

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
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**TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS:
PROGRAMMES, MATERIALS AND TEACHERS**

Master's thesis

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ABSTRACT

*“Those who know nothing of foreign languages,
know nothing of their own.”*

by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

In the light of the current approach that places main emphasis on a possibly early start of the teaching of foreign languages (Harmer, 2008; Cameron, 2001) there can be no doubt about the interest and value of research in the given area. According to *the Good Practice and Main Principles* report of 2006 the European Commission strongly recommends introducing teaching of modern foreign languages to children before formal schooling in the member countries of the European Union (Edelenbos et al, 2006). Early foreign language instruction will undisputedly cause radical changes to such important components of pedagogical practice as curriculum design, teacher training and material development (Brewster et al, 2002; Williams, 2004).

The given master's thesis aims at establishing the present state of the art of teaching English to Young Learners across Europe with the main focus on practising teachers' background, language programmes and resources in use.

The hypothesis of the given research is that the process of teaching English to Young Learners will be more successful if it promotes good practice constituted of effective curriculum, qualified teachers and appropriate language resources.

Thereby, the author of the given paper assumes that an overview of the field studied in this research will, firstly, establish how instruction of English to Young Learners is maintained these days and, secondly, will help identify what can be improved in such domains as language curricula, development of materials and training of pre-and in-service teachers of English in Estonia to ensure success. Hence, this research is undertaken in

order to make an in-depth inquiry in the field regarding how language teaching at early stages can be further improved.

The given research will attempt

- to provide a review of literature related to early language teaching
- to investigate the professional background of current English instructors of Young Learners in four sample countries in Europe;
- to establish what programmes, methods and materials have been in use in teaching English to children aged between five and seven years old from 2006 onwards in six sample schools in the same four countries;
- to administer questionnaire- and interview-based survey to find out about the attitudes and experiences of the teachers and parents in the six sample schools
- to draw links between the established through the research good practice criteria and particular outcomes of the research survey to verify the effectiveness of early English language teaching and to suggest further ways of improvement

The introductory part starts with an overview of how English is recommended to be taught to young speakers of other languages by modern scholars, educationalists and practitioners. The next two chapters discuss how English is being taught to Young Learners in England, Finland, Estonia and Russia on the examples of *St Chad's School* in Lichfield, *Espoo English Playschool* in Helsinki, *International School of Estonia*, *International Kindergarten* and *Helen Doron Early English Centre* in Tallinn and *BKC-International House* in Moscow. Finally, the empirical part of the research explores the views of practitioners on good language teaching practice including programmes, teachers and materials, analyses the survey outcomes by comparing them to the good practice

criteria and, lastly, formulates possible ways of improvement for teaching English to Young Learners.

An action research¹ method with a triangulation² of the quantitative and qualitative data retrieved from a semi-structured interview with language practitioners, two self-completion questionnaires administered for teachers and parents of the sample schools and three contrastive tables with the details of language instruction in the same schools will be applied to present evidence for the validity of the research hypothesis. The results will be thoroughly analysed and conclusions and recommendations made.

Extensive working experience in international schools encouraged the author to undertake this research with a hope to make a considerable contribution to the area of pre-school English teaching in Estonia.

¹action research is a practical approach to professional inquiry in any social situation' by Waters-Adams, 2006 (<http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/actionresearch/arhome.htm>)

² 'triangulation is....used to indicate that more than two methods are used in a study with a view to double checking ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangulation_\(social_science\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangulation_(social_science)))

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

BKC-IH	- BKC-International House
CPH	- Critical Period Hypothesis
DfE	- Department for Education (as from May 12 2010; former DfES)
EAL	- English as an Additional Language
EFL	- English as a Foreign Language
ELT	- English Language Teaching
EMI	- English as the Medium for Instruction
ESL	- English as a Second Language
ESOL	- English for Speakers of Other Languages
HDEE	- Helen Doron Early English
IK	- International Kindergarten (Tallinn)
ISE	- International School of Estonia
KS	- Key Stage
NALDIC	- National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum
OfSTED	- the Office for Standards in Education
PGCE	- Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PYP	- Primary Years Programme
QCDA	- Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency
QTS	- Qualified Teacher Status
SEN	- Special Education Needs
TA	- Teacher Assistant
TDA	- Training and Development Agency for Schools
YL	- Young Learners
ZPD	- Zone of Proximal Development

INTRODUCTION: Background to the Research

To make a professional inquiry in the state of the art of early English instruction some background knowledge of the field is needed. Further, some insights made into advantages of early language instruction, Young Learner's profile, peculiarities of teaching Young Learners and the models developed for teaching English to children on the basis of published literature sources are presented.

Is Younger Better?

Recently more and more education authorities and schools all over the world are encouraged to introduce English at a pre-school level as a consequence of wide-spread beliefs that there are definite advantages of starting foreign language learning as early as possible (Brewster et al, 2002). Masaru Ibuka, the author of '*Kindergarten Is Too Late*', claims that only very Young Learners have a capacity for 'painless' learning of anything including the most difficult skills such as first language acquisition, reading, playing musical instruments, learning foreign languages etc.

Dough-McGlothlin (1997) agrees that children appear to learn new languages effortlessly, almost too easily. He explains this by the similarity of this process to the positive experience of native language acquisition. First, a stress-free environment is naturally created around children; thus, a child is more motivated to 'experiment' with a new language as there is no pressure, no grades and no standards involved. Second, the language input is not sequenced by grammar while there is plenty of repetition of the new words spoken in context around learner. Also the child has a number of opportunities to listen to the often simplified language spoken mainly by native speakers. Therefore, in such the environment, language learning can be naturally ordered and gives the child many opportunities to speak the new language and be understood. Third, language is always of

secondary importance to a child as he uses it to satisfy his primary interests in play and communication. Besides, it is natural for a child to desire to learn new things, to participate actively in the learning process and to experiment with the new language. Finally, the child has no fear of failure. All that creates favourable advantageous conditions for fast and relatively 'easy' language learning for small children.

Another scholar Halliwell (1992:3) points out the well-established set of instincts that helps children excel in language learning: e.g. ability to learn indirectly and use language creatively, capability of interpreting meaning without knowing words through vivid imagination, most importantly a child's urge for real life communication, fun and active participation. All those help a child learn to produce meaningful language quickly, in spite of partial or limited knowledge. 'The child actively tries to make sense of the world [...] also from a very early stage the child has purpose and intentions' (Donaldson, 1978:86 quoted in Cameron, 2001:258).

As far as academic research is concerned, many scholars claim that a healthy baby is already born with an innate language device for language acquisition. During their early development children start experimenting with language by babbling, imitating sounds, saying their first words, sentences and later making their first talks, questions and finally are able to converse in complex sentences by using the language they need for functions (Brewster et al, 2002). All this happens thanks to a child's ability to work out rules, generalise them and finally test them out before starting to use language correctly. Isaacs identified those stages in learning as meeting new language, manipulating new language and making language your own (Curtis, 2002).

Another principal finding for child's early language development was the *critical period hypothesis* introduced by Lennenberg (Singleton, 2007). He argues that the first few years of life are crucial for a child to acquire a first language as there is a close

biological link between the ability to master the language and child's age. What is more, McLaughlin (1992) states that young children can learn a second language particularly effectively before the age of puberty because they can still use the brain mechanism that helped them acquire their first language. Good evidence of that could be a native-like accent of children, who studied English as a second language at a younger age. Nevertheless, an early age is not an automatic advantage as one has to consider other important learning factors such as child's motivation, confidence, personality, differences in first and second languages as well as quality of teaching and provision of adequate time, methods and resources.

Profile of the Young Learner

Given research addresses the aspects of teaching 'Young Learners'. Different scholars provide different age ranges for young children by often differentiating between Young and very Young Learners. Phillips (1993) defines *Young Learners* as children of primary school age from the first year of schooling (five to six years old in the UK) to eleven or twelve years of age. However, in other countries a starting age for formal education is from six to seven years of age to ensure that the two year period (from five to seven) could be used as a preparation time for school (Gorkova, 2002). This two year transition from nursery to primary is often referred to as a kindergarten³ form of education (Wood, 1998).

At the kindergarten stage children still develop their motor skills. They tend to learn slowly and forget quickly but get bored easily and have a short attention and concentration span unless they find something interesting. They are still self-oriented and ego-centric; they still need to develop confidence to share and play with others, have emotional needs

³ Kindergarten is a form of education for young children which serves as a transition period from home to the start of formal schooling (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindergarten>)

and individual peculiarities. They are also in need of constant praise and routine for security and consistently seek parental support and encouragement (Brewster et al, 2002). Young kids are also excellent at mimics, physically restless and, therefore, need variable activities to burn off energy.

Despite still developing their first language at this stage, many children reason out the rules for the native language (Brewster et al, 2002). This fact was carefully examined by Canadian educationalists who later developed a successful language immersion teaching model claiming that the age of five to seven was a suitable time for a child to master another language by using his knowledge of the first language as a learning tool (Munoz, 2006).

Thereby, this author narrowed the research target age down to the range of five to seven with an aim to explore the teaching of English to this particular age group closely.

Specifics of Teaching Young Learners

The teacher must be aware of the two approaches to understanding of children's learning developed by Piaget and Vygotsky (Katz, 2001). Piaget argued that in the language development of a child a thought derived from an action as a result of which the child had to adjust to the outcomes of his action. By doing that, the child develops his logical thinking skills and later starts finding patterns, which allow him to categorise and classify things. Nonetheless, Piaget's arguments were heavily criticised for putting an emphasis on logical thinking development and ignoring totally the role of social interaction with adults in the child's language improvement.

Vygotsky's theory, on the contrary, was based on the assumption that learning only happens in a social context, where an adult (teacher) **MUST** encourage a child to think and do things to develop his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Wertsch, Sohmer, 1995).

Vygotsky saw the ZPD as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given to allow the child to develop. Another scholar, Bruner, shared his views with Vygotsky by believing that adults can support children by 'scaffolding' their learning (Wood, 1998). Hence, the presence of skilful teachers in a child's life is obligatory and essential.

What is more, during these pre-school years, the teacher is to help the child develop and prepare the ground for the more formal kind of learning that will come in primary school. Much of the learning takes place through play. It is widely recognised nowadays that play is an important part of the child's learning process. Most suited activities for teaching Young Learners at this age are songs, chants, rhymes, stories as well as tasks that involve drawing, colouring, cutting and sticking, games, puzzles, dressing up, acting etc (Reilly and Ward, 1997). Therefore, the study play-based programme along with the use of appropriate resources is essential.

There are certain advantages in teaching the kindergarten age group. One of the main bonuses for the teacher is that there are usually no strict syllabi to follow, no tests, and no performance objectives to be met to make it an enjoyable experience for both teacher and pupils. Another advantage is that children of this age are less inhibited. They are not afraid to be imaginative and do not bring along any negative attitudes left over from previous school experiences. They are curious about everything, keen to learn, and receptive (Smidt, 2009).

There are certainly some difficulties to be faced when teaching young children too. They can be selfish and uncooperative. If they want something, they may be rude and aggressive and often show little concern for the other child's feelings. Some of them may use temper tantrums, scream or bite to try and get what they want. Needless to say, an enormous amount of patience on behalf of the teacher is needed (Brewster et al, 2002).

Early Language Teaching

As far as language teachers are concerned they need to be aware of how first language can help with learning a second language. Besides, language teaching requires excellent linguistic and pedagogical skills and a solid knowledge of appropriate methodology and effective syllabi, lesson planning, suitable resources and topics as well as an ability to set goals of learning and work with mixed-ability groups. Language instructors should also be skilful at classroom management, establishing routine and organising motivating activities according to learner's needs (Phillips, 1993). Thus, a role of appropriately trained teachers in language instruction for Young Learners is considered to be vital.

Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) insist that comprehensible input is a key factor for creating context, where Young Learners can easily understand what is being said. Teachers must be able to facilitate learning-centred process based on a balance of suitable teaching approaches, topics, types of interaction, activities and skills. What is more, early language instruction should not aim at creating bilingual children but assist children linguistically, psychologically and culturally in developing their language awareness for further effective communicative practice in the future (Boen, 1989:5). Besides, it is recommended to integrate early non-mother tongue learning into the whole learning process. Thereby, curriculum designers have to ensure that the language programmes are content-based and aim at developing not just language skills but develop the child in general.

Last century Europe experienced the first large scale wave of foreign language learning in primary education, which reported a need for creating optimal conditions for teaching languages to children (Brewster et al, 2002).

The learning of a language by children may start, for example, at a state or private kindergarten with English as a medium of instruction or at a language school, where English is taught as a foreign language. Alternatively, the child may be attending private English classes outside school. There are numerous language programmes available for early introduction of a new language to a child.

Early Language Teaching Models

At present the most popular models for early language instruction to Young Learners appear to be the following: foreign language full and partial immersion for children of the same mother tongue, studying in English as a medium of instruction, bilingual study programmes and learning a foreign language in regular sessions (Nikolov, 2009).

Language immersion is an approach to foreign language instruction in which the usual curricular activities are conducted in a foreign language, used particularly when the linguistic background of the group is similar (Bostwick, 2005). Immersion students acquire the necessary language skills to understand and communicate in 'class'; however, they do not hear the immersion language at home. The main principle of immersion is for the teacher to understand the children's mother tongue but to systematically use only the immersion language with them. All the general goals related to a child's growth, development and learning are also used in language immersion. Thus, immersion represents the most intensive form of content-based foreign language instruction (Snow, 1986 quoted in Baker 1998).

Attending formal 'school' with English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is similar to the language immersion; however a teacher may now speak the first language of a child. Besides, a child does not study the target language but learns to apply it for study purposes

including building up literacy skills and communicative competence. Although such learners quickly become fluent in English, it may take them up to six years to acquire the level of proficiency for understanding the language in its instructional uses (Collier and Thomas, 1989).

Some other early language teaching is done through private tuition that is claimed to be tailored to the needs of a child and takes place either at home, private language schools or in school extra-curricular activities. Lessons are usually conducted at least once a week where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). Such language classes are often organised to meet a demand of interested parents. The language programmes are usually designed by a tutor (Harmer, 2008).

Each of the above-mentioned language programmes has its advantages and disadvantages. However, present research is mainly concerned with establishing the components of effective policy for teaching English to Young Learners.

Thus, through the overview of the field-related literature it was established that there are certain advantages of introducing foreign language instruction early due to child's innate abilities and favourable learning conditions. However, a number of scholars argued that for effective language learning appropriate conditions must be created. First, a qualified and skilful teacher, who could initiate productive language learning, provide scaffolding and facilitate the development of child's ZPD is required. Second, play-based study programme with content-based curriculum aiming at developing child's linguistic, cognitive and communicative skills must be exploited. What is more, the programmes may differ depending on the intensity and the extent of exposure to a target language. Third, the use of age-appropriate resources is recommended. Therefore, to examine early language teaching one has to explore the use of those three conditions.

It was decided to limit the research target age of the Young Learners to from five to seven. Next, motivation, aims, methods and tools for the research will be discussed.

Motivation for the Research

Nowadays, both private and public educational institutions have to cope with the high expectations of parents and to deal with a situation in which Young Learners arrive with a wide range of different backgrounds in the learning of English as a Foreign Language (Nikolov, 2009). Singleton argues that unless the English Language Teaching (ELT) policy to Young Learners is supported by high-quality materials, appropriately trained teachers and favourable public attitudes, the experience may be negative and the effects counter-productive (Brewster et al, 2002:21). Considering the present European tendency for early introduction of foreign languages to Young Learners, such negative outcomes should be avoided and more efforts must be made to ensure that early language practice is implemented by observing those important learning conditions (Nikolov et al 2007).

As an experienced language teacher and trainer, the author fully agrees with the statement above and is concerned with the appropriateness of the present early language teaching practice. Hence, by initiating and completing this research the author hopes to be able to collect valuable data of the state of the art of early English teaching practices including the details of their teachers, language programmes and resources across Europe, to analyse their effectiveness and to make useful recommendations for future improvement of foreign language provision to Young Learners in Estonia.

England, Finland and Russia along with Estonia were chosen as research sample countries due to the author's assumption that the present practice of early language teaching in Estonia might have been shaped or influenced by early language instruction standards established in those countries for historical and political reasons.

Introduction to the Research Questions and Research Methods

Considering the primary area of research and the importance of observations of the established learning conditions the following hypothesis has been produced. The process of teaching English to Young Learners will be more successful if it promotes good practice⁴ that is constituted of effective curriculum, qualified teachers and appropriate language teaching resources. To prove the hypothesis aimed at early language teaching practice improvement an action research method with a triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data has been chosen. The main research questions are the following:

- What are the existing policies and practices with regard to language curriculum, resources and teachers in England, Estonia, Finland and Russia and the six sample schools from those countries.
- Does each sample school present an effective pattern of how English should be instructed to Young Learners?
- What are the parents' views on the language instruction of the six sample schools?
- What needs to be done in such domains as language curricula, development of materials and training of English language teachers at to Young Learners to ensure effective teaching practice in Estonia?

Further to the primary question the main part of the research begins with an inquiry into the state policies on early education, cognition of teachers of foreign languages and English language curricula and resources applied in four European countries: England, Estonia, Finland and Russia. What is more, a detailed description is provided to exemplify current English language teaching of three different models in six sample schools in the four countries including Estonia.

⁴ best or innovative practice that contributes to the improved performance (Edelenbos, Johnstone and Kubanek, 2006)

To address the next two questions the following research tools have been selected: a semi-structured interview, a contrastive table and a questionnaire in a close-ended and an open-ended format. The semi-structured interview is intended to be administered to collect language practitioners' professional views on good practice of teaching English to Young Learners. The data elicited from the interview will later be compared to the good practice criteria established by scholars in order to evaluate the early language teaching practices in the six sample schools.

Next, the designed teacher self-completion questionnaire with open and close-ended questions will retrieve data on the attitudes and experiences of the teachers from the sample schools. The data will then be employed in the three contrastive tables drawn to provide criteria-referenced details of language practices in the sample schools. The following analysis of the data collected from the literature overview and the teacher questionnaires incorporated into the tables will allow the author to establish if good practice principles are realised in the six schools. Finally, the outcomes from the parent questionnaires distributed among the parents of the students of the sample schools will help to identify if language instruction conditions (teaching, curricula, materials) in the six schools are effective and thus the teaching process is successful and whether the research hypothesis is valid.

In the concluding part of the research paper, an overview of the overall research findings will be given and a number of relevant recommendations will be made.

