Summary and Keywords

The focus of intergroup communication research in the Baltic countries is on interethnic relations. All three countries have Russian-speaking urban minorities whose process of integration with Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian majorities has been extensively studied. During the Soviet era when the Russian-speaking communities in the Baltic countries were formed, they enjoyed majority status and privileges. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a status reversal as Russian speakers become minorities in the newly emerged national states. The integration of once monolingual Russian-speaking communities has been the major social challenge for the Baltic states, particularly for Estonia and Latvia where they constitute about 30% of the population. Besides the Russian-speaking minorities, each of the Baltic countries has also one other significant minority. In Estonia it is Võro, a linguistically closely related group to Estonians; in Latvia it is Latgalians, closely related to Latvians; and in Lithuania, it is the Polish minority. Unlike the Russian-speaking urban minorities of fairly recent origin, the other minorities are largely rural and native in their territories.

The intergroup communication between the majorities and Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic countries has often analyzed by a triadic nexus consisting of the minority, the nationalizing state, and the external homeland (Russia). In recent analyses, the European Union (through its institutions) has often been added as an additional player. The intergroup communication between the majorities and the Russian-speaking communities is strongly affected by conflicting collective memories over 20th-century history. While the titular nations see the Soviet time as occupation, the Russian speakers prefer to see the positive role of the Soviet Union in defeating Hitler and reconstructing the countries’ economy. These differences have resulted in some symbolic violence such as relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument in Estonia and the riots that it provoked. Recent annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the role of the Ukrainian Russian speakers in the secessionist war in the Eastern Ukraine have raised fears that Russia is trying to use its influence over its compatriots in the Baltic countries for similar ends. At the same time, the native minorities of Võro and Latgalians are going through emancipation and have demanded more recognition. This movement is seen by some among the Estonian and Latvian majorities as attempts to weaken the national communities that are already in trouble with integrating the Russian speakers. In Lithuania, some historical disagreements exist also between the Lithuanians and Polish, since the area of their settlement around capital Vilnius used to be part of Poland before World War II. The Baltic setting is particularly interesting for intergroup communication purposes, since the three countries have several historical parallels: the Russian-speaking communities have fairly similar origin, but different size and prominence, as do the titular groups. These differences in the power balance between the majority and minority have
Introduction

Intergroup communication research is a fairly recent development in the Baltic countries. During the Soviet time, all social sciences were so heavily ideologically controlled that an objective research was impossible. Several fields, including communication, were considered bourgeois pseudosciences and either banned or strongly marginalized.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all three Baltic countries faced a challenge of transition from the Soviet system to democratic society. Coping with market economy and large nonintegrated fractions in society became the pressing social issues. At the same time social sciences established and reestablished cooperation with Western colleagues. It was in this context in early ‘90s that the Western scholars urged to set the problems of interethnic relations and cross-cultural research into focus (Draguns, 2006). Since then, research on these topics, including the intergroup communication aspects, have grown almost exponentially in the Baltic countries.

Undeniably, the intergroup setting in the Baltic countries is very interesting: here one has three fairly similar societies from the point of their historical development, particularly during the last 100 years. Currently, all of them have the same type of problem (integrating the Russian-speaking minorities of the Soviet origin), but its magnitude varies, depending on the relative proportion of this minority to the national majority in each society. This relative power differential influences intergroup communication, particularly the ways how the ideologies, policies, and actions that are aimed at managing interethnic relations are negotiated.

Further, intergroup communication in real settings is always influenced by its context, that is, of the past intergroup relations. The historic events, particularly historic injustices, have a major role in shaping the narratives. The Baltic setting provides good examples about these processes: here, intergroup communication revolves around one key narrative that is at the bottom of a complex set of contested topics. It is the interpretation of the events of World War II. The clashing narratives assign different role and status to different groups, thus it is a genuine site of an intergroup power struggle.

The Baltic setting is also a good case to show how real-life intergroup communication involves often more than two groups in a dialogue: beside the national majority and Russian-speaking minority, there is also the external homeland of the Russian-speaking
minority involved, and the international organizations, too. This gives rise to a complex
dynamic in which different actors counterbalance or reinforce each others’ claims.

Since the intergroup communication in the Baltic countries is highly context dependent,
the first two sections of this overview focus on the historic and ethnodemographic
background of each country. The third section outlines the patterns of language use and
multilingualism, particularly in connection to collective identities. The fourth section
focuses on negotiating the power relations between different ethnic groups in the context
where the state authorities are aiming at social integration. The fifth section outlines
Roger Brubaker’s (1995) triadic nexus of intergroup relations that is often used as the
framework to understand the complex relationships between the actors in this intergroup
communication context. The final section concentrates on outlining the main
characteristics of the pivotal narrative about World War II that is at the core of the
negotiation of intergroup relations in the Baltic countries.

