



Learning of Latvian Language in Pre-schools in Linguistically Heterogeneous Situations

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The State language in Latvia is Latvian language and good knowledge of Latvian language for children of any nationality is relevant for the successful study process at school.

Research aim - to study the promotion of the Latvian learning of children of pre-school age in the pedagogical process in theoretical and practical terms, by implementing various programmes and through the provision of the educational environment.

Research question - how to improve the acquisition of Latvian language of native speakers and minority pre-school age children?

The tasks of the study

1. To perform a theoretical analysis of the scientific literature on the peculiarities of Latvian language acquisition of pre-school children in Riga and Kurzeme;
2. To carry out a study of children's audio recordings and to give a qualitative analysis of the obtained data.

Pedagogical research

- A new Latvian proficiency test for 5-6-year-olds has been developed and tested to establish readiness for school in Latvian during the period from May to June, 2019.
- The study sample comprised **150 records** obtained from 5-6 year old primary school students from
- **Kurzeme** (4 pre-school educational establishments, **75 records**)
- **Riga** (5 pre-school educational establishments, **75 records**).
- In each region Kurzeme and Riga there were
- 25 *Latvian children* from groups with *Latvian language instruction*,
- 25 *Russian children* from groups with *Latvian language instruction*,
- 25 *Russian children* from groups with *Russian language instruction*.

Pedagogical research

The children speech recordings were analyzed according to the following criteria:

- speech of dialogue,
- fluency,
- pronunciation,
- vocabulary,
- grammar
- literacy skills.

Children were asked to look at the test picture and describe it, answer the questions, create a narrative and read the sentence.

Every record was done in a **20 minutes** period.

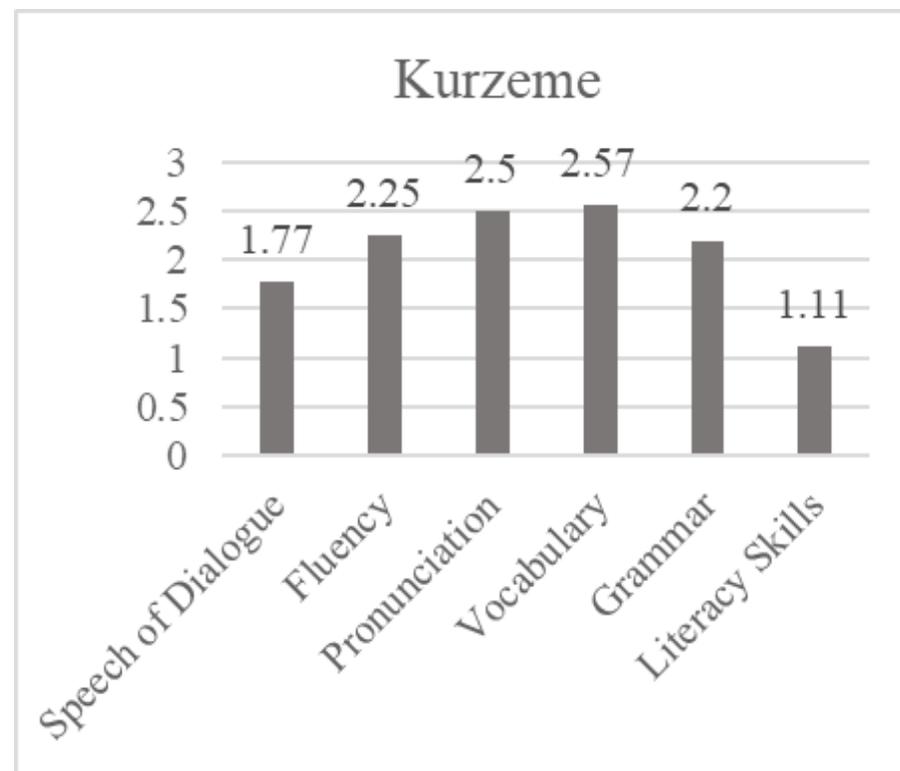
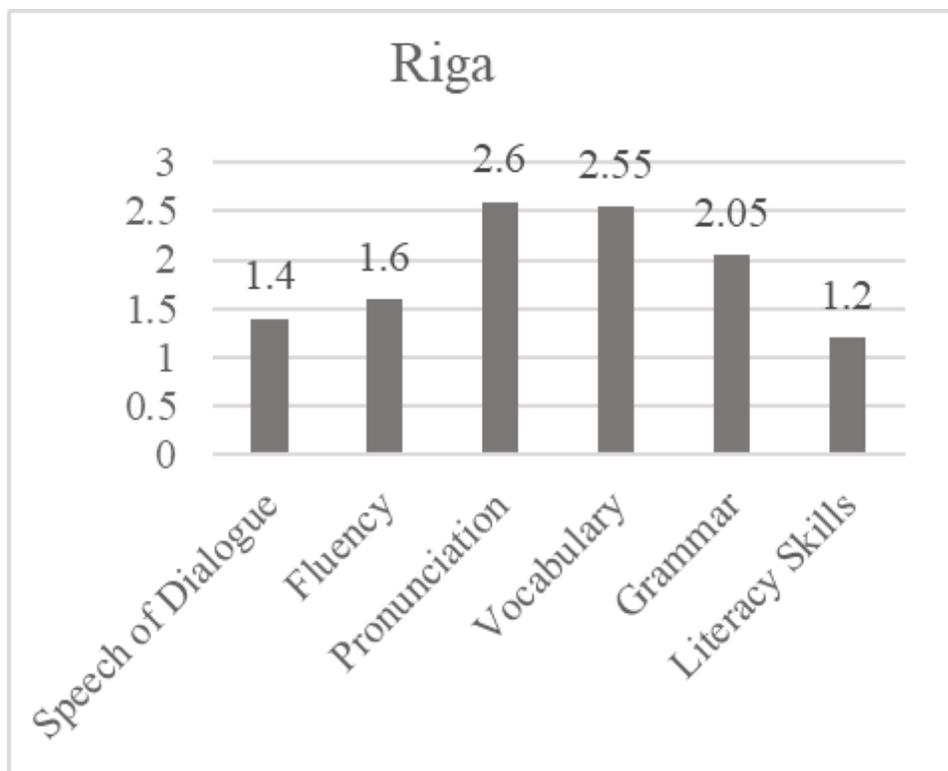
Pedagogical research

