

This article was downloaded by: [Ehala, Martin]

On: 19 March 2011

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 935124365]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t794297829>

### Hot and cold ethnicities: modes of Ethnolinguistic Vitality

Martin Ehala<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia

Online publication date: 18 March 2011

**To cite this Article** Ehala, Martin(2011) 'Hot and cold ethnicities: modes of Ethnolinguistic Vitality', Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 32: 2, 187 – 200

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2010.541919

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2010.541919>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## Hot and cold ethnicities: modes of Ethnolinguistic Vitality

Martin Ehala\*

*Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics, University of Tartu, Ülikooli 18, Tartu 50090, Estonia*

*(Final version received 17 November 2010)*

The paper presents the summary of the special issue of *JMMD* 'Ethnolinguistic vitality'. The volume shows convincingly that ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions as measured by standard methodology such as the Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaires (SEVQ) are not reliable indicators of actual vitality. Evidence that ethnolinguistic behaviour is more affected by social structural factors and by members' motivations than by their subjective vitality perceptions is summarised. Based on these findings, it is proposed that ethnolinguistic vitality, i.e. the group's ability to behave as an active collective entity, depends on the emotional attachment of its members to this collective identity. This suggests that when high vitality is achieved by affective involvement, the rational arguments for being aligned to one or the other group measured by SEVQ lose their force. From this it follows that groups have two prototypical modes of operation, 'hot' and 'cold', or a scale of modes between these extremes; and that ethnolinguistic vitality is achieved at least to some extent by different means in different modes. An overview of factors affecting ethnolinguistic vitality modes is presented.

**Keywords:** identity; intergroup relations; attitudes

### Reflective summary

The complexity of language maintenance issues has provoked an immense volume of research over the last half a century. This special issue has added another set of papers to this research. In this context, it is inevitable that the question arises as to what the unique contribution of this particular collection is, what its unique message is that has not been stated before in some form or another. A straightforward answer is that this special issue proposes a set of related arguments about the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality. Although all of the contributions in this issue are critical to the established version of the vitality theory, particularly to the concept of subjective vitality, the collection does not aim to refute the theory, but to take a step forward and refine its principles.

Four of the papers in this volume have used Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaires (SEVQ) as part of their empirical research. The sociolinguistic settings studied were diverse: Yagmur reports comparative data on Turkish minorities in Australia, France, Germany and the Netherlands; Ehala and Zabrodskaia have studied the Russian-speaking community in Estonia, McEntee-Atalianis the Greek community in Istanbul, and Moring et al. the German community in North Italy, the Hungarian community in Romania and the Swedish

---

\*Email: ehala@ut.ee

community in Finland. Altogether, the performance of SEVQs is assessed in nine minority communities with different sizes, origins, and levels of state support.

In general, the SEVQ results published in this issue (Yagmur; Ehala and Zabrodskaja; Moring et al.) indicate that the instrument differentiates between communities of different objective vitality quite adequately. In Yagmur (2011, this issue), the lowest SEVQ scores were in Australia, where the Turkish community is the smallest of the four communities studied. The score was the highest in Germany, as would be expected, considering that the German Turkish community is the largest. The score for the Netherlands was quite close to that of Germany; and the score for France was slightly weaker. The scores of Russian-speakers in Estonia reported in Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2011, this issue) were close in size to the Turkish scores in the Netherlands and France. This is in the range of reasonable expectations, given the more or less comparable size and status of these groups. Not surprisingly, in Moring et al. (2011, this issue) the highest SEVQ scores were obtained among Germans, the regional majority in northern Italy. The Hungarians in Romania and the Swedes in the Uusimaa region of Finland showed lower results, which were, however, quite close to each other. This finding is surprising, given that Swedish has much higher institutional support in Finland than Hungarian has in Romania. Still, this fact itself is not problematic in regard to the SEVQ, since this instrument is meant to measure subjective perceptions and these need not always fully reflect the objective reality. Actually, the surprisingly low scores for the Uusimaa Swedes in Finland may reasonably reflect the community members' perception of the inner weakness of their community, despite the state support it enjoys.

What is much more in need of explanation are the findings that SEVQ scores underestimate actual language maintenance behaviour (Yagmur 2011), do not depend on the nature of the immediate sociolinguistic environment (Ehala and Zabrodskaja 2011), and do not correlate with ethnic media usage and the extent of bilingualism (Hogg and Rigoli 1996; Moring et al., 2011), yet correlate with the perceptions of inter-ethnic discordance (Ehala and Zabrodskaja 2011; Giles and Johnson 1987). These findings seem to suggest that the vitality scores are not directly related to the subjects' ethnolinguistic behaviour. As the whole idea of this instrument is to differentiate between subjects who are likely to maintain their language and those who might prefer social mobility into the dominant majority, its inability to differentiate is critical to the validity of the instrument. Furthermore, if inter-ethnic discordance is an attitude that strengthens group members' disposition towards collective action, its reverse impact on SEV perceptions found by Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2011) would significantly distort the mean values of the community's actual subjective vitality if it were measured by SEVQ.