1. TEACHING ENGLISH to YOUNG SPEAKERS of OTHER LANGUAGES IN EUROPE

The previous part of the thesis provides an overview of the published literature on the topic of early language teaching by introducing the advantages of teaching languages to Young Learners, outlining the Young Learner profile as well as discussing the models and important learning conditions of early language teaching. It also presented the hypothesis, main research tasks, methods and the instruments of the given research.

In this chapter the author attempts to address the first research question by providing an overview of the early years' education policies on foreign language teaching in Finland, England and Russia. Early English language instruction on the examples of the three children's institutions in Finland, England and Russia are presented to demonstrate the state of the art of teaching English in Northern Europe. The three schools with early language instruction were chosen owing to their geographical proximity, accessibility to the schools' resources and personal connections of the author with the personnel. Another important for the selection criterion was that each sample school presents a different model of English language instruction i.e. English language immersion in a non-English-speaking environment (Finland), English as a medium of instruction in an English-speaking environment (England) and English as a foreign language in a non-English-speaking environment (Russia). Requirements to early years' language teachers, language programmes and resources set in each of the three countries and the respective schools are examined in detail.

1.1 The European Directive for Early Language Teaching and Learning in Europe

In the Commission Staff Working Paper Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in education and training (European Commission, 2005:14) the Commission outlines the strategy and steps to take through the year 2010 in order to make education and training systems in Europe the best in the world, and includes the chapter '*The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very Young Learners*'. In that document the European Commission has expressed its intent to extend, consolidate and develop the effective early learning of one or more foreign or additional language(s) in each of the European Union member states (European Commission, 2005).

'In an enlarged and multilingual Europe, learning foreign languages from a very Young age allows us to discover other cultures and better prepare for occupational mobility.'⁵

There is an ongoing discussion about the present status of English as an early language in Europe. In most cases, children's first language will be their country's official language. An additional language will likely be either another official language or a foreign language (most likely English, French or German). According to Eurydice report (2007) a number of EU member countries have made English the standard primary modern foreign language.

What is more, recently the starting age for language learning in such countries as Spain, Sweden, Italy, Slovakia was shifted down to a kindergarten stage (Eurydice report, 2007). Unfortunately, the report cannot submit clear evidence that English as a foreign language has necessarily been taught to Young Learners early across Europe because it does not cover extracurricular language subjects or activities in the private education

⁵ http://www.eurydice.org/Doc_intermediaires/indicators/en/frameset_key_data.html

sector. Similarly, the European Commission points out that the new ‘inherently advantageous’ early language learning reform can only be effective if teachers are trained to work with young children, classes are small enough, the learning material is adequate and sufficient time is allotted in the curriculum (Edelenbos et al, 2006).

According to the Commission Staff Working Document (2005) in 2002/03 about half of the primary foreign language teachers in Europe were generalists⁶, who were provided with equal opportunities to participate in professional development and teacher exchange programmes at a national and international levels.

With regard to the methodology of teaching foreign languages, priority was given either to developing listening and speaking or to all four skills equally through combining the foreign language teaching with other subjects or activities where possible. What is more, plurilingual curricula were initiated in some regions where several languages are spoken, for example in three languages – French, Italian and English at the same level of instruction from kindergarten age to the end of primary school (*National Summary Sheets on Education Systems in Europe*).

Thus, the current European Union’s position with regard to the language learning is to encourage member states to implement early foreign language instruction; however, the use of appropriate programmes and materials as well as professional training of language teachers should be ensured.

1.2 Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at Pre-school Level in

Finland

Within last 20 years communicative English skills of Finnish residents have increased significantly (*National summary sheets on education systems in Europe, 2009*).

⁶ an administrator, teacher, etc. with broad general knowledge and experience in several disciplines or areas, as opposed to a specialist (www.yourdictionary.com)

What is more, according to the same source Finland counts a good number of educational institutions where some instruction is provided in a foreign language (most commonly English). The online source *Expat in Finland* claims that there are a good number of private early years' schools around Finland, where the medium of instruction is English. On the account of the above-mentioned reasons as well as the author's personal connection with an employee of a kindergarten with EMI in Helsinki, the capital (in the form of an interview), it was decided to examine early English instruction in Finland with regard to English teachers, programmes and resources in detail.

The key components of the Finnish education policy are quality, efficiency, equity and internationalisation (Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland's website). Compulsory education starts in the year when a child becomes seven years old and elementary English as a compulsory subject starts in Year 3. During the years before formal education the child can participate in pre-primary education in schools or day-care centres. The aim of pre-primary education is to develop the child's learning and other basic development skills, knowledge and capabilities from different areas of learning in accordance with their age and abilities.

1.2.1 General Requirements and Conditions for Pre-school Foreign Language Teaching in Finland

The Finnish National Board of Education defines the core curriculum for pre-primary education on its website without eliminating particular subjects but stating the key subject fields and objectives: e.g. language and interaction, mathematics, ethics and philosophy, environmental and natural studies, health, physical and motor development and art and culture. The subject of English as a foreign language or any other foreign language is not included (Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland's website).

Nevertheless, according to the Finnish Curriculum for pre-primary education it is possible to organise pre-primary education based on different pedagogic methods. These forms of pre-primary education include, for example, pre-primary education carried out in a foreign language or CLIL-type (Content and Language Integrated Learning) provision, or Steiner and Montessori pedagogies (Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland's website). The size of a pre-primary teaching group is not determined by legislation, nevertheless, the maximum size of the group recommended by the Ministry of Education and Culture is 13 children, and with another qualified person in the group, the size can be extended to a maximum of 20.

1.2.2 Educational Background of Pre-school Teachers of Foreign Languages in Finland

On all school levels, teachers are highly qualified and committed. A Master's degree is a requirement, and teacher education includes teaching practice. A teaching profession is very popular in Finland which gives universities a chance to select the most motivated and talented applicants. In general, teaching staff of early childhood education and care hold either Bachelor's degree received in a university or a polytechnic or a post-secondary vocational qualification of a teacher (*Organisation of the Education System in Finland, 2008-2009*). Requirements for language teachers are not specified.

As to initial training and continuing professional development of teachers involved in language instruction for Young Learners, it is an ongoing process in the education system of Finland. Considering the list of competences stated in the European Profile for Language Teacher Education, a purely new approach is being awaited to be proposed to ensure that the element of foreign language competence would be strengthened in the

training of students who want to become pre-primary teachers in Finland (Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland's website).

1.2.3 Finnish National Curriculum Requirements for Foreign Language Teaching at Pre-school Level

The Finnish National Board of Education confirmed the National Core Curriculum for Pre-school Education in 2000 (*Organisation of the Education System in Finland*, 2008-2009:48). The two of its key objectives, that are significant for this research also, are to prepare a child to live and to function in a pluralistic Finnish society and to provide an environment for language learning.

Finnish municipalities are entitled by the Ministry of Education and Culture to design their own curricula for pre-primary institutions to ensure that key subject fields stated in the National Curriculum are fully covered. Activities in day-care centres should be organised by age group; pre-primary education for six-year-olds takes place in separate groups. Teachers may freely choose the teaching methods and materials as long as they support learning and facilitate children's awareness of learning and its effect on their learning processes (Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland's website)

The generalised recommendations of the Finnish National Curriculum do not provide clear guidance regarding foreign language teaching at pre-school level. However, CLIL-type provision is advised in the curricula, whereas the term 'four skills' is not found (Välimäki and Lindberg, 2004).

1.2.4 Pre-school foreign language resources recommended

Due to the right of the Finnish municipalities to design their own curricula for local pre-schools it is impossible to establish clear recommendations regarding the selection of

appropriate resources for language teaching at pre-school level. Teachers are requested to deliver language instruction based on group teaching and individual guidance stemming from each child's development level. Selection of appropriate teaching resources is the responsibility of school administrators and teachers. All teaching materials are chosen by practising teachers according to the needs of learners or the recommendations of a school curriculum.

To sum up, the Finnish authorities recognise the importance of foreign language learning and generally support pre-primary schools by setting general recommendations and requirements for teacher's education, performance and knowledge of the subject. As to pre-school foreign language curriculum and resources there are no concrete requirements stated.

1.2.5 Teaching English through Language Immersion in Non-English-speaking Environment in *Espoo English Playschool*, Helsinki, Finland

Espoo English Playschool was selected for the given research due to two reasons. First, the author had access to primary sources of information for the school because of a personal connection with a school employee and, second, the school exemplifies a valuable for this research model of language teaching.

Espoo English Playschool was founded as a non-profit private company in 1992 by the parents to offer their children active learning of English in the safe environment of the capital city. Espoo is part of Helsinki with its own municipality and as any other private daycare centre *Espoo Play School* is supervised and supported by the municipality of Espoo. The school has two branches *Karakallio Playschool* and *Kilonpuisto Playschool*, which are maintained by a parent's association and meant for children between the ages of three up to six-seven (*Espoo English Playschool's* website)

School applies early language immersion technique, where the staff speaks only in English, but the child's Finnish is understood. The first language of the child should be Finnish or at least Finnish should be spoken at home on a regular basis. Teachers use expressions and gestures in addition to speaking and show the things talked about in practice. The child does not need to speak English to start at the school. The child learns the language by first building up basic vocabulary through activities: games, stories, songs and riddles. Themes and events such as Halloween, Christmas celebrations and sports days help the child expand their vocabulary relatively quickly. There are about 150 children attending both schools at the moment. Each group has not more than 10 children (adapted from the interview with a former employee of *Espoo Playschool*).

1.2.6 Educational Background of *Espoo English Playschool* Teachers

Current staff of both schools counts a head teacher, four kindergarten teachers, two nursery nurses and four helpers who are fluent in English and speak Finnish as their first language. One of the recruitment requirements is that the school must have at least one native speaker. There are also qualified leaders helping with an afternoon club. To add to that, the playschool has to have at least one teacher, who has specialised in pre-school teaching. The head teacher is supposed to have Master's degree in pre-school education. Teachers regularly attend in-service teacher training organised outside the school.

1.2.7 *Espoo English Playschool* Curriculum Requirements

Teaching in *Espoo Play School* follows the theme-based curriculum accepted by the city of Espoo and focuses mainly on developing of co-operation and social skills, hand skills and achieving academic preparedness for school with the aim to create a feeling of self-esteem. To secure the development of the child's first language, parents are expected

to talk, read and sing with the child in their mother tongue at home. In fact, in the beginning, family and adult support is highly recommended.

A day in *Espoo Play School* starts with a morning circle where the language theme of the week is either presented, developed or revised through various activities. The activities are designed to take into account both the child's individual and different age group requirements. Alternatively, children can be divided into three groups based on age, development and language ability. One of these groups called *Preschool group* fulfils the requirements for pre-school teaching and prepares children for school attendance. Each day of week is devoted to a different subject: e.g. maths, language, science/environment, art, music. The time before lunch is used for an outside play and the post meal time is either spent in quiet games or afternoon nap. There is another circle in the afternoon devoted either to physical activities, art or music followed by a walk outside (Inberg, 2007).

Special events, sports days and field trips are important components of the school's curriculum. Apart from language learning there are some other areas of learning activities involved such as construction, sand and water play, imaginative play, practical life, mark-making area, outdoor play, creative area, reading area, number area, and 'small world' play. The children's programme also includes exercising and sports activities, both inside and outside. Children also make frequent visits to the local library, theatres and museums (adapted from the interview with the principal of *Espoo Play School*).

Espoo Play School curriculum is based on project works and is designed by a kindergarten specialist. Ms Inberg, the head teacher of *Espoo Play School*, claims that the English language immersion method developed by their school specialists has proved to be a success.

1.2.8 Resources Available in *Espoo English Playschool*

There are no books as such required for use by the *Espoo English Playschool* curriculum. In general, teachers tend to use online and various hard copy resources with image-based activities that are often photocopied. There is a white-interactive board connected to a computer available for every day use.

In sum, the Finnish national policy towards early language instruction does not impose any concrete requirements as long as the early years' education provider employs qualified teachers and follows the principles of the curriculum approved by local education authorities.

Espoo English Playschool exemplifies early English teaching through the immersion method where Young Learners are exposed to the target language intensively but have an opportunity to master their first language at home. The study programme that generally follows the recommendations of the local education authority, has been developed and is maintained by well-qualified staff with university degrees in education and a good command of English. Resources are selected at a teacher's discretion.

Thus, realisation of early English teaching practice in Finland happens with little guidance from the government.

1.3 Teaching English as an Additional Language to Key Stage 1 Students in England

The model of foreign language instruction in Finland represented the possibility of studying English in a non-English-speaking environment. When studying English in the UK, for example England, the exposure to the target language will be higher because English is the UK's state language and the medium of instruction (EMI) in school.

Another distinction from the previous model for starting learning English by five-to-seven-year-old children of other origin in England will be compulsory attendance of school because formal education in the UK starts at the age of five. The 1996 Act divides the period of compulsory education into four key stages (KS) (*Organisation of the Education System in the UK*, 2008/2009). Primary education is covered in key stages 1 and 2; key stage 1 caters for pupils aged from five to seven years old, which is the target age group of this research. As to the class sizes all maintained primary schools in England are legally required to ensure that children of KS1 are taught in classes of not more than 30 pupils per single teacher (Act 1998⁷).

Due to historical and political reasons the current situation across the UK is such that each tenth student attending school speaks other than English language as his/her mother tongue (Roberts, 2005). These children are often referred to as bilingual students or learners of English as an additional language (EAL). Bilingual learners face two main tasks in the UK school: they need to learn English and they need to learn the content of the curriculum. It is also important to recognise that children learning EAL are as able as any other children and the learning experiences planned for them should be no less cognitively challenging (*Excellence and Enjoyment* handbook, 2006). Therefore, the research should benefit from examining how EAL instruction is implemented at schools around England and what requirements set to EAL teachers, programmes and resources are.

1.3.1 General Requirements and Conditions for Teaching English as an Additional Language to Young Learners in England

According to the UK Department of Education the majority of primary schools in England are separate community schools established and funded by local authorities (LAs).

⁷ can be found on <http://www.inca.org.uk/1292.html>

On all matters affecting the school curriculum the Government is advised by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA). All schools are required by QCDA to provide a balanced and broadly-based curriculum and have discretion to develop the whole curriculum to reflect their particular needs and circumstances. Primary core subjects are mathematics, science, information and technology, music and physical education, art, history, geography and English (QCDA's website). The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) is the subject association responsible for provision of English as an Additional language in schools around England (NALDIC's website).

In recent years significant progress has been made in raising standards for children in primary schools including EAL students. Former total exclusion from mainstream activities for intensive language instruction was replaced by the EAL child being involved in class work with support of teaching assistants (TAs) to give children good models of English. However, EAL students may still work outside the mainstream classroom: for example, pupils very new to EAL may work one-to-one with TAs on basic vocabulary in a separate room (*Guidance for Teaching EAL*). At present EAL learner's needs are addressed through collaborative teaching of a primary teacher, an EAL specialist or a TA.

1.3.2 Educational Background of Pre-school Teachers Involved in Primary EAL Provision in England

School teachers must hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The main route to the QTS in England consists of a Bachelor of Education degree followed by a Professional or Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Primary teachers are usually trained as generalists to teach all subjects in the curriculum. Many schools also employ teaching assistants (TA), who work alongside teachers in the classroom, helping pupils with their

learning on an individual or group basis. Some TAs specialise in areas such as literacy, numeracy, special educational needs, music or English as an additional language. Participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is part of the contractual professional duties of a teacher (TDA: Training and Development Agency for Schools's website)

In 2008 according to the UK Department of Education (DfE) EAL was recognised as a national priority. Due to the increasing demand for EAL support for children and young people, a framework to develop a pathway of qualifications for teachers and support staff to provide leadership in effective EAL teaching and learning was sought. Following that, the UK government awarded two contracts for the provision of accredited EAL training by London University's Institute of Education and by Birmingham University (*the National Audit*, 2009).

Another arising problem in English schools with regard to EAL specialists is that EAL provision is often seen as part of the work of the Special Education Needs (SEN) team. There seems to be a lack of clarity of the distinctions between EAL and SEN with the consequence that there is often no clearly-identified criterion for identifying the language needs of pupils. Often SEN specialists would not have appropriate training in EAL. As a result, a shortage of EAL specialists in school leads to a situation where EAL support work is entirely carried out by TAs, who are often non-qualified teachers (NALDIC's website).

1.3.3 British National Curriculum Requirements for Teaching English as an Additional Language at KS1

The local authorities (LAs), school governing bodies and head teachers responsible for schools have a general duty to secure the implementation of the National Curriculum in

schools (DfE's website). English state-maintained primary schools are major providers of early years' education. In England, six 'key skills' are embedded in the National Curriculum for key stages 1 and 2. These are communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem-solving, which have been identified as the skills needed to succeed in work, education and everyday life (*UK Primary Curriculum, 2007*). To develop those skills and to access learning and complete tasks, the EAL child needs adult's support and well-formed linguistic skills. That is why it was decided to integrate permanent in-class EAL support into mainstream teaching in primary schools. What is more, continued development of first language and promotion of the use of first language for learning has been recommended to enable children to access learning opportunities within the school and beyond (NALDIC's website).

The QCDA publish practical guidance on how schools might plan curriculum time in primary schools. Programmes of study set out the minimum statutory entitlement to the knowledge, understanding and skills for each subject at each key stage, and teachers use the programmes of study as the basis for planning schemes of work. Particular teaching methods and books are not usually prescribed as part of a programme of study but are chosen by teachers who may also add to the subject material specified in the programmes of study (Rose, 2009). Learners of English as an additional language are to follow the same curriculum as other students in class.

1.3.4 EAL Resources Recommended for Use at KS1 in England

Teaching methods and learning materials are usually decided by class teachers, in consultation with a school head teacher and subject coordinators. The latter ones approve appropriate sets of books for use for certain duration of time. Teachers may also use audio-

visual equipment such as DVDs, videos, slides, audio recordings and television in their teaching. Most schools have computers and white interactive boards available for use by teachers and pupils.

Although particular teaching methods and learning materials are not usually prescribed, teacher guidance documents for the teaching of specific curriculum subjects are often provided by such government bodies as the Department of Education, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment etc. One of the examples of such schemes is handbook called *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and Teaching Bilingual Children in the Primary Years* published in 2006. The book outlines the Primary National Strategy making an accent on the distinctive pedagogy for bilingual and recommends a range of teaching strategies to support language development of EAL students in particular (NALDIC's website).

