

TARTU UNIVERSITY NARVA COLLEGE

DIVISION of FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Ljubov Nikonova

THE LANGUAGE IMMERSION IN ESTONIA: A COPY OF THE  
CANADIAN MODEL OR ONE OF ITS OWN KIND?

*Bachelor's thesis*

Supervisor: Anna Golubeva, MA

NARVA 2013

## **PREFACE**

Learning other languages is very important nowadays. Majority of the whole population is multilingual. And most people use at least two languages in their everyday life. The Estonian society is even more than bilingual - trilingual, which is obviously more desirable and better. Thinking about the other countries, there is no other country with about 40% of the whole population who do not speak the official language of this country. And only a few countries are trilingual, like for example Switzerland or Belgium. The issues with the Estonian-Russian community appeared when Russian-speaking people could not be fully integrated into the Estonian-speaking society. The main reason for that was the Russian's minority poor knowledge of the state language. In order to help improve the situation the language immersion programme was launched in Estonia at the end of the 1990s.

The topic of the present Bachelor's thesis is "The Language Immersion in Estonia: a Copy of the Canadian Model or One of its Own Kind?" This thesis is based on the comparative analysis of both language immersion models. The goal of this thesis is to examine and compare the Estonian and Canadian language immersion programmes, and analyze the differences and similarities between them.

The thesis consists of the following parts: the Introduction, two core chapters, and the Conclusion. The Introduction provides a general overview of the subject of study. It gives the definition of the key term - language immersion, the aim of this programme and the hypothesis of the thesis. The theoretical part focuses on the necessity for language immersion, brief history of the Canadian model. It also provides an overview of the sources on the topic. The practical part analyses the Canadian and Estonian language immersion programmes in terms of the chosen criteria for models, describes the Canadian language immersion model and analyses its relevance in Estonia. The Conclusion reflects the results of the main points discussed throughout the paper and gives a summary of the comparative analysis in view of the proposed hypothesis.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language immersion is an approach to foreign language instruction in which the usual curricular activities are conducted in a foreign language. This means that the new language is the medium of instruction as well as the object of instruction. Immersion students acquire the necessary language skills to understand and communicate on the subject matter set out in the school's programme of instruction. They follow the same curricula, and in some instances, use the same materials (translated into the target language) as those used in the non-immersion schools of their district. (Bostwick 2001)

Language immersion is thought to be the most successful of several programme types that teach languages other than students' native language. (Potowski 2007: 1)

First of all, it is necessary to give the definition to the term of language immersion. So, what is language immersion? Language immersion is a special government programme, with help of which foreign language is used as the language of instruction in schools. It is also necessary to differentiate immersion from other types of bilingual education programmes. The nature of language immersion is the following:

- 1) In the language immersion programme, at least 50% of the subjects are taught in a language other than the students' native language;
- 2) One teacher - one language;
- 3) Integrated and cooperative study:
  - a) language study is supported in all the subject classes;
  - b) extensive use is made of topic and project study;
  - c) the acquisition of the subject material (for example geography, history) is supported in language classes;
  - d) the principle of mutual enrichment is important in the instruction;
  - e) constant feedback on learning as a process. (Mehisto 2006)

What are the purposes and aims of language immersion in school? Why is it so important?

Immersion programmes are the fastest growing and most effective type of foreign language programme currently available in Estonia. Most immersion students can be expected to reach higher levels of second language proficiency than students in other school-based language programmes. Becoming bilingual opens the door to communication

with more people in more places, and many parents want to provide their children with the skills to interact competently in an increasingly interdependent world community.

In addition to reaping the social and economic advantages of bilingualism, immersion learners benefit cognitively, exhibiting greater nonverbal problem-solving abilities and more flexible thinking. (Met 1998)

It has been suggested that the very processes learners need to use to make sense of the teacher's meaning make them pay closer attention and think harder. These processes, in turn, appear to have a positive effect on cognitive development. However, a high level of second language proficiency is needed in order to experience the positive cognitive benefits that come with bilingualism. (Cummins 1981)

The major aim of language immersion programme for children is to experience themselves in other language, learn to communicate socially, be effectively acquired through the regular usage of it. This programme is made for bilingual and trilingual communities, just like Canadian-French experience, and Estonian-Russian society. The second case for language immersion programme gives the article "*Ten Years With Language Immersion Program*" (2010). According to this article the aim of language immersion is : "...to bond, inspire, achieve and draw conclusions."

