

POSTPRINT

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Negotiating a Place for German in Estonia: Contemporary Functions, Attitudes and Policies

Abstract: This chapter investigates policies which shape the role of the German language in contemporary Estonia. Whereas German played for many centuries an important role as the language of the economic and cultural elite in Estonia, it severely declined in importance throughout the twentieth century. Mirrored on this historical background, the paper provides an overview of the current functions of German and attitudes towards it and it discusses how these functions and attitudes are influenced by policies of various actors from inside and outside Estonia. The paper argues that German continues to play a significant role: while German is no longer a lingua franca, it still enjoys a number of functions and prestige in clearly defined niches involving communication within German-speaking circles or between Estonians and Germans. The interplay of language policies of the Estonian and the German-speaking states as well as by semi-state and private institutions succeed in maintaining German as an additional language in contemporary Estonia.

Keywords: German, Estonia, Language attitudes, Language functions

1 Introduction: Past Contexts of German in Estonia and Theoretical and Methodological Agenda

From the Middle Ages until the first half of the twentieth century, German played an important role as the language of the economic, administrative and cultural elite in the areas of current-day Estonia. As a result of mostly German-speaking crusaders' conquests, the territory of contemporary Estonia was divided among the Sword Brethren and later Livonian Order and German-speaking bishops, and an increasingly independent merchant rule in the towns. In all of these political units, German was the dominant language of the elite – at first Low German, which, after its

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decline as a written language, was replaced by High German. The German aristocracy kept its privileges when the territory came under successive waves of Polish, Swedish, and, finally, Russian rule. As a result of its societal status throughout centuries, the Baltic German nobility had long-term influence on the Estonian culture and language; German, for example, is one of the most influential contact languages for Estonian as reflected in hundreds of (Low and High) German loanwords. German remained the strongest language of the economy and of education even when it was increasingly replaced by Russian as the language of administration during Russification policies of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the early 20th century, the Russian empire carried out a language policy of “three local languages” in Estonia, German alongside Estonian and Russian (Rannut 2010, 13–14). In the first period of Estonian independence (1918–1940), Estonian became the official language of the state, but Germans like other minorities enjoyed cultural autonomy and German continued to be used as a language of the economy and, not least because of its international role as a major language of e.g. culture and science throughout Europe, was the most popular foreign language at school. The importance of German in Estonia has severely declined since 1939 when ethnic Germans were ordered to “return” to the Reich. During the Soviet occupation, Russian became the second language of Estonian society, with both English and German being strong in foreign language learning (Rannut 2010, 14). Since German is not one of the major languages in the country today, it is usually used as a foreign language learnt through formal education. Yet, German continues to be used in Estonia in various domains. Importantly, its historical role continues to influence its current position, e.g., when it is used for a commodification of the past in tourism.

Mirrored on the historical role of German in Estonia, this chapter aims to shed light on the various functions German inhabits in contemporary Estonia, and on language-policy players from inside and outside Estonia who influence these functions. Language policy is understood in this chapter in a broadest possible way in the tradition of language policy and planning, including all aspects of Spolsky’s (2004, 2009) framework of beliefs, ideologies, practices and management (language policy or planning in the narrower sense), all of which influence each other reciprocally. At the same time, the paper discusses which types of language policy and planning – frequently distinguished as status, corpus, usage, acquisition, prestige, discourse planning, (cf. e.g., Hornberger 2006, 28–29; Haarmann 1986; Lo Bianco 2005) – contribute to shape the current position of German in Estonia. The discussion follows partly Ammon’s (2015) classification of roles of the German language in international contexts, with German as a language of an officially recognized traditional minority, of the economy, as an academic language, in tourism, in politics and diplomacy, as a language of media and art, and in education. Accordingly, this paper discusses attitudes towards German and German skills among the Estonian population, traces of the historical role of German particularly as taken up by language users and policy makers for contemporary purposes, policies and practices regarding German as an L1 in Estonia today, “exterior” language policy, i.e., policies by the predominantly German-speaking states and other actors

from outside Estonia which aim at strengthening the status of the German language in Estonian society, and policies affecting German as a language of business, tourism, and in the educational system. In addition to analyzing practices by speakers of German as an L1 and as a foreign language and top-down policies, the chapter also focuses on the role of activists who as individuals or as bottom-up organizations influence the role of German in Estonia today. In total, the interplay of these different language practices and policies provide a regular presence of German in various domains of contemporary Estonian society.

The data was collected by different methods and from various sources. In particular, the 2011 census data on Germans skills is presented along with some results of a survey on language attitudes and learning motivation conducted among high school and university students in Estonia between 2010 and 2014. Additionally for this chapter, policy documents and statements by language policy actors made in various official and unofficial contexts were analyzed. The overview of relevant language-policy actors from Germany and their interplay with policies originating from Estonia is based on the author's six-year-long involvement (2009–2015) in Germany's exterior language policy. This picture is completed by ethnographic observations made both by the author and his colleagues from Tallinn University, in particular with regard to Linguistic Landscapes studies, and their analysis of individual instances of the use of German, e.g., in ergonyms. In this, the chapter also follows methodologies of "Spot German" (cf. Heimrath 2017; Marten and Saagpakk 2017), i.e., the systematic collection, classification and didactic application of the presence of the German language and symbols relating to German-speaking countries in a previously defined area in which the German language is not one of the main languages of contemporary society.

