

# Minorities' Choice of Language of Instruction in Latvia

*The case of Russian and Polish minority parents*

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# **Minorities' Choice of Language of Instruction in Latvia: the Case of Russian and Polish Minority Parents**

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IV

# Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of how linguistic minorities in Latvia make their choice on a language in education. Despite various minority groups having access to education in their mother tongue, some parents still prefer sending their children to mainstream educational institutions. Therefore, I questioned how education for linguistic minorities was organized in the Republic of Latvia and what parents' motivations were when choosing a school for their children. Two minority groups Russians and Poles have been chosen because they enjoyed the best opportunities to maintain their mother tongue through education.

The research problem was addressed qualitatively. Analysis of national policy documents as well as semi-structured interviews with two minority school directors and thirteen parents were employed in order to address the topic from different perspectives and increase trustworthiness and reliability. Analyzed data was then discussed inside the theoretical framework based on the main concepts of language, power and identity.

The study found that the choice of a school is a complex decision-making process in which a number of factors play a role. However, language of instruction has found to be one of the most important factors for minority parents when choosing a school for their offspring. On the one hand, the intrinsic value of the native language and its significance to one's identity has found to be the main factor for favouring minority schools. On the other hand, instrumental goals along with the desire to be accepted by the titular population are the main motivating factors for minority parents to choose mainstream educational institutions. Despite contextual differences and dissimilar interpretation of the aim of minority education in Latvia, both Poles and Russians evaluate positively their choice of a school and the education system in general.



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# Table of contents

- 1 Introduction ..... 2
  - 1.1 Objective of the study ..... 3
  - 1.2 Outline of the thesis ..... 4
  - 1.3 Limitations ..... 5
- 2 Contextualization and Literature Review ..... 6
  - 2.1 Background information on minority education ..... 6
  - 2.2 Historical overview of minority education ..... 8
    - 2.2.1 Minority education in pre-war years ..... 9
    - 2.2.2 Education in the Soviet period ..... 10
    - 2.2.3 Education reforms in Perestroika and independent Latvia ..... 11
  - 2.3 Literature review ..... 13
    - 2.3.1 Acculturation strategies and language choice in Latvia ..... 14
    - 2.3.2 Experts’ views on bilingual education policies in Latvia ..... 17
- 3 Theoretical Framework ..... 20
  - 3.1 Introduction ..... 20
  - 3.2 Monolingualism versus multilingualism ..... 21
  - 3.3 Language and power ..... 23
  - 3.4 Language and identity ..... 28
  - 3.5 Language issues in education ..... 30
    - 3.5.1 Minority language in education ..... 30
    - 3.5.2 Bilingual education ..... 32
- 4 Research Methodology ..... 34
  - 4.1 Design ..... 34
  - 4.2 Sample ..... 36
  - 4.3 Interviews ..... 39
  - 4.4 Documentary analysis ..... 41
  - 4.5 The role of the researcher ..... 42
  - 4.6 Reliability and validity ..... 44
  - 4.7 Ethical considerations ..... 46
- 5 Minority Education in Latvia: Policy and Practice ..... 48
  - 5.1 Legal basis for minority education ..... 48

5.2	Bilingual education programmes in Russian and Polish schools .....	53
5.2.1	Establishment of the schools .....	53
5.2.2	Primary education programmes for minorities.....	55
5.2.3	Challenges faced by the minority schools .....	60
6	Choice of Language of Instruction and Attitude towards Education Policies .....	63
6.1	Mothers as decision makers.....	63
6.2	Minority schools .....	67
6.2.1	Intrinsic and instrumental motives .....	67
6.2.2	Advantages and weaknesses of minority education .....	71
6.3	Mainstream schools .....	77
6.3.1	Russian-speakers .....	77
6.3.2	Polish-speakers.....	79
7	Discussion and Concluding Remarks.....	83
7.1	How is education organized for Russian and Polish minority groups? .....	83
7.2	What are parents' motivations and attitudes when choosing a school?.....	86
7.2.1	Minority school .....	87
7.2.2	Majority school .....	88
7.3	Key findings .....	90
	References .....	92
	Appendix 1 .....	101
	Appendix 2 .....	107
	Appendix 3 .....	110
	Appendix 4 .....	114
	Appendix 5 .....	117

# List of acronyms

LCHR	Latvian Centre for Human Rights
LI	Latvian Institute
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LM	Latvian mother
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PM/PF	Polish mother/father
PSD	Polish School Director
RSDD	Russian School Deputy Director
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

# 1 Introduction

*Language and languages are an essential aspect – maybe the most essential aspect – of being human* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, p. 6).

In recent years, due to the formation of new nation states, combined forces of globalization, promotion of human rights, increased mobility, and movement of human populations, the concern of cultural and linguistic diversity has been broadly investigated and widely discussed in an international arena and in the research sphere. Language has found to be one of the important and controversial factors in these discussions since it may serve both for unification and segregation of society. On the one hand, it serves as the main instrument for communication. Therefore, in multilingual countries at least one common language should be shared among all citizens (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988). On the other hand, it is a symbol of one's cultural affiliation and an important marker of one's individual and group identity. For linguistic minorities the choice of language to raise and educate their children in is often guided by complex consideration of intrinsic and instrumental benefits of each language. Researchers (Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) believe that for minorities it is important to develop skills in both languages in order to enhance cognitive, linguistic and academic growth; therefore, bilingualism and bilingual education is not only a desire but also a necessity for them. In order to achieve this goal, it is important that their first language is recognized in wider society and is given status in the educational sector.

In Latvia separate schooling for different linguistic groups existed for several centuries but they took on a different meaning depending on the political context (Silova, 2006). While structural-functionalists claim that the task of schooling is to reinforce the society's existing social and political arrangements (Kubow and Fossum, 2007) and maintain the interests of dominant groups, I believe that in democratic society education should not merely reproduce the social structure that exists, but it should serve as a principal mean of creating a more equal society and as an important prerequisite for overcoming injustice and reducing disparities (UNESCO, 2009). Therefore, I find it important to give voice to a targeted population, namely minorities, to discover their views on the present-day minority education system in Latvia and the value they attach to the languages.

## 1.1 Objective of the study

This study aims at investigating and analyzing how multilingualism is addressed in one of the democratic European states Latvia, in particular how education is organized for different linguistic groups that constitute almost a half part of the total population of the country. My main intention is to give voice to the Russian and Polish minorities, and to some extent the majority, to discover their views on the current bilingual education system in the Republic of Latvia as well as to get to know how important they judge access to schooling in their mother tongue. I hope that this research will contribute to the body of literature on the choice of language of instruction.

Based on the specific objectives mentioned above this study will try to answer the following questions:

- How is education organized for Russian and Polish minority groups?
- What are Russian and Polish minority parents' motivations when choosing a school for their children?
- What is the parents' attitude towards minority education policies in Latvia?

The last two questions are asked in light of the fact that schools in Latvia are divided along linguistic lines; separate schools exist for different linguistic groups. Therefore, I look at the relationship between language of instruction and parents' choice of a school and investigate what value Russians and Poles attach to their mother tongue in comparison to the state language in a school setting. According to the MoES data (2011), the number of students attending Latvian<sup>1</sup> schools has increased by almost 20 percent during the last two decades, rising from 54 percent of the total number of students in the school year 1990/1991 to 73 percent in the years 2010/2011. Meanwhile the composition of Latvians has decreased by 3 percent during the same period of time (CSB, 2011). This change can be explained by the emigration of non-Latvians in recent years and the tendency of mixed and non-Latvian parents to send their children to schools with Latvian as the language of instruction. Therefore, I question whether arguments for the maintenance of minority languages remain their sense if more and more minorities opt for a majority language (May, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> The terms 'Latvian' or 'majority' schools refer to schools with Latvian as the only language of instruction. 'Minority', 'bilingual', 'Russian' and 'Polish' schools describe schools where programmes for national minorities are implemented.

The Russian and Polish minority groups have been chosen purposefully for several reasons. First, both represent national minorities in Latvia. Second, Russians and Poles enjoy the best, in terms of number of schools, opportunities to learn their mother tongue. Although according to the law, both groups have equal rights and opportunities to maintain and preserve their language, culture and tradition, in practice, Russians receive more attention and different treatment in comparison to other minority groups due to their numerical predominance and recent political, social and economic power in Latvia. In addition, it is important to underline that bilingual or, as officially called in the Education Law (1998) minority education programmes, for Russians and Poles have been created differently and for different purposes. In case of Russian minority schools it was the official language that was added to the minority language after the collapse of the Soviet Union, not the other way round as it is commonly accepted in bilingual programmes around the world (Druviete, 2000). Meanwhile, the Polish minority schools were created on the basis of Latvian schools and the Polish language was added as a second language. Therefore, taken that both minority groups initially had different opportunities for mother tongue learning and maintenance, I find it important to analyze views of different groups to answer my research questions.

## **1.2 Outline of the thesis**

In order to understand a current education system and different aspects of its development and administration, I find it important to present the historical as well as the political background of formation of a country and education policies in particular. Chapter two therefore provides both extensive contextual data on development of minority education in Latvia as well as a review of the literature related to the research topic.

In chapter three I discuss the significant theoretical concepts related to language choice in multilingual context. First, the concepts of ‘monolingualism’ and ‘multilingualism’ are defined. Then, the relation between language, power and identity are discussed. Lastly, the language issues in education are briefly presented.

Chapter four presents the qualitative-based methodology of the thesis research and explains the reasons for choosing the qualitative method as well as discussing factors such as design, sample, different qualitative research methods used, reliability, and validity. I also

touch upon the process of field work and how my position as a researcher influenced the study conducted.

Analysis of data is performed in chapter five and six. The purpose of chapter five is to discuss legal basis for minority education policies in Latvia and present practical implementation of the bilingual education models in two minority schools. Chapter six that is divided into two parts presents the findings that consist of analysis of interviews with Polish and Russian-speaking minorities who have chosen minority or mainstream Latvian schools for their children. The purpose of this analysis is to look at the parents' motivation when choosing a language of instruction and discuss their views on implemented education policies.

The seventh and final chapter includes discussion of findings and concluding remarks.

## **1.3 Limitations**

In my study interviews were conducted with various linguistic groups in three different languages: Latvian, Russian and Polish. Even though I am fluent in all the three languages, different vocabulary used during the interviews may be seen as a constraint when doing data analysis. Language issues are very sensitive and often bound to subjective interpretation. Therefore, my personal language ideologies may limit my research. However, as noted by Bryman (2004), in a qualitative study the analysis is always the researcher's own interpretation and therefore cannot be generalized or regarded as truth.

In addition, I realize that I, as a researcher and interviewer, might have had some influence on the replies given by the interviewees. Although I did my best to be as objective as possible, I am aware of the fact that my personal experience of being a former student of a Polish minority school and belonging to a Russian minority group might have somehow affected the way I perceived the things. As noticed by Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (1988), the insider's perspective is an extremely important to analyse bilingual education. Therefore, I hope that my background and insider's knowledge of the educational processes in Latvia are rather advantages than drawbacks. I will elaborate more on my role as the researcher in the methodology chapter.

## 2 Contextualization and Literature Review

In order to understand a current education system and different aspects of its development and administration, it is important to know the historical as well as the political background of formation of a country (Crossley and Watson, 2003). Therefore, I further present the contextualization and historical overview of the development of education policies in Latvia with special attention to the Russian and Polish minority groups. The chapter begins with the description of the general information on education system in the Republic. Then the next section presents a historical overview of the development of minority education policies and discusses the impact of political changes that affected formation of the current education system. Lastly, a brief literature review is presented that discusses previous studies conducted on acculturation strategies and bilingual education in Latvia.

### 2.1 Background information on minority education

Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union Latvia has been a newly re-established independent democratic republic. The state is *de jure* monolingual; the only official language in the country is Latvian, while all the others, except Liv, the language of the indigenous population, are considered to be foreign languages (Republic of Latvia, 1999). However, Latvia is *de facto* a multilingual country. Its strategic location has made the territory an international crossroad for trade, commerce and cultural exchange already in ancient times bringing diverse, multilingual and multicultural population to the land (Latvian Institute [LI], 2008). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia (MoFA, 2010a, ¶ 2) confirms that “the Latvian nation was formed through centuries, alongside with the existence of the Baltic German, Russian, Jewish, Polish, as well as Estonian and Lithuanian communities”.

According to the Latvian Institute (Mežs, 2010), almost a half part of the population in Latvia represents linguistic minorities of which Russians constitute the largest part: 27.6 percent is officially recognized as Russians, 28.4 percent affiliate themselves as Russians and 37.5 percent recognize Russian as their mother tongue. Other minorities represent smaller numbers: 3.6 percent belong to Belarusians and 0.8 percent state having Belarusian as their



mother tongue. Ukrainians and Poles constitute 2.5 and 2.3 percent respectively, while 0.7 percent report Ukrainian as their native language and 0.6 percent acknowledge Polish as their mother tongue. Lithuanians amount to 1.4 percent of the population of Latvia, and other minority groups represent less than 1.5 percent in total. Thus, the data suggests that a big part of the population have a mother tongue that differs from the official state language Latvian.

The Constitution of Latvia (*Satversme*) (Republic of Latvia, 1922) declares that persons belonging to minorities “have the right to preserve and develop their language and their ethnic and cultural identity”. The Education Law (Republic of Latvia, 1998, last amendments made in 2005) prescribes that all citizens and non-citizens<sup>2</sup> of the state as well as those with temporary residence permit have equal access to education. The provision of obligatory education (from grade 1 to 9) and secondary education (from grade 10 to 12) is a duty of the state and local governments and must be free of charge. The language of acquisition is prescribed to be the official language Latvian. Yet, schooling can be provided in another language in state or private education institutions with programmes for minorities, while education in state higher educational institutions is to be provided only in the official language, with some exceptions for foreign language programmes. In addition, all the final examinations both at schools and in higher education institutions are to be taken in Latvian that underlines a dominant position of the Latvian language (Pedersen, 2002).

Official documents, meanwhile, do not specify the term ‘national minority’ despite the fact that it is often used in legal acts and political discourse (Latvian Centre for Human Rights [LCHR], 2008). The only definition of national minorities can be found in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ratified by Latvia in 2005 that defines them as:

citizens of Latvia who differ from Latvians in terms of culture, religion or language, who have been traditionally living in Latvia for generations, who consider themselves as belonging to the state of Latvia and the Latvian community, and who would like to preserve and develop their culture, religion and language (MoFA, 2010a, ¶ 11).

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Non-citizen’ is a unique status applied only in Latvia and Estonia to Soviet-era residents which the legislation recognize as legitimate residents but do not grant the status of citizens. After restoration of independence in 1991 only those persons who had been citizens of the independent Latvia (before Latvia was annexed by the Soviet Union) and their descendants had their citizenship restored, while one third of non-Latvians were deprived of the right to receive citizenship automatically. These people, with some exceptions, could receive the citizenship only through a naturalization process. The state has been criticized by various international organizations and human rights defendants for discriminatory attitude towards non-citizens since some political (e.g. voting), economic and social rights in Latvia are reserved only for citizens (Poleshchuk, 2009).

Non-citizens who identify themselves as minorities and meet the criteria of the definition mentioned above may also enjoy the rights of national minorities (MoFA, 2010a). Nevertheless, some minority groups such as Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and others who arrived in Latvia after World War II see the definition as too vague, and want the meaning of “traditionally lived in Latvia for generations” to be clarified since their relation towards the Convention is unclear (LCHR, 2008).

When it comes to minority education, eight groups consisting of Russians, Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Roma have access to education with special programmes for minorities (MoES, 2011). The programmes for national minorities are created by the education institutions in accordance with the state standards and are based on general education models<sup>3</sup> approved by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES, 2011; MoFA, 2011; Republic of Latvia, 1998). The Education Law stipulates that these programmes shall include the content necessary for members of minority groups “for acquiring the appropriate ethnic culture and integration of the minority in Latvia” (Republic of Latvia, 1998, Section 41, para. 2) and define the amount of subjects that must be acquired in the official language. Thus, although the terms ‘bilingualism’ and ‘bilingual education’ are not officially stated in the Education Law, they are often used when speaking about schools for minorities where both, the state language and a minority language, although in different proportions, are used as the means of instruction.

Since the current education policies cannot be understood without some awareness of the historical and political events that have taken place in the territory of Latvia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a brief historical overview of formation and implementation of minority education policies in Latvia is further introduced.

## **2.2 Historical overview of minority education**

Scholars (e.g. Batelaan, 2002; Silova and Catlaks, 2001; Silova, 2006) distinguish three main historical periods that have had a considerable impact on the present day formation of bilingual education policies in Latvia: Latvian pre-war years (1918-1939), the Soviet

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1

period (1940-1985) and the *Perestroika*<sup>4</sup>, period (1986-1991). I would merge the Perestroika phase with the reform period of independent Latvia (1991-1999) that laid down the foundation for the current bilingual policies for minorities.

Separate schooling for Latvians and minorities existed since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but they took on different meanings depending on the political context (Silova, 2006). It is worth mentioning that historically the Latvian nation has developed from native Baltic and Finno-Ugric tribes. From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century the territory of the present day Republic was invaded and ruled by Germans, Swedes, Poles, and Lithuanians, later – by Russians (Batelaan, 2002, LI, 2008). This led to the development of a multilingual and multicultural society. For several centuries German, later also Russian, were almost exclusively the languages of education, while schooling in Latvian began to develop only in the mid- to late 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along the spread of nationalistic movements in Europe, rapid development of Latvian education began (LI, 2008). In 1918 Latvia proclaimed its independence and declared Latvian as the only official language of the state.

### **2.2.1 Minority education in pre-war years**

From 1918 till 1934 minorities in Latvia developed a certain cultural autonomy, including receiving education in state-funded minority schools. During that period approximately 80 percent of minority students (Germans, Russians, Jews, Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Estonians) had classes both in their mother tongue and the Latvian language (Silova, 2008). Poles, for example, had seven (Jekabsons, 2007) and Russians five (Institute of Russian Cultural Heritage of Latvia [IRCHL], n.d.) state-funded minority schools that were run by the Polish and Russian Education Departments established within the Ministry of Education. After the *coup d'état* of 1934 nationalistic tendencies in Latvia increased. The authorities began to create “Latvia for the Latvians” (Batelaan, 2002, p. 2) and reduced the rights of minorities to be taught in their mother tongue.

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<sup>4</sup> *Perestroika* (Russian: “restructuring”) the term given to the radical reform launched in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 to restructure Soviet economic and political policy which led to disintegration of the Soviet Union and creation of fifteen newly independent states in 1991 ([www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com)).

## 2.2.2 Education in the Soviet period

The nature and purpose of separate schools for linguistic minorities have undergone considerable transformation during the Soviet period when thousands of Russians and other non-Latvians from Soviet republics immigrated into Latvia, while a number of Latvians left the country. As a result, the country's demographical situation changed "threatening Latvians to become a minority in their own land" (Zepa, 2003, p. 84). Referring to Jekabsons (2007), Poles represented the only minority in Latvia whose numbers have not changed significantly despite repressions and deportations in WWII, varying from 50 to 60 thousands.

During the Soviet times the Russian language dominated over Latvian in various social, political and economic domains. Although formally all the languages of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had equal status (Laganovskis, 2012), Russian was assessed as more legitimate and dominant than Latvian and all the other languages spoken in the USSR. Two education systems, each with its own curriculum, one using Russian-language instruction and the other using Latvian, were established (MoFA, 2010b). Other minority schools were closed down; as a result most of minority students attended Russian schools (Muiznieks, 2004) and eventually began to associate themselves as Russians (Silova, 2006). According to Jekabsons (2007), the last Polish school in Latvia was closed in 1949.

Since Russians and Russian-speakers enjoyed certain academic, social and economic privileges, the number of students attending Russian schools rapidly increased while the Latvian schools experienced an opposite situation. Thus, by the end of the 1980's 47.6 percent of all students in Latvia attended Russian schools. Although some mixed schools existed, they still separated students since Russian and Latvian-speaking pupils had to attend parallel, not ethnolinguistically mixed classes (Silova, 2006; Batelaan, 2002). In addition, most of higher education programmes were available only in Russian. Cara (2010) claims that separation of children into different schools during the Soviet period was in line with the idea of national self-determination as one of the basic principles in the multinational, quasi-federal structured union. In addition, separate Russian-language schools were also necessitated by the massive waves of immigration from various Soviet republics to Latvia. Silova (2006), commenting on the reasons for establishing separate schools for different linguistic groups, claims that it allowed the Soviet government to hold strict control over the content of education and "unwanted nationalistic sentiments" (p. 40) as well as ensured certain academic, social and economic privileges to Russians and Russian-speakers.

*Russification*<sup>5</sup> policies, introduced under the slogan “merging the nations” (Khazanov, 1995), aimed at one-way bilingualism for Latvians and prescribed Russian to become the obligatory second language for all with another first language (Silova, 2006). Khazanov (1995) claims that many Russians felt their supreme position over titular nationalities, therefore had a dismissive attitude towards the culture, traditions and languages of the native population. Thus, although the official interpretation of *Russification* policy aimed at “social and cultural unification of all ethnic groups on the basis of Soviet Russian culture” (Khazanov, 1993, in Silova, 2006, p. 36), its real aim was assimilation of titular nationalities and establishment of the Russian language as the Soviet *lingua franca* (Khazanov, 1995; Silova, 2006). As a result, by the end of the 1980’s 5 percent of Latvians claimed to have switched their native language to Russian, and only 27.1 percent of Poles acknowledged their mother tongue to be Polish (Vebers, 1994, in Silova, 2006). Although the Latvian language was allowed to be used in the areas of culture, education, media, and private life, Russian completely dominated in the areas of administration, economy, professional life, and science (Laganovskis, 2012; Zepa, n.d.). Consequently, Russian became a language of power in the Soviet Latvian Republic.

### **2.2.3 Education reforms in Perestroika and independent Latvia**

During the *Perestroika* period and after the collapse of the Soviet Union the process of the restoration of the Latvian culture began (Batelaan, 2002), and, as noted by Silova (2006, p. 44), “education became the centre of reform, signaling a radical departure from Soviet practices to Western democratic ideals”. Latvians aimed at restoring independence, returning the power to Latvians, bringing back status to the Latvian language, eliminating legacies of the Soviet past, and joining Europe. As a result, in 1989 the Language Law was adopted which granted the Latvian language status as the only official language of the state (Silova, 2002, 2006; Zepa, 2003). Russian and other languages spoken by the population (e.g. Ukrainian, Belorussian, Polish) received status of foreign languages. In 1999 the law was amended prescribing that the official language is the only language of communication with the state and municipal authorities, thus strictly defining the use of the state language in public life (Zepa, 2003). In addition, in 1991 a resolution on “Renewal of Republic of Latvia

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<sup>5</sup> The term *Russification* refers to policies designed to spread Russian culture and language among non-Russians ([www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com)).