The reason why I have chosen this particular topic is that language immersion in Estonia seems to be the most successful and rapidly growing programme hypothetically based on the Canadian model. Estonian language immersion programme showed the best results of second language immersion programmes not only in Canada, but in USA and Europe, that is why this programme is so widespread and popular nowadays. And the aim of this paper is to find out, does the language immersion programme in Estonia uses the copy of Canadian model or its own kind .

The hypothesis of this paper is :

- Estonia has selected to implement its language immersion programme by adapting the Canadian model.

In order to verify the hypothesis, the research was conducted and three main criteria were chosen: curriculum, basic principles and students' results. They are not the only ones to describe language immersion programme fully, but I have chosen these particular criteria

to give to provide the reader with a better understanding of common and different features between Estonian and Canadian models of language immersion.

## **CHAPTER I. ANALYSIS OF THE CANADIAN LANGUAGE IMMERSION MODEL**

### **1.1 History of the Canadian Language Immersion Experience**

Before discussion about Canadian model of language immersion, I should start with describing the necessity of language immersion programme to Canadian schools. As Fred (1998: 244) writes about necessity of this language programme, :”French is the only official language of province Quebec itself while English and French are official languages of Canada.” It can be said that it all started because of French influence on this particular province, so for economic survival it was necessary to improve the level of proficiency in spoken French.

Canadian immersion programmes were established in the 1960s under middle- and upper-middle-class parental pressure for more effective French language education. (Genesee 1987) By the mid-1960s, it was already becoming apparent to the English-speaking population of the Canadian province of Quebec that economic survival there would require high levels of proficiency in French. French was (and still is) Quebec’s official language, and the language spoken by the majority of its population. However, large enclaves of English speakers knew little of the language. Many had studied French in school, but the small amounts provided and the focus on grammar, memorization, and drill had not provided them with sufficient skills to work in French, or to socialize with French speakers.

This was the situation that prompted a group of parents in St. Lambert, Quebec to lobby their school board for improvements to the teaching of French as a second language (FSL). These parents read accounts of different forms of bilingual education that might serve as alternatives to what was being offered to their children, and consulted with scholars in bilingualism at McGill University. (Johnson, Swain 1997: 2)

At that time, Quebec was experiencing ethno-linguistic tensions as Francophones began making demands for linguistic and cultural equality (Genesee 1987: 8), and French immersion sought to promote “a more fair and a more interesting society...for all ethno linguistic groups in the Canadian mosaic” (Lambert 1984) . As a result, they proposed to their school board a radical departure from any existing FSL programme in Canada: a

programme in which, from the first day of school in kindergarten, their unilingual English-speaking children would be instructed entirely in French. Thus the children first learned to read in French, and only later, in grade 2, were first language literacy skills introduced into the curriculum. Other subjects were also introduced in English in later grades, so that by grade 6 about half the curriculum was taught in English and half in French. This programme was labeled by the parents and school board as an immersion programme. (Johnson, Swain 1997: 2)

These were soon followed in the 1970s by similar programmes in the United States. Research in both The United States and Canada over the last three decades has indicated that immersion results in the highest levels of all elementary foreign language programmes. Additionally, immersion students often develop more positive sociocultural attitudes towards native speakers. (Potowski 2007: 1)

What was the difference between second language teaching and language immersion programme in Canada? Before this Canadian language immersion programme was established, second language instructions in schools were limited and were dedicated to particular areas of study and were focused on increasing vocabulary of students, not on their assimilation into other society. Language immersion programme gave an opportunity to use the other language as much as the native language, and be socialized in the other society feeling comfortable. Using Fred Genesee words (1998: 243): “By integrating second language learning with academic instruction, it was expected that students would learn the target language in much the same way that children learn their first language-to communicate with other about meaningful and important events in their lives. Thus, in contrast to conventional second language methodology, teaching second languages in immersion programmes is incidental to teaching regular academic subject matter, and language learning is incidental to learning the academic material that is necessary to succeed in school.”

In this case, regular second language learning is focused on teaching language as an independent subject, just like chemistry or math. But language immersion programme gives an opportunity to experience subject through the language. Here is the most important difference between language learning programmes and language immersion programmes.



## 1.2 Programme Features in Terms of the Chosen Criteria

Talking about curriculum for language immersion in Canada, it should be said that the whole school programme was changed. It was necessary to create special essential conditions to enhance language learning in immersion classrooms. All the factors were reviewed to let children assimilate in a natural way. The most important thing for a teacher is to use the language of instructions, other than native, in that way, so all the students stayed motivated.

Children need to view the immersion language as a valuable communication tool for expressing ideas and feelings on a wide variety of subjects. Consequently, the learners must be surrounded by the language, and involved in tasks that are meaningful and relevant to them. Keeping curriculum objectives in mind, it is also vital to allow students to regularly guide the teacher in identifying the language they wish to acquire. This will motivate students and contribute significantly to an incidental, effective and much more natural acquisition of language.

