ENGLISH, LANGUAGE POLICIES, AND THEIR ROLES IN RUSSOPHONE IDENTITY FORMATION IN ESTONIA

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0. Abstract

The aims of this research are to understand the impact of languages on the identity formation of Russophone youth in Estonia. This will allow further analysis of the connection between the languages and state actors that may impact identity-formation for these students, and the success of the current language policies. This research is based on interviews with 8 secondary school Estonian Russophone students. The primary conclusion of this research is that each language is tied to one of the state actors that interacts with the process of identity formation for the Russophone students. The impacts of this conclusion are twofold. Firstly, it shows the success of the language policies in Estonia in establishing the value of the language in connection with its citizenship processes and education system. Secondly, it shows the role that English plays in Estonian society is not one that distinctly threatens Estonian, but rather compliments the local language as a promotion of European possibility. However, students expressed concern over experiences of negative treatment that stemmed from their mother tongue, raising issues of continued stereotyping and institutional bias.

1. Introduction

The increasingly open flow of goods, ideas, and media across borders in today's world has a profound and not yet fully understood impact on the creation of identity in adolescents (Jensen et al., 2011, p. 285). In addition to the multitude of cultures that young people are exposed to in this global media, they are increasingly interacting with multiple different languages online, firmly placing many adolescents in a multilingual context (Cunningham & Craig, 2016; Malinowski et al., 2020). In Estonia, these multilingual surroundings exists both on- and offline, creating different linguistic communities and a complicated context in which to form an identity. The interaction between global languages like English in global media spaces and the existing multilingual context of Estonia is not yet well understood (Cameron, 2012; Fonzari, 1999; Toomet, 2011). For some young people, the prevalence of global languages like English in media and in economic spaces may serve as motivation to acquire the language, but how does this impact the status of the other languages in these multilingual spaces? And more importantly, how does this linguistic prioritisation impact the formation of identity in these young people? It is precisely this issue that this research centres.

The context of this research is Estonia, the northernmost country in the Baltic chain with a population of around 1.3 million. The main language spoken in Estonia is Estonian, with a global native population of around 1.1 million. Estonia is a post-Soviet country, and as such has a contentious history of language policies, which following the reestablishment of independence in 1991 asserted the rights of the Estonian language in all domains. Part of these new language policies involved the transition of an existing monolingual Russian-medium education system to mandated Estonian education. Since this transition in the 1990s, the Russophone population in Estonia has dealt with shifting education systems, new citizenship policies, and an distinctly multilingual reality. Members of the youngest generation, that which was raised after these policies were implemented, have also experienced the country's ascension into the European Union and the tide of globalisation that followed. In the face of these shifting cultures and linguistic realities, the identity-formation process of the young Russophone generation is imperative to understand in order to see the impact of the shifting language-mix policies and the rising role of English. Not only will this give more detail to the Estonian context, but it will allow further understanding of how English interacts with the valuation of smaller titular languages in multilingual settings throughout Europe.

This research is based on the results of 8 interviews with secondary school Estonian Russophone students. The students were asked about their identity and their attitudes towards the three primary languages in their lives: English, Estonian, and Russian. The aims of this research are to understand the impact of languages on the identity formation of Russophone youth in Estonia. This will allow further analysis on the connection between the languages and the state actors that may impact identity-formation for these students, and the success of the current language policies.

This paper begins with a review of the context of the Russophone population in Estonia, relating this population to the current research on language policy and identity. Following this background, the methods of this research are presented, focusing on the quadratic nexus of Russophone identity formation as presented by Cheskin (2015). Subsequently, the findings of the interviews are outlined, focusing on the themes of motivations, treatment, identity, and schooling. Finally, these findings are analysed on the basis of cultural, economic, and political factors of three different state actors. These are related to the process of identity formation in Russophone students in Estonia. The primary conclusion of this research is that each of the state actors interacting with the processes of identity formation of Estonian Russophones is tied to a language, and that the role that English plays in the motivations of students in Estonia is primarily tied to international institutions rather than their lives in Estonia.

2. Background on the Estonian Context

Before it is possible to discuss the role that languages play in the identity formation of residents in present-day Estonia, it is imperative to understand some of the historical context of the country. The Russian-speaking population in Estonia is a heterogenous population with different relationships to their homelands and to the Estonian state, though this population has undergone some processes of Russification, or the homogenisation of this population towards "Russian culture" (Aidarov & Drechsler, 2013; Rannut & Rannut, 2010). The relationship between the Estonian and Russian languages is one that is marked by occupations by the Soviet Union and previously the Russian Empire, but also by Russian serving as a *lingua franca* for minority populations moved to Estonia during periods of

economic transition in the 1950s through 1970s (Aidarov & Drechsler, 2013). This section will outline the policies and migrations that resulted in the creation of the population of Russophones in Estonia, as well as the political ideologies associated with the languages today. It will follow the timeline of policies, starting from USSR language policies and migration (section 2.1), then moving on to education policies after the re-establishment of Estonian independence (section 2.2). The next section (2.3) discusses the citizenship policies in independent Estonia, and their impact on the remaining Russophone population, as well as the most recent efforts to integrate them. Finally the recent literature on the motivations of the Russophone population to learn Estonian is examined, looking specifically at the perceptions of discrimination within the population (section 2.4). One of the languages of interest for this research, English, is notably absent from these early policies, as its value and presence in the country was not widely remarked upon until EU ascension processes (Fonzari, 1999; Toomet, 2011). As such, it will be treated as a separate area of interest in section 3.4.

2.0 Terminology

For the duration of this paper, those with Russian as their native or home language will be referred to as *Russophones*. Relatedly, *Russians* will only be used to discuss those with citizenship or origins in present-day Russia. Those with Estonian as their native or home language will be referred to as *Estonian-speakers*, as there is no standardized nominative form in use. *Estonians* will refer to those with Estonian citizenship or origins, which may include Russophones. The combination of these terms will give light to the nuance in language and identity in Estonia expressed by research participants and existing literature.

2.1 Roles of Russian and Estonian in USSR Policy

Estonia's history is marked by repeated occupation and shifting language policies. The most recent of these occupations was by the Soviet Union, which lasted from WWII until Estonian independence was reasserted in 1991. Throughout the duration of this occupation, language policies shifted both in their goals and in their implementation. During the five decades of occupation, language policies were not consistently applied, and "there existed numerous contradictions and discrepancies between laws and policies, on the one hand, and specific

measures, on the other" (Pavlenko, 2008, p. 279). While Russian was the official lingua franca of administration across all Soviet states, titular languages[1] were mostly maintained through local education, with many of the smaller titular languages also given resources for linguistic documentation, standardization, and development, as was the case in Estonia (Ozolins, 1999; Pavlenko, 2008, 2011).

During the shift from an agricultural economy to industry in the 1960s and 70s, workers were brought in from other areas of the USSR to staff the increasing need for manual labour (Kiilo & Kutsar, 2012). Given that the lingua franca of these populations was Russian, this migration concentrated the Russophone population in areas of rising industry, as well as in elite administration (Kulu & Tammaru, 2004). The linguistic groups were increasingly located near factories in the northeast of the country, Ida-Virumaa, as well as the central government in the country's capital, Tallinn (Mägi, 2018). During this period Russophones made up the largest shares of the highest and lowest classes, with Estonians comprising the middle class (Kulu & Tammaru, 2004). The segregation of the linguistic groups was replicated in the education systems, as Russian monolingual education systems were established for the children of the new workers, while Estonian-speaking children attended institutions with compulsory Russian instruction in the other parts of the country. As a result of this one-way bilingualism in the education system, by 1988 the proportion of Russophones in Estonia with the ability to speak Estonian was only 14% (Kemppainen et al., 2008). A recent map of the concentration of the Russophone population can be seen in Figure 1 (below).

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[1] The term "titular languages" refers to the language after which a territory is named; Estonian in the example of Estonia. While this term helps address the multilingual nature of many post-Soviet countries, it also allows discussion of linguistic identity, by noting the relationship between the language and the identity label given to populations. Distinguishing "titular languages" from other local languages similarly enables richer discussion of minority languages not given official status, and their place in USSR policy. Given that this term is prevalent in existing literature (Ehala, 2017; Hogan-Brun, 2005b; Laitin, 1995), it is important to note here.
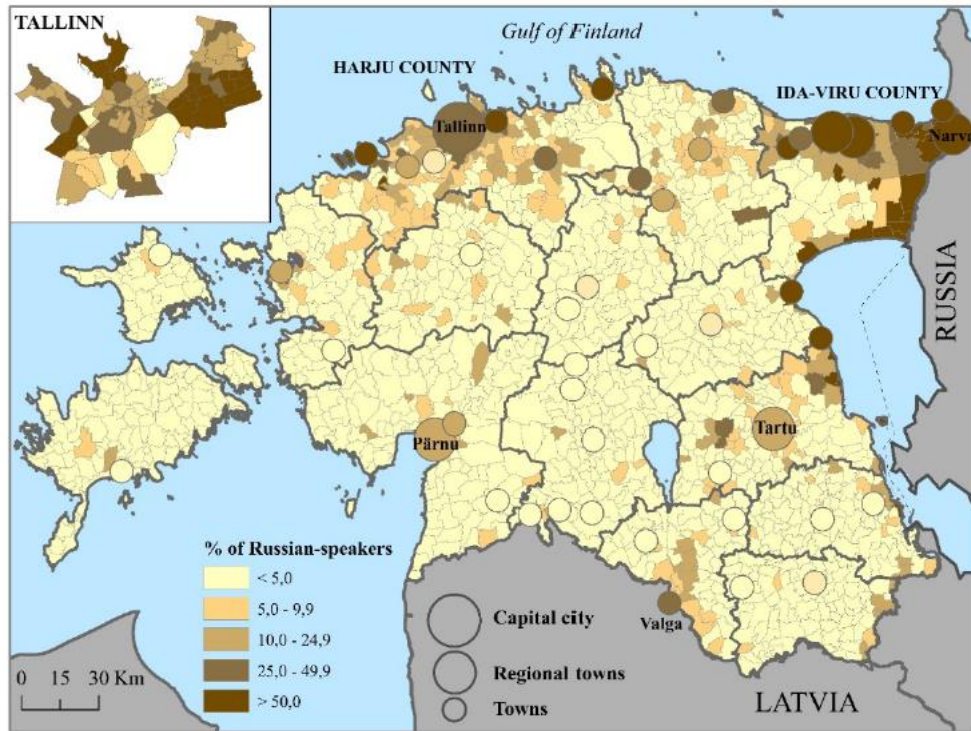
Figure 1: Percentage of Russian-speakers in urban and rural neighbourhoods from (Mägi et al., 2016)

There is much debate ongoing in literature over to what degree the Estonian language was threatened during the Soviet occupation. Especially directly following independence, it is often argued that the elite position of the Russian language in Estonia in administration and education posed an existential threat to Estonian language and culture during Soviet occupation (Druviete, 1997; Rannut, 2004; Rannut & Rannut, 2010; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 1994). There is now pushback on this position, with some arguing that the degree to which speakers were shifting their L1 to Russian during occupation in Estonia was negligible, and there is no evidence that language policy at the time sought to eradicate teaching and reproduction of the Estonian language and by extent culture (Ozolins, 1999; Pavlenko, 2011). This position also warns against the conflation of the Estonian context with contexts impacted by Western colonialism, as the Russification during the Soviet occupation was not similarly rooted in a systematic policy of *replacement* of all languages with Russian (Pavlenko, 2011). Both sides of this argument have merit, and the reality was likely different across the country and changed throughout the duration of the Soviet language policies. While the policies themselves do not push for a replacement of Estonian in all social arenas, the experiences of those living during this period may have felt

pressures beyond policy that pushed the message of a diminishing value of Estonian, something reflected in conversations with Estonians today but not common in the literature.