**Historical and Cultural Background**

The interethnic communication in the Baltic countries is to a large extent influenced by
the collective remembrance of histories of these countries that share some parallel
developments as well as differences (Jõesalu & Kõresaar, 2013; Onken, 2007). The deepest
historical difference lies in the tradition of statehood. Ethnic Estonians and Latvians did
not have statehood at the time their territories were conquered by Teutonic Crusaders in
the 13th century. For over 700 years the German-speaking nobility remained the ruling
class while Estonians and Latvians formed the peasant majorities. After a series of wars
over several centuries when Estonia and Latvia changed hands between Teutonic Order,
Danish, Polish, Swedish, and Russian powers, both were incorporated to the Russian
Empire in 1721 as the result of the Northern War. Lithuanians, on the other hand, have
had a long statehood history: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was formed in the 13th
century and evolved into a dynastic union with Poland, which in the 16th century took the
form of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—the state that at its peak in the 17th
century was a regional superpower. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist
after a series of Partitions of Poland at the verge of the 19th century, and Lithuania
became a part of Tsarist Russian Empire (Kasekamp, 2010).

Thus, in the 19th century, all three—Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians—were the
subjects of the Russian Empire and started to share similar historical trajectories. In the
19th century, there were few possibilities for cultural and political self-determination.
However, the second half of the 19th century was the time of national awakenings, which
led to the emergence of modern Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian nations (Plakans, 1974)
that were stateless at the beginning, but declared their independence in the turmoil of
the Russian Revolution at the end of World War I. The brief period of independence
between the world wars was interrupted in 1940 when the Soviet Union annexed all three
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following the Molotov-Ribbentrop secret pact in 1939 (Ilmjärv, 2004). Having lost their statehoods before World War II, the Baltic countries did not participate in the war as states, but were subjected to military occupations by the Soviet Union, followed by Nazi Germany during the war; and by the Soviet Union again from 1944.

After the World War II, all three Baltic countries remained incorporated to the Soviet Union even though the Western powers did not recognize its legitimacy. The Soviet regime brought in drastic demographic changes, particularly in Estonia and Latvia: Large Russian-speaking communities were formed, and even if the Russian speakers were numeric minorities in each country, they enjoyed a privileged status as the representatives of the dominant group in the Soviet Union, and most of them did not learn to speak the local language (Misiunas & Taagepera, 1993).

The demographic change brought by Soviet annexation and Russification were the main concerns that mobilized Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians to fight for their full independence from the Soviet Union when Gorbachev started his policies of democratization and free speech. As a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union, all three Baltic states declared independence (Gerner & Hedlund, 1993). The last 25 years of their history has been remarkably parallel, too (Mole, 2012)—all of them joined the EU and NATO, and replaced their national currencies by Euros.

Linguistically and culturally, the Baltic states share interesting similarities and differences. Both Latvia and Lithuania belong to the Baltic branch of the Indo-European languages. They are closely related, but not to the extent of being mutually intelligible. Both of them are also related to the Russian language, which belongs to the Slavonic branch of Indo-European languages. Estonian belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family (closest relative being the Finnish language). It is structurally quite different from the Baltic languages and Russian. These structural differences may be the reason why learning Estonian may be more difficult for Russian speakers than learning Latvian or Lithuanian (or vice versa). Partly this may have affected the speed of social integration of the Russian-speaking minorities after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Culturally, Latvians and Estonians share several distinct traits that make them different from Lithuanians. First, Lithuania is predominantly Catholic while Latvia and Estonia are historically Lutheran. In Lithuania, the level of religiosity is relatively high, Estonia is very secular, and Latvia is in between (AEV, 2008). The relatively short statehood is also a factor that Estonian and Latvian nations share and which sets them apart from Lithuanians. Third, both Estonia and Latvia developed a tradition of large song celebrations in the second half of the 19th century. The choir singing was a part of Lutheran practice, and the actual song celebration format was borrowed directly from the Baltic Germans (Smidchens, 2014). For Estonians and Latvians, the song celebration tradition was used as a tool for national awakening and social mobilization, becoming the backbone of their national identities by the beginning of the 20th century. The tradition...
then spread also to Lithuania, and became an important cultural trait for the whole region, having a strong impact on intergroup communication later in the 20th century.

First and foremost, the song celebration has been the most important means of national self-affirmation for the Baltic nations throughout the 20th century, particularly during the Soviet time. The song celebrations were not banned by the Soviet authorities, but just heavily Sovietized. Nevertheless, the weekly practice of singing in choirs for the national song celebration held in every fifth year and attracting about 30,000 singers and 100,000 listeners in each country continued to be the central national ritual and instrument of resistance. The practice enabled the formation of social networks of trust that became the main means of social mobilization at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Singing was so naturally connected to this freedom struggle that the whole phenomenon has become known as the Singing Revolution (Smidchens, 2014).