An immersion teacher must remember that all curriculum disciplines help children acquire language skills and that these need to be applied in context so that they may be seen as meaningful. Lessons should focus primarily on non-language concepts which, conversely, provide meaningful contexts for the instruction of language skills. When students are interested in a topic of study, they will learn to manipulate the language incidentally to suit their immediate needs. The purpose and the audience will naturally dictate the form that the language will take. Nonetheless, within integrated units, teachers must clearly set goals for content and language, as well as for general cognitive skills. The expectations of each activity must be clearly articulated at the outset and the teaching and learning strategies must be closely connected to the selected assessment methods. (Immersion Handbook 2005: 139)

So, immersion programme in Canada already was presented from the early stages of studying. According the Fred Genesee (1983: 7), : "...it is common in kindergarten and the early part of first grade to hear students using English while the teacher uses French. However, as children progress through the grades, they are encouraged to use more French with teachers and peers. Initial literacy instruction is in French, and English literacy skills

are typically introduced in second grade. Subject taught in English are added in later grades, so that by sixth grade about half the curriculum is in English and half in French”.

From that example it is clear that from the early grades study process is conducted with French, as the language of instruction, and after assimilating into new conditions, students step by step learn to use two languages. By adding subjects in native language later than in other languages teachers give the opportunity for children to get used to other language and society, so by the time when half the curriculum is held in their native language, they already use the second language as their mother tongue.

Equal status is given to both languages within the curriculum, as well as within the classroom and school environment. (Baker 1996) It also means that the programme parallels the curriculum of the local curriculum.

According to Baker (1996) basic principles in Canadian language immersion programme were the following: “Two way bilingual schools aim to produce bilingual, biliterate and multicultural children. As such, two-way immersion programmes work towards academic, language and affective goals. Programme goals include:

- the development of high levels of proficiency in students' first language;
- the development of high levels of proficiency in a second language;
- academic performance at or above grade level in both languages;
- the development of positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors;
- the development of high levels of psycho social competence.”

First of all, Canadian Model of language immersion programme was spread outside Canada, which shows that its results were successful.

During the past decade, numerous reports and statistics have revealed that two-way immersion is effective not only in the teaching of languages, but also in the development of academic excellence and superior socio-cultural awareness. Results from research indicate that these benefits extend to both language groups and to all students in two-way programmes. (Genesee 1994: 11)

A growing body of research on immersion education has shown that immersion students consistently meet or exceed academic expectations in the following areas:

- Foreign language skills: Immersion students by far outperform students in traditional foreign language classes. Although students usually do not become "native-like" in the foreign language, they do become functionally proficient in the immersion language and are able to communicate according to their age and grade level.
- First language skills: In the early years of first language instruction, there may be a lag in first language reading and writing skills. By the end of elementary school, however, immersion students do as well or better than students in "first language-only" classes.
- Content areas: Immersion students achieve in academic areas as well as students in "first language-only" programmes.
- Cultural sensitivity: Immersion students are more aware of and show positive attitudes towards other cultures. (Bostwick 2001)

Important observations of language immersion students were made by Collin Baker (1993). He paid attention to such important aspects as

- Early immersion students "lag behind" their monolingual peers in literacy (reading, spelling, and punctuation) "for the first few years only". However, after the first few years, the immersion students catch up with their peers.
- Immersion programmes have no negative effects on spoken skills in the first language.
- Early immersion students acquire almost-native-like proficiency in passive skill (listening and reading) comprehension of the second language by the age of 11, but they don't reach the same level in reading and writing because they have enough level to communicate with their teachers. Also, if they communicate only with their teachers, they don't learn the skills to hold day-to-day conversations.
- Early immersion students are more successful in listening and reading proficiency than partial and late immersion students.
- Immersion programmes have no negative effects on the cognitive development of the students.

- Monolingual peers perform better in sciences and math at an early age, however immersion students eventually catch up with, and in some cases, outperform their monolingual peers.
- Studies have also shown that students in dual programmes have "more positive attitudes towards bilingualism and multiculturalism."

Analyzing Canadian Model, I found out that a lot of changes were made to establish a new language learning system. And this system has proven to be a highly successful model of language immersion education in terms of linguistic, social skills and assimilation. Not a surprise that right after Canadian "success", this language immersion programme was used outside Canada. All these results together show, that Canadian Model became the most important and grown one. The curriculum in language immersion programme goes parallel with the local school curriculum, basic principles of this programme were fully completed by producing the new bilingual society and all the conditions were made for better learning show development in high levels of proficiency in native, as well as in second language.