Another good example of EAL teaching resources available to the teachers of Young Learners at present is *Clicker 5 software* to support guided sessions for writing in English as an additional language. Many of the activities there lend themselves to whole-class work and can be incorporated into shared reading and writing with peer support (NALDIC's website).

In addition, the QCDA runs the 'National Curriculum in Action' website that illustrates standards of pupils' work at different ages and key stages.

Thus, a framework for meeting the needs of a great number of bilingual Young Learners appears to be in place in English primary school; however, there seems to be a lack of qualified EAL specialists to coordinate EAL practice in schools.

1.3.5 Teaching English as an Additional Language at *St Chad's* Primary School, England

St Chad's primary school was chosen to be a sample school to represent the model of teaching English as an additional language (EAL) in the English-speaking environment because of the author's past close cooperation with *St Chad's* teaching staff and the school personnel's extensive experience in teaching EAL learners.

St Chad's primary school is an average sized primary school with 205 pupils aged between four and eleven years old in Staffordshire. The quality of care, guidance and support in *St Chad's* according to the latest report of the UK Office of Standards in Education (C. Field, 2008) is adequate. The breadth of curricular opportunities is good and offers a range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sport and the arts. Teaching and support staff are effectively deployed and have a good impact on pupils' achievements. Pupils are keen learners, who want to do well.

Almost all of the pupils of *St Chad's* school are native speakers of English except 13 students who speak English as an additional language. Those students' first languages are Japanese, Danish, Hungarian, Chinese, French and Polish but they all speak good English and achieve good results due to well-targeted and effective support. EAL work is regarded to be integral to the work of the school by the school's former head teacher. The school's major policy regarding EAL support is to employ trained and equipped to take on this enhanced role teaching assistants.

1.3.6 Educational Background of *St Chad's* Primary School Teachers

At the moment *St Chad's* primary school counts 42 members of staff including the acting head teacher, Mr A Dooley, a deputy head teacher and a team of teachers, teaching assistants, a school office team, midday supervisory team and house keeping personnel.

Teaching staff are a strong team of qualified specialists who are reflective about their practice and keen to share ideas in the pupils' best interests. The school policy regarding recruitment is to employ skilled, effective and well-motivated staff committed to excellence in education at all levels. The school administration sees the importance of providing opportunities for the training and development of staff (adapted from the interview with the former school head teacher, Ms Coles).

The teaching and additional support for pupils with EAL has been evaluated positively (Field, 2008). There is a specialist in both SEN and EAL who coordinates respective areas of school work. Nine classroom assistants are well used in most lessons, to help all pupils, especially those with EAL. At the moment two teacher assistants are bilingual which helps with parent communication. The school is keen to develop the role of its TAs in EAL support by sending them to professional development training. However, many teachers still express their concerns regarding the lack of training on dealing with EAL students (adapted from the interview with the former school head teacher, Ms Coles).

1.3.7 Curriculum Requirements for Teaching EAL and Literacy at *St Chad's* School

St. Chad's School's vision is to be a school where 'skills, attitudes and personal development give pupils a firm foundation to meet the challenges of the future' to realise their potential (*St Chad's* School Prospectus). 81 children in KS 1 (aged between five and seven) of St Chad's school including six EAL students follow the National Curriculum with its five core subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. In addition, those children study history, geography, art, music, physical education, design and technology. For each subject there are specific objectives setting out what pupils are expected to know and be able to do by the end of each Key Stage.

Wilkins, the English Ethnic Minority Achievements co-ordinator, (as quoted in Roberts, 2005) insists that pupils cannot adequately access a curriculum programme without developed language skills. With regard to that, *St Chad's* primary school attempts to do its best to enable EAL learners to access all subjects covered by the National Curriculum through the medium of English. Plenty of support is given to the EAL students to develop their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as to encourage development of their home language. *St Chad's* School has its Special Needs Policy that sets out some procedures to follow in order to meet the Special Education Needs of pupils including the EAL ones. A support team of nine teaching assistants is provided to give additional individual support to those students. The Special Educational Needs and EAL coordinator works together with the team of TAs, class teachers and parents to address the needs of EAL students (adapted from the interview with the former head teacher).

The school places a big emphasis on the inclusion of all pupils in mainstream class activities. When EAL students are enrolled into *St Chad's*, they join in a well-organised range of activities that suitably develop their learning. First, with the help of a TA, well-focused individual education plans are drawn for each EAL child. After EAL pupils start speaking with confidence and clarity as well as comprehending what others say, a teacher begins involving them in story-telling activities. Story-telling is seen by *St Chad's* teachers as a good way to prepare children for learning to read and write in English. Homework is a regular feature of the teaching and helps raise standards in reading and writing (adapted from the interview with a *St Chad's* Year 1 teacher).

Besides mastering L2, the EAL student has to develop English literacy⁸ skills. In Year 1 in-class guided reading and discussing of stories and poems are done. After reading there is usually a discussion to talk about the story line, to predict what might happen next,

⁸ Literacy has traditionally been described as the ability to read and write (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy>)

to discuss story characters and to see if children like the story. This full discussion helps a child develop their strategies for reading and their general language skills writing. Children are encouraged to select books of different reading schemes to read in class and bring home to read individually or with parent's support (adapted from the interview with a *St Chad's* Year 1 teacher).

In Key Stage 1 special spelling books are sent home once reading routines are established and a method of practising spelling been understood by your child. The spellings normally cover the High Frequency Words⁹ as referred in the UK National Curriculum. New spelling rules are also sent home to practise spelling as well as handwriting on a regular basis. In Year 2 reading is taught mostly in group reading sessions in class with a further silent reading at home with a following record of how many pages have been read. There are more spelling words to memorise and practise (from observation of the author's daughter's schooling in *St Chad's*).

1.3.8 Resources Available for Teaching EAL learners at *St Chad's* School

St Chad's primary school is well resourced and has all sorts of literature including reading and education books available in the school library. *Building Learning Power Programme* software has been recently introduced to all school students to help them tackle new experiences. In addition, each classroom has a computer and a white interactive board.

St Chad's teachers are recommended to get acquainted and to regularly refer to the following self-study modules: *Grammar knowledge for teachers* and Primary Guide UK EAL available online. *St Chad's* SEN and EAL coordinator recommends KS1 teachers and TAs to use 'Jolly Phonics' or Ruth Miskin's phonics-based materials in lessons with EAL

⁹ <http://www.sparklebox.co.uk/cll/lettersandsounds/hfwords.html>

learners. Alternatively, there are some bilingual books (English-Japanese, English-Polish, English-Russian) available for reading in the school library. The school also aims to provide more visual support for learning through displays. There are also some materials designed for children who are conversationally fluent but require support in developing academic language, particularly for writing. However, the general school's policy on EAL resources is that most of EAL pupils should be able to handle the materials and resources used in classrooms without needing adapted versions (*St Chad's Teacher Handbook*, 2008).

To conclude, despite the developed state strategy of catering for the needs of EAL learners, a shortage of trained EAL mainstream staff leaves primary teachers unsure about what strategies to use for EAL achievement. *St Chad's* primary school demonstrates an existing practice of supporting pupils with EAL needs in the mainstream classroom. The school is well resourced and employs qualified staff. However, the lack of EAL training reinforces professional insecurity of class teachers and makes them rely totally on a teaching assistant to embed EAL practice into class work.

1.4 Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Pre-school Level in Russia

The third early language teaching model examined in this chapter presents the teaching English as a foreign language at a limited length and depth and, unlike the previous two practices, instruction takes place on a several hours a week basis.

Nowadays the European Union countries do not appear to be the only ones with an increasing demand for introducing English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners. After the collapse of the Soviet regime, the residents of the Russian Federation started travelling outside the country and realised how many new prospects lay open ahead provided they could speak another language. Naturally English has become one of the most

popular languages for learning in Russia. Many parents at this time became concerned regarding their children's education and language skills. As a result, many competing private schools, English clubs and camp programmes for kids as well as language schools appeared throughout the country. Better quality and greater provisions of English language teaching were offered in either the schools specialising in teaching foreign languages or private "international" schools (based on the overview of several websites about Russian education in English).

In the light of such tendencies, the Russian Government in 2005 introduced earlier foreign language teaching in schools starting from Year 2 (age of 7-8) instead of 10, as it was before (Khutorskoi, 2006). Since the target age group for this research are children aged between five to seven which in Russia is considered to be a kindergarten age, this part of Chapter 1 will discuss the situation in teaching English as a Foreign Language to the pre-school age children only. Both state and sample school requirements to language teachers, programmes and materials will be thoroughly discussed below.

1.4.1 General Requirements and Conditions for Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Learners in Russia

According to Arapova-Piskarjeva (2005), 89% of Russian pre-school children spend five days a week in a kindergarten on a regular basis. Kindergarten teachers can obtain a qualification at either teacher training colleges or higher education institutions. Alongside games and outdoor recreational activities, pre-school programmes approved by the state include classes, which prepare children for primary school: language development, instruction in reading, writing, counting, singing, dancing, and art.

Foreign language instruction at pre-school level still remains optional and is often run as a hobby class. Alternatively, a child may receive private language tuition at home or at

language centres set up to provide children with opportunities to develop their various skills including languages. Moreover, privately owned family nursery kindergartens are gradually gaining popularity due to their broad curricula including foreign language classes (Gorkova, 2002).

1.4.2 Educational Background of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language to Children in Russia

Russian kindergarten teachers must receive appropriate training to work with pre-school children. An average kindergarten group of 15-20 single aged children is run by two teachers and a nursery nurse. The pre-school curriculum is designed and monitored by the head teacher and the deputy head teacher (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation's website). During the day activities are run and coordinated by group teachers while extra-curricular activities such as language clubs are often delivered by external teachers. There are no certain requirements set to a language teacher as long as parents are satisfied with the quality of teaching. Typically, lessons are run by either a student with a good command of the target language or a language teacher who takes this as an opportunity to receive an additional income. Language lessons normally take place two-three times a week approximately 45 minutes long (Arapova-Piskarjeva, 2005).

Some pre-schools offer language learning in partial language immersion groups. There are also several international schools operating in Moscow and other large cities, where English is used as a medium of instruction. Such institutions tend to employ native-speakers and unlike the English clubs run in kindergartens they employ approved well-developed curricula.

1.4.3 Russian State Requirements for Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Pre-school level

Due to the fact that in Russia pre-school education is a non-compulsory stage of schooling there are no set requirements regarding foreign language teaching at this stage. A kindergarten may develop their own subject syllabus for English language teaching as a part of their curriculum that should correspond to core principles of the Education Act (Arapova-Piskarjeva, 2005). The same rule applies to the selection of language resources.

Thus, early language instruction in Russia is gaining its popularity but it does not appear to be maintained at the state level.

1.4.4 Teaching English as a Foreign Language at *British K Company-International House Moscow, Russia*

British K Company-International House (BKC-IH) Moscow was recommended to this author of research by its employee, a Russian teacher assistant Jelena Sergejeva, as one of the most respected and largest English foreign language institutes in Russia (based on several online reviews of language schools in Russia). Their first language school was opened in 1993 and now they own 30 schools located mainly in Moscow, the capital of Russia, with approximately 3000-4000 students per academic year (*BKC-IH's* website). Besides offering English classes for adults, they operate numerous Young Learners' programmes divided by age groups. One of them caters for age group, applicable for this research (from five to seven years old). The number of Young Learners at this school comprises of approximately 20% of their total number of students. Each year BKC-IH employs native-speakers of English from all over the world to teach English in its Moscow schools (adapted from the interview with Ms Sergejeva).

1.4.5 Educational Background of Teachers of Young Learners at *BKC-IH Moscow*

The majority of *BKC-IH Moscow* teachers are university graduates with a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) qualification from UK, Australia, Ireland and other English-speaking countries. A great emphasis is placed on consistent in-service teacher training and development of the staff in order to help teachers improve their teaching skills. A compulsory monthly seminar programme takes place every third Saturday of every month. Teachers may also attend seminars on a variety of EFL teaching topics related to their day-to-day teaching practice. Furthermore, teachers are observed regularly by senior members of staff as part of an ongoing commitment to Teacher Professional Development and Performance Assessment. In addition, *BKC-IH Moscow* have qualified Young Learners' teacher-trainers who run various courses for pre-service and in-service teachers of English, who want to specialise in early years' language learning (*BKC-IH Teacher Handbook*, 2009).

The provision of EFL in all *BKC-IH Moscow* branches is coordinated and maintained by its Educational Management Team which consists of experienced language teachers and teacher-trainers from the English-speaking countries. These practitioners are in charge of curriculum design and implementation as well *BKC-IH Moscow* teachers' professional development (adapted from the interview with Ms Sergeyeva).

1.4.6 Syllabus Requirements for Young Learners' Courses at *BKC-IH Moscow*

15 out of 30 *BKC-IH Moscow* branches provide high quality Elementary English courses for Young Learners aged between five and seven. Teachers mainly apply the principles of communicative ELT methodology. A typical communicative lesson begins with a teacher presenting new vocabulary or grammar item through demonstration. Later

students practise the presented material by doing activities such as role-plays, written tasks and storytelling all which allow them to apply the presented language item productively (adapted from the interview with Ms Sergeyeva).

Young Learners attend classes two or three times a week, and each lesson is 45 minutes in duration. Classes commence at the beginning of September and run until the end of June. The course length is 64 hours (32 weeks). The maximum class size is eight students. Besides, one-to-one classes, Kids Club summer programmes and weekend classes can be organised on request (*BKC-IH's* website).

As children are new to the classroom environment and routine, they need to be taught to be students and to socialise. Effective communication requires good speaking skills and knowledge of vocabulary. On a daily basis, all teaching is done without reading and writing; however, simpler tasks like holding a pen and drawing on a piece of paper are practised as first steps towards learning to write. As far as English is concerned, learning of words is encouraged with a further aim to advance this into simple sentences and then into conversations with either the teacher or other children (*BKC-IH Teacher Handbook*, 2009).

Alternatively, *BKC-IH Moscow* offer a special *Playgroup* programme in a semi-emersion kindergarten style for children aged from three to six. The project-based programme was specially developed for BKC-IH by an early education specialist for teaching English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners. The classes run daily for two hours by an English speaker in a group of up to 10 learners through the use of *Playway to English* series. The language and lessons are based around the interests and the world knowledge of the children. There is a Russian-speaking assistant in each class for clarification and explanation if necessary. The courses are pre-literate and encourage speaking and listening in a friendly and fun environment. Besides learning a language the children can practise socialising and develop their motor skills. The *Playgroup* programme

also provides general learning activities to develop the child's creative thinking, observation and problem-solving skills essential for the child's further growth and learning. It includes music, science, maths, creative arts and exercises for physical development too (adapted from the interview with Ms Sergeyeva).

1.4.7 EFL Resources for Teaching EFL to Young Learners Available at *BKC-IH*, Moscow

Most of *BKC-IH Moscow* branches have their own teacher resource rooms with plenty of course books, online resources and additional photocopiable materials. Various course-books such as *Playway to English*, *I-Spy*, *Messages*, *English Zone*, *English in Mind*, *All Stars* etc. are available for teaching Young Learners in *BKC-IH Moscow* schools. Because of the nature of the Young Learners, the personnel of *BKC-IH Moscow* ensure that each classroom has a sufficient number of storybooks with photocopiable follow-up activities as well as flashcards, DVDs with songs and chants, literacy resource packs and craft materials for the teacher to make the process of learning enjoyable (*BKC-IH Teacher Handbook*, 2009).

Hence, at state level the teaching of foreign languages at kindergarten stage in Russia does not appear to be robust. Private language company *BKC-IH Moscow* provides teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners on the basis of a project-based curriculum with the application of community methodology performed by the English-speaking specialists several sessions of up to two hours a week.

In conclusion, Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the state policies including the one of the European Commission and the state of the art of early language teaching practices in three countries. Language curriculum standards in early years' education, use of age appropriate teaching resources and requirements for language teachers of Young

Learners in Finland, England and Russia have been described to establish the following results. The UK government supports EAL teaching by providing teacher training, developing strategies and resources as part of state school support unlike in Russia or Finland, where no concrete requirements or recommendations are introduced for early language instruction which is not considered to be formal yet. However, appropriate teacher education is provided in all three countries (see Appendix 1).

The employment of the three recommended early language teaching models on the examples of three schools from the respective countries have been examined with regard to their teachers, curricula and resources with the aim of exploring the state of the art of early English teaching activities around Europe. It was established that all three schools appear to be well resourced and make a good use of the language programmes implemented by appropriately trained teachers of different job-related qualifications with native or native-like command of English.

Therefore, as recommended, early foreign language instruction through various teaching models is currently being implemented in a number of countries in Europe but to a different extent and down to governments comes with little support or control over language curricula, materials or teachers.

2. TEACHING ENGLISH to YOUNG LEARNERS in ESTONIA

The preceding chapter established current realisation of early language instruction around Europe on the example of three countries by describing professional background of teachers, curriculum details and a range of resources used in three different language models.

Chapter 2 is aimed to present a similar to the previous chapter overview of the current early years' language teaching practices and related government policies in Estonia. The same three teaching models will be exemplified by three inland early education institutions with the main emphasis placed on teacher's qualifications, curriculum requirements and material selection.

Estonian non-formal pre-primary education comprises all public- and private-sector institutions that provide pre-school instruction for children aged from one to seven (*UNESCO Report, 2007*). In 2008, the Government of the Estonian Republic approved the renewed national curriculum for pre-school child care institutions (*Organisation of the Education System in Estonia, 2008-2009*). According to it, the common objective of pre-schooling is consistent development of children in cooperation between home and the child care institution to foster their physical, mental, social and emotional development. Main subject areas studied in pre-school in Estonia include first language, maths, art and music and physical education (*Koolieelse Lastesutuse Riiklik Õppekava, 2008*).

Foreign languages are generally not included into the state pre-school curriculum and are rather taught as hobby classes on parents' request for an additional fee. However, in accordance with the local government data, English as a foreign language is taught in around one-third of the pre-school educational institutions of Estonian cities. Besides, there are also several schools in Estonia that offer intensive studies of German, French and Finnish (*Organisation of the Education System in Estonia, 2008-2009*).

Similarly, early foreign language learning is available in private pre-school institutions that can be found in larger Estonian cities like Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, Rakvere and Pärnu. There are three private education institutions in Estonia that provide full-time instruction in English for Young Learners: International School of Estonia, International Kindergarten and Tartu International School (Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia's website).

