400).

Through language, culture is preserved, and as a result, linguistic identity has a key role in the formation of an ethnicity (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). A common language encourages the distribution of shared views, and identity becomes uniform (Kirch 2002). Some collectives are bilingual – the speaker chooses a language depending on the situation or field (*diglossia*), while in the case of others, transition is more common (Vahtin 2004): in one situation, one language might be used to fulfil some function while in another situation the other language might be used in different circumstances for a different purpose. For example, a linguistic community may use the minority language at home, in a neighbourhood, for religious purposes and in social activities, but opt for the majority language in the workplace, educational sphere and when consuming mass media (Hudson 2001). The majority language is normally in use in formal communication situations and the minority language in informal situations (Baker 2006). This contrast between higher and lower social status for languages may be the result of linguistic prestige and power rather than language variation (*ibid.*). Each society has more than one language variant. According to Dan P. McAdams (1997), it is increasingly difficult in the industrial age to retain linguistic identity, the main reason for which is the intermingling of ethnic groups – a characteristic of the era.

In a multilingual environment, the basic question concerns the choice of language. The use of a home language and, for example, a government agency's use of language may be influenced by the next generation's switch of language determined by educational opportunities (Rannut et al. 2003). The linguistic environment is a significant factor in the case of linguistic identity as everything that has an impact on the linguistic environment affects the individual and use of language in the broader sense (Rannut 2005).

The relationship between the choice of language and identity is significant. The choice of a given language signals a special identity and may even determine whether the individual is accepted into some group or not. In choosing a language, people are standing face-to-face with a choice of identity or community (Mills 2001:400).

In communities where individuals have strong social networks, positive views on the language of the community and distinct rules for using the home language, the language shift process is slow, taking about four generations (Holmes, Aipolo 1990). However, among communities and individuals where the networks are weak the attitudes towards preserving the language are ambivalent and, thus, the language dominating in the society might become the home language, in addition, the language shift is rapid and it might take place in less than two generations (Starks 2005:541).

2.1. School environment, attitudes and responsibility in the learning process of children speaking a minor language

It has been found that systematic use of home language as a learning language in pre-school age supports later academic aptness and has a positive effect also on school-age children when they are learning after bilingual study programmes (for example, see Kohnert 2005:257). There is evidence that supporting the home language of a child of a minor language on a regular basis does not reduce the long-term performance level in the major language. On the contrary – it seems that all in all it increases the level of major language skill. For example, Baker (2000) brings out that the experience of using the first (L1) and second language (L2) at home and the development of literacy in home language of children representing the minor language is a crucial point of dispute among teachers and parents of children of minor language, who often ask which language they should use when communicating with their children. There are also those who claim that parents should do it in the language dominating in the society, even if they are not completely proficient in the language, or at least bring as much other language into the home language as possible (Rossell, Baker 1996:302). According to the present discussion, the use of socially dominating language at home helps children to learn the language faster and at the same time this helps to access the main educational tendencies. The given argument is based on the time-on-task hypothesis (*ibid.*), i.e. the more time is spent on the completion of one task, the greater skill is obtained in the field, and as the time is reputedly limited, the time spent on one task leaves less time available for the completion of another task.

For a child born in a host country, the inherent acquisition of language has remained insecure and in an unfinished stage (Kaufman 2004). Nevertheless, with the help of linguistic input, even if limited, the development continues. When adding the input, changed simultaneously with these processes, to the second language (L2) as a socially dominating language, the child usually loses its home language, even if the family and community try to prevent it in a strongly motivated way (*ibid.*). However, the language can be maintained: after all, it is up to the parents to encourage the child to learn also the first language, develop and preserve it and pass it on from generation to generation also in a written form as a result of making an effort (Seville-Troike 2000:165).

At the same time children with an ethnic background different from the majority might find themselves between two cultures where their identity is

strongly tied to their choice of language. This might make them reluctant to use their home language at school, in case they are not provided with a truly multicultural school environment. At school, some children might even hide the existence of their home language which differs from the language used by the majority (Siraj-Blatchford, Clarke 2000:29). The reluctance of using their home language at school might also be a repercussion of the home environment where it is being preserved regardless of the pressure (Tannenbaum, Howie 2002).

According to Pedraza and Pousada (1992:253), children depend on the competing influences which they receive from home, school and their community. The concept of involvement is used to emphasise that the school is responsible for contributing to adaptation: the school must change its environment and policy to fit in the needs of the students (DfEE 1999). In order to determine the corresponding demands for school, there must be some comprehension of the practice of students with a different background and their literacy outside school (Pagett 2006).

Language attitudes and motivation are crucial in language studying. Baker (1992:41–42) has mentioned that language attitudes are remarkably influenced by three factors: age, context of education and home language. Speaking of the relations between attitudes and motivations, three types of criteria can be pointed out (Huguet 2006:414):

- attitudes and motivation are related to the level of language capability, which has been achieved regardless of the level of intelligence;
- there is a close relation between parents and children regarding their attitudes, which indicates that their development begins at home prior to formal education;
- assessment of language attitudes, which has been performed before and after learning, changes minimally and consequently it does not seem to be connected to better knowledge in the second language (L2).

Classically, the motivations of language study are categorised into two groups: instrumental and integrative. The first expresses the study of the second language (L2) for practical reasons (for instance, with the purpose to get a better mark at school or find a more highly paid and prestigious job). The motive of studying the second language for integrative reasons might suggest a strong inner wish to study the second language and also about the culture of the people using this language as their first language with the aim of participating in the customs and practices of the second linguistic community and becoming part of them (Gardner, Macintyre 1992). Language study on the latter motive tends to promote a higher level in the competence of the second language (*ibid.*). At the same time, integrative and instrumental motivations can be interwoven (Dörnyei 1994).

According to C. Baker (1992), the instrumental language study motive is stronger than integrative. Language study on integrative motives is regarded as more effective, integrative motivation is especially important when developing the communication language (*ibid.*). Gardner (1973) has analyzed the development in the attitudes of parents of the children's language acquisition and found that integrative motivation occurs in families where the parents show positive attitudes

to their child's language learning. Baetens Beardsmore (1986) states that the integrative and instrumental motivations have a decisive impact, in addition to the exchange of language, or to the maintenance conditions for language extent in the bilingual society.

H. Giles and I. L. Byrne (1982) argue that the second language learner can achieve modest results when there is a stronger sense of belonging to an ethnic group, the perception of its viability and strength of language, there is a well-organized institutional support, the community is rather large, stable, and it has been given a high status.

It is important in which environment languages are studied, and the success of learning the main language depends to a great extent on all of it (Stern 1985). However, Holliday (1994) warns of excessively emphasising relatedness when touching upon the cultural differences, as many local (i.e. personal) factors might be of much more significance. Also, he marks that stereotyping special cultural groups might threaten the cultural background of children at school.

Failure to maintain home language development would lead to, among other consequences, a cultural loss, which also reduces the extent of contact with family members (Anderson 2004). Moreover, this is a threat to children who have not received prior to the second language any learning opportunities to adequately develop the first language. Those children are endangered by later development of their own cognitive and academic skills than their peers who have had the opportunity to use their first language (Cummins 1984). The language of instruction or the retention agents includes one more important factor: the opportunity to speak this language (Kohnert et al. 2005).

Voluntary language classes for school-age children have been established in the world. Some local community groups wish to provide their children with the education and training in their own home language. For example, in England and Canada people have set up classes for minority languages, night-schools, groups working in a school holiday, Saturday and Sunday schools, and the various communities in order to teach to the children language and culture of their parents and grandparents (Baker 2006:125–126). However, there are also schools with a bilingual curriculum, where one day one language is used, and next day another. In addition, there are schools, which use one language during half the day, and another in the second half (Baker, Jones 1998:588).

It is important to study which language policy components of a family, just like socio-linguistic factors, may accelerate or decelerate the preservation of home language, as these components seem to vary in different language communities. In most cases, the extent of conveying knowledge about language heritage is probably related to a complex of several factors. The same family-related factors, which promote language transmission between generations within one group, can lead to changes in language in other ethno-linguistic groups (Kaufman 2004).