2 German Language Skills and Attitudes Towards German in Estonia

The people of Estonia have a high level of competence in German, though not at the same level as Estonian, Russian and English. In part, these numbers reflect native-German speaking residents. Among the 1,294,455 permanent residents (2011 Population and Housing Census), there were 448, 21, and 24 individuals with German, Austrian, and Swiss citizenship, respectively.¹ There were 1544, 25, and 23 people with German, Swiss, and Austrian "ethnic nationality", respectively (Eesti Statistika PC0428). Altogether 522 individuals claimed German as their mother tongue (Eesti Statistika PC0431). Slightly more than a tenth of population (130,191 individuals) claimed knowledge of German as a foreign language, compared with 38.3% who claimed knowledge of English, 12.9% of Finnish and 6.2% of languages labeled as

¹ Eesti Statistika PC0421; note that the statistics do not differentiate between Swiss with a German-speaking and with other backgrounds.

Table 1 Estonian population according to 2011 census by age group and command of foreign languages (Eesti Statistika PC0438)

	Total	English	% of age group	Finnish	% of age group	German	% of age group	Other foreign language(s)	% of age group
Age groups total	1,294,455	495,420	38.3	167,315	12.9	130,191	10.6	79,616	6.2
0–14	199,891	366,35	18.3	1,165	0.6	3,241	1.6	2,615	1.3
15–29	254,857	198,936	78.1	31,232	12.3	45,593	17.9	26,152	10.3
30–49	352,517	179,153	50.8	82,362	23.5	40,311	11.4	27,776	7.9
50–64	257,750	59,924	23.2	38,133	14.8	23,598	9.2	13,705	5.3
65 and older	229,440	20,772	9.1	14,423	6.3	17,448	7.6	9,368	4.1

“another foreign language“ i.e., excluding non-native knowledge of Russian and Estonian (see Table 1 above). Notably, in all age groups, except for 30–49 and 50–64, a slightly bigger share of people reported knowledge of German than of Finnish.

The relatively high proportion of individuals with competence in German is arguably based partly on its historic importance, in particular in the 80+ group which may still have had German-language classes before the Soviet occupation, but also reflects the role of German as one of the major foreign languages in the Soviet educational system. Practical use of German could have been somewhat higher than for English because of exchanges with Socialist East Germany, even though the practical use of languages other than Estonian and Russian was generally low. In the youngest age groups, the higher number of individuals claiming knowledge in German in contrast to Finnish is one of the results of Estonian public schooling where few students choose to study Finnish; Finnish has been learnt at a later age for job purposes and by the parts of the population which have worked in Finland, and among the generations socialized in Soviet times because of the importance of Finnish TV for Estonian society (see also Koreinik & Praakli this volume).

Besides language skills, in order to understand the role of German in contemporary Estonia, attitudes toward the language also play a role in its presence and function. The following are some of the core results of the survey “Language Learning Motivation in the Baltic States” (LLMBS) conducted between 2010 and 2014 by a group of lecturers of German in the Baltic States. For the Estonian sample, more than 1,000 respondents, mostly high school and university students from different parts of the country and with different language backgrounds, were asked about the importance and functions that they assign to the German language today (cf. Breckle and Johanning-Radžienė (2013) for a more detailed insight into the methodology of the survey).

Questions focused on the role of German indicate that German is considered an important language and an asset. Figure 1 shows that slightly less than 60% either “entirely agrees” or “rather agrees” that “it is useful to have a German language certificate or a school report which includes German”, as opposed to only 8.1% who

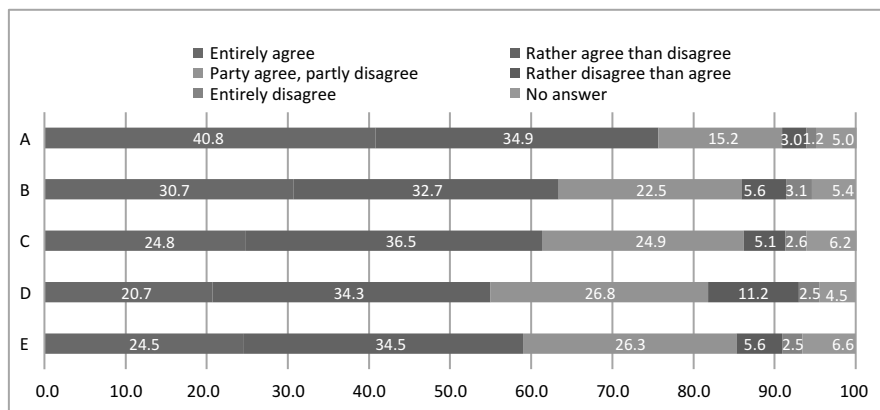


Fig. 1 Usefulness of a German language certificate, importance of German as an international language and for being well-educated, German culture as interesting, and usefulness of German when travelling in %; n = 1009

A: The German language is useful when travelling, B: German culture and language are interesting, C: It belongs to a good education to have knowledge about the German language, culture, authors, philosophers or similar, D: Also in our times German is an important international language, E: It is useful to have a German language certificate or a school report which includes German

entirely or rather disagrees. More than a half of the respondents support the statement “also in our times German is an important international language”. In addition, respondents consider the German language and culture useful when travelling (75.7%), relevant for being well-educated (61.3%), and interesting (53.4%).

A comparative perspective of German usefulness vis-à-vis a number of other languages was also surveyed. Figure 2 shows that German is considered the fourth-most relevant language for both work and leisure purposes, after English and Estonian, but for working purposes ahead of Russian and well ahead of Finnish, French and others. Notably, usefulness for work was considered higher than usefulness for leisure for all languages except Estonian.