Citizens' Rights and Fundamental Principles of Naturalization” was passed which deprived one third of non-Latvians (mainly Russians, other immigrants from the Soviet Union and their children) the citizenship of the Republic of Latvia (Poleshchuk, 2008), consequently reducing their political, social and economic rights<sup>6</sup>.

Many discussions and hot debates about the future of Russian schools, from their full elimination to seeing them as a “temporary problem” (Silova, 2006, p. 55), were held. Meanwhile special attention was devoted to the restoration of schools for historical minorities such as Poles, Lithuanians, Estonians, Belarusians, Jews, and Roma. As a result of this policy, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and five Polish schools were opened. It is worth noticing that most Poles living in Latvia have proved to be very loyal to their roots, language and traditions despite various cultural and political changes and adaptations, and mostly due to their active involvement the Polish schools were opened in Latvia. In addition, the government of Poland and the government of Latvia signed the agreement on Cultural and Educational Cooperation which prescribes ensuring that “interested members of the Polish minority in the Republic of Latvia [...] have access to the study of their native language, history and culture and education in the native language within the framework of the educational systems (pre-schools and schools)” (Embassy of the Republic of Poland, 2005, Article 5). The same rights, according to the agreement, have to be ensured by the Polish government with respect to Latvians living in Poland. Exchange of experience, teacher training and students’ cooperation is also to be supported and encouraged according to the document.

The Soviet past, as noted by Batelaan (2002), created insecurity in Latvians about their identity endurance and led to negative attitudes towards Russians. Russian-speakers were “perceived as ‘occupants’ who would eventually leave Latvia” (Silova, 2006, p. 86) and as a result the Russian schools would disappear. This stance was not supported by the international actors and organizations such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNDP, UNESCO, OECD, and some others that Latvia either was or wanted to become a member of. As a result, the state granted Russian schools the status as minority schools and began a gradual *Latvianization* process keeping separate schools for different linguistic groups (Pedersen, 2002; Silova, 2006). Silova (2006) believes that the decision of keeping children from both groups separately was a result of Latvians’ fears being assimilated and losing their

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<sup>6</sup> In 2000 the Latvian Human Rights Committee published a list of 57 differences between the rights of citizens and non-citizens (permanent residents) of Latvia. The number is rather relative since the dynamics of limitations change. The list is available at [http://www.cilevics.eu/minelres/count/non\\_cit-rights\\_1.htm](http://www.cilevics.eu/minelres/count/non_cit-rights_1.htm)

‘Latvianness’; therefore, although parents had the right to choose any school they wanted to send their offspring to, it was not recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science to send Russian-speaking children to Latvian schools. As a result, despite officially having the alternatives, it was the state that created a framework within which parents could make a choice.

In 1999 a new education reform was introduced in Russian schools aiming at transition from Russian in primary to Latvian in secondary school. However, the new policies received harsh criticism and faced numerous protests from Russian-speaking students, parents and NGOs due to the lack of information, implementation mechanisms, financial support, dialogue with educators, and symbolic participation of minorities in developing bilingual education policies (Silova, 2006). The anti-reform movements widened the already existent gap between the Russian minority group and the majority. The national minority blamed the government for assimilation (Batelaan, 2002), while the officials labeled all opponents of the reform “enemies of the state and integration” and the protest movements as “anti-Latvian activity and sabotage” (Silova, 2006, p. 152). Since 77 percent of Russian speaking young people in Latvia consider language as the core of their identity, the reduction of accessible education in Russian was seen by these people as a threat to their identity as well as their ability to study the content of specific subjects in the Latvian language (Poleshchuk, 2009). Meanwhile, for the representatives of Russian-speaking politicians the anti-reform movement was a chance to demand more political power. Nevertheless, an agreement was reached and in 2004 the bilingual education policies with 40 percent of secondary school curricula taught in minority languages and 60 percent in the Latvian language were implemented in Russian schools (MoFA, 2010b).

## **2.3 Literature review**

Having presented a historical and political background on formation of the current education system in Latvia, I would now like to turn to the review of the recent literature related to the existing language and education policies in the Republic. As noted by Basit (2010, p. 41), “no research can be done without an understanding of the context to which it is related”. Therefore, literature review is one of the essential steps in all types of social science research. The goal of the review is to find out what is already known about the topic, to

interpret, develop and support one's own arguments with the help of other scholars' ideas (Bryman, 2008). It "rests on the principle that scientific research is a collective effort, one in which many researchers contribute and share results with one another" (Neuman, 2011, p. 124).

A great deal has already been written in Latvia and some other post-Soviet states on the topics connected to integration of minorities, language use, bilingual education, and alike. However, a common pattern of these studies is that most of them exclude smaller minority groups that live in these territories, focusing mainly on Russians and Russian speakers. Even in the official state documents of Latvia under the term "minorities" one can often see mentioning only Russians. Besides, many studies were done in the 1990s, but little is written after 2004 when a new education reform was launched. Therefore, as Bryman (2008) notices, caution is necessary in attempting to treat written texts as depictions of reality, and criteria like authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning must guide the assessment of the documents.

### **2.3.1 Acculturation strategies and language choice in Latvia**

It is claimed that education is an essential mean for human development and social cohesion (e.g., Cara, 2010); it can wider ends and serve as the most important prerequisite for overcoming injustice and reducing disparities (UNESCO, 2009). On the other hand, it may also serve for social exclusion and marginalization (Kabeer, 2000), where dominant groups seek to impose their values or devalue and disparage other groups, linguistic minorities included. For example, school curricula, language of instruction, textbooks, and educators, who often spend more hours daily with children and youth than their parents, may have direct or indirect influence on students and serve both for promoting the understanding and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity as well as for the extent of disrespect or even racism and xenophobia.

A number of experts have studied strategies employed by Russian speaking minorities in Latvia and other Baltic states with regard to language choice. For example, Laitin (1998, in Ponarin, 2000), analyzing Russian speakers in former Soviet republics, argues that Russians in Latvia have taken steps toward assimilation by choosing to send their children to schools with instruction in the titular language and by encouraging them to learn Latvian. This decision was mostly based on instrumental values in the hope of improving their economic situation.



Meanwhile, Ponarin (2000, p.1538) challenges the validity of Laitin's findings claiming that Laitin underestimates cultural factors and "place[s] a disproportionate weight on rational choice arguments" claiming that one's identity could easily change for purely instrumental reasons. According to Ponarin (2000), Russophones in the Baltic rather 'accommodate' than assimilate, while their choice to learn Latvian leads to bilingualism not assimilation.

Bloom (2008) in his research on *The Political Economy of School Choice in Latvia* has found out the significant interactive relationship between the out-group-acceptance, the in-group-status and the economic rewards variables. The author argues that although Russian-speaking parents want their children to benefit economically from knowing the state language, they will only send their children to Latvian-language schools "if the risk of their children encountering exclusion by ethnic Latvian classmates is low" (p. 949). Bloom makes a link between Russian-speaking parents' choice of school and Latvian nationalist sentiment. He states that Latvian nationalism has a positive effect on assimilation in regions with a smaller non-Latvian population and a negative effect in regions where the non-Latvian population is larger (greater than 58.7 percent of the population). Thus, in the largest cities with strong Latvian nationalist sentiment Russian-speakers fear of out-group exclusion and opt for self-segregation and interaction with members of their own group. At the same time, assimilation rates were greater than expected in some Russified eastern cities and districts of Latvia with the worst economic performance and low levels of Latvian nationalism. In these regions Russian-speakers lack the fear of out-group exclusion and enroll their children in Latvian schools.

Romanov (2000) also believes that Russian speakers living in predominantly Latvian-speaking towns and villages will be more willing to shift the language than those occupying urban centres with Russians in the majority. According to the author, two motivational orientations guide minorities to learn the majority language: integrative and instrumental. Those with integrative orientations and with favourable attitudes towards majority language and culture demonstrate higher levels of motivation to learn the language in comparison with those who have only instrumental orientations.

Another valuable research on acculturation strategies of Russian-speakers in Latvia was done by Cara (2010). In her longitudinal study she focused on attitudes and behaviour change in Russian-speaking adolescents who attended Russian schools in Riga two years before and three years after the implementation of the 2004 education reform. Her research showed that both in 2002 and 2007 integration was the most favoured strategy and

marginalization was the least preferred among Russian-speaking adolescents in Latvia. The second-preferred acculturation mode was separation, while assimilation remained the third most popular choice. Cara concluded that many adolescents and their parents in Latvia favour bilingual education. They wanted to gain competence in the Latvian language and keep their knowledge of Russian at a high level to be competitive in the labour market. Her results showed that there are very weak assimilation tendencies, and the choice to learn the second language leads rather to bilingualism than assimilation. She believes that one should not necessarily feel any sense of belonging to the state and still be separated despite learning Latvian and/or choosing Latvian citizenship.

Another study on the choice of language of instruction has been conducted in Estonia, a Baltic state in a very similar minority situation to Latvia with a large Russian-speaking population and broad opportunities to use their language in education and private settings. Kemppainen, Ferrin, Hite, and Hilton (2008) describe several variables that influence Russian parents' choice of language of instruction. First, parents' own second-language proficiency was found to be important. The higher parents' proficiency in Estonian, the more likely they were to choose Estonian schools over Russian schools. Second, attitudes toward the native culture played an important role. Those parents who consider Russian culture maintenance very important tend to send their children to Russian-language schools. Finally, the strongest impact on parents' choice of language of instruction for their children was found to be attitude toward the second language. Findings suggested that valuing the second language correlated with choosing to educate one's children in the second language.

All in all, the choice of language of instruction is not widely explored either in Latvia or in other Baltic states. Although the above mentioned studies are of high importance and contribute significantly to the body of literature on this phenomenon, more research is still needed on language behaviour amongst titular and non-titular communities to provide vital data for policymakers (Hogan-Brun, Ramonienė & Grumadienė, 2005). Besides, all the studies under investigation were limited to one minority group, namely Russian-speakers while smaller minority groups such as Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and others were not examined. More research is needed on groups that study in other minority schools.

### 2.3.2 Experts' views on bilingual education policies in Latvia

Since language is closely related to identity, human and cultural rights, bilingual education is one of the most discussed topics in educational and political spheres (Batelaan, 2002). Although human rights advocates and UNESCO see it as “a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies” (UNESCO, 2003 in Inglis, 2007, p. 74), political and educational motivations for bilingual education frequently differ. A number of international and local experts have given their evaluation on the bilingual education policies in Latvia that will be briefly discussed in this section.

In the early 2000's a group of experts were invited by the Soros Foundation of Latvia to evaluate the models of bilingual education introduced in Russian schools in Latvia and the degree to which these models support the integration of minorities into the Latvian society. Unfortunately, no one has ever commented on the education programmes for other than Russian minority groups. The experts (Batelaan, 2002; Crawford, 2002; Pedersen, 2002; Housen, 2002; Choumak, 2002; Silova, 2002; 2002; Protassova, 2002) examined in detail content of the bilingual education models produced by the Ministry of Education and Science and were concerned about the manner in which the policies were introduced. Housen (2002), for example, expresses criticism on One-way bilingualism which is addressed towards one group in society only, namely minorities. He uses Beardsmore's concept of “in-built linguistic discrimination” to describe the current education situation where only minority children are required to make an effort to learn the second language whereas Latvian children are exempt from it. In addition, minority students who study in Latvian-language schools do not have an opportunity to study their native language or subjects connected with their own culture (Poleshchuk, 2010).

Silova (2002) criticizes Latvian education policies for being too politicized and aiming at *Latvianization* of minorities instead of bilingualism that was claimed to be the main goal of the new education reform introduced in the context of integration. As a result of such one-way process, minorities are feared of assimilation. She is also critical about officials' strong obsession with laws and regulations instead of practical implementation of bilingual education in Russian schools. Lack of financial resources, support mechanisms, insufficient amount of training and motivation among teachers are just few obstacles to successful implementation of the reform. Although on paper all teachers working in minority schools are

proficient in Latvian, the reality is often different (Muiznieks, 2004). Teachers admit that there is still lack of sufficient methodological training for teaching subjects bilingually. Nevertheless, teachers in minority schools are often inspected by the State Language and Education Inspections who evaluate their proficiency of the national language, ability to teach subjects in the state language or bilingually, the time educators devote to minority and state languages, kind of textbooks they use, etc. (Silova, 2002, 2006). While Muiznieks (2004, p. 9) believes that “the Ministry of Education and Science has taken a pragmatic, flexible approach, examining the preparedness of each school for the reform”, Silova (2002, 2006) argues that teachers and school principals are often afraid of inspections and fear of losing their jobs and being punished; therefore, they prefer to employ hidden resistance to state education policies and carefully manipulate with the official reform content through its interpretation. For instance, some schools developed a double curriculum, “one for regular use in school and one for inspection” (Silova, 2002, p. 109) or used two types of books, “one on the desk to be used regularly in class (usually a textbook published in Russia) and the other under the desk to be used when the inspection comes to school (usually a textbook published in Latvia)” (Silova, 2006, p. 139).

Protassova (2002) is concerned about the fact that bilingual education programmes offered by the MoES have little or nothing to say about types of instruction or methods to be used; none of them take into consideration the composition of the classroom or the materials and opportunities available to teachers. She argues that the linguistic composition and size of the class, teaching style, the quality of materials used, and the effectiveness of the methods employed play more important role in achieving success in bilingual education than the number of lessons taught in a second language that are offered in the MoES models. She stresses the importance of effective teacher training which is underestimated in the case of Latvia. Teachers who do not master a language of instruction, may produce unfortunate mistakes that detract students’ attention from the topics and leads to decreased motivation both for teaching and learning. As a result, such ineffective bilingual teaching can create more harm than good for students, second language learners. Protassova is also one of a few experts who points out that Russians is not the only minority group in Latvia, and that historical language diversity should not be underestimated by the officials who make little reference to these languages as positive cultural elements.

On the whole, given Latvian historical and political background, the new bilingual education policies were evaluated by the experts as “reasonable” (Protassova, 2002, p. 1).

Nevertheless, a lot of work still needs to be done to improve quality of education. This includes systemic implementation mechanisms, motivation and support for teachers, intercultural learning both for majority and minorities, cooperation with parents and NGOs, financial support, etc. The overall conclusion is that bilingual education should be a two-way process and a common space for deliberation should be insured.

## 3 Theoretical Framework

Having presented a sufficient description of the development and administration of minority education system in Latvia, it is now time to approach the research topic within a more theoretical structuring. In this chapter I discuss relevant theoretical concepts related to language choice on the individual and state level in a multilingual context.

### 3.1 Introduction

Language issues can be discussed and analyzed from various different perspectives. On the one hand, language is considered to be the main instrument for communication. Therefore, in multilingual countries in order for democratic processes to be possible, at least one common language should be shared among all citizens (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988). This process involves the legitimation or formal recognition of the language by the nation-state and institutionalisation, understood as acceptance of the language in different formal and informal contexts (May, 2001). This inevitably suggests granting a particular language higher status and ‘symbolic power’ (Bourdieu, 1991) ascribing speakers of other languages than the official as ‘minorities’.

On the other hand, “language is more than utilitarian medium of communication; it is a representative of specific cultural values and identifications” (Preece, 2005, p.129); it is “what makes a person human” (Watson, 2007, p. 256) and is “intimately connected with our perception and interpretation of the world, with our identity as individuals and as members of a community, with self-expression and the expression of our culture and values” (Vlaeminck, 2003, p. 36). This suggests that for individuals language is more than just a way of expressing their ideas or opinions, it represents a particular culture and identity.

Tollefson (1991, p. 13) claims that language is an “arena for struggle, as social groups seek to exercise power through their control of language”. This struggle is especially important in education since educational institutions play a vital role in determining political power, economic opportunity (McGroarty, 2002), and in structuring and influencing relations between various social groups. This study investigates the relationship between language of instruction and minority parents’ choice of a school for their children. Given that there is a difference in

status among the languages, it is interesting to investigate what value minorities, in this case Russians and Poles, attach to their mother tongue in comparison to the official language and what reasons are given for the choice of the language in use. For the analysis to be robust, the important concepts of language related to the research problem have to be clarified.

## 3.2 Monolingualism versus multilingualism

Monolingualism and multilingualism can be discussed from at least two perspectives (Biseth, 2005). The terms can be referred to the societies that function in more than one language as well as to individuals. According to Skutnabb–Kangas (1988), the large majority of the world countries are *de facto* multilingual although officially most of them are considered to be monolingual which means they have only one officially recognized language. The monolingual countries are rather exceptions in our world since the number of independent countries is less than 200 while the number of languages spoken in the world estimates around 5000 (Skutnabb–Kangas, 1988, p. 11) to 6000 (May, 2001, p.1), depending on the definition of language.

When it comes to individuals, monolingual people also constitute a minority, because there is a little number of those knowing only one language and being able to function through that language (Skutnabb–Kangas, 1988). Multilingual persons, on the contrary, are those who are capable in functioning in at least two languages. Nevertheless, there is still little consensus as to the exact meaning of the terms ‘bilingualism’ or ‘multilingualism’ since both have been used to refer to a wide variety of phenomena. For instance, Cummins and Swain (1986, pp. 7-8), referring to different scholars, provide several explanations on the term ‘bilinguals’ varying from “those who possess at least one of the language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) even to a minimal degree in their second language”, to “those who demonstrate complete mastery of two different languages without interference between the two linguistic processes or who have native- like control of two or more languages”.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981, 1988, 2000) defines bilingualism according to a combination of linguistic identification, both internal and external, different levels of competence and capability to function in two languages. The author divides bilingual individuals into four large groups: elite bilinguals, children from linguistic majorities, children from bilingual families, and children from linguistic minorities. All of them have different pressure and

prerequisites for becoming bilingual; they pursue various methods to achieve it and face rather different consequences in case of failure. For example, bilingualism for elite children and young people (e.g. upper- and middle-class children who travel or live abroad, whose parents are academics or diplomats, and some others) is voluntary; they are encouraged to learn a second language mainly for an enrichment of their individuality. Consequences in case of failure to become bilingual are rather minor and insignificant since in most cases they will be able to use their mother tongue fully again when they are back to their home country.

Another group consists of children from linguistic majorities who either learn a second language as a foreign language subject or study through the medium of this language at school. Although their mother tongue is highly valued, they choose to become bilinguals in order to get greater privileges and economic advantages. This may happen when a minority language is used for official purposes or a more prestigious minority or a so called world language is taught to an (oppressed) linguistic majority. As noticed by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), bilingualism for such children is more or less voluntary; the methods for teaching a second language are well developed, as a result the risk of failure is small. Even if children do not become 'completely' bilingual, they can well function in their own language which in most cases is the official state language.

The next group consists of children from bilingual families. Such individuals are often subject to family internal pressure since both parents may want their children to learn their respective language. Meanwhile, if one of the parents speaks the majority language, society will 'encourage' a child to become monolingual in the official language and not in the language of the other parent. Given complicated factors affecting the balance between the two languages at different stages in the child's life, there is certain risk that the child will fail to become 'completely' bilingual. Instead, he/she may become either monolingual or very dominant in one of the two languages that may result to the negative consequences for the relationship between the child and his/her family members. The child may lose connection to one of his/her parents and their cultural heritage. Children from bilingual families may face even more challenges if both of the parents speak minority languages that have no official status in the society. The situation of such individuals will be the same as that of the last group discussed by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981): children from linguistic minorities. These individuals are often subject to both strong external and internal pressure to become bilingual. The parents want their children to learn the majority language mostly for the instrumental



reasons, e.g. possibility to get better education and job opportunities. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) evaluates the risk of failing in the attempt to become bilingual for such individuals as great and consequences as catastrophic. Thus, if a child does not manage to learn a second language, he/she will lose educational opportunities and will not be able to compete in the labour market. If, on the other hand, a child becomes very dominant in the majority language, he/she may have difficulties with communication within the family, face identity problems, and lose connection to their origin and culture. In some more radical cases a child may acquire none of the languages on a high level and find him/herself on a disadvantaged position. Therefore, referring to Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, p. 21, italics in original), for linguistic minorities the most desirable goal is to use "... *both* languages at a very high level and to identify positively with both". However, in order for this to be achieved, it is important that minorities' first language is recognized in the education sector. This, in turn, requires granting minority language some form of language equality at the level of the nation-state (May, 2001), thus, challenging the existing symbolic power of social relations between different linguistic groups.

### **3.3 Language and power**

From linguists' perspective, "all languages spoken natively by a group of people have equal worth ... [and] *all could have the same rights*" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, p. 12, emphasis in original). Whereas from a political perspective, different languages have different political rights which do not depend on any inherent linguistic characteristics, but on the power relationships between the speakers of those languages. Although linguistic diversity is agreed to be an essential element of cultural heritage (Grin, 2003), languages disappear every year. It is estimated that only less than 10 percent of the present oral languages will survive until the next century (Krauss, 1995 in Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; May, 2001). Language decline and death occur usually in bilingual or multilingual contexts, in which one language or so called 'majority' language is given higher status, political power and social prestige than the other, 'minority', languages (May, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, 2000). This is usually achieved by means of legitimation or formal recognition of the language by the nation-state and institutionalisation, understood as acceptance of the language in different formal and informal contexts (May, 2001). According to Bourdieu (1991, p. 45), the state language possesses

'symbolic power' over other languages used in a country and becomes "the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured". Symbolic power is a kind of concealed power which is deployed in social life and recognized or acknowledged as legitimate by both dominant and dominated groups. As a result, the disguised hierarchy which serves the interests of one group more than the other is seen as natural by both groups. In a discussion of language, one language or a group of languages are assessed as more legitimate and dominant than others, while speakers of this language(s) possess more 'symbolic capital', a taken-for-granted form of capital which exerts a power on others and accumulates profits for their owners (Biseth, 2005). As noticed by May (2001), a dominant language group controls the crucial authority in the areas of administration, policies, education, economy, etc., and gives preference to those with a command of that language. Other language groups are limited in their language use and are thus left in a choice of assimilation or resistance against established hierarchy.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) believes that resources, especially non-material resources, are socially constructed. When discussing power relations, she divides the population into an A team and a B team where the A team represents those who have more access to power and material resources than those from the B team. The A team, according to the author, glorifies their own resources and stigmatize resources of the B team. As a result, the A team's resources, cultural and linguistic included, are seen as the self-evident norms, while resources of the B team are treated as deficiencies. The representatives of the A team, in Bourdieu's conception, possess symbolic power and symbolic capital which in turn can be converted into valuable capital. According to Galtung (1980, in Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), one can convert material (e.g. money) and non-material (language, culture, education, knowledge) resource power into structural power which is a kind of power one possesses by virtue of one's position in the society. For example, one can use money to get better education that will help to get a good job with a fair salary, new knowledge and connections which can again be converted. For minorities, who often represent the B team, in order to be able to convert their non-material resources into material capital, it is important that their 'starting capital' (language, culture, formal education) is validated by those who have the power to define resources as valuable, and if the A team does not do that, they can stay in power and in a vicious circle continue to decide what kind of resources are valuable.

