




Resistance and adaptation to newspeakerness in educational institutions: two tales from Estonia

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Abstract

The term ‘new speaker’ has recently emerged as an attempt by sociolinguists not only to understand the different types of speaker profiles that can be found in contemporary societies, but also to grasp the underlying processes of becoming a legitimate speaker in a given society. In this article, we combine the results from two studies situated in two educational institutions in Estonia in order to find out about speakers’ language attitudes and experiences in connection to learning and using Estonian. We concentrate on members of the international community who have relatively recently arrived to the country. Our results indicate that these speakers fluctuate between two prototypical discourses, which we broadly dub as ‘resistance’ and ‘adaptation’ to newspeakerness. Our study thereby adds to current debates on ‘new speaker’ and language policy issues by illustrating how tensions around language legitimacy are played out on the ground in a small nation state such as Estonia.

Keywords Language policy · Language attitudes · ‘New speakers’ · Estonia · Languages in education

Introduction: ‘new speakers’ in the Estonian context

The term ‘new speaker’ has recently emerged as an attempt by sociolinguists not only to understand the different types of speaker profiles that can be found in contemporary societies, but also to grasp the underlying processes of becoming a legitimate speaker in a given society. As O’Rourke and Pujolar (2013: 56) explain,

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“notions such as ‘new speakerness’ and ‘new speakers’ have begun to be used to describe the ways of speaking and the social and linguistic practices of speakers which exist outside the traditional native-speaker communities”. While the ‘new speaker’ concept can be connected to other recent developments in sociolinguistics that emphasize the need to conceptualize languages as practices and resources (Blommaert and Backus 2011; Busch 2015; Canagarajah 2013; Kramsch 2012; Pennycook 2010; see O’Rourke et al. 2015), ‘new speaker’ research has tried to shift the focus of attention from ‘language’ to ‘the speaker’, so as to better understand the social consequences for actual members of a given society when adopting (or not) a language that they have acquired at a later stage in their lives, typically as adults (O’Rourke and Pujolar 2015). Some authors (e.g. Dewaele 2017) have been critical of the term because the label ‘new’ implies an opposition with ‘old’, and so a question might emerge as to when one can cease to be a ‘new’ speaker to become an ‘old’ one, pointing to issues of legitimacy and authority. However, this is precisely the kind of issues that ‘new speaker’ research intends to shed light on. The modifier ‘new’ is added as an attempt to replace the prefix ‘non’ in such constructs as ‘non-native’ or to avoid the labelling as ‘learners’ if used in contrast to a perception of being a proficient speaker; the aim in this is to allow for a changed perspective in the exploration of the experiences of people in multilingual contexts (O’Rourke and Pujolar 2015). In short, one of the main tenets behind work on ‘new speakers’ is to try to find out what happens when people cross linguistic and social borders, what resources they draw on in order to do that and what impact this has for them socially and in terms of constructing their multiple identities (see Darquennes and Soler, this issue). ‘New speakers’ have originally been looked at from a perspective of autochthonous minority communities (e.g. individuals who have acquired much-discussed minority languages in Western Europe such as Irish or Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Catalan, Galician or Breton), but recent debates, in particular in the context of the COST network on New Speakers (cf. <http://www.nspk.org.uk/>) have taken the concept further to include also individuals who have—as migrants or members of transnational movements—acquired a major language of society or national language.

For obvious historical reasons, sociolinguistic research on multilingualism in Estonia has concentrated, on the one hand, on the Russian-speaking population and their adoption and use of the Estonian language (e.g. Vihalemm and Masso 2003; Ehala and Zabrodskaia 2014), or on the other hand, the shifting nature of the multilingual skills of the Estonian population (e.g. Soler-Carbonell 2014; Marten 2017; Verschik 2012). While Estonian is the sole official language in the country, individuals who identify themselves mostly as speakers of Russian are still a numerous proportion of Estonian society, albeit with notable regional differences. After the re-establishment of Estonian independence in 1991, language policies by the Estonian state have concentrated on overcoming the ‘asymmetrical bilingualism’ of Soviet times with Russophones being mostly monolingual, whereas ethnic Estonian were mostly bilingual, resulting in a de facto dominance of Russian in society (Rannut 2008). Inhabitants with other languages than Estonian as home languages were encouraged to acquire Estonian. In particular in the young generation, knowledge in Estonian has increased, whereas knowledge of Russian is by far less widespread among the post-Soviet generation of ethnic Estonians. Yet, a certain level

of segregation of Estonian society remains and knowledge of Estonian can still not be taken for granted by Russophones, in particular among persons with lower levels of education. This segregation is not least reinforced by largely separate media practices in light of the dominance of broadcasts from Russia and by the continuing existence of two parallel school systems with schools functioning overwhelmingly in Estonian and schools in which Russian is used as a language of instruction for many subjects which aim at meeting demands by minority activists while at the same time ensuring sufficient acquisition of Estonian (see e.g. Lazdiņa and Marten 2019 for an overview).

