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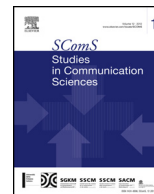
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Studies in Communication Sciences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/scoms

Language competence as a moderator of ethnolinguistic identity gratifications among three language minorities in Europe

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 September 2014

Accepted 23 February 2015

Keywords:

Television

Ethnolinguistic identity

Minority languages

German in South-Tyrol

Hungarian in Transylvania

Swedish in Finland

ABSTRACT

Using a social identity gratifications framework (Harwood, 1997, 1999), this paper examines the role of ethnolinguistic identity and language competence in influencing television viewing among three language minorities in Europe: the German minority in South-Tyrol, Italy; the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, Romania; and the Swedish minority in Southern Finland. Self-report questionnaire data were collected among secondary school students ($N = 1443$) in 2010. The results indicated that in settings where preference for, or consumption of, minority language media was relatively low, effects of identity on minority television language preferences were strongest for those who were least bilingual. In contrast, in settings where minority language television preferences were relatively high, the effects were stronger for more bilingual audience members. Findings and implications are discussed.

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1. Introduction

According to the social identity gratifications perspective (Harwood, 1997, 1999), social group identity can be a motivational factor for seeking out specific media content, and, reciprocally, media can support or reinforce particular social identities. Several recent studies have supported this notion, demonstrating the role of social identities such as age (Harwood, 1997, 1999; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010), gender (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2006; Trepte, 2004), race (Knobloch-Westerwick, Appiah, & Alter, 2008) and ethnicity (Abrams, 2010; Abrams & Giles, 2007, 2009) in media selection.

Memberships in language groups can be important social identities (Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987), and language can be a prevailing determinant of media consumption. In linguistically diverse environments where media landscapes as well as audiences are linguistically divided, ethnolinguistic identity can motivate media use, and media can, in turn, support or reinforce ethnolinguistic identity. The positive relationship between ethnolinguistic identity and media use has been demonstrated among Estonian-speakers and Russian-speakers in Estonia (Brady & Kaplan, 2000), Swedish-speakers in Finland (Sundback, 1994),

Hungarian-speakers in Slovakia (Vincze & Harwood, 2012) and French-speakers in Canada (Clément, Baker, Josephson, & Noels, 2005; Gaudet & Clément, 2005). These investigations demonstrated that higher identification with a language was associated with more use of the media in that language.

While gratifying age, gender and other social identities by media use does not require any additional “skills” or conditions, ethnolinguistic media use is intrinsically tied to language competence. The “ability to speak or at least understand the language of a broadcast, is an important ingredient in audiences’ selection of a program and their enjoyment of it” (Straubhaar, 2003, p. 82; see also Anashin, 2000; Bochmann, 1993). Reviewing studies conducted among Latinos in the USA, Subervi-Velez (1986) demonstrated that higher competence in English was accompanied by greater preference for and exposure to English language media. Similarly, Ksiazek and Webster (2008) found that monolingual Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Americans consumed media products overwhelmingly in their own language, but language played a smaller role in the media consumption of those who had greater bilingual competence.

However, the research fails to clarify mechanisms by which these two facets of the linguistic self (identity and competence: Liebkind, 1995) work simultaneously in media use. Specifically, we argue that these two facets of the linguistic self are not only important components of media consumption, but they *interact* when predicting media preferences and exposure. In other words, we maintain that in bilingual contexts neither identity nor competence

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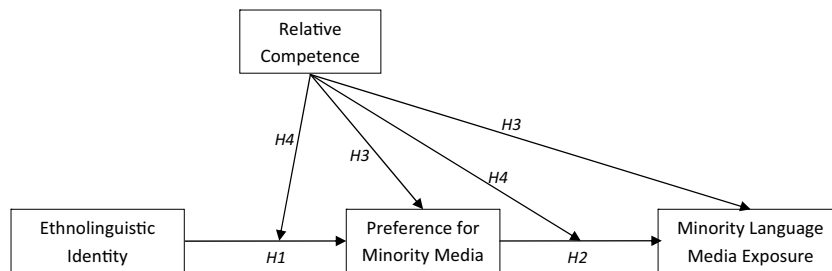


