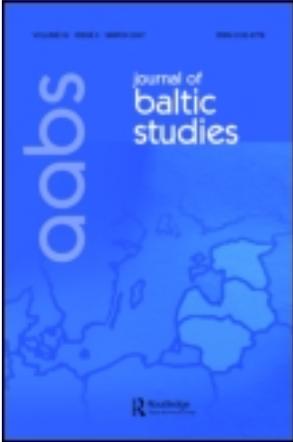


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# EVERYDAY CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN THE ESTONIAN REFUGEE COMMUNITY IN SWEDEN

## Leelo Keevallik

Social constructionist approaches underscore that identity is constantly negotiated. It emerges as values and attitudes are promoted and confronted in everyday actions, behavioral patterns and fleeting comments by participants in social events. This article analyzes membership categorization and pragmatic code-switching in the Swedish Estonian refugee community, demonstrating the fragile balance between ‘Estonian’ and ‘Swedish’. The speakers orient to Estonian as the target variety of language, while frequently using Swedish for sense-making. The analysis is based on audio and video recordings of Swedish Estonian club activities and research interviews.

**Keywords:** identity construction; code-switching; membership categorization; Estonian; diaspora community

### Identity in Sociolinguistic Research

The relationship between social roles and categories, on the one hand, and language, on the other, has been the main focus of sociolinguistic research. The speaker’s identity has generally been treated in terms of a number of stable characteristics that form the basis of behavior. Speech variables co-vary with different identities, real or desired, such as male/female, young/middle-aged, highly educated/little formal education, local/immigrant, insider/outsider (Labov 1972, 2001, among many others). Researchers have therefore carefully accounted for the speakers’ social background, age, gender, job, education and aims in life and coordinated these

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external factors with primarily phonetic and phonological variants. The linguistic features have been said to reflect and disclose the speaker's identity.

This understanding has been challenged by those who do not view people as necessarily imprisoned in social categories, neither the ones they are born into nor the ones to which they have been ascribed during their life. Instead, identity can be understood as a relationship accomplished in and arising from social discourse (De Fina 2007; De Fina *et al.* 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004). Rather than being treated as an explanatory resource that we analysts haul with us to a scene where people are interacting, identity is approached as a topic that requires investigation once we get there (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998a, p. 2). Identity is seen as a personal display of belonging to a specific category, including how speech is produced. Since identity is accomplished within an event, the researcher's task is to disclose the relevance of participants' behavior in terms of identity, rather than correlate it with a predefined concept.

To fathom one's identity as something that is accomplished, rather than inherited and stable, it is easiest to think about how identity changes in time. We can subscribe to different roles when growing up and we make use of different facets of our identity in different situations in life. These changing ideas are reflected in the way we use language as an 'act of identity' (LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985). Moreover, the identities themselves change in time. What was perceived as male behavior 50 years ago need not be the same as what we perceive as the male identity today. People can also more or less consciously adapt features they consider attractive, whether from another group, such as choice of cars and clothes, features of speech or value systems. With regard to immigrants, it is obvious that one's identity and values can change during a lifetime and that one can acquire a (partly) new ethnic identity. As with any other identity, the identity of immigrant groups can be questioned and needs therefore to be actively maintained and confirmed within the group as well as communicated outside the group. Immigrants may have to work for their identity as representatives of the old country of residence as well as to be accepted in the new context.

What is more, not all of the components of one's identity are relevant in every communicative situation. Some may or should be completely irrelevant in certain situations, such as immigrant identity at a dentist. Within the branches of identity research that rely on the ideas of social constructionism and ethnomethodology, researchers are therefore looking for ways to hear and see identities and to discern which facets are made relevant, when and how (Schegloff 1991). The ethnomethodologist Harvey Sacks pointed out that people tend to organize their world, including themselves and other people, into categories and display these categories explicitly or implicitly in their behavior (1992, pp. 40–8, 568–83, based on lectures from the 1960s). Membership in a category is 'ascribed (and rejected), avowed (and disavowed), displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times' (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998a, p. 2). A person's identity is seen as a display of membership in a certain category, not as the obvious underlying reason for behaving in a certain way. Identity is something that is used in talk, 'something that is part and parcel of the routines of everyday life, brought off in the fine detail of everyday interaction' (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998a, p. 1). Identities emerge in practice, in the ways of going about everyday business. It is therefore necessary to observe people

in various situations rather than merely ask them about what they think of their identity and what it leads them to do.

With this in mind, it is possible to analyze which behavioral patterns are used to perform and maintain identity categories. Social constructionist analysis has become especially popular in the age of globalization. As borders are easier to cross, individuals find themselves more often in a situation where it is necessary to actively work on an identity, either in conflict or in harmony with the representatives of different groups. In multicultural societies, it becomes acutely clear that what is considered self-evident in one ethnic group need not coincide with what is done in other groups.

Verbal ways of managing one's identity are an interesting subject for sociologically oriented linguists. The empirical microsociological research tradition of ethnomethodology and the related conversation analysis carry out detailed analyses of specific interactional sequences in order to demonstrate, at the micro-level, how the speakers co-construct their identities in interpersonal communication. It is then possible to discover what kind of identities the speakers claim for themselves and other interactants, how they achieve their aims and how they are treated by others. Much of this work on identity reverberates in language use (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998b; Bucholtz 1999; Ochs 1995). With the help of the minute analysis of how people treat each other, researchers not only can get at the social injustice in a society by disclosing patterns that are based on prejudice and stereotypes, but they can also study how common value systems and ideas about identity arise and are maintained within a group.

In several communities, especially immigrant ones, code-switching between different languages has been shown to be part of identity construction. That code-switching is constitutive of group culture has been an established fact in sociolinguistic studies for a long time (e.g., De Fina 2007; Gumperz 1982; Labov 1971; Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998). Code-switching does not necessarily reflect deficient knowledge of either language. Instead, code-switching may be a communicative discourse strategy that is basically stylistic or metaphorical. It may index identity but it may also be occasioned by conversational actions within specific interactional sequences (Auer 1998; Wei 2005). Fluent code-switching may furthermore be the unmarked and grammaticalized way of speaking in bilingual communities (Maschler 1998), representing the so-called fused lect (Auer 1999, pp. 321–9). This study focuses on cases of the more pragmatic code-switching used for stylistic, metaphorical or other rhetorical reasons. These cases display more conscious language choice, which makes them usable and analyzable as acts of identity.

