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Voices across borders: Exploring linguistic and national identity among Ukrainian expatriates in Tallinn

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Abstract: This article aims to understand how Ukrainian expatriates maintain their sense of national identity in light of the ongoing war in their home country. It seeks to identify specific cultural, linguistic, and social practices employed to preserve national identity. Additionally, this study explores the impact of the full-scale invasion on expatriates' national identity and their practices. Furthermore, the study aims to investigate how the full-scale war has affected the attitudes and language usage of respondents with different linguistic backgrounds. Through the lenses of Social Identity Theory and concepts such as identity, its connection with culture and language, and national identity, the study's findings were analysed. The primary tool utilised in this research was the semi-structured individual interview, specifically tailored to grasp the perception of identity, interpret practices, and uncover the underlying reasoning among the expats. The findings indicate that Ukrainian young adults exhibit strong cultural, social, and linguistic practices that aid in maintaining their national identity, with a particular emphasis on the civil component of national identity. The full-scale invasion has heightened the salience and strength of Ukrainian expatriates' national identity and practices. Additionally, the study shows that the invasion has contributed to a positive shift in attitudes toward and increased usage of the Ukrainian language. The study highlights the significance of maintaining national identity among expatriates and emphasizes the growing understanding of the importance of national identity and the significance of its defining traits.

Keywords: identity; social identity theory; language; culture; expatriates; Russian; Ukrainian; Estonia

1. Introduction

The article delves into the multifaceted concept of identity, encompassing linguistic, social, and national dimensions. Identity is recognised as dynamic, shaped by internal and external factors throughout one's life. National identity, particularly, undergoes fluctuations, notably influenced by events like cross-border movements and conflicts. In the context of globalization, migration has become a pivotal issue, exacerbated by geopolitical and economic challenges, marking this era as one of the most migratory in history (Turner and Holton, 2016). The global community is actively engaged in discussions and debates surrounding migration.

Since Ukraine was exempted from EU visas in 2015, the issue of mass emigration has gained prominence in the country. During that period, the Ukrainian economy experienced a significant impact due to the internal and external dramatic events of 2013–2014, which marked the onset of the war between Russia and Ukraine. The year 2022 served as a turning point not only in the relations between Russia and Ukraine but also in the self-identity of Ukrainians and the forced migration resulting from a

full-scale invasion. Ukrainian national identity is undergoing changes in light of the ongoing full-scale war in Ukraine.

The research on Ukraine's national identity is crucial due to its perceived complexity and duality, encompassing ethnic, historical, religious, and linguistic aspects that conventionally divide the nation (Himka, 2006). Ukrainian scholars studying the issue of national identity have concluded that, following the events of 2014, the formation of a national identity among Ukrainian youth has become a matter of national survival and a vital strategy for the development of the state as a democratic country (Fedorenko et al., 2020).

This study explores the impact of the full-scale invasion on the national identity of Ukrainian young expatriates residing in Tallinn for a minimum of two years. It contributes to understanding how dramatic events in their home country alter the social identity of Ukrainian migrants living abroad and their connections with their homeland.

The primary goal of this study is to investigate how the national identity of Ukrainian expatriates living in Tallinn is formed and maintained in light of the ongoing dramatic events. A secondary goal is to determine the impact of the full-scale war on the linguistic situation, encompassing attitudes toward and the use of Ukrainian. To achieve these aims, the following research questions will be explored and eventually answered:

- 1) What cultural, linguistic, and social practices do Ukrainian expatriates employ to preserve their national identity?
- 2) How did the full-scale war in Ukraine impact the national identity and practices of preservation among Ukrainian expatriates in Estonia?
- 3) In what ways did the full-scale war affect attitudes toward and the use of the Ukrainian language among Ukrainian expatriates living in Tallinn?

2. Theoretical framework

Identity is a broad term covering ethnic, religious, gender, political aspects, etc. Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a prominent theory in the study of national identity and social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). It explores how individuals perceive their role in society and their connections with different social groups. Scholars differ on its nature: some see it as a fixed, stable lifelong phenomenon, aligning with essentialist structuralism. However, many argue that identity is socially constructed and fluid, shaped by the environment and interactions, adopting a poststructuralist perspective (Block, 2006). Recognizing identity as a dynamic, evolving concept is crucial (Bekerman, 2009). It involves an individual's sense of self and belonging, shaped by social interactions (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Individuals negotiate their past, present, and future positions to shape identity, often tying it to group membership.

Social identity involves the cognitive merging of self and group, with individuals representing themselves on behalf of the group (Tyler and Blader, 2001). Historical and contextual factors influence its complexity (Bekerman, 2009). Group identity can shape individual identity, aiding in its construction (Merino and Tileagă, 2011). Overall, self-identification is a complex, multilevel phenomenon with various components. Throughout life, identity, a dynamic and evolving notion, manifests non-linearly and irregularly (Averianova and Voropaieva, 2020). The individual constructs

it through their relationship with society, encompassing diverse social identities linked to community affiliation

2.1. Identity and language

In the identity framework, language is intricately linked to identity, with a complete understanding of language requiring consideration of identity (Joseph, 2004). Language not only aids self-cognition and identity representation but also plays a role in forming social affiliations and friendships. The connection between language and identity is significant, contributing to the construction, development, and representation of individual and group identities. Language is seen as the prescribed link between one's sense of self and communication (Block, 2006).

Identity is closely tied to the language used to interpret an individual's internal mental state and thoughts, establishing a direct relationship (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Another perspective views identity as a product of linguistic and other semiotic practices, emphasizing its social and cultural nature rather than being purely internal and psychological. Language, as symbolic capital, is closely tied to cultural identity and territory. It serves as a central element in legitimizing nation-states and can take on roles such as a marker of cultural location and arena, whether or not closely linked to nationality or nation (Holliday, 2010).

2.2. Language and Ukraine

Ukraine's linguistic identity is complex and ambiguous (Riabchuk, 2012). Events in 2013-2014, including Ukrainization efforts and changes to the status of the Russian language, have led to the politicization of language as a divisive tool in Ukrainian society (Korostelina, 2013; Kulyk, 2016; Bureiko and Moga, 2019). The media played a significant role in amplifying the East-West conflict, highlighting concerns that not all Russian-speaking Ukrainians align with a Westernised vision of Ukraine's independence, culture, and development.