Fig. 1. A model of the associations between identity, competence, preference for minority media and minority language media exposure. Hypotheses are indicated on the appropriate paths in the model.

can provide sufficient explanation for the linguistic patterns of media behavior; rather, it is their combined effect that counts. Hence, our goal here is to integrate two rather separate lines of research; one concerned with affective (identity) influences on media use, and one concerned with cognitive/pragmatic influences (linguistic competence). We believe that such integration will both improve our ability to predict media use among minority populations, and speak more generally to the boundary conditions for identity's influence: we endorse the general idea that identity influences behavior, but suggest here that its influence is moderated by pragmatic concerns that identity scholars sometimes ignore.

Against this background, we examine the distinct and combined effect of ethnolinguistic identity and language competence on preference for minority language television use and actual exposure to minority/majority language television among minority language group young media users. We examine the German minority in South-Tyrol, Italy, the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, Romania and the Swedish minority in Southern Finland. Of course, young people use many media other than television, however we focus on television because it remains a ubiquitous medium (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010) and because we believe that the language of television use is indicative of the language of other media use.

1.1. Hypotheses

We begin by providing our definitions of four key concepts, building on the previous literature. Ethnolinguistic identity and language competence are the two facets of the linguistic self, the former referring to the description of self as belonging to a group and the value associated with that membership, and the latter referring to actual linguistic ability. We also examine two ethnolinguistic facets of media use: Preference for minority language media use and the language of exposure. By preference we mean an expression of wanting or needing to consume media in the minority language. In contrast, exposure refers to the actual behavior of media use. We proposed the following hypotheses (depicted in Fig. 1). Consistent with the tenets and evidence surrounding social identity gratifications (Harwood, 1997, 1999), individuals who identify more with the minority language group will have a greater preference for minority language media (Hypothesis 1). Second, we expect that people who express a greater preference for minority language media use will consume more minority language media; thus, preference will mediate the impact of identity on minority language media exposure (Hypothesis 2).

Third, we predict that language competence will influence media preference and exposure. People who master both languages have a broader array of majority and minority language media to choose from, can easily shift from one to the other, and can meet many needs using media in either language. On the other hand, individuals with less majority language competence have less ability to gratify needs using majority media. Understanding majority

media is more effortful for these individuals, and hence presumably will only be attempted when either (a) minority language offerings are low interest, (b) language is relatively unimportant to comprehension (e.g. watching sporting events), or (c) information is being presented that is important and unavailable in the minority language. Hence, we present the relatively mundane prediction that individuals who have lower competence in the majority language will express higher preference for and expose themselves more to minority language media (Hypothesis 3).

Finally, we predict that language competence will moderate the links from identity to preference, and preference to exposure. Given the previously described flexibility enjoyed by bilingual individuals, their minority language media preference and consumption has greater scope to be influenced by identity than is the case for more monolingual minority language group members. For the monolingual, consumption patterns will be most strongly influenced by competence: even low-identifying people will consume mostly minority language media due to their relative inability to understand majority language media. On the other hand, bilingual individuals can be more selective, and hence low minority-identifying individuals might gravitate to heavier majority group consumption, while high minority-identifying individuals would prefer and expose themselves to minority language media whenever possible (Hypothesis 4).

1.2. The settings

Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) introduced the notion of ethnolinguistic vitality to analyze the sociostructural and cross-cultural variables affecting the social strength of languages in bilingual settings. The approach offers three factors to determine the vitality of an ethnolinguistic group: status, institutional support and demography. The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is defined as "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting" (Giles et al., 1977, p. 308). Vitality is a pre-existing condition accounting for ethnolinguistic attitudes and behavior (Bourhis & Barrette, 2006), and also for ethnolinguistic identification and survival (Giles & Johnson, 1981). Below we overview the ethnolinguistic vitality of three minority language groups (see also Table 1).

Table 1 Objective vitality of the minority languages and access to minority language TV channels.

