



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU



# The Minority of Estonian Tatars: Ways and Challenges of Maintaining Tatar

EAAL 19th Annual Conference,  
Influence of the language: from data to  
content-rich knowledge

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# Estonian Tatars

Total number of Tatars living in Estonia is 1,938 out of which majority are located in Tallinn 1,033 (Statistics Estonia 2021)



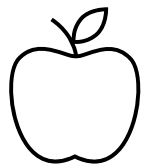
# Tatars and Tatar language in Estonia



The Tatars are an ethnic group of Turkic origin living in Estonia, partly an indigenous minority (descendants of pre-occupation Tatars), and partly immigrants, who came during the Soviet era and their descendants, dating back to 1870 (Viikberg 2000).

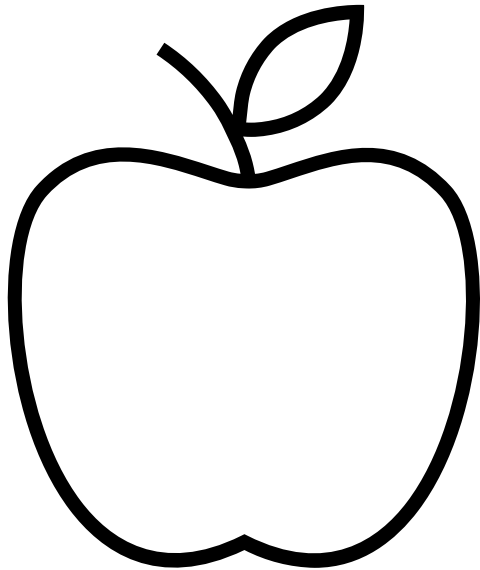
Tatar is spoken as a mother tongue only by 806 pupils (Statistics Estonia 2011).

Children learn and acquire Tatar in the home environment, language usage also happen in their communities, e.g. Nur Sunday school or any kind of informal educational setting (e.g. Tatar Cultural Society, Narva Tatar Cultural Society, Tatar Community in Estonia, Estonian Tatar Society Altõn, Tatar Cultural Center Yoldõz).



Family Language Policy (FLP) becomes an important aspect to shape child language development.

# What is FLP?

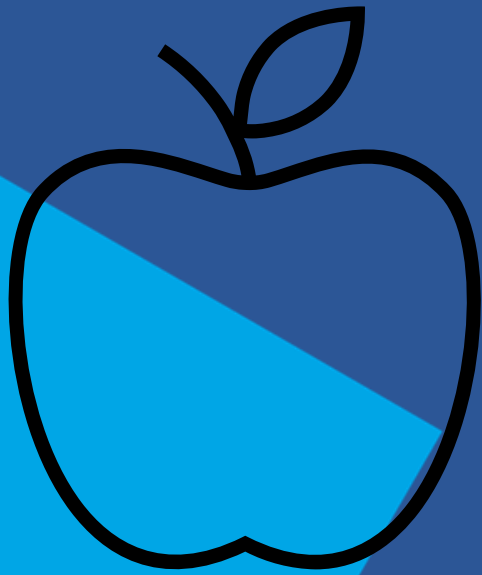


Family - cornerstone for language socialization and language development.

Policy - mechanism to organize, manage or manipulate language behaviors.

FLP - the planning on the use of language among family members in home environment (Schohamy, 2006, Schiffman, 1996 in King, Fogle & Logan-Terry 2008).

Spolsky (2004) links important outcomes related to FLP: political, social, demographic, religious, cultural, psychological, bureaucratic, and so on.



# Earlier research made in Estonia on FLP

FLP has been studied worldwide since the beginning of 2000s. First, the focus was on public space and the analysis of the interaction between the child and the caregiver, as well as on the study of parents' language ideology, e.g. Okita (2001), Piller (2001, 2002) and others.

