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ANALYZING CAUSES OF DIFFERENCES
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
IN ESTONIAN- AND RUSSIAN-MEDIUM SCHOOLS IN ESTONIA
MA thesis

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the problem of the big difference in the performance of the Russian-medium schools' students in the English language state examination compared to Estonian schools' students.

Four schools have been selected to represent basic and upper secondary school levels of both Estonian- and Russian-medium education:

Tartu Annelinn Upper Secondary School (*Tartu Annelinna Gümnaasium*, TAG).

Tartu Kristjan Jaak Peterson Upper Secondary School (*Tartu Kristjan Jaak Petersoni Gümnaasium*, KJPG).

Tartu Kivilinna Basic School (*Tartu Kivilinna Kool*, TKK).

Narva Language Lyceum (*Narva Keeltelütseum*, NKL).

The curricula of three schools (TAG, KJPG and TKK) were analyzed to get information about the study hours dedicated to English language learning, and the content of the study program. Six lessons (three in TAG, two in KJPG, and one in NKL) were observed to understand which teaching approaches are used in these schools. Surveys among the Estonian and Russian-speaking groups of students were conducted to get an understanding of the learning strategies and content preferences. Two interviews were taken to provide a deeper understanding of all the aspects listed above from the real students who had experienced studying in both types of the schools.

The analysis of the data revealed that the next causes can be emphasized:

1. Different language environment of Estonian and Russian-speaking students.
2. Bigger than average language learning academic load of the language immersion classes' students.
3. Different teaching approaches in Estonian and Russian-medium schools.

The research aimed at finding the possible causes and reasons of this problem, leaving the research problem opened for further investigations on the possible solutions.

Keywords: English language learning, Estonian education, Russian-medium schools in Estonia, language teaching approaches, language learning strategies, motivation, language environment

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Introduction

Estonian educational system is considered to be the one among the highest in the world according to the Programme for International Student Assessment from 2015 (OECD, 2015). The official language of instruction is Estonian; although, instructions in schools may be in another language, for example, Russian, English or Finnish. The biggest share of non-Estonian language schools is Russian-medium schools, where usually 60% of the curriculum is taught in Estonian, and the rest 40% in Russian (Mehisto & Asser, 2007).

The good education system is a necessity for a successful and modern state that depends on its intellectual resources and technology advantages. Estonian society and educational system are characterized by high English language skills (Education First, 2015). However, when it comes to Russian-medium schools, English language level varies significantly in comparison to their Estonian colleagues. State examination results year by year demonstrate a significant share of Russian-medium school students who are not able to pass the English exam by reaching at least B1 level (SA Innove, 2017). Table 1 describes the state examination results over the three last years of the students who graduate from Tartu Annelinn Upper Secondary School and Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Kristjan Jaak Peterson.

Table 1. English language state examination results (SA Innove, 2017)

School		2015	2016	2017	Average
Tartu Annelinn Upper Secondary School	Students, N	76	68	69	
	Passed, %	59	30.9	58	49.30
	B1, %	36	22.1	36	31.70
	B2, %	20	5.9	22	15.97
	C1/C2, %	3	2.9	0	1.97
Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Kristjan Jaak Peterson	Students, N	239	223	176	
	Passed, %	87	82	91	86.70
	B1, %	33	40.8	36	36.60
	B2, %	53	39.5	52	48.17
	C1/C2, %	1	1.7	4	2.23

On average, only ~50% of the Tartu Annelinn Upper Secondary School students achieve the level higher than B1 on the English language state exam, while in the Kristjan Jaak Peterson Upper Secondary School the share of the students achieving the same result is almost 87%. Thus, it can be seen that the schools are from the same neighborhood and of the comparable prestige status show quite different results.

Since English language knowledge is one of the key competencies when entering the higher educational institutions in Estonia and the core requirement when applying for studies abroad, it is a necessary task to guarantee that school graduates, regardless their mother tongue, nationality or the school they have finished, have an equally good level of English knowledge. Assuring that both Estonian- and Russian-medium school students have equal opportunities when entering universities will also help to create equal opportunities in the labour market.

The research problem of the thesis concerns the low performance in the English language state examination of the Russian-medium schools' students compared to Estonian schools' students.

The purpose and the motivation of the research are to find and describe the possible reasons of this phenomenon that might also serve as an input for the further investigations. By getting closer to solving the problem with language level inequality the chain of the consequent problems will become easier to solve, such as those connected with entering the higher educational institutions, finding a good job, having opportunities of studying and working abroad. Such factors as decreased inequality in studying and finding a job will directly influence the social inequality overall, investing into a better, equal and unified society.

In this work, the following research questions (RQs) will be answered:

RQ1. Whether and how do English syllabi differ in Estonian and Russian-medium schools?

RQ2. Which approaches to teaching EFL and which teaching methods are used in Estonian and Russian-medium schools?

RQ3. Is the use of language learning strategies and motivation of EFL learners different in Estonian and Russian-medium schools?

RQ4. Is the language environment of Estonian and Russian-medium school students different and how does it influence foreign language acquisition?

This master thesis consists of the following parts: theoretical background, which is going to provide information about English teaching approaches, language learning strategies and motivation. In the methods chapter the instruments for data collection are presented, as well as the subjects of the research. This data is then analyzed in the results chapter, with further interpretations and explanations in the discussion part.

Theoretical background

In this chapter, the theoretical background that supports the thesis is going to be described. The aim is to give an overview of the existing knowledge about English teaching approaches, language learning strategies and motivation.

English teaching approaches

An approach to language teaching reflects a certain model or research paradigm, whereas a method is a set of procedures that quite precisely instructs how to teach a language (Anthony, 1963). There are a lot of classifications and taxonomies used to describe the way English is taught. For example, Ashman and Ongwae (2001) described four main types of teaching methods: Teacher-Centered Method, Learner-Centered Method, Content-Focused Method and Interactive/Participative Method.

In the *teacher-centred method*, the teacher plays the role of being a master of the subject matter and is overlooked as an expert or an authority by the learners who are presumed to be passive recipients of knowledge. The obvious disadvantage of the method is little or no involvement of learners in the teaching process.

In the *learner-centred method*, the teacher is both an instructor and a learner at the same time and is considered as a source of knowledge rather than authority.

Content-focused method makes both the teacher and the learners fit into the content that is taught. A lot of emphasis is put into the clarity and careful analyses of content.

Interactive/participative method is somewhat similar to the three methods described above, with the difference in not putting an emphasis on either the learner, content or teacher. The method allows adjusting what learning content and means are used based on the needs and situation of learners and the teacher.

Language teaching approaches changed throughout the time and a lot of times one came to replace another just to repeat the procedure once again. Some approaches stayed dominant for the decades and some were specific for certain countries. In this paper, Celce-Murcia's classification is used as the one that has captured the evolutionary nature of the teaching methods. She outlined nine approaches in modern language teaching and described their features:

In *Grammar-Translation approach* instructions are given in the native language of the students, and target language has a little use. Lessons are built around grammar exercises and reading classical texts, with a typical exercise consisting of translation sentences from the

target language into the mother tongue. As a result, a huge part of students is usually unable to use the target language for communication.

Direct approach has been developed as a reaction to the Grammar-Translation approach as it failed to reliably produce successful users of a target language. In this approach, the usage of the mother tongue is not allowed (teacher may not even speak students' native language). Lessons contain dialogues and mostly use a modern conversational style, readings are not analyzed grammatically. Pictures or actions can be used to augment the teacher's speech. Grammar is learned inductively.

Reading approach was introduced as a response to the impracticality of the Direct approach. Not every teacher had enough language proficiency to implement it to the full extent. In this approach reading skill is given the most emphasis. The grammar that is only useful to comprehend reading is taught, and translation again becomes one of the key classroom activities.

Audiolingualism answered a lack of oral skill emphasis of the Reading approach. Here lessons usually follow the sequence: listening, speaking-reading, writing. Dialogues at the beginning of the class are common, and pronunciation is stressed. Grammar rules are taught inductively.

Situational approach was also introduced as a reaction to the Reading approach and answered the same issues that Audiolingualism using different pedagogical experience. The main idea is to introduce and practice new content (lexical and grammatical) situationally, i.e. by different topics, for example, "at the doctor" or "at the bank".

Cognitive approach considered learning a foreign language as a rule acquisition, but not as a habit formation as Audio-lingual approach stated. Pronunciation was de-emphasized as an unnecessary perfectionism, and all four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) were considered of equal importance. Grammar can be taught either deductively (rules first, practice after) or inductively (practice first, rules then explained or left for the learners to study on their own).

In *Affective-humanist approach*, the individual, each student and the teacher, is emphasized and the feelings are respected. Thus said, the atmosphere in class is considered more important than methods or materials. Class activities involve working in pairs and groups. Teacher may start with using students' native language to ease the process and then eventually move to use of only the target language.

Comprehension approach carries the idea that foreign language acquisition is quite similar to the first language acquisition. Listening is considered as a pivotal skill that allows

speaking, reading and writing to develop. Learners listen to any meaningful input that is just a bit higher than their current level and try to produce any meaningful response. Only when learners feel ready they can start with speaking. The importance of understanding and making themselves understood is stressed, whereas error correction is considered unnecessary and even counterproductive.

Communicative approach states that the goal of teaching a language is to make learner able to communicate in the target language. For example, students can work in pairs where they are put into a situation where one person has to transfer the information that the other lacks. Materials and activities tend to follow or reflect real-life situations. Skills are integrated, and activity can involve reading, speaking, listening and writing simultaneously. Teacher plays the role of guide and facilitator and correcting errors does not have the primary priority (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

Understanding what approaches are used in today's classrooms can provide better awareness and good insights into how the modern school deals with foreign language teaching.

Language learning strategies classification and measuring

Language learning strategies is a term describing processes and actions that language learners consciously use in order to learn or use a language more effectively (Rose, 2015). It is basically an approach, a set of thoughts and actions that an individual takes from the very beginning till the advanced level of learning the language (Cohen, 2014).

Rubin's article "What the good language learner can teach us" (1975) is considered the beginning point of researching strategies for language learning. Several years after her first article, she came up with the first taxonomy of strategies that included learning strategies, communicative strategies and social strategies.

Learning strategies are the strategies that contribute directly to the development of the language. There are cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies.

Cognitive learning strategies include all steps, actions and operations used by the learner in learning and problem-solving and they require analysis, transformation or synthesis of the learning material. Rubin identified 6 main cognitive learning strategies: clarification (verification), guessing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization and monitoring.

Metacognitive Learning Strategies are the strategies that are used by the learner to regulate and self-direct his or her language learning. They involve various processes as planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management.

Communicative Strategies are not directly related to language learning since they are focused more on the process of participating in a conversation, getting the information, understanding and clarifying what speaker are talking about and what he or she wants to say. These strategies are very useful and helpful when the learner faces some difficulties in speaking and tries to explain his or her thoughts in a way that he or she is understood by the others even if his or her language skills are not very high.

Finally, *Social Strategies* contribute indirectly to language learning because they allow the learner to use the language knowledge in practice (Rubin, 1981).

Developing these early works further, O'Malley and his colleagues (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985) developed the taxonomy that featured mostly cognitive and metacognitive strategies and investigated how learners memorize and process the new language. One of the most recent and complete classifications of the language learning strategies that have gathered the previous findings in the area is the classification by Oxford (1990).

However, by the mid-2000s the field was experiencing certain issues. In 2005, Dörnyei called the initial taxonomy formulated by Rubin (1981) to be reconsidered as a list but not a framework and suggested the whole field to be replaced with self-regulation (Dörnyei, 2005). The term "self-regulated learning" describes an active process (more dynamic, as compared with the learning strategies) that students use to acquire academic skills. This includes students setting goals, analyzing their abilities, monitoring the process, controlling their cognition, motivation, behaviour, changing strategies to succeed, managing their time and evaluating the outcomes (Zimmerman, 1990).