However, when discussing language and power relationship, it is vital not to underemphasize the specific sociohistorical and sociopolitical processes by which majority languages became accepted as dominant and legitimate. As noted by May (2005 in Wee, 2011, p. 66), “a language only comes to occupy a particular status as dominant or minority at a specific point in time due to the historical accumulation of various sociolinguistic effects”. In other words, the power relationship between different languages within the state can be understood by studying the forces which have led to the present socio-political division of power and resources (Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins, 1988). In case of Latvia historical and political events played a crucial role in language and power relationship formation. Latvian was the only official language in Latvia when the state first proclaimed its independence in 1918. All the other languages spoken by the population were considered to be minority languages. The language lost its official status during the Republic’s annexation to the Soviet Union. At that point in time, the Russian language was established as the Soviet *lingua franca* and occupied various social, political and economic domains, thus becoming the language of power and prestige. Although officially all the languages spoken in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had equal status and rights, in reality Russian was assessed as more legitimate and dominant than Latvian (Laganovskis, 2012). After the breakdown of the USSR, Latvia restored its independence and Latvian regained the status of the only official state language. As a result, Russian gradually lost its dominant position and got a status of a foreign language in the Republic.

Druviete (2000, p. 156) argues that “the actual hierarchy of languages in multilingual society can better be characterized by their sociolinguistic functions rather than by their legal status”. For instance, both Russian and Polish have equal status as foreign languages in Latvia. Nevertheless, it is evident, that Russian, due to its former dominant position in the USSR and a high number of Russian-speakers who use the language in private, business and occasionally in public sectors possesses more symbolic power than the Polish language. The fact that four out of five people in Latvia speak Russian, which is almost as high as the proportion of Latvian- speakers (LI, 2008) indicates that Russian is used not only by its native speakers but also by Latvians and representatives of other minority groups. Thus, although not being an official state language, Russian still occupies a powerful position among population of Latvia that leads to conscious or unconscious shift of language by some individuals.

There are increasing numbers of minorities who voluntarily shift to a majority language for different reasons. However, the degree to which shift occurs ‘voluntarily’ and consciously should be considered with a critical attitude. Sometimes a decision may be a result of a conscious choice while often shift to a majority language occurs due to social disadvantages minorities face when speaking languages that have low status and prestige in a country (May, 2001, p. 149). Critics of language rights (May, 2005 in Wee, 2011) often suggest that minority language speakers are better off shifting to the majority language to be able to take advantage of the socioeconomic opportunities that would otherwise be denied them. According to economic theories, a rational individual should conduct a kind of cost-benefit analysis and pursue the study of the majority language if the benefits outweigh the costs. For example, obtaining work can be considered as one of the most obvious economic reasons for learning another language. As a result, economic reasons are of crucial importance for second-language learning in the short run and for language shift in the long-term perspective (Romanov, 2010).

Dorian (1999, p. 26) has noticed that individuals whose languages have no official standing “may be actively trying to blur the lines between themselves and certain other groups slightly above them in the social hierarchy by shifting to the use of other languages and by marrying into other groups if they can”. In more radical cases, the people may distance themselves from the ancestral language completely and claim not to speak their original ancestral language at all (ibid.). During the Soviet times, for example, representatives of small minority groups in Latvia such as Poles, Lithuanians, Estonians, Jews, and some others became Russified and abandoned the mother tongue of their ancestors. Thus, by 1989 only 43.8 percent of Belorussian, 27.1 percent of Poles, 27 percent of Jews, and 34 percent of Germans acknowledged that their native languages corresponded to their ethnicity (Silova, 2006). The Russification policy which officially aimed at “social and cultural unification of all ethnic groups on the basis of Soviet Russian culture” (Khazanov, 1993, as cited in Silova, 2006, p. 36), in reality led to assimilation of titular nationalities and establishment of Russian language as the Soviet *lingua franca* (Silova, 2006).

However, it cannot be claimed that a language shift occurs only due to external factors. Both external push and internal pull factors are invariably involved (May, 2001). Internal factors are deemed determinants of the individual, familial and local settings. Scholars (Fishman, 1991; Crawford, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) claim that the family

domain and community members constitute one of the most important factors in survival and transmittance of the native language since “without intergenerational mother tongue transmission, no language maintenance is possible” (Fishman, 1991, p. 113). Nevertheless, it is not enough just to use the language in the home environment. Increasingly important is to teach the language to children “by choosing their own languages as the medium of education or otherwise ensuring that children get full competence in their language in school” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, p. 296).

However, lack of governmental support and/ or information on the efficacy of education in one’s first language lead many in an uninformed population to conclude that teaching in official language is the most desirable strategy to achieve their educational goals (Crawford, 2002). In Latvia, for instance, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the unclear position of the Latvian government towards Russian schools pushed many Russian-speaking parents to send their children into Latvian education institutions, because parents were uncertain of the future of Russian schools and of teaching Latvian as a second language. Thus, they hoped that their children would be more successful with picking up the Latvian language through natural interaction with the native speakers rather than learning it as a second language in Russian schools (Münz and Ohliger, 2003; Muiznieks, 2004). As a result, many Russian children were deprived of the opportunity to maintain their mother tongue along the official state language, while such a ‘voluntary’ parental decisions of non-transmittance might have had long-term consequences for the children themselves and for the relationship between parents and children (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). All in all, parents’ choice of language of instruction for their children is a complex phenomenon which needs to be examined in political, demographic, and social contexts (Kemppainen, Ferrin, Hite, & Hilton, 2008). Several variables such as sociocultural, pedagogical, language attitudes, parental assumptions regarding second-language acquisition, children’s level of second-language proficiency, and identity related issues may affect the choice of language of instruction. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), two main motives for second-language learning exist: instrumental for gaining educational and job opportunities, and integrative for integrating into the mainstream society. However, a cultural motivation may also take place when a choice of a first language as a language of instruction in educational institutions exists. The authors provide an example of research done in Canada among French-speaking parents which demonstrated that some parents sent their children to French language schools to maintain their ethnic identity, culture, and language in order to remain

within their minority group heritage. Therefore, I find it important to look at the relationship between language and identity.

### **3.4 Language and identity**

It is claimed by scholars (e.g. Burke and Stets, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Fishman, 2011) that a person has both individual and group identities that are never static and are always changing. The individual identity rests on a sense of selfhood, when we recognize ourselves despite changes over time, while the group identity is a social identity with a collectivity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Fishman (2010, p. xxix) states that there is no ‘true identity’ but “only situationally and contextually more effective and less effective identities and more salient and less salient identities” meaning that identities are socially constructed and people may redefine themselves if it is desired or needed.

Identity can also be distinguished between ascribed/imposed and assumed/achieved (Weber, 2009). While an individual may be recognized according to his/her desired identity, he/she may also be ascribed another identity by others who disregard the achieved identity of the individual. In other words, ascribed identity refers to the way people see other people while assumed identity is the way a person sees him/herself. The difference between ascribed and assumed identities may be rather visible in multilingual and multicultural societies where individuals often are scribed according to one particular language or culture while an individual may identify him/herself with another or several languages and cultures.

Language is said to be one of the important markers of personal and group identities. According to Watson (2007, p. 256) “the importance of language cannot be underestimated. It is what makes a person human; how s/he thinks, expresses his/her deepest feelings and emotions, what helps identify a person with a particular ethnic or linguistic group”. Social psychologists believe that it is basically language that gives a group its distinctiveness and interweaves the individual’s personal identity with his/her collective identity. Individuals acquire shared beliefs, values and behaviours through the language of home and community; therefore, language serves both as a core element in primary socialisation (Byram, 2003; Padilla and Borsato, 2010), in identifying oneself as a member of a particular group, and in distinguishing one group from another by establishing boundaries between the in-group and out-group. For some language is to a higher degree a core value of their identity than it is for the others

(Smolicz, 1992 in Extra, 2004); therefore, measures affecting the use of people's mother-tongues can be perceived as serious threats to individual and group identities (Van Els, 2003).

Meanwhile, May (2001, p. 8) claims that "there is no necessary relation between particular cultural attributes, such as language, and particular (group) identities. Language is but one cultural marker among many and not even a particularly important one at that ..." For some groups other cultural factors such as a specific religion, social structure, or racial affiliation may prove of greater core significance than language, as a result, the intrinsic link between language and identity becomes problematic. One may assume that for minority groups it is not a language *per se* that is intrinsically valuable but the symbolic value attached to it (Extra and Yagmur, 2004). Therefore, even when language loses its communicative value or proficiency in one's own language declines as a result of shift to a majority language, one should not necessarily lose his/her linguistic identity (Liebkind, 2010) since language still maintains an important symbolic value for them.

Still, not all members of the same group would like to be principally identified and identifiable by their language (May, 2001). One should be careful by attempting to categorize people according to the language they speak. Identity is a dynamic process; an individual can have multiple identities and belong to two or even more groups at the same time like two language or ethnic groups (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) that is a common case in bi- or multilingual contexts when a person is involved in the use of two or more languages on a daily basis.

In intercultural interaction participants' identity and membership to a particular group can be either very salient or interpersonal, when only personal characteristics of speakers matter (Liebkind, 1999, 2010). The speech or communication accommodation theory (CAT) proposes three basic strategies in cross-cultural communication: convergence, when speakers try to become more like their listeners in the language style they use; maintenance, meaning that speakers maintain their own speech styles; and divergence, when speakers prefer to accentuate the linguistic differences between themselves and their listeners. Social position of interlocutors, particularly the power and status relationships between the language groups involved, determines in many cases the strategy of communication. When the speaker identifies strongly with his/her own group and/ or puts it on a higher position than out-groups, the strategies of maintenance and divergence prevail, while converge often minority or less 'prestigious' language speakers who want to get social approval and evoke positive reaction in others (Liebkind, 1999, 2010). As noted by Liebkind (1999), it is often psychological security or insecurity of a group that

influences their behaviour. For example, insecure majorities may feel threatened in their majority position and as a result choose discriminatory position towards out-groups. In contrast, psychologically secure minorities may feel freer to reject majority culture and language and assert their own distinctiveness. In bilingual contexts, however, minority members may consider themselves to belong simultaneously to two groups and adopt an integration orientation by identifying themselves with both cultures and languages. This bicultural/bilingual alternative, according to Liebkind, is often the most satisfactory one for the individual. Successful bilingualism enhances cultural awareness and helps to construct one's own hybrid culture. However, in order to achieve a positive bilingualism, both languages have to be equally valued by society. Otherwise, bicultural ambivalence can take form and the feeling of a necessity to choose between two cultural identities may occur (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The status a language is given in society is often reflected in the practices at school (Biseth, 2005), because school serves as one of the major institutions for transmitting and transforming the society's structure, culture, values, and attitudes.

## **3.5 Language issues in education**

### **3.5.1 Minority language in education**

Education plays an important role in dealing with the challenges posed by the diversity and in structuring and influencing relations between majority and minority groups (Inglis, 2008). While education is considered to be vital for “achieving the major objectives of democracy in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies” (Inglis, 2008, p. 20), and an important prerequisite for overcoming injustice and reducing disparities (UNESCO, 2009), it may also reproduce inequalities, reinforce distinctions and serve the interests of the dominant groups (Kabeer, 2000; May, 2001; Moore, 2004; Kubow and Fossum, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, 2000). It is evident that schools are important institutions in a democratic and multilingual society because they both mirror the wider society and act as a role model (Biseth, 2005).

Assuming that for minorities language is vital for the preservation of their identity and culture, it is important that their language is recognized in the education system (Cummins, 2000). Besides, the legitimization and institutionalisation of a language are the key factors to its



long term survival that is extremely significant in the era of harsh decline of languages. Research shows that children learn best and acquire basic knowledge faster when they are taught in the language they are familiar with (Cummins 1999, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, 2000). Therefore, in order for a child to be successful in learning a second language (L2) and other subjects, to achieve cognitive, linguistic and academic growth, the teaching of and through the mother tongue (L1) is highly recommended. Besides, bilingual learners are more competent at learning additional languages that becomes important in the era of increasing mobility of peoples and the spread of global languages.

For the states, however, the recognition of minority languages in education is not merely a choice of language as medium of instruction, but it is often central to a host of social and political processes. The official recognition of a minority language gives it higher status and consequently more power that may be seen as an obstacle for dominant groups to retain various forms of political and economic control. In addition, the groups that learn and transmit further their own languages and as a result reproduce themselves as a minority group, may be perceived as a threat to the stability of a state, since they in the future may demand external self-determination (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Pedersen (2002), in turn, believes that the existence of different languages in a country is rarely the cause for civil conflict that might threaten the unity of the state. The author claims that “the conflicts arise when nationalistic governments or authoritarian regimes believe in the unity as a stabilising factor and fight for the unity with all means, also by linguistic means” (p. 41).

Inglis (2008) in her booklet *Planning for Cultural Diversity* admits that state- policy makers in multicultural societies have two main objectives in developing language and education policies: to avoid internal conflict and disharmony and to be able to proceed with their nation-building projects. The author believes that the key factor in avoiding conflict is neither the full incorporation of minorities from societies nor their complete exclusion, rather both groups should agree about the preferred mode of incorporation. Inglis (2008) distinguishes three main philosophical and ideological models of incorporating diversity: assimilationist, differentialist and multiculturalist. The assimilationist model prescribes full absorption of the minority group into the mainstream group by abandoning their linguistic, social and cultural characteristics. Differentialist, on the other hand, prescribes minimization and elimination of contacts among linguistic groups by creating parallel institutions for minorities and the dominant group. The third policy model, multiculturalist, accepts the legitimacy of minorities and requires full

incorporation of minorities into society by restructuring mainstream institutions to the support of parallel institutions which are integral to the society.

Meanwhile, individuals and groups in plural societies may also choose to adopt to a desired acculturation strategy: assimilation, when an individual chooses to identify solely with the culture of the larger society; separation, meaning an exclusive involvement in one's traditional cultural values and norms, coupled with little or no interaction with the members and culture of the larger society; integration, when one identifies and involves with one's traditional culture as well as that of the larger society; and marginalization, a rejection and/or lack of involvement in both one's traditional culture and that of the larger society.

### **3.5.2 Bilingual education**

Despite the fact that the current internationally accepted education and minority rights declarations and conventions protect and support the rights of persons belonging to linguistic minorities to use their own language, to express themselves freely in their language in private associations and communication (Preece, 2005; Grin 2003; Dulkan, 2002; UNESCO, 2003), none of them impose any requirements upon the state to recognize minority languages as authoritative within public institutions or to provide publicly funded minority language education. The article 14 of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities recognizes that “every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language” (<http://conventions.coe.int>). In areas inhabited by minorities either traditionally or in substantial number, states “shall endeavour to ensure ... within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language”. Thus, it is upon every single state to decide whether to recognize minorities as ‘national’ and whether to provide or not education in a minority language. Meanwhile Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, pp. 10, 15, emphases added) claims that

In a democratic country, *it should be the duty of the school system* to give every child, regardless of linguistic background, the same chance to participate in the democratic process. If this requires that (at least) some children (i.e. the linguistic minority children) become bilingual or multilingual, then *it should be the duty of the educational system* to make them bilingual/multilingual ... since bilingualism is a necessity for them, and not something that they themselves have chosen.

Bilingual education, when both languages, L1 and L2, are used as the means of instruction, is also a rather controversial issue, broadly discussed in educational and political spheres, since it may lead to different outcomes depending on the programme applied. As noted by Paulston (1992), the effectiveness of bilingual education programmes largely depends on the appropriateness of the programmes to the historical, political and economic situation in the given state.

The most commonly discussed and indeed applied model is transitional or subtractive bilingualism which aims at learning second language at the expense of one's mother tongue (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, 2000; Inglis, 2008). Although the concept of transitional bilingualism can be perceived as a step forward towards recognition of minority languages, it still prescribes replacement of L1 by L2 and thus is not beneficial either to the individual or to a society as a whole (May, 2001). Another model called additive or maintenance bilingualism is oriented towards learning both minority and majority languages and is considered to be more appropriate to meet the needs of minority children. In this case students are instructed in both languages throughout primary and secondary schooling, as a result children from minority groups become bilingual, bilateral and bicultural (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, 2000; Batelaan, 2002; Inglis, 2008). Two-way bilingual programme, which is rather seldom implemented in multilingual states, has the same assets as the maintenance programme but aims at learning and development in both languages by members of both communities, majority and minority (Batelaan, 2002).

Research (e.g. Batelaan, 2002; Inglis, 2007) shows that minority groups have different opinions regarding bilingual education. On the one hand, they see it as a way of preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage as well as being fluent in the national language that increases students' social and political integration and economic proficiency (Inglis, 2007). On the other hand, minorities perceive bilingual education as a mean of assimilation and therefore are afraid of losing their identity, particularly in countries such as Latvia where they are not fully accepted as citizens (Batelaan, 2002). This study aims to discover what is minority parents' living in Latvia opinion on bilingual education and how do they perceive teaching of both languages to their children. But before I move to the data analysis it is important to explain the methodological thinking behind this investigation; therefore I now turn to this issue.

# 4 Research Methodology

After providing the contextual information and the theoretical background of the research, I will now present a detailed outline of the research design and methods used in this study. In this chapter the key features of methodology: the research design, the sampling approach, and the role of the researcher will be described followed by a discussion of reliability and validity issues. Some challenges faced during the data collection and analysis will be briefly presented in between.

## 4.1 Design

Since the aim of my research is to investigate parents' attitudes towards the education system in Latvia and find out their motivations for school choice, a qualitative research approach has been chosen. As noted by several authors (Patton, 2002; Fairbrother, 2007; Bryman, 2008), qualitative research methods are particularly suited to provide rich, deep and detailed description as well as offer explanations of complex situations and phenomena. It is important to notice that although objectivity in the qualitative approach is questioned, a fundamental purpose of this research method is to discover participants' points of view, values and actions rather than seek for general explanatory laws (Fairbrother, 2007). Thus, it is the informants' perspective that is of greatest interest for my study, and these perspectives are subjective in nature.

Given that my study aims at examining two different linguistic groups, Russians and Poles, and comparing their motivations for the school choice (minority school versus mainstream school), a comparative design is considered the most appropriate option for this research. The desired strategy to gain insight from this topic via comparative design is in the form of a multiple-case study because the number of cases exceeds one. According to Bryman (2008, p. 60), the comparative design is "essentially two or more cross-sectional studies carried out at more or less the same period of time" which focuses on similarities and differences between units and helps to gain deeper understanding of social phenomena in different contexts. While the strength of comparative research is in "its ability to eliminate or offer alternative explanations for causal relationships" (Neuman, 2011, p. 487), this research

design is not without difficulties. Meaningful comparative data and equivalent sampling has to be insured for comparison to be relevant (Bryman, 2008; Manzon, 2007). In addition, by examining differences and similarities one should be cautious of illusory commonalities and/or illusory differences that may appear to be both significant and insignificant for the study (Manzon, 2007).

In this comparative multiple-case study a multilevel analysis is employed (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Framework for a Multilevel Comparative Analysis of Parents' Views

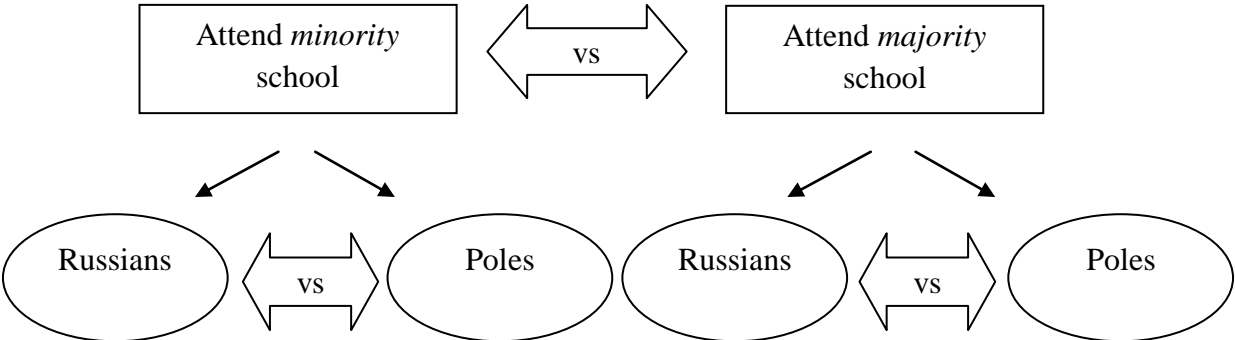


Figure 3.1 depicts the multilevel comparative dimension of my study. First, I divide minority parents into two groups: those who have their children in the minority schools and those who prefer education institutions for the majority. Thus, comparison of minority parents' views on bilingual education policies and their motivations for having their children in schools with different languages of instruction is done. Next, within the two groups I do the additional comparative analysis of the views of Poles versus Russians. This is important due to contextual differences between the two linguistic groups that may affect respondents' motivations and strategies for choosing the school. Thus, by doing a multiple level analysis, I hope to achieve a multifaceted and holistic understanding of the ways in which different patterns are shaped and influenced by each other (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007).

For the data collection and analysis I have chosen research methods associated with qualitative research: semi-structured interviews and policy document analysis. Qualitative interviewing has been chosen for several reasons. First, since I intend to view the world from the participants' point of view and to shed light on their individual experiences, qualitative

interview allows going off at tangents and seeing what is relevant and important for them (Bryman, 2008). Second, in semi-structured interviews the researcher can use a list of questions or an interview guide but is still free to ask new questions and thus get rich and detailed answers from respondents, a richness that is difficult to capture in close-ended interviews or surveys.

The analysis of the state policy documents provides information on practical and political decisions, intentions and aspirations of the state institutions regarding education (May, 1993). In democratic societies legislative policies, at least theoretically, should be derived through mutual agreement of different interest groups; therefore, it is interesting to discover whether the education policies meet the interests and desires of the targeted population. Due to constant ongoing debates in mass media about the linguistic situation and the intentions of a large part of population in Latvia to give Russian the status as a second official language, additional strategy such as following the news on the internet and television was employed to provide contextual information. All in all I evaluate the design appropriate and the chosen research methods adequate to answer the research questions posed.