### **1.3 Influence on the USA and Europe**

After Canadian "success" on the field of education, the second country that adopted this programme was the United States of America.

According to a 2003 survey by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), there are over 400 schools in 27 states that offer total, partial or two-way immersion programmes in 11 different languages. In addition to the USA, language immersion (usually based on the Canadian model) has spread to Australia, South Korea, Finland, Hungary, Hawaii, Spain, South Africa, Hong Kong and Japan. In Australia, for example, immersion programmes are offered in French, German, Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese. (Bostwick 2001)

The results and reports from various studies in the United States demonstrate that two-way immersion can be an effective model for teaching other languages to English-speaking students, for teaching English to students from other language backgrounds, for teaching academic subjects, and for fostering positive cross-cultural attitudes and self-

esteem among students. In contexts where the community demographics are suitable and where there is good support for such a programme at the school and community level, clearly, the two-way model represents an attractive alternative to conventional models of bilingual education. With respect to the suitability of community demographics, the interest and support of parents for developing more effective bilingual education programmes, and most importantly, the availability of committed and suitably trained teachers, Quebec presents an ideal context for the implementation of two-way immersion programmes. (Montreal Magazine, 1999: A1, A10)

In the United States, and since the 1980s, dual immersion programmes have grown for a number of reasons: competition in a global economy, a growing population of second language learners, and the successes of previous programmes. Language immersion classes can now be found throughout the US, in urban and suburban areas, in dual-immersion and single language immersion, and in an array of languages. As of May 2005, there were 317 dual immersion programmes in US elementary schools, providing instructions in 10 languages, and 96% of programmes were in Spanish. (Potowski 2007: 10)

According to these reviews, Canada has been the source of inspiration for other countries. In this case, all education programmes changed in terms of Canadian experience and developed in its context, getting new features and the core of immersion. In many countries where Canadian Model was established French was not spoken by the community, and because of that French was replaced with the second language of this country, other than native. So, using Canadian language immersion programme, different countries changed only the language of instruction, creating prototypical programmes. Prototypical immersion programme differs from the original Canadian Model only by social context, curriculum, pedagogy, characteristics of teachers and students, and, of course, implements of these features.

In this case, “Immersion programmes vary in a number of ways from each other. These include the educational level which is introduced, and extent, which is used, the continuity of the programme from level to level within the educational system, the bridging support provided for students moving to medium level instruction, attitudes towards the culture, the status, and what in different contexts count as success.” (Johnson 1997: 15)

Focusing of Canadian Model and its influence on Europe, a lot of European countries can be highlighted, as well as my home country-Estonia.

The volume *“Ten Years With Language Immersion Programme”* (2010: 33) gives a look at other countries in Europe, which use the same Canadian Experience, adopting and improving it in their own context. The nearest country to Estonia - Finland has been using language immersion programme during many years and is quite successful in terms of teaching Estonian colleagues: “Alongside our Canadian colleagues, it has been our Finnish colleagues who have taught us the most...their cheerful teachers and school administrators have always shared their experiences with us and made useful suggestions.”

According to this volume, such countries as Latvia and Poland also shared their experience with Estonia: “Our Latvian colleagues have introduced a bilingual study and teaching model that is used to prepare basic school graduates for Latvian language instruction at the upper secondary school level. The experiences of our Latvian colleagues and the results of the first state examinations confirm the strengths of language immersion and its importance in the diversified development of children.” As well as Poland experience gave Estonia an opportunity to promote multiculturalism: “Poland’s educational policy supports the diversity of cultural and religious beliefs and education is free of charge for refugee and children of immigrants in difficult situation. The systematic approach to the promotion of multiculturalism, support for foreign and first language learning, taking into consideration the multicultural situation in schools and school democracy as a way to acquire civic education were very impressive.”

To conclude, Canadian Model became the most powerful and successful not only inside Canada, but it made the particular influence on the Unites States and Europe. A lot of different school systems were changed in terms of new features. Using Canadian Model as a base, most of the schools got the successful results. Teachers had to be more qualified, which also had a positive input. And all schools together can improve the system, because during the usage of Canadian Model, different contexts influenced the basic programme.

## CHAPTER II. ANALYSIS OF THE ESTONIAN LANGUAGE IMMERSION MODEL

### 2.1 The Canadian-Estonian Joint Project

The whole society in Estonia can be divided into Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking people. To help Russian-speaking people assimilate into the Estonian society there are Estonian language lessons in school. Before language immersion programme, in schools Estonian language was given as a separate subject-second language, but with growing popularity of language immersion programme Estonian language became the language of instruction from the early immersion to the later immersion.