At the same time, the Estonian government has focused on developing skills in English. Competence in English has, in fact, become wide-spread in the younger and middle-aged generations, and English has even been labelled a ‘third local language’ of Estonia (Marten 2017). So far, however, not much research has been conducted about the population in the country of neither Estonian nor Russian background: speakers of third languages who have arrived to the country in recent years, usually for job-related or family reasons and who frequently use English for every-day purposes (but see, e.g. Doyle 2013; Soler and Zabrodskaia 2017). Not least, many of these new migrants work in the educational sector: whereas teaching in Russian in tertiary education is limited to a few institutions, the internationalisation of education is a specific aim which encourages universities to employ teaching and research personnel who mostly conduct their activities in English.

In this paper, we present and analyze two case studies conducted in educational institutions in Estonia where such (potential) ‘new speakers’ of Estonian with an international background were examined. As a small nation state that has managed to attract a number of transnational workers of different kinds in recent years, Estonia provides a fruitful ground for the exploration of the interplay between robust nation building language policies (Siiner 2006), practices of internationalization by both public and private institutions, and the needs, aspirations, and underlying ideologies of individual people. All in all, in the article we thus focus on the question of how speakers who do not have Estonian as their L1 acquire or do not acquire the language, and what attitudes they express towards it.

In addressing this question, we draw on two case studies are situated in educational institutions, both of them influenced by official language-in-education policies and the increasing internationalization of Estonian society, in general, and of educational institutions, in particular. The first case study (conducted by Soler) is situated at Tartu University, the country’s largest and oldest university. It reports on in-depth interviews conducted with transnational scholars working at that institution and their views on the sociolinguistic situation of their setting, particularly regarding the role of Estonian and English in their daily activities (see also Soler-Carbonell and Jürna 2017). Tartu is a relatively ‘Estonian’ town (approximately 80% of the city’s population is ethnically Estonian); its city landscape is highly influenced by the existence of Tartu University, which also explains the presence of English and other international languages as languages of the academic community. The second case study (conducted by Marten) focuses on language attitudes and practices at a private international school in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, where the number of Russian L1 speakers amounts to almost 50% of the city’s inhabitants. In Tallinn,

there is also an increasing number of transnational expatriates, consisting of diplomats, business people as well as migrants who have arrived for other purposes. The case study presents data gathered through a questionnaire and ethnographic observations to find out about the school community's attitudes regarding the Estonian language, in particular relating to language learning motivation and opportunities and to practical needs of knowing Estonian while living in the country. Before moving to the analysis of the two studies, we first provide a brief overview of the theoretical framework on which we ground our article.

Ethnographic and discursive approaches to language policy

In recent years, a 'new wave' of language policy studies has emerged under the framework of ethnographic and discursive approaches (e.g. Blommaert et al. 2009; Hult 2010; Johnson 2009, 2013; McCarty 2011; Johnson and Ricento 2013; Halonen et al. 2015; Barakos and Unger 2016), adding to more classical language policy theories (e.g. Shohamy 2006; Spolsky 2004, 2009). From such a perspective, language policy is a multi-layered phenomenon, something that agents constantly recreate through their complex discursive interaction (Barakos and Unger 2016: 1; see also Marten 2016). Within such multi-layered frameworks attempts are made to bridge the gap between critical discourse studies (traditionally focused on macro-level structures of power domination), interactional studies (typically aimed at highlighting the agency of individuals and their power to provide a counterweight to macro domination) and studies of micro practices and attitudes towards languages 'on the ground'. So, a methodological and theoretical framework is proposed in order to investigate "the agents, contexts, and processes across the multiple layers of language policy creation, interpretation, and appropriation" (Johnson 2013: 44). One of the strengths of ethnographic and discursive perspectives to the analysis of language policy is their capacity to show how ideological spaces for the protection, promotion, and development of (minority) languages can be either fostered or hindered, and under what societal conditions that happens (Hornberger and Johnson 2007).

By combining historically informed studies and analyses of official documents by e.g. ministries, educational authorities or schools, with situated interactional practices, language policy research can make use of a renovated set of tools to overcome the perennial macro and micro critiques. In short, ethnographic and discursive approaches are well situated to answer questions such as: how do top-down language policies matter and affect speakers' actual practices and behaviors? In which way do speakers' actual practices and behaviors create a bottom-up counterweight by shaping institutionally crafted language policies? In the Estonian context, Brown et al. (2017, 5) describe language policies in the 21st century "both as how formal policies are taken up, or appropriated, but also as the ways social actors generate policy through their decision-making". Their volume (Siiner et al. 2017) analyses language policy in Estonia from different perspectives. It stresses the nature of Estonia as a country at (linguistic, cultural, geographical and political) borders between Eastern and Western Europe,

the post-Soviet and the traditionally democratic and capitalist realms, but also Estonia's political and social dynamism which relatively recently has created new speech communities. Examples of such communities are Russian-L1 users of Estonian as a second language or Estonian communities world-wide which by the means of contemporary media cooperate with speakers in Estonia in increasingly transnational patterns.