Despite the language situation being diverse and hybrid (Horbyk, 2018), scholars argue that politicians manipulate language issues to divert attention from economic challenges (Korostelina, 2013). In reality, Ukrainians adapt to both Ukrainian and Russian, with the majority proficient in both languages (Riabchuk, 2012). Interactions often involve one person speaking Ukrainian and the other responding in Russian, raising questions about whether language truly divides society, as people may not strongly associate it with their affiliation to Ukraine (Korostelina, 2013).

Surveys post-2013-2014 reveal a decline in Russian language co-officiality in Ukraine. Ukrainian society's affiliation with the state remains unaffected by Russian as a native language (Bureiko and Moga, 2009). The Maidan events, Crimea occupation, and the Eastern Ukraine war transformed the linguistic identity, boosting Ukrainian language popularity (Bureiko and Moga, 2009). The 2022 invasion accelerated the shift, prompting more individuals to voluntarily adopt Ukrainian, partly in response to domestic security threats. A decade-long poll reveals a steady rise, with 76% considering Ukrainian their mother tongue in 2022 (Rating, 2022). Despite daily use of Russian, many identify with Ukrainian. Throughout the war, societal unity strengthened support for Ukrainian as the sole state language (now at

83%). The Ukrainian language's role as a symbol of independence and national identity is more pertinent than ever, solidifying its status across regions (Korostelina, 2013; Rating, 2022).

2.3. Identity and culture

Traditionally, culture is viewed as stable, constraining behaviour within geographical blocks. However, a postmodernist perspective sees culture as a socially produced, politically, and ideologically charged entity (Holliday, 2010). Described as a learned set of shared interpretations shaping behaviours, culture encompasses beliefs, values, norms, and social practices (Lustig and Koester, 2010). Ethnographic research in a Latvian village explored the language and culture of ethnic Russian women, revealing language as a cultural identifier alongside clothing, house decorations, behaviour, and perceptions of national and ethnic mentality (Cara, 2010).

Individual identity and connection to a larger group are shaped by an individual's enculturation and adult socialization experiences (Bekerman, 2009). Cultural identity is fluid and dynamic, involving shared community, patterns, belonging, and ongoing connectivity. Collective cultural identity extends beyond homogeneity, encompassing the sense of continuity across generations, shared beliefs, and memories of the group's history (Smith, 1991).

Cultural identity is multifaceted, embracing aspects like religion, ancestry, language, class, education, profession, skills, community, family, activities, region, friends, food, dress, and political attitudes (Holliday, 2010). It is dynamic, adapting as individuals move between cultural environments, allowing them to belong to multiple cultural groups simultaneously. Moreover, cultural identity is susceptible to significant changes influenced by traumatic events, influencing feelings of belonging, continuity, and shared memories. Events like war, conquest, exile, captivity, immigration influx, and religious conversion are recognised catalysts for profound shifts in cultural affiliation (Smith, 1991).

2.4. National identity

A nation is a united community bound by political and cultural ties. Individuals share common values, traditions, symbols, and homeland (Smith, 1991), fostering a collective consciousness and sense of belonging. In essence, the nation is a community with a shared identity based on joint civic and cultural elements like traditions, values, symbols, and territory.

A nation, as defined by Anderson, is an "imagined political community" fostering a sense of belonging and identity among its inhabitants (Anderson, 2006). This concept involves a centralised government, recognised territorial borders, and sovereignty (Joseph, 2004). Anderson (2006) emphasizes the role of experiences and mass media in shaping national identities, distinguishing nations from ethnic groups by the presence of geographical boundaries and a unified authority (Tartakovsky, 2011a).

Scholars recognize national identity as a dynamic, socially constructed concept shaped by various external and internal factors, making its explanation and measurement challenging (Shulman, 1999; Joseph, 2004; Tartakovsky, 2011a; Turner

and Holton, 2016; Fedorenko et al., 2020; Windari, 2021). The development of national identity is uneven throughout an individual's socialization process and signifies their identification with a specific national community (Averianova and Voropaieva, 2020).

Barrett underscores the context-dependent nature of national identity, emphasizing its significant role in shaping an individual's subjective sense through beliefs and sentiments about the national group. This pervasive identity subtly influences daily choices, including language use, television preferences, celebration of national holidays, and the incorporation of national symbols in clothing (Barrett, 2005).

Scholars acknowledge national identity as multi-dimensional and complex, comprising nine components: Awareness of the national group's existence, self-categorization, subjective importance of national identity, personal affiliation, emotions towards the nation, beliefs of similarity, defining traits of the nation, and knowledge of culture and national attributes (Barrett, 2005).

Shared history, belief systems, practices, language, and religion are highlighted by Block (2006) as intrinsic elements of the nation-state. Smith's agreement includes considerations of historical territory, common legal rights, and economy. Emphasis is placed on the inclusion of sentiments and symbolism, rejecting the reduction of national identity to a single component (Smith, 1991).

A robust emotional attachment and solidarity with fellow citizens are recognised as vital aspects of national identity. These feelings, or the salience of national identity, can be positive or negative, influenced by factors like the socio-economic and political environment and the fulfilment of personal needs (Tartakovsky, 2011a; Shulman, 1999).

Commonly used measures of national identity in research include identification with the nation and attitudes toward the country. Individuals may have multiple national identities, either by birth or choice, especially among those with parents from different nations. The fluid nature of national identity means that the categorization of "we" and "others" is often changing and can be ambiguous. For instance, one's nationality at birth may not align with the nationality one adopts, as exemplified by immigrants (Kuzio, 1996).

The literature identifies various factors influencing national identity, including education, economics, parents, peers, religion, age, and geographical location (Barrett, 2005; Tartakovsky, 2011a; Fedorenko et al., 2020; Windari, 2021). The media plays a significant role in shaping national identity by creating myths about values, goals, and norms, impacting people's attitudes and perceptions (Tartakovsky, 2011a). Media accessibility and frequency influence attachment to national identity (Windari, 2021). Peer involvement, especially in adolescence, contributes to national identity development through the selection of friends based on similarities (Tartakovsky, 2011a). National identification is believed to become more prominent with age (Barrett, 2005).

Culture is crucial in shaping national identity, with shared traditions, values, customs, and various cultural elements forming the core of a nation's identity. These cultural traits unite members and differentiate one nation from another. The strength of national identity is tied to cultural homogeneity, and greater homogeneity leads to

stronger solidarity (Shulman, 1999). Cultural traits both form and express national identity overall.