The survey also revealed that pragmatic attitudes dominate with regard to the motivation of foreign-language learning. In summary, this implies that knowledge of German as an additional language is still quite high, and it is also valued as an important language.

3 Practices and Policies: A “Taking Up” of the Historical Role of German

The historical role of German in Estonia contributes to shaping the language’s role in contemporary Estonian society. Besides the enduring influences of historic German-language contacts in Estonian in personal and place names, it is of interest

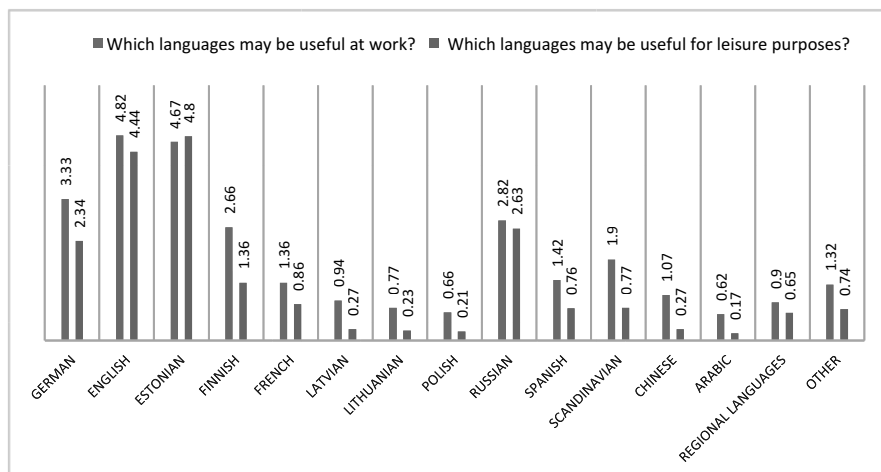


Fig. 2 Usefulness of Languages in Estonia (n = 1009; mean scores; 0 = not useful at all; 5 = maximally useful)

to understand what implications history has for the awareness of historical multilingualism and for the acquisition of skills in the German language among the Estonian population today. Data from the LLMBs survey reveal that history is of little importance for evaluating the role of German today – neither in a positive (i.e., history would encourage people to learn German) nor in a negative way (i.e., people would be discouraged by history). Only slightly more than one tenth of the respondents “entirely” or “rather” agreed with the statement “because of historical events people have a negative image of Germany and therefore don’t choose to learn German”, which more than half disagreed with. On the other hand, slightly less than a quarter (23.3%) either entirely or partly agreed that “in my country, many people learn German because Germany is historically connected to my country”.

The survey thereby confirms my observations while working as a lecturer of German linguistics at Tallinn University (2009–2015). Findings revealed that even among students of German philology, the awareness of German in today’s Estonia was surprisingly low. For example, students were not aware of the German origins of the name of famous historical sites and tourist attractions such as the “Kiek in de Kōk”² artillery tower in the old town of Tallinn. In a more systematic way, Saagpakk (2017) reports how she investigated the role of German with students in a number of projects following the Linguistic Landscape approach, with the purpose not only to document the presence of German, but also to contextualize the historical role of German among the younger generations. According to Saagpakk, many students were puzzled when they were asked to collect 10 German texts in public space, and when doing their research mostly found German in its historical role (e.g. on church

² ‘Peep into the kitchen’ in Low German.

epitaphs). In a similar way, the project,³ conducted by the Estonian Association of Teachers of German (*Eesti Saksa Keele Õpetajate Selts*) and the German Embassy in Estonia, collects examples of German found by school teachers and their students across Estonia.⁴ The project is not limited to past language and culture contacts, but also includes examples of German organizations, product and brand names; at the time of writing (September 2015) the category of historical contacts has the highest number of recorded examples (62 out of 195). This project stands in the tradition of “Spot German,” which aims at analyzing the presence and functions of the German language and symbols like flags, products, brands in regions without a strong obvious connection to Germany (e.g., as conducted in Malta, cf. Heimrath 2017).

Another frequent example of the presence of German is the commodification of the German-speaking past in ergonyms, such as the chain cafés “Kehrwieder” or the “Löwenruh” restaurant in Tallinn.⁵ Whereas the latter is an example of taking up a concrete historical German place name,⁶ the former plays with history by evoking associations with the German past among tourists of all backgrounds and additionally by creating nostalgia among Germans with a family background in the Baltic States. These examples show both how the historical role of German, in a limited way, but also the commodification of German, influences language choices in domains such as tourism, business or education.

The influence of the past on language policies is more evident in the continuing relevance of German as a dominant language for specific sub-domains, e.g. academic disciplines as history, religious studies, law or linguistics as well as for specific professions such as lawyers. Since the Estonian law is to a large extent based on German law (cf. e.g., Pärnamägi 2014), it is highly advantageous for Estonian lawyers to be able to consult legal commentaries on German law, of which there are by far higher quantities than commentaries on Estonian law. Notably, the *Bibliographia iuridica Estonica*, the annual bibliography of Estonian law, appears in Estonian, English and German. In a similar way, academic staff in the history departments of Estonian universities report that the limited abilities of many students to read German which, limits their access to historical sources and restricts research of Estonian history to the twentieth century (cf. e.g. an interview with Tallinn University professor of history Ulrike Plath, Sakova-Merivee 2014). Sakova-Merivee (2015) summarizes that German is “absolutely essential” for people with an interest in Estonian culture and history. The policies by representatives of historical, legal or other institutions, thereby, favor the German language and its acquisition based on its historical role.