“Estonia is one of the few European Union member states whose education system includes publicly financed schools that provide an education in languages other than the official state language. Russian-language education is available in public and private schools at all levels – preschool, basic, and secondary – as well as in vocational schools and in some higher education institutions. About 20% of all schoolchildren in Estonia attend Russian-language basic and secondary schools between the ages of 7 and 19. Basic school education (grades 1-9) is mandatory and the language of instruction in these schools is determined by their owners, usually the municipal government.

At the secondary education level (grades 10-12, which are not mandatory) the language of instruction is defined by the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act.”(Official Estonian web magazine, 10 may 2013)

Statistics indicate that only 19% of non-Estonians declare their mother tongue to be Russian. Recent ”Euro barometer” surveys show that the number of residents of Estonia who state Russian to be their mother tongue has decreased by 14%. Canada has pro-actively supported the training of primary and secondary school teachers (many of whom are ethnically Russian) to teach Estonian to non-Estonian children using language immersion programmes. Language immersion techniques and skills have a long and successful history in Canada. ( Article in “*Estonia World Review*”, September 2005)

Focusing on volume “*Ten Years With Language Immersion Programme*” (2010: 12), can be claimed that the main activities in the Estonian language immersion programme

began in 1998, so the first language immersion classes were established already at the beginning of the 2000s.

The Integration Foundation's language immersion centre was in charge of the development, implementation and dissemination of language immersion methods from 2 October 2000 to 31 December 2008. Awareness of the broader background of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has meant a rise in the importance of language immersion solutions. Since 2009, the development of language immersion programme activities has been one of the functions of the foundation's multicultural education unit."

For the Estonian model of language immersion the Canadian experience was necessary. Just like the United States and Poland, Estonia started to use the Canadian model of language immersion, only in its own context. Estonian-Canadian partnership influenced the creation of a special language learning system based on the Canadian programme. From the same volume "*Ten Years With Language Immersion Programme*"(2010: 15), can be highlighted such processes like the Estonian-Canadian project. What started as an Estonian-Canadian project has evolved into a programme with a definite and particular place in the Estonian educational system: Content and Language Integrated Learning and language immersion are terms used in state curricula and can be treated not only in the context of Estonian but of other possible languages as well. Many of the provisions in preschool children's institutions and updated state primary school curricula contain aspects familiar from the language immersion programme. Integration of subjects (or "field" in the case of nursery school), targeted support for coping with educational requirements, taking into consideration various learning styles, formative assessment etc. Foreign experts have acknowledged the well-thought-out development of the programme and the collaboration between different levels of cooperation (ministries, local government agencies, educational institutions, management and boards of educational institutions, teams of institutions which also include a parent and teacher of conventional classes).

Along the development of the Estonian language immersion programme, raised the necessity of improving it with different sources and qualified teachers, so at the end it evolved into the independent programme with its own features, goals and usage. Estonian language immersion programme, built on the Canadian model became a well-developed and popular programme nowadays. But it is not only about teaching and learning a



language. This programme also included other values, like: "...caring-caring for children, teachers and each other."

This has been so since the earliest days of the programme's development. The role model of the personnel from the language immersion centre was influential. Now everyone contributes to keeping the feeling of cohesion high; it is spread from the more senior language immersion personnel to new ones, the warmth helps attract new partners to us as well. Children have a more trusting relationship with their teachers; there are more contacts with the local community, as well as with Estonia; and already in nursery school children are more self-confident when it comes to interacting with strangers in Estonia. (*Ten Years With Language Immersion Programme*, 2010: 16)

According the same volume "*Ten Years With Language Immersion Programme*", (2010: 18): "Language immersion has many faces in the agencies that play a part in the language immersion programme and a different role in the development of the nursery school or school. In our 2009-2013 strategy, we have put priority on programme enlargement and quality-language immersion is a widespread method of CLIL in Estonia."

After all the Estonian government decided to transit Russian schools to Estonian ones and in the year of 2011/2012 Estonian language was claimed as the language of instructions in secondary school. From that year Russian schools ought to transit their education system into partial Estonian instructions. Official web magazine *Estonia.eu* (accessed on May 2013) states: "The act stipulates that the language of instruction is to be Estonian for at least 60% of studies in all public schools, including those that once taught only in Russian." The other 40% of the curriculum can be taught in another language chosen by the school, for example Russian or the language of the school minority.

The goal of transitioning to Estonian as a language of instruction for secondary education is to encourage all students to practice the Estonian language in different linguistic situations, helping to ensure that they will have equal opportunities to obtain higher education, participate in society, and be successful in the labor market. It is also an important means of integration that can increase the cohesion of society.