The particular value of focusing on the ethnic identity of Estonian refugees and their descendents in Sweden is the long-term stability of this group. The 50 years of Soviet occupation of Estonia seem to have enhanced strong group norms within the core refugee circles. Present-day free mobility within the European Union, in which both countries are members, has already changed the group dynamics, particularly in the younger generations of Estonians in Sweden who are not included in the study. The present article thus offers insight into a unique set of attitudes held by a relatively compact group of people who left their country unwillingly, almost

simultaneously, two generations ago. By focusing on this particular set of people, the article adds yet another building stone to the social constructionist research on ethnic identity and it also displays how occasionally conflicting claims on identity can be understood in the context of the multiple identities, loyalties and value systems of people living at the border of two cultures.

After a brief overview of Estonians in Sweden and a description of methodology, we will look at how Swedish Estonians define and deal with their identity in everyday life after 60 years of exile. The analysis focuses on a number of mundane situations in which Swedish Estonians make claim to different facets of their identity as non-Swedes and non-Estonian Estonians, thus demarcating a group of their own. Finally, a number of code-switching events will be discussed in terms of their meaning for group identity.

### **Estonian Refugees in Sweden**

During World War II, Estonia was trapped between two main fighting forces, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The first Soviet occupation in 1940–1941 brought horror to the country, as Soviet forces in 1941 deported the large group of people for political reasons (Andrae 2004, p. 23). Nazi Germany occupied Estonia in 1941–1944. When their troops started the retreat in the early autumn of 1944 and the second Soviet occupation was imminent, many Estonians chose to flee, setting off the so-called Great Exodus of tens of thousands. The closest safe country was Sweden, just across the Baltic Sea.

As a result of this wave of refugees, the number of Estonian citizens who had acquired Swedish residency permits by the end of 1945 was 22,213, excluding children under the age of 16 (Reinans 2006, p. 124). Due to further migration after the war, the number of Estonian refugees diminished to about 15,500 by 1953 (Reinans 2006, p. 144). At the moment, it is impossible to determine the number of Estonian descendants in Sweden, since the Swedish census does not include information on ethnic groups.

Estonian refugees were not only composed of ethnic Estonians but also of the Swedish minority in Estonia, who were systematically evacuated. From the thirteenth century onwards, ethnic Swedes had formed a minority on the west coast of Estonia. They numbered about 6000 among the refugees (Raag 1983, p. 18). By World War II, many of them were bilingual or even monolingual Estonians in their daily lives. Fortunately, Swedish authorities treated the category of ethnicity liberally during the evacuation and included people with loose connections to the Swedish minority as well as those able to pay well (Andrae 2004, p. 38–40).

These two big groups of refugees from Estonia – ethnic Estonians and Estonian Swedes – have formed the basis of the active cultural and community life in Sweden. Estonian cultural activities have involved choirs, theaters, sports clubs, churches, publishing houses, newspapers, journals and political parties as well as Estonian schools and kindergartens. A comprehensive overview of the political and cultural life of Estonians in Sweden can be found in Kangro (1976) and Raag (2005). For a long time, it was the general hope among the Estonian immigrants that they would soon

move back home. Present community members often claim they had heard about somebody who was unwilling to pay rent one month in advance in case Estonia were liberated and they could return. This attitude is said to have prevailed for decades. The dream of returning has been an important component in the identity of Estonian refugees. Identity narratives such as this aim at preserving a particular version of a collective experience (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004, pp. 18–19). After Estonian independence in 1991, of course, it has been quite hard to realize this dream. There has been no mass repatriation.

Estonians currently constitute one of the oldest immigrant groups in Sweden. They have integrated well into Swedish society, displaying high rates of employment very soon after the war. Simultaneously, they have also preserved their language and culture to a considerable extent. Socioeconomic and political factors, some suggest, contributed to the persistence of strong Estonian identity. As a rule, the refugees were less affluent than their Swedish fellow-workers and furthermore did not share the socialist or communist views that prevailed among Swedes after the war (Raag 2005, pp. 370–1). There are still active Estonian clubs in the bigger centers, such as Stockholm, Göteborg, Uppsala and Lund. An Estonian school in Stockholm and the continued publication of an Estonian newspaper witness to a lively and strong group culture.

Nevertheless, the second and third generations of Estonian refugees in Sweden rarely belong to the core activist group when it comes to ethnic sentiment. In addition to the recent arrivals, the clubs are dominated by the refugee generation and those born to Estonian parents right after the war. These generations have generally considered fluency in Estonian highly important. They have valued education on Estonian topics to the extent that they sent their children to special complementary schools on weekends. Originally, the goal of these complementary schools was to promote the children's career chances after returning to Estonia. Apparently, subsequent generations have not been convinced of this necessity to the same extent as the refugees.

As to language proficiency, the refugee generation and those born soon after the war are as a rule highly competent speakers of Estonian. Among the younger generations of Estonians, it is very hard to evaluate language proficiency in general terms, as it varies considerably from person to person. According to a questionnaire among 98 Swedish Estonians at the beginning of the 1980s, those who were infants during the flight did not use Estonian as often as those who had grown up in Estonia. The difference in daily use of Estonian between these two groups was about 40% (Raag 1982, p. 38). This huge gap is closely connected to the narrow range of functions and registers within which Estonian in Sweden had been confined, involving mainly home, ethnic clubs and national rituals (Raag & Raag 1988, pp. 133–4). Language proficiency in the second and third generation is therefore sometimes reduced to minimal grammar and basic words (Allik 2002). Still, a number of Estonian descendants speak surprisingly good Estonian and can talk about any subject, albeit interspersing some Swedish terminology. Frequent recent contacts with Estonia after the restoration of independence may have contributed to this development.

In terms of cultural practices, the core circles of Swedish Estonians to date have carefully preserved many Estonian traditions in symbolic acts that are obviously

important to the group. Examples include eating pork, blood pudding and sauerkraut at Christmas and observing the politically important commemoration of Estonian Independence Day. Options for purchasing the special Estonian blood pudding are a constant topic of discussion, as it is not easily available in Sweden. Many participants wear national costumes to Independence Day ceremonies. Subscribing to the local Estonian-language newspaper is quite common, but reading Estonian literature is reported to be difficult by many of the interviewees in this study.

At the same time, new Swedish customs have been introduced among Swedish Estonians, such as the celebration of Lucia on 13 December. The video documentation of this study recorded a mocking celebration of Lucia, where Lucia's role is embodied by an elderly man instead of a young lady with long blonde hair. Some Swedish Estonians go out together to eat the traditional Swedish smorgasbord at Christmas and everybody drinks mulled wine called *glögg* (with almonds and raisins) at the club during Christmas. *Glögg* has also become customary in Estonia in recent years. In contrast to Estonians living in Estonia, cremation instead of burial has become predominant among Swedish Estonians (Aarelaid-Tart 2002). These practices seem to be considered unproblematic by the community, as they are never commented upon as particularly Swedish.