	South-Tyrol	Transylvania	Southern Finland
Demographic capital	Strong	Moderate	Weak
Status	High	Low	High
Institutional support	Strong	Weak	Strong
Regional TV	+	–	+
Transfrontier TV	+	+	–

1.2.1. South-Tyrol, Italy

The vitality of the German-speaking minority in South-Tyrol is strong on all three vitality dimensions. About 310,000 people or 70% of the population of South-Tyrol is German speaking (hence it is a majority in the region, albeit of course a national minority). Italian and German have official status and the same rights. German is supported by a strong formal and informal institutional network, including a provincial parliament and government, different educational and media institutions, political parties and its own Catholic diocese (Bonell & Winkler, 2006; Oberrauch, 2006). The RAI Sender Bozen is a German-language regional channel of the Italian Broadcasting Company (RAI) which can be received with analog and digital technology all over South-Tyrol. The length of German-speaking programs is 2.5–5 h per day; the channel primarily broadcasts news and cultural programs (Bonell & Winkler, 2006). In addition to the RAI channel, public broadcasts in German from Austria, Germany and Switzerland are available in South Tyrol at no cost.

1.2.2. Transylvania, Romania

Hungarian in Transylvania presents a case in which low status and weak institutional support is accompanied by moderately good demographic capital. The census of 2011 found that 1,238,000 people or 6.5% of the population of Romania are ethnic Hungarians. The Hungarian minority makes up a fifth of the population of Transylvania; in the western parts of the region, their proportion varies between 5% and 30%, whereas in the eastern part they make up more than 80% of the population. The Hungarian language has no official status in Transylvania. According to the Romanian public administration law (2001/215), local administrative authorities should allow the use of the minority mother tongue in their own affairs in administrative units where more than 20% of the population belongs to a minority language group; however, various studies have pointed out the problems with accomplishment of the law (Péntek & Benő, 2003; Veress, 2005). Although support for the language in other formal institutions is lacking, there is a Hungarian school system in Romania. Support for Hungarian is much better in informal institutions such as churches, theaters and other cultural institutions. There is no state-financed Hungarian television channel in Romania. Romanian Public Television airs 6.5 h a week in Hungarian—less than 1% of the total broadcasting time. As a result, watching Hungarian language television relies primarily on channels coming from Hungary. The availability of these depends on local providers and hence varies across Romania.

1.2.3. Southern Finland

Swedish language speakers in Finland are strong in status and institutional support, but significantly weaker in demographic capital. Demographically, about 5.4% or 284,000 people have Swedish as mother tongue. In the Southern coast of the country, the share of Swedish-speakers ranges from 8 to 33% in the majority of municipalities. Being one of Finland's two national languages, Swedish has a high status, accompanied by broad institutional support (formal and informal) comprising educational institutions, political parties, a Swedish Lutheran diocese and a navy marine infantry in which training is provided in Swedish (Finnäs, 2010; Tandefelt and Finnäs, 2007). Finland Swedish Television (YLE Fem), a digital public service TV channel, was launched in 2001 and offers mainly news, youth programs, documentaries, talk shows, sport and cultural programs, and some movies in Swedish. It presents overwhelmingly home-made productions, although it has also shared programming with the Swedish broadcaster Sveriges Television since September 2011. In Southern Finland, people must pay an extra broadcast receiving license to receive transfrontier channels from Sweden hence this is

not common (unlike on the West coast of Finland where access to such channels is freely available).

2. Method

A letter of invitation was sent to secondary schools in all three regions, where the language of instruction was the minority language. After the schools agreed to participate in the study, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire survey was conducted in 2010. The questionnaire was completed in the class supervised at a distance by teachers and research assistants. The total dataset had 1443 participants (404 German speakers in South-Tyrol, 643 Hungarian speakers in Transylvania, 396 Swedish speakers in Southern Finland). Girls made up 72% of the sample in South-Tyrol, 62% in Transylvania; 55% in Southern Finland. In South-Tyrol, 13% of mothers had a higher education degree, 39% in Transylvania; 55% in Southern Finland; Fathers: 14% in South-Tyrol, 47% in Transylvania, 64% in Southern Finland. We do not have exact information about the age of the participants; respondents were between 15 and 18 years old in all three regions. Gender and parents' education were investigated as potential covariates and found to be overwhelmingly nonsignificant; hence they were not included in our final analyses. The four concepts in our hypotheses were measured with the following variables.