2.2 Education Policies After Independence

Independence was reinstated in Estonia in 1991. During the economic transition, previously industrial towns in Ida-Virumaa suffered, seeing a loss of 21% of the total jobs in the area (Kondan & Sahajpal, 2017). There was also emigration of (primarily upper-class) Russophones who worked in Tallinn during the Soviet occupation. This reshuffled the class divide of the linguistic groups and social value of languages that had previously existed (Kulu & Tammaru, 2004). Additionally, language policies shifted from state-imposed bilingualism to titular language monolingualism (Ehala, 2017). Overwhelmingly, the Russophone population accepted the legitimacy of the new language laws (Ozolins, 1999). This acceptance was surprising, given that this population comprised 39% of Estonia at the time, with only 14% of this group having command of Estonian (Kemppainen et al., 2008). However, the sudden policy shift away from Russian posed challenges primarily in the large portion of the workforce who was monolingual, notably the teaching staff in the monolingual Russian education systems in Ida-Virumaa. In an effort to transition to Estonian-medium education, *Riigikogu*, the new parliament, passed laws in the years following independence that reasserted the language of education to be Estonian in private schools (1993), vocational schools (1993), upper secondary school (1993), and universities (1995), as well as redefining Estonian as the sole language of public administration with the Language Act (1995). These were also followed by the first of 4 Integration Strategies in 2000, which again focused on the transition of Russian-medium schools and education systems into Estonian (Kiilo & Kutsar, 2012; Rannut, 2004).

There was immense pushback by Russia and the Russophone media to these policies, especially the Upper Secondary School Act of 1993, which attempted to fully transition Russian-medium secondary school to Estonian by 2000. As a result, *Riigikogu* was forced to postpone the start of this transition to the 2007/2008 school year and remove any expected completion date, leaving the policy in a state of limbo (Kiilo & Kutsar, 2012, p. 223). One of the primary challenges that the transition of the Russian-medium education system was

facing was finding teachers equipped to teach in a bilingual or transitional monolingual[2] environment. Even in 2010, almost 20 years after independence, only 70% of Russophone teachers had any Estonian abilities (Kiilo & Kutsar, 2012). The isolation of the Russophone population, especially in Ida-Virumaa, created conditions for a continued monolingual community, and state-imposed shifts to education systems were not going to be enough to create a fully bilingual population (Leping & Toomet, 2008; Mägi, 2018). Since teaching in Russian-medium schools legally requires a B2[3] level Estonian, there remains low availability of qualified bilingual teachers, hampering the progress of a school-medium shift that continues today (Kemppainen et al., 2008). This issue is also compounded due to the burden of recruiting qualified teachers falling on the schools themselves (Siiner, 2014). Overall, the aims of the transitionary education policies have not been fully implemented in most secondary schools in Ida-Virumaa (Kiilo & Kutsar, 2012), and many students continue to learn content fully, or nearly fully, in Russian (Mehisto, 2011). Attempts to increase the Estonian abilities of Russophone teachers to necessary levels to teach fully in Estonian have not been successful, and the recruitment of native Estonian-speaking teachers has been hampered by the continued high levels of segregation of these linguistic groups (Mägi, 2018; Mehisto, 2011; Mehisto & Asser, 2007). One report on the progress of the linguistic transition states the problem plainly, saying:

> "The biggest obstacle to the transition is the poor Estonian language skills of Russian school teachers.[…] Municipal education leaders, who are responsible for what is happening in schools, are probably hoping for some spontaneous changes, because nothing else can explain their strange indifference to improving the Estonian language skills of Russian school teachers and school leaders" (Tomusk, 2019, p. 4).

In the following years, management of medium-of-education policy was shifted to the Integration Strategies, policies originally formulated to aid in the integration of the Russophone and non-citizen population into Estonian culture. The Integration Strategies were firstly motivated by a desire for a united national population, but also used as a block against concerns over Russian media disinformation by carving out funding for Estonian Russophone media programs (Jakobson, 2014; Kondan & Sahajpal, 2017; Nimmerfeldt et al., 2011). However, from their inception in 2000, the Integration Strategies conflated cultural

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[2] For these purposes, a bilingual system is one where the two languages are taught simultaneously, often separated by subject (e.g. Math, Science, and Music taught in the L1, Literature, History, and Health taught in the L2). A transitional monolingual system is where the system begins with a large proportion of the content taught in the L1, and slowly increases the amount of content in the L2 until the majority (or entirety) is taught in the L2.

[3] Estonia uses the Common Reference Levels established by the Council of Europe.

integration with Estonian ability and constructed Strategies primarily focused on Estonian-language education activities for the Russophone population. As policies before, the Integration Strategy launched in 2008 aimed to increase the instruction time in Estonian to 60% of the school day within a few years, but did not meet its projected deadline. These attempts were again met with pushback from Russia and linguistic rights activists as a challenge to the right to mother tongue education (Hogan-Brun, 2010). In later Integration Strategies, this 60% goal was removed as an indicator, though many current teachers and policy researchers assure me that this policy is still in effect.

Despite the issues encountered in the medium-of-education shift in existing school systems, the Integration Strategies led to the creation of bilingual immersion programs for 7 year-old students in 2000, and for Grade 6 (aged 13-14) students in 2008. These immersion programs[4] begin with 70% of all content delivered in Estonian, which drops down to 60% of content in Estonian after 9th grade. These programs were largely successful in preparing Russophone students for education in Estonian, but encountered some student motivation and teacher preparation issues in largescale rollout (Kukk et al., 2014; Mehisto, 2011; Mehisto & Asser, 2007). Despite the offerings of bilingual systems and Estonian immersion programs, 60% of Russophone students attend school entirely in Russian, evidence of the lack of transition to a majority Estonian-medium system in all Russian-medium schools (Kemppainen et al., 2015). The current policies that control the language mix in Estonian education are complex and at times contradictory, resulting in a wide gap between policies pushing for Estonian-medium transition and the reality in Russophone areas (Lauristin et al., 2008; Tomusk, 2019). With an increase in the number of offerings of language mixes in education (immersion, Russian-medium, and Estonian-medium), some parents navigated this choice according to their ideologies. School choice was increasingly found to be tied to attitudes towards the social treatment of Russophones. A study on this topic by Kemppainen et al. (2008, p. 100) found that when Russophones perceive greater social dominance by Estonian speakers, they are predicted to choose Russian-language instruction, while perceiving social equality between the two groups was expected to be associated with choosing Estonian-language instruction.

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[4] The immersion programs in Estonia were created by the Language Immersion Centre, using the Content Learning Integrated Language (CLIL) approach. While the full treatment of these programs is beyond the scope of this paper, a full discussion of the program can be found in Mehisto (2011).

2.3 Citizenship Policies

The differing attitudes towards treatment by Estonian-speakers may tie back to one of the most notable policy changes for Russophones following independence: the Citizenship Act of 1995. This act granted Estonian citizenship to "only citizens and descendants from the first inter-war republic" (Pavlenko, 2011, p. 42). The Citizenship Act also reinstated *ius sanguinis*, passing citizenship through parentage rather than location of birth. The population that had settled (or been settled) during the Soviet occupation was consequently without a claim to citizenship in the country where they now resided. To gain citizenship to the new Estonian state, residents were required to pass an Estonian language test, originally at the B2 level, but lowered to B1 following recommendations for the ascension to the EU (Ozolins, 1999, 2019). As aforementioned, there were extensive barriers to increasing the level of Estonian competency in the Russophone population, and as a consequence this magnified the challenges to gaining citizenship and political representation (Nimmerfeldt et al., 2011). As of 2017, about 54% of the Russophone population has Estonian citizenship, while a quarter have Russian citizenship, and 20% remain stateless (Ehala, 2017, p. 478), though Jakobson (2014) reports this number as lower, around 7%. These stateless citizens are commonly discussed according to their "grey passports," referring to the identity documentation issued by Estonia to stateless citizens who have a right to residence.

The Integration Strategies, in particular the immersion programs, have seen some success in increasing the Estonian abilities of the Russophone population (primarily younger generations). However, issues in the rollout of the programs and the access to citizenship for these groups have not resulted in the full formation of a unified cultural identity or even a defined Russophone Estonian identity (Cheskin, 2015; Kemppainen et al., 2015; Laitin, 1995; Mägi, 2018). This could be due to the delineation of groups in the post-independence policy by linguistic ability, in particular their command of Estonian. On this point, Kondan & Sahajpal note a "deep concern that the Estonian public analysis consistently frames the Russian minority vis-à-vis the external Russian aggression" (2017, p. 110). Despite efforts to integrate the population into Estonian society, the consistent othering of those with Russian as a mother tongue continues to frame the population as outsiders responsible for the actions of their assumed external homeland. Further discussion on identity formation of Russophones in Estonia will be treated in section 3.3.

2.4 Motivation and Perceived Discrimination

Following the policies of the Integration Strategies and school medium shifts, many research projects have considered the motivations of Russophone students and adults to learn Estonian. For many Russophones, there is an agreement that the Estonian language is an important resource for living in Estonia, especially for employment and career development (Kulu & Tammaru, 2004). This creates a favourable context for improvement of Estonian language skills, but "sociological factors (especially education) together with the geographical ones (location in Estonia) have a critical role" (Kulu & Tammaru, 2004, p. 378). That is to say, the remaining segregation of the two linguistic groups and the lower attainment of education of Russophones may be working against the acquisition of Estonian (Cheskin, 2015). Given this, for Estonian to be seen as a valuable language to learn, it may be important to be perceived as bringing an economic advantage as part of having an instrumental value (to be discussed in section 3.1).

The framing of the Estonian language as key to accessing the Estonian labour market increases its value in the education system for students (Klaas-Lang & Praakli, 2015). However, there is conflicting data supporting the economic advantage of Estonian proficiency for Russophones in Estonia. While some studies show an average 10.1% wage increase for Estonian proficiency of Russophones (Lauristin et al., 2008, p. 201), others show negligible if not *negative* estimated returns on Estonian language skills for all sectors other than public administration (Toomet, 2011). This leads to the perception of a language-based wage gap, evidence for the existence of which varies (Cheskin, 2015; Laitin, 1995; Lauristin et al., 2008; Leping & Toomet, 2008; Mägi, 2018; Soler-Carbonell et al., 2017). On the perceived wage gap, Leping & Toomet specifically note that "if the knowledge of Estonian language were the main factor behind the unexplained wage gap, one should expect the gap narrowing over the period as all the evidence points to improving Estonian skills of the minority workers. However, we do not observe the gap getting any smaller" (2008, p. 607). They go on to note that this gap between the linguistic groups is likely due to "establishment-level segregation, possibly related to sorting and screening discrimination" rather than linguistic ability (Leping & Toomet, 2008, p. 1).