³“Discover places in Estonia with a connection to Germany”.

⁴saksa-eesti.ee.

⁵“Come back” and “lion’s rest” in German, respectively.

⁶The restaurant is located in a building which once belonged to a manor of the same name; the nearby park with a well-known lion’s statue also carries the name in the German version.

4 Policies Influencing the Role of German as an L1 in Estonia Today

In contemporary Estonia, German is learnt mostly as a foreign language, but, as the census results (shared in Sect. 2) indicate, there are also some L1 or L2 speakers. Individuals belong to two major groups with largely separate profiles and needs, even though these groups overlap to some degree. The present-day traditional German minority in Estonia consists overwhelmingly of Soviet-time migrants from other parts of the Soviet Union rather than descendants of Baltic Germans.⁷ Ethnic Germans whose ancestors had settled close to the Black Sea or in the Caucasus were deported during the Stalin era, mostly to Kazakhstan and Siberia. After their rehabilitation, they were allowed to move to other parts of the Soviet Union. Yet, many of these ethnic Germans, in particular those from the younger generations, had by that time become dominantly Russophone. According to the 1989 census, there were 3,466 ethnic Germans in Estonia, of whom only 739 were born in Estonia (1,391 were born in Russia, 639 in Kazakhstan, 345 in Ukraine; Statistikaamet 1997, 18–27). The majority of these Germans subsequently migrated to Germany during the 1990s: between 1992 and 1997, an average of 322 ethnic Germans from Estonia settled in Germany each year, declining to an average of 82 persons between 1998 and 2003 and to 17 individuals annually between 2004 and 2009, in total amounting to 2,520 persons between 1992 and 2009 (Worbs et al. 2013, 32–33).

In terms of language policies, Germans in Estonia founded organizations at the end of the 1980s, with the purpose both to revitalize German traditions and to serve as language activist organizations. Today, the umbrella organization of Germans from other parts of the former Soviet Union in Estonia, the Union of Germans in Estonia (*Eestimaa Sakslaste Selts*), is a member of the Federal Union of European Nations (FUEN) as well as of the Estonian Union of National Minorities (*Eestimaa Rahvuste Ühendus*). These organizations are carrying out language policies directed both to the minority and to the general population without a German background. The main organizations and local groups promote awareness of the German minority and the German language in order to get support for cultural activities. In addition, language acquisition policies aim at younger persons who see themselves as ethnic Germans and who have the wish to learn their parents' (and often grandparents') culture and language. *Eestimaa Sakslaste Selts* receives modest funding from the Estonian state and, for specific projects such as language courses, from the German government. There have been several groups in different towns throughout Estonia within the organization, but as chairwoman Erika Weber reports (personal communication), the critical mass of active members has been diminishing because of migration to Germany since the 1990s.

The second group of German L1 speakers in Estonia are German-speaking migrants who are part of a new diaspora of Germans who have come to Estonia in recent years as part of the broader processes of European integration and globalization. Reasons for migration to Estonia are manifold; some members of this group

⁷Very few Baltic Germans stayed in Estonia after 1939/1941.

have a spouse from Estonia, others are in Estonia permanently for job purposes, still others are part of international transnational groups such as students, academic staff, or diplomats. Most members of this group use L1 German on an everyday basis at home and in their personal and professional networks, thereby giving German a regular place on the linguistic market of Estonia.

Members of both L1 groups – the Soviet-era population and more recent immigrants – engage to varying degrees in language policy and other activities in a network of German-language institutions with other non-L1 speakers, including activities based at schools with a strong German element or related to German businesses. Some of these activities enjoy support from Estonian or non-Estonian state institutions. The arguably strongest nexus of these activities is the German congregation within the Estonian Lutheran Church. It has a priest from Germany, church services, leisure activities for adults and children, and a regular informal pub meeting.⁸ In terms of language policy, the network may be seen as a result of language practices aiming to support a German-language space within Estonian society, mostly for the members of the German-speaking minority, but which is open to others and thereby spreads the German language into mainstream society. Both L1 groups are largely separate groups of society, but may overlap in individual situations, e.g., regarding membership and participation in the German Lutheran congregation.

In total, language policies by individuals or activist organizations, other institutions created for the needs of the German-speaking minority, and the state (mostly through the funding of activities) interact in creating space for L1 speakers of German and their descendants. These policy actors frequently relate to the historical role of German, but mostly aim at providing possibilities to use the German language in certain niches in contemporary Estonia and strive to improve the status of German in society at large.