As these controversial findings have been persistent over time in different studies, an explanation is needed for the SEVQ to have a meaningful use. The critical question is what the SEVQ actually measures. The fact that the mean results of SEVQs correlate with the size of the linguistic communities which are being assessed indicates that SEVQs might measure the perception of the strength of the ethnolinguistic group, where *strength* can be summarised as the demographic strength of the group, its institutional support and its status, i.e. what is commonly called objective ethnolinguistic vitality. In fact, in EVT literature the term *vitality* is often used interchangeably with the term *strength* (see Abrams, Barker, and Giles 2009; Harwood, Giles, and Bourhis 1994).

As SEVQs ask about the subjects' perceptions of these phenomena, it is reasonable that the results would reflect the perception of how strong the group is. But if ethnolinguistic vitality is understood as the property that makes a group 'behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations' (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977, 308), the SEVQ is not an adequate instrument for vitality, since it is not able to differentiate between subjects with different ethnolinguistic behaviour. This is not to say that the perception of group strength has nothing to do with the attitudes facilitating group behaviour. It is very likely that the perception of strength constitutes one aspect in this belief system, but as numerous studies, including those in this collection, have shown, it is not the main aspect.

The question of whether ethnolinguistic behaviour is more influenced by the social-structural properties of groups (objective vitality) or by social-psychological factors, such as beliefs and motivations, is discussed in the contributions of Moring et al. (2011) and Karan (2011). Karan (2011, this issue) presents the principles of the Perceived Benefit Model of Language Shift, and argues convincingly that the choice of one or another language in a range of communication settings depends on motivational factors that affect the behaviour of individual language users. These motivations may be communicative, economic, identity related, religious or cultural.

Moring et al. (2011) address this issue in terms of the institutional and functional completeness of media. Media usage primarily depends on the existing supply of media platforms. Moring et al. argue that only if the institutional completeness condition is satisfied will the subjective attitudinal factors that influence the subject's choice of media from the range that is available to them come into play. In this way, institutional completeness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for functional completeness. The latter can emerge only if the minority language audience displays a preference for using media in the minority language, rather than in the majority language. Although this preference is an attitudinal phenomenon, Moring et al. (2011) show that it is more strongly related to a social structural phenomenon, such as the language of education, than to subjective vitality.

At first glance, it seems that the claims that Moring et al. (2011) and Karan (2011) make are conflicting, as Moring et al. argue that media behaviour is better explained 'mainly by background variables related to the objective aspects of ethnolinguistic vitality and to the completeness of the media supply, and less by subjectively perceived ethnolinguistic vitality factors' (p. 184), while Karan claims that 'in order to forecast ethnolinguistic vitality, it is crucial to understand the motivations that are behind the language choices, which when combined make up language shift' (p. 148). Upon closer inspection, this controversy may only be apparent because, by subjectively perceived ethnolinguistic vitality, Moring et al. mean the perception of group strength measured by traditional SEVQs. It is not very surprising that the perception of group strength does not play a major role in ethnolinguistic behaviour, since it may be just one factor influencing motivations, not a direct expression of these motivations.

What the complementary contributions of Moring et al. (2011) and Karan (2011) highlight is the interactive and reinforcing dynamics of structural and social psychological factors in shaping a group's ability to behave as a collective entity in intergroup encounters. The motivational fabric of individuals is shaped, to a large extent, by their socialisation, beginning in the family and continuing in the school, church and public space. This is well illustrated by the finding of Moring et al. that educational choices influence one's media preferences later in life. These preferences,

in turn, sustain the audience for the very same media and educational system. Therefore, a group needs its social institutions and structures to create the social–psychological willingness for the group members to act as a distinctive collective entity. If this willingness is present, the group is able, in turn, to sustain the same institutions that are used to maintain the group’s vitality, i.e. its ability to act collectively (for a more detailed account of this dynamics, see Ehala 2010b).

Because of the mutual feedback loop between the social structural and the social–psychological sides of language and identity maintenance, the system is characterised by a considerable inertia, which, to some extent, allows for the assessment or prediction of the sustainability of speech communities. The stronger the structural factors, i.e. the overall strength of the group, the more likely it is to be able to socialise its members so as to have the social–psychological disposition to contribute to the group. The weaker the group, the less likely this is to happen. If this were always so, nothing new would have been added to the predictions of Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977).