In all three Baltic countries, the Singing Revolution was nonviolent and bloodless. It has been argued that the nonviolence of the Singing Revolution was largely due to the spirit of the song celebration that promoted intergroup harmony rather than ethnocentrism and supremacy (Ginkel, 2002). The positive potential of the song celebration has been noted also for creating affective solidarity that promotes civic attachment in contemporary society (Pawłusz, 2016).

**Ethnodemographic Background**

**Estonia**

According to the 2011 census, there are 1.29 million people in Estonia, roughly 70% of whom are ethnic Estonians and the remaining 30% Russian speakers. The overwhelming majority of Russian speakers are Russians, but there are also Ukrainians, Belarusians, and members of many other groups that speak Russian as their home language, but value their heritage in the form of “symbolic ethnicity.”

Historically the Russian-speaking population has largely been formed after the annexation of Estonia to the Soviet Union in 1940. During the Soviet period, immigration of Russians and other Soviet ethnicities into Estonia was encouraged by the Soviet authorities. As a consequence, the share of ethnic Estonians in the population dropped from 93% in 1940 to 61% in 1989. After regaining independence in 1991, the trend reversed, partly due to withdrawal of Soviet troops and their families from Estonia in the mid-1990s (Tammaru & Kulu, 2003).

Currently, about half of the Estonian Russian speakers live in the capital Tallinn area where they constitute nearly 50% of the population. Residentially, most of them are concentrated into a few ethnic suburbs. Further, 30% of Russian speakers live compactly
in industrial cities in East Estonia, near the border of the Russian Federation. The proportion of Russian speakers in these cities is around 90%. The region is strategically crucial to Estonia, as it has the mines of oil shale, fueling the largest national power plants. The remaining 20% of the Russian speakers are scattered in other cities and towns of Estonia where they are a small minority (Tammaru & Kulu, 2003).

Besides the Russian speakers, Estonia also has a Võro minority, traditionally considered a dialect of Estonian. The total population in the Võro language area is about 70,000 people, among whom about 30,000 claim to have a working knowledge of the Võro language (Koreinik, 2013). For the speakers of standard Estonian, Võro is not easily intelligible. In economic terms, the Võro area is largely rural and of a lower living standard than the urban areas, particularly the capital Tallinn. The linguistic distinctiveness and economic inequalities between the center and periphery has motivated the promotion of Võro as a distinct language and identity. Still, most of the activists acknowledge that Võro is a subidentity of Estonian national identity, not a distinct national identity on the same level (Brown, 2002).
Latvia

According to the 2011 census, Latvian population was 2.1 million people of which 62% were Latvians and 33% Russian speakers. As in Estonia, the Russian speakers are an ethnically diverse community, including representatives of dozens of nationalities with Russians being the largest fraction. While a minority in Latvia, Russian speakers form a majority in its two largest cities: the capital Riga, and Daugavpils (about 55% and 85% of the population respectively). The remaining 40% of the Russians live in other cities where the Latvian population makes up the majority (Nemeth, 2013).

Similarly to Estonia, the Russian-speaking community was largely formed after the World War II when Latvia was incorporated into the USSR. Differently from Estonia that was overwhelmingly monoethnic, Latvia had a Russian population already before its incorporation to the Soviet Union: It consisted of the rural Russian Orthodox Old-believers’ community, and a relatively well-off urban population in Riga established already in the 19th century (Simonyan, 2013). At the moment, the Russian-speaking community in Latvia is relatively active economically, culturally, and politically. The Russian language is widely used in education, media, and culture (Cheskin, 2013).

Compared to the Russian speakers in Estonia, the community in Latvia is much more prominent and active. Their influence to Latvian society is more significant than the influence of Russian speakers in Estonia and Lithuania (Ehala, 2013).

Besides the prominent Russian-speaking minority, Latvia also has a Latgalian minority. Latgalian is a language (or dialect) closely related to Latvian, spoken in the eastern parts of Latvia. The estimated number of speakers is around 200,000. The use and promotion of Latgalian has been prohibited in several historic periods for political reasons. Right now, Latgalian has some state support as a regional variety of Latvian (Cibuls, 2009). Still, Latgalian movement is received reluctantly by the majority Latvians, and so the intergroup communication about recognition of Latgalian is a contested topic (Lazdina & Marten, 2012).

Lithuania

Lithuania is the largest, yet ethnically the most homogenous Baltic country. According to the 2011 census, there were 3.05 million people in Lithuania of which the Lithuanians constituted about 80%. The estimated number of Russian speakers is roughly 260,000 (about 8% of the population). The Russian-speaking community was formed at the Soviet time. For example, most of the personnel and their families at the Ignalina power plant immigrated from Russia and now form about 75% of the inhabitants of Visaginas, a small town near the power plant. Altogether they form about 20% of the entire Russian-speaking community in Lithuania. Close to 40% of the Russian speakers live in the capital
Vilnius constituting about 20% of the population there. The remaining 40% of Russian speakers live scattered in other urban centers in Lithuania.

