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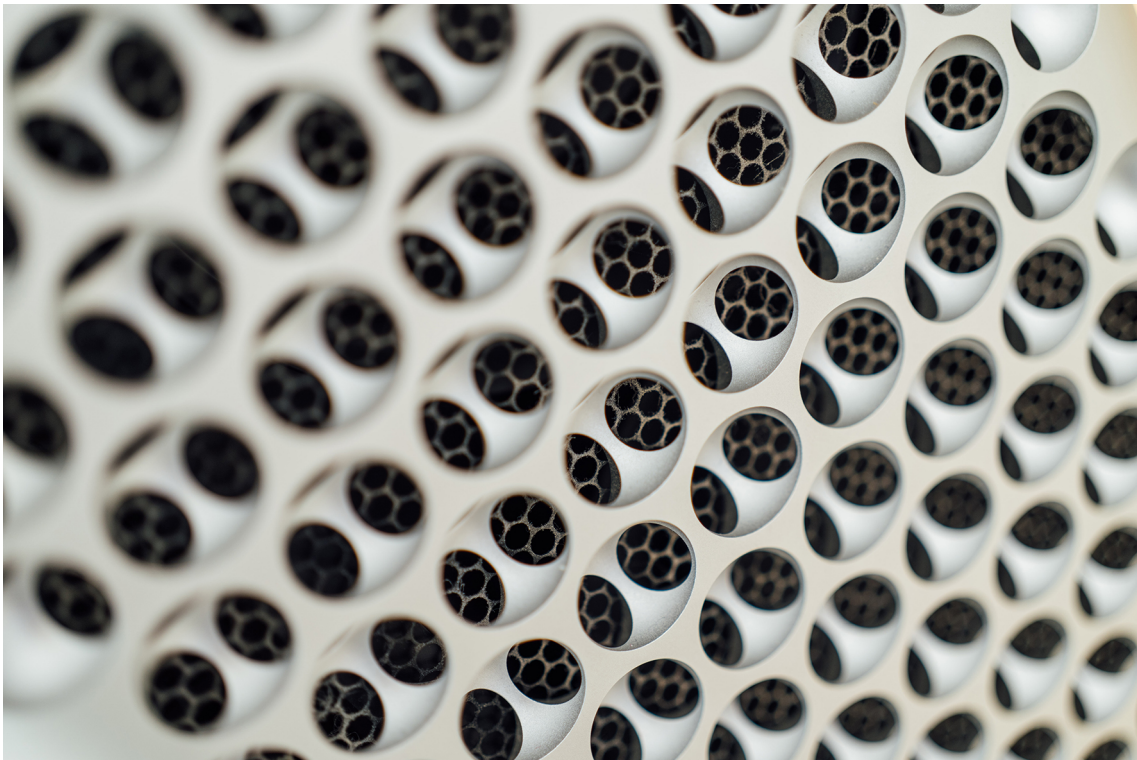
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**Ilkhom Khalimzoda**

# Russian Speakers' Acculturation in Finland and Latvia

## The Role of Language and News Media Engagement

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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

JYU DISSERTATIONS 708

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**Russian Speakers' Acculturation  
in Finland and Latvia**

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Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellisen tiedekunnan suostumuksella  
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## ABSTRACT

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This study uses the acculturation framework to engage in a comparative exploration into the acculturation of Russian speakers' in Finland and Latvia, with a particular focus on media engagement and language preferences. Specifically, I trace the historical trajectory of Russian-language media and the development of the diaspora in Latvia and Finland, spanning from the Russian conquests of Latvia (1710) and Finland (1809) to the 2020s. Acculturation is operationalized in terms of cultural involvement (CI) and cultural preference (CP), following the model proposed by Carlson and Güler (2018), and complemented by news media and language use domains. This dissertation consists of three articles. Drawing on survey data from both countries (N = 224), the study revealed that participants' CI and CP orientations tended toward a middle point, indicating a state of biculturality. In terms of media use, the overall analysis suggests predominantly higher engagement with non-Russian news media sources compared to Russian ones. However, a closer examination revealed nuanced findings. In terms of language, this research also identified a significant relationship between participants' CI scores and language proficiency. Going beyond proficiency, the language most frequently used outside the home emerged as a key factor explaining a substantial proportion of the variation in both CI and CP. Applied beyond its original context in the USA, the CI and CP scales proved reliable when tested in the context of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland. Such measures benefit from creative complements, as exemplified here by the inclusion of language and news media aspects atop acculturation. Possible theoretical and practical implications of the findings are also discussed.

**Keywords:** acculturation, Russian speakers, news media engagement, language proficiency, accidental diaspora, migration

## TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Khalimzoda, Ilkhom

Venäjänkielisten akkulturaatiosta Suomessa ja Latviassa: kielen ja uutismedian käyttöön

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Diss.

Tutkimus tarjoaa vertailevan näkökulman venäjänkielisten sopeutumiseen Suomessa ja Latviassa, keskittyen erityisesti median käyttöön ja kielivalintoihin sopeutumisen viitekehysessä. Tämän ymmärtämiseksi jäljennän venäjänkielisen median historiallista kehitystä Latviassa ja Suomessa, ulottuen Venäjän valloituksista Latviaan (1710) ja Suomeen (1809) 2020-luvulle asti. Sopeutuminen on operatiivinen käsite kulttuuriseen osallistumiseen (CI) ja kulttuuriseen mieltymykseen (CP), hyödyntäen Carlsonin ja Gülerin (2018) ehdottamaa mallia ja täydentäen uutismedian ja kielenkäytön osa-alueita. Tutkimus koostuu kolmesta artikkelista. Kyselytutkimuksen tulokset molemmista maista (N=224) paljastavat, että osallistujien kulttuurinen osallistuminen (CI) ja kulttuurinen mieltymys (CP) ovat keskiluokalla, osoittaen kaksikulttuurisuus (biculturality) tilaa. Median käytön osalta kokonaistarkastelu viittaa pääasiassa suurempaan osallistumiseen 'ei-venäläisiin' uutislähteisiin verrattuna 'venäläisiin'. Kuitenkin tarkempi tutkimus paljastaa hienovaraisempia löydöksiä. Kielen osalta tutkimus tunnistaa myös merkittävän suhteen osallistujien CI-pisteiden ja kielitaidon välillä. Kielitaidon ylittäessä, kodin ulkopuolella yleisimmin käytetty kieli nousee keskeiseksi tekijäksi selittämään merkittävää osaa vaihtelusta sekä CI:ssä että CP:ssä. Alkuperäisen kontekstin ulkopuolella sovellettuna CI- ja CP-asteikko osoittautui tehokkaaksi venäjänkielisten sopeutumisen tutkimisessa Latviassa ja Suomessa. Olen osoittanut, kuinka tällaiset mittarit hyötyvät luovista täydennyksistä, kuten tässä esimerkkinä kielen ja uutismedian näkökohtien sisällyttäminen sopeutumisen yläpuolelle. Tutkimus käsittelee löydösten mahdollisia teoreettisia ja käytännön vaikutuksia.

**Avainsanat:** sopeutuminen, venäjänkieliset, uutismedian osallistuminen, kielitaito, sattumanvarainen diaspora, siirtolaisuus

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## DEDICATION

In May 2022, I sat beside you (Abrudasul Mustanov) and picked up your recently published book. As I flipped through its pages, you directed me to page 61, where you had penned a poem for my grandmother—someone you dearly loved and couldn't bear to lose just five years earlier, in 2018, on her birthday. You asked me to read the poem aloud, and as I did, tears streamed down your face. Little did I know that it would be the last time I saw you, far away in Finland. From your first and most cherished grandson, this work is dedicated to you, bringing your poem to life and manifesting your love for our grandmother. Rest in peace.

Robim lutf aylab ön sakkizimda,  
Taqdirim qöshilgan malagim, parim.  
Könglimdi quvonchi, orzu armonim,  
Barakam, boyligim, oltinim, zarim.

Özng chora ayla, dilim betoqat,  
Ayla karamingla oxirim obod.  
Ög'il-qiz, nevara, doim aylab yod,  
Duolar qilsinlar ruhim etib shod.

Meni tashlab ketding, yolg'iz qoldim men  
Men endi yolg'iz.  
Sultonim, yoningga meni olib ket.  
Men endi yolg'iz.

(Mustanov, 2020, p. 61-66)

In mercy, O God, my destiny shaped,  
In my twenties, my fate embraced.  
My heart's a garden, dreams in tune,  
My blessings, my stature, my gold and boon.

Be the guide of my heart, purify my soul,  
To Your grace, I surrender, my ultimate goal.  
Sons and daughters, a perennial prayer,  
May they supplicate, seek Your mercy with care.

You left me, I remain alone and apart,  
I am alone now, severed is the heart.  
My Queen, take me towards Your light,  
I am alone now, in the quiet of the night.

(Khalimzoda and OpenAI, 2023, p. 61-66)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey has been marked by intellectual exploration, research challenges, and moments of learning. As I reflect on the completion of this dissertation, I am humbled and grateful for the (physical and spiritual) support and contributions that have shaped this scholarly endeavor. First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Marko Siitonen, whose guidance, expertise, and unwavering support have been instrumental in steering this research towards fruition. Your insightful feedback, suggestions, and encouragement have been invaluable throughout this journey.

I want to express my appreciation to my seniors, colleagues, and peers Margarethe Olbertz-Siitonen, Malgorzata Lahti, Mélodie Sommier, Maria Sharapan, Shomaila Sadaf, Elvis Nshom, Yusuf Shaymardanov, Margareta Salonen, who provided intellectual camaraderie and stimulating discussions. Your diverse perspectives and shared enthusiasm have been a source of great support.

My mentors in Latvia, who invested their time in helping me in this journey, namely, Liesma Ose, Māra Vidnere, Ainārs Dimants, Maria Golubeva, Laura Bužinska, and others, I extend my thanks.

Special thanks are due to the participants of this study, whose willingness to share their experiences and perspectives has been the bedrock of this research. Your voices have illuminated the intricate interplay of media engagement, language, and acculturation. I am grateful to the academic community at the University of Jyväskylä for providing a conducive environment for research and intellectual growth. The department's resources and support offered have been instrumental in the completion of this dissertation.

My heartfelt thanks go to my family for their unwavering support, understanding, and encouragement throughout this academic journey. Especially, to my lovely wife Endžela Šuhrati. Your belief in my capabilities has been a driving force, and I am profoundly grateful for your love and encouragement. I express my deepest gratitude to my friends who provided a community, a sense of balance, and laughter during the highs and lows of this academic pursuit. Your companionship has made this journey richer and more enjoyable.

Thanks also to OpenAI's ChatGPT-3.5, which played the role of an assistant during the latest stages when I debated with it in-depth regarding the theory of science. I have also asked it to paraphrase some passages to have an idea of how I can say it in different ways. I have also asked it to translate some of my text into Finnish, which was then edited for the Finnish language text. In completing this dissertation, I recognize that it is the culmination of collective efforts, guidance, and encouragement. Each person mentioned has played a crucial role, and I extend my sincere thanks to all who have contributed to this scholarly achievement.

With gratitude,  
Jyväskylä 21.09.2023  
Ilkhom Khalimzoda



## FOREWORD

Commencing my journey with the Russian language in my youth opened doors stretching from Central Asia to Northern Europe. It not only allowed me to work in Russian but also acted as a shield from Russian-speaking troublemakers on the streets of Riga. Beyond the practical advantages of communication, being fluent in Russian immersed me in the world of Russian-language media, fostering a unique acculturation within the Russian-speaking community in Latvia. However, as I began to notice disparities between my lived experiences and the portrayals in Russian media, I found myself questioning the nature of this exposure.

My societal identity became doubly nuanced, straddling the line between self-perceived Latvians and Russians, as I identified with the Russian-speaking crowd while carrying the label of “*arzemnieki*” [foreigner]. Upon relocating to Finland, this dynamic shifted dramatically. This transformation inspired me to delve into how fellow Russian speakers’ in Latvia and Finland interact with media, their language preferences, and the extent of their connection to the places they inhabit.

Embarking on this academic journey has been a profound exploration into the intricate intersections of media engagement, language dynamics, and adaptation. As the pages of this dissertation unfold, readers are invited to scrutinize how individuals engage with media, negotiate language use, and navigate the complexities of acculturation within socio-cultural and political landscapes.

I extend an invitation to readers to join this intellectual voyage, hoping that the insights gathered from this dissertation contribute to the ongoing discourse on media engagement, language, and acculturation. May these findings serve as a catalyst for further inquiry and deepen our understanding of the intricate ways in which individuals navigate the contemporary landscapes of society, language, and media.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Theoretical Relevance of the Study

This is a comparative study of the acculturation of Russian speakers in Finland and Latvia. In particular, this study explores the role of language and news media use. The term “Russian speakers” is employed to refer to the study participants from Latvia and Finland, acknowledging the lack of consensus in existing literature that employs varied designations, such as “Russophone” (Kaprāns & Mieriņa, 2021), “Russian minority” (Renvik et al., 2020), “Russian diaspora” (Coolican, 2021; Sencerman, 2018), “immigrants” (Golova, 2020; Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2008), or “Russian speakers” (Cheskin, 2013; Kaprāns & Juzefovičs, 2020; Laitin, 1998; Pisarenko, 2006) when referring to this specific population. It is also interesting to note that the official Russian Federation documents call people within this group “Compatriots,” defined as transmitters of Russian culture and intermediaries between Russia and foreign countries (Coolican, 2021). This diversity in terminology underscores the imperative to consider the complex, evolving, politically charged, and dynamic historical context surrounding the Russian-speaking population in the regions neighboring modern-day Russia.

During my pilot data collection process, participants self-identified as “special,” “Slavic,” and “Baltic Russians,” further adding complexity to the terminology. Scholars such as Shafir (1995) have argued that Russians in the Baltics exist in a unique situation, as they are situated between migrants and ethnic minorities. Brubaker (2000) further characterized them as an “accidental diaspora,” emphasizing the formation of diaspora due to abrupt border changes. In such circumstances, the choice of terminology becomes a delicate issue. Here, I have chosen to intentionally employ the term “Russian speakers,” but I also use “diaspora” and “migrants” in recognition of the varying degrees of accuracy and to evade undue limitations. Readers are invited to take into account this

complexity and focus on the particular backgrounds of the research participants and their self-identification.

Looking at Russia's neighbors, which are often characterized by a substantial Russian-speaking population, significant challenges in social cohesion have been documented (Bela, 2013; Muiznieks, 2010; Rozenvalds & Zobena, 2014). Meanwhile, Russia has consistently expressed concern for its diaspora abroad, encouraging ties and Russian speakers' identification with Russia as their "homeland" through soft power channels, such as the media and compatriot policies. Given the evolving geopolitical landscape, especially considering the full-scale war in Ukraine that was going on at the time of writing this thesis, understanding the attachment of Russian speakers beyond Russia's borders and how such allegiance influences their relationships with their countries of residence becomes a crucial topic of research (Birka, 2016). In such situations, context plays a pivotal role in shaping the acculturation process and underscores the dynamic interactions between migration/minority studies and intercultural/interethnic relations. Interrogating these dynamic interactions adds nuance to the current circumstances and allows the identification of factors that either facilitate or hinder the acculturation process. The primary aim of this study was to delve into specific aspects, such as media engagement and language use and preferences, within the acculturation framework. Although it acknowledges the roles played by policies, host attitudes, and discrimination, this dissertation focuses on specific aspects, leaving other dimensions to be explored in further studies. Extended descriptions of the study's context are offered in subsequent chapters.

As a phenomenon, acculturation reflects how people adapt to their changing cultural environments and situations. These changes and people's reactions to them are especially evident in relation to migration and in the case of diasporas. In this study, I was interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the dynamics surrounding Russian speakers' acculturation, primarily for two reasons. First, I was interested in comparing the "accidental diaspora" (Brubaker, 2000) of Russian speakers in the Latvian case, where borders have moved over the people, and the more traditional diaspora in the Finnish case, where people have moved over the border. Second, I am interested in the complexities of contemporary societies in terms of language and news media choices that are prone to hike tensions. Such tensions have been especially prevalent and interesting between Russia and the rest of Europe, as evidenced by the cases of Latvia and Finland.

Although the role of communication (and media) in acculturation was already recognized half a century ago as a primary vehicle through which migrated people may engage with their new environment (Gudykunst, 2001; Kim, 1977; Tan, 1983), the picture nowadays has increased in complexity due to the possibilities of mass and digital communication in facilitating or hindering the process of adaptation (Kim, 2008). This is especially true given the fact that media use has become so fluid and transnational (Torkington et al., 2020), as users can tap into media content published by various types of hybrid media

(Chadwick, 2013), despite being in different geographical and linguistic areas (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Golova, 2020; Toivanen et al., 2021). Studies on acculturation have also identified a strong relationship between language proficiency and acculturation (Grigorjev & Berry, 2017; Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2008; Pisarenko, 2006). However, the increasing need to know the local language to access better opportunities in the country of residence, the use of information and communication technologies, and the evolving significance of different *lingua francas*, such as business and administrative English (Balič, 2016; House, 2003), continue to challenge our understanding of how immigrants may relate to and deal with language-related questions. This development has highlighted the need to understand current acculturation processes, especially in bilingual or multilingual countries where English is not one of the official languages.

Russian speakers' acculturation has been studied in the EU, such as in Finland (Renvik et al., 2020), the Baltics (Kaprāns & Juzefovičs, 2020; Muižnieks, 2011; Pisarenko, 2006), Belgium (Grigoryev & Berry, 2017), Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands (Hedegaard & Bekhuis, 2018). However, comparative studies investigating topics such as Russian speakers' language use and preferences, news media choices, and acculturation are scarce. This study contributes to this research area by comparatively analyzing the situations in Latvia and Finland. Specifically, this study aims to describe and understand the relationship between news media and acculturation, as well as language and acculturation. By carrying out this investigation using a quantitative approach, I aim to contribute to a broader understanding of the practices and trends among linguistic minorities, especially in countries where minorities' actual or imagined countries of origin and destination are embroiled in strained political relationships that have consequences for everyday life.

Investigating Russian speakers' acculturation through their news media engagement and language use necessitates a thorough understanding of the historical presence and development of Russian-language media in conjunction with the development of diasporas in Latvia and Finland. Therefore, the first research question of my study is as follows:

RQ1) What are the similarities and differences between Russian-language news media and diasporas in Finland and Latvia?

I not only compare but also attempt to demonstrate how to write the history of the Russian-language media and diasporas, beginning with the historical Russian conquest of modern-day Latvia (1710) and Finland (1809), followed by Soviet-era (1940–1990) trajectories, and ending with the post-Soviet transformation (1991–2021). This study emphasizes the predominant interconnectedness of migration and communication studies. By bringing the existing literature written in multiple languages into dialogue, I present the similarities and differences between the cases. After exploring the historical

background of Russian-language media and diasporas, I move on to the following research questions:

RQ2) How do Russian speakers' self-reported news media use relate to their acculturation?

RQ3) How do Russian speakers' self-reported language proficiency and use relate to their acculturation?

To answer these research questions, I operationalize (analyze)<sup>1</sup> acculturation as *cultural involvement* (CI) and *cultural preference* (CP) in the origin/destination countries, adopting a model proposed by Carlson and Güler (2018).<sup>2</sup> These CI and CP dimensions combine Berry's four-category typology with Szapocznik et al.'s (1980) approach. Specifically, the CI dimension links two of the four outcomes found in Berry's categorical method (marginalization versus integration). The CP dimension links the other two outcomes (separation versus assimilation). Each of these measurements maintains the continuous scalar features of the origin and destination country scales.

To answer the second and third research questions, I draw on quantitative survey data collected from Latvia and Finland (N = 224). To give a bit of introductory insight into the participants of this study, 54% of them were born in Latvia, in the case of Latvia. Meanwhile, all participants in the Finnish sample were born outside of Finland. Partly due to this difference, overall, the Latvian participants had lived in Latvia longer ( $M = 28.8$ ,  $SD = 17.5$ ) than the Finnish respondents in Finland ( $M = 12.1$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ). The Latvian sample featured 65 respondents with Latvian citizenship, 6 with Latvian non-citizen status, and 19 with Russian citizenship. In the Finnish sample, 61 had Russian citizenship, 48 had dual citizenship (Russian and Finnish), 11 had Finnish citizenship, and 5 had Estonian citizenship. In total, 87% of the respondents reported having Russian ethnicity.<sup>3</sup>

My analysis shows that the majority of the respondents reported predominantly engaging with non-Russian news media sources and having average CI and CP scores, which means that their orientation was close to integration. However, regardless of societal context, respondents who engaged more with Russian news media sources also scored higher on CP (separation). I also found a correlation between Russian speakers' everyday language use and their level of acculturation. The results showed that in the Finnish context, the Finnish language was reported to be the main language used in communication for most of the participants, whereas in the Latvian sample, participants predominantly reported using Russian outside of their homes. The amount of English use was also relatively high. A detailed explanation of the findings and

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<sup>1</sup> To put into operation, action, or use; implement.

<sup>2</sup> Two measures that each incorporate information from the origin and destination scales. One of these is based on the sum of the two scales (labeled "cultural involvement"). The other is based on the difference between the two scales (labeled "cultural preference").

<sup>3</sup> This was a multiple-choice question with an open field that allowed a respondent to state other preferences.



overall evaluations are offered in the individual research papers, as well as in the discussion section of this dissertation.

This study reveals the latest understanding of the relationship between acculturation and language and news media use among Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland, from the viewpoint of the immigrants themselves. It also elucidates which types of news sources are used most often by the participants and whether and how news media consumption relates to the CI and CP of the participants.

## 1.2 The Societal Relevance of the Topic

At the time of this thesis's writing in the 2020s, Latvia and Finland were neighboring countries to Russia. However, both countries were a part of the Russian Empire at one point in their histories. Both countries gained independence from the Russian Empire after World War I. After a brief period of independence, as an outcome of World War II, Latvia was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Finland lost some of its territories to the Soviet Union but maintained its independence. As a result of these historical circumstances, significant Russian-speaking populations emerged in Finland and Latvia. Latvia regained its independence in 1991. In the post-Soviet era, the status of Russian speakers in Finland changed, although this was more so the case in Latvia. Since the 1990s, the Latvian government has gradually implemented policies aimed at promoting the widespread usage of only one state language (Latvian) in public spheres, thereby causing the Russian language and media to lose power. This development has led to heightened public tensions between Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking communities (Schmid, 2007). In Finland, challenges stemming from strained interethnic relations are also present, particularly for Russian speakers who often view themselves as a non-privileged group and may feel the need to hide their identity to fit into Finnish society (Viimaranta, 2019). This situation can be especially difficult for young people who speak both Finnish and Russian, as studies have shown that having a Russian heritage can be both an asset and a burden for them (Lähteenmäki & Vanhala-Aniszewski, 2012). These and other complexities around interethnic relations stemming from the history of Russian speakers in contemporary Latvia and Finland highlight the delicacy of acculturative patterns in both countries.

As of 2023, ethnic Russians make up 23.7% of the total population of Latvia, which equates to around 445,612 people (Official Statistics of Latvia, 2023).<sup>4</sup> In Finland, statistical information on ethnicity was not collected, but the first language was. According to Statistics Finland, 112,662 Russian-speaking people

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the term "ethnic Russian" refers to people who identify as Russian, regardless of their citizenship or legal status in Latvia.

lived in Finland<sup>5</sup> in 2021 (Official Statistics Finland, 2021). This amounted to roughly 2% of the total population. The minority status of the Russian language and the large number of speakers in these countries make language use and its impact on acculturation an important question for both countries. Studies have pointed to the low “rootedness” of Russian speakers in Latvia (Pisarenko, 2006) and the existence of parallel realities that often contradict one another within society (Manaev, 2013). Therefore, it is no surprise that the role of Russian-language media in the acculturation experiences of Russian speakers in the age of conflicting media landscapes is becoming increasingly important. Liebkind (2001) found that exposure to mainstream media can help facilitate the acculturation process by providing a window into the host society’s norms and values. However, other studies (Croucher & Kramer, 2017) have argued that exposure to ethnic media can serve as a way to maintain cultural identity and mitigate the stress associated with the acculturation process. As a further development, recent studies by Davydova-Minguet et al. (2019) and Sotkasiira (2017) found that some Russian speakers in Finland expressed being “burned out” from being in between the two information camps. In Latvia, for example, Kozlovs (2020) asserted that a large number of Russian-language media contain disinformation (Kozlovs, 2020) and divisive content, especially about politics and international affairs (Rislakki, 2014). This often results in a steadily selective portrayal of Latvia and the EU (Zakem et al., 2018).

The subject of immigrant acculturation remains a topic of interest for scholars, policymakers, and communities interested in promoting social cohesion and inclusive policies. Some scholars have argued that acculturation (in the case of assimilation) can lead to the loss of cultural identity and traditions, thus eroding the uniqueness of cultural heritage (Phinney, 2005). Others have contended that acculturation (in the case of integration) can lead to positive changes, such as increased intercultural understanding and improved socioeconomic outcomes (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; Rudmin, 2003). These debates have generated interest in the topic and spurred research into the complex and multifaceted nature of acculturation (Liebkind, 2001; Sam & Berry, 2010).

### **1.3 The Composition of the Dissertation**

This dissertation comprises six chapters and three journal articles. The introduction established a thorough understanding by discussing the theoretical and societal significance of the topic. Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive overview of the research context, particularly emphasizing its relevance. Chapter 3 examines the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the work, addressing

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<sup>5</sup> This number includes not only people who speak Russian as their native language but also those who have learned Russian as a second language or have other language backgrounds but use Russian as their primary language of communication.

criticisms and providing insights into the research framework's operationalization. Chapter 4 details the methodology, outlining the decisions made during data collection, the analysis, the interpretation of the data, and the research design. Chapter 5 presents the main findings and assesses the journal articles. The final chapter (Chapter 6) discusses the findings, provides an overall evaluation, offers conclusions, and discusses the implications of the study.

## 2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### 2.1 Rationale for the Extended Context

Significant changes have occurred since Russian speakers first appeared in Finland and Latvia. Although these countries were once under the rule of the Russian Empire (and the Soviet Union in the Latvian case from 1940 to 1991), Latvia and Finland are now independent countries where the Russian language is not a state language. Even though Russian speakers are part of society and the countries, this group is characterized by certain distinctions in terms of identity, language, social and legal status, and religion (Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021; Apine & Volkov, 2007). These distinctions exist both in the sociocultural, legal, and societal realities and in the Russian speakers' self-identification. Although these features may unite to create a diaspora or subcommunities, they are also targets of stereotypes, prejudice, perceived threats, tensions, and even conflicts in extreme cases (Apine & Volkov, 2007). These dynamics of power, language, and domestically and geopolitically strained relationships are common worldwide and not unique to Russian speakers or limited to Latvia and Finland. From this perspective, acculturation may play a vital role in reducing tensions and enabling a more cohesive multicultural, multilingual society to function. Against this backdrop, I investigated the history of the Russian diaspora and Russian-language media in my first dissertation article to better understand the dynamics present today. The media is an essential domain of acculturation and plays an institutional role as a reflection of reality and in creating reality (Berry, 1997). The press, media, news, and entertainment are also a part and a perpetuation of a language—in this case, Russian (Berry, 1997; Cottle, 2014). This study connects historical trajectories to present dynamics and adds to current knowledge.

There is an urgent need to explore and compare the development of Russian-language media and the Russian diaspora in Latvia and Finland, as no

such study currently exists in the literature. Previous studies have dealt with the Latvian case (Dzenovska, 2016) and the Finnish case separately and in response to different questions at different times (Georgiou, 2003; Keinonen, 2012; Mikhaïlov, 2003; Sotkasiira, 2017). Furthermore, previous studies on this matter are fragmented and exist in different languages, including Russian, Latvian, Finnish, and English (Dzenovska, 2016). To address this gap in the literature, this study not only investigates the historical trajectories of Russian speakers but also demonstrates how to study Russian-language media and diasporas in Latvia and Finland (Khalimzoda, 2023). The upcoming chapter describes the early contact between Russia, Latvia, and Finland and how the presence of Russian speakers and related media have evolved to the present day.

## **2.2 An Exploration into the History of Russian-Language Media and Diasporas in Latvia and Finland**

Russia viewed the Baltic Sea's eastern coastlines as a path into Europe, which led to the conquest of Riga in 1710 (Bikovs et al., 2018). Almost a century later, in 1816, the first Russian-language news outlet in Latvia was established. In the late 19th century, Russification policies were implemented to decrease the dominance of the German and Latvian languages in administration, courts, and education, eventually leading to the prohibition of the Latvian language in public spheres, particularly schools. The 1905 Russian Revolution led to discussions of an independent Latvian state spearheaded by social and national groups in reaction to political and economic pressures from German and Russian forces (Spekke et al., 2019). The spread of mass media was essential to these political transformations. Latvia declared its independence from the Russian Empire in 1918, and during its independence from 1918 to 1940, among all the minorities, the Russian speakers remained the most significant, with more than 70 Russian-language newspapers and 80 Russian-language magazines published in Latvia in the 1920s and 1930s. These publications were mainly concerned with the fate of their homeland (Khalimzoda, 2023).

The Finnish War was a conflict between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Russian Empire from February 1808 to September 1809 (almost a century after the Russian Empire conquered Latvia). As a result, Finland was added to the Russian Empire as the Grand Principality of Finland from 1809 to 1917. During the 19th century, both Latvia and Finland were a part of the Russian Empire, making this their first historical similarity. Russian-language media are not known to have existed in Finland before the Finnish War. Instead, the Swedish language dominated the media. After the Russian Empire won the war against the Swedish Kingdom, a Russian-language press emerged in Finland. It focused primarily on military affairs, military settlements, and religion (Viimaranta & Protassova, 2018), with the first publication appearing in *Åbo Tidningar* in July 1808. Throughout the 19th century, media in Finland operated mostly in Swedish

or Russian, with Finnish-language media emerging slowly. Finland broke away from the Russian empire and declared its independence on December 6, 1917. Soon after, Latvia followed suit after the Latvian War of Independence.

Throughout the 20th century, Latvia and Finland continued to have various interactions with Russia. In 1940, Latvia was incorporated into the Soviet Union as the 15th Republic, a relationship that lasted 51 years. During this time, the percentage of Russian speakers in Latvia increased from 8.8% in 1935 to 34.0% in 1989. The media industry in Latvia developed, with the media presenting a liberal and national stance by the end of the 1980s. The Popular Latvian Front emerged in 1988 and won the 1990 elections, leading to a declaration of independence in May 1990. After failed Soviet attempts to reinstate the previous situation, Latvia declared its independence following the failed Moscow coup (Spekke et al., 2019).

Finland experienced an increase in Russian emigrants following its independence in 1917. Many Russian-language media publications were created by Russian revolutionaries-turned-refugees, and these publications were preoccupied with the fate of their Russian homeland. Helsinki was the primary destination for Russian immigration after World War I. The postwar period saw the reboot of the small Russian community that remained in Finland, which established a cultural organization that later made Russian-language publications an important initiative. The Russian community also established organizations, such as the Russian Theatre and the Union of Russian Artists in the 1950s. After the beginning of regular television transmissions in 1956, the Russian Cultural Democratic Union played an important role in coordinating collective efforts to create Russian-language content (Kauranen & Tuori, 2000; Keinonen, 2012). Both the United States and the Soviet Union were highly interested in television developments in Finland during the Cold War, as television was viewed as a potential medium for spreading ideology. Therefore, early commercial television in Finland was a site for balancing “the East” and “the West” (Keinonen, 2012).