However, as Yagmur (2011) clearly argues, Turkish immigrant communities in some European countries maintain their language and groupness much better than would be expected from their objective institutional support, as well as the perceptions of their group strength measured by SEVQs. The results of Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2011) suggest that this discrepancy may be due to perceived inter-ethnic discordance, which has the effect of mobilising the group, and at the same time to lower the perceptions of their in-group strength. This means that the strength of the group does not always determine the extent to which its members act as a collective entity. There are cases where the vitality of the group exceeds their strength and, in these cases, the general prediction that the strong become stronger and the weak get weaker does not apply. These conditions are of primary interest to the theory of language maintenance and shift, as these are the moments that shed light on the active processes of group mobilisation, i.e. the unexpected rise of ethnolinguistic vitality. Knowing the mechanism through which this happens, it is possible to actively engage in effective language revitalisation.

### **The nature of ethnolinguistic vitality**

This brings us to the crucial question of what makes a large number of individuals behave as a distinctive collective entity. Giles and Johnson (1987, 89), in outlining the theory of ethnolinguistic identity, argue that this ability is determined by subjective vitality, the perceived hardness and closedness of ethnic boundaries and the strength of ethnic identification. While subjective vitality perceptions have failed repeatedly to predict the tendency for ethnolinguistic behaviour (Ehala and Zabrodskaja 2011; Hogg and Rigoli 1996), the strength of ethnic identification has been shown to be related to group behaviour. For example, Giles and Johnson (1987) report that the strength of Welsh young people’s ethnic identification correlated with the importance of the Welsh language, the learning of the Welsh language by their future offspring, linguistic differentiation from English speakers in a wide array of communicative situations, and support for the Welsh Nationalist Party.

This suggests that the level of ethnolinguistic vitality, understood as individuals’ ability to act as a distinctive collective entity, is related to the strength of their shared ethnic identity (for a detailed elaboration of this argument, see Edwards 2010). This leads to the question of what makes an identity strong or weak. According to Tajfel

and Turner (1979), whose theory of social identity lies behind the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality as well as behind the theory of ethnolinguistic identity, social identity is 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel 1978, 63). Ellemers, Kortekaas, and Ouwerkerk (1999, 386) argue that these three components of social identity – cognitive, evaluative and emotional – are conceptually distinct aspects of identity, and that only 'group commitment appears to be the key aspect of social identity which drives the tendency for people to behave in terms of their group membership'. Therefore, it could be argued that the emotional attachment to one's ethnic group is the key aspect that influences individual ethnolinguistic vitality: the more a person is emotionally attached to his/her ethnic group, the more likely that person is to participate in group actions.

While in traditional writings of social psychology, identity is accounted for in fairly essentialist terms, and the same tradition has also characterised work done within the EVT framework, McEntee-Atalianis (2011, this issue) argues convincingly for a broader approach, in which identity is seen as publicly constructed rather than an internal pre-discursive phenomenon. She argues that identity 'may be multiply constructed or manipulated in and through discourse and other semiotic systems. It is a resource through which subjects are created and projected' (p. 156). Only if this dynamic understanding is adopted is it possible to explain the sudden increases in ethnolinguistic vitality of some ethnic groups, usually known as ethnic/national awakenings.

A detailed model of the process of how group commitment and emotional attachment to a social identity are created is offered by Thomas, McGarty, and Mavor (2009), who present the conditions that are required for the emergence of social identities oriented towards collective behaviour. According to their theory, a sustainable social identity is based on the alignment of three types of collectively shared normative beliefs: shared emotions, shared norms for collective action and shared beliefs in the group's efficacy. For example, a group whose members share the belief, emotional in character, that their position is unjust and their group is efficacious is significantly more ready for collective behaviour than a group that does not have a shared emotional belief or does not feel effective enough. Thomas, McGarty, and Mavor (2009) claim that collectively shared emotions constitute the key factor that creates emotional attachment to the group, which, in turn, is one of the pivotal elements in ethnolinguistic vitality.

The level of emotional attachment seems to have a substantial effect on how a group perceives its existence and how it operates. Ehala and Zabrodskaia (2011), Giles and Johnson (1987) and Hogg and Rigoli (1996) have reported that vitality perceptions depend on affective factors: subjects who perceive high levels of inter-ethnic discordance and/or are strongly attached to their in-group tend to perceive their in-group vitality as being lower than subjects who have lower levels of affective involvement. Hogg and Rigoli (1996, 87) suggested that the relationship between SEV and ethnic identification is positive for weak identifiers, but there is a discontinuity which, for strong identifiers, 'flips the relationship around'. This suggests that there might be different modes of vitality for groups whose members have high emotional commitment, as compared to those whose members have low levels of commitment.

