

# The Russian Language Outside the Nation

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Edited by Lara Ryazanova-Clarke

EDINBURGH  
University Press

## To my mum Rida

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Edinburgh University Press Ltd  
The Tun – Holyrood Road  
12 (2f) Jackson’s Entry  
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ  
www.euppublishing.com

Typeset in 11/13 Monotype Ehrhardt by  
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire,  
and printed and bound in Great Britain by  
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 6845 8 (hardback)  
ISBN 978 0 7486 6846 5 (webready PDF)

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# Ethnolinguistic Vitality and Acculturation Orientations of Russian Speakers in Estonia

*Martin Ehala and Anastassia Zabrodskaja*

## INTRODUCTION

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Ethnolinguistic vitality ‘is that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations’ (Giles et al. 1977: 308). It was suggested that groups that have little vitality are likely to cease to exist as distinctive collectives, while those that have high vitality are likely to survive. Traditionally, ethnolinguistic vitality is divided into objective and subjective vitality (Bourhis et al. 1981). Objective vitality is determined by three structural variables: demography, institutional support and status (Giles et al. 1977); while subjective vitality is understood as ‘group members’ subjective assessment of in-group/out-group vitality’, which ‘may be as important in determining sociolinguistic and interethnic behaviour as the group’s objective vitality’ (Harwood et al. 1994: 175). In this chapter, ethnolinguistic vitality is understood as a perception of ‘groupness’, together with emotional attachment to this group and readiness to act collectively as a group (see Ehala 2008a, 2010b); thus our approach is social psychological in nature and close to traditional subjective vitality studies, although the framework is considerably extended.

As a social psychological phenomenon, vitality is tightly connected to ethnic/linguistic identity. According to Omoniyi and White ‘the sociolinguistics of identity focuses on the ways in which people position or construct themselves and are positioned or constructed by others in socio-cultural situations through the instrumentality of language and with reference to all the variables that comprise identity markers for each community’ (2006: 1). In this chapter, we concur with Bendle (2002) that identity construction is an ongoing, lifelong project in which individuals constantly attempt to maintain a ‘sense of balance’ that depends on the

context in which they live. In the Estonian setting, micro-sociolinguistic factors (language aptitude, attitudes towards an official language and experience in studying it, an exposure to language policy matters, and knowledge of history) and macro-sociolinguistic factors (the prestige of the first and second (= official) languages, the language planning climate, attitudes between majority and minority language groups, and so on) certainly influence how informants exploited different issues during the interview for the purpose of self-identification. Through this relationship to the context, Russian speakers' identity construction in Estonia is certainly intermingled with their own acculturation orientations, as well as with the acculturation orientations of the members of the majority group.

The purpose of the present study is to analyse ethnic and linguistic affiliations and identity construction by Russian speakers in Estonia by triangulating the results of a quantitative study of ethnolinguistic vitality with the data obtained from focus group interviews about Russian speakers' reflections on their ethnic and linguistic identities and intergroup relations in Estonia. The quantitative data disclosed several subgroups amongst the Russian-speaking community in Estonia, characterised by variable perceptions of Russian speakers as a group and their own attachment to this group. Qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed some of the reasoning behind these perceptions, together with the ways people maintained the 'sense of balance' in their identity positioning.

The chapter is organised as follows. First, the theoretical background for ethnolinguistic vitality is formulated along with a refined vitality model (see Ehala 2008a, 2010b), which was used as a main theoretical framework. The chapter continues with an explanation of the Estonian sociolinguistic situation. Then the methodologies of both the quantitative study and focus group interviews are addressed. Finally, we present the results of the quantitative study of the ethnolinguistic vitality of Russian speakers in Estonia. The results are combined with the analysis of the qualitative interviews, which aim to further our understanding of ethnolinguistic processes among Russian speakers.

#### MEASURING ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY: INTRODUCING THE V-MODEL

Over thirty years have passed since the introduction of the notion of ethnolinguistic vitality. During this time, a large body of research has accumulated, though the vitality framework has not yet managed to establish itself as a genuine field of study bridging sociolinguistics,

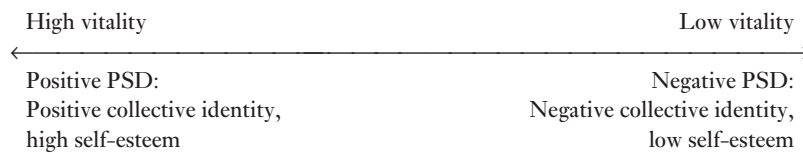
cultural studies and social psychology (see Hogg 2006; Taylor and Usborne 2007). Although the concept of vitality is intuitively clear and has remained attractive for researchers, it is very hard to operationalise. Therefore, vitality studies have not led to the refinement of the theory, despite the severe criticism the theory has occasionally attracted (see Husband and Saifullah Khan 1982). To overcome this weakness, Ehala (2005; 2008a; 2010a; 2010b) has been developing a formal model of ethnolinguistic vitality that can be used to obtain directly comparable data from distinctive interethnic contact situations – the V-model. Relying on the social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and previous models of ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles et al. 1977; Sachdev and Bourhis 1993; Allard and Landry 1994; Landry et al. 1996; Bourhis 2001), this model specifies the structural relationships between its four key variables that affect the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups: (1) perceived strength differential (PSD) between the in-group ('us') and the most prominent out-group ('them'); (2) the level of intergroup discordance (D); (3) perceived intergroup distance (R); and (4) the level of utilitarianism (U) in the value system of the group studied.