Previous studies on communicative styles have concerned families during dinnertime and they have suggested both that Swedish Estonians behave more like Swedes than Estonians in Estonia (De Geer *et al.* 2002) and that Estonians behave similarly regardless of the country of residence (Tulviste *et al.* 2002). Primary differences between the two groups of Estonians seem to concern regulatory utterances to children, which tend to be more direct and less hedged in the Estonian Estonian community. In fact, numerous Swedish patterns of language use have become a part of Swedish Estonian group norms (Keevallik 2006). At the same time, some very distinct Swedish cultural practices have not been borrowed on a wider scale, such as hugging everybody at arrivals and departures. At least older Swedish Estonians generally still shake hands, regardless of the level of acquaintance, while hugs may be delivered on special occasions, such as birthdays. In short, Swedish Estonians quite expectedly follow a mix of different cultural norms in their daily behavior.

## Methods

The people under scrutiny in the current study are either refugees themselves or the children of refugees who are by now seniors (60 years and over). They have spent either most or all of their lives in Sweden but still consider their Estonian origin important. Video and audio recordings for this study have been made among the people who were accessible in the various Estonian clubs in different parts of Sweden and thus involve those who are active in the communities.<sup>1</sup> These people regularly come together to manifest their Estonianness, which is in itself a crucial practice in their identity construction. The meetings are generally held at the so-called Estonian Home, which is a house or apartment that the community owns or rents for this purpose and which includes small Estonian libraries, art collections and souvenirs. Thus the physical space of community meetings also indexes Estonianness and, along

with ethnic food, is part of the organizational practices that underlie identity construction (see De Fina 2007 on similar practices of Italian Americans).

The recordings involve common celebrations of Christmas, Independence Day and the anniversary of Tartu University as well as the regular club activities of reading groups, pensioners' meetings and oral presentations of various kinds. All of it is accompanied by meals or coffee-drinking. At these occasions Estonian is spoken almost exclusively, since preserving and speaking Estonian is one of the main objectives of the activities. All the participants are highly proficient in Estonian. Still, some are self-conscious about their language and feel uneasy when talking to a linguist. Official guests at the club may be invited from outside and therefore some of the presentations are in Swedish. Some of the talk may also be conducted in Swedish, but only to accommodate significant others who do not speak Estonian. All the people in this study can be considered bilingual, even though the Swedish of some of the oldest speakers carries a distinct Estonian accent.

In addition to the recordings of social events, a number of interviews have been studied. Estonian social scientists, linguists and historians have conducted interviews among Swedish Estonians during the last decade in order to collect language and life stories as well as to compile a history of the flight. These interviews have been used to some extent, especially because they disclose patterns that prevail in cross-group interaction between Swedish Estonians and Estonian Estonians. All in all, 252 hours of data are included in the database, out of which 36 hours are video recordings made exclusively by the author and 186 hours are interviews carried out by various researchers, including the author.

As its starting point, the study focuses on fleeting mundane events where identity is made relevant by the interactants themselves. The most straightforward way of doing this is by exploiting membership categories, such as 'Estonian' and 'Swedish', with various meanings: the country, the people, the language. The related use of the pronouns 'they' versus 'us' is of similar relevance. Another form of identity display is language choice. Do Swedish Estonians define themselves as Estonians in their interactions or do they distance themselves from other Estonians? Do they present themselves as 'non-Estonian' in some ways? When? In which language do they choose to communicate? Why? To target these questions, two different but complementary approaches will be taken – membership categorization analysis and code-switching. Both research methods are qualitative and crucially concerned with language use.

Membership categorization analysis helps to demonstrate how Swedish Estonians position themselves in terms of ethnic categories. Some of the most revealing implementations of category names occur not when the discussion topic is explicitly ethnic difference, but when names are introduced in the course of other activities. The verbalized and intellectualized summaries of stereotypes and beliefs of people are not the only interesting subject of study, nor probably the most objective. We all tend to rationalize, typify, simplify or complicate the picture, if pushed to answer questions on identity, such as how we feel as a female, a middle-aged person, a father, researcher in the humanities, etc. The methodology of membership categorization analysis (as represented in, e.g., Antaki & Widdicombe 1998b) is more subtle than the use of questionnaires that ask people to actively take a stance on the question of ethnic or other type of identity (a survey on Swedish Estonian identity has been carried out

by Karu-Kletter & Valk 2005, pp. 1989–98). The membership categorization method does not aim at large surveys. Instead, it exposes local interpretations at specific moments in interaction, disclosing what is important to the interactants there and then. In the analysis of mundane encounters among people, there is no imposed obligation to take a particular stance, with the result that the categories people refer to arise from an in-group or interpersonal need for categorization. The reasons why the interactants are allied with one or another group give us information about their common values and attitudes.

Code-switching analysis reveals how the speakers make use of the symbolic and indexing values of language (Gumperz 1982). The term ‘code-switching’ is here used to denote ‘the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems’ (Gumperz 1982, p. 59). In recent years, scholars have also underlined that analysts cannot always apply their own understanding of values to the data but should look closely at group members’ own reactions and behavior as to the use of various codes (Auer 1999). Code-switching creates social meaning and is thus interpreted by the participants. These situated interpretations constitute the most important resource for the analyst. What Swedish Estonians choose to do in terms of language choice is a crucial part of their identity construction in the context of Estonian clubs.

Identity not only involves subscribing to abstract categories but is crucially connected to the conduct and choices of daily life. Swedish Estonians have reported that family ties and friends are the most important components of their ethnic identity, alongside language (Karu-Kletter & Valk 2005, p. 1992). Thus the ‘small world’ of relatives and friends, presumably communicating in informal settings, forms the basis of the Swedish Estonian identity. Identity is often reflected in such mundane notions as kinship relations, rites of passage and calendar traditions. In post-war Sweden and pre-war Estonia these matters have been described as being reasonably similar, thus enabling a swift adaptation with only minor adjustments for the refugees (Aareleid-Tart 2002). In contrast, after the war Estonians in Estonia found themselves in a shockingly new daily reality with novel holidays and prohibited rituals. Both groups lived under constant cultural pressure from the majority ethnic group, enforced either by state policies or by practical everyday needs. Facing an endangered identity and resisting the majority culture have therefore been necessary for Estonians on both shores of the Baltic Sea. In order to find out how identity is maintained among Swedish Estonians, studying mundane and informal in-group communication is of utmost relevance as the main locus of identity construction.

## Membership Categorization by Swedish Estonians

Attitudes and values characterizing a group of people are dynamic and changing, as are group boundaries and even categorizations. They have to be established by group members more or less openly and defined in relation to other significant groups. Swedish Estonians, according to the data, relate primarily to Swedes and other Estonians around the world. During the post-war period, politics has not hindered communication among Estonian diaspora communities, which were held together by

the common hope of a liberated Estonia. Worldwide Estonian cultural and sports festivals were held from 1972 onwards, which certainly contributed to the general loyalty among Estonians.