### **2.3 Changes in the Situations Surrounding Russian Speakers and Their Media after 1991**

After regaining its independence in 1991, Latvia did not automatically award citizenship to those who arrived in Soviet Latvia between June 1940 and 1991. This decision naturally affected many Russian speakers. Non-citizens were automatically granted permanent residency, which provided them with nearly the same privileges as citizens, with the exception of participating in elections. However, citizenship was only available through a naturalization procedure requiring a particular degree of Latvian language and historical knowledge (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia [MFA], 2023). Russian-language media, like the Russian diaspora, lost significant status, resources, and

orientation but quickly tried to unify the Russian-language media throughout the Baltic states (Shnaider, 2018).

In recent decades, for Russian speakers in the Baltic nations, belonging to a Russian-speaking community has emerged as one of the most significant identities and markers of identity (Cheskin, 2013). The Russian-speaking diaspora, formed accidentally following the tremendous political changes that resulted in the movement of borders across the Russian people, has its own scars and collective memories. The perceived political discrimination of the Russian diaspora is related to its non-integration into Latvian society (Pisarenko, 2006). Delving into ethnic identity and intergroup relations, it has been proposed that the perceived superiority among ethnonational minority groups in autonomous republics of the Russian Federation was one of the major predictors of perceived intergroup conflict (Minescu & Poppe, 2011). Tense interethnic relations in Latvia might also have been sparked by the combination of at least two conditions: the turning into an accidental diaspora and perceived ethnic superiority. In their study in the Finnish context, Mahonen et al. (2014) found that the perceived superiority of Russian migrants was a predictor of more negative sentiments against the country's national majority.

In addition, Russia's long-lasting rhetoric and state policy of "protecting" Russian speakers abroad further exacerbated the situation (Kallas, 2016). Therefore, a parallel society based mainly on linguistic and informational separation grew over time. Studies of media discourse in Latvia have found a clear distinction in the structure and content of Latvian and Russian-language media, which have a substantial impact on group identities (Cheskin, 2013; Rožukalne, 2010).

In Finland, the situation has not been as acute as that in Latvia, most likely due to the retained independence from the Soviet Union, which did not lead to a similar drastic increase in Russian speakers as in the Latvian case. Only 4181 people emigrated from the Soviet Union to Finland in 1990 (Niemi, 2007). Aside from these people, Finnish Russians who descended from "Old Russians" who stayed or came to Finland in its early independence are also part of this diasporic group. The third group of Russian speakers is the Ingrian Finns, who returned to Finland immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 2020, Russian speakers amounted to approximately 87,000, the majority of whom moved from the former Soviet Union and later from Russia (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016). According to Brubaker (2000) and Voronova et al. (2019), Russian speakers in Finland constitute a classical diaspora because the majority of Finland's current Russian-speaking population is composed of individuals who moved from the former Soviet Union as a result of immigration that began in the 1990s. These people passed borders, in contrast to the majority of the Russian speakers in Latvia on whom the borders moved. In terms of Russian speakers' media activities, Russian was the only minority language on Finnish broadcast radio in the early 2000s (Kauranen & Tuori, 2000).

Given the context of Russian speakers in these two countries which was also elaborated in more details in the first article of this dissertation (Khalimzoda,

2023), I would also like to elaborate on the participants of the study in detail. This study appears to focus mostly on people who reported being ethnically Russian, except for a very small number of respondents indicating being Belarusian or Jewish. In the Finnish case, for example, all respondents came from abroad, specifically Russia. In the Latvian case, more than half of the participants came from abroad, specifically Russia, while others were born in Latvia. This latter condition led me to not use the term “Russian migrants,” all over, as there are several “Russian speakers of other origins” in this study. I avoided calling the respondents “ethnic Russians,” as not all respondents reported to be 100% Russian in ethnicity; it was rather 87%. This led me to use the generic term “Russian speaker” to holistically cover every single respondent in this study. However, it is also evident that this study is mostly about the ethnic Russians in Latvia and Finland.

## **2.4 Mapping Out the State of Russian-Language Mass Media in Finland and Latvia in the 2000s and 2020s**

The categorization of accessible Russian-language media actors in Latvia and Finland is necessary to facilitate a better understanding of the complex media landscape in both countries. The Russian-language media landscape means the collection of all media outlets, including all varieties and types, whether state, private, or public, and the retransmission of Russian TV channels via telecommunication networks. There are also foreign media actors (not based in Latvia or Finland) that focus on specific audiences in these countries. This has attracted attention to the role of the media in promoting Russian foreign policy and increasing the visibility of “Russia’s official point of view” as it is presented to foreign audiences (Zakem et al., 2018).

In analyzing the media landscape in Latvia and Finland, three categories of Russian-language media emerge: (1) public broadcasting services where the material/content is produced in Latvia/Finland as a unique production or as content translated from the national language to Russian; (2) private media outlets within the country; and (3) foreign media outlets with a significant focus on Latvia/Finland and directly retransmitted TV channels from Russia (in the case of Latvia). Besides these, I also complement each media outlet investigated with additional information.



TABLE 1 Russian-Language Finnish Public Broadcasting Services

Name	Information
<p>YLE Novosti (TV)  <a href="https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/novosti/">https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/novosti/</a></p>	<p>This is a Russian-language television news program launched in 2013 by the public broadcasting service YLE. It screens five-minute news updates that are broadcast at 4:50 p.m. every day. “The aim is to keep Russian speakers up to date about things going on in Finland and bring out the Finnish perspective, especially on issues of conflict between Russia and Finland,” said Katja Liukkonen in her email response in June 2020.</p>
<p>YLE Novosti  <a href="http://yle.fi/uutiset/novosti/">http://yle.fi/uutiset/novosti/</a></p>	<p>YLE’s Russian-language page on the internet presents the information broadcast on TV. Translated articles from the Finnish YLE and their own stories in Russian appear as well.</p>

TABLE 2 Russian-Language Finnish Private Media Actors

Name	Information
<p><i>Novye Rubezh</i> [New Horizons]  <a href="http://www.newhorizons.fi/">http://www.newhorizons.fi/</a></p>	<p><i>Novye Rubezh</i> (published by Ostromedia Oy), earlier called Rubezh, is a magazine published six times a year. It aims to reach audiences not only in Finland but also in Scandinavia, Russia, and the Baltic states. They have declared that “Novye Rubezhi is a Russian-language business/lifestyle magazine which has been published since 1999 and has established itself as a readable and reliable source of information” (<a href="http://newhorizons.fi/">http://newhorizons.fi/</a>);</p>
<p><i>Spektr</i>  <a href="https://spektr.fi/#/">https://spektr.fi/#/</a></p>	<p><i>Spektr</i> (published by Spektr Kustannus Oy) is a tabloid newspaper published 10 times a year with a circulation of 20,000. The paper contains news and information about social matters in Finland. According to Davydova-Minguet et al. (2016), Spektr had a circulation of 17,000 to 25,000 copies per year. It has about 500 private and a dozen package subscribers. Spektr’s declared goal was to promote the integration of Finnish Russian speakers into Finnish society. It had ended its operations by the end of 2020.</p>
<p><i>Mosaiikki</i>  <a href="http://mosaiikki.info/">http://mosaiikki.info/</a></p>	<p><i>Mosaiikki</i> was registered as an association in Jyvaskyla in 2003. Producing a magazine is just one of the many activities of the association. Mosaic magazine is published both in paper form and online.</p>

*continues*

TABLE 2 continues

Name	Information
<p><i>Pietarin Kauppatie</i> or <i>Torgovyj Put</i>  <a href="http://www.kauppatie.fi/index.html">http://www.kauppatie.fi/index.html</a></p>	<p><i>Pietarin Kauppatie</i> is a monthly magazine aimed at audiences in Russia, as well as at Finnish advertisers. On their homepage, they say the magazine is “designed to promote the development of trade and economic relations between Finland and Russia.” As a result of the current sanctions imposed in relation to the war in Ukraine, the magazine has paused its publication but provides news online.  <a href="http://www.torgovyiput.fi/">http://www.torgovyiput.fi/</a></p>
<p><i>Russian Hour</i>,  Lähiradio  <a href="http://www.kansanradioliitto.fi/ohjelmakartta">http://www.kansanradioliitto.fi/ohjelmakartta</a></p>	<p><i>Russian Hour</i> is a weekly one-hour online radio program in the Russian language on public/community radio – Lähiradio. It streams news about Russia, Finland, and the rest of the world.  <a href="http://www.kansanradioliitto.fi/ohjelmat.php?id=90">http://www.kansanradioliitto.fi/ohjelmat.php?id=90</a></p>
<p><i>YstäväTV</i> [Friend TV]  <a href="https://www.ytvfinland.fi/">https://www.ytvfinland.fi/</a></p> <p><i>Razum Show</i>  <a href="https://finestfm.fi/">https://finestfm.fi/</a></p>	<p><i>YstäväTV</i> and <i>Razum Show</i> [Mind Show] radio (run by YTV Oy) are news webpage publishers and online TV broadcasters launched in 2019. On the webpage, they emphasize the following about their endeavor: “A new television channel in the Russian language about life in Finland. To engage Finnish audiences, the channel features Finnish subtitles” (<a href="https://www.ytvfinland.fi/">https://www.ytvfinland.fi/</a>). As of April 2023, the website has not been reachable, and the company register shows losses in the balance. The programs might have been discontinued.  <a href="https://www.asiakastieto.fi/yritykset/fi/ytv-oy/29792355/yleiskuva">https://www.asiakastieto.fi/yritykset/fi/ytv-oy/29792355/yleiskuva</a></p> <p>The <i>Razum Show</i> radio broadcast is currently broadcast in the Uusimaa region (98.5 MHz) in Kanta-Häme, Hyvinkää (94, 4 MHz), and online at <a href="https://finestfm.fi/">finestfm.fi</a>.</p>

TABLE 3 Other Russian Media Actors (Abroad) with a Significant Focus on Finland

<p><i>Sputnik</i>  <a href="https://sputniknews.com/search/?query=finland">https://sputniknews.com/search/?query=finland</a> &amp;  sputniknews.ru</p>	<p><i>Sputnik</i>, together with RIA Novosti, makes up part of the state-run media conglomerate Rossiya Segodnya. It has published thousands of articles on Finland in Russian.</p>
<p><i>Fontanka</i>  <a href="https://www.fontanka.ru/fontanka_fi/">https://www.fontanka.ru/fontanka_fi/</a></p>	<p>Started in 2011, this private, cross-border internet publication combines the knowledge and networks of Russia and Finland. It is under the aegis of Fontanka.ru, a Russian company based in St. Petersburg that specializes in urban life and politics.</p>
<p><i>RIA Novosti</i>  <a href="https://ria.ru/location_Finland/">https://ria.ru/location_Finland/</a></p>	<p><i>Ria Novosti</i>, together with Sputnik above, has also focused on Finland, though it addresses mostly NATO-related issues.</p>
<p>Yandex  <a href="https://yandex.ru/news/region/Finland">https://yandex.ru/news/region/Finland</a></p>	<p>The Russian search engine Yandex presents a wide variety of pro-Russian news sources about Finland for its wide array of users in Russia. It is also accessible beyond Russia.</p>
<p><i>Rossiyskaya Gazeta</i>  RG.RU  <a href="https://rg.ru/tema/mir/Evropa/finlyandiya/">https://rg.ru/tema/mir/Evropa/finlyandiya/</a></p>	<p>This newspaper includes the topic of Finland on its homepage, and at least several articles about Finland are published per month.</p>
<p><i>Novosti</i>  <a href="https://novosti.fi/">https://novosti.fi/</a></p>	<p>This web page plays the role of a news aggregator while not a mass media content producer itself. It mixes news links from different providers, such as YLE and InoSmi.</p>
<p><i>Russia Today (RT)</i>  <a href="https://russian.rt.com/tag/finlyandiya">https://russian.rt.com/tag/finlyandiya</a></p>	<p>A worldwide, well-known media source that publishes 4–6 articles per month on Finland.</p>

TABLE 4 Russian-Language Latvian Public Broadcasting Services

Name	Information
Latvijas Televizija 7	Latvian Television Channel 7 (LTV7) broadcasts 25% of its programming in the Russian language.
Latvijas Radio 4	Radio Latvia 4 operates fully in the Russian language to inform and engage all Russian-speaking populations.
<i>Latvijas sabiedriskais medijs (LSM)</i>	<p>Latvian Public Broadcasting - <i>Lsm.lv</i> is a news portal that was launched in 2013 by combining Latvian Television and Radio Latvia into one common platform, which is available in Latvian, Russian, and English.</p> <p>Note: The aforementioned media services will cease operation from 2026 to create a “unified information space,” said in the recent report: Eng.LSM.lv</p>

TABLE 5 Russian-Language Latvian Private Media Actors

Name	Information
<i>Spektr</i> <a href="https://spektr.presses">https://spektr.presses</a>	This newly established news portal in Latvia focuses primary on events in Russia, though it discusses events around the world.
<i>Meduza</i> <a href="https://meduza.io/pages/contacts">https://meduza.io/pages/contacts</a>	This international Russian-language news portal provides daily information about Russia and the world. Meduza was established in Riga in 2014 by journalists who were exiled from Russia after being dismissed from Lenta.ru in 2013.
<i>DELFI</i> <a href="https://rus.delfi.lv/">https://rus.delfi.lv/</a>	<i>Delfi.lv</i> is a major media organization in the Baltics. Since 2007, it has belonged to the Estonian company Ekspress Grupp. It operates under a single name in the three Baltic states. On its page for the Latvian audience, it offers news in Latvian and Russian. The Russian version was launched in 2000 and receives 300,000 visits every month.

*continues*

TABLE 5 continues

Name	Information
<p><i>Pervij Baltijskij Kanal</i> [First Baltic Channel] (PBK) <a href="http://www.1tv.lv/">http://www.1tv.lv/</a></p> <p><i>MK Latvija</i> <a href="https://www.mklatv.lv/about.html">https://www.mklatv.lv/about.html</a></p> <p><i>Pervij Baltijskij Muzikalnij Kanal</i> [First Baltic Music Channel]</p>	<p>The PBK was the third-largest commercial TV channel in Latvia operating in the Russian language, though it has been accused of disinformation. It is often associated with the First Channel in Russia. The National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) revoked its license, and in 2023, the website was not reachable, though the court appeal continues.</p> <p>The PBK's owner (Baltic-Russian media tycoon) was found guilty of breaching sanctions (<a href="https://en.rebaltica.lv/2022/02/court-finds-baltic-russian-media-tycoon-guilty-for-breaching-sanctions-against-russia/">https://en.rebaltica.lv/2022/02/court-finds-baltic-russian-media-tycoon-guilty-for-breaching-sanctions-against-russia/</a>).</p> <p><i>MK Latvija</i>, first published in 2003, is a Russian weekly newspaper. It tops the rankings as the most read periodical. It also owns Телепрограмма «Телевизор» - [TV program - Televizor], which is still in operation.</p> <p>This is a former all-Baltic music channel. The channel broadcasted modern popular foreign and Russian music. The channel stopped broadcasting in November 2017.</p>
<p><i>Mixnews</i> <i>Radio Baltcom</i> <i>Radio Mix FM</i> <i>Radio Yumor</i> <i>Radio Lounge FM</i></p>	<p><i>Mix Media Group</i> consists of four radio channels and an internet news portal started in 2008. It is an active combination of a news provider and a radio broadcaster. On its homepage, it states, "It has gained a serious reputation for news and media analysis" (<a href="https://mixnews.lv/">https://mixnews.lv/</a>).</p>
<p><i>Vesti Segodnya</i> [News Today] <a href="https://press.lv/catt/vesti">https://press.lv/catt/vesti</a></p> <p><i>Biznes &amp; Baltiya</i> [Business &amp; Baltics] <i>Lyublyu</i> [Love] <i>VIP LOUNGE</i></p>	<p><i>Vesti Segodnya</i>, a daily newspaper, claims to be the only Russian-language daily in the EU. In 2017, its name was changed to Segodnya [Today]. The unprofitable Segodnya has a façade owner, a 23-year-old living in Ukraine, while the actual owner is alleged to be a former member of the Russian Duma, millionaire Eduard Yanakov, according to EUvsDisiNFO (2017). <a href="https://euvsdisinfo.eu/the-only-russian-language-daily-newspaper-in-the-eu/">https://euvsdisinfo.eu/the-only-russian-language-daily-newspaper-in-the-eu/</a></p> <p><i>Biznes &amp; Baltiya</i> used to be a daily newspaper, but it moved online in 2014. Both were registered in 2013 under the company Media Nams Vesti, which is owned by a Russian politician and entrepreneur's wife.</p> <p>The journals Lyublyu and VIP LOUNGE also belong to the same group.</p>

continues

TABLE 5 continues

Name	Information
<i>Subbota</i> [Saturday]	<i>Subbota</i> is a weekly Russian newspaper that launched in 1994. It writes about the Russian diaspora in Latvia: “The newspaper represents the interests of the residents of Latvia, who value Russian culture, the Russian language, Russian education, and the humanitarian values of the Russian world. The newspaper has a stable, loyal audience that has been choosing this newspaper for more than 20 years” (see <a href="https://www.abonents.lv/ru/abonementy/21-subbota.html">https://www.abonents.lv/ru/abonementy/21-subbota.html</a> ).
<i>PRESS</i> <a href="https://press.lv/">https://press.lv/</a>	<i>Press.lv</i> is an Internet news portal in the Russian language founded in 2016. The portal unites the content of the weeklies <i>Latvijskij Vesti</i> [ <i>Latvian News</i> ], <i>7 Super Sekretov</i> [ <i>7 Super Secrets</i> ], and <i>Subbota</i> .
<i>Baltijas Balss</i> (BB) <a href="https://bb.lv/">https://bb.lv/</a>	Since 2019, BB has been the new name of <i>vesti.lv</i> . Both the old and new brands have been criticized for spreading propaganda and providing incorrect content in some of their articles. According to the old <i>vesti.lv</i> website, the brand belongs to Media Nams Vesti, which also owns the daily <i>Segodnya</i> in Latvia.
<i>Baltic Course</i> <a href="http://www.baltic-course.">http://www.baltic-course.</a>	The printed version of the <i>Baltic Course</i> has been available since 1996. After 2007, it became an online news magazine. It mostly features content about the business world.
<i>Grani</i> <a href="http://www.grani.lv">http://www.grani.lv</a>	<i>Grani.lv</i> is a news website owned by Mediastrims Ltd. No information could be found regarding their aims or owners. In 2023, it was seemingly inactive, as no new content had been published recently.
<i>Chayka</i> [Gull] <a href="https://chayka.lv/">https://chayka.lv/</a>	The relatively recently launched news portal <i>Chayka</i> based in Daugavpils city (Latvia’s second-largest) aims to foster responsible, diverse, and high-quality journalism at the Latvian national and regional level.
<i>RU FM</i>  <i>Radio Pik</i>  <i>TOP Radio</i>  <i>Alise Plus</i>  <i>Ef-Ei</i>	<i>RU FM</i> is owned by Autoradio Riga Ltd. and is available in the cities of Riga, Kraslava, and Daugavpils, offering music and entertainment. <i>Pik 100 FM</i> is owned by Pikal un Partneri Ltd. and is available in the city of Riga. Alongside music, it also offers news in Russian. <i>TOP radio</i> is one of the most widely available nationwide music and entertainment radio stations and is owned by the “Radio Enterprise” broadcast, which is active in 12 cities in Latvia. It offers music in various languages. Russian-language <i>Alise plus FM</i> (101.6) is owned by Alise Plus Ltd., which operates in Daugavpils City, where ethnic Latvians are reported to make up 19.8% of the general population. <i>Ef-Ei</i> (91.4 FM) is a local radio station that operates fully in the Russian language. It is based in the city of Rezekne, Eastern Latvia, where the ethnic Russian population makes up about 43% of the total population. It is owned by Ef-Ei Ltd.

TABLE 6 Other Russian Media Actors (Abroad) with a Considerable Focus on Latvia and Directly Retransmitted TV Channels from Russia

Name	Information
<p><i>REN Baltija</i> <i>CTC Baltija</i> <i>NTV MIR Baltic</i></p>	<p>These three TV channels are adapted to the Baltic states and offered via telecommunication providers. They are governed by the Russian Federation. These TV channels are popular and widely available not only in the Baltics but also in ex-Soviet republics. By 2021, the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) excluded it from the list of programs retransmitted in Latvia, as its representative in Latvia has not been known.</p>
<p><i>PTP</i> <i>Ohotnik I ribalov</i></p>	<p>The RTR TV channel and its programming are governed by the Russian Federation. It is rebroadcast and offered via telecommunication providers in Latvia, similar to the TV channels above, and similarly excluded now, as of 2021 (see <a href="https://www.neplp.lv/en/article/neplp-excludes-16-programmes-list-programmes-retransmitted-latvia-including-ren-tv-baltic-and-ntv-mir-baltic">https://www.neplp.lv/en/article/neplp-excludes-16-programmes-list-programmes-retransmitted-latvia-including-ren-tv-baltic-and-ntv-mir-baltic</a>).</p>
<p><i>BaltNews</i> <a href="https://lv.baltnews.com/">https://lv.baltnews.com/</a></p>	<p>The owner of the site is the international information agency Russia Today, registered in Moscow. Latvia banned its domain baltnews.lv for spreading so-called disinformation. The news site then changed its domain to baltnews.com. It is also mentioned by the EUvsDisiNFO for spreading fake news (see <a href="https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?s=baltnews">https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?s=baltnews</a>).</p>
<p><i>Sputniknews</i> <a href="https://lv.sputniknews.ru/">https://lv.sputniknews.ru/</a></p>	<p>Currently banned, the once-popular Russian information agent, together with RIA Novosti, make up part of the state-run media conglomerate Rossiya Segodnya and publishes a lot on Latvia, as its Latvian language page used to do.</p>
<p><i>Lenta</i> <a href="https://lenta.ru/rubrics/ussr/baltics/">https://lenta.ru/rubrics/ussr/baltics/</a></p>	<p>An internet newspaper registered in 1999 in Moscow, Lenta targets audiences both locally and abroad. After the editor-in-chief was fired back in 2014, part of their old team quit in protest and moved from Moscow to Riga to launch a new news project called meduza.io.</p>
<p>Rubaltic <a href="https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/latvia/">https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/latvia/</a></p>	<p>This analytical portal was started in 2013 by scientists from Russia to focus on ex-Soviet countries, especially the Baltic countries, because they believe that “the world fluctuates from rolling towards a confrontation between the blocks. In this context, Baltic states are among the active lobbyists for the implementation of this scenario in the European region” (<a href="https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/latvia/">https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/latvia/</a>).</p>

Media organizations listed in the tables above were included in this study following thorough screening and analysis. Notably, some of these organizations are prone to change very rapidly. During the writing of this thesis, this list had to be constantly edited, given its changing nature. Furthermore, spreading false information or being a threat to national security caused some of the media outlets and companies, especially internationally known names, to be

condemned. In particular, the ones in the Latvian section were denounced. Latvia even passed legislation to cease funding for the public broadcasting of Russian-language content by 2026. In the following section, I provide a summary of the main conclusions regarding the Russian diaspora and the similarities and differences in Russian-language media between Latvia and Finland.

## **2.5 Conclusions on the Contextual Backgrounds of Russian Speakers and Their Media**

Throughout most of the 20th century, Latvia was under Russian rule as part of the Soviet Union. This resulted in a large population of ethnic Russians living in Latvia, many of whom moved to Latvia while the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union existed or are the descendants of these migrants. Only a small number of ethnic Russians have immigrated to Latvia in the last two to three decades. The percentage of Russians in 2023 decreased to 23.7%, compared to 34% in 1989 (MFA, 2023). Latvia had to contend with the legacy of Soviet mass media, as the concentration of Russian-language media in Latvia during the difficult period of regime change from 1991 to 2000 led to competition for the attention of the Russian-speaking audience. Russian-language media in newly independent Latvia had to restructure and unite after the collapse of the Soviet Union, serving as a voice for Russian speakers who had lost their previous status. As of 2020, there were over 30 accessible Russian-language private media outlets in Latvia, and many used outsourced material from Russian sources. It must be noted that, the National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia (NEPLP), based on the threat of systemic dissemination of fake news or aggressive war propaganda and incitement to national hatred, banned the retransmission of many Russian television channels and programs (Andersone & Sorainen, 2022). Furthermore, some of the media outlets mentioned in the tables are also among the banned.

In Finland, a large number of Russian speakers left the country during the Second World War. Currently, the majority of ethnic Russians living in Finland are those who immigrated after 1991 for work, marriage, education, or asylum. After 1991, only one border magazine operated between Finland and St. Petersburg to facilitate cross-border information flow due to increasing mobility, and the radio network Sputnik was launched in 1999. Apart from the Finnish public broadcasting network YLE Novosti, only about four locally produced Russian-language media sources exist in Finland. There are no licensed retransmissions of Russian TV channels, including cable and IPTV operators and collective antenna networks, registered with the authorization body Kopiosto in Finland. However, as presented in Table 3, some Russian television channels and programs have been retransmitted and available in Latvia for a very long time, until the extensive prohibition on February 24, 2022 (Andersone & Sorainen, 2022). A similarity between the cases is that there are currently many media actors in the third category of the tables presented above, namely private



organizations broadcasting for a Russian-speaking audience while based abroad (in Russia), the most known of them also being banned in Finland due to EU sanctions. In this regard, EUvsDisiNFO led by the EU's high representative might be valuable.

Russian-language media continues to be important in countries with Russian-speaking populations, particularly those bordering Russia. In line with the analysis presented in this chapter and the first article of this dissertation (Khalimzoda, in print), the concentration of currently available Russian-language media in Latvia was significantly higher than that in Finland. This was mainly due to the higher number of Russian speakers in Latvia, as well as the overall situation in terms of how Russian-language media has existed and developed in the country. Also in the case of the Baltic States, Russian-language media has demonstrated highly dynamic ways of moving, changing, and then reappearing with new identities and addresses, making this more likely to be a game of hide and seek.

Another essential distinction derived from the overall context is the presence of Russian speakers in these two countries. In Latvia, Russian speakers constitute a significant minority and have been living in Latvia for a long time, as they migrated to Latvia mostly during the Soviet era, given that Latvia was a subordinate state and Russian was their main language. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, these particular groups of people suddenly found themselves in a completely different political scene where the Soviet Union's borders and legal authority were no more. They were suddenly "at home" in a different country, thus creating an accidental diaspora (Brubaker, 2000; Khalimzoda, 2023; Voronova et al., 2019). In contrast, in Finland, there is a very small number of Russian speakers who date back to pre-independence (before 1917) or are post-independence ancestors (after 1917), and most of the current Russian speakers immigrated to Finland, thus creating a traditional diaspora, as they crossed borders. This situation could have had an impact on acculturation, media development, and the dynamics between minority and majority populations in both Latvia and Finland.

## 3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.1 The History of the Term “Acculturation”

When reviewing the acculturation literature, it is easy to get distracted by the vast number of definitions and terminology employed. Terms that are used in the study of acculturation and (cultural) adaptation have also been used interchangeably, depending on the time, societal context, and discipline. An in-depth understanding of acculturation requires visiting its origins, further stages of its evolution, and the current state of the art. This comparative analysis can reveal how certain paradigms have shifted, given the dynamics of the time, context, and academic practices. In brief, acculturation can be considered a process of adapting to a new sociocultural environment. It has been asserted that all individuals are encultured into a cultural milieu as children and that the primary socialization of an individual into their native culture is enculturation (Kelvin, 1970). In contact with other cultural practices, people observe, learn, and react to perceived similarities and differences.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* presents records from 1880, when the term “acculturation” was first used by J. W. Powell in the context of American Indigenous People’s (at that time, “Indians”) reaction to the presence of millions of European settlers (OED, 2021). Later on, it appeared in the works of sociologists Thomas and Znaniecki (Symmons-Symonolewicz, 1968). They utilized the term in a study of Polish immigrants in Chicago and defined three forms of acculturation: “Bohemian” (adopting the culture of the destination and abandoning their culture of origin), “Philistine” (resisting the culture of the destination but retaining their culture of origin), and “Creative” (able to accommodate the host culture while sustaining their culture of origin). Later, anthropologists Redfield et al. (1936) defined acculturation as the process of change that takes place when ethnocultural groups come into contact with one another and gain further recognition. Although such changes can take place as a

result of almost any intercultural contact, acculturation is most often studied in individuals living in countries or regions other than where they were born—that is, among immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and sojourners (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Among sociologists, a similar definition has been given to the term “assimilation.” According to Gordon (1964), one of the first definitions of assimilation was given by sociologists Park and Burgess (1921) to describe the process of fusion and interpretation in which individuals and groups, by sharing their histories and experiences, are incorporated into the majority of common cultural life. Overall, the term “assimilation” has been used more by sociologists, and the term “acculturation” more by anthropologists (Gordon, 1964) and social psychologists (Berry, 1970, 1997; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Liebkind et al., 2016). A significant point of reference in the usage of both terms has been the emphasis on and acknowledgment of the reciprocity of the acculturation or assimilation processes and that these concepts did not eliminate mutual changes in the early years of their introduction.

However, in the context of the United States, a unidirectional definition of both assimilation and acculturation also existed. For instance, Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) developed the argument that individuals who live at the juncture between two cultures can lay a claim to belonging to both cultures, either by being of mixed racial heritage or by being born in one culture and raised in a second (these should be considered marginal peoples). The common assumption, exemplified by the positions of Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935), was that living in two cultures is psychologically undesirable because managing the complexity of dual reference points generates ambiguity, identity confusion, and normlessness, which results in these groups’ marginalization. Thus, biculturalism was not considered an option by Stonequist (1935), who instead presented it as a dual pattern of identification and divided loyalty. . . [leading to] an ambivalent attitude.

Ruiz (1981) emphasized that the goal of the assimilation process is to become socially accepted by members of the target culture as a person moves through these stages. The underlying assumption of all assimilation models is that a member of one culture loses their original cultural identity as they acquire a new identity in a second culture (LaFromboise et al., 1963). Later, Milton Gordon (1964) argued that earlier definitions of assimilation as a mutual process of change had given way to a more unidirectional approach in which immigrants were expected to conform to the dominant cultural norms of the receiving society. He described this as a “melting pot” model of assimilation, in which immigrants were expected to shed their cultural identities and become indistinguishable from the majority population. This model became prevalent in the context of the United States, where the massive immigration of over 41 million people from Europe and North America, as well as to a smaller extent from Asian countries, took place. Gordon (1964) also described the theories of Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism, where the United States, as the continent-spanning nation of the present, was seen as constituting the setting allowing

people to meet. In other words, in the United States, becoming and identifying as an “American” in conjunction with being Irish, Italian, German, and many others were meant to be processes of assimilation and referred to as such. Against this trend, America’s Social Science Research Council (Acculturation, 1954) had to emphasize in a later discussion that assimilation is not only a kind of acculturation. Referring to the reciprocity and dynamism of the process, they noted, “It (acculturation) can also be reactive (triggering resistance to change in both groups), creative (stimulating new cultural forms, not found in either of the cultures in contact), and delayed (initiating changes that appear more full years later)” (Acculturation, 1954).

Despite these efforts, the meaning associated with the term “assimilation” shifted toward a unidirectional process (one way). Accordingly, acculturation has also been the subject of gradual deviation from its original meaning (as outlined earlier), becoming more synonymous with assimilation (e.g., Gordon, 1964). Still, the initial meaning has not been completely lost, and it has made comebacks now and then. It can be observed that, among others, historian John Higham also wrote about the rise of “cultural pluralism” in the United States in the 1950s, which he described as a response to the failures of earlier assimilationist (one-way) policies. Cultural pluralism recognized the value of ethnic and racial diversity and sought to promote greater tolerance and understanding among different groups.