In our article, we concentrate on speakers' reported language practices and their attitudes to existing top-down policies and practices, looking at how they construct themselves as (potential) speakers of Estonian or how they resist that stance. Adapting to or resisting 'new speaker' status in Estonian is a complex phenomenon, where both internal (individual) and external (societal) factors, sometimes contradictorily, intervene. In a similar way to Block's (2005) analysis of French-language teachers in London, we find that there exist a number of push-and-pull factors that may determine speakers' sociolinguistic stances towards their host society. Individuals who see themselves as permanent residents and are there to stay are more likely to become an 'adapter', i.e. acquire sufficient Estonian to use it on a regular basis as a 'new speaker'. In contrast, individuals who consider themselves to be ex-pats who stay only temporarily in their host society, may turn into 'resisters', i.e. they acquire Estonian only to a limited degree or even not at all (except for possibly a few tokenistic phrases). In the article, we do not look at a specific professional group and their identity construction as in Block's case, but, as we shall see, we do find similarities between the discourse of the French language teachers that Block interviewed and the members of the broadly-defined international community in Estonia. Following the language-ethnographic vein introduced above, we combine two studies with two slightly different methodologies, one interview-based and the other with data from an online questionnaire. While the two methodologies may start from a different researcher position, they can fruitfully complement one another with data that allow us to discuss our shared concern, namely participants' self-positioning as adapting or resisting to become 'new speakers' of Estonian. In the next section, we provide more details of the two studies. We offer a selection of the results that allows us to tackle our main goal in the article.

'New speakers' in Estonian educational contexts

Study 1: 'new speakers' in Estonian higher education

Study 1 investigates the role and the status of different languages in Estonian higher education, with the aim of observing the different discourses underpinning that context. Fieldwork at the University of Tartu was conducted during the academic year 2013–2014. In the autumn semester of 2013, a series of seminars on English for academic purposes were observed and recorded; subsequently, in the spring semester of 2014, a series of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted among scholars at the university with different profiles, from Ph.D. students to professors in a range of disciplines. 20 of the interviewees were transnational

scholars. They constitute the focus of analysis in this paper. Some of the interviewees were recruited in the observed seminars. Although data from those observed sessions is not reported in this article, the fact that some of them were familiar with the researcher and his investigation may have affected their views on the issues discussed.

The participants represent different nationalities, most of them were of European origin, but also Asian and Latin American. Their time of residence in the country varied, from less than a year up to 7 years. Table 1 summarizes some basic features of the participants who were interviewed in the study.

In addition to the in-depth interviews, one focus group discussion was conducted with ten scholars from the IT Department. The ten faculty members came from mixed backgrounds and academic ranks, from Ph.D. students to Professors. Only two of them were Estonian nationals (not included as part of the study), the rest were international members who had been living in the country for at least 1 year. The group discussion lasted 1 h, it took place in English and it was held in the university premises. Table 2 summarizes some basic features of the participants in the focus-group discussion.

Table 1 Features of the transnational scholars interviewed at UT

Pseudonym	L1	L-interview	Time in Estonia at the time of interview	Field
Annette	Norwegian	English	1.5 years	Humanities
David	Dutch	English	5 years	Humanities
Carmelo	Spanish	Spanish	10 months	Social Sciences
Emma	Russian	Spanish	1 year	Social Sciences
Lisa	German	English	4 years	Natural Sciences
Laura	Spanish/Catalan	Catalan	2 years	Natural Sciences
Martin	Spanish	Spanish	6 years	Natural Sciences
Qiu	Chinese	English	3 years	Natural Sciences
Serge	German	English	9 years	Natural Sciences
Nolan	Urdu	English	10 months	Engineering

Table 2 Features of the transnational scholars interviewed at UT (focus-group discussion)

Pseudonym	L1	L-interview	Time in Estonia at the time of interview	Field
Antonio	Spanish	English	4.5 years	Engineering
Mario	Spanish		6 years	
Oscar	Spanish		5 years	
Naaim	Urdu		4 years	
Pak	Persian		4.5 years	
Teo	German		1 year	
Sasha	Russian		4.5 years	
Fabio	Italian		1 year	

The conversations during the interviews and focus-group discussions revolved around a number of different topics. Here, we concentrate on the way participants framed their need and motivations (or lack thereof) to learn and use Estonian. Almost invariably, participants noted that Estonian is the language that they encounter more regularly in their workplace. They might use more English, but Estonian is the language that has more presence in their respective departments. Yet their stance towards the language varies from more supportive of it and actively engaged in trying to learn and use it, to more neutral or resisting positions.

Attitudes and ideologies towards Estonian: adopting and resisting newspeakerness

Those more favorable towards Estonian emphasized their motivation to acquire the language in different ways. Carmelo and David, for example, saw it as their ‘duty’ or ‘obligation’ to engage with the language professionally (even though they both were at an early stage of their learning process). David explained that in work meetings, he was still afraid to use his ‘broken Estonian’; but recently (i.e. at the time of the interview) he had been at a meeting where he was the only person who did not speak Estonian, so he said it was fine to have the meeting in Estonian: “I’d rather be me who is a little uncomfortable than them”, he noted. Carmelo saw it as a way of ‘giving back’ to the country and to the institution. Embodying an institutional stance, he explained: “if you’re doing a Ph.D. here, in addition to it being of help for your career and for yourself as a person, this needs to help our country [Estonia] too”.