5 Exterior Language Policies by Germany and Austria

An important element in language policy with regard to German in Estonia is what the German Foreign Office calls its “exterior cultural and educational policy”. This concept denotes the “third pillar of foreign policies” besides political and economic policies which explicitly includes the aim to “support the German language in Europe and the world” (cf. *Auswärtiges Amt*). Whereas the Estonian state’s language policy towards German is largely shaped by acquisition policies in formal education (see below), which interact with language choices and activities by other policy actors, major state players from Germany and other German-speaking countries react to existing practices and demands by institutions and individuals in Estonia. State or state-supported institutions in Estonia include the Goethe Institute, the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, DAAD), and the Central Office for German Schools Abroad (*Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen*, ZfA). These institutions conduct a series of active support for

⁸<http://baltische-wochenzeitung.de/index.html>

language policies, often in close cooperation with Estonian partners (e.g. the German Cultural Institute Tartu, Deutsches Kulturinstitut Tartu). The German Embassy has a coordinating position and, for instance, helps organizing and financing German Language Days with games, discussions, readings and similar elements at schools all over Estonia, but the institutions are independent and not part of the Embassy (even though a large share of the funding stems from sources by the German government). The Austrian Embassy conducts similar policies on a smaller scale. Prestige and awareness campaigns are organized by various institutions, most dominantly the “Saksa kevad” (“German Spring”) series of educational, academic, business and other events conducted every spring since 2010 in Tallinn, Tartu and other places. As an example, the exhibition “Eine Sprache – viele Geschichten” (“One language – many stories”) held in the Solaris shopping centre in Tallinn and at the Tallinn Goethe Institute throughout 2015⁹ displayed the importance of the German language in the lives of a number of famous as well as ordinary Estonians, including figures as prominent as Arvo Pärt. The German state and non-state organizations are present in the educational field on all levels (see above), but also with film screenings, theatre and concert events and similar. The DAAD runs scholarship programs, conducts information meetings at schools and universities, and finances several positions of German academic staff at Estonian universities. Language courses are available at the German Cultural Institute Tallinn (in cooperation with Goethe Institute) and at the German Cultural Institute Tartu. The ZfA finances a network of teachers from Germany who teach at schools throughout Estonia.

An exceptional example of joint state language policies are the German, Austrian and Swiss reading rooms at the National Library of Estonia, which are co-financed by the governments of Estonia (rooms and staff), Germany, Austria and Switzerland (books and other media). This long-term commitment was threatened in 2014 when the leadership of the national library announced the closure of the rooms and the incorporation of the existing media into the library’s general collection, which would in turn have resulted in a disbandment of the support by the German, Austrian and Swiss governments. However, a massive campaign by the three governments, a users’ petition and lobbying by the Estonian Association of German Teachers was able to stop these plans, thereby providing an example of how different layers of language policy actors may successfully interact. In total, the activities by German institutions succeed in providing a space for the German language in Estonia through a combination of status, prestige, acquisition, and usage policies.

6 German Language Policies in Business and Tourism

In addition to policies and practices by and for L1 speakers or conducted by the German-speaking countries, German plays also a role within the language policies of other institutions in Estonia, in particular in the economy. This part of the chapter

⁹http://www.goethe.de/ins/ee/de/tal/ver.cfm?fuseaction=events.detail&event_id=20549179

draws on “Linguistic Landscape” research and on a number of micro studies, partly within the context of familiarizing students of German philology with the presence of German in their everyday surroundings. Qualitative as well as quantitative Linguistic Landscape (LL) research including interviews and ethnographic observation carried out in Estonia since 2008 has revealed that German is of rather limited importance in public space in Estonia. Pošeiko (2015) investigated the LL of 9 cities: Narva, Pärnu and Viljandi in Estonia, Valmiera, Ventspils and Daugavpils in Latvia and Druskininkai, Alytus and Visagina in Lithuania, and found German on 0.8% of all signs. Estonian, English and Russian are – not surprisingly – by far more present. Yet, in comparison with other major European languages such as French, Spanish or Polish or the languages of neighboring regions such as Finnish or Swedish which one might assume to have a certain presence, German is more prominent in a sense of being “best of the rest”.

However, when looking at specific niches within Estonian society, the result changes. One of the institutions in the network of German institutions in Estonia is the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce. Germany is among the most important trade partners of Estonia; in 2014 Germany ranked second in imports to Estonia and sixth in exports from Estonia, compared to Austria: 20th imports/30th exports, Switzerland: 22nd imports/25th exports (Statistics Estonia 2015, 260-261). A qualitative study of language needs among member companies of the Chamber (Sikamägi 2015) shows that German is the dominant language in business communication between German and Estonian companies being ahead of English, while Estonian and Russian play only a marginal role. Even though the respondents presume that the role of English is going to increase in the future, the study concludes that German is still an important asset when doing business, in particular with regard to so-called “soft factors” such as how to develop confidence in a business partner: “There is no doubt that German language skills create a clear advantage in Estonian-German business communication. One third of the respondents (9 out of 27 respondents) even claimed that they could not fulfill their work duties without knowledge of German” (Sikamägi 2015, 73).

In a panel discussion on the role of German studies in Northern Europe at Tallinn University in June 2015, Maren Diale-Schellschmidt, CEO of the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce, confirmed that competence in German is badly needed: “If someone wishes to have concrete connections with German business partners, they are intensively looking for people with a good knowledge of German.” This focus on the practical applicability of German is thereby in line with the pragmatic attitudes to language learning revealed in the LLMBS survey in which cultural or historical aspects of German played only a minor role.

The role of German in the economy is also confirmed when looking at the data of the saksa-eesti web site project (see above). Besides historical connections, German companies, advertisements or brand names are a second important category which participants identified in their search for signs relating to German in Estonia. Also the study by Pošeiko (2015, 118) summarizes that the most common presence of German in public space is in shops and on construction sites.