In contrast, communication with Estonian Estonians became possible on a wider scale only after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Before then, given the almost hermetic Soviet border, normal liaisons were severely hindered. Harsh political threats and Soviet propaganda stirred up considerable suspicion on both sides as people had to undergo vigorous security screenings in order to visit. At the same time, the narratives of the refugees presented an idyllic picture of pre-war Estonia to younger generations of Estonians in Sweden. Now the situation has changed. Since visiting is no longer a problem, virtually every Estonian in Sweden has personal experiences of Estonia and Estonians living there, all of which contributes to the formation of mutual attitudes.

In the following, we will look at a number of mundane episodes in which the categories 'Estonian' and 'Swedish' are foregrounded in the course of insider interactions among Swedish Estonians. The aim is to analyze attitudes and self-identification as revealed in these episodes.

The recorded data reveal the relevance of the general category 'Estonian' for Swedish Estonians. In the following episode from an Estonian club (1), somebody has taken out an old cutting machine that nobody has used for the last decade. Four people have gathered around to figure out how it works. One of the participants, Kati, has suggested they throw the machine away but Mari and Aarne (in lines 3 and 4) suggest that they keep it.<sup>2</sup> The codes reveal the speaker's gender (F or M) and generation (1 = born in Estonia before 1944; 2 = born in Sweden 1944–1959).

(1)

- 1 Riina F1: *Uvitav, misasi see on.*  
'I'm wondering what this is.'
- 2 Aarne M1: *Mai tea mis - (.) ahh, ega see plast [tal ikkagi -]*  
'I don't know what - (.) the plastic isn't -'
- 3 Mari F2: *[Ei, las nad] olla siin s. las olla siin sis.*  
'No, let them be here, let it be here.'
- 4 Aarne: *Las ta olla, las ta olla jah. aga on küsimus ainult et -*  
'Let it be, let it be, right. But the question is -'
- 5 Kati F1: *Eestlased ei saa kunagi midagi ära visatud.*  
'Estonians can never throw away anything.'  
((laughter, Kati takes the machine back))
- 6 Aarne: *Ei ei, me- Veljo ütles [et] - (.) e kui minul Veljot ei oleks olnud,*  
'No, no. Veljo said that - (.) If I hadn't had Veljo (by my side)'
- 7 Riina: *[Jah.]*  
'Yeah.'
- 8 Aarne: *(.) siis ma oleks (.) kõik: e Alberti asjad alles jätanud enam-vähem.*  
'then I would have kept all Albert's stuff more or less.'

After Mari's proposal to keep the machine and Aarne's agreement, Kati states somewhat jokingly that Estonians can never throw anything away. The behavioral pattern of keeping old stuff has natural roots in the constant state of war and shortages

in Estonia, but the claim itself has also become a truism. By saying it, Kati explicitly marks all the present participants as belonging to the group of Estonians who never throw things away. The others express their agreement with this classification by appreciative and approving laughter.

Furthermore, Arne elaborates on the identical point by describing how hard it was for him to throw away things after somebody's death. He thereby confirms and illustrates Kati's point. This exchange nicely reveals how a mundane exchange becomes an act of identity. On the one hand, the commonly held truism about Estonians is used as an excuse for somewhat irrational behavior. Kati, by already taking the machine back while uttering the statement in line (5), is definitely including herself in the definition of Estonians who cannot 'throw away anything'. On the other hand, her statement solidifies the interactants' ethnic identity as Estonians. In such statements, speakers constantly confirm and renew their group loyalty, subject to other members' approval.

However, not all usages of the concept 'Estonian' can be inclusively accessed by Swedish Estonians. For example, as Swedish citizens Swedish Estonians cannot talk about the Estonian state as if they belonged there. Thus, when someone expresses the hope that Estonian pensions will be increased 'now that they have become a part of the European Union', the excluding pronoun 'they' refers to the citizens of another state.

While contacts with Estonians living in Estonia were sparse during the Soviet years, contacts with the Swedish society have been constant. This contact necessitated defining the special features of Swedish Estonians as compared to Swedes. Numerous remarks suggest that Swedish Estonians position themselves as outsiders in relation to the ethnic majority in Sweden. They can, for example, tell stories about stupid Swedes who pay a too high rent for the summer cottages in Estonia, thereby implying their own expertise in relation to present-day Estonia. The differences between Swedish Estonians and Swedes have most probably always been (constructed as) significant and become conventionalized, at least by the most active part of the Estonian refugee community.

Example 2 comes from a local Swedish Estonian club event and illustrates a recurrent pattern of teasing based on linguistic-pragmatic differences between Estonian and Swedish languages. In Estonian Estonian, the verb *laena* – 'borrow' – cannot be used as a polite expression for an item that will be consumed and thus not be returned to the owner. In contrast, using the Swedish equivalent of the verb 'borrow', one can 'borrow' a cigarette or a napkin, or something edible without the expectation of return.

At the beginning of the excerpt 2, Arne and Teet are chatting at the coffee table. When Rain shows up and says (in line 2) that he wants to 'borrow' a bread roll from the table, he triggers a teasing exchange.

(2)

- 1 Arne M1: *see oli mees kellel oli Stockholmis, XX kaubamajas oli, Saluhallenis oli:; [oli esimene eestlaste kauplus.]*  
 'This was the guy who had in Stockholm, at warehouse XX, at Saluhallen (he) had – had the first Estonian shop'

- 2 Rain M1: [*Enne kui poisid kõik saia ära söövad siis ma] laenan natuke siit.*  
‘Before the guys eat up all the bread rolls I’ll borrow some from here’
- 3 Teet M1: *Laenad. nagu rootslased.*  
‘You borrow like the Swedes (do)’
- 4 A: *Tema laenab.=*  
‘He borrows’
- 5 B: *=XX laenab.*  
‘XX borrows’
- 6 ((laughter))
- 7 Aarne: *Tule [tagasi.] (.) Too [tagasi.]*  
Come back Bring (it) back’
- 8 Teet: *[Aga-] [Aga lae-] (.) Laen tavaliselt makstakse tagasi.*  
‘But But a loa- A loan is usually paid back’
- 9 Aarne: *Ja protsendiga.*  
‘Plus the interest’
- 10 Teet: *hah [hah]*
- 11 Aarne: *[hah hah] protsendi- hah hah [hah] hah hah hah*  
‘The interes—’
- 12 Teet: *[Juuju.]*  
‘Yeah’
- 13 Teet: *Tema laenab ja [ei] mõtlegi tagasi maksta.=*  
‘He borrows and does not even think of paying back’
- 14 Aarne: *[heh]*
- 15 Aarne: *=Noojah. See on nagu rootslased jah. hah [hah] (.) hah hah hah=*  
‘Right, just like the Swedes do’.