### **3.2 Theorizing and Modeling Acculturation**

Reflecting the historical evolution of the concept of acculturation and its changing meanings, a similar trend in the theoretical frameworks used to understand acculturation can be observed. Berry (1997) supported Gordon’s (1964) view that there has been a misinterpretation of acculturation, which has led to the belief that it is synonymous with assimilation, even though assimilation is just one phase of acculturation, which has three other phases. However, it should be noted that despite the extensive literature on acculturation, related terminology and definitions are frequently used interchangeably. As for the theories from the past, LaFromboise et al. (1963) conducted an extensive study of models and theories related to acculturation available before 1963. They discussed various models, such as the second-culture acquisition, cultural competence, assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multicultural, and fusion models. Through their analysis, the authors speculated that the models are not mutually exclusive but rather all collectively assume what happens to a person who engages in intercultural communication. Furthermore, they proposed acquirable skills, such as knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, positive attitudes toward both groups, bicultural efficacy, communication ability, role repertoire, and groundedness, that can help an individual become socially competent in the destination country without losing the same competence in their country of origin. LaFromboise et al. (1963) also advertised that their model

of bicultural competence is the best way to facilitate the acquisition of skills based on the alternation model.

Berry (1997), perhaps the most prominent pioneer of acculturation research, presented an early understanding of acculturation and adaptation in 1976. According to him, the term “adaptation” refers to both the strategies utilized in the acculturation process and its results and suggests that various strategies lead to different types of adaptation. He identified three primary strategies: “adjustment,” “reaction,” and “withdrawal.” Around a decade later, Berry (1976, 1984) proposed another framework that posits four acculturation strategies: “integration,” “separation,” “assimilation,” and “marginalization.” These strategies, which have influenced acculturation research for several decades, are generated when considering two underlying issues simultaneously: cultural maintenance, contact and participation. This model proposed that the best outcome (integration) is likely to happen in societies where psychological preconditions are established. Some of these were the widespread acceptance of cultural diversity, relatively low levels of prejudice, positive mutual attitudes among cultural groups, and a sense of attachment to the larger society. Given such preconditions, the integration strategy may be pursued (Berry & Kalin, 1995).

In later literature on adaptation and acculturation, a distinction was made between psychological, sociocultural, and economic adaptation (Searle & Ward, 1990). Psychological adaptation refers to a set of internal psychological outcomes, including a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context. Sociocultural adaptation is a set of external psychological outcomes that link individuals to their new context, including their ability to deal with daily problems, particularly in the areas of family life, work, and school. Although these two forms of adaptation are usually related empirically, there are two reasons for keeping them conceptually distinct. One reason is that the factors predicting these two types of adaptation are often different. The other is that psychological adaptation may best be analyzed within the context of the stress and psychopathology approaches, while sociocultural adaptation is more closely linked to the social skills framework (Ward & Kennedy, 1993a). The process of acculturation is also linked to a range of stress factors (Delara, 2016) that can affect individuals’ health and well-being. These include financial strains, employment difficulties, and perceived discrimination, among others. As societies continue to become more diverse and distant at the same time, understanding the process of acculturation becomes increasingly important for promoting social cohesion and well-being (Ward & Geeraert, 2016).

### 3.3 Criticism of Acculturation Research

Over the years, acculturation theories and models have been subject to criticism, with various concerns raised about the terms used and the processes involved. The majority of the criticism has focused on Berry's acculturation model because it is one of the most well-known and used in research. As a result, such critiques have broader implications for other models, with issues relating to their definition, content, and operationalization (Rudmin, 2009). Therefore, to familiarize the reader with the discussion around the most well-known models, I provide some highlights of this debate.

Anderson (1994) problematized the concept of acculturation and proposed Bennett's (1977) study on cross-cultural interactions instead. Bennett (1977) stated that the so-called "transition experience" could be understood as "tension and anxieties we face whenever change threatens the stability of our lives" (p. 45). For Anderson (1994), cultural adaptation is a subcategory of "cultural transition." In this regard, she also insists that if shock exists, it is more appropriate to label "culture shock" as "change shock," given the argument that "change anywhere demands accommodation" (Anderson, 1994, p. 297). This is a fair point, but in acculturation research, it is barely talked about such changes in "any place" and "any location". Instead, the focused predominantly on the change caused by the "change in cultural zone", which is the understanding moving this dissertation forward. She also surveyed much of the previously available literature and suggested in a handful of summaries that four broad models have primarily been used to describe cultural adaptation processes. These four models can be summarized as "recuperation" (recovery from the shock), "essentially a learning process" (mostly communication and behavioral), "recovery and learning" (from denial to understanding and from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism), and "equilibrium" (the dynamic and cyclical process of transition). See Anderson (1994) for a more thorough elaboration and criticism of the acculturation models.

Another criticism of Berry's fourfold model of strategies (assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization) was presented by Rudmin (2003), who, referring to one of Berry's reports (below), argued that the fourfold paradigm almost always produces the same kind of results:

Acculturation strategies have been shown to have substantial relationships with positive adaptation: integration is usually the most successful; marginalization is the least; and assimilation and separation strategies are intermediate. This pattern has been found in virtually every study and is present for all types of acculturating groups. Why this should be so, however, is not clear. (Berry, 1997a, p. 24)

Rudmin (2003) also drew attention to the fourfold model for "its lack of psychological and cultural content and for its ineffectiveness in explaining differences between groups or between individuals" (p. 4), to which Berry (2009) also responded. Rudmin (2003) further underlined that many studies tend to ignore the need to examine the majority society's strategies for acculturating

minority groups, as if the dominant society is somehow isolated, immutable, monolithic, and resistant to acculturative origins and as if acculturation happens only to minority peoples. While this paradigm was valid to a certain extent in its time, Berry and others have emphasized the idea of a plural society for integration to take place. In his later speech, he also admitted that many societies have not really tried out multicultural policies to address the criticism against the arguably failed multicultural society. However, that should not mean that there has not been studies on the majority aspect, here I have presented some studies of the majority population (Lee & Rice, 2007; Kim & Choi, 2016; Ward et al., 2009; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000; Yu & Li, 2015). Similar to the aforementioned studies on the receiving society aspect, I have also advocated for and executed comparable investigations (Nshom & Khalimzoda, 2020), where we studied the acculturation strategies of Finnish adolescents toward Russian speakers in Finland and found integration to be the favorite orientation.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Bhatia and Ram (2009) claimed that Berry's framework "implicitly assumes that both the majority and minority cultures have equal status and power" (p. 148). Berry's (2009) response was as follows:

I have never held these positions, nor have ever expressed them. On the contrary, for example in my work with Aboriginal peoples (e.g., Berry, 1999b) the key to understanding their acculturative experiences and the variable outcomes (often negative) is the existence of domination, conflict, and resistance. When cultural incompatibility or conflict is present, then integration is not likely or even possible; instead, other strategies (particularly separation and marginalization) are the most common ways of acculturating. (p. 369)

Continuing with the evaluation and criticism of, by then, classical theories of acculturation, especially Berry's fourfold model, Chirkov (2009) sees acculturation as distinct from immigrant adjustment. To him, acculturation is practically not predictable, and immigrant adaptation studies are, in turn, oriented toward descriptive investigations of how immigrants adjust to and function in the new environment. Chirkov (2009) further argued that acculturation researchers have applied a positivistic and quantitative approach "to a phenomenon that is far beyond the capacity this approach has to comprehend it" (p. 94). At the same time, Chirkov's (2009) elaboration does not exclude the fact that acculturation can be studied using quantitative and qualitative approaches:

Thus, the process of acculturation could be addressed from two different philosophical positions. Researchers could apply a deductive-nomological approach and analyze acculturation as a natural science phenomenon trying to explain it through discovering and applying universal covering laws of acculturation and then predicting future outcomes. Or researchers could look at acculturation through the prism of the interpretative social sciences and focus on the dynamics of the changes in the intersubjective meanings of various culturally constructed realities and study individuals' intrasubjective meanings that immigrants assign to their actions in a new country. And to me,

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<sup>6</sup> I must note that these studies were conducted before Russian aggression in Ukraine, so the acculturation strategies of the neighboring countries for Russian immigrants might have been affected/changed.

this second approach fits much better, than the first one, the nature of acculturation process (p. 97)

Following the publication of the complete issue of the *Journal of Intercultural Relations* dedicated to the criticism of acculturation research, mainly the fourfold model, John Berry was also given the right to respond. He has since addressed most of the criticism thoroughly (see Berry, 2009), but I present only a short, relevant highlight, as this also informed the way I have conducted this research. One of the pressing issues highlighted by this special issue is the nature of human science. In this regard, Berry (2009) argued that both propositions of quantitative and qualitative approach regarding human beings' natural and cultural worlds are true, as they allow for intercultural understanding and an appreciation of human diversity while searching for our common humanity. According to him, favoring one approach by dismissing another is limiting, as it ignores the potential benefits of employing both natural and cultural research traditions in the study of acculturation. A dual approach allows for comparative work based on our common membership in one species and for work that focuses on the individual within the nexus of a single culture. This approach is supported by ideas drawn from the field of cross-cultural psychology and is in line with the views of scholars such as Donald Campbell, who advocated for reconciling differences between the quantitative and qualitative traditions of research. Berry (2009) further asserted that other scholars have also advocated for this dual stance, such as Fay (1996), who proposed a multicultural approach to the philosophy of science, and Glynos and Howarth (2007), who noted that social and political theorists should integrate explanation, interpretation, and critique. Informed by this and other scholarly discussions, I have come to the conclusion that we can still study and measure common patterns of culture, or "cultural transition," in Anderson's terms. As such, this study is not limited to measuring acculturation but also explores two crucial domains of acculturation: media and language.

Overall, with increasing global mobility and digital communication, the study of acculturation in the context of the EU has become important in informing policies to bridge the needs of minorities and incoming populations with the needs of the larger society (Tervola, 2020). European countries have come to terms with and developed integration programs to facilitate easier adaptation and acculturation, offering language and other educational training. However, these practices are not perfect and have also been scrutinized (Laakkonen, 2022; Nshom, Sadaf, & Khalimzoda, 2022). Having said that, in this study, we interrogate the self-reported CI and CP of Russian speakers in their societies in Latvia and Finland in relation to two major aspects of acculturation. In the next section, these aspects are thoroughly discussed.



### **3.4 The Function of Media and Language in Shaping the Impact of Acculturation on Intercultural Communication**

One major role of acculturation may be its connection to intergroup and intercultural relations, where perceived threat, fear of the other, and prejudice play a significant role. In the Finnish and Latvian contexts, these countries' historical experiences with Russia add more nuance to the current complexities. Increased contact between members of various groups is said to lead to more positive attitudes and reduce prejudice (Nshom, Sadaf, & Khalimzoda, 2022). However, the quality of contact matters more. Acculturation, as conceptualized in this study as CI, could potentially pave the way for high-quality contact by creating opportunities to interact in various social settings.

Moreover, acculturation policies that encourage and support acculturation can be instrumental in reducing interethnic tensions. Government policies focusing on creating inclusive environments that respect and celebrate diversity while promoting a shared national identity have been associated with positive intergroup relations (Esses et al., 2017). Additionally, acculturation serves as a mechanism to address socioeconomic disparities among different ethnic communities through social programs, leading to economic equality, which in turn contributes to a more harmonious society (see Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). Furthermore, acculturation contributes to cross-cultural collaboration, encouraging interactions in various fields, including the arts, sports, and business. Shared experiences and achievements foster a sense of unity and cooperation. These strategies align with broader approaches to promoting intercultural communication, encouraging media literacy, exchange programs, education, community engagement, inclusivity, conflict resolution programs, diverse leadership, legal frameworks, and social programs.

Research on acculturation has identified various domains and aspects related to the process, including cultural, social, economic, and linguistic domains, as well as the role of the host community (Berry, 1997; Dalisay, 2012; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Viimaranta, 2019). In this study, I primarily focus on the language and media aspects of acculturation because to the best of my knowledge, such a comparative study on Russian speakers' acculturation in Finland and Latvia does not exist. Second, increasing transnational connectivity has challenged the classical idea of the orientation between local (national) and heritage languages, especially given the increasing influence of the English language as a lingua franca (see e.g., Lehtonen, 2015; Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003). For instance, in Article 3, we found that English was reported to be used almost as often as Russian and Finnish among Russian speakers in Finland (Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2023). Third, media and language in the context of Latvia and Finland are among the most significant aspects of acculturation, policy, and everyday life (Khalimzoda, 2023; Nshom, Sadaf, & Ilkhom, 2022; Sam & Berry, 2010). The development of global media in the changing face of acculturation has allowed for transnational flows of migration; therefore, to understand contemporary

acculturation, a perspective on media use needs to be included. In the next sections, I elaborate on this and the language domains of acculturation in detail.

The significance of the role of media in shaping the perceptions of immigrants and their acculturation processes has been long recognized (Berry et al., 1977). With the growing use of information and communications technology (ICT) over the last decades, transnational media has become even stronger, enabling individuals engaged in migration to maintain connections with their country of origin and other previous countries of residence while adapting to their new host societies (Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2022; Park, 2022). Mass media and social media, for instance, play an important role in the transnational aspect of acculturation, as immigrants can use social media platforms to stay connected with family and friends in their home countries and participate in cultural events remotely (Lim & Pham, 2016). Social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and X, have also become essential tools allowing diasporic communities to connect, construct, and preserve their identities across borders. These platforms allow individuals to form virtual communities based on shared cultural and linguistic interests and experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and connection that can be vital for those feeling isolated or disconnected from their new environments (Park, 2020).

However, the extensive use of far-away media in acculturation can also have hindering effects. It can delay exposure to the local media, language, and realities, hindering individuals' full capacity to participate in their new environment (Lim & Pham, 2016). This delay may reinforce stereotypes and limit their understanding and competence regarding their new home country. Therefore, some scholars have recommended that media consumption be balanced between home and host country media to facilitate a smooth acculturation process (Lim & Pham, 2016).

Furthermore, engagement with the local media could prove valuable in terms of providing new ideas and perspectives into the new life being built. Extensive use of media from one's home country may limit immersion into the new culture and inhibit adaptation to the host country (Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2022). Although such considerations are up to individuals' approaches and preferences, dependence on far-away media can create further economic inequalities through lack of participation, social capital, and competence. Therefore, scholars interested in the acculturation process should further explore newcomers' use of media (Croucher & Kramer, 2017).

In the linguistic domain, acculturation involves changes in language use, proficiency, and attitudes (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). Our comprehension of how immigrants may relate to and handle language-related issues continues to be challenged by factors such as rising mobility, globalization, the use of information and communications technology, and the evolving use of different lingua francas (e.g., business and administrative English) (Balič, 2016; House, 2003). This evolution has brought attention to the importance of comprehending these processes, particularly in bilingual or multilingual nations where English is not an official language. In the case of Russian speakers in Latvia, for example,

Bērziņa et al. (2015) highlighted language proficiency and cultural identity as the most significant domains of acculturation. Similarly, in Finland, language has been one of the highlighted domains of acculturation, as the ability to speak the national language is crucial for social integration and access to education and employment (see e.g., Kivisto, 2001).

However, this should not undermine the individual realities and difficulties every new learner might be experiencing in the aftermath of a relocation that may bring difficulties that span a long time. It is similarly important to recognize and acknowledge immigrants' prior language knowledge repertoire (Leeman & Modan, 2009), especially in job offerings or in preparing language and adaptation programs that are highly demanded by newcomers.

That said, it is the local language that enables most of the opportunities present in society, regardless of whether they are related to the job market or sociocultural involvement. Local language proficiency can also facilitate societal participation and decrease the sense of isolation. Therefore, there is great value in the continuation of accessible language training for new learners in the context of Finland and in creating more similar opportunities in Latvia. This is because learning the language of a new country enables immigrants to access education, media, and the labor market, making their everyday lives easier. Furthermore, this equips them to deal with bureaucracy and further grants them access to the sociocultural activities of the country. These opportunities and perspectives may not be fully available or accessible in other languages, such as in Russian in the context of Finland. Although some services, such as courses for children, cultural activities, student and entrepreneurship clubs, car repair, and hairdressers, may be available to immigrants in their first language, most other areas, especially those related to official documentation and employment, require proficiency in the host society's official language(s), such as Finnish or Swedish in the case of Finland and Latvian in the case of Latvia.

In rare cases, migrant communities may hold onto their repertoire of languages and find unique opportunities in the labor market that require their languages. For instance, in Latvia, where ethnic Russians make up approximately 24% of the entire population (MFA, 2023), naturally, there is no lack of services in the Russian language in the private sector, as there exists a large number of Russian-speaking service providers and businesses. Nevertheless, beyond the comfort of using one's own language in a country where the majority speaks some other language, the lack of availability of private services in Russian does not serve the minority and does not provide equal opportunities, as immigrants and minorities who do not speak Latvian may not be able to fully participate in public life, state bureaus, media, and many other domains of society, where knowledge of the Latvian language offers a head start.

The evidence presented above underscores the interplay between language, media usage, and acculturation, shedding light on how specific groups may navigate the challenges posed by increasing diversity, multifaceted media consumption, and evolving language ideologies. This understanding is crucial for comprehending and responding to the fundamental principles of social

engagement and well-being within contemporary societies. Addressing this issue necessitates a sophisticated toolkit to unravel the intricate relationship between our daily interactions that occur through language and media. Hence, the focus of this research is to comprehend these practices within the domains of media and language.

### 3.5 Operationalizing Acculturation

As discussed in the previous sections, the unidimensional conceptualization of acculturation as a zero sum has had its place in the research literature and has influenced further operationalizations. Such a conceptualization of acculturation, where immigrant populations adopt the host culture's behavior and values at the cost of discarding the attributes of their culture of origin, has led to operationalizations in which the process is seen as an inverse linear relationship between an individual's involvement with their original and host cultures (Szapocznik et al., 1980). According to Marina (1979), this view of acculturation as a unidimensional process manifested in part due to the pressures of being in a melting pot, causing individuals to behave in this fashion. In other words, a zero-sum process assumes that full identification with and participation by immigrants in a new home country is only possible by giving up identification with and participation in the country of origin (Eisenstadt, 1954; Stonequist, 1935). Therefore, early survey measures of acculturation typically forced respondents to choose between the origin and destination cultures on a zero-sum scale with one cultural alternative at either end (Carlson & Güler, 2018). Biculturalism, which implies that an individual can participate in two cultural contexts (Szapocznik et al., 1980), was not popular for many early scholars. For example, Ross (1920) argued that biculturalism is a compromise that entails the distress of giving up to which one feels entitled. Child (1939) similarly stated that biculturality does not resolve cultural conflicts or end frustrations and is thus more distressing than a commitment to one culture or the other. Ichheiser (1949) more specifically argued that bicultural behavior will cause the majority to make misattributions about the minority, as well as cause the distress of inhibiting and masking one's core personality. Glaser (1958) further argued that the bicultural person is marginalized and "may have guilty feelings and fears of discovery as a result of duplicity and inconsistency in identifying himself to others" (p. 34).

Conversely, studies have found discrepancies and documented high rates of behavioral disorders among migrants experiencing pressures to unidimensionally acculturate (see Szapocznik et al., 1978). Other explorations have empirically demonstrated that youngsters, for example, can maintain or develop involvement in either culture without giving up the other (Lasaga et al., 1980). With the growing acceptance of the concept of cultural pluralism, acculturation has increasingly come to be understood as a more multidimensional process with adaptation to a host culture no longer requiring rejection of the culture of origin (Szapocznik et al., 1980). Du Bois (1961) would

call it a state of “double consciousness,” and Kim (2008) would call such multidimensional adaptation “intercultural personhood.”

This bidimensional challenge to the unidimensional assimilationist perspective (Berry, 2005; Carlson & Güler, 2018; Zak, 1973) asserted that connections to destination and origin cultures do not necessarily have to vary inversely. This change in perspective led researchers to operationalize the acculturation experiences of both migrant and local populations. For example, the fourfold acculturation model proposed by Berry (1984) has been operationalized by using a questionnaire or survey to measure an individual’s orientation toward their heritage culture and the dominant culture. Such questionnaires typically include a series of statements that ask participants to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. Based on their responses, individuals can be classified as adopting one of the four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization. The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA-II) is among the most widely used, and it assesses language use, ethnic identity, and preference for cultural traditions (Cuéllar et al., 1995). More recently, researchers have begun to use more nuanced and context-specific measures of acculturation that take into account the unique experiences of different immigrant groups. For example, the Sociolinguistic Acculturation and Identity Scale (SAIS) was designed to capture the acculturation experiences of immigrant youth from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Schwartz et al., 2010). The multidimensional acculturation model is another measure developed to capture the multidimensional nature of acculturation experiences among immigrants (Lopez-Tamayo et al., 2016).

In Finland and Latvia, acculturation has been extensively studied using both quantitative and qualitative approaches and scales, especially from the viewpoints of intergroup contact, ethnic identity, and well-being (Lebedeva et al., 2016; Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2006; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2012; Nshom & Khalimzoda, 2020; Renvik et al., 2020). In the next section, I present the instrument used in this study.

### **3.5.1 Instrument of This Study: Acculturation Measure Constructed from Bidimensional Scales**

In this study, the CI and CP indices were used as tools to measure acculturation. These indices form a bidimensional instrument with which connections to destination and origin cultures do not necessarily have to vary inversely. It involves a set of statements designed to assess contact, involvement, and preferences regarding the various dimensions of acculturation, such as language, social relationships, and cultural practices. These indices are specified in the second paper of this dissertation and were also originally published in the work of Carlson and Güler (2018).

The instrument suggested by Carlson and Güler (2018) is based on Szapocznik et al.’s (1980) approach. It combines two parallel scales to measure involvement with both origin and destination cultures, drawing on modified and combined features from several instruments established in earlier research. These

scales include measures of reported behaviors, affective cultural values, and elements of personal identity and were designed to produce summary acculturation indices. In their original study, Carlson and Güler (2018) used a set of 12 questions to assess the involvement of Turkish immigrants in their culture of origin rated on a nine-point scale (see Figures 1 and 2).

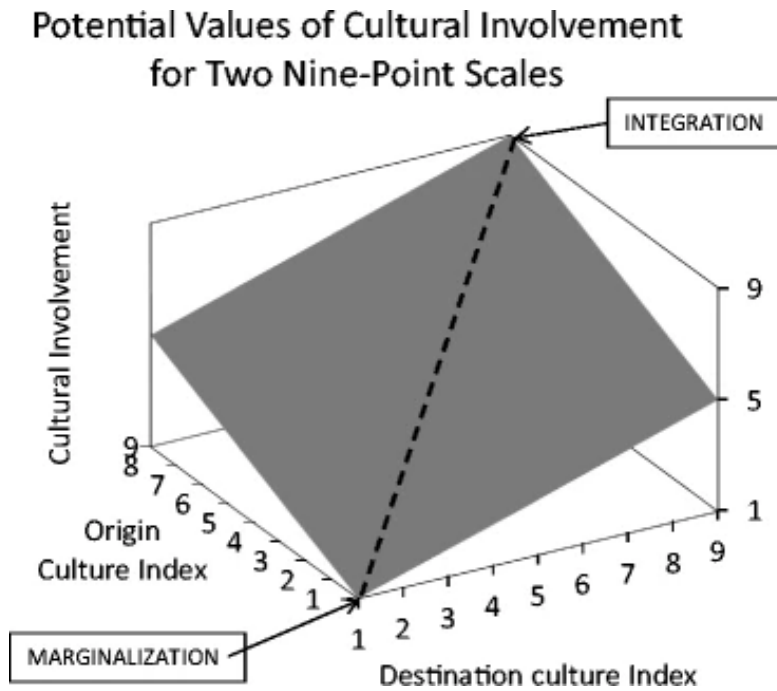


FIGURE 1 An illustration of the potential values of cultural involvement (CI) (Carlson & Güler, 2018, p. 629).

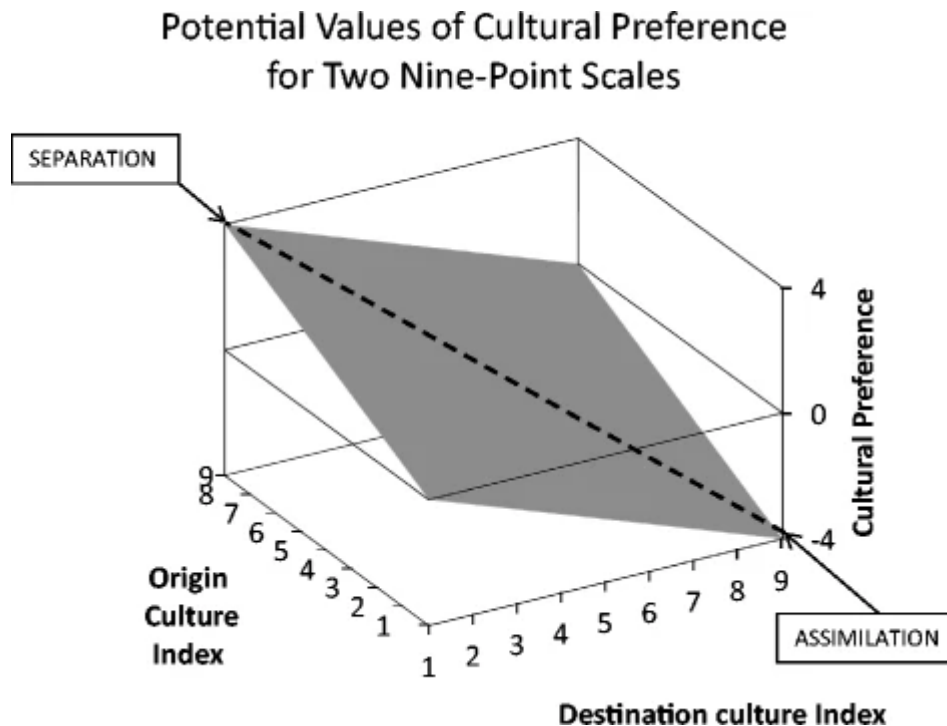


FIGURE 2 An illustration of the potential values of cultural preference (CP) (Carlson & Güler, 2018, p. 630).

The scores used in the inventory ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree), with 5 being the neutral midpoint. The same set of 12 questions has also been used to measure involvement with the destination US American culture by replacing the word “Turkish” with “American” (or “English” for language), which is a convention in research using the bidimensional approach. More specific details of how I utilize this instrument are given in Chapter 4, in which I describe the methods of this study. Meanwhile, the next two paragraphs offer more details on how the instrument operates, as well as its benefits in studying acculturation.

Carlson and Güler’s (2018) instrument involves two measures that incorporate information from both the origin and destination scales. One measure was based on the sum of the two scales, while the other was based on the difference between the two scales. These measures retain the continuous scalar properties of the origin and destination scales rather than dividing the plane into four discrete quadrants. CI is a measure that sums scores on the origin and destination culture indices and divides them by two to adjust for the original scale ranges. The CI score ranged from 1 to 9. The resulting scores depict a linear function from “total marginalization” to “total integration.” The measure also has the ability to calculate scalar values along the CI axis by averaging the scores of the two scales. CP measures the direction of preference for one’s culture of origin versus the culture of the destination society. The CP score is calculated as the difference between the two scores divided by two and ranges from -4 to +4. According to Carlson and Güler (2018), put together, these measures allow for a

more nuanced understanding of an individual's acculturation experience than Berry's four-category typology. Carlson and Güler (2018) further argued that their CI and CP measures can provide important new insights into existing studies of immigrant populations and can directly measure concepts that have been shown to be important predictors of immigrant well-being. They suggest that their synthesis of Berry's four-category approach with Szapocznik et al.'s (1980) dimensions can provide a more precise and nuanced understanding of the exact locations of respondents in the space formed by the origin and destination culture scale dimensions. In the following chapter, I elaborate on the methodology of the study, delving further into its application.



## 4 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 4.1 Quantitative Approach to Acculturation

Epistemologically, quantitative approaches to studying acculturation have been influenced by the philosophy of positivism, which assumes that knowledge can be discovered through empirical observation and scientific methods (Bryman, 2016). Quantitative research uses numerical data to test hypotheses and answer research questions. Therefore, it can be used to measure variables and generalize results to a larger population, making it a popular approach in acculturation studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, surveys used in acculturation research also have limitations, such as response bias (Tourangeau et al., 2000), limited understanding of the context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), limited understanding of the meaning (Kvale, 1996), and limited understanding of the complexity and dynamic nature of acculturation (Berry, 1997). Despite these limitations, quantitative research methodologies are widely used in acculturation studies due to their advantages, such as the proven validity and reliability of measurement instruments, the ability to collect data from large populations, and the use of standardized questions to facilitate comparisons across different groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this context, quantitative approach enable the testing of scales in different situations to better understand their applicability (or lack thereof) to diverse populations. This has both theoretical and methodological significance. For instance, Carlson and Güler's (2018) CI and CP bicultural inventory was initially examined only in the United States. This study illustrates how it can be applied in different societal contexts, outlining both its possibilities and limitations. For these reasons, I opted for a quantitative method for collecting and analyzing data. Given the comparative nature of this two-country research project and the aim of involving a diverse range of participants, quantitative research methodologies seemed practical. Whether this assumption holds true will be a focal point in the discussion section.

#### **4.1.1 Constructing the Survey**

The survey used in this study was created and administered in both Finland and Latvia using the Webropol online system. The characteristics of the Webropol platform were carefully studied and implemented to ensure clear and concise data collection and to minimize potential errors or loss of data. The survey consisted of 40 questions spread over four pages. Before beginning the survey, an overview of the purpose of the study, a description of privacy measures, consent box, and the researcher's contact information were provided. Participants were also given practical instructions on how to complete the survey. The questionnaire was divided into four parts: basic demographic information, language proficiency and use, open-ended questions about media engagement, and questions originating from the Carlson and Güler (2018) inventory.

The measurement scale items, consisting of 24 statements on a nine-point Likert scale based on the Carlson and Güler (2018) inventory, were placed after the media-related questions. Half of these statements focused on the participants' "culture of origin" (Russian) and the other half on the "culture of the new home country" (either Finland or Latvia). The survey concluded with a space for participants to provide feedback and comments. The survey was originally written in English but was fully translated into Russian, then back-translated and reviewed by two proficient speakers. A pilot study was conducted with nine participants to test the clarity of the questionnaire and to make any necessary improvements based on the results. Some of the changes made included 1) changing the language-related questions—an option for those who wanted to indicate not speaking one of the offered languages was included; 2) reformulating the questions to make clear that the survey was interested in language use outside of home; 3) adding the option of multiple answers in the language and media questions; 4) adding a feedback box; 5) asking about the country of birth; 6) including an open question concerning ethnicity so that participants could indicate an ethnicity for themselves; and 7) asking the participants for an evaluation of the trustworthiness of the media that they use to avoid relying only on their exposure because exposure alone does not necessarily indicate trust. These and some other small grammatical corrections were made to make the survey more comprehensible and easier for the participants to complete.

#### **4.1.2 Data Collection**

Data collection using the survey began in June 2019 and ended in December 2020. I first reached out to a number of government and non-governmental organizations related to or working with ethnic Russians in both Finland and Latvia. Approximately 35 organizations in each country were contacted with the hope that they could help spread the survey to their members on their email lists. Receiving the survey through the organizations potential participants were connected to could have made the survey seem more trustworthy. Despite efforts to reach out to these organizations, few agreed to cooperate, with some stating

privacy rules preventing them from collaborating. The survey was also disseminated using a snowball sampling approach through social media posts by Russian-speaking entrepreneurs and institutions, such as universities, business departments, and student organizations. The survey was further posted in major online groups to which Russian speakers belonged. As a critical side note, the snowballing method may have led to biased results, as the participants may not be representative of the population. However, this approach was useful in reaching hard-to-reach populations, as the participants referred the researcher to others who may be interested. According to the statistics provided by Webropol, the survey was opened by 2257 people in Latvia, of whom 142 responded, indicating a response rate of 6.3%. In Finland, the survey was opened by 1965 people, out of whom 137 responded, indicating a response rate of 7%.