Self-regulation has been in the focus of learning for quite a while and is widely used in educational psychology inspecting the strategic behaviour. However, it lacks the previous developments on researching the second language acquisition process and cannot be considered as a full substitution for the language learner strategies, which already has been researched specifically in the context of the language learning process. Thus, many authors in the field agreed that learning strategies still can be used in researching learners' behaviour keeping in mind the contexts and specifics of each individual case (Hu, 2016).

The current state of the field, as it is seen by (Oxford, 2011) includes combining self-regulation and existing knowledge about language learning strategies. In this research, the same approach is used, utilizing Oxford's taxonomy, while also researching students' motivation under the concepts of self-regulation.

The following is the language learning strategies outlined by (Oxford, 1990):

- *Affective strategies* help learners to regulate their emotions, feelings, motivations, and attitude towards learning a foreign language. By concentrating on the positive sides, in order to relieve stress and anxiety, students can achieve better results. They can use positive self-talk, deep breathing, writing about their feelings in a language learning diary, talk to someone about how they feel when they learn a foreign language. It is well-known that the fear of making a mistake blocks learner's knowledge, and even if he or she knows more, the performance can suffer (Hu & Wang, 2014). The use of affective strategies diminishes when the learner becomes more proficient and confident about his/her language skills (Oxford, 1990)
- *Cognitive strategies* include any kind of manipulations with the material in direct ways, e.g. through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, and synthesizing, repetition, organizing new language, guessing the meaning from the context, making associations between new and already known information. A user of these strategies tends to surround him/herself with a target language to maximize the number of interactions with it.
- *Compensatory strategies* are based on seeking workarounds when facing minor language knowledge gaps. This includes guessing the unfamiliar words' meaning out of the context, using gestures and mimic during conversations in a foreign language. These strategies are mainly used to overcome limitations in speaking and writing and are very effective in doing so.
- *Memory-related strategies* focus on memorizing new foreign language words with the help of associations, flashcards, sound similarities, and other mnemonic means. However, this does not necessarily involve deep understanding. The use of memory strategies also diminishes when the learner becomes more proficient (Oxford, 1990).
- *Metacognitive strategies* involve identifying learners' own preferences and needs, planning, monitoring mistakes, evaluating task success and are used to manage the learning process in general. Learners who prefer these strategies may find MOOCs and other online tools very effective to use as they embrace setting goals, tracking own progress and reflecting on mistakes.

- *Social strategies* rely on learning via interactions with others and exploring cultural and social norms. Users of these strategies ask questions in order to get help or clarification, talk with native-speakers to gain practice. Such learners find it easier to ask a course mate or a native speaker of a target language than to look for information in a book or on the internet.

Different methods enable to measure the use of language learning strategies. Among them, the most widely used one in the foreign language learning area is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire, based on Oxford's taxonomy. This questionnaire serves a double purpose, as by completing it students not only give insights on what strategies they use most and least, but they also reflect on the approaches they unconsciously follow and learn new things about themselves (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

Intrinsic and external motivation

Motivation is one of the core aspects that influence human behaviour. It is characterized by willingness, volition, and aspiration to do something. Motivation can be defined as a physical, psychological or social need which stimulates the individual to reach or achieve his goal and fulfil his need and, finally, feel satisfied. Motivation gives a reason, a motive to achieve a specific target. Motivation is seen as a combination of beliefs, perceptions, values, interests, and actions (Gopalan, Bakar, Zulkifli, Alwi, & Mat, 2017).

A lot of authors, such as Katz and Kahn (1978), Etzioni (1961), and McClelland (1985) tried to formulate their motivation taxonomies and classify them, however Barbuto and Scholl (1998) found similarities in the categories they proposed and presented his own taxonomy consisting of five types of motivation: *intrinsic process*, *instrumental*, *external self-concept*, *internal self-concept*, and *goal internalization*.

Intrinsic process motivation. When a person is motivated to perform a work or to behave in a certain way due to the fun and positive emotions he is getting out of this certain activity, then intrinsic process motivation is considered the driving motivation. It is not the outcome of the task, but a work itself acts as the incentive, as individuals enjoy what they are doing.

Instrumental motivation drives an individual when he/she perceives that his/her behaviour will lead to a certain tangible extrinsic outcome (such as money reward or promotion).

External self-concept motivation. Individuals are driven by external self-concept motivation usually behave in ways that will result in social feedback that is consistent with

their self-concepts. Individuals behave in a certain way to satisfy reference group members to gain first acceptance and then status by meeting the expectations of this group.

Internal self-concept motivation. Individuals are driven by internal self-concept motivation take the standards of traits, competencies, and values from their ideal self. They are motivated to engage in behaviours that reinforce these internal standards and later achieve higher competency.

Goal internalization motivation is based on the individual's personal value system, which person uses to adopt his/her attitudes and behaviours.

Later, Ryan and Deci (2000) boiled down the motivation types into three: *intrinsic*, i.e. internal, *extrinsic*, i.e. external motivation, and *amotivation*, which is essentially a complete absence of both two abovementioned types.

Intrinsic theory, which represents an activity done only for one's own satisfaction without any external expectations. The challenge, curiosity, control, inclination, fantasy, interest are key factors to trigger up intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation directs the individual to participate in academic activities only to experience some fun, to know something new, to try self-forces and to reveal him- or herself in various areas without any external pressure. Intrinsic motivation can spread the positivity and make the gained knowledge to sustain for a long time.

In contrast, *extrinsic motivation* describes external activities such as a reward, compulsion and punishment. Extrinsic motivation contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself. Those who are extrinsically motivated to perform and do affairs as they think that their contribution will cause desirable results like a reward, teacher admiration, or evasion (prevention) of punishment.

Deci, Ryan and their colleagues proposed a complex typology of extrinsic motivation where some types involve self-determination and choice. They identified four types of extrinsic motivation ranging from non-self-determined to self-determined.

The first type of *extrinsic motivation* is *external regulation*. It is the least self-determined type of extrinsic motivation and the individual performs only to attain a positive end state (e.g., to get a good grade) or to avoid a negative end state (e.g., to avoid parents' reproaches).

The second type of *extrinsic motivation* is *introjected regulation*. Here, a person acts out of obligation, in order to avoid feeling shame or internal pressure. For example, a man

who votes at presidential elections because he believes he has to, because it is his duty as a citizen.

The third type of *extrinsic motivation* is *identified regulation*. Here, the activity is judged valuable by a person and he or she will perform the activity with the sense of choice and the reasons to engage in this activity are already almost internalized. For instance, a girl in high school who decides to get up several hours earlier to review her notes before the exam, because she feels it is personally important to do it. Although there is a choice to engage in some activity, it is not necessarily coherent with other self-structures.

The last type of extrinsic motivation is *integrated regulation*. It is the most self-determined type of extrinsic motivation. The choice underlying behaviour is in harmony with other self-structures. For example, a ballet dancer who chooses not to go to a party with friends in order to be in shape for dance class early on the next morning (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In the work “The role of motivation in promoting and sustaining self-regulated learning” Pintrich (1999) concentrated on three general types of motivational beliefs including:

Self-efficacy beliefs. Individuals' beliefs about their performance capabilities in a particular domain and judgments about their ability to accomplish certain goals or tasks by their actions in specific situations. In general, it is students' confidence in their cognitive skills to learn (Bandura, 1986; Pintrich, 1999; Schunk, 1985).

Task value beliefs. The individuals' perception of the importance of the task, their personal interest in the task, and their perception of the utility value of the task for future goals.

Goal orientations. Students, in order to self-regulate their learning, performance and behaviour, must have some goal or standard, or criterion against which to compare their progress, i.e. learners have a general orientation without which they cannot achieve a task. Pintrich distinguishes two goal orientations – intrinsic and external (1999).

Motivation and learning process have a deep connection. That is why teachers should be aware of motivation and its high importance and types, discover and pay attention to the personality of each student and do their best to increase students' interest and enjoyment from learning so that they become more intrinsically motivated (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012).

Motivation, being a psychological phenomenon, cannot be observed or recorded directly. In most cases, researchers use *self-reports* for measuring motivation. However, there are some methods and instruments allowing to assess people's motivation without relying on

self-reports, because very often people are not aware of their psychological states and it can limit this approach. These methods are: *cognitive measures* such as memory accessibility, evaluations, and perceptions of goal-relevant objects, *affective measures* such as subjective experience and *behavioural measures* such as speed, performance, and choice to capture fluctuations in motivational strength (Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2014).

Cognitive and Affective Measures of Motivation include the *activation, evaluation, and perception of the goal-related constructs* and *the subjective experience* they evoke. The goal is the cognitive representation of the desired end state and all goals the person has are organized in his/her mind in a way that they are all connected to corresponding constructs which can be some activities, objects and things (Ibid).

Goal activation: Memory accessibility, and goal-related constructs. Activation is a process in which the goal is being activated by the constructs connected to this goal. When the goal is active, the motivational system prepares the individual for action by activating goal-relevant information. The individual can be aware or unaware of the goal activation and its subsequent pursuit. Motivation can be measured by the degree to which goal-related concepts are accessible in memory. So, the more person is motivated to achieve a goal, the more likely he/she remember, notice, or recognize concepts, objects, or persons related to that goal.

Evaluation, devaluation, and perception. Motivation is measured by the degree to which a goal-relevant object is assessed positively because motivational states affect the evaluation of goal-related objects. *The devaluation* of conflicting constructs can also serve as a measure of motivation. Goal-relevant objects are often perceived as positive and while pursuing a goal, people often try to avoid objects that might interfere with successful goal pursuit, which they perceive as negative (Markman & Brendl, 2005).

Experience. The researcher can also assess an individual's subjective experience and use it to measure his/her motivation. For instance, the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory measures intrinsic motivation by assessing an individual's interest/enjoyment, competence, effort, value/usefulness, felt pressure and tension, and perceived choice while performing a given activity (Ibid).

Behavioural Measures of Motivation. Even though the behavior is not an outcome of motivation, researchers use behaviour to capture the strength of motivation and evaluate behaviour's correspondence to the goal an individual tries to achieve.

Speed. This duration measure can be used in most cases to measure the strength of motivation. The more motivated the individual is, the faster he/she completes a task or moves from one task to the next.

Performance. Motivation can also be measured in terms of the level of performance at a goal-related task. Performance measures include accuracy, the amount (i.e., how much has been done), and the highest level of achievement. Another aspect of performance is persistence, i.e. how much effort an individual makes to achieve a goal, in spite of difficulties he/she faces. Persistence may be expressed in the amount of time an individual spends on goal-related activities, in how many activities an individual completes or in the extent to which the individual continues to engage in the goal (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

Choice. A choice can also indicate the strength of motivation, especially when an individual chooses between two conflicting goals. Researchers can measure the number of goal-related choices and hence measure the strength of motivation (Ibid).

Self-report questionnaires are the most widely used instruments to assess motivation because they are easy to design, administrate and interpret the results. *The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)* was created by Pintrich and his collaborators with the goal to measure different motivational components and the use of learning strategies (Pintrich, 1991).

Methods

This chapter describes the major research subjects and the methods used to answer the research questions. Each method is described including its disadvantages to outline that the general picture can only be obtained not by using every one of them separately but by combining the results of every method.

When researching learners of a foreign language, using the combination of methods is usually recommended (Chamot, 2004). In this research, document analysis is used for extracting information from the schools' syllabi in order to answer RQ1. This is then complemented with information extracted from the lesson observations and interviews to provide answers to RQ2 and RQ4. Self-report questionnaires are used to answer RQ3 on students' language learning strategies and motivation.