## 4.2 Sample

The sampling approach used in my study was based on selection of participants with direct reference to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). For that reason, purposive non-probability sampling was used. I have purposefully chosen one of the multilingual cities in Latvia where Latvians and minorities would represent more or less equal numbers. In a city under investigation Latvians made up 44.2 percent, Russians were estimated to represent 47 percent and Poles 2.5 percent (Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, 2011). Although various state and municipal bodies in Latvia collect demographic data, linguistic data included (LCHR, 2008), the information on students' native language is limited due to data protection laws. Therefore, I found snowball sampling to be an efficient way of selecting participants for my study. With this sampling approach the researcher establishes first contacts with a small group of people who then recommend other people relevant to the research topic (Bryman, 2008). Establishing first contact with Russian and Polish minorities whose children attend different schools was rather easy because the research project has taken

place in my hometown, one of the most linguistically diverse cities in Latvia, and I was familiar with some of the participants.

Nevertheless, few unexpected challenges were faced at this point of the study. Despite my interviewees being very open and willing to help, it was difficult to find “homogeneous” Russian and Polish minority families. Often ascribed identity by others did not correspond to self-perceived identity of my participants. For example, in some cases people gave me contacts of what they believed to be homogenous Russian families whereas in reality these families appeared to be mixed (e.g. one parent was Russian, the other Latvian or Polish). As a result, most of my participants came from linguistically mixed families. This, however, does not make my research less valuable. On the contrary, I believe that discovering strategies of parents with different linguistic backgrounds on the choice of school and language of instruction for their children is even more interesting since these people may face more challenges when deciding upon the school for their offspring. Their decisions may appear to be more complicated than in families in which both parents share the same language. In addition, such cases pose additional questions important to the topic under investigation such as how bilingual/ multilingual families deal with language issues, e.g. whose language prevails (if any) and how do parents make decisions on language of instruction. In some cases participants themselves found it difficult to recognize and formulate their belonging to one or another group. Few participants had mixed background and they admitted to have attachment to two or more cultures. Therefore, multiple identities of participants were taken into account when analyzing the data.

During my field work I was trying to grasp every chance to speak to as many people as I met in the process. Therefore, the sample size increased slightly in comparison to the initially planned from twelve to thirteen parents, one Polish school principal and one Russian school deputy principal. I purposefully chose to focus on families in which children attend basic or primary school level because they began to go to school after the new bilingual education reform of 2004 was completely implemented in Latvia.

*Table 3.1 Number of Interviewed Parents According to the Home Language and Chosen Schools of Instruction*

Language(s)	Polish	Polish/Latvian	Russian	Russian/Latvian	Polish/Russian
School					
Latvian		2 [LM3] [LPM]		2 [LM1] [RM5]	
Russian			2 [RM1] [RM2]	2 [LM2] [RM3]	2 [RM4] [RPF]
Polish	1 [PM1]	1 [PM2]			1 [PM3]

Table 3.1 divides interviewees according to the first languages of both parents<sup>7</sup> and the school their children attend. Thus, four parents whose children go to majority schools and nine of those who go to minority schools were interviewed. All parents whose children attend majority schools come from bilingual families: in two families parents had Latvian and Polish background; in two others: Russian and Latvian languages were used. Minority school pupils: two parents were of Russian origin, one represented Poles, two came from Russian and Latvian families, and two from Russian and Polish bilingual families. Although my aim was to interview minority parents, in two cases I was able to speak to Latvian mothers (married to Russian men) whose children attend the minority school and the mainstream school.

The director of the Polish school [PSD] and the Russian deputy school director [RDSD] were interviewed to get deeper understanding about the way minority education is organized, to discover what education programmes have been implemented in those schools and what educators themselves had to tell about the national education policies for minorities. These particular schools have been chosen mostly due to the fact that nine of the interviewed participants claimed having their children in these educational institutions. Although initially I was not planning to interview the school directors, the data gained from the interviews found

<sup>7</sup> The abbreviations in square brackets indicate on the self-identified first language(s) of the interviewed parents and sequence of the interviews within each linguistic group: LM-Latvian Mother, RM-Russian Mother, PM-Polish Mother, LPM-Latvian & Polish Mother, RPF- Latvian & Polish Father.



to be very valuable and it makes the basis for the analysis of the organization of minority education in Latvia discussed in Chapter five.

Regarding the sample size, Bryman (2008) states that there is no definite answer as to how large it should be and the size of the sample necessary to support convincing conclusions will vary from situation to situation. Given that this is a qualitative study with an exemplifying case, my intention is not to generalize the findings but rather provide a suitable context for answering certain research questions. From my point of view, the chosen sampling size is considered appropriate to find answers to my research questions. I would also like to notice that most of the people I met during the fieldwork were very open and friendly.

### 4.3 Interviews

According to Neuman (2011), the field interview is a speech event, close to a friendly conversation, with an explicit purpose to learn about the member and setting. A semi-structured interview was employed in my study for several reasons. First, the interview process is flexible while still the interviewer can focus on specific topics prepared in advance. In addition, in case when interviews are conducted with different linguistic groups in different languages as it was done in my study, it is easier for the interviewer to control and follow whether the interviewee has understood a question and the interviewer can explain or clarify issues at hand if they are not understood by the participants. Furthermore, a list of questions used in this kind of interviews helps the researcher to guide the conversation and ask the same questions and use similar wording from interview to interview (Bryman, 2008).

May (1993) discusses three necessary conditions for the successful completion of interviews. First, he talks about *accessibility* or, in other words, ability of an interviewee to talk about the topic and having access to the information. Bearing in mind the fact that in Latvia traditionally a woman has been in charge of the household and education of children, I was more oriented towards interviewing mothers. Yet, it was not a condition and fathers were welcomed to join the conversation. Nevertheless, out of 14 interviewed parents only one was a male.

The second important condition for successful interviewing mentioned by May (1993) is *cognition* or an understanding by the interviewees what is expected from them. For that

reason, both written<sup>8</sup> and oral information was presented to the participants that included facts about me as the researcher, my research project and its goals. In addition, an interview guide with a list of questions and topics to be covered<sup>9</sup> was prepared in three languages (Russian, Polish and Latvian) and sent electronically or presented in person to the parents beforehand. Since the meetings with the school principals were not planned in advance, general topics of the conversation were presented.

The last concept to be discussed is *motivation* (May, 1993) or making the participants feel valuable and respecting their views. I began all my conversations with building rapport, discussing some general topics and introducing my research. Although sometimes this followed by rather lengthy conversations and numerous questions from the participants about my personal life, experience of studying abroad, about Norway, its culture, and other interesting and not so interesting topics, I believe it was worth it. Neuman (2011, p. 450) has noted that “a field interview involves a mutual sharing of experiences”; therefore, it was necessary for me to build trust and encourage the interviewees to share their own social world with me.

When conducting my interviews I was trying to follow some practical suggestions made by Bryman (2008), for instance, getting hold of a good-quality recording machine. Nevertheless, some challenges were faced at this point in time. Unfortunately, the first interview was not fully tape-recorded due to mechanical errors where the recording was thought to be in process but was in fact not. However, some notes were made during the conversation and a follow-up meeting arranged thereafter. In addition, the interview with one of the school principals was not recorded because it was rather unplanned and happened unexpectedly. In this case, however, I believe that due to the lack of the tape-recorder I managed to get very open and honest comments from the official. In other cases the tape-recorder was used. It is worth mentioning that all the interviewees were ensured confidentiality and all of them gave written consent to being recorded.

Another recommendation made by Bryman (2008) is ensuring a comfortable setting for the successful interviews to take place. For that reason all the interviews were conducted in the location suitable for the participants, most often in my place with tea and snacks to

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 3

create an informal atmosphere and showing my gratitude, another time in cafeterias or other areas such as at home or at work of the participants.

The appropriate choice of language is also an important prerequisite for a successful interview (Bryman, 2008; Neuman, 2011; May, 1993). In my field work I tried to use the languages that were comprehensible and relevant to my participants. This included not only vocabulary used by me but also giving a chance to my participants to choose the language most appropriate for them, be it their mother tongue, the official state language or other language preferred by them and known by me. For example, one of the Polish participants and several Latvians have chosen to communicate in Russian while some Russians and one Polish woman used both their mother tongue and Latvian during the conversation switching from one language to another from time to time. I found these cases interesting and will elaborate more on the reasons and consequences for such behaviour in Chapter five.

Some words have to be mentioned about the quality of the interviews. Some informants were more willing to provide information and share their feelings and opinions than others. This can be explained by the different personalities of the respondents as well as their attitude towards the topic discussed. For some parents these appeared to be rather private and intimate matters such as for a woman whose child, due to low achievements, had to change from a mainstream school to an education institution for children with special needs. In few cases the participants were afraid of not being able to help me because they believed they had “nothing special to tell me”. It is worth noticing that I, as the researcher, was also in a continuous process of learning. As a result, the interviews taken later on in the study were more focused as I gained more insight and knowledge about the phenomena. All in all, I believe that the chosen method for the data collection has proved to be successful.

## **4.4 Documentary analysis**

In qualitative research, textual data are also of importance (Biseth, 2005). The inadequacy of the interview as a sole methodology for the study gave way for the analysis of documents. In order to discover the way minority education is organized in Latvia, it is worth analysing national education policies. Since there is no single recipe for policy analysis, and policy in general is a very complex concept, I decided to focus my attention on the most

popular definition of “policies as documents” (Yang, 2007 p. 244) and analyze official documents deriving from the state such as the Constitution of Latvia (*Satversme*), the Education Law, the General Education Law, the Official Language Law, and Bilingual Education Models issued by the Ministry of Education and Science. Legislative policies are chosen for several reasons. First, they are supposed to have the most visible impact on the practice, since they are legislation or legislative regulations. However, Bryman (2008, p. 521) warns that “caution is necessary in attempting to treat them as depictions of reality”. Secondly, in a democratic society legislative policies, at least theoretically, should be derived through mutual agreement of different interest groups. Still, one should bear in mind Yang’s argument (2007, p. 252) that “policy only represents the values of the interest group that possesses the authority in policy making..., [and] it would be both theoretically naive and politically abhorrent to suggest that the policy process is democratic”. Therefore, criteria like authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning must guide the assessment of the documents (Bryman, 2008). Some official documents deriving from private sources available in the public domain such as school programmes for national minorities (gained from the Russian and Polish school officials), Latvian Human Rights’, Soros Foundation’s and PROVIDUS’ (Centre for Public Policy) reports and policy analyses are used to gain contextual data as well as to develop my own arguments.

## **4.5 The role of the researcher**

When using qualitative research methods the researcher herself is an instrument for data collection and hence influences the conduct of the research process from the choice of a topic and research questions to methods of data collection and analysis (May, 1993; Bryman, 2008). Therefore, the role of the researcher should not be underestimated and will be thoroughly discussed.

Numerous researchers (e.g. May, 1993; Bryman, 2008; Neuman, 2011) argue that social science cannot be value-free since “social research is not a neutral medium for generating information on social realities” (Gouldner, 1962 in May, 1993, p. 39) but rather an interpretation of phenomena by the researcher. As a result, the outcome of the study is often influenced by values and politics of the researcher. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for

the researcher to be aware of the issues that surround the production of a study and the place and influence of values within it (May, 1993).

I conducted my research with an ‘insider’ identity since I come from the same society<sup>10</sup> as the participants of my study. This fact, however, might have had both positive and negative effects on the outcomes of the research project. On the one hand, being familiar with the local culture and customs and having already established relationships can be beneficial for getting access to groups that might otherwise be closed to ‘outsiders’. The level of trust and openness of the participants is more likely to be higher towards a member of the same group than towards ‘outsiders’ (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). On the other hand, being too close to the participants and knowing or assuming to know much about the subject under investigation may prevent the researcher from seeing things from other, different perspectives (Narayan, 1993). As a result, reflexivity and authenticity of such research projects can be questioned (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

The extent to which one can be an authentic ‘insider’ or a ‘native’ is questioned by scholars who argue against the fixity of a distinction between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ anthropologists. For example, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 61) believe that the researcher can be “closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but [...] [he/she] cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions”, while Acker (2000, ¶ 1) believes that one should not even attempt to solve this issue but rather “try to work creatively within its tensions”. Narayan (1993) claims that ‘native’ anthropologists are often perceived as ‘insiders’ regardless of their complex backgrounds. When doing my research, I was constantly asking myself whether I was more the ‘insider’ or the ‘outsider’ to my participants and how did my role affect the data I collected and inferences drawn. The mixed ancestry and diverse background such as mine<sup>11</sup> has shaped my cultural identity to the extent that I cannot claim belonging or representing one particular cultural or linguistic group and therefore be either the ‘insider’ of one group or the ‘outsider’ for others. Nevertheless, for some participants I was to a greater extent the ‘insider’ than the ‘outsider’. For instance, Russians or Russian-speakers perceived me as a “native” since Russian is my mother tongue. Poles also

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<sup>10</sup> I come from the same country and the town as my participants.

<sup>11</sup> I was born in Latvia in a Russian-speaking family of a Belarusian father (who was born in Kazakhstan) and Russian mother (born in the Soviet Latvian Republic) living in Latvia while both of my grandfathers had Polish roots. I went to a Polish minority school and feel a strong attachment to the three cultures: Russian, Latvian and Polish. I speak fluently five languages and consider two of them, Russian (by origin) and Latvian (by competence and function), my mother tongues.

perceived me as “one of them” because I had attended a similar school as their children and I speak Polish. One Latvian respondent viewed me both as the ‘outsider’, pointing to my belonging to Russians, and as the ‘insider’ when comparing “us” (people living in Latvia) with representatives of other countries.

I fully agree with Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 59) who state that “the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one’s research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience”. It is without doubts important to acknowledge the influence the researcher has on the project and take it into consideration when analysing data and discussing findings, while it is also vital to remember that every person constructs and interprets social reality differently; therefore, interpretation of data in this thesis is only one possible understanding of ‘reality’ (Biseth, 2005). I believe that my investigation will contribute to the understanding of phenomena under discussion and the ongoing process of knowledge creation.

## **4.6 Reliability and validity**

Two concepts are central to prove whether the results of a study are of value or not: validity and reliability. Validity in qualitative research is often referred to as truthfulness (Neuman, 2011) or trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Although in qualitative research there are no precise standard methods to measure validity and reliability of a study like in quantitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four basic criteria for achieving trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For me, as a researcher, it was important to obtain trustworthiness throughout the whole data gathering process.

One of the qualitative determinants of the acceptability of others is the feasibility or credibility that the researcher provides within the research. It can be established by ensuring that the research has been performed “according to the canons of good practice” and by ensuring submitting research findings to the participants for confirmation (Bryman, 2008, p. 377). Another technique that can increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the study is triangulation. It entails using multiple methods, theoretical perspectives or sources of data in

the study of social phenomena (Bryman, 2008). In this research credibility was established by using a triangulation technique and respondent validation. Use of several sources such as interviews with different informants (parents and principals), literature review and analysis of policy documents is part of this study. To achieve respondent validation, transcriptions of interviews were sent to three participants for verification. Positive replies from all of the participants with no corrections were received.

For others to be possible to make judgments about the potential of transferability of findings to other settings, it is important to provide thick description and great deal of contextual data (Bryman, 2008). In my study I have attempted to make as detailed description as possible in order for me to draw some conclusions in the end and make it possible for others later on to transfer this knowledge to another context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In order to establish trustworthiness it is important to demonstrate dependability or reliability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Gall, Gall & Borg (2007, p. 477), reliability is “the extent to which other researchers would arrive at similar results if they studied the same case using exactly the same procedures as the first researcher”. Neuman (2011, p. 241), however, sees reliability problematic in qualitative research because “data collection is interactive process in which particular researchers operate in an involving setting whose context dictates using a unique means of measures that cannot be repeated”. In other words, social context is not static and researchers’ own pre-understanding influence the way investigators perceive and assess the world. As a result, it is difficult to replicate qualitative findings. Still, some steps can and should be done to increase reliability when conducting social science research. Thus, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest keeping all data collected during the research available for ‘auditing’, so that appropriateness of the procedures employed during the research project can be double checked. For that reason, I have kept all the cited records of my study that included written consent forms from participants, full transcriptions of each interview and coding parameters. Such materials give the possibility of returning to the “raw” material for later recall and comparison, thus increasing reliability.

The next criterion for qualitative trustworthiness described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is confirmability. One technique for determining confirmability is the already mentioned inquiry audit and ensuring that the researcher has “acted in good faith” (Bryman, 2008, p. 379). I have recognized and previously acknowledged my personal biases and values that might have affected the whole process of the research project. Since I was aware of some of my personal biases prior to the field work, I paid special attention to the formulation of

questions already before meeting the informants, and I tried to perform my research in as objective and holistic manner as possible.

## **4.7 Ethical considerations**

Every researcher should adhere to research ethics and professional principles that prescribe not to harm and deceive participants, fully inform them about the research project as well as guarantee privacy and confidentiality (Bryman, 2008). In my study I adhered to principles included in the Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and the Humanities (NESH, 2005), that embrace both personal and institutional morality, as well as both to the legislation of Latvia, in which the study took place, and Norway, the state in which the Master's degree has been done. In addition, notification to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services was submitted and permission to conduct the study received.

During the fieldwork both written and oral information about the nature and purpose of the study were given to all parties involved (parents and school principals). Since my interviews with the school principals were not planned beforehand, no separate consent form was made for them. As a result, the form which was given to parents was signed by the principals as well. I consider it appropriate since the consent form included main facts about me as the researcher, my research project and its goals. No interview was conducted before written consent was signed. In addition, an interview guide with a list of questions and topics to be covered was prepared in three languages (Russian, Polish and Latvian) and sent electronically or presented in person to the parents beforehand. All informants were ensured confidentiality and anonymity. Special attention was paid to store both written and recorded data in a way that it was not accessible to others. No personal or other information that might help to identify the participants against their will was mentioned and a list of informants was held separate from the actual transcriptions. Besides, I fully complied with scientific integrity by following good reference practice, e.g. using appropriate citing of authors and the relevant punctuations in order to avoid plagiarism. Texts and extracts for data analysis were selected according to their direct connection to the topic and availability. I tried not to be selective in order not to misrepresent data or achieve preconceived position.



Having presented the general methodology of this multiple-case study, it is now necessary to look over and analyze the results of the applied methodology. The following chapters will focus on data analysis and discussion of findings.

# 5 Minority Education in Latvia: Policy and Practice

This chapter intends to answer the first research question: *How is education organized for Russian and Polish minority groups?* A variety of data sources such as policy documents, interviews with the Polish minority school principal [PSD], the Russian minority school deputy principal [RDSD], and parents will be analyzed to approach the topic from several perspectives. Triangulation of data from several sources in this way can increase trustworthiness and reliability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

## 5.1 Legal basis for minority education

In the Republic of Latvia the Parliament (*Saeima*) enacts laws on language and education; the Cabinet of Ministers issues regulations, while the Ministry of Education and Science is the central executive institution for education which has authority to draft normative acts and pass binding recommendations to subordinate institutions. The Constitution of Latvia (*Satversme*) (1922, *Satversmes sapulce*, Articles 4, 112, 114) includes three main articles on language, education and minority rights:

- the state language in the Republic of Latvia is Latvian;
- persons belonging to minorities have rights to maintain and develop their linguistic, ethnic and cultural identity;
- everyone has rights to state financed primary and secondary education.

Meanwhile, three main laws give legal foundation for minority education policy: the Education Law (1998), the Law on General Education (1999) and the Official Language Law (1999). In addition, there are regulations from the Cabinet of Ministers and instructions from the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Education Law (Republic of Latvia, 1998, last amendments made in 2013) regulates the education system as a whole and determines the rights and duties of all parts involved: state, municipalities, public organizations, private entities, educational institutions,

parents, and students. The law states that all citizens and non-citizens of the state as well as those with temporary residence permit have equal access to free state-funded general education. Several sections of the law contain prescriptions regarding language of acquisition of education. Thus, Section 9 prescribes that “Education shall be acquired in the official language in state and local government education institutions”. To acquire primary or secondary education, examinations testing the Latvian language proficiency should be taken.

Meanwhile, the Education Law allows other languages to be used in private, state and local government schools, which implement minority education programmes. This complies with the article 14 of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities which recognizes that “every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language” (<http://conventions.coe.int>). The Convention suggests that in areas inhabited by minorities either traditionally or in substantial number, states “shall endeavour to ensure [...] within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language”. Although none of the legislative documents in Latvia explain thoroughly what groups belong to the national minorities, state- financed minority education is available in eight languages: Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Hebrew, and Romani (MoFA, 2014)

Section 41 of the Education Law says that minority education programmes are designed by schools themselves in accordance with state educational standards and on the basis of recommendations from the Ministry of Education and Science. The programmes are based on one of the four models approved by the MoES as sample minority education programmes<sup>12</sup>. The main difference between the models lies on the number of lessons given in each language. Meanwhile, no information is provided on type of instruction or methods to be used. As a result, schools have to decide themselves on how to implement these models in practice.

The Education Law prescribes that educational programmes shall include content that is necessary for students to learn about their culture and for integration of minorities in Latvia. Integration of minorities is also mentioned as one of the goals in the Official Language Law (1999, Section 1, para. 4) which says that “the purpose of the law is [...] the integration of

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1

members of ethnic minorities into the society of Latvia, while observing their rights to use their native language or other languages”. It is worth mentioning that any other language used in the Republic of Latvia (except the Liv, the language of the indigenous population) is regarded as a foreign language, none of the languages have official status of a national language.

According to the Official Language Law (1999), the integration of minorities should be based on the use of the Latvian language and its acceptance as the only state language. The law stresses the importance of “the maintenance, protection and development of the Latvian language” (Section 1, para. 1), its use in state and governmental institutions, educational and other spheres. It guarantees acquisition of education in the official language only while other languages can be used in “unofficial communications, in internal communications of national’s and ethnic groups, or in services, ceremonies, rituals and other kinds of religious activity of religious organisations” (Section 2, para 3). It means that in practice, for example, after class activities in minority schools can be held in minority languages, while pedagogical meetings and school events must be held in Latvian or translation into the official language should be ensured. Remarkably, neither bilingualism nor Latvian as a second language is mentioned in any of these laws. The focus is on Latvian, its use and protection. In Fishman’s (2010) terms, the Latvian language law is considered to be a permissive policy, which neither prohibits nor supports use of other languages.