2.2. Informal language planning

There has been much discussion about whether there is any need to support the development of home language, if it is not the majority language and not used for education. Researchers in early childhood (see van Tuijl et al. 2001; Tabors 1997) have recognized the home ambient, including the value of their home language and preschool education programs. Language speaking opportunity is motivated and related to the child's social, emotional and cognitive development of cultural family. In case of children, their social, emotional, cognitive and communication development are mutually dependent.. These ratios are within the skills to develop culture, and cultural environment is primary for the child's immediate family (Kohnert et al. 2005).

An alternative perspective of maintaining the home language is when minority languages are actively spoken at home (Goldenberg et al. 2006). One reason for this could be that the parents interact with their children in the language, in the best way they can., that is, in order to ensure the best possible linguistic model for their children. It is observed that the skills acquired in one language, and knowledge exchange in the second language (L2) at the same time maintaining the home language of the family and community members, contribute to the development of literacy in general (Wong Fillmore 1991). Other reasons to maintain the first language at home are cultural, cognitive and pragmatic. On this basis, we can also talk about cultural literacy, which includes, inter alia, the knowledge conveyed from generation to generation (Simpson 1991). This in turn represents an important part of cultural competence. The third reason why people should maintain the language spoken at home is the fact that the failure of communication between parents and their children influences negatively the socialization and family dynamics in general (Goldenberg et al. 2006:303). However, there is no clear answer to the question whether the home language should seek to encourage children's literacy development. For example, some studies prove the association between using the home language and the development of the child's literacy (see Monzó, Rueda, 2001).

Unfortunately, however, the home language level of the minority language-speaking children, is in jeopardy. This is especially true when the languagespoken at home is not widely used in education or in the community. An ability to maintain and develop the skills of minority must be in accordance with the systematic support and enrichment programs of the home language. If home support on the language is not available, then it will be unlikely that children want to speak their minority language with their own parents and other close family members. (Anderson 2004). Pursuant to this, social, academic and emotional load on the children is increasing.

2.3. Communication strategies of the home language usage

Some of the children are bilingual without any effort, almost from birth, while others learn the language later, in addition to any other, whether at home or as adults outside home. The first occurs when two languages are acquired in parallel

from birth (Baker 2006:97). For example, if one parent speaks in one language with children, the other parent in another language, the child learns the languages at the same time (Hauwaert Barron, 2004). But according to L. Thompson (2000), the successive childhood bilingualism means a situation in which the child learns at home first one language, and then at school he learns a second language. The education provided by kindergartens or nursery schools make the acquisition of a second language more available, without any determination of this second language as an official teaching language (ibid.).

Even two-year old (and younger) children are amazingly good at understanding which language and in which situation should be used when communicating with different family members (Meisel 2004). Children can easily switch from one language to another, while being quite capable of making clear distinction between two languages; however, individual differences, depending on the age and development level of a child, can be observed (Quay 2000). In general, the ability to use the suitable language becomes apparent rather early; for example, Nicoladis (1998) has observed that social awareness of using languages in domestic environment, applying the 'one parent – one language' principle, seems to be encouraged by the awareness, which allows to interpret two equivalent, distinguished linguistic systems.

Children have also demonstrated a readiness for parallel utilisation of two languages. Code mixing (switching between languages within or between sentences) takes place in informal communication situations, involving those between family members and natural context (Zentella 1999). De Hower (1990) suggests that children tend to mix codes less when talking to a unilingual person while shifting noticeably towards bilingualism when communicating with a bilingual person. A child's ability to switch from one language to another, without experiencing any difficulties, may be, in part, attributable to linguistic competence level in these two languages, but this is a phenomenon of temporary nature, diminishing in time as a better level is acquired in both languages (Baker 2006:99). Both parents and children sometimes use code mixing; for example, when being unable to recall a word or phrase in one language, both parents and children use the word concerned in another language. In the case of adults, the code mixing and switching may also serve some pragmatic purpose, for example, to reinforce a demand or command (Kaur, Mills 1993). In the case of children, code mixing is strongly influenced by the scope of code mixing within a family or community; for example, if parents are frequently mixing codes, children may start to imitate the pattern (Baker 2006:100). It has been observed that code mixing, used by minority groups, is in essence a step towards the adoption of majority language (Baker, Hones 1998:587).

I. Piller (2002:62) refers to unofficial language planning, although he has observed that many married couples have never adopted an informed decision regarding the language to be used at their respective homes; therefore, the choice of language is accidental. Also, there are those who consciously keep two languages apart in the case of different situations and define specific strategies, identifying the languages to be talked to both each other and to their children.

Accidental choice of language may be attributable to their habits which have emerged over time.

A. Pavlenko (2004:184) also indicates, generalising, that parents make language choices in a family either consciously, sub-consciously or subject to spontaneous decisions. The language choice of parents are affected both by social and local context (language preference of the community) of the family. Both parents may choose a specific language to communicate with their children. In the case of another scenario, mother may choose one and father another language to communicate with the children. Many families balance between two languages; for example, parents communicate with each other in one specific language, whereas the other or even a third language is used to talk to the children; in addition, some families use an extreme strategy, excluding the learning of a majority language outside their homes (Barron-Hauwaert 2004). Situations have been registered where language and language strategy of a family have been chosen on emotional grounds; for example, different languages, used by parents to talk to their children, may express a variety of emotions: such a family may make a distinction between the 'language of love' and 'language of punishment' and therefore, the choice of language is spurred by different emotions, where one language is used to express positive and another – negative emotional status (Pavlenko 2004).

Bilingual development of a child or hindrance thereof is affected, aside the parents, also strongly by a variety of factors, present outside the home, for example, mass media and friends. Alternative scenario for retarding language competence is a situation where, at most, only passive community language skill remains. For example, grandparents and younger relatives may fail to use the same domestic language due to insufficient language skills (Baker 2006:102). The children may only have passive language competence in the language concerned (De Houwer 2005).

It has been discovered that children may control their preferences amazingly strongly and thus guide their language choice themselves (Tuominen 1999). Mills (2001:388) describes a bilingual situation where a child applies avoidance strategies when using domestic language, rejecting the use of domestic language by responding with one-word sentences to questions, asked by a parent, either changing the subject of a conversation or switching to another language. Code switching of described type is not a disturbance, if used by adults; also, it does not serve as an indicator of later language development of children (Poplack 1980).

For some children, language learning environment means an important mixed language input. Small children traditionally mix language codes within a scope, equivalent to their original custodians (Petitto et al. 2001:478). In general, original bilingual custodians of a child are recommended to choose the traditional language and avoid jumping between two languages or using code mixing (McCardle et al. 1995). Two beliefs follow this recommendation as a logical consequence. The first language code mixing is harmful for a child; secondly, traditional language code switching is something very simple for adults. Kohnert et al. (2005:254), however,

contest this conviction. He does believe that such a statement may work against the statements of specialists, indicating the presence of both parents and partners within the intervention process.

Concluding, we could additionally exteriorize upon early childhood bilingualism theories, suggested by Baker (2006:102–103) and communication strategies, used within a family:

- **One individual – one language**

Parents use two languages, one of which is often dominant within a community. Each parent uses his/her own language to talk to a child since his/her birth while parents themselves tend to speak to each other in one language only. It is often assumed that this is a strategy for developing bilingualism.

- **Domestic language is different from the language used outside home**

Both parents may use the same language in domestic environment and the child may learn the other language outside home, either formally or informally. One parent may also start using the other language as a domestic language occasionally. The language, used by the parents, may be the same used in the neighbourhood, but may also be different. Multilingualism also benefits from a situation where each parent talks to the children in different language as of their birth and the child acquires a third language, for example, outside home. This results in trilingualism.

- **Using mixed codes in domestic languages**

A parent uses two languages to talk to a child practically simultaneously. A child needs to understand that some fields (school environment, for example) require segregation of codes.

- **Late bilingualism**

As a language used in school has a higher status, parents may postpone teaching such language until a child reaches a certain age and then add another, majority language, to their domestic languages.

I. Piller (2002) argues that the first two of the categories, discussed above, have been observed as successful forms for developing bilingualism while a negative impact has been attached to the third and fourth language. Besides these categories, schoolmates, friends, mass media, etc. may also develop bilingualism in children.