2.1. Measures

2.1.1. Identity with minority language group

Identity was measured with two 4-point items ("The minority language is an important part of me", "I am very proud of being a minority language speaker"), which were collapsed into a single measure. Reliability of the scale was good in South-Tyrol ($\alpha = .71$) and Southern Finland ($\alpha = .77$), while in Transylvania it was marginally acceptable ($\alpha = .61$).

2.1.2. Preference

Preference for minority language TV viewing was measured with seven 4-point items (e.g. "I enjoy TV in German much more than in Italian", "I am much more interested in TV programs in Swedish than in Finnish"). The statements were phrased in each region with regard to the local minority and majority languages (e.g. German vs. Italian in South Tyrol). Higher values indicated greater preference for minority language television. The reliability of the scale was good in all regions (South-Tyrol $\alpha = .88$, Transylvania and Southern Finland $\alpha = .85$).

2.1.3. Language of exposure

Linguistic patterns of TV viewing were measured by a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = "only in [majority language]" to 5 = "only in [minority language]", phrased in each region with regard to the local languages (e.g. German vs. Italian).

2.1.4. Perceived relative competence

Relative language competence was measured with a single item. Participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale their relative linguistic skills; the scale ranged from 1 (much better in the majority language than in the minority language) to 5 (much better in the minority language than in the majority language).

Means and standard deviations of the variables are listed in Table 2. South-Tyrolean participants watch the most minority language TV, Transylvanians do it less, and participants in Southern Finland even less. There is little difference between South-Tyrol and Transylvania in the level of preference for minority language TV viewing; however, participants in Southern Finland indicated considerably lower preference for the minority language TV programs than participants in the other two regions. In parallel with

Table 2
Results for one-way ANOVAs with region as factor.

	M (SD)			F(df)	η^2
	South-Tyrol	Transylvania	Southern Finland		
Exposure	4.43 (.72)	3.84 (.82)	2.41 (1.08)	568.95 (2, 1429)	.44
Preference	2.78 (.72)	2.75 (.72)	1.80 (.66)	261.61 (2, 1403)	.27
Competence	4.66 (.70)	4.55 (.78)	3.84 (1.07)	114.47 (2, 1428)	.14
Identity	3.45 (.59)	3.72 (.45)	3.70 (.51)	37.46 (2, 1428)	.05

Note. Language of exposure and competence range from 1 to 5, identity and preference from 1 to 4. Higher scores indicate more exposure/preference/competence/identity with the minority language group (German, Hungarian, and Swedish, respectively). All F statistics are significant, $p < .001$.

these tendencies, participants in Southern Finland reported the highest competence in the majority language, Transylvanians lower and South-Tyrolean the lowest. In Finland, 36% of the students reported scores of 3 or lower—effectively being bilingual or better in Finnish than Swedish. In Transylvania (12%) and South Tyrol (7%) only a small number of respondents were bilingual or better in the majority than the minority language, with most being better in the minority than the majority language. South-Tyrolean students identified themselves somewhat less with the minority language than those in Transylvania and Southern Finland. In terms of effect size, region had the greatest effect on language of exposure, then on preference and competence, and the smallest effect on identity. Variation in language of exposure and competence is considerably greater in Southern Finland than in the other two regions.

3. Results

We tested our hypotheses by the means of the PROCESS SPSS macro (Hayes, 2013), examining first and second stage moderated mediation (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). We examined the mediated effect of identity on language of media consumption, through media preferences. Relative language competence was proposed as a moderator of both indirect paths in the mediated model. The macro is based on bootstrapping and produces unstandardized regression coefficients. In the analyses, 5000 bootstrap samples were produced by randomly sampling with replacement from the original data, yielding 5000 estimates of the indirect path coefficient. As Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommend, indirect effects are significant when bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals do not include zero. We present bootstrap estimates of the total and specific indirect effects together with bias corrected and accelerated 95% confidence intervals. For significant moderator effects we present simple slopes.

