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THE RISE OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN ESTONIA

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ABSTRACT

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the spread of English and the use of this language in states where the first language is not English. The following dissertation will provide an overview of the rise and role of English as a *lingua franca* in the Baltic States, more specifically in Estonia at Tartu University where my research was carried out. It begins with a general description of the use of English in Europe as a *lingua franca*, then, in the second section, a focus on the use of English in Estonia and its historical background is provided. Subsequently, the thesis analyses the role of English in Estonian Higher Education and finally the last chapter reports the main findings of my case-study which was conducted through an online questionnaire of 20 questions delivered to 40 students attending Tartu University. The results of this research indicated an increasing use of the English language, especially among younger generations, and a simultaneous refusal of Russian, the previous *lingua franca* of this country. In particular, the current study found that attitudes towards the use of the English language in the fields of communication, especially virtual communication, and in the University are positive, demonstrating the crucial role of English in these contexts.



INTRODUCTION

“From Bengal to Belize and Las Vegas to Lahore”, as Crystal (2003: 3) suggests in his work “English as a global language”, the English language is spreading all over the planet, finding new venues and locations. Recently, the flow of the English language has found a new route in the Baltic states: the comparatively new Republics of the Baltic have witnessed an increasing use of this language, proving once more how English is becoming the new κοινή διάλεκτος (*koiné*).

The past decade has seen the rapid development of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as multicultural societies and, due to the various centuries of foreign domination (mainly German, Swedish and Russian) these new republics are now shaping their own national identity and are susceptible to different cultural influences. More specifically, English language and culture seem to have an appeal on the Baltics for different reasons: after almost fifty years of Russianization, which is a form of cultural assimilation process implying the imposition of Russian language and culture to non-Russian communities, English is likely to be perceived as the symbol of liberty, or, according to Fonzari (1999: 40), as the “language of freedom” opposed to the previous one. In addition, with the official entrance of these states in Europe during the last decade, (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania acceded to the EU on 1st May 2004) English was associated with the language of the European Union, especially among the young generations. Nowadays, another possible explanation of the spread of English in the Baltics, could be the multicultural policies of the Universities (promoting internationalization of the Universities and mobility projects and using English as a language for education) as well as the consequence of the phenomenon of Globalization. Hence, having briefly described the particular cultural context of the Baltic states, my research will focus on Estonia, the northernmost of the three republics, for personal as well as practical reasons. My interest in this area developed while I was studying in Tartu University (Estonia) for five months with an Erasmus+ project. Here I had the chance to feel personally the international atmosphere of Tartu, as well as the opportunity to melt, even if only for a few months, into the spirit of Baltic culture, thanks to my Estonian and also Latvian and Lithuanian friends.

Hence this dissertation will examine language attitudes of Estonians towards Russian and English. This concept, as we will see later on in chapters 2 and 4, can be defined as attitudes, feelings and beliefs of a certain group of people, towards their own language or a foreign one. As a consequence, behavior and different types of approach towards speakers will be observed and studied to demonstrate language attitudes. Namely, a primary concern in my thesis is to prove how Estonians tend to have a more positive attitude towards the English language and English speakers, rather than Russian (a concept that will be analyzed more in



detail in chapter 4). For instance, in this study I will argue how Estonians prefer to use English when speaking with a Latvian or Lithuanian person, or how important is the use of this language for them and for future generations. However, language attitudes require a different type of study, since they are based on abstract, rather than practical, concepts. Authors like Giles, Ryan and Hewstone (1988) have established three main approaches in order to study this particular subject: “These approaches are called the analysis of the *societal treatment* of language varieties, *direct measures* and *indirect measures* (indirect measures are sometimes referred to as the “speaker evaluation paradigm”, or “the matched guise technique” in the language attitudes literature) (Garret, 2010: 37). In this study, a direct approach will be used, demonstrating Estonian attitudes towards English and Russian through a questionnaire containing direct questions and statements about the subject. The reasons for this choice will be explained in greater detail in chapter 4, while describing the type of survey I carried out.

Subsequently, the major objective of this study is to investigate the rise and role of English language in Estonia and, more specifically, at Tartu University, where my survey was conducted. Therefore, Russian is also involved in my research, since it was the previous *lingua franca* in Estonia and in the other two Baltic states. The language of the Tsar was used not only in Russia and in the three Baltic Republics, but also in all the other countries and areas of the former Soviet Union, from Georgia to Ukraine and Armenia. Thus, the aim of this study was also to clarify several aspects of the role of Russian today in Estonia, pointing out how this language, that in other states like Ukraine and Belorussia still plays a crucial role and is widely spoken, has gradually been replaced by English in its status of *lingua franca* (especially among younger generations). In particular, this dissertation will address two main research questions: Why the use of English, instead of Russian, is increasing and how. Last but not least, this thesis examines the significance of English at Tartu University, the most important University in Estonia, where the international atmosphere requires the use of this language as a means of communication. As we will see in chapter 4, the questionnaire I devised for my research was sent to 40 students (all attendees of Tartu University) and among them eight were international students coming from various parts of Europe. Their answers are another indication of ELF in Estonia, as well as the demonstration of how the Universities try to promote multiculturalism and foreign languages, forbidden during some periods of Russian domination.¹ In addition, the presence of Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and other respondents coming from the states of the former USSR, demonstrates how English is progressively growing also in these countries. However, due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of the use of English in all the ex-Soviet Union republics.

¹ This topic will be treated more in detail in Chapter 4.



Furthermore, the reader should bear in mind that the study is based on students aged 19-30: adults belonging to the generation before 1991 (the end of USSR) are not taken into account. Hence, by discussing and pointing out the main aims of my dissertation, this study will show how the phenomenon of English has reached Estonia.

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Having stated the main purposes of the research, I shall now consider the methods that I have chosen for my case-study. Firstly, my qualitative research was made, as mentioned above, in Tartu University (UT), the most important University of the Baltic States, where I had the chance to meet local as well as international students. Hence, in order to demonstrate the use of English language and its potential role of *lingua franca*, it was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was to submit an anonymous questionnaire to a certain number of students of UT. As a result, 20 questions (both multiple choice and open-ended ones) were used in the questionnaire asking in a direct or less direct way, about the real use of English language in various contexts of everyday life, from online social networks, to University classes. Among the respondents of this survey, 18 were Estonians, 4 were Russians, another 4 were Latvians, 1 Lithuanian, 7 Erasmus+ students (from France, Mexico, Germany and Turkey) and another 6 students coming from former Soviet republics such as Ukraine, Moldavia and Georgia (40 students in total). In addition, it is worth mentioning the fact the majority of the respondents were my friends or at least acquaintances, while other Estonians who submitted the questionnaire were complete strangers: among the respondents only four did not reply to the questionnaire. The main tool I decided to use for my research is the online Google questionnaire, for two main reasons: it is very practical and simple to create and spread. It was sent via email to all the respondents, but it can also be sent via Facebook chat and it is the type of questionnaire that students are mostly acquainted with, since it is used also by university organizations like E.S.N or Erasmus-land. Therefore, data for this study was collected using this questionnaire and analyzing all the different answers of the respondents in order to give a comprehensive overview of the use of English in Estonia.

Crucial in this field are the preceding studies and analysis conducted in Estonia about ELF. As a matter of fact, what we know about English in Estonia is largely based upon empirical studies made during the last decade of the past century. The first serious discussions and analyses of this topic emerged only in 1997 (six years after the official collapse of USSR) with Fonzari's paper entitled: "English in the Estonian multicultural society". This study attempted to show how "Estonians have on the whole accepted English as the language of communication and technology,



as a reaction against the fifty-year imposition of Russian language and culture” (Fonzari, 1999:1). This research was carried out in Tartu University, in the immediate post-communist period, and it was based on a questionnaire administered by the author to 30 people belonging to three different generations. The first group was aged 19-32 (University students), the second group was aged 41-57 and the last one included respondents aged 60-87. Thus, the survey is based upon a diastatic research regarding the various approaches towards English and Russian by these different age groups. The results of the questionnaire, described the general situation of English in Estonia, seen in “a perspective of economic growth of their country but also of their personal growth as individuals, citizens of western world” (Fonzari, 1999: 47). In addition, an increasing interest in foreign languages was found among the respondents of the first group (age 19-32) showing how the younger generations are more prone to learning other languages, since they already boast a good knowledge of English. However, these results were based upon data from over 20 years ago and it is unclear if the situation is still the same. In addition, the fact that the questionnaire was administered in 1997, a period of great changes for Estonia and in general for all the Baltic states because of their new independence gained in 1991, can alter the perception and attitudes towards English. Fonzari’s analysis does not take account of the European Union, since Estonia would join it only in 2004, nor does she examine the opinions of people coming from other ex-Soviet republics (her respondents were only Estonians). Yet, her research plays a pivotal role in the understanding of the linguistic situation in Estonia after the end of USSR and it is used in my thesis as the main source and model to follow and integrate with new and recent data.

A second name I shall mention in the field of ELF in the Baltic states, is definitely Benjamin Breggin. His attempt to describe the role of English in these republics, was made ten years after Fonzari’s study, in 2009 with a survey and a series of interviews conducted in the Stockholm school of Economics in Riga (SSER). Although the location of the research is in Latvia, rather than Estonia, the paper gives a clear overview of the multicultural atmosphere of the University, reflecting some aspects of UT. As in my study, also in this case the questionnaire was administered only to students and the author also includes respondents coming from Russia and ex-Soviet republics (for example Estonia and Lithuania). However, the research has consistently shown the linguistic situation in Latvia, where Russian cultural influence and migration rate are higher compared to the Estonian one, which is more affected by its Finnish and Swedish neighbours. What is not yet clear is the role of English as a *lingua franca* according to the writer: “it is at least appropriate to doubt that English could ever make inroads as national *lingua franca* in any Baltic country, even if fluency in English were to become more universal than fluency in the local languages.” (Breggin, 2007:1).

A third source comes from the survey conducted in Tallinn University by Soler-Carbonell: in his case-study, through the delivery of a questionnaire to different



groups of students and group discussions, he analyses the role of English in this University. More specifically, his research was conducted in 2015 in order to demonstrate the concrete use of English as a means for instruction (EMI), a concept which will be treated more in detail in chapter 3. Therefore, this original research highlights only the academic aspect of English and the students attitudes towards it, a concept which is crucial also in my research, especially in the second section of the questionnaire regarding the use of English in the academic context. Consequently, the studies evaluated so far failed to specify some aspects of ELF and how it is concretely used nowadays in Estonia (or in the Baltic states in general) by youngsters, a gap which I set out to fill in my thesis, with updated, recent data.

In order to reach all the aims above mentioned, my dissertation has been organised in the following way. Firstly, it will start with a short account regarding English as a *lingua franca* in Europe, then the second chapter will examine the historical background of Estonia, giving a brief overview of the history of this nation. Subsequently, the third chapter is concerned with University and the actual use of English language as a means of instruction and communication. An insight to academic policy in Estonia will be given, as well as comparison between communist and post-communist Estonian University. The fourth chapter instead, presents the findings of the research and questionnaire, focusing on the three key themes: multiculturalism in Tartu University, the type of research I have chosen (direct approach questionnaire, selection of the respondents and so on) and the analysis of the results of the survey. Finally, the conclusion represents a short summary and critique of the findings, evaluating them and highlighting what aspects my research has brought to light.

Throughout this dissertation, some terms and acronyms will be used to refer to specific concepts: for instance, ELF means English Lingua Franca and UT stands for University of Tartu. In addition, expressions like *Russianization* or *Russification* are used to refer to those policies designed to spread Russian culture and language among non-Russians, as well as *Soviet* and *post-Soviet* are words referring to the period before and after the official collapse of USSR in 1991.

To conclude, having described all the aspects and parts of this study, I wish the reader an enjoyable reading of my dissertation, picturing to follow the impetuous flow of English language digging its new path in the grassy, lush fields of Estonia.



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CHAPTER 1. THE RISE OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN EUROPE

So far, we have always mentioned the expression *lingua franca*, but what does it really mean? If we take a look at Macmillan dictionary the correct definition would be the following: “a language that people use to communicate when they have different first languages”². Yet, this definition is not enough to represent the whole concept of *lingua franca* and more specifically, its implications for the English language. Therefore, I may introduce at first the idea of English as a *Global language*, a concept which is not so obvious. As David Crystal argues: “A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. This might seem like stating the obvious, but it is not, for the notion of ‘special role’ has many facets” (Crystal, 2003: 3). As a matter of fact, to be classified as such a global language has to be considered a second official language or the main foreign language taught in schools and institutes. The former would be a language “to be used as a medium of communication in such domains as government, the law courts, the media, and the educational system”, (Crystal, 2003: 4) as in the case of Ghana or Singapore. The concept of foreign language instead, refers to the language that children mostly learn at school, from their childhood.

Recently confirmed in a conference held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in October 2011 “English is now firmly established as the world’s lingua franca” (Newbold, 2011). But why this language become our contemporary global language? The answers are several. Some people may argue, for instance, that English has become a global language simply because it was easy to learn, without gender differences (such as feminine, masculine and neuter). However, historical events can prove the exact opposite: Latin, for example, was considered the *lingua franca* of the Roman empire for centuries, despite its complex and difficult grammar. Others, may maintain the thesis that English achieved this linguistic status because of its economic and technological power or as a result of British political choice of imperialism. According to Crystal instead (2003: 9):

a language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people – especially their political and military power. The explanation is the same throughout history. Why did Greek become a language of international communication in the Middle East over 2,000 years ago? Not because of the intellects of Plato and Aristotle: the answer lies in the swords and spears wielded by the armies of Alexander the Great.

Thus, a global language might be seen as a language reflecting power.

² <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>

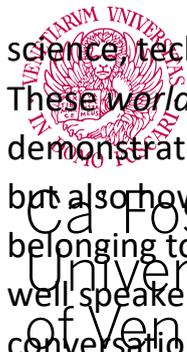


A further objection to the use of English as a *lingua franca* could be that English became a global language as a product of British Imperialism. Global language and power are closely linked and, as a result, colonialism and imperialist policies can be crucial in establishing a *lingua franca*. On the one hand, some critics, like David Crystal (2003), support this thesis reporting for instance the case of Latin, which was the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire, or the case of Arabic imposed by the Moorish armies in the Ottoman Empire, or even Spanish and Portuguese in their American Colonies. Thus, “British political imperialism had sent English around the globe, during the nineteenth century, so that it was a language ‘on which the sun never sets’” (Crystal,2003: 10).

On the other hand, authors like Lorenza Fonzari (1999) argues in her paper entitled “English in the Estonian multicultural society”, that the spread of English and its subsequent status of *lingua franca* are not a direct consequence of British imperialism. In her essay, she reports a case-study conducted in Estonia, in Tartu University where, through a questionnaire, she has investigated the role of ELF in this Baltic state. According to this author, English become a global language not simply for a “discourse of linguistic imperialism” (Fonzari, 1999: 1) since Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania as well as other states where English is slowly achieving this status, were not former British colonies. The situation of the Russian language is a case in point: the language of the Tsar failed to become the *lingua franca* of Eastern Europe, despite the huge Empire they managed to build (even though, traces of this *linguistic Empire* are still visible in some of the former Republics of USSR). However, British Imperialism has indisputably played a pivotal role in the development of ELF.

English nowadays is widely spread and spoken by 400 million people as a native language, and by other 300 million as a second language, giving birth to numerous varieties of English. Thus, a large and growing body of literature has investigated and is still investigating the linguistic phenomenon of *world Englishes*. Starting from the American English, to the English language spoken in former colonies like New Zealand and Australia, this language has now many varieties with different accents, different spelling and different expressions. In 1997 Kachru, an important writer and critic in this field, proposed a scheme (fig.1) which clearly summarizes the English-speaking situation. Analyzing the three circles (fig.1) it is possible to indicate three main areas: the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle.

The first area includes the Native English-speaking countries like England, USA and Canada, the second area instead, includes former colonies such as India, Africa and Nigeria where English is spoken mainly as a second language, and finally the third area, the expanding circle, consists of those states like Turkey, China and Japan, where English is becoming the predominant language in fields like business,



science, technology and education.

These *world Englishes* may be a new interesting subject matter, since they demonstrate not only how language is transformed in these different countries, but also how the intelligibility of English is not always guaranteed: speakers belonging to different circles may have problems in understanding each other, as well speakers of the same circle: e.g. an English and an American having a conversation may have some misunderstandings while talking.

This study will focus more on the last circle, which is recently growing and including new states and countries where English is becoming more and more important and where Estonia, could perfectly fit.

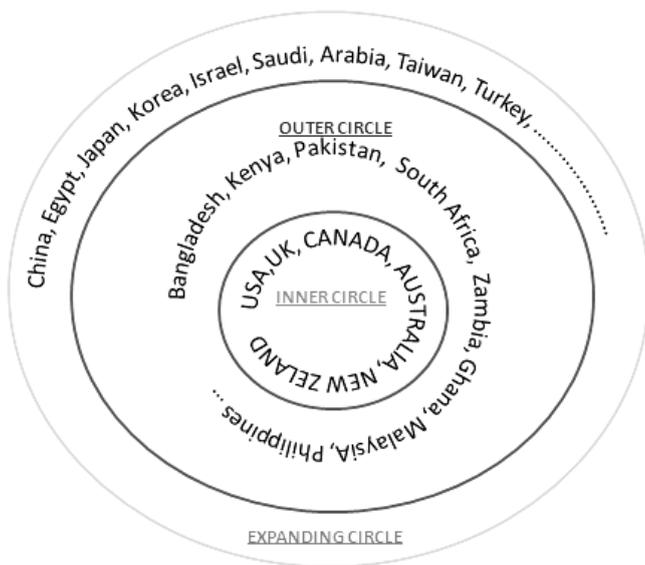
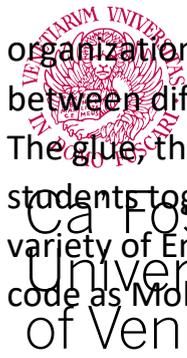


Figura 1 Concentric circle model (Adapted from Kachru (1997))

Another significant aspect is the role of European Union and the abolition of boundaries between the various states. Officially, on the 7th of February 1992, after Maastricht pact, the EU was taking shape, incorporating all the 28 different members that we count nowadays. Consequently, this new political and economic organization, was bringing together all the various states of the continent, from the U.K. (now leaving the EU after last year's referendum), to France and Poland, abolishing boundaries and trying to create a unique monetary system. In addition, from a linguistic point of view, the birth of the EU had certainly a strong impact: all these states, with one single national language, raised in a monolingual context and finding their own identity in their national language, were all at once united. The linguistic result of this union was the birth of *Euro-English*: a term firstly used in 1986 by Carstensen to indicate the use of loanwords and Anglicism in general. However, nowadays this linguistic phenomenon deals with the so called *Erasmus generation*, moving across Europe, buying Ryanair low-cost flights and using English as a means of communication. The birth of EU implied the creation of new



organizations and mobility projects to promote travels and exchange-programmes between different Universities of the Union.

The glue, the uniting force that brings all these different states, nationalities and students together is English, now transformed into *Euro-English*. This possible variety of English, is used in many contexts and also in private life, like a contact-code as Molin argues(2006: 79):

Contacts between individuals from different states have substantially multiplied in the last decades. Town twinnings, school exchanges, programmes such as Erasmus and, simplest of all, holidays, as well as increased general mobility, have all created situations in which Europeans meet and need to find a common medium of communication.

Therefore, in this new light, English achieved a more characteristic status which is that one of a European, rather than global, *lingua franca* with its new features. For instance, since Euro-English is spoken mainly by non-native speakers, it tends to have a simplification of the sentence as well as similarities with other languages (more specifically with French, which was the previous potential *lingua franca* in EU). *Euro-English* is the language of the parliamentary system, the language of travelers, the language of the Erasmus programme and ESN (Erasmus Student Network). In other words *Euro-English* is what we most often use and speak while communicating. Hence, it was crucial in my research to report this concept and give a brief explanation of it, for the respondents of the questionnaire all belong to the *Erasmus generation*.