Major research subjects

Tartu Annelinn Upper Secondary School (*Tartu Annelinna Gümnaasium, TAG*) is a Russian-medium basic and upper secondary school in Tartu that has classes from the 1st to the 12th year of study. The school was founded in 1964, however, moved into the current educational building only in 1983.

The school was among the first Russian-medium schools in Estonia that applied the language immersion program. In language immersion classes 60% of the subjects are taught using Estonian as a language of instruction, while the rest 40% using Russian. In the basic school, the proportion is shifted towards Estonian-language learning. This approach helps children to adapt better in Estonian society (Mehisto & Asser, 2007).

In this school three lessons were observed, 37 survey answers collected with SILL and MSLQ questionnaires, and one interview taken. From here on Tartu Annelinn Upper Secondary School is referred to as TAG.

Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Kristjan Jaak Peterson (*Tartu Kristjan Jaak Petersoni Gümnaasium, KJPG*) is an Estonian-medium high school in Tartu. It was founded in 2014 by merging the high school units of Kivilinn Upper Secondary School (*Kivilinna Gümnaasium*), Tartu Commercial Upper Secondary School (*Tartu Kommertsgümnaasium*) and Tartu Upper Secondary School, Lyceum named after Descartes (*Tartu Descartes'i Lütseum*).

The school has classes of the 10th, 11th and 12th year of study, i.e. upper secondary school level classes. This model corresponds to the new trend in Estonian education of separating basic schools and upper secondary schools.

During the research, two English lessons were observed, 57 survey answers collected with SILL and MSLQ questionnaires, and one interview taken in this school. From here on Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Kristjan Jaak Peterson is referred to as KJPG.

Narva Language Lyceum (*Narva Keeltelütseum, NKL*) is a Russian-medium basic and upper secondary school with classes from the 1st to the 12th year of study that has a specialization in foreign languages. The school is located in the city of Narva, Estonia. Thanks to the business trip organized by TAG, the opportunity was created to observe and describe one English lesson in this school. From here on Narva Language Lyceum is referred to as NKL.

Another school that was a subject of the research is Tartu Basic School of Kivilinn (*Tartu Kivilinna Kool, TKK*). This school, as well as TAG and KJPG, is located in the Annelinn neighbourhood. Since the school teaches students from the 1st to the 9th grade, it has been selected for the analysis of the curriculum only. From here on Tartu Basic School of Kivilinn is referred to as TKK.

Document analysis

The way subjects are taught is regulated by the school curriculum and syllabus (*õppekava* and *ainekava* in Estonian). Each school has its own curriculum, and although it is based on the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act and its derivative laws and regulations, the curriculum can differ slightly from school to school (Riigikogu, 2016).

Curriculum and syllabus analysis were conducted in the three schools: TAG, KJPG and TKK.

The given selection of schools covers all grades from the 1st to the 12th year of study, in both Estonian and Russian-medium schools (Table 2). The closeness of the schools ensures that the majority of students attending these schools are from the same neighbourhood, and therefore have similar to some extent living conditions, environment and other variables.

The curricula and syllabi were accessed via the schools' web pages. Another informational dimension is the students' performance in the state examination that takes place at the end of the basic school and the upper secondary school (Riigikogu, 2016).

Table 2. Curricula and Syllabi analysis coverage

	Basic school	Upper secondary school
Russian-medium schools		
TAG	✓	✓
Estonian schools		
KJPG		✓
TKK	✓	

Analyzing the documents, curricular and syllabi enables us to answer RQ1. Information about the number of study hours in each year of study, lists of topics, and the requirements of completion for each study year were compared in these three schools and the differences were discussed related to learners' study results.

Lesson observations

While documents give an overview of how the teaching of the subject should be done “on paper”, more detailed idea of the teaching methods and techniques can be obtained during the lesson observations. This extracted data can then be analyzed in order to answer the RQ2 on approaches to teaching EFL and teaching methods used in classes. For analysis, 3 lessons were observed in TAG, 2 lessons in KJPG and 1 lesson in NKL.

While observing lessons in above-mentioned schools, notes were taken, a lot of attention was paid to how the teacher was conducting the lesson, which approaches and techniques were used and how students were behaving in different situations. After lessons were observed, teachers provided plenty of information about the content of lessons, books, and software used in classes.

The disadvantages of the lesson observation as a method are that the number of lessons one can observe is limited, and the perception may vary depending on which lessons has been selected for the observation. The quality of the lesson may also be affected by the psychological factors: the less experienced teacher may worry that his lesson is being observed by another person, and the lesson quality can be lower than usual due to this, while the more experienced teacher can also non-intentionally put the best of his techniques into the selected lesson, which would also alter the real picture (Edgington, 2016).

Self-report questionnaires

In order to get the overview of students' learning habits and learning skills, what language learning strategies they apply, and which motivation types prevail among the students in Estonian and Russian-medium schools (RQ3), SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) and MSQ (The Motivated Strategies for Learning) questionnaires were used to collect the necessary data for analysis. These two instruments were chosen because being used world-wide they enable international comparison in further studies, they are suitable, given the aim of the study, available resources and time.

The sample of students comprised 37 respondents from TAG and 57 respondents from KJPG:

- TAG - 37 respondents, among them from 10th grade – 10 respondents, 11th grade – 16, and 12th grade – 11.
- KJPG - 57 respondents, among them from 10th grade – 18 respondents, 11th grade – 20, and 12th grade – 19.

SILL enables to measure the frequency of students' language learning strategy use in five factors: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies (Appendix A). In this questionnaire a respondent follows the sequence of statements, such as "I use flashcards to remember new second language words" assessing them on the Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "never or almost never true to me" and 5 is "almost or almost true to me". By calculating the average of each factor, we get the score for each type of strategies. The higher the score is, the more this type of strategies is used by the respondent.

MSQ is a widely used self-report questionnaire for researching learners' self-regulation. Proceeding from the aim of the current study, only two factors were employed: intrinsic and external goal orientation (Appendix B). MSQ uses a similar type of statements to reveal learners' self-reported assessments on their learning activities, for example: "*In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me, so I can learn new things*" to reveal internal motivation or "*Getting a grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now*" to reveal external motivation accordingly. While assessing the statements, students use the scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is "not at all true of me" and 7 is "very true of me".

To understand the language environment of the students and how it influences their foreign language acquisition, another questionnaire was developed (Appendix C). It enables

to study students' preferences in music, videos, and reading habits in a way that the real aim of the survey (what are the languages the students use to consume various types of content) stays hidden. When a student answers the question "List your 5 favourite video bloggers and the language they speak", he either lists them or says that he is not into video blogs or blogging as a thing at all. This gives us two dimensions of the data. First, what type of a media-consumer this student is, for example, whether he/she is an active user of YouTube or Instagram or not. The second dimension is the language that student's favourite music band, bloggers or authors use. Therefore, the student reveals what languages he/she actively listens to and what is the amount of this listening. The data collected with questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The disadvantages of using questionnaires as a source of data may be that the students may not always answer honestly or describe the perfect imaginary him/herself instead of the real him/herself. Another issue is that due to the length of the questionnaire, the respondent may get tired and his/her attention may drop and influence the answers' accuracy (Chamot, 2004; Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2014).

In order to analyze the data collected with self-report questionnaires, descriptive statistics were used.

Placement test

Placement tests are used for identifying the level of student's language knowledge and are usually conducted right at the beginning of the studies. English placement tests provide an overview of the student's acquired English language knowledge and skills.

Both major research subjects, TAG and KJPG, are upper secondary schools (with TAG being a mixed school with both basic and upper secondary levels). This means that the classes in both of these schools are formed from the graduates of other schools (in case of TAG significant part of these graduates are coming from TAG's basic school). To understand the level of students' English knowledge at the beginning of their studies at the upper secondary school level, a placement test was conducted in the 10th grades of both schools at the beginning of the 2018/2019 autumn semester. Such data will complement the information gathered from the lesson observations, questionnaires and will help to answer RQ3 and RQ4.

The written part of the placement test from the Cambridge English Unlimited series was selected. This test evaluates the students' language level and the obtained grade can be mapped into the CEFR scale from A1 to C1 (Cambridge University Press). The scale is described in Table 3.

Table 3. Grade mapping from the Cambridge test to the CEFR language knowledge level

CEFR level	A1	A2	B1	B1+	B2	C1
Written test score, points	0-15	16-35	36-55	56-75	76-95	96-120
Test completion score, %	0-13	14-29	30-46	47-62	63-79	80-100

54 students of the 10th grades from TAG and 69 students of the 10th grade from KJPG were tested. According to the Cambridge requirements, the test duration was 40 minutes, and any communication or electronic devices, as well as dictionaries, were forbidden.

The speaking skills of the students are tested with the oral part of the test and this is used to tune the results from the written part if the obtained grade is on the edge between the described levels, however, in this research, the oral part of the test was not conducted due to the lack of resources.

Interviews

In order to get a deeper insight into learners' learning practices and more thoroughly answer RQ3, interview method was applied additionally. Structured and semi-structured interviews are widely used to evaluate learning strategies and motivation. While being interviewed, students describe their approaches and preferences based on memories about what is "typical" for their learning or what could be "typical" in some future or imaginary situation. The interview is a great way to gather information and insights that may otherwise be missed if only questionnaires and observations are used. The flexibility of an interview process gives the advantage of extracting the information that is necessary for the interviewer (Chamot, 2004).

Two respondents volunteered for interviewing:

- E.M., an 11th-grade student, whose mother tongue is Russian, had initially been studying in Tartu Hansa Basic School, an Estonian basic school for seven years, and then went over to the 8th grade in TAG, the Russian-medium school.
- A.K., a 10th-grade student, whose mother tongue is Russian as well, had been studying in the Russian-medium TAG, and when she was about to finish the basic school, decided to go over to KJPG, the Estonian-medium school.

As we can see, both interviewees had a learning experience in Estonian- as well as Russian-medium schools.

The interview was divided into two parts (see Appendix D), the first part aimed to get the overview of the respondent's background, academic performance and the experience of studying English at the respondent's school. Part 2 investigates the respondent's attitude and motivation towards English learning and the language environment. The interview data were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

Interviews are without a doubt a great way to get the broad spectre of information. However, the opinions and descriptions from the interview are affected by the respondent's personal views and preferences and are deeply individual. Therefore, an interview as a source of data is used in combination with other sources, in order to get the most objective view (Chamot, 2004).

Results

This chapter presents the results of data analysis according to the data collection methods. The further discussion and explanations are presented in the discussion part of the thesis.

Document analysis

In order to answer the RQ1 document analysis was conducted. The analysis involved schools' curricula and English syllabi.

Estonian national curriculum is based on courses. Each course is an equivalent to 35 academic hours. The national curriculum sets up a minimum number of these courses to be present in every school's curriculum. For the English language as a foreign language subject, these numbers are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Minimum number of hours required by the National Curriculum

Years of study	Courses	Hours
1-3	3	105
4-6	9	315
7-9	9	315
10-12	5	175

However, schools may decide to increase the number of courses. Table 5 shows how the schools in the city of Tartu implement the English language courses in their curricula. This helps not only get the average number of hours but also understand how the curricula are organized. The grey and dark grey boxes indicated whether the school has dedicated more or slightly more hours than the state curriculum requires.

Some schools strictly follow the number of hours and the distribution over the years of the study described in the document, while others deviate slightly. Some schools historically have the foreign language specialization, and some follow the newly developed long-term strategies. The deviation is usually due to one or both of the described reasons. The examples of the exceptional focus on foreign language learning are Upper Secondary School named after Miina Härma (*Miina Härma Gümnaasium*) and Tartu Basic School of Veeriku (*Tartu Veeriku Kool*), with the number of hours dedicated to learning the English language hugely exceeding the all-Tartu average.