2.1 National Requirements and Conditions for Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Learners in Estonia

According to the European Commission report (Education and Training, 2010) more and more state schools in Estonia start providing instruction of foreign languages (mainly English) starting in Year 1¹⁰. Furthermore, recently the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research developed *the Estonian Foreign Languages Strategy for 2009–2015*¹¹ to ensure successful language learning in the country. The main emphasis of the document is placed on the quality of foreign language teaching in the state. Present Estonian education authorities are being concerned with the future of foreign language syllabuses, teaching resources and methodology and the technical basis of the teaching of foreign languages (*the Estonian Foreign Languages Strategy for 2009–2015*).

In this connection, the government identified a number of tasks to ensure the development of foreign language skills of Estonian residents. Primarily, the educationalists target improvements in foreign language teacher training¹², provision of resources and language teaching conditions 'to guarantee the effective teaching of foreign languages at

¹⁰ starting age for school in Estonia is seven years old.

¹¹

<http://contactpoints.ecml.at/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=8lWNTiRd1A4%3D&tabid=1319&language=en-GB>

¹² 'to ensure the training of a sufficient number of language specialists.... through state orders ...check on the quality of language teaching; to guarantee the general and in-service training abroad of specialists' (from the source above)

all levels of formal education and to create adequate conditions for this to take place, including curricula, teaching resources and teacher training' (*Estonian Foreign Languages Strategy for 2009–2015* p.9).

By having created this document the state attempts to promote the learning of foreign languages in both formal and non-formal education for various ages including pre-school children.

2.1.1 Pre- and In-service Training Opportunities for Pre-school Teachers of English in Estonia

In Estonia, to teach at a pre-school institution one has to have a teacher qualification and a degree or a diploma in education (UNESCO report, 2007).

Currently pre-service teacher training and education is provided by the University of Tartu, Tallinn University, Narva College of Tartu University, Tallinn Pedagogical College and Rakvere Pedagogical College (*Narva College of Tartu University Self-Evaluation Report, 2009:17*). Teachers of pre-primary schools are trained at the first level of higher education (Bachelor's degree). The training options available to foreign language teachers in Estonia vary from additional studies or requalification programmes to higher education qualifications such as degrees in philology. The diploma and certificate awarded to both specialisations provide evidence of teaching qualifications (Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia's website).

According to *the Estonian Foreign Languages Strategy for 2009–2015* (see above) the present government places main emphasis on in-service trainings of language teachers:

An umbrella organisation uniting foreign language teachers shall be created with the support of the state and shall maintain active operations. The organisation shall plan in-service training, advisory services and provide information on opportunities for international cooperation and training abroad and share experience and best practice.

To the author's knowledge currently there are several providers of in-service training courses in Estonia. Universities of Tartu and Tallinn as well as Narva College of Tartu University conduct numerous teacher-trainings, professional conferences and seminars for both pre-primary and foreign language teachers. What is more, the Estonian Association of Teachers of English hold annual events dedicated to English teaching issues. In addition, practising language teachers may apply for a grant to participate in a teacher training programme abroad from the non-government organisation *Archimedes* based in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. Attendance of professional trainings in English-speaking countries also benefits teachers' language proficiency.

The appropriate command of the target language of a teacher is also regarded vital. At the moment, training courses are held for teachers of foreign languages on the subject of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio¹³. The document *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*¹⁴ that recently was sent to all of Estonia's schools, universities and language centres was designed to set clear standards for validation of language competences (Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia's website).

2.1.2 Estonian National Curriculum Requirements for Foreign Language Teaching at Pre-school Level

In Estonia pre-primary establishments are to design their own curricula and activity plans by taking into account the general requirements set by the national curriculum for pre-school child care institutions. Generally speaking, the curriculum should include the

¹³ the system of language proficiency levels, determining the purposes of language study, formulating the study results, and assessing language proficiency (<http://www.hm.ee/index.php?148672>)

¹⁴ this EU document provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp)

concept of learning that emphasises the child's active participation in education and schooling activities for developing his cognitive, learning, social and self-management skills. In activity plans, the objectives of schooling and education should be set and the activities are to be planned according to the child's age and needs. Teachers are free to choose the methods of instruction. The renewed national curriculum for pre-school child care institutions coordinated by the Curriculum Development Centre of the University of Tartu came into force in 2008 (*Structure of Education in Estonia*, 2008).

In a new curriculum a child is seen as an active participant in education and schooling activities, whereas a teacher is the creator of an environment that supports the child's development. The curriculum no longer predetermines the number of different education and schooling activities in a week because it complicates the application of general teaching and different methodologies. Now cooperation between pre-school teachers and parents is more encouraged as it helps create a growing and learning environment supportive of children's development (Jürimäe and Treier, 2008).

On a regular basis a timetable of children of six to seven years of age may include activities developing psychic processes (perception, memory, illusions, thinking) or basic studying abilities: observation and listening skills, abilities to compare, rate, count, measure, group and model (development (Jürimäe and Treier, 2008). However, there appear to be no certain requirements regarding introducing early years' foreign language learning in pre-school in Estonia.

As to teaching methodology at preschool level, a pre-primary institution teacher is free to choose any appropriate method of instruction as long as it incorporates the principles of the theories of development and learning of children. In planning education and schooling activities, methods of child-oriented approach should be considered. This approach follows the principle according to which education and schooling activities are

linked together by topics related to a child's life and surrounding environment. During the recent years, the role of audiovisual and multimedia facilities has grown in study and educational activities (Kikas, 2008). The same rules may apply to foreign language teaching at pre-school level.

2.1.3 Recommended Pre-school Resources for Teaching Foreign Languages in Estonia

In 2008, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research published handbooks¹⁵ for teachers and parents to support the implementation of the national curriculum for pre-school child care institutions. The handbooks cover all fields of education and schooling activities and their organisation, the development of general skills in pre-school age as well as the evaluation and support of children's development in a pre-primary institution. Parents have the right to consult the rules of education and schooling and the curriculum. These manuals are distributed by national publishers; similarly, relevant workbooks, textbooks, educational games and other teaching materials for children are also available (Vallaste, 2010).

As for the list of state recommended resources for early foreign language teaching a "Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching and assessment" as background reading is suggested. The Estonian version – "Euroopa keeleõppe raamdokument: õppimine, õpetamine ja hindamine" – is available on the website of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research. Other materials available for online reference are the European Commission's "White book on education", "Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity: action plan for 2004–2006", "New framework strategy on multiculturalism", etc. (Vallaste, 2010). With regard to the English language

¹⁵ Lasteaiaõpetaja käsiraamat: õppe- ja kasvatustööst kuni kolmeaastaste lastega. (2003) Tallinn: Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus

teaching resources, *Allecto*, the bookstore in Tallinn, that specialises in foreign language books, conducts workshops on contemporary teaching materials run by international publishers for teachers and offers a range of materials and books for all levels and ages.

To sum up, at present there is no legal requirement for pre-school institutions in Estonia to provide early foreign language teaching. There are also no concrete recommendations with regard to foreign languages curricula or resources to be employed in language teaching to Young Learners in Estonia (see Appendix 1). However, with a recent introduction of *the Estonian Foreign Languages Strategy 2009-2015*, the education authorities of Estonia intend to develop foreign language skills of the citizens by improving first of all foreign language syllabi, teaching resources and methodology including pre-primary level.

2.2 Options Available for Learning English to Young Learners in Estonia

In this subchapter the author of the research overviews three early English teaching models on the basis of their teachers, programmes and materials employed in three early years' institutions in Estonia. As previously, the task is to establish the state of the art of teaching English to Young Learners in Estonia based on the examples of a private kindergarten with daily communication and instruction in English, a private primary school with English as a language of instruction, and a private language school with regular lessons of English as a Foreign Language for five to seven year olds.

2.2.1 Teaching English through Immersion at *International Kindergarten* in Tallinn, Estonia

Among the few pre-school institutions where full-time instruction to children is given in English is the *International Kindergarten (IK)* located in the capital of Estonia, Tallinn. It

was founded in 1997 under the name of *the International English Kindergarten*, which later was changed into *the International Kindergarten*. The institution defines its mission as ‘to bring a sparkle to children’s eyes’ (*IK’s website*). Their main objective is to bring up ‘happy and well developed children’ in a home-like environment with the help of compassionate highly qualified teachers and loving parents (*International Kindergarten Curriculum*). The private institution caters for both nursery and kindergarten age students of any linguistic background. The kindergarten operates five days a week and offers flexible attendance hours.

2.2.1.1 Educational Background of *IK* Teachers

IK holds eight to ten members of staff, who are of Estonian origin. All the teachers have a degree in education and have taken various professional development courses before starting to teach in *IK*. The *International Kindergarten* has a qualified music teacher and a professional dance teacher (*IK’s website*). According to the manager of *IK*, all teaching members of staff have a good command of English needed for the provision of daily instruction. The staff is encouraged to participate in professional development trainings on a regular basis. For example, one of the teachers participated in the *Child-Centred Method in Kindergarten* course held by *International Step by Step Association*, the elements of which have been shared with the colleagues and incorporated into the *IK* curriculum.

The kindergarten manager is responsible for the administration and liaison with parents and the local education authorities as well as social services. Qualified staff takes care of the kitchen and hygiene of the premises to ensure a healthy and happy environment.

2.2.1.2 *IK* Curriculum Requirements

Children of *IK* are divided into three age groups with a maximum of 10 children in each group with an aim of pre-school preparation in English, aided by three professional teachers.

Play in *IK* is considered to be the most important part for children's development as play-based activities help children learn about the world around them. That is why *IK* curriculum is generally play-based and takes into account children's interests, needs and abilities. The teachers' role is seen in helping to harness the child's natural curiosity and shape it into rational, logical and sustainable processes of thought through meaningful, playful and hands-on learning experiences (*IK's* website).

As mentioned previously, according to the manager of *IK*, the teaching team have developed a curriculum which takes into consideration the development and needs of children from 24 months to 7 years. The curriculum deals with different subjects or so called themes in order to keep children interested. It is carefully structured to establish certain learning objectives for each age group. Each subject is covered within about a week. Children take part in the activities related to the subject of the week during group work as well as leisure time. These activities develop mathematical, linguistic, scientific and environmental skills and support creative, social and personal development (*IK's* website).

IK sets targets for its students on the basis of the expected development of the skills of five to seven year-old children in different fields of study such as Mathematical Development, Environment and Science, Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Art and Creative Development, Music, Physical Development and Language and Literacy. Since all the subjects are covered in English plenty of time and attention is given to the development of the following language abilities of a child:

- to build vocabulary in order to work towards fluency of speech and meaningful communication with adults and peers
- to develop awareness of letters, sounds and phonics
- to employ the range of writing mediums including pencils, pens, colour pencils
- to perform various writing and symbol making activities
- to sing songs and to be engaged in story-telling
- to retell past experiences and to take part in role plays (*IK Curriculum*)

IK teachers create plenty of activities to ensure that children can express themselves in English fluently, can comprehend foreign speech and answer questions, can follow teacher instructions, recognise and write all capital letters and can read easy words. Language activities, for instance, may include conversation on the weeks` theme, study units, activities for development of basic writing skills, fairy-tales etc. Even though *IK* teachers do not teach reading as a subject, most of its six and seven year-old students can read and write to a certain extent in English before they leave *IK* for the first grade in primary school. Their daily programme includes a morning circle to develop the child`s linguistic skills, free play, additional activities related to language, science, maths, craft, music or sports or a choice of outdoors activities (*IK`s website*).

2.2.1.3 Language Resources Available in *IK*

With the kindergarten`s primary emphasis on development of spoken English *IK* teachers use a great number of flash cards, board games, songs, rhymes, story books to ensure rapid language development. The various activities of the curriculum are based on themes such as: space, fire, water, earth, myself, family, people around us, birds, animals, insects, plants and many others to teach children moral values and ecological awareness in

its broadest sense (adapted from *IK Curriculum*). Teachers also investigate suitable activities and resources available online or in their resource room.

Thereby, early English language immersion is currently being well implemented at the *International Kindergarten* for teaching five to seven year-old children. Full days, from Monday to Friday, instruction in English is delivered through self-designed play- and theme-based curriculum by qualified early years' teachers who have appropriate language competence and use of a good range of resources.

2.2.2 English as a Medium of Instruction within Primary Years Programme at International School of Estonia, Tallinn

According to the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research there are 0.5% educational institutions that provide formal instruction in English in Estonia. Those schools can be found in Tallinn and Tartu. One of them is the *International School of Estonia (ISE)* founded in Tallinn in 1995.

ISE is a coeducational day school which offers an educational programme for 115 students of 20 nationalities aged from three to nineteen years old. One third of the students are native speakers of English, mainly of American nationality, other 'majority' groups are of Estonian and Swedish origins (*ISE's website*). School's mission is to provide a high quality, internationally recognised education in English to communicative, curious, compassionate and reflective students 'in the face of 21st century challenges' (*ISE Teacher Handbook*).

The school is well equipped. Its facilities include a newly equipped science laboratory, an assembly hall, newly renovated library, a 16 station computer laboratory, a gymnasium, outdoor basketball court, a cafeteria and a playground (*ISE's website*).

The language of instruction in the school is English. *ISE* offers a comprehensive education programme with an international curriculum that is fully accredited by the Council of International Schools¹⁶ and New England Association of Schools and Colleges¹⁷. *ISE*'s Primary Years Programme¹⁸ (PYP) was established in 2003. Taking the best practices from elementary curricula around the world, this type of programme aims to foster children's natural curiosity and to develop the necessary skills for future success. It offers a framework that meets children's several needs: academic, social, physical, emotional and cultural (PYP by IB Organisation's website).

Due to the research interest, the author will only examine the *ISE* primary education instruction in Reception Year (5-6 years old) and Grade 1 (6-7 years old), with its curriculum based on the programmes of the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

2.2.2.1 Educational Background of *ISE* Teachers

The *ISE* teaching staff of 30 members (including the headmaster) has a wide background of international experience and represents teachers from France, the USA, the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Estonia. All staff undergoes regular professional reviews and evaluation. *ISE* governors believe in and support professional development. Teachers are provided with the opportunity to work collaboratively on planning, teaching and assessing (*ISE* website). The primary school class teachers are referred to as homeroom teachers. There is also an ESL specialist who speaks Estonian as her first language, and is fluent in English (adapted from the interview with *ISE* PYP coordinator).

¹⁶ An organisation that sets standards for international education (<http://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=241>)

¹⁷ Provides accreditation services to educational institutions (<http://www.neasc.org/>)

¹⁸ Primary Years Programme IB at <http://www.ibo.org/pyp/>

2.2.2.2 PYP Curriculum Requirements in ISE

ISE is authorised to offer the Primary Years' Programme for primary age students. PYP's aim is to provide learners with an opportunity to construct meaning through concept-driven inquiry and take action as a result of the learning through CONCEPTS, SKILLS, ATTITUDES, ACTION, KNOWLEDGE (PYP's website). The PYP focuses 'on the heart as well as the mind' and addresses social, physical, emotional, cultural and academic needs of a child (*Schools' Guide to the PYP*).

Six academic subjects of language, mathematics, social studies, science and technology, physical education and the arts inspire students explore knowledge and to become inquirers, thinkers, communicators and risk-takers. Other PYP learners' criteria include being knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well-balanced, and reflective. Students' progress in relation to the attributes listed above is observed and records of performance are included in each child's portfolio (*School's guide to PYP*).

In Reception Year and Grade 1 students are immersed to classroom activities in English from day one without any outside extra language support. The students with limited English get support from an experienced ESL teacher. There are no grades or homework in ESL. There is also no set curriculum because the instruction is based on the needs of the student. ESL teachers keep close contact with homeroom teachers regarding subject related vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing material that has to be covered with ESL students.

There are no textbooks or workbooks. Children use children's literature books for reading and story-writing. During the units of study students are encouraged to bring books and other materials in their mother tongue (adapted from the interview with *ISE* PYP coordinator).

2.2.2.3 Resources Available for Teaching at ISE

ISE has a good library with a great number of resources. The school is also well-equipped. Digital imaging equipment that includes LCD projectors, video and still cameras and video conferencing equipment together with computer software give students the opportunity to develop numerous skills. The entire campus is connected to the school network and the upper school is fully wireless. The staff handbook is available in a hard copy and online (*ISE* teacher handbook).

To conclude, the *International School of Estonia* provides an opportunity for Young Learners to receive high-quality formal education through the transdisciplinary programme of concept-driven inquiry in the English language in Estonia.

2.2.3 Teaching English as a Foreign Language at *Helen Doron Early English*

Franchisee Centre in Tallinn

Informal instruction of English as a Foreign Language at pre-school level is presented by a famous brand of the British linguist, Helen Doron, whose *Helen Doron Early English* (HDEE) programme is being employed in two language centres in Estonia: Kristiine and Viimsi (*HDEE's* website). According to Helen Doron, the developer of this internationally acclaimed English learning system, her English courses stimulate the child's natural ability to learn through repeated hearing at home, and play activities in the class creating a positive, fun-filled environment that gives children the ability to learn English as if it was their native tongue (*HDEE's* website).

2.2.3.1 Educational Background of Teachers of HDEE Centre

Helen Doron Early English group take a serious attitude toward its teaching qualifications and experiences. To provide language courses by HDEE method a teacher has to be accepted into *HDEE* training programme according to the following criteria: ESL

/EFL certified, experience of working with children, teaching skills, and excellent English proficiency. Being enrolled onto *Helen Doron Early English Teacher Training Course* can be the first step towards setting up a *HDEE* centre. Moreover, *HDEE* teachers are committed to attending ongoing seminars each year to accommodate their pedagogical needs and the needs of the children entrusted to them (*HDEE's* website).

Once the training is complete, *Helen Doron Early English* as a main franchisor supports the *HDEE* centre and the teachers with non-stop opportunities for networking, participation in annual conferences and professional development trainings and providing an access to the *HDEE* Teacher Web Portal and Teacher's Weekly Forum. Helen Doron has a network of over 2000 international active teachers and 17 teacher trainers contributing to the quality of *HDEE* programme by sharing ideas, suggestions and experiences at meetings, annual conferences, seminars and through an international e-mail forum (*HDEE's* website).

At the moment five specialists of Estonian origin are teaching in the two *HDEE* centres in Estonia (adapted from an interview with a teacher at *HDDE* Estonia).

2.2.3.2 HDEE Syllabus Requirements

Helen Doron piloted her exclusive language learning methodology in 1985. Today the *Helen Doron Educational Franchise Group* is a famous international brand used for teaching English around the world. The *HDEE* method is used for teaching English as a Foreign Language for children aged between three months and fourteen years old in small afternoon groups. It is based on child's natural way of learning through fun, movement, music, play and repetition (Lindvee, 2010).