Having described the importance of EU for English language, and the phenomenon of *Euro-English*, I now consider the real use and contexts in which ELF appears, in our concrete lives. Apart from being the language of Europe, the language of political and economic power, English is a *lingua franca* appearing in more practical contexts such as those of social-networks or movies. The Media, the press, cinema, TV, advertising, radio and music are just a few examples of areas in which English is used as a potential *lingua franca* and these aspects will be considered in my questionnaire. Some questions are related to the use of English in social networks and cinema/TV. As Crystal (2003) argues in his work, already in the second half of the 20th century, English was replacing French in many fields of social life: for example, foreign trade unions as well as sporting clubs (such as the African Hockey Federation) were using English as their official language. In addition:

these trends are reflected even in Europe, where we might expect other languages to be playing



a more dominant role. We can see this if we examine the *Yearbook* organizations whose names begin with *Euro-*. Out of a sample of 1,000 of these, 440 specified the official or working languages they used. Almost all used English as an official language (Crystal, 2003: 88).

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Going on in history, English started to affect our private sphere, for instance in TV or radio (English-language broadcasting proliferated in various countries during the last decades) or in the case of Music (especially in the '60s - '70s). In our century, English has invaded even more our everyday life, with the development of technology and the birth of social networks such as Facebook and Instagram. Therefore, ELF is a concrete and existing reality that we unconsciously touch every day, in our ordinary lives, giving instructions to a Chinese tourist in the streets or simply listening to the new hits at the radio. Chapter 4 will show, when analyzing the questions of the survey, this aspect is crucial also in Estonian society, a topic which will be analysed especially in the third section of the questionnaire regarding the practical use of English in Estonia.



CHAPTER 2. ENGLISH IN ESTONIA

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are the three Baltic states, also known as the Baltic Republics, whose complex history and centuries of different dominations can be embodied in the figure of a particular philosopher: Wilhelm - Vasily Sesemann (1884-1963). Son of a Finnish-Swedish father and a Baltic-German mother, he studied in St. Petersburg where he changed his name to Vasily and graduated in philosophy. After this Russian sojourn, he started teaching in the new University of Lithuania, where he changed his name again to Vosylius Sezemanas. Here he remained until Soviet invasion in 1940 and ten years after he was sentenced to 15 years of penal labour in a camp in Taishet (Irkutsk) and released six years after, during Khrushchev's regime. Because of his many-layered identity we can definitely describe him as a Baltic philosopher, perfectly representing through his life and origins the controversial historical and cultural background of these Republics. Hence, the following chapter will provide a brief overview of Estonian history, firstly describing its history from the origin until the annexation to Russia, and after focusing on the contemporary history of the country, from the 20th century to these days. Then, in the second part of this chapter, I will give a realistic *fresco* of the linguistic situation in Estonia, describing the main contexts and areas in which Russian, English and Estonian coexist and alternate.

2.1 Historical background

The beginning of Estonian, and more in general Baltic, history coincides with the end of the Roman Empire, a period of deep crisis in Western Europe in which: "a group of stateless peoples settled permanently in the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea during the fifth and the sixth centuries AD" (Plakans, 2011: XIII). As a matter of fact the term "Estonia" comes from "Aestii" a Latin word that referred to the Baltic-Finn tribes living in that area, and that was coined in the first century AD by the Roman historian Tacitus. Ceramic pottery and graves are the only finds of this population that we can still see in the ruins of Viljandi and Saaremaa, which is the main island where the first settlements, Asva and Ridala, were fortified. Going on in history, the first coins, jewels and artefacts appeared: the Roman Iron age was starting in Estonia, affected by the Latin culture of the Roman Empire.

Subsequently, in the 12th century AD political and administrative subdivisions began to emerge in Estonia: the parish (*kihelkond*) and the county (*maakond*). The former consisted of small villages, usually with a stronghold, the latter instead was composed of several parishes, also headed by an elder. In the following century Estonia was counting more than a few *maakond*, such as: Sakala (Saccala), Harjumaa (Harria), Rävåla (Revalia), Virumaa (Vironia), Saaremaa (Osilia), Järvamaa (Jervia), Ugandi (Ugaunia), and Läänemaa (Maritima). At the same time,



Scandinavian Vikings were starting to raid these areas of the Baltic: the first ones of a long list of invaders.³

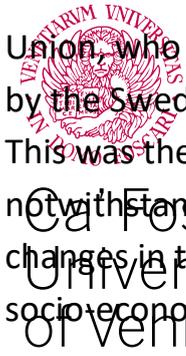
Middle Ages in Western Europe were soaked with religion, likewise this part of Estonian history was characterized by the Christianization and the subsequent invasion of the Germans and the Danes. In times of Christian Crusades against pagans, Estonia, together with Latvia and Lithuania, suddenly became appealing to the eyes of popes and bishops, more specifically Pope Celestine III who in 1193 called for the Baltic Crusade. As a result, troops from northern Germany were invading and conquering Riga in the name of God, baptizing and Christianizing those peoples. In 1208, it was time for Estonia to be Christianized and, despite a few years of strong resistance, the Germans managed to conquer the Southern part of the region. A few years later, in 1219, on the opposite side of the country, in Lindanisse (now Tallinn), the Danish crusaders were invading and settling in the area, dividing this state in two: a German kingdom in the South and a Danish reign in the North. However, the latter domination was hostile to the Estonians who rebelled against the Danes in 1343, during the so called St. George's Night Uprising. Nevertheless, as far as Christianity is concerned, in 1227 with the final conquest of Saaremaa (the last pagan stronghold) by the Livonian Brothers of the Sword, Estonia was the extreme bastion of Christianity. The Livonian Brothers of the Sword, also known as *Fratres militiæ Christi Livoniae*⁴, was a German military order born in Riga thanks to the Latvian Bishop of the capital. This order will then become a distinct branch of the Teutonic Order and after St. George's Night Uprising of 1343, it will be the dominant power in all the country, from North to South. Thus, Estonia became known as *Terra Mariana*, literary: the land of Mother Mary, where a new feudal system based on a network of manorial estates, was established. It was the Estonia of "the new order" (Plakans, 2011: 33) that was built between the 13th and the 16th centuries under German control.⁵

After centuries of German domination, in 1561 with the beginning of the Livonian War, Estonia was conquered by the Swedes. As a matter of fact, this war was waged for the possession of Livonia (the south of Estonia, including a part of Northern Latvia) and it was counting well than four different participants: the Tsardom of Russia, the kingdom of Sweden and the Commonwealth of Lithuania and Poland (the latter was a union that will have long lasting consequences). The main outcome of this conflict was the annexation of Northern Estonia to the Swedish Kingdom, while the south was under the control of the Polish-Lithuanian

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#History>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livonian_Order

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#History>



Union, who dominated this area only until 1625, date in which all Estonia was ruled by the Swedes.

This was the époque of Baroque and Enlightenment, a period in which, notwithstanding the centenary Swedish dominion of Estonia, there were many changes in this area. The entire Europe, Baltic States included, was facing a whole socio-economic system collapsing:

As old feudal ties between lords and vassals and sub-vassals were eroding, lords could no longer expect loyalty from their subordinates on the basis of a personal bond alone.

Military servitors to whom lands had been granted were refashioning themselves into land-based aristocracies, discovering at the same time the benefits of heritability of their holdings and the advantages of binding “their” peasants to the soil. Cities were becoming an increasingly powerful and independent political force, while long-distance trade and commerce established new forms of personal wealth (Plakans, 2011: 77).

In addition, Christianity was in danger because of the spread of Protestantism, which affected also Estonia and the Baltics in general, with the creation of Lutheran Churches and the conversion of most of the population (the German influence was still strong). Moreover, for Estonia, this was also a period of National cohesion and fight against foreign enemies: the Peace Party is evidence of Estonian national awareness and unity. During the Livonian war, among local gentry and townspeople a growing sense of dissent and independence was spreading, leading the Livonians to organize this Peace Party, whose aim was to fight, with their own independent army, against Danish and Swedish troops and allying with the Tsar Ivan The Terrible. However, this coalition was not a fortunate one: the war was lost and soon Estonia and Livonia were invaded, becoming years later, an entire state part of the Swedish Crown. Yet, the 17th century can be argued to be an age of wealth and improvements in Estonia, where in 1632, for instance, the University of Tartu was founded. Also, great political achievements were taking place in this period, such as the greater autonomy and freedom that was granted to lower classes by the king Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden and the establishment of the printing press. However, the duchy of Estonia would soon be in the grip of another great Empire, the Russian one, as we will read in the following section.⁶

In 1700 another war began: the control over the Baltic sea led Russia and Sweden fighting again in the so called Great Northern War (1700–21) which saw the final victory of Tsar Peter I and the subsequent incorporation of Estonia in the Russian Empire. The history of the Baltic was opening a new and complex chapter that would create strong cultural bonds as well as internal dissents and fights. After

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#History>



several battles and skirmishes, the Russian-Swedish front of the Great Northern war, ended in 1709 with the decisive battle of Poltava (now in Ukraine), where the Swedes were defeated on Russian soil. As a result, in 1721, when Sweden finally capitulated, the treaty of Nystad was signed: King Frederick I of Sweden formally recognized the annexation of Estonia, Livonia, Ingria, and the South of Finland to the Russian Tsardom.

The Russian Empire was now starting to emerge, conquering new states and gaining control over the Baltic, a strategic area for European trade and commerce. Crucial, during Russian domination, was the role of German aristocracy: Estonian upper-class was mainly composed of German nobles who appreciated the new Russian imperial policy. Thus, the first period of Tsarism in the Baltic states was welcomed especially by the aristocrats, whose Lutheran religion was accepted by the Russian Orthodox Church (which still nowadays is present in Estonia: 143, 000 citizens declare themselves to be Orthodox believers). During the 18th century, the Protestant Holy Bible was officially translated into Estonian and a new theological faculty was founded in Tartu University: it was the period of the Estophile enlightenment (1750–1840)⁷, an Estonian philosophical movement which was based on national awareness and consciousness, which Estonians found in their past before the invasion of the Danes in the XIII century. Thus, newspapers and mass literature was now published in their national language, as well as the Bible above mentioned.

However, enlightenment ideals are usually followed by subsequent revolutions, as in the case of France. Despite the long distance, French ideals of brotherhood, freedom and democracy reached Estonia and the Baltic area, influencing their culture and political attitude. As a result, in 1819 Estonia abolished serfdom, a practice that was still in use in Russia (where it was abolished only in 1861) and more in general in Eastern Europe. At the same time a phenomenon parallel to this national awakening, was the first attempt of Russianization in Estonia which was led by Alexander III Romanov: the German local upper-classes had to follow this linguistic imposition and the University of Tartu was renamed as the University of Yuryev which existed only until 1918.

While the Tsar was imposing Russian nationalist tendencies, Estonians were trying to safeguard their own culture and language promoting the use of Estonian as a means of instruction (a goal that will be achieved at the beginning of the following century) and also encouraging local literature. Consequently, during the second half of the 19th century, national epic and poetry were emphasized and promoted. A key epic-poem of this period is certainly *Kalevipoeg* published in 1861⁸, it narrates the heroic deeds of Kalev's son, who embodies the nationalism burning in young Estonian hearts. Thus, this century was soaked with patriotism and national

⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estophilia>

⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalevipoeg>



awakening developing together with an increasing phenomenon of Russianization, which will reach its peak in the bloody Sunday of 1905, as we will read in the following section. The solid balance between Russians and Estonians was slowly becoming unstable; preparing the basis for the future rebellions and fights for independence that characterized the 20th century.⁹

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2.1.1. Estonia in the 20th century: Soviet era and aftermath

From the treaty of Nystad (1721) until the collapse of USSR in 1991 and its aftermath, the destiny of Estonia was bound to the Russian one. More specifically, during the last century the cultural and political influence of Russia and the subsequent phenomenon of Russianization, added a sour taste to this union which brought Estonia to the rebellion and final independence. Thus, in this section I will describe the complex situation of Estonia in USSR, during the 20th century starting from the Bloody Sunday of 1905, describing the Soviet era in Estonia and finally picturing the confused period after the immediate ending of the USSR.

Everything started on the cold morning of 22nd January 1905 in Saint Petersburg, where a mass of protesters was marching towards the Winter Palace: this day was destined to be remembered as the Bloody Sunday of 1905 (in Russian Кровавое воскресенье)¹⁰. Under the reign of the last representative of the Romanov's dynasty, Tsar Nicholas II, a socio-economic crisis was spreading in Russia: after the abolishment of serfdom in 1861, a new peasant working class was formed and soon this new class of the social ladder, was invading the industrial cities and towns. New suburbs and urban areas were created, heavily populated and squalid zones, where these workers were living and working in terrible conditions: low wages, 15 hours working day and unsafe conditions, were the keywords of an industrial worker's life.

Thus, thanks to the diffuse discontent and radical ideas spread by the Russian upper classes, soon strikes and manifestation started to appear. Congregation and illegal assemblies were held in secret, such as those organized by Father Gapon, a Russian priest concerned with the controversial situation of the working class and also an active and charismatic leader of this Revolution. After several disorders, in January 1905 the working-class families and representatives decided to march peacefully towards the Winter Palace (the residence of the Tsar), in order to ask for improvements of working conditions and higher wages. Furthermore, a petition was prepared asking for the universal suffrage and the end of the Russo-Japanese

⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#History>

¹⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_\(1905\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_(1905))



war. And yet, a peaceful demonstration ended up in blood: when the protesters arrived in front of the Winter Palace, a line of armed soldiers started shooting on the demonstrators, killing and injuring more than 1000 people. This day was marking with innocent blood the beginning of the Revolution of 1905 as well as the prelude of the Russian revolution of 1917, whose long-lasting consequences will be crucial not only for Russian history, but also for the Baltic one.

While Russian society was facing an imminent revolution, in Estonia the clash between the campaign of Russianization, started under the previous Tsar Alexander III, and the new Estonian national awakening and patriotic tendencies, was creating problems and political issues. As a result, in the wake of the Bloody Sunday of 1905, both in Estonia and in Latvia public manifestations were organized and other innocent victims were shot: for instance, in Tallinn street market or in Riga, where the Russian army caused many casualties among the participants. The result was the formation of new political parties with radical and less radical factions. On the one hand, there was the democratic *National Progress Party* held by Jaan Tõnisson¹¹, promoting ideas of Constitutional monarchy and supporting the Revolution moderately. On the other hand, a more radical spirit was found in the figure of Jaan Teemant¹², the founder of the *Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Union* which was the revolutionary party in Estonia, associating the idea of the Revolution to great political changes. Despite their different approaches and attitudes, these two main factions had two similar goals: putting an end to Russianization and gain National independence. Freedom of the press and assembly, universal suffrage and national autonomy are the keywords to understanding the main political goals in Estonia, which would be partly achieved in 1917, when the Russian Empire was pestered with another bloodier Revolution, whose outcomes will change Baltic history forever.

Having anticipated the burst of a new Revolution in Russia, I now consider and describe the causes of this complex event. In this case a real *casus belli* cannot be traced, but many different factors contributed to the final explosion of the so called February Revolution of 1917. Firstly, the Revolution of 1905, made the working class aware of the Tsarist cruelty and indifference towards them and it also spread a wide discontent among the lower classes. Secondly, the Great War had started three years before in 1914, and it saw the immediate participation of Russian Empire on the side of the Allies. However, despite some victories (such as the Battle of Galicia in which the Germans were defeated), the Russian army was facing many defeats and counting copious casualties. In addition, famines and

¹¹ https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaan_T%C3%B5nisson

¹² https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaan_Teemant



economic crises were troubling the home-front, in which a common sense of dissatisfaction was growing. Finally, the Tsar became an unpopular figure: lacking of charisma and leadership skills, the Tsar Nicholas II was adopting wrong political strategies, such as the involvement of Russia in the ruinous First World War. As a result, on 23rd February 1917 (8th March according to our calendar) a mass of protesters marched to the Winter Palace and forced the Tsar to abdicate. Subsequently, a provisional government was proclaimed, containing two different factions: on one side, there was the aristocratic and Liberal party chaired by Prince Georgy Yevgenyevich Lvov, on the other side there was the Socialist party, known as the Petrograd Soviet (Petrograd was the new name of Saint Petersburg) which was very popular among the lower classes. This dual power lasted for a few months, until the arrival of a great new figure coming back from his exile: Lenin, the leader of the October Revolution that was going to take place in the same year. This period was a crucial one for Russian and Baltic history, facing immense political, social and economic changes in a short period of time, like Boris Pasternak (1968) writes in his masterpiece *Doctor Zhivago*, when the protagonist arrives in the Russian capital after the Revolution:

Everything had changed suddenly--the tone, the moral climate; you didn't know what to think, whom to listen to. As if all your life you had been led by the hand like a small child and suddenly you were on your own, you had to learn to walk by yourself." (Pasternak, 1968: 203)

Taking advantage of the chaotic situation in Petrograd, of the First World War that was continuing to disseminate death, and of the powerful feeling of rebellion that was rapidly spreading out all over the Empire, Estonia started to make pressures on the new provisional Government. Consequently, national autonomy was finally granted to the country: in February 1917 the elections for the new parliament were gathered. The *Maapäev*, (Estonian name of this provisional parliament) was officially taking shape, with its two main branches: the Menshevik and Bolshevik, two factions of the Socialist movement. The former was representing the minority of supporters of the less radical leader Martov, the latter instead, was representing the vast majority supporting Lenin.

However, this dream of Independence in Estonia was a short one, since on the eve of the October Revolution the Bolshevik leader Jaan Anvelt obliged the *Maapäev* to dissolve, Estonia was once more under the leash of Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, another great power was threatening this country: the German army was advancing and getting closer to Estonia. Thus, the Bolshevik Russian army after having dissolved with force the provisional assembly and Council (*Maapäev*), abandoned



the country and withdrew back to Russia. At the same time, the Salvation Committee (a three-member committee proclaimed by the Maapäev before being dissolved) announced on the beach of Parnu on 23rd February 1918 the Estonian Declaration of Independence¹³. The day after, on the 24th February 1918, Tallinn was occupied by the German army, who did not recognize Estonian independence, establishing a sort of provisional Government which lasted less than eight months.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, a few months later, in the same year the Central Powers were defeated: the First World War was ending, but a new dangerous war was starting in Estonia.

Immediately after the retreat of the German troops from the Baltics, the Russian Soviet army was planning to retake this area, causing new riots and uprisings which Estonians remember as their War of Independence (1918-1920). The spirit of the revolution and freedom was still alive, leading the Baltic population to finally achieve democracy. Quoting again Pasternak (1968: 268):

No single man makes history. History cannot be seen, just as one cannot see grass growing. Wars and revolutions, kings and Robespierres, are history's organic agents, its yeast. But revolutions are made by fanatical men of action with one-track mind, geniuses in their ability to confine themselves to a limited field. They overturn the old order in a few hours or days, the whole upheaval takes a few weeks or at most years, but the fanatical spirit that inspired the upheavals is worshiped for decades thereafter, for centuries.

Thus, in the wake of the Russian revolution and the end of the First World war, Estonians gathered an army and troops immediately worked to defeat the Soviet army (renamed the Red Army) and as a consequence, in 1919 the Russian troops were pulled out of the country and a constituent assembly with its 120 members, was elected in order to vote for a new chairman. Estonia was celebrating its new military victory and democratic achievements, while the USSR was facing great territorial losses (the treaty of Brest-Litovsk¹⁵ implied the loss of the Baltic states, the south of Caucasus, as well as the recognized independence of Ukraine) and the massacre of the Civil War, which will end only in 1922.

A pivotal role in this war was certainly played by foreign troops coming from Finland and United Kingdom, that delivered 6500 rifles, 200 machine guns, two field guns and continued helping Estonians with arms and equipment during the whole war. Finnish troops instead supported them by providing 5000 rifles and 20 field guns and sending 3500 volunteers. Finally, thanks to foreign aides and

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonian_Declaration_of_Independence

¹⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#History>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Brest-Litovsk



Estonian army, the War of Independence was won and on 2nd February 1920,¹⁶ the treaty of Tartu was signed between the newly born republic of Estonia and the Soviet Russia: the latter was officially recognizing their independence and renouncing to any kind of territorial interest of the area, in addition the frontier was set in Narva (which still now covers the same function). In the same year Estonia wrote and issued its National Constitution and Parliament with 100 members regularly elected, and in 1921 it was officially joining the League of Nations (the most important intergovernmental organization of the 20th century). Great social and economic changes were taking place after Independence was gained, for instance the land reform, which was redistributing the land of the Baltic aristocracy to the volunteers of the war and the other classes in general. In addition, new trading strategies were adopted, choosing Scandinavia, the USA and the UK as main suppliers and buyers (creating new foreign relationships). However, this period of stability and freedom lasted only 20 years: in 1939 the Second World War was again infuriating in Europe.