National identity and the case of Ukraine

Ukrainian national identity is marked by significant diversity, leading to ongoing debate. Scholars assert that historical influences, particularly from imperial forces, have shaped and distorted the collective identity of Ukrainians (Himka, 2006), resulting in present-day consequences. The complexity and ambivalence of Ukraine's national identity are described by researchers, with some suggesting an incomplete process of nation building (Himka, 2006; Riabchuk, 2012; Korostelina, 2013; Shulman, 1999; Smoor, 2017).

In addition to inherited socio-cultural diversity, the political landscape in independent Ukraine has intensified conflicts, hindering the formation of a unified political nation (Korostelina, 2013). The authorities' neglect of identity re-categorisation, in favour of power polarization, has resulted in the persistence of dual identities and societal stagnation, posing a threat to state integrity (Veira-Ramos et al., 2020).

The literature highlights divisions in Ukrainian self-reference and identity, stemming from factors like ethnicity, language, historical perspectives, and ideological differences linked to Soviet nostalgia. Riabchuk's (2012) discourse on "Two Ukrainians" emphasizes the distinct nature of the western and eastern parts of Ukraine, comparing them to Western European and Eastern Slavonic representatives. These divisions manifest linguistically, ethnically, religiously, and politically. Despite regional disparities, common markers such as ethnicity, culture, language, history, religion, food, customs, and intermarriage contribute to the territorial security of Ukrainians, Russians, and Russophone Ukrainians within independent Ukraine. In 2015, Riabchuk updated his framework due to Crimea's annexation and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, emphasizing ideological polarization, particularly the distinction between anti-Soviet or European and East Slavonic viewpoints, as the central dividing factor (Riabchuk, 2015). Other factors contribute to this ideological division to varying extents, with the primary polarization focusing on views of the country's past and future, rather than linguistic and ethnic differences, which do not indicate hostility towards Ukrainian identity.

The events of 2013–2014, including Maidan, the war in eastern Ukraine, and the occupation of Crimea, significantly influenced the perception and attitude toward Ukrainian identity and language. Researchers observe a notable increase in Ukrainian identity and its significance, coupled with a decrease in regional identity, particularly in the eastern part of the country, and a sense of alienation from Russia (Kulyk, 2016; Veira-Ramos et al., 2020). The Maidan, as noted in (Kulyk, 2016), played a role in reshaping national identity, including language practices, acting as a unifying factor and contributing to the decline of Soviet identity. An analysis of studies spanning 2013–2019 found a progressive extension of Ukrainian national identity to the eastern and southern regions, with respondents' attitudes and self-esteem towards Ukraine experiencing growth (Averianova and Voropaieva, 2020).

Research from 1991–2018 indicates a transformation in national identity post-2013–2014 events, acquiring new meanings for citizens irrespective of language,

religion, or ethnicity (Veira-Ramos et al., 2020). Within national identity, ethnic, linguistic, and regional factors are viewed stereotypically. Ukrainian and Russian speakers coexisting tend to converge on many issues, challenging generalizations about Russian speakers' views, dispelling notions of a homogeneous group with allegedly pro-Soviet or pro-Russian sentiments, and negating an anti-Ukrainian identity (Kuzio, 2017).

The increased prominence of Ukrainian identity is a response to the perceived threat to national identity, particularly evident in the emphasis on learning Ukrainian (Bevz, 2020). This trend is more pronounced today, as Ukraine's identity is primarily political rather than ethnic. It is rooted in civic values rather than linguistic, cultural, or ethnic factors (Riabchuk, 2015). In this context, neither ethnicity nor language is decisive.

Scholars acknowledge Ukraine's transition into a civic nation, emphasizing the pivotal 2013–2014 events as a turning point (Fedorenko et al., 2020). They concur that the shift was not immediate, reflecting the gradual process of national identity formation. The foresight of this civic trajectory, which incorporates regional identity, was anticipated (Kuzio, 1996). Ukrainian identity is presently in a transitional and crisis phase, with ongoing nation building, influenced by contemporary challenges. Ukrainian society, analysed in response to crises, is reinforcing its national identity and avoiding polarization on crucial subjects (Veira-Ramos et al., 2020). Currently undergoing substantial changes with historical significance, the outcome of society's emergence from the wartime crisis remains uncertain.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Research strategy

This study adopts a qualitative approach, which is increasingly prevalent in the field of intercultural communication (Jackson, 2015). The primary focus of qualitative research is to understand human society and culture (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Identity research commonly employs observation and interviews as data collection methods (Leavy, 2022). In communication studies, the individual semi-structured interview method is widely used, aiming to comprehend the meaning of specific cultural and behavioural practices and their significance to community members (Jackson, 2015; McKinley and Rose, 2019). These interviews provided an invaluable opportunity to explore multi-layered identities through meaningful conversation, allowing the researchers to delve deeper into specific topics as needed.

3.2. Sampling

The sampling frame comprises Ukrainian young adults, defined as individuals aged 19 to 29, born in Ukraine, and proficient in both Ukrainian and Russian languages. To be eligible, participants must have resided in Estonia for at least 2 years to ensure they do not fall under the category of war refugees and have come to Estonia voluntarily. Additionally, they should possess a higher education degree. All five criteria are pertinent for the accuracy of the research.

In this research, both convenience and snowball sampling methods were

employed. Initially, potential participants were identified within the interviewer's social circle based on availability and willingness. Participants were then selected based on specific criteria in line with the study's objectives. These criteria included being born in Ukraine, falling within the age range of 19–29, having resided in Estonia for a minimum of two years, and proficiency in both Ukrainian and Russian languages. Proficiency could be due to factors such as a Russian-speaking upbringing, having a Russian-speaking partner in Estonia, or other relevant reasons, in addition to possessing a higher education background.

Through convenience sampling, four research subjects were selected. Subsequently, a snowball sampling approach was utilised to identify the remaining four participants. This involved the initial interviewees referring four additional participants who met the study criteria.

The sample size consists of eight people. Four of them primarily communicated in Ukrainian, while the other four used Russian as their first language of communication. During the interview preparation, it was discovered that some respondents had changed their primary language of communication over time in Ukraine or Estonia, reflecting their position or adapting to the social environment.