The results are presented in Table 3. In South-Tyrol, the mediation was significant, indirect $B = .31$; 95% CI [.22, .40], and indicated full mediation as the effect of identity on language of exposure ($B = .38$, $p < .01$) became non-significant ($B = .08$, $p = .13$) after including preference as a mediator in the model. Competence significantly predicted preference and exposure for German language television.

Table 3
Moderated regressions predicting preference and language of exposure.

	Dependent variable: preference					Dependent variable: language of exposure				
	Identity	Competence	Identity × competence	R ²	F(df)	Preference	Competence	Preference × competence	R ²	F(df)
South-Tyrol	.36**	.52**	.12*	.37	75.10 (3, 386)	.42**	.29**	-.19**	.59	138.49 (4, 385)
Transylvania	.57**	.28**	.07	.25	66.21 (3, 606)	.43**	.30**	.07	.31	67.35 (4, 605)
Southern Finland	.31**	.26**	.13**	.24	39.15 (3, 370)	.53**	.40**	.19**	.41	63.13 (4, 369)

Note. All total regression models were significant ($p < .01$). The table shows unstandardized regression coefficients (B).

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

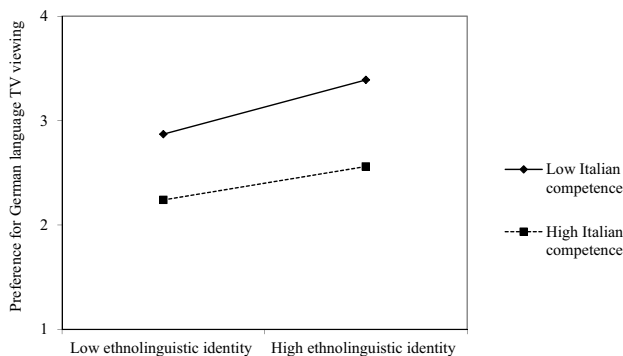


Fig. 2. Simple slopes for the effect of identity on preference for German language TV viewing in South-Tyrol, as moderated by language competence. High scores indicate greater preference for German language TV viewing.

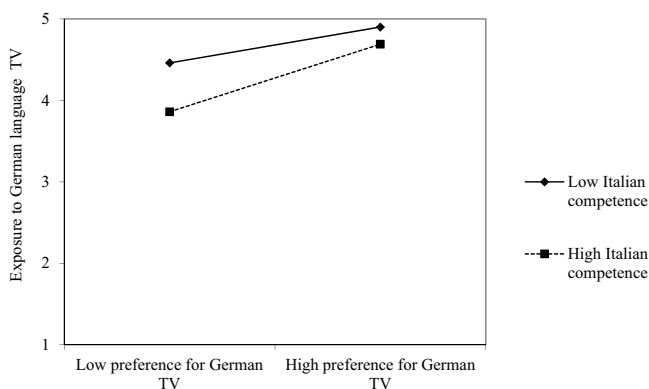


Fig. 3. Predicted values of language of exposure in South-Tyrol based on preference for German language TV viewing and language competence. High scores indicate more exposure in German, while low scores indicate more exposure in Italian.

This all supports H1–H3. Competence significantly moderated the path between identity and preference as well as the path between preference and TV viewing. As shown by the simple slopes illustrated in Fig. 2, the effect of identity on preference is stronger for those with lower majority competence than for bilingual students. However, Fig. 3 shows the opposite pattern, with preference having the strongest effects on consumption for more bilingually competent respondents. The data show mixed support for H4.

The mediation analysis was also significant in Transylvania, indirect $B = .34$; 95% CI [.26, .43], and indicated full mediation as the effect of identity on language of exposure ($B = .44$, $p < .01$) became non-significant ($B = .09$, $p = .18$) after including preference as a mediator. As can be seen in Table 3, competence significantly predicted both preference and consumption of minority language television. Competence was not a significant moderator between identity and preference or between preference and TV viewing. Consequently, in Transylvania we found support for H1–H3, but not for H4.