Language level was represented in points and the following levels were defined:

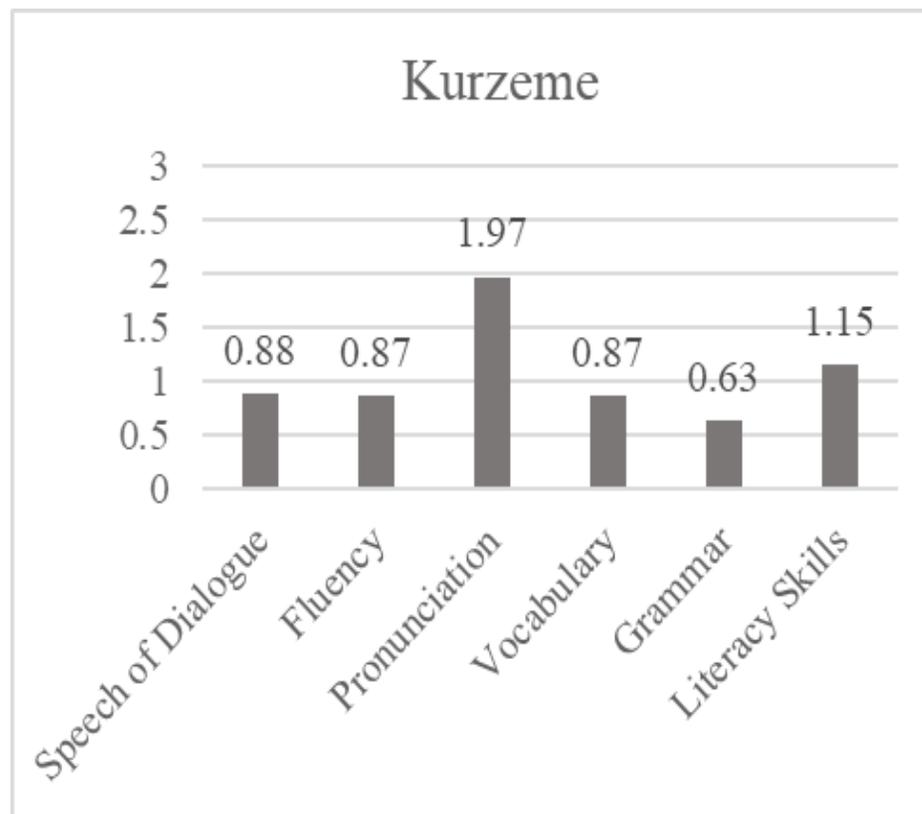
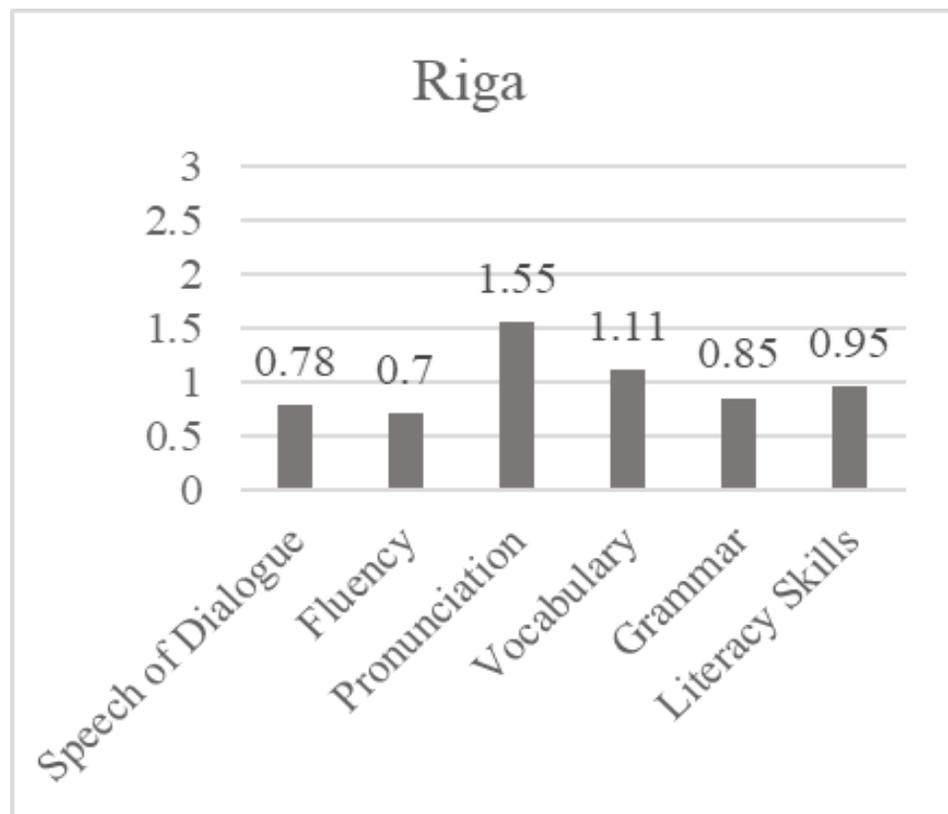
- **0 points** (insufficient level) – a child does not have or have very limited (< 5%) knowledge and skills;
- **1 point** (low level) – minimal (< 25%) knowledge and skills;
- **2 points** (average level) – average (> 50%) knowledge and skills;
- **3 points** (high level) – good (> 75 %) knowledge and skills.

Skills for learning the Latvian language of native Latvian speaking children in Riga and Kurzeme