All these factors are socio-psychological, and they reflect group members' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about their own group and the interethnic relations in the setting where they are living. The mathematical V-model is operationalised in a way that makes it possible to assess these factors on a scale, so that each respondent is characterised by a vitality score. By calculating the average score for the sample and/or finding subgroups with different vitality scores, it becomes possible to assess the vitality of a given group, that is, its readiness to act as a collective entity in intergroup relations. Below we will characterise each of the subcomponents of the V-model in more detail.

### **Perceived strength differential (PSD)**

The driving force behind language shift is the power difference between dominant and minority groups. Language and identity maintenance depend on the opportunities and rewards, real or symbolic (including positive social identity), that the competing groups can provide for their members. The sum of these factors can be called the perceived strength of the group.

However, for group vitality, the crucial factor is not perceived strength itself, but the perceived strength differential between the in-group and the most prominent out-group. The reason is that groups exist in their socio-historical settings and the perception of the strength of the 'us' group depends on the relative strengths of the 'them' group



**Figure 6.1** Interdependence between group vitality and the perceived strength of the groups

(see Figure 6.1). In general, if the PSD is small, the benefits from shifting one's group membership do not outweigh the emotional and social costs. The more the PSD is in favour of the out-group, the more toward the beneficial it would seem to shift identity. Thus, provided that the influence of all other factors is zero, the  $V$  of the group would be equal to the differential of the perceived strengths ( $S_{we}$  and  $S_{they}$ ) of the minority (in our case, Russian-speaking) and majority (Estonian-speaking) groups. Mathematically, this can be formulated as follows:  $V = PSD = S_{we} - S_{they}$ . If  $V < 0$ , then the group has low vitality; in other words, it has a low potential to act as a group, a condition that may lead to identity and language shift. If  $V \geq 0$ , then the group is vital, i.e. it is able to function as a group and to maintain its identity over time.

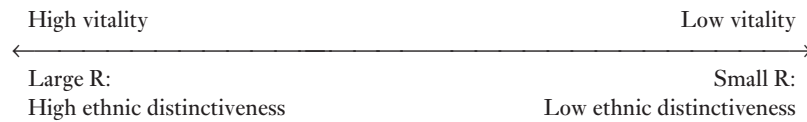
### Intergroup distance (R)

Although PSD is the driving force behind identity and language shift, it is certainly affected by other factors that either hinder or enhance this tendency. One such factor is intergroup distance (R). This is a complex factor that relates to the extent of the intergroup contact and the distinctiveness of features characterising the group.

The resistance to intergroup contact expresses a group's disposition to maintain its in-group networks, while the environment offers opportunities for the development of a different network that unavoidably weakens the heritage network (Landry et al. 1996). Sanders (2002) discusses several cases where ethnic entrepreneurship was able to provide resources for the community, thus reducing the need for contacts with outside communities. Thus, a disposition to maintain segregative minority networks would enhance the  $V$  of the group, despite a large negative PSD.

The network structure, in turn, is heavily related to language usage: as the intergroup contact often involves two languages, network structure determines language usage patterns. The more numerous the contacts of the minority group with the dominant out-group, the more the dominant





**Figure 6.2** Interdependence between group vitality and intergroup distance

language is used. This means that the language usage pattern is often a good indicator of the extent of intergroup contact.

Besides language, intergroup distance can also be marked by other features, such as religion and other cultural practices (Myhill 2003), as well as racial features. Sanders (2002: 342) refers to a number of studies indicating the inhibitory effect that individuals' distinctive racial features have on their choice of possible ethnic identities. For example, dark-skinned West Indian children living in New York City have severely limited options with regard to ethnic identity, as they are persistently identified as African Americans (Waters 1994). Also, second-generation Asian Indians with dark skin are not able to avoid racial marginality in the United States (Rajagopal 2000), whereas lighter-skinned groups, particularly biracial children who have one Asian parent, have more choices (Xie and Goyette 1997).

Ultimately, the intergroup distance is dependent on the symbolic and discursive factors that establish the norms concerning the acceptability, extent and nature of intergroup contacts; this is also related to ethnic distinctiveness (see Figure 6.2). Thus, all factors being equal, the less intergroup contact takes place and the more distinct the groups appear – that is, the larger the intergroup distance – the higher the  $V$  of the group. Mathematically, the relationship of intergroup distance to the other factors can be expressed as:  $V = (S_{we} - S_{they}) / R$ .