Focusing on the Estonian language immersion programme, it can be said, that by now this programme is still developing and improving. It started with Canadian success and support and became an independent system which helps Russian-speaking people to assimilate easier in the Estonian society.

## 2.2 Language Immersion in Estonia

The Estonian language immersion system is divided into early and late language immersion: in the first case, children start with their language immersion in kindergarten or the first year of school and continue until their graduation of secondary school; in the second case, language immersion classes are taught in years 6-9. (Belova Svetlana, Hirmo, Meelika 2012)

To help Russian-speaking children feel comfortable in Estonian-speaking community, Estonian language immersion centre offers many opportunities. There are special programmes for different groups of people-for early immersion, later immersion and for children who have never been immersed into the Estonian language.

As for the curriculum of such programmes - they are going parallel with the regular school curricula, what means that Estonian is just the language of instructions for usual subjects. Even ten years ago all schools were divided into Russian and Estonian schools, but nowadays, thanks to the Estonian language immersion programme, most schools and kindergartens started intensive early immersion into Estonian language, which gave a positive feedback to the development of CLIL. Today, no matter what the subject taught in class, the main language of instructions is Estonian, which gives children an opportunity for a better and faster assimilation into the Estonian society. But not only teachers are interested in this programme, parent are very motivated for their children to be multilingual and multicultural.

Estonian Ministry of Education and Research gave the definition for the language immersion in Estonia: "Language immersion is a form of studies that is being implemented as a national programme in Estonia for better acquisition of Estonian as the second language." Today almost half of non-Estonian schools and kindergartens apply language immersion methods. The amount of instruction in Estonian language is about, and in some schools even more than 50 percent of the total study. Estonian is used in studying different subjects, taking part in different exercises in kindergartens. The aim of the language programme is in acquiring equally good skills in native language and Estonian.

Research has verified the hypothesis that children will successfully acquire the knowledge and skills set in the national curriculum, their proficiency in their native language is equal to their contemporaries studying according to the Russian-language

syllabus and they speak Estonian at a very good level. It has also been proved that the programme has not become elitist and pupils who succeed in traditional programmes will also achieve good results in language immersion classes. Active parents all over Estonia have formed the Parents Association of Language Immersion Programme to express their opinions in the issues of language immersion, teaching the Estonian language and other educational matters. About 30 parents all over Estonia decided to come together in autumn 2004 and discuss their children's opportunities of studying Estonian. Thus it was decided to form a parents' association with the objective of supporting the spread of language immersion programmes in Estonia. (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research centre, 2012)

Basic principles and goals of Estonian language immersion programme are the following:

- age-appropriate levels of native language competence in reading, writing, speaking, and listening;
- advanced levels of functional proficiency in second language reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension;
- grade-appropriate levels of academic achievement in non-language school subjects, such as mathematics and science; and
- an understanding and appreciation of the culture of the home language group and that of the second language group.

Immersion programmes are a form of additive bilingual education because they aim for functional proficiency in both the student's native and second languages and, in some cases, a third language. The most distinctive feature of immersion programmes is the use of the second language to teach regular academic subjects, such as mathematics and science. Immersion students are expected to achieve the same levels of achievement in these subjects as students learning through the medium of their native language at the same time as they acquire advanced levels of functional proficiency in the second language. The rationale behind immersion programmes is linked to research on first language acquisition. All children, with a few exceptions, acquire proficiency in at least one language without formal, direct instruction. Children acquire their native language naturally and relatively

easily because it is used for sustained and meaningful communication with others. Immersion programmes seek to create in school the same conditions that are associated with native language acquisition; namely, social environments in which the individual is motivated to learn the second language in order to communicate with significant others about meaningful and important matters. (Genesee 1998: 243-258).

According to Baker (1996) basic principles in Estonian language immersion programme are more or less connected with Canadian model's basic principles, which were:"

- the development of high levels of proficiency in students' first language;
- the development of high levels of proficiency in a second language;
- academic performance at or above grade level in both languages;
- the development of positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors;
- the development of high levels of psycho social competence."