Table 5. Numbers of courses and hours dedicated to English language subject in schools in Tartu

Grades	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total (basic / upp. sec.)
Russian-medium basic and upper secondary schools													
TAG	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	5	1225 (735 / 490)
TAPK ¹	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	735
Estonian basic and upper secondary schools													
Average													1210.5 (895.5 / 315)
Average, excluding language-specialized basic schools													1130.5 (815.5 / 315)
KJPG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4	420
MHG ²	2	3	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	-	1610 (1260 / 350)
JPG ³	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	175
HTG ⁴	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11			385
TTG ⁵	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7			245
TKK	-	1	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	-	-	-	910
THK ⁶	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	735
TDK ⁷	-	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	805
TFK ⁸	-	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	805
TKaK ⁹	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	875
TRK ¹⁰	1	2	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	-	-	-	945
TKeK ¹¹	-	1	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	840
TMRK ¹²	-	-	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	770
TTK ¹³	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	735
TVaK ¹⁴	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	735
TVeK ¹⁵	3	3	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	-	-	-	1330

¹ Tartu Basic School named after Aleksandr Pushkin (Tartu Aleksander Puškini Kool)

² Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Miina Härma (Miina Härma Gümnaasium)

³ Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Jaan Poska (Jaan Poska Gümnaasium)

⁴ Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Hugo Treffner (Hugo Treffneri Gümnaasium)

⁵ Tartu Upper Secondary School of Tamme (Tartu Tamme Gümnaasium)

⁶ Tartu Hanseatic Basic School (Tartu Hansa Kool)

⁷ Tartu Basic School named after Descartes (Tartu Descartes'i Kool)

⁸ Tartu Basic School named after B.G. Forselius (Tartu Forseliuse Kool)

⁹ Tartu Basic School of Karlova (Tartu Karlova Kool)

¹⁰ Tartu Raatuse Basic School (Tartu Raatuse Kool)

¹¹ Tartu Basic School of Kesklinn (Tartu Kesklinna Kool)

¹² Tartu Basic School named after Mart Reinik (Tartu Mart Reiniku Kool)

¹³ Tartu Basic School of Tamme (Tartu Tamme Kool)

¹⁴ Tartu Basic School of Variku (Tartu Variku Kool)

¹⁵ Tartu Basic School of Veeriku (Tartu Veeriku Kool)

TAG has the total number of hours allocated for the English language learning close to the average among the Estonian-medium schools in Tartu (1225 vs 1210.5).

If we calculate the same average excluding the schools that are heavily specialized in the foreign language learning (i.e. Tartu Upper Secondary School named after Miina Härma and Tartu Basic School of Veeriku), then the number of hours that TAG spends on English studies exceeds the average (1225 vs 1130.5).

However, the difference lies in the balance of the academic load between the basic school and upper secondary school levels. TAG has a significant number of hours concentrated in the last three years of study while having only the state-required minimum in the basic school level. 8 out of 12 Estonian-medium schools (with only 2 of them being intensively foreign language oriented) increase this minimum amount, adding additional lessons per week or have the subject starting from the 1st or 2nd grade already.

The curriculum of TKK states that the student obtains the B1.2 level of English language proficiency by the time he/she finishes the 9th grade (TKK, 2018). The curriculum includes a detailed list of conversational and grammar topics, but the teachers are free to have the course book of their choice to implement the syllabus. The school starts teaching English from the 2nd year of study, however, an elective preparatory course in the 1st grade is available.

TAG basic school curriculum also targets the B1.2 level for the 9th year graduates. English language learning starts in the 3rd grade, however recently the school has started considering the possibility of introducing an elective preparatory course for the 2nd grade. The basic school curriculum in TAG is quite detailed and well-described, with the exact descriptions of the topics, activities, and grammar for each of the study years. For the 3rd grade, it is explicitly recommended to use “I love English 1” coursebook by Ülle Kurm, and starting from the 4th grade, the “Opportunities” series by Michael Harris and David Mower, however, the teacher is free to choose additional materials (TAG, 2017).

The upper secondary school level curriculum of TAG starts with the courses of the B1.1 level and requires the B2.2 level upon completion. The syllabus describes topics and grammar, detailing the preferred way of the exercises to be used. It is worth to note that the grammar supporting each topic is loosely determined and gives a certain freedom to a teacher in order to adapt to a level and specifics of a particular class (TAG, 2017).

KJPG curriculum requires B2.1 level at the beginning of the studies, i.e. in the 10th (G1) grade. It is expected that the student is able to complete the courses and achieve B2.2 level. In general, the curriculum emphasizes watching and listening to authentic audiovisual

materials, independent reading and listening, and active search for supporting information from various foreign-language sources of information (KJPG, 2017).

All three schools have the common features of the situational approach in the curricula. The courses and lessons are described based on the specific topics chosen, and the vocabulary and grammar derive from these topics.

It is also worth considering the total academic workload for the subjects that are related to language learning. As it can be seen in Table 6, both full language immersion and partial language immersion classes from TAG have a significantly bigger number of hours (134 courses = 4 690 hours) than, for example, the combined curricular of TKK and KJPG (105 courses = 3 675 hours).

Table 6. Number of courses dedicated to a language learning subjects

School (class)	Subject	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	Total (basic / upp.sec.)
Russian-medium schools						
TAG <i>(full language immersion class)</i>	Native language (Russian)	12	15	12	6	45 (39 / 6)
	2 nd native language (Estonian)	18	12	12	12	54 (42 / 12)
	A – foreign language	3	9	9	14	35 (21 / 14)
	B – foreign language	-	-	-	-	
	<i>Total</i>					134 (102 / 32)
TAG <i>(partial language immersion class)</i>	Native language (Russian)	19	15	12	6	52 (46 / 6)
	2 nd native language (Estonian)	11	12	12	12	47 (35 / 12)
	A – foreign language	3	9	9	14	35 (21 / 14)
	B – foreign language	-	-	-	-	
	<i>Total</i>					134 (102 / 32)
Estonian-medium schools						
KJPG <i>(upp. sec. school)</i>	Native language (Estonian)	-	-	-	8	8
	A – foreign language	-	-	-	12	12
	B – foreign language	-	-	-	6	6
	<i>Total</i>					26
TKK <i>(basic school)</i>	Native language (Estonian)	19	12	7	-	38
	A – foreign language	4	10	10	-	24
	B – foreign language	1	7	9	-	17
	<i>Total</i>					79
<i>Total for Estonian-medium schools</i>						105 (79 / 26)

The document analysis that consisted of the analysis of curricula and syllabi, did not provide a clear picture to answer the research question. However, it can be concluded that the curriculum in TAG does differ from TKK and KJPG. The latter ones generally have more hours of the English language in the basic school, while TAG puts a significant number of hours in the upper secondary school level.

Lesson observations

While the comparison of school curricula and syllabi did reveal some insights of the language teaching in general and the academic load in the observed schools, it is necessary to investigate the teaching methods and approaches to language learning. From the notes that describe the structure and the content of the lessons observed, the teaching approaches, methods, techniques and the use of technologies were extracted.

The three lessons that were observed at TAG (Russian-medium school) (see Appendix G, Appendix H, and Appendix I) contained mostly the elements of the following English teaching approaches:

- *Grammar-Translation approach.* Some teachers used Estonian rather than English in order to give instructions. There were translation and grammar exercises dominating.
- *Comprehension approach.* Listening was emphasized, and from the lessons that were observed, it could be seen that preparation for the state examination took most of the time.
- *Reading approach.* Reading texts as activity had a significant place in work in the class and at home. The texts that were read, were also eventually the subject of translating, either partially or fully, depending on its overall size.
- *Situational approach.* Lessons were built around the topics, for example, „Family“, and students could talk about their own families, using vocabulary and grammar they have just learned or are going to learn.

The classrooms, despite the school building not being renovated yet, were in a good condition, in all the rooms there were either a flat TV or a projector present, with a couple of rooms having a smart board installed. Listening to audio materials was usually done via speakers that are connected to the teacher's personal computer.

In KJPG, the Estonian-medium school, two lessons were observed (see Appendix J and Appendix K). The teaching approaches that were used were as follows:

- *Situational approach.* Lesson's structure was pivoted around one or several topics. The vocabulary that was used during the lesson was taken from these topics.
- *Cognitive approach.* The grammar was introduced rather inductively than deductively, and the author did not notice any preference given to the grammar learning in the cost of the other language skills, such as listening, writing and speaking.
- *Reading approach.* Students had home reading tasks, as well as reading in the class with the following discussion about the main points and ideas.
- *Communicative.* Students worked in pairs or small groups in order to complete some of the tasks.
- *Affective-humanist approach.* A significant amount of time during the lesson was dedicated to a learning game. The teacher stated after the lesson that the main reason for including the game was not only to practice the lesson content but also to give a mental break from the typical class activities.

The school was recently renovated while becoming a classical upper secondary school. Classrooms are in a good condition, with a similar set of equipment that TAG has. The teachers had access to digital materials that come with the English language course books, but usually, have to be bought separately.

Additionally, one lesson in NKL (Russian-medium school) was observed (see Appendix L) as a part of an official business trip. During this lesson, the next approaches were identified:

- *Situational approach.* The lesson was developed mainly around the specific topic or topics. The materials and corresponding exercises were aimed at practising vocabulary and grammar on the lesson's topics.
- *Reading approach.* A part of the lesson was spent on reading the text and working on the exercises connected to this text.
- *Communicative approach.* Students worked in pairs and small groups.

There was not much time to get a full overview of the school. The class where the lesson was observed was in a good condition, with a projector and a teacher's personal computer.

After the observation of the 6 lessons in the 3 different schools, the next conclusions were made: while the Situational and Reading approach was present in all the three schools,

the Grammar-Translation approach was spotted only in TAG and NKL, however, in the latter, the teacher used English for communication in the class. The lesson observed in Narva was a part of a business trip aimed to share the best practices, therefore it cannot be considered as a fully representative example. Focusing on the differences between TAG and KJPG, one major difference was that teachers in KJPG were using the digital content from the coursebooks, and it seemed like learning games were more common, while in TAG the games are used more as a course-level, not a lesson-level activity.

Self-report questionnaires

Language Learning Strategies

Learners' use of language learning strategies was assessed with the self-report questionnaire SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) on the 5-point scale. The results of the SILL questionnaire can be seen in Table 7. This and all the tables in this chapter use the "heatmap" colour scheme, where the highest value is represented by the green colour and the lowest value is represented by the red colour.

Table 7. Average values of language learning strategies distributed by schools

Groups of respondents	Learning strategies					
	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
All respondents (N=94)	2.85 (SD=0.59)	3.16 (SD=0.57)	3.22 (SD=0.56)	3.33 (SD=0.74)	2.72 (SD=0.69)	3.29 (SD=0.73)
TAG (N=37)	3.03 (SD=0.54)	3.29 (SD=0.58)	3.21 (SD=0.64)	3.45 (SD=0.76)	2.68 (SD=0.74)	3.51 (SD=0.72)
KJPG (N=57)	2.73 (SD=0.62)	3.08 (SD=0.54)	3.23 (SD=0.41)	3.26 (SD=0.71)	2.74 (SD=0.61)	3.15 (SD=0.72)

We can clearly see that memory and affective strategies are the least frequently used strategies among both groups. The preferred strategies of the Estonian students are metacognitive and compensatory, while Russian-speaking students tend to use social and metacognitive strategies. It is worth to note that the memory strategies, being least frequently used among both of the groups together with affective strategies, are less unpopular among the TAG students than they are on average. Overall, while metacognitive strategies are used actively by both groups, Estonian-medium school students prefer compensatory strategies while their colleagues in the Russian-medium school use social strategies.

The SILL results divided additionally by the grades (see Table 8) reveal a couple of additional details. First of all, what instantly catches the eye is the presence of the certain trend among the students from both schools: Metacognitive strategies that gathered the most points overall, drop their popularity the closer to the graduation the student is, while compensatory strategies gain the popularity.