Sometimes, however, the goal of transnational scholars to learn and use Estonian frequently seemed like an aim they had to struggle for. Lisa was a clear example of this case. As a Ph.D. student in Biology, her studies are mostly in English, but the day-to-day activities in her department are in Estonian. As a result, she felt she really wanted to engage with the language from an early stage. However, many times she felt she had to try quite hard to take a stance as a learner of the language, particularly in more informal, small-talk situations:

Lisa: It was such a weird feeling, I was thinking well now I’m really nice and I try but it feels rather that you have to fight and that you disturb someone, you’re so slow, and the others want to be polite and talk English to you, and still I can’t speak Estonian if I’m not comfortable, if there are people who I see can’t wait, then I say well if you want to speak English then let’s speak English. But my supervisor is really encouraging this, it’s really like it’s nice.

As Lisa’s case illustrates, the route towards Estonian, even for those who are most motivated to learn it and use it regularly, is filled with particular circumstances and events of one’s life trajectory that crucially shape one’s lived experience with the language (Busch 2015). In fact, it was often the case that those who had managed to attain a good knowledge of Estonian had done so because of extra-professional circumstances. In the case of Serge, for example, it was after meeting his future wife that he decided he would learn Estonian and engage actively with the language, something that for him happened even before moving to Estonia. Having children is another frequent route towards needing to engage with the language more frequently. Even if this does not lead to actual acquisition from the parents, children

bring Estonian to the home and they do acquire the language at school. In the case of Martin, he explains that moving from the city center to a residential neighborhood in the outskirts, coupled with having children, made a difference in his activation of Estonian:

Martin: it also helped that we moved to the place we live now, because in the center, it was everything was more impersonal, and here we have neighbors, they ask you things, talk to you and so on, and also having a child puts you in contact with other people from the place, and then you begin speaking more and more, so you improve in your knowledge, right? ... so I began speaking more in this way.

Turning now to those who expressed more neutral or negative opinions about the need to acquire and use Estonian, we can note the following trends. Almost invariably, they emphasize that in their contexts, on a daily basis, they do not need the language, that everyone around can easily accommodate to English or other languages they may know (e.g. Russian). Sasha, a participant in the focus-group discussion, presented the argument in the following terms:

Sasha: 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 young people they know English and Estonian, and the older people, from Soviet Union, they know Russian or Estonian as well, so for me it's kind of easy to manage with two languages, Russian and English.

There seems to be an ideological construction of the perception that one can get by easily without the language, even if that might not always be the case. Annette, a lecturer in the Scandinavian department, explained it in the following way:

Annette: Most people speak English. Of course, if I go to Narva then it's not so easy.

Josep: Mhm

Annette: But then I don't go there so very often.

Josep: Mhm

Annette: But in Tartu and in Tallinn it's okay, and now I even get by, because sometimes if you go to the shop, the people, the cashiers, they don't speak English that well.

Josep: Mhm mhm

Annette: So, but I think I can get by now somehow.

The key seems to be Annette's last point, the idea that she thinks she can get by somehow with her limited knowledge of Estonian and with English. Nolan, a post-doctoral researcher in technology, shares this feeling. While he was taking Estonian language lessons, he felt English could be used generally everywhere: "and I'm trying to learn slowly but you know I almost never had to ah how to say it like English is always you can use it pretty much everywhere here so it has been very smooth". This feeling of not needing Estonian and therefore not being motivated to make an effort to acquire it more decidedly might be motivated for two reasons: a lack of

prospects of staying in the country for an extended period of time, combined with a prioritization of issues other than learning the language. Emma, a postdoctoral scholar in social sciences, expressed it in the following terms:

Emma: I don't believe in my own capacities to learn Estonian; my husband, who has been here already for three years, started learning Estonian. He is talented for foreign languages but the result is not so good because sometimes we still have trouble talking in Estonian; sometimes my husband, who has studied the language for three years taking courses and so on, he is able to read the menu in the restaurant [...] And the truth is I don't think we'll live here for many years.

Pak, a Ph.D. student in the focus-group discussion at the IT Department, also explained that. "I receive emails that arrive regularly about free courses for teachers and staff to learn about Estonian and Estonian culture. I haven't taken any of them, I usually delete them, but I know it's there at least". Pak refers to the courses offered by the university to its international staff, which are part of the institutional official policy of promotion of the Estonian language.

Indeed, the Language Principles of the University of Tartu (2009) provided some general guidelines for the promotion, protection, and development of the Estonian language while fostering a multilingual inclusive atmosphere where (academic) English would play a pivotal role [see Soler and Vihman (2018) for a more detailed analysis of UT's language policies]. Regardless of such official policy, we see speakers on the ground taking different approaches to the idea of learning and acquiring Estonian, those who adapt and are more willing to learn the language and those who are more resistant to that.