3. From Language Policy to Identity

The languages of Estonia have now been looked at from a historical, policy, and economic perspective. Next, let us turn to understanding the linguistic background of the Estonian context, considering the relationship between language and identity. Linguistic realities are shaped both by external factors—the society one lives in and the context that surrounds it, and internal factors—one's own desires, opinions, and attitudes (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). The space in which these two factors intersect creates one's unique relation to the world and by extension their identity therewithin. It is precisely this topic that this section explores. This section will begin (3.1) by looking at background literature about language attitudes and how they are formed, including the existing research on this topic in Estonia. Next, section 3.2 moves to treating linguistic motivations and how language attitudes manifest themselves in language learning decisions. The next section (3.3), looks to the literature regarding the interaction between language and identity, and how motivations and attitudes interact with identity formation. Finally, section 3.4 introduces literature on the final of the 3 languages on which this research is based: English. This includes discussion of the role of English in Europe (section 3.4.1), in minority language literature (section 3.4.2), and finally in Estonia (section 3.4.3).

3.1 Language Policy and Language Attitudes

While there are many definitions of the concept of language policy (Peled, 2014; Ricento, 2014), this paper follows that of Johnson (2013, p. 9) in which the term "language policy" is one that broadly refers to any state or institutional policy that is enacted to effect some change in the form, function, use or acquisition of language. In Estonia, policy analyses have shown that "policies regulating language and education issues in the country, especially regarding the internationalization of higher education, are particularly concerned with the protection, promotion, and development of Estonian" (Soler-Carbonell et al., 2017, p. 9). As previously discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3, the legislation of language use in Estonia also focuses on the tension between the two largest linguistic populations in the country: Russophones and Estonian-speakers. This study primarily focuses on these policies and programmes.

In Estonia, like most other contexts, language and the laws that govern it are inextricably tied to the social context in which they are based. This *linguistic culture* as outlined by Schiffman (2009, p. 112) includes ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, religious structures, and other "cultural baggage." In most understandings of the term, language attitudes are the social meanings people assign to a language and its users (Dragojevic et al., 2021). These can relate to judgements about one's group identity, social ranking, and personality on the basis of language or accent. Language attitudes do not have to accurately reflect the population being judged, but rather serve to display the social stereotypes and norms of those who hold them. The evaluative beliefs that underlie language attitudes can be broken into two areas of study: beliefs about language varieties in themselves, and beliefs about their speakers (ibid, p. 4). These both influence the interactions between and reflect the opinions of different linguistic groups.

In the case of Estonia, attitudes towards the different linguistic groups manifest themselves in stereotypes and opinions that are attributed based on mother tongue. For example, there is a history of monolingualism that is attributed to the Russophone population in Estonia, which while rooted in historical truths, is now far from the reality. This stereotype of monolingualism has also had other attitudes attributed to it, as found by Fonzari in a questionnaire from 1999 of Estonian-speakers, showing that "Russophones' refusal to learn Estonian has been interpreted as a lack of appreciation for Estonia as a separate country (Fonzari, 1999, p. 40). In this way, the Russophone population is assigned both a stereotype of monolingualism, and an anti-nationalistic belief system due to their mother tongue. These pervasive stereotypes have drawn research to the topic of the magnitude of Russophones' motivation to learn Estonian, and what might increase it.

3.2 Motivations

In much of the research on attitudes towards language in Estonia, attitudes are measured by a scale variable inquiring about the perceived value of the language (Ehala & Niglas, 2006; Kemppainen et al., 2008). This research is not only necessary in identifying the attitudes of students and their parents, but also for monitoring the progress of policies aimed at increasing the acquisition of Estonian among non-native populations. By identifying what motivates learners, and where they perceive value in language, programme managers are able to more

successfully target the lessons and recruitment efforts. The motivations or rationalizations of language acquisition are often linked to public, economic, and integration values of languages (Koreinik, 2011, p. 246), these are most often discussed as instrumental and integrative motivations of language. It is important to note these phenomena discuss complex interactions of equally complex notions, and as such any categorization of motivations is fluid and often overlapping.

Gardner et al. (1985) was early in defining the separation between instrumental and integrative motivations and showing the large role that motivation plays on language acquisition. For Gardner, instrumental motivations are defined as the pragmatic or utilitarian value of learning a language. Klaas-Lang & Praakli (2015) further refine this definition to explicitly be tied to economic benefits or seeking a better socio-economic position. In practice, a student using primarily instrumental motivations would be learning a language for the explicit reason of gaining or advancing in a job.

Integrative motivation was also defined by Gardner (1985) as the importance of studying a language to enhance interaction with that language community. This has been related to studies of migrant populations, which emphasize the role of language in the acceptance of migrant populations into society and culture. In other words, integrative motivation serves to advance one's cultural position in the target linguistic community. This type of motivation is the primary one considered by the Estonian Government in their Integration Strategies, though evidence shows that expectations of integrative motivation are much higher than the reality in Estonia (Lauristin et al., 2008, p. 55).

As noted earlier, these categories of motivation are not discrete nor fixed. Attitudes and motivations overlap and values attributed to language often straddle these labels of integrative and instrumental (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Similarly, the instrumental motivations of a language can also be negatively impacted by concepts on integration. In the case of Estonia, while a study of 9th grade Russophone students found that they were motivated mainly by the uses of Estonian in the labour market, there was an explicit concern that the use of the Estonian language threatened their Russian identity (Klaas-Lang & Praakli, 2015). However, this directly contradicts early research that shows that "Estonian is valued as a token of identity but not much as a commodity in the sense of linguistic economy" (Ehala & Niglas, 2006, p. 1). These findings reflect the disparity in attitudes both within and

amongst populations. Even the integrative value attributed to the Estonian language differs between populations, with the Russophone population seeing it as a lower resource for integration than native Estonian speakers (Lauristin et al., 2008, p. 51). Given that Estonian-speakers believe that Estonian has more power to integrate a community than Russophones do, this research elicits reflection on if the reality and experiences of the two groups may be the reason for this gap. Furthermore, given the policy-based identification of these groups by their mother tongue, it is possible that the integration of the Russophone population is perceived as impacted more by the Russian ability of the population, rather than their Estonian ability.

3.3 Language, Community and Identity

The topics of integration and group definition raise further questions on the subject of identity. As defined by Ehala & Zabrodskaja (2014, pp. 166–167), 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". Bonny Norton's (2010; 2011, p. 420) influential work on identity and language argues that "personalities, learning styles, motivations, and so on are not fixed, unitary, or decontextualized, and while context 'pushes back' on individuals' claims to identity, individuals also struggle to assume identities that they wish to claim." This contextual identity is constructed through interaction with social factors like religion, ethnicity, gender, class, and the impact that these have on one's social relations (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). As such, social identity will be considered as something constantly negotiated in each interaction, and with the possibility to shift and change over time (Ochs, 1993).

A crucial aspect of the construction of communities in which these identities are formed is language use, and as such, "language is very often the main pillar of ethnic or national identity" (Ehala, 2017, p. 473). Language impacts not only the linguistic community in which values can be transmitted, but also the relation of this community to the rest of the world, especially in places of high language contact like Estonia (Anderson, 2006). Language serves as a conduit for identity construction, and for the power relations between communities (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 246). In a country where the division of groups is based on language, as in the targeted polices following independence, identity will follow those

dividing lines. Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) draws subcategories in identity formation related to the convergence of factors that impact it, these subcategories include: territorial identity, political identity, ethnic identity, linguistic identity. Territorial identity is the identity that is attributed to one based on their geographic origins. Political identity expresses loyalty to the state. Ethnic identity relates to origin and culture as well as traditions and value judgements. Finally, linguistic identity shows "functional competence, pragmatic skills, different communicative strategies in a specific language" (Kuun, 2008, p. 185).

Identity and community are also key factors in integration, and language acts a cornerstone of all 3, as "society's acceptance of one's first language may lead to stronger identification with that society" (Kemppainen et al., 2015, p. 336). The current research on this topic in Estonia shows that Russophone students have created at least 4 distinct identities: 1) Russian-centred; 2) multicultural (with identification to several ethnic and linguistic groups or with global identification); 3) bicultural (Estonian-Russian); 4) Estonia-centred (Kemppainen et al., 2015; Klaas-Lang & Praakli, 2015; Kuun, 2008; Laitin, 1995; Nimmerfeldt et al., 2011). In this range of identities, the language of education was at times shown to be directly correlated with the ethnic self-identification of the student. While this may support the efforts of the Integration Strategies to push for Estonian-medium education as a means of integration of the Russophone community, it also legitimizes the worries that reduction of Russian-medium education will be a threat to any Russophone identity. This supports the theory of Küün (2008, p. 184), who notes that areas with a high concentration of Russophones are "often the sites for the development of oppositional attitudes which are expressed by opposing oneself in the society to the group speaking the target language as a mother tongue." Since language in Estonia is particularly key to ethnic identity, perceived threats to that language reinforce the social power differences between the two groups, and may deepen the *us* vs *them* attitudes that prevail today.

3.4 The Role of English

The rise in English in domains such as international higher education (Soler, 2019), tourism (Rao & Abdullah, 2007), and the global labour economy (Cameron, 2012) tends to be relatively uncritical (Phillipson, 2017). This global status of the language is inexplicably tied to the colonial past of its home countries the UK and US. Phillipson (2017) notes that,

"European colonisation was legitimated by the fraudulent myth of *terra nullius*. Americanisation worldwide is furthered by projecting US norms and lifestyle as a *cultura nullius* for all. English is marketed as a *lingua nullius*, for instance in British promotion of English worldwide, as though English is a universal 'basic skill'. This is false argumentation that echoes colonial discourse."

This section will endeavour to give a brief overview of the discourse surrounding English and its role in Europe, minority language discourse, and finally in Estonia, to outline the unique place it holds in the linguistic policies of the country and its society.

3.4.1 In Europe

The commodification of English in Europe is one that has been tracked over time (Phillipson, 2017). Recently, neoliberal movements of global markets have pushed an ideology that notes the "efficiency" of a "single market, single currency, single language" system, indirectly promoting English as this new global language "disconnected from its original sources" (Phillipson, 1996, 2004). The dangers of this rhetoric are well outlined in the literature, primarily in the work of Phillipson (1996), in relation to the concern of *linguistic displacement,* or the replacement of other languages with English (Phillipson, 2017). Ethics aside, English is taking on an increasing role of cross-cultural communication in Europe (De Houwer & Wilton, 2011; Linn et al., 2016), and this phenomenon has not gone unnoticed by learners, especially in Eastern Europe, where evidence shows increasing instrumental motivations to learn the language (Fonzari, 1999).