Let us assume that the minimal value for  $R$  is 1. This would correspond to the minimal intergroup distance, both in terms of social network and cultural distinctiveness. It would mean a very strong interconnectedness of social networks and a high cultural similarity between the groups. Such a situation may be characteristic of dialect or regional language groups in relation to standard language speakers (Ehala and Niglas 2007). In such cases, it is very easy to shift from one group to the other, and  $R$  has no impact on vitality, which is determined only by the PSD. When  $R$  is larger than 1, this starts to reduce the effect of the negative PSD, because of the costs that are associated with the shift from one group to another. Thus, the larger  $R$  gets, the closer  $V$  gets to zero, in other words, the point where the benefits of identity shift are cancelled out by the costs. At this point, there would be no motivation

for identity shift by the minority group members, and thus the minority group would remain sustainable.

### Utilitarianism (U)

U is a value system that justifies pragmatic and economically beneficial courses of action. Scollon and Scollon (1995: 116) describe the basic principles of utilitarian discourse as follows: (1) humans are defined as rational economic entities, (2) 'good' is defined as that which will provide the greatest happiness to the greatest number, and (3) values are established by statistical (that is, quantitative) means.

Each culture, though, functions as interplay of rational and emotional motivations, and utilitarian principles are balanced by what can be called the traditionalist discourse, according to which: (1) the essence of humanity is emotional; (2) the notion of 'good' is set by the moral authority; and (3) values are defined by tradition. The traditionalist discourse expresses the group members' commitment to their cultural practices and values. In a balanced culture, utilitarian and traditionalist values are in modest conflict, the two sides of which are rational efficiency and tradition, which is a characteristic of many well-functioning societies. This opposition is well recognised by the major theories of human values, such as Schwartz (1992; 2006) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005), although all authors use their own terminology.

As the utilitarian principles are discursive, different groups may vary in respect to the salience of the utilitarian and traditionalist values in their culture. Although the level of utilitarianism and traditionalism can form different combinations (Ehala 2012), two of them are directly relevant to language and identity maintenance. Groups which are very low in utilitarianism while holding strongly traditionalist values tend to be highly committed to their social identity (see Figure 6.3). For example, some religious groups (such as the Amish or the Russian Old Believers in Estonia<sup>1</sup>) are so traditionalist that they hardly assimilate at all, despite their supposedly large negative PSD with the mainstream society. This value configuration would support language and identity maintenance. If the group tends towards utilitarian values while traditional values are disfavoured, the group members are more predisposed to abandon heritage traditions, as maintaining them seems costly, meaningless and/or backward. Such a value configuration would reduce V. For example, Sue Harris Russell (2000) reports the case of the New Guinean Gapun, whose speakers adhere to a value system oriented towards inter-individual competition, which promotes a shift towards Tok Pisin as a tool to raise one's status in Gapun society. Lewis's (2000: 95) analysis

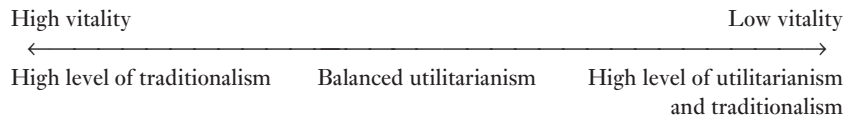


Figure 6.3 Interdependence between group vitality and group value system

shows that those Guatemalan Mayan communities that were more open to innovations and economic development were also the most affected by language shift. If the utilitarian and traditionalist values are balanced,  $U$  does not have an effect on  $V$ .

The index  $U$  captures this regularity. It is calculated as the differential between adherence to utilitarian ( $ut$ ) and traditional ( $tr$ ) value systems: ( $U = ut - tr + 1$ ). It is higher than 1 when the group tends to be utilitarian, while displaying a low level of traditional values, and lower than 1 when the group is low in utilitarian and high in traditional values. Therefore, the higher the  $U$ , the more it reduces vitality. Given this, utilitarianism can be included in the formula in the following way:  $V = U \cdot (S_{we} - S_{they}) / R$ . This means that if the value of  $U$  is 1 (balanced utilitarianism and traditionalism), its impact on overall vitality can be disregarded. If the value of  $U$  falls below 1, it starts to reduce the negative value of PSD. When  $U$  reaches 0, the whole equation becomes equal to 0, meaning that the group is so traditional that it has no inclination for identity shift towards the majority. If the value of  $U$  is greater than 1, the effects of PSD start to increase, causing the  $V$  value to drop.

### Intergroup discordance (D-factor)

D-factor expresses the perceived illegitimacy of intergroup power relations, as well as distrust towards the dominant majority. Although legitimacy and distrust are clearly distinct concepts, they are inter-related. It is well known that some low-status groups tend to show out-group favouritism, i.e. a minority group member's tendency to see the dominant majority in a more positive light than his/her own group (Sachdev and Bourhis 1991), and that the perception of a more powerful group is dependent on the degree of the perceived legitimacy of their power (Zelditch 2001). This would imply that the more the intergroup power relations are perceived as legitimate by the low-status group, the more positive their perception of the high-status out-group is. Batalha et al. (2007) offer empirical support for this hypothesis, showing how the dominant group with legitimate power is perceived as being more