Two participants are from the eastern part of Ukraine, where the prevailing language is Russian. The other two are from Kyiv, where the language situation is highly mixed. However, one of them comes from a Ukrainian-speaking family, while the other interviewee is from a Russian-speaking one. The fifth interviewee, from Boyarka town in the Kyiv region, has Russian-speaking parents in contrast to grandparents. Another participant was born in Ternopil in the western part of the country but has spent most of their life in a Russian-speaking environment in Kyiv. Yet another interviewee from Ternopil has a Ukrainian-speaking family and social setting. The eighth participant, from Zhytomyr, experiences a dominant language known as *surzhyk*—a mix of Ukrainian and Russian.

3.3. Data collection: Interview design

Appendix A displays the structure of the interview, focusing on the national identity and practices of Ukrainian young adults. Engaging in conversations with the interviewees proved instrumental in observing how concepts and perceptions of social reality and cultural context were constructed and comprehended within the studied group, especially in discussions about identity and the Ukrainian language. Due to the target audience's youth, their technological savvy, and the time constraints of both the interviewees and the interviewer, the decision was made to conduct the interviews online using a video chat service. This approach enables the researcher to maintain a live conversation with each interviewee, observe their facial expressions and body language, and discern nuances in responses. These interviews are often referred to as virtual face-to-face interviews (Gibson and Hua, 2015).

The interview consisted of 35 questions and was divided into six parts: warm-up, introduction, three key segments, and outro. Analysing cultural artefacts enables the unveiling and pinpointing of specific facets of respondents' identities, offering insights into their value systems, and, to some extent, immersing oneself in their cultural milieu.

Artefacts, as objects most frequently linked with national culture (Holliday,

2015), play a crucial role in this process. The preparation of favourite items and a discussion about them at the beginning of the interview facilitated smooth engagement, serving as a warm-up component of the interview. Interviewees were asked to contemplate and bring three meaningful items connected to Ukraine. As a result, each interview commenced with a staged observation to ensure that participants warmed up and initiated their thought processes regarding identity, particularly national identity.

Observing the cultural artefacts independently chosen and highlighted by the respondents aided the study in understanding the significance of these items to the interviewees and how they related to their home country. Additionally, it shed light on the importance of specific settings and territory to one's identity.

The next section was an introduction that focused on self-identity, specific social identity, and occupation. Additionally, it was intended to determine whether respondents have acknowledged their change of identity while living abroad.

The next three parts aimed to discover the cultural and social identities and their practices, linguistic identity and practices, and national identity and practices of the respondents. Each part aimed at identifying specific practices in linguistic, cultural, social, and national identities that are prevalent in the daily lives of young Ukrainian adults, as well as the changes in practices that occurred over the year since the start of the full-scale invasion. The linguistic part of the interview was designed to track attitudes towards Ukrainian and Russian languages, as well as their meanings and roles in the lives of respondents.

The final part was the outro, which raised the topic of further plans to stay in Estonia or return to Ukraine, as a result of the current events in the country. Additionally, this part provided space for any additional data gathering related to the changes in practices of young adults during the last year.

For the sake of ensuring the privacy of respondents, each responder was given a code, which was later used to analyze the data. Interviewees were informed about their right to terminate the interview or disregard a question if they felt uncomfortable disclosing certain information. With the respondent's consent, the interviews were recorded.

3.4. Participants

Respondents were categorised based on demographic characteristics such as age (19–29) and city of origin. Another crucial factor considered was the duration of living abroad. It was essential to ascertain the main current language of communication for each interviewee to conduct the interview in the language most suitable for them. In **Table 1**, the first language of communication is presented, as it provides crucial information regarding the language usage changes among respondents over their lifetime.

Later in the research, interviewees will be generalised as Russian- and Ukrainian-speakers, based on their first language and usage of Ukrainian. Additionally, it was revealed that each participant has acquired at least one higher education degree in Estonia.

Table 1. The demographic characteristics of study participants.

	Name	Age	City of origin	1st language	Time in Estonia	Higher Education	Language of interview	Classified and named in the research
1.	IS	22	Dnipro	Russian	5	completed BA in Estonia	Russian	Russian-speaking
2.	KB	22	Odesa	Russian	5	completed BA in Estonia	Russian	Russian-speaking
3.	SK	28	Ternopil	Ukrainian	6.5	completed MA in Estonia	Ukrainian	Ukrainian-speaking
4.	AG	23	Kyiv	Russian	5	completed BA in Estonia	Ukrainian	Ukrainian-speaking
5.	VG	22	Kyiv	Ukrainian	5	completed BA in Estonia	Russian	Ukrainian-speaking
6.	AD	23	born Ternopil, mainly lived in Kyiv	Ukrainian	5.5	completed BA in Estonia	Ukrainian	Ukrainian-speaking
7.	NI	29	Zhytomyr	Ukrainian	7	completed BA in Estonia and Ukraine	Ukrainian	Ukrainian-speaking
8.	KK	28	Boyarka town, Kyiv region	Russian	6.5	completed MA in Estonia	Ukrainian	Ukrainian-speaking

3.5. Data analysis

All interviews were verbatim transcribed to ensure precision, without employing any specialized transcription tools. To achieve the research objective, it was necessary to identify shared patterns and practices among interviewees regarding their connection to their homeland during a period of conflict. Thematic analyses were performed following the interpretive approach suggested by Peel (2020). The analysis method employed open coding and pattern identification to discern repetitive keywords and shared perspectives among interviewees. This approach ensured that the results are representative of the respondents' experiences and competencies. It allowed researchers to interpret the comprehensive understanding of the collected data, presenting the participants' points of view through the researcher's lens (McKinley and Rose, 2019).

3.6. Ethical considerations

Participants were informed about the research topic, objectives, and their rights, with details on the anonymity of their participation, recording (including video) of the interview, and confidentiality of provided information. A written consent form was sent before the online meeting, providing interviewees the option to withdraw data use permission within a week, resulting in material deletion—none opted for this. Participants also had the choice to skip a question without explanation, though this option was not utilized in the study.

The interviewees appeared natural, expressing emotions, occasional confusion, or the need for time to think. Half were in the interviewer's personal network (acquaintances and friends), and the rest were referred by mutual acquaintances. Negotiating with the latter group revealed their interest in the research topic and a desire to assist fellow citizens.

The interviewer's dual perspective, as both an insider and outsider, enabled a thorough exploration of collected data. As a Ukrainian citizen from the eastern part of the country, raised in a Russian-speaking family, she moved to Tallinn for higher education. Simultaneously, as a graduate student at Tallinn University, she brings an academic perspective, leveraging knowledge gained during her studies.