On 23rd August 1939 Stalin, the new leader of USSR successor of Lenin, and Hitler the new governor of Germany, were signing the fateful Molotov–Ribbentrop pact (these were the names of the two foreign ministers representing respectively Russia and Germany). This pact was made, in fact, to share the areas of interests between these two great nations: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Romania were divided between Stalin and Hitler, declaring a guarantee of non-belligerence by each party towards the other. However, when on 1st September of the same year, Hitler occupied Poland, the Second World War started, with Russian troops invading the north of Poland. As a matter of fact, the Baltic States were in the Russian sphere of influence according to the above-mentioned pact. Thus, as soon as the war started, the Red Army threatened Estonia (as well as Latvia) with war in order to gain some territories for the construction of military bases. Estonians declared neutrality in this war, but this was not considered by the Russian government, which gave the country an ultimatum for the establishment of these military bases: Estonia was forced to accept and, as a result, Red troops invaded the country. In June 1940, the Russian army occupied the nation, imposing a Soviet Government with forced parliamentary elections where Estonians could vote only Communist candidates. In August 1940, the country was formally joining the USSR, changing its name into “Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic”. Hard years of terror were following the annexation: many citizens were arrested and executed, others were sent in *Gulag* working camps in Russia (where usually people were dying of hunger and overworking). In the next year, mass deportations of *Kulaks* (independent farmers or small landowners) caused the

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonian_War_of_Independence



mobilization of more than 10,000 Estonian civilians in Siberia.¹⁷ Many of them perished there or decided to live in those areas of USSR, some others instead decided to come back in their hometowns: a few Estonian respondents of my questionnaire had their grandmothers and grandfathers deported in *Gulags* or some others managed to escape and come back in the '60s. National cemeteries and monuments were destroyed, imposing the new Soviet culture of the USSR: the second and more monstrous part of the Russianization was taking place in Estonia, leaving indelible traces in contemporary and future generations. Nevertheless, Estonian sufferings were not yet coming to an end: the Nazis were planning to invade the Baltics.

On 22nd June 1941 the German troops of the Führer defeated the Russians and invaded USSR, occupying also the Baltic States which become part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* (the official name used to indicate the occupied territories including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, north of Poland and part of Belorussia.) A provisional government was established and a German internal security (*Sicherheitspolizei*) was introduced: Estonia was under the leash of another great power, the German one, and was facing a new chaotic phase of its history.¹⁸ After three years of Nazi occupation Estonia finally had a glimpse of hope: in 1944 the Allies were defeating the Germans on many fronts and the victory was almost certain, thus thousands of Estonians joined the German army in order to fight against the USSR and prevent a future second invasion of the Red Army. By joining the German SS legion, Estonians were hoping to attract the attention of foreign States that could help them in their cause, after German would have left Estonian territories because of the Allied victory. Nevertheless, mass conscription and formation of a new army in defense of Estonia did not manage to stop the Soviet advance, which occupied Tallinn in September 1944¹⁹. The nightmare of a second advent of the USSR was now coming true, and Estonia would have been part of it until its final collapse in 1991, under the iron fist of Stalin. Once the last Nazi-German troops were pulled out, the Soviet army officially took control of the area, which was now a destroyed country with 40% of industries damaged and one-fifth of the population died because of war and air-raids: Estonia was a nation devastated by decades of different dominations and by the effects of the Second World War. However, the Soviet rule was imposed and all the Estonians who were considered to be not loyal to the Communist cause or alleged enemies were arrested, killed or sent to *Gulags* or deported in Siberia (in 1949, 2.5% of the population was sent there)²⁰. Subsequently, between 1946-1950 an anti-Soviet resistance was organized in secret in the lush woods of Estonia:

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_deportation#Number_of_deportees
¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_occupation_of_Estonia_during_World_War_II
¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#Soviet_occupation
²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_deportations_from_Estonia



Metsavennad (the Forest Brothers) was its name. Headed by the charismatic figure of Alfons Rebane, the Forest Brothers were counting more than 30,000–35,000 volunteers, not enough though, to defeat the Soviet enemy.²¹ As a matter of fact, around 1950 any form of dissent or resistance was suppressed and the Communist party known as Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ECP), which was the only leading power of the country, counted only 48% of local Estonians. The situation was harsh and remained such until 1953, when a turning point appeared: Stalin died and his successor Khrushchev was slowly slackening the iron fist. Subsequently, the ECP above mentioned, was now counting a higher percentage of Ethnic Estonian representatives. More contacts with Finland, and Western societies, were allowed (for instance the ferry-boat connection between Tallinn and Helsinki was opened), in addition, TV broadcast in Finnish were available and free healthcare was established. This was only a prelude to the era of Gorbachev, in which radical changes will be brought in the entire USSR, with the so called *Perestrojka*.

When Mikhail Gorbachev took the reins of the Government in the '80s, a new political movement and strategy was adopted in USSR. After the terrible years of Stalinism, the situation was slowly changing, until this Soviet leader finally revolted the situation. As a matter of fact, this period between the '80s and the final collapse of USSR in 1991 is known as *Perestrojka*²² (in Russian перестройка) literally meaning “rebuilding, reconstruction”, since the main purpose of this policy was to restructure the economic and political system of USSR, by focusing more on the real needs of Soviet citizens.

However, the main outcomes of Gorbachev's reform were the gradual worsening of the political tensions in the huge Soviet Union and also the increasing nationalism in the annexed Republics such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. More specifically, in the last decades of the past century, Estonians were concerned over their national identity and roots, which were now almost disappearing (for instance, in 1981 Russian language was taught in all primary schools and in some cases also in kindergartens). Consequently in 1988 the Estonian Popular Front was organized and soon also Estonian National Independence Party was established, this country was moving its first steps towards the total independence.

Reforms and new laws were issued, such as the linguistic law of January 1989, which proclaimed Estonian the official language of the State. In addition, an Estonian Citizens' Committees Movement was launched in 1989, attracting many locals striving to recognize their nationality and statehood in contrast with the Soviet one. Although the Communist authorities of the country were threatening and discouraging these movements, local committees and organizations were created all over the state, with thousands of citizens registering themselves as part of the

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Brothers

²² <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestrojka>



Republic of Estonia: the phenomenon was irreversible, Estonia was finally achieving liberty and independence. Free elections were held and soon in March 1991 the referendum regarding Estonian independence was taking place, demonstrating the strong will of liberty present in the country: among all the voters 82% voted for independence. And yet, the Soviet coup d'état attempt, better known as the August Coup, was the final straw: members of the Soviet Union tried to steal Mikhail Gorbachev's role and power, but the result was a complete failure. The resistance lasted only for two days and it was immediately repressed, but the eminent complete dissolution of the USSR became clear to everyone. As a matter of fact, in Estonia 20th August is a national holiday, celebrating the Estonian confirmation of independence of 1991, immediately after the failed August Coup: Estonia was finally and officially becoming a free Republic²³.

Having described the complex history of this country until 1991, I now focus on the immediate aftermath of the official collapse of USSR. After centuries of different dominations (more specifically Danish, German, Swedish and Russian) Estonians were facing a new period of total independence which implied new responsibilities, such as the choice of a certain type of Government, or the new trading strategies to adopt and later on also the issue of the promotion and rehabilitation of Estonian traditions and culture. However, the period subsequent to the immediate collapse of USSR in 1991 was a chaotic moment for the Baltic states: complete freedom and independence from USSR was not achieved immediately. For instance, the Russian armed troops withdrew from Estonia only in 1994, or the elections of the *Riigikogu*²⁴ (the Estonian parliament) were held only in 1992, one year after independence). Striking was also the fact that all the Estonians born before 1993 were registered on their birth certificate, as if they were born in the Soviet Union (this is the case of some of the respondents of my research coming from different states of the former USSR).

Nevertheless, contacts with Western Europe were reestablished and a few years after the withdrawal of the Russian army, the three Baltic states started negotiations with the EU (only in 2003 did Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania officially join the European Union and, in the same year, Estonia also joined the NATO). The Estonian economy was in deep crisis after the collapse of the USSR, thus, radical measures were taken in the '90s, including a fast privatization of the economy and the reduction of Statism, which was the opposite strategy of the previous Soviet economy.²⁵ As a result, economic growth characterized the last years of the 20th century, despite some social and health issues: Estonian average life expectancy was very low compared to the other states of the former Union. In addition, the

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#Soviet_occupation

²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riigikogu>

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#Soviet_occupation



linguistic and psychological impact of this great historical change was certainly strong on the Baltic population, causing new troubles and social issues in the country, a topic that will be better analyzed and described in the following section of this chapter.

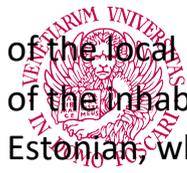
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2.2 The use of English in Estonia today: fields and context

Having briefly represented the complex history of Estonia, I will analyse and illustrate the current use of the English language in this country. Today the fields in which this language appears are various, from the academic context to the online communication on social medias. Therefore this section will illustrate the main contexts in which English is used as a *lingua franca*, starting from the oral communication between residents. Then, an overview of Estonian media will be given, analysing and demonstrating the use of English on TV, Cinema, Internet and technology. Outcomes of the sections of my questionnaire dealing with this topics will be also reported, providing the reader with recent data.

After the demise of the USSR in 1991 and the end of the Communist regime, Estonian society was a puzzle composed of many different ethnic groups and internal clashes, mainly due to the strong presence of the Russian minority. As Fonzari (1999) suggests in the title of her paper, Estonia was and still is a multicultural society with a population of 1,315,635 among which only 68.8% are Estonians, 25% are Russians, 1.8% are Ukrainians and the remaining part of the population is composed of Finns and Others (unknown or mixed nationality) according to the census of 2016. However this multicultural society provoked internal differences and clashes such as the contraposition between Estonians and the Russians, who represent the largest minority of the country. As a matter of fact one of the first social issues the new Independent Government of Estonia had to face, was certainly the problem to citizenship: who, among all these immigrants, had the right to Estonian citizenship? And which was the main requirement in order to obtain it?

During the Soviet period internal migration was a common practice, with thousands of Russians moving to the Republics of the former USSR, and when in 1991 the Soviet empire collapsed the number of Russian citizens living in Estonia was relatively high (more precisely, 30.3% of the population). Therefore the first measure of the Estonian Government concerned the right of citizenship: in 1995 it was established that the Estonian citizenship was based primarily on the principle of *jus sanguinis* and the second main requirement was native-speaker knowledge



of the local language. However, looking at the statistics: today only “37.6 per cent of the inhabitants with Russian citizenship declared that they are able to speak Estonian, whereas nearly 60 per cent of those with Estonian citizenship indicated that they are able to speak Russian” (Kaun: 2013, 14). Despite the Language Law of January 1989 stating that Estonian is the official national language, and the measures taken for the right of citizenship, the linguistic situation is still confused, with a large minority speaking Russian and several similar dialects.

This internal fracture between Russian and Estonian speakers is of interest for this research: according to Fonzari (1999) this situation of bilingualism present in the country “has enabled the population to get used to a third language, English, employed as the first language of communication with other non-Russian speaking countries, and in some cases, between the Estonians and the Russian residents” (Fonzari, 1999: 40). Thus, a simple act of communication with a Russian speaking resident could be a possible context in which English appears in Estonian daily life.

A further dichotomy present in Estonian society sees the contraposition of older and younger generations: the Soviet and the Post-Soviet generation gap. If this contrast may be characteristic of every culture in the world, in Estonia this clash is probably exacerbated since the two generations belong to different historical periods. The older generations born during the Soviet regime lived under Communist rule with mass deportation and with the imposition of Russian culture and language, whereas younger generations born after 1991 faced a completely different reality, in a new and independent state, with a more globalized society and with the implementation of internet and virtual communication. Therefore, the clash between older and younger generations is also linguistic: the former tend to speak more in Estonian and Russian, while the latter speak Estonian and English. A case in point is the study conducted by Fonzari in Tartu in 1997: this research was based on a questionnaire delivered to 40 respondents divided into three groups: the first group aged 19-32 (Post-Soviet generation), the second group aged 41-57 and the last group aged 60-87. Outcomes of this diastatic research indicated that among the third group “there were more cases of bilingualism, with Russian being the second language” (Fonzari, 1999: 43), whereas the first group aged 19-32 was using the English language, and also Russian. In addition, in my case-study all the respondents are young University students, with a good knowledge of English (85% of the respondents declared that they speak fluently) even though none of them is English or American. Thus, the use of English is observed especially among younger generations, who are more exposed to this language through the means of social media, a topic which will be analysed in the following section.



The media, plural of the Latin word *medium*, is a concept and reality strictly linked to our contemporary society, more specifically to the area of mass communication. According to Crystal (2003) the media is one of the main ambits in which English is used a *lingua franca*, more specifically he indicates five main areas of media in which English covers this function: the press, advertising, broadcasting, cinema and popular music. Due to practical constraints, this dissertation cannot provide a comprehensive overview of the role of English in all the areas of Estonia medium, but will only focus on the use of this language in TV-cinema and online communication (mainly social networks).

However, before focusing on these specific spheres of, an overview of the Estonian media situation must be given. Nowadays, the national media company of the country is *Eesti Meedia*,²⁶ the largest media group in the Baltics, partly owned by a Norwegian company, which includes print and online media content creation, television and radio broadcasting, operating in three countries and thirteen cities and towns: Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, Viljandi, Rakvere, Paide, Valga, Riga, Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Panevėžys. Nevertheless, having a national Estonian television is a relatively recent concept: until 1955 when *Eesti Televisioon* (Estonian Television) was launched, the only channels available on TV were in Russian. Consequently, television was controlled by the Soviet Government and programmes were all broadcasted in Russian. It was only after 1955 that Estonian TV could have channels and programmes in the local language and also in Finnish (channels in this language were available already in 1953). In addition, in the Baltic states, the media has played a pivotal role in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of USSR: “During the period of radical political and economic reforms (1991-1994), the mainstream media helped to promote a positive climate for so-called “shock therapy”.” (Kaun, 2013: 17) Thus, cinema and TV in Estonia are points of interest in this research, since their multicultural aspects (the company is partly Norwegian, with channels in Russian, Estonian) include also the English language.

Currently, *Eesti Television* (ETV) offers local viewers various channels from Still to Kanal 2 and TV3 –TV2, all broadcasting programmes in Estonian, Russian or Estonian with Russian Subtitles. In addition, channels like DMAX and REALTIME offer programmes in English (or American) with Estonian subtitles: viewers have access to satellite and cable TV with channels mainly in English. Interestingly, the dubbing system presents anomalies: in Estonia, like in other countries, dubbing is not common and Estonian viewers watch films and TV shows in their original language with Estonian subtitles. However, some movies and programmes, especially on the Russian channels, are dubbed with the voice-over technique. This dubbing method is particularly used in Eastern Europe and it consists in the overlap

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eesti_Televisioon



of a recorded voice over the original audio track of the movie which can be heard in the background. However, this technique is mainly used on Russian channels and in TV programmes for children, movies and foreign TV shows are often broadcasted in the original language with Estonian or Russian subtitles. Therefore Estonian Television, similarly to the Norwegian one (which partly owns ETV) offers many shows and movies in English, helping Estonians to daily get in touch with the language and improve their level.

As far as cinema is concerned, films are always projected in the original language and the subtitles are in Estonian and Russian. Thus, Estonian TV and Cinema present a mixture of English, Russian and Estonian language. However a preference towards the English language is observed among youngsters. According to my research conducted in UT, the majority of the students reported that they usually watch online TV series with English Subtitles. In the third section of my questionnaire, dealing with University and everyday life, the respondents were asked in which subtitles they prefer watching films or online TV series (which are mainly American or English): 60% of the respondents preferred watching movies with English subtitles and only 30% of the respondents preferred them in their native language: significant data demonstrating how this language is part of Estonian youngster's everyday life (see Figure 2). In addition, Fonzari (1999) noted in her research a positive attitude of younger generations towards the use of English on Estonian TV: when asked if they were in favour of the original language programmes (in English), rather than the translated ones, the vast majority of the respondents of the first group declared that they were in favour, whereas the third group aged 60-87 was strongly against.

Do you prefer watching Tv series/films with...

40 risposte

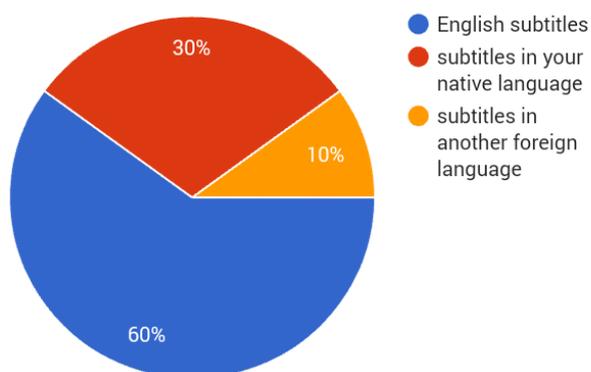


Figura 2 Languages preferred for subtitles



The post-Soviet generations have faced the Internet revolution with the implementation of new forms of communication and new forms of mass media. Thus, this section will focus on the following contexts: Internet and technology. After the official entrance of the Baltic Republics in the EU, strong investments were made for the improvement and spread of the Internet and new technologies, as Kaun (2013) argues:

Estonia is a leading-edge country when it comes to the implementation of e-services, the spread of free wireless internet connections, and the development of an extensive economic, technological and educational programme (Tiger Leap program) – all of which has put Estonia firmly on the map as an “e-state (Kaun,2013: 19).

Thus, this topic is crucial in my research, since in these contexts the use of the English language is essential. As a result, part of the questionnaire is dedicated to the use of online social networks and the linguistic situation present in this perspective. Interesting is the fact that among the respondents (all students aged 19-27) 57.5% of them answered that on online social networks they prefer using their native language, rather than English (40% declared that they use English and the remaining 2% another language, see Figure 2). However, according to Fonzari “computer studies have been vigorously implemented in most schools and universities, one of the aims being that of educating the new generations especially to the use of Internet” (Fonzari, 1999: 41). In addition, she demonstrates how, through the results of her questionnaire, the above mentioned clash between older and younger generations in Estonia is even more emphasised when speaking of the use of English online. When asked if they “are in favour of internet and academic writing in English in Estonia” the vast majority of the respondents of the first group (aged 19-32) wrote to be FOR the use of English, whereas the third group of respondents (aged 60-87) was strongly against the use of the English language in this context.

Comparing the results of my case-study with those of Fonzari, it may seem that Estonian youngsters had changed their minds, preferring to use their native language in social networks. However, the reader should bear in mind that Fonzari’s paper was written soon after the demise of USSR, a period in which probably the use of English was starting to spread and it was a new exciting phenomenon especially for the younger generations. Furthermore, nowadays online translators can release information translated into various languages, such as Russian, Polish and also Estonian, a fact that could improve the use of native language but discourage the use of English. Last but not least, while Fonzari was concentrating on the general topic of English online, my questionnaire deals with the use of this language in the precise context of social networks, which had not even existed in 1999, in the period of her research.



Nevertheless, today in Estonia a significant use of Internet can be found in all the different ambits of society, from school to government: for instance, legislations are all published online, as well as cabinet meetings. Skype, one of the contemporary means of online communication, was invented in Estonia, and in Tartu university many funds are invested in technological progress and discoveries, another proof of the importance of the internet and new technologies in this state. As far as social networks are concerned, it's worth noticing that VK (BkoHTaKTe) the most popular Russian social network, very similar to Facebook with photos, tags and chats, is not very popular in Estonia. Whereas other former republics of USSR like Kazakhstan and Belarus, where Russian influence is still strong, the use of VK is massive (according to Alexa Internet ranking of May 2017²⁷). Consequently, even if the results of my case-study demonstrate that 57.5% of the respondents prefer using their native language on social networks rather than English, it is still possible to argue that contemporary generations in Estonia, make a considerable use of the English language: the world of technology and internet is essential in their country and it implies the use of this language. (As Crystal states: "Nowadays 80% of the information available on the Internet is in English" (Crystal, 1997 : 104) Yet, if the results may be slightly contradictory in this sphere of the Media, in the field of Education and University the use of the English language is undisputed, a topic that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Which language do you use more on social networks?