Table 8. Average values of language learning strategies distributed by schools and grades

	Grade	Learning strategies					
		Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
TAG (N=37)	10 (N=10)	3.41 (SD=0.60)	3.59 (SD=0.54)	3.25 (SD=0.27)	3.71 (SD=0.67)	2.60 (SD=0.52)	3.98 (SD=0.45)
	11 (N=16)	2.94 (SD=0.63)	3.24 (SD=0.60)	3.08 (SD=0.44)	3.39 (SD=0.86)	2.77 (SD=0.80)	3.46 (SD=0.72)
	12 (N=11)	2.82 (SD=0.49)	3.08 (SD=0.34)	3.35 (SD=0.44)	3.29 (SD=0.27)	2.64 (SD=0.38)	3.15 (SD=0.72)
	Grade	Learning strategies					
		Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
KJPG (N=57)	10 (N=18)	2.78 (SD=0.56)	3.20 (SD=0.68)	3.12 (SD=0.53)	3.51 (SD=0.78)	3.06 (SD=0.76)	3.35 (SD=0.59)
	11 (N=20)	2.76 (SD=0.58)	3.09 (SD=0.57)	3.36 (SD=0.53)	3.34 (SD=0.81)	2.46 (SD=0.82)	3.03 (SD=0.78)
	12 (N=19)	2.65 (SD=0.52)	2.95 (SD=0.53)	3.20 (SD=0.82)	2.94 (SD=0.65)	2.75 (SD=0.61)	3.11 (SD=0.72)

At TAG, the dominant social strategies lose their positions only among the final year students, with compensatory strategies taking their place. While, as a part of the global trend, the amount of points dedicated to the metacognitive strategies decreases each year, they still take the 2nd place by frequency in all years of study. It is also interesting to note that on average rarely-applied memory strategies have their slight growth among the 10th-grade students of TAG, having 3.41 points.

The students of KJPG also follow the trend of increasing compensatory strategies and decreasing metacognitive strategies each year. However, social strategies were not assessed as frequent as in TAG. They are never at the top place but are placed 2nd in the 10th and 12th year of study, with the exception in the 11th year of study.

Learning Motivation

Learners' motivation was assessed with two scales of the self-report questionnaire MSLQ comprising 4 statements for intrinsic motivation and 4 statements for external motivation on the scale from 1-7. Table 9 shows how the results of the motivation scales of MSQL (The Motivated Strategies for Learning) are distributed among the schools. It can be seen that intrinsic motivation prevails among all respondents, however, the gap between the values is rather small.

Table 9. Average values of intrinsic and external motivation (green colour indicates the greater value)

Groups of respondents	Type of motivation	
	Intrinsic	External
All respondents (N=94)	4.68 (SD=1.10)	4.56 (SD=1.10)
TAG (N=37)	4.86 (SD=0.93)	4.74 (SD=1.08)
KJPG (N=57)	4.56 (SD=1.19)	4.43 (SD=1.11)

The more detailed distribution can be seen in Table 10. The respondents from both schools have the intrinsic motivation prevailing in the 10th and 11th grade, however, it changes to the external being dominant in the final, 12th year of study. The possible reasons for this change are explained in the discussion part of the thesis.

Table 10. Average values of intrinsic and external motivation distributed by the schools and grades

TAG (N=37)			KJPG (N=57)		
Grade	Type of motivation		Grade	Type of motivation	
	Intrinsic	External		Intrinsic	External
10 (N=10)	5.05 (SD=1.09)	4.68 (SD=1.05)	10 (N=18)	4.54 (SD=1.27)	4.51 (SD=1.35)
11 (N=16)	5.08 (SD=0.90)	4.80 (SD=1.25)	11 (N=20)	4.85 (SD=1.18)	4.36 (SD=1.20)
12 (N=11)	4.39 (SD=0.71)	4.73 (SD=0.94)	12 (N=19)	4.28 (SD=1.07)	4.43 (SD=0.80)

Language environment

In order to understand the learners' cultural and language environment, and their culture and information consumption outside the school, students' responses to the language environment questionnaire were analysed. Table 11 demonstrates the aggregated data according to schools and activities. Each cell indicates the number of persons, who stated that they perform the given activity mostly using the given language. For example, if the person reads mostly in Estonian, he/she will be assigned to (Reading, Estonian) cell, even if the person occasionally reads in other languages.

Table 11. The number of cases mentioned in the Language environment questionnaire distributed by activities and schools

School	Activity	English	Estonian	Russian
TAG (N=37)	Reading	15	0	22
	Watching	11	0	23
	Listening	27	0	9
KJPG (N=57)	Reading	18	38	1
	Watching	29	7	1
	Listening	43	5	2

In the case of TAG, we can observe that most of the students read books or information on the internet and watch video content in Russian or English, the first being almost twice as popular. However, when it comes to music preferences, the ratio is reversed towards English-language music, bands or singers.

The students of the Estonian-medium KJPG usually use Estonian and English to read any text materials in paper or on the internet, however, when it comes to consuming video content and music, there is a clear preference given to the English language, with a smaller but significant group watching or listening to the Estonian language content.

As for the social media consumption, the average number of hours spent on consuming the content of social media among all the respondents is 2.94 hours per day. The average for the students of TAG is 3.2 hours per day that is significantly more than the average value reported by the KJPG students – 2.7 hours per day.

The described trends and patterns provide a good foundation for further analysis in the discussion section of the thesis in order to answer the RQ3 and RQ4.

Placement test

To estimate the English language level of the students who begin their studies at the upper secondary school level in TAG and KJPG, the placement test was conducted among the 10th-grade students. The written part of the Cambridge Unlimited placement test was used.

As can be seen in Table 12, the majority (76%) of the students who continue their studies at TAG come from the same basic school. The average score of these students (64.61%) fits in the bottom bound of the B2 range. A significant part of the students is coming from the Russian-medium Tartu Basic School named after Aleksandr Pushkin, *Aleksandri Puškini Kool* (8 students, 15%) got B1+ level, which corresponds to the level that is in between B1 and B2. The “Other” group, that represents students who came from other schools outside Tartu, got similar results.

Table 12. Placement test results of 10th grade students from TAG

TAG			
Previous school	Students, N	Test score, %	CEFR level
TAG	41	64.61	B2
TAPK ¹	8	50.75	B1+
Other	5	58.80	B1+
<i>Total</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>62.02</i>	<i>B1+</i>

From Table 13, we can observe the composition of the students who begin their studies in KJPG. We can see that the biggest group is coming from the TKK. This makes a lot of sense considering that TKK is located near the KJPG. We can see that there are a lot of small groups coming from various Estonian-medium basic schools all over Tartu, and the group “Other” represents students coming outside Tartu. There are also 4 students from Tartu Basic School named after Aleksandr Pushkin. It is interesting to note that the Estonian-medium school attracts students from a Russian-medium school, even though the number is quite small as of yet, while the opposite scenario, when a person from Estonian-medium school enters Russian-medium upper secondary school, has not been observed this year.

¹ Tartu Basic School named after Aleksandr Pushkin (Tartu Aleksandri Puškini Kool)

Table 13. Placement test results of 10th grade students from KJPG

KJPG			
Previous school	Students, N	Test score, %	CEFR level
TKK	15	80.73	C1
TKaK ¹	8	77.38	B2
TDK ²	5	79.80	B2
TMRK ³	5	77.60	B2
TRK ⁴	4	82.25	C1
TAPK ⁵	4	49.00	B1+
TFK ⁶	4	76.00	B2
THK ⁷	3	80.67	C1
TVaK ⁸	3	67.67	B2
Katoliku kool	2	80.50	C1
TTK ⁹	1	90.00	C1
Other	15	81.27	C1
<i>Total</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>77.70</i>	<i>B2</i>

We can clearly see that the English knowledge level of the students coming to KJPG upper secondary school level classes is significantly higher compared to TAG (KJPG - 77.7, TAG – 62.02). Thus, the school already works with the better prepared students which enables teachers to deviate more from the default curriculum activities during the classes.

¹ Tartu Basic School of Karlova (Tartu Karlova Kool)

² Tartu Basic School named after Descartes (Tartu Descartes'i Kool)

³ Tartu Basic School named after Mart Reinik (Tartu Mart Reiniku Kool)

⁴ Tartu Raatuse Basic School (Tartu Raatuse Kool)

⁵ Tartu Basic School named after Aleksandr Pushkin (Tartu Aleksandri Puškini Kool)

⁶ Tartu Basic School names after B.G. Forselius (Tartu Forseliuse Kool)

⁷ Tartu Hanseatic Basic School (Tartu Hansa Kool)

⁸ Tartu Basic School of Variku (Tartu Variku Kool)

⁹ Tartu Basic School of Tamme (Tartu Tamme Kool)

Interviews

In order to get a more profound overview of the teaching and learning process in both TAG and KJPG two interviews were conducted. Both students, E.M and A.K had been studying in one type of school and then went over to another, so, having a learning experience in Estonian as well as Russian-medium schools they were able to compare them based on their experience and impressions.

E.M. had studied in Tartu Hanseatic School (*Tartu Hansa Kool*, Estonian-medium school) till the 7th grade before he decided to change the school, where he is currently studying in the 11th grade. While comparing the English teaching and learning process in his previous and current school, TAG, E.M. stated that there were several differences. For example, in his current school teachers changed every course, starting from the 10th grade, which means that approximately every two months students had to get used to a new teacher and possibly new approaches and requirements. In addition, according to E.M. the share of the Estonian and Russian language used to give instructions or explain the material was bigger compared to the usage of English for the same purposes, which was different from his former school.

He also shared some thoughts about what he found the most important in learning English and also added that he needed more speaking practice during the lessons. Listening activities and grammar exercises in TAG took a big part of the lessons, however, it happened that some activities outnumbered the others, depending on a teacher (some teachers preferred grammar exercises, others – describing pictures, listening, retelling the texts, and so on). E.M also pointed out that listening was not really useful for him, because he was not able to understand the recordings and to comprehend the information. E.M also confessed that he would prefer tasks for the beginners to get used to listening activities overall and to understand more in the future. E.M also described his own experience (travelling to Norway) where he understood the importance of English in practice.

A.K. completed the basic school classes in TAG and decided to continue her studies in KJPG. A.K. (see Appendix F), she expressed the same opinion about the established process of changing the teacher every course in TAG. She also pointed out that in KJPG she had more speaking activities every lesson, compared to her studies in TAG, which she considered as a big advantage, boosting her speaking skills and the English language skills overall. In her opinion, it is very important to provide students with the opportunity to speak, even if they make mistakes. Watching videos, films and TV-series is efficient as well and she

also said that in KJPG it is common to watch videos in English in different lessons, such as Art, Music, Biology and so on.

Overall, it can be concluded from the interviews that teachers from both schools have different approaches to teaching and use different activities. For instance, in TAG teachers very often make students retell the texts, and learn them by heart, use a lot of grammar exercises, describing pictures, while in KJPG teachers prefer speaking and listening activities and students have a lot of practice in English, because they also use the English content in the form of videos in other lessons and it positively affects their English skills.

Discussion

In this chapter, the interpretation of the results presented in the previous chapter will be given. The research questions are going to be answered, a summary of the findings presented, the strong and weak points of the thesis highlighted, and the next possible steps discussed.

To answer RQ1, the results of the document analysis revealed that the syllabi in Estonian and Russian-medium have certain differences.