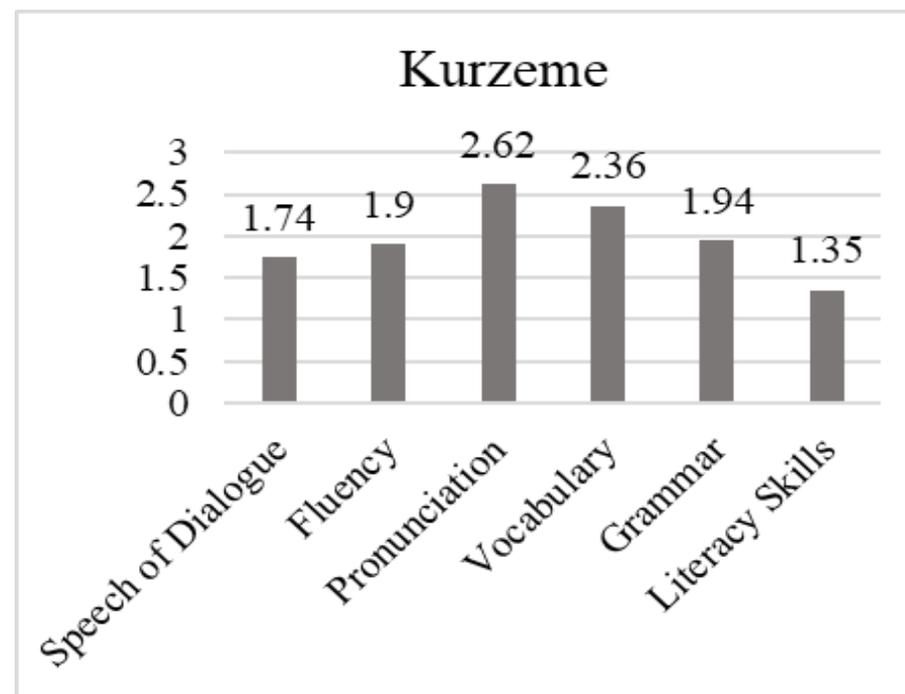
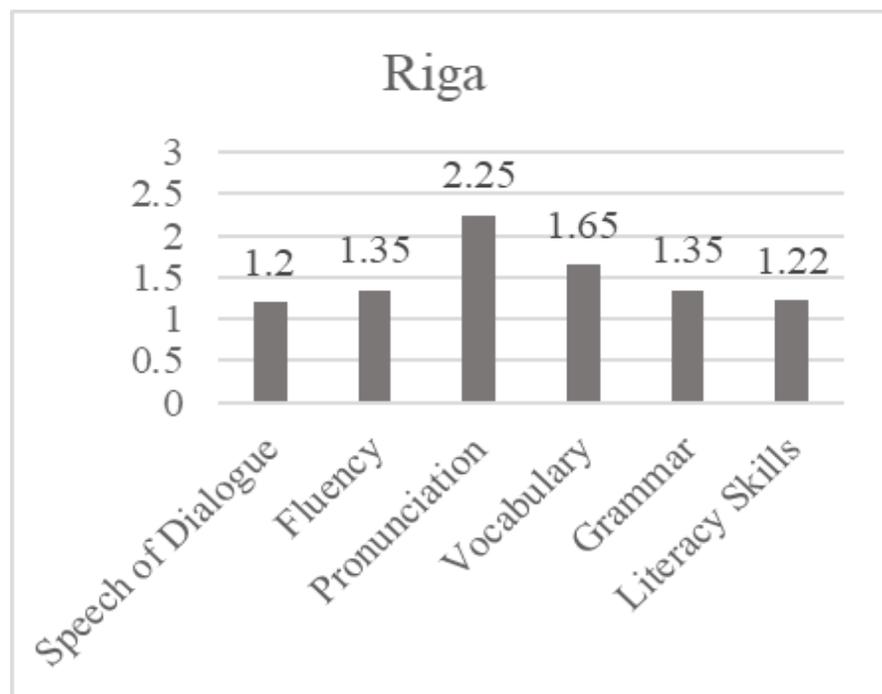
(values represent children language level indicated in points)



Latvian language skills of minority children in Riga and Kurzeme in groups with Russian language daily (values represent children language level indicated in points)



Latvian language skills of minority children in Riga and Kurzeme in groups with Latvian language daily (values represent children language level indicated in points)



Results

- For children visiting groups using the Latvian language every day, the Latvian language skills are significantly better than the language skills of minority children visiting groups using Russian-dominated language every day;
- If a child's family is bilingual, a child in a group with a daily dominant Russian language may also have good results learning Latvian in reality.

Results

- The best results in pre-school can be achieved in child pronunciation development;
- Expanding the vocabulary is the next result to be reached;
- For those children who visit groups using the Latvian language (as native and second), the Latvian vocabulary is substantially richer, while for those minority children who visit groups using Russian every day, the Latvian vocabulary is very poor and only covers some of the most commonly used names in the household, and they are usually nouns in the nominative case.

Results

- Some parents do not pay much attention to children's reading skills at pre-school age, believing they will be learnt through school training. The recommendation is to provide a real bilingual environment for minority groups of children;
- Various methods were observed during the research - reading aloud, asking purposeful questions to children, forming dialogues, activating cooperation with other children and teachers in the form of games; teaching grammar and stimulating reading; also interaction with visual materials in the surroundings.

Results

- The results of the study give an answer to the issue - to ensure more successful integration of children into school, *the development of the Latvian language should be strongly promoted in the pre-school education institutions in contact with children;*
- Over the last two years, the introduction of new education guidelines is being implemented in preschool, which provides for a significant increase in the use of Latvian language also in minority pre-primary education institutions with an improved methodology for learning the Latvian language.

Thank you for your attention !