The *HDEE* programme comprises ten English courses, three of which are used for teaching Young Learners of the research target age: *First English for All Children*, *English*

for All Children, More English for All Children. During these courses children learn to develop English pronunciation, study grammar and learn vocabulary. The course is one year long and is designed for a group of 4-8 children; lessons take place once or twice a week with lesson duration of 45 minutes. Students are asked to do home work and listen to a home CD with the records of material covered in lessons (Kirsipuu, 2009).

For the business security the author was unfortunately refused an access to the *HDEE* curriculum to provide its full overview.

2.2.3.3 HDDD Teaching Resources

A qualified *HDEE* teacher is supplied with all *HDEE* sets of teaching materials, promotional tools and support services. The materials normally include exclusive learning sets with songs, music on CDs, movements, games, special activities developed by experts, teaching props such as dominoes, memory and flash cards, bingo and lotto games, puzzles, drawing patterns etc. For example, a set for teaching *More English for All Children* course comprises a teacher's book with 930 words to be learnt, a workbook, a CD, three stories with one of them being recorded for acting and flashcards (adapted from an interview with a teacher at *HDDE* Estonia). In addition, each *HDEE* centre and teacher is entitled to supporting pedagogic, organisational and promotional services. *HDEE* teachers may attend seminars, participate in forums, download props, receive *HDEE* newsletter and copies of new promotional materials (*HDEE*'s website).

Generally speaking, *Helen Doron Early English* classes are conducted through a progressive English learning method in small learning groups with a motivating atmosphere by highly experienced teachers.

To sum up, Chapter 2 has presented an overview of the Estonian Government's policies regarding such early foreign language teaching components as language teacher

education opportunities, primary years teaching and materials to complete the overall picture of the state of the art of teaching English to Young Learners around Europe including Estonia. English teachers, curricula and materials of the three early age institutions were examined in detail to establish that early English teaching based on study overseas programmes is currently being implemented by qualified teachers in private institutions in Estonia. At state level, formal early foreign language teaching is not being regulated, whereas, educational opportunities for re-qualification programmes and professional development programmes are provided.

3. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The overview of the published literature on the topic of early language teaching demonstrated numerous advantages for an early start for teaching foreign languages to Young Learners provided certain learning conditions are observed. On the basis of that a hypothesis was formulated to initiate a research on early English teaching around Europe. To prove the validity of the hypothesis an inquiry into the state policies on early education, cognition of language teachers, foreign language curricula and resources applied in four European countries was made. In addition, a detailed description of six current English language teaching practices on the basis of three teaching models was drawn to confirm the realisation of early English instruction under the required learning conditions in four sample countries.

It was decided to apply action research method as most suitable for establishing the validity of the hypothesis of the research. The action research method was developed by Lewin (Cohen et al, 2007) and was seen by him as a powerful tool for improvement (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). Furthermore, Zuber- Skerritt (1996:3) suggests that the action research is a ‘critical and self-critical inquiry by practitioners into a major problem or issue or concern in their own practice’. Therefore, by employing an action research method this chapter will attempt to collect evidence to prove that the six language teaching instructions overviewed in the previous chapters exemplify good practice and are regarded as successful.

First, the good practice criteria on the basis of the outcomes of semi-structured interview for language practitioners and the views of the scholars will be established. Second, the author will attempt to determine the realisation of good practice in the six sample schools by analysing the data in three contrastive tables for the presence of good practice criteria. The data in the three contrastive tables was compiled on the basis of the

details from the previous overview of the sample school practices and the outcomes of teacher self-completion questionnaires distributed among the teachers of the six sample schools.

Finally, provided early English language teaching in the six sample schools is recognised as good practice, an analysis of the outcomes from the parent questionnaires will be performed to identify the effectiveness of the practices. By doing this the validity of the hypothesis will be established and further recommendations for language teaching practice improvements made.

3.1 Establishing Evidence for Good Practice

Good practice of language teaching is seen as a successful process achieved by the provision of adequate conditions for learning: scaffolding, maximum exposure to the target language, parental involvement, learning continuity and progression (Nikolov, 2009). What is more, Edelenbos, Johnstone and Kubanek (2006) claim that the promoters of good practice of early language teaching have to employ the teachers specifically trained to teach languages to Young Learners in classes small enough for language learning to be effective and to supply the teachers with appropriate continuous training and materials as well as to allocate sufficient curriculum time devoted to language learning. Andrews and McNeill (2005) add promotion of communication skills and the use of enjoyable and meaningful language-activities suitable for mixed-ability Young Learners to this list.

To sum it up, according to the researchers, good practice for early language teaching appears to be constituted by the following eight components:

- Appropriate exposure to target language
- Continuous meaningful study **programme** of a sufficient length
- Professional language **instructors** qualified for teaching Young Learners

- Established routine
- Small groups of learners
- Catering for mixed-ability Young Learners
- Suitable motivating learning and teaching **resources** and activities
- Parent support

It is important to note that the three good practice components have been the variables of this research: programmes, teachers and materials.

The next research task is to establish what practicing teachers and specialists involved in the area of teaching English to Young Learners of non-English origins see as benchmarks of good practice for early language teaching.

3.1.1 Structured Self-administered Questionnaire-based Survey on Good Practice

To collect detailed views of practitioners on good practice of current English language teaching to Young Learners, a structured self-administered interview was administered and conducted face to face on an individual basis or by telephone between 2007 and 2009. *Non-random purposive sampling*¹⁹ was involved for collecting qualitative data from the specialists in English language teaching to Young Learners in four European countries.

The first two interviews with the first sample were carried out in April 2007 in England, after which the original was shortened and adapted to serve better for the purpose of the research (the latest copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix 2). The survey questions were linked to the afore-mentioned eight components of good practice and fell into four parts that focused on the background of respondents, their teaching experience and expertise. The main purpose for this part of the research was to

¹⁹ selected by the researcher subjectively to target a particular group (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007)

involve as many specialists related to the research topic as possible to elicit their professional opinion on what constitutes good practice for early language teaching.

3.1.2 Profile of the Interviewees

39 language specialists from four countries (England, Estonia, Finland and Russia) took part in the survey. Nearly all of them were females (with an exception of four respondents (10%)) of middle age (74%), whose teaching experience ranges from one to more than 15 years with the majority (80%) being involved in the teaching job for at least 10 years. One third of the survey participants are native speakers of English, while the rest estimated their command of English as fluent. Half of the respondents have a degree while one third hold teaching qualifications and a few (10%) have a Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate. Slightly more than a half of the interviewees (64%) have taught English as a foreign language, whereas the other 40% acknowledged to having taught speakers of other languages in English as the medium of instruction in the past.

As to the specification of respondents' jobs, the statistics reflects the following: one third (33%) of the interviewees are English teachers, nearly one fifth (18%) are qualified primary teachers with the other 18 % being teacher trainers, and the other third is represented by administrative staff (13%), subject teachers (8%), and SEN/EAL coordinators (10%). One of the most important statistical findings on the background of the respondents is that nearly half of them (41%) have an experience of teaching English as a foreign language to Young Learners while one third have taught children of non-English speaking background through English as the medium of instruction. The majority of the survey participants (67%) have also taken part in professional development in teaching English to Young Learners, while nearly one third have been involved in conducting teacher-training based on teaching English to Young Learners at a professional level.

Thus, apparent language competence, subject expertise and extensive experience in teaching English to Young Learners of the interviewees may allow the author of the research to trust the professional views expressed by the survey participants in order to judge on what constitutes the good practice for early English learning.

3.1.3 Responses of the Interviewees

The fourth part of the interview with 15 open-ended questions was designed to elicit good practice criteria. The first five questions of Part 4 inquire about the early language learning conditions such as age, aim, place, method etc. The next five questions deal with such components as teachers, materials and curriculum requirements. Questions 10 to 12 seek a professional opinion on parent's support, progress signs and the difficulties encountered by the teachers of English to Young Learners. The last two questions are pivotal for the second subchapter of Chapter 3, where the author will try to establish the implications of the research.

The answers below are those collated from the interviews.

1. At what age do you think a child should start learning a foreign language? Why?

Many respondents supported the introduction of early language learning provided that there are appropriate conditions created. Ages of four, five and seven were equally mentioned although one quarter of respondents suggested the official school age for formal language instruction.

2. Where do you think a child should start learning another language?

The majority were in favour of kindergartens for such premises can cater full-time for children as well as provide security and scaffolding for the learning process.

3. Why do you think a child should start learning other than his native language?

The answers were the following: to provide children with the opportunity to learn English while they are so open and interested (18%). English instruction will enrich the child's development (41%) and let them master language more effectively and effortlessly (67%).

4. Which model of language learning do you find most effective: EFL/ESL/EAL/EMI/language immersion?

The majority of the interviewees (80%) were referring to immersion as the most effective model for early language teaching as it provides sufficient exposure to the target language (64%) and ensures that the development of child's first language does not get affected (41%). Other responses included studying in English as a medium of instruction where the target language is spoken within a community which maximises exposure to the target language (18%).

5. What are the important learning conditions for teaching English to Young Learners?

There appeared to be a diversity of opinions. Here are some extracts from respondents' answers:

- qualified enthusiastic teachers with a native or native like command of English (79%);
- theme- and play-based instruction with the use of songs, music, visual props, movements, drawing (72%);
- excellent motivating resources (62%);
- systematic thoroughly planned continuous teaching (13%);
- themes should correspond to the age levels of the children and ideally go in parallel with what is being learnt in the first language (10%);
- awareness of different learning styles (3%).

6. Should a teacher necessarily be a native speaker of English? What teacher competences are required to teach English effectively to Young Learners?

Nearly all agreed that non-native speakers may teach as successfully as long as the teacher is qualified, experienced, aware of child's needs and able to meet parent's and school's expectations. One third of the respondents argued that the role of the teacher is first and foremost to support the learning environment and provide input and guidance.

7. What should be a weekly frequency or length of the course for early language instruction?

Different numbers were suggested; however, all seemed to have agreed on the need to provide progressive instruction within the context with an aim to build up child's skills consistently and continuously. Besides, no one saw a point in offering 'twice a week 30-minute long' sessions for the duration of three months.

8. How big should a language group be?

Five students per a learning group appeared to be the most favourable number; however a few interviewees suggested up to ten children per a learning group.

9. What methodology, resources should be used? Who should be responsible for curriculum design and material selection?

Approximately half of the respondents pointed out that although ideally there should be a group of specialists including a teacher to develop a course syllabus or programme for teaching a foreign language to Young Learners; in reality, all is often maintained by a teacher on the basis of the materials available.

10. What is good practice for teaching English to Young Learners?

Here are some criteria suggested by the survey participants with regard to good practice for teaching English to Young Learners:

- availability of appropriate resources must be provided (87%).

- learning should be implemented creatively through play, songs, repetition, fun (82%);
- good practice must be based on integrated teaching (54%);
- teachers should be familiar with the peculiarities of both teaching the language and teaching Young Learners (26%);
- positive cooperation with colleagues should be implemented (18%);
- the language instruction provider must set up clear and realistic objectives (15%);
- effective timetabling is needed (21%).

11. How could parents be involved in assisting their child with learning a language?

By providing extra support outside the classroom: by memorising and revising words, rhymes and songs at home (38%), taking part in school events (33%), reading books and watching DVDs in English together with children (28%) or giving a child an opportunity to use the language he has already learnt (15%).

12. When should you expect Young Learners to start making progress in language learning?

No one suggested a certain time period as most of the respondents claimed that the progress in language learning would depend on a child and his needs and motivation (77%). Teachers must be aware of this and use effective strategies to ensure children's language development without expecting immediate progression (10%).

13. What problems do teachers of English to Young Learners have?

The difficulties often faced by language teachers are

- the lack of appropriate training for teachers (82%);
- the lack of appropriate equipment (74%);
- children with mixed levels of language skills and knowledge (54%);
- unsmooth transition between language programmes (31%);

- teacher's over-reliance on child's literacy skills (23%);
- inadequate English language competence (5%).

14. What are the possible ways of improving the present state of teaching English to Young Learners?

- more in-service training required (90%)
- there should be more support from the Ministry of Education (38%).
- more English language training/practice for teachers needed (18%)
- the curriculum for early language learning should be developed and maintained at the state level (10%).

15. In your opinion, should the government introduce formal Early English Instruction at a kindergarten level? Are pre-school institutions prepared for it at present?

Only a small party of the respondents (15%) expressed their agreement with introducing formal English instruction at the kindergarten level. The majority saw it as a challenge since there are no qualified foreign language pre-primary teachers as such.

3.1.4 Conclusions and Implications

According to the most popular views of contemporary language practitioners, early English teaching could take place at a kindergarten level provided it is implemented by appropriately trained **teachers** with a native-like command of English in small groups via an integrated creative teaching approach based on language immersion and sufficient language teaching **materials** and equipment. As far as a formal language instruction is concerned the majority of the teachers recommended starting it in school.

Among the most important conditions for foreign language learning qualified teachers, a theme-based approach and appropriate resources were mentioned. The language

experts also support a well-planned continuous intensive English **programme** preferably designed by a group of specialists, where parents are actively involved and students are encouraged to develop their skills gradually. However, teachers are concerned with the lack of resources and training and suggest those as areas for improvement. Finally, according to the practising teachers the good practice of early English language teaching is based on **integrated teaching** with the elements of play and fun provided by qualified pre-school **teachers** of English with the help of relevant teaching and learning **resources**.

To sum up, all the above-mentioned survey findings regarding the components of the good practice of early language teaching fully coincide with the ones proposed by the researchers. Therefore, the next step will be to establish if early language instruction in the six sample schools selected for this research appear to be employing the established good practice criteria.

3.1.5. Finding Evidence for Good Practice in the Research Sample Schools

To find out what elements of good practice are being used in the six schools in England, Estonia, Finland and Russia, the author has drawn up three contrastive tables to incorporate full details of current language instruction in those schools. The data in the tables originates mainly from two sources: the overview of reliable sources of information on each of the six schools in chapters 1 and 2 and the outcomes from the teacher questionnaire (Appendix 3), administered and distributed among the staff of each school, which in some cases were followed up in order to retrieve more details on the teaching situation.

3.1.6 Teacher Questionnaire

The teacher self-completion questionnaire (Appendix 3) in close-ended and open-ended format was administered in 2006 with an aim to collect detailed information regarding English language teaching provision from the teachers of each individual school. Approximately 18 respondents out of 25 completed the questionnaires distributed among the administration staff and practicing teachers of the six schools in the above-mentioned countries between 2006 and 2009.

The body of the questionnaire comprised of six parts dedicated to personal details of respondents, their educational background and overall teaching experience as well as current teaching and work conditions. The final section of the questionnaire was concerned with each respondent's professional views on some issues connected to the topic of the research. English was chosen as the language of the questionnaire assuming that it was designed for the teachers of English with a sufficient command of English to answer the questions.

Despite the relatively big volume of the questionnaire (six pages in the original copy) the author decided to examine only selected sections related to good practice. Namely, only the answers regarding the teacher's educational background and experience of teaching English to Young Learners aged between 5 to 7 as well as working conditions in terms of resources and school curriculum guidelines were taken into consideration with a further intention to use the data for filling in the contrastive tables for a respective school. The author assumed that the overall patterns of teacher responses combined with the sample schools' data obtained from the published sources would provide appropriate indication of the extent to which these teachers considered their school's early instruction to be good practice. Therefore, the author partially retrieved the relevant, in her view, data from the teacher questionnaires and incorporated it in the contrastive tables.

3.1.7 Contrastive Tables

This part of the research presents three contrastive tables with the findings on each of the six sample schools; the latter ones were put in pairs depending on the language teaching model. Table 1 presents the data on *St Chad's* school in England and *International School of Estonia*, while Table 2 displays the data on *Espoo English Playschool* and *International Kindergarten* and Table 3 provides the details of *BKC-International House* and *Helen Doron Early English* language schools. Such division was chosen to see if the good practice components established previously could be found in use in both sample schools (one abroad and one in Estonia) of a similar type of instruction and if they resembled one another or differed. All the data used in the tables was drawn on the outcomes of the teacher questionnaire discussed previously and information received through the overview of the published literature on sample schools.

Each of the three tables provides input on 17 components related to early language teaching stated in the left column. The author ensured that the 17 selected sections included in the contrastive tables could fully present and reflect on realisation of established criteria of good practice identified previously. The first seven sections aim to elicit information on the school's subject and chosen methodology. The next big section presents the professional profile of the sample school teachers. The following two parts display details on lessons, activities and resources. Two other sections inquire about the child's progress in the target language learning and what support s/he can get in class. The last five sectors offer information on such important issues as government support, parental involvement, difficulties encountered by teachers and possibilities for children to master their native language in class or to improve the target language outside school.

Table 1 displays information on English language teaching in the first two years of *St Chad's* primary school (UK) and Reception Year and Grade 1 at *International School of Estonia* with English as a Medium of Instruction. Six teachers (four from *St Chad's* and two from *ISE*) completed and returned the teacher questionnaire. Some of their answers were found valuable and relevant to the research and were incorporated in many sections such as teacher's profile, parent support, resources, lessons and activities and language development of Table 1. The author also referred to the published sources on *St Chad's* school and *International School of Estonia* when completing the table and contacted two teachers from the respective schools by e-mail to update some of the information. Some of the author's personal observations and teachers' comments made during a visit to *St Chad's* school were included.