3.4.2 In Minority Language Literature

While some arguments for the increased use of English in international business frame it as a neutral *lingua franca*, the possibility of neutrality of English is contentious (Phillipson, 2017). A primary reason English is so widespread globally as an L2 was due to the colonial and imperial past of the United States and England (Phillipson, 1997). Pennycook (2017) outlines the depth of these connections and pushes for a critical examination of the increase in English language teaching across the world, most specifically in education policies. This has been echoed in the literature and debates surrounding medium-of-education policies in post-colonial countries (Heugh, 2013; Hoadley, 2012; Kamwangamalu, 2008, 2013; Reagan, 2001). These discussions largely break down into the same dichotomy outlined here: the advantages of English proficiency as a commodity must be weighed against the imperial

history of English. In many contexts in which English is flourishing as an L2, the language is also reinforcing imperialist power structures and widening gaps between the "haves and have nots" as well as threatening the role that smaller minority languages play in the economy and education systems (Phillipson, 2017; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009). While the debates of the commodification of English in areas of post-colonial power structures have been well-documented, the role that English plays in areas of the world not subject to western imperialism require mores study, increasing the need for attention in countries like Estonia.

3.4.3 In Estonia

The Estonian policies and power structures treated up to this point have focused solely on Russian and Estonian. The rise of English in Estonia has happened largely since its ascension into the EU and the global markets which followed (Toomet, 2011). Considerations of linguistic domination in the country focused uniquely on the power structures left behind by the Soviet occupation, and rarely consider English in its role as a colonial language (Druviete, 1997; Hogan-Brun, 2005a, 2005b; Pavlenko, 2011). Studies have mapped the rise in English use and prestige in the Baltic states since their ascension to the EU, notably in Lithuania, where English was unanimously indicated as the most prestigious language by students in 2011 (Ozolins, 2019). As education in English increases with its perceived economic value, this also has diminished the perceived value of Estonian to many. Soler (2019, p. 90) noted this attitude in a study of international staff members at a university in Tartu, quoting one interviewee saying, "Actually there is no need to know Estonian, I think. Because all the people know, for me, all the people know Russian or English". The increasing value of English in this circumstance is diminishing the value of Estonian, supporting the theory of Ehala and Niglas (2006) that "any increase in English in education is a decrease in the value of Estonian".

Despite this documented power shift, ideologies of linguistic imperialism tend to be used to support the spread of English in Estonia, rather than to stop it. Fonzari (1999) demonstrates this mindset by stating that "Estonians have on the whole accepted English as the language of communication and technology, as a reaction against the fifty-year imposition of Russian language and culture". By positioning Russian as the language of linguistic imperialism,

English can serve a role as a "neutral" third language used to avoid the political and ethnic identity connotations of using Russian in public, or acquiring Estonian (Soler, 2019).

For this reason, discussions of Russian and Estonian language policies must also account for the continual encroachment of English. Early on in independent Estonia, Taylor (2002, p. 336) argued that "English-language learning is increasingly sought by non-Estonians unwilling or unable to achieve the necessary competence in the official language"[5]. This is supported by Laitin's (1995) earlier predictions that Russophones would "have more reason to learn English than Estonian". If not only for an expansion in the labour market available to those with a competence in English, there is also data that supports the idea that *within Estonia* there are higher salary returns for English competence in Russophones over Estonian abilities. This is evident in the industries for which Estonian is required for employment, which are isolated primarily to the service sector and other lower-income jobs (Druviete, 1997; Lauristin et al., 2008; Toomet, 2011).
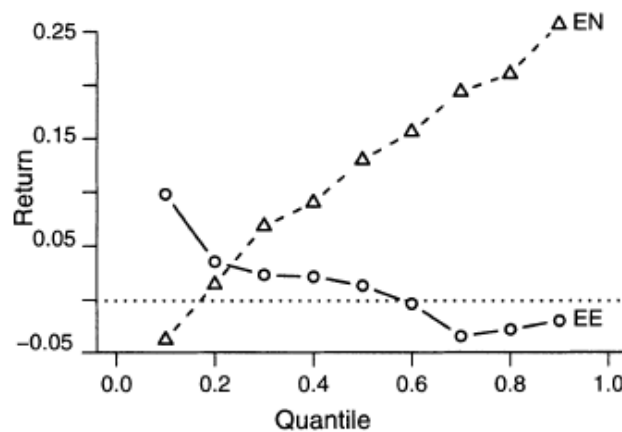
Figure 2: Estimated Percentage Returns to Language Skills by Quantiles; EE – Estonian, EN – English (Toomet, 2011)

Using the Estonian Labour Force Survey and Paths of a Generation data, Toomet (2011) illustrated that there are negligible returns on Estonian abilities for all sectors other than public administration, which employs only 3% of Russophone men. However, there is an income boost of 25% for the upper decile of the labour market for English skills (Figure 2).

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[5] This, of course, draws into question the extent to which English *is* a neutral language in Estonia, given the role it can play in avoiding more politicized language choices. More discussions on this topic of language choice can be found in Toomet (2011) and Fonzari (1999).

The contradiction in evidence for primarily instrumental motivations of Russophones to learn Estonian and the apparent lack of returns for their Estonian skills paints a concerning picture for the future of Russophones in Estonia. These background sections have given a short summary of the policies that impacted the Russophone population both before and following independence, and how the efforts to integrate the population have been met with pushback and logistical challenges. By extension, the identification of this community by their lower Estonian skills has led to pervasive stereotypes of monolingualism and even anti-nationalism, even following the increase in Estonian ability in particular by younger generations. These groups are also subject to residential segregation and perceived wage gaps for which Estonian skills offer mixed aid. The role that English is increasingly playing in Estonia may complicate the already fraught relationship that many Russophones have with Estonian, and may impact their attitudes and motivations towards all 3 languages. This is the central tension that this research seeks to investigate, and in section 4 the methods for this research are outlined.

4. Methods

4.1 Methodological aims and approaches

The aims of this research are to identify narratives used by Russophone students when discussing their motivations to learn English and Estonian, and how this manifests itself in their identities. This research does not seek to pass judgement on the linguistic decisions of the interviewees, but instead hopes to see what the attitudes of the students can tell us about the status and success of the language policy decisions of the Estonian government. There is little research applying how the economic impact (perceived or real) of languages in Estonia and in wider Europe affects the decisions of actual language learners, and how this changes their relationships to and motivations for acquiring Estonian or English. This paper hopes to fill this gap by looking at the role of 3 of the most prominent languages in the Estonian labour market today, and adding to a body of evidence for the common motivations and attitudes of students who have studied exclusively under the new language policies outlined earlier. This will also allow an exploration of the role that these languages play in the identity formation of Russophone teenagers in Estonia, a topic on which there is little literature on all 3 languages combined.

The research undertaken in this project was exploratory by design. I aim to get an overview of the narratives that shape the motivations of Russophone students learning Estonian and English, and see if there were differences to the existing research that only analyses Russian and Estonian. By speaking about all 3 languages in tandem, I am able to compare the different linguistic motivations and attitudes of the students and see what that might tell us about the language market in Estonia. The data consists of self-reported language use and language attitudes, and provides insight into the anecdotal experiences of young people, rather than drawing broad conclusions about the entire population. The strength of exploratory research is not in an ability to define the "cause" of any motivations to learn Estonian or English, nor any direct "effect" that English has had on the motivations of students to learn Estonian. Rather, the data that is gathered from the interviewees illustrates accepted narratives and opinions of the languages and their place in the labour market, which give us insight into the cultural language attitudes and power relations between all 3 languages.

The reason to use exploratory research design is twofold. The first being that given the unique population that is being studied, this type of research allows for purposeful sampling strategies. Purposeful sampling enables research in contexts where the population of interest shares unique characteristics that limit the size of the selection pool, and where variation along certain variables is wanted (Sandelowski, 2000). The sampling in this case is purposeful, in that the students were selected based on their adherence to certain criteria (having Russian as a home language), but the sample was *stratified* based on regional origin to get some variation. The variation along certain variables, here regional origin, that stratified purposeful sampling allows for yields "high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and important shared patterns that cut across cases" (Suri, 2011, p. 67).

Secondly, the approach of investigating individual experiences allows flexibility in the design of the interviews and for more of a cyclical approach to the interview guide. This is because when looking for narratives, the answers do not necessarily have to be replicated in order to be interesting or notable, as narrative research understands the individual nature of one's relation to the surrounding context (Moen, 2006; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). While patterns of responses are one of the methods of analysis, new and novel responses are also noteworthy as proposing new plausible relationships. Any rigid conception of cause and

effect would nullify this type of analysis by seeking only repeatable narratives and conclusions (similar to the quantitative/qualitative debate, as in Hammersley, 1992).

4.2 Data collection

This research is based on 8 interviews that were conducted with upper-secondary Russophone students from Tartu (2), Tallinn (4), and Narva (2) with high-level English abilities. The interviews were designed to get the voices of different profiles of students, varying by region, medium-of-education, and age. Unfortunately, the sample did not provide any variation in gender, with all interview participants identifying as women. The primary axis on which student attitudes were thought to differ is along region of origin, as this is one way that education systems and their language histories differ. Tartu, Tallinn, and Narva have concentrations of Russophones making up approximately 15%, 50%, and 90% of the populations respectively. Given this variation, the three cities represent different linguistic landscapes and differing bilingual or monolingual settings, impacting the experiences of their residents in relation to Estonian-speakers (Kulu & Tammaru, 2004; Raud & Orehhova, 2020). The interviewees show this diversity by attending different models of schooling, with some in immersion schools, some in bilingual schools, and some in monolingual Estonian or Russian schools.

To select the students, my local supervisor and I contacted school administrators for approval, and they contacted teachers to reach out to students meeting the participant criteria. Two interviews were conducted in person, and the rest were conducted using video chat due to the ongoing health crisis. The interviews lasted up to one hour. The interview design was semi-structured, allowing for a large degree of flexibility of the follow-up questions, and more freedom for the respondent. This helps in collecting narrative data because it allows the interviewee the flexibility to steer towards what they deem important about the subject at hand, rather than providing precise responses to precise questions (Wengraf, 2001). All consent forms were prepared and distributed in both English and Russian.

The interview guide included the general themes of: demographic and language use, language motivations, identity and experience, and languages in school. The interviews were held in both English and Russian, with the help of a Russian research assistant in 6 interviews, and a

Estonian Russophone translator in 2. For all but 2 of the interviews, the section of the interview on identity and linguistic experience was conducted entirely in Russian. This decision was made in an effort to eliminate a linguistic barrier from the more personal responses and to elicit more elaboration on the part of the students, this will be discussed more in section 4.5. It was highly successful in gaining more insight to the emotions and specific nuance that comes with conversations about identity.

The audio from the interviews was transcribed using machine translation (Sonix.ai), and edited by speakers of the languages. Russian transcriptions were then translated to English and double checked by a professional translator.