There could be a variety of reasons why the response rates were low, including the sensitive and politicized nature of questions related to acculturation, language, and media use; the length of the survey (which featured 40 questions); the lack of trust in universities; apathy or disinterest; and privacy concerns. As an example of a lack of trust, there were heated discussions and comments in several social media groups where the survey was posted. Some commentators questioned my identity and legitimacy as a researcher, while others expressed feelings of burnout from similar studies and called for an end to extensive research on Russians. Anonymized examples of such comments include the following:

- "You have to be Russian and know Russian literature, history, and all of its nuances to be able to conduct research on Russians."
- "Who funds such research other than the USA?"
- "This is all done due to the societal fear from Russia and Russians living in Latvia and Finland."
- "умом Россию не понять, и тестом общим не измерить [Russia cannot be understood with intellect and cannot be measured with a common test]."
- "Не все иностранцы читают русскую классику, но при этом берутся изучать русских людей [Not all foreigners read Russian classics, but at the same time, they undertake to study Russian people]."
- "Если вы не понимаете подобных культурных ссылок, то не вижу у вас потенциала на изучение вашей темы среди русскоязычных, это без обид [If you do not understand such cultural references (Russian classic literature), then I do not see your potential for studying your topic among Russian speakers, this is no offense]."
- "Это то чувство, когда по-русски написано без ошибок, но ты понимаешь, что пишет не русский [This is the feeling when it is written in Russian without errors, but you understand that it is not a Russian who writes]."
- "Хотя и сама пишу докторскую, но к подобным исследованиям отношусь скептически [Although I myself am writing a doctoral thesis, I am skeptical about such studies]."
- "...Русскую культуру вы не знаете, финскую культуру вы не знаете, но тем не менее отваживаетесь изучать адаптацию русскоязычных иммигрантов в Финляндии, а как Латвия сюда относится? Может вы будете изучать представителей что-то более вам знакомого? [You do not know Russian culture, you do not know Finnish culture, but nevertheless, you dare to study the adaptation of Russian-speaking immigrants in Finland, but how does Latvia appear here? Maybe you will study representatives (people) more familiar to you?]"

- “То чувство, когда Икхом Квазиморда пытается что-то понять [That feeling when Ikhom Quasisnout<sup>7</sup> tries to understand something].”
- “Мы отдельный вид. Мы не латыши и не русские. Мы - русскоязычные прибалты в хрен знает уже каком поколении [We are a separate species. We are not Latvians and not Russians. We are Russian-speaking Balts who knows which generation already].”
- “Я здесь родился,здесь роделись, бабушка, мама, и мои дети и мне не надо одаптироваться на сваей родине. Я родился в СССР. [I was born here, my grandmother, mother, and my children were born here, and I don’t need to adapt in my homeland. I was born in the USSR].”

### 4.1.3 Processing the Data

The total number of participants who completed the survey was 279. As a primary task, the questions and answers were back-translated into English before the analysis phase began. Afterward, data from both countries were merged into one file using IBM SPSS Statistics software. To enable further analysis across datasets, a dummy variable expressing whether the answer came from the Latvian or Finnish sample was created. After careful screening of the data, 54 responses were considered incompatible with the goals of the study. These respondents were not part of the survey’s target audience or did not complete the questionnaire in its entirety. As a result, they were omitted from the analysis. A scatter plot was used to look for outliers in all variables, but no critical cases were identified. After these steps, the number of complete responses totaled 224 (91 from Latvia and 133 from Finland).

Although small, the sample was still adequate for various types of statistical analyses. All analyses in this study were completed using SPSS. It is crucial to remember that the purpose of social research is to draw conclusions about a larger population from a sample and not only to describe the characteristics of a sample. Therefore, I began by comparing the participants’ demographic information to the general statistics of the Russian speakers in Finland and Latvia to determine how close or far my samples were from the target populations. However, it is important to be mindful of the limitations of the sample and avoid generalizing the findings beyond the study’s participants. In the case of this study, I acknowledge the limitations of the sample and emphasize the need for future research that features a larger and more representative sample. That said, a lower response rate should not discourage other researchers from conducting such studies, but they must be aware of the implications and limitations associated with sample size and use caution when making inferences based on their findings.

Selecting the right statistical method for research can be challenging. As Pallant (2020) put in their book on methodology, it is comparable to choosing a recipe for dinner based on available ingredients and the desired meal type. Likewise, in research, considerations revolve around questions, assumptions, and data characteristics (Pallant, 2020). When deciding on a statistical method,

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<sup>7</sup> It is a form of disdain or scoff.

variables<sup>8</sup> and research questions take center stage. Distinctions emerge between techniques for exploring relationships among variables and those for investigating differences between groups. For example, t-tests are suitable for scrutinizing mean differences within a single variable, such as differences in CI scores between respondents from two separate countries. Conversely, when dealing with two continuous dependent variables (CI and CP) and two categorical variables (language and media), the choice shifts to a two-way between-group analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The rationale for employing a two-way between-group ANOVA becomes evident when seeking to understand how different groups compare. In the specific scenario of two continuous dependent variables and two categorical variables with three levels, the two-way ANOVA enabled the examination of the impact of two independent variables (media engagement and language) on one dependent variable (CI or CP). This method is advantageous, as it allows not only the assessment of the “main effects” of each independent variable, such as media and language, but also the exploration into potential interaction effects. An interaction effect, a key feature of the two-way ANOVA, elucidates instances in which the influence of one independent variable is contingent on the presence of another. For instance, it helps in discerning whether language use significantly increases CI but only within the Finnish sample. Thus, by incorporating a two-way ANOVA, the research design allowed both the overall effects of independent variables and nuanced interactions between them to be investigated.

#### **4.1.4 Demographics of the Participants**

The following section is necessarily very similar to the text presented in the second and third articles of this dissertation (see Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2022), but here, I wanted to present it for the benefit of the reader.

In the Finnish sample, a higher proportion of females (76.5%) responded to the survey than males (23.5%). While skewed, this is reflective of the fact that approximately 57% of the Russian-speaking population in Finland is female (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). Additionally, the Russian-speaking population in Finland includes more working-age people than the general population (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). Out of the 133 respondents, 115 reported being employed, indicating a higher employment rate than the general Russian-speaking population in Finland, which reported only an approximate 50% employment rate (Varjonen et al., 2017). Furthermore, the education level of the Finnish sample was relatively high, with 15.8% having completed secondary education, 65.4% holding a bachelor’s degree, and 18.8% having a master’s degree or higher. These numbers are higher than the official data on educational levels among Russian speakers in Finland, although no reliable statistics are available (Varjonen et al., 2017).

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<sup>8</sup> In simple language, a variable is something that can change. In the context of research or experiments, a variable is a factor or a characteristic that can take on different values.

In the Latvian sample, a higher proportion of females (68.1%) responded to the survey than males (31.9%). This is consistent with the fact that approximately 61% of Russian citizens in Latvia and 52.5% of non-citizens in Latvia are female (Official Statistics of Latvia, 2021). The education level of the Latvian sample was also high, with 22% having completed secondary education, 68.1% holding a bachelor's degree, and 9.9% having a master's degree or higher. Unfortunately, no reliable national data were found regarding the education levels of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia. Regarding citizenship, 65 respondents in the Latvian sample had Latvian citizenship, 6 had Latvian non-citizen status, and 19 had Russian citizenship. In the Finnish sample, 61 had Russian citizenship, 48 had dual citizenship (Russian and Finnish), 11 had only Finnish citizenship, and 5 had Estonian citizenship.

The Latvian and Finnish samples also differed in terms of where the participants were born and their length of stay in their current countries of residence. In the Latvian sample, 54% were born in Latvia, while all participants in the Finnish sample were born outside of Finland. Latvian respondents' length of stay in Latvia was longer ( $M = 28.8$ ,  $SD = 17.5$ ) than that of Finnish respondents in Finland ( $M = 12.1$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ). Overall, these demographic differences between the Latvian and Finnish samples need to be taken into account when generalizing the findings of the survey to the Russian-speaking population in these countries. While the sample sizes are not large enough to make definitive claims, the data provide some insight into the characteristics of the Russian-speaking populations in Latvia and Finland.

#### **4.1.5 Coding and Analyzing the Open-Ended Questions**

Open-ended questions have the capacity to provide a wealth of information through detailed and in-depth responses. However, they are not amenable to direct analysis using statistical software, such as SPSS. SPSS is designed to analyze numerical or categorical data, but qualitative data are often unstructured and text-based. To make the data available for analysis, the responses are usually grouped and coded (see Mohajan, 2018). Once the data are turned into numerical variables, they can then be entered into SPSS for analysis and statistical tests.

In the questionnaire used in this study, two sets of open-ended questions were coded, with one related to language proficiency and use and the other related to news media use. The questions related to language proficiency and use asked the participants to self-assess their language proficiency (e.g., in the local language of Finnish or Latvian and in English) in a multiple-choice format. I included Swedish as an option in the Finnish survey because it is the country's second official language, but no respondents indicated that they spoke Swedish. The participants were also asked to indicate which languages they used the most outside of their homes and to rank those languages in order of use. Coding such questions is not as difficult as in the case of truly qualitative data, where, for example, long passages of text need to be thematically analyzed to code them. By coding the answers to the self-assessed language proficiency and use questions,

I was able to create two variables: 1) *second-language proficiency* and 2) the *most used language*.

The original questionnaire also comprised four open-ended questions delving into the participants' media habits. These questions queried the primary mediums for news consumption (TV, radio, online, etc.), weekly news sources, the most trusted news outlets, and the predominant language of media consumption. Upon scrutinizing the final data, it became evident that none of the individual open-ended questions alone offered clear insights into participants' media engagement habits. Some respondents provided mixed responses, while others opted to skip these questions (subsequently, they were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete responses). Ultimately, I conducted careful analysis of the answers to construct a single variable indicative of the respondents' news media engagement habits. This variable, representing media engagement, classified participants into three groups: 1) those leaning toward Russian media sources, 2) those leaning toward non-Russian media sources, and 3) those indifferent to media overall. The coding process involved interpretative analysis, in which each response to an open-ended question was evaluated in relation to other responses from the same respondent. For example, if a respondent mentioned turning to both Russian and non-Russian sources, their responses to questions about trusted media sources played a pivotal role in determining the final categorization. Generally, while some participants acknowledged minority, partisan, or alternative media sources, the majority expressed a preference for mainstream, well-known news providers. The data revealed two predominant directions in news media competing for attention: Russian and "Western" mainstream media. Here, the "West" pertains to an envisioned geopolitical rival of Russia, as explored in the comparative analysis of Latvian and Finnish media landscapes.

In this study, Russian media encompasses organizations operating in Russian, along with diasporic media relying on Russian sources, often considered "pro-Russian," featuring commentary-oriented interpretive journalism. Conversely, non-Russian media refer to organizations in Europe and North America not dependent on Russian sources, often labeled "pro-European," offering more descriptive news content. While those familiar with the context may discern these differences upon initial encounter, the difficulty associated with differentiating these arises concerning organizations not under state control in Russia, such as *Novaya Gazeta*, *Echo Moskvi*, *Meduza*, and *Dozhd*. In this study, these sources are categorized as non-Russian media due to their status, whether they are independent from state control or the "foreign agent" label has been imposed by the state for their perceived lack of cooperation or for "spreading Western ideas." To ensure validity, a thorough weighing process was implemented, and self-reported news media use, trusted sources, and language consistency were the considered criteria. Defined categories captured variations in observed media engagement, with contextual understanding, as discussed in the first article (Khalimzoda, 2023), playing a pivotal role in interpreting the intricacies in the participants' responses. In summary, leveraging open-ended

questions allowed participants to express their choices, and it enabled interpretative analysis, categorization into themes, and consideration of the broader context.

#### **4.1.6 The Researcher's Position**

Originally from Tajikistan in the former Soviet Union, I learned Russian from a young age and furthered my proficiency during my studies in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. After obtaining my master's degree in Latvia, I realized the extent to which I had relied on the Russian language, as I had exposed myself to Russian media and acculturated to a Russian-speaking subcommunity embroiled in the long-present Latvian-Russian ethnic and linguistic tensions. Facing limited career prospects without knowing Latvian, I shifted my focus and engaged with the larger society through work, volunteering, and active participation. Through this process, I positively transformed my perception of Latvia and diversified my media consumption. Upon moving to Finland, I encountered a different reality with minimal Russian media and positive interactions, even though online Russian-speaking communities sometimes displayed toxic discourse. These experiences fueled my interest in exploring the relationship between migration patterns, language, and mass media, thus sparking this doctoral research.



## 5 KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLES

The first article is the core background study of this dissertation under my sole authorship. The second and third articles were written following my first collaboration with my professor. While we collaborated on most of the sections, it was primarily my role to design the overall work and take the lead in the survey design, data collection, analysis, and writing. The following chapter presents the early steps leading to the three sub-studies and their key findings.

At the beginning of my PhD journey, different and thus conflicting media narratives in Russian and the national languages of the two countries were on my radar. For example, I had personally encountered the reality of life in Latvia, where I originally only spoke Russian and was therefore primarily exposed to Russian-language media. When I reached the point where I wanted to study the relationship between media use, language, and acculturation, I needed to study the media landscape of these two countries in depth. This is how the first sub-study emerged as a cornerstone of further work. This work was based on explorations into Russian-language media and the diaspora from its early days. There is a lack of such analyses available, and my study makes a clear contribution to the field in this regard. I wanted to offer my comparative work as a demonstration of how to explore and compare Russian-language media and diasporas across countries. In the second article, my PhD supervisor and I investigated the relationship between acculturation and news media, drawing on survey data. In the third article, we further explored language use and acculturation, again based on the survey data. In the following paragraphs, I elaborate on the key findings of these articles.

### **ARTICLE I: The History of the Russian-Language Media and Diasporas in Latvia and Finland**

In this manuscript, I analyzed and attempted to demonstrate how to write the history of the Russian-language media and diasporas in Latvia and Finland. I wrote the comparison in the organic form of a bibliography, with events

composed in chronological order through certain political periods (Bastiansen, 2008). The historical analysis began with the Russian conquest of today's Latvia (1710) and Finland (1809), continued with the Soviet era (1940–1990), and ended with the post-Soviet transformation (1991–2021). By bringing the existing literature into dialogue, I discussed the similarities and differences between the cases.

The analysis and literature showed that there is a perception of a persistent Russian presence as an informational influence or a contraflow that is directed toward the Russian diaspora outside of Russian borders and is further reinforced and negotiated by the Russian diaspora (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Kaprāns & Juzefovičs, 2020). In Latvia, after the country gained independence, Russian-language media underwent significant identity and scope changes, competed for the attention of the Russian diaspora, and acted as a political voice and defender in both societal and political processes. In the long run, this division of society into two linguistically distinct parallel worlds with frequently at-odds agendas contributed to the division of the people (Cheskin, 2013; Erbsen, 2019). According to Kozlovs (2020), the current content of Russian-language media in Latvia is divisive and full of misinformation, particularly when it comes to politics and world affairs (Rislakki, 2014). According to Berdnikov (2016), this is also the product of unprofessional journalism that fails to verify the source of information, time constraints, and a desire to fulfill the audience's expectations. In Finland, the majority of the Russian diaspora consumes both Finnish and Russian media productions (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016), in contrast to the Latvian case where there is a high demand for Russian-generated content (from abroad) (Rozukalne, 2017). Another example is the closing of Radio Sputnik in Finland in 2018. However, we must bear in mind that these were the findings before the beginning of the war in Ukraine in 2022.

The differences between the Russian-speaking diasporas in Latvia and Finland are another factor that my analysis highlights. Put simply, a major source of difference is the nature of the “accidental” (Brubaker, 2000; Khalimzoda, 2023) Russian diaspora in Latvia and the more traditional Russian diaspora in Finland. The vast majority of Russians in Latvia are descendants of families who lived there continuously during the Soviet era. The sudden, traumatic shifting of borders across populations due to the fall of the Soviet Union caused them to lose their status as privileged citizens of a great power and instead become vulnerable minorities, which resulted in their unintended dispersion. In my analysis, I argue that because media and audiences co-create and feed off one another, the larger accidental diaspora has a greater need for the kind of Russian-language media that is already existent in Latvia (see Chapter 2.4, Tables 1–6).

In this article, I could have concentrated on other aspects of Russian-language media, such as ownership, content, or the narratives that it upholds. I could also have looked at the differences in the media models, in particular where the media in Russia, Latvia, and Finland have differed (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2011). However, this would have deviated significantly from the snapshot of the historical timeline that better serves as the context of this work, and it would not

have been otherwise possible to look at the media and diaspora together. Overall, this study highlighted the importance of understanding the dynamics of media at different times and in different societies, as well as the complexities of defining Russian-language media abroad. This article explains why Latvia and Finland are important to study and why it is important to analyze the history of Russian-language media in countries neighboring modern-day Russia. This investigation also revealed commonalities and differences between the genesis of Russian-language media and diasporas in the two countries.

## **ARTICLE II: Russian Speakers' Media Engagement and Acculturation in Finland and Latvia**

In this article, we examined Russian speakers' acculturation in Finland and Latvia by comparing their CI and CP with their media use. Using an online survey, we gathered data on self-reported acculturation and news media involvement. Drawing on the analysis conducted on the data collected from both countries ( $N = 224$ ), we can state that news media is related and an important domain of acculturation.

For CI, the Latvian sample ( $M = 6.21$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) and the Finnish sample ( $M = 6.27$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ;  $t[224] = 0.43$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ) did not differ significantly. As for CP, the Latvian sample ( $M = + 0.99$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) differed statistically significantly from the Finnish sample ( $M = + 0.47$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ;  $t[222] = 3.16$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). The size of the mean differences was very modest ( $\eta^2 = 0.004$ ) in accordance with the standards outlined by Cohen (1988). We concluded that the participants in both nations had CP scores that were more in line with biculturalism than monoculturalism. As for media engagement, in Latvia, 61% of respondents tended to favor "non-Russian" news, 33% were more engaged with "Russian" news, and 5.5% did not trust any news ("not engaged"). In Finland, 73% of respondents tended to favor "non-Russian" news, 19% tended to favor "Russian" news, and 8% who were not engaged did not trust any news media. The Latvian and Finnish samples differed, as shown by a chi-square test for independence ( $\chi^2 [2, N = 224] = 6.03$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ). The Latvian respondents' slightly higher propensity toward "Russian" sources (33%) compared to the Finnish respondents' lower propensity (19%) was the most obvious practical difference between the groups.

Regarding the impact of media engagement on CI and CP, we discovered that there was a statistically significant interaction effect on CI scores explained by the country of the respondents and by media engagement ( $F [2, 224] = 3.25$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). To remind the reader, the subjects were split into two groups based on their place of residence (Latvia or Finland) and three groups (levels) based on their media engagement (Group 1: Russian news sources; Group 2: Non-Russian news sources; Group 3: Not engaged with media). The difference in CI scores explained by media engagement, according to post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test, only emerged in the Latvian sample. Leaning toward Russian news sources resulted in considerably lower CI scores ( $M = 5.83$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) compared to leaning toward non-Russian news sources ( $M = 6.41$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ).

Overall, neither the media engagement variable ( $F [2, 224] = 0.766, p = 0.466$ ) nor the main effect on CI from the respondents' country (Latvia/Finland) variable ( $F [1, 224] = 0.424, p = 0.516$ ) reached statistical significance. On the CP side, the major impact of media engagement and respondents' country on the CP score was investigated using a two-way between-groups ANOVA. The main impact of the respondents' country (Latvia/Finland) ( $F [1, 224] = 0.107, p = 0.744$ ) and the interaction effect (Media\* Latvia/Fin) did not achieve statistical significance. Media engagement had a main effect that was statistically significant ( $F [2, 224] = 26.12, p = 0.001$ ). The mean score for the Latvian sample that leaned more toward Russian news sources ( $M = 1.80, SD = 0.905$ ) was significantly different from the group that leaned more toward non-Russian news sources ( $M = 0.633, SD = 1.134$ ), according to post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test. Additionally, there was a significant difference between the Russian news group ( $M = 1.80, SD = 0.905$ ) and the not involved with news group ( $M = 0.100, SD = 1.387$ ). The homogeneity of variances assumption was not broken, as shown by Levene's test of equality of error variances, which was more than 0.05.

We must acknowledge the sample's obvious lack of representativeness for the total population of Russian speakers in Finland or Latvia as a limitation of our study. Online surveys frequently contain various forms of selection bias (Bethlehem, 2010), and our study is no exception. Our study highlighted a particular dynamic between media taste and acculturation, but further research is required to determine how widespread these tendencies are in the general population. Acculturation and media use may also be related to other characteristics, including language preference and proficiency, as well as early media exposure. That said, there is still a dearth of research on the relationship between Russian speaker's media use and acculturation, despite the fact that the acculturation of Russian speakers in relation to issues like identity, perceived superiority, discrimination, and socioeconomic remittance has been extensively studied in the context of the EU. The results of this study help us understand how using news media may affect the acculturation process. Furthermore, our research sheds new light on the issue of how news media use affects immigrants' acculturation. They remind us of the duality of the domestic and international hybrid media contexts, as well as the potential implications for their target audiences.

### **ARTICLE III: Language and Acculturation: The Case of Russian Speakers in Latvia and Finland**

The third article of this dissertation deals with the following research question: RQ3) How do Russian speakers' self-reported language proficiency and use relate to their acculturation? In other words, how are Russian speakers' CP and CI related to their language proficiency and use?

This study's design is similar to the previous one. The only difference is that, here, we analyzed the language aspect with acculturation (CI and CP). Looking at self-reported second-language knowledge, we can observe that almost half of

the respondents (62) in the Finnish context indicated Finnish to be their second language, while almost half of the other people (61) indicated English as a second language. Only a few people (10) indicated that both Finnish and English were equally strong second languages. In the Latvian context, half of the respondents (46) reported Latvian as their second language, and one-third (30) reported English as their second language. Similar to the Finnish sample, some respondents (15) reported that both Latvian and English were their second-strongest languages (see Table 1; Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2023).

TABLE 7 Self-Ranked Second Language Proficiency

	Finnish/Latvian	English	Both Finnish/Latvian and English	Total
Finnish sample	62 (46.61%)	61 (45.86%)	10 (7.51%)	133
Latvian sample	46 (50.54%)	30 (32.96%)	15 (16.48%)	91
Samples together	108 (48.2%)	91 (40.6%)	25 (11.2%)	224

N = 224

In terms of the frequency of language use, in Finland, Finnish was cited as the most spoken language outside of the home (54), with English (41) and Russian (38) being the second most used, in roughly equal amounts. The majority of the respondents in the Latvian sample (72) reported speaking Russian outside of the home. The use of Latvian (16) outside the home was reported by a small number of respondents, while the use of English (3) was hardly ever reported. Russian was by far the most frequently used language in the Latvian sample, although Finnish and English appeared to play a significant role in Finland (see Table 2; Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2023). Therefore, it is important to look into the connections between reported language use and CI and CP.

TABLE 8 Most Used Languages Outside of the Home

	Russian	Finnish/Latvian	English	Total
Finnish sample	38 (28.57%)	54 (40.60%)	41 (30.82%)	133
Latvian sample	72 (79.12%)	16 (17.58%)	3 (3.29%)	91
Samples together	110 (49.10%)	70 (31.25%)	44 (19.64%)	224

N = 224

Drawing on the analysis of the data collected from both countries (N = 224), we can further support that in terms of CI, the participants who indicated proficiency in either of the local languages (Finnish or Latvian) also scored higher in their CI in the destination country (Finland or Latvia). In terms of CP, we did not find a relationship between the respondents' language proficiency and their CP scores in either country. When it comes to actual language use, respondents who used local languages more often showed higher CI results compared to those who predominantly spoke English or Russian. Accordingly, those who reported using the local language the most showed lower CP scores. However, those who reported using the Russian language the most had the highest CP scores. These findings illustrate how using the local language goes hand in hand with a decrease in the preference for the culture of origin and an increase in CI.

Clearly, the participants' CP scores were not significantly affected by proficiency in the local language. However, despite the relatively small effect size, there was a statistically significant correlation between the participants' CI scores and their language proficiency. Beyond linguistic competence, the language that was said to be used the most outside the home was what contributed the most to the explanation of the variation in CI and CP. Low CP scores were substantially correlated with reported local language use outside the house ( $M = -.16$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). Meanwhile, higher CP scores were associated with reported usage of the Russian language outside the house ( $M = 1.29$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ). I will further discuss these findings in the next chapter.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation investigated how the Russian-speaking diaspora and media in Finland and Latvia formed and evolved. I delved deeper into the question of Russian speakers' acculturation, focusing in particular on the function of the news media and the participants' language proficiency and use. Such comparative studies examining language use preferences, news media preferences, and acculturation among Russian speakers are scarce. By examining the situation in the context of Latvia and Finland, this paper contributes to this field of study. Furthermore, by using quantitative methods, this research advances knowledge of linguistic minorities' practices and trends, particularly in countries where minorities' real or imagined countries of origin and countries of destination are bound by tense political ties that have implications for daily life. The study sets the stage for further explorations into key factors influencing immigrants' well-being, particularly in the realms of news media engagement and language use. The intricate interplay between biculturalism, duration of stay, and acculturation outcomes provides nuance that can shed light on the well-being of immigrants in different contexts. The following chapter offers a discussion of the study's main findings.

### 6.1 Cultural Involvement and Cultural Preference of Russian Speakers

Within the scope and reach of this study, which was based on survey data collected from both countries (N = 224), participants' CI and CP orientations were found to be close to a middle point, which indicates biculturalism (Carlson & Güler, 2018; Szapocznik et al., 1980). In terms of Berry's (1970, 1997) four acculturation strategies, it can be seen as leaning toward the integration outcome, as the respondents were similarly involved with their culture of origin (Russian) and culture of destination (Finnish or Latvian). This integration orientation, despite some reservations (see Rudmin, 2003; Schinkel, 2018; Stonequist, 1935), is

considered an optimal outcome both for the migrant and other parts of society from the theoretical standpoint, as well as in terms of the current policies in Europe (Berry, 2005; Berry & Kalin, 1995; Klarenbeek, 2019). It is worth noting that while all survey participants in Finland came from abroad and the duration of stay in Finland averaged 12.1 years, almost half of the respondents in Latvia were born in Latvia, and their average duration in Latvia was 28.8 years. Looking at studies conducted in the 2000s, the length of time spent in the host country positively affects acculturation (e.g., Ward et al., 1998). On the contrary, in the case of this study, Russian speakers' longer length of stay, for example, in Latvia, did not show any significant difference in terms of CI. This finding is in line with previous studies, which showed that the sheer fact of living in the country does not appear to have an immediate impact on how immigrants acculturate (Miglietta & Tartaglia, 2009). However, Miglietta and Tartaglia (2009) asserted that length of stay aids in improving local language ability while decreasing the intake of country of origin media. This will be discussed in the following subsections on news media engagement and language.

### **6.1.1 News Media Engagement and Acculturation**

The analysis showed that the majority of the respondents in both countries reported engaging more frequently with "non-Russian" news media sources than with "Russian" ones (Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2022). This goes somewhat against what was predicted by most prior literature in the case of the Latvian sample. However, this finding is supported by Kaprāns and Juzefovičs (2020), who studied Latvia's Russian-speaking audiences and contended that younger Russophones use fewer "Russian" news media outlets in their daily lives than the older TV-era group. Miglietta and Tartaglia (2009) also argued that reduced ethnic media use is linked to a longer length of stay in the country of destination. Despite this outcome, the picture becomes more nuanced when we look at the details and samples separately. For instance, the finding that the Latvian respondents preferred the culture of origin (in this case, Russian) more than the Finnish sample was a statistically significant point of difference in the data. This finding resonates with the stronger presence of diasporic media and more severe discontent in political and information spaces in Latvia compared to Finland (Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2022). It is also interesting to note that respondents from both samples who indicated that they accessed more "Russian" news media sources had higher scores on the CP index. This reflects a higher preference for the culture of origin (Russian) among those whose media preferences also lean toward the Russian point of view. This phenomenon might be related to how strongly minority members identify with their ethnic group and how they perceive their group to be superior to the national majority, which in turn defines their attitudes toward the outgroup (Roccas et al., 2008). In their study of Russian migrants in Finland, Mahonen et al. (2014) argued that high levels of ethnic superiority eliminated the positive association between ethnic identification and support for multiculturalism. In other words, perceived superiority is linked to



more unfavorable opinions against the national majority (Mahonen et al., 2014), and this may also be extended to local news content.

In general, local media use in the country of destination has been thought to foster acculturation (e.g., Croucher & Kramer, 2017). However, using media from the country of origin may be connected with decreased engagement in specific circumstances, such as the one in this study involving Russian speakers residing in neighboring countries where there are historically tense relations, causing conflicting media landscapes and a somewhat politicized diaspora (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Sotkasiira, 2017). Some scholars have suggested that media consumption should be balanced between home and host country media, facilitating a smooth acculturation process (Lim & Pham, 2016). However, this balancing act may not be simple in the context of conflicting media landscapes. Looking at the study's findings, only a small percentage of respondents in each country reported non-engagement with any media. These respondents exhibited the same propensity toward CP as those who reported using non-Russian news sources. This result is consistent with Davydova-Minguet (2019) and Sotkasiira (2017), whose research revealed that some Russian speakers in Finland were "burned out" from having to navigate between the two information camps (Russian and non-Russian), and as a result, they decided to completely cut back on their media consumption. This particular group warrants further attention from media scholars and acculturation researchers alike.

### **6.1.2 Language Proficiency and Acculturation**

On the topic of language, the analysis revealed that the participants' CP scores were not related to their proficiency in the local language. However, despite the relatively small effect size, a statistically significant correlation between CI scores and language proficiency emerged. This was no surprise, as it is consistent with previous research on the significance of local language proficiency in acculturation (Arola, 2017; Vuori, 2015). In the context of Italy, Miglietta and Tartaglia (2009) found that greater proficiency in the language of the destination country promotes adaptation and affects emotional attachment, both directly and indirectly.

In the Finnish context, the Finnish language was reported to be the main means of communication for most participants. This can be due to several reasons: the traditional nature of the diaspora in Finland (Khalimzoda, 2023), the 10-15-times smaller Russian-speaking population than in Latvia, the lack of opportunities in languages other than Finnish (Nshom, Sadaf & Khalimzoda, 2022), and the types of integration programs that Finland offers (Hytti & Paananen, 2003). These include financial support within the duration of the integration program, language and professional education training, and employment guidance for a limited duration of time (full-time students and employed people are ineligible for such programs), which in many ways exceed the kinds of programs that are offered in Latvia and beyond. In the Latvian sample, Russian speakers reported predominantly using Russian outside of the home, which is primarily related to the accidental nature of the Russian diaspora.

Looking beyond language proficiency, it was the language that was reported to be used the most outside the home that explained a greater part of the variation in CI and CP. The reported use of the local language outside the home was significantly related to low CP, while the reported use of the Russian language in everyday life outside the home was related to higher CP. Therefore, we suggest that while language competency (or fluency; see Pisarenko, 2006) may be used to explain the features and processes of acculturation, it may be particularly helpful to focus on the languages people actually report using on a daily basis (see Dewaele & Stavans, 2014). Despite the surprisingly high rate of English used outside the home in the Finnish context, which is correlated with a higher CI score than Russian, it still could not reach the high CI score explained by the local language. Studies concentrating on bilingual societies have shown that in some situations, segmenting linguistic competence may be a more reliable starting point. For instance, Lapresta-Rey et al. (2021) demonstrated that immigrants' knowledge of one local language—Spanish—could be advantageous from the perspective of immediate employment, whereas their knowledge of another—Catalan—was connected to higher social mobility and increased income in the long run. If this is the case, English can be helpful as a quick solution to get through in Finland. However, local language knowledge and use are likely to be connected to higher social mobility and better cultural adaptation in the long run. Grigoryev and Berry (2017) found that the language proficiency of immigrants working in Belgium positively influenced their socioeconomic adaptation in two ways: directly (better language proficiency predicted better socioeconomic adaptation) and indirectly (better language proficiency promoted the participants' preference for integration).