3. The importance of domestic language studies within Estonian context

For Estonia as a European Union member state it is important to identify which is the current realistic language situation and which are the languages, used by the Estonian population – this is required by the European Union language policies which promote multilingualism (Commission ... 2005). It is as important to determine the realistic scope of language usage and variety of languages, used within the public and private sphere. Based on the European Convention (2003), the European Union must accept any cultural, religious and linguistic differences (Baldauf, Kaplan 2006).

Based on the results of a census of 2000 (Eesti ... 2000), the representatives of 142 ethnic groups are residing in Estonia, speaking, in total, in 109 native languages, including Estonian. Such registered information indicates which languages are assumed to be native languages. However, it is not quite clear which languages and language combinations are used in domestic environment.

Domestic language studies give a feedback on educational policies, contributing to more efficient organisation of domestic language studies. It can be also linked with the right for a native language, defined as a part of linguistic human rights sphere. It is important to be aware of the fact that attaching value to our own language and culture provides better prerequisites for developing a positive attitude towards both ourselves and the destination language and culture.

The studies underlying this publication are based on the research of home language of students in Tallinn basic schools. The research, commissioned by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (ETF grant 7065), who has also been the provider of targeted financing of the research project, was carried out in 2007–2008 in the framework of an international study “Multilingual Cities Project”, the aim of which was to gather, analyse, and compare home language data on basic school students in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius, the three Baltic capitals in order to compare the outcome with the results derived from the reports on minority language studies conducted among basic school students in some other cities of Europe (Gothenburg, Hamburg, the Hague, Brussels, Lyon and Madrid) (Extra, Yagmur 2004).

The project teams in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have made an attempt to ascertain which languages the students in the capitals and segregative areas of the corresponding countries use at home and in school, what is their respective level of competency, choice, predominance and preference, as well as the repertoire of language both in school and at home. The target group were schoolchildren between the ages of 8 and 12. The characteristic feature of each of the towns is its multi-language and multicultural population, the development of which can well be predicted by measuring the variability and loyalty of the language of basic school students.

In Estonia, like in the other countries, the said international research was carried out in two stages. Initially a quantitative study of home language was carried out (see Ü. Rannut, M. Rannut 2007). The object was to identify the language and educational needs of the students in order to allow further improvement in planning of language teaching activities. A similar study was subsequently conducted also in the town of Kohtla-Järve (see Küün 2008), one of the segregative regions of Estonian language environment (northeast Estonia). The outcome was compared with the above-mentioned study carried out in Tallinn. One of the targets of the study was to compare the information collected in Kohtla-Järve with that recorded in Tallinn. Thereafter quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted in the City of Maardu, which is located in the vicinity of Tallinn and also belongs to the segregative language environment of Estonia. In addition to students, the last mentioned study involved as informants also the parents who in their turn served as

source of information on the home language of their parents. This enabled to explore the transition of language from one generation to another, as well as the viability of minority languages within a longer period of time.

*3.1. The development of two separate language environments:
Kohtla-Järve and Maardu*

Kohtla-Järve and Maardu are linguistically rather specific regions in Estonia. Kohtla-Järve gained its city status a little less than half a century ago. If there had been no oil shale and its extensive mining, Kohtla-Järve would hardly ever have developed into a city. Mining of oil shale gave rise to chemical industry. Settlements were set up in the vicinity of mines and quarries. In 1924 a shale oil plant was established in the village of Kohtla-Järve. In the surroundings of the plant a workers' district called Kohtla-Järve emerged. The importance of Estonian oil shale deposit increased during the Second World War. The main settlement of the oil shale deposit received city status. In 1946 the people of Kohtla-Järve became city residents. In 1947 Kohtla-Järve became a city of national subordination. This brought about additional investments and led to the fact that Kohtla-Järve became the second important town in Estonia of that time (Kohtla-Järve 2008). After the Second World War the development of industry resulted in growing numbers of immigrants from other regions of the Soviet Union (Helemäe et al. 2000:17). Kohtla-Järve was an industrial region and a considerable part of the tens of thousands of people of different nationalities who had arrived in Estonia, settled there. It is under these circumstances that the population of Kohtla-Järve predominantly consists of Russian-speaking people of Slavonic origin (Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians) (et al.:17). The population of Kohtla-Järve is slightly over 50,000 (Kohtla-Järve 2008). According to 2000 Census of Population 17.8% of the total population of Kohtla-Järve were Estonians.

The development of the town of Maardu, which is situated in the eastern part of Estonia not far from Tallinn, is quite comparable to that of Kohtla-Järve. Maardu with its population of about 16,000 belongs among the ten largest towns in Estonia. However, as a city Maardu is quite young. Its appearance on the map of Estonian towns was associated with the nearby phosphorus fields. Phosphorite mining near Maardu started in 1920. In 1939 a government invested enterprise Eesti Fosforiit AS was established in order to lay the foundation to a new mine, a processing plant and a new industrial complex. After the Second World War the phosphorite mining and processing in Maardu continued to develop. A sulphuric acid and superphosphate plants were started. As in Kohtla-Järve, it considerably increased the non-Estonian immigration. In 1980 Maardu was given the status of independent municipality although it administratively still belonged to Tallinn (Maardu 2008).

It is hardly possible to find a city in Estonia, which like Maardu has the population consisting of such a variety of representatives of nationalities. The population consists predominantly of Russians; approximately 10% are Estonians. There live representatives of 41 different nationalities belonging to different confessions in Maardu (Maardu 2008).

4. Purposes of the study

The goal of the study was to determine the language and education needs of students, in order to better plan language teaching. The final goal is to put these data into the multilingual and international perspective.

One of the goals of the project was also to predict the perspectives of languages remaining viable and ethnic identities being preserved. Regarding the subject of ethnic identity, it must be said that language identity is one of the most important parts of ethnic identity (Iskanius 2005); at the same time we should not forget that language identity means not only speaking a language, but also a sense of belonging to others speaking this language (Dufva 2002:36). Regarding ethnic identity, the language study also speaks of the importance of attitudes toward teaching and using language and toward language identity (Iskanius 2005). Language has an important role in assessing original linguistic and cultural values, especially if the language being used is not the native language. The language, identity and culture of minority nations are strongly affected by the accepted dominant language and also the psychological, social and political factors in the society (*ibid.*).

It is also clear that language is not preserved automatically and without effort; language use must be enriched and language must be used more emotionally in families (Iskanius 2005). The protection of minority languages is very important already in principle, because this relates to one of the human rights in the field of language – the right to native language. For example, there are 21 Sunday schools for minorities active in Estonia, teaching children their native languages, telling them about the culture and traditions of their origin country and spending free time together (Muldma 2009:11).

But even with all this there is still a risk of a language declining or even vanishing. The reasons for this are often cultural pressure, decline of the prestige of the language in the eyes of the very people speaking it, and other causes. The number of people speaking the language is not always the most important factor – attitude is what counts (Rannut et. al. 2003).

5. Study methods

Questionnaires and interviews were used as the study methods, whereas interviews were intended for further specifying some information. The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of experience gathered from studies in other countries. The study is based on questions with multiple answers and the results can be compared both within a country and internationally. This database can be used for predicting the viability and preserving of the language across generations, separately for every language group.

The questionnaires were used for gathering information about the school, class and gender of the students and about the origin country of the students and their

parents, about home language and skills regarding the home language and the communication language with people at home (what language is the student using when talking to mother, father, siblings and grandparents; what language is used by them when talking to the student). Also, language preferences outside home were studied (the language used when talking to friends and when in school). It was tried to determine the scope of using the home language (the rate of the home language being the most used language of the students), the language preferences (the rate of preferring to use the home language) and the language skills (the level of the four skill components regarding the home language – understanding, speaking, reading and writing). The range of languages studied included also the languages learned in school (and elsewhere) and the languages that the students wanted to learn additionally. The results of the study can be used for making conclusions about the estimated future vitality of a language across language groups and about the prerequisites for language transfer across generations. A separate goal of the study was to find the language range of schools that would provide information about what languages are being learned in school (and outside it) and whether there will be a need to teach some other language as well.

The statistical data processing package SPSS 13.0 was employed for processing the data of the study. Correlation, T-test and χ^2 -test were used. The goal of using correlation was to determine whether two variables were related to each other and how strong was the possible relationship. The T-test allowed determining whether the difference between the mean values of the variables was significant. The χ^2 -test was used for the overall sample in order to verify whether the distribution is uniform.