In this exchange, the general support of the other participants and the spin-off effects of the original joke reveal how they protect Estonian identity against an invading Swedishness. Even though the atmosphere is friendly and everybody joins in the laughter, including Rain, the exchange embeds a seed of criticism against the one who has misused the Estonian language. For members of this core Estonian group, it is clearly important to speak proper Estonian, to avoid Swedish influence, if at all possible and to enforce Estonian behavioral and pragmatic norms. In the specific case of the Swedish concept of ‘borrowing’, it is often used as the target of jokes and should therefore be salient for all the group members. At the same time, since many other Swedish usages go unnoticed and are never subject to joking, the exchange even conveys an element of conventionalization.

In the recordings, another example documents a dinner celebrating the anniversary of Tartu University. Small cakes are offered as dessert. A man who comments that there could have been a greater variety of cakes receives the following comment:

(3)

*Sina oled nagu rootslane et sju sorters kakor peab olema. (F2)*

‘You are like a Swede that you want **seven types of cakes**’

This friendly teasing is again meant and received as a joke, but the meaning depends upon retrieving the concept of ‘seven types of cakes’ from the Swedish setting, in which a traditional housewife is expected to prepare multiple cakes for guests. The expression is still in wide use in Sweden, but there is no equivalent in Estonian culture. The joke works because the main speaker and other participants are obviously well aware of this difference. The critique of too few cakes can be rejected as not representative of the in-group point of view. What is more, the speaker uses Swedish for the expression, inserting *sju sorters kakor* ‘seven types of cakes’ in an otherwise Estonian clause. Code-switching is a resource that makes the ethnic contrast even clearer.

During the same event, a toast was proposed and people simultaneously lifted wine glasses, looked each other in the eye, one by one, as they nodded slightly. A female participant commented: ‘*nii rootsistunud*’, meaning ‘[we] have become so much like the Swedes’. The Swedes follow intricate rules about eye contact and nodding after lifting wine glasses and before drinking. The comment demonstrated the woman’s awareness of not behaving like a representative of her own ethnic group while it also confirms that she still knows community rules. She thus displays her bi-cultural knowledge as she simultaneously makes visible the foreignness of the behavioral standards just followed. Her fleeting comment is an instance of social control and an attempt toward maintaining group norms.

Another instance of etiquette adopted by Swedish Estonians is the customary expression of appreciation to a former host on the occasion of the next encounter (Oksaar 1972, p. 440). The thank-you can be said in Swedish or expressed as a literal translation into Estonian that lacks the relevant phrase *tack för senast* ‘thank you for the last time’. In the following exchange, the former guest said to her former host:

(4)

*Oleks rootslane, ütleks midagi.* (F2, born in Estonia)

‘If (I) were a Swede, (I) would say something’

This utterance indicates the speaker’s knowledge of the Swedish norm, at the same time demonstrating her awareness of the lack of such a practice among Estonians. The crucial thing about her utterance is that it distances her from the need to express thanks at the same time that it recognizes the practice as the correct behavior in Swedish society. Both participants were clear about the orientation and meaning of her statement. Once a pattern of etiquette has been introduced, it is obviously hard to ignore.

All ethnic groups have stereotypes about themselves as compared to others. These stereotypes, sometimes used as truisms, tend not to be challenged, for they often are flattering to the in-group and unfavorable for other groups. Estonians maintain that they are hard-working and meticulous. This characterization frequently arises in the biographical interviews, where it is used to explain why Estonians have coped so well in Sweden, getting the jobs and adapting to the society. Often such hard-working Estonians are contrasted to newer immigrants who are perceived as less successful in the labor market. As proof of the Estonians’ exceptional diligence, speakers point out that nobody organized language courses for the World War II refugees as has been done for the new arrivals in present-day Sweden.

Swedish Estonian speakers occasionally weave fleeting claims about the positive features of Estonians into their talk. When preparing a communal lunch, somebody might say that they work ‘*Korralikult nagu eestlased ikka teevad*’ (‘Properly, as Estonians always do’). The image of the toiling Estonian provides a contrast to the image of the lazy Swede. In a discussion about the long history of social democratic policies in Sweden that has resulted in myriad workers’ rights, a woman states bluntly that the Swedes are too lazy to work. These kinds of stereotypes and corresponding prejudices are highly visible in the mundane discussions of the refugee community. They are used to draw a line between Estonians and Swedes as well as Estonians and later immigrant groups.

However, the distancing from Swedes and other immigrant groups does not imply that Swedish Estonians would always affiliate with any group of ethnic Estonians. They may just as readily distance themselves from the values and attitudes of other Estonians, especially those living in Estonia. The tendency to mark one’s difference from those living in Estonia is to be expected after 60 years of separate development under widely divergent circumstances. While Sweden was often at the frontline of social development after World War II, Estonia had to adapt to local political circumstances that tended to preserve conservative values, as illustrated by the following example (5). In it, Swedish Estonians distance themselves from what they designate as typical Estonian behavior.

Two men, Aarne and Lembit, discuss bringing their wives along to the next meeting. Jokingly, one responds that he cannot force his wife to come (line 4). This statement elicits a strong reaction from another participant, Priit (lines 6–7).

(5)

- 1 Aarne M1: *eee (.) k (0.2) Võtad sa naise ka kaasa siis vä.=*  
‘Will you bring your wife along then?’
- 2 Lembit M1: *=ee Kui ta tuleb. (.) mai tea,*  
‘If she comes (.) I don’t know’
- 3 Aarne: *Sai tea kui tuleb.=*  
‘You don’t know whether she’ll come.’
- 4 Lembit: *=Mai saa sundida (teda).*  
‘I cannot force her.’
- 5 Aarne: *Ei no sundida ei saa, [kes saab santi] sundida -*  
‘No, (you) can’t. Who can force a cripple –’  
(the beginning of an Estonian saying)
- 6 Priit M1: *[Kuidas ei saa.]*  
‘What (do you mean you) can’t!’
- 7 Priit: *mis: kurat, eesti mees [XX (XX)]*  
‘What the hell, an Estonian man . . .’
- 8 Aarne: (([laughs] out loud))=
- 9 Lembit: *[(oioioi)]*
- 10 Ann F1: *=Sest kui üks ee(h)s[ti mees ütleb et, nüüd tuled sa kaasa sis] - =*  
‘Because when an Estonian man says that now you’ll come along then’ –
- 11 Aarne: *[Ei ma- ma mõtlen et- (.) et ee]*  
‘No, I mean that –’

- 12 Mart M1: =*Rusikas laua peale. eksole.*  
 ‘You bang your fist on the table, right?’
- 13 Ann: [*sis- sis nüüd tuleb ta*] *kaasa. [peab tulema].*  
 ‘then she comes along. (She) has to come along’.