**Modes of ethnolinguistic vitality**

In social psychology, identification with groups is studied in a range of frameworks, such as the theory of social identity (Brown 2000), collectivism-individualism (Triandis and Gelfand 1998), studies of nationalism (Bar-Tal 1993), etc. In different paradigms, the phenomenon is accounted for in different ways, but there seems to be a wide consensus that identification with groups is a multidimensional phenomenon with several distinct facets (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004). Different research paradigms differ on how many dimensions there are, but almost all theories agree that identification has at least cognitive and affective sides (Roccas et al. 2008).

Based on this, it is likely that, for each individual, the tendency to participate in a group's collective action is affected by both emotional and rational factors, but the level of commitment depends on the particular combination of these. For example, people may contribute to group goals because of the personal benefits they receive through the institutions and social networks of this group, because their noncompliance would trigger sanctions, or because of an inner sense of duty caused by strong emotional attachment to the group and its goals. It is evident that strong emotional attachment may cause a very strong commitment, to the extent of sacrificing one's life for the group. It is unlikely that rational motivations can provide a basis for this level of commitment: a possible benefit motivates people only to the extent that it is likely to exceed possible risks, and the fear of sanctions is effective only to the extent that the possible danger is less than the severity of punishment for abstaining from the action.

This suggests that there are two types of motivations for individuals' behaviour: self-beneficial motivations, and altruistic (group-beneficial) motivations. The self-beneficial motivations are founded on the perceived benefit for the self, more or less as described by Karan (2011). Altruistic motivations are based on the understanding that there are higher principles than the benefit of the self that may motivate a person's behaviour. These goals lie outside of the self, be it the ethnic group, deity or a loved individual. It is suggested here that in the case of high emotional commitment, group-beneficial motivations can gain prominence to the extent that they may bring high costs to the self.

Based on the strength of emotional attachment of members to their group, ethnic groups can be categorised into two prototypes: 'hot' and 'cold'. A 'hot' ethnic group is one whose members have a high emotional attachment to their group. These groups use a high emotional climate to mobilise their members for collective behaviour. Members of these groups may set the group-beneficial motivations higher than self-beneficial ones. 'Cold' ethnic groups are those whose members' emotional attachment to the group is low, absent or latent. Members of such groups are willing to participate in collective action on the basis of rational calculation – if it is beneficial to them, or to avoid sanctions from 'free-riding'.

***Ethnolinguistic vitality of cold groups***

In the cold mode of operation, the emotional attachment and emotional alignment are low among the group members. They categorise themselves cognitively as members of this particular group, but this fact does not hold emotional significance

and is not important for their self concept. In this situation, the relationships of the members to the group are based on the rational calculation of costs and benefits for the self: if the group is able to provide access to resources for life and provide a positive social identity, the person is satisfied and does not seek to shift group membership through social mobility.

This means that the ethnolinguistic vitality of the cold group is guaranteed by its social institutions, which provide goods and set sanctions for its members. Through a system of benefits and sanctions, the system motivates its members for coordinated action. In general, the stronger the group, i.e. the more economically, politically, culturally and militarily powerful it is, the easier it is to motivate its members for collectively coordinated behaviour purely on self-beneficial grounds. In addition, strong ethnic groups usually do not face any existential dangers which could lead them to the hot operating mode. For this reason, a strong ethnic group is vital even if it is operating in a cold mode. For example, most of the Western welfare nations function in fairly cold modes.

It is different with small ethnic groups and minorities whose ethnic social institutions are weak, whose economic and cultural powers are modest, and whose demographic numbers are small. Such ethnic groups are not able to provide a fully functional system of benefits and sanctions to motivate their members to act collectively for the benefit of the group. Also, weak groups are not able to provide collective pride and positive social identity. For this reason, these groups are threatened by language shift and assimilation if they are operating in a cold mode, because their members, following a purely rational logic of argumentation, may find some other groups that provide better opportunities for personal success and even a more rewarding social identity. This means that small ethnic groups need a stronger emotional attachment to the group from their members in order to remain ethnolinguistically vital than do large ethnic groups.

### ***Ethnolinguistic vitality of hot groups***

When an ethnic group is in a hot state of operation, its members' emotional attachment to the group is high. Emotional attachment is created discursively through the alignment of collective emotions (see Thomas, McGarty, and Mavor 2009). The nature and number of these emotions may differ, depending on the socio-historical context (see David and Bar-Tal 2009), but the effect of these processes on intra-group behaviour is fairly uniform.

Generally, it may be claimed that the higher the emotional attachment of the members to their group, the more rigid and impermeable the boundaries of this group become, the clearer the group's distinctiveness from out-groups becomes, and the more negative the attitudes towards out-groups become.