Companies frequently use and promote German as an additional language when addressing an explicitly German-speaking audience. This applies to a call center

opened in Võru in 2013 by a German energy supplier, which exclusively serves the German market in German.¹⁰ Similarly, Hütt (2015) reports of internal language practices within a call center in Tallinn working on behalf of an international airline. Of the 22 employees, 7 use German and English, 5 Chinese, 3 French and English, 3 Italian and English, 3 Russian and 1 Spanish, which makes German the language of second-highest importance (after English) in customer care. Yet, her research also reveals that German is used exclusively in communication with customers from Germany; English is used with persons of other backgrounds (including many people with a native language not represented among the company's staff), and English is also (besides Estonian) the language of internal communication.

In tourism, language policies which support the use of German are influenced by the fact that tourists from German-speaking countries are among the biggest groups in Estonia: in 2014, 112,877 tourists from Germany were registered in Estonian accommodation establishments, thereby amounting to the third-largest group behind tourists from Finland and Russia and on an equal level with visitors from Latvia (Eesti Statistika 2015, 377). Sikamägi reports from an interview with a tourism manager that German tourists increasingly know (at least some) English, but that they still overwhelmingly wish to hear and use German during their holidays; if there is a lack of German information this may even lead to German tourists choosing not to travel to a certain location (Sikamägi 2015, 62).

Linguistic Landscape research of touristic settings in Estonia reveals that German is a possible additional language which appears regularly in addition to the main languages of Estonian society, even though there are also domains in which German is less prominent than might be suspected. For instance, there is a lack of German on restaurant menus: Rajasaare (2015) investigated the restaurants elected as the "50 best restaurants of Estonia" in 2014. Her research reveals that only one of these restaurants' web sites has a German version. Estonian was present on all web sites, English on 26, Russian on 18, and Finnish on 12. Interviews with staff of eight of these restaurants explained that Estonian, English, Russian and Finnish are also used in oral communication in the restaurants; few Germans visit these restaurants, even though the interviews revealed that two restaurants explicitly take up the German tradition of the region. Similarly, an LL project on tourism conducted in six medium-size towns in the Baltic states including Narva and Pärnu (Marten et al. 2012) found that German is a regular, although not omnipresent language on tourism information centers' or hotels' web sites. Yet, German is hardly present on signs in public space relating to tourism: Of 415 tourism-related signs (relating to museums, cafés, information stands or similar) in the six towns, German is present on only seven. On written signs in the Old Town of Tallinn, German has been found to be the fifth-common language after Estonian, English, Russian and Finnish (Haas 2015). German is most frequent in historical contexts, which also explains a discrepancy between Lower Old Town where a lot of shops and restaurants are located and where Finnish is more common, and Toompea, the Cathedral Hill with mostly administrative buildings, where German is more frequent (Haas 2015).

¹⁰<http://www.danpower.ee/tutvustus>

7 Beliefs, Policies and Practices in the Educational Sector

The educational sector is the place where the presence of German and German-language policies is most usual for Estonians. The principles of the Estonian state's policies towards German were stated in the Foreign Language Strategy 2009–2015, in which German is labeled as one of “the most common languages in global communication and key languages in the economic, cultural and social spheres” (Eesti võõrkeelte strateegia 2009–2015/2017, 5). The importance of German is further stressed because of the “close cooperation between Estonia and German-speaking countries in a number of fields and the contemporary and historical traditions we share in terms of history and culture” (Eesti võõrkeelte strateegia 2009–2015, 16). In particular, the strategy stresses that German should be learnt as a first or “A language”, taught from grade 2 or second or “B language”, taught from grade 6 rather than third foreign language, since “studying it as a C or D language will not ensure that Estonia has an adequate number of good and very good speakers of German in the future” (ibid.). Diale-Schellschmidt¹¹ confirms that “we help our membership companies (...) to find staff, and we are still surprised how many candidates with good German skills there are, but this is decreasing.”

Statistics show that, of the 142,515 students who were enrolled in schools of general education in Estonia in 2014/2015, German as a foreign language was learnt by 14,120 students (9.9%). German is thereby far behind English (115,371) and Russian (50,851), but far ahead of French (4,199) and all other languages (in total 3,185).¹² The number of students who learn German has been in decline in absolute and relative numbers, in the year 2008/2009 25,095 out of 154,481 (16.2%) learnt German after it had reached its peak in the mid-1990s with 22.4% of students learning German in 1997/1998 (Eesti võõrkeelte strateegia 2009–2015, 13). In 2014, 219 students took the final school exams in German, of whom 44 candidates did not reach B1 level of the Common European Framework for Reference of Languages, whereas 58 passed B1, 54 B2 and 63 candidates C1 exams.¹³ This indicates that there is still a balance between candidates who manage to reach a good level and those who don't.

The LLMBS survey also reveals that German is still an important language in the educational sector, and that those people who choose to learn German are generally satisfied with their decision. Table 2 shows the languages which, according to the respondents, should be learnt in Estonia as foreign languages at school:

The findings demonstrate that the role of English as the most important foreign language is uncontested. Russian dominates as the second language, whereas German clearly leads the list of third foreign languages introduced mostly in secondary school from 10th grade onwards. German also scores considerably higher than

¹¹ Panel discussion on the role of German in June 2015.