What could easily have been a commonplace joke about conservative gender roles is given an ethnic dimension. The participants laugh and two other people add ridiculing details about a typical macho guy forcing his wife to comply by banging the table. Furthermore, a female speaker chooses to repeat the fact that such behavior is specific not to just any man but to an Estonian man (line 10). The participants thus outline a caricature of a prototypical Estonian male and at the same time distance themselves from it, thereby displaying how common values are negotiated and approved in these mundane situations. On the surface at least, people laugh together in agreement. In example 5, the agreement concerns common condemnation of the macho behavior that at the same time is characterized as ‘Estonian’. Whether this stereotype is valid and whether it concerns Estonian Estonians exceeds the scope of the analysis here. Swedish Estonians as a group may themselves have preserved the traditional gender roles longer than other groups in Swedish society. The important thing is that the participants recognized the stereotype and do not approve of it.

What is particularly noticeable is the strong orientation of Swedish Estonians to Estonia in terms of language correctness and grammar. They put Estonian usage forward as an argument for how a word should be used. An example follows:

- (6)  
*Arusaam ütlevad Eestis kõik. (F1)*  
 ‘Everybody in Estonia says: “understanding”’

Typically, as a refugee group, the speakers are aware of the numerous loans from Swedish in their Estonian and of their lack of formal schooling in Estonian linguistic norms. Therefore, it is not unusual for them to relate to every Estonian as a language expert. Interviewers from Estonia often receive questions from the Swedish Estonians they interview about the correctness of the words they use (example 7). For example, the excerpt below reveals the speaker’s insecurity with regard to the usage of the word *algkool* ‘primary school’.

- (7)  
*Ma käisin.: algkoolis., kas see on.: üheksanda klassini. kas võib öelda seda. (M2)*  
 ‘I went to primary school, is it up to the ninth grade? Can you say that?’

Occasionally, the Swedish Estonian interviewee gets the Estonian interviewer to produce a term by explicitly asking for help. In example 8, the unknown word that S is searching for can be inferred on the basis of prior discourse.

- (8)  
 SE (M2): *Ja sis: ja sis leidsime sis ühe: - (.) mis see on eesti keeles.*  
 ‘And then we found a – (.) what is it in Estonian’
- EE: *Ämmaemand.*  
 ‘Midwife’

SE: *Ämmaemanda. isegi kaks ämmaemandat leidsime.*  
 ‘A midwife, actually we found two’

Note that it is the Swedish Estonians who treat the Estonian Estonians as language experts by asking the question, ‘What is it in Estonian?’ Very rarely, if ever, do interviewers from Estonia offer words to the Swedish Estonians they interview without being asked. One interviewee does, however, report the complaints of Estonian Estonians about Swedish Estonian language use.

(9)

*(No aga) mõned, kes Eestist tulevad on ju natukene nii et, (Q küll te räägite imelikusti. et nii ei saa ju teha. Q) (0.2) miks te räägite nii, ja miks te teete nii et, natuke nii, (F2)*

‘But some people who come from Estonia are a little bit like that: “Oh, you speak strange and you shouldn’t say it like that. (0.2)Why do you speak like that and why do you do that,” something like that’.

This complaint is delivered as reported speech with a marked voice quality that imitates nagging and exaggeration. We will never know whether somebody actually said that or whether the critique was implied in some other way, but the talk is rhetorically attributed as illustrative of an Estonian Estonian attitude. The example reveals the language insecurity of the Swedish Estonian speaker and responds defensively to possible critiques by those in Estonia. Clearly, Swedish Estonians in general orient to Estonian Estonian as the language norm and do not value their own variety, viewing it instead as deteriorated by the long foreign contact. In a summarizing article in the local newspaper, published after one of my presentations on idiosyncratic Swedish Estonian particles and back-channels, the reporter declared: ‘Now we know why our language use reveals us as refugee Estonians and here is what we can do about it’. Generally, questions posed by Swedish Estonian audiences about my research reveal concern about the ‘correct’ Estonian ways of saying things, suggesting a desire not to be linguistically distinguishable from Estonians back in Estonia.

In relation to behavioral patterns other than language use, the orientation to Estonia is not clear. For example, an official speaker at the pensioners’ club maintained that Estonian Estonians are inefficient and do not understand business dynamics. This characterization was sharply contrasted with the Swedish Estonian’s estimation of his own approach to business, which demanded quick action and resolution of bureaucratic problems. The presentation rendered the Swedish-born Estonian a winner, who could easily show Estonian Estonians how things should be done. This contrast indexes differences in the social norms and structures of the two countries with drastically different recent histories. In a number of interviews, the informants also acknowledge that they adhere more to ‘Swedish values and attitudes’ than ‘Estonian’ ones.

Even from these few examples, we can conclude that Swedish Estonians nurture an identity that straddles the border between the Estonian and the Swedish, one that has been influenced by the general social development of Sweden. Although Swedish Estonians identify themselves as Estonians, they have their reservations about Estonian Estonians. At the same time, at least during the events recorded for this study

(in which the Estonian minority communicates within the group), the differences between Estonians and Swedes were carefully maintained as well.

### Code-Switching as a Resource of Identity Construction

Probably the most important component of Estonian refugee identity is language preservation (Raag 2005, p. 370). Even people with no active engagement in local ethnic activities consider themselves Estonians because they speak the language. Among Swedish Estonians, switching between the two available languages marks their special group identity. In principle, since everybody is fluent in both codes and cultures, Estonian and Swedish could be used freely to communicate. However, as evidenced in the recorded community events, shared norms enforce speaking in Estonian, leaving Swedish as the marked code. Quite expectedly, Swedish Estonians simultaneously rely on Swedish loans in ways they are not aware of any more (Raag 1982; Keevallik, forthcoming). Such loan words cannot be put to strategic use in terms of code-switching. But in other cases, as the examples below illustrate, language choice is more conscious and strategic, serving pragmatic aims in the otherwise Estonian-language conversation.

To start with, the data point to instances of marked code-switching. Swedish sayings and proverbs are used in Estonian interaction (10) as well as alliterated rules of behavior (11), that is, rules that repeat the same consonant at the beginning of every word to achieve a rhythmic sound. The choice of the code is pragmatically triggered because certain expressions just do not work at all in another language. In the following, code-switching is fully functional and also serves to demarcate the participants as bilingual. All the Swedish words and their translations are rendered in bold.