6. Results

6.1. Study of the home language of basic school students in Kohtla-Järve

The study was conducted in ten schools of Kohtla-Järve (the target group were students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school): seven of these schools were Russian speaking, two schools were Estonian speaking and one school had both Russian and Estonian departments. A total of 1,002 students responded to the questionnaire; this makes up 80.5% of all students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school in Kohtla-Järve. Of these, 774 students (83.7% of the Russian-speaking students) were from Russian schools and 228 students (71.5% of the Estonian-speaking students) were from Estonian schools. The gender balance of the respondents was almost equal: there were 507 boys (392 from Russian-speaking schools, 115 from Estonian-speaking schools) and 495 girls (382 from Russian-speaking schools and 113 from Estonian-speaking schools). The conducting of the study was facilitated by the managers and class teachers of the schools. The students answered the questions in the questionnaires with the help of their teachers and parents.

6.2. Origin countries of students and their parents

The respondents of the questionnaire were students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school, attending schools in Kohtla-Järve. They are from two countries and their parents are from 16 countries. Most of the students were born in Estonia: as much as 99.5% of the students (i.e. 997 students) were born here, 82.63% of mothers (i.e. 828 mothers) and 81.53% fathers (i.e. 817 fathers) were born in Estonia as well – see Table 1. Thus, the majority of this group of students are second generation immigrants already. (Most of the mentioned states are the former Soviet Union republics. In the present article the areas are indicated by their present names.)

Five of the students in the study (0.5%) were born in Russia, 130 mothers (12.97%) and 132 fathers (13.17%) are from Russia as well.

Next it was determined whether the home language is related to the birth country of the students and their parents and if yes, then how.

Table 1. Birth countries of students and their parents

Birth country	Students number	%	Mothers number	%	Fathers number	%
Estonia	997	99.5	828	82.63	817	81.53
Russia	5	0.5	130	12.37	132	13.17
Ukraine			15	1.5	16	1.6
Belarus			13	1.3	17	1.7
Uzbekistan			4	0.4	0	0
Kazakhstan			4	0.4	1	0.1
Azerbaijan			1	0.1	4	0.4
Latvia			2	0.2	2	0.2
Armenia			2	0.2	3	0.3
Turkmenistan			1	0.1	2	0.2
Lithuania			1	0.1	2	0.1
Poland			1	1.1	0	0
Tajikistan					1	0.1
Denmark					1	0.1
Finland					3	0.3
Italy					1	
	1,002	100	1,002	100	1,002	100

6.3. Use of home language when communicating with people at home

The fact of the parents of students being born in Estonia or in some other country does not necessarily affect the home language. In case of the students in Kohtla-Järve, only two languages were used as home languages – Estonian and Russian. The students in Russian-speaking schools (a total of 774 students, i.e. 77.25% of the total sample) had univocally Russian as their home language, even if the parents were born in Estonia or in some other country. For example, in two cases both parents were born in Armenia and in Kazakhstan, but the home language was still Russian.

After Estonia and Russia, the larger groups consisted of parents being born in Ukraine and in Belarus (15 mothers and 16 fathers in Ukraine; 13 mothers and 17 fathers in Belarus). In five cases both parents were born in Ukraine, in eight cases they were both born in Belarus and regardless of the family being of mixed type or not, the home language was Russian. Students considering their home language to be Russian talked in Russian to their grandparents both from mother's side and from father's side. This shows a remarkable loss of language or an emigration from the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine and Belarus. When comparing the use of language across generations it can be seen that the loss of language has happened already in an earlier generation and it can be said that the language of these nationalities in Estonia has vanished and been assimilated into Russian at least in Kohtla-Järve. There may be a need for learning groups or classes for these languages in order to enliven their use again.

The share of students from Estonian schools in the total sample was 22.75% (a total of 228 students). Of these, 68.42% (i.e. 156 students) considered their home language to be Estonian, 15.35% (35 students) considered it to be Russian and 16.23% (37 students) considered both Estonian and Russian to be their home languages. It can be assumed that the use of Russian as the home language stems from the fact of Russian-speaking children attending Estonian-speaking schools. Some of them have one Estonian parent and both Estonian and Russian as home languages. If both parents have Russian as their native language, then the student considers the home language to be Russian; in case of both parents having Estonian as their native language, the student considers the home language to be Estonian.

Figure 1 illustrates the use of home language for responded students in Kohtla-Järve when communicating with people at home.

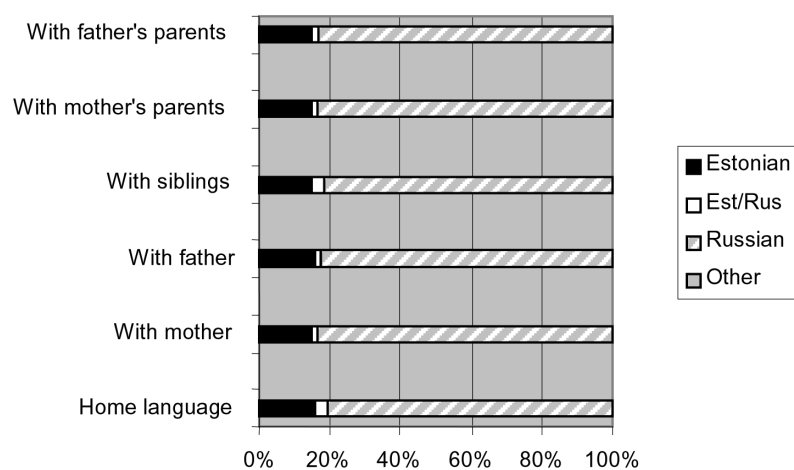


Figure 1. Choice of home language when communicating with people at home

The students in Russian schools of Kohtla-Järve are using Russian when communicating with people at home (with mother, father, and siblings) (a total of 774 students).

Of students in Estonian-speaking schools, 148 are using Estonian when speaking to mother, 159 when speaking with father and 148 when speaking with siblings. In these families, both parents are Estonians. 62 students use Russian when speaking to mother, 55 when speaking with father and 46 when speaking with siblings. In these families, both parents are non-Estonians, but the children are attending an Estonian school. The parents have the opinion that this way their children will learn the Estonian language better and they will have it easier in future if they have a good command of the official language (this establishes better options for a well-paying employment, continuing studies in a higher education institution and better career options). Both Estonian and Russian are used in mixed families where one parent is an Estonian: in 18 cases when speaking to mother, in 14 cases when speaking to father, and in 34 cases when speaking to siblings. Mothers and fathers are speaking to their children in the same language that the child is using. Thus, home language is highly dependent on the nationality of the parents, not so much on their origin countries (162 mothers were Estonians and 66 were Russians; 147 fathers were Estonians and 81 were Russians).

As the students attending Russian schools have only Russian as their home language, the statistical analysis regarding the relations between the home languages, birth countries of parents and nationalities of parents is applied only to the students attending Estonian schools. The results are stated below.

The following statistical variables are expressing the relation between the home language and the nationality of the parents:

- Correlation: $r = 0.64$ ($p = 0.000$) for mother, $r = 0.71$ ($p = 0.000$) for father; this shows that the home language is strongly related to the nationalities of both mother and father. The T-test and the χ^2 -test also confirm this.
- T-test: $t = 29.71$ ($p = 0.000$) for mother, $t = 29.70$ ($p = 0.000$) for father.
- χ^2 -test: $\chi^2 = 40.42$ ($p = 0.000$) for mother, $\chi^2 = 19.11$ ($p = 0.000$) for father. (r – correlation multiplier, t – T-test coefficient, χ^2 – χ^2 -test coefficient, p – significance probability).

The following statistical variables are expressing the relation between the home language and the birth country of the parents:

- Correlation: $r = 0.21$ ($p = 0.004$) for mother, $r = 0.34$ ($p = 0.001$) for father; this shows that the home language has a weak relation to the birth country of the parents.
- T-test: $t = 1.846$ ($p = 0.66$) for mother, $t = 1.619$ ($p = 0.12$) for father.
- χ^2 -test: $\chi^2 = 56.12$ ($p = 0.000$) for mother, $\chi^2 = 51.27$ ($p = 0.000$) for father. (r – correlation multiplier, t – T-test coefficient, χ^2 – χ^2 -test coefficient, p – significance probability).