Many studies (et. al. Hallaste 2015, Pranjuk 2015, Aleksejev 2017, Doyle 2018 etc.) have been conducted on Estonian language maintenance abroad and among mixed families in Estonia.





# Earlier research made in Estonia about Estonian Tatars (1)

- The Tatar political authorities emphasised the importance of improving the status of the Tatar language, as well as, its moral and spiritual commitment to the diaspora, yet not actually funding activities that would promote the recreation of Tatar identity in the diaspora (Klaas 2015: 3, 9).
- Some folk musicians and representatives of the Ministry of Culture are often visited by delegations from Tatarstan to Estonian Tatars Maardu Sabantuy and it shows a sign of respect and proof of the good work in the eyes of the local Tatars community (Klaas 2015: 9).

# Earlier research made in Estonia about Estonian Tatars (2)

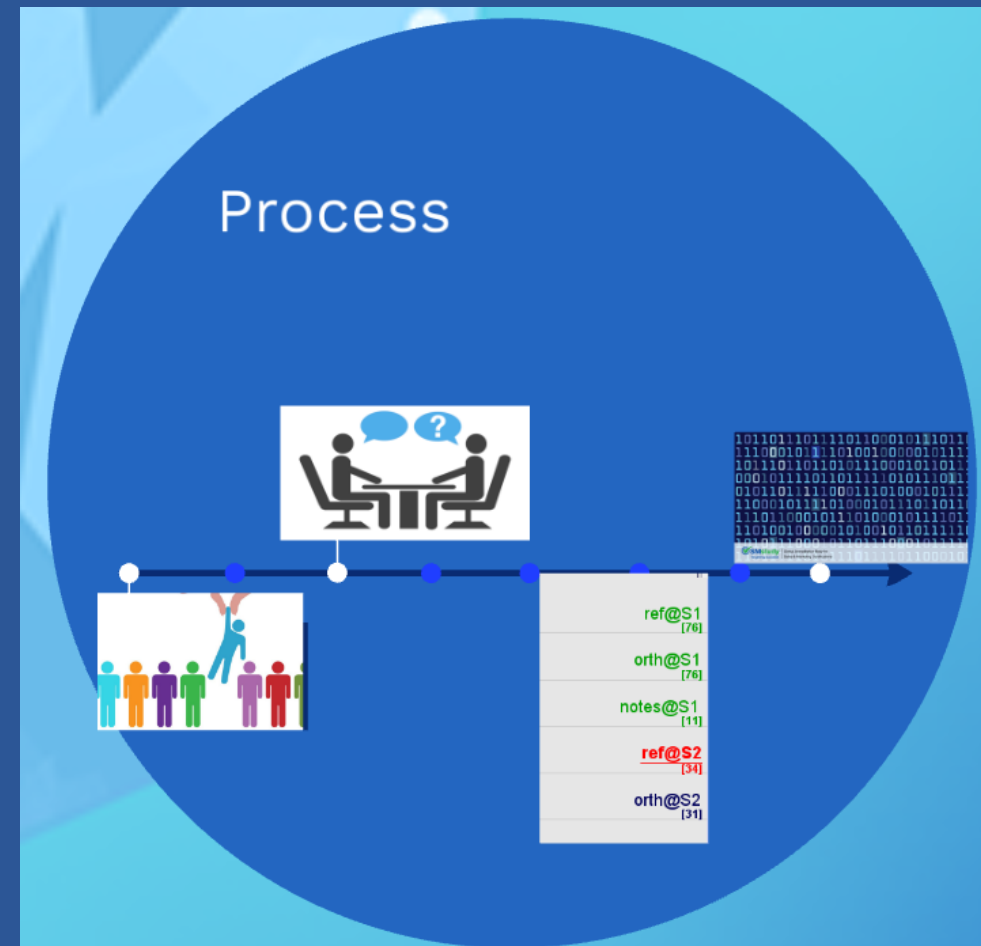


Speaking either Kazan Tatar or Mishar Tatars is the expression of the Tatariness in Estonia and attending events like the World Congress of Tatars in the All-World Tatar Youth Forum, Faller (2011: 301 in Klaas 2015: 10) put it bluntly, as “introductiong young Tatars to each over so that they might marry and produce Tatar children”.

