



Estonian-Language Teaching Materials for Non-Estonian Speaking Children

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Abstract

Knowledge of the national language (Estonian) is seen as the primary vehicle for facilitating the economic, social and political integration of the country's non-Estonian-speaking population. An early start is particularly important, in language learning. Children at the kindergarten level can acquire significant skills in a second language. If supported properly, children at that age learn a second language using the same natural process with which they acquire their mother tongue. There are over 600 kindergartens in Estonia. Of these, 124 are Russian-language kindergartens. The largest concern of kindergarten teachers is the lack of appropriate teaching materials for voluntary language learning at early age and, as well as e-learning materials to support national language learning. Integration and Migration Foundation in cooperation with Lasteveeb OÜ launched a project under financial support of the Ministry of Education and Research. This project aimed to provide non-Estonian speaking children, their families and kindergarten teachers in Estonia with much-needed teaching materials to support the voluntary learning of the national language, Estonian. E-learning materials (songs, games, cartoons, etc.) were developed and published in <http://mudila.lastekas.ee/>. By supporting non-Estonian-language children in their quest to learn Estonian, the project helps provide students with a head start to integration. Voluntary language training programs at the kindergarten level allow students to gain a remarkable level of fluency in second languages and set the stage for later more rapid learning. We would like to present the criteria and process used to develop these E-learning materials, the make-up and unique features of the e-learning games, related teachers guide and feedback from users.