Meanwhile, the Education Law is supportive towards other, ‘national’, languages for the educational purposes. The law allows and grants financial support to minority language schools. According to Inglis (2008, p. 36), such position is a sign of a multicultural policy model which “accepts the legitimacy of ethnic minorities’ cultural and social distinctiveness. It envisages that individuals and groups can be fully incorporated into the society without either losing their distinctiveness or being denied full participation”. On the other hand, despite supporting minority education, the state still promotes parallel education institutions for majority population and minorities. In Inglis’ terms it is a sign of a differentialist model, which aims in avoiding conflict by minimizing contacts among different groups. The objective of this policy is not to incorporate minority students into the society but rather to facilitate their separation. Advocates of differentialist model argue that such division is necessary due to organizational problems, meaning that bilingual education is most easily provided when students from particular mother tongue backgrounds are concentrated in the

same school (Inglis, 2002). In fact, Inglis (2008) claims that both models can possibly coexist and aspects of multiculturalism and differentialism can appear within the same system.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia (2011) describes separate school structure for mainstream population and linguistic minorities as a sign of multiculturalism. Meanwhile, some experts (Batelaan, 2002; Silova, 2002, 2006) believe that Latvians fear of negative aspects of linguistic and cultural mixing on Latvian students. For example, Silova (2006) found that although in the 1990's the decision of keeping children from both groups separately was promoted in the *Integration of Society in Latvia* (1999) as “the opportunity for non- Latvians to study Latvian language and culture without losing awareness of their ethnic origin” (p. 92), in reality Latvians feared of assimilation and losing their ‘Latvianness’. Therefore, in spite of parents having rights to choose any school they wanted to send their children to, it was not recommended by the Ministry of Education to educate Russian-speaking kids into Latvian educational institutions. In several Latvian language publications of 1995 and 1996 (as cited in Silova, 2006, p. 94) was said:

If a large number of Russian children study in a Latvian school, there is a whole range of negative issues – Latvian children do not receive the necessary knowledge, because teachers need to pay additional attention to Russian children who do not know the Latvian language well. Latvian children tend to learn not the best Russian character traits and pollute their [Latvian] language... the mentality of our people [Latvians] and Russians is too different. Often, Russian children, who are more active, impose their language, vocabulary, and traditions onto Latvian children... Latvian children have to live in a hostile environment, alien for the Latvian identity [...]

Similar attitude has experienced one of the Russian-speaking participants of this study whose daughter was denied admission to a Latvian kindergarten because “she would start speaking Russian with Latvian kids” (RM1). Although officially she was not granted a place due to limited capacity, the respondent believes it was her Russian background that played a crucial role in decision making.

Some experts on education (Romanov, 2000; Batelaan, 2002; Protassova, 2002) suggest that Latvia would gain more if Two- way bilingual programmes that aim at the learning and development in both languages by members of both communities would be introduced. Such programmes are useful when a minority group constitutes a large part of the total population and when a minority language is a ‘world language’ as it is in case of Russian. Such programmes serve as an ideal environment for “learning to live together”

(Batelaan, 2002, p. 14). One Latvian mother (married to a Russian man) whose both children attend bilingual Russian school says to me:

Russian is as a world language, and knowledge of it gives huge advantages. Nowadays young Latvians don't speak Russian, and they lose possibility to get a good job because Russian is demanded by many employers. Either you like it or not... I think those Latvians who don't speak Russian lose much. In my times we studied Russian. Yes, the political system was different but if we forget about the politics... so many people speak Russian, it is a world language! I think Latvian children are discriminated by not being taught Russian. Latvian and Russian kids should not be separated. You can like it or not but one day all of them will need Russian; we live too close to Russia and have too much in common (LM2, interview, 13.03.2012).

She admits that Russian should be valued for its instrumental benefits which can increase individual's economic and social capital. Inglis (2008) notices that for societies like Latvian whose economy relies mostly on knowledge-based industries due to lack of natural resources, it is vital to make full use of and develop all the human resources. Therefore, knowledge of Russian as a world language and the state language of economically strong neighbour may find to be important for the well-being of nation and every individual. As a result, bilingual education for all can make a valuable contribution to society's economic advantage.

Romanov (2000) provides several examples of successful multilingual language policies implemented in various European countries. For instance, in Finland both Finnish and Swedish are official languages; the rights of Swedish minorities are very well secured and knowledge of Swedish is a prerequisite for entering various professions, for civil servants and others. In Belgium three languages: French, Dutch and German enjoy equality guaranteed by a series of language laws. The principle of personality and territory is employed in the country, meaning that the state is divided into three different monolingual areas, each with its own official language used by the administration and in the schools. In the district of Brussels bilingualism is the official policy and every speaker can use either French or Dutch and can have his/ her children educated in either of the two languages. Thus, the policy makers in Latvia face huge challenges in developing education policies that would satisfy the needs of minorities, the majority, and the state with its nation-building projects.

Having presented legal basis for minority education in Latvia, I will now turn to the discussion of the minority schools, Russian and Polish, I attended during the fieldwork to describe two examples of practical organization of minority education in Latvia.

## **5.2 Bilingual education programmes in Russian and Polish schools**

Most of the interviewed parents admitted having their children in two particular minority schools. Therefore, I found it important to discover how education is organized in these Russian and Polish schools. Both fulfil legal requirements to be called minority schools; nevertheless, despite being equal according to the law, they differ considerably in practice.

### **5.2.1 Establishment of the schools**

The Russian school was founded in the early 1940's as a response to the growing number of Russian speakers in the territory of Soviet Latvia. It was the time when the composition of the population of Latvia changed considerably, great numbers of Russians, Belarusians and other nationalities immigrated to the territory of Latvia while thousands of Latvians were deported to Siberia. Education system, affected by the Russification policies, experienced great transformation at that time. Two school subsystem, one using Russian language instruction and the other using Latvian were established, while other minority schools (e.g. Polish) were liquidated. The Russian language was introduced in all Latvian schools while the study of Latvian by Russian students was "neither required nor taken seriously in the Russian language schools" (Silova, 2006, p. 38). Silova (2006) notices that due to Russification policies, the number of students attending Russian schools increased considerably. Various linguistic minorities, especially Slavic language speakers, chose to attend Russian educational institutions because it was easier for them to switch to Russian. Since Russians enjoyed more privileges in the Soviet times than those speaking titular languages, a number of Latvians were also switching from Latvian to Russian schools. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and particularly in the late 1990's the status of the Russian school and Russian language changed. Today the school I attended during the fieldwork have a status of a minority school with Russian being taught as a minority language and used in pair with the state language as the media of instruction. Nevertheless, in minds of both Russian and Latvian-speakers bilingual schools are still associated with the Soviet Russian schools where the Russian language was dominating.

The Polish school had another way to go. The school was opened in 1990's soon after the Ministry of Education and Science had been committed to restoring Latvian pre-war minority education policies. In 1989 the MoES passed a regulation allowing establishment of Sunday schools for linguistic minority groups (Silova, 2006), while few years later a secondary Polish school was opened. The director of this school recalls:

In 1940's the Polish school was closed while Polish culture and traditions were destroyed. The main task of the [newly opened] school was to restore Polish traditions, culture, to teach language to the children and integrate them into Latvian society. But this was too difficult to achieve... Only in cooperation with the school, family, society, Polish society, we could have achieved it (PSD, interview, 09.03.2012.).

These objectives go in line with the official aims of the Education Law (1998) and the Language Law (1998, Section 1, para. 4) which says that its goal is “the integration of members of ethnic minorities into the society of Latvia, while observing their rights to use their native language or other languages”. The main idea, however, is to integrate minorities on the basis of the Latvian language. In 2001 in unofficial communication with Silova, the former politician and policy maker admitted

The idea of restoring cultural autonomy for minority education... was a strategic move [...] It was geared toward splitting the opposition and distinguishing among Russified minorities [...] of whom were studying in Russian schools and did not even think of their own identity [...] Therefore, it was necessary to use education, particularly minority education and culture, as an instrument of returning minorities to their ethnic identity and reversing the effects of Russification (Silova, (2006, p. 53).

The goal of splitting Russian speakers was partly achieved. Today not only children from Polish families but also Russians, Latvians and others choose to study in the Polish school. Although data on the linguistic background of pupils is not publicly available, the school principal admits that, according to their own investigation, 68 percent of students have Polish roots; others represent various linguistic groups. The reason for that is discussed further in this chapter.



## 5.2.2 Primary education programmes for minorities

The General Education Law (1999) allows general educational institutions to implement one or several educational programmes. Therefore, the Russian school offers two minority education programmes: the 2<sup>nd</sup> model<sup>13</sup> developed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the school model<sup>14</sup> established in accordance with State educational standards and on the basis of recommendations from the MoES. Referring to the deputy school principal, parents have rights to choose according to which programme they prefer their children to be taught. Pupils are then divided into several classes, in accordance with the chosen programme. Nevertheless, she admits that the school model, which was introduced in the late 1990's, becomes rather unpopular among parents and students. She comments:

We like the 2<sup>nd</sup> model best because it includes just few subjects taught entirely in Latvian while most of the subjects are taught bilingually. Children beginning the school have different levels of the Latvian language knowledge; some have good proficiency, while others have none. Therefore, it is difficult for them to begin learning in Latvian (RDSD, interview, 10.03.2012).

When comparing both models, one can see that in the school model free subjects: the Latvian language/literature, nature study, and music are taught entirely in Latvian from the grade one. It is interesting to notice that nature science is taught in the state language only until the grade four. Afterwards, children begin to be educated bilingually. The deputy principal believes it is rather illogical and lacks any sense because when children get used to learn terms and specific subject vocabulary in one language, it is difficult for them to switch to another language. In addition, she admits that pupils with no or very weak knowledge of the Latvian language have problems in acquiring subjects in a foreign language. Meanwhile, there are eight subjects that are taught entirely in Russian and seven- bilingually.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> model, however, includes no subjects, except the Latvian language and literature, taught exclusively in the state language, but also subjects taught in the minority language are very few: Russian and literature, ethics or Christian studies, physics and chemistry (in grades eight and nine). As a result, students choosing the second model are educated bilingually in most of the subjects in primary education. The Ministry of Education and Science (2009) recommends this model to pupils who have basic conversational

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 4

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 4

knowledge of the state language but who do not use it on the daily basis, and to those who want to be integrated into the society of Latvia.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1995, p. 14, emphasis in original) suggests that in order for minority children to reach full bilingualism and biliteracy “*the mother tongue* must function as the medium of education in all subjects initially. At least some subjects must be taught through L1 all the way, up to grade 12, but the choice of subjects may vary”. Thus, despite the fact that the school programme proved the strongest maintenance of the minority language, the school management and parents favour the 2<sup>nd</sup> model with both languages being almost equally used from grade one. Nevertheless, the RDSB admits that Russian parents ask to pay more attention to the Russian language use during the lessons, meaning that on the one hand, parents want their children to be educated bilingually, while on the other hand they are insecure about the effectiveness of the programme in teaching their mother tongue.

The Polish school has also chosen to implement its own model<sup>15</sup> which, according to Anglo-American definition<sup>16</sup>, can hardly be characterized as bilingual education. According to the programme, Latvian is the main language of instruction in the school while Polish is taught only as a language subject and used in after class activities such as singing in chorus, drama, folk dance, and some others.

We saw the prospects in giving the Latvian language [to pupils] because they are graduates of the Polish school in Latvia... we should try to give them Latvianness since not all of them will move to Poland... and we've made a right choice. All graduates today speak fluently Latvian, Polish, English [the English language is taught as a foreign language subject according to the state standards]... We could have chosen another way to go, to have more classes in Polish than in Latvian but we predicted... we did another way round, so that we had more Latvian language than Polish (PSD, interview, 09.03.2012.).

Although the principal does not specify what exactly they predicted, one can assume that she speaks about strengthening of the position of the Latvian language that took place in the 1990's and the impact it had on education policies. Despite the fact that until 1999 only two subjects at minority schools had to be taught in Latvian while others could have been taught in minority language (MoES, 2011), the Polish school management decided to use

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<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 5

<sup>16</sup> According to Anglo-American definition of bilingual education, two languages should be used as media of instruction; teaching a second language as a separate subject does not relate to bilingual education (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

Latvian as the language of instruction in all subjects. Such model does not lead to additive bilingualism but is rather close to the transitional or subtractive bilingualism which aims at learning second language at the expense of one's mother tongue (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, 2000; Inglis, 2008). May (2001) does not find this model beneficial since it prescribes replacement of a mother tongue by the second language.

The PSD assumes that some students might leave Latvia and move to Poland, while most of graduates will stay and continue their studies in Latvian higher education institutions where Latvian is the main language of instruction. Admission to higher educational institutions as the main reason for studying Latvian is also mentioned by the RDSB who thinks that tests in Latvian and final examinations in school and higher educational institutions put Latvian on a higher position than any other language used in the Republic.

To choose Latvian as the main language of instruction in Polish school was also a tactical move. Given that the number of Poles or those identifying themselves with the Polish language and culture decreased considerably during the Soviet times, it would be rather impossible to gather enough number of pupils for the education institution to be opened. Therefore, Latvian as the main language of instruction attracted Latvians as well as parents and children from other linguistic groups. The Education Law of Latvia (1998, Section 57) gives rights to parents or persons exercising parental authority to "choose the pre-school and primary educational institution in which the child will acquire education, taking account of the child's wishes". However, children left without parental care regardless of their cultural, linguistic and ethnic background must be educated in the official language. As a result, non-Latvian orphans are refused to study in their mother tongue even if they wish so. Duncan (2002, p. 38) is critical towards such state's position claiming that "assimilation into national culture, education and language does not respect the child's own cultural identity".

Commenting on the non-Polish parents' choice of their school, the principal states:

I think that parents realize that their child will become richer by learning the additional language and culture. When Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga [President of Latvia in 1999-2007] visited our school, she also told the parents and pupils that knowledge of the additional language and culture is a treasure. This treasure can be gained in our school... Parents see the possibility for their children to study in Poland and to get good quality education there (PSD, interview, 09.03.2012.).

This can be true in case of children from linguistic majorities who choose to learn additional language(s) mainly for instrumental reasons, to get greater privileges and economic advantages. As noticed by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), this may take place when a minority language is a more prestigious or a so called world language. Although Polish is not considered to be a world language, it is still used by millions of people around the world. Bilingualism for such children is voluntary and the risk of failure is small. Even if children do not become 'completely' bilingual, they can well function in their own language which is the official state language. For linguistic minorities such as Russians, Belarusians, and others who choose to study in the Polish school such choice can have less favourable consequences. These children are pushed to study through the medium of two foreign languages that can cause various educational problems. By learning additional languages parents believe their offspring will have better possibilities to get good education and job opportunities while they fail to realize the fact that a child may acquire none of the languages on a high level and find him/herself on a disadvantaged position. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) notices that if a child does not manage to learn a second language, he/she will lose educational opportunities and will not be able to compete in the labour market. In addition, a child may have difficulties with communication within the family, face identity problems and lose connection to his/her origin if he/ she becomes more dominant in foreign languages than their first language.

On the other hand, there are always exceptions; in other words – there are no general truth as to how education should be organized in order for every child to succeed. What can be true in certain circumstances may be false under other. The Polish school principal claims that their pupils have no problems in acquiring several languages, especially those coming from Russian-speaking families. She states that they learn Polish faster than Latvians because both languages are from Slavic language group. Although the educator admits the importance of knowing child's first language for his/her cognitive development, she does not consider it to be a problem that Russian-speaking pupils studying in her school lack opportunity to learn their mother tongue and culture. She believes that the rich Russian language environment, the use of language at home and on the street, access to Russian television, newspapers, and books contribute to their first language development and can compensate lack of language teaching at school.

Meanwhile, for the interviewed Russian-speaking mothers whose children attend Russian minority school these arguments are not persuasive. They find it insufficient for their

children to use their first language without studying it comprehensively at school. For instance, one Russian-speaking mother (RM4) admits she was advised by several friends and the Polish school staff to send her daughter to the Polish school but despite all their efforts and close geographical location of the school, she finds mother tongue teaching more important than any other possible advantages her child can get if studying in this school.

The PSD finds the personal attitude of the school staff towards pupils, regardless their cultural and linguistic background, as another main motivation for the parents to have their kids in this school.

The fact that we begin every school day by praying to God and have our religious traditions make people know that we differ from other schools... also visual environment and our logo *School is our home* [statement written on the wall in Latvian and Polish by the entrance of the school]... we try to make school a home to our children. In addition, no other school administration visits their pupils at home. We go to every child's home to meet their parents, to see the conditions children live in, to help in difficult situations, to meet grandparents because cooperation with family is very important to us. The town we live in is not big and parents know about our traditions. And of course our pedagogical staff and achievements... we show one of the best results in student final examinations (PSD, interview, 09.03.2012.).

Although she believes that the successful school programme and students' achievements play an important role for parents, the director admits that only 40 percent of parents show real curiosity in the content of the education programme. To notice, none of the participants whose children study in this school had personally seen the school programme prior to sending their children to the educational institution. They all relied on what they have heard about the school from others but did not investigate the programme themselves. In contrast, the Russian school management claims that parents of pupils studying in their school are very interested in the school programmes and even try to affect them by expressing recommendations with regard to the language choice in various subjects. According to the data collected, half of the parents contacted the school management and went through the programme together with the staff before sending their children to this Russian school.

### 5.2.3 Challenges faced by the minority schools

As noticed by Pedersen (2002), such programmes like the one implemented in the Russian school (the 2<sup>nd</sup> bilingual education model) have good chances of integration and both language learning only if the programme is well implemented. The school management, however, admits that a number of teachers have problems with the Latvian language use in the class. These are mostly good and experienced old generation teachers who had been educated in Soviet higher education institutions where knowledge of the Latvian language was not demanded. The deputy principal comments:

In general I think bilingual education is not well prepared, there are still questions lacking answers ... For example, you see, old generation teachers find it very difficult to learn Latvian but still they are very good subject teachers. To me it is important that my children get good quality education in subject regardless in which language it is being taught... (RDSD, interview, 10.03.2012.)

The RDSD would like the state officials to pay more attention to preparing bilingual language teachers, not just teachers of Latvian and Russian languages. She states that some educators in their school still lack opportunity to get professional methodological training to be able to teach bilingually. As a result, shortage of qualified teachers, especially those trained in teaching Latvian as a second language or bilingually, impedes the successful implementation of the bilingual education policy (Housen, 2002) and can affect the achievements of students. For instance, the research conducted by the Association of Russian Culture, Education and Science (2007, in Poleshchuk, 2009) shows a significant decline in Russian students' achievements after the introduction of bilingual policies. Thus, among graduates from schools with education in minority languages the average grade in mathematics in 2004 was 4 percent lower than the average grade of graduates from Latvian schools, while in 2007 it was 9.4 percent lower. Grades in English were 6.5 percent - 7.5 percent lower; history grades were lower for 10 percent in 2004 and for 20.8 percent in 2007. To compare, in the years 2001 – 2004 students in schools for minorities showed the same or even better progress in subjects they studied in their mother tongue such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, and biology than students in Latvian schools (Centre for Curriculum Development and Examinations, in Poleshchuk, 2009). Although professionalism of teachers should not be considered as the only possible reason for students' decline in achievements, it still plays an important role in it.

The fact that in reality teachers lacking Latvian language knowledge instruct 'bilingual' subjects in Russian is also validated by one of the mothers whose daughter is a student of grade four in this school. She admits that most of the subjects are taught mainly in the Russian language, "You know, this is a Russian school. They use text- and exercise books written in Latvian but I am sure they teach in Russian. Only mathematics and nature sciences are taught in Latvian" (RM1, interview, 11.03.2012.). Such way of teaching resembles translation of content, not bilingual teaching.

Meanwhile, the RDSB stresses, "We don't translate, we teach bilingually. It is not a translation. The lessons are divided into several sections and each section is taught in their own language". Such mismatch of information between the school staff and the parents can indicate on different understanding of the way bilingual education is to be implemented or deceit of the official policies. Silova (2002) describes the ways some Russian schools used to manipulate the system when the new bilingual policies were introduced. Some schools used to develop a double curriculum, one for regular use, while the other during inspections, or two types of textbook, "one on the desk to be used regularly in class [usually a textbook published in Russia] and the other under the desk to be used when the inspection comes to school [usually a textbook published in Latvia]" (Russian language school teacher, 2001, as cited in Silova, 2006, p. 139). This indicated that despite intentions of the policymakers, it is the school administration that makes final decision as to how bilingualism is to be implemented and to which extent recommendations of the MoES are to be followed. Richard Elmore (quoted in Silova, 2006, p. 109) has rightly called this phenomenon "the power of the bottom over the top", meaning that actual school and classroom practice has more influence on the implementation of policy than policy has on practice.

The Polish school director also confirms that it is up to the school to decide on techniques the minority programmes are to be implemented. She admits that although the school does not offer bilingual classes, teachers are obliged to attend special qualification training arranged by the MoES to be able to teach bilingually. Consequently, the state wastes financial resources to train teachers who will ever use their knowledge in practice. Thus, it is recommended that the officials reassess the goal and content of the training courses and adopt them to the real needs of teachers working in minority schools.

Another problem mentioned by both educators is lack of good quality materials available in the minority languages. According to the Education Law (1998), the Ministry of Education and Science regulates and confirms all the published materials to be used in general primary and secondary schools and restricts use of books published outside Latvia. However, given the fact that locally developed Polish language textbooks are not available, the Polish school is allowed to use materials published in Poland. It is thus a duty of the school to gather teaching materials for their mother tongue teaching. Referring to the school director, the textbooks are usually sponsored and delivered by the Embassy of Poland and non-governmental organization Wspólnota Polska<sup>17</sup>.

Meanwhile, teaching materials published in Russia are not allowed in Russian minority schools. The students are taught according to the books produced in Latvia that Pedersen (2002) considers not to be good enough because local authors are not sufficiently qualified to compose standard texts in Russian. Krupnikova (2004) has analyzed 81 school textbooks for grades 1 to 9 published both in Latvian and Russian and found that the social life in Latvian and Russian language textbooks is portrayed differently with little or no interaction between the two groups and representatives of other minorities. The author concludes that textbooks in Latvian and Russian are ethnocentric with regard to other groups as well as their social and cultural contribution. She claims that Latvian-language and Russian-language textbooks exist in two separate information spaces that rarely overlap. For example, Latvian books create a monocultural information space, absent from minorities, while in Russian textbooks Russian characters are detached from the Latvian social context. In addition, in Latvian language textbooks minority representatives are not used to illustrate the positive examples of loyalty to the state or civil participation reserving this role to Latvians. As a result, already existing divide between Russian and Latvian-speakers and between different types of schools is reinforced.

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<sup>17</sup> The main goals of the organization are to cooperate and support Poles living outside Poland, promote use of the Polish language, maintenance of their culture and traditions, defense of rights of Polish minorities, strengthening the socio-economic position of Polish communities in their country of residence (wspolnotapolska.org.pl)



# 6 Choice of Language of Instruction and Attitude towards Education Policies

Having presented legal basis for minority education in Latvia and an insight into its practical side, I will now turn to the analysis of views of my informants whose children attend bilingual and monolingual schools. My intention is to answer the two last research questions: *What are Russian and Polish minority parents' motivations when choosing a school for their children?* and *What are the parents' attitude towards minority education policies in Latvia?*

As it has already been stated, parents in Latvia have rights to send their children to any school they prefer. While for some adults a choice of school goes without saying, for others it is a rather difficult topic which needs to be carefully pondered. Decision making for representatives of linguistic minorities is even more complicated because they have to go through careful evaluation of intrinsic and instrumental benefits of education in the state language and their mother tongue which has no official status in a country. In addition, identity issues, a number of internal and external factors, socioeconomic benefits, and practical constraints are just few dilemmas faced by minority parents when going through decision making.