All these properties are created discursively. Often a hot state of operation is achieved by construction of an inter-ethnic threat, in which case it is accompanied by the perception of weakness by the in-group in comparison with threatening out-groups (see Ehala and Zabrodska 2011; Giles and Johnson 1987). The same goes for group distinctiveness. Barth (1969) has argued that group distinctiveness is not based on entirely empirical differences between the members of two different ethnic groups; rather, the differences are constructed. The hotter the mode of operation for



a group, the more distinct it becomes from out-groups. For example, the distinctiveness between Serbs and Croats is achieved, among other ways, by quite small linguistic differences. These two processes have led to the intergroup boundaries becoming more rigid and impermeable.

In a hot state of operation, the issue of treachery becomes a further factor contributing to the vitality of the group. In a hot mode of operation, when the boundary between in-group and out-group is sharpened, those members showing ambivalent emotions or expressing ambivalent positions are criticised and forced to comply with the prevalent views and actions of the group. Thus, in a hot state of operations, even those members who have a low emotional attachment to the group or who are not emotionally aligned with the hegemonic mood of the majority have no option but to contribute, as a lack of contribution would trigger social stigmatisation and sanctions.

In a situation of tense relationships, the possibility of social mobility is further reduced by the fact that the dominant majority out-group is also more reluctant to accept new members from a subordinate group. In this way, a hot mode of operation stops the process of social mobility and forces all members of the group to contribute to group action.

As a consequence, particularly high ethnolinguistic vitality is achieved. History has shown that, in the case of strong ethnic groups, this mode of operation is often used for ethnic aggression. In the case of weak groups, this may be the only sustainable way to avoid the inevitable assimilation that would occur if such a group were operating in a cold mode. Seemingly a good solution is complicated by several possible drawbacks: first, it is not easy to achieve a hot state; second, being in a hot state increases the likelihood of destructive developments; and finally, eventual cooling down may bring the group into a worse situation than before the transformation into the hot state. This makes the discussion of the dynamics of ethnolinguistic vitality inevitable.

### **Dynamics of ethnolinguistic vitality**

It is argued above that ethnolinguistic vitality is achieved through substantially different means by hot and cold groups: for hot groups, vitality is achieved by the strength of collective emotions (supported by rational arguments); for cold groups, vitality is the consequence of its members' rational decisions. Even if vitality is achieved through different means by hot and cold groups, the hypothesis set forth here is that there is a set of conceptual dimensions which are used in the formation of the social–psychological state of ethnolinguistic vitality (see for example David and Bar-Tal 2009; Ehala 2005), and this set is the same for both types of groups. The difference between cold and hot modes of vitality lies in whether these meanings are interpreted only cognitively or emotionally, too.

Based on my earlier work on ethnolinguistic vitality (Ehala 2010a, 2010b), I propose that there are at least four partly interdependent dimensions: group strength, inter-ethnic discordance, utilitarianism–traditionalism, and inter-ethnic distance. If these dimensions are processed cognitively, the individual ethnolinguistic vitality of a person is in the cold range; if at least on one dimension the information is processed affectively, the person's individual ethnolinguistic vitality reaches a hot stage.

### ***Group strength***

The perception of group strength is formed on the basis of three major groups of factors: (1) a group's economic, social and cultural status, (2) a group's demographic strength (absolute numbers and density migration) and (3) the strength of social institutions. Perceived group strength is what traditional SEV questionnaires (e.g. Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal 1981) measure. In traditional EV literature, it is assumed that this perception is relevant for a group's vitality, i.e. its members' ability to act as a distinctive collective entity.

It is hypothesised here, based on the results of Giles and Johnson (1987), Hogg and Rigoli (1996) and Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2011), that perception of strength affects group members' ethnolinguistic behaviour only in a cold mode of operation. In this mode, group members participate in group actions only on the grounds of self-beneficial motivations. If a majority group provides better conditions for personal livelihood, and if changing group membership is easy, members of the weaker group may decide to change their group affiliation. In a hot state of operation, the perception of strength loses its power, because the members of the group are committed to their group emotionally. As the results of Giles and Johnson (1987) and Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2011) suggest, in a hot mode of operation, group members' perceptions of their in-group strength may even be lowered.

Perception of group strength is by its nature a cognitive category, but it can be manipulated so as to become unrealistically high or unjustifiably low. Such extreme comparison results may be the basis for the alignment of collective emotions. For example, an extremely high strength perception may be connected to the emotional belief of superiority, and an extremely low perception of strength may be related to a strong feeling of collective inferiority. The first condition may cause a group to transition to the hot mode of operation; the extreme feeling of collective weakness may trigger a 'cascade of assimilation' (Laitin 2007).