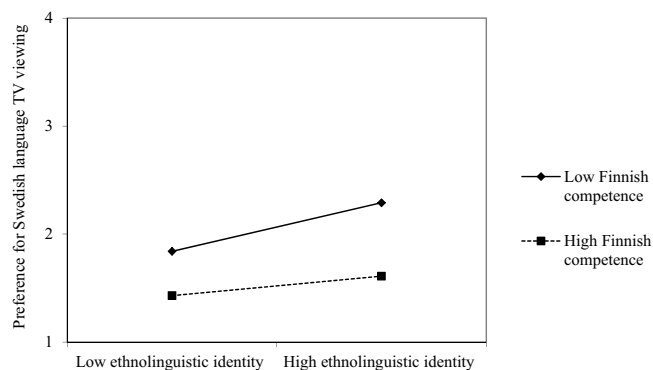


Fig. 4. Predicted values of preference for Swedish language TV viewing in Southern Finland based on ethnolinguistic identity and language competence. High scores indicate greater preference for Swedish language TV viewing.

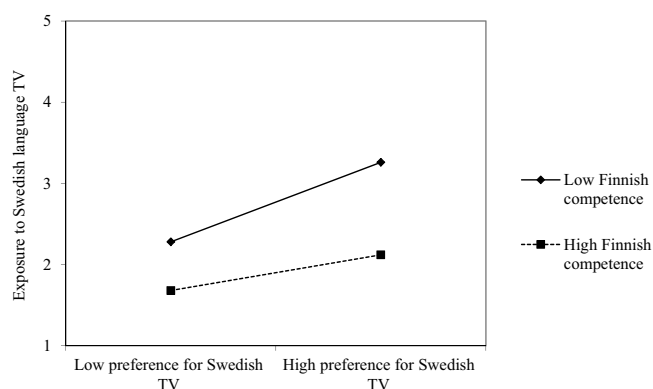


Fig. 5. Predicted values of language of exposure in Southern Finland based on preference for Swedish language TV viewing and language competence. High scores indicate more exposure in Swedish, while low scores indicate more exposure in Finnish.

The mediation was significant in Southern Finland, indirect $B = .30$; 95% CI [.20, .41], demonstrating full mediation as the effect of identity on exposure language ($B = .33$, $p < .01$) became non-significant ($B = .04$, $p = .70$) after including preference as a mediator. Competence significantly predicted preference and consumption. Hence H1–H3 were supported. Competence significantly moderated the path from identity to preference and the path between preference and TV viewing (see Table 3). In contrast to our prediction, both effects were stronger among those with lower levels of bilingualism (i.e., lower Finnish competence: see Figs. 4 and 5).

4. Discussion

This paper aimed to shed light on the combined effect of ethnolinguistic identity and language competence on preference for and exposure to minority language television among three linguistic minorities in Europe: German-speakers in South-Tyrol, Hungarian-speakers in Transylvania, and Swedish-speakers in Southern Finland. We tested four hypotheses. Our first three hypotheses were supported in all three regions, and confirmed that ethnolinguistic identity affected linguistic preferences in television use, which fully mediated the effect of ethnolinguistic identity on language of television exposure. Language competence was also directly associated with preferences for minority language television viewing and also with the language of exposure to television viewing across contexts: more majority language competence predicts more viewing of majority language television.

There were more mixed effects across settings when examining the moderating effect of language competence. Only in one case

did we see support for our prediction: in South-Tyrol, those with more competence in the majority language also displayed stronger effects of preference on language of exposure. As we predicted, those with broader linguistic skills are not constrained by language competence and hence their viewing patterns reflected the effects of non-competence variables (i.e., in this case preference) more strongly.

However, three other analyses (both mediated paths in Southern Finland, and the identity-preference path in South Tyrol), revealed the opposite pattern: the effect was *smaller* for the more bilingual respondents. In Transylvania, language competence did not function as a moderator at all, again offering little support for our prediction. A couple of factors can be discussed to account for these results.