40 risposte

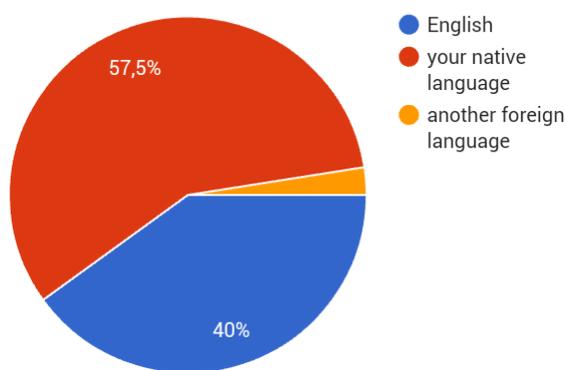


Figure 3. The languages used on social networks by young Estonians

²⁷ <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/vk.com>

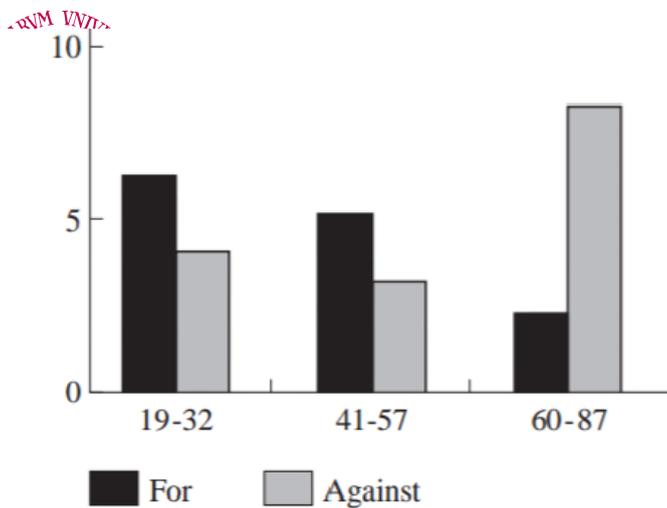


Figure 4. : Answers to the question: “Are you in favour of Internet and academic writing in English in Estonia?” in a survey conducted by Fonzari in 1999



CHAPTER 3. ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ESTONIA

The rapid expansion of the English language has seen its development not only in the above mentioned fields, such as TV, Cinema, Internet and social networks, but also in the field of Education. More specifically EMI (English as a Medium for Instruction) is becoming a global and worldwide linguistic phenomenon: a growing number of Universities decided to adopt English as a means of Instruction, even though in those countries the first language is not English²⁸. Crucial is the real use of EMI in Estonian Universities (mainly Tallinn and Tartu Universities) where previous research and studies were conducted. In addition, an overview of Estonian University policies and internal structure will be given, underlining the great changes and differences of those Universities between the Soviet and Post-Soviet era (in particular with regard to language policies).

In order to represent faithfully the linguistic situation in Estonian Universities, this chapter will be structured as follows: first, a brief overview and explanation of EMI will be provided, pointing out the main reasons for the existence of this phenomenon and its main aims and methods, then, in the second section of this chapter, a focus on Estonia and on the use of English as an Academic language will be given. Finally, the last section of the chapter will describe the main differences between Estonian University before and after the collapse of USSR in 1991.

3.1 English as a Means of Instruction (EMI)

The use of English in the field of Higher Education (HE) plays an important role in this thesis, more specifically in Universities, where my research was conducted. One of the products of globalization, in terms of education, is the promotion of English language study programmes, especially in tertiary education: “Over 400 European Higher Education institutions provided a total of more than 2400 programmes taught entirely in English in 2007, which represent a remarkable 34% increase on the 700 Bachelor courses and Master’s programmes taught in 2002. This is a trend that can be observed worldwide” (Doiz *et al.*, 2012: XII) Thus, the spread of the English language in the field of HE is an increasing phenomenon, which has taken various shapes.

A possible definition of EMI, according to Dearden (2014), could be: “The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where

²⁸ Dearden, J. (2014). English as a medium of instruction-a growing global phenomenon. British Council.



the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (Dearden, 2014 : 4). A concept similar to EMI is CLIL: Content and language integrated learning, which implies the introduction of English language as a means of instruction for various subjects. However, there are some differences between CLIL and EMI, for instance the fact that in the case of EMI the language used as a medium is necessarily English, while CLIL can imply the use of other languages. In addition, whereas CLIL has a clear objective of furthering both content and language as declared in its title, EMI does not (necessarily) have that objective” (Dearden, 2014 : 4).

However, the concept of EMI is not so recent as we may think: the first EMI programme appeared during the '80s, in Maastricht University, in the heart of Europe: this Dutch University decided to open a first-degree programme in International management all taught in English and, despite the initial failure, this project later became a great success with an increasing number of students enrolling per year. In addition, following the example of Maastricht, other Dutch Universities such as Groningen, Tilburg and Rotterdam opened new English-taught courses, not only in business and economic areas, but also in other disciplines for instance Arts and Humanities (in Maastricht).

Subsequently, after the Bologna process had started in 1999, European Universities were more attracted by EMI: due to this ministerial meeting taking place in the most ancient University of the world, mobility projects and Erasmus programmes were implemented. The Bologna process had the main purpose of creating a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in which mobility and synergies between Universities were possible. Consequently, the Bologna Declaration was signed, implying an intergovernmental agreement between EU and non-EU countries, in which participation and cooperation are completely voluntary²⁹. Thus, “the rapid application (in 2002) of the Bologna Declaration [...] meant many institution had to rethink their curricula, and several, like Maastricht, opted to deliver more programmes in English, with any on student mobility and diploma portability” (Doiz et al.,2012: XII.) It was the beginning of EMI, spreading with remarkable rapidity across different states and Universities, as I will illustarte in the following section.

Several studies investigating EMI have been carried out during the last decades, yet this thesis will focus on a more recent case study conducted by the British Council in 2014 in 55 countries, picturing a map of EMI states, among which there is Estonia (while Latvia and Lithuania are not present). Factors which were taken into account in this research are certainly political, socioeconomic and cultural choices of the different countries: for instance the size and population of the state in question. The 55 states analysed in this research are: Afghanistan, Cyprus, Iran,

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna_Process



Netherlands, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Czech Republic, Iraq, Nigeria, Switzerland, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Israel, Pakistan, Taiwan, Bahrain, Ethiopia, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, Bangladesh, Germany, Japan, Qatar, Uganda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, Brazil, Greece, Macedonia, Senegal, United States, Bulgaria, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Serbia, Uzbekistan, China, Hungary, Mauritius, South Africa, Venezuela, Colombia, India, Montenegro, South Sudan, Vietnam, Croatia, Indonesia, Nepal, Spain, Zambia (USA is part of this research since there are some areas in which English is not the first language, for instance in Texas).

The current study found that a new awareness of EMI programmes in HE is present among professors :

Respondents reported that policies on EMI exist in 22 of the 55 (40 per cent) countries surveyed. Twenty-seven countries out of 55 (49 per cent) reported that official statements concerning EMI had been made publically available [...] This result was surprising as in our preliminary research teachers in three European countries were overwhelmingly unaware of any policy on EMI in their universities (Dearden, 2014 : 12).

Interestingly, the adoption of EMI is higher in private institution and, another significant outcome was that among those 55 countries, 51% of the respondents thought that EMI was controversial in public opinion: for instance in some countries like Estonia EMI is a potential risk for the loss of national languages and cultures. Another concern was regarding social inequalities that EMI could increase in schools and Universities: "In Indonesia, for example it was reported that the public were questioning the nature of huge funding allocated for minor and generally already well-off state schools". (Dearden, 2014 : 21) Other respondents were expressing their doubts about EMI especially when referring to the effective competence of teaching staff in institutions. However, even if the introduction of EMI may be seen as controversial in some states, the overall situation suggests a prosperous rise of this linguistic phenomenon in HE.

Having pictured the map of the states agreeing to EMI project, some questions and doubts arise: Why is this linguistic phenomenon so wide spread? And why is English the chosen language of instruction? Crystal's answer (2012) to this question is the following:

Since the 1960s, English has become the normal medium of instruction in higher education for many countries – and is increasingly used in several where the language has no official status. Some advanced courses in The Netherlands, for example, are widely taught in English. If most students are going to encounter English routinely in their monographs and periodicals, it is suggested – an argument which is particularly cogent in



relation to the sciences – then it makes sense to teach advanced courses in that language, to better prepare them for that encounter (Crystal, 2012: 112).

Therefore, according to Crystal, the reason why EMI is a worldwide phenomenon is simply due to the fact that the vast majority of the research materials and books are written in English.

A further reason for the adoption of EMI could be the increasing presence of international students and mobility projects in many Universities: after the Bologna process³⁰, a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries to ensure comparability between different universities and campuses, exchange projects and mobility was promoted.

Within Europe, Erasmus programme has achieved the *de facto* internationalization of thousands of campuses across the continent, and, despite Europe's commitment to multilingualism, has probably, in tandem with the Bologna process, accelerated Englishization (Doiz et al., 2012: XIII).

Subsequently, English is the language chosen for instruction and it is not a simple coincidence that among the 55 states above mentioned, 18 are also part of the Bologna zone (in total 50 states participating to Bologna process).

Another answer to the question regarding the spread of EMI is prestige: in Dearden's case-study, where also private schools and Universities were taken into account, "respondents judged that the prevalence of EMI in the private sector was largely due to EMI giving an international image, prestige and reputation to the institution in question" (Dearden, 2014 : 11) Once more, the English language is linked to the image of power, a concept which I have mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation.

Last but not least in importance, is the factor related to job opportunities: it is generally known that knowledge of foreign languages, and in particular English, is requested by a growing number of employers. Other studies (Wachter & Maiworm, 2008) have summarized nine main reasons for the introduction of EMI in HE, among which three stand out: "to attract international students who would not enroll in a programme in the domestic language; to make domestic students fit for the global or international market; and to sharpen the profile of the institution in comparison to others in the country." (Doiz et al., 2012: XII) Thus, all these different reasons, could promote the introduction of EMI.

Having stated the main reasons and motives that generally induce Universities to adopt EMI, let us now focus on the methods and strategies through which EMI is applied to HE institutions. It is worth mentioning staff development and staff

³⁰ This concept will be explained in the last chapter when describing Tartu University.



competences which are required for EMI programmes: language skills and quality of teaching staff is essential. This quality is based on three aspects: “disciplinary competence, teaching competence and language competence” (Doiz *et al.*: 2012:17). The first two aspects are not dealing with languages *per se*, but with personal skills which are required also when staff is teaching in their own native language. The third aspect is strictly linked to language skills and, subsequently, to the effective knowledge of English, an issue which concerned some respondents of the case study above mentioned. In Dearden’s research many respondents expressed their doubts regarding the effective linguistic knowledge of teaching staff: “ ‘Are there enough qualified teachers in your country to teach through EMI?’ the answer was a resounding ‘No’ with 83 per cent of countries responding in this way” (Dearden, 2014: 24). Wilkinson (2012), when describing the case of Maastricht University reports a strict cooperation of teaching staff with language experts, guaranteeing a correct use of the English language. However, in Dearden’s more recent research (2014) the linguistic situation of teaching staff seems static. “Professors and staff not fluent in English are sometimes expected to gain proficiency by taking weekly English classes. Whether or not this is sufficient training to enable teachers to be able to work in English is open to debate” (Dearden, 2014: 24). As a matter of fact very little is done to help teaching staff to improve their language skills and use of English, an issue which each country and institution faces differently. For instance, states like Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, according to Gundermann (2014), tend to invest more on the linguistic support for EMI teaching staff, for example with the creation of specific research units for this purpose, like the Centre for Internationalization and Parallel Language Use. In the case of the Basque University of Bilbao, which is described by Doiz *et al.* (2012), in the faculty of engineering, not only are courses of English organized for teaching staff, but a specific test is used to assess their linguistic competence (an alleged C1 level) through the so called TOPTULTE (Test of Performance for Teaching at University Level Through English)³¹. However this dissertation will focus only on how Estonian Universities deal with EMI and with the effective competence of teaching staff. Thus, EMI is observed in Higher Education not only through teachers and professors using English as their medium of instruction, but also through the internal policies that Universities or HE institutes choose and how students and professors deal with these programmes, a topic which will be treated more in detail in the following section, in the context of Estonian Universities and more specifically in UT where my research was conducted.

³¹ Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. M. (Eds.). (2012). English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges. Multilingual matters.



3.1.1 English as a means of instruction in Estonia

Having described the concept of EMI, the reasons for its adoption in HE and the methods of its application, the following section of this chapter will provide the reader with an analysis of EMI in the context of Estonian HE, more specifically in Tartu and Tallinn Universities where previous research about English as a Medium of Instruction, were conducted, with regard also to a study conducted in SSER (Stockholm School of Economics in Riga), which will be taken as a basis for comparison. Then, the following section will focus on a specific study carried out in Tallinn University, dealing with students' attitudes towards EMI. An overview of the effective presence of EMI programmes and of the real linguistic support provided to teaching staff will be given in the last part of this section. A summary of the findings of my questionnaire regarding the topic of HE will be also given, since all the respondents of my case-study are students of this University.

After the collapse of USSR in 1991, Estonian Universities faced a series of reforms and internal changes, with the result of a multicultural and more European atmosphere. The direct result of these reforms was the adoption of English as a Medium for Instruction in Universities as well as in some High schools (the latter case however, will not be analysed in the course of this dissertation) with the implementation of EMI programmes in Tallinn and Tartu Universities, the two main Public Athenaeums of the state. Therefore, among those changes, I will focus on the main reforms of the academic year 2002/2003: in that year Estonia adopted the three-cycle division of study levels with three years for Bachelor's degrees, two years for Masters' and four years for Ph.Ds (a prototype which was suggested in the Bologna Declaration of 1999). This was certainly one of the first steps of the Estonian Universities towards internationalization.

Subsequently, with the Bologna process taking place and the fulfillment of these reforms, the quality of the process of internationalization was a new matter of concern for Estonian HE institutions: for instance, in December 2007, the *Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalization of Estonia's Higher Education Institutions*³² was signed by the rectors of the country's six public universities (Estonian Academy of Arts (*Eesti Kunstiakadeemia*), Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (*Eesti Muusika- ja Teatriakadeemia*), Estonian University of Life Sciences (*Eesti Maaülikool*), Tallinn University (*Tallinna Ülikool*), Tallinn University of Technology (*Tallinna Tehnikaülikool*), University of Tartu (*Tartu Ülikool*)). According to this agreement, the above-mentioned universities which have expressed the desire of a multicultural atmosphere will observe the good practice of internationalization, implying the promotion of international mobility

³² http://www.ut.ee/sites/default/files/ut_files/UT%20Strategic%20Plan%202015.pdf



(both for students and professors) and ensure a high quality education for incoming exchange-students.

A further step towards the implementation of EMI in Estonia, and its subsequent internationalization, was the creation of a *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Estonian Higher Education over the Years 2006-2015*, which implied “activities for the improvement of the position of Estonian higher education within the area of international higher education, with the aim of making our system of higher education more open and visible”³³. The most important points and principles established in this document are the promotion of Joint Curricula, allowing different European Universities to cooperate with the Estonian ones and guarantee the acquisition and automatic recognition of a significant part of the curriculum at the partner institution, and another crucial principle is related to the right to apply for study allowances and study loans while studying at a foreign university, a strategy meant for the development of mobility programmes. The provision of transnational higher education establishes that:

The precondition for the opening of a foreign institution of higher education or a branch thereof in Estonia is that the educational institution be recognised at the national level in its country of origin, and that quality control be provided for by legislation in the home country, and prior experience of the provision of transnational education. It is also important to take into consideration the university’s reputation in its home country and internationally. The activities of the foreign educational institution or branch thereof must comply with the legislation of both the home and target countries, and be in harmony with the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education. A favourable legal environment is also created for Estonian institutions of higher education outside Estonia is created, primarily through the guaranteeing of the mutual recognition of qualifications³⁴.

A clear and strong desire for Internationalization and improvement of multiculturalism in the Academic environment is visible in the abovementioned *Strategy*, an aim which will be fulfilled in the case of Tartu University, as the third chapter of this dissertation will show, as well as in the Athenaeum of Tallinn where Soler conducted his research (which will be reported in the next section). Thus, after several reforms, the process of internationalization of Estonian Universities reached its peak, with the complete introduction of EMI courses.

However, before describing the effective adoption of EMI and its impact on students and professors in the academic environment, the reader will be provided with the serious risks and implications that EMI programmes represent in this

³³ <http://www.ut.ee/en/university/strategy>

³⁴ <http://www.ut.ee/en/university/strategy>



country. As a matter of fact, already Dearden in her case-study regarding EMI, reported the main risk and concern of Estonian Universities when adopting this type of programme: “The Estonian Language Act declares that Estonian medium instruction should be provided in all curriculum fields at all levels. There has been public discussion about protecting Estonian” (Dearden, 2014: 17). As a result, one controversial aspect of EMI is certainly the imposition of English as a *lingua franca*, with the subsequent risk of the loss of local languages, especially in the case of small states and realities, such as in the case of the Baltic Republics.

Giving a look at statistics and numbers, it is possible to argue that Estonia is a multicultural society, like Fonzari (1999) argues in the title of her paper: local population reaches the small number of 1,315,635 among which only 69.7% are ethnic Estonians, whereas 24.8% are Russian (the most important Ethnic minority), then 2% of the population is Ukrainian and the remaining part is composed of Belorussian, Swedish and Finnish ethnic groups. During the Soviet Era, internal migration was a common phenomenon, which explains why today this state seems a collage of different ethnicities. Consequently, the linguistic situation reflects this cross-cultural nation: 157 different languages and dialects are spoken in Estonia, among which the most common one is certainly Estonian (spoken by 84.14% of the population), the Russian language is the second most spoken language of the country and the first language of this ethnic minority.

The result is a society made up of different languages, groups and subgroups, in other words a multicultural society in which the Estonian language should be the common glue, uniting all the various elements. Indeed, as I previously stated, the most important requirement to obtain Estonian citizenship is the knowledge of the local language. Nevertheless, data show that only a part of local population speaks this language (more specifically 84.14%): a possible explanation could be that in such a small geographic area with so many different languages and ethnic groups, English has become a suitable *lingua franca*.

A further reason why the use of English as a means for instruction may represent a risk for local languages lies in the linguistic features of Estonian³⁵: this language belongs to the Finnic branch of the Uralic language family and it includes fourteen noun cases: nominative, genitive, partitive, illative, inessive, elative, allative, adessive, ablative, translative, terminative, essive, abessive, and comitative, implying the declination of case and number not only of nouns, but also of the adjectives. Compared to Russian with only six cases, or to the English language where a system of cases is not even present in its grammar, Estonian seems a very difficult language to speak and learn. For instance, a student interviewed by Soler in his research conducted in Tallinn University declared to find easier writing in English rather than Estonian (this case-study will be analysed and described in the next section). Thus, the presence of English not only in the above-mentioned fields

³⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonian_language



of everyday life such as music, TV and internet, but also in HE could cause an extensive use of this language to the detriment of Estonian. This would explain the great efforts made by Estonian Universities to promote the local language and literature to domestic students as well as to foreigners (for instance UT offers every semester an intensive course of Estonian for beginners to all the incoming Erasmus students). Thus, in the battle for the safeguarding 14 noun-cases in the small and multiethnic society of Estonia, EMI could represent a concrete risk.

As far as attitudes are concerned, a case-study conducted in 2015 by Soler-Carbonell in Tallinn University may be of interest for this research. This case-study is based upon empirical data collected mainly through an online questionnaire delivered to a group of students from different levels and faculties and from a series of interviews to students of Social Sciences. The main aim of this research was to assess the attitudes of students attending EMI programmes and the level of difficulty they encounter when studying in English. The location of this study is Tallinn University where according to Soler there is “a fairly substantial provision of programmes in English: 5 Bachelor degrees and 11 Masters’ . However, they represent only 2.8% of all the BA programmes and 6.5% of the MA degrees offered by the institution” (Soler-Carbonell, 2015:13).