(10)

*Dunkelt sagda är det dunkelt tänkta.* (F2)

**'If your words are obscure, your thoughts are obscure'**

(11)

*Hälla hämta höger.* (F1)

**'Pour, take away from the right'** [a rule for serving at the table]

Studies on code-switching have frequently pointed out that quotations may (but don't have to) be rendered in the original language (e.g., Gumperz 1982, pp. 75–6). Quotes from Swedish conversations may accordingly be produced in Swedish within otherwise Estonian discourse. Example 12 is a report from a bilingual speaker's argument with Swedes.

(12)

*Ma ütsin et, det bryr jag mig inte om.* (F2)

**'I said, "I don't care"'**

Real or imagined quotes attributed to monolingual Swedes may be reproduced in Swedish. Excerpt 13 contains two Swedish nicknames for foreigners from different periods.

(13)

*Tänapäeval on ju, kõik on ju, sisserändajad on ju svartskallar. aga siis oli jävla utlänning, ja ema-isa ei tahtnud et mulle öeldakse jävla utlänning.* (F2)

‘Nowadays all the immigrants are **blackheads**, but then one said **damned foreigner** and my mother and father didn’t want **me to be** addressed as a **damned foreigner**’

Since the corresponding words are never used as insults in Estonian, it does not make much sense to translate them for those who also speak Swedish. Thus, the Swedish terms are the most efficient way of conveying the content and they are delivered without any hesitation or flagging. This pragmatic code-switching contextualizes the talk as ‘Swedish’ and corresponds to the rhetorical needs of the speaker. At the same time, it defines the participants as belonging to a group that understands both languages. None of the above excerpts (10–13) is followed by any indication that the bilingual co-participants are experiencing problems with comprehension.

In some cases, a Swedish term initially translated into Estonian is later replaced by the original Swedish. Clarifying reiterations are characteristically code-switched (Gumperz 1982, pp. 78–9, among others). As the speaker in example 14 describes his choice of a high-school curriculum track, he self-repairs his words into Swedish, although the listener has already signaled an understanding of the Estonian translation.

(14)

L: *See oli see- loodusteaduse - [no na]turvetenskaplig.* (M2)

‘It was this natural science, well **natural science** (curriculum)’

R: [mm mm]

In this way, the speaker can get credit for at least trying to translate the term and thereby demonstrating his Estonian expertise. However, there is no corresponding high-school system in Estonia and therefore no counterpart to the term. Obviously, the Swedish Estonian speakers sometimes feel that an original Swedish term is very specific and therefore use it among bilinguals, just to ensure being properly understood.

The translation may also occur the other way round. A Swedish term may be translated into Estonian. For example, the term for traditional Swedish crayfish parties is translated in extract 15, possibly in order to orient to the monolingual norm of the interactive event.

(15)

*kräftskivadel.* (0.1) *vähjapidudel.* (F2)

‘at **crayfish parties** (0.1) at crayfish parties’

Note that the Swedish term receives Estonian case and number endings, which are not bolded. For some researchers, this would imply that the word was not code-switched and has instead become a loanword. Clearly, the speaker himself here treats *kräftskivadel* as code-switched and even subject to repair.

Because the Swedish items above may be freely used among bilingual and bicultural Swedish Estonians, they may be considered ‘acts of identity’ within the

group of Swedish Estonians. The speakers rely on their special competence – derived from the lexical or phonological features of Swedish Estonian – and thus exclude all the other groups, Estonian Estonians among them, who do not share the languages or the cultural experience of Swedish society. They may, of course, do so unintentionally, but they may also deliberately switch the code.

A clear case of deliberate switching occurs when the speakers explicitly mark the speech they produce as ‘Swedish’, as therefore different from the rest of the talk. Examples 16–17 illustrate this use:

(16)

*nüüd ma pean ütlema rootsi keeles märkesvaror.* (F1)  
 ‘now I have to say it in Swedish, **brand products**’

(17)

*nigu rootslased ütlevad knytkalas.* (F2)  
 ‘as the Swedes say **knytkalas**’ [a party where everybody brings something]

The target item in example 17 is untranslatable as a single word in Estonian but if the co-speaker did not understand it, the speaker would have to do more than just make an excuse for using the Swedish term. None of the above statements, however, causes any of the listeners who belong to the in-group of bilinguals to complain.

Typically Swedish names of specific products, institutions and places also abound in Swedish Estonian conversation. Some are elaborate and descriptive, such as *moster’s chokladrutor* ‘aunt’s chocolate quadrangles’ for a brand of cookies. These items are neither problematic nor do they elicit an Estonian counterpart. The interactants use their bicultural competence to achieve understanding.

In 16 and 17, above, Swedish or Swedes were explicitly mentioned to flag the language switch. In other instances, the speakers simply point to problems with language production that are solved by using Swedish. In examples 18 and 19, the speakers remark on the difficulty of finding the necessary word, and without further ado turn to the default language – Swedish – to help out.

(18)

*glutenallergiker, seda ma ei oska öelda.* (F1)  
 ‘**a person allergic to gluten**, I can’t say that’

(19)

*forskningsprojekt või kuidas ma ütlen.* (F1)  
 ‘**research project** or how should I say’

None of these spates of talk constitutes a word search that aims at eliciting the relevant term from co-participants. The words are not produced with a rising intonation nor is the term or clause followed by a pause, which would invite another speaker to provide a translation. In-group members require no translation. These examples display how bilingual speakers straightforwardly convey what they want to say while also paying tribute to the demands of the Swedish Estonian club context (and probably also to the recording situation), both of which heighten awareness of speaking and preserving pure and proper Estonian.

The main function of marking some talk as being in another code is to maintain the norm of a single code – Estonian – among the participants, so that deviant cases are clearly distinguished. Markers are an overt orientation to the group norm that prescribes usage of Estonian as far as possible during meetings with other Estonians. They also serve to identify the competent speakers of Estonian, who recognize loanwords and are aware of not producing proper Estonian for the time being. Ultimately, by marking the Swedish stretches of talk these speakers construct their identity as Estonians while simultaneously using Swedish as a self-evident additional source of sense-making.

Characteristically, bilingual competence can also be used when searching for a word, as displayed in the following excerpt (20), in which Anna reaches for the word ‘brainwashing’.

(20)

- 1 Anna F1: *Ja just, ma ütlen see on - (0.3) kudas seda öeldakse. hjärn- (0.5)*  
‘Yeah, right, I’m saying this is – how do you say that **brain-**’
- 2 Leena F1: *Ajupesu.*  
‘Brainwashing’
- 3 Anna: *Ajupesu jah.*  
‘Yeah, brainwashing’

Anna first indicates that she has problems finding the right word and then produces half of the Swedish word *hjärn-* ‘brain-’. She is then offered the correct Estonian word, which she immediately accepts. Word searches also occur in monolingual settings but in bilingual ones they can take specific shape. In the above exchange, context and half a word in Swedish enable the production of the Estonian word by Leena. Thus, the participants once again orient to the monolingual norms of the club while also using Swedish – code-switching, in other words – as a resource.