## 6.1 Mothers as decision makers

As noticed in chapter four, my initial goal was to interview parents from homogenous linguistic groups. The practice, however, shows that in the multilingual town the data was gathered homogenous families are rather an exception. Although Velliste (in Romanov, 2010, p. 65), claims that Russians and Latvians in Latvia “led and still lead a relatively independent existence with very little social mixing between the linguistic groups”, the data presented by Muiznieks (2010) shows that in 2008 19.8 percent of Latvian men and 20 percent of Latvian women were marrying non-Latvians. I believe, in the town under investigation the proportion of mixed marriages is even higher. As a result, ten out of thirteen participants claimed to come from mixed Russian and Latvian, Russian and Polish, or Polish and Latvian families. In

some cases different linguistic background of the parents created additional challenges when making decision upon the school.

The main decision makers with regard to children education and school choice in families are found to be women. Only three participants from bilingual families claimed the decision was made by both parents, other mothers admitted having chosen school for their children themselves. This can be explained by the fact that traditionally in Latvian society a woman has been in charge of raising children and housekeeping while men were bread winners. Although nowadays most of women work just as much as men, questions connected to children are still under their responsibility.

The mother tongue of the women dominated when choosing the language of instruction for their kids. One of the main reasons for that is the fact that women are in charge of decision making. In addition, in most cases mothers spend more time with their children than fathers and it is easier for them to help their kids with home exercises in their first language. Although Romanov (2010) claims that in bilingual families it is a woman who often shifts her language in favour of the partner's language, in case of my participants it is not the gender that defines which language prevails in interfamily communication but the value and status attached to both languages within the family and society, as well as both partners' knowledge of the languages. Thus, for example, all of my Polish-speaking participants communicate with their spouses in the first language of the partners. This decision is based mostly on practical consideration since none of their Russian or Latvian partners have knowledge of Polish.

Meanwhile, it is interesting to notice that in families where the women's mother tongue is Latvian and their partners' first language is Russian, the Russian language dominates. No one of the interviewed women, however, can explain the reason for such language choice; all of them find it to be very natural. Only in one family the mother tongue of a Latvian woman (LM1) dominates in daily communication between the spouses. To say more, two Latvian participants (LM2 and LM3) admit their husbands ask them to speak Latvian at home while the women confirm having an unknown barrier to do so. Thus, one of them explains:

Sometimes he asks me to speak Latvian to him but I can't. I can say two or three sentences but then automatically switch to Russian. This is just the way it is. I can do nothing with it. I know he understands Latvian very well and would learn it even better if I started talking Latvian to him, but I just can't (LM2, interview, 13.03.2012.).

This ‘natural’ language shift within the family can be explained by the effects of Russification policies that took place in Latvia until the late 1980’s. The status of Russian as the Soviet *lingua franca* made many choose Russian as the language for their daily communication. All of the parents I interviewed were born, raised, and educated in the Soviet Latvian Republic; therefore, they used to use Russian on the daily basis and have made a habit to use it in communication with Russian-speakers. Although nowadays fewer Latvians choose to speak Russian, it is still generally believed that Latvians would switch to Russian in communication with Russian-speakers. Thus, for example, another Latvian respondent claims, “I always speak Russian to Russian-speakers even if I know they understand Latvian. That’s the way it’s always been... Now my children do the same. They speak Russian to Russians and Latvian to Latvians” (LM3, interview, 14.03.2012.). Similar statement is made by the Russian-speaking participant who claims:

She [daughter] has Latvian friends but they always speak Russian [to her]. I asked her once why she didn’t speak Latvian to them, and she replied that they [friends] begin speaking Russian themselves. You know, it’s always like that. Even if there is just one Russian among many Latvians, they all will switch to Russian... It’s always been like that (RM5, interview, 17.03.2012.).

Some explain this situation as a lack of Latvian-language skills among Russian-speakers or difference in mentality, meaning that Russians “who are more active, impose their language, vocabulary and traditions” onto Latvians (Derums, 1995 as cited in Silova, 2006, p. 94). Meanwhile, according to the communication accommodation theory [CAT], it is social position of interlocutors, particularly the power and status relationships between the language groups involved, that in many cases determines the strategy of cross-cultural communication (Liebkind, 1999, 2010). The theory suggests that speakers bring their own attitudes to interactions that are often based on the sociohistorical backgrounds as well as individuals’ previous experience of similar interactions and perceived social norms. For Latvians, therefore, it may seem to be natural to switch to Russian due to their previous experience of using it in everyday interaction with Soviet citizens and their memories of Russian as a language of prestige. Latvians’ stereotypical views on Russians’ bad knowledge of Latvian can also have an impact on their choice of language. As a result, children of Latvian parents copy behaviour of adults and also choose to use Russian in communication with their Russian-speaking peers.

Meanwhile, Russians may choose to diverge in order to accentuate the linguistic differences between themselves and Latvians and put their own group and language, which

lost the status of the official language, on a higher position than Latvian. Although CAT suggests that minorities usually converge in order to get social approval and evoke positive reaction in others, Russian-speakers may not be willing to accept the dominant position of Latvian; therefore, they use their mother tongue as often as possible. On the other hand, in bilingual contexts, individuals may consider themselves to belong simultaneously to two groups and adopt an integration orientation by identifying themselves with both cultures. As a result, those choosing to speak Latvian to Latvians or Russian to Russians find it natural to speak the first language of their interlocutor, regardless of its official status and position in the society.

In families where both parents were involved in the decision-making process, a final choice was always a result of a compromise. Thus, for example, in bilingual Latvian/Russian family a Latvian mother (LM2) insisted on the Latvian school while a father wanted his children to learn his first language too. As a result, kids were sent to a bilingual Russian minority school.

We argued much about the right school for our kids. My husband made his position clear- he insisted that Russian was also their mother tongue, and if we would have sent our children to Latvian school, they would have never be taught Russian in there and would not be able to write and read in Russian without making mistakes. But it has always been important to me that they can read Russian literature in the original language because it is so rich and beautiful... So, I was thinking much about it and came to the conclusion that my children would gain by studying in bilingual school. So, we reached a compromise. I have never regretted our choice (LM2, interview, 13.03.2012.).

The mother, however, admits that before their children began the school, she had worried about the quality of the Latvian language teaching in there. She associated Russian bilingual schools with Soviet Russian educational institutions where Latvian was poorly taught. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that she is satisfied with the level of education in and of both languages.

Two women say that opinion of their children is also important when it comes to the school choice. One Polish mother admits that the final decision about the school was made together with her child. Her daughter is now a student of grade four in the Polish minority school. The mother tells:

I accidentally met the school principal on the street; we began to talk and she invited us to visit the school, to see how everything is organized in there. So we did. She [the daughter] was so excited about the school and its atmosphere, many toys and smiling

teachers... She told me that she wanted to stay in there. So, it was her who made a final decision (PM1, interview, 11.03.2012.).

The woman admits she would have sent her daughter to the Polish school anyway but it was good to know the daughter was also happy about the chosen educational institution. Similar statement is made by another Polish woman (PM3) whose oldest daughter attends the same school (the youngest is in a kindergarten). Her statement suggests that the school director was actively involved in encouraging parents to send their children to her school, “She [the school director] is a very kind and open person. She knows my mother well, and she has always been asking her if her grandchildren would attend the Polish school. I think it’s very nice of her” (PM3, interview, 15.03.2012.). As a result, the involvement of the school management and their good attitude towards children and their parents has also influenced the decision of the parents. This brings us to the discussion of the parents’ strategies and motivation when making final decision about the school and language of instruction for their offspring.

## **6.2 Minority schools**

Most of the parents have similar motivation when deciding to send their children to the minority school. Although strategies and priorities of the parents slightly differ, they all conclude that language of instruction plays a crucial role when making a decision. Teaching of their mother tongue along with the state language is found to be the main objective for choosing a minority school. Other factors affecting their decision are school reputation, quality of education, location, after class activities, and attitude of the school staff towards both children and their parents.

### **6.2.1 Intrinsic and instrumental motives**

It has been found out that Russian and Polish- speaking parents’ motivation for school choice is similar. Nevertheless, there is a difference between their attitude towards the education system and minority education programmes in particular. Poles express gratefulness for having a chance to maintain and support their language through the education, Russians however take education provided in the Russian language for granted.

For example, one of the Russian-speaking mothers rejects considering herself and Russians in general as minorities and finds it obvious that Russian should be taught at school. She states, “We [Russian-speakers] are not minorities, as someone prefers to call us. We are native inhabitants of this land, and we want to be taught in our first language here” (RM2, interview, 12.03.2012.). Protassova (2002) states that people attach themselves to the place they are born and raised, and while majority population may see minorities as foreigners or outsiders, minority groups’ members can feel very ‘rooted’ in a place. However, despite identifying themselves with the Latvian state, the interviewed minorities admit keeping separate of the mainstream population cultural and linguistic identity.

It has been claimed that individuals have several identities that are never static. Burke and Stets (2009) discuss multiple identities and conflicts that arise when these identities are activated. For minorities living in Latvia it is not uncommon to face role conflict because meaning and expectations from both cultural and national identities are present. Thus, for instance, most of the minority parents I interviewed agree on the necessity for their offspring to learn Latvian because it is the state language of the country they live in and attach themselves to, while at the same time they find it more important to learn and maintain their mother tongue. As a result, identities can come in conflict when individuals should make a choice in favour of one of them. Although some parents acknowledge they attach themselves to both languages, they value differently each of them. The intrinsic value of the mother tongue which, according to my participants, is a core element of their identity is put in contrast with the instrumental value of the state language. For example, two Russian-speaking mothers express similar views when saying:

I have always wanted her [daughter] to study in a Russian school; Polish or Latvian schools would not give her enough mother tongue knowledge [...] She is Russian; she needs to be educated in her mother tongue... But, of course, since we live in Latvia, it is not only a desire but mostly a necessity to know the Latvian language. If she is going to live here in the future, her Latvian language knowledge should be good (RM4, interview, 13.03.2012.).

Another mother says:

We are Russians. The priority is given to the Russian language. I want my child to know her mother tongue well both written and oral. [...] We live in the Latvian Republic; therefore, we need to know the state language. We need it to get a good job and, you know, there are other privileges it gives you (RM1, interview, 11.03.2012.).

Both mothers identify themselves and their children as Russians, and the Russian language is seen to be an integral part of their cultural identity. To them, being a Russian means speaking the Russian language. On the other hand, Latvian is important for their national identity since they attach themselves to the Latvian country and for its instrumental value that brings certain privileges and advantages.

Poles have similar point of view. Polish has an intrinsic value to them; it links them to their ancestors, while Latvian is a necessity. Besides, two out of free Polish participants admit having strong attachment to the Russian language too. The Polish-speaking woman (PM3, interview, 11.03.2012.) who is married to a Russian man says, “Polish is my mother tongue, it is my heart language; Russian too. Meanwhile, Latvian... yes, those who live in Latvia need to know the language. I think it is absolutely wrong that some Russians say they don’t need to know the Latvian language...” Another Polish woman (PM1, interview, 15.03.2012.) who is much in contact with Russian-speakers comments, “Russian is closer to me than Latvian because everyone speaks Russian. Latvian is a foreign language to me, I need to know it to use at work... I think everyone needs to know two languages [Latvian and Russian] in modern Latvia.”

For both women knowledge of Latvian is essential because it is the state language that should be known to communicate with people living in Latvia, and it gives certain privileges in terms of job. They also admit that Russian is important to them since it is used in communication within the family and with other members of the society who speak this language. Their comments suggest that the multilingual environment they live in, especially a big number of Russian-speakers in the society, affect their attitude towards the Russian and Latvian languages. It can be assumed that the situation might have been different if they would have been living in another part of Latvia where the Latvian language dominates. In addition, both mothers admit that knowledge of the Polish language has not only intrinsic but also an instrumental value for their children since they might leave Latvia and move to Poland. “In the future my daughter will need Polish more than Latvian because she will move to Poland. Latvian is a necessity because it is the language she gets education in now but she won’t need it in the future” (PM1, interview, 11.03.2012.). Another woman says:

I can’t say now which language is more important for my children. It depends on which way they will go in the future. If they choose to move to Poland, then Polish is more important. If they stay in Latvia, then Latvian (PM3, interview, 15.03.2012.).

The woman values languages according to their practical use and status in a particular society.

Another Polish-speaking woman whose son attends the Polish school does not find it necessary to make differences between the languages. Her position is the following, “Every individual and every state [government] should think of language only as a language, as a mean of communication, not as a tool for raising conflicts or inequalities. The most important is that people can languages, not of what nationality or linguistic group they are” (PM2, interview, 15.03.2012.). Although she states that all languages have equal worth and value to her, she admits that “as for a citizen of Latvia Latvian is the most important to me; for my individuality – Polish, while Russian I need to communicate with other people”. As a result, each language has its own value for her depending on the activated identity. She does not compare or contrast the languages she speaks but rather put them side by side meaning that all languages have equal worth depending on the context. She continues, “All languages are treasures that no one can ever take away from you”.

Nevertheless, she has chosen the Polish school for her son. She claims that this decision has not even been discussed in the family for three main reasons. First, she is a deputy school principal in this school, and it was evident that the child would study there. Second, Polish is her mother tongue and she wants her son to be both fluent and accurate when using the language. Meanwhile, Russian, the first language of her husband, “can be used at home” or “taught in a secondary school as a foreign language subject”. Finally, the level of the Latvian language teaching is high in this school that is ‘very important for everyone who lives in Latvia because it is the state language’. It is also worth noticing that she identifies her son as a Polish, not as a Polish *and* Russian; that is a common characteristic for most of the parents I interviewed. Despite the fact that their children come from bilingual and bicultural families, mothers use to identify them with their own first language and culture.

Parents choosing minority school for their children are guided both by the desire for their children to maintain the linguistic and cultural identity of their parents (mostly of a parent who is a decision maker) as well as to be able to learn the state language that is a prerequisite for their future success. Nevertheless, although all the parents are satisfied with their school choice and none of them have ever considered changing the educational institution, they still admit facing some challenges in education and express various suggestions as to what can be changed or improved in the current education system.



## 6.2.2 Advantages and weaknesses of minority education

Attitude of the parents towards minority education is mostly based on their personal experience. All of the parents despite the language they speak or the chosen school for their children are mostly satisfied with the minority education programmes implemented in the schools. Nevertheless, the Polish and Russian parents have slightly different opinion about the goal of the minority education. For example, the main advantage of the education system in Latvia mentioned by the Russian-speaking parents is the fact that children have an opportunity to study the state language in addition to their mother tongue. Thus, the state language teaching is thus considered to be a 'bonus' to the mother tongue teaching.

Meanwhile, for the Poles the situation is opposite. They admit valuing the current education system for the possibility of learning their mother tongue in addition to the Latvian language. One of the mothers claims, "It is great that we have Polish schools in Latvian, children need to know their mother tongue, not only the official language which they will learn anyway" (PM3, interview, 15.03.2012.). Another Polish-speaker states, "I'm grateful to the state that she [daughter] can learn her mother tongue, maintain our Polish identity and support our traditions [...] in addition to learning Latvian. Parents can never give equally good language and cultural education than a well trained native teacher" (PM1, interview, 11.03.2012.).

For the Russian- speaking parents it is evident that Latvian must be learned by their children. Nevertheless, they see their schools first and foremost as Russian schools the aim of which is to teach primarily Russian and in Russian. Poles, on the other hand, recognize their school as Latvian in which the Polish language can be acquired. Although officially both Russian and Polish educational institutions have equal status of the minority schools, and they operate according to the same laws and requirements, schools are interpreted differently by the parents and, as this paper suggests, by the state officials too. One of the Polish- speaking women also notices the difference in attitude of the government officials towards Russians and smaller minorities. She is somewhat frustrated about the attention Russians get in comparison to the Poles and claims:

It is good that we have minority schools in Latvia because children need to know their mother tongue but I think Russians should not be considered as minorities. There are too many Russians, they are too powerful here. Why do they have to have separate schools? They can be taught Russian as a separate subject just as we have it in our

school. Russian is everywhere; it will never die anyway. They should better learn Latvian (PM3, interview, 15.03.2012.).

According to her point of view, Russians should not be treated the same way as other minorities. Their numerical dominance and overall use of the Russian language in comparison to her mother tongue Polish makes her feel undervalued. Although having no official status in the society, the Russian language is valued higher than other minority languages. This indicates that it is not the legal status that defines the actual hierarchy of languages but its sociolinguistic function (Druviete, 2000) and a symbolic power attached to it. She finds Russians to be too dominating and suggests that they should better integrate into the Latvian society by sending their children to the Latvian language schools. Her position is similar to that of nationalistic Latvian politicians of the early 1990's who wanted to eliminate Russian schools and begin teaching entirely in Latvian (Silova, 2006).

Meanwhile, another Polish-speaking mother who has close connection to the Russian culture has an opposite view:

I'm happy that my daughter learns her mother tongue at school. Bilingual school is always better than the monolingual; for children speaking several languages it will be easier to adapt to our modern multilingual society. At least in our country everyone needs to know two languages [Latvian and Russian]. Russian language should definitely be taught at schools; street level language is not acceptable. I would be very happy if they would have taught Russian in the Polish school too (PM1, interview, 11.03.2012.).

As their comments suggest, the attitude of individuals towards other linguistic groups is based on their personal connection or lack of it to these group. The first woman identifies herself with the Polish and Latvian groups while the latter Polish interviewee has close connection to the Russian language and culture. As a result, they identify themselves positively with their own group while evaluating negatively or differently others not in the group. From this develops a sense of "we" or "us" and "them". (Burke and Stets, 2009). Pedersen (2002) has noticed that the divine line between "us" and "others" is very visible in Latvian context, and the separate school structure for different linguistic groups can hardly change this situation.

Despite overall positive attitude towards the education system, the parents admit that bilingual programmes make them face various challenges. Some of the parents claim that their kids have difficulties at school. However, it is important to distinguish between hardships faced by children and by the parents themselves. For example, one of the Russian-speaking mothers admits that unprofessional and untrained teachers make obstacles towards successful acquisition of knowledge in both languages. Such an opinion is based on the

information she gets from her daughter as well as on her own observations. Although the officials and school administration try to convince parents that teachers get special qualification training, they are not always satisfied with it:

I know personally all of the teachers working at school and I can't say they are bad teachers. No. They are good subject teachers but some of them are not qualified enough to teach bilingually. How an old teacher who has been teaching geography in Russian for twenty five years will suddenly begin teaching it in Latvian? Of course she won't be able to do it. They speak bad [Latvian] language or don't speak it at all (RM3, interview, 13.03.2012.).

Meanwhile, one Polish mother complains on the opposite; she is not happy about the amount of the Polish language use and on lack of subjects taught bilingually in the Polish school. Although she is satisfied with the pedagogical staff and after class activities organized in Polish, she expresses sorrow about teachers and children using too little Polish in other subjects than the Polish language as well as during the breaks. She believes that the main reason for it lies on the big number of non-Polish children studying at the school:

Yes, she [daughter] studies Polish at school but they [pupils] don't use the language after lessons; they all speak Latvian or Russian. It is very sad because it is a Polish school. But I know why it is so. Children studying in our school come predominantly from Russian- and Latvian- speaking families. In our class only two kids come from Polish families. Only two... They [non-Polish children] don't use Polish as their first language, they study it only as a subject, as a foreign language subject (PM1, interview, 11.03.2012.).

Another Polish mother (PM2) who is also a deputy director in the Polish school agrees that it would be better to have more lessons taught in Polish but she stresses that the school cannot exceed the allowed number of lessons taught in a minority language. She admits that in a given situation children still acquire the Polish language good enough in order to communicate on the daily basis. However, if they choose to study in higher educational institutions in Poland, additional courses have to be taken. She also admits that it would be beneficial to have subjects taught bilingually in Polish and Latvian but points out on the practical constraints such as lack of teacher training.

According to her point of view, the main hidden goal of bilingual education in Latvia is to teach Latvian to Russians so that they become fluent in the state language, while other minority schools are left only to their mother tongue teaching as a separate language subject. Although the official policy gives equal rights to all minority groups to implement bilingual programmes, in practice only Russian schools get practical support in terms of teacher

training and teaching materials in a minority language. As a result, in contrast to the Russians who complain about inadequate use of the Latvian language in comparison to their mother tongue, the Poles prefer having more first language teaching and use it more often on the daily basis at school.

One more obstacle mentioned by the Russian parents is the fact that children have too much work to do to in order to succeed in bilingual subjects. Mothers admit spending several hours daily to help children with homework exercises. For some respondents it is a problematic issue since they do not master the Latvian language on a sufficient level. Thus, a mother of a boy of grade two complains:

I like the idea of bilingual education. I want him to be fluent in Latvian too, but it is so difficult... Every day we spend more time than the day before to do homework. For example, math... You know, those text exercises; we should first read the text, translate it into Russian, discuss it, do the task, and translate the answer into Latvian again. And this is just in grade two... (RM2, interview, 12.03.12.)

Another mother also claims, "I think she [daughter] faces some problems because of use of two languages. I have problems myself to help her do homework in Latvian" (RM4, interview, 13.03.12.).

However, there is a mother of a girl from the same school, grade four, who expresses the opposite view, "I think it is fine that math is taught in Latvian; such difficult subjects like physics and chemistry must be taught in the Russian language. These are too difficult subjects to be taught in a foreign language. But math is ok." (RM1, interview, 11.03.12.) Her positive attitude towards bilingual education is based on her daughter's success at school. She admits that the girl does very well in most of the subjects. One of the reasons for that can be the fact that she had some Latvian language knowledge when beginning the school. The mother evaluates her own Latvian language proficiency as "quite good", as a result she finds it unproblematic to help her child with homework exercises in Latvian. In addition, she notices that the girl "has a talent" to acquire languages.

A view that a child has to be talented or possess inborn abilities in order to successfully acquire languages is supported by many of the informants regardless of their first language or school their children attend. One Russian-speaking mother suggests, "Much depends on a child's abilities. Some may have two [Latvian language] lessons a day but learn nothing. Much depends on intelligence and willingness to learn" (RM3, interview, 12.03.12.).