### ***Inter-ethnic discordance***

The dimension of inter-ethnic discordance expresses the perception of the legitimacy and trust in intergroup relations (see Ehala and Zabrodskaja 2011). The more legitimate the intergroup power relations are considered, and the more trusting intergroup attitudes are, the less the level of perceived discordance. Usually, the perceptions of legitimacy and trust are interrelated (Ehala and Zabrodskaja 2011).

The perception of discordance is also a cognitive category, but if the perception of illegitimacy and distrust towards the out-group(s) is high, it is particularly easy to use this perception to align collective emotions of injustice and anger. It should be mentioned that the past injustice done to other groups can also be used to align a collective emotion of shame on this dimension. For example, a large scale study of national pride (Rose 1985) showed that while, generally, as many as 96% of the citizens of a country felt a sense of pride in their country, only 59% of the citizens of West Germany did so.

If the collective sense of injustice and anger is high, the group reaches a hot mode of operation. If the emotions are aligned around the feeling of shame, this may promote a wish to dissociate oneself from this particular group identity, which in turn may reduce a group's ethnolinguistic vitality.

***Utilitarianism–traditionalism***

The third dimension expresses the extent to which the members of an ethnic group value their culture, language and traditions and their intergenerational transmissions, or how much they are open to the change and overall modernisation that may be necessary for personal economic success, but often at the expense of discontinuing heritage linguistic and cultural practices (see Ehala 2009a, 2009b). There are groups, such as the Amish or Russian Old Believers, which are so traditional that they reject all innovations. Because of their traditionalism they have been successful in their cultural and linguistic continuation for a considerable period of time, despite being minority groups among very powerful and economically attractive out-groups.

As the previous dimensions, the traditionalism-utilitarianism dimension is cognitive, too, but as it is the case with previous dimensions, the extreme values on the scale are likely to be related to alignment of shared emotions. For example, high traditionalism may be related to emotional worship of the group's god, ruler, homeland, language or other phenomenon that could be characterised as this group's 'core value' (see Smolicz 1981; Smolicz, Secombe, and Hudson 2001). The utilitarian end of the scale could be associated with the collective emotion of hedonism which sets personal enjoyment and satisfaction higher than any possible collective goals.

***Intergroup distance***

Inter-ethnic distance is a perception of racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences between one's in-group and a prototypical member of an out-group. The larger the perceived differences between the characteristic features of the members of both groups, the larger the perceived inter-ethnic distance. The larger the perceived differences between two groups, the harder it is for a member of one group to become a member of the other group. Consequently, high intergroup distance enhances a group's ethnolinguistic vitality. When the groups are perceived as similar, individual social mobility is relatively easily attainable, which may reduce group members' will to act collectively in intergroup situations.

Similar to other dimensions, inter-ethnic distance can be manipulated. According to Barth (1969), groups use actual empirical differences differently to construct group boundaries. Only those features that are culturally marked as important are determinative in intergroup distance. It often happens that when intergroup relations worsen, even the slightest differences may be interpreted as significant in terms of making the two groups more distinct. Hornsey and Hogg (2000, 147) reported a number of cases of symbolic actions to reduce intergroup contact and to stress cultural differences in situations of intergroup conflict. In such situations, group differences may be used to align such collective emotions as disgust.

***Change of group temperature***

These four vitality dimensions – perceived group strength, intergroup discordance, utilitarianism–traditionalism and intergroup distance – are not fully independent; rather, they are mutually connected. For example, the perception of group strength seems to be related to the perception of intergroup discordance (Ehala and Zabrodska 2011). In addition, the different dimensions have different impacts

on group vitality (see Ehala 2010a, 2010b). Although their mutual relationships may be complex, it is proposed here that, in each dimension, the processing of information by individuals may be conducted either cognitively only, or also affectively. The latter happens usually when the perceived value on one dimension is significantly out of the neutral range. In such a case, the extreme value receives public attention in the community and it is used deliberately or unintentionally to align such collective emotions as superiority, out-group derogation, anger at injustice, or worship of group symbols or religious values. This alignment of emotions may lead the group to enter a hot mode of operation when the group members' actions may become affected by group-beneficial motivations more than by self-beneficial ones.

The transition to a hot mode of operation is achieved by aligning collective emotions (see Thomas, McGarty, and Mavor 2009). It is hard to achieve a collective psychological state in an ethnic group consisting of rationally behaving members who have a low emotional attachment to the group, or who may even have a wish to dissociate themselves from this group. Therefore, to start the heating process, an initial spark is needed, for example a shocking or threatening event, such as the fire in the Reichstag, the 9/11 catastrophe, or public humiliation connected with group symbols (such as the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument in Estonia; see Ehala 2009b), which would help to align collective emotions. Perhaps because of the evolutionary history of humans, emotional alignment is more easily achieved by negative events than by positive ones (see Spoor and Kelly 2004).