The students attending Russian schools were using only Russian when speaking with their grandparents. 146 of the students attending Estonian-speaking schools were using Estonian when speaking with their grandparents on their

mother's side, 66 students were using Russian and 16 students were using both Estonian and Russian. 150 students were using Estonian when speaking with their grandparents on their father's side, 60 students were using Russian and 18 students were using both Estonian and Russian. Estonian was used as the communication language if the grandparents were Estonians. In case of grandparents with other nationalities, Russian was used; both languages (Estonian and Russian) were used if one of the grandparents was Estonian. This shows that loss of language is already evident in the previous generation and other languages are being assimilated into Russian in Kohtla-Järve. In this case, the origin country has no effect on the selection of communication language, but it is affected by the home language of the students attending Estonian-speaking schools.

The following statistical variables are expressing the relation between the home language and the language used when communicating with grandparents:

With mother's parents: $r = 0.75$ ($p = 0.000$), $t = 27.75$ ($p = 0.000$), $\chi^2 = 146.00$ ($p = 0.000$);

With father's parents: $r = 0.77$ ($p = 0.000$), $t = 27.65$ ($p = 0.000$), $\chi^2 = 146.00$ ($p = 0.000$).

The results show a strong relation between the home language and the language used when communicating with grandparents.

The three largest origin countries among the sample were Estonia, Russia and Ukraine. The sample from Kohtla-Järve did not use Ukrainian as home language. This shows that loss of language has already happened in an earlier generation and the tendency is becoming more intensive with each successive generation. In order to stop the Ukrainian language from vanishing completely, the use of this language could be enlivened by e.g. establishing learning groups in schools on the basis of a voluntary subject, if there are enough students wishing to learn that language.

New immigrants are valuing their native language higher, but generally the people living in Kohtla-Järve have migrated there much earlier and have become more Russian in time.

6.4. Use of home language outside home

According to one of the goals of the study, it was necessary to determine the language domination (the rate of using the home language as the first language of the student), the languages learned in school and elsewhere, and the languages that the students wish to learn additionally. 177 of the students attending Estonian-speaking schools (17.66% of all respondents) were using Estonian outside home. The students attending Russian-speaking schools used Russian outside home and additionally 51 students attending Estonian-speaking schools were also using Russian; this makes up a total of 825 students (82.34% of all respondents). These 51 students were from Russian-speaking families. The main language used when communicating with classmates was Russian (78.25%). In Estonian-speaking schools, 185 students used Estonian (18.4% of all students, 81.14% of Estonian-speaking students). In communicating with friends, Estonian was used even less

(15.67% of all students). Here, too, the domination of the Russian language can be seen. There were no other languages used besides Estonian and Russian.

A strong relation between the home language and the language used outside home was seen in case of students attending Estonian-speaking schools. In speaking with classmates, the correlation was $r = 0.73$ ($p = 0.000$), $t = 35.99$ ($p = 0.000$), in speaking with friends it was $r = 0.78$ ($p = 0.000$), $t = 30.09$ ($p = 0.000$). In case of the language used most, the correlation was $r = 0.77$ ($p = 0.000$), $t = 26.17$ ($p = 0.000$), in case of the language most liked it was $r = 0.67$ ($p = 0.000$), $t = 29.14$ ($p = 0.000$), in case of the language best known it was $r = 0.75$ ($p = 0.000$), $t = 27.31$ ($p = 0.000$).

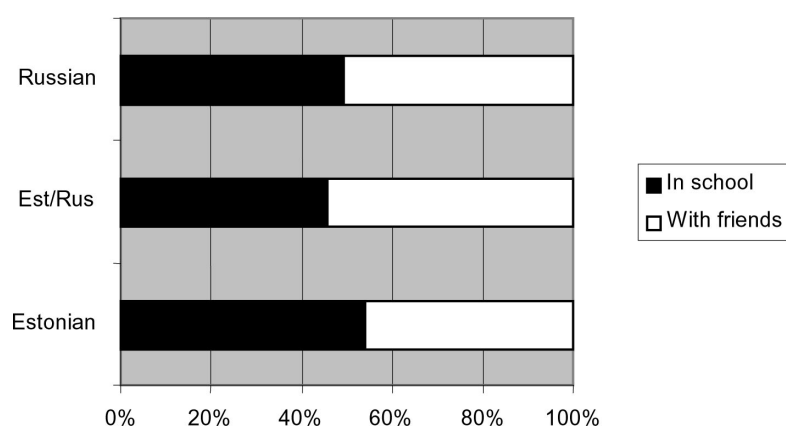


Figure 2. Use of home language outside home

6.5. Knowledge of home language

The language preferences of the students are stated below, by assessing the rate of use of the four skill components (understanding, speaking, reading and writing) in different home language groups. Usually, immigrants know their native language, if this is not the language of the education work at school, better in speech than in writing. The students attending Russian-speaking schools and the students with Estonian background attending Estonian-speaking schools are also good at reading and writing in their home language. The situation is different with Russian-speaking students attending Estonian-speaking schools, if their home language is Russian. Some of them can read and write in Russian only a little: 14 students when communicating with mother, 10 students when communicating with father, 14 students when communicating with grandparents from mother's side and 18 students when communicating with grandparents from father's side. Thus, if the home language is not the same as the language of education work in school, non-Estonian students have better spoken language skills (understanding, speaking) than written language skills (reading and writing) – the home language is used

in speech when communicating with people at home, but it is not taught at school or the level of teaching it is low (the ability of the students to learn a language apparently also has an effect in this). The reading and writing skills are largely dependent on whether the home language is used in school (as overall education language or in a specific subject); the level of valuing the native language at home is an important factor as well.

In the context of Estonia, this is largely dependent on the status of the small languages. It should be mentioned that in Kohtla-Järve, none of the students in the sample stated their home language as the language of the origin country of their parents (except Estonia and Russia). As writing skills have an especially important role in preserving a language, children should be taught to read and write in their home language as well and attention should be paid to teaching it. Having reading and writing skills in the native language has a positive effect on learning other languages as well and also on establishing self-esteem (see also Rannut, M., Rannut, Ü. 2007).

809 students (80.74% of the respondents) considered Russian to be the language they know best, 193 students (19.26%) considered it to be Estonian. 182 students (18.16%) liked speaking the Estonian language, the rest (820 students, i.e. 81.84%) preferred Russian. 177 students (17.66%) were using the Estonian language the most and 825 (82.34%) were using the Russian language the most. The students of schools in Kohtla-Järve who responded to the questionnaire prefer Russian when communicating. All 1,002 students are learning both Estonian and Russian in school; in addition to these languages, 949 children are learning English and 53 are learning German. The students expressed a wish to learn English, German and Estonian languages more comprehensively. Besides these languages, they wish to learn French, Italian, Spanish, Finnish, Chinese, Japanese and Swedish languages; additionally, two students wished to learn Arabic. On the basis of these data it is not surprising to note that the languages of the European Union are popular already among younger schoolchildren, especially English and French – this has to do with the prestige of these languages.

7. Study of the home language of basic school students in Maardu

In Maardu, the home language study involved the students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school attending Maardu Upper Secondary School, and their parents. The study methods used were as follows: first, a questionnaire to the students and their parents, in order to select the students in that school speaking a minority home language; the second stage used spoken interviews of those students speaking a minority language (a couple of children were interviewed), in order to achieve a deeper understanding about the background of the choice of language of these students and to determine more comprehensively the need to teach those languages in Estonian-speaking schools. Maardu Upper Secondary School, involved in this study, is a Russian-speaking school.

The same questionnaire was used for students in Maardu as in the above described studies in Kohtla-Järve and Tallinn. The questionnaire for the parents

was different. The respondents of the study were considered those students and their parents who have a minority language as their home language or who are of some other ethnic origin than Estonian or Russian. The parents also responded to questions about their spouses/partners and their own parents and parents of their spouses/partners.

A total of 177 students responded to the questionnaire; of these, 9 children had a home language of Russian and a second home language of something else than Estonian.