Another Polish-speaking mother (PM1) whose daughter attends Polish school, grade four, believes that her girl speaks fluently four languages, Polish, Latvian, Russian, and English, because she has predisposition to language learning as well as “good genes”. Her mother speaks herself three languages and admits spending much time with the daughter by reading books and watching cartoons in various languages. Still, she finds intelligence to play more important role than her own investment in daughter’s language learning process or appropriate teacher methods and motivation. Interestingly, mothers of pupils who face troubles in foreign language acquisition prefer to point to ‘inborn inabilities’ as an excuse for their children failure. Thus, for example, one of the Russian mothers whose son has problems with the Latvian language subject says, “If a child has abilities to learn the language, he will do so. If not, it plays no role how good teachers are or what methods are used. I can sit hours with him but he learns nothing” (RM2, interview, 12.03.12.).

Meanwhile, Carroll (1962, in Gardner and Lambert, 1972) suggests that aptitude and general intelligence are just few factors among several that affect the way languages are learned. He claims that motivation, the opportunity students have for learning, and the adequacy of presentation of the material to be learned play also an important role in language acquisition. Gardner and Lambert (1972) believe language learning suggests more than just having ‘an ear for languages’. Although one may have intellectual capacity and language aptitude, there is definitely something more to it than just abilities. The learner’s motivation, his attitude towards other linguistic group and representatives of this group, as well as willingness to adopt distinctive aspects of linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviour of what are characteristic to that other group play crucial role in mastering a foreign language.

Pawlak (2012) also claims that there are several factors that affect learner’s results in foreign language acquisition: age, intelligence, aptitude, cognitive and learning styles, learning strategies, motivation, anxiety, beliefs, and willingness to communicate. Although the first three factors can be controlled neither by children, nor by parents or teachers, the rest can and should be affected by adults in order for children to succeed. Research data (Pawlak, 2012) suggests that motivation accounts for almost as much variance in learner’s achievement as aptitude. Since it is rather difficult for young children to find proper motivation themselves, it is the task for both parents and teachers to motivate young learners in order for them to succeed in second language acquisition. Therefore, assuming that “everything depends on a child” is not convincing. A child’s anxiety, beliefs and willingness to communicate in a

foreign language depend much on their parents' attitude towards the language and its speakers. Thus, it is important that parents not only admit that learning, for example, Latvian is necessary for their children but also express positive attitude towards Latvians and speakers of this language.

It is interesting to notice that parents who evaluate their Latvian language knowledge as satisfactory or worse, are more occupied with their children learning Latvian than those who have no problems in using Latvian. Parents recall their own difficulties with obtaining a well-paid job or having problems with communication in state institutions due to bad knowledge of the official language. For these reasons they want their children to be as fluent in Latvian as possible. One of the Russian-speaking mothers recalls, "No one needed Latvian, when I went to school. I am really sorry that we had such bad teaching and overall attitude towards the Latvian language. You know, we were taught Latvian in Russian... If I just knew, I would have studied more seriously..." (RM4, interview, 13.03.12.). The woman expresses sorrow about her bad knowledge of the state language because it makes her face disadvantages. She confirms the fact that Latvian had lower status when she was studying at school, and she, as a pupil, was not demanded to have good knowledge of the language. Thus, lack of motivation from teachers' side, low status and prestige of the Latvian language, as well as overall use of Russian led to neglect learning of the Latvian language in the Soviet times.

Another mother recalls, "My attitude towards the [Latvian] language has changed since then [school age]. We live in the Latvian Republic, and we need to know the state language. We need it in order to get a good job..." (RM1, interview, 11.03.12.). Again, instrumental value of Latvian prevails. Parents, who have suffered due to insufficient knowledge of the state language, want their children to avoid marginalization and enjoy all the practical opportunities knowledge of the state language can give them. In Skutnabb-Kanga's (2001) terms, these parents represent the B team who believes in symbolic power of the state language, the language of an A team. As a result, knowledge of Latvian is seen by parents as starting capital for their children that can be converted into valuable capital in order to climb the social ladder from the B team towards the A team (Biseth, 2005). According to May (2001), minorities who become limited in their language use in official institutions are often left in a choice of assimilation or resistance against established hierarchy. Nevertheless, the Russian-speaking parents who choose to educate their children in a minority language

adopt an integrationist strategy by keeping learning and maintaining their mother tongue along with the language of the state (Romanov, 2000). In contrast, those choosing majority education are more willing to accept an assimilationist model. This brings me to the analysis of parents whose children attend mainstream Latvian schools where their mother tongue is not taught.

## **6.3 Mainstream schools**

Parents who choose monolingual Latvian schools for their children believe these educational institutions give the optimal basis for further education and job opportunities in Latvia. Meanwhile, the motivation of Russian and bilingual Russian/Latvian parents slightly differ from that of bilingual Polish families.

### **6.3.1 Russian-speakers**

Russian-speaking parents or parents from mixed families prefer mainstream Latvian schools instead of bilingual schools because the latter do not give good knowledge of and in Latvian that is believed to be the main prerequisite for successful future of their children. Poor knowledge of the Latvian language by teachers in Russian minority schools is seen as the main obstacle towards obtaining good quality education in these educational institutions. For example, one of the Latvian mothers who was raised in a bilingual family herself and is married to a Russian man admits that it is important for her children to study in Latvian while Russian can be used at home with their father.

I'm a [pre-school] teacher myself; I know how bilingual classes are taught. They don't give enough Latvian language knowledge in these [Russian] schools. Children need to communicate more in Latvian. To have few subjects taught in this language is not enough (LM1, interview, 16.03.12.)

She believes that bilingual subjects in Russian schools are taught either in Russian only or in a poor Latvian that is not beneficial to pupils. Her opinion is based on what "others say" because she has never been to any Russian minority school herself and has no information about the programmes implemented.

During the conversation she points out that both Latvian and Russian languages have equal status in their family. However, she stresses that her children should be taught “in their mother tongue Latvian”, ignoring the fact that they have two first languages. As a result, her mother tongue Latvian is placed on a higher position than the language of her spouse Russian. She concludes, “I’m proud I know the Russian language. I want my children to know it too but in order to speak it they don’t have to study it at school” (LM1, interview, 16.03.12.). Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) states that in situations when children from bilingual families are educated in one language only, kids may fail to become ‘completely’ bilingual. Instead, they may become either monolingual or very dominant in one of the two languages that can lead to the negative consequences for the relationship between the child and his/her family members. As a result, the child may lose connection to one of his/her parents and their cultural heritage.

Although the mother’s main argument in favour of a mainstream school is insufficient knowledge of the Latvian language provided in minority schools, she admits that for her children “it would be very difficult to study in two languages, because they have no abilities to learn languages. Education should take place in one language only.” This statement makes me believe that her dissatisfaction with bilingual schools is based not only on her belief in poor teaching but also on her fears that the boys would not succeed if more than one language of instruction would have been used. Even though numerous research demonstrate efficacy of bilingual education, many individuals still conclude that teaching in official language is the most desirable strategy to achieve their educational goals (Crawford, 2002).

Another Russian-speaking mother (RM5, interview, 17.03.12.) whose son studies in the Latvian school, grade five, has similar opinion; she claims that good knowledge of the state language is more important for him than knowledge of Russian. Although they speak Russian at home, she wants him to become Latvian. Her choice of school is based not only on the language she wants her son to speak but also the identity she wants him to associate and be associated with. She states, “I want him to become Latvian because Russians are discriminated now. Despite me being Russian, I know my child will gain more if he becomes Latvian...” (RM5, interview, 17.03.12.). Thus, according to her point of view, speaking Latvian equals to being a Latvian, while being a Latvian means being privileged and having advantages over non-Latvians.

Her choice of the Latvian language and identity for her boy is based mostly on social disadvantages Russians face when speaking their language that, according to her, has no prestige in the Republic of Latvia. She confirms she is insecure in minority education or



rather on the attitude of the society towards this type of education, as a result, she chooses assimilation acculturation strategy for her son in order for him to identify himself with the culture of the larger society. Pedersen (2002) has also noticed that minority parents who choose mainstream schools for their children may not necessarily believe that the standard of minority education is poor but rather because they feel a rejection of their minority status. The author believes this indicates on the assimilationistic education policy adopted by the state or assimilationistic attitude in society.

### 6.3.2 Polish-speakers

Parents who claim to have Polish roots and basic Polish language knowledge reject sending their children to the Polish school mainly due to their belief that knowledge of Polish does not give any privileges to their children, or, in other words, have no instrumental value for them. These parents claim to have very weak attachment to the Polish culture and language. Only one woman identifies herself both with Latvian and Polish.

For example, one Russian-speaking father who admits having Polish ancestors can be put both under the Poles and Russians in my study. He explains:

Yes, I can speak Polish but very little. It was my grandmother who talked Polish to me. I remember her singing Polish songs and reading *bajki*<sup>18</sup>... We talked Polish with my father but very rarely; he talked mainly Russian because my mother is Russian. She understands some Polish too but doesn't speak it. When the grandmother passed away, no one spoke Polish in our family anymore (RPF, interview, 18.03.12.).

It is difficult for him to decide what value he attaches to the Polish language while he is sure that it has no practical value for his children who attend Latvian school.

They don't need to know Polish. What will they do with it here in Latvia? No one speaks it here, no one needs it here. Okay, those studying in Polish school speak it but no one else, I guess. Does anyone speak it in state institutions or is there any employer who demands it? I don't think so. They should better study English because it's been used everywhere now (RPF, interview, 18.03.12.).

The father values languages only according to the instrumental benefits his children can get by mastering these languages. It is more important to him that the boys learn a foreign language English, than the language of their ancestors Polish. Thus, he abandons the native language of his father because it gives no economical benefits. The loss or shift of language

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<sup>18</sup> The Polish name for fairy-tales

began already with his father who, despite knowing Polish and talking it to his mother, shifted it to the Russian language. As a result, family lost ties with their Polish roots and distanced themselves from the ancestral language. Both internal and external factors have played role in the language shift: first, the low status of the Polish language in the territory of Latvia; second, the dominant position of Russian in the Soviet Republic of Latvia where both his father and he were raised, as well as social and economic privileges it gave; third, lack of education institutions where the Polish language was taught; and last but not least, family domain and community members that did not speak enough Polish. Fishman (1991, p. 113) notices that “without intergenerational mother tongue transmission, no language maintenance is possible”. Although his grandmother spoke Polish to them, it was not enough to maintain the language and transmit it to the next generations. As a result, he began to identify himself as a “Russian with the Polish roots” (RPF, interview, 18.03.2012.).

When it comes to the choice of a Latvian school for his children, he claims it was his wife (Russian-speaking) who decided upon the educational institution, while he had nothing against it. He comments, “We live in Latvia where everyone needs to know Latvian. I think it’s the best way for them to learn Latvian. We had very bad Latvian language education in our times, and we don’t want them to suffer like we did” (RPF, interview, 18.03.12.). His personal bad experience in learning Latvian in a Soviet Russian school makes him and his wife believe that the Latvian mainstream school is better for their children than minority Polish or Russian school. Although he admits that kids face problems at school, he still believes teaching in Latvian is more beneficial than teaching in two languages; “I can’t help them much with homework exercises in Latvian when they have problems but I hope these are just temporary problems because as far as I can judge both of them speak very good Latvian now.” Thus, the parents choose assimilationist approach for their children by encouraging them learning the state language at the expense of their mother tongue Russian and the language of their ancestors Polish.

Meanwhile, another Latvian-speaking woman whose son attends a Latvian school claims to have Polish roots identifies herself both with the Latvian and Polish culture. Her story is similar to the story of the previous respondent. Her Polish grandfather married her Latvian grandmother. At home they communicated in Russian because none of them spoke the mother tongue of the other. Since they lived in Latvia, grandfather adapted to the Latvian culture while keeping his Polish identity; he listened to the Polish radio, read Polish books, and spoke Polish to his Polish acquaintances. She recalls that her grandparent had never

insisted on other family members speaking Polish; it was her own decision to learn it. She explains:

I've always known I'm not really a Latvian. Although my parents are Latvians, I felt I'm more like my grandfather. You know, I have temperament that differs from Latvian. They are slow, discreet, and considerate; I'm the opposite; I'm very fast and active... Even my husband makes jokes about my Polish temperament (LPM, interview, 10.03.12.).

Despite speaking little Polish, she identifies herself with the Polish culture. May (2001) has noticed in this regard that language is but one cultural marker among many; therefore, the language one speaks should not necessarily be related to one's identity. Even when language loses its communicative value or proficiency in one's own language declines, one should not necessarily lose his/her cultural identity. In contrast to May, Lewis (1981, in Kalantzis, Cope and Slade, 1989) claims that language *is* a symbol of one's cultural affiliation. Although the woman admits that knowledge of the Polish language is not the main prerequisite for her to feel connection to the Polish culture, it has still an intrinsic value to her. Therefore, now, in her age of 40, she begins to take a Polish language course.

Meanwhile, when it came to the school choice for the son, only Latvian schools were taken into consideration. The decision was made together with her Latvian husband and based mostly on the school location and its popularity among friends. The Polish school was not considered at all since she has never identified her son as a Polish. Neither has she ever thought about advantages or disadvantages of him knowing the Polish language. The mother realises that her son has strong Latvian identity, and she does not want to insist on him learning Polish. Meanwhile, LPM admits she would be happy if one day he would decide to learn the Polish language himself, not for its instrumental value but rather as a language of their ancestors.

It can be claimed that all the parents, regardless the language they speak or associate themselves with, have chosen mainstream schools because they perceive or want to perceive their children as Latvians. While some parents admit their decision came naturally without saying, it still can be assumed that parents keep in mind advantages and disadvantages of a particular school and a language of instruction. Most of the parents have chosen mainstream schools due to the dominant position of the Latvian language in the society and privileges the knowledge of this language gives. For the Russian-speakers poor quality of education in bilingual schools and the attitude of the Latvians towards this kind of education makes they

stay against minority schools, while for the Poles low status of the Polish language was the main reason for not sending their children to the Polish school.

# 7 Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In this chapter the results presented in chapter five and six are discussed in light of the theoretical framework provided in chapter three. The data is analyzed from the perspective of language, power and identity relationship, and the research questions are used as the guidelines according to which answers are generated.

## 7.1 How is education organized for Russian and Polish minority groups?

Latvia is a multilingual state with over 40 percent of population representing various linguistic groups. Nevertheless, only one language Latvian is officially recognized as the state language while others are considered to be foreign. Tollefson (1991) claims that “Language is one arena for struggle, as social groups seek to exercise power through their control of language; and it is also a prize in this struggle, with dominant groups gaining control over language.” In Latvia, a struggle between Russian and Latvian- speaking population on holding the power has been taking place since the Soviet times when the Russian language occupied the dominant position and was valued higher than Latvian. After the collapse of the USSR, the shift of power took place, Latvian was acknowledged as the only state language while speakers of other languages were labelled as minorities. Preece (2005, p. 5) defines minorities as “political outsiders whose identities do not fit the criteria defining legitimacy and membership in the political community on whose territory they reside”. Thus, the same groups of people may be called both as minorities and majority depending on the political context.

Since the re-establishment of independence the Language Law of Latvia has been aiming at increasing influence of the Latvian language and using it as the main tool for unification of society (Republic of Latvia, 1999). Although the state policy acknowledges existence of national minorities, none of their languages is granted official status. As a result, Russian, a mother tongue of ca. 38 percent of inhabitants, is considered to be a foreign language just like Polish which is used by 2,5 percent of population. Such authoritative

language requirements purposefully ignore the existence of linguistic diversity and lead to gradual minority language assimilation (Preece, 2005). Minorities, however, react differently on the established order. While representatives of small-minority groups living in Latvia, including Poles, have voluntarily or otherwise accepted their minor position and fully or partially assimilated with the Latvian (and some of them also with the Russian) language and culture, a number of Russian-speaking population has been trying to resist established hierarchy and demand more rights and recognition of their native language in formal institutions, especially in education.

Given that education is considered to play a vital role in determining political power and economic opportunity, language policies in education are seen as having the central importance in organizing social and political systems (Tollefson, 2002). On the one hand, the law in Latvia *permits* education in languages other than Latvian in private, state and municipal schools where minority education programmes are implemented. This can be assumed as an attempt of the state to promote diversity and multilingualism. On the other hand, education is *guaranteed* only in the state language that in turn highlights the differing levels of commitment to education according to language of instruction (Dunkan, 2002). Thus, although Russians and Poles are allowed to use their mother tongue along with the state language in separate educational institutions, these rights are not officially guaranteed by the state; neither is bilingualism or multilingualism set as a goal for their children. In addition, state higher education is available in the official language only that stresses the dominant position of the Latvian language and leads to resistance to mother tongue education from a number of minority parents and educators (Biseth, 2005). Even though the state policy can be considered a multicultural, it still has a sign of differentialist model which aims in minimizing conflict between different groups by keeping them in separate institutions.

The status a language is given in society is often reflected in the practices at school (Biseth, 2005). Although both Poles and Russians have equal rights to implement bilingual education programmes with various subjects taught in their mother tongue or bilingually, in reality, only Russians hold bilingual classes while the administration of the Polish school chooses to teach children in the state language by introducing Polish only as a separate language subject. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) claims that such programmes do not lead to bilingualism but rather to quick assimilation, both linguistically and culturally, and acceptance of the dominant group's linguistic, social, and cultural norms. Linguistic rights

critics, on the other hand, suggest that learning the state language is the best option for linguistic minorities to improve their socioeconomic situation (Wee, 2011). However, the degree to which the choice of the school management was made ‘voluntarily’ should be considered with a critical attitude. The official position of the state that encourages learning of the Latvian language only, its passive practical support in Polish and bilingual teacher training and lack of Polish teaching materials have led to prioritizing of the Latvian language by the school administration. Also lack of higher education in minority language diminishes the practical value of the Polish language among students and parents. In Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000) terms the Polish minority group is considered to belong to the B team whose non-material resources such as language and culture are valued less than those of the mainstream population or the A team. Thus, despite officially permitting minority education, the state leaves the Polish school staff and parents to their own devices to organize their mother tongue teaching.

It has been admitted both by the government officials and minorities that the main target group towards which the minority policies have been addressed is Russians (Silova, 2006). Since re-established independence the aim of the education policy has been Latvianization of Russian schools. The Russian school I attended during the fieldwork, in contrast to the Polish school, admits to accept increasing demand of the Latvian language teaching only as long as it does not affect the quality of the mother tongue teaching. Numerical dominance of Russian-speakers, their former position as a powerful majority as well as strong attachment to the Russian culture and language has created positive conditions for them to demand extensive use of their mother tongue in education. However, although officially the school has autonomy to implement their own bilingual education model, it is the Ministry of Education and Science that creates framework within which a choice can be made. The state affects the curriculum, holds control over the use of the Latvian and minority languages by defining amount of subjects taught in both languages, by publishing teaching materials that include content desired by the state, and restricting use of textbooks produced outside Latvia. All these measures aim at securing the position of the Latvian language while saying little about the importance of students’ mother tongue teaching for their cognitive and emotional development that in turn has found to be very significant for the minorities themselves. This brings me to the discussion of the parents’ attitude towards minority education in Latvia and their main motivation when deciding upon the language of instruction for their children.

## 7.2 What are parents' motivations and attitudes when choosing a school?

The choice of a school is a complex decision-making process in which a number of factors play a role. For the parents in this study language of instruction has found to be one of the most important factors when choosing a school for their offspring. Although research shows that mother tongue education is the most desired goal for the minorities (Cummins and Swain, 1986; Cummins, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, 2000), individuals still have different attitude towards education in their native language. On the one hand, Russian and Polish-speaking parents who choose minority schools see it as a way of preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage as well as being fluent in the state language that in turn increases students' social and political integration and economic proficiency. On the other hand, there are individuals who believe that minority education serves as an instrument for discrimination of their children, and it does not lead to the desired social and economic outcomes. This results in a choice of mainstream education institutions.

In my study I was aiming at interviewing parents from Russian and Polish linguistic groups. Nevertheless, the ascribed identity not always corresponded to the individual's assumed identity; neither was the first language admitted as the main marker of one's social identity by all of the parents. In some cases adults found it hard to formulate their belonging to one or another group that is not an uncommon situation in multilingual and multicultural settings where a person is involved in the use of two or more languages on a daily basis. Identity is thus considered to be a dynamic process and an individual can have multiple identities and belong to two or even more groups at the same time (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). As noticed by Biseth (2008, p. 8), "Identity is not a question of "either-or", but of "both-and"" meaning that all identities can well coexist with each other. However, Burke and Stets (2009) notice that multiple identities can come in conflict when these identities are activated and individuals may feel a necessity to prioritize one over the other. This has found to be true for few parents discussed later in this subchapter.



## 7.2.1 Minority school

It can be claimed that for most of the parents choosing instruction for their children in the minority language their mother tongue is an important indicator of their cultural and social identity. The choice of language of instruction is thus seen as being directly connected to their cultural affiliation and desire to maintain their identity within a particular group. For the Russian-speakers however language has found to be more important marker of their group identity than for the Poles. It is not primarily the language that defines the identity of my Polish informants although it still plays an important role in it. Their roots and ancestry are vital for their identification with the Polish group. Language however has found to have a symbolic and emotional value to those parents who did not have a possibility to use their native language in their own education and had to accept the dominant language of the state. They still managed to maintain their cultural identity and had a strong feeling of belonging to the Polish group. Now, they find it important that the state supports bilingual education because it leads to explicit use of their mother tongue by their children and to strengthening of their Polish identity.

For the Russians, in contrast, language plays the most important role in identifying their belonging to the Russian group than other cultural factors. Speaking Russian language is seen as being enough for them to define themselves as Russians while the use of their mother tongue both at home and in education is the reason for claiming a Russian identity. Language serves also as the main instrument for distinguishing themselves from other groups and underlying differences between “us Russians” and “others”. Nevertheless, parents who choose bilingual schools seem to be loyal to other languages too, especially the state language. It can be concluded that intrinsic value attached to the mother tongue by both Poles and Russians lead parents to choose education institutions with their mother tongue as one of the language of instruction.

Another reason for the choice of bilingual schools to be mentioned is the instrumental value the parents accord to their mother tongues that in both cases are the languages of the larger communities. The Russian-speakers realize the prestige the Russian language has on the international scale, as a result education in their mother tongue is seen as a chance to increase children’s social and economic capital. Poles also see (and even aim at) the possibility of their children leaving Latvia, and the Polish language is thus seen as an instrument for their well-being improving.

Teaching of the state language is accepted as a necessity and is valued positively by representatives of both groups. Parents acknowledge importance of the Latvian language learning due to its dominant position in the society. Nevertheless, Russians are not willing to accept teaching of the state language on the expense of their mother tongue. According to my interpretation of parents' comments, they do not fear of their children being assimilated by learning the state language but rather on them being limited in their native language use that can lead to children's insecurity in their mother tongue use and practical problems in achieving fluency and accuracy in Russian. Meanwhile Poles seem to accept the established language hierarchy and dominance of the Latvian language over Polish. None of them believe education policies lead to assimilation of their children despite admitting that the goal of education is first and foremost to acquire the state language.