4. Findings

Firstly, the most fundamental component of national identity for Ukrainian young adults was a sense of belonging, expressed through personal attachment, emotion, interest, and support for all things Ukrainian. Secondly, being born in Ukraine is considered a crucial factor in identifying as Ukrainian, followed by proficiency in the Ukrainian language. According to the respondents' answers, national identity is preserved and maintained when living abroad.

4.1. Cultural artefacts

Ukrainian youth living in Tallinn, Estonia, employ various cultural practices to preserve their national identity. They keep items brought from Ukraine, received from family members, or purchased independently as reminders of memories and loved ones:

This perfume is associated with childhood, family, and home, as my mother wore it when I was a child. ... I used it until February 24, 2022, and after that, it has been on my shelf. It evokes very strong emotions and memories, I miss home a lot. I can't use it now. Now I look at it or just smell it from time to time, but I don't put it on myself.

... a backlit thing on which you can write or draw, this is an element of decor. [...] I wrote there "Все буде Україна". I turn it on and off every morning and evening...

The phrase 'Все буде Україна' "Everything Will Be Ukraine" personifies the belief in victory and the assurance that everything will be fine. It gained popularity during the full-scale invasion, serving as mutual support among Ukrainians.

Additionally, they possess cultural artefacts such as carpets with authentic patterns, red coral necklaces, books of Ukrainian literature, and national heritage items like flags and items imprinted with Ukrainian slogans:

... a carpet with an authentic Ukrainian pattern. This carpet is from the village (not sure if my grandmother made it or not). But this is a family heritage already for me. It is associated with childhood and Ukrainian culture.

I have a Ukrainian book corner. I am building a collection of Ukrainian classic literature... Eventually, I want to have a small library of Ukrainian literature.

Red coral necklace. We bought it with my mother when we were on vacation in Crimea when I was 13 years old. I rarely wear it because I'm afraid I'll lose it (the lock is weak over time) ... it has survived after many years of the movement.

Furthermore, they engage in the preparation and consumption of homemade food and traditional national dishes, with borscht being the most commonly mentioned dish:

... [I] made my first borscht by myself in Estonia. My personality completed its formation in Estonia.

Moreover, they actively support Ukraine in various forms:

The Ukrainian flag that I sewed myself to go to a demonstration in Estonia in support of Ukraine. At that time flags were not sold anywhere. My friend and I

bought fabrics in a store and sewed them. It has a paint stain left on it from one of the posters caused by the rain. I don't want to wash it off, because it shows that I was not alone at that event, there were many people there and it was very crowded.

The respondents commonly prioritised connections with family members and childhood, a prevalent pattern among them. The chosen items primarily reflected their social identities, with national and cultural identities emphasised through items such as Ukrainian flags, slogans, magnets, traditional ornaments, jewellery, and literature.

4.2. Social and cultural practices in preserving national identity

The social practices identified in the study suggest that the main social circle of the participants consists predominantly of Ukrainians or includes them:

I have many acquaintances among locals here [...], but mostly I communicate with Ukrainians, I guess. Over time, a group of Ukrainian friends formed, with whom you often communicate and see each other.

Furthermore, their closest friends in Tallinn are also Ukrainians:

More with Ukrainians. At the moment, it is much more comfortable and as a support. Although I also communicate with Estonians and foreigners.

The closest and best [friends] are Ukrainians. In general, there are more Ukrainians. But [I communicate] on a daily basis evenly with Ukrainians and Estonians.

Communication with relatives and friends in Ukraine is named by Ukrainian expats as the most crucial practice for staying connected to their homeland. All respondents frequently communicate with relatives in Ukraine, with the majority doing so daily:

Every day with parents and friends. It has always been with such periodicity. Of course, immediately after the 24th of February, we communicated permanently, several times a day, but with time, it returned to the usual.

Every day with relatives, with friends at least once a week.

All respondents consider it necessary to stay informed about Ukrainian news, with the majority consuming news on a daily basis:

Every day starts with checking the news in the morning – whether there were explosions, whether the alarm was there, and where.

... during the day I read the news, every time I pick up the phone this is the first thing I check.

Interviewees identify themselves as Ukrainians and actively participate in social events organised for and or by Ukrainians, including concerts by Ukrainian performers, charity events, and master classes. To express their Ukrainian national identity, all of them participate in demonstrations in support of Ukraine or are involved in organizations assisting Ukraine and its people:

A Ukrainian is someone who cares about the future of his country and you put in as much effort as possible, you do care what happens to your country, regardless of whether you plan to live there or not, or whether you have already settled on another continent, but still you are not stopping thinking and supporting Ukraine or the people who live there.

The respondents maintain their Ukrainian citizenship, with none considering changing it. The majority emphasizes the importance of participating in Ukrainian elections and expresses readiness to contribute to their country's development:

It is important for me because I do not terminate my connection with Ukraine, it is important for me. [...] It is important for me to have a point of influence on events in Ukraine.

In conclusion, this study highlights strong community bonds among Ukrainian expatriates in Tallinn, showcasing their dedication to preserving national identity and contributing to Ukraine's well-being.

4.3. Linguistic identity and practices in preserving national identity

All Ukrainian young people living in Tallinn have multiple linguistic identities, speaking at least three languages. Given the bilingual situation in Ukraine, Russian-speaking Ukrainians consider Ukrainian to be their native language:

I started to speak Russian in my life. It is important to note that my grandmothers did not speak Russian, but my mother and father were Russified. But I realized quite early that it was important for me to develop the Ukrainian language, so I switched to Ukrainian as a teenager.

Technically, it is Russian. But when I fill out any documents and it is required to indicate my native language, I always write Ukrainian. Because for me it is logical – I am from Ukraine, I am Ukrainian and my native language is Ukrainian. Even as a child, it caused dissonance in me. So Ukrainian.

All respondents use Ukrainian while living in Tallinn, with most of them using it as their primary language of communication with relatives and friends. Russian-speaking Ukrainians incorporate Ukrainian words and expressions even when speaking in Russian to better convey their thoughts or when someone addresses them in Ukrainian:

Yes, I often use Ukrainian words when I speak Russian with people from Ukraine in order to give a certain brightness to the word and convey the exact emotion I have. Since sometimes some words in Russian do not fully convey the meaning, you want to convey.

The Russian language is viewed as a means of communication:

It has played all my life and plays a technical role. I speak Russian because I was born in the eastern region and my family speaks Russian. I have always treated the Russian language as a tool, even before [February 24] I did not associate or connect it with my identity.