Summary of study 1: from resistance to adaptation and back again

In sum, it would also be unfair and too simplistic to present one group of participants as having an unproblematic relationship with Estonian, being willing to actively engage with it, and another group being more resisting to the idea of learning it. There exist multiple layers of discourses between the two groups. Space constraints do not allow us to provide more evidence of that, but to put it simply, there is resistance and pragmatism among the adapters and there is adaptation and romanticism among the resisters. David, whom we have seen explaining he would rather be uncomfortable instead of having an entire group uneasy because of his lack of Estonian, retold that he once was in a very embarrassing position when during his Ph.D. yearly assessment, the chair of the evaluation committee would refuse to speak anything but Estonian, producing an additional degree of anxiety and uncertainty at that moment. Carmelo, who felt that his learning Estonian was a way of 'paying back' to the country, admitted as well that the credits he gained by taking Estonian courses at the university were enough for him to obtain the points he needed for the semester. Martin, who had managed to activate his passive knowledge of Estonian, struggled with the language in some stages of his Ph.D., particularly in the last phase, when he had to produce an Estonian-language summary of his thesis.

By contrast, even though participants in the focus-group discussion were not, as a general rule, adamant of spending time learning Estonian, they were certainly aware that in given key moments, they would need the language. Mario explained to one of the Ph.D. students in the group that he should start thinking about how to translate one of his key terms in his thesis into Estonian, as he would need that when the time came to produce a summary of his work in the language. Mario also explained that there exists a particular person in the department who takes pride on translating terms and specialized vocabulary into Estonian, showing again an awareness as a department of the necessity to manage language-related matters, even if only from time to time. All in all, we see different paths that may lead towards positions of adaptation or resistance towards Estonian. In either case, the path is not always clear-cut. Being more inclined to learning and using the language or not can depend on a number of different factors, including one's personal stance towards language learning, willingness to spend time on it, the length of the time one has stayed in the country and future prospects of remaining there for a longer period.

Study 2: attitudes to becoming a 'new speaker' of Estonian in an international school community

The second case study also discusses different routes towards Estonian that index different kinds of attitudes towards developing a 'new speaker' profile. The case in point is an international English-medium school in Estonia's capital Tallinn. The point of departure of the study has been an interest towards understanding attitudes towards (learning) the Estonian language among the international school community. Given previous experience and knowledge of the institution, it was assumed that many members of the international community in Tallinn do not perceive skills in Estonian as necessary.

Background and design of the research

The International School of Estonia is an American-led private school which provides general education in English from nursery until grade 12. At the time of research, around 130 children attended the school. The school community comprises embassy employees, university staff and leading employees of international companies, supplemented by some locals with both Russian and Estonian as home languages. The school's official language policy is that formal education takes place exclusively in English. One foreign language (usually French or German) is compulsory for all students; in addition, Estonian L1 lessons are offered for children with Estonian as a home language. Everyday practices are, however, characterized by a high level of multilingualism and a pragmatic attitude of choosing languages most comfortable for communication in specific situations. This includes the regular use of Estonian, Russian, Swedish, Finnish and German among students, staff, and parents. The school also conducts 'international days', multilingual reading days, and similar activities which aim at familiarizing the students with the diversity of cultures and languages, albeit in specifically designated time frames.

The research was carried out as an online and paper survey in March and April 2015. It was inspired by similar studies [cf. e.g. Fukuda (2017) on attitudes and practices around a Japanese school in Barcelona]. 25 informants of different national and linguistic backgrounds took part in the study (mostly from European countries such as Sweden, France, Austria, Germany, Poland, Hungary or Portugal, but including informants from North America and Asia). Many of the participants had lived in different countries and had conversational skills in more languages than their L1 and English. The questionnaire was distributed and completed in English; because of the research design ethnic Estonians or Estonian L1-speakers were excluded from the research. Open questions which required text answers aimed at understanding discourses; these were supplemented by Likert scale and yes/no questions. Sections included personal information, questions on the stay in Estonia (reasons, length), on experiences and opinions towards learning Estonian, on language practices in Estonia, and on perceptions of the Estonian language. The data relevant for this paper consisted of written text answers which were collected and analyzed using discourse-analytical tools and which were supplemented by observations on the school premises.

Results regarding general attitudes to Estonian

In the following, a number of results will be discussed that illustrate the attitudes within the community.¹ To a certain degree, the pattern of ‘resistance’ versus ‘adaptation’ identified in study 1 could also be detected among the informants of study 2. However, there were many different reasons for turning towards one or the other direction.

At first, a number of issues will be discussed which are representative of those informants who have become or are on their way to become ‘new speakers’ of Estonian. The following answers to the question *Could you please, in a few words, summarize the role that the Estonian language plays in your life in Estonia?* suggest that there are practical reasons to becoming a ‘new speaker’ of the language. These may, for instance, be related to professional purposes or to understanding Estonian culture. Cristina (female, 46–55 years, L1 Spanish), for example, makes a clear point of how important Estonian is for her everyday life. Yet, this is based on the importance of Estonian both in her personal and in her professional life:

Cristina: Essential. This is the language I use to communicate with my in law family, some friends and colleagues at work, teachers of my children at school, other parents, associations, every day life, to keep updated listening to the news, etc., etc.