The views of both groups differ when it comes to the attitude towards their first language learning. Poles see minority education as an opportunity to study their mother tongue *in addition* to the official language while for the Russians teaching of the state language in addition to their mother tongue is seen as a the goal of the education. This different interpretation of the minority programmes is a consequence of the long-lasting dominance of Russians and assimilation of smaller minority groups. The supremacy the Russian- speakers enjoyed in the Soviet times is still present in minds of people who reject accepting the power shift and thus see learning of the state language as an additional bonus to their mother tongue learning. Nevertheless, not all minorities share this point of view.

### **7.2.2 Majority school**

A number of minorities opt for education inclusively in the state language that in most cases is an unknown foreign language for their children. The identity, power and language relationship have found to play a crucial role in their choice. The adults I interviewed are guided by two main motivations when sending their offspring to monolingual schools. First, they either identify themselves or want others to identify their children with the Latvian language and culture. Second, they find good knowledge of the Latvian language, which is to be obtained only in a monolingual Latvian school, as one of the most important prerequisites for reaching their instrumental goals. Parents from bilingual families claim to identify their children with both cultures and accord both languages equal status; nevertheless, they promote one language more

than the other in their everyday reality. The language of the final decision maker in the family, in this case Latvian, is then chosen as the medium of instruction.

Parents, whose mother tongue is a minority language, are guided by thoughtful considerations when sending their children to the Latvian school. They believe in the symbolic power of the Latvian language over other languages and want their children to be a part of powerful elite. Belief in Latvian as in the language of power and prestige was evident in the conversation with representatives of both Russian and Polish-speaking minorities. The parents assume their native language(s) have low value in the Latvian society; as a result, adults feel disadvantaged and even discriminated.

It is important to notice that not all parents who admit experiencing disadvantages due to their poor Latvian language knowledge choose to send their children to the majority school. Instead, there are Russian and Latvian parents who believe that knowledge of both languages (Russian and Latvian) increase children's cultural capital that in turn can be converted into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). To say more, one of the Latvian mother's who has chosen a Russian minority school for her children believes that both languages have to be taught to children from both communities in order to increase students' competitiveness and avoid discrimination.

According to my interpretation, the minority parents who favour schools with instruction in the titular language are guided mostly by instrumental motives and by the desire of their children to be identified as Latvians. It seems to be very important to them that their children are ascribed as Latvians by the mainstream population in order to avoid marginalization. Given that individuals are often ascribed by their language and culture (Weber, 2009), the Latvian language school is supposed to serve as the best instrument to achieve this goal. It is also possible that kids identify themselves with both cultures and languages; nevertheless, their parents insist that identification with the mainstream population is more desirable. The exception is a Latvian/Polish woman who identifies herself with both cultures and would like her child to do the same. It can be claimed thus that parents choosing assimilation strategy accept the dominant position of the state language and so continue to reproduce unequal power relationships. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) claims that in multilingual societies feeling of a necessity to choose between two cultural identities occurs if a mother tongue of an individual is not given any value by wider society (Biseth, 2005). This, however, is not to be applied to the Latvian case because despite the state's efforts to increase the use of

the Latvian language on the expense of minorities' mother tongue, minorities still enjoy reasonable autonomy and freedom to use their languages in private domain and education.

## 7.3 Key findings

The key findings of this study obtained through policy document analysis and listening to the parents' voices are found to be the following:

- Legal policy in Latvia permits education in minority languages while promoting the use of the official language. By supporting separate school structure for majority and minority groups the state adopts both multiculturalist and differentialist model of incorporating diversity.
- Mothers are found to be the main decision makers with regard to the school choice for their children. As a result, in most cases the language of instruction corresponds to the native language of a mother.
- The intrinsic value of the native language and its significance to one's identity has found to be the main factor for favouring minority schools. Those parents who consider their culture and language maintenance very important tend to choose their native language as the mean of instruction.
- Instrumental goals along with the desire to be accepted by the titular population are the main motivating factors for minority parents to choose mainstream educational institutions.
- Parents preferring minority education institutions for their offspring aim at bilingualism and biculturalism while those favouring mainstream schools are more likely to assimilate.
- Poles and Russians interpret differently the aim of minority education in Latvia: Polish-speakers consider it as a chance to study their mother tongue in addition to the state language, while for the Russians learning of their native language is seen as a self-evident fact.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that the findings of this study are my own interpretation of the parents' and educators' voices and are thus not to be considered as "the one and only truth" (Biseth, 2005). Instead, it is one of the various possible interpretations of the social reality. Therefore, I would like to encourage other students and researchers to do

more studies on this topic in order to approach it from different perspectives. For example, parents' various educational experiences, different socio-economic status and other factors that have not been touched upon in this research can have a direct or indirect influence on the language choice of minorities.

I would like to end my paper with citing Vlaeminck (2003, p. 41) who, according to my point of view, has rightly noticed, "Real communication is not about using the same words, it is about understanding and respecting other cultures and their values and customs" (Vlaeminck, 2003, p. 41).

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# Appendix 1

Minority education programmes for primary general education developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES, 2009)

Model 1

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
<b>Languages</b>									
Latvian Language and Literature	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Minority Language	5	6	5	4	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign Language			2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Basics in Science and Technology</b>									
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Informatics					<u>1</u>	1	1		
Nature Science	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	2	2	2			
Biology							2	2	2
Physics								2	2
Chemistry								2	2
Geography							2	2	2
<b>Human and Society</b>									
History of Latvia and the World						2	2	2	2
Social Science	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	1	1	1
Ethics / Christianity	1	1	1						
Housekeeping and technology	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	1	1	1	1	1	1

Sport	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Arts</b>									
Literature				1*	2	2	2	2	2
Music	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	1	1	1	1	1	1
Painting	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	2	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Maximum amount of lessons per week</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Optional lessons* and individual/ group activities</i>	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2

Number of lessons taught in Latvian	Number of lessons taught bilingually	Number of lessons taught in minority language
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\* It is recommended to use optional lessons and individual/group activities for mother tongue teaching and teaching of subjects related to ethnical culture of minority group.

## Model 2

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
<b>Languages</b>									
Latvian Language and Literature	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Minority Language	5	6	5	4	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign Language			2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Basics in Science and Technology</b>									
Mathematics	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Informatics					<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>		



Nature Science	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>			
Biology							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Physics								2	2
Chemistry								2	2
Geography							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Human and Society</b>									
History of Latvia and the World							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Social Science	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Ethics / Christianity	1	1	1						
Housekeeping and technology	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Sport	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Arts</b>									
Literature				1*	2	2	2	2	2
Music	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Painting	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
<b>Maximum amount of lessons per week</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Optional lessons* and individual/ group activities</i>	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2

Number of lessons taught in Latvian	Number of lessons taught bilingually	Number of lessons taught in minority language
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\* It is recommended to use optional lessons and individual/group activities for mother tongue teaching and teaching of subjects related to ethnical culture of minority group.

Model 3

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
<b>Languages</b>									
Latvian Language and Literature	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Minority Language	5	6	6	4	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign Language			2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Basics in Science and Technology</b>									
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	5	5
Informatics					1	<u>1</u>	1		
Nature Science	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	2	2			
Biology							2	2	2
Physics								2	2
Chemistry								2	2
Geography							2	2	2
<b>Human and Society</b>									
History of Latvia and the World						2	2	2	2
Social Science	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	2	2	2	1	1	1
Ethics / Christianity	1	1	1						
Housekeeping and technology	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sport	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Arts</b>									
Literature				1 *	2	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Painting	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Maximum amount of lessons per week</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Optional lessons* and individual/ group activities</i>	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2

Number of lessons taught in Latvian	Number of lessons taught bilingually	Number of lessons taught in minority language
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*\* It is recommended to use optional lessons and individual/group activities for mother tongue teaching and teaching of subjects related to ethnical culture of minority group.*

#### Model 4

*(From grade 4 to grade 6 an educational institution in accordance to abilities of children and in cooperation with parents freely choose the number of subjects taught in Latvian or bilingually but no less than 50 percent of the curriculum)*

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
<b>Languages</b>									
Latvian Language and Literature	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Minority Language	5	6	5	4	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign Language			2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Basics in Science and Technology</b>									
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	5	5	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Informatics					1	1	<u>1</u>		
Nature Science	2	2	2	2	2	2			
Biology							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>

Physics								<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Chemistry								<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Geography							2	2	2
<b>Human and Society</b>									
History of Latvia and the World						2	2	2	2
Social Science	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
Ethics / Christianity	1	1	1						
Housekeeping and technology	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sport	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Arts</b>									
Literature				1*	2	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	1	1	1	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Painting	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Maximum amount of lessons per week</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Optional lessons** and individual/ group activities</i>	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2

Number of lessons taught in Latvian	Number of lessons taught bilingually	Number of lessons taught in minority language
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Source: <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/>

## Appendix 2

This appendix contains the Russian (1a) and Polish (1b) originals of the consent form used for the sampling of informants and its English translation (1c). The personal data such as mine and my supervisor's E-mail addresses and telephone numbers are removed and replaced by squared brackets for the purpose of being presented here.

### 2a. Consent form for parents in Russian

#### Согласие родителей на участие в проекте

Я являюсь студенткой магистратуры Университета Осло (Universitetet i Oslo) по программе „Сравнительная международная педагогика”. В данный момент я провожу исследование для магистерской работы на тему „Отношение русских и польский языковых групп к билингвальной системе обучения в Латвии”. В связи с этим, я хотела бы взять интервью у родителей польского и русского происхождения, дети которых обучаются в двуязычной (русско-латышской/польско-латышской) либо одноязычной (латышской) школе. Меня интересуют языковые стратегии, предлагаемые Министерством Образования национальным меньшинствам и латышам, а так же, мотивация родителей при выборе школы обучения для своих детей. Для того чтобы раскрыть тему работы, интервью будут проводиться с родителями детей, обучающихся в польской, русской и латышской школах. Большинство вопросов подготовлены заранее, поэтому, если у Вас возникнет желание, Вы можете ознакомиться с ними заранее.

Интервью будет проходить в удобное для Вас время и не займет более одного часа. С Вашего согласия разговор будет записываться, вся информация будет конфиденциальна и будет доступна только мне. Все интервью будут удалены по завершению магистерской работы ориентировочно в мае 2012 года. Участие в проекте является добровольным, и Вы можете в любой момент отказаться от участия в нем.

Если у Вас возникнут дополнительные вопросы, пожалуйста, свяжитесь со мной или моим научным руководителем.

Татьяна Чернякова  
[contact data]

Heidi Biseth  
[contact data]

✂-----

Я ознакомился (ась) и подтверждаю свое участие в проекте.

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Город, дата

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Подпись

## 2b. Consent form for parents in Polish

### Potwierdzenie rodziców do udziału w projekcie.

Jestem studentką Uniwersytetu w Oslo (Universitetet i Oslo) wydziału „Porównawczej edukacji międzynarodowej”. Obecnie piszę pracę magisterską na temat stosunków przedstawicieli mniejszości narodowych (Polaków i Rosjanów) do dwujęzycznego systemu edukacyjnego na Łotwie. W celu uzyskania zrozumienia o podejściu różnych grup językowych do edukacji, planuję przeprowadzić wywiad s rodzicami pochodzenia polskiego i rosyjskiego, których dzieci uczą się w dwujęzycznej polsko-łotewskiej/ rosyjsko-łotewskiej lub łotewskiej jednojęzycznej szkołach. Interesuje mnie strategia edukacji językowej w szkołach łotewskich i dwujęzycznych oraz motywacja rodziców przy wyborze szkoły dla swych dzieci.

Wywiad zostanie przeprowadzony w wybranym przez Pana/ Panią czasie i miejscu. Spotkanie nie powinno przekroczyć jedną godzinę, i Pan/ Pani może zapoznać się z przygotowanymi pytaniami przed spotkaniem. Ze zwołenia Pana/ Pani, w trakcie rozmowy będzie używany dyktafon. Uzyskana informacja będzie konfidencajna i zostanie usunięta po napisaniu pracy magisterskiej v maju roku 2012.

Udział w projekcie jest dobrowolny, a więc Pan/ Pani ma prawo do rezygnacji z uczestnictwa w każdej chwili.

W razie jakichkolwiek pytań, proszę o kontakt ze mną lub kierownikiem mojej pracy magisterskiej.

Tatjana Czerniakowa  
[contact data]

Heidi Biseth  
[contact data]

✂-----

Zapoznałam/ -em się z informacją powyższe infomacje i zgadzam się na udział w projekcie.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Miasto, data

\_\_\_\_\_  
Podpis

## 2c. Consent form for parents in English

### Consent form for parents

I am a student at the University of Oslo at the Master Programme in Comparative and International Education. The working title of my research project is “Linguistic minorities’ approaches to education in Latvia: a multiple-case study of Polish and Russian minority groups”. In relation to this I want to interview parents of the Polish and Russian background whose children attend state-funded bilingual minority (Russian/ Polish) or monolingual majority schools. I will investigate the linguistic strategies offered for the minorities and the majority in Latvia; the views of minorities on the education policies of the state, and the motivations of parents for choosing the particular language school.

In order to get an understanding of different linguistic groups’ approaches to education, I wish to conduct interviews with parents at Russian, Polish and Latvian schools. I have prepared most of the questions before the interviews and you may get a copy of the interview guide in advance of the interview if desirable.

The interviews may be conducted at any time convenient for you, preferably during the school day, and will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

A voice recorder will be used if approved by you. All the information from the interview will be confidential and will not be accessible to anyone apart me. Information given will not be able to be traced back you. The recorded information will be deleted at the end of the project, May 2012.

It is voluntary to participate in the project and you can at any time withdraw from the interviews without giving any particular reason.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor for further questions.

Tatjana Cernakova  
[contact data]

Heidi Biseth  
[contact data]

✂-----

I have read the information above and want to participate in the inquiry

---

Place, Date

---

Signature

# Appendix 3

This appendix contains the Russian (2a) and Polish (2b) originals of the interview guide I used for conducting the interviews and its English translation (2c).

## 3a. Interview guide in Russian

Информация о респонденте

1. Какой язык является Вашим родным языком (какой Вы выучили первым/ какой знаете лучше всего/ каким пользуетесь чаще всего/ с каким языком Вы себя ассоциируете)?
2. На каком языке Вы получили образование в школе?
3. Какими языками Вы владеете?
4. Уровень Вашего образования?
5. Национальность/ родной язык Вашего супруга/ партнера?
6. Сколько у Вас детей?
7. Кто Ваш ребенок по национальности (этническая принадлежность)?

Информация о языке (-ах):

8. Каким языком/ языками вы пользуетесь в семье?
9. Какими языками Вы и Ваш ребенок пользуетесь все дома?
10. Каким языком Ваш ребенок владеет лучше/ в совершенстве?
11. Как Вы оцениваете свои знания латышского языка?
12. Каковы Ваши приоритеты в значимости языков? Как Вы считаете, что важнее для Вашего ребенка, знания латышского или родного языка?
13. Какое значение Вы придаете латышскому языку и своему родному языку?
14. На каком языке, на Ваш взгляд, должно происходить обучение, чтобы ребенок был успешен в учебе?

Информация о школе:

15. В какую школу ходит Ваш ребенок?
16. Кто принимал решение при выборе школы?



17. Какова была Ваша мотивация выбора школы для ребенка? (как много вы знали о школе/программе/достижениях/качестве образования/обучение языкам обучению языкам по сравнению с другими школами)?
18. Вы довольны школой и достижениями Вашего ребенка?
19. Ваш ребенок доволен школой?
20. Как Вы думаете, Вашему ребенку легко или тяжело учиться в билингвальной школе/ на двух языках? У него возникают какие-либо трудности в связи с языком обучения? Бывают ли трудности в восприятии предмета из за языка обучения?
21. Вы когда-нибудь задумывались о смене школы? (Почему?)
22. Почему Вы считаете, что билингвальная школа лучше для Вашего ребенка?
23. Каково Ваше мнение, Ваша общая оценка системы образования в Латвии, а, конкретно, обучение для представителей языковых меньшинств? Насколько важно, по вашему мнению, иметь школы с родным языком обучения?

### **3b. Interview guide in Polish**

#### Informacja o rodzicach:

1. Ojczysty język? (pierwszy język, którego P. się nauczyła/ jęz. P. zna najlepiej/ język, którym porozumiewa się P. najczęściej/ jęz., który P. utożsamia jako ojczysty)
2. W jakim języku P. zdobyła wykształcenie w szkole?
3. W ilu językach Pani może się porozumiewać?
4. Jakie wykształcenie P. ma?
5. Język ojczysty męża/ żony/ partnera?
6. Ile dzieci P. ma?
7. Język ojczysty/ pochodzenie etniczne dzieci?

#### Informacja o języku:

8. W jakim języku/ językach posługiwacie się w domu?
9. W jakim języku P. i dzieci posługują się za terenem/ oprócz domu?
10. Jaki język dziecko zna najlepiej?
11. Czy mogła by P. ocenić swój poziom znajomości języka łotewskiego?
12. Jaki jest stosunek P. do języka rodzinnego i łotewskiego (państwowego)? Znajomość którego języka, P. zdaniem, ma większe znaczenie– rodzinnego lub państwowego?
13. Jaka jest wartość obojga języków dla P.?
14. W jakim języku dziecko musi się uczyć aby osiągnąć sukces w szkole?

Informacja o szkole:

15. Do jakiej szkoły chodzi P. dziecko?
16. Kto wybierał szkołę?
17. Na jakiej zasadzie była wybrana ta szkoła (czy P. miała dużo informacji o szkole/ programmie/ osiągnięciach/ jakości nauczania/ językach nauczania w tej i innych szkołach)?
18. Czy P. jest zadowolona ze szkoły/ z osiągnięć dziecka?
19. Czy dziecko jest zadowolone ze szkoły?
20. Czy P. zdaniem dla dziecka jest łatwo lub ciężko uczyć się w szkole dwujęzycznej?  
Czy dziecko ma kłopoty w stosunku do języków wykładowych (czy ma kłopoty ze zrozumieniem przedmiotów ze względu na język?)
21. Czy P. kiedyś zastanawiała się o zmianie szkoły? Dlaczego tak/ nie?
22. Czemu P. myśli, że dwujęzyczna szkoła jest lepiej niż łotewska dla P. dziecka?
23. Czy P. mogła by dać ogólną ocenę systemu edukacji na Łotwie w stosunku do mniejszości narodowych? Jaka jest ważność P. zdaniem zdobywania wykształcenia w języku ojczystym?

### **3c. Interview guide in English**

Information about the interviewee:

1. What is your mother tongue (the language you learned first/ the language you know best/ the language you use most/ the language you identify yourself with)?
2. What was the language of instruction in your school?
3. How many languages do you know?
4. What level of education do you have (primary/ secondary/ higher)?
5. What are the ethnicity/ mother tongue of your spouse/ partner?
6. How many children do you have?
7. What ethnicity you identify your child/ children with?

Information about the language (s):

8. What language (s) is used in your family on the daily basis?
9. What language (s) do you and your child use outside the home?
10. What language does your child know best?
11. How do you evaluate your knowledge/ proficiency in Latvian?
12. What is the relationship/priority level between Latvian and your mother tongue?
13. What value do you attach to both languages?
14. Which language(s), according to your point of view, should be used as a mean of instruction at school for the child to succeed?

Information about the school:

15. What language school does your child attend?
16. Who made the decision about the choice of this school?
17. What were your motivations for choosing this particular school? (depending on the reply additional questions may be asked, e.g. how much did you know about the school programme/ achievements/ quality of teaching/ languages taught, etc. in this school in comparison to others?)
18. Are you satisfied with the school/ with your child's achievements at school?
19. Is your child satisfied with the school?
20. Do you think it is easy/ difficult for your child to study in monolingual/ bilingual school? Does he/ she face any difficulties with the languages of instruction?
21. Have you ever considered changing the school? Why yes/ no?
22. Why do you think monolingual/ bilingual school is better for your child than bilingual/ monolingual school?
23. What is your overall opinion/ judgement about the education system for linguistic minorities in Latvia? How important is it to have language minority schools?

# Appendix 4

Russian school minority education models issued in 2011

School Model

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
<b>Languages</b>									
Latvian Language and Literature	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Minority Language	5	6	5	4	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign Language			2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Basics in Science and Technology</b>									
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	5	5
Informatics					1	1	1		
Nature Science	2	2	2	2	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>			
Biology							<u>2</u>	2	2
Physics								2	2
Chemistry								2	2
Geography							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Human and Society</b>									
History of Latvia and the World						<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Social Science	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Ethics / Christianity	1	1	1						
Housekeeping and technology	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Sport	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Arts</b>									

Literature					2	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Painting	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Maximum amount of lessons per week</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Optional lessons* and individual/ group activities</i>	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2

Number of lessons taught in Latvian	Number of lessons taught bilingually	Number of lessons taught in minority language
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#### Model 2

<b>Subjects</b>	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
<b>Languages</b>									
Latvian Language and Literature	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Minority Language	5	6	5	4	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign Language			2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Basics in Science and Technology</b>									
Mathematics	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Informatics					<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>		
Nature Science	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>			
Biology							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Physics								2	2
Chemistry								2	2

Geography							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Human and Society</b>									
History of Latvia and the World							<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Social Science	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Ethics / Christianity	1	1	1						
Housekeeping and technology	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Sport	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Arts</b>									
Literature				1*	2	2	2	2	2
Music	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Painting	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
<b>Maximum amount of lessons per week</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Optional lessons* and individual/ group activities</i>	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	2 – 4	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2	1 – 2

Number of lessons taught in Latvian	Number of lessons taught bilingually	Number of lessons taught in minority language
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Source: Russian Deputy School Director, March 10, 2012

# Appendix 5

Polish school minority education model issued in 2009

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
<b>Languages</b>									
Latvian Language and Literature	5	6	5	5					
Latvian Language					3	3	3	3	3
Polish Language	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
English Language			2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Basics in Science and Technology</b>									
Mathematics	4	4	4	5	5	5	6	5	5
Informatics					1	1	1		
Nature Science	2	2	2	2	2	2			
Biology							2	2	2
Physics								2	2
Chemistry								2	2
Geography							2	2	2
<b>Human and Society</b>									
History of Latvia and the World						2	2	2	2
Social Science	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
Ethics / Christianity	1	1	1						
Housekeeping and technology	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Sport	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Arts</b>									

Literature					2	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Painting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Maximum amount of lessons per week</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Optional lessons and individual/group activities</i>	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1

All subjects except Polish language and literature and English language are to be taught in the Latvian language.

*Source: The Polish School Director, March 9, 2012.*