

Bilingual Students with Special Educational Needs – a Challenge for the Teachers

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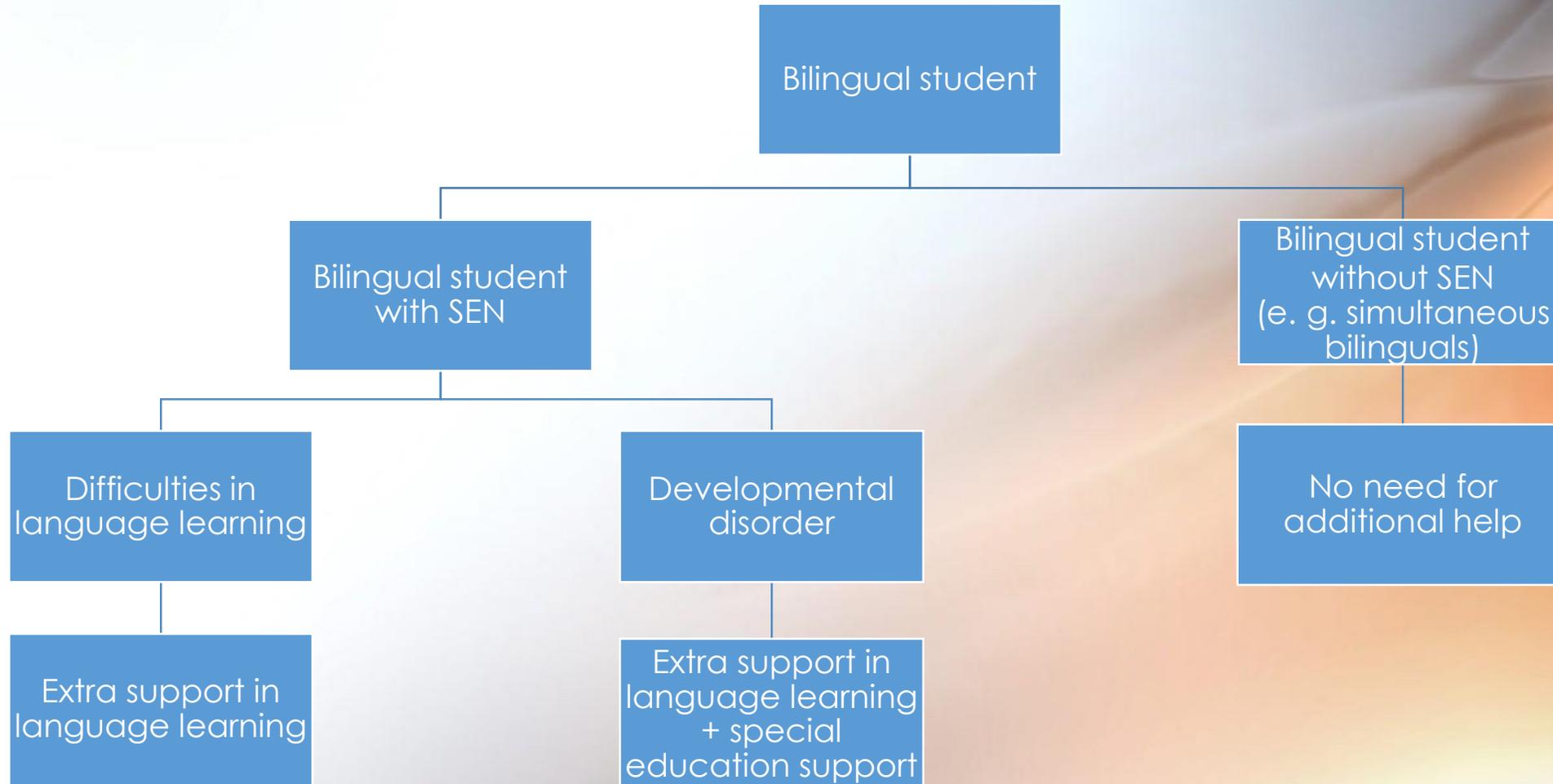
Inclusive education in Estonia

Students with special educational needs (SEN) acquire quality education (=responds to students' ability) at a regular school in their place of residence.