Most Ukrainian young people consume media content, such as music and videos on YouTube, in Ukrainian:

It's cool that the Ukrainian language is becoming popular and a lot of cool content has started to be made in the Ukrainian language. [...] I am proud that much is now done in the Ukrainian language.

Young adults perceive and recognize Ukrainian as the sole dominant language in Ukraine that should be used in the public sphere and popularised:

If there is more Ukrainian language in the public space, this will contribute to the development of Ukrainian culture and attract people's interest in it.

Ukrainian is seen as the only official state language, playing a pivotal role in culture and serving as an instrument of social identification and differentiation:

I am pleased to see that the native language is used much more often. Because it is not just about increasing the amount of Ukrainian language in the public space, it is also usually connected with the amount of Ukrainian culture. And, in general, it generates more respect and trust for all Ukrainian than before.

Knowledge of the Ukrainian language is considered compulsory. The language's profound significance underscores its vital role in preserving the nation:

I see the Ukrainian language as a way of self-identification, and protection of our borders, culture, and heritage ... There is such an expression "As long as the language is alive, so is the nation." [...] Unfortunately, I understand its true meaning only after such dramatic events.

The interviewees strongly commit to preserving their national identity by choosing Ukrainian as their main language, emphasising its role in self-identification and safeguarding culture. Overall, participants stress Ukrainian as a dynamic force in shaping and maintaining national identity.

4.4. The impact of a full-scale war on (linguistic) identity and the practices employed to preserve it among Ukrainian young adults

These are the changes in the perception and habits of Ukrainian young adults after the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine: Preferences regarding entertainment media content and music have shifted. Since February 24, 2022, respondents have begun distancing themselves from Russian-origin media products and have become more conscious of their place of origin:

After February 24, all artists of Russian origin were removed from my playlists, and I unsubscribed from Russian citizens on social media.

The interviewees have either limited or completely terminated the consumption of Russian-origin content and music:

I try to watch more Ukrainian content. Mainly it's Ukrainian and English content. I try to avoid Russian content and even people who have already left the Russian Federation and live in Europe.

There is a growing interest in all things of Ukrainian origin and about Ukraine, including media content, Ukrainian-made products, culture, and history:

I became more interested in Ukrainian content - it started to pop up in my info space more and more, my friends also [started to be interested more], and we started recommending something to each other.

There is a growing recognition of the Ukrainian language's importance, particularly among Russian-speaking Ukrainians, resulting in an increased prevalence. Ukrainian young adults now prioritise regularly following Ukrainian news, largely driven by the ongoing military actions:

After February 24, I definitely started reading and listening to Ukrainian news more. I am much more interested, of course, about the frontline, but in general, I read more about various laws that are adopted and political changes... I want to understand more about what is happening in Ukraine.

Civil engagement has strengthened, with most respondents recognising the significance of participation in elections and contributing to the country's development:

I didn't vote last time, but I should have. I repent. My position now is that everyone should vote. But at that time I was too lazy, and I did not register with the Ukrainian Embassy for this. It is important that young people go to vote.

The interviewees have emphasised their willingness and attempts to help their country and compatriots through volunteering, sharing information on social media, regular donations, and attending demonstrations and charity events:

If somebody writes to me for help in Ukraine, I will help, any volunteer help.

I try to donate more for military needs because part of my family protects Ukraine, so it is especially important to me.

At some point, my direct belonging to Ukraine began to fade while I lived in Estonia, but after February 24, this feeling became much brighter and even brighter than it had ever been. So whenever I can, I want to be a part of what's going on there.

The interviewees, especially those who speak Russian, now observe more differences between Ukrainians and Russians and have re-evaluated the importance of categorisation within the Ukrainian national group:

The process of self-identification after February 24, 2022, has changed a little for me. I didn't have a clear division between Russians and Ukrainians before, I somehow mixed it up. But after that, I began to notice more and more our differences, and what makes me more Ukrainian. Perhaps this is still because of emotions, but it seems to me that our people are more ready to help each other and are more united and humane.

The deteriorating economic situation in Ukraine has influenced the plans of half of the interviewees to return to Ukraine; however, the desire remains. Some people have developed a strong desire to visit Ukraine:

I think everything will depend on the state of affairs in Ukraine. Because on the one hand, I still think that it would be a good decision to return to Ukraine, and I would like to do it. But depending on the economic situation after the end of the war, it just might not be such an easy decision.

Thus, the full-scale war in Ukraine has brought about noticeable changes in the attitudes and behavior of young people. The act of distancing themselves from content of Russian origin signifies an elevated level of awareness and a deliberate detachment from external influences. Civic engagement, political awareness, and interest in the country's development have all increased.

4.5. The effect of the full-scale invasion on the attitudes toward and the use of the Ukrainian language

It elevated the value of the Ukrainian language and underscored its significance for the interviewees, resulting in a noticeable decline in the supportive attitude toward the Russian language. Most interviewees unconsciously associate it negatively due to its connection with the invading force in their country:

After February 24, I increased the use of the Ukrainian language. [...] If somebody addresses me in Ukrainian, I always try to answer in Ukrainian, even though I make mistakes.

It is important for respondents not to be identified as Russians:

I feel ashamed to speak in public in Russian, especially abroad so that they would not think that I am Russian.

This influences the use of Russian depending on the circumstances, with Ukrainian-speaking interviewees using it only in situations of extreme necessity:

I use it only with Estonians who do not know English at a sufficient level to communicate with me. [...] with a family doctor, it is important for me that they understand what is bothering me. [...] If I can avoid using the Russian language, then I actively do it, whereas before I would rather just speak Russian [in conversation with a Russian-speaking interlocutor].

This shift has resulted in the acknowledgment of the Ukrainian language as the predominant language in Ukraine, overlooking the inherent duality of the language situation, even among Russian-speaking interviewees.

The increased prevalence of the Ukrainian language is evident, as young adults tend to incorporate it into their everyday practices.

I use every opportunity to speak in Ukrainian besides communicating with my parents. [...], in a shop near my house [where Ukrainian women work], every morning I go there before work and speak Ukrainian.

This includes substituting Russian content with Ukrainian, refraining from switching to Russian, or not continuing in Russian when communicating with strangers from Ukraine or Ukrainian-speaking individuals:

Before February 24, I adapted more to the language of the interlocutor. It was not that important to me. Now if I know that a person is from Ukraine, and

understands Ukrainian, then I stick to Ukrainian as a language of communication, even if my interlocutor speaks to me in Russian.