In a different example of bilingual sense-making, one of the speakers announces that he has just learned the name of a flower in Estonian – *paiseleht* ‘coltsfoot’. He asks the other club members whether they know what it is. Several people immediately offer the counterpart in Swedish, *tussilagon*, and treat this response to the question as an obvious and sufficient one. In a monolingual setting limited to biologists, the Latin name of the plant could have served the same purpose, but generally this kind of a shortcut to an oral identification of a flower is not available to monolinguals. Code-switching to Swedish again functions as a means of guaranteeing mutual understanding for the Swedish Estonians. At the same time, the mere fact that having learned an Estonian name for a flower is worth reporting indicates the high relevance of language issues among the group members.

In all of the above cases, the bilingual and bicultural identity of the speakers is revealed and made relevant via language use. Using code-switching as an idiosyncratic resource implicitly promotes group coherence. Indeed, bilingual competence is even treated with pride, as something that distinguishes this group from the visiting Estonians who do not speak Swedish. In one recording, the members discuss some typical lexical features of Swedish Estonian and laugh at Estonian Estonians who do not understand these expressions. The discussion, however, is a direct continuation of their talking about how they do not understand all the new words in the Estonian

newspapers. They thus define their own group's special linguistic characteristics in comparison to Estonian Estonians.

Occasionally, participants conclude that there is simply no good equivalent in Estonian for a Swedish concept, for example, *bevingade ord* 'familiar quotation', lit. 'words with wings'. The claim is put forward with pride, as an indicator of the presumably larger language repertoire of the Swedish Estonian group. Another topic that appears at least twice in the recordings is about the Estonian word *ringtee*, which means both 'roundabout' and 'road that circles a town'. In Swedish, two different words are used, which prompts one of the Swedish Estonians to conclude that Estonian Estonians cannot express the concept of a roundabout at all: *Nad ei oskagi seda öelda*. 'They don't know how to say it'. The exclusive pronoun 'they' implicitly promotes the advantages of Swedish and Swedish Estonian as instances of richer and more precise languages. This statement, however, elicits a counter-argument by a participant who has grown up in Estonia and who claims that Estonians in Estonians can of course make a distinction between these two things. We thus witness both an attempt to draw a boundary between different groups of Estonians and the immediate negotiation of this boundary-drawing. The identities, groupings and boundaries are constantly being discussed and loyalties may depend on the local demands of the ongoing argumentation (Bucholtz & Hall 2005, pp. 589–91). Sometimes, all Estonians are treated as a group, but sometimes club members single out the more local group of Swedish Estonians.

## Conclusion

This article shows how Swedish Estonians negotiate in-group ethnic identity in mundane interaction. It contributes to the research tradition that maintains that 'collective identity is not a mental image, but rather an emergent construct that takes shape within significant practices' (De Fina 2007, p. 377) and is reinforced and readjusted in communication with others. Estonian refugees who have lived in Sweden for more than 60 years still define and redefine their identity, in relation to both Swedes and Estonian Estonians. Local Estonian clubs are the core loci for this enactment of Estonianness in Sweden – for its production and negotiation.

The Swedish Estonians described here generally sought to achieve Estonian identity through evaluations, language choice and contrast with Swedes. Attempts at using a single code were also clearly present. On the other hand, the in-group communication reveals how Swedish is implemented as a self-evident unproblematic guarantee of sense-making. As the speakers collectively construct their idiosyncratic group identity as Swedish Estonians, they enhance this idiosyncrasy with claims of superior linguistic competence in comparison to Estonian Estonians and through distancing from certain characteristics defined as 'Estonian'. What seem to be contrasting loyalties to either Estonianness or Swedishness in fact reflect the borderline position Swedish Estonians have occupied between the two cultures and societies.

The microsociological method of membership categorization analysis was used to exemplify the co-construction of identity among Swedish Estonians. This method

takes into account who says what and how, and especially how other members of the group respond. Attention to responses is an especially powerful empirical tool that allows the researchers to draw conclusions about participants' understanding, approval or disapproval. When the interactants join together in teasing or creating a stereotype, they are enacting a general (dis)approval of particular behavior (re-)establishing common group values. The group's adherence to a previous linguistic environment – Estonia – can be explained by their involuntary departure from the home country, the coherence maintained among Swedish Estonians and the shared sentiment about return maintained in life narratives.

In a number of cases, group members overtly commented on the bilingual patterns of their code-switching. By flagging their use of Swedish terms and notions, Swedish Estonians displayed their desire to speak only Estonian, even as they occasionally also took pride in their knowledge of Swedish concepts that seem untranslatable or more precise.

The methods used here do not aim at large generalizations. The events described have happened and similar events continue to happen in the lives of Swedish Estonians. Conversational exchanges have been and will be meaningful for the group members in accomplishing their identity in mundane interaction. The goal of the article was to capture norms and attitudes of a well-established refugee community that has been relatively coherent and has actively maintained its ethnic identity but which is now on the verge of tumultuous changes in the new political and economic reality.

Taking into account the particulars of language, culture and society in Sweden, similar results may well be reached in other Estonian refugee communities. Some issues raised by the Swedish Estonians – such as the traditions of doing business, dealing with bureaucracy and gender roles – relate to the larger differences between types of societies. Circumstances similar to Sweden apply in a number of places. The priority status given to Estonian language use among other identity-bearing features is also valid more widely than merely in the Swedish Estonian community. In other refugee communities formed in the post-war years, one can thus expect similar attempts to sustain linguistic purity in the core Estonian circles as well as an orientation to Estonian norms, while actually functioning as a bilingual group.

## Transcription Conventions

- – truncation
- [] – overlaps
- = – latching or continuation of the same speaker across intervening lines
- (0.5) – pause length in tenths of a second
- (.) – micropause
- : – lengthening of a sound
- hah, heh – laughter
- ((snort)) – transcriber's comments
- (XXX) – difficult to hear what was said but the number of syllables can be judged, X corresponds to one syllable

- (guess) – transcriber’s best guess of what was said  
 (Q Q) – marked voice quality  
 . – pitch fall at the end of an intonation unit  
 ? – pitch rise at the end of an intonation unit  
 , – level pitch at the end of an intonation unit  
 (translation) – the item was not used in the original but is necessary in the translation

## Notes

- 1 The recordings were made in 2004–2005 as part of the project ‘Estonian in Sweden’ at Uppsala University, which was supported by the Swedish Science Foundation in 2004–2006.
- 2 In the excerpts presented, the names of all persons have been changed.

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