TABLE 1		<i>St Chad's school (England)</i>	<i>International School of Estonia (Estonia)</i>
Type of school		state Primary school	private Primary and Secondary school
Aim		to provide a happy caring environment for learning where each child is equally valued and treated regardless the background or L1	to provide quality internationally recognised education in English as a medium of instruction
Target language		EAL	ESL
No. of students in class		up to 30	up to 10
Model of teaching		EMI	EMI
Method of teaching		EAL in the mainstream	ESL in the mainstream
Curriculum/ Programme		UK National Curriculum for KS1, subject-based (5 core subjects)	Primary Year Programme of IB curriculum, concept-driven inquiry; focus on concepts, skills, attitudes, action, knowledge
Teacher's profile	Teaching qualification	QTS, SEN and EAL speciality, non-qualified TAs	QTS, degree in education
	Language proficiency	native-speakers	native-speakers/fluent
	Teacher's L1	English	classroom teachers – English ESL teacher - Estonian
Teaching in general		formal education, limited choice of creative tasks, although there are zones for different activities incl craft corner, computer room, library etc	less formal education, no grades or homework in ESL, no set curriculum as such for ESL learners, based on the needs of the student
Resources		books, white interactive boards, computers, flashcards, phonics, board games for developing vocabulary,	games, books, puppets, audio and video materials, computer programmes, no textbooks or

	photocopying facilities, DVDs, TV, comp software, teacher handbook etc	workbooks, literature works for reading to use in lessons
L2 Development	individual education plan drawn for each EAL child; gradual utterances progress from short to longer chunks towards the end of term 2; start with building up vocabulary, understanding instructions, story-telling; spelling improves by the end of the school year; are able to read words	students start with listening, observing and simply getting involved' tutoring programme; ESL students show great improvement within the first half a year.
Scaffolding	receive regular individual support and help from TAs	receive regular individual support and help from experienced and qualified ESL teacher
Exposure to L2 outside classroom	outside school plenty of exposure to English as this is the language of community	limited, only in after school interaction with English-speaking mates/teachers
Parent support	Regular parent-teacher meeting, assistance with home reading and spelling	voluntary
Student's L1 development	No, however there are bilingual books in Russian, Polish, Japanese available in the school library	There is support in student's L1 by L1 speaking teachers and mates especially at the beginning of studies, can bring and use L1 books to class
Problems faced by teachers	Lack of EAL training and support	Mixed ability ESL learners, inconsistent attendance of students
Government support	EAL support, training and handbooks, QCA, LA support with training	n/a

The most significant outcome for the purpose of this research derived from the data of Table 1 is that there is evidence of achievement of good practice in the two sample schools thanks to several established criteria. First, both schools as the institutions with English as a medium of instruction provide an appropriate in-school exposure to the target language on the basis of a formal continuous meaningful study **programme** of a sufficient length. Second, *St Chad's* and *ISE* cater for the needs of Young Learners with a mixed command of English and can boast of the use of various age-appropriate **resources** for learning and teaching. Third, the schools employ qualified English-speaking primary **teachers**.

What is more, in *ISE*, unlike in *St Chad's*, there is an experienced and qualified teacher of ESL for Young Learners with a native speaker language competence who, in addition, speaks the native language of some students. Next, as a state school *St Chad's* cannot afford to teach EAL students in small groups although occasional face-to-face

learning occurs with a TA and a student. Parental support in both schools is not obligatory but encouraged especially in St Chad’s school, where learners receive plenty of homework based on spelling and reading where parental guidance is advised. Hence, despite little differences on the whole both *St Chad’s Primary School* and *International School of Estonia* appear to be providing early language instruction by meeting such good practice criteria as continuous meaningful study programme of a sufficient length and language exposure, various age-appropriate resources and qualified English-speaking primary teachers.

Table 2 presents input for two private kindergartens: *Espoo English Playschool* (Finland) and *International Kindergarten* (Estonia). Seven teachers (five from *Espoo English Playschool* and two from *IK*) agreed to complete the teacher questionnaire. The most valuable and relevant to the research responses were incorporated in the following table sections: teacher’s profile, parent support, resources, lessons and activities, curriculum in use and language development. The author also applied the information from the available literature sources on the two kindergartens when completing the table. Several additional contacts with a teacher from *Espoo English Playschool* were made recently to update some of the information which was received three years ago.

TABLE 2		<i>Espoo English Playschool (Finland)</i>	<i>International Kindergarten (Estonia)</i>
Type of school		private kindergarten	private kindergarten
Aim		to achieve preparedness for school via instruction in English	to bring up happy and well-developed children in home-like environment with EMI
Target language		ESL	ESL/EAL
№ of students in class		up to 10	up to 7-8
Model of teaching		full immersion	full immersion
Method of teaching		early language immersion	early language immersion
Curriculum/ Programme		theme-based, acknowledged by local education authority curriculum, different subject covered each day	own curriculum designed on the basis of Child-Centred Method through discovery learning, theme-based, 7 study fields,
	Teaching qualification	qualified kindergarten teachers and nursery nurses, qualified after school	degree in education

Teacher's profile		activity leader	
	Language proficiency	fluent	fluent
	Teacher's L1	English/Finnish	Estonian
Teaching in general	informal education through games, riddles, stories, songs, construction, imaginative play, play with sand/water		play-based, hands-on learning
Resources	books, visual props, flashcards, phonics, board games, photocopying facilities, DVDs, TV, comp software		games, books, puppets, flashcards, play stations
L2 Development	each child has a language and general development portfolio; learning starts with basic vocabulary building; gradually child starts being involved in activities on basic science, maths, story-reading, copying, letter learning		speaking and listening skills to begin with; later develops an ability to perform theme –based activities; by the age of 7 many kids can read and write in English at the elementary level
Scaffolding	routine-based day, plenty of repetition, visual support		routine-based day, plenty of repetition, visual support
Exposure to L2 outside classroom	limited		limited
Parent support	development of L1 at home, regular feedback from parents re child's and kindergarten's performance		In development of L1
Student's L1 development	It's recommended that child speaks L1 at home; L1 is 'spoken' by teachers		No, but teachers speak L1 of some of the children
Problems faced by teachers	lack of ESL training, no continuous language instruction for children once they leave for primary school; short of cover staff		mixed ability learners
Government support	n/a		n/a

The input data again allowed the author to conclude that both *Espoo English Playschool* and *International Kindergarten* evidently employ the established components of good early language teaching practice.

First, the theme-based **curriculum** is implemented through the children being immersed in English language on a daily full-time basis. One can be also certain of the meaningfulness of the study programmes and the appropriate learner's exposure to target language in both kindergartens. Second, the use of small groups, excellent **resources** and a range of activities within the established routine add up to the full picture of English instruction in the two kindergartens. Lastly, a few but well-qualified early years **teachers** work in both institutions. They all speak at least two languages: English as an Additional Language and their mother tongue. However, *Espoo English Playschool*, unlike *IK*,

ensures that at least one of their teachers speaks English as a first language. Another distinctive feature of both kindergartens is their reliance on parental support for the development of child's first language.

Table 3 provides input on two private language schools *BKC-International House* (Russia) and *Helen Doron Early English Centre* (Estonia). Five teachers (three from *BKC-IH* and two from *HDEE*) took part in the questionnaire-based survey. Some of their answers were incorporated in Table 3 in the following sections: teacher's profile, school's curriculum, parental support, resources, lessons and activities and language development.

Some information was adapted from *BKC-IH*'s and *HDEE*'s websites. Due to high competition in the education market and right for privacy there is limited published literature available on *BKC-IH* and *HDEE* centres.

TABLE 3		<i>BKC-IH (Russia)</i>	<i>HDEE (Estonia)</i>
Type of school		private language school	private language school
Aim		to develop child's linguistic skills	to present and provide the process of learning of English as a creative activity
Target language		EFL/EAL	EFL
№ of students in class		up to 8	up to 7-8
Model of teaching		teaching of English as a Foreign language	teaching of English as a Foreign language
Method of teaching		communicative method	Helen Doron Early English Method developed on the principle of L1 acquisition
Curriculum/ Programme		topic-based	curriculum developed and imposed by Helen Doron Early English Group
Teacher's profile	Teaching qualification	university graduates with TEFL certificates, often with a limited experience of teaching Young Learners; plenty of internal in-service training provided	University Degree, specifically trained to deliver EFL by HDEE method, extensive EFL experience
	Language proficiency	native-speaker	fluent
	Teacher's L1	English	Russian
Teaching in general		learning new vocabulary from visual presentation, role plays, storytelling	play-based lessons, plenty of performance, fun-orientated
Resources		books, visual props, flashcards, phonics, board games, photocopying facilities, DVDs, TV, computers	a pack of teacher resources developed by Helen Doron: HDEE games, HDEE CDs, HDEE books; selected by teachers lesson props
L2 Development		First, speaking is developed	individual progress; children are not

	(vocabulary learning to build up on short conversations), plus development of motor skills, no reading or writing as such	able to speak in English fluently by the end of the year programme; start with speaking, listening; learn letter and word writing; vocabulary studied via numerous repetition without translation
Scaffolding	at some stages of lessons	certain lesson routine, visual support
Exposure to L2 outside classroom	limited	limited
Parent support	voluntary	to ensure the course CD is listened to at home after each class
Student's L1 development	no	no
Problems faced by teachers	inexperienced teachers	learners do not 'do' homework, short study time
Government support	n/a	n/a

As far as evidence of good practice in *BKC-IH* and *HDEE* centres is concerned, the author finds it difficult to make a judgement. On the one hand, both language centres provide English teaching in small groups in appropriately-equipped classrooms with a good range of resources. On the other hand, exposure to the target language (EFL) is limited; language instruction in *BKC-IH* is conducted by native speakers inexperienced in teaching or in case of *HDEE* centre qualified language teachers of non-English background. Furthermore, the well-developed curricula in both cases seem to be affected by limited length and duration of instruction as well as unstable attendance of learners. A certain established routine is followed in lessons but it does not seem to cater for learner's confidence as a language user.

Thereby, some good practice is clearly visible in the English language instruction of *BKC-International House* and *Helen Doron Early English Centre* (e.g. small groups, excellent resources, good teachers); however, there is some evidence that other important components of good practice such as appropriate exposure to L2, continuous meaningful study programme of a sufficient length cannot possibly be identified in the respective schools.

To conclude, the three contrastive tables were drawn up with an aim to collect criteria-based data to establish whether English language instruction in the six sample schools could be regarded as examples of good practice. The author concluded that most of the sample schools including the two schools with English as a medium of instruction and the two schools based on early language immersion provide good practice of teaching English to Young Learners. As to teaching English as a Foreign Language in the last two schools, some of the significant benchmarks of good practice were found to be insufficiently met.

3.2 Establishing Effectiveness of Good Practice in the Sample Schools

The other step towards finding evidence to support the hypothesis of the given research is to identify if the early English language instruction (that has been found to meet the criteria of good practice) in the sample schools is successful. To be able to estimate the effectiveness of those practices three criteria for judgement have been set. As key benchmarks of good quality are a meaningful and continuous programme, excellent motivating learning and teaching materials and professional instructors the author decided to refer to those three criteria for further analysis of the outcomes of a parent questionnaire. An assumption was made that if those three components are described positively by the parents of the sample schools one may conclude that their teaching practice is successful. Therefore, it was decided to establish parent's attitudes to their child's language learning experiences in the six sample schools and to evaluate schools' teaching practices in the light of the three selected criteria.

3.2.1. Parent Questionnaire

To achieve the above mentioned aim, a parent self-completion questionnaire (Appendix 4) was administered in 2006. The general parent questionnaire aimed to retrieve parent's attitude and to estimate the effectiveness of early language provision in the sample schools in four European countries. The questionnaire was designed along with the teacher questionnaire and contained similar questions in order to receive a fuller picture and more examples on early language teaching practice in the six sample schools and to establish parent's satisfaction with children's and school's performance.

3.2.1.1 Parent Questionnaire Background

The first draft of parent questionnaire was produced on four A4 format pages in 2006. The author tried to incorporate plenty of questions that would allow a respondent to reflect his child's language learning experience to a full extent. Mainly the questions concentrated on teachers' cognition, language programme details, a range of resources available in school and also asked a parent to share their views on early language learning introduction.

Attention was paid to avoiding many open-ended questions and to keeping the language as simple as possible. The trial group was made up of friends whose children attended some private English lessons. A considerable number of changes in relation to wording and layout were made in response to the views expressed by members of the trial group. The most significant of those changes was the decision to prepare a less time-consuming survey that provided ready-made answers for a respondent to underline or circle. Also it was decided to have the questionnaire translated into Estonian and Russian languages.

The parent questionnaire is seven pages long and consists of ten parts. The first three parts inquire regarding the background of a child's parent such as education, parent's first language and language for communication at home. The following two parts ask for the details of the child's English language learning experience and school including parent's views upon the professionalism of their child's language teacher, course programme and resources. Next, the parent is asked to measure the child's progress in English and to provide some details of the child's previous language learning experience. Finally parents are requested to give an account of their parenting experience and their general views on the child's ability to learn foreign languages and how English teaching effectiveness could be achieved.

The parent questionnaire contains many questions of a similar nature to retrieve as much information from parents as possible. Despite being bulky, the questionnaire mostly provides close-ended or multiple-choice questions where the parent just has to choose, circle or underline a suitable answer. The open-ended questions appear towards the end of the questionnaire-based survey, where parents are asked to give their opinions on early language learning issues. The last two questions of the survey directly ask parents regarding their accounts on how early language instruction effectiveness can be achieved.

3.2.1.2 Profile of Parent Questionnaire Respondents

Approximately 28 respondents out of 80 returned completed questionnaires distributed among the parents of the Young Learners from *St Chad's* school (6), *International School of Estonia* (5), *Espoo English Playschool* (8), *International Kindergarten* (2), *BKC-International House* (4) and *Helen Doron Early English Centre* (3) between 2006 and 2010. It was ensured that the questionnaires were only distributed among the parents of five to seven-year old children attending classes of the six schools.

The general profile of the respondents is the following: all but one are females aged between 25 – 41, whose countries of current residence are England (21%), Estonia (36%), Finland (29%) and Russia (14%). All survey participants speak English but to a different extent: native speakers (7%), fluent in English (64%) and rather poor command of English (29%). First language range is extensive with one quarter speaking Estonian, one quarter speaking Finnish and one quarter speaking Russian; the last one fourth is made up by English, Polish, Swedish, Norwegian, Georgian, Japanese and Hungarian-speaking parents.

The age of the children of the survey participants ranges from five (21%) to seven (32%). The first languages of the majority of the Young Learners are Estonian, Finnish and Russian which were acknowledged to have been mastered by children to the appropriate standard. One quarter of the children has been claimed to be bilingual by their parents (including one English-speaking child).

All survey participants confirmed their children's present English skills developed previously at the age of three to five. The starting point for learning English by more than a half of the respondents' children was attending a pre-school with English as Medium of Instruction or Communication. One fourth of the children attended EFL hobby classes and some children were claimed to have been introduced to English at home through 'lessons' with parents at an early age. Parents felt responsible for introducing early English learning to their children to ensure their better general development (71%) or a mastery of English required for future studies abroad (57%), a successful future career (42%) or living in the English-speaking country (21%).

To sum up, the majority of the parent questionnaire respondents of Estonian, Finnish or Russian origins with a good command of English felt responsible for their child's English language mastery to ensure general development or successful future. All the children between five to seven from the sample schools, whose parents took part in the

research survey were claimed to have achieved some level of competence in English (speaking skill mostly developed) thanks to the attendance of the schools providing instruction in English or EFL classes.

3.2.1.3 Analysis of the Entries on Teaching, Materials and Programmes in the Sample Schools

Next, on the basis of the three selected criteria of programmes, teachers and resources the author will attempt to establish whether the teaching of English to Young Learners in the six sample school has been considered successful.

To begin with, the choice for the school was affected by several factors: most of the respondents acknowledged that they sent their child to the particular school because it had a good reputation (68%) and employed native speakers of English as teachers (57%); other parents pointed out school's good quality of language instruction (29%), lack of choice (21%) and positive reviews of the school (25%).

As far as school teachers are concerned, parents as respondents in their judgment pointed out the following qualities of the instructors in the sample schools:

TEACHERS	St Chad's, ISE, Espoo, IK	BKC-IH&HDEE ²⁰	All 6 schools
qualified early years teacher	14 67%	1 14%	15 54%
language teacher	6 29%	7 100%	13 46%
has a degree	10 48%	1 14%	11 39%
native speaker	13 62%	4 57%	17 61%
experienced	16 76%	3 43%	5 18%
creative	7 33%	3 43%	10 36%
enthusiastic	6 29%	2 29%	8 29%

In the table above one can see that the data for *BKC-IH* and *HDEE* schools differs from the statistics for the other four sample school and, therefore, could possibly affect the validity of the variable of effectiveness in this part of research if combined. To sum up the data, the majority of parents appear to believe that the teachers of the four sample schools

²⁰ the author intentionally separated *BKC-IH* and *HDEE* centres from the rest of the schools as previously there were some doubts regarding the good practice implementation in the respective schools

are experienced **English-speaking qualified teachers of early years** with a university degree. The teachers of *BKC-IH* and *DHEE* are regarded as **qualified language teachers** but not the early years' specialists by all respondents, while a half of them was certain of the teacher's extensive **professional** experience and creative approach to teaching. One third of respondents in both groups found the teachers enthusiastic. Other features mentioned were supportive, fun, strict. The overall statistics for all six schools demonstrates that the majority of the teachers in the views of the half of the parents are **native speakers of English** with a **qualification in early years' education**.

Thus, the above-mentioned characteristics correspond to the criteria of good practice for professional language instructors qualified for teaching Young Learners. What is more, the respondents were asked to express whether they were generally satisfied with the performance of their child's teacher. The majority (82%) answered positively which evidently contributes to the success of the language instruction in the sample schools despite some minor complaints regarding the 'laid-back' approach and a lack of experience in a few cases.

With regard to the school resources, three quarters of the parents found all the schools to be well-equipped and lessons including teaching materials interesting and appropriate. Below are the entries of the respondents that have been incorporated in a grid corresponding statistics.

RESOURCES	St Chad's, ISE, Espoo, IK (21)	BKC-IH&HDEE (7)	All 6 schools (28)
computers	15 71%	0 0%	15 54%
own library	12 57%	0 0%	12 43%
interactive whiteboard	17 81%	2 29%	19 68%
different activity zones	21 100%	1 14%	22 79%
classbooks	1 5%	6 86%	7 25%
CDs	10 48%	7 100%	17 61%
games	21 100%	5 71%	26 93%
additional books for reading	16 76%	1 14%	17 61%

As one can see, the quantity and a range of the equipment in the sample schools vary. The schools, where English is employed as a medium of instruction, enlist various 'zones' for different activities, high-tech equipment such as interactive whiteboards, computers for children to use and a library. *BKC-IH* and *HDEE*, on the other hand, seem to be lacking those but unlike the other four schools possess books for use in class. The evidence points to all six schools using games and CDs frequently. There is an interesting finding here regarding the type of resources in use: *BKC-IH* and *HDEE* seem to be applying a traditional set of teaching materials such as a published workbook and records for developing speaking and listening skills while the other four schools appear to be catering for more than just English language development.

Despite the variety of resources, the author finds it difficult to make a valid judgement regarding resourcing norms acceptable for good practice. As established previously, good practice materials should be suitable and motivating. The respondents did not appear to confirm that either due to the absence of the question on the teaching materials features or simply because the respondents did not see that information as crucial.