Table 2. Number of respondent students across school years

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
II	26	20	46
III	29	25	54
IV	10	15	25
V	28	24	52
Total	93	84	177

152 parents responded to the questionnaire. Table 3 provides an overview of the number of respondent parents across school years.

Table 3. Number of respondent parents across school years

Year	Fathers	Mothers	Total
II	1	45	46
III	9	37	46
IV	3	20	23
V	6	31	37
Total	19	133	152

The respondent parents were mostly mothers and not all parents provided answers to the questions.

7.1. Origin countries

Analysis of the questionnaire responses showed that the students and their parents have 11 origin countries. Most of them were born in Estonia: these were 96.6% of the respondent students (i.e. 171 students), 64.9% of the fathers (115 fathers) and 60.5% of the mothers (107 mothers). Thus, majority of the students are second generation immigrants.

Table 4 shows the birth countries of the students and their parents.

Table 4 shows that most of the parents born outside Estonia were born in Russia and Ukraine (these countries were in the second and third place after Estonia). 46 fathers and 41 mothers were born in Russia and 12 fathers and 11 mothers were born in Ukraine. 2 students were born in Russia and 4 were born in Ukraine.

Table 4. Birth countries of the students and their parents

Born in	Students		Fathers		Mothers	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Estonia	171	96.6	107	60.5	115	64.9
Russia	2	1.1	46	25.9	41	23.1
Ukraine	4	2.3	12	6.8	11	6.2
Belarus			3	1.7	3	1.7
Lithuania			1	0.6	1	0.6
Latvia			5	2.8		
Kazakhstan					4	2.3
Armenia					1	0.6
Hungary					1	0.6
Kirgizstan			2	1.1		
Azerbaijan			1	0.6		

In the following, the ethnic origins of the respondent parents are provided as background data.

Table 5. Nationality of parents

Nationality	Fathers	Mothers
Russian	138	150
Ukrainian	15	11
Byelorussian	13	9
Lithuanian		1
Tatar	1	1
Armenian	1	
Polish	1	
Finnish	1	1
Armenian	1	
Estonian	6	4

The next section shows the relations between the home languages of the students and the birth countries of their parents.

7.2. Languages used as a home language

In case of this group it was determined that, similar to the Kohtla-Järve students attending Russian schools (see Küün 2008), the students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school attending Maardu Upper Secondary School are dominantly using Russian as their home language, i.e. 91.5% of the respondent students responded and 8.5% of the students have home languages of Russian and some other language.

Table 5. Home languages of the students attending Maardu Upper Secondary School

Language	Number of students		Comments
	Number	%	
Estonian	6	3.4	3 mothers Estonians, 3 fathers Estonians
Russian	162	91.5	Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, etc.
Ukrainian	7	3.9	6 mothers Ukrainian, 1 father Ukrainian
Lithuanian	1	0.6	Mother Lithuanian
Tatar	1	0.6	Both parents Tatars

In mixed families it is usual that Russian is used as the home language (Rannut 2002). As shown in Table 5, second home languages are the Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Tatar and Estonian languages. The Estonian language was used as a second home language by students having one Estonian parent and one Russian parent; in one family both parents were from an Estonian-Russian mixed family.

Also, Estonian is used when speaking to parents and grandparents having an Estonian background (a mixture of Estonian and Russian languages) but Russian is preferred when talking to siblings because, as the responses show, the students know this language better. These responses are typical of children in a Russian-speaking environment. The responses of the parents show that they, too, have attended Russian schools and some of them were born in Russia. The Estonian language is no longer examined because in the Estonian context this is not a minority language but a dominant first language among the majority group.

The second largest group after the Russian-speaking students are the Ukrainian-speaking students. 3.9% of students (7) considered Ukrainian to be their second home language; of these, 6 students had a Ukrainian mother and one had a Ukrainian father. 9 mothers and 1 father spoke Ukrainian. 23 parents were born in Ukraine, thus 43.5% of the parents having born in Ukraine spoke the Ukrainian language, although as a second language, the main language still being Russian. This means that loss of language has happened even among first generation immigrants.

An extract of an interview is given in the following, translated from Russian into English. This extract shows the most common reason for immigrants to move to Estonia. It should also be added that most of the children involved in the study were born in Estonia, but there were exceptions to that rule.

- Were you born in Estonia?
- *No, in Ukraine, in Lvov.*
- When did you come to Estonia with your parents?
- *When I was 2 years old.*
- Why did your parents come to Estonia?
- *They came to work here.*

The questionnaire responses from the mother of the same child show that the mother married a Russian from Estonia. The parents of the woman were from Ukraine; both parents of the man were from Estonia. The respondent parent

attended a Russian-speaking school in Lvov. In childhood, she spoke with her parents in the Ukrainian language, but the current home language is Russian. Still, she sometimes speaks Ukrainian with her children.

The responses of the same student to the following questions show the scope of using Ukrainian, i.e. the former home language of the student's mother, at the student's home and when communicating with grandparents.

- What language are you speaking at home?
- *Usually Russian, but sometimes Ukrainian with my mother.*
- And with your father?
- *I speak Russian with my father and brother because I know this language better.*
- Does your father know the Ukrainian language?
- *No.*
- In what language are you speaking with your grandmother and grandfather – the parents of your mother?
- *In Ukrainian and in Russian.*
- And in what language more?
- *In Russian.*
- And in what language are you speaking with the parents of your father?
- *Also in Russian.*

The other 6 students replied in almost the same way; the only difference was that one of the students had a Ukrainian father and the Ukrainian language was spoken with the father and with his parents. All 7 students used only the Russian language outside home, in school and with friends.

The following extract from an interview gives an overview of the scope of language use outside school.

- In what language are you speaking in school and with your friends?
- *In the Russian language.*
- What about the Ukrainian language?
- *Nobody in school knows Ukrainian and my friends don't know either.*
- In what language do you like to talk more?
- *In the Russian language.*
- But why Russian?
- *I don't know. Everybody does.*
- Do you know the Ukrainian language well?
- *I can understand it and speak it, too.*
- Can you read and write in this language?
- *A little.*
- Who taught you that?
- *Grandmother.*

The parents who responded to the questionnaire did not use the Ukrainian language outside home. Additionally, three mothers were speaking to their parents in Ukrainian, but the home language was still Russian and they spoke to their

children only in Russian. This shows that the usual language used in Ukrainian families is Russian, especially in mixed families where one parent is Ukrainian.

When comparing the language use across generations it can be seen that the use of the Ukrainian language is diminishing with each generation. Some parents (3 mothers) were speaking Ukrainian with their parents when they were children, but they attended a Russian school and they are currently speaking with their children only in the Russian language. A large share of the respondent parents born in Ukraine is communicating with their parents in the Russian language as well (3 mothers and 10 fathers). This shows that language loss has happened already in an earlier generation. Possibly learning groups or classes are needed for supporting the Ukrainian language, in order to stop this language from merging into Russian.

7.3. The need to teach minority languages

As responses to the open question included in the questionnaire, the parents stated the following opinions about the necessity of such learning groups or classes. The question: "If there was a school or a class near you with education work in your native language, would you put your children into such school or class?" was answered negatively. Various opinions were expressed:

- There's no such need when living in Estonia
- My child will probably never go to live in Ukraine
- The Ukrainian language is not important in Estonia

The questionnaire had one more open question that allowed the parents to provide a longer reply and explain the reasoning behind it. The question: "If there were a group for learning the Ukrainian language near you or if such a learning group opened in your school, would you put your child in such a group?" was replied to by one parent that there would be no point in this because the Ukrainian culture is not significantly different from the Russian culture, so the child will get the necessary cultural and linguistic knowledge from a Russian-speaking school as well. Ukrainian culture can be taught at home. The rest of the parents had the opposite opinion – they said that it would be a good idea to open such a learning group. The following are exact replies of the parents:

- Why not learn the Ukrainian language and culture once a week
- If the child agrees, then it could be taught as a voluntary subject
- Yes, because a child needs to know his or her roots in order to be able to have an identity
- Agreed, because the child has the right to know his/her ethnic origin, the culture and language of Ukraine.

This means that part of the Ukrainians living in Estonia consider the Ukrainian culture not significantly different from the Russian culture. But there are also those who want their children to know the language and culture of their ancestors. Thus, learning groups or classes for the Ukrainian language would probably be needed if there are enough students interested in learning it.