On the basic school level, the number of hours spent on English learning in Russian-medium schools corresponds to the state-required minimum, while most of the Estonian schools tend to add more hours to their English language curriculum. The reason for this might be due to the total language learning academic load being significantly bigger in the Russian-medium schools that deal with teaching the state language to its non-native speakers in the first place, while also keeping and developing their native language and additionally introducing one A-foreign language (with the target level of B2 upon graduation). Overall, it is hard to make conclusions from the analysis of the basic school curricula, since the English examination that is held at the end of the basic school is not obligatory and cannot serve as a persistent and reliable effectiveness measure of the basic schools, and therefore their curricula.

On the upper secondary school level, the major difference is that particularly in the case of TAG, the curriculum starts with B1 level courses due to the uneven knowledge level of the students who continue studies in the school and students who come from other basic schools, as placement tests revealed. Therefore, the school has substantially more hours dedicated to English language learning than the all-Tartu average to prepare both of these groups for the state examination. Placement tests conducted in both TAG and KJPG shows that this decision is justified.

It is worth noting that in the full immersion classes of TAG, the number of hours dedicated to learning Estonian (without the hours of using Estonian as a language of instructions) exceeds not only the number of hours dedicated to learning Russian language, the native language of most of the students, but also exceeds the number of hours put into learning the Estonian language as the native language in Estonian schools. And indeed, this does produce good results with the vast majority of the students passing the Estonian language state examination on the B2 level, with the exceptional students achieving C1 level of Estonian language knowledge.

In order to answer to RQ2, the lesson observations and interviews were carried out. These showed that although the teaching approaches vary from school to school, the difference is not significant. All schools are using some similar approaches (such as Situational and Reading approach), which is due to the fact that the elements of these approaches are present in the National curriculum (Riigikogu, 2016). On the other hand, it is clear from the interviews with the students that they lacked some practical activities, such as speaking, and listening to the authentic real-life sources, rather than only focusing on the prepared learning samples. While from the TAG strategy it is obvious that teachers put a certain effort into grammar learning because of the presence of grammar exercises in the state exam, the balance between grammar learning and other activities is yet to be found.

Another aspect of English learning in Russian-medium schools is the language of instruction. The interviewees pointed out that it would be more beneficial to have English as a language of instruction in the English language classes. According to the interviews, in the case of Estonian schools, sometimes English is even used in other classes. It can be said that the same approach works with Estonian language learning in Russian-medium schools, therefore a possibility of applying it in English language classes should be considered, even though it is obvious that Russian-medium school also follows a goal of Estonian language immersion by conduction foreign language classes with Estonian as a language of instruction.

Investigating students learning motivation and their use of language learning strategies to answer RQ3 demonstrated that although the language learning strategies and motivation of learners in Estonian and Russian-medium schools are not identical, they are quite close, and follow the same trends and patterns. Students from both schools have the intrinsic motivation prevailing, with the external motivation taking the dominant position in the final year of study. This can be explained with the state examination being the major reason and source of motivation to study the English language in the final grade. It can be also noticed that the compensatory strategies slightly increase in frequency in the final year of study among all the students. This is also considered as a way students operate the knowledge they have gained throughout the previous years in the school to use in real-life situations, including the state examination.

The memory and affective strategies appear to be the least popular among all students. However, the slight growth of the memory strategies frequency can be observed in the 10th grade of the TAG. Since these strategies are typical for beginners in the language learning, this peak most probably indicates the presence of the students whose language level is lower than average in the class due to some classes being mixed with the students from the basic

school of TAG and other basic schools. The same pattern, but with affective strategies, can be seen in KJPG, whose classes are all composed of the students of different basic schools.

Affective strategies probably help these students to cope with stress and fear while speaking a foreign language in a new school and a new class.

The metacognitive strategies are equally popular among the students in both schools. This tells us that both Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking students of the upper secondary school level are generally enough self-organized in language learning. The difference between the groups is in the usage of the social strategies that are more frequently used by the students of TAG.

The language environment questionnaire provided the needed insights to answer the RQ4. The language environment of the Estonian and Russian-speaking students is different and seems to influence the acquisition of the English language. The data shows that Estonian students have more practice in English outside the classroom and school. They are consuming not only English-language music, which is common among both groups but also all other kinds of content, including reading the printed and digital materials, watching videos and blogs. The interviews supported this statement, with both students expressed that they would like to have more speaking and listening practice while studying in the Russian-medium school. While in the case of learning Estonian, students of TAG did not put Estonian language content in the first place of their content consumption preferences, this is compensated with the natural practice of the Estonian language at school, during other classes and in real life. This partly explains the success of Estonian students in the English state exams and Russian-speaking students of language immersion classes in the Estonian state exams.

Overall, the following explanations to Estonian and Russian students' different EFL results can be highlighted:

1. Different language environment of Estonian and Russian-speaking students.
2. Bigger than average language learning academic load of the students in language immersion classes.
3. Different teaching approaches in Estonian and Russian-medium schools.

Concluding the discussion above, the last point to outline is the fact that TAG is the only one Russian-medium upper secondary school in Tartu and the whole South-Estonia, and it is really hard to raise the requirements for the Russian-speaking students coming from the basic schools, which works in the case of NKL, Narva Language Lyceum. Therefore,

specifically in the case of TAG, one more cause can be that the school cannot set strict requirements to admit to upper secondary school.

Another important aspect to note is that while English is considered as A-foreign language de jure, it is de facto third language to learn for the students of TAG. And while Estonian-medium school students learn English as a second language de jure and de facto, comparing English performance among these two groups should always be done with this difference in mind. And if we are to compare the de facto second learned languages, TAG does indeed succeed in teaching Estonian, the state language, as a second language. Besides the hours directly allocated for learning the language, the students also use Estonian as a language of instruction in several other subjects, such as Physics, Natural Science, Art and even the English language itself. During the last three years, on average 88.7% of the TAG students were able to achieve the B2 level in the Estonian language state exam (2015 - 92%, 2016 - 90.3%, 2017 - 84%). Comparing these results to the results of the English state exam at KJPG (2015 – 87%, 2016 – 82.1%, 2017 – 91%) shows that from this particular perspective, schools are equally successful in teaching their students (SA Innove, 2017).

The research includes a broad overview of how schools in Tartu implement the English language curricula, with four schools taken a closer look at, and two of them analyzed in depth. While the situation in the abovementioned schools is well studied, there might be other cases, scenarios and information missed from the other schools in Estonia.

The next possible steps that would develop the topic of research might be increasing the scale (including schools from multiple cities in Estonia, with different prestige levels), scope (analysis of other subjects, related to language learning overall), depth (comparing more instances of historical data and even individual records of the students) and presenting the possible projects of solutions to the existing research problem.

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the research problem that concerns the difference in the performance in the English language state examination of the Russian-medium schools' students compared to their colleagues from the Estonian schools. Through the curricula analysis, lesson observations, three types of surveys, placement test and interview, the research described the possible reasons of this phenomenon.

It was found out that the main possible reasons why the results of the English state exams in the Estonian and Russian-medium schools are significantly different are the very different language environment of Estonian and Russian-speaking students, with Estonians using and contacting with English naturally; bigger than average language learning academic load of the language immersion classes' students, that may leave less space for foreign language learning; and different teaching approaches in Estonian and Russian-medium schools.

Overall, the results that were obtained showed that the problem is truly multidimensional. While the possible causes are identified, it is unclear whether only educational science is enough to cope with them. The external factors such as the language environment and attitude towards foreign languages are hard to influence and yet they play a significant role in the students' motivation. The problem of Russian-speaking students having a little contact with the English language and therefore underestimating its importance need to be addressed not only from the pedagogical but also from the psychological and sociological point of view.

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Author's declaration

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis independently and that all contributions of other authors and supporters have been referenced. The thesis has been written in accordance with the requirements for graduation theses of the Institute of Education of the University of Tartu and is in compliance with good academic practices.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire

This form of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) is for students of a second language (SL). Please read each statement and fill in the bubble of the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells HOW TRUE THE STATEMENT IS.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. **There are no right or wrong answers to these statements.**

Part A		Score				
1	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
2	I use new SL words in a sentence, so I can remember them	5	4	3	2	1
3	I connect the sound of a new SL word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word	5	4	3	2	1
4	I remember a new SL word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used	5	4	3	2	1
5	I use rhymes to remember new SL words	5	4	3	2	1
6	I use flashcards to remember new SL words	5	4	3	2	1
7	I physically act out new SL words	5	4	3	2	1
8	I review SL lessons often	5	4	3	2	1
9	I remember new SL words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign	5	4	3	2	1
Part B		Score				
10	I say or write new SL words several times	5	4	3	2	1
11	I try to talk like native SL speakers	5	4	3	2	1
12	I practice the sounds of SL	5	4	3	2	1
13	I use the SL words I know in different ways	5	4	3	2	1
14	I start conversations in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
15	I watch SL language TV shows spoken in SL or go to movies spoken in SL	5	4	3	2	1
16	I read for pleasure in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
17	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in the SL	5	4	3	2	1

18	I first skim an SL passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully	5	4	3	2	1
19	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
20	I try to find patterns in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
21	I find the meaning of an SL word by dividing it into parts that I understand	5	4	3	2	1
22	I try not to translate word for word	5	4	3	2	1
23	I make summaries of information that I hear or read in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
	Part C	Score				
24	To understand unfamiliar SL words, I make guesses	5	4	3	2	1
25	When I can't think of a word during a conversation in the SL, I use gestures	5	4	3	2	1
26	I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
27	I read SL without looking up every new word	5	4	3	2	1
28	I try to guess what the other person will say next in the SL	5	4	3	2	1
29	If I can't think of an SL word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing	5	4	3	2	1
	Part D	Score				
30	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my SL	5	4	3	2	1
31	I notice my SL mistakes and use that information to help me do better	5	4	3	2	1
32	I pay attention when someone is speaking SL	5	4	3	2	1
33	I try to find out how to be a better learner of SL	5	4	3	2	1
34	I plan my schedule, so I will have enough time to study SL	5	4	3	2	1
35	I look for people I can talk to in SL	5	4	3	2	1
36	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in SL	5	4	3	2	1
37	I have clear goals for improving my SL skills	5	4	3	2	1
38	I think about my progress in learning SL	5	4	3	2	1
	Part E	Score				
39	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using SL	5	4	3	2	1
40	I encourage myself to speak SL even when I am afraid of making a mistake	5	4	3	2	1
41	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in SL	5	4	3	2	1
42	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using SL	5	4	3	2	1
43	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary	5	4	3	2	1
44	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning SL	5	4	3	2	1
	Part F	Score				
45	If I do not understand something in SL, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again	5	4	3	2	1
46	I ask SL speakers to correct me when I talk	5	4	3	2	1
47	I practice SL with other students	5	4	3	2	1
48	I ask for help from SL speakers	5	4	3	2	1
49	I ask questions in SL	5	4	3	2	1
50	I try to learn about the culture of SL speakers	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix C.

Language environment questionnaire

TEXTS

1. What languages do you usually read in (books, websites, blogs)?

List the languages from the most used to the least used.

VIDEOS

2. How often do you watch videos on YouTube or Instagram? (hours per day)

3. List your 5 favorite video bloggers and the language they speak:

	Video-blogger / famous personality	The language he/she speaks
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

MUSIC

4. List your 5 favorite bands/singers and the language they sing in:

	Music band / singer	The language he/she speaks
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Appendix D.
Interview structure

Part 1	Part 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What school have you studied at before? • What were the reasons you have been transferred to your current school? • What were your academic records, and have they changed since changing your school? • What are your first impressions of how English is taught in your new school? • What was completely “new” for you in the English classes at your new school? What do you think lessons lack compared to your previous school lessons? • At your new school, what activities you do mostly in the class? What activities do you like the most? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your attitude towards learning English and foreign languages overall? • What helps you study better? What motivates you? • What language do you use while using the Internet for academic purposes (e.g. looking for information, reading Wikipedia)? • What language do you use while using the Internet for entertaining purposes (e.g. playing online games, consuming media-content)?