Nevertheless, the responses received for the following question enquiring whether the children found lessons enjoyable were all affirmative apart from one answer. Thus, the variety of the resources cannot prove quality and suitability *per se*. However, some link between the appropriateness of the resources and the purpose of instruction can be seen. What is more, children seem to be finding the lesson activities enjoyable which partially can be owing to the resources.

Next, in the parent questionnaire the respondents were also asked to share their knowledge of the details of their school's curriculum. Unfortunately, not many parents appeared to be familiar with those. The majority of the answers stated either unfamiliarity

with the subject or referred to some topics or subjects regularly covered in class. Therefore, it is rather difficult to make judgements upon how parents see the programme. However, nearly three fourth of the respondents claimed it to be effective as children seemed to be able to talk about the learnt material in English. The parents of *BKC-IH* and *HDEE*, on the contrary, appeared to be more concerned with the intensity and length of language classes as they would like them to be more extensive and frequent. Hence, the question of whether the study programmes in the sample schools are continuous, meaningful and of a sufficient length still arises although the issue of ample time for learning has been addressed.

Lastly, nearly all the respondents expressed their satisfaction with the overall quality of the English instruction in the sample schools.

To summarise, the analysis of the respondents' entries (related only to the teachers, materials and programmes of the sample schools) from the parent questionnaire has not provided sufficient evidence to prove the effectiveness of the English teaching to Young Learners in the six sample schools. It was confirmed by the majority of the respondents that the schools had a good reputation. It was also found out that in general the teachers in the sample schools are appropriately trained and speak English as their first language, which was one of the main reasons mentioned by the respondents for sending a child to the particular school. However, it was not easy for parents to establish whether the teaching materials were adequate and motivating despite their variety or if the programmes were meaningful and intensive enough. Therefore, the author decided to explore other related to the norms of good practice responses of the parents in detail to elicit more evidence.

3.2.1.4 Other Important Research-Related Entries

To find more evidence to support the effectiveness of the teaching practices in the six sample schools it was decided to overview the entries for the child's English language

progress in the sample schools and the parents' accounts of their views on the factors that make language learning successful.

First, all parents seem to have acknowledged their child's progress in English while attending the sample schools with their answers being ranged from 'immediately' to 'by the end of the programme' (28%), 'in a few months' (43%) or 'half a year later' (32%). Prior to the survey, many respondents' children knew a great number of words in English and could use them or recognise them when heard. Three thirds could communicate in English and understand. One fourth had English literacy skills developed.

However, it was noted that the parents' entries for the child's progress in *BKC-IH* and *HDEE* centres differed. Most of the answers from the respondents of the latter, two schools appeared to refer to the child's ability to handle words and short phrases in English while children from other schools (not the majority though) seemed to be able to communicate, read and write in English. Perhaps, those results could be explained by different amount of exposure to the target language although some additional evidence is needed to establish that. Thereby, one can conclude that the language instruction in sample schools can be regarded successful as it facilitated children's general progress in English though to a different extent.

Second, with regard to the parents' general attitudes towards the language learning process all parents appear to be in favour of the early start for language learning beginning from the very birth (11%) of a child (speaking the target language at home) and preferably before entering the primary school (formal instruction). Half of the answers (54%) suggested the ages of three and five as the favourable starting point for language instruction. Other criteria viewed by the parents as being important for successful learning conditions were **good teaching** (82%), **play-based activities** (47%), **supportive environment** (39%) and **opportunities to build up** (36%) further and not to lose

developed language skills later in primary and secondary school. The latter ones were also of the some concerns expressed by the respondents in the parent questionnaire. For instance, some parents pointed out that consistency (18%) and long-term continuity (36%) of early language instruction gives the child a better chance to master his language gradually and consistently. Hence, the respondents were all in favour of having language instruction for their child before schooling with a half of them pointing out the age between three and five as a starting point. As to the successful learning conditions, good teaching with play-based activities in a supportive environment with a further long-term opportunity to learn the language consistently and according to the level of competence were suggested.

Finally, to achieve a maximum reliability of the research evidence, the author decided to contact some of the parents by e-mail to inquire about the provision of the relevant learning conditions²¹ in the sample schools. Four parents from *St Chad's ISE*, *Espoo* and *IK* established as schools with good teaching practice were asked to answer three close-ended questions on whether their schools provided good teaching, supportive environment and play-based lessons. Three parents answered all three questions positively, while no response was received from the fourth parent.

Hence, the collected and evaluated evidence from the respondents, whose children attend the sample schools, allow the author to state that in all the research sample schools with an exception of two (*BKC-IH* and *HDEE*) appear to be employing and maintaining successful good practice of early English teaching. The judgement for success was made on the basis of the parent questionnaire outcomes that reflected overall satisfaction of the parents with the quality of extensive language instruction in the sample schools. It was established that teaching of English to Young Learners of non-English-speaking origins in

²¹ the condition of long-term consistent instruction was excluded because there were many administrative and non-research-related issues involved.

the sample schools is conducted by qualified instructors in a supportive learning environment with enjoyable play-based activities and the use of various language resources which results in a child's sufficient linguistic progress.

CONCLUSION

The overview of the existing early language teaching practices in Chapters 1 and 2 shows that a great amount of activity is taking place to create conditions for early English language teaching practice across Europe at present. However, the educationalists have still not drawn a conclusion on a universal model of how foreign languages should be taught. Moreover, despite decreasing the optimum starting age for learning other than native languages, many European governments still do not provide much guidance and support to educational institutions with regard to curriculum design, teaching qualifications, resources or methods for teaching Young Learners.

Early English language instruction to the non-native English-speaking children of five to seven years of age was identified as the primary area of interest for the given research. The author proposed that the process of teaching English to Young Learners will be more successful if it promotes good practice that is constituted of effective curriculum, efficient teacher and appropriate resources.

The empirical study of the research was undertaken after making an inquiry into the current process of teaching English to Young Learners in England, Estonia, Finland and Russia to establish whether the current early language instruction is successful. To prove the hypothesis some important combined quantitative and qualitative evidence was collected through a semi-structured interview, contrastive tables and self-completion questionnaires in open- and close-ended format as tools of the action research method chosen for investigation.

Analysis of the evidence allowed to make the following conclusions:

- 1) Early foreign language teaching is advantageous.
- 2) There is hardly any state support given to maintaining early foreign language instruction at pre-school level at the moment.

- 3) Teaching of English to Young Learners is currently implemented through the following three models both in Estonia and abroad: language immersion, teaching through English as a medium of instruction and teaching English as a foreign language.
- 4) There are some important components that constitute good practice of early language teaching: a continuous meaningful study programme of a sufficient length and appropriate exposure to the target language, professional language instructors qualified to teach Young Learners, suitable motivating learning and teaching resources and activities carried out in small groups.
- 5) Four sample schools are capable of implementing good practice of early language instruction due to meeting the majority of the established criteria of good practice
- 6) Parents expressed their satisfaction with the quality of teaching including the teachers' professionalism in all six sample schools. It was also pointed out that early language learning should take place in a supportive environment where plenty of play-based activities and opportunities to build up language proficiency for Young Learners are provided.
- 7) The process of teaching English to Young Learners will be more successful, if early teaching practice is constituted of qualified teachers with an excellent linguistic competence, continuous meaningful curriculum of a sufficient length and appropriate exposure to the target language as well as appropriate motivating language resources.

The last conclusion paraphrases the hypothesis of the given research and makes it appear valid. With regard to the question of validity of the research and its hypothesis the following judgement was made.

The main findings from the previous subchapters established that some sample schools examined in the research appeared to be maintaining successful good practice of early English teaching. What is more, their practices were found to be successful due to several good practice components being found in use.

However, the research hypothesis drawn on the basis of the professional views of the scholars specialising in the field of early language learning emphasised the importance of applying all three components of the good practice (effective curriculum, qualified teachers and appropriate resources) to make it more successful. In a real situation, the provision of some of the good practice components (.e.g. effective curriculum in the case of *BKC-IH* and *HDEE* centre) appeared to be incomplete and insufficient. Conversely, if the sample school's early language teaching practice provided all three components to a full extent the process of teaching English to Young Learners would be more successful there. This proves the validity of the research hypothesis and makes the research findings valuable.

As a result of the established value of the research conclusions the following recommendations for the current and future practices of early English instruction can be suggested:

1. In the present situation, the commitment and contribution of the government to the introduction of formal early language teaching should be increased in the following areas: teacher training, provision of adequate resources as well as development and design of effective early language curricula based on integrated teaching by national specialists.
2. Provided formal foreign language learning is introduced at a pre-school age, state governments will have to be fully involved in creating, maintaining and monitoring the appropriate learning conditions in pre-schools: e.g. in decision

and policy making, provision of appropriate teacher training and supply of adequate resources.

3. The positive and negative experiences of current early language teaching practices should be taken into consideration and generalised for the sake of further good practice.
4. The components constituting good practice of early language teaching should be further investigated and the findings as well as implications should be made accessible to teachers and subject specialists.
5. To continue research in the area of the effectiveness of good practice of language teaching so as to establish the most successful models for teaching English to Young Learners.

By proposing the recommendations stated above the author of the research hopes to contribute to the development and improvement of the early English teaching practice in Estonia.

To sum up, the given research appears to be of some value to the area of early English language teaching. First, it has overviewed some existing practices applied both in Estonia and abroad by describing the most important required conditions of curricula, materials and teachers. Second, seven conclusions on the basis of the findings of the research were drawn and five recommendations on such domains as language curricula, materials and training of language teachers to Young Learners were made. The suggestions were mainly concerned with increasing the input of the Government in decision and policy making and provision of appropriate support for early language teaching.

It was also recommended to provide more information on existing practices of early language instruction and the outcomes of using different models of the language curricula that are currently being implemented to the specialists involved in the field. In addition,

researchers should explore the advantages and disadvantages of current teaching models for early language instruction in detail. Alternatively, one may conduct research on how to provide and achieve the effectiveness of curricula, materials and teaching or what education reforms should be implemented in Estonia to introduce a formal foreign language instruction at pre-school level.

This research is an effort to better understand the practice of teaching English to Young Learners of other languages. It is the author's hope that this research will ultimately contribute to the field.

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APPENDIX 1	AGE FOR		YL's TAR GET FL	PRE- SCHOOL TEACHER QUALIFI CATIONS	LANGU AGE TEACHER QUALIFI CATIONS	YL GROUP SIZE	PRIVATE /STATE SECTOR for ELT to YL	GOVERN MENT SUPPORT for ELT to YL	YL's SKILL TO DEVE LOP	DIFICUL TIES in ELT to YL	RESPONSIBLE FOR DESIGN&SELECTION of ELT to YL			
	SCHOOL AGE	STARTIN G SCHOOL									FORMAL LEARNIN G EFL	CURRI CULUM	SYLLA BUS	METHOD
ENG LAND	5	-	EAL	QTS+ PGCE (FOR CLASS TEACHER)	Qualified Teacher Status+ Degree or Postgraduate certificate in education	UP TO 30	STATE	EAL TRAINING, QCDA, Local Authorities	Literacy Numeracy, ICT, EAL	LACK OF QUALIFIED EAL SPECIA LISTS	QCA	SCH O OL ADM IN	TEA CH ER	CL AS S TE A C H ER S
ESTO NIA	7	7-8	EFL	DIPLOMA/ CERTIFIC ATE IN EDUCA TION	DEGREE+CE RTIFICATE IN EDUCA TION	UP TO 20	PRIVATE	Estonian Foreign Languages Strategy 2009–2015	(SPEA KING/ LISTE NING)	1-YEAR GAP to FURTHER FORMAL LANGU AGE TRAINING	chosen at private pre-school discretion's (the content of the language course does not unfortunately correlate with the material later covered in EFL classes in school)			
FIN LAND	7	9	EFL	DIPLOMA /DEGREE IN EDUCA TION	DEGREE+ TEACHING PRACTICE	13-20	PRIVATE	Finnish Core Curriculum for Pre- primary Education	CLIL	2-YEAR GAP to FURTHER FORMAL LANGU AGE TRAINING	chosen at private pre-school discretion's although the pre- school admin has to ensure that the curriculum meets the local education authority requirements for teaching at pre-school level			
RUSSIA	7	7-8	EFL	DIPLOMA/ CERTIFIC ATE IN EDUCA TION	DEGREE	UP TO 20	PRIVATE	NONE	(SPEA KING/ LISTE NING)	LACK OF QUALIF IED EFL TEACH ERS FOR PRE- SCHOOL	chosen at private pre-school discretion's (the content of the language course does not unfortunately correlate with the material later covered in EFL classes in school)			

Appendix 2

QUESTIONS for the INTERVIEW with FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRACTITIONERS

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Sex: M/F

Name and contact e-mail: (optional):

Age (please circle): under 25 25-35 35-45 45-55 over 55

First language (*mother tongue*):

The place and country of present employment:

II. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

Degree/Diploma (please specify):

Teaching Qualification(s)(please circle): **PGSE/TEFL/EAL qualifications/QTS/other**

Command of English (please circle): **nativespeaker/fluent/intermediate/limited/other**

Membership in any professional body/organisation:

III. TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Experience length (please circle): just started 1-3 years 3-8 yrs 8-15yrs over 15

Are you (please circle) a **generalist/subject/English teacher**
/administration/trainer/other.....?

Have you ever taught children aged between 5 to 7 years old? YES/NO (please circle)

Have you ever taught (please circle) **EFL/ESL/EAL/EMI ? YES/NO** (please circle)

Have you ever taught EFL/ESL/EAL/EMI (please circle) **to children aged between 5-7**
(please circle)? **YES/NO** (please circle)

Have you ever participated in a teacher-training on teaching English to Young
Learners? YES/NO (please circle)

Have you ever conducted a teacher-training on teaching English to Young Learners?
YES/NO (please circle)

IV. PROFESSIONAL VIEW

1. At what age do you think a child should start learning a foreign language? Why?
2. Where do you think a child should start learning another language?
3. Why do you think a child should start learning other than his native language?
4. Which model of language learning do you find most effective: EFL/ESL/EAL/EMI/immersion?
5. What are the important learning conditions for teaching English to Young Learners?
6. Should a teacher necessarily be a native speaker of English? What teacher competences are required to teach English effectively to Young Learners?
7. What should be a weekly frequency or length of the course for early language instruction?
8. How big should a language group be?
9. What methodology, resources should be used? Who should be responsible for curriculum design and material selection?
10. What is a good practice for teaching English to Young Learners?
11. How could parents be involved in assisting their child with learning a language?
12. When should you expect Young Learners to start making progress in language?
13. What problems do teachers of English to Young Learners have?
14. What are the possible ways of improving the present state of teaching English to Young Learners?
15. In your opinion, should the government introduce formal early English instruction at kindergarten level? Are pre-school institutions prepared for it at present?

APPENDIX 3

Teacher Questionnaire

*Dear respondent,
this questionnaire is designed to collect detailed information
about your experiences and expertise
in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or Second Language (ESL)
to Young Learners aged between 5 and 7.*

Thank you for taking your time to answer all these questions.

PERSONAL INFORMATION: (please circle your answers where appropriate)

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss

Sex: M/F

Name (optional):

Age: under 25 25-35 35-45 45-55 over 55

First language (*mother tongue*):

The country of living/present employment (if different):

Contact e-mail:

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

Degree/Diploma (circle) **in:**

Any other qualifications:

Qualification(s) for teaching EFL/ESL:

Assess your level of English in the following skills by putting a tick where appropriate:

(**1** is the lowest score and **5** is the highest):

SKILL	1	2	3	4	5	please tick if native speaker
speaking						
listening						
reading						
writing						

Are you a member of any professional body/organisation? YES/NO (*please circle*)

If yes, please underline where applicable:

You are a member of your subject teachers' association in your state/elsewhere (*please provide a name*)

your subject's special interest group (*please provide a name*)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Your teaching experience: just started 1-3 years 3-8 years 8-15 years over 15 (*circle*)

What subject/s have you taught so far? At what level? (*please state all subjects/ levels*)

SUBJECT	LEVEL	WHERE	AGE OF LEARNERS

Have you ever taught English as a Second (SL) / Foreign language (FL)? YES/NO

If yes, please, fill in the chart: (*please circle*)

SUBJECT	WHERE	AGE OF LEARNERS	DATES (YY-YY)

Do you take part in professional development? YES/NO (*please circle*).

If yes, please specify by ticking:

- I attend in-service teacher training in my school/town/country/abroad (*please circle*)
- I develop and run in-service teacher training in my school/town/country (*please circle*)
- We share our teaching experience and knowledge with colleagues regularly;
- I design learning materials for my lessons which I share with colleagues;
- I am a member of a teachers' association/ special interest group in my country/elsewhere (*please circle*)
- other

PRESENT TEACHING:

The name of your present employer (optional):

What type of educational institution is it? (please circle where appropriate)

private/state / if other please specify:

compulsary/optional/ if other please specify:

nursery/pre-school/kinder-garten/language school/primary/if other please specify:

What subject(s) are you teaching at present: (please fill in the chart)

SUBJECT	WHERE	AGE OF LEARNERS	LEVEL (if applicable)

PRESENT ESL / EFL (English as a Second/Foreign Language) TEACHING

Are you teaching EFL/ESL at the moment? YES/NO (please circle).

If yes, please fill in the chart:

EFL/ ESL	age group	level	Previous language learning experience (Y/N)	Learners' home language/ language of instruction	Nº of students in class	Nº of hours/ classes per week	Compul sary/option al subject (C/O)	Where

Do you have any bilingual/English speaking children in your teaching groups?

YES/NO (circle). If yes, please specify how many children/ what languages the bilingual

children speak/why they attend ESL/EFL classes:

Do you plan your present EFL/ESL classes according to (*please underline*):

- the State National curriculum
- your school curriculum
- language immersion programme requirements
- other requirements (please specify):

or do you follow personal/colleague/parent (*please circle*) **reccommendations?**

.....

Who is responsible for:

please tick where appropriate in the chart below

<i>Please tick where applicable</i>	designing EFL/ESL syllabus?	deciding on frequency & number of hours?	deciding on which materials to use in class?
HEAD-TEACHER			
YOUR COLLEAGUES			
YOU			
PARENTS			
OTHER(<i>please specify</i>)			

Please specify the language resources and materials you use in EFL/ESL classes.