Besides the Ukrainian language, the Lithuanian and the Tatar languages were used as second home languages (in one case it was Lithuanian and in one case Tatar). In the first case, the mother was a Lithuanian (born in Lithuania) and the father was a Russian. The Russian language was used as the home language and Lithuanian was used as the second language. The student and the father were born in Estonia.

One parent (mother) of a student stated her place of birth in the questionnaire as Kaunas, Lithuania. The reason for coming to Estonia was studies and she also got married in Estonia. In Lithuania she had attended a Russian-speaking school and both Russian and Lithuanian had been used as her home languages. She was speaking in Lithuanian with her parents and was trying to teach Lithuanian to her children as well.

The child of that mother was born in Tallinn. The child speaks Russian and Lithuanian at home (always Russian with the father), sometimes in Russian and sometimes in Lithuanian with the mother and the sister. The child speaks in Lithuanian and less frequently in Russian with the grandparents on the mother's side. The language used when communicating with the parents of the father is Russian because they are Russians and do not know the Lithuanian language.

7.4. Communication language of the students outside home

The same above-mentioned student is always speaking Russian with friends, because they do not understand Lithuanian. Thus, the child mostly uses Russian, except using Lithuanian sometimes at home. When asked the question about the level of skill components regarding the Lithuanian language, the student declared understanding Lithuanian and being able to speak it, but not to read or write it, although the child said that his mother was going to teach that. The mother of the child did not use Lithuanian outside home either.

This shows that in a mixed family with the father being Russian, the Russian language is used as the home language and Lithuanian is used as a second language. In one case, where the father was Lithuanian and the mother was Russian, only Russian was used as home language. Thus, mothers have a higher impact on the selection of the home language than fathers.

The respondent Lithuanian mother had spoken with her parents in the Lithuanian language as a child. The replies of that parent show, too, that her children learn only in Russian and that the children speak in two languages with her at home, yet using Russian more frequently. The school for the child was chosen because of the vicinity. The question: "If there was a local Lithuanian-speaking school, would you put your child there?" was replied by her as follows: "No, the children know Russian better and Russian is used more at home too, so it is easier for the children to attend a Russian-speaking school". At the same time, she would agree to put her child into a school with a learning group for the Lithuanian language as a voluntary subject. The reason for this was explained by the parent as follows: "The child needs to know the language and culture of

grandparents, because this helps the child to grow into a more cultural person and to be more aware and also proud of own origins”.

The Tatar language was represented in one family of the respondents. Both parents in the family were Tatars, but born in Estonia. The grandparents of the student (both on the mother’s side and the father’s side) came to Estonia in 1949 looking for work. The parents had attended a Russian-speaking school and the home language turned out to be Russian with Tatar as a second language.

The mother and the father of that family spoke both Russian and Tatar with their parents; also, the student communicated with the mother, the father, the brother and the grandparents on the mother’s side and the father’s side in both Russian and Tatar. With this family, the continuity of the Tatar language has been preserved well across generations. Of course, no long-term conclusions can be made on the basis of this, because the number of such respondents is small, only 0.6% of the languages spoken in the school, but it does give an idea of trends.

The respondent child from this family is attending a Russian-speaking school, because there is a choice of only Estonian and Russian schools in Estonia, but the family knows the Russian language better. The respondent parents’ opinion about learning Tatar was that this language was of no use in Estonia. But if there was a learning group or a voluntary subject of the Tatar language and culture at school, then the parent would put the child there, so that the child would get to know the Tatar culture and language, i.e. his own roots, “because a person knowing his own origin and roots is an educated person”. The respondent student understands Tatar and also speaks it, but cannot read or write in this language.

Besides the Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Tatar languages, the parents also mentioned the Byelorussian language in two cases and the Chuvash language in one case. But those languages had been used only as home language in their childhood, and they have not taught these languages to their children; the home language is Russian. Those parents had attended Russian-speaking schools and become Russian-speaking people.

Among the languages spoken in the European Union, the parents mentioned Finnish in two cases and Polish in one case, as languages spoken when talking to their parents in childhood, although they had attended Russian-speaking schools. The Russian language is used as the home language and they stated their nationality in the questionnaire as Russian. This shows the loss of language continuity.

7.5. Home language skills

In the following, we review the language skills regarding home language as Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Tatar, on a scale of understanding – speaking – reading – writing. All 7 students were able to understand Ukrainian and make themselves understood in speech, but they could only read and write a little in this language. In case of the Lithuanian and Tatar language, the relevant students understood it and were able to speak it, but not read and write in it.

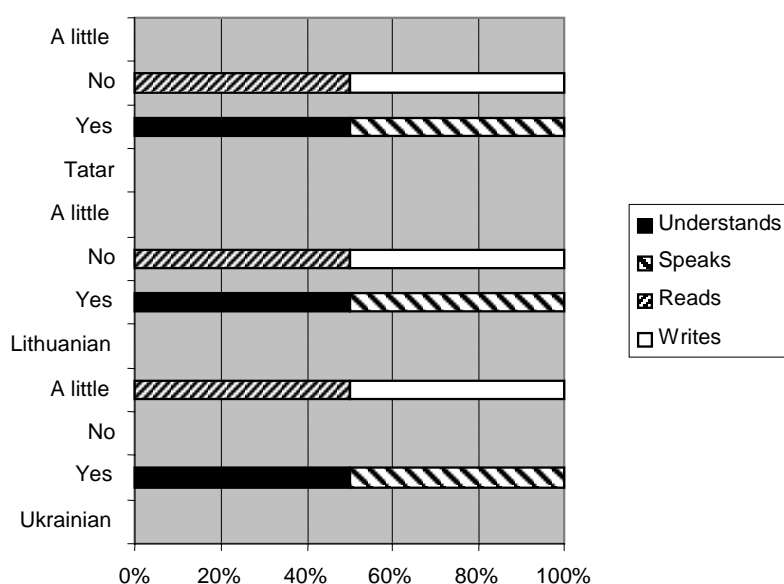


Figure 3. Language skills regarding home language

Thus, the spoken skills (understanding and speaking) of these students regarding their home language are better than written skills (reading, writing). The reason for this is that the home languages are used in a spoken manner at home and not taught in school. The reading and writing skills are mainly dependent on whether the relevant language is taught at school; it is also important how much these languages are valued at home. Literacy is very important for preserving a language, thus support groups could be established for learning certain languages, as these would help the children to acquire the skills of reading and writing in these languages.

8. Comparison of home languages of students from Kohtla-Järve, Maardu and Tallinn

The students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school, involved in the study from schools of Kohtla-Järve, are from two countries and their parents are from 16 countries. The majority were born in Estonia: as much as 99.5% of the students were born here, 82.63% of mothers and 81.53% fathers were born in Estonia as well. Thus, most of the students in this group are second-generation immigrants. 5 of the students in this group were born in Russia, 130 mothers (12.97%) and 132 fathers (13.17%) were born there as well. The students involved in the study from Maardu Upper Secondary School and also their parents are from 11 countries. Most of the respondents were born in Estonia: 96.6% of the students, 64.9% of the fathers and 60.5% of the mothers. Thus, most of the students in this group, like in

the Kohtla-Järve group, are second-generation immigrants. When comparing the data from a similar home language study involving students in Tallinn (see Rannut, M., Rannut, Ü. 2007), it can be seen that the students in Tallinn are from many more different countries – 28 in total – and their parents are from 52 countries. 97% of the students, 83% of the mothers and 81% of the fathers were born in Estonia. Tallinn is the largest city in Estonia and also the city with the most languages; also, the number of respondents in Tallinn is higher. At the same time, the labour market in Tallinn is wider, attracting foreigners into Tallinn, with home languages differing from the local language.