Answers to the question *Could you please tell us briefly the main reasons why/why not you are learning/you have learnt the Estonian language? Please be spontaneous in your answer!* allowed to take a closer look at the motivation underlying attitudes

¹ In all examples provided the original orthography and grammar have been kept unchanged. The names assigned to the informants are pseudonyms chosen for guaranteeing anonymity while at the same time keeping a narrative coherence with the way how Study 1 is presented.

towards becoming a ‘new speaker’ of Estonian. Those informants who had a positive attitude towards Estonian mostly displayed an integrative motivation to the language, as exemplified by Göran’s (male, over 55, L1 Swedish) answer:

Göran: IT is rude not to try to speak the language of the country you are living in.

In contrast, informants who resisted newspeakerness showed that Estonian does not play an important role in their lives. Many informants stressed that Estonian was not needed for being successful in their professional lives. When reasoning why someone displayed unwillingness to become a ‘new speaker’ of Estonian, Pierre (male, 26–35, L1 French) largely argued along instrumental lines:

Pierre: I came with a european programm and it was hard to have a proper workshop about estonian language during my staying in Estonia. So the only estonian I learned was through contact with locals. After, I decided to stay, I left my first working place (estonian speakers) to an international community where english is widely spoken. I dropped estonian as I have to catch up in English. Still, I learn with locals but very few.

Another question inquired about attitude changes in a diachronic perspective: *Has your attitude towards learning the Estonian language gone through noteworthy changes during your stay in Estonia? (Yes/No) If so—how and why?* Answers to this question were balanced with 11 informants answering YES and 11 NO. Some informants stressed the importance of English in Estonia, the perceived difficulty of Estonian and the idea of learning Russian instead. Göran, even though he had considered it to be “rude” not to make an effort to speak Estonian (see above), argued along these line:

Göran: Everyone speaks god English in the environment I am working. Estonian is à verk difficult language to learn as it is so unlike other languages I have studied.

Finally, also the answers to the question *Should Estonian lessons be offered at the school that your child attends?* indicated the divide in the community regarding newspeakerness. At the time of conducting the survey, only very few of the students without Estonian as a home language had the opportunity to choose Estonian as an elective at the school, based on a lack of interest for more extended lessons (personal communication with the school’s principal). The following answers were chosen (Table 3).

Table 3 Opinions on the position of Estonian at school among the International School Community

No	3
As a voluntary afternoon activity	6
As an elective within regular school hours	8
As a compulsory subject	3
Some or all subjects should be taught in Estonian	0
No answer (partly because of no children of one’s own by school staff)	5

It was not a surprise that there was no wish for Estonian-language education, given the abundance of other schools in Tallinn with Estonian as the main medium of instruction. Yet, the fact that only 3 informants answered that Estonian should be a compulsory subject indicates that there was no overwhelming wish to turn one's children into 'new speakers' of Estonian; the high numbers of informants who wished Estonian to be an elective or a voluntary activity suggests that the language was seen as something of only potential importance. Also, this question thus confirmed the attitudes expressed in responses to the other questions: some knowledge of Estonian might be an advantage for understanding more about one's current country of residence, but generally it was not considered necessary. The answer by Michael (male, 46–55, L1 English) to the question *How would you describe your view on the Estonian language with regard to your children in total?* summarizes this general attitude quite well: "I would prefer They learn another language only 1 Million people speak EST and we will most likely never live here again."

The impact of top-down language policies and practices by Estonian society on becoming a 'new speaker' of Estonian

A second important aspect of the study was to investigate how perceptions of existing language policies and practices by Estonian society contributed to choosing the resistance or the adaptation path. The overwhelming number of answers showed that among those informants who had generally displayed a positive attitude towards becoming a 'new speaker', the non-existence of adequate learning opportunities contributed to turning more towards the resistance side. Some informants stressed the lack of adequate text books, whereas Renate (female, over 55, L1 German) emphasized the lack of classes:

Renate: I think there is PLENTY of room for improvement. I found it difficult to find the right group course, that's why I have to take private lessons.

What is important about these statements is that they express views by people who had at some point been interested in acquiring Estonian. Some informants indeed reported of fairly positive experiences with local authorities whom they considered to be very helpful to foreigners. Some informants were surprised about how many official documents were available in English. Yet, such practices and offers again limited the perceived necessity of becoming a 'new speaker' of Estonian. Similarly, also experiences with the general public displayed this ambiguity between being happy about Estonians' willingness to communicate in English and disappointment which led to a lack of motivation of becoming a 'new speaker' of Estonian. Cristina explained:

Cristina: The only problem is they jump to either Russian or English to continue the conversation. In the past, i had to be very determined to continue still in Estonian, even when English was an easier option.

The most critical view on the helpfulness of Estonians was expressed by George (male, over 55, L1 English):

George: I found the basic combinations of sounds and stressing very different from English. Consequently my early attempts at speaking were met with a complete blank by native speakers. This inability (refusal) to ‘understand’ anything apart from absolutely correct pronunciation quickly led me to reject any idea of learning the language. The initial hurdle became an impossible barrier.