EFL books	
ESL books	
Audio tapes/CDs	
Videos/DVDs	
Computer software	
Books for reading	
OTHER(<i>please specify</i>)	

What other materials/props do you use in EFL/ESL classes (e.g. handicraft materials, paints, games, toys etc) (*please specify*):

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

Do you have your own room to teach ESL/EFL? YES/NO (*please circle*)

If yes, can you describe it by answering the following questions?

(please circle where appropriate):

Is there a TV, VCR, a computer, a CD/DVD player, an interactive white in it?

Are there different zones for playing, sitting, doing writing/drawing task, wholeclass activities, quiet corner? *(please circle where appropriate):*

*Extra comments:

Would you describe your classroom as self-contained? YES/NO *(please circle and specify)*

If not, please describe where you normally teach EFL/ESL by trying to incorporate the questions above in your answer:

What facilities for teaching EFL/ESL does your school provide: *(please underline where applicable)*

- free resources (books, tapes/CDs/DVDs, videos, softwares)
- free photocopying
- TV, VCR, CD/DVD player
- computer lab
- white interactive board
- free stationery

-.....

Does your school administration willingly refund for: *(put YES/NO across where appropriate):*

- in-service EFL/ESL teacher-trainings you wish to participate in?
- resources you wish to purchase for in class use?
- expenses connected with a stage performance or a project work you wish to launch?
- improvement of EFL/ESL classroom?
- upgrading school's equipment?

-.....

PROFESSIONAL VIEW

Please express and support your opinion regarding the following matters:

What age do you think a child should start learning a second /foreign language? Please specify

Where/How do you think a child should start learning a second/foreign language?
(please underline & specify below)

- in natural environment: in a playground with English-speaking children
- at English school with English as a language of instruction
- in a language immersion group with EMI but the first language of learners is different
- in a private language school by having regular EFL classes
- by having regular EFL classes in a child's school as an obligatory/optional subject
- at home with parents
- by having a private tutition
- by watching TV/videos/DVDs in English
-

With what do you start EFL/ESL teaching first? In your opinion what skill should be taught first?

When should you expect your learners to start making progress in EFL/ESL? (please underline):

- immediately
- after 1/2/3/4/5 months of teaching
- after half of the programme is fulfilled
- never
-

How do you ‘measure’ progress? - By noticing/having proved that your learners

(please underline where appropriate)

can grasp general understanding of commands in English

can grasp general understanding of what you say in English in class

can grasp general understanding of what you read in English in class

can grasp general understanding of what they hear in English in class

can name objects shown

can say English words or phrases with correct pronunciation and intonation

can answer in English to your questions

can use their English withing a context

use English langauge creatively

speak English accurately

speak English to class mates

can read English words

can write English letters and words

can make/say/read/write sentences in English

.....

What problems do EFL/ESL teachers of Young Learners have? (please underline where

appropriate)

learners do not make progress

learners tend to speak in their mother tongue all the time

learners refuse to learn/use the target language

parents/learners have very high expectations

learners get easily frustrated when unable to express themselves in the traget language

there are no resources

there are no facilities

there is no syllabus/curriculum for this age group

discipline in class

.....

Should an EFL/ESL teacher necessarily be a native speaker of English? YES/NO

(please circle and specify WHY?)

Should the EFL/ESL learner's groupmates be native speakers of English? YES/NO

(please circle and specify WHY?)

Should the EFL/ESL learner's parent (just one) be a native speaker of English?

YES/NO *(please circle and specify why).*

Do you think a child learns (like any other subject) or acquires (achieves nearly native speaker competence) other than his native language? Please specify.

Do you think a child learns a foreign language better than a teenager/adult? Why?

Any additional comments? Please use an additional sheet if needed.

Thank you for taking your time to answer all these questions!

***Please return it to Viktoria Sokolova by e-mailing to: victoriasokolova@yahoo.co.uk
or by post to the address enclosed to the questionnaire.***

APPENDIX 4

Parent questionnaire

*Dear respondent,
this questionnaire is designed to collect detailed information
about your child's experience
of learning English*

Thank you for taking your time to answer all these questions.

PERSONAL INFORMATION: *(please circle your answers as appropriate)*

Sex: M/F

Name and Contact e-mail (optional):

Your age: under 25 25-35 35-45 45-55 over 55

Relation to a child: parent next kin grandparent guardian other.....

Your first language:

Country of residence/current living:

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

Secondary/College/Professional/Higher: *(please circle)*

Do you speak any other languages apart from your native language?

(please write as many as applicable)

Assess your level of English by putting 1 as the lowest score and 5 as the highest:

SKILL	1	2	3	4	5	If native speaker please tick below
speaking						
listening						
reading						
writing						

FAMILY BACKGROUND:

Number of family members:

Languages spoken at home:

CHILD'S PROFILE:

Name (optional):

Sex: M/F

Child's age:

Child's first language:

Is your child bilingual (speaks two languages equally well)?: YES/NO (*please circle*).

If yes, what languages does he/she speak?:

YOUR CHILD'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Can your child speak English? YES/NO (please circle)

If yes, at what age did he/she start learning English?:

Please underline below **What your child can do in English:**

- knows many words
- understands spoken English
- can communicate in English
- can read in English
- can write in English

Where did your child start learning English? (*please underline where appropriate*):

- at home as one of the parents is a native speaker of English
- at home as English is a home language too
- in a playground **with** English-speaking children
- at English school with English as a language of instruction
- in a language immersion group with English as a language of instruction but the first language of learners is different
- in a private language school by having regular EFL classes
- in his/her school by having regular EFL classes as an obligatory/optional subject

- at home by practising it with parents
- at home with a private tutor
-

If your child started learning English at an educational institution, please specify the following:

- the school's name (optional)
- location (town/country)
- is it private / state? *(if other please specify):*
- is it a kindergarten/primary/language school? *(if other please specify):*
- does it provide compulsory / optional education? *(if other please specify):*
- is English learnt as a separate subject or does child study in English? *(if other please specify):*
- was (were)/is (are) your child's groupmates native speakers of English? YES/NO
- how many lessons/hours per week your child studies English/in English:
(if other please specify)

PROFILE OF YOUR CHILD'S PRESENT SCHOOL

How/why did you find/choose this school for your child to learn English/study in English? *(please underline where appropriate):*

- it was recommended by a friend/teacher/local government advisor/
- my friend's child(ren) go(es) there
- it was/is the only school available in the area
- it was/is affordable
- it was/is prestigious to send your child there
- the school has a good reputation
- it provides a high quality education

- its teachers are professional
- it has native-speakers of English as teachers
-

- TEACHERS

To your knowledge is/are your child's teacher(s) (please underline where appropriate)

- a qualified early years teacher/ language teacher (*please circle*)
- has a degree
- a native speaker
- experienced
- creative
- supportive
- praising
- enthusiastic
- helpful towards pupils/ towards parents (*please circle*)
-

Are you satisfied with your child's English teacher's job? YES/NO Why?

- STUDY PROGRAMME

To your knowledge is the school's English language programme that your child

follows: (please underline where appropriate)

- widely used in other schools
- made up by the English teacher
- a part of the school's curriculum
- theme-based/ subject based (*please circle*)
- designed for a short period of time/ 3 months/ a year/ several years
- there is no programme as such

- I don't know anything about it
-

Do you find your child's school's English programme successful? YES/NO Why?

- TEACHING MATERIALS and CLASSROOM/SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

To your knowledge what facilities and resources does your child's school possess?

(please underline where appropriate)

- a separate well-equipped classroom for learning English
- library with books
- computer class
- an interactive whiteboard/computer/projector *(please circle)* in a classroom
- a TV/VCR/DVD/CD *(please circle where appropriate)* players in a classroom
- different zones for playing/writing/drawing in a classroom?
- craft station/reading corner/quiet corner *(please circle where appropriate)*
- playground/gym/garden *(please circle where appropriate)*
- free stationery to be used by children in lessons
- photocopying facilities in school
- textbooks/workbooks/books for reading *(please circle where appropriate)*
- CDs/videos/computer sotwares/DVDs *(please circle where appropriate)*
- games/flashcards *(please circle where appropriate)*
-

Is the school/classroom well-equipped? YES/NO Why?

Are lesson/teaching materials appropriate/interesting? YES/NO Why?

Are lessons enjoyable for your child? YES/NO Why?

Are you generally satisfied with the quality of English instruction in your child's school? YES/NO Why?

How do you think your child felt/feels about learning English/in English?

(please put a tick where appropriate)

	worried	relaxed	motivated	confident	enjoying it	write your suggestion
in the start?						
now						

additional comments:

Does English learning experience affect your child's

(if yes, please specify in the columns provided)

behaviour at school?	behaviour outside school?	emotional state?	first language development?	overall development?	relationship with you?

additional comments:

What problems has your child come across during English language learning?

(please underline and circle where applicable)

- he/she had/has no problems
- he/she did/does not feel secure in class
- he/she did/does not want to study/speak/use English in class
- he/she wanted/wants to speak his/her mother tongue in class all the time
- he/she refused/refuses to practise English at home
- he/she did/does not get teacher's/peers'/parents' support/approval/praise
- he/she wanted/s to be able to speak English immediately
- he/she never understood/stands what he/she was/is asked to do in class
- he/she did/does not want to take part in class activities
- he/she was/is unable to express him/herself in the target language
- he/she was/is unable to meet teacher's/parents'/his/her own expectations
-

CHILD's PROGRESS in ENGLISH

When did you start noticing that your child started making progress in English?

(please underline)

- from the very start
- 1/2/3/4/5 month(s) later
- at the end of a school term/school year/course *(please circle)*
- half a year later
- I did not notice any significant progress
-

How did you realise that your child has started making progress in English?

By noticing that he/she *(please underline as many as appropriate)*

- was able to repeat/use English words outside school
- was able to name objects shown
- was able to say English words/phrases with correct pronunciation and intonation
- was able to build short phrases in English
- was able to apply grammar *(e.g. three cats/ they **are** etc)*
- was able to understand generally what is said in English in class/on CD to him/her
- was able to grasp general understanding of what is read to him/her in English
- was able to answer to questions in English
- was able to use English within a context
- was able to speak English accurately/correctly
- was able to communicate in English with a teacher/class mates/a native speaker
- was able to write English letters and words
- was able to make/say/read/write sentences in English
-

What level of English, in your view, has your child achieved? *(please underline)*

- can say English words or phrases with correct pronunciation and intonation
- can build short phrases in English
- can grasp general understanding of what is read/said to him/her in English
- can answer in English to questions
- can express himself/herself in English
- speaks fluently in English and can communicate with native speakers
- speaks English as well as his first language
- can write English letters and words
- can read in English
-

YOUR CHILD’S PREVIOUS LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Had your child had any learning experience before he started learning English/in English? YES/NO *If yes, please underline where appropriate:*

- my child was fluent in his first language
- my child was able to read in his first language
- my child was able to write in his first language
- my child had learnt another foreign language before
- my child is bilingual
-

PARENT’S EXPERIENCE

Did you assist your child in learning English? YES/NO *(please circle).*

If yes, please specify HOW: by

- speaking in English to the child occasionally/regularly/all the time *(please circle)*
- revising what your child did in class

- reading to him in English
- learning songs/rhymes/poems in English
- playing English games
- persuading your child to watch cartoons in English
- persuading your child to use educational softwares in English
- providing him/her opportunities to practise English outside classroom
-

What problem/worries did you as a parent face?

(please underline and circle where applicable)

- I did not have any problems
- I had to persuade/make my child (to) learn English
- I was worried as my child was unable to cope/ keep up with pressure/ requirements
- I was worried that learning English would affect his knowledge of his mother tongue
- My child was upset as he/she was unable to speak English immediately/ express him/herself in English
- My child refused to practise English at home
- My child refused to study/speak/use English in class
- I was unable to help my child in learning English
-

Has school requested your help or support with English for the child? YES/NO

Is there regular communication between the school/teacher and parents? YES/NO

If yes, how is it done?

How do you plan to support your child's knowledge of English/keep his/her interest to English in future?

- we are living/planning to live in the country where English is a state language

- he/she will be/is attending a school with English as a language of instruction
- we are going to hire a private English tutor for the future
- we are planning to practise/practising English at home
- he/she is going to study English as a part of his/her school's curriculum
- he/she has got (an) English speaking friend(s)
-

Why do you think your child needs to learn/speak English?

(please underline/ circle where applicable)

- for his/her future career
- for his/her general development
- for future travelling
- for being able to study abroad
- because we are living/planning to live in the country where English is spoken
- for the sake of prestige
- it is a language of instruction in his/her school
- it is a 'home' language
-

PARENT'S PERSONAL POINT of VIEW

Please give your opinion of the following matters (OPTIONAL):

At what age do you think a child should start learning a foreign language?

(please specify)

Where/How do you think a child should start learning a foreign language?

(please underline & specify below)

- in natural environment: in a playground with English-speaking children
- at English school with English as a language of instruction

- in language immersion group with English as a language of instruction (If the first language of learners is different)
- in a private language school by having regular EFL classes
- by having regular EFL classes in a child's school as an obligatory/optional subject
- at home with parents
- by having a private tuition
- by watching TV/videos/DVDs in English.
-

When should you expect a child to start making progress in learning a foreign language? (*underline*):

- immediately
- after 1/2/3/4/5 months of teaching/at the end of the year/course (*please circle*)
- never
-

Should a child's teacher(s)/one of the parents/classmates necessarily be (a) native speaker(s) of English? YES/NO (*please circle & specify WHY?*)

What makes the process of language learning effective for a child: programme/resources/teachers?

How can school make English language teaching to Young Learners effective?

Thank you for taking your time to answer all these questions!

Please return it to Viktoria Sokolova by e-mailing to: victoriasokolova@yahoo.co.uk or by post to the address enclosed to the questionnaire.

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

INGLISE FILOLOOGIA ÕPPETOOL

VIKTORIA SOKOLOVA

TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS: PROGRAMMES, MATERIALS
AND TEACHERS

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Annotatsioon

Pidades silmas kaasaegset kommunikatiivse keeleõppe nõuet, mis asetab põhirõhu võimalikult varakult algavaks võõrkeelte õpetamiseks (Harmer, 2003; Cameron, 2001), ei saa olla mingit kahtlust sellise uurimustöö tähtsuses ja väärtuses antud valdkonnas. Vastavalt 2006. aastal välja antud „Hea Tava ja Põhiprintsiipide“ aruandele soovitab Euroopa Komisjon tungivalt liikmesriikidel alustada lastele võõrkeelte õpetamist enne formaalse haridustee algust (Edelenbos, Johnstone ja Kubanek, 2006). Kahtlemata toob varajane võõrkeele õpe kaasa muutusi sellistes olulistes pedagoogilistes aspektides nagu pedagoogiline praktika, õppekavad, varajase õppe õpetajakoolitus ja õppematerjalid (Brewster, Ellis ja Girard, 2002; Williams, 2004).

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärgiks on analüüsida praeguse inglise keele õpetamise taset väikelastele erinevates Euroopa riikides, keskendudes peamiselt õpetajate

ettevalmistatusele, keeleõppe programmidele ja kasutusel olevatele õppmaterjalidele.

Uurimustöö hüpoteesiks on väide, et algtasemel inglise keele õpe eelkooliealistele on tõhusam juhul, kui on loodud hea õpetamise tava praktika, mis koosneb heast õppekavast., kvalifitseeritud õpetajatest, sobivatest õppematerjalidest ja on heaks kiidetud ka vanemate poolt. Seega eeldab antud magistritöö autor, et uurimustöö läbiviimine antud valdkonnas annab esiteks võimaluse näidata kuidas tuleb alustada inglise keele õppega väga noortele õppijatele ja teiseks aitab kindlaks teha, milliseid eeltöid on vaja teha sellistes valdkondades nagu keele õppekavad, materjalide väljatöötamine ja õpetajakoolitus selleks, et tagada edu. Seega on uurimustöö eesmärgiks saada teadmisi sellest, kuidas keeleõpet varajastes etappides veelgi parandada.

- | Antud | uurimustöö | püüab: |
|---|------------|------------------------------|
| - anda ülevaate | uurimustöö | teemaga seotud kirjandusest; |
| - uurida praeguste noorte õppijate inglise keele õpetajate kutsealast tausta mõnedes valitud Euroopa riikides; | | |
| - kindlaks teha, millised programmid, meetodid ja materjalid on kasutusel inglise keele õpetamiseks lastele vanuses viis kuni seitse aastat alates 2006. aastast kuues koolis nelja Euroopa riigi näitel; | | |
| - sooritada küsimustikul ja intervjuul põhinev uuring selleks, et selgitada õpetajate ja vanemate suhtumist varajasse keeleõppesse uuritavas kuues koolis; | | |
| - tuua välja seosed uurimuse käigus rakendatud tõhusate meetodite ja käesoleva uurimustöö konkreetsete tulemuste vahel, et määratleda varajase inglise keele õpetamise tõhusust edasise arendustöö tarbeks. | | |

Sissejuhatav osa algab ülevaatega sellest, kuidas inglise keelt soovitatakse õpetada teadlaste, haridustöötajate ja praktikute poolt. Kaks esimest peatükki vaatlevad, kuidas õpetatakse inglise keelt noortele õppijatele Inglismaal, Soomes, Eestis ja Venemaal *St*

Tšaadi's (St Chad's) Kooli Lichfieldis, *Espoo inglise Playschooli* (Espoo English Playschool) Helsingis, *International School of Estonia*, *Rahvusvahelise Lasteaia* (International Kindergarten), *Helen Droni Early inglise* (Helen Doron Early English) keele kooli Tallinnas ja *BKC-International House* Moskvast näidete põhjal. Esitatud on uuritavates koolides kasutatavate keeleprogrammide, õpetamismeetodite ja -vahendite üksikasjalik analüüs, samuti nõuded keeleõpetajatele ja vanemate hoiakud. Tõestamiseks uurimistöös hüpoteesi paikapidavust, kasutatakse võrdleva analüüsi meetodit. Andmed analüüsiks saadakse autori poolt loodud võrdlustabelitest, milles on rakendatud tõhusate meetodite üksikasjad õpetamise hea tava raames; üldküsimumustikest, mis on mõeldud nii õpetajatele kui ka vanematele; keelepraktikute teaduspõhistest uuringutest. Tulemusi on põhjalikult kirjeldatud. Tehakse järeldused ning antakse soovitusi.

Autori laialdane õpetamiskogemus rahvusvahelistes koolides julgustas käesolevat uuringut ette võtma lootuses, et uurimistöös teeb väärtusliku panuse koolieelsesesse inglise keele õpetamisse Eestis.