When such events do not occur, the construction of negative future developments can serve the same purpose. As the future is uncertain and alternative scenarios can always be constructed that are more positive, the success of such attempts depends on the persuasiveness of argumentation. A possible source for a group heating could be a prolonged social injustice, the perception of which could be discursively sharpened. Resistance to injustice could significantly increase vitality and stop social mobility to the dominant group. For example, the injustice of the communist regime certainly was the major factor that prevented the people of the Baltic nations from assimilating to the Russian mainstream and made it very easy for them to mobilise ethnically as soon as the regime showed signs of weakness.

An alternative to conflictual paths of transition to a hot state may occur when small minority communities have no other option for increasing their vitality than to align their emotions around the core values of the group. This is particularly effective in the case of ethno-religious communities whose strength of religious practice is so tightly connected to their ethnicity that it keeps their group vital.

No matter which way an ethnic group achieves its hot state, this might still not be a sustainable solution, as it may bring about an ethnic conflict that may end in an economic and demographic catastrophe, the effects of which are much more devastating than possible long-term assimilation. In any case, prolonged low intensity hostility is a costly strategy that cannot be continued forever. Lack of success and loss of resources may bring about disillusionment and a cooling down process. When a hot state is achieved by worship of the groups' values and traditions, this necessarily leads to a rejection of modernisation. This would lead the group to exclusion from the mainstream society, which is a very high price for increased vitality.

The same may happen in cases in which an ethnic awakening accompanied by a transition to a hot mode of operation has been successful: the goals are achieved, the cause for becoming hot eliminated, and collective emotions have fulfilled their goal. But if the group does not have enough symbolic and economic capital to provide an overall positive social identity, and the ethnic institutions are too weak to ensure high vitality for the group in a cold mode, the group may still face assimilation even if there is no immediate danger of this occurring, or maybe even because of the lack of it (see Smith 1999).

### **Conclusion**

Research has convincingly shown that ethno-linguistic vitality perceptions as measured by standard methodology are not reliable indicators of actual vitality (Yagmur 2011). There is evidence that vitality perceptions depend on affective factors (Ehala and Zabrodskaja 2011; Giles and Johnson 1987): subjects who perceive high levels of inter-ethnic discordance and/or are strongly attached to their in-group tend to perceive their in-group vitality as being lower than subjects who have lower levels of affective involvement.

On the other hand, social-psychological studies have provided evidence that group entitativity, i.e. a group's ability to behave as an active collective entity, depends on the emotional attachment of its members to this collective identity (Ellemers, Kortekaas, and Ouwerkerk 1999), which is created by normative alignment of collective emotions (Thomas, McGarty, and Mavor 2009). This suggests that, when high vitality is achieved by affective involvement, the self-beneficial motivations for being aligned to one or the other group lose their force. This does not mean that rationality-based vitality models, such as SEVQ (Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal 1981) are inadequate. Evidence shows that they correctly forecast the vitality of groups whose members have no strong collective emotions and therefore have a low affective commitment.

This suggests that groups have two prototypical modes of operation ('hot' and 'cold') or a scale of modes between these extremes; and that ethnolinguistic vitality is achieved, at least to some extent, by different means in different modes. This has serious implications for the methodology of ethnolinguistic vitality research: as affective factors cannot be clearly accounted for by quantitative surveys, a more complex methodology is needed (McEntee-Atalianis 2011). In addition, research on institutional support should not only describe the situation, but also focus on how collective emotions and group affiliations are actually constructed by these institutions (Moring et al. 2011).

From this perspective, the transitional processes from a cold mode of operation to a hot mode form the crucial point of attention in language maintenance and ethnolinguistic vitality research, because they form the key to a successful maintenance of heritage ethnic identity and the linguistic and cultural practices characteristic of it.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper is part of the project supported by the Estonian Science Fund, under grant agreement no ETF7350, 'Ethnolinguistic vitality and identity construction: Estonia in the Baltic background'.