¹² Numbers for the school year 2014/2015, http://www.haridussilm.ee/?leht=alus_yld_6

¹³ http://www.innove.ee/UserFiles/Riigieksamid/2014/Statistika/Koolid_saksa_keel_2014.html

Table 2 Which languages should in which order be learnt at schools in Estonia

1st Foreign language (%)	2nd Foreign language (%)	3rd Foreign language (%)
English 69.9	Russian 46.9	German 31.6
Russian 10.8	German 19.7	Russian 13.1
Estonian 4.5	English 12.3	Finnish 10.1
German 4.3	Finnish 3.7	French 5.2
Finnish 1.2	French 2.0	English 4.0
Others 2.0	Spanish 0.8	Chinese 1.7
No (valid) answer 7.4	Others 2.7	Spanish 1.6
	No (valid) answer 12.0	Swedish 1.0
		Others 2.9
		No (valid) answer 28.9

n = 1009

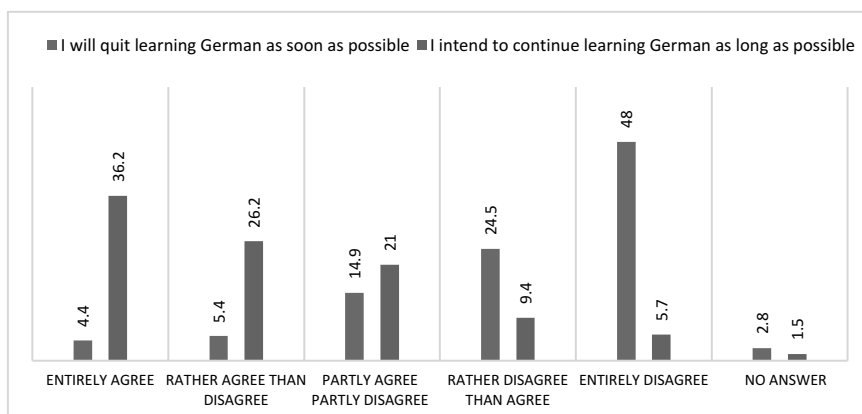


Fig. 3 Intentions to quit/continue learning German among respondents who currently learn German in %; n = 542

any other language (notably Finnish and French) as possible first or second foreign languages.¹⁴

In the survey, respondents who learnt German at the time of taking the survey were asked about their future plans. The overwhelming share (72.5%) of respondents does not wish to quit learning German or intend to continue learning it as long as possible (62.4%), which indicates a general level of satisfaction with the choice (Fig. 3).

In practice, the regular presence of German in education shows that educational policies provide a place for German which corresponds to wishes by students. Among the highlights are several schools with a dedicated German profile such as Tallinn German High School (*Tallinna Saksa Gümnaasium*) which is co-financed by the German state. This school introduces German as a foreign language in first grade; from

¹⁴Note that the respondents could choose that less than three languages should be learnt which explains the high number of invalid answers; the third place of Estonian among first foreign languages is caused by answers from respondents with Russian as L1.

seventh grade it is possible to choose schooling with German as the medium of instruction in most subjects which leads to the opportunity to take both the Estonian and the German high school exams. In addition, there are 14 schools spread throughout Estonia which have been invited by the ZfA and other German institutions active in Estonia (see above) to be part of the global PASCH (Schools: Partners of the Future, Schulen: Partner der Zukunft) network,¹⁵ which allows for students to take the DSD German language test to facilitate easier access to German universities. Many Estonian schools that teach German also have a partner school in a German-speaking countries.

Even if German is quite prominent in several schools in Estonia, the position of German is also under threat, e.g. by requirements for group sizes which cannot always be met or by closing schools where German is taught¹⁶ which are often caused by the general decline of student numbers as a result of demographic changes in society. As a reaction to such developments, the Estonian Association of Teachers of German (Eesti Saksa Keele Õpetajate Selts) not only creates an abundance of opportunities for its members, providing them with teaching materials or organising adult education events, summer courses and conducting campaigns to raise awareness among students and calls for competitions in which students get the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in order to keep the importance of German on the agenda of educational policies.¹⁷ Regarding pre-school education, it was seen by activists of German such as enthusiastic teachers of German or representatives of Germany's and Austria's exterior policies as a major step forward that German was introduced to a number of kindergartens in different parts of the country; a frequent argumentation of educational promoters of German is that German should be chosen as first foreign language in order to guarantee sufficient skills. Goethe Institute has an "Early German" ("Frühes Deutsch") campaign and provides courses and materials for pre-school educators. In 2014/2015, there were 28 kindergartens in Estonia offering German.¹⁸

In higher education, German is available both as language courses for students of other fields as well as in programs of German philology on BA and MA level at the universities of Tallinn and Tartu. In addition, every year a handful of MA students graduate to become teachers of German. The programs of German in higher education are, however, under regular supervision with regard to minimum student numbers and the re-organization of study programs. Not least because of the lower language competence of many new students, their focus has been shifting from philological contents to language-learning oriented programs. At Tallinn University, the decision taken in 2015 to abandon many programs focusing on German language and culture in favor of general philological studies with a very small proportion of courses dedicated to a specific language and culture, has been met by heavy criticism among academic staff and leaves strong doubts if there will be sufficient place for a deeper understanding of linguistic structures, literatures and cultures. The focus of Estonian educational policies on fields such as the sciences and

¹⁵<http://www.pasch-net.de/par/spo/eur/est/deindex.htm>

¹⁶For example Tallinn German High School will be merged with Tallinn Sikupilli Gymnasium.

¹⁷<http://www.edlv.ee/www4/>

¹⁸<http://www.goethe.de/ins/ee/de/tal/lhr/ffl/kgs.html>

engineering make it difficult for foreign languages other than English to maintain their position in Estonian institutions of higher education, even though scholars from other fields complain about a lack of knowledge in German in the light of the historic connections between Estonia and the German language (see above). Yet, German continues to be used occasionally as a language of writing academic theses also in other fields such as law or religion.