Because of their small number and scattered nature, the Russian speakers do not constitute a culturally or politically active community. The Russian language cultural life is sparse, even though the TV broadcasting from the Russian Federation is widely followed. While there are Russian language schools, the parents prefer to send their children to mainstream Lithuanian schools. According to some scholars the Russian speakers in Lithuania have chosen a voluntary assimilation strategy (Brazauskiene & Likhachiova, 2011).

Compared to the Russian-speaking minority, the Lithuanian Polish minority is much more active. Currently the Polish community is about 212,000 people, which is 6.6% of the population of Lithuania. Most of the Poles live in the southeast part of Lithuania, near the Polish border where they form more than 60% of the population, and in the capital Vilnius where they make up about 19% (Barwiński & Leśniewska, 2014). Between the world wars, these areas, including Vilnius, were a part of Poland. Culturally and politically, the Lithuanian Poles are well organized. There are Polish language media and cultural activities as well as state-funded Polish language schools. However, similarly to Russian speakers, many Polish parents prefer to educate their children in Lithuanian schools. The two Polish ethnic political parties in Lithuania have considerable support among the Polish electorate. They are in power on a municipal level and have representation in the Lithuanian Parliament (Janušauskienė, 2016).

Language Use and Identity

Because of the ethnodemographic constitution, all three Baltic countries are multilingual, even though Lithuania is relatively less so. This means that both the state language as well as Russian is known and used actively in all three Baltic countries. Polish, Latgalian, and Võro are spoken as heritage languages by the corresponding ethnic groups. The knowledge of these minority languages is very limited among the titular groups as well as among the Russian speakers.

The extent to which different languages are used in different domains varies quite largely. For example, language use in the family domain is overwhelmingly monolingual—most of families in all three countries are monoethnic, and the use of ethnic language in the family is a norm. In Estonia and Lithuania, 75%; and in Latvia, 69% of the Russian speakers use only Russian at home; 90% of Lithuanians use only Lithuanian; 85% of Estonians only Estonian; and 69% Latvians only Latvian at home. Polish speakers are the least monolingual—just 41% use only Polish at home.
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Language use in public spaces (for example, with strangers on the street) is much more multilingual: in Latvia, as much as 67% of Russian speakers use both languages in public spaces while 3% use exclusively Latvian, and 30% use Russian only. Estonia is slightly less bilingual: 57% of Russian speakers use both languages, 4% use only Estonian, and 39% use Russian only. In Lithuania, public space is predominantly Lithuanian speaking: 43% of the Russian speakers use only Lithuanian, 23% only Russian, and the remaining 34% use both Lithuanian and Russian (Ehala, 2013).

While multilingualism is present in all three Baltic countries, its patterns are markedly different (see Figures 1 and 2). Figure 1 plots the language use by Baltic minorities, averaged over six domains of language use: family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, service people, and strangers. Estonian Russians are the most monolingual, followed by Latvian and Lithuanian Russian speakers. Polish speakers are the least monolingual. Both Lithuanian minorities (Polish and Russian) show a high level of exclusive state language use that can be taken as a sign of ongoing language shift. There is no apparent language shift among Russian speakers in Estonia and Latvia, yet the Latvian Russian speakers show the highest level of balanced bilingual use. Among all minorities, the Estonian Russian speakers are characterized by the highest level of monolingualism, which indicates a relative segregation of Estonian- and Russian-speaking communities in Estonia (Ehala, 2013).

If we look at the use of Russian language by the titular groups (Figure 2) it appears that Lithuanians are characterized by an overwhelmingly monolingual usage, which is understandable considering the relatively small size of the local Russian-speaking community—in many places in Lithuania there are just no Russian speakers around. Estonians also are quite monolingual, even though the Russian community is much larger. One reason for this is a relative geographic segregation of Russian speakers in Estonia, but to some extent also social segregation—the two communities lead largely parallel lives. The language use of Latvians is significantly more bilingual (Ehala, 2013).
Since the racial, cultural, and religious differences between the majorities and minorities in the Baltic states are not large, language serves as the main marker of, and also a sacred value for, group identity. It is not surprising then that the official status of one’s language is an emotionally significant issue. In Estonia, 89% of Russian speakers feel that Russian should be the second official language; in Latvia the share is 85%; and in Lithuania, 64%. The titular groups are as strongly opposed to the idea: among Estonians 86%, among Latvians 69%, and among Lithuanians 84% (Ehala, 2013).