# METHOD

- Open-ended questionnaire
- Semi-structured interviews
- Questionnaires in Estonian, Russian, Tatar
- Approx. 8 hours total recorded digitally and transcribed
- ELAN transcription tool
- Snowball and random sampling
- Since Jan 2019 – Jan 2022

Tatar parents and children; (14) respondents (5 mothers and 3 fathers), who live in Harju, Tartu and Ida-Viru County.



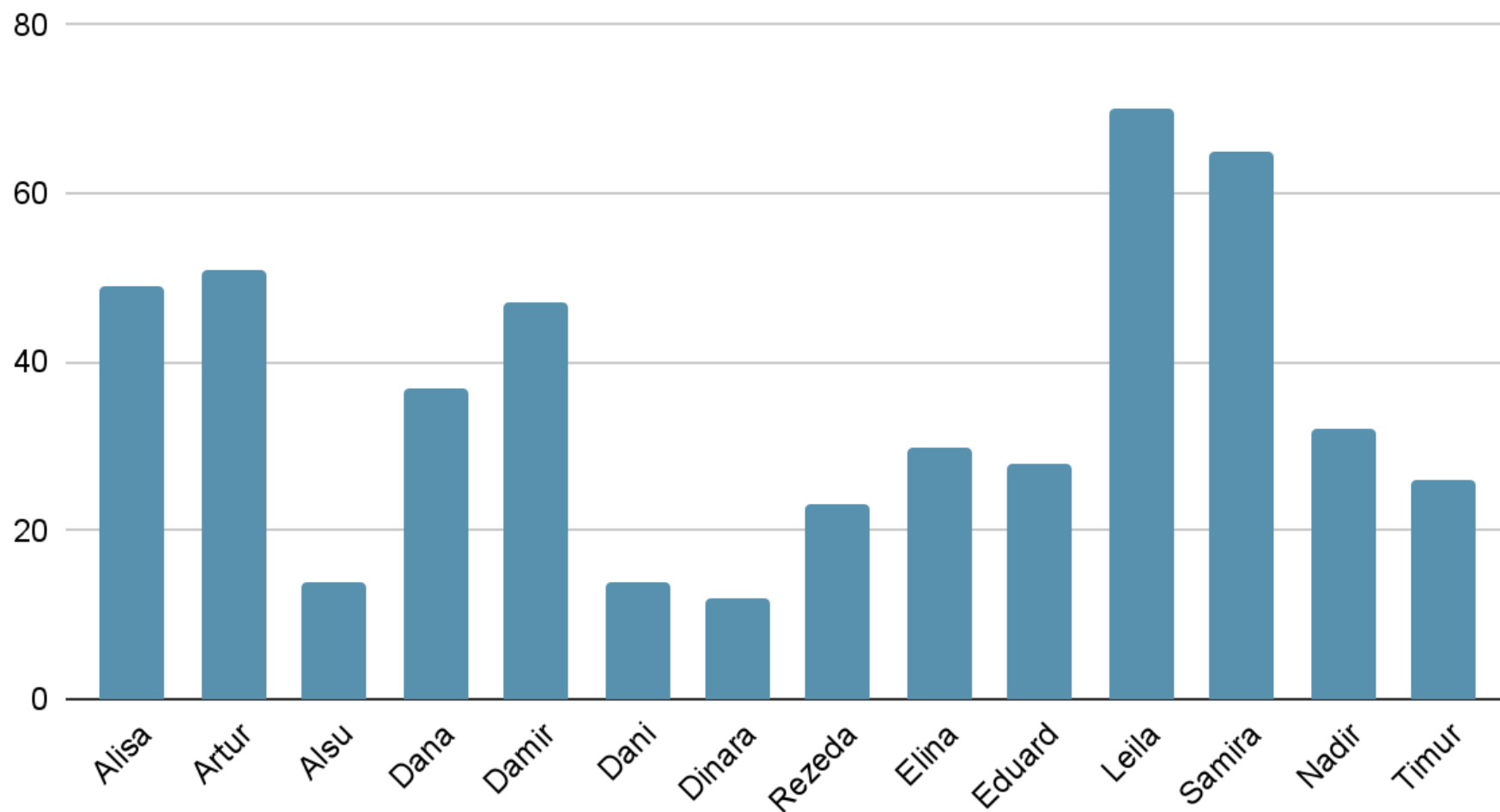


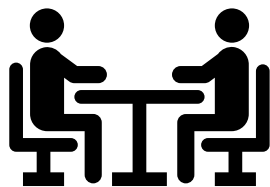
# Profile of Respondents (1)

Family	Informant	Age	Main language	Place of Birth	Place of Residence
Ansar family	Alisa	49	Tatar	Udmurtia, Russia (Located in Estonia since 1977)	Maardu
	Artur	51	Tatar	Republic of Tatarstan, Russia (Located in Estonia since 1990)	Maardu
	Alsu	14	Tatar	Maardu	Maardu
Din family	Dana	37	Tatar	Orenburg oblast, Russia (Located in Estonia since 1995)	Tallinn
	Damir	47	Tatar	Tallinn	Tallinn
	Dani	14	Tatar	Tallinn	Tallinn
	Dinara	12	Tatar	Tallinn	Tallinn

Family	Informant	Age	Main language	Place of Birth	Place of Residence
<b>Roza family</b>	Rezeda	23	Russian	Tallinn	Tallinn
<b>Emir family</b>	Elina	30	Tatar	Maardu	Maardu
	Eduard	28	Tatar	Republic of Tatarstan, Russia (Located in Estonia since 2014)	Maardu
<b>Layyan family</b>	Leila	70	Tatar	Narva	Narva
<b>Sabah family</b>	Samira	65	Tatar	Narva	Narva
<b>Nassir family</b>	Nadir	32	Tatar	Tallinn	Tallinn
<b>Timer family</b>	Timur	26	Estonian	Narva	Tartu