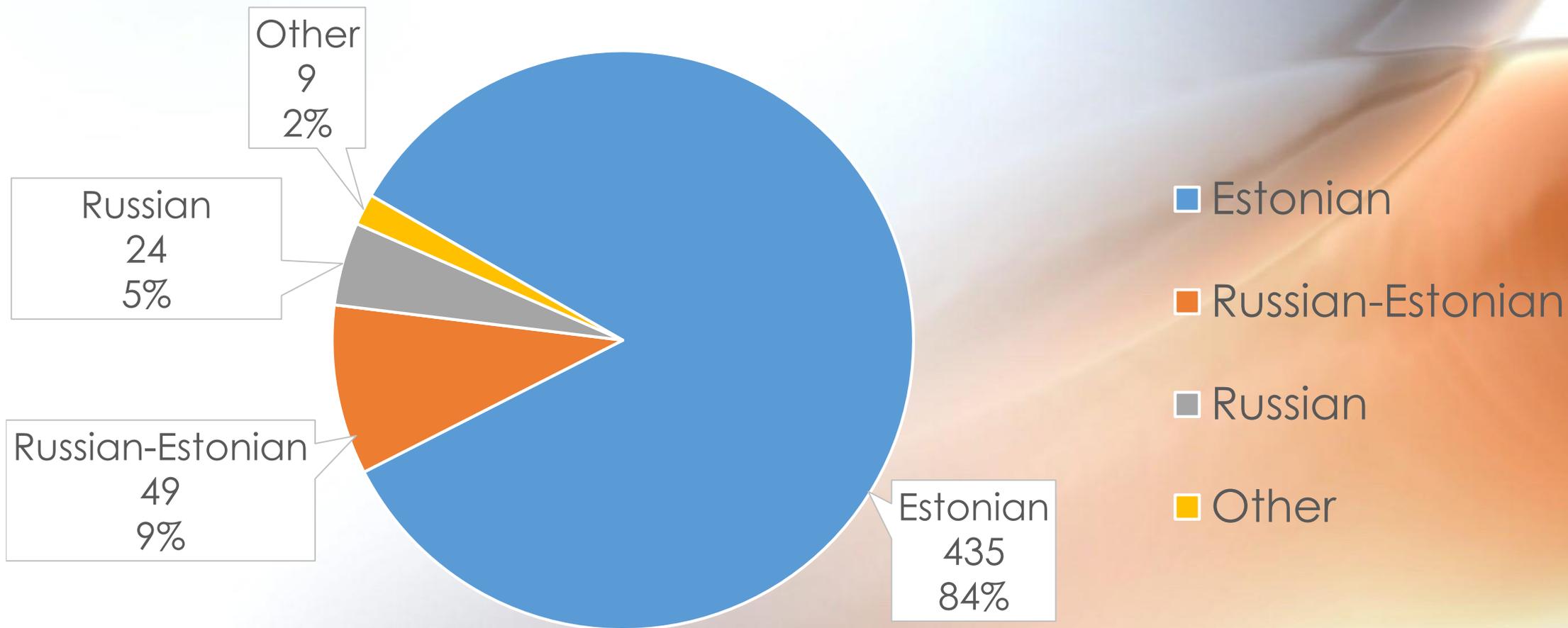
This right applies to students from another language and cultural area, including bilingual students.

(Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2019a)

Bilingual students in inclusive education



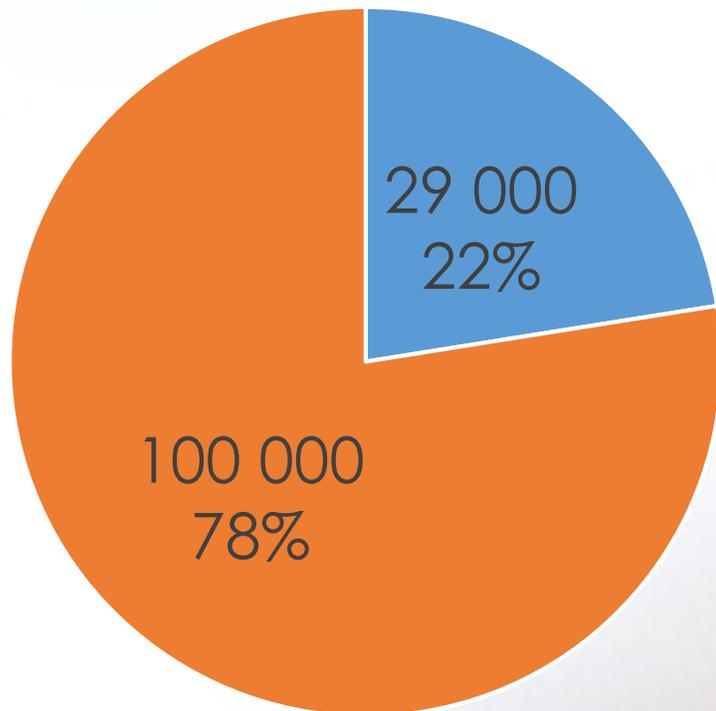
Schools with different language of learning



(Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2019b)

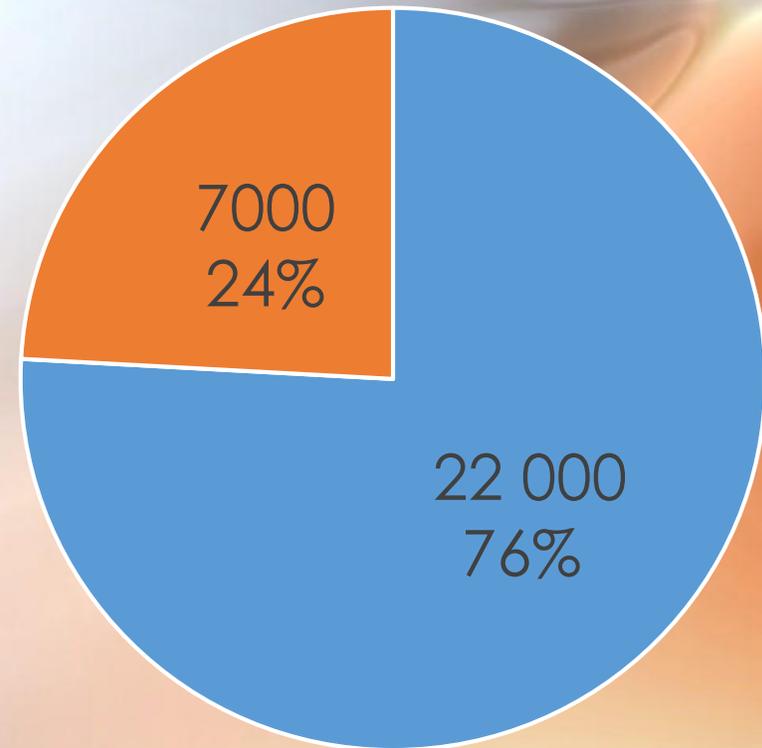
Students in Russian and Russian-Estonian schools

Students in basic schools



■ Russian, Russian-Estonian ■ Estonian, other

Students in Russian and Russian-Estonian schools



■ In Russian ■ Language immersion classes

(Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2019b)

Bilingual students in Estonian schools

5% of students in Estonian basic schools are students whose language at home is other than the language of learning.

Most of them were born in Estonia, home language is Russian. They are learning Estonian as the first language.

5% = approximately 6400 students

(EHIS, 2018)

Bilingual students with SEN

Bilingual students with SEN are students who need support measures to cope with the learning (Soll & Palginõmm, 2011).

...21% of the total number of students with special educational needs.