## References

- Abrams, J.R., V. Barker, and H. Giles. 2009. An examination of the validity of the Subjective Vitality Questionnaire. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 30, no. 1: 59–72.
- Ashmore, R.D., K. Deaux, and T. McLaughlin-Volpe. 2004. An organizing framework for collective identity: Articulation and significance of multidimensionality. *Psychological Bulletin* 130: 80–114.
- Bar-Tal, D. 1993. Patriotism as fundamental beliefs of group members. *Politics and Individual* 3: 45–62.
- Barth, F. 1969. Ethnic groups and boundaries. In *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organisation of culture difference*, ed. F. Barth, 9–37. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Bourhis, R.Y., H. Giles, and D. Rosenthal. 1981. Notes on construction of a 'subjective vitality questionnaire' for ethnolinguistic groups. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 2, no. 2: 145–55.
- Brown, R. 2000. Social identity theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30: 745–78.
- David, O., and D. Bar-Tal. 2009. A sociopsychological conception of collective identity: The case of national identity as an example. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 13, no. 4: 354–79.
- Edwards, J. 2010. *Minority languages and group identity: Cases and categories*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Ehala, M. 2005. The role of MTE in language maintenance and developing multiple identities. In *European identities in mother tongue education*, ed. S. Kiefer and K. Sallamaa, 36–50. Linz: Trauner Verlag.
- Ehala, M. 2009a. The Bronze Soldier: Identity threat and maintenance in Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40, no. 1: 139–58.
- Ehala, M. 2009b. Connecting the individual cultural level value analysis: The case of utilitarianism vs. traditionalism. *Journal of Human Values* 15, no. 2: 107–18.
- Ehala, M. 2010a. Ethnolinguistic vitality and intergroup processes. *Multilingua* 29, no. 2: 203–21.
- Ehala, M. 2010b. Refining the notion of ethnolinguistic vitality. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 7: 363–78.
- Ehala, M., and A. Zabrodska. 2011. The impact of interethnic discordance on subjective vitality perceptions. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 32, no. 2: 121–136.
- Ehala, M., and A. Zabrodska. Forthcoming. Interethnic discordance and stability in Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies*.
- Ellemers, N., P. Kortekaas, and J.W. Ouwerkerk. 1999. Self-categorisation, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 29: 371–89.
- Giles, H., R.Y. Bourhis, and D.M. Taylor. 1977. Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations. In *Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations*, ed. Howard Giles, 307–48. London: Academic Press.
- Giles, H., and P. Johnson. 1987. Ethnolinguistic identity theory: A social psychological approach to language maintenance. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 68: 69–99.
- Harwood, J., H. Giles, and R.Y. Bourhis. 1994. The genesis of vitality theory: Historical patterns and discursal dimensions. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 108: 167–206.
- Hogg, M.A., and N. Rigoli. 1996. Effects of ethnolinguistic vitality, ethnic identification, and linguistic contacts on minority language use. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 15, no. 1: 76–89.
- Hornsey, J.M., and M.A. Hogg. 2000. Assimilation and diversity: An integrative model of subgroup relations. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 4: 143–56.
- Karan, M.E. 2011. Understanding and forecasting Ethnolinguistic Vitality. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 32, no. 2: 137–149.
- Laitin, D.D. 2011. *Nations, states, and violence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- McEntee-Atalians, L. 2011. The value of adopting multiple approaches and methodologies in the investigation of Ethnolinguistic Vitality. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 32, no. 2: 151–167.
- Moring, T., C. Husband, C. Lojander-Visapää, L. Vincze, J. Fomina, and N. Mänty. 2011. Media use and ethnolinguistic vitality in bilingual communities. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 32, no. 2: 169–186.
- Roccas, S., L. Sagiv, S. Schwartz, N. Halevy, and R. Eidelson. 2008. Toward a unifying model of identification with groups: Integrating theoretical perspectives. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12, no. 3: 280–306.
- Rose, R. 1985. National pride in cross-national perspective. *International Social Science Journal*, 37, 85–96.
- Smith, A.D. 1999. *Myths and memories of the nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smolicz, J.J. 1981. The three types of multiculturalism. In *Community languages – their role in education*, ed. Mark Garner, 1–12. Melbourne, Sydney: River Seine Publications.
- Smolicz, J.J., M.J. Secombe, and D.M. Hudson. 2001. Family collectivism and minority languages as core values of culture among ethnic groups in Australia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 22, no. 2: 152–72.
- Spoor, J.R., and J.R. Kelly. 2004. The evolutionary significance of affect in groups: Communication and group bonding. *Group Processes Intergroup Relations* 7, no. 4: 398–412.
- Tajfel, H. 1978. Social categorization, social identity, and social comparison. In *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel, 61–76. London: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H., and J.C. Turner. 1979. An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, ed. W.G. Austin and S. Worchel, 33–47. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Thomas, E.F., C. McGarty, and K.I. Mavor. 2009. Aligning identities, emotions, and beliefs to create commitment to sustainable social and political action. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 13, no. 3: 194–218.
- Triandis, H.C., and M. Gelfand. 1998. Converging measurement of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74: 118–28.
- Yagmur, K. 2011. Does Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory account for the actual vitality of ethnic groups? A critical evaluation. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 32, no. 2: 111–120.