## Informantide vanus





# Language Practice (1)

*Artur: Русский язык и литература были как иностранные языки в школе.*

*Alisa: У него произошёл резкий переход, резкая смена языка общения и учёбы.*

*Artur: Да, вот было тяжело конечно.. Пока переведёшь ихний вопрос у себя в голове, пока сформулируешь ((ответ)), много времени заняло и иногда не успевал и отвечать.*

*'Russian language and literature were foreign language subjects at (my) school.*

*He had drastic change, spoken and study language changed. Yes, of course it was difficult.. The time it took to translate their question in my head then to put in words ((an answer)), it took a while, sometimes I couldn't even answer.*

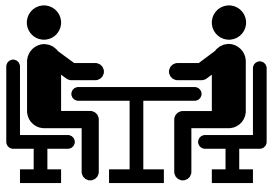
*-Mis keeli Te veel kasutasite kodus?*

*Kõiki keeli kasutasime, eesti, vene keelt ka, kõik kolm keelt.*

***-What there the other languages you spoke at home?***

*Nadir: We spoke all languages, Estonian, Russian also, all three languages.*

# Language Practice (2)



*Timur: Olin 5-aastasena kolinud perega Tallinnasse ja sõbrad olid eestlased, naabrilapsed olid kõik eestlased, mängisime segakeeles, ei tea kuidas üksteisest aru saime.*

*At age of 5 I moved with my family to Tallinn (from Sillamäe) and all our neighbours kids were Estonians, we played in mixed language, no idea how we understood each other.*

## Secret Language

*Timur: See (bulgaaria keel) oligi just ema ja isa vaheline salakeel, et mu vanem õde tahtis ja ema õpetas talle (bulgaaria keelt).*