Rather than exceptions, however, some informants expressed views on policies and practices by Estonians which might support the wish to turn into ‘new speakers’. One informant called Estonians “supportive”; another found that “they are always happy and helpful”. In addition, it needs to be stressed that also negative experiences with the authorities or the Estonian public might lead to a higher motivation of becoming a ‘new speaker’ of Estonian for practical purposes: Renate summarized her experience that “they do really expect you to know Estonian”. Mostly, the informants stressed that the more specific your needs would be, the less likely it would be that services would be offered in English.

In sum, Study 2 thus confirms the two tendencies identified in Study 1: the divide between adapting and resisting newspeakerness. Those informants who were largely positive towards Estonian and have managed to acquire it to a higher degree usually plan to stay in Estonia for a longer period because of their career and/or an Estonian partner. Informants who were generally positive towards Estonian without advanced proficiency usually intended to stay in Estonia for at least a few years, sometimes because of an Estonian partner. Some of the latter informants tried to learn Estonian because they considered it as important to integrate and sometimes felt excluded because of insufficient language skills. Yet, many informants did not perceive Estonian as necessary in everyday life; in addition, Estonian was repeatedly perceived as difficult to learn.

The main arguments by those informants with overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards turning into ‘new speakers’ were that it was essentially possible to get by in Estonia with English. Some informants who displayed a general openness towards learning languages argued that Estonian was a too small language in too small a country. Informants answered that they might sometimes feel excluded or miss out on information, but such situations were not perceived as substantial enough to make efforts to acquire Estonian.

Regarding policies and practices, the majority of informants were critical towards Estonians’ limited support and their tendency to switch to English, as well as to the lack of adequate language learning opportunities. The attitudes by Estonian authorities were seen with ambivalence: on the one hand, efforts to accommodate the international community by offering services in English were appreciated; on the other hand, this presence of English in official domains implied less necessity to acquire Estonian. This view changed, however, among informants with more advanced needs to communicate with Estonian authorities.

Discussion and conclusions

We started the article with the aim of investigating how speakers who do not have Estonian as their L1 acquire or not the language, and what attitudes they express towards it. Our two case studies have shown a diverse range of attitudes towards Estonian, and a range of motivations towards its acquisition, different ways of constructing oneself as a learner or a ‘new speaker’ of the language, and different paths which may lead individuals to choose one or the other direction. Generally, our studies allow us to identify two broad ‘discursive bundles’ among our sample of members of the international educational community in Estonia: ‘resisting newspeakerness’ and ‘adapting to newspeakerness’. In broad terms, participants in our studies find themselves between these two prototypical discourses. Needless to say, the two of them have no clear-cut boundaries, and speakers can fluctuate between one and the other depending on a number of variables. However, the results from our respective studies allow us to hint at prototypical features of those who tend to associate themselves more with one or the other type of discourse.

Speakers who follow the ‘resistance’ line of argument have typically arrived in Estonia relatively recently. They do not expect to stay for a long period of time (e.g. usually for a maximum of 3 years), and are focused on their work or on their academic career development. They see the learning and acquisition of Estonian as something that demands an important extra effort, an investment (Norton Peirce 1995) that they do not necessarily wish to make. These informants perceive English to be used ‘everywhere’—i.e. both at work and outside of it, including in communication with the authorities. Their attitude to languages is mostly instrumental, i.e. they see language as a tool to achieving better results at work or to make progress in their career. Even if people feel excluded in certain situations, this does not change their attitude; these informants largely stay in the international community with relatively little contact with locals. It is also noteworthy that a good knowledge of Russian reduces the perceived need to acquire Estonian—arguably in Tartu to a lesser degree than in Tallinn because of the ethnic and linguistic composition of the two towns. A consequence of ‘resisting’ newspeakerness is, however, that a deeper integration into the Estonian society and culture as well as, possibly, long-term participation in political and societal processes might be limited.

In contrast, ‘adapters’ have typically been in the country for a (relatively) longer period of time or envisage staying longer (e.g. 3 years or more). They have developed an attitude that it is beneficial and/or necessary to learn and acquire Estonian better and to use it more frequently and in more diverse contexts, usually motivated by factors outside their professional sphere, what some have termed language learning ‘in the wild’ (e.g. Clark et al. 2011). These informants might feel an integrative motivation, e.g. when expressing that they find Estonian culture interesting or by arguing that it is a matter of respect to acquire the main language of the country you live in. At the same time, the examples where an early positive attitude towards adapting newspeakerness turned into resistance based on negative experiences with Estonians show that without any instrumental value (e.g. communicating with one’s partner’s family) also this attitude has its limits. Generally, these informants see the

advantages of knowing Estonian for integrating into Estonian society. Having a partner from Estonia—not surprisingly—contributes to developing this profile, which, in the international school community, also translates into the wish that children attend Estonian lessons. ‘Adapting’ to new-speakerness enables newcomers to Estonia not only to understand Estonian culture better—in a long-term perspective, it also opens up opportunities such as long-term residence permits or even full participation in political and societal processes through applying for Estonian citizenship. Yet, our data show that such questions were not of major importance for our informants at their individual stages of integrating into Estonian society.