4.3 Data analysis

Once the interview transcripts are in English, multiple passes were done over the transcripts to identify the codes, and group them into categories (Deterding & Waters, 2021). These codes seek to describe the data in detail using shared vocabulary to facilitate comparison of the different cases (Saldaña, 2013). Given the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the subject of language, culture, and identity, coding is important to track the nuances in the experience of the participants and to avoid losing detail. Codes could be marking ideas as simple as "Kazakh grandparents" or as complex as "Russian identity as non-Estonianness". These codes are then organised into groups or code categories. These categories were: 1) *language use; 2) language background; 3) treatment; 4) language identity and culture; 5) motivations and values; 6) schooling.* Within these categories, codes were further sorted into subcategories (Deterding & Waters, 2021). As an example, within the category of *treatment*, there were six subcategories: by country, by peers, by strangers, by generations, expectations and stereotypes, and sentiments towards treatment.

The ideas and themes that emerged from sorting the data were then analysed using the framework of identity formation in the form outlined by Cheskin (2015). This *Quadratic Nexus* analyses the formation of identity of Russophones in the Baltic states through their treatment by and attitude towards the political, economic, and cultural forces impacting them through three different state actors: the nationalizing state (here Estonia), the external homeland (here primarily Russia), and international institutions (here primarily the EU and

the Schengen Area). Using this *Quadratic Nexus* as a framework of analysis, the responses and individual experiences of the students can be analysed with regard to the cultural, political, and economic factor of each state actor. For each of these factors, the aim is to identify the positive and negative poles of attraction for the students to see more clearly how each state actor influences their identity formation. Additionally, this research makes it possible to discuss how languages relate to these state actors, and identify how the attitudes towards and narratives surrounding each language interact with the poles of attraction for the state actors and may impact identity.

4.4 Limitations of the study

As with all studies, these research methods had limitations and drawbacks. The first of these limitations was the multilingual nature of the research. Students are understandably more comfortable in their native language(s), but many of these students have a very high level of English ability. As such, simultaneous English-to-Russian translation was not an effective method as the students grew frustrated being able to understand the question without translation, but conducting the entire interview in English naturally limited the responses. Students were also trepidatious towards codeswitching during the interview, and would answer a question in the language in which it was asked. The adopted solution of a half-and-half interview was an effective workaround to this limitation.

A related issue to the multilingual nature of this study was the coordination of the interviews. This coordination was done in some instances through the teacher directly in Estonian, but in some instances the teachers requested my coordination of interview logistics directly with students. These exchanges were in English, and as a result preselected students with very high English abilities, which may have impacted the included narratives.

As with all qualitative research, my positionality as a researcher influences both the evidence that I can collect, and my interpretation of the results (Hopkins et al., 2017; Milner, 2007). Researchers cannot escape our own social world in the field, so it is important to note the power structures, motivations, and bias that may influence the interpretation of qualitative data, as it cannot be presented in its full form for interpretation by the reader for reasons of anonymity (for details on this reflexive sociology see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Firstly,

as a linguist I am shaped by the belief that languages build cultures and as such should be preserved to promote diversity of cultures and practice. My linguistics education in the United States also shapes my opinion on the topic of linguistic integration, predisposing me to support the idea of minoritized language maintenance and education. On the other hand, I am an English teacher who spent a year promoting the learning of English in Estonia. This shapes my opinions on the role that English can play in facilitating cross-cultural communication in the country, as does my experience as an outsider and native English-speaker in the country. Finally, I have lived and worked in some capacity with Estonian-speakers for over two years, and have discussed these topics at length with them. While this has added many layers of nuance to my understanding of the subject, it also by nature impacts my understanding of the topic going into these interviews.

Being aware of these positionalities that I hold as a researcher, I have aimed to interpret the findings of the interviews in as objective a light as possible, and have looked for the narratives that are new and novel in the grand scope of the existing literature. It is my hope that through an understanding of the background literature and considering my positionality as a Western researcher, the resulting analysis will accurately represent the students on whom it is based.

5. Findings

In this next section the findings of the interviews are presented. Section 5.1 begins by outlining the arenas of language use and resulting motivations for each of the 3 languages. Following this, narratives of treatment of Russophones are presented in section 5.2. Next, the topic of identity is treated in depth, considering Russian, Estonian, and mixed identities of the students in section 5.3. Finally, the findings relating to schooling are presented in section 5.4, considering the topics of experiences in Russian-medium schools, and looking at the narratives around school quality.

5.1 Language Use and Motivation

Throughout the interviews, when students mentioned a domain of their life where they used a specific language, it was noted. Over time, these comments build up a picture of the areas in which each language is commonly referenced as being used. The 3 languages of interest

occupy different spaces in the daily lives of the students interviewed. Though these different domains can illustrate the attitudes that the students have towards the languages and the values that they attribute to them, they are not definite boundaries.

Beginning with Russian, for which the primary domain was the language of the home, but being that it is the L1 of these students, it is also used in other aspects of their life when needed. Russian was the sole language spoken at home for all but one of the interviewed students, and as such it was described as the language of the house, of friends, and of online messenger systems with these local friends. The description of the role of Russian in their lives did not show any instrumental motivations, particularly in discussions of the future. The status of the language as the language of the home and friends does show some evidence of integrational motivations, specifically in reference to their local communities rather than Estonia as a whole. This, and the complex connection between identity, integration, and Russian, will be treated more explicitly in section 5.3.

The arenas in which Estonian was commonly referenced are primarily related to school. These students are all learning at least a portion of their coursework in Estonian, and are approaching state testing in the language in order to continue on to Estonian university. Estonian was also the language of work, both current and future, for the vast majority of these students. Notably, this was only the case for those who wished to stay in Estonia in the future, or as a secondary plan for those who wished to leave. Estonian was also noted to be the language first attempted with strangers during daily encounters. For a few of the students, Estonian was occasionally used in personal life. All had separate groups of Estonian friends, three even reported using the language in previous relationships. However, the only student who explicitly referenced Estonian as a language of their future home was the student who was raised in a bilingual household. On the whole, Estonian was framed as a primarily functional language in the daily lives of these students, operating as the language of their studies and work.

The domains of usage of Estonian underpin its value through its instrumental use. The common rationales for learning Estonian were twofold. The first being: If you want to live in Estonia, to work, you have to speak Estonian. The second answer being: All the exams are in Estonian, university is in Estonian. While there is not much choice to learn the language for these students, their reasoning behind it centres around measurable goals: to be able to speak

Estonian *well enough* to pass an exam, get a driving license, get into university, to speak to colleagues, or for formal employment. Estonian is central to any desire to stay in Estonia, and for this generation this has become the norm given its role in their education. Estonian has been a part of their education since the beginning, so the conversation surrounding the language is not around *if* they will acquire Estonian, but rather their plans for future use of the language. The students only referenced the connection between integration and Estonian when referring to their inability to identify as Estonian due to their lack of native command of the language. This will be discussed more explicitly in section 5.3.2.

When discussing English, the students assigned it broad terms: the language of travel, the language of social media, the language of media. Many mentioned the role it plays in their classrooms for other classes, one noting, "Even in our history classes, all the materials brought are in English just because we don't have them in Estonian" (Tallinn student 1). Where Estonian has limits, such as the amount of information on Wikipedia, English and Russian fill in. There were different perceptions of the role that English plays in daily life in Estonia. Two students (from Tartu) mentioned using it regularly in shops and transport, while other students explicitly said that they do not need or use English in Estonia. No matter the role students gave it in their lives in Estonia, all students underlined the role it plays in their online lives, with many mentioning the consumption of English-language movies and TV shows, as well as short-form video content such as TikTok and other social medias like Instagram. In one case, a student noted that "Since I have [friends] in other countries, I have to use English" (Tallinn student 2). This comment frames another common theme: the relation of English to all concepts of abroad. Most explicitly, students referenced the need for English when travelling on holidays abroad, but some talked specifically about hopes to study abroad for which English plays a key role. Notably, this did not expressly mean they wanted to study in an Anglophone country. Many of the countries that were named were not English-speaking such as: Spain, Sweden, Finland. Though some mentioned a desire to move to countries like England or Scotland. With this, a divide emerges in the languages of university: for those wishing to stay in Estonia, Estonian is the language of higher education, for those wishing to move away, it is English.

Through these domains of use, it is clear that English like Estonian was regarded instrumentally. English fills in the gaps of all the other languages that they speak. When information or media is not available in Russian or Estonian, it is almost a certainty that it is

available in English. Students talked about consuming media in English, participating in social media spaces in English, using exclusively English when travelling (even to non-Anglophone countries). While Estonian was discussed as the language of "here," English was framed as the language of "everywhere else." This is not to say that local languages of other countries were pushed aside. A few students discussed learning languages for countries they one day hoped to move to, but English was always noted as a tool through which they would get there, either by study programs or otherwise. On a simplified level, Estonian served as an instrumental language largely for the academic and workplace futures of these students, but English was the instrumental language for other areas of their lives both now and in the future.

5.2 Treatment of Russophones in Estonia

Many of the students shared stereotypes that they faced and even negative experiences of treatment by peers, teachers, and strangers based on their L1. It is important to note in this section and further sections the terminology that students use to identify this group receiving the negative treatment, typically using the identifier "Russian" rather than "Russian-speaking" or some other term. This will be more explicitly discussed in section 5.3.1.

5.2.1 Stereotypes

Beyond the use of their languages, the students were also asked about their experiences as native Russophones in Estonia. Many discussed the negative stereotypes that were associated with Russians[6] in Estonia that they had to face when interacting with Estonian-speakers. In their own words, here are some of the stereotypes:

> "You don't imagine anything good would come [from] being Russian." (Tartu student 2).

> "Russians are really negative persons, and they think only ever bad about situations and stuff. And that they use only some bad words in their language so they don't use a normal language, they use only bad words." (Narva student 2)

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[6] I use the term "Russian" here because these are also stereotypes about Russians as a nation that have expanded to Russian-speakers in Estonia. This is also due to the way follow-up questions were usually phrased, using the same identifiers that the students introduced, in this case mainly the term "Russians".

> "[Someone said to me] 'Your English and especially Estonian skills are quite nice. And can you answer a question, are any Russians are like droopy and sad?' Um. Key answer, no, not all of us, of course." (Narva student 1)

While some of these stereotypes have a lighter tone, they showcase the othering of the Russophones as foreign people in the country, despite all of these students being born in Estonia, most 2nd or 3rd generation. What is also notable is the surprise at the language skills in the final example given by a student from Narva. A pervasive stereotype noted in all the interviews and in other interactions with native Estonian-speakers is that Russophone students are unwilling to learn and unable to speak other languages, including Estonian and English. This stereotype is repeated even by the Estonian teachers of these students in some cases, and moves us into our next topic, the negative treatment of Russophones in Estonia.