The overall result of this case study indicated that there is a low percentage of participation in EMI courses and 65 students declared that they had never taken an EMI course before that semester. However, as far as attitudes are concerned, “the respondents do not see academic English as a threat to Estonian academic language and they generally do not feel that native English speakers have some kind of advantage over non-native speakers of the language in academic contexts” (Soler-Carbonell, 2015: 14) What is interesting in these data is that students do not feel disadvantaged from a linguistic point of view and are not even scared by the idea of taking a whole course in a foreign language, in this case English: a result which foretells a prosperous development of EMI.

Strong evidence of this attitude can be found in the results of the section of the questionnaire dealing with the possible future of EMI courses: “The results indicate that students are indeed very supportive of these courses and that they demand more of them” (Soler-Carbonell, 2015: 16). Moreover, this study provides a series of interviews to students and class discussions on this topic, in which interesting answers and results are reported and analysed. For instance, when dealing with the issue of specific academic terminology and the clash between Estonian and English , many students argued that they prefer English terminology and one particular respondent replied in this way: “S1: And a lot of the academic vocabulary, you can’t put it into Estonian” (extract from Soler-Carbonell, 2015: 18). In another interview the respondent argued that the only academic language she knew and used was English: “Jaanika: Right now I can switch from English to



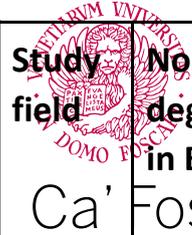
Estonian as quickly as possible, I don't even have to think about it. However, my academic language is English, and that made it so much harder for me to write in academic Estonian, because I am not familiar with the concepts. So that's really hard for me" (extract from Soler-Carbonell, 2015: 20). Briefly put, Soler's case-study has shown a positive situation, indicating through empirical data, how Estonian students have positive feelings and attitudes towards the use of English as an academic language, an outcome which can foretell a bright future for EMI in Estonia.

In Tartu University the use of English as a medium for instruction is an essential part of the academic system, with more courses offered in this language compared to Tallinn University. UT is the most ancient (it was founded in 1632), as well as the most important University of the state. In addition, this athenaeum holds similar records also worldwide: it ranks in the top 2% of world's best universities and in the QS World University Rankings, and it gained the 347th position in the world's top 800 universities. As far as the internationalization of the athenaeum is concerned: UT counts, on average, more than 1000 international students per year, coming from 70 different countries.³⁶ However a detailed overview of the multicultural atmosphere of Tartu University will be given in the next chapter, when describing my case-study conducted in Tartu.

Thus, Tartu University can boast a considerable amount of international students, as well as a wide range of EMI courses: taking a look at the official website of UT, is possible to find all the courses taught in English. More specifically, EMI courses for this first semester of the academic year 2017/2018 are: 3 first-cycle degree programmes in English; 19 second-cycle degree programmes in English; 31 PhD programmes taught in English; 1 Erasmus Mundus programme coordinated by UT; 2 Joint programmes coordinated by other Estonian institutions; 3 Joint programmes coordinated by other foreign institutions; 4 PhD programmes in English with the presence of few courses delivered in Estonian; 375 courses taught in English for Short-term studies (including the College of Narva, Parnu and Viljandi Culture Academy, which are separate branches). The following tables will sum up all the first-cycle degree programmes in English found on the official website of the University.

Table 1: University of Tartu first-cycle degree programmes in English for the Academic Year 2017/2018 (<http://www.ut.ee/en/courses-taught-english>)

³⁶ <http://www.ut.ee/en/about-us/ut-rankings>



Study field	No. of first-cycle degree programmes in English	Titles of first-cycle degree programmes
Ca' Foscari University of Venice		
	1	Business Administration
	1	Science and Technology
	1	Medicine
Total	3	

Table 2: University of Tartu second-cycle degree programmes in English for the Academic Year 2017/2018 (<http://www.ut.ee/en/courses-taught-english>)

Study field	No. of first-cycle degree programmes in English	Titles of first-cycle degree programmes
Humanities	4	Philosophy; Semiotics; Folkloristics and Applied Heritage studies; European Languages and Cultures

 <p>Science and Technology</p> <p>Ca' Foscari University of Venice</p>	6	<p>Actuarial and Financial Engineering;</p> <p>Applied Measurement Science;</p> <p>Computer Science;</p> <p>Geoinformatics for Urbanised Society;</p> <p>Robotics and Computer Engineering;</p> <p>Software Engineering</p>
Social Sciences	9	<p>Educational Technology;</p> <p>European Union – Russia Studies;</p> <p>Democracy and Governance;</p> <p>Information Technology Law; Innovation and Technology Management;</p> <p>International Law and Human Rights;</p> <p>International Relations and Regional Studies;</p> <p>Quantitative Economics;</p> <p>Wellness and Spa Service Design and</p>

 Ca' Foscari University of Venice		Management
Total	19	

As the two tables show, there is a sizeable difference between Master and Bachelor degrees: the number of English taught courses in second-cycle degree programme is defiantly higher compared to the first-cycle degree programme. International students as well as domestic ones, are provided with a wide selection of different EMI courses, whose number is actually increasing: the list on the website is updated every month. Subsequently, the next issue I analyse in this dissertation is the concrete language support given to professors in Tartu University, to guarantee a high quality teaching standard.

Before dealing with the issue of teaching support, it is worth noticing how the concern towards the English language and its application in the academic field has changed dramatically in the last decade. More specifically, the strategy plan of Tartu University for 2009-2015 reports, in the 4th section regarding the English support for students, the following intention:

4.1.6. guarantee the opportunity for students to develop their English language skills and other transferable skills, in order to ensure their competitiveness on the international labour market

And, in the last part of the same section, the strategy plan indicates that the University is intended to:

4.2.6. support the continuous development of employees' professional skills and knowledge, including the development of management skills of managers and improvement of skills required for working in an international academic environment



(Estonian language skills for international lecturers and researchers, English language skills, intercultural communication, etc.);³⁷

A clear concern towards English is found in this strategic plan, hinting at a crucial topic: linguistic support to teaching staff in Tartu University. And yet, in the strategic plan of 2015-2020, which is the most recent one, the council of Tartu University seems to be more concerned with the survival of Estonian language: the word “English” is not even mentioned in the whole plan. One possible reason explaining this focus on Estonian could be the safeguarding of the local language and culture, an issue which I have already mentioned when illustrating the risks of EMI in Estonia. Thus, this aspect of the strategic plan of 2015-2020 would confirm the fact that EMI is de facto an essential part of UT, an element which is discouraging the use of Estonian, causing the Council’s apprehension for the local language. As a result, the main aim and mission of the strategic plan 2015-2020, is the following:

The University of Tartu as a national university of Estonia bears the responsibility for solving problems faced by the society by ensuring the continuity of Estonian intellectuals and language and culture and by contributing to the development of education, research and technology and other creative activities throughout the world ³⁸.

Bearing in mind this shift of attention towards the Estonian language, I now focus on the linguistic support given to teaching staff in UT. First of all, the main services used by Tartu University are: the Centre for Academic Writing and Communication (AVOK) and the Test Centre. The former refers to a service which Tartu University offers to its staff, in order to help them use correctly both Estonian and English, in addition, it provides writing consultants for teachers who offer regular feedback about writing and are able to apply different methods of evaluation and assessment. AVOK also offers courses to strengthen the use of English, in particular academic English (courses are offered to students as well as professors, in Estonian and English). Last but not least, AVOK is also organizing international projects in order to encourage the use of academic writing: in the academic year 2016/2017 AVOK started cooperating with the Universities of Chalmers, Malmö, Aalto and Bergen for an international project. Moreover a second service is also granted to teaching staff of UT: the test Center which was formed in 2015 in order to test foreign language teachers and lecturers. This testing team is also testing students

³⁷ To know more:

http://www.ut.ee/sites/default/files/www_ut/ulikoolist/tartu_ulikooli_arengukava_aastateks_20152020_a2020_eng_0.pdf

and http://www.ut.ee/sites/default/files/ut_files/UT%20Strategic%20Plan%202015.pdf

³⁸

http://www.ut.ee/sites/default/files/www_ut/ulikoolist/tartu_ulikooli_arengukava_aastateks_20152020_a2020_eng_0.pdf



applying for the Erasmus projects as well as the domestic students who need to improve and test their linguistic level. As far as professors are concerned, this service provides the teaching staff with ad hoc teams assessing and helping them in their linguistic needs. However, the most relevant aspect of the Test Centre is the new project of 2014:

In years 2011 – 2014 the language centres of four universities in Estonia (University of Tartu, Tallinn University, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tallinn University of Technology) organised a joint project called “Harmonising the levels of teaching and testing foreign languages in higher education according to the CEFR”, which was funded by PRIMUS. Every year there was a joint training taught by internationally recognised professionals from ALTE and TestDaF. Participants learned about the CEFR levels, compiling language tests and administering them.

<https://www.maailmakeeled.ut.ee/en/test-centre>

The key aspect of this project is the use of the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). This is a guideline used to define linguistic achievements of learners of foreign languages, a guideline which was born in the Council of Europe during the '90s and that is now the most popular system used in Europe to assess and test linguistic skills of learners (both students and professors in this case). As a result, students and professors are all aware of CEFR levels and are also familiar with this concept: for instance, when in my questionnaire students were asked to report their level of English according to CEFR standards, none of them had any problem in understanding the right level. Therefore, it is possible to argue that Tartu University tries to foster the use of English for instruction with ad hoc courses and centers supporting teaching staff in the improvement of the English language.

Having reported the main aspects of EMI in Estonian Universities and more specifically in Tartu University, I will provide the reader with a comparison between the current study and a study conducted in SSER (Stockholm School of Economics in Riga). Since this research was similar to mine and the location is in a University in Latvia, one of the three Baltic republics, it was interesting to use this case-study as a basis for comparison. As a matter of fact the Latvian capital hosts an international Swedish campus of economics in which Breggin carried out a survey with a series of interviews to local students in the academic year 2006/2007. Among the 120 students accepted every year in this campus usually there is a great percentage of Lithuanians and Estonians, more in detail, in 2007 when the research was conducted 65% were Latvians, 25% of students were Lithuanians and the



remaining 10% were Estonians. Official language of SSER is English, and it is also used, by necessity, as a *lingua franca* between students and professors (usually coming from other states).

Therefore the study in question takes for granted the fact that these students possess already a good knowledge of the English language (which is required for the admission to SSER) and tries to analyse the role of English in contexts in which this language is not required. For this purpose, a questionnaire was administered to a group of SSER students including “a series of questions that endeavored to determine which languages each respondent most often uses to communicate with SSER friends and acquaintances of each ethno-linguistic background” (Breggin, 2007: 1). Main areas of interest for this case-study were those related to everyday life such as watching TV, reading books and talking with colleagues at the University: areas in which English could be used even if not required.

The findings of this research confirm the idea that English is spreading also in Latvia and in particular it supports the concept of English as a Trans-Baltic *lingua franca*: in SSER where all the courses are taught in English and all the students are fluent in this language, scholars belonging to different Ethnic-groups (namely Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians) tend to use English instead of Russian for communicative purposes³⁹. Surprisingly, a significant difference was observed between Latvians and Estonians: the first ones “eagerly cultivate Russian for intercultural communication and most ethnic Latvians are also happy to accept it for such purposes, [...] though their English may be better than their Russian” (Breggin, 2007: 5), whereas Estonians prefer using English or their local language when communicating. In addition, none of the Estonian respondents claimed to be fluent in Russian and, according to one of the students, native Estonians seem not to care for the improvement of Russian and are satisfied with the sole use of the English language.

To sum up, although SSER has a wide range of EMI courses and uses English as *lingua franca* between students and professors, the presence of Russian is still found, especially among Latvian students. The result of this research differs from the above-mentioned study of Soler-Carbonell (2015) which was conducted in Tallinn University and which demonstrated a positive attitude of students towards the use of English (even though it was restricted more to the academic context). Data collected from Breggin’s research differs also from my case study which I will report in the following section of this chapter: students in Tartu University tend to use more the English language outside the University, also in everyday life contexts such as those of TV, cinema, social networks and so on. Therefore a large difference can be observed between students from Latvia and Estonian students, who are generally more prone to the use of the English language.

³⁹ Breggin, B. (2009). Intercultural Language Trends at a Quadriethnic English-medium University in the Baltics. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*



A positive attitude of Estonian students to English is observed also in my case-study, more specifically in the section regarding University. The third section of the online questionnaire which was delivered to 40 students of Tartu University, is entitled "UNIVERSITY AND EVERYDAY LIFE" and it asks questions dealing with University and EMI courses: More in detail, the respondents were asked to specify the number of courses taken in English and the number of courses taken in Russian. The results indicate that among these 40 students 47.5% followed a number of English taught courses between 3 and 5, whereas 22.5 % of them followed only a few EMI courses (from 1 to 3) and the remaining 30% of students were enrolled in courses taught in other languages (see Figure 5). As far as Russian courses are concerned, the majority of the respondents (70%) answered that there is not a single Russian course in their schedule and only 10 % of the respondents were enrolled in more than 3 courses (from 3 to 5) taught in this language (see Figure 5). In addition, it is worth noticing that the majority of EMI courses in UT are in second-cycle degree programmes (see Table 2) and only a few of the respondents is in Master degree, more precisely: 19 MA courses and only 3 Bachelor courses are taught in English.

Another significant aspect is the following: among the respondents six are Russophone (one of them is Estonian, one is Ukrainian and four are ethnic Russians) and none of them applied for Russian courses (which may help them, since it is their native language). And yet, respondents whose mother's or father's native language was Russian, took some courses in this language. This may imply that Russian is no longer seen as a *lingua franca* but more as a foreign language to study for personal interest. However, these data could demonstrate not only how EMI is now an accepted practice in Tartu University, but also the fact that English courses are privileged to Russian taught courses. Therefore it is possible to argue that this case-study has further supported the idea of English as a means for Instruction in Estonian HE, in agreement with Soler-Carbonell's study of 2015 which indicates a positive attitudes of students towards EMI.

How many courses taught in English did you take this semester?

40 risposte

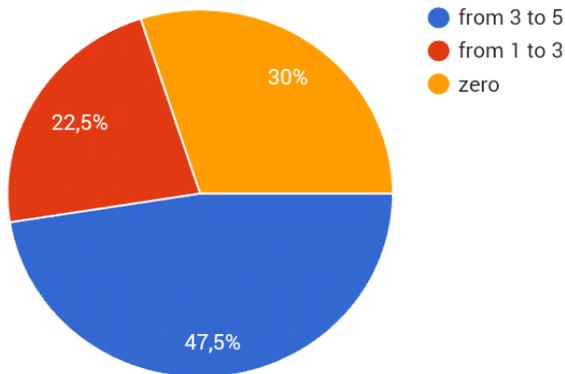


Figure 5. Courses taught in English.

How many courses taught in Russian did you take this semester?

40 risposte

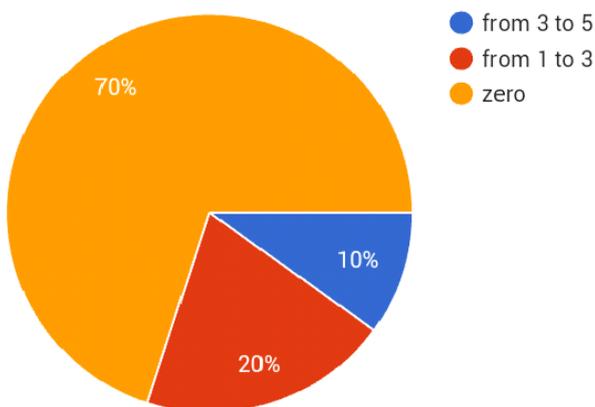


Figure 6. Course taught in Russian.

3.2 University policy in Estonia: Soviet and Post-Soviet University

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991 Estonian society faced profound social, economic and political changes. As a result, also University policies underwent a series of new different policies, which will be mentioned and analysed in the

following section.

Firstly, a process of privatization took place in Estonia (as well as in the other two Baltic Republics and more in general in all the states of the former Soviet Union).

This process implied the creation of private institutions and factories (a possibility which was strictly forbidden during Stalinism). Therefore, after the demise of the USSR, a process of privatization started also in the field of education, implying the creation of new institutes of Higher Education. For instance, in 1990-1991 Estonia could count only six State Universities, while eleven years later, in 2002 the number of public and private HE institutions increased to 49 (including mainly Universities and professional HE institutions).

However, this radical changes that were invading the newly born Estonian society brought the local population to a social and economic crises, causing riots and disorders, a phenomenon which was reflected also in the academic context: soon inequalities and social issues become the main concern for HE institutions. As Soler-Carbonell (2015) reports in his paper: "Indeed, another key development that can be highlighted from the last two decades is the drastic increase in tuition-fee paying students: from 7% in 1993 to 49% in 2011" (Soler-Carbonell, 2015 : 6). Subsequently, the immediate result of this policy of privatization was not only the increase of HE institutes but also the increase of the price of tuition-fees, which led to inevitable social inequalities.

In Tartu University the annual tuition-fee for courses of the academic year 2017/2018 can vary from a range of €1700 to €2000 (for instance the English science courses have this price) and the most expensive course is the faculty of medicine costing € 5500per year.⁴⁰ Similar prices are seen also on the Tallinn University website: the least expensive faculty is Politics and Governance with a tuition-fee of €1450 and the most expensive one is the law faculty, coasting € 2176 per year ⁴¹. Interestingly, in both Universities the English-taught degree programmes cost more than the Estonian ones: another element implementing social inequalities and confirming also the concept of the English language as reflection of power and prestige.

As far as languages are concerned, also in this sphere drastic changes were brought in Estonia after 1991. As stated in Chapter 2, the linguistic context in this state has always been confused: with more than three different foreign dominations and with the Russianization process that imposed Russian language to Estonian citizens and the increasing internal migrations in the huge Soviet Empire, after the collapse of the USSR the Estonian linguistic situation resembled a collage of various different languages and ethnic groups. Therefore, one of the first decisions of the new Estonian Independent government was the declaration of the Estonian language as the state first language (which was also imposed as the main

⁴⁰ To know more, see: <http://www.ut.ee/en/prospective-students/tuition-fees-0>

⁴¹ To know more, see: <http://www.tlu.ee/en/Degree-Studies/Tuition-fees-20172018>



requirement to obtain Estonian citizenship).

Subsequently, also in Universities, linguistic policies saw drastic changes: Tartu University for instance, had many courses in Russian during the Tsarist Empire (from 1882 to 1917) until the first part of Communist era (1917-1918), with the coexistence of both languages in the academic context: it was a bilingual institution. In 1919 UT was proclaimed the new official Estonian-language University: after the burst of the October revolution in Russia, Estonia gained a short and temporary period of independence in which UT was honored with the title of first Estonian-language University.

Today, every year the University of Tartu celebrates this anniversary on the first of December with conferences, balls and street parades, in order to remember and commemorate this important linguistic achievement. Although the official language was Estonian, UT could count many courses taught in Russian during the Soviet era, and only after the 1991 the number of Russian courses decreased. Now, this University still has courses in this language (eight courses of Russian culture and grammar, and other six courses for the TORFL certification⁴²) and also the official website can be read in three languages: Estonian, Russian and English. The latter language was in fact adopted and used after 1991 with the implementation of English courses and after the Bologna process UT started offering also EMI programmes.

Briefly put, nowadays post-Soviet Universities, and more specifically Tartu University which is the venue of my research, have the Estonian language as their official first language. However, traces of Russian are still visible and still many courses and programmes are offered in this language.⁴³ English is then the second official language offered in Estonian athenaeums, as a result of the process of multiculturalism started in the '90s, a topic which will be examined and analyzed in the following section.

Further reforms applied to post-Soviet universities are those regarding mobility projects and the promotion of multiculturalism. Thus, I will now focus on the question of internationalization of Estonian Universities after the demise of the USSR. As already stated, Estonia was one of those countries which participated to Bologna process with the creation of mobility projects between different European Universities: immediate outcome of this international meeting was the adoption in Estonia in 2002-2003 of the three-cycle division of study levels (three years Bachelor and two years Master) which was suggested in the Bologna declaration (1999). In addition:

Strategic policy documents recently approved in Estonia also place an emphasis on international mobility in order to strengthen the visibility and competitiveness of the

⁴² This is an international certification known as ТРКИ-TORFL, acronym for Test of English as a Foreign Language.