8 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter shows that German, once a *lingua franca*, still plays a significant role in the linguistic market of contemporary Estonia, as a language in addition to the three dominant local languages Estonian, Russian and English. There is a critical mass of speakers of German, consisting of ethnic German residents of Estonia, of learners with different backgrounds, and of German speakers who are in Estonia only for a limited period of time. The existence and the linguistic behavior of the speech community create a regular presence of German in certain niches.

The LLMBS survey indicates that attitudes towards the German language are largely positive, and German is considered an additional important language within Estonian and European contexts. Also Linguistic Landscape research shows that German – together with Finnish – is at the top of the less-used languages in Estonia. German is also considered an asset in the economy, in tourism and the academic world. Language policy regarding German takes place on all levels and by a range of actors – by organizations caring about the population with German as L1, by companies and other business players which engage (overtly or covertly) in language policy, by educational policy makers and by institutions from outside Estonia. There are top-down approaches by the Estonian state (mostly in education) and the German-speaking states with regard to awareness and prestige and sometimes direct intervention into educational issues. At the same time, also bottom-up initiatives by the German speech communities and activists, notably the Estonian Association of Teachers of German, create awareness and keep the German language on the agenda of societal debates.

Language policy in favor of German relates to its historical role in Estonia, even though policy aims are solidly rooted in contemporary needs. Active measures to use and promote the language by the traditional German minority as well as recent German-speaking migrants in conjunction with the Lutheran church and other institutions create niches in which the German language can flourish. Businesses provide space for German, depending on their cooperation with German companies and their orientation towards German customers. In total, German may therefore be labeled to be a side language in the Estonian economy, directed towards touristic and general economic purposes. German has a certain importance because of its demographic and economic strength in communication with people from Germany, but it has almost no function as a *lingua franca* with persons of other language backgrounds. This principle translates into different types of language policies:

Estonian-based institutions without a focus on Germany might or might not have German as an additional language for their contacts with speakers of German. Organizations with such a focus usually have clear policies which emphasize the need of German skills, similar to German companies engaged in Estonia. At the same time, policy statements by the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce, by individual companies and practices by German tourists stress the economic value of the German language, thereby arguing in favor of language acquisition and usage policies which include German as a useful language for residents of Estonia. Educational language policies on German in Estonia should therefore focus on practical aspects (i.e. less German philology and more practical knowledge which may open up employment opportunities in different fields). Policies should encourage discussing the importance of German in contemporary Estonia in this respect.

Demands by L1 speakers and businesses are met in the educational field, where the Estonian state, teachers and their organizations as well as institutions from Germany negotiate the place of German and the contents of German classes, in relation to students' wishes and the financial framework provided by the Estonian state. In total, it is this interaction of a number of top-down and bottom-up policy actors which shapes the place of German in the educational system in Estonia. The Estonian educational authorities assign German the role as an important language. At the same time, the state sets limits, e.g. with regard to minimum requirements for student numbers which are highly influenced by language choices by students and their parents. Activists such as dedicated teachers and their institutions as well as educational organizations from the German-speaking countries react to official policies and students' choices: active campaigning aims at influencing discourses on German in order to convince students and parents of the importance of including German in individual education trajectories; financial and institutional support creates a stable place of German in the educational system and incentives such as specific diplomas, student exchanges or the supply of media from the German-speaking countries. The German and Austrian states add to this conglomerate with their policies of emphasizing traditions, active campaigning for the importance of the German language, and supporting cultural events and educational institutions. Through their constant negotiations with Estonian educational policy-makers and their awareness and prestige campaigns, these actors succeed in achieving a relatively stable place for German in the educational sector and in Estonian society at large.

In terms of types of language policy and planning, German is mostly affected by status planning and the question which role it should have in Estonian society today. Closely connected to this is prestige planning by awareness campaigns, competitions, exhibitions and similar, which also affects discourses on German, as well as acquisition planning by maintenance of German classes by the state but also by external institutions. Usage planning takes place mostly implicitly when organizations create opportunities to use German, including e.g. regular pub meetings or film screenings, but sometimes also appears in more explicit situations, e.g. regarding the threat to close the German-language reading rooms in the

National Library. Corpus planning for German, finally, is of rather little importance in Estonia.

This interplay of active policies, beliefs and practices creates a position of German in the linguistic ecosystem of Estonia in which it may be argued that German is in fourth place within the societal language hierarchy. It is clearly of less importance than Estonian, Russian and English, but as “best of the rest” ahead of any other languages. There is a certain “competition” from Finnish which in terms of language skills, tourists and open visibility is more wide-spread, but more detailed investigations underneath the surface show that also German still enjoys a number of societal functions and high prestige. In these niches, German is used among the German-speaking community or between Estonians and Germans, but only rarely as a lingua franca among people of other language backgrounds. Yet, what matters more than the question whether German, Finnish or another language come fourth or fifth in the hierarchy of languages in Estonia, is the fact that there is a vivid German-speaking community which consists of many facets, has its infrastructure and cannot be ignored, neither by players from inside nor from outside Estonia.

In total, a remarkable mix of state players from inside and outside Estonia, of semi-state and private organizations as well as individuals negotiate which place is assigned to the German language in contemporary Estonia. Language policy activities by all players continuously renegotiate the status of German in education, in the economy, as a language for specific purposes, usage opportunities for L1 and new speakers of German and awareness for the German language among the wider public.

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