5.2.2 Negative Experiences

Though not an experience shared by all of the interviewees, a handful of the students had experienced multiple instances of negative treatment that they attributed to being Russophones. One student had even moved cities due to the negative treatment at her previous school, recalling that the Estonian teacher told her, "You're Russian, you have no chance, don't think of making any plans." To which she noted, "I realized that I don't need it, I want to learn Estonian with pleasure, not with judgment. And I left." Other students noted experiences of friends being "humiliated in class for being Russian," (Tartu student 2) or treated badly by peers, feeling a "certain slight negative attitude, they might ignore him, or like, be offended." (Tallinn student 3).

Treatment outside of the classroom can also impact the students negatively, one outlining the possible mindset of Estonian-speakers by saying. "When you see a person who is Russian, you don't really expect him to speak Estonian. And so you can— You can treat me, treat him really bad, so you think that he anyway doesn't know Estonian, so why would I speak to him?" (Narva student 2). Another described experiences when they were young and still learning Estonian, saying,

> "More than once I've experienced the fact that [Estonian-speakers] can be aggressive, specifically about the fact that you're like, in Estonia and don't speak Estonian at all. When we were younger it made us confused, and angry, but now I understand that

when a person doesn't speak Russian it's no problem to talk to him in Estonian, because I can afford to." (Tallinn student 2).

This comment, specifically the verb "afford" when discussing Estonian language skills, paints an interesting picture for the "cost" of speaking Russian in Estonia. Understandably, Estonian skills take time to build, and it is interesting that there is a certain threshold past which the students feel that they no longer fit the stereotype of having low-to-no Estonian skills.

There is disagreement between the students about the age groups from which this negative treatment stems. Some specifically noted that older generations, mostly those over 45, were the main group of concern, possibly rooted in their experience of the Russian mandates under the Soviet education system. One student explained, "A lot of people of this [45+] generation who know Russian are resistant [to speaking it], and a lot of people of this generation are slandering Russians, it's no good to say you're Russian - that's coming from them at times." (Tartu student 2). In some cases this generational negative treatment is also passed down, with one student telling of a time when speaking to a boy, he told her "If my parents knew that I was talking to a girl who's not Estonian, they would kill me." (Tartu student 1).

However some other students disagreed, noting that the negative treatment in their experiences comes primarily from younger generations who never experienced the Soviet one-way bilingualism. One student from Tallinn explained,

> "Older Estonians evidently speak Russian quite well, they're generally happy to speak it, but even if they do not speak well they understand it almost completely. Probably the most problematic generation is from ages 25 to 45, give or take. That is where the problems arise that there is a sharp rejection of Russians and the maximum reluctance to speak." (Tallinn student 2)

The student went on to comment that this aligns with the generations raised at the height of the movement towards independence, and when the nation's identity was being tied to its language. This covers only the small sample of experiences of these students on an interpersonal scale. Comments on the perceived structural treatment of the students will be addressed in section 5.4.

5.3 Identity

In each interview, the students used the identifier "Russians" to refer to themselves, though very few of them explicitly identified a Russian when asked. This contradiction was present in every interview, and when asked explicitly about their use of the term "Russian" after explicitly saying they couldn't be Russian, one student said "You know what a coincidence is, it's just life doing its own thing. I mean, I was just born here" (Narva student 1). This phenomenon is one of the most apparent ways to see the complexity of identity as a Russophone in Estonia, and it is likely that the term Russian in casual conversation has been reduced to meaning Estonian Russophone. This section looks at each of the identities that the students answered with when asked how they identify: Russian, Estonian, and a mixed identity. In most cases, these identities were discussed in terms of what prevented them from identifying as something, rather than what enabled their identity.

5.3.1 Russian Identity

There was only one student in this sample who identified themself as Russian. The student who identified as Russian held a Russian passport until they were a teenager and noted that as the main reason for their Russian identity. Despite now having an Estonian passport, this identity remains. Some identified the cities they were born in (e.g. Narva) as a "Russian city," but this seemingly refers more to the linguistic makeup of the city than any anti-national sentiment.

Some students specifically noted their inability to identify as Russian, with one noting feeling foreign when visiting extended family in Russia for the first time at 16. Others tied this to their lack of Russian cultural knowledge, saying, "We come to Russia and there we aren't considered Russians either[…] We can't completely count ourselves as Russians because we don't know all the traditions and so on." (Tallinn student 2). Another student explained identity as being tied to the time spent in a territory, concluding that since they had not spent time in Russia they could not be Russian. For some students, this went explicitly against the Russian identity their parents had assigned them growing up, saying "My parents have always said that we were Russian, but the older I get, the more I realize that this stretches into some kind of nonsense because I can't really consider myself a Russian." (Tallinn student 2). Being that the Russophone community in Estonia is highly heterogenous, there were students

who implied they could not identify as Russian because they had no ties to Russia in their heritage. There were students with Belorussian, Ukrainian, Kazakh, and even Lithuanian grandparents, further fracturing the treatment of the Russophone population in Estonia as a monolith, and complicating the question of identity even more. Notably, these students also did not identify with these other homelands. Another student tied their inability to identify as Russian to their multilingualism, detailing an interaction with a family member from abroad telling them they have an accent by saying, "I was concerned. I was like, But I'm speaking Russian. Is that OK? [He's] like, 'Yeah, it's all OK.' But you can definitely say that I'm not Russian. Just the tiniest bit, just because I have to combine all of those languages at once." (Narva student 1).

5.3.2 Estonian Identity

Given that all but one of the students declined to identify as Russian, they were asked about the possibility of having an Estonian identity. While all interview participants held Estonian passports, only 3 students identified as Estonian during the interviews. Two of those identifying as Estonian used how others would identify them in a new context as a driving factor for this identification, saying "If we come now to another country we will be considered Estonians." (Tallinn student 3). These same students also used their time in the country as a driving factor for their identity, explaining, "We were born here, we … We lived, we studied…" (Tallinn student 3), and "50% of the time we're communicating in Estonian... though we're in a Russian environment" (Tallinn student 4). It is also important to note the role that Estonian-use plays in this justification. Despite their "environment" (likely their neighbourhood) being "Russian," since they speak in Estonian half of the time they are allowed an Estonian identity. However, they expand this requirement of Estonian knowledge to other identities as well, underlining, "Well, [being a Russian-speaker] still requires knowing Estonian, you know..." (Tallinn student 3), which underlines that Estonian ability is not the sole factor in their identity. These two Tallinn students who identify as Estonian base this identity on their time spent in the country, and on their use of the Estonian language.

These same justifications were found in the third student who identified as Estonian, though the situation of this student was unique. This student was raised in a bilingual household and speaks both Estonian and Russian as mother tongues. While they note that it would likely be

"more correct" to call themself a mix of Russian and Estonian, they prefer considering themself Estonian. The student elaborated saying, "I just like the Estonian culture and all of its beauty. I don't know. Just like when I call myself Estonian, I just can feel my heart beat so fast. And I'm just like, very happy to call myself Estonian" (Narva student 2). In this case there is an evocation of the Estonian culture and a deep connection with the identity. However, this identity was noted to be not common in Narva, as the student noted that speaking native Estonian on the phone in the primarily Russophone area elicited "funny looks."

For the rest of the students, however, the Estonian identity seemed unavailable to them. A Tallinn student tied this explicitly to their lack of native Estonian skills, saying, "[Identity] is actually a very complicated issue, because we in Estonia are considered nobodies, that is, not Estonians[…] We sort of can't count ourselves as Estonians because we can't say that we know Estonian, that it is our native language" (Tallinn student 1). A student from Tartu echoed this point, saying, "I personally think that I am not Estonian because it is not my native language" (Tartu student 1). Though when later asked if someone can be Estonian without speaking the language they said yes. This tension in answers shows a disparity between the opinions of the students when asked directly about the exclusivity of the Estonian identity, and how they apply these exclusions to themselves. This may be due to their own past experiences that deny them access to the identity, taken jointly with their non-native Estonian abilities.

5.3.3 Mixed Identities

For the other students in this sample, their identity was a mix. One student described their mixed identity by saying, "I consider myself a Russian-speaker, but I live in Estonia, but I do not consider myself an Estonian because Russian is the language I know perfectly" (Tartu student 1). Other students identified themselves by noting that they could not identify as either Russian or Estonian, but that this was not rare, and there was a whole community that felt the same way.

> "In terms of the fact that there are a lot of people like us in the country, it's not like we're anything special. So in principle we live in an area where I think half the people are Russian, you can speak Russian in any store, so you get this sort of community in

which everyone understands each other at least in principle. It's already like a
separate nation" (Tallinn student 1).

A student from Narva echoed the same sentiment. After identifying herself as having a dual identity, she said "And everyone around me feels like the same. There is Russians all around me, the same people as me that were born in Russian families but actually born here, not somewhere in Russia or elsewhere" (Narva student 1). A few of these students noted that logically, they know that they are Estonian, but they do not feel that they are integrated into the culture of Estonia enough to be able to identify with it, especially when they mix those cultural points with their own family culture they identify as being solidly Russian. Another student also described this grey area, but noted that there are not many moments when you have to define yourself nowadays, so this mixed identity does not cause much concern.

Now that the identities of the students have been discussed, it is possible to look more directly at integrative motivations tied to the languages. This is made more difficult due to the role that language plays in citizenship in Estonia. In order to be an Estonian citizen on paper, one must pass a language test. One of the students had a family member opt for Russian citizenship over Estonian due to this mandate, while another student told the story of her and her mother taking the language test to get citizenship. In these two cases, the choice to learn Estonian was not driven by a desire to be Estonian as an identity, but rather driven by the bureaucratic process of obtaining the passport. The student who went through the citizenship process did not identify as Estonian. As can be seen in the identities of the students, even after learning Estonian their entire academic careers, there is still a barrier for many of the students to an Estonian identity. It is clear from their explanations that it would be impossible for them to learn Estonian well enough to be considered "truly Estonian" in their lifetime. In this case, the bar to identity goes beyond what is required on the citizenship test, and requires native proficiency from birth. This also draws into question how integrative motivations are defined. The students who discussed this question feel integrated into the communities in which they live, because they live in communities with people from the same migratory background as themselves. In this case, Russian serves as the language of integration in these communities, but elsewhere in Estonia there is a different linguistic expectation, and less sense of integration due to their lack of Estonian.