These different discourse-types among the international community stand often in direct relation to language policies by the Estonian state and other institutions; they are connected as well to ‘on the ground’ practices by Estonian society. That is to say, official (state and institutional) language policies, as well as interactional practices, are key in enabling the possibility for these discourses to emerge and to gain currency in social contexts. Returning to the ethnography of language policy framework, and the discursive orientations to language policy sketched above, our article illustrates how members of the international community in Estonia experience and react to language policy issues at a personal level, emphasizing the importance of the lived experience of language (Busch 2015) in order to understand language policy developments in any context (McCarty 2015).

It seems that experiences with language policies by the authorities and practices by Estonians contributed highly to choosing one or the other path. Generally, a lack of adequate language courses was criticized as well as a certain unwillingness to support learners in everyday communication. It was mostly seen as positive that the authorities offer quite a great deal of services in English; however, this again reduced the need to become a ‘new speaker’ of Estonian. At the same time, the data revealed that, among the informants who displayed a relatively higher level of experience and a change of attitudes throughout their individual trajectories of language acquisition, there is an interesting sub-group: informants who at some point had been positive towards the Estonian language but had started to reject becoming ‘new speakers’ of Estonian, based not only on the perceived difficulty of learning the language and the lack of necessity to know it, but also on the perceived unhelpfulness by Estonians and the lack of learning and practicing opportunities. In line with Block (2005), there are both ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ forces at play when it comes to predicting whether someone will decide on investing on a new type of language-related identity for themselves, not just professionally, but also personally.

In this sense, the participants in our respective studies indeed seemed to be caught between the Estonian authorities’ desire to attract a pool of international, well-qualified professionals (for whom services in English are/should be on offer), and the promotion of Estonian as the sole national and official language of the country, a clash of discourses of ‘pride’ and ‘profit’ (Duchêne and Heller 2012). Despite the ideology of Estonianization of the state, policies allowed international residents to be accommodated to a sufficient degree for not becoming ‘new speakers’ of Estonian. Educational institutions like the ones we investigated, with explicit or implicit agendas of internationalization, and with relatively significant numbers of international members, are particularly prone to feel the tension between these two goals.

In addition, this tension, as it seems, can be exacerbated by encounters with local, L1 Estonian speakers, whose responses to the language use by speakers of different backgrounds can be mixed, but not infrequently discouraging and demotivating (as reported by participants in both case studies), leading potential ‘new speakers’ of the language to the ‘resistance’ discourse. In sum, different agents with different views and objectives on language policy matters do play a role in shaping people’s dispositions towards language and towards language learning (Hornberger and Johnson 2007; Johnson 2009), thus illustrating the importance of carefully tracing the circulation of discourses across the language policy cycle (Canagarajah 2006).

Finally, and more broadly, our research relates to studies which have been conducted on linguistic and societal integration in other contexts. Studies among migrants in Western Europe have shown a strong correlation between the wish to stay in the country and both language proficiency and actual use, whereas a strong concentration on one’s own ethnic community has negative effects on acquisition of the main language of society [cf. e.g. van Tubergen and Kalmijn (2008) on migrants with Turkish and Moroccan background in the Netherlands]. With a similar research interest, Elias and Lemish (2008) analyse the role of media consumption among Russophone Israelis. As they argue, many families of Russian origin—and in particular their children—are torn between integrating into mainstream Israeli society and a preservation of the traditional values and life style of their families (even though, in contrast to our informants, the informants in Elias’ and Lemish’s study mostly migrated to Israel to stay there for good). Also here, the perception of mainstream culture is decisive for paths to—in the terminology of our paper—adapting to or resisting the linguistic regime of Israel (which in the specific case study is closely related to media-practices—a connection which in our studies were only marginally addressed, even though some correlation to following Estonian media could also be detected).

We are aware that the two case studies were conducted in rather different contexts—both in terms of methodology and informants, and regarding the Tallinn/Tartu divide. Space does not allow us to problematize these differences here, but we believe that our research provides valuable insight into the discourses of the international community in Estonia, in particular since our data has shown that, in spite of the differences between the two case studies, the lines of ‘resistance’ or ‘adoption’ of new-speakerness are surprisingly similar. While we may concede that broad generalizations are hard to make based on a limited sample of participants, the similar trends we have been able to draw from both case studies, allows, in our view, for a stronger credibility of our findings. The combination of ethnographic observations, interviews, and a questionnaire in sum provided valuable data which in total shape a diverse and differentiated picture of language practices and perceptions. In that regard, the issues raised in our article connect to broader discussions on ‘new speakers’, and may help widen the analytical purchase of the concept. Indeed, not unlike the situations of minority language settings (e.g. O’Rourke 2011; O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013), members of the international community in Estonia need to negotiate their position as legitimate speakers of the state language as speakers who have a ‘right’ to acquire and use the language. Discursively, they construct themselves as either making an effort to be seen as legitimate speakers of Estonian or justifying

their choice to not engage with the language actively and pursue a different path. Either way, the influence of the majority in the society is something that needs to be underscored in shaping these different paths, something that ‘new speaker’ studies might do well to ponder more emphatically in future research.

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