## **6.2 Limitations and Further Research**

There are several limitations to this study. In a time of increased dependency, transnationality, and growing polarization, such topics of study require more time and resources to shed light on each and every aspect of acculturation. In this regard, the instrument used here to operationalize the acculturation process was unable to delve deep enough to ruminate every such aspect. Thus, only a large quantity of people's self-reflections on statements given at a certain time and place were investigated. Looking into the content of what this methodology captured in actuality, I can clearly see that this research was not as comprehensive as I wished. Therefore, I would strongly encourage future researchers to consider conducting in-depth interviews with the same set of participants to further understand their choices and elaborate on the process of meaning making, especially the themes and narratives they might provide. Although I had planned to do so, it was not possible to fit such interviews into the duration of the dissertation work.

A relatively low number of respondents in this study further limited the findings' applicability. Given the reactions to this study from Russian speakers

in large Facebook groups, many potential respondents seemed dubious about the study's intentions or expressed their dislike for the topic in general. This study illustrated a relationship between (self-assessed) language and acculturation, but more studies are needed to determine how common such patterns are within the broader population. It would also be important to develop more nuanced ways of measuring language and media use in different contexts, such as at home, at work, or in society overall. The way in which we operationally define media engagement may also be insufficient. This is even more the case with the categorization of the media outlets as Russian and non-Russian, as the nature and format of news media providers are prone to change over time. It might also be that some media outlets do report impartially in certain areas but develop partiality or commentary style journalism in other topics where they might be biased or have their interest. This necessitates looking at this study as a snapshot of the situation in the 2020s. Further research could explore news media use to better understand the reasons behind the preference for certain news providers because media exposure does not exclude ideas opposing a given message. A small group of respondents indicated not following any news outlets, which is an invitation to further understand the justifications and their possible consequences. Another prospective study in this regard would be the Telegram channels and the social media groups where admins play an editorial role in spreading certain types of news or in orienting the direction of the shared news toward one's own agenda via commentary. Such groups have great potential to turn into echo chambers in which Russian speakers may end up being.

### **6.3 Conclusions and Implications**

As research progresses, theoretical frameworks often evolve from initial linear concepts to more circular and spiral models. Acculturation theories, now confronted with dynamic human practices in a world fraught with historical and contemporary challenges, consider multifaceted factors influencing how diasporic populations negotiate their acculturation. This negotiation predominantly depends on motivations, capabilities, contexts amplifying historical narratives or traumas, attitudes, and social, cultural, and political engagement with the place and its people.

Applied beyond its original context, the CI and CP scales proved effective when tested in the context of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland. The scales yielded continuous, bidirectional results, capturing involvement with Russian, Finnish, and Latvian contexts while addressing CPs. This opens a new chapter in the scales' application across contexts, acknowledging and incorporating the criticisms presented in the limitations section.

To push beyond the current state of the art, I demonstrated how such measures benefit from creative interventions, as exemplified here by the inclusion of language and news media aspects atop acculturation.

This study underscores how news media use is directly related to acculturation, with the dual nature of domestic and international hybrid media potentially leading to a “twofold absence” (Sayad, 1999) – an absence from home and a lack of proper integration in the destination country. The multifaceted use of media can also result in “bifocality” (Vertovec, 2004), emphasizing the diaspora’s lives lived “here” and “there” in both current and past societies. Importantly, these modes of media engagement, as revealed in this study, contribute to the acculturation process. This is an area that certainly requires more attention in the future, as the impacts of media use on the processes related to immigration and acculturation are likely to grow in importance.

This study looked into the context of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland and explored existing literature in multiple languages. This attempt was made in an effort to draw parallels between the Latvian and Finnish cases while acknowledging their differences. Given the significant number of Russian speakers and the recent influx of Ukrainian refugees alongside a surge in asylum applications from Russian citizens in Finland, the topics of societal integrity, cohesion, and future prosperity warrant urgent further research. The combination of the acculturation scale with the media and language domains provided valuable insights into the study participants, offering information pertinent to countries with diasporic communities and the diaspora itself. Such information could potentially facilitate diasporas’ integration and well-being.

### **6.3.1 Recommendations for the Public, Private, and Other Sectors**

Based on the studies included in this doctoral thesis, I propose the following practical recommendations for those working with issues related to immigration and acculturation.

*Inclusion of English.* The importance of international lingua francas, such as the English language, should not be overlooked. In both the Latvian and Finnish contexts, English serves as a bridge for newcomers, given the increasing number of migrants using English as a means of communication. This is especially true in the Finnish context.

*Context and Collaboration.* It is important to recognize the significance of context, the sense of home, accommodation, and collaborative efforts in the development of society and services alongside the acculturation of migrated individuals. Very recent initiatives, such as Public Broadcaster YLE’s Russian language service Yle Novosti’s ‘Накипело? Обсудим! [Boiling over? Let's discuss] program, which addresses user-voted topics, could play a crucial role in engaging with migrated populations, addressing their concerns, and amplifying their voices.

*Media Diversity.* It would be important to encourage news media organizations to maintain neutral reporting practices while diversifying content with commentary or discussion programs to showcase diverse opinions in the news evaluation process.

*Whole Society Approach.* For the societies in question, I propose adopting a holistic approach to accommodation and engagement, reinforcing the idea that migrated individuals are residents or (future) citizens valued by the country.

*Support for Research and Advocacy.* There is a growing need for support for research and advocacy projects focusing on migration-related issues.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations for Migrated Individuals**

I propose the following practical recommendations for those working to make their current societies a place they can call home.

*Language Investment.* It is important to recognize the importance of local languages and to invest seriously in improving proficiency. An increased understanding of the local language enhances CI and contributes to social capital and well-being, which can be considered domains of acculturation.

*Avoiding Absence.* Avoid a twofold absence by actively engaging with both the country of residence and the country of origin and their media. Local media play a significant role in keeping people up to date in the current society. It is also a window into people's thinking and the way society functions.

*Proactivity and Exploration.* Despite the challenges of relocation and associated stress, it is important to remain proactive in exploring the host country via easy-to-access activities offered by the city, universities, non-governmental and other organizations.

*Engaging with Society.* Migrated individuals should actively engage with the local environment and inquire about and learn why certain aspects of life function in specific ways (e.g., healthcare, schools, and other institutions and services). Meaningful interactions and quality contact can break prejudices and negative perceptions.

*Positive Social Circles.* Migrated individuals should surround themselves with positively oriented individuals who understand the pros and cons of life in the given country rather than entrench themselves in echo chambers and bubbles, especially in social media.

## SUMMARY IN FINNISH/TIIVISTELMÄ SUOMEKSI

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee venäjänkielisten akkulturaatiota (kulttuurillinen osallistuminen ja mieltymys) Suomessa ja Latviassa. Tutkimuksessa pyritään ymmärtämään, miten venäjänkieliset Suomessa ja Latviassa suhtautuvat nykyisen kotimaansa kulttuuriin ja miten akkulturaation prosessi liittyy uutismedian käyttöön ja kieleen. Tutkimusasetelma painottaa historiallisen kontekstin merkitystä venäjänkielisten nykytilanteen ymmärtämiseksi. Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan venäjänkielisen median historiaa ja nykytilaa alkaen Venäjän keisarikunnan ajasta Latviassa (1710) ja Suomessa (1809), neuvostoajan (1940–1990) kautta neuvostoliiton jälkeiseen aikaan (1991–2021). Tutkimus tarjoaa vastauksia kysymyksiin venäjänkielisen uutismedian ja diasporan yhtäläisyyksistä ja eroista Suomessa ja Latviassa sekä uutismedian käytön ja kielitaidon sekä kielen käyttämisen yhteyksistä akkulturaatioon.. Kyselytutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että enemmistö vastaajista seuraa enemmän 'ei-venäläistä' kuin 'venäläistä' uutismediaa molemmissa maissa. Ne vastaajat, jotka ilmoittivat käyttävänsä enemmän 'venäläisiä' uutislähteitä, osoittivat suurempaa mieltymystä alkuperäistä (venäläistä) kulttuuria kohtaan.

Kyselytutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että kielitaidon ja akkulturaation välillä oli tilastollisesti merkitsevä korrelaatio. Suomalaisessa otoksessa suomen kieli oli päivittäisen viestinnän pääasiallinen väline, kun taas Latviassa vastaajat ilmoittivat käyttävänsä enimmäkseen venäjää kodin ulkopuolella. Tutkimus tarjoaa näkökulmia ymmärtää venäjänkielisten maahanmuuttajien ja vähemmistön akkulturaatiota ja suhtautumista nykyisten asuinmaidensa kulttuuriin, kieleen ja uutismediaan.

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# **ORIGINAL PAPERS**

## **I**

### **THE HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA AND DIASPORAS IN LATVIA AND FINLAND**

by

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Preprint.

# The history of the Russian-language media and diasporas in Latvia and Finland

Ilkhom Khalimzoda

## Abstract

European and Russian media narratives and perceived realities are in confrontation. Russian speakers living in Latvia and Finland, a neighboring country to Russia, have to navigate and negotiate their identity and belongingness under this information confrontation (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016). Although different in many ways, these two cases present sufficient historical parallel(s) to explore, and that can be crucial for the current state of the knowledge. This study is an attempt to demonstrate how to write the history of the Russian-language media and diasporas in Latvia and Finland. The analysis begins with the historical Russian conquest of today's Latvia (1710) and Finland (1809), continues with the Soviet era (1940-1990), and ends with the post-soviet transformation (1991-2021). By bringing the existing literature into dialogue, this paper discusses the similarity and differences between the cases.

**Keywords:** accidental diaspora; diasporic media; comparative research; Russian-language media, media history

## Introduction

This paper is part of a larger project studying Russian speakers' acculturation and media activity in two Baltic Sea Region countries of Finland and Latvia. In this regard, investigating the history of Russian-language media hand-in-hand with the Russian diasporas is critical, due to the historical contact with Russia and developments related to that. That is hard to comprehend without exploring the genesis of Russian-language media and diasporas in Latvia and Finland. That has brought a question: How to write the history of the Russian-language media and diasporas in Latvia and Finland? This is an attempt to answer this question, in an organic form of bibliography, composed in chronological order through certain political periods. This study follows Bastiansen's suggestion of a methodology that uses chronology and periodization as analytical tools (Bastiansen, 2008).

Why Latvia and Finland? Latvia and the other Baltic countries from the time of independence (1991) and entrance to the EU (2004) have been vocal against Russia's foreign policies (Ciziunas, 2008) and historical narratives. This stance can be understood through their traumatic past and the contemporary sense of threat, which multiplied especially after the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 and in 2022.

Why is it important to analyze the history of Russian-language media in countries neighboring modern-day Russia? First, this kind of comparative research presents a possibility to understand the dynamics of media at specific times and societies. Second, pro-European and pro-Russian media narratives and perceived realities have been in a confrontation on geopolitical issues (Fayzullalev, 2017). This poses tensions and confusion on an individual and the societal level because oftentimes the Russians and Russian speakers living in Latvia and Finland have to navigate and negotiate their identity and belongingness under this information confrontation (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016). Although different in many ways, we assume these two cases present sufficient historical parallel(s) to explore, and that can be crucial for the current state of the knowledge.

### **Russian-language media and the diasporas**

Defining the Russian-language media abroad in one single term is not a simple task. Depending on the time, political regime, producer, and consumer, the way it is defined changes. In this article, when the Russian-empire period is analyzed, it is the Russian Press described. During the Soviet era, the Soviet press is the main term. For the post-Soviet era, it even becomes more complicated as media landscapes of the neighboring states may include ethnic/minority media that ethnic Russians themselves have launched and the media that enters directly from Russia to the neighboring countries through a cable-TV operator, satellite, or through the internet. Finland and Latvia also offer public broadcasting in the Russian – language. Therefore, the term Russian-language media is used and highlighted here since the focus of this study is the media in Latvia and Finland that is launched by Russians for the Russian-speaking audience (Berdnikovs, 2016; Kaprāns & Juzefovičs, 2020). To see more studies on the typology of the Russian-language media around the world and the diasporic media discussions, please see Voronova, Voronova, and Yagodin, (2019).

In most cases, Russian-language media is for and about the diasporas. The term ‘diaspora’ is widely used and contested in the humanities. It was initially intended to describe people (Jewish community) who were forcibly relocated but remained emotionally, imaginatively, or politically committed to their homeland (Brubaker, 2000). However, it is now more commonly used to describe people who identify with a geographic location but live elsewhere. Budarick (2014) also described the shift in the

studies of diaspora from a specific definition to a wider one, which is not only fixed through ethnicity and homeland but also through connectivity.

## **Historical Overview of the Formation and Development of Russian-Language Media in Latvia**

### *The Era of Russian Control*

In 1710, the Russians conquered Riga and Estonia in the aftermath of the Great Northern War between Sweden and Russia. Russians perceived the Baltic Sea Eastern shores as a “window to Europe” (Bikovs, Brūge, and Spruds, 2018). According to Oksana, in 1816, the first Russian-language print media outlet in Latvia, *Russian Weekly* in Riga, was established (Chelyseva, 2015). It was a summary of important, general, and entertaining news, brief stories, and comments on other content. For early accounts of comparison, this was not all about the Russian-language press. In 1822, *Latviešu Avīze* [Latvian Newspaper], the first weekly newspaper in Latvian, was launched, followed by the weekly *Tas Latviešu Ļaužu Draugs* [Friend of the Latvian People] in 1832, issued by the Lutheran Church, in which the first journalists who wrote in Latvian were present. The latter reported on the latest events both at home and abroad. For the news from abroad, the weekly used the German press as a source. As reported in the newspaper *Latvijas Luterānis in 2012*, a weekly *Friends of the Latvian People* wrote also on the issue of Latvians converting to Catholicism. The Russian government understood that the story appealed to Latvians also not to convert to Orthodoxy, which took place en masse in many Vidzeme congregations at that time. Then Governor-General J. Golovins suspended the publication of the newspaper (Admin, 2012).

In 1889, a new policy of ‘Russification’ was put in place, aimed to reduce autonomy of the autonomies, including the Baltic provinces. The introduction of the Russian language in administration, the courts, and education was meant to reduce the predominance of the German and Latvian languages. These policies also banned the Latvian language from the public sphere, especially the schools. With progressing industrialization in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, Russian language mass communication also progressed. (Messinger, 2010).

## *From the 1900s Onward*

The 20th century arrived with an eruption- the 1905 Russian Revolution - and during that time, the idea of an independent Latvian state was openly discussed. Mass communication, compared to the early stages of strong censorship, had now become a crucial element of political change. Latvia broke away from the Russian Empire and declared its independence in 1918, and the free development of its press began after 1920. The short period of independence enjoyed by Latvia (1918–1940) was the heyday of its democratic, nationalist, and patriotic press (Shnaider, 2018). During the whole period of independence (1918-1940), Russians remained the biggest national minority in the country. In 1935, Russians amounted to 8.8% (206,499) of the total population in Latvia (MFA, 2015).

Russian-language media continued to flourish, and some of them were *Russkaya Zhizn* [Russian Life] (1920), *Russkoe Slovo* [Russian Word] (1932), and in 1933, *Golos Naroda* [Voice of the People] (Treijs, 1996). In Mikhail Gubin's (2019) article in *Sputnik Latvia* on Russian- language press in Latvia, it is stated that in total, more than 70 newspapers and 80 magazines in Russian were published in Latvia in the 1920s and 1930s. These newspapers held various views and represented different political forces (Gubin, 2019). Some newspapers published several hundred issues, others limited to three. In particular, the Russian-language newspaper *Segodnya* [Today] and its supplement *Segodnya Ponedelnik* [Today is Monday] were the most popular Russian-language newspapers. These publications quickly supplied readers with both local and foreign news (Shnaider, 2018). Famous Russian writers like Konstantin Balmont and Nadezhda Teffi sent their materials to it. The publication did not consider itself an émigré, it was a Latvian newspaper in Russian, quite loyal to the authorities, claims Gubin (2019). To Rihards Treijs, for many years, the newspaper *Segodnya* was published based on the principle of publishing by Russians for Russians uninformed (Treijs, 1996).

## *During The Era of the Latvian SSR*

In the summer of 1940, Latvia lost its independence and was occupied by the USSR. Historians note that the first decade of Soviet Latvia proved difficult. Several waves of mass deportation of at least 140,000 people from Latvia to Siberia occurred, most notably in 1949 (Lazda, 2005). The Russian community kept growing from 8.8%

(206,499) of the total population in 1935 to 34.0% (905,515) up to 1989. The Russian language dominated public life, including mass communication (Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2022; Spekke et al., 2019).

According to Konstantin Ranks, the Russian language became a lingua franca (Chelyseva, 2015). The most important newspapers were those of the Communist Party and the Komsomol, published both in Latvian and Russian languages. In 1953, 71 newspapers were published in Soviet Latvia, with a total circulation of 115,614 copies per year. In 1954, a television studio started operating in Riga. This marked the beginning of television journalism in Soviet Latvia. (Zasurskogo et al., 1975)

The film industry in the country developed quite rapidly. Already in 1946, *Lenfilm*, together with the Riga film studio, shot the black-and-white film *Sinovia* [Sons] (Shneider, 2018). By the end of the 1980s, the media in Latvia were able to get out of communist ideological pressure to present a liberal and national position, leading to the development of an informal alternative press.

The tension between the state-sponsored and alternative press kept growing. According to Janis Chakars, in 1988, the independence-minded newspaper *Atmoda* [Awakening] ran an article that griped central party claims e.g., ‘all Latvians were nationalist, anti-Russian, and sought to oust the Russians from Latvia (Chakars, 2010). Mass media was important to the Front’s efforts to strengthen its cause by attempting to create, and mobilize sympathizers and allies in Latvia (Chakars, 2010, 2016). On 4 May, the legislature passed a declaration to renew independence. Soviet efforts to restore the earlier situation culminated in violent incidents in Riga in January 1991. After a failed coup in Moscow in August, the Latvian legislatures declared full independence.

### *Russian Diaspora and their Media After 1990*

In the post-Soviet decade, much of the national media flourished as the economy became more liberalized (Spekke et al., 2019). Latvia quickly reoriented itself towards Western Europe, and the press system was restructured in 1991 (Locmele, 2016).

After regaining independence in 1991, Latvia did not immediately award citizenship to anyone whose forefathers arrived after June 1940 (during the Soviet era), a decision that primarily affected ethnic Russians. Citizenship was first granted based



on knowledge of the Latvian language and history (MFA, 2015). Similar to the situation of the Russian diaspora, Russian-language media lost in position, resources, and orientation, deployed a new trend - an attempt at the unification of Russian-language media in the Baltic States (Shnaider, 2018), as evidenced by the names of the newspapers published at that time shows, e.g., *Baltiyskiy Vremya* [The Baltic Times] (1989–1992), and *Baltiyskaya Gazeta* [Baltic Newspaper] (1990–1995). According to the *Russians of Latvia* website, a project by the Institute of the Russian Heritage of Latvia, by 2010, Russian-language media in Latvia was represented by 4 daily national newspapers, 11 weeklies, a dozen regional papers, and over 30 magazines on the most diverse topics (Admin, 2010).

One of the remarkable moments of post-independence is Russia's recovery and content-rich TV channels that also began re-transmission in Latvia through cable TV providers. Apart from the local news institutions in the Russian language, TV channels from Russia became an important source of information and entertainment, which also attracted the attention of the Latvian regulators of electronic mass media as well as a scholarly interest (Rožukalne, 2016).

For Russians in the Baltic states, belonging to a Russian-speaking community has become one of the most essential identifiers and markers of identity (Cheskin 2010). Russian diaspora's perceived political discrimination relates to non-integration into Latvian society (Pisarenko, 2006). Diaspora, which was formed accidentally after the tremendous political change that resulted in moving borders across Russian people (Brubaker, 2000), has its scar in memories. In addition, Russia's long-lasting rhetoric and state policy of protecting Russian speakers abroad (Kallas, 2016) further exacerbate the situation. Therefore, a parallel linguistic and information flow in Latvia has only grown more over time. Studies of media discourse in Latvia, for example (Cheskin 2010; Rožukalne 2010), have found a clear distinction in the structure and content of Latvian and Russian-language media. It is sometimes maintained that many of the country's media publications' preconceptions and intolerance assist in further demarcating, establishing, and perpetuating the differences between the two built communities, and hence have a very substantial impact on group identities (Cheskin, 2013).

## **Historical Overview of the Formation and Development of Russian Language Media in Finland**

### *In the Era of Autonomous Finland*

The Finnish War was fought between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Russian Empire from February 1808 to September 1809. As a result, Finland was added to the Russian Empire as the Grand Principality of Finland from 1809 to 1917. Russian - language media was not known to have existed in Finland before 1808. Rather, Swedish had been the prominent language. Russian publications subsequently emerged in Finland; these were primarily publications related to military affairs, military settlements, and religion (Shenshin, 2008; Viimaranta & Protassova, 2018). In July 1808, the first Russian point of view on military news was published by the order of the Russian commander in chief in Finland's only newspaper of that time, *Åbo Tidningar* [Turku Newspaper]. From then on, *Åbo Tidningar* became the Russian press agency, since Russians considered the formation of public opinion to be the main function of the press (Mikhailov, 2003). Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, media in Finland operated mostly in Swedish or Russian. Finnish language media emerged only slowly hand in hand with the emergence of nationalist movements. One of the early turning points of Russian rule was the 'February Manifesto' - a legislative act given by Emperor of Russia Nicholas II on 15 February 1899, defining the legislation order of laws concerning the Grand Duchy of Finland, which saw the beginning of the Russification policy. This was strongly opposed by most Finns. One among many rationales for this policy was to have greater control over the autonomy of Finland. This period brought the closure of some newspapers (Kauffman & Niinistö, 1998). Right after that, a few years before his assassination in the Helsinki Senate (1904), governor-general Bobrikov established the first news organization of the Russian government in the Grand Duchy of Finland, *Suomen Sanomat* [Finnish Newspaper]. *Suomen Sanomat* (also called *Finlyandskaya Gazeta* in its Russian - language translation) was published 3-6 times a week and lasted from 1900–1917.

In 1910, there were 12,307 Russians permanently living in Finland. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, only those Russians who acquired Finnish citizenship could. At that time, there were approximately 5000 of them (Niemi, 2007). From 1900 to 1917, more than 15 Russian-language periodicals were operating in Finland, mostly

issued by revolutionary parties in Vyborg. The longer-lived ones are listed in the detailed study of Mikhailov. Some examples of this were, *Ekonomist Finlandii* [The Economist of Finland] (1912–1917) a monthly publication. *Kauppalehti* magazine was founded in 1898 as *Torgovaya Gazeta* [Trade Newspaper], which still exists today, the editor of which was O.E. Yatinen. *Gelsingforsskiy prihodskoy listok* [Helsingfors parish leaflet] (1914–1917), published in Helsinki and contained religious literature e.g., about the history of the Finnish Orthodox Church (Mikhailov, 2003).

### *During the Era of Independent Finland*

The number of Russian media publications in Finland started to go down when Finland gained its independence in 1917. However, due to the need for a new wave of immigrants fleeing the Russian Revolution to seek asylum in Finland after 1917, media organizations were set up and press activities saw an increase once again. According to Kauranen & Tuori (2000), there were 33,000 Russian citizens in Finland in 1920, when the overall population in Finland was little more than three million (StatFin, 2017). Post-independence Russian-language media publications were, for the most part, published by Russian revolutionaries turned refugees. Many of these publications were preoccupied with the fate of their earlier homeland. Helsingin Sanomat newspaper reported, about 40 Russian- language periodicals appeared in Finland in the inter-war period (Kauranen & Tuori, 2000). Looking at the list provided by Mikhailov, the most relevant are, *Russkaya Listochka* [Russian Leaflet] (1918–1919), a daily newspaper, which embodied the protection of the interests of the Russian population of Finland, edited by P.I. Leontyev; *Novaya Russkaya Zhizn* [New Russian Life] (1919–1922) which was a daily newspaper published in Helsinki; *Dni Nashey Zhizni* [Days of Our Lives] which was a monthly magazine published by the Circle of Russian Youth in Finland, issued from May to August in 1923.

Helsinki was the most popular destination for Russian immigration after the First World War. Their activities, including the press that they set up, were flourishing. However, later this changed when many Russians in Finland had to leave the country during the Winter War (1939-1940) and a Continuation War (1941-1944), making France the new popular destination for Russian migrants (Mikhailov, 2003). The post-war period became a restarting point for the Russian community that remained in Finland. From the 1950s on, peaceful interstate relations - meaning a period without

armed conflicts onward enabled the Russian community to establish a cultural organization that, at a later stage, pushed Russian -language publications as one of its important initiatives.

The external environment favored the development and formation of Russian organizations such as the Russian Theatre, Russian Choir, Balalaika Orchestra, Russian Merchant Society, Sports Society YC-33, and the Union of Russian Artists (Mikhailov, 2003). Arguably, an important locomotive role was taken by the Russian Cultural-Democratic Union (RKDS) established in Finland, in the spring of 1945. As Mikhailov (2003) attests, meetings of all representatives of Russian cultural and public organizations took place and the above organizations became collective members of the Russian Cultural-Democratic Union in 1946, which served to coordinate the collective efforts, as it is evident from the early appearance of the *Information Bulletin* of the Union, edited by M.M. Savchenko in 1946. Later in 1947, Union's *Russian Journal* was published under the editorship of L.M. Lindeberg. In 1952, the bulletin was renamed to *Наша Жизнь* [Our Life] and published monthly.

Another crucial moment in the development of Russian language content was after 1956 when Finland began regular television transmissions. In her work on early commercial television in Finland, Keinonen (2012) describes the interest of the United States and the Soviet Union in the development of television in Finland. She states that “The Finnish media was one of the main interests of the communist regime. With this potential to become a part of the Eastern bloc, Finland was of interest also to the United States” for the very reason “...the Finnish Television was regarded as a potential medium of ideological propaganda” (Keinonen, 2012:177-178). That said, apart from the printed press of the Russophone diaspora, Finland continued to be under the influence of the geopolitical rivals after the Cold War politics, and these aspirations made the early commercial television a site of balancing between ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ (Keinonen, 2012).

### *Russian Diaspora and their Media After 1990*

The number of immigrants from the Soviet Union was only 4181 people in 1990 (Niemi, 2007). Apart from them, there have been also Finnish Russians who are the descendants of the “Old Russians” who stayed or have come to Finland in its early independence as well as the returning Ingrian Finns immediately after the dissolution

of the Soviet Union in 1991. The number of Russians as citizens of Russia in Finland in the year 2000 was 20,552, in the year 2002 was 24,336, and in the year 2007 was 26,211 (Niemi, 2007). In 2020, the Russian speakers were approximately about 87 000 (OSF, 2022) of whom the majority have moved from the former Soviet Union and Later from Russia (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016). According to Brubakers (2000) and Voronova, Voronova, and Yagodin (2019), constitutes a classical or traditional Russian diaspora.

The earliest Russian-language post-1990 media presence is covered for instance in Kauranen & Tuori's (2000) work on mapping minorities and their media. They specifically mention that in 2000, the Russian diaspora was the only minority language with its broadcast radio (here *Radio Sputnik*). They also listed six periodicals. These are *Pietarin Kauppatie* [Petersburg Trade Route] established in 1993; *Novye Rubezh* [New Horizons] established in 1999; *Rajalehti* [Border Journal], a bilingual magazine registered in 1992 to facilitate traffic between Russia and Finland. Currently, it has the title *Rajaviesti*; *Spektr*, a tabloid newspaper published ten times a year and registered in 2001; *Stop in Finland*, a monthly magazine aimed at a Russian audience in Russia; and *Radio Sputnik*, started in 1999, which was the only Russian language radio station operating in Finland (Kauranen & Tuori, 2000), which seized operation in 2018 (Radionytt, 2018). There is also the Finnish Public TV channel YLE which televises five-minute Russian-language news every day.

## **Comparison**

What does this historical investigation tell us? Exploring the genesis of the Russian-language media and diaspora in Finland and Latvia exerts appealing commonalities and differences. Such comparative studies exist in different contexts, e.g., Coleman and Rollett, (1997) and Cooper-Chen, (2005). Especially in Georgiou (2003)'s *Mapping Diasporic Media across the EU* – project. Analyzing bounded and distinct aspects across geographies was also presented by Blumler et al., (1992a). Following their footsteps, here are some key aspects in contrast. Similarities are presented first, and differences follow after.

## *Similarities*

First, in 1889, a policy of Russification put in place by the Tsar, aimed to reduce German autonomy in the Baltic provinces as well as to limit Finnish autonomy, played a significant role both, as a momentum for the Russian-language media and restraint for other media. This policy, however, has turned out to be a faux pas for the Empire in the short and long run, e.g., as seen in the Finnish case where, the active implementation of Russification by General Bobrikov, resulted in his murder by an activist in the Senate.

Second, after the political change amid the Russian October Revolution and the Latvian-Finnish independence (1917-1918), the situation and the role of mass media have improved in both countries. Compared to the early stages of strong censorship, now it has become a crucial element of political adjustment and freedom, also for the Russian - language media. As we can see from the 'era of independence', Russian-language media continued to flourish. In Latvia, more than 70 newspapers and 80 magazines in Russian were published between the 1920s and 1930s. Similar progress was noticed in Finland, especially due to the large number of Russian refugees escaping the unrest back in their homeland.

Third, Russian media and diaspora are still present in both countries and are a matter of everlasting societal issues. For example, the Russian diaspora's integration, dual citizenship, loyalty, media use, a political stance from one side, and prejudice and discrimination towards them from another side, have become an issue of societal relevance (Askola, 2022; Ekmanis, 2020; Nshom and Khalimzoda, 2020; Renvik, Jasinskaya-Lahti and Varjonen, 2020).

## *Differences*

Given the commonalities, there are notable distinctions that have changed the future of the Russian-language media landscape in Latvia and Finland largely, if not entirely.

First, Latvia lost its independence and was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940, followed by the Nazi occupation in 1941 and taken back again by the Soviets in 1944, where post-war Soviet media advanced. On the other hand, Finland fought in the Winter War (1939 -1940) and the Continuation War (1941-1944) as part of the Second World War and maintained its independence. During the wars, most of the Russian

refugees fled from Finland, which also diminished the pre-war Russian diaspora and Russian-language media presence bringing the number of Russians to the historical minimum.

Second, post-war period analyses signify that the Russian-language media in Finland had to begin swiftly from scratch, by the remaining Russian diaspora in the country who established cultural organizations that pushed Russian language publications already in 1946. Meanwhile, in the Soviet Latvian SSR in 1953, the number of Russians kept increasing rapidly, the Russian language became a *lingua franca*, and there were around 71 newspapers, with a total circulation of 115,614 copies per year.