Early immersion just like in Canada, begins in kindergarten or at least at the first grade of school. And as Canadian experience, the language of instructions is second language, in our case-Estonian. "Early immersion programmes begin in kindergarten or grade 1, when the students are about 5 years of age...the most common type of programme in Canada. In early total immersion programmes, the second language is used as the medium of ALL instruction during the first three or four grades; the exact number of grades during which the second language is used exclusively varies among school districts." The native language of students is introduced as a medium language of instruction in some schools in second grade and, in other schools, until fourth grade, or even later. In successively higher grades, the native language is used to teach some academic subjects, such as mathematics and science. The same subjects are never taught during the same year in both languages. The use of the native language in the final grades of the programme varies from as little as 20% of total instructional time to 60% or 70%, depending on the school. As much as possible, different teachers are used for teaching through the native language and second language, and the teachers who teach in the second language have native or native-like proficiency in the target language. Immersion teachers often present themselves as monolinguals; this is done in order to encourage the students to use the second language as much as possible. (Immersion handbook, 2005: 11)

Opposite to the early immersion programme, there is also later immersion programme for children at the age of 12. Some teachers thought that earlier immersion is better, so there was a hypothesis that later immersion is less effective and takes more time for children to assimilate into another society. And, in spite of all doubts about later immersion, it was decided to try this programme as well, and the results were totally different from what teachers were expecting, and: "There has been no evidence that the native language skills of students participating in late immersion programmes suffer – late immersion students demonstrate the same levels of native language ability in reading, writing, speaking, and listening as native language Control students in native language schools."(Immersion handbook 2005: 19)

According the book "*Ten Years With Language Immersion Programme*"(2010: 54-55) results, that were taken from Estonian schools were quite impressive. The following significant results have been achieved under the leadership of the Language Immersion Centre:

- All the principles and methods applied in the language immersion programme are nowadays widespread in Estonia schools and nursery schools
- The history of implementation of the Canadian language immersion programme into the Estonian is considered a successful one, and the learning results of language immersion classes correspond to international experiences
- For language immersion classes have been developed special learning resources
- Training courses and consultations are organizes for educational institutions by The Language Immersion
- Has increased the number of trainers in terms of language immersion programme
- The programme is independently monitored
- Public relations are systematically developed in a goal-oriented manner..."

All these results show the fact that in Estonia Canadian language immersion model deserves its place. More and more schools and nursery schools participate in this immersion programme every year, more and more teachers become better qualified in this field because of trainings and sessions at the programme. Learning books and brochures are

printed every year to attract parents' attention to this particular programme. The possibility of applying language immersion exceptions is set forth in the preschool child care institutions and basic national curricula.

As a result, the system of immersion which was totally new for Estonia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century entered and became an independent language immersion programme. Canadian model of immersion second language was tested with decades and when it was finally successful, it brought an easier way for teachers and students to learn a language other than native. And still, the programme of language immersion in Estonia is gaining momentum rapidly and is expected to be the first and the best language immersion programme in Estonia as well.

To summarize, there are a lot of similarities between Canadian and Estonian models of language immersion, because Estonia, like one of the other countries used Canadian model as a base for creating its own programme. Analyzing these two systems, I found out that, although these programmes had a lot of similarities in the beginning of their cooperation, nowadays Estonia uses its own independent model of language immersion, in terms of context, curricula and linguistics. This programme has found its place in Estonian schools and nursery schools and with the help of this successful system became the base for creating new fresh ideas for learning the language. The great positive feedback brought the cooperation between all participants of the process, if the process is between teacher and student, or between schools, or even between countries.

## CONCLUSION

This present paper shows how the most popular and successful programme of language immersion has been developing during decades and how it influenced other educational systems. Starting from Canada and French immersion experience, the programme which was established in 1960s became the most powerful and modern model in the last fifty years. With its great experience it has shared its influence on United States, and Europe, especially on Estonia and its educational system. Because of Russian-speaking assimilating problem, this Canadian model became the solution for the better and easier integration into the Estonian-speaking society.

Traditional language learning methods were unable to give an opportunity for children to be a part of another society, despite of what nationality you are, but nowadays, Estonian language immersion programme is made in such a way, that students are well motivated for learning a language, other than native, to feel comfortable in another community - Estonian. It can be said that most of the schools and nursery schools in Estonia tend to use the Canadian model of language immersion to attract the attention of government and parents, to get the support from foreign colleagues and to acquire children into Estonian-speaking majority.

The three criteria, which I have chosen to analyze, had a lot in common between the Canadian and Estonian experiences, just like curricula, basic principles and results of taken researches, but in spite of these common features, I claim that Estonia uses its own model of language immersion, according to context of usage, changes in basic Canadian programme and improvements that appeared using this programme.

The aim of this Bachelor thesis was to analyze and examine two models of language immersion - Estonian and Canadian, to find out the differences and similarities between them in order to establish whether Estonia has selected to implement its language immersion programme by adapting the Canadian Model. In the theoretical part of present paper the history of establishing Canadian Model of language immersion was discussed, referring to previous literature available on this topic, and explanations and definitions of some key terms in the topic area. This part of thesis gives the reader a general overview for better understanding what this paper is about.