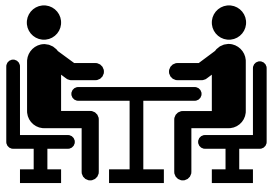
*Bulgarian language was mom and dad's secret language, so my sister wanted to learn and my mom taught her.*

*Timur: Meie vanemad ei teadnud inglise keelt hästi siis me saime salaja õega rääkida.*

*Our parents did not know English that well so we could speak secretly with my (younger) sister.*



# Language Management



*Alisa: Вот когда у нас родилась дочь, и к нам приходили в гости родственники, мы говорили своим родственникам, что 'нельзя' говорить на русском, дяди.. тёти, их дети когда к нам приходили*

*Artur: тоже свой язык подтягивали, вот сейчас уже взрослые и нам благодарны!*

*'When our daughter was born, and people came to visit we said to our relatives that it's not allowed to speak in Russian. When uncles and aunties children came to visit for instance*

*They enriched their language as well ((Tatar)) like that, now children are grown and very thankful to us.'*

***If you could go back in time, would you prefer Russian speaking school?***

*Alsu: I think I would stick with the same decision (.) because I went to Estonian ((speaking)) school I know Estonian better now and have more opportunities now in work and personal life, knowing many languages and it's always helpful.*

# Language Ideologies

*Dana: В Советское время было определённое отношение к религиям и верующим./---/, бабушка в своё время говорила “не говори на языке кяфиров”, это она имела ввиду русский, /---/было всё один язык - тюркский язык, и его название мусульманский язык. /--/*

*‘There was a certain attitude towards religions and believers /---/, granny use to say in her time “don’t speak in Kafirs language”, she meant by that Russian /---/ in nowadays Russia Caucasasia and other Republics, but in old times it was just one language - Turkic and it was named Muslims language.*

# Prejudices Towards Education

*Damir: /---/ они не становятся эстонцами “эстонизируются” как некоторые люди боятся, они с такой легкостью переходят с одного языка на другой.*

*‘/---/ they are not becoming Estonian like some people are afraid, they are switching between languages so easily’*

*Dana: Я думаю вообще что те, кто учатся в эстонской школе, там преподают языки хорошо, и дети владеют иностранными языками вообще лучше и есть дальше возможности учиться в университете в Эстонии.*

*‘I think in general, those who studied in Estonian language schools, the foreign languages are being taught well, and they learn generally foreign language better and have more opportunities in future to study in universities in Estonia.*

# Foreign vs Home language

*было ли у Вас желание отдать в русскоязычную?*

*Damir: Нет, у нас же был в самом начале как-то осознанный выбор именно чтобы их отдать в эстонский садик и в дальнейшем в эстонскую школу, чтобы они во первых себя комфортно чувствовали в той стране которой родились в которой живут и чтобы у них не было таких 'проблем' которые.. ну есть у нас.. из-за такого недостаточного владения языка, что вроде учишь: учишь, а как чувство как иностранцы. Для них я думаю они не считают, что это какой-то иностранный язык.*

***Did you ever wish to enroll Your children in a Russian speaking school?***

*No, we agreed in the very beginning it was our conscious decision to enroll children in Estonian speaking school, so that they firstly would feel comfortable in the environment in which they were born and are living in, so that they won't have such 'problems', like ((.)) we do due to weak command of ((Estonian)), that studying but feeling still like foreigners. I think they don't have that feeling, they don't feel like it's a foreign language'.*