Third, in the 1990s, Finland began receiving Russian immigrants from the Soviets and later from the Russian Federation, some of whom came for work, marriage, and some other reasons, whereas some of them were returning to Ingrian Finns. Therefore, the number of Russian speakers in Finland grew from 4181 in 1990 (Niemi, 2007) to 15,872 thousand in 1995 and to 28,205 in 2000. In 2021, there were around 87 000 Russian speakers (OSF, 2022). By the 2000s, there were around six Russian - language publications in Finland. These publications were primarily about trade, the life of the Russian diaspora in Finland, as well as information on Finnish life, laws, language, and customs. In early post-independent (1991 onwards) Latvia however, the Russian minority would form as 34.0% (905,515 people) of the total population.

Fourth, in addition to the previous great contrast that the number of Russians in Latvia excelled in the Finnish case, another significant contrast was in the nature of these two diasporas. The Russian diaspora in Finland was formed predominantly by people who have freely chosen Finland and left the Soviet Union or Russian Federation on their own, passing through the border, which represents more classical/traditional diaspora patterns. Whereas relocation of people from various regions of Russia to Soviet Latvia was more of a planned policy by the regime (Brubaker, 2000). This location was within the borders of the Soviet Union, within the same political and linguistic sphere, when all of a sudden, this large population found themselves in a new nation-state that is not anymore a 'Russian superpower state' as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, characterizing an accidental diaspora (Brubaker, 2000; Voronova, Voronova, & Yagodin, 2019).

Fifth, one of the remarkable differences in the post-Soviet Russian-language media landscape, there were more than five popular Russian TV channels (originating from Russia) that were re-transmitted in Latvia through cable TV providers, e.g., *REN Baltija*, *NTV MIR Baltic*, *PTP*, *CTC Baltija*. Thus, Russian channels have been an important source of information and entertainment, which also attracted the attention of Latvian politicians, lawmakers, and scholars (Rožukalne, 2016). In Finland however, except for a short-term appearance of one or two Russian TV (originating from Russia), there are no permanent and well-known re-transmissions found. In addition to that, Radio Sputnik also ceased operation in Finland in 2018.

Sixth, last, and foremost differences hold in the focus of the media organizations. As mentioned earlier, there were few Russian-language media in Finland and their content has been described as a traditional diasporic media, with more focus on local affairs and social integration. Whereas in Latvia, a large number of Russian-language media fields with disinformation (Kozlovs, 2020) and divisive content especially about politics and international affairs (Rislakki, 2014). This often results in a steadily picky portrayal of Latvia and the EU (Zakem et al., 2018) that goes beyond simply “being critical” and crosses over to being constantly negative (Muižnieks, 2011).

## **Discussion**

The current paper is an attempt to answer the question of how to write the history of Russian-language media and diasporas from the two distinct contexts. Organic form literature review in four languages Latvian, Finnish, Russian, and English has enabled me to bring various studies and relevant aspects into dialogue, reinforcing a few points for discussion. Russian-language media continues to be of importance in countries with Russian-speaking populations, especially those that border Russia. It is seen from the analysis and the contemporary literature that there is a sense of a persistent Russian presence as an information influence or a contraflow (Berzina, 2018; Molodikova, 2017) that is directed toward the Russian diaspora outside of the Russian borders, as well as, it is further reinforced and negotiated, by the Russian diaspora as a result of the first goal (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Kaprāns & Juzefovičs, 2020).

As marked earlier, during the next three decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the concentration of Russian-language media in Latvia was markedly higher than in Finland. This is obviously due to the one-third of the Latvian population



being ethnically Russian, as well as due to the mass media apparatus of Soviet Latvia, that is the organizations, journalists, and technical capabilities. After the independence, Russian-language media in Latvia transformed in its identity and scope, scramble for the attention of the Russian diaspora, and served as a political voice and defender, both in the societal and political processes, which in the long run, played a role in the division of the society into linguistically two distinct parallel worlds that often have conflicting agenda (Cheskin, 2013; Erbson, 2019). According to the study on the diversification of media content (Rožukalne, 2016), for Russian-speaking consumers to secure Latvian-generated content, it was found that Latvia's Russian diaspora believed that they do not feel a need for additional information channels because the variety of information provided by Russia's TV and radio channels is sufficient, which is practically problematized. For instance, Kozlovs (2020) argued that Russian-language media in Latvia is filled with disinformation, and its content is divisive, especially regarding politics and international affairs (Rislakki, 2014). Berdnikov (2016) stated that that also happens to fit the audience's expectation as well as due to the unprofessional journalism that fails to check the source of information under time pressure.

Meanwhile, in Finland, a study has found that the Russian diaspora often describes the Russian media as propaganda and the Finnish media as less propagandist (Sotkasiira, 2017). In times of war (e.g., Russia and Ukraine in 2014) when the tension in the media landscape intensifies, some Russian speakers also opt for transnational and diverse media use as a strategy to minimize the polarization. These are the individuals that actively expose themselves to multiple versions of reality to develop their realities through the comparison of various media (Sotkasiira, 2017). According to Viimaranta and Protassova (2018), consumption and demand for Finland's public media in Russian (Yle Novosti) is growing, however, the study revealed that the Russian diaspora would wish to see a more positive portrayal of Russians in Finnish media (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016, Sotkasiira, 2017). Contrary to the high demand for the Russian generated content (from abroad) in the Latvian case (Rožukalne, 2016), the majority of the Russian diaspora follows both Finnish and Russian media productions (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016) in Finland, and the need for media made in Russia is lower

(Khalimzoda and Siitonen, 2022), compared to the Latvian case. Closer of the Radio Sputnik in Finland in 2018 is another example<sup>1</sup>.

Another aspect revealed in this extensive review is the difference between the Latvian and Finnish Russian-speaking diaspora. This is first and foremost due to the nature of the accidental Russian diaspora in Latvia and the classical Russian diaspora in Finland. The majority of the Russians in Latvia belong to families who had settled in Soviet Latvia permanently. Thus, they did not consider themselves to be immigrants. When their status unexpectedly changed from privileged citizens of a great power into precariously situated minorities as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, they have become an accidental diaspora through the rapid, traumatic shifting of borders across populations. The larger accidental diaspora demands a greater need for the type of Russian-language media that is present in Latvia because media and audience co-create and feed each other.

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that these were the findings before the 2022 war in Ukraine.

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## II

### **RUSSIAN SPEAKERS' MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND ACCULTURATION IN FINLAND AND LATVIA**

by

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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# Russian speakers' media engagement and acculturation in Finland and Latvia

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## Abstract

This comparative study looks into Russian speakers' acculturation in Finland and Latvia by contrasting their cultural involvement and cultural preference Carlson and Güler (*J Int Migr Integr* 19:625–647, 2018. 10.1007/s12134-018-0554-4) with their self-reported news media use. Drawing on survey data collected from both countries (N = 224), the findings show that participants in both countries scored closer to biculturalism than monoculturalism. Majority of the respondents report predominantly engaging with non-Russian news media sources. However, regardless of the societal context, respondents who were more engaged with Russian news media sources also scored higher on cultural preference (towards Russian culture of origin). Further significant differences and implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** Acculturation, Media use, Migration, Ethnic media, Russian media, Latvia, Finland

## Introduction

Studies into immigration and acculturation have a long history and continue to be of importance to contemporary societies (Gordon, 1964; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Olsson, 2021; Šūpule, 2021; Tiilikainen et al., 2019). Studying immigration and acculturation enables us to explore the variety of dimensions involved in the process of move, from people's motivation to leave their earlier home, their journey, and experiences in their destination country, to the enablers and barriers in their acculturation processes, and involvement with their country of origin and destination. In short, acculturation studies are interested in how people adapt to their changing environments and situations. Acculturation is a complex process that may cause more changes in one area of human thought and behaviour than another (Chun et al., 2003).

Earlier studies highlight the importance of communicative patterns, especially media use, in the acculturation process (Croucher & Kramer, 2017; Dalisay, 2012; Torkington et al., 2020). While the role of media was recognized already decades ago, the picture is nowadays made more complex by the fact that media use has become so fluid and international, including various types of hybrid media (Chadwick, 2013) and being able to tap into media content from different geographical and linguistic areas (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Golova, 2020; Toivanen et al., 2021). This study contributes to the body of

research on media use and acculturation by exploring Russian speakers' involvement and preference of news media in the context of Latvia and Finland.

The term *Russian speakers* is used here to cover most other relevant subcategories, such as recent immigrants from Russia, Russian minorities living in a country, citizens of Latvia and Finland whose first language is Russian (Pisarenko, 2006), as well as other ethnicities living in these two countries, with a background from the former Soviet Republics that use Russian as a first or common language. In this study, we specifically focus on Russian speakers of Russian origin, whether they were born in Latvia or Finland, or moved there later on in their lives.

In Latvia, Russian speakers are the biggest ethnic minority. In Finland, they are the second largest linguistic minority after Finnish Swedes (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). The motivation to study Russian speakers stems from the peculiarity in the historical and current interstate relations (Berzina, 2018) and the distinctive position that Russian speakers held in Latvia and Finland in different times of the history, e.g. during the Russian Empire, Soviet Union and after.

In diverse European societies, understanding the triggers of division, conflict and cohesion is an important aspect to consider. For example, conflicting media landscape (Muižnieks, 2011) between the countries can pose challenges for the news media user, from the perspective of their country of origin and the society they currently live in Davydova-Minguet et al. (2019). Both in Latvia and Finland, apart from the national media, there is also Russian language media that provide news both from inside and from outside the country (Rozukalne, 2017). This work explores which types of news sources are used predominantly by the participants of this study and whether and how news media consumption relates to cultural involvement and cultural preference of the participants, in between the country of origin (Russia) and destination (Latvia or Finland).

## Theoretical background

### Theorizing acculturation

Acculturation is a process that has been studied under a variety of labels, from assimilation to adaptation to cultural fusion and adjustment. The term assimilation has been used more by sociologists, and acculturation more by anthropologists (Gordon, 1964) and by social psychologists (Berry, 1970, 1997; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Liebkind et al., 2016). What is central in all is the change emanating from interpersonal and intergroup contact. Actually, the initial definitions of assimilation included similar characteristics to how we understand integration today. According to Gordon (1964), early conceptualizations of acculturation included the idea of mutual change. For example, the earliest and most authoritative conceptualization of acculturation suggested by anthropologists Redfield et al. (1936), reads:

*Acculturation as phenomena which appears when groups of individuals having different cultures come into the first-hand contact that is continuous, with subsequent change in the heritage culture patterns of either or both groups... (p. 149).*

However, over the years the term assimilation gained ground, proposing that full identification with and participation by immigrants in a new destination culture would only

be possible by depriving identification with and participation in the migrant's culture of origin (LaFromboise et al., 1963; Stonequist, 1935). This evolution of assimilation as a zero-sum then spread to the term acculturation, eroding acculturation from its original meaning so that it became practically synonymous with assimilation in terms of unidimensionality (Gordon, 1964). Therefore, early measures (operationalizations) of assimilation/acculturation only gave respondents the option to choose between 'origin' and 'destination' cultures on a zero-sum scale with one cultural alternative at either end (Carlson & Güler, 2018, p. 626). Today, the term assimilation is deployed to mean 'giving up' one's culture of origin to fully identify with the culture of destination as one of the possible long-term outcomes of the acculturation process, which is also referred to as one of the four strategies of adaptation (integration, assimilation, marginalization, separation) (Berry, 1970, 1980, 2005).

Despite LaFromboise et al. (1963) overview of the previous unidimensional models of assimilation, they concluded that the bidimensional model of biculturalism is more appropriate. This bidimensional challenge to the unidimensional assimilationist perspective (Berry, 1970; Zak, 1973; Berry, 2005; Carlson & Güler, 2018) asserted that connections to destination and origin cultures do not necessarily have to vary inversely. This approach has since become the dominant theoretical understanding for acculturation research (Schwartz et al., 2010; Carlson & Güler, 2018) and is also the approach adopted in this study. More specifically, we adopt Carlson and Güler's (2018) cultural involvement (CI) and cultural preference (CP) indices, whose theoretical and methodological usefulness and applicability was originally illustrated in their work with Turkish immigrants to the USA.

### **Media and acculturation**

Many variables have been identified as playing a role in the acculturation process. Especially in the more recent acculturation research, scholars have pointed out to the role media may serve in the acculturation process as an enabler of communication with the host culture (Croucher & Kramer, 2017), as promoting the acquisition of the national language and knowledge of the society (Dalisay, 2012), and as increasing exposure and accommodation to aspects of the destination culture (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008). Referring to earlier theorizing in acculturation, Dalisay (2012) points out that communication is the 'primary vehicle' that enables immigrants' acculturation to their new social environment (p. 149). For example, immigrants themselves may become producers of media content for other co-ethnics (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019) and for the general population.

Today, there is a rising concern around the media's role in strengthening or dividing societies (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Kraidy & Murphy, 2008). Against this backdrop, diasporic media has been scrutinized, along with the immigrant-sending country's foreign policy and interest in influencing what they often view as 'compatriots abroad'. Here, it must be noted that the whole concept of diaspora is evolving from its original meaning. For example, it is argued that diaspora today can be understood as a 'more cosmopolitan, hybrid social agent' (Budarick, 2014, p. 143). In our study, we define diaspora as connectivity (Tsagarousianou, 2014) with a common language (Russian) and an imagined common civilization (historical motherland), not only through ethnicity.

A similar conceptualization of diaspora has been adopted also by other scholars (e.g., Voronova et al., 2019). By diasporic media in the context of this particular study, we refer to Russian-language media that operates as a platform for the Russian community's self-expression and representation (Bailey et al., 2007; Byford, 2014; Voronova et al., 2019). In other words, diasporic media in this paper refers to the Russian media that is produced in the country of origin (Russia) and in the country of residence (Latvia or Finland) by Russian speakers.

At present, there is a need to examine the roles that immigrants' use of both diasporic media and destination country (national) media play in the acculturation process (Croucher & Kramer, 2017; Shumow, 2010). This need is emphasized by the ambiguity that Dalisay (2012) brings out referring to Kraidy and Murphy's (2008) concept of 'translocalism', which entails that the ethnic/diasporic media in local context influenced by foreign countries could simultaneously resist or accommodate aspects of destination culture. It is also important because the potential exists that diasporic media can influence immigrants to resist the destination society's stance (e.g., DeFleur & DeFleur, 2003). Diasporic media can also over-facilitate immigrants' culture of origin (e.g., Moon & Park, 2007) by distancing immigrants from the realities of the destination country. In this study, we explore the question of the relationship between media use and acculturation by looking at the specific case of two countries in the Baltic Sea Region with Russian speaking minorities: Finland and Latvia.

#### **The context of the research**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, around 10 percent of its population found themselves residing outside of the Russian Federation. In Latvia, Soviet era immigrants and their immediate descendants were not granted automatic citizenship, but instead were suggested to go through a naturalization process, proving some knowledge of Latvian language, constitution and history. They were given a status of 'permanently resident non-citizen'. As Selga (2016) describes the rights and benefits under this status are different in two major terms: non-citizens cannot vote in main elections or hold certain public positions in government. However, non-citizens do not need a visa to travel within the European Union and also, they can travel to Russia without a visa. In 1991, non-citizens in Latvia amounted to 715,000. Today, 209,007 non-citizens are living in Latvia (10.1% of residents), of whom the largest ethnic group are Russians. The decrease in non-citizens' numbers is due to the fact that the vast majority of Latvia's ethnic Russians, 71.1% or 398,549 people, have received Latvian citizenship over time, while some have pursued Russian citizenship. In 2021, 2.53% (52,271) of Latvian residents were citizens of Russia (PMLP, 2021).

In Finland, Russian speakers form the largest group of immigrants speaking a foreign language. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, there were 6,000 people with Russian background, holding a Finnish citizenship (Baschmakoff & Leinonen, 2001). In 2021, there were 84,000 people (1.5% of the total population) who considered Russian to be their native language (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). Most of these Russian speakers have a recent migrant background, with 55,552 being born in the former Soviet Union and 12,766 being born in the Russian Federation.

These macro-level differences between the countries are also visible in the empirical part of the study at hand. As discussed later on in more detail, about half of the Latvian sample reported being born in Latvia, whereas participants from Finland have all been born outside of Finland. This provides an interesting point of comparison between the two cases, since earlier studies argue that Russian speakers that are born and have a longer length of stay in their new home country have better acculturation results (Grigoryev & Berry, 2017; Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006).

### **Russian speakers' acculturation in Latvia and Finland**

Although Russian speakers' acculturation has been studied in the EU, e.g., Finland (Renvik et al., 2020; Nshom & Croucher, 2014), in the Baltics (Kaprāns & Juzefovičs, 2020; Muižnieks, 2011; Pisarenko, 2006), Belgium (Grigoryev & Berry, 2017), and Germany, Denmark and Netherlands (Hedefaard & Bekhuis, 2018), comparative studies are rare. To help fill this gap, this study provides a comparative look at the acculturation of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland.

From the early years of the Latvian independence, the situation of the Russian speakers that were predominantly distant to the Latvian language and culture (during the last three decades of the USSR) was a challenge (Voronov, 2009). More specifically, according to Musaev (2017), the so-called ethnic Russians had difficulty in accepting their minority position. Manaev (2013) argues that the difficulty to adapt was due to the worsened situation of ethnic Russians in Baltics, their limited rights and political discrimination. He also argues that, in Latvia, Russians and Latvians, as well as their information spaces, have been separated. Nevertheless, some scholars (Kaprāns & Juzefovičs, 2020; Pisarenko, 2006) also argue that the new generation of Russian speakers who are born in the country after the restoration of the Latvian independence have more positive attitude towards the country and stronger feeling of belonging to Latvia.

In Finland, Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) has argued that Russian speakers are—for the most part—acculturated into the mainstream culture (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000: 51). Despite this, studies have shown continuing negative attitudes and prejudice towards Russian speakers in Finland (Nshom & Croucher, 2014).

### **Russian speakers' news media engagement in Latvia and Finland**

One of the prevalent conversations about Russian speaking minorities living in Europe concerns their media preference, whether they exclusively follow and trust Russian media, especially news (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019). This question has become of importance due to the fact that tensions within and in between media landscapes are commonplace in bordering countries with historically strained relations and politicized diaspora (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Marcus, 2018; Sotkasiira, 2017).

Russian-language news media continues to be of importance in countries with Russian-speaking populations, especially those which border Russia. From the time of independence, in Latvia and Finland, the status of Russians and its media within each has changed. For instance, the so-called 'Russophone diasporic media' developed naturally and by small steps in Finland, while it had to be restructured and reformulated under new conditions in Latvia.

To note, the concentration of the currently available Russian-language news media in Latvia is markedly higher than in Finland. Looking at the diversified media landscape in Latvia, Rožukalne (2017) found out that Latvia's Russian speakers consider the variety of information provided by Russia's TV and radio channels to be sufficient, and therefore do not express a need for additional information channels. Although each news media outlet may differ in its approach and intensity, one thing most of the diasporic Russian-language media in Latvia have in common is that they tend to confront the narratives of the Latvian-language media (Muižnieks, 2011). Typically, they offer different interpretations of the same incident, which then becomes a 'picky'—a term used to denote the negative portrayal or an opposite narrative to the Latvian-language content (Muižnieks, 2011). It has been claimed that the Russian-language media in Latvia is filled with disinformation, and that its contents are divisive especially concerning politics and international affairs (Kozlovs, 2020). This often results in a steadily 'picky' portrayal of Latvia and the EU (Zakem et al., 2018) that goes beyond simply "being critical" and crosses over to being constantly negative (Muižnieks, 2011). Arguably, this state of affairs can be seen as a reflection of the historical, ethno-political competition reproduced in the media and, sometimes, by the media.

Meanwhile in Finland, studies show that the Russian diaspora often describe the Russian media as propaganda and the Finnish media as less propagandist (Sotkasiira, 2017). In times of war (e.g., between Russia and Ukraine in 2014), when the conflict in the media landscape intensifies, some Russian speakers have also opted for transnational and diverse media use as a strategy to minimize polarization. These are the individuals that actively expose themselves to multiple versions of reality in order to develop their own realities through comparison of various media (Sotkasiira, 2017). According to Viimaranta and Protassova (2018), consumption and demand for Finland's public media in Russian (YLE Novosti) has been growing in recent years, though another study revealed that the Russian diaspora would wish to see more a positive portrayal of Russians in the Finnish media (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016; Sotkasiira, 2017). In contrast with the high demand for the Russian-generated content in the Latvian case (Rožukalne, 2017), the majority of the Russian diaspora in Finland seem to follow both Finnish and Russian media productions (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016), and the demand for media made in Russia is lower.

Based on acculturation theorizing and the viewpoint that news media use and engagement are an integral part of the acculturation process, and taking into consideration the specific features of Russian-language media in Finland and Latvia, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

(RQ1) How is Russian speakers' acculturation orientation in Finland and in Latvia related to the kind of news media they engage with?

## **Method**

### **Measures**

In order to answer the research question, we collected data measuring self-reported acculturation and news media engagement of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland using an online survey. Measuring acculturation, especially the domains to which

it refers, has led to the development of several measures, each with a different operationalization of acculturation (Kim, 2001). In this study, we utilized Carlson and Güler's (2018) measurement that conceptualizes acculturation using the dimensions of cultural involvement (CI) and cultural preference (CP). This measurement contains 24 items, which combine features from four previous scales, including Ryder et al. (2000). According to the authors:

*Each measure combines data from both origin culture and destination culture scales, retains the continuous properties of these scales, connects Berry's two of the four-category acculturation outcomes, and has theoretical significance and potential comparability across studies of different immigrant populations. Together they offer a quantitative measure of variations in the structural relation between an immigrant group and its new destination culture and should reveal new insights into the acculturation process. (Carlson & Güler, 2018, p. 625).*

The 24 items are divided into two measures containing twelve statements each (Table 1). The first half measures involvement with the respondents' culture of origin (here: Russian) on a scale from 1 for strongly disagree to 9 for strongly agree, with 5 as a neutral mid-point. The second half repeats the measurement for the destination culture (here: Latvian or Finnish).

Engagement with news media was approached with a set of four open-ended questions. The questions asked participants to write down their most used mediums for the purpose of news consumption (TV, Radio, Online, etc.), weekly news providers, most trusted news sources, and the language that they used most for this type of media consumption.

Apart from the acculturation measure and news media engagement, the survey included questions on background information such as the age, sex, education, years lived in destination country and short-long term orientation.

### Procedure

The questionnaire was first designed in English and then translated into Russian language with back-translation. Three people were involved in the process, two of whom had Russian as their first language. Data was collected in several steps. First, we

**Table 1** Acculturation measure scale items (Carlson & Güler, 2018)

- 
1. I enjoy (nationality) entertainment (e.g., movies, music)
  2. I am interested in having (nationality) friends
  3. I enjoy social activities with (nationality) people
  4. I participate in (nationality) cultural events
  5. I feel comfortable speaking (nationality)
  6. My thinking is done in the (nationality) language
  7. I have strong ties with the (nationality) community
  8. I enjoy (nationality) jokes and humor
  9. It is important to me to maintain the practices of (nationality) culture
  10. I behave in ways that are "typically (nationality)."
  11. I would be willing to marry a (nationality) person (if single)
  12. I enjoy (nationality) food
-

systematically reached out to governmental and non-governmental organizations that were related with Russian speakers separately in each country. This step involved contacting around 35 organizations and asking them to circulate the survey to their members. Second, the link to the survey was circulated in social media, making use of the researchers' networks and the principle of snowball sampling. Third, an inquiry was posted in social media groups created for Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland. In total, 142 people answered the Latvian survey, and 137 people answered the Finnish survey.

### Participants

The number of received responses reached 279 in total (142 Latvia, 137 Finland). As part of initial data screening, we carefully went through the data to check for missing data and outliers, and for the frequencies of each variable. We found 54 respondents did not fit the target of the survey or did not complete the questionnaire. Therefore, they were excluded from the further analysis. Outliers were checked for all the variables by using a scatter plot, but none were found. The final number of survey answers was 224 (91 Latvia, 133 Finland).

Of the Finnish sample, (76.5%) were female and (23.5%) were male. While skewed, this distribution reflects the fact that in Finland, approximately (57%) of the Russian-speaking population is female (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). The age of the respondents varied from 20 to 68 with a mean of 39. Overall, the Russian-speaking population in Finland includes more working age people than the general population (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). Out of 133 respondents, 115 reported to be working. This separates our sample clearly from the overall situation in Finland, where Russian speakers report only a circa (50%) employment rate (Varjonen et al., 2017). The education level of the respondents in the Finnish sample was high. Overall, (15.8%) had completely secondary education, (65.4%) had a bachelor's degree, and (18.8%) had a Master's degree or higher. These numbers are higher than the official ones concerning Russian-speakers' educational level in Finland, albeit there are no truly reliable numbers due to the shortcoming in measurements and statistics (Varjonen et al., 2017).

Of the Latvian sample, (68.1%) were female and (31.9%) were male. This reflects the fact that in Latvia, approximately (61%) of the Russian citizens are females, and (52.5%) of non-citizens of Latvia are females (Official Statistics of Latvia, 2021). The age of the respondents varied from 17 to 80 with a mean of 37. Out of 91 respondents, 84 reported to be working. This is slightly higher than the (67.7%) general working age population of Latvia (European Commission, 2021). The education level of the respondents in the Latvian sample was also high. Overall, (22%) had completely secondary education, (68.1%) had a Bachelor's degree, and (9.9%) had a Master's degree or higher. No reliable national data was found regarding the Russian speakers' education levels in Latvia.

### Demographic differences in the Latvian and Finnish samples

The Latvian and the Finnish sample had several differences in reported demographic factors. In the Latvian sample, (54%) of the participants were born in Latvia. Meanwhile, all participants in the Finnish sample were born outside of Finland. Latvian respondents' length of stay in Latvia was higher ( $M=28.8$ ,  $SD=17.5$ ) than that of the Finnish



respondents ( $M = 12.1$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ). In the Latvian sample, 65 respondents had Latvian citizenship, 6 had a Latvian non-citizen status, and 19 had a Russian citizenship. In the Finnish sample, 61 had Russian citizenship, 48 had double citizenship (Russian & Finnish), 11 had only Finnish citizenship, and 5 had Estonian citizenship.

### Data processing

As the first step of data processing, we constructed the culture of origin index and the culture of destination index. This was done by summing the respondents' answers to the corresponding questions together, and then dividing the sum by twelve (the number of items in total). Taken together, the Latvian and Finnish participants' responses to the twelve statements on the culture of origin was ( $Min = 1.58$ ,  $Max = 9$ ,  $M = 6.87$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ). Their twelve responses on the culture of destination were ( $Min = 1$ ,  $Max = 8.91$ ,  $M = 5.51$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ). The culture of origin scores in the Latvian sample ( $Mdn = 7.42$ ) were higher than those in the Finnish sample ( $Mdn = 6.75$ ). A Mann–Whitney test indicated that this difference was statistically significant, ( $U = 4926$ ,  $z = -2.363$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The culture of destination scores in the Latvian sample ( $Mdn = 5.42$ ) were lower than those in the Finnish sample ( $Mdn = 5.83$ ). A Mann–Whitney test indicated that this difference was statistically significant ( $U = 7336$ ,  $z = 2.698$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Cronbach's alpha in both Finnish and Latvian samples showed that the questionnaire reached high internal reliability, from  $\alpha = 0.890$  to  $0.905$ . This internal reliability was higher than in Carlson and Güler's (2018) original study where these combinations of items were proposed, indicating that our translation of the items into Russian language worked as intended.

Through a round of interpretive coding and weighing the answers given to the four questions related to media use, we were able to construct a single variable for each respondent that is indicative of their news media engagement. The outcome is a three-level variable divided into those leaning towards 'Russian' news media sources, those leaning towards 'Non-Russian' media sources, and those indifferent to news media altogether ('Not engaged'). The coding was done by a round of interpretative analysis, where each open-ended answer was considered in relation to others given by the same respondent. For example, in a case where a respondent would indicate following both 'Russian' and 'Non-Russian' sources in one answer, the other answers given to the questions of trusted media sources, or the language of media use would be considered in the final decision. Over the next section, we will present the analysis as well as our findings.

## Findings

### Cultural involvement score

To calculate the Cultural Involvement (CI) score we followed Carlson and Güler (2018) and summed up the origin culture index and destination culture index and divided the score by two. The cultural involvement (CI) measure, according to Carlson and Güler (2018), treats two of Berry's four categorical outcomes as polar opposites, from total marginalization at the minimum cultural involvement score to total integration at the maximum cultural involvement score. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the CI scores for the Latvian and Finnish samples. CI scores for the studied respondents ranged from a high of 9 to a low of 3, with a mean ( $M = 6.25$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ).

There was no significant difference in scores for the Latvian ( $M=6.21$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ) and the Finnish sample ( $M=6.27$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ;  $t(224)=-0.43$ ,  $p=0.66$ ).

#### **Cultural preference score**

Following Carlson and Güler (2018), we calculated the Cultural Preference (CP) score by subtracting the origin culture score minus the score on the destination culture index, divided by two. This difference between scores on the origin and destination culture scales replicates the calculation suggested by Szapocznik et al. (1980). For the entire sample, the overall mean CP was ( $M=+0.68$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ). When interpreting CP scores, Carlson and Güler (2018) explain that CP score of +4.0 is equivalent to complete separation in Berry's categorical formulation, whereas -4.0 is equivalent to complete assimilation (p. 631). Simply put, higher scores indicate preference towards the culture of origin, lower scores indicate preference towards the culture of destination, and scores near the middle point indicate an orientation to biculturalism. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the CP scores for the Latvian and Finnish samples. There was a statistically significant difference between the Latvian sample ( $M=+0.99$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ) and the Finnish sample ( $M=+0.47$ ,  $SD=1.19$ );  $t(222)=3.16$ ,  $p=0.002$ ]. However, the magnitude of the differences in the means was very small (eta squared=0.004) according to the criteria proposed by Cohen (1988). In conclusion, we can say that the participants in both countries scored closer to biculturalism than monoculturalism in their CP scores.

#### **News media engagement**

Comparing the two data sets, we could see that in Latvia, (61%) of respondents leaned towards 'Non-Russian' news, (33%) were more engaged with 'Russian' news, and (5.5%) did not trust any news ('Not engaged'). In Finland, (73%) of respondents leaned towards 'Non-Russian' news, (19%) leaned towards 'Russian' news, and (8%) did not trust any news media ('Not engaged'). The most notable practical difference between the samples is that the Latvian respondents were somewhat more inclined towards the 'Russian' sources (33%) than the Finnish respondents (19%). A chi square for independence confirmed the difference between the Latvian and the Finnish samples:  $X^2(2, N=224)=6.03$ ,  $p=0.049$ .

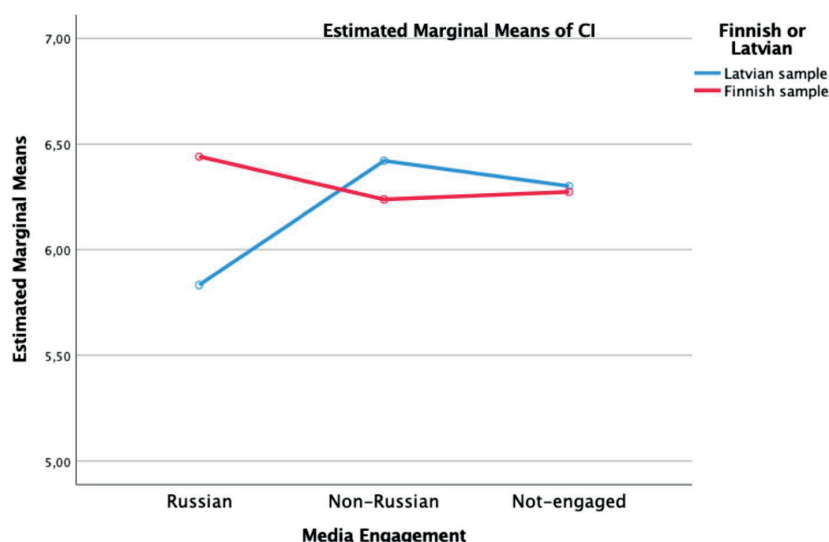
#### **News media engagement and cultural involvement**

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of the media engagement and the country of the respondents on scores of Cultural Involvement (CI) (see Table 2). Subjects were divided into three groups according to their media engagement (Group 1: Russian news sources; Group 2: Non-Russian news sources; Group 3: Not engaged with news), and to two groups according to the country they participated from (Group 1: Finland; Group 2: Latvia). There was a statistically significant interaction effect on CI scores explained by the media engagement and the country of participants [ $F(2, 224)=3.25$ ,  $p=0.041$ ]; with an effect size (partial eta squared=0.02).