The second part-part of practice was dedicated to analysis itself in terms of the chosen criteria and also referring to previous literature to confirm the talking point. This analysis showed that the Canadian model, like the most impressive and prosperous that time, was the base for many prototypic language immersion programmes. And Estonia is not excluded. It is a fact, that just like many other countries, Estonia has chosen the Canadian Model of language immersion to integrate minority of Russian-speaking into governmental Estonian society. And it is not a surprise that Estonia also got only positive feedback and advantageous results.

In conclusion, focusing on hypothesis at the beginning of the paper, it seems clear that Estonia has selected to implement its language immersion programme by adapting the Canadian Model, and even more - improving it in terms of its particular needs. Estonia has elected to implement its language immersion programme by adapting the Canadian one to reflect its own particular set of political, social and educational circumstances.

I do not consider this paper to be flawless, so not everything that was planned for this thesis was carried out - language immersion is a huge topic and there was an intention to do a more deep analysis with more criteria. In that case, some information could not have been included. However, this thesis showed that the hypothesis can be confirmed with existing facts, so even though there are some common features between Canadian and Estonian language immersion models, those are minor exceptions to the conclusion that Estonia uses its independent programme of language immersion, just by adapting the Canadian model, and it is proving the initial hypothesis, stated in the Introductory part.



## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Keelekümbelus Eestis on päris uus ja huvitav meetodika. Praegu keelekümbelus koolides on väga efektiivne, aktiivne ja intensiivne meetod eesti keele õpimiseks. Keelekümbelus on ka väga väärtuslik, sest see süvendab võõra keele õppijal oma emakeele taju, teoreetiliselt ja praktiliselt. Mitme keelte valdamine positiivselt mõjub inimeste teadvusele ja maailmapiltile. Praegu Eestis, kus on palju ka venelasi, püüavad tekkida niisugust meetodeid et vene keelte inimesed võivad edukalt voolada sisse eesti ühiskonnasse. Eestis oli praegu teine keelte süsteem, kui eesti keel oli õpetatud nagu eraldiolev aine-nagu inglise või saksa keel, ja selle tõttu inimesed ei oskanud olla hästi integreeritud teises ühiskonnas. Et seda saavutada oli kasutatud Vene koolides niisugune süsteem nagu keelekümbelus, ja algus esimesest klassidest, järk-järgult võttis rohkem kui 60% ainetest eesti keeles.

Käesoleva bakalaureuse töö eesmärgiks oli uurida ja analüüsida erinevused ja sarnased kahe meetodikate vahel-just nimelt Kanada ja Eesti meetodikate vahel ja uurida kas hüpotees, mis oli töö alguses, on õige või vale, aga nimelt “Eesti kasutab keelekümbelus nagu oma meetod, adapteerides Kanada kogemust“

Analüüsivad allikad olid raamatud, ajakirjad ja web resuursid, kus kohas oli kirjutatud palju nii Kanada kogemust, kui ka Eesti uuringutest. Need allikad on kirjutatud kogu maailmast teadlaste abil ja sealt võib uurida palju nimelt sellest teemast. Analüüsi tulemused on näidanud, et hüpotees oli õige ja allikad on ka näidanud, et vaatamata sarnastele selle meetodikate vahel, Eesti praegu kasutas ise oma süsteemi.

Töötades läbi materjali kasutamisest jäi mulle mulje, et peaaegu kõik Euroopa riigid ja Ameerika Ühendriigid eelistavad just Kanada mudelit, nagu edukaim ja positiivste resultaatidega süsteem. Ja just nagu Eesti. Seega oli selle töö kirjutamise peaesmärkideks selgitada välja, milles seisneb Kanada keelekümbeluse mudel, selle efektiivsus, ning uurida, kui tihti ja kui palju koole Eestis kasutavad seda mudelit, ja, loomulikult, saada teada kas Eesti kasutab just Kanada keelekümbeluse süsteemi, või ta tekkis oma ise keelekümbeluse mudelit, kasutades Kanada kogemust.

Kokkuvõtteks tuleb öelda, et kõik need allikad mida ma kasutasin on väga kasulikud selle teema kohta, ja tänan kõikidele teadlastele kes kirjutas sellest teemast enne minu tööd, sest oli väga palju materjale mis kergendas mulle tööd tegema, sest seal oli palju

kasulikke informatsioone, kus kõik oli kirjutatud selgesti ja arusaadavalt. Ja kõik resultaatid on kirjutatud selles töös.

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