⁴³ https://www.ut.ee/sites/default/files/www_ut/ettevotlus/russian_courses.pdf



country's universities overall, and the possibility of offering courses in English is a central concern in that context (Soler-Carbonell, 2015: 6).

For instance, crucial documents regarding the internationalization of Tartu University, are certainly the *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Estonian Higher Education over the Years 2006-2015* and the following one of 2015-2020: these papers attest that the purpose of UT is to attract foreign students and to provide them linguistic facilitations such as a wide selection of EMI courses and also an intensive Estonian course for beginners (which was proposed in the most recent strategy of 2015-2020).

Concrete results of this international policy are the increase of international students in Estonian Universities: the number of students taking part in Erasmus programmes increased from 1.36% in 2009-2010 to 1.49% in 2010-11 (a growing trend which is seen in all the state Universities). In addition, every year UT enlarges its networks of connections between Universities (80 partner universities in 31 countries) and the same holds true for the second most important Estonian athenaeum, Tallinn University, with 43 partner universities from 21 countries and over 400 Erasmus+ partnerships.

To sum up, Estonian post-Soviet Universities have tried in a short period of 20 years to create and encourage a multicultural atmosphere, an aim which is partly achieved, as demonstrated by the statistics regarding the number of international students.



CHAPTER 4. THE SURVEY: THE USE OF ENGLISH IN TARTU UNIVERSITY

The current study will now focus on the survey I have conducted this year (2017) in Tartu University. More specifically it will describe the venue, the aims and methods of my research and it will analyse its main outcomes and results. In order to achieve this purpose, this chapter will be structured as follows. Firstly, a brief overview of the history of Tartu University will be given, with a focus on the multicultural aspect of this athenaeum. A description of the main mobility programmes and benefits offered to incoming students will be provided to the reader (for instance the use of ECTS and the presence of associations like ESN TARTU). Subsequently, in the second section of this chapter, the survey will be described more in detail, explaining the concept of attitudes to languages (which is at the base of the questionnaire) and analyzing the type of questions chosen for this online survey. The last section of this chapter will indicate the findings of my research, highlighting the most interesting results and comparing them with previous researches in similar fields of study.

4.1 Multiculturalism in Tartu University

THE VENUE

The venue chosen for this survey is Tartu University (UT) in the South-East of Estonia, in the county of Tartuma. The reasons for this choice are several, but probably the most important one is related to my personal experience in this University: this dissertation was conceived during my time studying in Tartu, as an international student there I witnessed the multicultural atmosphere of this athenaeum, as well as the effort of UT in the promotion of intercultural activities and projects (both for incoming and outgoing students). In addition, during my Erasmus (which lasted five months) I had the opportunity to meet many locals, mainly students, who became subject of my case-study: the questionnaire was sent mainly to friends and personal acquaintances, people I met there during my mobility programme. A further reason that induced me in the selection of this University is certainly its highly international environment: among 13,000 students, over 1000 are exchange students from 70 different countries, significant data which hint at the multiculturalism strategy of this University. Moreover, in Tartu domestic students as well as international ones live in the same buildings, since it is of use to sleep in dormitories provided by the University rather than renting an



apartment. Thus, the close contact between locals and foreigners is even more felt, especially if we take into account the limited size of the town: only 95,074 inhabitants. This aspect encourages interactions between students and also the possibility of making friends, a significant aspect for this case-study since many respondents of my questionnaire were simply acquaintances made in the dormitories or in the streets of Tartu. The last reason that played a pivotal role in the decision of UT as the venue for my research, is the prestige and authority of this institution in Eastern Europe: as already mentioned, Tartu University belongs to the top 2% of world's best universities by ranking 347th in the QS World University Rankings 2016/17 and within the 301–350 range in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2016-2017. Tartu University is placed 4th in the QS University Rankings: Emerging Europe and Central Asia (QS University Rankings: EECA)⁴⁴. Apart from being a prestigious University, UT is also the largest one in Estonia, counting 56 Bachelor, 71 Master and 32 Doctoral study programmes available in 2017/2018 (including 23 programmes in English) and it has several branches in Parnu and Viljandi. On the top of that, Tartu University is the most ancient institution in Estonia, passed under three different dominations: it is symbolically representing the troubled history of this country, continuously subdued to foreign invaders and now finally independent.

Founded in 1632 by King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, UT 's stone façade has seen the passage of three different powers: the Swedish, the German and the Russian ones. Its official first name was *Academica Dorpatensis* or *Academia Gustaviana* (from the name of its founder) from 1633 until 1710, when Estonia was annexed to the Russian Empire. UT was conceived as an emulation of the University of Uppsala, in Sweden and it counted four faculties: philosophy, law, theology and medicine. During the Russian-Swedish conflict UT was temporarily closed for safety reason and it was reopened in Parnu only after the end of the war, in 1710, when Estonia was part of the Russian Tsardom: the University remained in Parnu for one century and finally reopened in its initial venue in 1810. On 21th-22th April 1802 the university was reopened in Tartu as a Russian state University and it was entitled *Kaiserliche Universität zu Dorpat* : the languages of instruction were mainly German and Russian (the presence of Germans was still strong and influent in Estonia). It was the golden age for Tartu University, with new faculties opening and many students coming from the whole Empire to study in Estonia: students associations and organizations began to appear and in 1884 the Estonian Students' Society was established, with its blue, black and white tricolor as their symbol, now used as the national flag.

Subsequently, in the wake of the Russianization process, the University of Tartu was re-baptized as the *Imperatorskij Jur'evskij Universitet* in 1895 and Russian was imposed as the only language of Instruction. During the last years of the First

⁴⁴ <http://www.ut.ee/en/university/general>



World War I UT was closed several times, with the evacuation of students and professors, until 1919 when the war was finished and the German troops left Estonia, which became an independent Republic until 1940. During this period of freedom and prosperity, UT was the new official Estonian University, with the local language as the language of instruction and also with foreign professors invited for the formation of new courses and lectures.

However, during the Second World War Estonia was again occupied by the German army and, as a result, the University of Tartu became known in 1942-1944 as the *Ostland-Universität in Dorpat* with German as the language of instruction. In addition, during the war UT lost many buildings, more than 22, such as libraries, accommodation and dormitories. Nevertheless, in 1944 UT was officially reopening and retaking again the name of Tartu State University, given by the Soviet Government: a second wave of Russianization was characterizing this period, with the removal of Estonian monuments and the deportation and arrest of many students and professors who were considered to be rebels.

Finally, in 1989-1991 after the end of the USSR, the University of Tartu was named as such, and it faced many radical changes, with the restoration of Estonian culture and monuments (such as the monument of Gustav II Adolf, which was re-erected on its original site). Today, students' associations and organizations continue to live and are still active in their cultural role in UT, preserving and keeping the traditions of the "student kingdom", where great personalities and intellectuals have studied (such as Yuri Lotman, the founder of structural semiotics and the Tartu School of Semiotics).⁴⁵

Today Tartu University is the most important University of the Baltic area and it still counts a considerable amount of students and well-known professors. Interesting for this research, is the number and type of International students present in this University, and how they are safeguarded and welcomed in Tartu. As already mentioned, in the period immediately after the collapse of the USSR Estonian society and Universities were facing significant changes: one of them was certainly regarding the internationalization of UT, a process which started in 1999 with the Bologna process. This event played a pivotal role in the field of European mobility and higher education with the publication of its famous declaration. This process was taking place with the reunion of rectors and representatives of different European (and non-European) Universities, with the aim of creating international networks and promoting students mobility. As a result, the Bologna declaration was signed, in the same year, by 29 European ministers, with the ambitious goal of establish the European Higher Education Space by 2010. Other ministerial meetings followed the first one and the Bologna zone was enlarged (now counting 50 states), more specifically other similar conferences were held in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007) and

⁴⁵ <https://www.ut.ee/en/university/general/history>



Leuven (2009).⁴⁶ But was this goal achieved in 2010? As far as Estonia is concerned, this small country, together with Latvia and Lithuania, participated to the first meeting in 1999, despite the fact that it was not even part of Europe and had gained its national autonomy and independence only a few years before, in 1991. Interestingly, among all the Universities of the Bologna zone, Estonia is one of those countries that had achieved several important goals, starting from the official annexation to the EU in 2004.

Moreover, as already stated, both Tallinn and Tartu University managed to create connections with other European athenaeums, enhancing the possibility for local and foreign students to study abroad, in other words, the Erasmus project. In 1987 it was proposed the Erasmus Programme (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) a project which was also promoted during the Bologna process and which finally become part of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013, under which the Erasmus (and other) programmes operate from 2007.

Many different forms of Erasmus and similar projects took shape in the last decades, with the creation of Erasmus Mundus, or the Erasmus Overseas (which includes countries outside Europe) and others. Although Estonia is probably not the most popular choice for an Erasmus programme, Tartu University has a considerable amount of international students (over 1000 per year) and it provides to its domestic students various types of mobility programmes and facilitations which will be reported in the following section.

Since seven respondents of this survey were Erasmus students, it is of interest for this research to indicate the types of mobility projects offered by this institution as well as the concrete benefits and scholarships that UT gives to international students in order to attract them. Tartu University provides its students with mainly four types of mobility programmes: the simple Erasmus + mobility (within EU and EEA countries), then the Erasmus + international credit mobility (ICM) which is a new type of mobility including non-European countries (in the case of UT, the partner Universities are in Israel, Morocco, Belarus, Russia, Georgia, Serbia and Mexico). As we will see in the next section, many respondents of my questionnaire were coming from these states, probably with this type of scholarship.

Then, there are also Inter-university mobility and Estonian national scholarship programmes which consists of a monetary scholarship granted to domestic students for a traineeship abroad. As far as facilitations are concerned, various types of scholarships are available for international students: a part from the Erasmus grant (€230 per month), there are other scholarships for degree studies, for the short-time mobility and for researchers.⁴⁷ However, the benefits are not

⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna_Process

⁴⁷ <http://www.studyinestonia.ee/scholarships>



only economic: the system of ECTS is another key-element of mobility programmes ensuring the right amount of credits and workload between foreign Universities. ECTS is the acronym for European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, credits are a standard means for comparing the amount of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload for higher education across the European Union. A further type of benefit offered by UT is a linguistic one: no language barriers are set by Tartu University. In some Universities, for instance in some athenaeums, a B1 level (according to CEFR) of the local language is requested to incoming students, whereas UT requires only a B1 level of the English language (even if it strongly recommends the enrolment in the Estonian course for beginners).⁴⁸ These types of facilitations and scholarships have certainly encouraged foreign students to study in Estonia, with an increasing rate of incoming students per year.

A further element which supports multiculturalism in Tartu University and gives a concrete help to incoming students is the Erasmus student Network (henceforth ESN). This association is a European student organization, whose main aim is to support and develop students mobility and the integration of international students. More specifically ESN is an NGO organization with its members actively participating as volunteers and organizing events such as trips, game nights, concerts, parties and cultural events. Interestingly, ESN Tartu was created in 2000, immediately after the Bologna process: it is the oldest ESN section in Estonia. Therefore, the interest for Erasmus students and the internationalization of the University has been observed since the beginning of the Bologna process. In addition, ESN Tartu collaborates with the University of Tartu, the Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu Art College, Tartu Health Care College and the Estonian Aviation Academy, in other words, a national network which covers all the town and surroundings. ESN Tartu has also many contacts with foreign sections of ESN, such as ESN Stockholm, ESN Riga and ESN Helsinki: this contacts are used for the organization of trips and international experiences. The main partners of ESN Tartu is the University, followed by the Emajõe Language School and Genialistide Klubi. These data are crucial, since not all the Universities of Europe help these no-profit associations financially: it a clear sign of interest and concern of UT for the existence of this type of organizations, whose role is fundamental during the sojourn of international students.

⁴⁸ <https://www.ut.ee/en/mobility>



4.2 The questionnaire: approaches and methodology

Before describing my questionnaire, I will focus on the multidisciplinary notion of attitudes to language, which is at the basis of this survey. Language attitudes are part of our everyday life, they represent the human behavior, the disposition in people towards languages, they “permeate our daily lives. They are not always publicly articulated and, indeed, we are not always conscious of them” (Garrett 2010: 1). Attitudes are closely linked to psychology and sociology and, since they embrace many aspects of our lives and society, according to Baker:

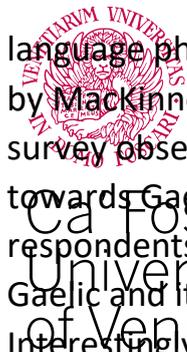
a survey of attitudes provides an indicator of current community thoughts and beliefs, preferences and desires. [...] In terms of minority languages, attitudes, like Censuses, provide a measure of the health of the language. (Baker, 1992: 9)

Attitudes are manifold and can be influenced by many factors such as the words used in a conversation, the accent used, the type of language (for instance its grammatical features) or the use of code-switching. The latter refers to the practice of changing languages when speaking, for instance in a bilingual area. This practice may influence the positive or negative attitude of the speaker, whose language changes for ideological, practical or social reasons, for instance, the respondents of my questionnaire use the code switching when speaking to a Russian or Baltic person, in order to express their solidarity to that specific ethnic group. The definition of attitudes is nebulous and the meaning of this term has varied over time: from the Latin word “*actus*”, “*atto*” in Italian, the initial meaning of attitudes was referring to the tendency toward action.⁴⁹ Nowadays, this concept is more linked to the psychological sphere, emphasising the emotional response, yet when it comes to definitions, there are several disagreements and more than one possible explanation. A possible definition could be the following: “a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution or event” (Ajzen 1988:4). Despite the various meanings and definitions of this term, attitudes remain an abstract and inner concept, hidden in our psychology and not always easy to understand. Therefore, the methods applied in order to study language attitudes are two: the Direct and Indirect approach.

APPROACH

The Direct approach is a type of approach which implies direct questions about the respondent’s attitude and behavior in certain circumstances or his/her evaluation of some aspects. As Garrett states, when describing this approach: “Typically [...] people are simply asked questions directly about language evaluation, preference, etc. they are invited to articulate explicitly what their attitudes are to various

⁴⁹ Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1988). Theory of reasoned action-Theory of planned behavior. University of South Florida.



language phenomena.” (Garrett, 2010: 39) A case in point is the study conducted by MacKinnon (1981) in the Scottish Lowlands and Highlands: this large-scale survey observed and studied the attitudes of Scottish citizens of those regions towards Gaelic. More specifically through a questionnaire of sixteen questions the respondents were directly asked about their opinion concerning the future of Gaelic and its importance.

Interestingly, the first ten questions were asking the respondents if they agreed or not (or were indifferent) to the situation expressed in the question, whereas the last six questions were open-ended and respondents could write their opinion.⁵⁰ Therefore, this study has privileged a direct approach , with straight questions dealing with the topic of language attitudes.

A second type of approach is the Indirect approach which implies “more subtle, even deceptive, techniques than simply asking straight question a about what people’s attitudes are to something” (Garrett, 2010: 41) Usually studies using indirect approach would make use of audio-tape recordings of a speaker reading the same passage with different accents, or languages or tone of voice, and respondents would be asked to listen to them and then evaluate the recording, with rating scales (for instance, from 1 to 5). In this way, the respondents are induced to answer in a more spontaneous way and they should be less influenced by a series of factors, such as the type of question used, or the social and acquiescence bias, which may appear more in the case of a direct approach.

According to Garrett (2010) “It may be that in some contexts there is a difference between people’s private attitudes and the ones they are normally prepared to tell people about” (Garrett, 2010: 42).

As far as my research is concerned, a direct approach was chosen for simple and practical reasons: this case-study was conducted online, and a matched guise technique with audio-recordings or personal interviews would have been impossible. Although internet and technology may help in the online communication, the possibility of interviewing a sample of students on Skype or Facebook was almost impossible, the most practical instrument was the questionnaire. Therefore, the type of questions used for this online questionnaire are straight and some of them are similar to the study of MacKinnon : a final open-ended question and answers reporting the agreement or disagreement of the respondents.

STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Having explained the type of approach chosen for this survey, I will now focus on the type of questions used in this online questionnaire. The survey was conducted

⁵⁰ This case study is reported in “Attitudes to language” (Garret, 2010: 37).



through an online Google questionnaire, an instrument familiar to students and youngsters, which is frequently used by students' associations like ESN. The number of questions is relatively small: twenty questions in total, one open-ended, fifteen multiple choices and other evaluative questions (on a Likert scale from 1 to

5). The questionnaire is divided into four sections and the first one dealing with personal information : respondents are asked to specify their age, gender, nationality, native languages and parents' native languages; this section was useful in order to understand the linguistic background of the respondents (for instance in some cases, one of the parents of the respondent is a Russian speaker but the respondent's native language is not Russian).

The second section concentrates on the knowledge of foreign languages, more specifically, the students are asked about their level of Estonian, Russian and other foreign languages. The answers to these questions reported the levels of knowledge according to CEFR (A1-A2, B1-B2, C1-C2).

Then the third section deals with university and everyday life: questions regarding courses taken in English or Russian are asked, as well as the language preferred when watching TV or using online social networks. For instance, the first question of this section is: "When you communicate with a stranger in the streets of Tartu, you address him/her..." in English, Estonian or Russian.

The last section clearly addresses the theme of attitudes to language, in this case, to English: the respondents are asked if they agree or not with some statements regarding English as the "language of freedom" and its potential use as a trans-Baltic *lingua franca*. For example, one question asks "How much (on a scale from 1 to 5) do you think the use of English in Estonia will increase in the next decades?" and the respondents could answer on a Likert scale from one to five. Subsequently, evaluative questions about the future of English in Estonia and its importance as a European language are asked, and finally an open-ended question closes the questionnaire. All these questions were required fields, apart from the last one which was not compulsory: the respondents were free to add a personal comment on the topic. This was an accurate choice in order to avoid the distortion of the outcome due to non-responses.

TYPOLOGY OF QUESTIONS

The questionnaire administered counts 20 questions in total, a relatively small number compared to the studies conducted by Fonzari and Breggin: the former counts 23 , the latter contains 40 questions in total. As a matter of fact, I have privileged a short but incisive questionnaire with straight questions addressing directly the topic I wanted to analyse. The order in which these 20 questions



appear is not casual: it starts with more general questions (age, sex, languages known) and at the end it narrows on the central concept of the research, namely the use of English in Estonia, respecting the so called funnel structure⁵¹. As far as questions are concerned, in this questionnaire different typologies are present: fifteen are multiple choices questions in which the respondents are asked straight and less straight questions about some topics, plus two statements in which the respondents are asked if they agree or not with a certain situation or topic. This typology of question was chosen in order to be clear and synthetic: being an online questionnaire the respondents had to be able to fully understand the questions and answer without any kind of help by the researcher. Among these multiple choice questions the first ones (of section one and two) are mainly informative, they just ask information about a specific concept or aspect. Other questions ask the personal opinion of the respondents (section 4).

However, among these fifteen multiple choices, two questions are hypothetical: "When starting a conversation with a Latvian or Lithuanian person I tend to use English, instead of other languages such as Estonian or Russian." and "When you communicate with a stranger in the streets of Tartu, you address him/her...". Two different hypothetical situations are represented and the respondents are asked to answer about the language used. According to Garrett (2010:43):

Hypothetical questions ask about how people would react to a particular object, event or action. [...] The responses to these sorts of questions are often poor predictors of people's future behavior in a situation where they actually encounter such objects, events or actions.

Despite Garrett's negative opinion about this typology, I decided to use two hypothetical questions in this survey for one main reason: the situations represented are taken from an ordinary and everyday life context, therefore there is no reason why the respondents should lie or act differently in the reality of everyday life.

A second typology of question present in this survey is typical of the direct approach researches, in other words, the strongly slanted questions. This type of question is usually direct and it contains strong emotional words such as *important, bosses, or natural*, words which push people to a certain response guided by the same question. In this questionnaire the last section reports this type of question, for instance: "According to some previous studies, English in Estonia is the language of "freedom". Do you agree?" . It is indeed a strongly slanted question, with the keyword "freedom" which implies an emotional involvement of the respondent.