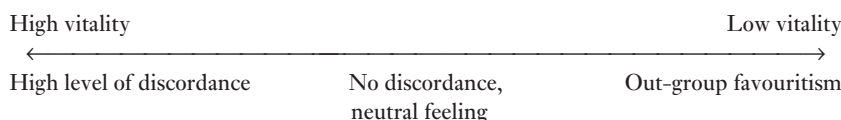


Figure 6.4 Interdependence between group vitality and intergroup discordance

intelligent and responsible. There is also some empirical indication that the larger the perceived illegitimacy of the situation, the higher the level of distrust towards the dominant out-group: for Russian speakers in Estonia, the correlation between perceptions of illegitimacy of the power position of Estonian speakers and the extent of distrust towards them have a fairly solid correlation:  $r = 0.368$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Ehala and Zabrodskaia 2011: 236). Thus, provided that there is typically a positive correlation between perceptions of illegitimacy and distrust, it would be reasonable to calculate the D-factor as the mean value of these two factors. The relationship between the D-factor and the other components of V needs to be specified, too. It would be reasonable to assume that the larger the negative PSD and the lower the value of D (that is, the more legitimate the situation is considered, and the more trustful the attitudes towards the out-group are), the lower the vitality (see Figure 6.4). In such a situation, the low-status group is unlikely to challenge the existing power relations, as it feels too weak and perceives its low status as legitimate. The smaller the negative PSD and/or the higher D, the higher the vitality, as the low-status group has both the motivation (to establish justice) and the perceived strength to change the power relations. When the D-factor is incorporated, the V formula takes the following form:  $V = U ((S_{we} - S_{they}) + D) / R$ .

It is reasonable to assume that in a case where there is neither perceived discordance towards the out-group nor perceived out-group favouritism, the value of D would be equal to zero, in other words, it would not affect the value of V. The higher the positive value of D, the more it will reduce the negative value of PSD, leading to higher values of V. If D has a negative value (indicating out-group favouritism), it will increase the negative value of PSD, leading to lower values of V.

In sum, vitality factors can be divided into rational (cognitive) and emotional (affective) ones. While the former include perceived strength differential (PSD) and intergroup distance (R), the latter are traditionalism/utilitarianism (U) and intergroup discordance (D). By measuring these factors, we can draw a vitality profile of a group. This profile might help to predict the group's interethnic behaviour and acculturation orientations.

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 RUSSIAN SPEAKERS AND THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE  
 IN ESTONIA: A SHORT OVERVIEW
 

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Russian is one of the minority languages spoken in Estonia. The position of the Russian speakers<sup>2</sup> in post-Soviet Estonia, who represent 31.7% of the population according to the 2000 census (Statistical Office of Estonia), falls into the conflicting and contested narratives. According to the contemporary Estonian nationalising discourse, they are not considered an autochthonous minority. Estonian legislators and language policy makers believe that, as the migration of Russian speakers to the Baltic countries was encouraged during Soviet rule (1940–41, 1944–91) by the central authorities, this group can be characterised as colonisers rather than immigrants, because Russian speakers, in their view, never conceptualised Estonia as a separate country, even though formally Soviet Estonia was regarded as a state in the Soviet Union (on the language situation in Estonia, see Kolstø 1995; Rannut 1995; 2004; 2008; Smith 1998; Verschik 2005; 2008: 25–47). This official position causes tensions with a third of the population of Estonia, who do not see themselves as colonisers.

There have been attempts to raise the status of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia by associating its origin with the liberation of Estonia from the fascist occupation, but these attempts have met strong resistance from the proponents of the official narrative (Ehala 2009). There have also been attempts to define the Russian-speaking community in Estonia as a transitional minority that is in the process of becoming native (Ehala 2008b), but this has not found acceptance either.

While Estonian was officially formally taught in all Russian-medium schools as a subject during Soviet occupation, most Russian speakers remained monolingual, as Russian was considered the language of intercultural communication within the USSR. Despite the fact that Russian was a compulsory subject in all Estonian-medium schools, proficiency in Russian among Estonian speakers varied according to personal needs, occupation, work requirements and region of residence. In the predominantly Russian-speaking north-eastern part of Estonia, proficiency in Russian was crucial for Estonians. In the other Estonian areas, functional bilingualism was characteristic of those Estonian speakers who had to work in the public sector, the civil service and so on.

Radical changes came about in 1989, when the first Language Law (ENSVK 1989: 60) decreed that ‘in Estonia, the traditional territory of Estonians’, Estonian should attain the status of the language of the state, administration and public discourse (Ozolins 1994: 161). In 1991, the Republic of Estonia was restored *de facto*, with Estonian as the sole offi-

cial language. As a result, competence in the Estonian language among non-Estonian speakers increased from 14% in 1989 to 44.5% in 2000, according to census data (Statistical Office of Estonia). Although the census does not define proficiency and the data are anonymous and self-reported, such self-descriptions can nevertheless be seen as indicators of identity. According to the 2000 census data, younger Russian speakers have a better command of the Estonian language than do their parents. They use Russian when speaking with their parents, but are essentially moving towards using primarily Estonian as they leave school and enter employment (Zabrodskaia 2006).

The following types of variation within the local Russian-speaking community can be established:<sup>3</sup>

1. Regional: the capital Tallinn is a bilingual city, the north-east is predominantly Russian-speaking and the other areas are predominantly Estonian-speaking.
2. Generational: younger people are more likely to know Estonian.
3. Individual: the predominance of Estonian or Russian may depend on identification with Estonia or Russia, proficiency in Estonian, conversational goals, social networks and so on.
4. Internal diversity within the Russian-language community: the willingness and competence to communicate in Estonian may vary between different Russian-speaking groups (for example, the Old Believers who migrated to Estonia in the seventeenth century versus the community that settled during the Soviet time).