Similar to the students attending Russian-speaking schools in Kohtla-Järve, the dominant home language of the students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school, attending Maardu Upper Secondary School, is Russian – this is so for 91.5% of the respondent students; 8.5% of the students have a second home language as something else than Russian. Such second languages were Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Tatar and Estonian, but the main language was still Russian. 3.9% of the students considered Ukrainian to be their second home language. 9 mothers and 1 father used Ukrainian as their home language, but as a second language, while the main language was still Russian. When comparing the home language data of the students from the schools of Kohtla-Järve and Maardu to the home language data of the Tallinn students of the same age, it was found that the latter considered a total of as much as 22 languages to be their home languages; according to the data of the Statistical Office, this is 20% of the total number of languages spoken in Estonia. 2% of the respondent students from Tallinn consider other languages to be their home languages: Ukrainian, Azerbaijan, English, Byelorussian, Finnish, Italian, Spanish, French, Romanian, Turkish, Bashkir, Georgian, Hebrew, Korean, Hungarian, Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Portuguese and sign language. Still, the majority of people in Tallinn are using Estonian and Russian as their home languages.

In case of students from Tallinn, English was stated as a home language as well. There were no such cases from Kohtla-Järve or Maardu, although the father of one of the students there was from Denmark, three fathers had ethnic roots in Finland and one in Italy. Still, English was not used much as a single home language in Tallinn either (3 students), but a parallel pair of English and some other language as home languages was more common. English was used as a home language if the parents were from different countries. Usually, English was used at home if neither of the parents was born in Estonia, but there were also cases of both parents being from Estonia but still using English as a home language. The reason for this is the high status of the English language in the world – the parents wish their child to learn this language. For the most part, the use of English as a home language was not related to the origins of the children or to the native languages of the parents.

In Tallinn, only 7% of the parents from Ukraine used Ukrainian at home; the rest of them used Russian as their home language. Similar to Kohtla-Järve and Maardu, this shows a marked loss of language and a strong relation with mixed

marriages. In case of families from Azerbaijan having come to live in Tallinn, 30 parents of the total 43 were using the Azerbaijan language when communicating with the child at home (in 10% of the families as the first language and in 17% of the families as the second language); this is a rather large share, especially taking into account the fact that according to the data of the Statistical Office (2000), the Azerbaijan people do not have nearly as large a community in Estonia as the Ukrainians. Regardless of this, the Azerbaijan people have preserved their language remarkably better than the Ukrainians. One of the reasons for this can be the trend of foreign immigrants to settle mainly in the capital city; for example, immigrants from Denmark, Sweden and several other countries are living in Tallinn besides the Azerbaijan people. Usually, recent immigrants value their language more. Still, like in Kohtla-Järve and Maardu, the dominant home language in Tallinn is Russian, used by 61% of the students in mixed families as the first home language and by 27% of the students as a second home language (Rannut, M., Rannut, Ü. 2007).

The students attending Russian-speaking schools in Kohtla-Järve were using only Russian when communicating with their grandparents. 146 students attending Estonian-speaking schools used Estonian when communicating with the grandparents from the mother's side, 66 students were using Russian and 16 students were using both Estonian and Russian with them. 150 students were using the Estonian language with the grandparents from the father's side, 60 students were using Russian and 18 students were using both Estonian and Russian. Estonian was the communication language if the grandparents were Estonian. The respondent students from Maardu also spoke Russian with their grandparents. The students having grandparents with Estonian background spoke a mixed language of Estonian and Russian with them. One of the respondent students from Maardu also used Lithuanian when communicating with the grandparents and one student used the Tatar language for this. When comparing language use across generations, it can be seen that the use of Ukrainian is diminishing with each generation. This shows that the loss of language has taken place already in an earlier generation. When comparing the loss of language across generations, it can be seen that 80% of the grandparents of the students in Tallinn used the Russian language when communicating with their grandchildren.

In case of all three cities it can be seen that the loss of language has taken place already in the previous generation or the emigration has taken place from the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine and Belarus.

9. Summary

When summarising the results of the study, the following important conclusions can be made. In the case of schools in Kohtla-Järve, the dominating home language of students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school is Russian (80.74% of the students). There are students with the Russian home language even in Estonian-

speaking schools (these are families with a Russian background, where the parents have put their children into an Estonian school). The group involved in the study there used no other home languages than Russian and Estonian. Estonian or Russian was used as a second home language also in families with one Estonian parent.

The selection of a home language was not dependent on the birth country of the students or their parents. The parents of most of the students were born in Estonia (99.5% of the students, 82.63% of the mothers and 81.53% of the fathers); the second largest birth country was Russia (0.5% of the students, 12.37% of the mothers and 13.17% of the fathers were born there). Also, relatively large groups were made up of parents having been born in Ukraine (15 mothers, 16 fathers) and in Belarus (13 mothers, 17 fathers). In their case, too, the home language was Russian; this shows either the loss of language or an emigration from Russian-speaking regions.

Russian and Estonian were also used when communicating with grandparents. Only the Russian language was also used in case of parents having been born in Ukraine and Belarus or in other countries. The loss of language had taken place already in an earlier generation. As the languages of the origin countries are vanishing in Kohtla-Järve, it may be necessary to establish learning groups or classes for these languages, because valuing a minority language and culture also creates a stronger basis for people to establish a positive attitude towards themselves.

The skills regarding home language depended on whether the students were attending an Estonian or a Russian school. Some of the students with a Russian background, attending an Estonian-speaking school, had difficulties with reading and writing in Russian. The reading and writing skills are directly dependent on whether the home language is used in the school (as education language or at least as a voluntary subject); it is also important how much the native language is valued at home. Literacy has an important role in preserving a language and thus the students should learn to read and write in their home language as well.

When comparing the home language selection of the students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school, attending schools in Kohtla-Järve, to the home language selection of the Tallinn students of the same age, it can be seen that in Tallinn, too, the Estonian and Russian languages are mostly dominating. English has become a popular home language, but this is mainly used if one or both parents are speaking English; in a few cases this is also used when both parents are from Estonia. All other languages tend to vanish and be assimilated into Russian. 2% of the students consider other languages besides Russian and Estonian to be their home language.

In case of the students in the 2nd to the 5th year of basic school, attending Maardu Upper Secondary School, the dominating language is Russian – this is so for 91.5% (162 students); 8.5% of the students have a second home language besides Russian. The main languages used as the second home language besides Russian were Estonian (3.4%, i.e. 6 students), Ukrainian (3.9%, i.e. 7 students), Lithuanian (0.6%, i.e. 1 student) and Tatar (also 0.6%, i.e. 1 student).

The respondent parents of Maardu would not put the children into a school where education would take place only in the language of their own nationality.

Still, some of them had the opinion that if the children wish, they could learn their origin language in their current school as a voluntary subject. Other reasons included the statement that children need to know their own roots in order to have an identity. Also, an opinion was expressed that knowing one's own language and culture helps the child to grow into a more cultural person.

10. Conclusion

Although the Estonian language is the only official language in the Republic of Estonia, it has not become a dominant one in the regions with a large percentage of immigrants; on the contrary – Russian is the most used language there. This is especially notable in case of students attending Russian-speaking schools: Russian is mainly used for communication both at home and outside. Many students cope without the Estonian language as well. Estonian is taught as a separate subject in Russian-speaking schools, but some students never use Estonian in communication; this way, the learned language is quickly forgotten and the language skills are unsatisfactory. Often there is no need to use the Estonian language because Estonians are a minority in these regions. Estonia should protect and encourage languages used by smaller group of speakers. No other languages besides Estonian and Russian are used as home languages. The smaller languages seem to be vanishing, especially in regions with a high percentage of immigrants. These languages are becoming assimilated into the Russian-speaking community; they are not used in communication. Thus, to avoid the continuing advance of the Russian language, attention should be paid to small languages and to the people speaking them; minority groups' needs of languages and education should be considered. This should be reflected in the language policy of Estonia.

This study allows us to move from the familiar picture of a society with two dominant language groups to a deeper view of the unnoticed ethnic groups and languages and to monitor their development. Generally, as can be seen, the birth country does not determine the used language; the language is chosen on the basis of several other factors.

The size of the language group is not specifically the dimension of vitality of a language; the important factors are also the status of the language, the effect of mixed marriages on the language choice, etc. In the case of small language groups, the determining factor is the attitude of the people speaking their native languages toward these languages. Overall, though, there is still a dominating trend of assimilating minority languages into Russian.

At the same time, the variations within a language group cannot be left unnoticed either – some of the minority nationalities are increasingly valuing their ethnic origins and are trying to convey their knowledge to their children as well, thus caring for the continuity and vitality of their language. The state institutions and the order of language teaching should take this into account.

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