This questionnaire lacks of multiple questions, a typology which was voluntary

⁵¹ http://www.unife.it/lettere/lofilosofia/comunicazione/insegnamenti/statistica-sociale/materiale_didattico/STATISTICA_SOCIALE_Lezioni_30_novembre_e_1_dicembre_2011.pdf



avoided since it can be ambiguous and it confuse the respondents. In this type of questions “a positive answer can refer to more than one component of the question, or they can be types of double negative questions” (Garrett, 2010:44) . This questionnaire also provides respondents with two evaluative questions, in which they are asked to rate their opinion on a Likert scale from one to five . This typology was chosen for various reasons: it is one of the most common rating scales used in surveys and it gives an accurate response of the participants’ opinion. In this questionnaire I have opted for a five-points scale: 1-not at all, 2-slightly, 3-moderately, 4-very, 5-extremely⁵², since eight points were too many and four points were not enough in order to assess the respondent’s attitude and evaluation on the topic.

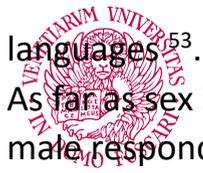
The closing question of the questionnaire is open-ended: the respondents were free to add a personal comment on the topic and some of them actually did, reporting interesting comments. This typology was chosen because it gives space to the respondents in order to fully express their ideas if they were interested in the topic.

PARTICIPANTS

The questionnaire was delivered to 44 students in total: four of them had never answered the email, while 40 respondents answered the questionnaire. As already mentioned in the introduction, among these 40 students the majority of them were friends and personal acquaintances, others were people involved in this research because they were in touch with some of the respondents I personally knew. Interestingly, not all of them are Estonians: 17 are Estonians (one of them is Finnish-Estonian), four are Latvian and one is Lithuanian; four respondents belong to other states of the former USSR (one Bulgarian, one Moldovan, and two Ukrainians), other four respondents are Russian and the remaining seven respondents are Erasmus students (one from Mexico, two from Germany, two from France and two from Turkey). Among the four students who did not answer the questionnaire two were French and the other two were Russians.

The choice of number and nationality of my respondents were not aleatory but reflected a series of themes which may be interesting for this research. For instance, the fact that all the respondents are aged 19-25 (only one respondent is 35) is not casual: these students were all born after 1990-1991 when the USSR collapsed, therefore they have no memory of the Soviet era and its negative implications. In addition, as Labov reports in his experiment in Martha's Vineyard island, youngsters are more flexible to linguistic changes and to learn other

⁵² <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/Documents/ANR/LikertScaleExamplesforSurveys.pdf>



languages⁵³.

As far as sex is concerned, I have tried to have the same number of female and male respondents, with a slighter majority of female students (23 female and 17 male respondents). The reason for this choice is the following: female speakers are usually more reluctant to speak new languages and to adapt to new linguistic situations, therefore I have tried to have the same number of male and female respondents, in order to have a realist overview of the use of English among these students. According to Gallois, Callan and Johnstone (1984) in their study about Australian English they found that:

On solidarity ratings white Australians and Aborigines judged male Aboriginal speakers as more friendly. [...] In contrast, however, Aboriginal females were rated less favorably than standard Australian speaking females” (Garrett, 2010:94).

Moreover, all the respondents are University students, a factor which may have implications on the overall outcome: all the respondents probably belong to Middle class or Upper class (since they can afford the University tuition fees) and they are all educated and attend University courses. According to Garrett (2010:93) belonging to a Lower or Upper class can alter the attitudes toward languages, especially when dealing with accents, dialects and varieties of the same language. Thus, the age and sex of the respondents, as well as their social status and level of education are factors influencing the final result of the survey.

POSSIBLE BIAS OF THIS SURVEY

This method of analysis has a number of limitations. First of all, the nationality of students: among 40 respondents, 7 are Erasmus students whose knowledge of Estonian and Russian reaches barely an A1 level. This element, may influence the overall results implying a consistent tendency to the use of English (since they don't speak the local language). Another limitation is represented by the four Russian students: a social desirability bias may be observed in this case, since the respondents are Russian, and as already mentioned in the historical background, the contacts between Estonia and Russia have always been controversial and still precarious (for instance last year, in October 2016, troops from Britain were sent in Estonia as well as other Italian, French and Danish troops sent in Lithuania and Latvia, in order to protect the borders from alleged Russian attacks)⁵⁴. Therefore, Russian students may have expressed an attitude to Estonian language that they ought to have, but that they might not actually share. As Garret argues (2010:44):

⁵³ Graffi, G., & Scalise, S. (2002). *Le lingue e il linguaggio. Il Mulino, Bologna*.

⁵⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/27/uk-to-deploy-hundreds-of-troops-and-aircraft-to-eastern-europe>



questions aimed at tapping attitudes towards racial, ethnic and religious minorities often are hampered by a social desirability bias. Respondents who hold negative views towards a particular group may not wish to admit this to the researcher, or even to themselves.

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In this way, the Russian respondents may have found it difficult to answer to some questions of the survey and they might have answered in a certain way in order not to appear bigot or racist against Estonians. For example, questions like “When starting a conversation with a Latvian or Lithuanian person I tend to use English, instead of other languages such as Estonian or Russian.” (agree or disagree) or “When you communicate with a stranger in the streets of Tartu, you address him/her...” (in English, Russian or Estonian) are quite impertinent questions for the Russian respondents, who may have preferred to express a positive attitude to English, rather than been perceived as prejudiced and potentially racial. However, this type of bias is of more significance in interviews, especially in focus group interview, where the respondent is asked to answer in front of other people or directly to the researcher. In this case-study, the survey was based on an online anonymous questionnaire, in order to reduce this type of bias, guaranteeing anonymity to the respondents.

Another potential drawback of this survey may be the acquiescence bias due to the fact that the majority of the respondents were friends of mine. In other words:

Some respondents prefer to agree with an item, regardless of its content. [...] They may see this as a way of gaining the researcher’s approval, giving them the answer that they think they want. This too, then means that the responses do not reflect the respondent’s actual personal evaluation of the attitude statement, and therefore raises issues of validity (Garrett, 2010: 45).

Despite the anonymity of this test, the respondents may have felt the responsibility to answer in a certain way in order to satisfy the aim of my research (namely, the use of English in Estonia as a potential *lingua franca*).

Last but not least the language employed in the questionnaire can have implications on the overall outcome. The type of language used in the survey may affect the respondents’ linguistic attitude, for instance if the questionnaire had been delivered in Russian or in Estonian the final outcome would have probably been different from the current one. According to a study carried out by Giles and Fluck (1983) in Wales⁵⁵, the results of the survey differed because of the language used in the questionnaire: the Welsh or the English language. Therefore, this study attempts to give an actual overview of the rise of English as a *lingua franca* in

⁵⁵ Garrett, P. (2010: 46). *Attitudes to language*. Cambridge University Press.



Estonia, but it probably fails to analyse impartially this topic, because of those bias that can occur among some of the respondents.

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4.3 Outcomes and results of the survey of Venice

The overall response to this questionnaire was very positive, with a large participation of the respondents (40 out of 44) and a high responses rate: the survey lasted only a few weeks. The main purpose of the research was achieved and the results reported positive data for the future development of English in Estonia. According to the survey, Russian is no longer considered as a possible *lingua franca* to use in Estonia or as a trans-Baltic common language, but it is now seen as a foreign language to study for personal interest. In contrast, English is widely spoken among students and it is usually used in various contexts of ordinary life, foretelling a future potential role of *lingua franca*. Therefore, in order to demonstrate how the objectives of this research were achieved, in the following sections I will report the outcomes of each part of the questionnaire.

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

The first set of questions aimed to gather biographical data (age, sex, nationality, native languages). As already mentioned, the respondents are all students aged 19-26 (only one student is 35), 57.5% are female and almost half of those surveyed are Estonians, 17 plus 1 Finnish-Estonian respondent. The rest of the respondents are grouped in different samples: the Baltic subgroup is made of 4 Latvians and one Lithuanian; a further subgroup is represented by one Bulgarian, two Ukrainians, two Georgians and one Moldovan representing the other states of the former USSR; another subgroup is composed by four Russian students and the last group is composed of 7 Erasmus students: one Mexican, two Germans, two French and one Turkish student. In this section respondents are also asked to indicate their nationality and native languages, plus their parents' native languages. Interestingly, some of the respondents had a different language and nationality, namely: one Estonian declared that her nationality is Estonian, but her native languages are Estonian and Russian. The same holds true for an Ukrainian student, with Ukrainian nationality, but with Russian and Ukrainian as native languages. In both cases, one of their parents was Russian, apparently, a common practice among Eastern families: among 40 respondents, nine has parents with different nationalities (mainly Estonian, Latvian, Russian and Ukrainian, plus one Erasmus student who has a French mother and a Spanish father). This demonstrates how the internal migration in the former USSR was a popular phenomenon which today



is traceable in multilingualism of these states.

This section finally asks the respondents about the languages used at home: the majority of those who responded to this item chose their native language as the language for communication at home. However, some respondents reported different languages. More specifically, three Estonians and one Bulgarian respondent speak their native language and Russian at home (because of one of their parents being Russian) and one Latvian student uses Estonian and Latvian when speaking at home, for the same reason. Surprisingly, one Estonian declared that the languages used at home for communication are Estonian and English, notwithstanding the fact that none of the parents is English or American. This last detail is of interest for this research since it demonstrates how English can be used also at home, in everyday life in an ordinary Estonian family.

SECTION 2: FOREIGN LANGUAGES SPOKEN

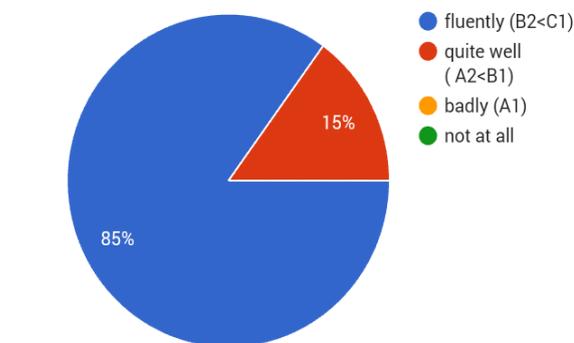
The main purpose of this section of the questionnaire is to assess the level of knowledge of Estonian, Russian, English and other foreign languages. As far as Estonian is concerned, among the respondents only 47,5% speak fluently this language, whereas 22,5% speak badly and 25% doesn't speak Estonian at all (mainly the Erasmus students plus 1 Lithuanian, 1 Ukrainian, 2 Russians and 1 Moldovan respondent). Interestingly, some Erasmus students speak the Estonian language quite well, whereas among the Russians two of them speak it badly and the other two don't speak Estonian at all. The pie chart below shows the knowledge of English among these students: 85% speak fluently and only 15% declared to speak the language quite well. What is interesting about the data in this chart is that none of the respondents speaks badly this language, a sign that English is not only widely spoken in Estonia, but also that the level of knowledge acquired is high (B2-C1). While the pie chart illustrating the knowledge of English clearly shows a vast majority of English-speaking respondents, the second chart reporting the situation of Russian is more puzzling: in Figure 8 there is a clear trend of decreasing use of Russian: only 32.5% speak it fluently, 20% speak it quite well, 32.5% speak it badly and the remaining 15% is not able to speak a word in Russian. Interestingly, among the six respondents who don't speak Russian at all, four are Erasmus students and two are Estonians. Apparently, Erasmus students are more interested in learning Estonian rather than Russian, a sign that Russian is no longer perceived as a possible language for communication in this country. The last question of this section asks the respondents about the knowledge of other foreign languages apart from Russian, English and Estonian: only 15% of the respondents declared that they don't speak other foreign languages, whereas the rest of the respondents have a basic or more accurate knowledge of other languages. These data can confirm the fact that, since the respondents speak fluently or quite well



the English language, they are more interested in other languages.

Figure 7.
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figure 8.



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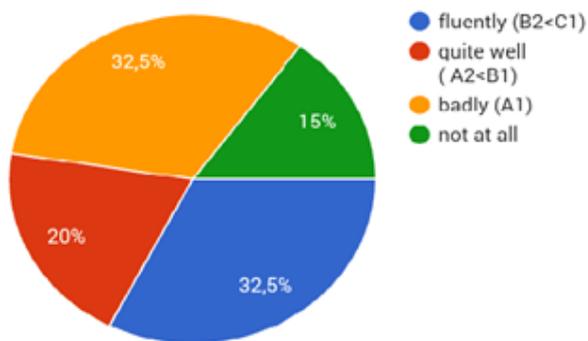


Figure 7. The level of knowledge of English among the respondents.

Figure 8. The knowledge of Russian among the respondents.

SECTION 3: UNIVERSITY AND EVERYDAY LIFE

As hinted in the title, this sections investigates the use of English at the University of Tartu and in other contexts of everyday life. More specifically, the first objective is to assess the use of English as a simple act of communication with a person in the streets of the town or with students. Strong evidence of this is found in the responses to the second question. The pie chart below indicates that the language used for communication between students of UT is mainly English: 57.5% of the respondents use this language, whereas 42.5% uses Estonian. What stands out in the chart is that none of the students uses Russian when chatting with other colleagues of the University and more than one Estonian respondent declared that they tend to use more English rather than Estonian when communicating with students. This result confirms that Tartu University is a multicultural institution



where a strong presence of international students encourages the use of English. The second pie chart below illustrates the use of English in the streets of Tartu, in the hypothetical situation of a causal meeting with a stranger. It is apparent from figure 10 that very few respondents use Russian for this purpose, whereas 50% of the students uses Estonian and 45% uses English. This outcome demonstrates how Russian is still used in Tartu, even if with less frequency than before, and that English is slowly becoming part of everyday life. These data would confirm Breggin's idea of English as the language of politeness, while "Russian [...] is regarded by some students as an apt language for rudeness." (Breggin, 2007: 5)

Figure 9.

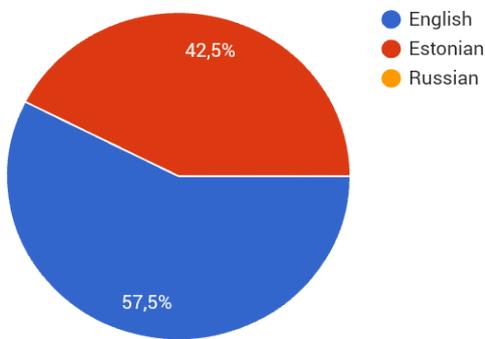


Figure 10.

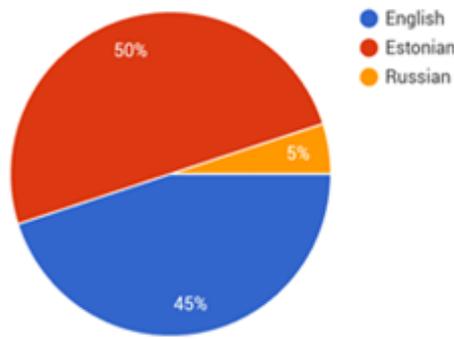


Figure 9. The use of English among students of UT.

Figure 10. The use of English in Tartu when communicating with a stranger.

As far as University is concerned, an increase of the courses taken in English is observed: 47.5% of the respondents take courses in English (from 3 to 5) and 30% of the respondents have not a single course taught in English (among them one Bulgarian, one Ukrainian and ten Estonians). This increase was noted in all levels of education by Fonzari (1999: 42):

the spread of English at all educational levels is documented in the percentages of the students choosing English as their first foreign language: it is remarkable to notice that in the space of two school years (1994-95 and 1996-97) there has been an increase from 39.9% to 51.8% of students choosing English.

Today, this growing pattern seem stable with the majority of the respondents choosing English taught courses (see Figure 5). As a result, when students are asked how many courses they take in Russian, the response indicates that this language is no longer seen as a medium for instruction: 70% of the respondents declared that they do not attend any single course taught in this language. As



already mentioned in the third chapter, English is becoming the new language for instruction in Estonian Universities, therefore the number of Russian taught courses is inferior to the number of English taught courses and they seem to be not so popular among students (only 10% of the respondents have courses in Russian). The last part of this section of the questionnaire focuses on the theme of the media, namely on TV- TV Serials and social networks. According to the results of these questions, the use of English in these contexts is growing of importance, with the majority of the students using English in these fields (the presence of other languages is marginal). This area of the media was analysed in part by Breggin in his research in SSER (2007): in his questionnaire he was comparing the use of English and Russian in books and TV shows, by asking the respondents which language they preferred most when reading a book for pleasure or watching TV. However, the data gathered in his research is not recent since ten years ago the use of social networks was not so common, or almost nonexistent, and the online streaming of movies and TV series was not so common either. Therefore, this last part of the third section is of particular interest since it brings to light a new ambit in which English is developing and potentially becoming a *lingua franca*. As illustrated in the pie chart (Figure 3), 60% of the respondents use English subtitles when watching TV series or movies and 40% of them use English on social networks. Despite 40% of the respondents use English in this context, there is no evidence that demonstrates the use of English as a *lingua franca* on social networks. However, it is possible to argue that English is pervading also the virtual communication.

SECTION 4: ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH

The last set of questions aimed to investigate the respondents' attitudes to English, which is the core theme of this research. More specifically, the first question asked if they agree or not with the following situation:

“When starting a conversation with a Latvian or Lithuanian person I tend to use English, instead of other languages such as Estonian or Russian.”

In response to this question, most of those surveyed indicated that they agree (95%) and only the remaining 5% disagreed (one Estonian and one French student). This result confirms that English is used in the Baltic states as a Trans-Baltic *lingua franca* instead of Russian. This outcome would confirm once more Breggin's thesis about English “for spontaneous social interaction when Balts are among themselves” (Breggin, 2007: 5). Thus, this outcome confirms the use of English as a trans-Baltic language for communication in Tartu.



The second question of this section is related to the study of Fonzari (1999) in which she clearly defines English as the language of freedom. The respondents are asked if they agree or not with this assumption:

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 According to some previous studies, English in Estonia is the language of "freedom". Do you agree?

65% of those surveyed agreed with this statement, whereas 35% disagreed (Figure 11). Among those who disagreed seven are Estonians, one is Lithuanian, one is Russian, one is French, one is German, one is Latvian, one is Bulgarian and one is Turkish. Apparently, some Estonians disagree on this concept of freedom related to the English language, a concept which, according to Fonzari (1999) was the result of the prohibitions and protectionism of the Soviet era. However, these results indicate that English is perceived as the language of freedom for the majority of the respondents.

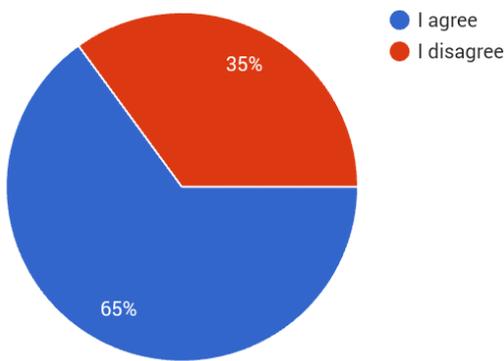


Figure 11. English as the language of freedom.

The objective of the third question of this section is to detect the perception of English as the language of the EU among the participants. In this case the respondents are asked to evaluate on a Likert scale (from 1 to 5) how much they think English is the language of the European Union. As shown in Figure 12, none of the respondents disagreed on the fact that English is the language of the EU and 50% of them chose 4 as the level of evaluation (Very). Closer inspection of the chart shows that 27.5% of the participants indicated the highest level of evaluation (5, Extremely) and 22.5% indicated the medium level of evaluation (3, Moderately). This topic of English as the language of Europe is a relatively new concept in researches made in this area: Estonia formally joined the EU only in 2004 and adopted Euros only a few years ago. Since Fonzari and Breggin's researches did not face this topic, the responses of this item give a recent and fresh overview of this particular attitude to English.