Appendix E.
Interview with E.M.

First of all, I would like to ask you, where had you been studying before you went to TAG?

I had been studying in Tartu Hanseatic School, an Estonian-language school, for seven years before I came here.

What are the reasons you have decided to study in TAG?

Well, one day, in the evening, when I was in the 7th grade, my mom said that it is time to choose an upper secondary school because at that time Hansa School was reorganized into a basic school.

But you were only in the seventh grade, why you did it so early?

Honestly, I decided to do it in advance not to write tests after 9th grade.

And, one more question here, why have you chosen TAG? Why not any other Estonian upper secondary school? Did you have any thoughts and preferences?

My mom herself studied in TAG and, furthermore, at that point in time I thought that it was better for me to be here, in terms of friends. I mean, here I have someone to talk to... In Tartu Hanseatic School I did not actually have real friends. Now, it is changed.

When you came to TAG, what were your first impressions? Maybe you noticed something completely different from what you were used to? In the process of teaching and learning? In teachers' approaches? In the organization of the studying process in general? Maybe, you liked something or, vice versa, did not like, from the first sign?

Well, first of all, the attitude of teachers. In TAG, teachers treat students more like... Not friends, but relationships are warmer, and they do not just do their job, they try to understand and to look at all situations from the inside, you know. However, it depends on each teacher... Sometimes teachers can be really strict and even rude, and it is difficult to say where exactly teachers are better... It is not even necessary to put it in this way, everything varies. But, what I can say is that Estonians are more serious, jokes aside, studying is their primary goal. Maybe that is why they are more hard-working and persistent.

Now, I would like to ask you about methods of teaching English in your first school, and here, in TAG, is there any difference? And if so, can you tell me about it more in details?

We have very different teachers here and each of them has his or her own approach. In the Hansa School, I had only one teacher and her approaches were quite balanced. Speaking,

listening, writing, reading, we had everything. Here, somebody prefers grammar, someone likes asking us to retell texts and describe pictures...

I noticed that you have different teachers each semester. Was it the same in Hansa School?

No, and to be honest, it is quite weird because it is not easy to get used to a new teacher and I am not sure whether it is effective or not. In Hansa School, I had the same teacher in 5th grade, 6th grade, 7th grade... She knew us, our strengths, and weaknesses, how we learn. I think it is better. At least, for me. One more very important and significant detail is that in my former school teachers always spoke English. And only when something was unclear, they switched to Estonian. Here, teachers tend to speak more Estonian or Russian and only sometimes they speak English. I think it can influence our level to some degree.

Next question is: What approach do you find the most efficient in learning and teaching English in general and for you in particular? What can help you most?

For me, it is crucial to speak. Just speak as much as possible. I remember one situation, when I was in the 7th grade, we were travelling by plane to Trondheim, from Tallinn, with the transfer in Oslo. And the thing was that we were late and missed the plane. It was awful because I had to talk about using my broken English, trying to somehow explain the situation... And then I understood that the most important thing is to be understandable for people. Not the grammar itself. I just started speaking English, because in that situation I had no choice.

Is there something you lack here and how your performance changed when you came in TAG?

I can say that in my former school I studied better. Maybe because the discipline was better, I do not know... From the 8th grade to the 10th grade my results were not that satisfactory (laughing). Now, in the upper secondary school, I am studying hard. And now my performance is the same as in 7th grade.

What motivates you to learn English? What do you like best? And, vice versa, what do you do not like?

I like to communicate with other people, and I am happy when they understand me when we have something to share with each other, when I understand what somebody says to me. English is the third language I am learning, it does not matter whether it is good or bad, I can speak it, even if I am not perfect, I am proud of myself, a bit... (smiling) But I feel stressed and it demotivates me when somebody is constantly correcting my mistakes focusing only on something I do wrong. Criticizing does not work in my case.

What can you tell about your classmates' attitude towards learning English? And, if you remember something about your former classmates, can you compare it?

I think that Estonians are more serious. They are more responsible, hard-working, persistent, conscientious, if you like, they take everything seriously. And that is why their attitude is different and their performance is better. Here, it depends. There are good students and there are bad as well. Fifty-fifty, I would say. Some prefer to avoid difficulties, not to do anything, just to pretend they are doing something when actually they are not.

What is your attitude toward learning languages?

Well, I do not learn a lot of languages... Only English and Estonian and I have never thought about it. I learn languages just because I want to understand people and not to feel limited and confused. I learnt a lot from playing computer games. You know, when you play, you need to communicate with other players, as you always play in the team. Even if your language is broken (laughing), you speak. It taught me not to be shy and afraid of my own level, as I saw that in the world there are so many different people speaking English with various accents! Mine is not the worst (smiling).

At your new school, what activities you do mostly in the class? What activities do you like the most? What activities do you find useful? And, what can you tell me about your current English teacher?

She prefers listening over other activities and we also do a lot of grammar tasks from the previous examinations in English. For me, it is hard, when I do not understand a word from what I am listening to. I know, I should, but for now, it is awfully challenging... People on the recordings always speak very fast and I feel lost. Then, we check the answers and that's it. I cannot say that it works, in my case. I would prefer something a bit easier just for the beginning. Well, and more speaking practice. We barely speak on our lessons. We write, read, listen, but do not speak much... I feel I need more practice.

And the last question, what language do you use while using the Internet for studying (e.g. looking for information, reading Wikipedia) and for entertainment (e.g. playing online games, using social media, listening to music)?

Well, when I study, I more likely google in Russian, because it is convenient. I read books in Russian and Estonian because some subjects we have in Estonian and it is easier to prepare. I watch some bloggers on YouTube, they speak Russian. But, as I said, I have some everyday practice when I play computer games online, with other people. Not so much, but still, at least something. I am that kind of person, who prefers speaking over everything else, so, I do not want to lose this opportunity (laughing).

Appendix F.

Interview with A.K.

To begin with, what school have you studied at before? What were the reasons you have been transferred to your current school?

Till the 9th grade, I have been studying at TAG. Then, I decided to transfer to KJPG, because I knew that it was better for me in terms of the level of education, even though I also knew it was going to be harder to study there... I know and speak Estonian very well, but anyway, you can imagine, that it is not that convenient to communicate all the time in a non-native (to some degree) language. But I needed it and it is a challenge now.

What are your first impressions of how English is taught in your current school? What was completely "new" for you in the English classes? What do you think lessons lack compared to your previous school's lessons?

Well, in TAG English is taught in a somewhat strange way. I mean, that almost every month you have a new course, with a new teacher and you have to get used to completely new requirements, new methods, new teaching style if I can put it in this way... Here, it differs. As far as I know, I am going to have only one teacher from 10th to 12th grade, and I feel more comfortable with it, lessons are more interesting, and my teacher always speaks English, and she uses Estonian only when she wants us to translate something from English to Estonian and vice versa. What is more? We speak. Every lesson we have some speaking activities, she gives us different tasks, asks questions... In TAG, I remember, I did not have an opportunity to speak so much and I think it is a reason why my English level has always remained low... The most important, as I have already said, is to speak, even if you make mistakes... And our teacher does not blame us if we make them.

In general, I also can say, that teachers are stricter in Estonian school. If you have not learnt something, you get a bad mark and you cannot beg for some extra time to improve it. You need to understand: here you study, and it is not a playschool anymore.

Next question is: What approach you find the most efficient in learning and teaching English in general and for you in particular? What can help you most?

Communicating, watching films and TV-series, being involved in conversations, relationships with people... Well, using language in your daily life. What is interesting, is that we watch different videos in English not only on English lessons but as well on Music lessons, Biology lessons, Art lessons... Well, for me it is quite difficult, but for my classmates, this is something really common.

Is there something you lack here and how your performance changed when you came in KJPG?

Now, I do not feel like I lack something. I have always been studying very well, in TAG and in KJPG. Maybe, there is only one detail. As everything is in Estonian, my grades are a bit lower, because I can misunderstand something, or miss something, but, in general, everything remained the same. I am happy I am now in a school where everything is balanced and organized. So, even if my performance suffers because of Estonian language proficiency, I can manage it.

What motivates you to learn English? What do you like best? And, vice versa, what you do not like?

I like the fact that all teachers, even being strict, are kind and understanding. If you have a problem, and you do not lie, they try to support you. This motivates me. The good attitude... I also understand that I will need English in the future, so, I cannot avoid it (laughing). I do not like that feeling when everybody knows everything, and you understand that you are the worst in your class. And it can keep me from speaking English in the lessons, but I try, of course, to cope with this problem, because my mates, they are nice. And I have never been blamed or made fun of... They always tell me, how to say something better, more grammatically or stylistically correct.

What can you tell about your classmates' attitude towards learning English? And, if you remember something about your former classmates, can you compare it?

They already know English and sometimes, they do not do anything because they are sure that they do not need it (smiling). But the good thing is that they understand the importance of English and they use it in their daily life. My former classmates have never thought about English as about something important, something they will need after classes or after school. It was just a subject they had to learn.

What is your attitude toward learning languages?

Positive! Definitely positive. I cannot say I am good at languages, but I try to improve! When I listen to someone speaking English almost perfectly, it motivates me to be better, I want to know something, I want to speak like this person, and I hate the feeling when I do not understand something...

At your new school, what activities you do mostly in the class? What activities do you like the most? What activities do you find useful? And, what can tell me about your current English teacher?

I like to learn new words and to use them. I am not a huge fan of grammar exercises, but who is? (smiling) I adore the activities where I actually can use something I am learning. And I like to see the progress. Even small progress gives me a feeling of satisfaction!

She is strict, not severe, but kind, she always speaks English, gives us a lot of homework, a lot of words to learn, but I like it because my level has improved, and I can speak better. Not great, but better. Better is better than nothing (laughing).

And the last question, what language do you use while using the Internet for studying (e.g. looking for information, reading Wikipedia) and for entertainment (e.g. playing online games, using social media, listening to music)?

When I need to understand something and to prepare for the lessons, I use Russian almost all the time. Sometimes Estonian. Honestly, I use English only when I do my homework (laughing), maybe because everything is available in Russian. But I do not listen to Russian music, it is awful... If you ask about social media... I am not a very active user of it, because I do not have enough time, you know, I work and study, that is why I do not watch bloggers and do not read their posts, but if I do, I use Russian.

Appendix G.

TAG – 9th grade lesson observation

School	TAG	Grade	9th
Book	English step by step	Level	B1
Topic	Reading and translating the text about the family: “Family matters”.		
Activity		Description	
Discussing a new topic, a new module, plans, grades, tests, etc. (about 5 minutes)		Teacher introduces a new module, explains what they are going to do, what kind of assignments students will have in the future and so on.	
Warm-up (approximately 5-10 minutes)		<p>Teacher asks different questions about family life, for example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) When do you think about your family, who do you think about? 2) How much time do you spend with your family every day? With your friends? 3) How many people are there in your family? <p>Students answer the questions one by one, the teacher helps them with unknown words.</p>	
Checking homework (10-15 minutes)		<p>Students had to rewrite sentences in Reported Speech.</p> <p>Teacher asks students to read their variants and they correct the mistakes. The teacher also explains the most difficult moments.</p>	
Reading and translating the text about the family “Family matters” (approximately 10-15 minutes)		<p>Teacher asks students to open their books and to read the text aloud, one sentence per one person, and to translate it into Russian.</p> <p>Note: Reading would be more effective if students just read the text at home and discuss the main ideas on the lesson.</p> <p>The teacher can ask the translation of only the most difficult words and phrases because it takes a lot of time to read and then to translate.</p>	

Discussing a homework
(about 2-5 minutes)

For the next lesson, students have to learn the text by heart and learn all the unknown words to be prepared for a small vocabulary test.