As currently Russian has no official status in any Baltic state, many Russian speakers may feel somewhat deprived. This feeling is related to the extent of the use of titular languages: The more the state language is used by Russian-speaking respondents, the lesser is their agreement with the statement that Russian should have an official status ($r = -.351, p < .001$ in Estonia; $r = -.352, p < .01$ in Latvia; $r = -.280, p < .01$ in Lithuania, see Ehala, 2013, p. 108). In other words, those Russian speakers that are less integrated and use the majority’s language less feel more strongly that the status of Russian is unjustly low.

The language issue is definitely one of the pivotal ones in the negotiation of intergroup power balance in the Baltic states, but it should be noted that this negotiation has largely been of a political nature, being present in the public discourse, while on the grass-roots level there is fairly little intergroup tension present (Ehala & Zabrodskaja, 2014).
Negotiating Intergroup Power Balance

Russian-Speaking Minorities

The main contextual factors currently influencing the intergroup communication in the Baltic countries have historical origins: Before annexation of the countries to the Soviet Union, all had fairly homogenous ethnic national populations. As a consequence of Soviet annexation, the Russian-speaking populations in the Baltic states were formed and constituted significant change in the social structure at their peak: In Latvia they formed 48%, in Estonia 39%, and in Lithuania 15% of the population. Also the vast majority of Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians knew Russian as the language of administration, whereas the knowledge of titular languages among the Russian speakers was low. For this reason, the Russian-speaking communities were seen as an existential threat, particularly in Latvia and Estonia. The intergroup communication was much more relaxed in Lithuania, but on the other hand, as a nation with high historical status and self-esteem, Lithuanians were very reluctant to speak Russian at the Soviet time; and so the Russian-speaking population in Lithuania acquired much better knowledge of the local language than the Russian speakers in the other two countries (see also Hogan-Brun, Ramonienė, & Grumadienė, 2005).

Perhaps for this reason, Lithuania took a liberal position on the citizenship issue after the collapse of the Soviet Union: The whole Lithuanian population was granted Lithuanian citizenship without consideration of ethnicity or first language. This symbolic gesture helped considerably to integrate the Russian-speaking community in Lithuania (see Gečienė, 2016). This solution was rejected by Latvia and Estonia, because the national elites feared that this would create officially bilingual states in Latvia and Estonia. Since the Russian speakers did not know the local language, but the host population was fluent in Russian, granting citizenship to all would have meant legitimizing the status quo with a continuing domination of the Russian language. Therefore, Estonia and Latvia insisted on the illegitimacy of the Soviet annexation. As a logical implication, the Russian-speaking settlers of the Soviet period were categorized as illegal immigrants, and had to apply for citizenship to legalize their stay, or to leave to Russia. The citizenship examination involved a state language test (Best, 2013).

While most of the Russian speakers did not leave, many were not applying for citizenship either. As a consequence, large groups of stateless people emerged in Estonia and Latvia. When Putin came to power, Russia started an active campaign to offer Russian citizenship to anybody who had been a citizen of the Soviet Union. As a consequence, many stateless Russian speakers in Estonia and Latvia choose Russian citizenship. Currently the citizenship patterns of the Russian speakers are as follows (see Table 1):
Table 1. Citizenship patterns among Russian speakers (Ehala, 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>Stateless</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>nearly 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the monolingualism of the Russian speakers, the main language political goal in Estonia and Latvia has been to promote the knowledge of the state language. This has given rise to intergroup tensions, since one of the main tools in achieving this goal has been increasing the state language instruction in Russian middle schools, and to reduce Russian-language education in the Russian high school. Latvia was strict in implementing these policies, which caused large-scale demonstrations of Russian speakers in 2003 and 2004. Estonian policies have been strict, too, but the administration has been relatively flexible in implementing the regulations: The reforms were postponed several times, and requirements weakened. In general, the strictness of citizenship and language policies in the three countries is in reverse correlation with the size and strength of the Russian-speaking minority: Lithuania is the most liberal and Latvia the strictest (Muiznieks, Rozenvalds, & Birka, 2013).

Currently, the intergroup communication between the Russian-speaking minorities and the national minorities has been affected by the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, and by the secessionist war in the Eastern Ukraine (Ehala, 2014). In both of these events, the local Ukrainian Russian speakers have played a pivotal role: In Crimea where they formed an overwhelming majority, their popular support enabled a shift to Russian control with little military action; in Eastern Ukraine, actions of the Russian-speaking group have led to military activities under the separatist identity project of Novorossia (New Russia).