5.4 Schooling

The students in this sample began learning Estonian at the beginning of their formal education, around age 7 or 8, and English around 2 years later. The students explained that their academic lives are punctuated by exams in these languages, most importantly the exams at the end of secondary school and the university entrance exams. When asked the most important language for them to learn in school, all of the answers included English or Estonian, no student chose Russian (Figure 3).
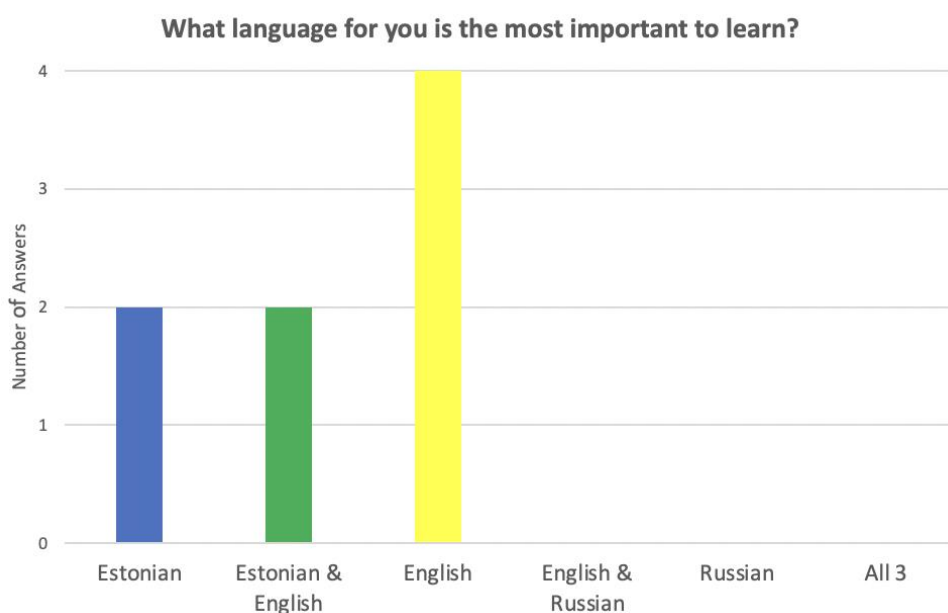

Figure 3: Most important language to learn, by response.

The languages that were marked as the most important to learn were different from the languages that were the "most important in life right now" for the students (Figure 4).

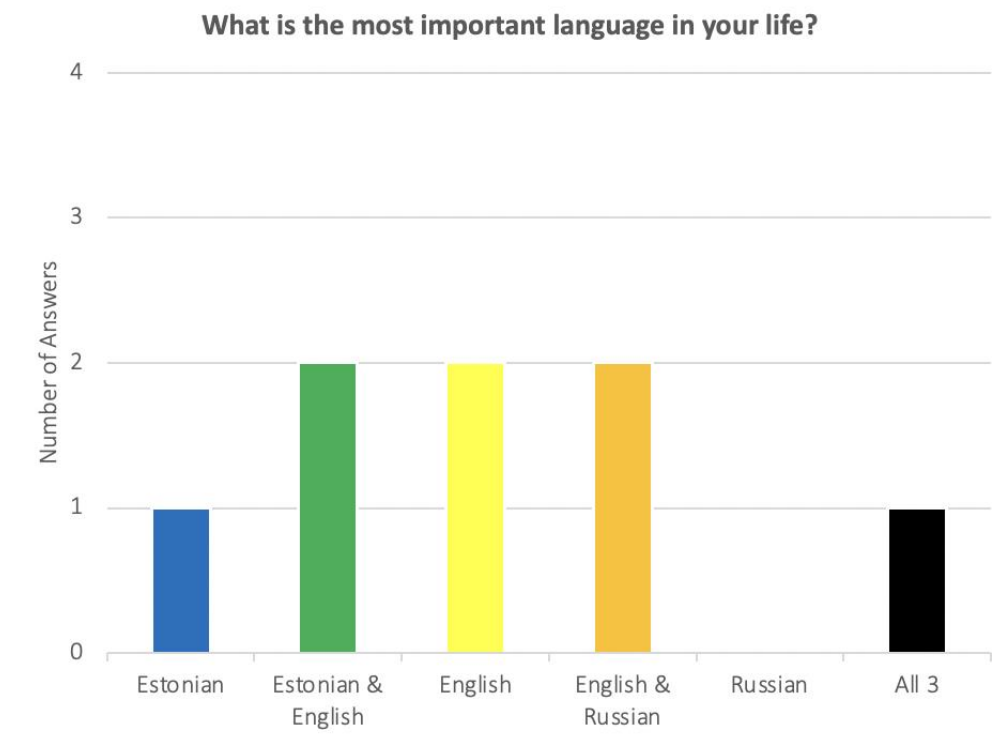**What is the most important language in your life?**

Figure 4: Most important language, by response.

The question of importance of learning sees a more sharp movement towards Estonian than when they considered which language was the most important for their current lives. This may also show the attitudes of the students and the hierarchy of languages in the education system, where Estonian and English proficiency may be a more pressing concern for exams than Russian. Notably, there is a difference in responses based on where the students are from. All of the students who named Estonian as the (or one of the) most important language(s) in their lives live in Tallinn. Most of these students had gone through immersion or intensive language programs, and all were learning Estonian from native speakers. All but one of these 4 students ranked their Estonian ability equal or greater than their English ability. These students were also neutral about an increase in the quantity of Estonian or English in their schools, with two of the students noting that there were issues with the quality of language teaching, not the quantity. This will be further discussed in section 5.4.1.

In contrast, the students from the other cities were much more English-focused in both their responses to important languages in their current lives and in school. One of these cases is a unique circumstance, given their native level proficiency in the other two languages. However, for the rest of the Tartu and Narva students, only one of these students named Estonian as one of the most important languages for them to learn. These students had more to say about an increase in the quantity of language teaching in their school. One student noted that it would be nice to have more practice in Estonian rather than more grammar classes, another noted that they would like more classes fully in Estonian and English. Students in Tartu also mentioned wanting an increase in the quantity of English learning, and to have more choice in the language of schooling and foreign language, one even noting that she would trade learning Russian with another foreign language. However, a sentiment was shared among most students, no matter their city: the quality of education in all languages was poorer in Russian-medium schools compared to Estonian-medium schools.

5.4.1 Disparity in Quality[7]

A common theme when discussing schooling with these secondary school students was the perception of poor quality English or Estonian education at their schools. For most, this was concentrated in their Estonian education, which they found to be poorly taught with minimal resources. One student explained,

> "In Russian schools, Estonian is taught very poorly - because it's unrealistic to find a teacher who can teach it. And despite the fact that we live in Estonia, where all the stores, all the ads, and so on are in Estonian, so many people don't have enough practice in the Estonian language."

Another student noted the lack of textbooks at higher levels, making it difficult to cross the boundary from conversational to fluent. A student related the stereotype of Russophones not speaking Estonian with this issue, saying "It seems to me that the problem is not with the children, but with the education," she continued later in a story about a family member navigating the citizenship bureaucracy, "it was honestly easier to get Russian citizenship than to learn Estonian." Other students note that their Estonian education has been poor due to

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[7] To protect the identity of these students given these comments about their schools, quotes will not be attributed for this section.

their teachers not having a high level of Estonian themselves, saying, "We definitely need more professional people or even people that are not Russians to study Estonian."

This perception of lower quality also extends to the English teaching in some cases. One student noted that, "It seems to me that in Estonian-Russian schools, the English language education is very lacking, I don't know a single teacher in our gymnasium[8] or in all Estonian-Russian gymnasiums, a good English teacher." This issue was also explained to be the way that languages are taught, focusing much more on rote memorization and repetition than on natural practice and conversation. These students even noted that they felt English helped Estonian-speaking students much more than it did them. One explained this difference by saying, "It seems that even the Estonian schools, they are pushing you more, in English. Because somehow they are driven to it more, or they study it more or something. And with us, it's like there's less of it and we miss out a little bit." This could also be attributed to the compulsory trilingual nature of the education in Russian-medium schools. Students may feel that any time given to Russian or Estonian inherently takes away from their learning other languages, vice versa. Others had different perceptions, noting that they feel that English education is of such a high quality that it gives them an advantage in study abroad, especially with the national focus on exams such as Cambridge C1 exam.

These findings give only a glimpse into the complexity of identity for Russophones in Estonia, and the difficulty of navigating both the education and bureaucratic systems. The 3 languages were each framed slightly differently in the minds of the students: Russian being the language of home, Estonian being the language of school, and English being the language of abroad. Additionally, many of the students had negative experiences they attributed to being Russophones, both in terms of treatment by others and in schooling. Their treatment and language use displays the social attitudes towards each of the languages, and can enable analysis on the role that these language attitudes play in informing the identity of these students.

6. Analysis: Cheskin's Quadratic Nexus

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[8] Estonian secondary school.

This analysis begins with a review of the Quadratic Nexus of Russophone identity formation outlined by Cheskin (2015). Then, the findings are analysed by looking at the role that national and international institutions play in the formation of the identity of Russophones in Estonia. It concludes by outlining how the three languages investigated in this study can each be explicitly tied to one of the three state bodies that interact in the identity formation of Russophones in Estonia. This also shows that the value of Estonian is increased by proxy to the value of English in regards to the language requirement of the Estonian passport and its connection to the EU.

The analytical model used in this paper separates the economic, political, and cultural factors of the three primary state bodies in the lives of the Russophone population in post-Soviet Eastern Europe: the nationalizing state, the external homeland, and international organizations. The analysis of each of these factors is done by identifying forces that would positively or negatively influence identity for each factor. These positive and negative influences are called positive and negative poles of attraction. These poles of attraction of the different economic, political, and cultural forces in these state bodies manifest in "conflicting pressures on Russian speakers to consolidate their identity and integrate into the social and political lives of the Baltic states" (Cheskin, 2015 p.2). Cheskin concluded his analysis with this infographic (Figure 5) showing the positive and negative poles of attraction for each factor for each state actor.

External homeland (Russia)			Nationalizing state (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)			International Organization (EU)		
Political	Economic	Cultural	Political	Economic	Cultural	Political	Economic	Cultural
−/+	−	+	−/+	+	−	+	+	+

Figure 5: from Cheskin (2015, p.17)

While Cheskin (2015) proposed an analysis of Russian speakers in the Baltic states with respect to the positive and negative poles, the students in this interview depart from his analysis. The data collected from these interviews also elaborates on the gap in data identified by Cheskin (2015) regarding the international institutions and their role in this identity formation.

6.1 The Nationalizing State

As noted by Cheskin, for the nexus to be effectively used it is important to combine state policies and events with "discursive, perceptual elements" (2015 p.14). In the case of the nationalizing state, these perceptual elements can be understood as the students' perceived treatment of Russophones by Estonians. It is apparent to many of the students that they are not welcome and not wanted in many parts of Estonia. While some express connection with Estonian culture, it seems out of reach for many of the others along linguistic lines. However, some discuss their own communities as a form of culture. As noted by both Cheskin (2015) and numerous other scholars (Aidarov & Drechsler, 2013; Rannut & Rannut, 2010), the heterogenous Russian speaking population in Estonia went through a process of Russification after formation. But it could be argued that this new generation of this population is creating their own mixed identity rather than a wholly Russian one. Though Cheskin's (2015) analysis considers the cultural factors of Estonia as a negative pole of attraction, this evidence would indicate that the reality is more mixed. While treatment by the state may serve as a negative pole of attraction, the culture of the communities with similar migratory backgrounds allows these students to feel surrounded by those with similar identities and is a positive pole of attraction.

The topic of politics was not much discussed in the interviews. The few times it was mentioned it was with an air of apathy, with one student saying, "[Speaking a common language] is necessary for the government too, you know... but it is already kind of irrelevant to us because whatever we say it does not affect the course of events" (Tartu student 1). However, beyond the action of politics, the students often discussed individual policies, namely the language of education requirements established in the 2008 Integration Strategy, and the citizenship requirements. Both of these policies established a minimum level of Estonian and directly (and primarily) impacted the Russophone population.