The Ukrainian language has assumed a new role – serving as a means of self-identification and fostering a sense of affiliation with the national group:

But after February 24, sometimes even unconsciously, I have the feeling that this is not just a language, it is the language of the people who are waging war in my country. [...] Whenever possible I try to use Ukrainian. Nevertheless, the Russian language in my worldview has completely changed its meaning, its narratives, and its annotation. Because now the popular expression that language is also a weapon resonates with me.

The full-scale invasion significantly affected Ukrainian expatriates in Tallinn, elevating the value of Ukrainian while diminishing support for Russian. This shift is evident in daily practices, reflecting a pervasive change, even among Russian-speaking interviewees. Ukrainian now serves as a means of self-identification intricately linked with the ongoing conflict.

5. Discussion

All the interviewees identified themselves as Ukrainians when answering questions about their identity and what defines their Ukrainian identity. This aligns with the self-categorization process, the first component of the SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), which posits that individuals should categorize themselves within a specific social group.

The key findings from the interviews related to the primary purpose and research question 1, ‘What cultural, linguistic, and social practices do Ukrainian expatriates employ to preserve their national identity?’ are as follows. The most significant aspect of national identity for this group of Ukrainian young adults living in Tallinn is their sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the national group. This has resulted in a strong desire to contribute to the well-being of the country and a positive depiction of the national group, its practices, and its characteristics, particularly when compared with other nation groups. Personal affiliation and emotional attachment to the nation group are considered fundamental components of national identity by Smith (1991), Barrett (2005), and Tartakovsky (2011b). Furthermore, substantial sentiments, the ability to label the in-group based on shared aspects, positive perceptions of the in-group, and comparisons are components of SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

National identity is shaped and reflected by cultural characteristics (Smith, 1991; Shulman, 1999). The research results align with this statement, as cultural practices play an essential role in helping Ukrainian expats maintain their connection with Ukraine. It was revealed that all respondents maintain their connection to their homeland by preserving cultural attributes and Ukrainian symbols, which serve as warm reminders of family, home, and cultural and national heritage. In line with Smith’s (1991) perspective, the vital characteristics of cultural identity lie in ongoing connections to the cultural group through specific practices or items preserved over time. A similar finding emerged from research on Ukrainian migrants’ ethnic identity in Slovakia between 2014 and 2016, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural

and national symbols, such as flags, books by important authors, traditional clothing, and other folklore items for migrants (Součková, 2018).

Another common practice among this group of Ukrainian young adults living in Tallinn was the consumption of Ukrainian media and a keen interest in Ukrainian-made products. Barrett (2005) has emphasised the pervasiveness of national identity and its visibility in people's daily lives, encompassing entertainment choices, language preferences, customs, and elements of national attributes. Moreover, cooking and savouring traditional meals and family recipes serve as crucial aspects in forming and signifying cultural identity (Holliday, 2010), acting as inherited markers of Ukrainian identity (cf. Kuzio, 1996).

In terms of social practices, Ukrainian young adults living in Estonia emphasize the importance of communicating with relatives and friends in Ukraine. Additionally, their main social circle, often the closest one, primarily consists of fellow citizens. This observation aligns with SIT, which posits that people connect with and prefer one group over another based on their self-identification (Tyler and Blader, 2001; Barrett and Davis, 2008). Furthermore, it supports Tartakovsky's (2011) belief in the significance of communication with parents and peers as influential factors in shaping national identity.

The other essential practices adopted by Ukrainian expats in Tallinn, Estonia, are directly related to their civil national identity, with the connection to the civic component of the Ukrainian nation group being the most salient among other identities, supported by scholars (Fedorenko et al., 2020; Bureiko and Moga, 2009). The observed connection with the homeland through traditions is not uniform, but responses were consistent regarding the necessity of following Ukrainian news daily. Media plays a crucial role as a source of information and influence on the framing and salience of national identity using symbols, principles, and common enemies, as noted by scholars (Anderson, 2006; Tartakovsky, 2011a). Moreover, the frequency of media consumption is essential for shaping one's social identity (Windari, 2021).

Other national practices uniting the respondents include the desire to contribute to their country's development through activities such as voting, attending demonstrations, participating in charity events, donating, and involvement in organizations aiding Ukraine or its citizens. Additionally, there is an unwillingness to change citizenship and a readiness to visit the country when the opportunity arises. These behaviours highlight the respondents' shared sense of self-consciousness (Barrett and Davis, 2008) and political bonds with the Ukrainian community (Smith, 1991). Their strong sense of belonging propels their interest in events in Ukraine and their aspiration to actively participate in the country's life, influencing it through such practices. Therefore, these findings contribute to the understanding of the civic direction of Ukrainian identity (Fedorenko et al., 2020).

All respondents, regardless of whether they are Ukrainian- or Russian-speaking, manifest the linguistic identity of Ukrainian expats living in Tallinn, Estonia, through their use of Ukrainian. The informants consume entertainment media content, including music, in both Ukrainian and English. Notably, Ukrainian is prevalent in daily communication, serving as the main language of conversation for Ukrainian-speaking respondents and being incorporated by Russian-speaking Ukrainians, who use certain words and phrases in Ukrainian to better convey their ideas.

All Ukrainian young adults consider and recognize Ukrainian as the only dominant language in Ukraine that should be used in the public sphere and popularised. The Ukrainian language signifies statehood, being the only state language, and serves as a tool for self-identification with the national group and differentiation. This finding aligns with Korostelina's (2013) viewpoint regarding the changing status of the Ukrainian language as a symbol of the nation and its independence, acting as a unifying factor. The cultural aspect of the Ukrainian language is also gaining prominence in people's minds, as (Holliday, 2010) argues that language may signify various meanings, including cultural identity. This finding contributes to the studies of Veira-Ramos et al. (2020) and Kuzio (2017), aiding in dispelling stereotypes about the contested national identity of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and their loyalty to Ukraine as a state, along with its culture, heritage, and language. The spoken language does not necessarily serve as the sole marker of one's national identity (Kuzio, 1996; Barrett, 2005).

To comprehensively address the primary aim of the study, we posed research question 2: 'How did the full-scale war in Ukraine impact the national identity and practices of preservation among Ukrainian expatriates in Estonia?'