Note: Learning texts by heart is quite a common assignment for students among teachers in TAG. It can be good for the beginners to train memory, but in my opinion, retelling or just discussing the text is better, because it allows students to use their own vocabulary and to feel more flexible, able to speak and communicate their thoughts. When they just learn the text, they can do it without thinking and they easily forget the words and expressions they have just learnt and, furthermore, this type of activity can be tough for those students, whose level is not very high because the phrases and words are difficult. It is better for them to retell the text using short and simple phrases so that they could share the main points and ideas of the text.

Appendix H.

TAG - G3 lesson observation

School	TAG	Grade	G3 (12 th year)
Book	-	Level	B2
Topic	Preparation to the state examination in English, Listening part.		
Activity		Description	
Warm-up (approximately 5 minutes)		Teacher distributes the handouts with questions for listening and explains what students have to write on them. The listening part consists of 5 tasks with 40 questions.	
Listening to Task 1		The description of Task 1: You are going to hear a talk about netiquette. You will hear the recording only once. Before you listen, read the sentences below. While you listen, complete the sentences. Write no more than three words in each gap. An example (0) has been done for you. You now have 30 seconds to read the sentences.	
Listening to Task 2		The description of Task 2: You are going to hear people talk about unemployment in the United States. You will hear the recording twice. Before you listen, read the topics below. While you listen, match the topics (B–I) to the speakers and write letters (B–I) in the table given. There are two extra topics you do not need to use. An example (0) has been done for you. You now have 30 seconds to read the topics.	
Listening to Task 3		The description of Task 3: You are going to hear a talk about a person from English history. You will hear the recording twice. Before you listen, read the sentences below. While you listen, tick the correct answer (A, B or C). An example (0) has been done for you. You now have 45 seconds to read the sentences.	
Listening to Task 4		The description of Task 4: You are going to hear a company owner answer a list of questions about machine learning. You will hear the recording twice. Before you listen, read the questions below. While you listen, match the questions (B–K) to the items and write letters (B–K) in the table given. There are	

	two extra questions you do not need to use. An example (0) has been done for you. You now have 30 seconds to read the questions.
Listening to Task 5	The description of Task 5: You are going to hear an interview with a blogger. You will hear the recording twice. Before you listen, read the sentences below. While you listen, complete the sentences. Write no more than three words in each gap. An example (0) has been done for you. You now have 30 seconds to read the sentences.
Collecting the papers	At the end of the lesson, students have an opportunity to check their answers one more time before they give their papers back to the teacher.

Appendix I.

TAG - G2 lesson observation

School	TAG	Grade	G2 (11 th year)
Book	All the world's a Puzzle	Level	B2
Topic	Articles, the usage of definite and indefinite articles; Writing a formal letter.		
Activity		Description	
Warm-up (approximately 5-10 minutes)		<p>The teacher explains to students what they are going to learn during this lesson. The lesson is dedicated to grammar practice and writing a formal letter.</p> <p>At the end of the lesson, students are supposed to understand how articles are used in various cases and to be able to explain the rules by themselves.</p>	
Introduction of articles, studying the rules of their usage. (approximately 20 minutes)		<p>Students read the rules and the teacher is commenting and explaining the cases. For example Zero articles, i.e. no article is used with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Plural and uncountable nouns in general 2) Meals and languages 3) Games and academic subjects <p>Teacher asks students to think of more examples of how the articles can be used.</p> <p>Students work independently, write notes, and share their sentences with the teacher.</p>	
Doing some grammar exercises (20-25 minutes)		<p>Students do the exercises from the book, write in their notebooks. The teacher helps them when they ask, explaining the rules one more time.</p>	
Introduction of formal letters (10-15 minutes)		<p>The teacher explains to students, that in this course they will have to write a letter of application and an essay. To do so, they have to understand what types of formal letters exist, and what is the structure of letter of application in particular.</p>	
Discussing a homework (5 minutes)		<p>At home, students have to do some exercises to practice articles and to write a letter of application.</p>	

Appendix J.

KJPG – G1 lesson observation

School	KJPG	Grade	G1 (10 th year)
Book	On Screen	Level	B2
Topic	Feelings, body language, moods, life stages.		
Activity		Description	
Discussing a new topic, plans, grades, tests, etc. (about 5 minutes)		<p>Teacher introduces a new module, explain what they are going to do, what kind of assignments students will have and so on. In this module, students also will write an opinion essay.</p> <p>Note: Teacher speaks English all the time and uses Estonian only while asking the translation from Estonian to English.</p>	
Warm-up (approximately 5-10 minutes)		<p>To start a new topic, the teacher asks students different words, to see what they know and what they do not know.</p> <p>Examples of the words: disappointed, amazed, confused, furious, peaceful, perplexed, disheartened, sensitive, worthless, depressed, exhausted, tired, angry, etc.</p> <p>Note: This activity allows students to feel involved in the process. Teacher asks sometimes very simple words, but the good thing about it is that everyone knows and remembers something, and it brings all students the feeling of success and satisfaction.</p>	
Checking homework (10-15 minutes)		<p>Students discuss the text they had to read at home (“Who says stress is bad for you?”), answer the questions one by one, check the tasks. To check the understanding of the text and to relax, teachers use Kahoot! It is kind a game, where students have to answer different questions, provided by the teacher, in a definite amount of time. They work in groups and those who answer all questions, win. It is also great because it allows having some rest. Even high school students can be tired and need to switch to another type of activity.</p>	
Doing some vocabulary exercises from the book		<p>Students work independently, but the teacher monitors the process and helps with unknown words.</p>	

Watching a video from YouTube “Body Language”	<p>Teacher asks students to watch a 5-minute video and to take some notes about the main ideas and points of the video.</p> <p>To check, whether students are attentive or not, the teacher pauses the video and asks some students to explain what they have just seen.</p> <p>As the video is about body language, some students show, using gestures, how to seem more confident and how to behave to make a good impression on people.</p>
Discussing homework	<p>The teacher explains what students have to do at home.</p> <p>Instruction: To write 5-6 sentences about body language (a short paragraph) based on the video watched on the lesson.</p>

Appendix K.

KJPG – G2 lesson observation

School	KJPG	Grade	G2 (11 th year)
Book	Activate	Level	B2
Topic	Education		
Activity		Description	
<p>Warm-up (approximately 5-10 minutes)</p>		<p>Teacher asks students to go to the website menti.com, using their mobile phones and write there up to 10 words to do with school and education. Any associations and thoughts.</p> <p>Note: In my opinion, it is a great idea, to start a new topic in this way, because it is catchy, relaxing, funny and it boosts students' imagination and creativity. It is also an opportunity to laugh, to see, which words are already known and what is going to be learnt.</p> <p>Examples of the words students mentioned: exams, grades, scholarship, teachers, students, books, courses, mates, evaluation, double-periods, studying, learning, teaching, knowledge, opportunities, languages, misery, evil, exhaustion, sadness, friends, fear, childhood...</p> <p>Some of the examples made everyone laugh.</p>	
<p>Reading of the article about education in Estonia (approximately 20-25 minutes)</p>		<p>In this task, the teacher asks students to read an article very quickly so that they understand only the most important points, the main idea.</p> <p>Then, students read this article one more time and highlight all the unknown words and the teacher writes them on the blackboard, translating into Estonian, giving all the necessary explanations.</p> <p>To check the understanding of the article, the teacher asks students to tell everything they remember from the article to their desk mates, so, students work in pairs for about 10 minutes.</p>	

	<p>Instruction: Tell your desk mate about what you have read in the article, do not read, speak, try not to use the same words and phrases, use your own vocabulary.</p> <p>Note: I liked this method and I noted it for myself, it is kinda mix of reading and speaking activities and it can help to understand better the information students read.</p>
<p>Discussion of the article (10-15 minutes) and reading some news article from the screen.</p>	<p>Teacher asks students different questions about the article they have just read, and they also discuss fast-food, fizzy drinks, what are the advantages and disadvantages of consuming such type of food.</p> <p>They also discuss different restaurants near schools, e.g R-kiosk, Hesburger, Opera Pizza and so on and the problem that students rather prefer to eat there, than in school canteens and why it is bad for their health.</p> <p>Note: Better to discuss some real problems than some artificial ones, something that you do not have any idea about.</p>
<p>Watching a video from YouTube (5 minutes)</p>	<p>The video is about eating habits among students, in form of an interview with a teacher from America.</p>
<p>Working with the article and menti.com one more time (5-10 minutes)</p>	<p>Now, the teacher asks students to highlight all the educational words in the article and students discuss its' translation and meaning.</p> <p>Then, students go to menti.com again and add there all new words they learnt on the lesson.</p> <p>Instruction: Try to think off more educational vocabulary you know and write down all of them + those you learnt during the lesson.</p>

Appendix L.

NKL – 9th grade lesson observation

School	NKL	Grade	9 th
Book	-	Level	B1
Topic	Sci-fi films, superheroes.		
Activity		Description	
Warm-up (approximately 5-10 minutes)		<p>Students answer the questions from a small quiz, created by the teacher, on the topic “Sci-fi films and superheroes”.</p> <p>For instance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "In space, no one can hear you scream." This was the famous tagline for 1979 space thriller starring Sigourney Weaver 2. “Who promised to throw the ring into the fires of Mordor?” 3.” Who wears a wooden mask?” etc. 	
Watching a trailer of the film “Doctor Who” and discussing it (5-8 minutes)		<p>Teacher asks students to watch a trailer very carefully and to get the main idea, what film is about.</p> <p>Then, the teacher asks different questions to see, whether students watched it attentively.</p> <p>After that, the teacher asks students to name everything they saw in the trailer, using only one word or expression, or a phrase.</p> <p>Variants: travelling in time, crazy doctors, mass-media, time machine, sci-fi film, fantastic, future, technologies, etc.</p> <p>Note: Video of the trailer is not of very good quality, especially audio, not everything is clear, speech is very fast, it may be difficult for students to understand and to get the idea of the movie.</p> <p>Better: to choose the review or a fragment of the of the film, different trailer, with the better quality, maybe with subtitles, or, with more understandable speech.</p>	
Reading a review to the film “Doctor Who” in the book and answering questions		<p>Students read a review and answer questions, they write answers in their notebooks or do it orally.</p> <p>After 10 minutes, the teacher asks these questions one by one.</p> <p>Note: Teacher spends a lot of time reading a text on the lesson.</p>	

<p>(approximately 10 minutes)</p>	<p>Better: To ask students to read this text at home so that it would be possible to organize a discussion and not to spend so much time on reading. The teacher could use Kahoot! to check the understanding, various quizzes, group work, etc.</p> <p>The teacher also could ask students to read any text about sci-fi films and to share the ideas of this text with their classmates. In my opinion, it is more effective, because students can choose everything they like, and it is not boring for them to read just one definite text chosen by the teacher.</p>
<p>Working with text and with the vocabulary (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Teacher asks students to find in the text any evaluative adjectives.</p> <p>Examples: scary, fantastic, fascinating, unusual, strange, weird, superb, spectacular, impressive, special, attractive, etc.</p> <p>Question to the class: “Why do we need them?”.</p>
<p>Working with the handouts (approximately 10 minutes)</p>	<p>Teacher distributes the handouts and in the first exercise, students have to put evaluative adjectives in two columns: positive and negative.</p> <p>Positive: thought-provoking, excellent, extraordinary, comical, unusual, Oscar-winning, mystical, mysterious, fascinating, intriguing, etc.</p> <p>Negative: hilarious, ordinary, boring, predictable, tedious, tiring, disappointing etc.</p>
<p>Working in pairs or in the group of three (about 8 minutes)</p>	<p>Teacher asks students to discuss how to write a review and to try to speak about any film using phrases and words learnt during the lesson.</p> <p>As homework, students are given a task to write a review, about 100 words, about any sci-fi film, using words and phrases from the handout.</p>

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