In the end of 2014 and particularly at the beginning of 2015, separatist provocations intensified in the Baltic countries, too, even though these were organized by very small and marginal groups. In Latvia and Lithuania, flyers were distributed and Facebook pages created demanding separation of certain territories in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Even though the groups are small there is a visible pattern of coordination between the Baltic states and Eastern parts of the Ukraine (Kuklys & Cârstocea, 2015). These attempts are not new, but have just intensified after the events in Ukraine. On the other hand, the stalling of the Novorossia project, and devastation brought in by continued military conflict has certainly had a sobering effect to the Russian-speaking populations in the Baltic states: Instead of a triumphant reunion with mother Russia, as in Crimea, a likely
outcome of separatist activities could just as well be destroyed homes, lives, and a military deadlock (Ehala, 2014).

Võro and Latgalian Minorities

Both the Võro minority in Estonia and the Latgalian minority in Latvia are linguistically closely related to the language of the majority of their state (but not to each other). Both varieties have enjoyed some literary language development in different historic periods, and their use and development has been discouraged (in Latvia, outright banned) at other periods. The breakdown of the Soviet Union also gave a mobilizing boost to the Võro and Latgalian activism, mainly as a form of ethnic self-affirmation after liberation from the Soviet supremacy.

From the mid-1990s, these movements have been supported by the political framework of multiculturalism that is one of the basic principles of the European Union. Particularly, the political activism for Võro and Latgalian minorities has received inspiration from the European charter of Minority or Regional Languages that proposes a number of policy measures to promote the use of minority or regional languages (Lazdina & Marten, 2012). Activist groups have urged the parliaments of Estonia and Latvia to sign and ratify the charter, but without success. No Baltic country has signed the charter.

This is only partly to do with unwillingness to support Võro and Latgalian as regional languages. In one hand, the reluctance is due to a fear that recognizing these two varieties as separate languages would reduce the size of Estonian and Latvian national communities, which would change the perceptions of intergroup power balance in relation to the Russian-speaking minority. While in Estonia the number of Võro speakers is relatively small to have a real effect (30,000 is about 3% of ethnic Estonians), the number of Latgalians is much larger (200,000, which is nearly 17% of ethnic Latvians) so that breaking the Latvian nation into two would risk Latvians to lose the absolute majority in their country (Gibson, 2015).

The other reason why Estonia and Latvia have not signed the charter is that this would also give protection to the Russian language (Koreinik, 2011). The charter explicitly states that immigrant minorities are not eligible for the charter’s provisions. However, both Estonia and Latvia have had a small Russian-speaking Old-believers’ community living in the country for several centuries. This fact would formally mean that Russian language should also be protected by the charter as a historic minority language, if Võro and Latgalian are. Even though both Estonia and Latvia de facto provide support for the Russian language that exceeds the requirements of the charter, no political party would want to provide Russian de jure status as a historic minority language, in fear that they would lose popular support by ethnic Estonians and Latvians.
Polish Minority

The Polish language has long historical connections to Lithuania, since it was the prestige langue at the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Because of this, the Lithuanian peasantry at the Polish border shifted to the Polish language. In 1918 when the Lithuanian state was formed, these areas, including the current capital Vilnius, became a territorial dispute between Lithuania and Poland. After a Polish-Lithuanian war (1919–1920), the area was incorporated to Poland and the status quo was accepted internationally. Lithuania did not acknowledge incorporation of the Vilnius area to Poland, and the two countries did not have diplomatic relations during the interwar period. After World War II, the disputed territories were given to Lithuania by the Stalinist administration, and many Poles were either deported to Siberia or forced to leave Lithuania. Vilnius became the new capital of Lithuania.

At the time when Lithuania strived for independence from the Soviet Union, a large fraction of its Polish minority supported the central government in Moscow in fear that the Lithuanian independence would mean Lithuanization of the Polish minority.

These historic conflicts very much affect the current interethnic communication between the Lithuanian majority and the Polish minority so that both see each other with a certain degree of distrust. Currently, the Lithuania-Polish minority has organized itself politically to protect its interests, mainly preservation of cultural heritage and securing Polish language education. There has been opposition to spelling of Polish names using Lithuanian spelling conventions, and to the removal of Polish place names from the street signs (Janušauskienė, 2016).

Comparing the three Baltic states, it appears that while in Estonia and Latvia, the Russian speakers constitute the significant other to the majority, in Lithuania, the significant other is the Polish minority, while intergroup communication between the Lithuanian majority and the Russian-speaking minority remains much less prominent (Ehala & Zabrodskaja, 2014).

The Triadic Nexus of Intergroup Communication

The Russian and Polish languages are used as majority languages in the Russian Federation and Poland respectively. Therefore, the intergroup communication between Russian-speaking and Polish minorities and the national majorities in their state is not just between minority and majority, but also includes Russia and Poland as the external homelands. This pattern that characterizes not only the Baltic states, but the whole Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space in general has led Roger Brubaker (1995) to
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propose a triadic nexus model for the analysis of intergroup relations in the newly emerged nation states in the Eastern Europe.