Overall, the national identity has strengthened and intensified due to the full-scale war in Ukraine, as evidenced by established practices and viewpoints among Ukrainian young adults. Firstly, there has been an increased interest and consumption of anything of Ukrainian origin, including clothing, cultural heritage products such as history and literature, but primarily entertainment media content. Additionally, due to the military activities on the territory of Ukraine, awareness of the importance of regularly following the news has been heightened. The civil component of the Ukrainian identity has risen in prominence, with a growing number of individuals reconsidering the importance of their contribution to the country's development through participation in elections, attendance at social events associated with this, and various forms of help to Ukraine.

Moreover, the majority of individuals have expressed a desire to visit Ukraine when an opportunity arises and even indicated a willingness to return. In other words, the full-scale war in Ukraine has strengthened the sense of belonging to the Ukrainian group and clarified the differences between Ukrainians and Russians, especially for Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Contrasts and distinctions between the two national groups are primarily traced to the characteristics of the groups and divergent accents when speaking Russian.

Ukrainian young adults have started to distance themselves from Russian-made products, especially entertainment media content. However, the full-scale war has negatively affected the plans of the majority of expats to return to Ukraine due to the economic situation. Block (2006) discussed the influential factor of the socio-economic environment on migrants' decisions to return to their homeland.

The findings suggest that this group of Ukrainian young adults living in Tallinn have maintained their connection with Ukraine as a means of strengthening their national identity during the full-scale invasion of their country. This commitment is evident in their social, linguistic, and cultural practices, as well as an increased awareness of the role of their national identity and its symbols. The reinforced national identity serves as a response to the identity threat, or, in other words, to national

survival, as outlined in the SIT. This aligns with the analysis of Ukrainian society presented by Veira-Ramos et al. (2020), which proposes that the society responds to various crises by reinforcing its national identity and overcoming polarization difficulties.

This research specifically examined the attitudes of Ukrainian young adults toward Ukrainian. To achieve the secondary objective, research question 3 was formulated: ‘In what ways did the full-scale war affect attitudes toward and the use of the Ukrainian language among Ukrainian expatriates living in Tallinn?’

Due to the full-scale invasion, the role of Ukrainian has intensified and strengthened. It has acquired new roles and symbolism, particularly for Russian-speaking Ukrainians, such as being a native language, a differentiation tool, and the only dominant language in the public sphere. Ukrainian language skills have also become associated with social identification factors. However, Ukrainian is still not the primary marker of national identity, as having Ukrainian as the first language of communication does not necessarily make a person Ukrainian. These findings are consistent with the arguments presented by Barrett (2005) and Kuzio (1996) regarding language not being the primary identifier of national identity.

In response to the national security threat, individuals have increased the presence and usage of Ukrainian in their lives. In contrast, there is an emerging need to limit the use of Russian to some extent, as it has acquired negative associations and narratives. While, in the majority of cases, it is still used as a means of communication, no conclusive evidence of a complete abandonment of Russian was found; however, the tendency towards limitation exists.

Overall, Ukrainian has been acquiring the status of the dominant and prestigious language, along with symbolic meanings tied to social identity. Meanwhile, Russian still maintains a presence to some extent in the lives of Ukrainian expats as a communication tool, although its usage is limited. This indicates that while the linguistic situation among Ukrainian expats remains diverse, Ukrainian is increasingly seen as more prestigious and superior.

Presumably, the full-scale invasion has a similar or even more powerful influence on language practice than the previous crises described by (Bureiko and Moga, 2009; Kulyk, 2016). Acknowledging the integral role of language in shaping cultural and national identities, it is pertinent to reference Smith (1991), who emphasised that traumatic events, such as war, frequently cause a radical shift in cultural identity, manifesting as the weakening or strengthening of cultural aspects.

The national identity of interviewees has strengthened and become more salient due to the war in Ukraine and the threat to national security and identity. The dramatic events, specifically the full-scale invasion, have not only reinforced emotional attachment to the nation and solidarity with its members but have also underscored the significant role of Ukrainian. This impact has led to the expansion of its use and presence.

The study has certain limitations that may have influenced the observations and results, and these should be considered in future research. Firstly, as respondents’ first language is either Ukrainian or Russian, and given the linguistic diversity of Ukrainian society, interviews were conducted in both languages based on participants’ language preference or the primary language of communication of a young Ukrainian adult.

Additionally, it is important to note that the language of the article is English. Consequently, a significant limitation of this study is language-related. This implies that certain linguistic nuances may be overlooked or understood slightly differently than in the original speech when analysing results translated from Ukrainian and Russian to English. If the article had been written in Ukrainian or Russian, it could have provided an opportunity to explore various aspects of the language more comprehensively. Due to word limits, a detailed exploration of this aspect was not feasible.

The sample size of eight respondents does not fully represent the entire population of Ukrainian young adults with higher education residing in Tallinn for at least two years. Given the diverse linguistic situation in Ukraine and the dynamic nature of linguistic identity, an imbalance existed between Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking respondents. Two individuals fully switched to Ukrainian, with one undergoing a linguistic identity shift before February 24, 2022. This discovery unfolded during interview preparations and negotiations.

6. Conclusion

In Tallinn, Ukrainian young adults display strong cultural, linguistic, and social practices, emphasizing their commitment to preserving national identity despite being abroad. Influenced by the ongoing war, they express a heightened sense of belonging to their country, manifested in intensified practices to maintain connections with Ukraine. This deepening national identification contributes valuable insights for future research on the impact of the war on Ukrainian expatriates. Recommendations include further exploration of national identity and practices among Ukrainians, both inside and outside the country, in subsequent studies.

Studying the impact of the full-scale war on the diverse Ukrainian nation is crucial, necessitating further research. Sustaining a strong national identity is vital for Ukrainians, whether residing in the country, as refugees, or voluntary migrants pre-dating the invasion. Additional research is strongly recommended, focusing on national identity preservation strategies among Ukrainian migrants who arrived before February 2022. To gain a comprehensive understanding of Ukrainian expats in Estonia, conducting research now—two years after Russia's aggression started—and later, after its conclusion, can reveal differences in national identity, including intentions to return home.

Future research could also delve deeper into the bilingual proficiency of interviewees and explore whether their wish to speak more Ukrainian signifies a desire for acceptance within Estonian/European society or is indicative of a potential shift in linguistic identity influenced by emerging Ukrainian nationalism. Examining the nuanced reasons behind language proficiency in a bilingual context could provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of societal acceptance and evolving national identities.

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