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the difference in CI scores explained by media engagement appeared only in the Latvian sample. Those

**Table 2** Two-way analysis of variance for CI

Descriptive statistics				
Dependent variable: CI				
Finnish or Latvian	Media engagement	Mean	SD	N
Latvian sample	Russian	5,8333	1,01,992	30
	Non-Russian	6,4196	99,442	56
	Not engaged	6,3000	75,829	5
	Total	6,2198	1,01,983	91
Finnish Sample	Russian	6,4400	72,629	25
	Non-Russian	6,2371	1,01,574	97
	Not engaged	6,2727	87,646	11
	Total	6,2782	95,428	133
Total	Russian	6,1091	94,129	55
	Non-Russian	6,3039	1,00,857	153
	Not engaged	6,2813	81,586	16
	Total	6,2545	97,960	224



**Fig. 1** News media engagement and cultural preference

who were leaning towards Russian news sources ( $M=5.83$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ) score significantly lower in CI compared to those who leaned towards non-Russian news sources ( $M=6.41$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ). The main effect on CI from the country of the respondents variable (Latvia/Finland) [ $F(1, 224)=0.424$ ,  $p=0.516$ ] and media engagement variable [ $F(2, 224)=0.766$ ,  $p=0.466$ ] overall did not reach statistical significance. For a visual illustration of ANOVA: Media engagement and cultural involvement (CI) in the Finnish and Latvian samples, please see Fig. 1.

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the main effect of the media engagement and the country of the respondents on the score of Cultural Preference (CP) (see Table 3). Subjects were divided into three groups

**Table 3** Two-way analysis of variance for CP

Descriptive statistics				
Dependent variable: CP				
Finnish or Latvian	Media engagement	Mean	SD	N
Latvian sample	Russian	1.8000	0.90592	30
	Non-Russian	0.6339	1.13414	56
	Not engaged	0.1000	1.38744	5
	Total	0.9890	1.21559	91
Finnish Sample	Russian	1.4800	1.09430	25
	Non-Russian	0.1959	1.01949	97
	Not engaged	0.6364	1.55066	11
	Total	0.4737	1.18596	133
Total	Russian	1.6545	0.99941	55
	Non-Russian	0.3562	1.08013	153
	Not engaged	0.4688	1.47726	16
	Total	0.6830	1.22199	224

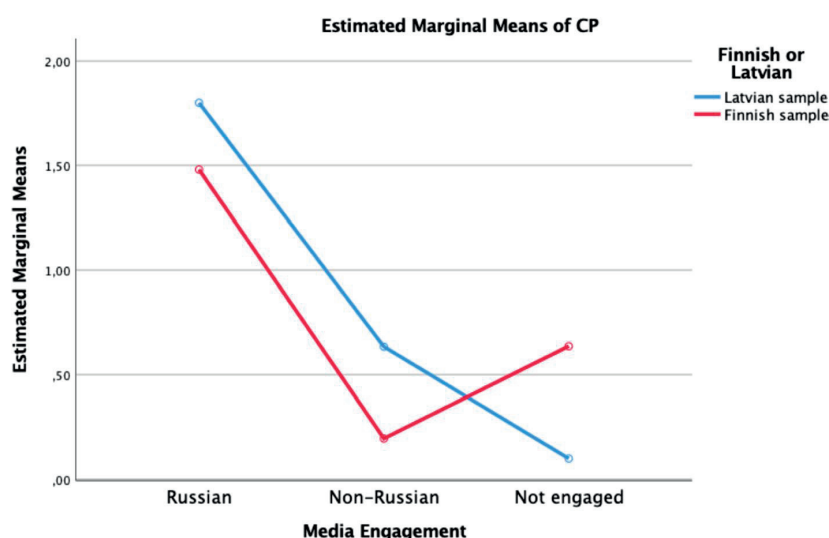
(levels) according to their media engagement (Group 1: Russian news sources; Group 2: Non-Russian news sources; Group 3: Not engaged with media) and in two groups according to their country of residence (Latvia or Finland). The interaction effect (Media\* Latvia/Fin) [ $F(2, 224) = 1.277, p = 0.281$ ] and the main effect for the country of the respondents (Latvia/Finland [ $F(1, 224) = 0.107, p = 0.744$ ]) did not reach statistical significance. There was a statistically significant main effect for Media engagement [ $F(2, 224) = 26.12, p < 0.001$ ]; with an effect size (partial eta squared = 0.193). Using Cohen's (1988) criterion, this can be classified as small effect size.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the group leaning towards Russian news sources in Latvia ( $M = 1.80, SD = 0.905$ ) was significantly different from the non-Russian news source group ( $M = 0.633, SD = 1.134$ ). The Not engaged with news group ( $M = 0.100, SD = 1.387$ ) was also significantly different from the Russian news group ( $M = 1.80, SD = 0.905$ ). We examined for the Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances, which was more than 0.05, indicating that the homogeneity of variances assumption had not been violated. For a visual illustration of ANOVA: Media engagement and cultural involvement (CP) in the Finnish and Latvian samples, please see Fig. 2.

## Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the way news media use and preferences may factor into the process of acculturation. The study also makes a contribution by testing the Cultural Involvement (CI) and Cultural Preference (CP) indices presented by Carlson and Güler (2018) in another context than the one they were originally developed for.

Looking at the findings, we can see that with regard to the CI index, the survey respondents from both countries are, in terms of Berry's (1970, 1997)'s four acculturation strategies, leaning towards the integration outcome ( $M = 6.25$ ). The results of the CP index all lean to the direction of biculturality (Carlson and Güler, 2018; Szapocznik



**Fig. 2** Our analysis shows that regardless of the societal context, those respondents who scored higher on CP (their cultural preference leaned towards the Russian culture of origin) were also more engaged with Russian language media. Similarly, it can be said that those respondents who were more engaged with Russian language media were those who scored higher on CP

et al., 1980). A point of difference in the data comes from the result that the Latvian respondents differed in a statistically significant way from the Finnish sample in terms of preferring the culture of origin (here: Russian) more. This finding resonates with stronger presence of diasporic media and more severe discontent in the political and information space in Latvia as compared to Finland. This is an interesting finding when one takes into consideration that half of the respondents in the Latvian sample were born in Latvia, whereas all the respondents in the Finnish sample have been born outside of Finland. It is possible that this finding is a consequence of the high number of Russian speakers in Latvia who originally moved to nowadays Latvia while it was still within the territory of the Soviet Union. Later on, when Latvia regained its independence in 1991, they effectively turned into involuntary migrants. On the contrary in the case of Finland, all of the Russian speakers have themselves chosen to emigrate. The variations within the population of Russian speakers in Latvia were also discussed by Brubaker (2000), who suggested distinguishing between traditional diasporas from ‘accidental’ ones, where the people do not move but rather the borders move around and over them.

Overall, the majority of the respondents in both countries reported being engaged more with ‘Non-Russian’ news media sources than with ‘Russian’ ones. In the case of the Latvian sample, this was somewhat against the expectations laid out by earlier literature. However, a recent study examining Latvia’s Russian-speaking audiences by Kaprāns and Juzefovičs (2020) provides support for this finding. According to their study, the exposure to the ‘Russian’ news media sources is not to be taken for granted. They propose that contrary to the older TV era generation, the younger generation Russophones use less ‘Russian’ news media sources in their daily lives.

Another interesting finding is that those respondents who reported engaging more with ‘Russian’ news media sources scored higher on the Cultural Preference index.

As Carlson and Güler (2018) point out, scores close to zero on the CP scale indicate biculturality, whereas scores deviating from zero indicate monoculturality (pp. 630–631). In our data, the direction of this deviation (positive), indicates a higher preference towards the culture of origin (Russian) within those, whose media preferences also lean towards the Russian point of view. While some scholars have proposed that the use of diasporic media may play an important positive role in the adaptation process (e.g. Croucher & Kramer, 2017), the findings of our study are more in line with DeFleur and DeFleur (2003), Kim (2001, 2012) and Moon and Park's (2007) work, where they discuss the potential that the media of the country of origin can influence immigrants to oppose the destination society's stance, and that relying on diasporic media can be a barrier to a tighter relationship with the destination country.

There was a small group of respondents in both countries who reported that they don't trust the media or were not engaged with any type of media. These respondents show a similar tendency in cultural preference as the ones who reported being more engaged with Non-Russian news media. This finding is in line with Davydova-Minguet et al. (2019), and Sotkasiira (2017), whose studies found out that some Russian speakers in Finland expressed being 'burned out' in between the two information camps (Russian and Non-Russian), and therefore choosing to minimize their media use altogether. This finding also resonates with Torkington et al. (2020) study of the role of locally produced foreign-language media in immigrants' experiences in Algarve, Portugal, where they revealed the ambivalence about the extent to which these media are useful in feeling integrated into the local society. Studies on the role of media in acculturation often find that media use facilitates better adaptation. However, in certain specific cases like the one in this study (Russian speakers living in neighboring countries), the role of using media from the country of origin may be associated with lower involvement or some other type of ambivalence concerning the current place of residence. One explanation for this may be those tensions within and in between media landscapes are commonplace especially in bordering countries with historically strained relations and potentially politicized diaspora (Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019; Sotkasiira, 2017).

A tendency of exclusion towards Russian-speaking minorities in the context of Finland and Latvia might also trigger less involvement and preference towards the country of residence. Previous studies illustrate that Russian immigrants have been victims of prejudice and discrimination both in Finland and in Latvia (e.g., Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006; Nshom & Khalimzoda, 2020). However, studies also emphasize that due to the smaller perceived cultural difference with the majority population, Russians are treated better than other groups such as Somalis and Arabs (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006). Finally, especially when speaking about media it is important to remember that media may categorize and marginalize social groups (Slade, 2010), and that this tendency may push audiences away from certain types of media they feel are antagonizing them. It is possible that at least some effect of this type can be witnessed in the context of Finland and Latvia. For example, it has been argued that "in the case of Finnish Russian-speakers, the antagonisation [by media] seems to be taking place" (Sotkasiira, 2017, p. 121).

### Limitations

Comparing the number of people who opened the survey online to the number of people who submitted answers, we can see that in Latvia the survey had a (6.3%) response rate and in Finland a (6.5%) response rate. This relatively low number of respondents could be due to the length of the survey. Another potential reason for the low number of respondents could be the topic itself. Based on the comments connected to the social media posts advertising the study, many potential respondents seemed dubious about the study's intentions, or expressed their dislike to the topic in general. As a limitation, we must note that our study's sample is clearly not representative of the overall population of Russian speakers in Latvia or Finland. Online surveys typically feature different types of selection bias (Bethlehem, 2010), and our study is no different in this regard. What our study illustrates is a certain kind of dynamic between media preference and acculturation, but more studies are needed in order to find out how common such patterns are within the broader population. Also, other factors such as language proficiency and preference, as well as earlier history of media use, could be explored in relation to media use and acculturation. Future research could also utilize qualitative methods to explore media engagement and acculturation patterns at the individual level, especially concerning those who do not trust media, or choose to avoid it altogether. Finally, developing ways in which media engagement can be operationalized, especially with regards to social media use, may open up new avenues for research.

### Conclusions and implications

Although Russian speakers' acculturation in relation to issues such as identity, perceived superiority, discrimination, and social and economic remittance have been extensively studied in the context of the EU, there is still a lack of research looking at their media use in relation to acculturation. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the role news media use may play in the process of acculturation. In this study, we utilized Carlson and Güler's (2018) synthesis of Berry's four-category approach with the Szapocznik et al. (1980) dimensions as a means to tap into acculturation preferences. Carlson and Güler's model allow for locating respondents in the interval formed by the origin and destination culture scales. Continuous and orthogonal measures of the concept of cultural involvement (CI) and Cultural Preference (CP) that we used have the valuable property of potential comparability across different groups and contexts. A distinct contribution of this study is in showing that the new approach, originally developed for the context of studying Turkish immigrants in the USA, can be applied to other societal contexts as well.

The question of the role of news media use in acculturation continues to be of interest to scholars, policymakers and practitioners. Our findings add new insight into the question of the role of news media use in immigrant acculturation. They remind us of the ambivalence of the national and transnational hybrid media environments, and what they may mean for their audiences. As a practical suggestion, and in line with previous research (Berdnikovs, 2016; Davydova-Minguet et al., 2016) we propose that both traditional and new media producers in Latvia and Finland could consider the need and the importance of providing more content in minority languages. This need has been

accentuated in 2022 due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. As our study illustrates, there are several ways in which Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland report approaching news media. The majority of the respondents reported being engaged predominantly with ‘Non-Russian’ news sources. They also showed positive cultural (both origin and destination) preference. A similar cultural preference pattern was presented by those respondents who reported choosing to limit their media engagement altogether. Finally, we witnessed a pattern where respondents who reported engaging more with ‘Russian’ news sources also leaned more towards Russian culture.

#### Abbreviations

CI	Cultural involvement
CP	Cultural Preference

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#### Author contributions

IK has been the main responsible for all research processes as a main author. MS has contributed and participated in many stages, such as structuring the draft, analysis, interpretations, conclusion and continuous revisions. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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#### Availability of data and materials

The original survey data used for this study contains larger data and other research outputs based on this data are under development. However, under reasonable request from the authors, customized data for this study will be possible, with the permission of the ethical board of the University of Jyväskylä. Cultural Involvement and Cultural Preference inventory that is used in this study is publicly available from the previous authors. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12134-018-0554-4>.

#### Declarations

##### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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### III

## LANGUAGE AND ACCULTURATION: THE CASE OF RUSSIAN SPEAKERS IN LATVIA AND FINLAND

by

Ilkhom Khalimzoda and Marko Siitonen

Preprint.

# Language and Acculturation: The Case of Russian Speakers in Latvia and Finland

**Ilkhom Khalimzoda and Marko Siitonen**

## **Abstract**

This study examines the acculturation of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland by comparing their cultural (dis)involvement and preference (Carlson & Güler, 2018) with their self-reported language proficiency and use. Using survey data collected from both countries (N=224), the study finds a correlation between Russian speakers' everyday language use and their level of acculturation. The comparative results showed that respondents using more local languages show higher Cultural Involvement (CI) compared to those who use English or Russian. Beyond the language proficiency, what really mattered was the actual use of the language as the local language used outside the home was significantly related to low CP scores.

Keywords: acculturation, cultural involvement, cultural preference, diaspora, Finland, Latvia, language proficiency, migration, Russian speaker.

## **Introduction**

This comparative study investigates the acculturation of Russian speakers in Finland and Latvia, emphasizing the role of language use and preference. The term 'Russian speakers' is deliberately chosen to address participants, recognizing the lack of consensus in existing literature that uses various designations such as 'Russophone,' 'Russian minority,' 'Russian diaspora,' 'Russian immigrants,' or simply 'Russian speakers,' (Cheskin, 2013; Coolican, 2021; Golova, 2020; Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2008; Kaprāns and Mieriņa, 2021; Laitin, 1998; Pisarenko, 2006; Sencerman, 2018). Acknowledging the complex historical context, participants in Latvia and Finland were self-identified during pilot data collection as 'special', 'Slavic', and 'Baltic Russians', adding intricacy to the terminology. The study intentionally employs terms like 'Russian speakers,' 'diaspora,' and 'migrants' to capture varying accuracy levels and to evade limitations, urging readers to focus on participants' background information and self-identification. Documenting challenges in social cohesion in neighboring countries to Russia with substantial Russian-speaking populations, the study recognizes Russia's consistent concern for its diaspora through so-called soft power channels. The evolving geopolitical landscape, particularly post-Ukraine, underscores the necessity of understanding Russian speakers' attachment beyond borders and its impact on relationships with their countries of residence. Therefore, this study delves into acculturation and language use and preferences aspects of Russian speakers in Latvia

and Finland, aiming to better comprehend the possible variations in these practices and contextual factors, while acknowledging the roles of politics, policies, host attitudes, and discrimination, leaving other dimensions for exploration by subsequent researchers.

Migration is a major factor in human history and a defining feature of the dynamics of globalization in the 2000s. Increased transborder migrations create new transnational ties and communities and novel forms of communicative interaction, as well as (dis)involvement and (mal)adaptation in the destination country. The process immigrants go through in their new living environment is usually referred to as ‘acculturation’. According to a classic definition, acculturation is: “... those phenomena which appear when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first-hand contact that is continuous, with subsequent change in the heritage culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936: 149). Living in and learning the language(s) of the destination country (sometimes called the host culture) has always had a place in the way acculturation has been theorized. Both in policy and research, there has traditionally been a strong focus on an immigrant’s ‘duty’ to fit in, which has for the most part downplayed the role of the so-called host culture in the acculturation process, as well as the possibility of immigrants being involved and identifying with multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Early on it was suggested that the acquisition by minority group members of the destination language (majority-dominant language) as a second language could be connected to the kind of acculturation that nowadays would be considered assimilation (Lambert, 1978; Dion, Dion & Pak, 1990). Indeed, some studies have asserted that the acquisition of a new language and culture occurs at the same time as the loss of the original culture in some immigrant groups (Noels, Pon, & Clement, 1996: 249). Today, with the growing acceptance of concepts such as cultural pluralism and multilingualism, acculturation has increasingly come to be understood as a multidimensional process where adaptation to a new cultural environment no longer requires the rejection of the so-called culture of origin (Carlson & Guler, 2018). Similarly, it is acknowledged that aspects such as the host culture’s attitudes towards newcomers as well as certain socio-cultural and linguistic differences related to friendship, socialization, and work habits for example play a vital role in the acculturation process of immigrants (Ahmad, 2005).

Studies into acculturation have identified a strong relationship between language acquisition and acculturation (Grigorjev & Berry, 2017; Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2008; Pisarenko, 2006). Increasing mobility, globalization, the use of information and communication technology, and the evolving use of different *lingua francas* such as business and administrative English (Balič, 2016; House, 2003) continue to challenge our understanding of how immigrants may relate to and deal with language-related questions. Indeed, this development has highlighted the need to understand these processes, especially in bilingual or multilingual countries where English is *not* one of the official languages.

This study examines the case of Russian speakers living in Finland and Latvia. Both countries neighbor Russia and have a significant Russian-speaking population, with a long and multi-faceted history of immigration between the countries. Existing

research on Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland has focused on the acculturation preferences of the majority population towards Russian speakers (Nshom & Khalimzoda, 2020), Russian-speaking minorities' perspectives (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2008), and the overall historical situation of Russian speakers as well as their socio-cultural adaptation and media use (Khalimzoda & Siitonen, 2022; Manaev, 2013; Voronov, 2009; Musaev, 2017). Russian speakers in Latvia are described as having low levels of rootedness in the country, along with strong ties to the historic motherland Russia (Kolstø, 1999a). According to Voronov (2009) and Musaev (2017), so-called ethnic Russians have had difficulties in accepting their minority position after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Finland, according to Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000), regardless of ethnic roots or attitudes towards acculturation, the immigrants' willingness to learn and use the host society's language(s) appears to be a pre-condition for being recognized as members of the same 'imagined community' and overcoming the cultural and interactional border between the majority as 'natives' and the minority as 'aliens' (pp. 62-63). However, it is also possible that migrated people or minorities may choose - or end up - living in their own ethnic, informational and ideological circles. Although this is possible, there is a continuous interest in understanding this dynamic of parallel lives, to ensure a common understanding and peaceful coexistence, inclusion and belonging, and to safeguard and prevent societies from further targeted division on the basis of language, ethnicity, religion, political opinion or particular conflicting views of historical events. The present study contributes to this emerging understanding by investigating the relationship between acculturation and the self-reported language use of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland from the viewpoint of the Russian speakers themselves. The study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between media use and acculturation, as well as the nuances concerning the nature of 'accidental diasporas' versus 'classical diasporas.'

## **Theoretical background**

### *Language use and acculturation*

Investigating the variables and processes that may impact acculturation, scholars have found language practices to be one of the main elements (Clement, 1984; Collier & Thomas, 1988). Language, according to Kim (1988), is the primary channel via which cultural knowledge is communicated. Clement's (1984) socio-contextual model of second language learning proposes that elements of interaction with the second language group, such as frequency and quality of contacts, lead to differences in an individual's linguistic self-confidence. In other words, when a person's host language proficiency improves, identification with the target language group should increase as well. Indeed, greater self-confidence in the destination language is linked to more frequent and better-quality contact with receiving society members (Noels, Pon & Clement, 1996). Language proficiency has also been demonstrated to affect employment. For example, Dustmann and Fabbri (2003) examined factors that influence language proficiency as well as the impact of language on non-white

immigrants' wages and employment prospects in the context of the United Kingdom. According to their study, language proficiency has a positive impact on career prospects, whereas a lack of local language (English) fluency has a negative impact on earnings. At the same time, contemporary studies on acculturation and language proficiency have highlighted the importance of the right to a heritage language and how it should be acknowledged alongside the need to learn the host country's language(s) (e.g., Latomaa, 2013; Ennser-Kananen & Pettitt, 2017). Local language proficiency may indeed play a significant role. Still, other scenarios are also possible where people feel belonging to a society but do not speak the language of the society in question due to the profession, temporariness of their stay or due to various other reasons such as difficulties in language learning, or lack of motivation. This may be the case especially if everyday life is manageable with the use of languages other than the local. Sometimes, newcomers may end up in different language communities within the country of residence. Most of the existing studies in this field concentrate on the English-speaking world, especially countries like the USA and Canada. Studies in the North American context have long used proficiency in the English language (e.g., Dalisay, 2012; Kim & Abreu, 2004; Cuellar, Harris & Jasso, 1980) and a propensity to use English in interactions (e.g., Kang, 2006; Stephenson, 2000) as markers of acculturation in society. From this viewpoint, higher levels of English proficiency, a preference for using English in interactions, and more awareness of the host society's politics are all seen to imply stronger acculturation to the host society (Dalisay, 2012: 149). However, there is much less research on the situation in non-English speaking countries, especially those that are bilingual or multilingual, though the internationally prevalent role of English, oftentimes as a *lingua franca*, is acknowledged.

The research that does focus on bilingual societies illustrates that in some contexts a segmentation of language proficiency may be a more valid starting point. For example, in a study by Lapresta-Rey, Janes, and Alarcon (2021) located in the Spanish Catalan context, it was illustrated how immigrants' proficiency in one local language (Spanish) could be beneficial from the viewpoint of immediate employment, while proficiency in another (Catalan) was connected to higher social mobility and increased income in the long run. Grigoryev and Berry's (2017) study indicated that the language skills of Russian immigrants working in Belgium had a positive impact on their socioeconomic adaptation in two ways: directly (better language skills predicted better socioeconomic adaptation) and indirectly (better language skills promoted the participants' integration preference). Also, multilingualism in general may have an effect on the acculturation process. For example, Dewaele and Stavans' (2014) study in the Israeli context illustrated how knowledge and frequency of use of multiple languages were associated with higher levels of social initiative and open-mindedness, as well as higher levels of cultural empathy. This was especially evident for those participants who had one local and one immigrant parent. Overall, there is a clear need for more studies into the relationship between language and different elements of acculturation in bilingual or multilingual contexts.

## **The context of the study: The situation of Russian speakers in Latvia and Finland**

Both Latvia and Finland were part of the Russian Empire in the era leading into World War I, Latvia from 1710 to 1917, and Finland from 1809 to 1917. Between the two World Wars, both countries experienced a period of independence and also served as a destination for the Russian diaspora of the time. For example, directly after World War I, Finland was a destination for tens of thousands of Russian refugees (some of whom were ethnic Finns or Karelians). In Latvia, the numbers were even higher. During the first independent Latvian republic from 1918 to 1940, the Russian diaspora amounted to more than two hundred thousand. The main difference between the two countries arose as an outcome of World War II. While Finland kept its independence after losing some of its territory, Latvia was incorporated into the USSR. This meant, among other changes, that the number of Russians in Latvia increased from 12 to 42 percent of the population between 1950-1980. It has been argued that only some of them were interested in the local (Latvian) culture (Voronov, 2009). Towards the end of the Soviet Union in 1989, Russians made up 34 percent of the population in Latvia (Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

Currently, inhabitants with a Russian background make up 25.8 percent of the Latvian population, making them the largest ethnic minority (Muiznieks, Rozenvalds & Birka, 2013; Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2016). Because the shift in the status of Russians occurred only after the collapse of the USSR, the situation of Russians in the Baltics is rather unique, falling somewhere between migrant and ethnic minorities (Shafir, 1995). Latvian is the only official language in the country. Russian is widely spoken in many places, however, effectively playing the role of a second language. In Finland, there were 84 000 people (approximately 1.5 percent of the population) in 2021 who considered Russian as their native language (Stat, 2021). Most of these Russian speakers have a migrant background, with 55 552 being born in the former Soviet Union and 12 766 being born in the Russian Federation. While the numbers of Russian speakers are much smaller than in Latvia, those with a Russian background still form the single largest group of foreign-language speakers in Finland (Stat, 2021).<sup>1</sup>

### **Language and Acculturation in the Context of Finland and Latvia**

Studies have considered Russian speakers' acculturation in the Latvian context from a variety of viewpoints. Kolstø (1999a) for example describes the Russian speakers in Latvia as having low levels of rootedness in the country, along with strong ties to the so-called historic motherland Russia. According to Voronov (2009) and Musaev (2017), ethnic Russians have sometimes had difficulties in accepting their minority position after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has also been hypothesized that Russian

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<sup>1</sup> In Latvia, the percentage reflects those who have indicated that they are Russian by ethnicity. Finland does not collect such official statistics, but rather the numbers reflect those who have indicated in the population registry that Russian is their first language.



speakers would end up adapting to the Baltics as a result of negative net migration from Russia (which brings their number down) and relative cultural similarities (Simonian, 2003; Pisarenko, 2006), depending on their motivation as well as the majority's attitudes towards their inclusion (Petersons & Khalimzoda, 2016).

In a study on language knowledge and acculturation of Russian-speaking adolescents in Latvia, Pisarenko (2006) showed how fluency in the dominant (Latvian) language of the society is positively connected to the acculturation strategies of assimilation and integration, and the preference for a separation strategy is statistically significantly interrelated with a lower level of language knowledge. The study further suggests that citizenship significantly matters in the choice of acculturation strategies, as participants who were non-citizens indicated a stronger preference for the separation strategy than Latvian citizens did (Pisarenko, 2006). This re-affirms the positive relationship between acculturation attitudes and the knowledge of the language in the country of destination. It can be also added that the younger generation of Russian speakers in Latvia who were born in the country after independence seems to have a more accommodating perspective, and they seem to adapt better to the Latvian-dominated society or at least understand the situation in a less confrontational way (Kaprans & Juzefovics, 2019).

In the Finnish context, Russian immigrants have been shown to perceive themselves to be hierarchically higher than some other immigrant groups, while at the same time feeling inferior to Finns (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006). National languages in Finland (Finnish and Swedish) hold a crucial space in acculturation (Arola, 2017; Vuori, 2015) since the situation is not comparable to the Latvian one where almost half of the population can speak Russian due to historical reasons. Studying Russian adolescents in Finland, Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) has shown how the variations in second-language competence across immigrant groups are linked to their duration of stay in the host society: those who arrived earlier had greater Finnish fluency. This skill was shown to raise both self-esteem and a sense of mastery but surprisingly did not improve life happiness. Despite the present studies on different aspects of immigrant life, understanding that acculturation is a process of change to be studied over time (Murray et al., 2014) remains a constant.

Based on acculturation theorizing, and the viewpoint that language proficiency and use in the destination country are an integral part of the acculturation process, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

RQ1) How are Russian speakers' cultural preference (CP) and cultural involvement (CI) related to their language proficiency and use?

## Methodology

### *Measures*

To measure acculturation, we used Carlson and Güler's (2018) inventory which operationalizes acculturation through the dimensions of cultural involvement (CI) and cultural preference (CP). There are 24 items in this measurement. According to the authors:

Each measure combines data from both origin culture and destination culture scales, retains the continuous properties of these scales, connects Berry's two of the four-category acculturation outcomes, and has theoretical significance and potential comparability across studies of different immigrant populations. Together they offer a quantitative measure of variations in the structural relation between an immigrant group and its new destination culture and should reveal new insights into the acculturation process. (Carlson & Güler, 2018, p. 625)

Table 1 Acculturation measure scale items (Carlson & Güler, 2018)

1. I enjoy (nationality) entertainment (e.g., movies, music).
2. I am interested in having (nationality) friends.
3. I enjoy social activities with (nationality) people.
4. I participate in (nationality) cultural events.
5. I feel comfortable speaking (nationality) language.
6. My thinking is done in the (nationality) language.
7. I have strong ties with the (nationality) community.
8. I enjoy (nationality) jokes and humor.
9. It is important to me to maintain the practices of (nationality) culture.
10. I behave in ways that are typically (nationality).
11. I would be willing to marry a (nationality) person (if single).
12. I enjoy (nationality) food.

The 24 statements are broken down into two measurements each with twelve assertions. The first part (see Table 1), assesses the respondents' involvement with their so-called culture of origin (in this case, Russian) on a scale of 1 to 9, with 5 serving as a neutral mid-point. The measurement for the destination culture is repeated in the second part (here: Latvian or Finnish, by changing the wording (nationality)). According to Carlson and Güler (2018), the CI measure portrays two of Berry's four categorical outcomes as polar opposites, ranging from absolute marginalization at the lowest cultural involvement score to total integration at the highest cultural engagement score (see Fig.1).

**Fig.1** The potential values of cultural involvement (CI) (Carlson & Güler, 2018, p.629)

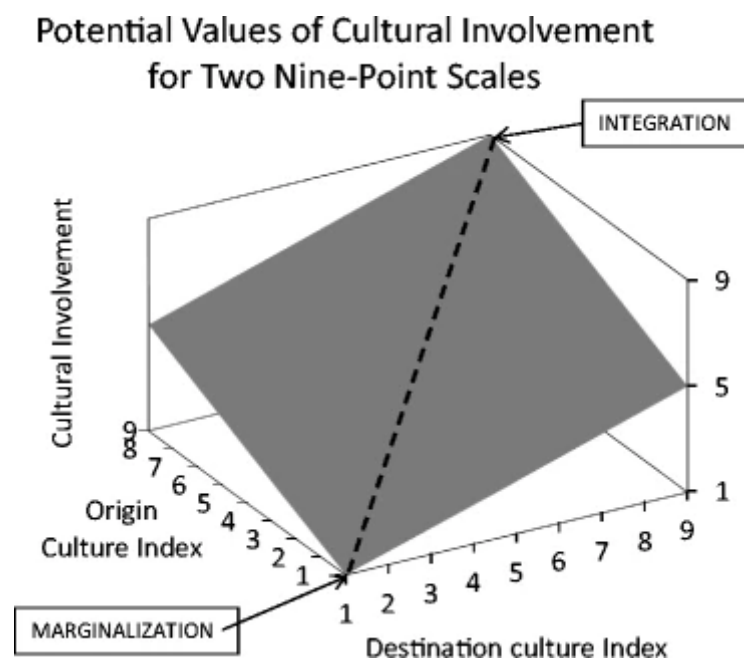


Fig.1 illustrates the potential values of cultural involvement (CI) for two nine-point scales sources (Carlson and Güler, 2018; Szapocznik et al. 1980). It is calculated as: origin culture index plus destination culture index divided by two.