Sociolinguistic background information was used as a basis for sample design. Now we turn to the presentation of the methodological paradigm for the current research.

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The sample consisted of 460 Russian speakers selected by a professional survey company from five different sociolinguistic regions in Estonia (see Table 6.1). Questioning was conducted anonymously during the spring of 2008. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 14.0.

As a result, five vitality clusters emerged (see Table 6.2), ranging from the Medium Low Vitality group, consisting of 10% of the respondents, to the Discordant group, with the highest vitality rate (14% of the respondents). The majority of the respondents belonged to three groups, with stable vitality indices but differing from each other in the configuration

**Table 6.1** Design of the sample selection

Regional concentration of sociolinguistic communities	Proportion of Russian speakers in the area (%)	Number of respondents
Rural settlements	1–10	50
Towns and settlements	10–20	70
Western Tallinn	30–50	70
Harjumaa and Lasnamäe	50–80	120
Towns of Ida-Virumaa	80–100	150

**Table 6.2** Five vitality clusters (the extreme values for each variable are given in italics)

	Medium Low	Stable Low Esteem	Stable Integrated	Stable Traditional	Discordant
% of the whole sample	10%	28%	22%	26%	14%
PSD ( $S_{we} - S_{they}$ ) –1.0 . . . 1.0	<i>–0.46</i>	0.37	–0.21	–0.32	–0.07
D –0.25 . . . 0.75	0.03	0.06	0.05	0.17	0.25
U 0 . . . 2	<i>1.04</i>	0.89	0.84	0.59	0.98
R 1.0 . . . 2.0	<i>1.57</i>	1.74	<i>1.57</i>	<i>1.77</i>	1.75
V –2.5 . . . 3.5	–0.31	–0.15	–0.08	–0.05	0.10

of the measured variables. Although the clusters differ from each other in a statistically significant way, it should be noted that they are abstractions over a continuous set of data. Therefore, the descriptions of the clusters represent a prototype rather than a well-bounded set of similar individuals. Also, due to the form of the survey, the results are strictly synchronic, presenting a snapshot that does not reflect possible shifts between the subgroups. In reality, subgroup boundaries are vague and the sizes of the vitality clusters may change over time.

The maintenance or shift of a group's language and identity depends, amongst other things, on discursive choices (the choice of narratives, beliefs and value systems) that become accepted in the group's shared communication space. These discursive choices are constructed on the basis of stereotypical views on characteristic features of both the in-group and the out-group. To obtain insight into these shared discursive features, the quantitative data was triangulated with half-structured interviews having open-ended questions that allowed for differentiated, individual and subjective opinions to be given but also provided a set of responses that could be related to the quantitative data. The interview plan was drafted on the principles of the V-model (see explanation above) and included the following topics: (1) self-categorisation, (2) per-

ceived cultural distance between groups (factor R), (3) possible identity trajectory in the future, (4) appreciation of traditions vs. utilitarianism (factor U), (5) perception of ethnocultural symbolic capital (factor PSD) and (6) perception of interethnic discordance (factor D).

The qualitative research was carried out during the autumn of 2008 by Anastassia Zabrodskaia through four focus-group oral interviews conducted in Russian among Russian-speaking youth from Tallinn and Narva (interviews 1 and 2, respectively), a group of Russian speakers from Narva (interview 3) and another one from Tartu (interview 4). Each group consisted of six people; each interview lasted approximately two and a half hours.

With the methodological discussions presented above in mind, let us now turn to the findings of a combined quantitative-qualitative study on the ethnolinguistic vitality of Russian speakers in Estonia.

#### ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY CLUSTERS AMONG RUSSIAN SPEAKERS IN ESTONIA

In all, there were sixty statements in the questionnaire built on the Likert scale principle, which made it possible to determine the precise frequency of their appearance in the variants' analysis. For the analysis of data, the statements were grouped into four conceptual groups: (1) PSD, (2) R, (3) U and (4) D. The Cronbach alpha values for all four conceptual groups were higher than 0.7, indicating that the division of statements into these conceptual groups was correct and reliable.<sup>4</sup>

To allow for data analysis, the mean values for each conceptual group were calculated. These values were used to compute the V values for each respondent. As the authors were interested not in the V values of individual respondents, but rather in the V differences between sub-groups within the Russian-speaking community, two-step cluster analysis<sup>5</sup> was conducted using the variables PSD, R, U, D and V as input. For a general overview, the characterisation of the clusters is presented in Table 6.2.

##### Medium Low Vitality

The Medium Low Vitality cluster was characterised by a high perceived ethnic weakness of Russian speakers compared to Estonian speakers (PSD = -0.46). The members of this cluster did not perceive any discordance in relations with Estonian-speakers; in fact, their D (-0.03) even indicates a slight favouritism toward the out-group, that is, a



tendency to see Estonian speakers in a very positive light. In terms of their cultural values, this group can be considered to have a slight preference for utilitarianism versus maintaining traditions and heritage culture ( $U = 1.04$ ). The intergroup distance of this group from Estonian speakers was the smallest in all five clusters, but still considerable ( $R = 1.57$ ). All these characteristics led to the lowest  $V$  value amongst the subgroups in this sample ( $-0.31$ ).