The last question concluding the section has the main objective of assessing the



awareness of the respondents about the future of English. More specifically, the respondents are asked to evaluate on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, the possible increase of the use of English in Estonia in the next decades. The pie chart below (Figure 13) compares the different grades of evaluation given by the respondents: two respondents (one Russian and one Latvian, both female) replied that, in their opinion, the use of English will not increase in the future and another respondent (one Latvian student) answered that it will slightly increase (point 2, Slightly). 27.5% of the respondents indicated that English will moderately increase in the next decade (point 3. Moderately), 40% of the participants indicated the fourth level of evaluation (4, Very) and the remaining 20% indicated the fifth level of evaluation (5, extremely), trusting in a bright future for English in Estonia. The overall outcome suggests that the use of English in this country will raise and, indeed, the awareness of the respondents on this topic seem significant and most of them believe in a more frequent use of this language, implying a potential use of English as a *lingua franca*. Data from this table can be compared with the data collected by Fonzari (1999: 45) in her research: “the great majority agrees that the importance of English will increase in Estonia” (see Figure 14). This majority is found among all the three different groups surveyed in this case-study. As a matter of fact, the importance of English in this country has evolved in the last decades, as demonstrated by the implementation of EMI courses or spread of English in various new contexts such as Internet and TV. Therefore, the data of Fonzari collected 20 years ago in 1997, were foretelling the truth: English has profoundly developed after 1997 and the awareness of the respondent may be foretelling again a further development of this language in Estonia.

Figure 12.

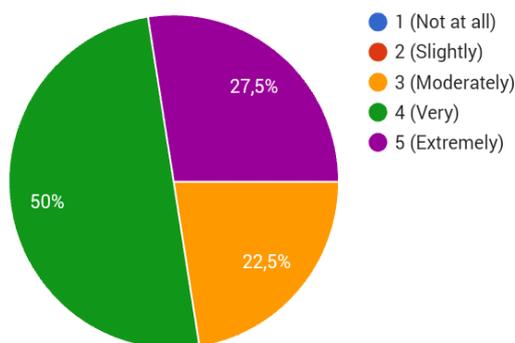


Figure 12. English as the language of the European Union.

Figure 13.

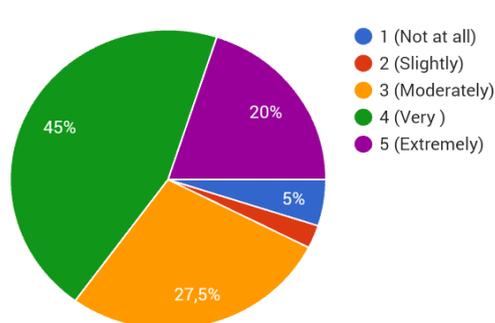
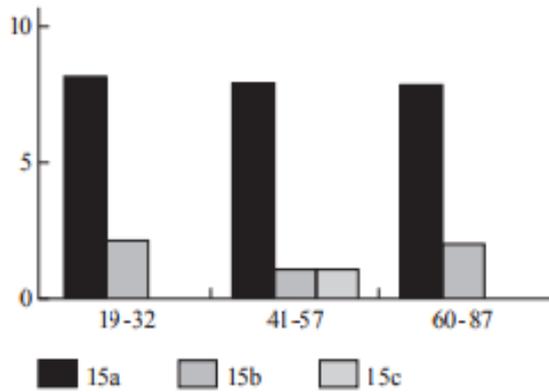


Figure 13. The future of English in Estonia.

Figure 14. The future of English in Estonia according to Fonzari (1999: 46)



15a = English will be spoken by the majority of the Estonian population.
 15b = The percentage of speakers of English in Estonia will remain the same.
 15c = Fewer people in Estonia will speak English.

COMMENTS

The last item of the questionnaire is an open-ended question in which the respondents had the possibility to write a personal comment on the topic. Among 40 participants, seven added a comment, namely: three Estonians, one Georgian, one Ukrainian, one Lithuanian and one Mexican student. Interestingly, the Estonian students seemed more interested in the topic: they were the first ones to answer the questionnaire and they added more comments and the quality of those comments is higher, with references to Estonian and English grammar as well as some sociolinguistic hints. Moreover, all the comments underline the fact that English is widely spread in Estonia and that it is rare to find a someone who is not able to speak this language. Some comments also underlined the linguistic gap between older and younger generations (see comments 5 and 6). The last comment stands out because of another feature of the English language in Estonia, namely the fact that is spoken mainly in Tartu and Tallinn, the most important cities of Estonia.

The first comment belongs to one male Estonian respondent, whose personal observation is very interesting:

1. The ever increasing use of English in everyday life in Estonia seems to bring more and more so called "loan" words into the Estonian language. Some of these loan words are completely unnecessary as some Estonian words convey the same meaning but simply are now rarely used since English seems to be the popular and cool language. For instance let's look at this sentence: "I went shopping". Translated to Estonian, the closest match would be: "Ma läksin ostlema". This is rarely used since people now tend to use the loan word "shoppama", so the sentence that you mostly hear being



used is actually - "Ma läksin shoppama". This is not necessarily a bad thing, just a thing I've noticed happening more and more recently.

The respondent clearly underlines the increasing use of English in Estonian, with references to the phenomenon of loan words, which linguistically demonstrates how Estonian is an open language, and how it prefers loaning words from English rather than Russian. What is interesting in this comment is the fact that according to the respondent the main reason why Estonians use loan words from English is simply due to popularity of this language. Thus, English words are not necessary to this language but Estonians like using them because they are "cool". This attitude is probably more popular among younger generations, yet it is crucial in the spread of English and underlines an interesting aspect of how this language is perceived in non-English speaking countries.

The second comment is short and not particularly complex. However it emphasizes a sociolinguistic aspect: English is spoken more by younger generations rather than the older ones. More specifically, the respondent, a male Georgian, reported his awe due to the fact that also young kids are able to speak in English:

2. I once met a 7-8 years old in Tartu who gave me directions in English.

The third comment belongs to a Mexican student, the only Erasmus student who added a personal comment. Despite some grammar mistakes, the message is clear: English is widely spoken in Estonia and it is difficult to come across a non-English speaking person. This Mexican student was not able to speak Estonian, subsequently his comment probably reflects his personal experience in Tartu, where the only language he could use was English.

3. Most of the people there speak English. It's rare the person who doesn't speaks English

The fourth comment focuses on the linguistic gap that divides younger form older generations. The respondent is a Lithuanian student who badly speaks Estonian and has a A2-B1 level of Russian and a B2-C1 level of English:

4. I believe that the choice of language depends on the age of Estonians or Latvians I would like to communicate with. With and older generation I would use Russian instead of English.

The fifth comment was written by a male Ukrainian student and it stresses the importance of English for daily communication. However, he also hints to another



interesting aspect to take into account when learning or studying a foreign language: the labor market. According to the respondent, the main reason why Russian is spoken by Estonians (in this case, by medical students) is for an instrumental motivation⁵⁶, mainly due to the fact that Russian may be more requested in the labor market. A last reason why Russian may be spoken is also related to the image of prestige that would add to the country. In other words, in this comment the respondent puts on the same level English and Russian, as two languages which are widely spoken in Estonia, but for different reasons and in different contexts.

5. English is very widely spoken by most of young Estonians and it strongly facilitates communication with foreigners. Also, medical students tend to speak quite good Russian, which, I believe, in both cases makes them very competitive in the labour market and improves the image of Estonia in general.

The sixth comment belongs to an Estonian student and it is quite controversial. The respondents argues that according to some students, English is not necessary in their lives. However, immediately after the respondent claims that grammatical accuracy of Estonian speakers is higher than an English speaker's one. More specifically, the respondent writes that the Estonians' grammatical competence is particularly developed (probably due to the complexity of their language) and in some cases it can be even better than the one used by speakers whose native language is English. Also this respondent reported the linguistic gap between older and younger generations.

6. We study English a lot in Estonia, but there are definitely people who think they won't need it. I also have to say that our grammar knowledge and usage when talking is usually higher than in England. Older generation is not really good at English and they tend to use more Russian.

The last comment was written by a female Estonian student and it stresses the fact that English is more spoken in Tartu and Tallinn which are the main cities in Estonia, and less spoken in smaller towns and villages. Also in this case some sociolinguistic issues are touched by the respondent in her comment. Interestingly, in those cities where she argues that English is more used, the level of immigration (in particular of Russian immigrants) is higher⁵⁷. Thus, it could be possible that

⁵⁶ Gardner, R. C., Lalonde, R. N., & Moorcroft, R. (1985). The role of attitudes and motivation in second language learning: Correlational and experimental considerations. *Language learning*, 35(2), 207-227.

⁵⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Estonia



English would be used in Tartu and in Tallinn not only for tourism, which is higher in those towns, but also for inter-cultural communication.

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7. English is generally much more used (and usable) in Tallinn and Tartu, but less so elsewhere.

Overall, the comments reported were quite interesting and introduced new topics and areas of interest, such as the use of English in certain areas of the country and the use of Russian in the labor market.

LIMITATIONS

The main weakness with this study is that it failed to give a comprehensive overview of the current situation of English in Estonia. More specifically, my survey was conducted only in the small context of the University of Tartu and the respondents were all students. Due to practical restraints, parts of the Estonian society, such as middle-aged and older people, as well as children, were excluded in this research. There are main reasons for this choice, first of all the fact that I had contacts mainly in the ambit of the University: the majority of the respondents were friends or personal acquaintances, I did not have any contact with adults or students of high schools. In addition, the survey was conducted through an online questionnaire, an instrumental choice which automatically excludes kids and old people who are not familiar with computers or are not able to use it. Therefore, my research was restricted to the academic context where I had more contacts and more interest in the field. Thus, this study fails to give a complete and detailed overview of the use of English in all the ambits and parts of the Estonian society. Moreover, the study would have been more interesting if it had included a sociolinguistic diastatic research, dealing more with social classes and the place of origin. As a matter of fact, this topic was faced or hinted in some of the respondents' comments (comments 5 and 7), and yet in this research I made no attempt to study this aspect of English in Estonia: the respondents were all belonging mainly to the same class (since they could all afford University) and it was set only in Tartu. The survey would have been more relevant if it was conducted in other towns and villages near Tartu or Tallinn, where the use of English might have been probably different from those more important towns. Perhaps the result of this survey would have been different if it had focused more on a social level and had surveyed respondents' belonging to different social classes.



A further limitation would be the fact that the respondents are all born after 1991, therefore they have no personal memory of the Soviet regime: this element has probably played a pivotal role in the outcome of the survey. The attitudes towards Russian is undoubtedly different between those generations who lived under the Communist rule and those who lived after the demise of the USSR. This research fails to consider this difference in attitudes to Russian, mainly because the respondents are all young and also because a research of this kind would have implied a complex historical and sociolinguistic analyses in order to explain the real reasons for this refusal of Russian. Thus, this case-study has focused more on the use of English, rather than the causes of the refusal of Russian, an issue which is hinted only in part in the course of the research.

Last but not least, the method chosen for the survey does involve potential issues and biases: the questionnaire was administered to friends I personally met and knew. As already mentioned, this could imply an acquiescence bias, increased by the fact that respondents knew me. Therefore, in order to control and restrict this implication, I decided to deliver the questionnaire anonymously, a choice which may have helped the respondents to answer sincerely to the questions. However, this aspect must be taken into account when reading and analysing the responses and discussing the final outcome.



The aim of the present research was to examine the use of English in Estonia in Tartu University, where my research was carried out. More specifically this case-study investigated the use of English among younger generations to the detriment of Russian, the previous *lingua franca* of the USSR. Therefore, in this thesis I have focused on the concept of English as a *lingua franca* in Europe and then, after having given the historical background of the Baltic states, and more in detail of Estonia, I have concentrated on the contexts in which today English is used in Estonia. A further goal of the current study was to determine the use of English in the academic contexts, a topic which is analysed in the third chapter, where I have demonstrated how Tartu University provides international as well as domestic students with plenty of English taught courses.

In order to identify the role of English in this country, I have conducted a survey through an online questionnaire delivered to 40 students of Tartu University, with questions dealing with the use of English and Russian language in precise contexts of everyday life. More specifically, in the questionnaire students were firstly asked general information about age, sex, nationality and native languages, then, in the second section of the questionnaire the participants were asked about the languages they speak, in particular they had to indicate their level of English, Russian, Estonian and other foreign languages according to CEFR. Respondents were also asked about the use of English in daily contexts such as the use of this language for communication purposes among students or when watching TV or writing in social networks. In the last section of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to determine their attitudes towards English, more specifically about its use as a language of communication between the Baltic states and about the perception of English as the language of freedom and the symbol of Europe.

The major finding of this research was that English is widely spoken among young generations of Estonians. Data collected through the online questionnaire demonstrated that 85% of the respondents speaks fluently in English and only 32.5% has the same level in Russian. In addition, 60% of the respondents declared that they prefer English subtitles when watching movies or TV series and 40% of them use English when writing in social networks: data which demonstrate how English is spreading in Estonia in many contexts and fields of our everyday life, a topic which may be of interest for future researches.

In addition, more than half of the students attends some English taught courses at the University, a result which indicates how recently English is developing in the academic context, a field in which previous studies (Fonzari, 1999) probably failed to examine this phenomenon. According to the results of this survey, English is not



only used in the academic context, but also among students, to talk and communicate in daily life: 57.5% of the respondents uses English when talking with another student of UT, interesting data which can confirm the fact that English is invading the sphere of social communications.

The second major finding was that English is used as a Trans-Baltic *lingua franca* (Breggin, 2007) between inhabitants of these Republics. In other words, this language is used for communicative purposes among Baltic citizens: instead of Russian, which was previously used as the common language for communication in all the states of the former USSR, today an Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian person would use English in order to communicate. This concept, analysed by Breggin in his research conducted in Riga in 2007, is confirmed by the responses to the first item of the last section of my questionnaire: 95% of the respondents declared that they would use English instead of Russian or Estonian when talking with a Baltic citizen. Hence, this study has found that, generally, English is used as the language of politeness when addressing someone in the streets or asking information to a stranger, since apparently using Russian would seem impolite or at least not so popular (only 5% of the respondents answered negatively to this item).

Moreover, this study has identified how English is perceived as the language of the European Union. According to the results of this survey, the majority of the respondents evaluates English as the language of Europe, only 22.5% of them argues that English can moderately be associated to the language of EU, whereas none of the respondents disagreed with this association. Therefore, it is possible to argue that generally, in Estonia English is perceived as the language of Europe, of the Erasmus generations to which all the participants belong. Interestingly, similar data are found in the responses of the previous item of the questionnaire, which asked the respondents if they perceive English as the language of freedom. In this case, 60% of the respondents answered positively, demonstrating how English is not only felt as the language of the EU, but also as the language of liberty, democracy and independence. Deliberately, the word *freedom* was used in this question without any specification: since this word is a broad term, it was open to personal interpretation (for instance, freedom meaning Independence, or democracy or economic liberalism). However, these findings suggest that English is perceived as the language of the EU and as the language of freedom, two concepts which may be closely linked if seen in contrast to Russian. After more than fifty years under the Soviet rule, the adoption of independence, economic liberalism and strategies of internationalization, coincides with the official annexation of this state into Europe. Therefore, it is possible to argue that in Estonia the concepts of freedom and Europe may be closely linked and indirectly related to the English language.

In addition, Estonian students seemed interested in this topic of languages and in particular of language attitudes towards English, as demonstrated by the long and complex comments they have added at the end of the questionnaire. Interestingly,



the Estonian students were the first ones to answer to the questionnaire, and some of them asked me in private my personal opinions about the reasons and ideas related to this research. Although most of the Estonian respondents were not even friends of mine, they were all ready and fast to answer the questionnaire and happy to collaborate in order to find other possible respondents. These positive attitudes towards the study of languages and in particular towards the use of English in their country is confirmed by the responses to the last question of the survey. When asked how much they think the use of English in Estonia would increase in the next years, the majority of the Estonian respondents declared that they believe in a significant increase. The same attitude was not observed among other respondents of different nationalities, more specifically French and Russian participants were the most reluctant in answering the questionnaire and none of them released any comment.

Overall, this study may confirm the idea that English is widely spoken and it is still spreading among younger generations. The current data highlight the importance of this language among young Estonians and its probable increase in the next decades, highlighting how their attitudes towards English are positive. Moreover, the contribution of this study has been to confirm that English is used as a trans-Baltic *lingua franca* between Baltic citizens, an interesting data which may foretell an increasing use of this language in this specific context, invading a linguistic area in which Russian had previously covered the same role.

In addition, this might be the first study reporting the use of English in social networks and in virtual communication as well as on online streaming and TV. Due to the novelty of this topic, none of the studies conducted so far have analysed this phenomenon in which the use of English is increasing with remarkable rapidity. Although these results seem interesting and positive, this research fails to have a complete overview of the use of English in Estonia. Being limited to the context of the University of Tartu, this study did not take into account some parts of the Estonians society: the sample of this survey was composed only of students. Adults, children and older generations were excluded in this research, which it represents only a small part of the society.

Since the respondents are all University students they probably belong to the same social class (due to the fact they can afford tuition fees). Thus, this study fails to give a diastatic analysis of the use of English in Estonia among different social layers.

A further limitation of this study is the fact that the participants were all born after 1991 and they have no personal memory of the Soviet rule. This implies also the fact that only some of the respondents were able to speak Russian, a data which would have been probably different if the research had involved also older generations. It is unfortunate that this study did not include more in detail this



aspect of Russian linked to the Soviet era, since this topic may be of interest for the psychological and historical reasons which may have encouraged Estonians to refuse the use of this language.

Notwithstanding the relatively limited sample, this work may offer valuable insights into the Estonian society and the increasing use of English in this country, which may become their new *lingua franca*.

More broadly, research is also needed to determine the future use of English on the web: with the creation of more social networks and the increasing use of virtual communication, it is likely that the use of English in this field will increase, especially among younger, but also among older generations.

As far as Russian is concerned, a better understanding of the reasons why Estonians tend to avoid the use of this language needs to be developed with new researches and studies. The challenge now is to see whether English will ever fully achieve the status of *lingua franca* in this country, in contrast to the previous imposed language of the USSR.



In this section I have reported the whole questionnaire with its four sections.

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TITLE: THE USE OF ENGLISH IN ESTONIA
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SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

- Firstly, please indicate your gender
- Your age
- Nationality
- Your Native language(s)
- Your Mother's native language(s)
- Your Father's native language(s)
- Which language(s) do you use at home?

SECTION 2: FOREIGN LANGUAGES SPOKEN

- Do you speak English...
 - a. Fluently (B2-C1)
 - b. Quite well (A2-B1)
 - c. Badly (A1)
 - d. Not at all

- Do you speak Estonian...
 - a. Fluently (B2-C1)
 - b. Quite well (A2-B1)
 - c. Badly (A1)
 - d. Not at all



- Do you speak Russian...
 - a. Fluently (B2-C1)
 - b. Quite well (A2-B1)
 - c. Badly (A1)
 - d. Not at all

- Other language(s)...
 - a. Fluently (B2-C1)
 - b. Quite well (A2-B1)
 - c. Badly (A1)
 - d. Not at all

SECTION 3: UNIVERSITY AND EVERYDAY LIFE

- When you communicate with a stranger in the streets of Tartu, you address him/her...
 - a. English
 - b. Estonian
 - c. Russian
- When you speak with students in Tartu, do you usually use..
 - a. English
 - b. Estonian
 - c. Russian
- How many courses taught in English did you take this semester?
 - a. From 3 to 5
 - b. From 1 to 3
 - c. Zero



- How many courses taught in Russian did you take this semester?
 - a. From 3 to 5
 - b. From 1 to 3
 - c. Zero
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- Do you prefer watching Tv series/films with...
 - a. English subtitles
 - b. Subtitles in your native language
 - c. Subtitles in another foreign language

- Which language do you use more on social networks?
 - a. English
 - b. Your native language
 - c. Another foreign language

SECTION4: ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH

- When starting a conversation with a Latvian or Lithuanian person I tend to use English, instead of other languages such as Estonian or Russian.
 - a. I agree
 - b. I disagree

- According to some previous studies, English in Estonia is the language of "freedom". Do you agree?
 - a. I agree
 - b. I disagree

- Estonia entered in the E.U. only in 2004. How much (on a scale from 1 to 5) do you think English is considered to be the Language of the European Union?



a. 1 (Not at all)
b. 2 (Slightly)
c. 3 (Moderately)
d. 4 (Very)
e. 5 (Extremely)

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- How much (on a scale from 1 to 5) do you think the use of English in Estonia will increase in the next decades?
 - a. 1 (Not at all)
 - b. 2 (Slightly)
 - c. 3 (Moderately)
 - d. 4 (Very)
 - e. 5 (Extremely)
- Please, if you have any other comments you would like to add about the use of English in Estonia and how you feel about it, please write them here



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1. Historical background of Estonia:

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