In fact, these policies are commonly discussed by teenagers on social media as well. In a TikTok video titled "Why I DON'T like ESTONIA" by Russophone user @chestnaja, they repeated a point I saw often: "in the near future will be closed RUSSIAN Schools [sic]" (@chestnaja, 2022). An Estonian speaking user commented on this video, "Estonian is the official language. Don't complain." To which the original poster responded "Yes, I know that IT [sic] is Official But… can Estonians have a little more respect for the Russians?" This

comment received 4 replies of "NO" within ten minutes[9]. Here, and in the interviews, there is an awareness of the national language policies and a concern for the place of Russophones in the country and its state systems like education. This also shows an interaction between Estonian and Russian speakers that echoes the experiences of the interviewees: a rejection of their language and by proxy of their community. For teenagers in Estonia, the political aspects of the country are a negative pole of attraction, even for those with citizenship.

In this sample of students, the main positive pole of attraction of Estonia was economic factors. As discussed, economic factors were the main motivators for the students' focus on Estonian. These came in the form of higher education and work, for which students spoke about language exams and a potentially monolingual office. Only one student spoke about the power that the Estonian economy held over the Russian one, noting that while an Estonian salary would go much further living in Russia, she did not want to leave the country and her community. However, this positive pole of attraction of the Estonian economy does not seem to motivate an Estonian identity, rather it serves to justify their already existing multilingual existence in the country.

As a whole, each separate factor of the nationalizing state is connected with the Estonian language. The Estonian culture as conceptualized by the students is mostly tied explicably to the language, and similarly they feel left out of the political space and impacted by policies that are founded on language shifts and migratory policies targeting their language group. As discussed in section 5.1, even the economy and education system of Estonia is intertwined with the Estonian language as it serves as a barrier of entry. As titular languages typically are, the Estonian language serves as a core feature of the lives and futures of the students in Estonia.

6.2 The External Homeland

The role that the external homeland plays in the identity formation of these students was minimal at the time of interviewing. It is possible and expected that the events in Ukraine that took place immediately after the interviews have impacted how the students view their own

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[9] What is also notable is that this interaction took place entirely in English. This ties back to the use of English in social media spaced by the students, and is the reason why explicit questions about language and social media were included in the interview guide.

identity and their relation to Russia. At the time of interviewing, the students spoke more about their home culture in relation to their immediate family, with only one student identifying this culture as explicitly Russian. As this generation and subsequent generations after them are born and raised in Russian-speaking communities in Estonia, it is likely that the ties they have to the external homeland will become more and more distant. The students for whom this was the most stark in their interviews were those with mixed backgrounds of more than 2 countries of origin. Understandably, their home culture was not solely Russian or any other national background, and as such the pull of their external homeland was considerably less. The impact of this generational distancing was also apparent in the students discussion of their visits to Russia, with most noting that they felt no connection to the country other than the fact that their extended families still live there. To this extent, the positive pole of attraction of the cultural aspects of the external homeland is called into question, especially as more Russian-language media is produced and disseminated in Western states and as a result the media ties to Russia may be lessening.

The economic factor of the external homeland expressed by the students is consistent with Cheskin's (2015) analysis. While only one spoke explicitly of the economic differences between job opportunities in the two countries, it is notable in all other interviews that none of the students had any desires to live, work, or study in Russia or any of their other countries of origin. Importantly, most of their families migrated to Estonia for work, so it does not seem like moving back is even considered as an option for them. In fact, there is evidence in the literature of a positive net-migration from Ivangorod to Narva due to better economic opportunities (Kondan & Sahajpal, 2017).

Finally, it is important to consider the political factor of the external homeland. As discussed previously, these interviews were all conducted prior to the invasion of Ukraine, and as such none of the students were asked to give their opinions on the role that the political actions of their external homeland plays on their identity. The political factors in their relation to the homeland were minimal at the time of interview. None of the students had citizenship rights in Russia, and none of the students with parents with a Russian passport discussed how they felt about it. While the students discussed the language of education policies and citizenship process, none of them expressed desires for a wholly Russian system or a removal of the language requirement for citizenship. The negative pole of attraction that the Estonian political system may play does not push the students in this instance towards a desire for the

politics of Russia. In fact, many of the solutions to issues that the students identified in the system stem from increasing the integration of the Russophone community: getting more native Estonian speaking teachers, increasing practical conversation in the language, producing higher quality higher level Estonian learning materials.

As the Estonian language is tied to the nationalizing state, Russian is tied to the external homeland. As previously mentioned, this group of students is not solely of Russian heritage, but they are all tied together by their native command of the language. For some, their ties to Russia are solely through the Russian language. Many of them identify their homes as "Russian" homes, though few consider their home culture to be Russian culture. As discussed in section 5.3.1 on Russian identity, for many of these students the nominative "Russian" title has little affiliation to the Russian state in casual conversation, and as such the connection to the external homeland has almost been eclipsed by the Russian language. It is clear from these interviews that the interactions with the external homeland are primarily through the Russian language.

6.3 International Institutions

The state body for which these interviews have the most to add is in the role of the international institutions in the identity of Russophones in Estonia. The primary conclusion that can be drawn from these interviews is that the language of international institutions for these students is English. The expression of desire for travel, study, and work abroad all related back to the motivations of students to learn and improve their English abilities. This relates directly to the economic pulls of these institutions and the opportunities that they support. Estonia is host to numerous international education programs including Erasmus Mundus Masters degrees, so these programs are visible to many Estonian students. This population of international students in Estonia also advertises the possibility of educational experiences abroad to Estonian students. When discussing their plans for futures abroad, only one student discussed a country outside of the EU or Schengen Area: Scotland. The open work and study opportunities offered by the setup of the EU are the most explicit of the positive poles of attraction within this sample.

Culturally, the international institutions also have a lot to offer Russophones in Estonia. A few students noted the simplicity in their identity when they travel, saying that when they are outside Estonia they can be Estonian with no caveats. The multicultural nature of the international institutions like the EU can offer these students a way to have a mixed identity and mixed culture without feeling policed or unjustified.

Finally, as speculated by Cheskin (2015), the political pull of the EU is not due to its political representation or voting empowerment, but rather in the access to the other EU countries that carrying EU citizenship affords someone. By proxy, being a part of the EU makes Estonian citizenship more attractive, thus enhancing the instrumental value of the Estonian language. Interestingly, this results in a process outlined by one of the students: as a Russophone in Estonia, if you want to leave, it often requires learning Estonian to a B2 level to get the Estonian passport in order to move away. The internationalization of the role of English in the EU has both increased the attractiveness of international programs, by enabling Estonians opportunities and rewards for the strong English programs in their education system, as well as increased the attractiveness of Estonian proficiency in tandem.

A final point that is important to note on this attractiveness of the EU via the Estonian passport is the changing attitudes toward the grey passport in Estonia. The grey (or noncitizen, see section 2.3) passport in Estonia used to be very common in the Russophone community due to the changing citizenship laws after the reestablishment of independence. However, there is a perception amongst the students that recently this grey passport has been given to refugees in Estonia. One student spoke of this by saying, "It's become very problematic lately after they started issuing grey passports to all refugees left and right, that is, they eventually had to find themselves some kind of citizenship." This new association of the grey passports with recent (non-European) refugees may have driven the recent decreases in grey passport usage in the Russophone communities, and resulting increases in Estonian citizenship in this population. In short, it is not only a positive pole of attraction to Estonian citizenship, but also a negative pole of attraction now tied to the concept of grey passports that may be motivating this shift. It's possible that this may change again with the influx of Ukrainian refugees.

In summary, the three languages investigated in this study can each be explicitly tied to one of the three state bodies that interact in the identity formation of Russophones in Estonia. The

positive attraction of international bodies like the EU and Schengen Area increase the instrumental value of English which by proxy increases the instrumental value of Estonian as a barrier language to this international exchange. Because Estonian still plays an important domestic role in the country and its education system, many of the students view learning the language as the status quo from which they do not see a reason to departure. With this being said, there is no motivation of the students to increase the role of English in the everyday interactions of Estonia, as it is still regarded as a foreign language.

7. Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to explore the complex relationships between Estonian Russophones and language, identity, and the state. At its core, this research was aimed at investigating the role languages play in identity formation of Russophone youth in Estonia. The primary conclusion of this research is that each language is tied to one of the state actors that interacts with the process of identity formation for the Russophone students. The impacts of this conclusion are twofold. Firstly, it shows the success of the language policies in Estonia in establishing the value of the language in connection with its citizenship processes and education system. Secondly, it shows the role that English plays in Estonian society is not one that distinctly threatens Estonian, but rather compliments the local language as a promotion of European possibility. The role that English plays for the students in this sample is one that compliments the economic opportunity and offerings in Estonia. While the language offers perceived opportunities outside of Estonia, the political function of the EU and Schengen Area requires a knowledge of Estonian to access these opportunities through citizenship.

Despite the positive impacts this shows for the increase in interest in Estonian citizenship, this research did raise concerns for the progress of the integration strategies. Perhaps as a result of the history of targeted policies towards the Russophone population which delineated by Estonian ability, students identified an extremely narrow definition of Estonian identity which was dependent on native-level competency in the language. This shows that while young populations are gaining citizenship to the country, they largely do not feel integrated enough to call themselves Estonian. This is also paired with experiences of negative treatment by peers, teachers, and strangers due to being an Estonian Russophone, which may

dissuade an Estonian identity as well. As a whole, language plays a key role in the formation of identity for Russophones in Estonia, as it is framed as imperative for the Estonian identity, seemingly in both speaking Estonian and not speaking Russian. While English seems to allow these students to interact more with European institutions and programmes, it does not seems to impact or detract from the identity-making process of this group.

While this research provided more evidence for the process of identity formation for Russophones, it similarly brought up areas that warrant future research. The impact of the war, primarily, would be key in reassessing the impact of political factors and language in the identity formation following the Russia invasion. Additionally, the use of languages in online spaces, particularly in interactions between Russophones and Estonian-speakers, would provide additional depth in understanding the identity formation of young populations. Finally, a key issue in the research of Russophone identity formation is the use of the nominative "Russian" to identify the Russophone population, even following a rejection of a Russian identity. This contradiction warrants future explicit research, particularly Russian-medium interviews to find precise nuance in the identity descriptions.

As the process of identity construction continues to be negotiated by the Russophone population in Estonia, it is impossible to ignore the impact of large political events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine may have on perceptions of the external homeland. As Ozolins (2019) outlined following the previous aggression in Crimea, language policies in the Baltic states are tied to a reassertion of titular language rights in response to Soviet-era language policies. For the Baltic states, Ukraine may show that "that shifts in language policy do not bring the supposed benefits they envisage" (Ozolins, 2019, p. 33), and may exacerbate existing linguistic tensions. While the two linguistic populations in Estonia continue to be treated differently based on their native language, there will be perceptions of discrimination and tension.

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