21% = 6462 bilingual students with SEN
(total number of students with SEN = approximately 30 000 students)

(Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2019b)

Bilingual students with SEN (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2019b)

Language of learning	ASBS* students (68%)	AS by Rajaleidja** students (32%)	Total	% of all BS*** in school
Estonian	1 395	235	1 630	25%
Russian/Estonian	2 221	692	2 913	41%
Russian	775	1 144	1 919	9%
Total	4 391	2 071	6 462	

*Additional support by schools

**Additional support in school recommended by the regional guidance centre (Rajaleidja)

***BS – bilingual students

Support measures for students with SEN

Additional support measures are implemented for students with SEN. This means services of special education teachers, psychologists or social pedagogues are made available to such student, if needed.

The additional support measures by schools:

- differentiated instruction in the classroom,
- extra help after classes by teachers,
- special education support,
- speech therapy sessions in study support groups,
- individual learning curriculum.

Support measures for students with SEN

If the supportive measures applied by schools do not give the required results, the schools and parents can seek for additional advice from the regional guidance centre (Rajaleidja):

- additional psychological or medical research,
- optimal learning curriculum.

(Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2019a)

Bilingual students with SEN – a challenge for the teachers?

Hypothesis:

Teachers have difficulties with identifying and assessing SEN among bilingual students. Teachers lack knowledge about how to support the development of their students.

Why is that?

- Estonian practice of inclusive education among monolingual students with SEN in the beginning stage. Few researches among bilingual students with SEN.
- SEN not identified – is it the lack of language skills?
- Underdiagnosis of language impairment in bilingual students worldwide (Paradis, 2010; Kohnert jt 2009).

The aim of the master thesis

To find out the problems raised by teachers and special education teachers about identifying, assessing and teaching bilingual students with special educational needs.

(Paulus, 2019)

Research questions

- SEN identified among bilingual students?
- How do teachers and special education teachers identify SEN of bilingual students? Assessing the development?
- Problems arise regarding the identification of SEN of bilingual students?
- Teaching bilingual students with SEN?
- What teachers need?

(Paulus, 2019)

Participants of the research

7 teachers, 3 special education teachers from schools with different language:

- 2 Estonian schools (Tartu, Tallinn)
- 1 Estonian/Russian school (Tartu)
- 1 Russian schools (Narva)

Individual interviews were carried out with all participants.

(Paulus, 2019)

The results of the study - what is identified?

- Low language skills of students, different skill levels in the beginning of the studies (7/10).
- Developmental disorders: ADHD (9/10), low ability in language acquisition (is it language disorder? 8/10), specific learning difficulties (6/10), emotional and behavioral disorders (6/10).

Problems: unable to identify the reasons of difficulties; unable to distinguish between developmental disorders and lack of language skills; identifying takes long time (from a couple of months to years).

The results of the study – how SEN is identified?

- Special education teachers rely on assessments given by the teachers (8), but there is a lack of adequate assessment tools.
- By the dynamic assessment (6), also early identification in pre-school (6).

Problems: insufficient communication with parents and with the regional guidance centre (4), inadequate school readiness cards (4).

The results of the study – teaching bilingual students with SEN

- Most of the teachers understand the need for individualization. Necessity is high because of the difficult teaching materials, which they need to adapt.
- Some of the teachers say they do nothing differently.

Problems: a lack of time and knowledge in selecting appropriate teaching materials and differentiating teaching.

(Paulus, 2019)

The results of the study – what teachers need?

- Knowledge about special education.
- Knowledge about how to teach Estonian as a second language to student with special needs.
- There is a need for training in selecting appropriate teaching materials and differentiating teaching.
- There is a lack of simplified teaching materials for narrative subjects and in the initial phase of language learning.
- A greater number of support specialists and assistant teachers are also required in schools.

(Paulus, 2019)

The results of the study – what next?

- Further studies are required.
- Instructional or supporting materials for the teachers and special education teachers are needed.
- Pre-service and in-service teacher education programs need to be improved: teachers need knowledge about teaching Estonian as a second language and teaching students with SEN.
- Pre-service and in-service special education teacher programs - how to teach bilingual students with SEN.

(Paulus, 2019)

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THANK YOU
for your attention!

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