# Mother Tongue vs Estonian Language

*Nadir: “Mu vanemad tegid sellist, nagu (..) ee.. väga targasti selles mõttes, et nad alguses rääkisid minuga aint tatari keeles sest see on noh, teadsid, et see on kõige lihtsam viis õpetada aga siis mind pandi eesti lasteaeda ja siis ma õppisin seal eesti keele selgeks, seal nagu lasteaias tegelikult ja siis pärast seda kui ma läksin ma.. (Mina: kooli?) noh koolis jätkas samamoodi, et ma kuskil seal koolis noh kuna ma rääkisin eesti keelt hästi palju ja mu sõbrad olid eesti keeles siis ma minu jaoks sai eesti keel minu jaoks nagu esimene keel onju, et ta ei ole emakeel aga ta on keel, mida ma valdan paremini kui tatari oluliselt, et jah.”*

*My parents did such, like (..)ee.. Very smart in a sense that, they started in the beginning to speak only in Tatar because they knew it's the easiest way to teach but then I was put into Estonian kindergarten and then I learned there Estonian and after I went to (Me: school?) well at school continued same, around school time well, because I spoke Estonian a lot and my friends spoke in Estonian then for me Estonian is my first language, it's not mother tongue alright, but it's the language which I know considerably better than Tatar, so yeah.”*



# Interest, time, motivation

*Nadir: „--Ma ise korraldasin sellist tatari jalgpalli meeskonda aga motivatsioon on selline asi, mida raske hoida, võib-olla saan vanemaks ja tekkib rohkem huvi ja aega.“*

*I organized myself Tatar football team but motivation is such thing, hard to keep up, maybe when I will become parent myself then will get interest and time.*

# Motivational Factors

Nadir: „—Kui mul lapsed tulevad, võib-olla tekib rohkem motivatsiooni õpetada oma lastele tatari keelt aga praegu ma oma naisele ei viitsi küll keelt õpetada, mu ema ja õde viitsivad rohkem.“

When I will get my own children, maybe then I will get more motivation to teach them Tatar but now I don't have any willingness to teach Tatar to my wife, my mom and sister have that more.

Nadir: “Käisime tatari laagrites, kus õppisime rohkem--“

We (he and his sister) went to Tatar camps, where we learned more--.

Nadir: “Ma olen islamiusuline, elan Eestis siukses huvitavas peres, räägin kolmes keeles, nagu kultuuri mõttes selline unikaalne olukord--, aktsendivabalt räägin eesti keelt--.“

I am Muslim, living in Estonia in such interesting family, I speak three languages, like in a culture sense such unique situation--, speaking Estonian without any accent--.

# Cognitive Decision

*Dana: Они иногда говорят на эстонском языке, если хотят чтобы их понимали.*

*Sometimes children speak in Estonian with each other, if they want others to understand them.*

*Eduard: Если они заставят друг друга то да ((будут говорить на татарском)), а так русский, просто ((детям)) легче.*

*'If they push themselves into ((speaking Tatar)) then yes, otherwise in Russian, it's just easier for ((them)).*

*Rezeda: If public media then in Russian, when it's some sort of scholarly article then in Estonian, that is somehow easier for me to read, because I am 'used' to study in Estonian.*

# Future Perspective

*Dani (14 y/o): Дайте-ка я подумаю (..) я думаю, больше всего буду общаться либо на русском либо на английском.*

*'Let me think(..) I think that I will speak mostly in Russian or English.'*

*Alisa: Если дочь здесь останется, то в университете эстонский, дома татарский.*

*'If daughter will stay here then in university Estonian and Tatar at home.'*

*Leila (70 y/o): «Я думаю молодёжь будет больше общаться и на английском в том числе, но это и не плохо.»*

*'I think the youth will speak more in English (among other languages) but that's not bad.'*

## Primary results

Children attend Estonian speaking schools and nurseries.

Command of Estonian among parents is sufficient, all parents agree that it could be better.

Parents prefer Estonian as a language of children's education.

Parents are creating conditions and favorable environment in the family for their children so that they could understand Tatar and use it.

A  
G



# Results

To conclude, there is a certain shift towards Estonian language among Tatars.

Parents and youth are claiming more benefit in being raised as multilingual.

Among the current informants there was one family, who speaks exclusively Tatar at home, other families mix languages in conversations.

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