First, the mean levels of competence in our data should be considered. Only in Southern Finland were average levels of (relative) competence below 4.5 on a 1–5 scale. Hence, in South Tyrol and Transylvania, most respondents were more competent in the minority language, and only a few approached bilingual status. Hence, effects for competence in these two regions are impacted by a minority of the sample, and perhaps individuals who are not representative of the local population overall. In Southern Finland, levels of bilingual competence are considerably higher. It is plausible that our hypothesized effects for competence would emerge with a population that demonstrated broader variation on the bilingual competence measure.

In addition, specific features of the local context can help us understand what we observed. As our descriptive data demonstrated, participants in Southern Finland showed smaller preference for minority language television viewing, and considerably less use of the minority language in actual television viewing than participants in South-Tyrol and Transylvania. This particular context, with low Swedish demographic vitality and access only to the regional Swedish language TV channel, probably results in a default “push” toward majority language television consumption. When minority language media are either low quality or available for only limited times, consumption of the majority media is required for anybody seeking entertainment or information. Only people who are weak in the majority language *and* identify strongly with the minority language group (and hence prefer minority programming) can resist this “push.”

Put more generally, it appears that when preference for or consumption of minority language media is relatively low on the scale, effects of identity on preference and preference on consumption are strongest for those who are *least* bilingual. This is the pattern just described in Southern Finland, and also is the case in Fig. 2 (effects on identity on preference in South Tyrol). In contrast, when consumption is relatively high (Fig. 3: effects of preference on consumption in South Tyrol), the effects are more in line with our prediction—stronger effects for more strongly bilingual audience members. To extend this in a speculative direction, we could conceptualize these findings in terms of a three-way interaction between competence, preference, and opportunity to consume. When opportunities to consume in the minority language are low, only those with the most minority-associated motivation (i.e., high minority identity) *and* least competence in the alternative (majority language) will pursue consumption of minority language media. On the other hand, when opportunities are high, only those with the least motivation (low minority identity) and the most competence in the alternative will *resist* consumption of minority language media. A preliminary model of this theoretical effect is presented in Fig. 6.

The absence of moderator effects in Transylvania could be a result of two factors. First, the overall effects of identity in Transylvania are stronger than in the other two locations (see Table 3, column 1). It may be that this is a more identity-driven

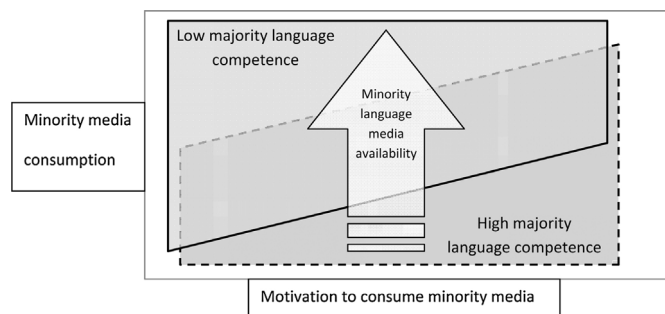


Fig. 6. General motivation–competence–opportunity model of minority language media consumption. The darker shaded area with a broken perimeter represents the likely field of minority language media consumption for those with high majority language competence. The lighter field with the solid perimeter represents the field for those with lower levels of majority language competence. Minority language media availability is represented as a force that increases minority language media use across the model.

environment, and one in which motivation plays a stronger role. Unlike Swedish in Southern Finland and German in South-Tyrol, Hungarian in Transylvania has neither the official status nor the broad language rights that the other two examined languages enjoy. Relatedly, Romanian speakers are not taught Hungarian in the educational system (Swedish and German are obligatory subjects in the majority language schools in the other regions). As a consequence, Hungarian speakers *must* know the majority language to get by in their daily life. These factors lend a different emotional and status complexion to competence in the majority language in this region. In addition, Transylvanian participants have less chance to live and behave according to their ethnolinguistic identity in their everyday life than participants in their other two regions; media provide a domain in which they can gratify their ethnolinguistic needs without any external hindrance or obstacle.