The following are the characteristics of a typical representative of this group:

- an Estonian citizen (65%; 1.20<sup>6</sup>),
- a University graduate (26%; 1.86),
- a private sector employee (49%; 1.63),
- has an above average income (21%; 2.33),
- lives in an Estonian dominant town or in the countryside (60%; 2.31).

Among respondents who expressed attitudes and beliefs characteristic of the members of the group is the 28-year-old Malle,<sup>7</sup> who has been bilingual from childhood and has an Estonian first name. She had her primary and secondary education in Russian. She is married to an ethnic Estonian. Her father is also an ethnic Estonian with some German roots. Her mother is Ukrainian. As she said in the interview, her parents did not hand down to her Russian ‘traditions and values’. She too does not maintain her Russian language and cultural dispositions as both her sons have attended Estonian kindergartens and schools. She lives in the Estonian-dominant countryside. Malle received a Master’s degree from the University of Tartu and has worked as a teacher of Estonian in immersion classes. When Malle analyses what has happened to her, she concludes that she has been Estonianised. She is happy about that and even sees Estonians as ‘better family people’ and wants to be similar:

Perhaps, I have been Estonianised. As early as a couple of years ago, maybe even last year, it was, like, in your soul you feel Russian. As I have been living in such an environment, a calmer environment, so to speak [. . .] My husband is Estonian and I am constantly in an Estonian atmosphere, so I feel that I have become less active, less involved in activities let us say [. . .], do not go out, everything is calmer, so to speak [. . .], more attention to the family than to outside communication [. . .] with people [. . .]. It seems to me Estonians give preference more to the family than to friends [. . .]. I am now also starting to show this. (Interview 3, part 1, question 2, M28)<sup>8</sup>

To summarise, Malle's narratives and values indicate and illuminate several aspects of the typical member of this cluster: a very small perceived distance from the out-group, a low level of traditionalism and a degree of out-group favouritism. Malle's acculturation orientation seems clearly pointed to assimilation. This is facilitated by her Estonian-speaking environment and relative socio-economic success.

### Stable Low Esteem

The Stable Vitality Low Self-Esteem cluster had a considerably higher V value ( $-0.15$ ) than the Medium Low Vitality group. This cluster's V value ( $-0.15$ ) is quite close to zero, indicating that the subgroup in general is maintaining its heritage. What makes this cluster special is that they have a clearly traditional value system ( $U = 0.89$ ) and a fairly large intergroup distance from Estonian speakers ( $R = 1.74$ ). They have neutral attitudes towards Estonian speakers ( $D = 0.06$ ), but perceive them as a considerably stronger group than Russian speakers ( $PSD = -0.37$ ).

The following are the characteristics of a typical representative of the above group:

- over 60 years old (17%; 1.21),
- retired (21%; 1.31),
- stateless (28%; 1.27),
- university graduate (17%; 1.21),
- income slightly below average (34%; 1.42),
- lives in eastern Estonia (46%; 1.31).

The 62-year-old Elena is a typical member of this group. She was born in Estonia and now is a pensioner. Before that she worked for many years in the education sector. She received higher education in the 1960s in a Russian university. She has Estonian citizenship, but she maintains that she received it 'only because of my Estonian husband, whose ancestors were citizens of Estonia before [16 June] 1940' (Interview 3, part 1, self-assessment on background information, J62).<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, her limited competence in Estonian would not allow her to get an Estonian passport. Living in a Russian-dominant town, she has almost no contact with Estonian speakers. This contributes to her perception of the cultural distance with them as large:

Firstly, the history of Russians and Estonians, and the historical gene pool are completely different, the national culture – everything, even cuisine – they have *mulgi* [the traditional

Estonian dish – mulgikapsas, which is pickled cabbage cooked with pork and barley], while we have Russian cabbage soup, a Russian consumer culture and Russian consumer habits. (Interview 3, part 2, question 14, J62)

Elena is afraid of moving to an Estonian-dominant area where, she claims, ‘my lack of Estonian language knowledge would limit my social networks or might become a barrier in everyday communication’ (Interview 3, part 3, question 21, J62). Both of her children have completed university and are getting on with their, in her view, significant careers in Estonian society; their knowledge of Estonian is close to mother-tongue level. She considers this to be very important as the family lives in Estonia with Estonian as the only official language. Elena observes Russian cultural traditions, feasts and holidays. As she claims herself, the more her children have become integrated into Estonian society, the more she tends to maintain Russian cultural dispositions and language use in her family.

### Stable Integrated

The Stable Vitality Integrated cluster has a V value of  $-0.08$ , indicating that the subgroup is stable in respect to V. This cluster has an even more traditional value system ( $U = 0.84$ ) than the previous one, and a similarly neutral attitude towards Estonians ( $D = 0.05$ ), but it differs from the Stable Low Esteem group in its small intergroup distance from Estonians ( $R = 1.57$ , the smallest amongst the clusters) and in terms of a lesser perceived strength differential between Estonian- and Russian-speaking groups ( $PSD = -0.21$ ). All this means that this group is well integrated into Estonian society, but has positive self-esteem and is maintaining its cultural and linguistic heritage.