**Fig.2** The potential values of cultural preference (CP) (Carlson & Güler, 2018, p.630)

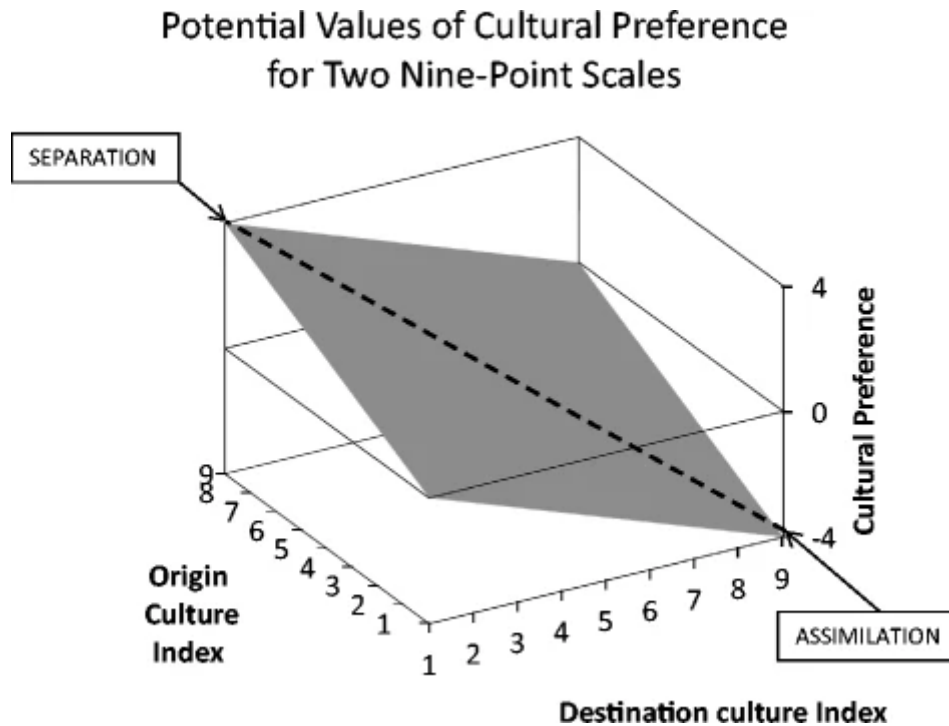


Fig.2 illustrates the potential values of cultural preference (CP) for two nine-point scales sources (Carlson and Güler, 2018; Szapocznik et al. 1980). It is calculated as: origin culture index minus destination culture index divided by two.

In addition to the acculturation items from Carlson and Güler (2018), we included several questions into the survey that inquired into the participants' language proficiency and use. We asked the participants to self-assess their language proficiency, for example in the local language (Finnish or Latvian), and English. We included Swedish as an option in the Finnish survey since it is the second official language of the country, but no respondents indicated that they spoke Swedish. The participants were also asked to indicate which languages they use the most outside of their homes by putting them into order.

#### *Procedure*

The questionnaire was created in English first, as in the original Carlson and Güler (2018) inventory. It was then translated into Russian using back-translation as a way to ensure that the translation worked as intended. The procedure was carried out by three persons, two of whom spoke Russian as their first language.

The responses were gathered over several stages. First, in each nation, we contacted governmental and non-governmental organizations involved with Russian speakers with an aim of utilizing their networks and email lists as a way to reach more participants. We contacted around 35 institutions, requesting them to distribute the survey to their members. Unfortunately, this approach did not yield significant results. Some organizations that responded to us cited privacy rules or similar reasons for not

disseminating the study further. Second, as a next stage, a link to the survey was shared on social media, utilizing the researchers' networks and the snowball sampling technique. Third, an inquiry was placed in Latvian and Finnish Russian-speaking social media groups. While this strategy did prove beneficial, sharing the survey in social media groups may also have led to biased results - a matter which we will discuss later on in our evaluation of the study. Ultimately, according to the statistics provided by the survey platform, the survey was opened by 2257 people in Latvia out of whom 142 responded, indicating a response rate of 6.3 percent. In Finland, the survey was opened by 1965 people out of whom 137 responded, indicating a response rate of 7 percent. In total, 279 responses were received (142 from Latvia, 137 from Finland)<sup>2</sup>. We checked the data for outliers as part of the first data screening. We discovered 54 respondents who either did not meet the survey's target audience or did not finish the questionnaire. They were therefore omitted from the rest of the investigation. A scatter plot was used to look for outliers among all the variables, but no critical cases were identified. The total number of complete responses to the survey was 224 (91 from Latvia, 133 from Finland).

#### *Participants and demographics*

In the following paragraphs, the basic demographics are presented, followed by initial calculations related to the CI and CP indices. As this study is part of a larger research project, this section repeats some information published earlier in [author(s)]. For clarity we have opted, however, to report key numbers here as well.

76.5% of the Finnish sample reported to be female and 23.5% reported to be male. Although distorted, this distribution echoes the reality that 57% of Finland's Russian-speaking population is registered as female (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). With a mean age of 39, the respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 68. Overall, there are more persons of working age in the Russian-speaking community in Finland than among the total population (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). 115 of the 133 respondents said they were employed. This significantly distinguishes our sample from Finland's general situation, where speakers of Russian report having an employment rate of only about 50% (Varjonen et al., 2017). The respondents in the Finnish sample had a high level of education. In all, 65.4% had a bachelor's degree, 18.8% had a master's degree or above, and 15.8% had only completed their secondary school. These figures are higher than the official ones when it comes to the educational level of Russian speakers in Finland, but there are no completely accurate figures because of statistical shortcomings (Varjonen et al., 2017).

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<sup>2</sup> The survey has reached around 2000 people in Finland and around the same number of people in Latvia. Despite this, the actual response rate is quite low, lower than the expected average of 10 percent. Hypothetically it is due to the nature of the questions regarding acculturation, language and media use which is sometimes politicized in Russia as well as in Eastern Europe. Second, this might be also partly caused by the number of survey questions (40).

The self-reported gender split of the Latvian sample was 68.1% female and 31.9% male. This reflects the fact that around 61% of Russian citizens in Latvia are registered as female and that 52.5% of non-Latvian citizens are female (Official Statistics of Latvia, 2017). With a mean age of 37, the respondents' ages ranged from 17 to 80. 84 of the 91 respondents said they were employed. This is higher than Latvia's overall working-age population of 67.7%. (European Commission, 2021). The respondents in the Latvian sample had also a high level of education. Overall, 68.1% had a Bachelor's degree, 9.9% had a Master's degree, and 22% had only completed their secondary school.

There were many variations in the reported demographic characteristics between the Latvian and Finnish samples. 54% of the participants in the Latvian sample were born in Latvia. In contrast, everyone in the Finnish sample has come from abroad. The average length of stay in Latvia for respondents from Latvia was longer ( $M = 28.8$ ,  $SD = 17.5$ ) than for respondents from Finland ( $M = 12.1$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ). In the Latvian sample, 65 respondents were citizens of Latvia, six were not, and 19 were citizens of Russia. In the Finnish sample, 61 people were citizens of Russia, 48 held dual citizenship (Finnish and Russian), 11 had Finnish citizenship, and five were Estonian.

#### *Data processing*

The culture of origin index and the culture of destination index were created by adding up the respondents' answers to the twelve statements, divided by twelve (the number of items in total). Together, the responses of the participants from Latvia and Finland to the twelve statements about the culture of origin were ( $Min = 1.58$ ,  $Max = 9$ ,  $M = 6.87$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ). Their twelve answers to the question on the destination's culture were ( $Min = 1$ ,  $Max = 8.91$ ,  $M = 5.51$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ). The Latvian sample's culture of origin scores ( $Mdn = 7.32$ ) were higher than the Finnish sample's ( $Mdn = 6.75$ ). This difference was shown to be statistically significant by a Mann-Whitney test ( $U = 4926$ ,  $z = 2.363$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The Latvian sample's culture of destination scores ( $Mdn = 5.42$ ) was lower than the Finnish sample's ( $Mdn = 5.83$ ). Also this difference was shown to be statistically significant by a Mann-Whitney test ( $U = 7336$ ,  $z = 2.698$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In both the Finnish and Latvian populations, Cronbach's alpha indicated that the questionnaire had high internal reliability, ranging from ( $\alpha = 0.890$  to  $0.905$ ).

As was stated earlier, we included several questions on language proficiency and use. Based on the answers, we created two nominal variables. First, one based on the respondent's answers to a question inquiring into their *self-perceived language proficiency*. Respondents were grouped according to whether they 1) marked the local language (Finnish or Latvian) as their second language; 2) marked English as their second language; or 3) marked both of these as equally strong. Second, we created another nominal variable based on the respondent's answers to the question on *the most used languages* outside of their homes. This variable grouped the respondents into those that indicated using 1) Russian, 2) Finnish or Latvian as the 'local language', or 3) English, as the most used language outside of their homes.

## ***Findings***

### *Cultural Involvement (CI)*

Following Carlson and Güler (2018), we added the origin and destination culture indexes and divided the score by two to get the Cultural Involvement (CI) score. The CI scores for the Latvian and Finnish samples were compared using an independent-sample t-test. The respondents' CI values varied from 9 to 3, with a mean of ( $M = 6.25$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ). This result is very close to the so-called biculturalism, which in Carlson and Güler's (2018) model signals an involvement with both Russian as well as Latvian/Finnish culture. There was no significant difference in scores between the Latvian ( $M = 6.21$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) and the Finnish samples ( $M = 6.27$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ;  $t(224) = -0.43$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ).

### *Cultural Preference (CP)*

We calculated the direction of the Cultural Preference (CP) score by subtracting the origin culture score minus the destination culture score, and dividing the outcome by two, as described by Carlson and Güler (2018). The overall mean CP for the entire sample was ( $M = +0.68$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ). Carlson and Güler (2018) explain that when interpreting CP scores, a CP score of +4.0 is equivalent to complete separation in Berry's categorical formulation and a CP score of -4.0 is equivalent to complete assimilation (p. 631). Simply defined, higher scores show a preference for the culture of origin, lower scores for the destination culture, and scores close to the midpoint show a preference for biculturalism. In order to further compare the CP scores for the Latvian and Finnish samples, an independent-samples t-test was used. The Latvian sample's CP scores ( $M = +0.99$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) differed significantly from the Finnish sample ( $M = +0.47$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ );  $t(222) = 3.16$ ,  $p = 0.002$ . In other words, the preference for the culture of origin (Russian) was higher in the Latvian sample than in the Finnish sample. According to Cohen's criteria (1998), however, the size of the mean differences was very minor (eta squared = 0.004). Therefore, we might conclude that the participants in both countries had CP scores that were closer to biculturalism than monoculturalism. Next, we will turn to look at these results and their relation to the participants' language proficiency and use.

## **Language proficiency and use**

The self-assessed proficiency of our respondents in the local language (Finnish/Latvian) and English is presented in Table 2. There was an almost even distribution between those who chose English and those who chose Finnish as their second strongest language after Russian. By contrast, in the Latvian sample, self-assessed English proficiency was lower.

Table 2. Self-ranked second language proficiency

	Finnish/Latvian	English	Both Finnish/Latvian and English	Total
Finnish sample	62 (46.61%)	61 (45.86%)	10 (7.51 %)	133
Latvian sample	46 (50.54%)	30 (32.96%)	15 (16.48)	91
Samples together	108 (48,21%)	91 (40,62%)	25 (11,2%)	224

N=224

Respondents also indicated how often they would use different languages outside of their homes. As seen in Table 3 below, the Finnish sample included a relatively even distribution between Russian (38), Finnish (54), and English (41), with Finnish being the most-used language outside of the home. In the Latvian sample, most of the respondents reported using Russian (72) outside their homes. A small number of respondents reported using Latvian (16), while the use of English (3) outside of home was almost nonexistent. These findings indicate that both Finnish and English language seem to play an important role in the Finnish context, whereas Russian was by far the most used language reported in the Latvian sample. It is therefore important to investigate further how reported language use relates to CI and CP. This moves us to the main research question: RQ1) *How are Russian speakers' cultural preference (CP) and cultural involvement (CI) related to their language proficiency and use?*

Table 3. Most used languages outside of the home

	Russian	Finnish/Latvian	English	Total
Finnish sample	38 (28.57%)	54 (40.60%)	41 (30.82%)	133
Latvian sample	72 (79.12%)	16 (17.58%)	3 (3.3%)	91
Samples together	110 (49.10%)	70 (31.25%)	44 (19.64%)	224

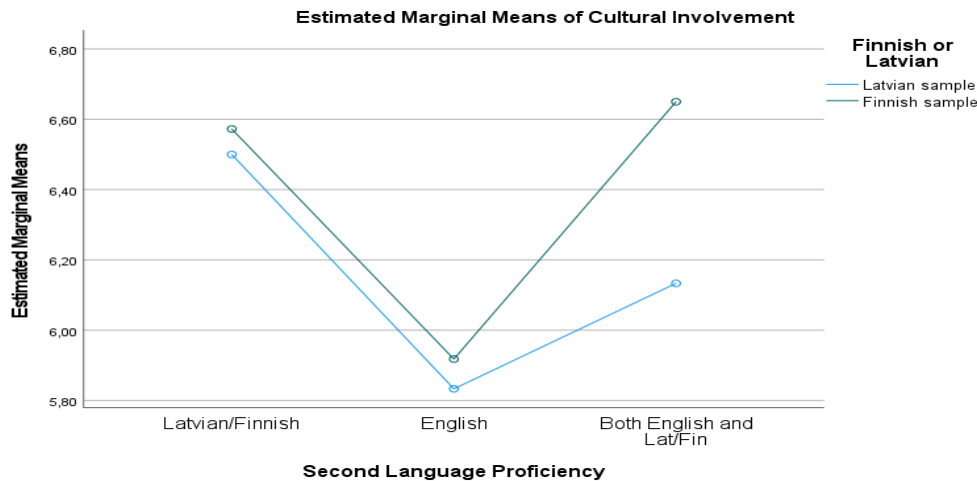
N=224



To answer our research question, we conducted four two-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). Our aim was to investigate if/how *second language proficiency and most used language* outside the home would relate to participants' Cultural Involvement (CI) and Cultural Preference (CP) scores. We conducted preliminary assumption testing to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted.

First, in a two-way between-groups analysis of variance, we explored the impact of *second language proficiency* and the *country of the respondents* on their CI scores. Participants were divided into three language groups (Group 1: Latvian/Finnish; Group 2: English; Group 3: Both English and Lat/Fin). There was a statistically significant main effect for second language proficiency [ $F(2, 224) = 11.62, p < .001$ ]; with an effect size (partial eta squared = .096). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean CI score for the Local (Latvian/Finnish) language group ( $M = 6.54, SD = .89$ ) was significantly higher than in the English language group ( $M = 5.89, SD = .98$ ). In other words, the participants who indicated proficiency in either of the local languages also scored higher in their cultural involvement in the destination country (see Fig.3). The interaction effect of second language proficiency with the country of the respondents (Latvia or Fin\*Sec\_Lan\_Pro) [ $F(2, 224) = .585, p = .558$ ] did not reach statistical significance.

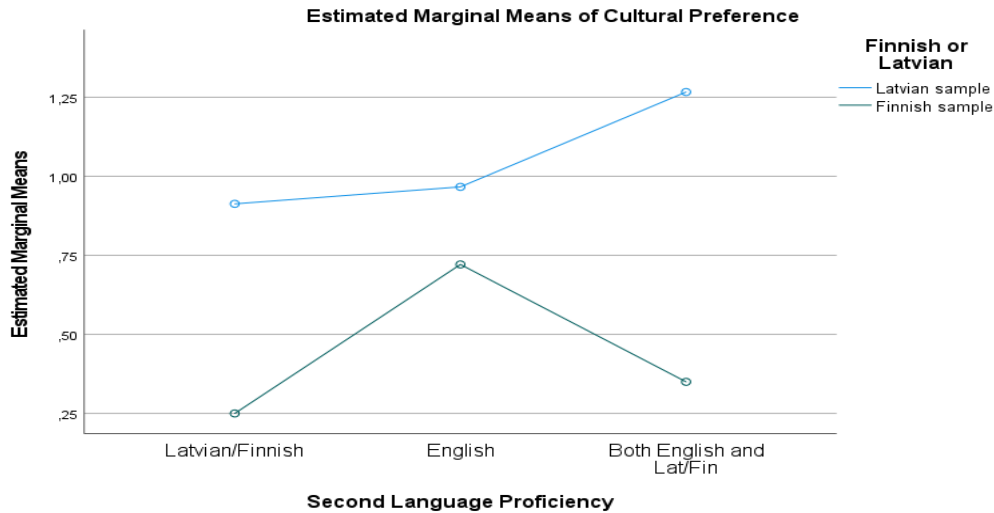
Fig.3



Next, we used a two-way between-groups analysis of variance to explore the relationship between *second language proficiency* and the *country of the respondents* on their CP scores. There was a statistically significant main effect for the respondents' country (Latvia/Finland) [ $F(1, 224) = 9.21, p = .003$ ]; with an effect size (partial eta squared = .041). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test did not produce statistical significance, however. The interaction effect for the second language proficiency [ $F(2, 224) = 1.20, p = .303$ ] and the country of respondents (Latvia or Fin\*Sec\_Lan\_Pro) [ $F(2, 224) = 1.05, p = .351$ ] did not reach statistical significance.

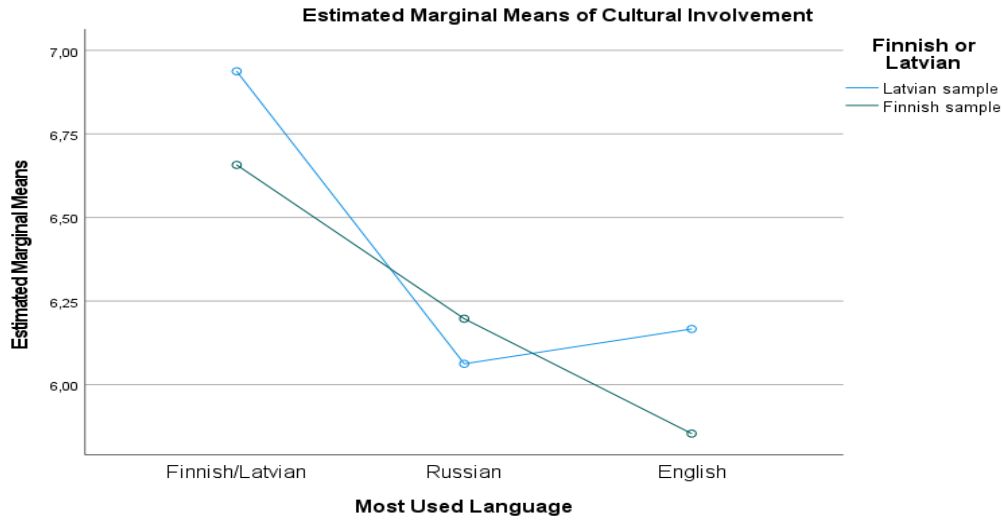
either (see Fig.4). In other words, we did not find a notable relationship between the respondents' self-reported language proficiency and their CP scores in both countries.

**Fig.4**



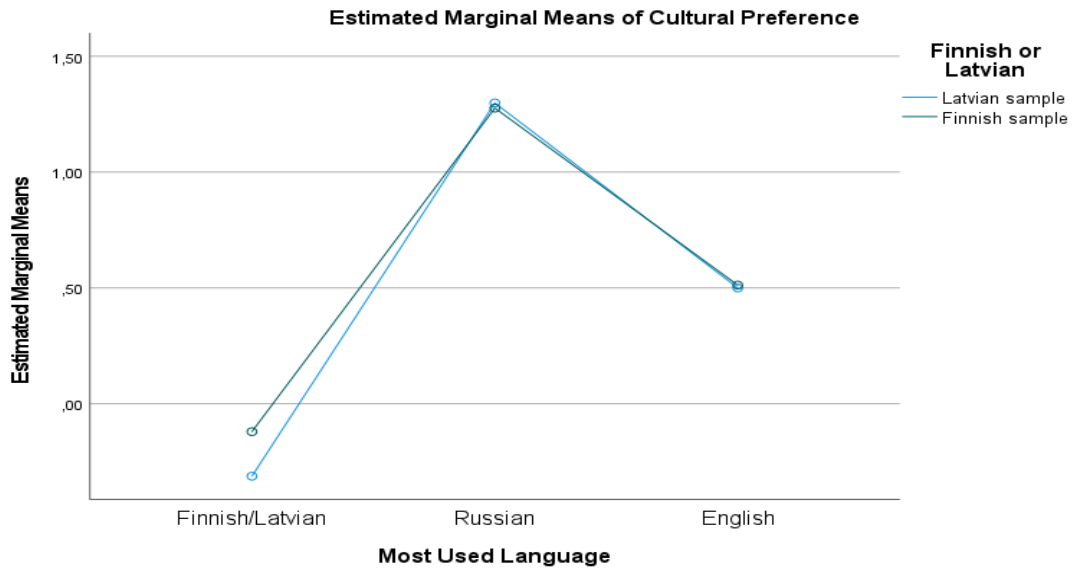
Third, a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relationship between the respondents' most used language outside of their home and country (Latvia/Finland) on their CI scores. There was a statistically significant main effect for the most used language [ $F(2, 224) = 9.21, p < .001$ ] with an effect size of (partial eta squared = .078). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean CI score for the Finnish/Latvian language group ( $M = 6.72, SD = .77$ ) was significantly higher than the scores of both the Russian ( $M = 6.11, SD = .95$ ) and English language group ( $M = 5.88, SD = 1.07$ ). In other words, respondents using more local languages show higher CI results compared to those who use English or Russian (see Fig.5). The interaction effect for the country of the respondents (Latvia/Finland [ $F(1, 224) = .507, p = .477$ ]) and the most used language (Latvia or Fin\*Most\_Used\_Lan) [ $F(2, 224) = .967, p = .382$ ] did not reach statistical significance.

Fig.5



Fourth, a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relationship between the *respondents' country and their most used language* outside of the home, and their CP score. There was a statistically significant main effect for most used languages [ $F(2, 224) = 34.23, p < .001$ ]; with an effect size (partial eta squared = .239). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the Finnish/Latvian language group ( $M = -.16, SD = 1.01$ ) was significantly lower than the scores of both the Russian language group ( $M = 1.29, SD = 1.11$ ) ( $p < .001$ ), and the English language group ( $M = .51, SD = .91$ ) ( $p = .003$ ). The mean score difference between the Russian language group and the English language group also reached statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ). In other words, those who report using the local language the most showed lower CP scores on average. Those who report using the Russian language the most had the highest CP scores (See Fig.6). These findings illustrate how using the local language goes hand in hand with a decrease in the preference towards the culture of origin. The interaction effect for the country of the respondents (Latvia/Finland [ $F(1, 224) = .063, p = .802$ ]) and the most used language taken together (Latvia or Fin\*Most\_Used\_Lan) [ $F(2, 224) = .174, p = .841$ ] did not reach statistical significance.

**Fig.6**



## Discussion

This study set out to explore the relationship between Russian speakers' self-reported language proficiency and use with their Cultural Involvement (CI) and Cultural Preference (CP) scores. The most evident difference between the Latvian and Finnish samples of Russian speakers was in the reported second language proficiency (Table 2) and reported language use outside the home (Table 3). In the Finnish context, the Finnish language was reported to be the main means of communication for most of the participants, whereas in the Latvian sample participants reported using predominantly Russian outside of their homes. Another difference lies in the role of the English language. In the Finnish sample, English was reported to be used often, and self-assessed English proficiency was higher than in the Latvian sample. The popularity of the Russian language and its extensive use in the Latvian context may be associated with 1) the different ways in which Russian speakers have historically moved into the country, especially during the Soviet Union era (Khalimzoda, 2023) and that they are considered to be somewhat in between a migrant and a minority (Shafir, 1995); and 2) current demographics, in which around 25 percent of the entire population of Latvia can be categorized as ethnic Russians. In other words, in the Latvian case we may be seeing a case of an 'accidental diaspora' (Brubaker, 2000), in which the Russian speakers in Latvia today have experienced a change in the political regime in the country of their birth, and where the borders of the nation around them have moved, instead of them moving over the borders. The participants' demographic information also confirms that slightly more than half of the Latvian respondents (54%) were born in Latvia. On the contrary, in the case of the Finnish sample, most of the Russian speakers arrived in the country voluntarily, conforming to a more traditional migration/diaspora. Therefore, according to existing normative use of terminology, participants in Finland can be

considered as having a migrant background, whereas slightly more than a half of the participants from Latvia may have local minority status instead.

Most importantly, despite a relatively small effect size, knowledge of the local language was shown to be related to the participants' CI scores. Knowing the local language did not play a statistically significant role in the participants' CP scores, however. Here, our findings are in line with earlier studies (Arola, 2017; Grigoryev and Berry, 2017; Vuori, 2015) on the role of local language proficiency in acculturation. Another important finding was that, looking beyond language proficiency, it was the language that was reported to be used the most outside of the home that explained a greater part of the variation in CI and CP. Reported use of the local language outside the home was significantly related to low CP scores ( $M = -.16$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). Meanwhile, the reported use of the Russian language in everyday life outside the home was related to higher CP scores ( $M = 1.29$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ). According to the original model by Carlson and Güler (2018), scores that are close to zero on the CP scale indicate biculturality and scores that deviate from zero in either direction indicate monoculturality (pp. 630-631). The preference towards Russian culture (CP) could explain the reason for the extensive use of Russian. The relationship may be bidirectional, however, in that the extensive use of Russian could also explain the strong orientation towards Russian culture. We, therefore, propose that while language proficiency (or fluency, see Pisarenko, 2006) may be used to explain acculturation strategies and processes, it may be especially useful to concentrate on the languages people actually use (see Dewaele & Stavans, 2014) on an everyday basis.

It is clear that in the Latvian context knowledge of Russian or Latvian will lead to somewhat different employment opportunities. In addition, there is an open question on whether proficiency in Latvian can be connected to the possibility of higher social mobility in the long run. For example, Manaev (2013) argues that even a solid command of the state language does not guarantee employment nor protect against prejudice. The question remains open, however, and warrants further inspection. Here, a parallel may be drawn to the Spanish Catalan context, where Lapresta-Rey, Janes, and Alarcon (2021) illustrated how immigrants' proficiency in one local language (Spanish) could be beneficial from the viewpoint of immediate employment, while proficiency in another (Catalan) was connected to higher social mobility and increased income in the long run. The same dynamic may not apply to Russian speakers in Finland, where the National languages (Finnish and Swedish) have traditionally been crucial in acculturation (Arola, 2017; Vuori, 2015). In Finland, the Russian language is spoken only by around two percent of the entire population, and as our study's participants demonstrated, many of them use Finnish outside of the home.

As our findings on the most used language and cultural involvement show, in practice it may be difficult to be involved in the surrounding society if one does not understand and use the local language. While the use of English as the lingua franca (ELF) (see Jenkins, 2007) and translanguaging practices (see Lewis, Jones & Baker,

2012) may in some societal contexts allow for certain levels of participation and involvement (i.e. business, studying), our findings illustrate how it was both proficiency and in particular the use of local languages that was related to higher cultural involvement.

It must also be noted that identity, as well as language, are also used as an ideological tool (Zakem, Saunders, Hashimova, & Hammerberg, 2018). Kolstø (1999a) describes the Russian speakers in Latvia as having low levels of rootedness in the country, along with strong ties to the so-called historic motherland Russia. This might be associated with the accidental diaspora we discussed above and also with the idea that Latvian and Russian speakers are commonly separated by linguistic identification and therefore a minority community known as Russian speakers has developed within the mainstream society (Pisarenko, 2006). Another rationale might also be - similar to the findings of Qurratulain and Zunnorain (2015) - that at times minorities may resist acculturation by retaining their language prestige and therefore tend towards deculturation. Research in the Russian language segment suggests that a key tool for preserving national identity and safeguarding the interests and rights of Russians in the Baltic states is a variety of public organizations and associations, some of which have made it their mission to preserve and develop Russian language and culture in their country. Like other non-governmental groups, however, they require not just moral but also financial backing from their home country (Manaev, 2013), which may raise concerns about the 'real purpose' of the source of the funding. At the time of writing this study, the war between Russia and Ukraine was ongoing, resulting in an increasing number of incoming refugees from Ukraine to both Latvia and Finland. Consequently, the linguistic realities, media landscapes, and political realities of Russian speakers in these countries may also change in the near future.

### **Limitations, future research, and recommendations**

As a limitation, we must note that our study's sample is not representative of the overall population of Russian speakers in Latvia or Finland. Our study illustrates a relationship between (self-assessed) language and acculturation, but more studies are needed in order to find out how common such patterns are within the broader population. The destination society's language policies are also crucial factors in the acculturation process that warrant further study. It would also be important to develop more nuanced ways of measuring language use in different contexts, such as at home, at work, or in society overall.

Future research could explore the reasoning behind using certain languages and their possible interactions with the process of acculturation, both in larger populations and on the individual level. What is especially needed is research in those societal contexts where English is not one of the official languages yet is widely used as a *lingua franca*. This involves asking questions such as what kind of cultural involvement may be (im)possible for migrants, and how it relates to using other languages (such as the official language or heritage language). The constructs of CI and CP are not without

their limitations either. For example, they may be criticized for their simplistic idea of culture of origin and culture of destination as connected to nationality alone.

Finally, the existence of two information spaces (i.e., news and media landscape) contradicting one another in Latvia pose some concerns as well (Khalimzoda, 2023). While the situation is much less accentuated in Finland, similar concerns exist relating to parallel realities in the media landscape (Sotkasiira, 2017; Khalimzoda 2023). In an earlier study, Khalimzoda and Siitonen (2022) found a positive relationship between the tendency to use Russian media sources and higher involvement in Russian culture. We propose that there may be several open questions to be explored in the intersection between language(s), media, and acculturation.

## **Conclusions**

One of the results of our study is that the dataset ended up challenging the way we approach migration. The inventory we utilized (Carlson & Güler, 2018), with its terminology, does not seem to cover minority communities, or so-called second and third-generation immigrant communities that belong to multiple backgrounds at the same time. The inventory uses terms such as ‘culture of origin’ and ‘culture of destination’, which may feel alienating for those minorities who have no culture of destination as such. Coming up with alternative terms is not simple either. While in some cases a term such as ‘ethnicity’ may work well, in other cases it may also lead to simplistic or alienating outcomes. On the other hand, despite the partial deviations towards the culture of origin or destination, on the whole, Russian speakers in our survey predominantly scored close to biculturalism. This means they could be seen as both leaning towards the culture of destination while retaining a connection to their culture of origin. This outcome was possible given the continuous nature of the measurement scale we utilized, where the CI and CP measurements combine information from the culture of origin and the destination culture scales and preserve the difference in scores, rather than cutting them off at some arbitrary point.

The study found that knowing the local language was connected to how much individuals engage with the local culture. Going beyond just knowing the language, what mattered even more was the language people actually reported using in their daily lives. For example, using the Russian language outside of home was linked to higher cultural preference towards Russian culture (culture of origin). The study also highlights the bidirectional relationship between language use and cultural preference. Understanding these connections is important because it helps us grasp how language and cultural involvement are intertwined. This knowledge can be valuable for supporting individuals in their involvement with the locality that they find themselves in. Though the dynamic nature of human choice should be kept in mind, studies such as this, by describing communities and their preferences, can provide useful knowledge about acculturation.

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