According to Brubaker (1995), the triadic nexus consists of national minority, nationalizing state, and the external national homeland of the minority. The national minority is a dynamic political stance that the elites of some cultural groups make to assert that they are ethnoculturally different from the majority, that the state should recognize this difference, and grant some provisions to maintain their heritage. By nationalizing state, Brubaker (1995) means a state that aims to become a nation-state, but sees itself as deficient in several ways, mainly because of its internal heterogeneity. Therefore, the nationalizing state sets its aims to promote the language, culture, demographic makeup, and economy of the nominally nation-bearing group in the state. The relationship between the minority and the nationalizing state is by definition immersed in a struggle, since they have conflicting goals—the nationalizing state to increase homogeneity, and the minority to secure its distinctiveness. The external national homeland, according to Brubaker (1995), is a political stance that a state constitutes a historic homeland for coethnics living in other states and having nationalities of these states; and because of this homeland connection the state has a legitimate duty to protect its coethnics in countries where they live even if they have different citizenships. Clearly the stance of an external homeland is potentially conflictual with the stance of a nationalizing state that has its legitimate interests for social coherence and territorial integrity.

Recently Brubaker’s (1995) triadic nexus model was elaborated by Cheskin (2014), particularly bearing in mind the setting of the Baltic countries. He added the fourth player, labeled broadly as international organizations, but narrowed for the sake of analysis to the European Union organizations (EU). According to Cheskin (2014), the EU is seen as a symbolic, political, and territorial entity that may influence the identity formation of Russian speakers in the Baltic countries. He remains somewhat vague as about the stances of EU in this quadruple nexus. Bearing in mind the commitment to human rights and multiculturalism, the main political aim of the EU is to ensure the fear treatment of the national minorities by the nationalizing state, but also—and it can be seen in the case of the Baltic countries—to be an impartial arbiter assessing the claims made by the proponents of the external homeland stance about the discrimination of their coethnics in the nationalizing states. As such the EU is having a stabilizing role in the inherently conflictual triadic nexus of national minority, nationalizing state, and external homeland.

The triadic, or quadruple, nexus characterizes well the main themes of intergroup communication between the ethnic groups in the Baltic states. There is little doubt that all Baltic countries are nationalizing states. They see the Soviet period as an interruption to their natural development that altered significantly the demographic and cultural makeup of their countries. Therefore, the goal of the reestablished states was to restore the nation states that involved as a crucial element to integrate the Russian-speaking and Polish minorities. Much effort has been devoted to legitimize these aims. In general, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have succeeded—the OSCE missions that were sent to
Estonia and Latvia to assist intergroup integration matters in the ‘90s, made some recommendations to soften their legislations, but commenced with the conclusion that the countries provide fair treatment to their Russian-speaking minorities.

The legitimacy of the aims of the nationalizing Estonia and Latvia was largely accepted by the Russian-speaking minorities, too, particularly in the 1990s when Russia was in economic decline, but the economy in the Baltic states improved. The situation changed after Vladimir Putin came to power. He started to boost the collective self-esteem of Russians that had suffered greatly because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and by the acceptance of the guilt of the Communist Party crimes. During Putin’s presidency, the victory in the Great Patriotic War (the Russian name for their part of World War II) has started to be promoted as the backbone of Russian pride. Also, the concept of Russia as the external homeland for the Russian speakers started to be extensively promoted.

The triadic nexus is crucially relevant in the intergroup relations between the Lithuanian Polish minority and Lithuanians, too. Even though Poland supported actively the independence of Lithuania from the Soviet Union, and the two countries are members of EU and NATO, the relations between Poland and Lithuania that improved in the 1990s and early this century have deteriorated again—the main issue being the treatment of the Polish minority by Lithuanian authorities. Poland has objected strongly the spelling conventions of the names, the restrictions for Polish language education, and Lithuanization of place names, yet the EU officials have not found these measures unconstitutional. Lithuania in turn sees the reaction of Poland and particularly its close cooperation with ethnic Polish parties in Lithuania as interference into Lithuanian internal affairs.

The triadic nexus is highly abstract model of a recurrent pattern in intergroup relations and intergroup communication in the Eastern Europe and in the Baltic countries in particular. While the pattern itself is recurrent, the narratives that are used to legitimize particular policies and or social movements are strongly tied to historical events and the conflicting interpretations of these events in the actors involved in the nexus.

**Conflicting Historical Narratives**

Remembrance of World War II and the interpretation of its events (Onken, 2007) is the key issue in the intergroup communication between the majorities of the Baltic countries, their Russian-speaking minorities, and the Russian Federation—the external homeland for the latter. The salience of these discussions have been high in Estonia and Latvia, and somewhat lower in Lithuania.