Below are the characteristics of a typical representative of the group:

- under 40 years old (64%; 1.25),
- an Estonian citizen (79%; 1.46),
- works in the public sector (34%; 1.17) or a student (13%; 1.63),
- has an average income (68%; 1.26),
- lives in an Estonian-dominant town or in the countryside (66%; 1.61).

Thirty-year-old Aleksander, who can be considered to be a part of the stable integrated vitality group, works as an IT-specialist in a public company. He graduated from an Estonian university and has almost completed a Master’s degree. He is proud of his nationality, traditions and culture:

But I am Russian and I consider myself Russian and I will never change that in my life because I feel proud overall of being a part of a great nation [. . .] Because I can read a huge amount of literature [. . .]; a huge number of ballets of all sorts, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff. I know that I have all this. I can always, when I need to, read, watch [. . .] Take an example from other nationality, such cultural baggage is not found anywhere else. (Interview 1, part 1, question 1, A30)

Aleksander does not show discordance towards Estonians and is very optimistic about the future relationships between Russians and Estonians. What is more important, in his opinion, is that if the Estonian authorities had given Estonian citizenship to all Russian speakers living in Estonia, then the situation would have been just and equal for every person living in Estonia.

### Stable Traditional

The Stable Vitality Traditional cluster is characterised by the most traditional value system amongst the subgroups ( $U = 0.59$ ). This is accompanied by a distinct feeling of discordance towards Estonians ( $D = 0.17$ ) and the largest intergroup distance from Estonians ( $R = 1.77$ ). Their  $V$  is somewhat lower in terms of their low perceived intergroup strength differential ( $PSD = -0.32$ ), so that their overall  $V$  index ( $-0.05$ ) does not reach a positive value.

Characteristics of a typical representative may be stated as the following:

- 40–60 years old (52%; 1.49),
- a citizen of the Russian Federation (40%; 1.74),
- income below average (43%; 1.16),
- lives in eastern Estonia (50%; 1.43).

The narrative produced by Ignat may be qualified as traditional and has stable vitality. He was born in Cheliabinsk and has been living in Estonia for almost forty years. Having Russian citizenship, he considers himself Russian both linguistically and culturally: ‘I am a citizen, a citizen of Russia, and this is why it is deep down very important to me. I have something to be proud of’ (Interview 4, part 1, self-assessment on background information, I58). He thinks that both Russian and Estonian speakers form groups of almost equal prestige: ‘I think everything is the same, well, maybe except for the upper echelons of power, where there are no Russians’ (Interview 4, part 2, question 14, I58). Ignat has

negative feelings towards the Estonian government, media and politics because they all pay too much attention to the ‘national question [. . .] especially in negative contexts’ (Interview 4, part 6, question 28, I58). The discordance between Russians and Estonians becomes apparent when he talks about the Bronze Soldier relocation.<sup>10</sup>

### Discordant

The Discordant cluster is distinct from the rest of the groups in several respects. First, it considers Estonians and Russian speakers to be almost equal in esteem ( $PSD = -0.07$ ), they have the highest perceived interethnic discordance ( $D = 0.25$ ) and a high intergroup distance from Estonians ( $R = 1.75$ ). Their value system is well balanced between utilitarianism and traditionalism ( $U = 0.98$ ). All this adds up to a positive  $V$  value ( $0.1$ ), indicating that this subgroup is vital, discordant and possibly ready to challenge the interethnic power relations in Estonia.

Characteristics of a typical representative may be stated as the following:

- under 40 years old (70%; 1.37),
- stateless (33%; 1.50),
- income significantly below average (18%; 1.38),
- lives in eastern Estonia (45%; 1.29).

Here, we would refer to Sergei (age 32) who falls in the category of high discordance towards Estonian speakers. He did not complete his university degree as he was unable to pass the Estonian language advanced level test.<sup>11</sup> Working for a private company and having a relatively low income, he has some Estonian colleagues, but he communicates with them, as he puts it, ‘in Russian, of course’ (Interview 3, part 3, question 21, S32). A holder of a Russian passport, he would like, if only he could, to have a dual Russian–Estonian citizenship. He feels offended by the Estonian citizenship law and regulations and makes negative generalised statements about Estonians (Interview 3, part 2, question 14, S32 and question 7, S32). The following is an excerpt from his testimony:

At least for me, they should have given citizenship from the very beginning because I was born here [. . .]: I think that this is enough. Then I would have a completely different attitude towards this country. I received Russian citizenship because Russia was the only country [. . .], because I did not want to be a stateless person, absolutely [. . .]. They were prepared to give it to

me just because I exist, that is, I did not have to prove to them anything or convince them in any way[. . .], for me, it was enough only to be, so that my existence is recognised [. . .]. And it is for that I am very grateful to them. (Interview 3, part 1, self-assessment on background information, S32)