Second, as the group with the lowest vitality and lowest internal media availability in the minority language, the options available in other cultures simply may not be available. It is noticeable that preferences for minority language media are similar in South Tyrol and Transylvania, but consumption is notably lower in Transylvania. This suggests barriers to minority consumption might exist in Transylvania beyond our analysis of the media environment. Most notably, they rely heavily on transfrontier television for Hungarian language programming, and the transfrontier channels do not cover Romanian topics. Hence, for the Hungarians in Romania they *must* watch Romanian language TV if they want any local news or information.

The findings of this study have several implications. While earlier research revealed that ethnolinguistic media use is linked to both linguistic competence (e.g. Książek & Webster, 2008; Subervi-Velez, 1986) and ethnolinguistic identity (e.g. Clément et al., 2005; Gaudet & Clément, 2005; Vincze & Harwood, 2012), the present study has demonstrated that these two facets of the linguistic self interrelate when predicting ethnolinguistic media use. We have shown that competence and identity can work mutually in this process, and that objective vitality conditions (e.g. minority media supply), impact subjective factors to determine preferences for and exposure to minority language media. Clearly, low objective vitality of a minority language is likely to bring more use of majority language media (Landry & Allard, 1994; Moring & Husband, 2007). However, this is especially the case when low vitality is accompanied with low media supply in the minority language. As television has considerably higher production and distribution costs than the other media types (see Arana, Azpillaga, & Narbaiza, 2007; Moring, 2007), TV supply in the minority language is often weak even in regions where the access to other media (e.g. newspapers or new media) is good (Moring & Husband, 2007). There are meaningful

consequences here for a location such as Southern Finland, where the minority language is the weakest demographically from our three cases, and hence where its speakers have much contact with the majority language. The minority language speakers here have the least opportunity to counterbalance their objective ethnolinguistic circumstances by receiving minority linguistic input through the television, and hence they receive the least support for the retention of the minority language. In a broader context, then, we should emphasize that minority language TV consumption is not merely of interest in and of itself; consuming said media also contribute in substantive ways to the maintenance or decline in minority language use more generally, something of concern to many minority speakers and to anybody concerned with maintenance of global linguistic diversity (Cormack, 2007).

Although, the context for media use has changed dramatically in the last decades with the emergence of new media technologies, television continues to be an important medium even among the younger generations. While we do not have direct evidence of broader trends in the cultures we studied, evidence from the United States indicates that television content consumption has actually increased in recent years, albeit some of that content is being consumed on other platforms (primarily computers, mobile phones, and tablets) (Rideout et al., 2010). The same research demonstrates that television remains the dominant medium for children and teens with more time spent on television content than any other medium. On the other hand, media multitasking is on the increase and future research should pay more attention to the 70% of television viewers who are simultaneously engaged in some other media activity while consuming television content (Rideout et al., 2010). We did measure total television viewing time for our respondents (5-point scale asking how much time participants spend with TV on an average day: no TV, 1–30 min, 31–60 min, 61–120 min, over 120 min; To calculate the weighted average an estimated mean was matched to each interval as 0, 15, 45, 90, and 150 min). Responses to this item showed that television viewing plays a relatively important role in the life of the participants as in each region they spend about an hour per day watching TV (South Tyrol $M=60.07$, $SD=46.19$; Transylvania $M=54.17$, $SD=48.51$; Southern Finland $M=55.86$, $SD=44.96$). A one-way ANOVA indicated no significant differences between the regions, $F(2, 1428)=1.98$, $p=.14$.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the study, including a cross-sectional design and problems with measurement (i.e., using single items when measuring competence and low reliability for the identity measure in Transylvania) our findings should encourage more work on the combined effect of ethnolinguistic identity and language competence in determining media preferences and exposure. Our conceptual model and the conflicting findings across three minority language settings provide numerous avenues for future work on this topic.

Acknowledgements

The empirical research and the work of the first author was supported by the project “Bilingualism, Identity and the Media in Interand Intra-Cultural Comparisons” (Academy of Finland, Project 1123686), and a grant from the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation.

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