The importance of the interpretation of the World War II events is so pivotal, because different interpretations assign different role to the Russian speakers, and of course, to the majorities as well. Because of their role, different ethnicities are assigned pride,
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shame, or guilt, and because of this, have different status in society. The debate over the interpretation of World War II events is therefore intensive intergroup communication about a shared and consensual understanding of justice in society that, according to Bourdieu (1991), is the source of symbolic power. If people accept a particular narrative as true, they are ready to accept the position in the social hierarchy that the narrative ascribes to them. In this way the hegemonic discourse emerging from the intergroup communication legitimizes the status relations between the subgroups in society.

The contested narratives are enacted in different events of commemoration, expressed by monuments of different meaning, and debated in public reactions to these former. Examples of these can be found plentiful in every Baltic country. For the Russian speakers the pivotal point is the celebration of the victory in the Great Patriotic War on May 9, a day later than Europe celebrates the end of World War II. In addition to this, a number of smaller but related victories are commemorated by some fractions of the Russian speakers, such as regaining the control over Tallinn and Riga, the capitals of Estonia and Latvia that they call “liberation.”

Various activist groups of ethnic Estonians and Latvians commemorate other battles and events, such as the March 16, the remembrance day of Latvian Legionnaires (the ethnic Latvian unit fighting in the ranks of Nazi Germany against the Red Army in 1944); the commemoration of the Battle of Tannenberg Line, where ethnic Estonian troops in the German army fought back the advancing Red Army in the summer of 1944. The list of these commemorative events can be continued. To understand the intergroup communication nature of these happenings, one particularly salient example deserves to be highlighted in more detail. It is the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument in Tallinn, Estonia, on April 30, 2007. As such it is a textbook case of intergroup communication over the hegemonic narrative, and thus about the statuses of the subgroups in society (Ehala, 2009).

The Bronze Soldier is not an obviously ideological monument. It is a mourning soldier in the Soviet uniform. In the Soviet time the monument had an inscription Eternal glory for the heroes who have fallen for the liberation and sovereignty of our country, which was replaced by a more neutral one in 1990s: For the fallen in the Second World War. In the 1990s the monument was visited by a decreasing number of war veterans. The situation changed after Putin came to power and made the World War II victory the cornerstone of the Russians’ collective pride. Following the pompous celebrations in Moscow, the monument in Tallinn started to attract larger and younger commemorators in Estonia, too.

As a response, some Estonian activist groups created another monument to commemorate those who fought against the Stalinist Soviet Union in the Estonian national troops in the German army. It was a bronze soldier, too, but in the German uniform and holding a machine gun ready for a fight. It is known as the Lihula monument, referring to the small countryside settlement where it was located. Because of the obvious Nazi resemblances, the EU officials strongly encouraged the Estonian
government to take down the monument. Complying with EU pressure, the Estonian government removed it in September 2004, at nighttime and without notice to the owners of the statue or to the public. This was seen as both cowardly and arrogant by most of ethnic Estonians, the more that the government had done nothing to stop the celebration of “Liberation of Estonia” by the Russian speakers around the other Bronze Soldier.

Therefore, the right-wing nationalist groups started to call the Bronze Soldier the monument for Soviet occupation, and demanded its removal, too, as tit for tat. They also started to provoke conflicts in the victory day celebrations. Finally, these micro clashes became so annoying that one Estonian political party made it its election promise to remove the statue from the center of Tallinn. This promise won them the elections, and so they set to fulfill their promise. However, they did not remove the statue completely, but just relocated it a couple of kilometers from the city center to the military cemetery. Still, the operation caused the first ethnic riots in Tallinn after the breakdown of the Soviet Union (Brüggemann & Kasekamp, 2008). The removal of the monument was an action to stop this cycle of conflictual meaning making. It certainly achieved its goal, but it is debatable whether it was the best possible solution.

The bottom line of all commemorative events is whether gaining control over the Baltic states by the Red Army in 1944 was a liberation of these countries from Nazis or Soviet military occupation. Of course it was both, but some activist groups of Russian speakers want to emphasize the liberation part that gives them a moral high ground and justification for demanding equal treatment. The titular majorities, however, prefer to see these events as Soviet occupation that justifies why the Russian speakers are treated as recent immigrants that need to go through a naturalization process to gain full citizenship.

**Conclusion**

Interethnic relations and integration are still acute social issues in the Baltic countries. Therefore, it is no surprise that most of the research on intergroup communication has had interethnic relations on its focus. The many historic and contextual parallels make the Baltic setting particularly suitable for theoretical comparative research that aims to explain the impact of different factors on intergroup communication. Also, as the historical setting is constantly evolving, new events also influence the nature of intergroup communication. For example, the recent immigration crisis in Europe, and its connections to extremist terrorism have already started to affect the intergroup relations in Estonia—the far-right fractions that previously saw the Russian-speaking community as the target, have somewhat shifted their focus. How this will affect the intergroup communication between the main ethnic groups in the Baltic countries, in the future, remains to be seen.
Further Reading


References


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