To summarise, Sergei's insufficient competence in Estonian narrows down his career opportunities and life prospects. His contacts with Estonian speakers remain limited, and motivation to learn Estonian is low. He shows a low propensity for linguistic accommodation and a distinct feeling of discordance towards Estonian speakers and the Estonian state.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results show that Russian speakers living in Estonia do not form a single unitary category which has a uniform value system and attitudes. Instead, the Russian-speaking community is quite diverse in respect to their beliefs and attitudes. Several different subgroups can be distinguished that differ from each other in a number of parameters. Consequently, it is not possible to talk about or assess the ethnolinguistic vitality of the whole Russian-speaking community in Estonia as a unit, as different subgroups display different tendencies in regard to culture and language maintenance or assimilation. On the one hand, there are subgroups which have a tendency towards social mobility and integration, but not all of these subgroups are prone to language and identity shift. On the other hand, there are subgroups that have a clear preference for language maintenance but, as the quantitative analysis shows, only a small minority (the Discordant cluster, consisting of 14% of the sample) have the potential to challenge the current interethnic status quo in Estonia.

As the study indicates, both linguistic environment and social networks are strong factors of ethnolinguistic identity. The ethnolinguistic vitality of Russian speakers in the towns is higher than in the rural areas, which are either dominated by Estonian speakers or are characterised by tighter interethnic social networks. Qualitative data confirm that Russian speakers' attitudes towards Estonian speakers are dependent on their educational and professional success. Intergroup discordance fosters the maintenance of traditional ethnic boundaries, leading to a segregative acculturation orientation. Therefore, the ethnolinguistic vitality of those Russian speakers who have an above average income and a university

degree is usually lower than that of those who have difficulties in getting on in Estonian society.

Overall, based on the quantitative analysis, it is evident that the maintenance of the Russian language and culture in Estonia is safe at present (see the relatively high intergroup distance (R) scores and low Utilitarianism (U) scores in Table 6.2 for most of the clusters), although there is some assimilation of Russian speakers to the Estonian majority (the cluster of Medium Low Vitality, about 10% of the sample).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research leading to these results has received funding from the Estonian Science Fund under grant agreement no. ETF7350 'Ethnolinguistic vitality and identity construction: Estonia in the Baltic background'. Oral data collected from the interviews was analysed for the study on 'Transfer of morphosyntactic patterns in the Estonian-Russian contact setting' (Mobilitas Postdoctoral Research Grant MJD96).

#### NOTES

1. The Old Believers (*starovery* or *staroobriadtsy*) abandoned the Russian Orthodox Church after 1666–7 in protest against the church reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon; in order to escape from religious persecution in Russia, they settled on the western coast of Lake Peipus in Estonia.
2. Russian is spoken as the first language by ethnic Russians, as well as by many Ukrainians, Belarusians and members of other ethnicities in Estonia. In the Estonian context, first language is the main boundary feature between Estonians, whose ethnic identity relies heavily on native fluency in Estonian, and the rest. As the number of native Estonian speakers who consider their ethnic identity to be something else than Estonian is negligible, we use the terms Estonians and Russian speakers in this paper as two identity categorisations of the same level, even though the reality is somewhat more complex.
3. For more information on diversity among Estonian Russian-speakers, see Rannut 2008: 155–8; Verschik 2008: 25–47.
4. Cronbach's alpha shows how great the correlation between different statements present within the same group is. The higher the value's index is, the stronger the questions are related to one another, forming a single whole to which a general name (a category) can be given. A general rule is the following: the questions relate one to another if the index of Cronbach's alpha is equal or larger than the value 0.7 (Cronbach 1951).
5. The two-step cluster analysis is a statistical tool for revealing natural groupings (or clusters) within a dataset that would not otherwise be apparent. Unlike the

traditional clustering methods, two-step analysis makes it possible to analyse large data files. By comparing the values of a model-choice criterion across different clustering solutions, the procedure can automatically determine the optimal number of clusters. This makes it possible to explore the data for a best solution by not imposing the number of clusters arbitrarily beforehand.

6. This index shows how many times the proportion of people belonging to this category is higher in this cluster than in the whole sample. For example, for 65%, 1.20 here means that in this cluster, there are 65% of those having Estonian citizenship and this ratio is 1.2 times higher than the whole sample. This also means that in some other cluster the ratio of Estonian citizens should be less than in the whole sample. Therefore, the differences between clusters are large even if the deviations from the whole sample may not seem particularly large.
7. For reasons of confidentiality, all names have been changed.
8. Translation from Russian is mine. In order to indicate a pause, I use [. . .].
9. It should be noted that Estonian adult citizenship is based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*: citizenship is not determined by place of birth but by having an ancestor who was a citizen of Estonia before 16 June 1940 (see Zabrodskaia 2009: 62–3 and the Introduction to this volume).
10. The Bronze Soldier is a WWII monument that became the centre of identity battles beginning in 2004 and was relocated by the Estonian government in May 2007. The relocation was followed by large-scale riots of mostly Russian-speaking youth; see Ehala (2009) for details.
11. Some universities require that advanced level state examinations in Estonian be taken before the final examinations for a bachelor's degree. See Zabrodskaia (2009) on the language testing system in Estonia.

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