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This paper was originally submitted as a dissertation in completion of the requirements for the degree Masters in Global Migration. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UCL's Migration Research Unit.

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## UCL Migration Research Unit Working Papers

No. 2015/1

### Growing up between languages

Multilingualism among young Bosnian immigrants in Carinthia, Austria

Lauren R. Shaw



**GROWING UP BETWEEN LANGUAGES**  
**MULTILINGUALISM AMONG YOUNG BOSNIAN IMMIGRANTS IN**  
**CARINTHIA, AUSTRIA**

**Lauren R. Shaw**

**2014**

**This research dissertation is submitted for the MSc in**  
**Global Migration at University College London**

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## **Abstract**

Language is both a tool for communication and an important marker of one's cultural or national identity. When migration entails a move across linguistic as well as international borders, migrants often face the challenge of acquiring a new way of communicating and of reframing their understanding of self in light of their new surroundings. For individuals who migrate as children and teenagers—the '1.5 generation'—such a move may result in multilingualism and hybrid forms of identity. This dissertation presents the results of a small qualitative research project that explored the way young immigrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina experience language acquisition and maintenance in Carinthia, Austria, as well as the practical and affective significance they attribute to the languages in their repertoire. It draws data from in-depth interviews conducted with Bosnian Austrians who immigrated as children and teenagers, conversations with educators, and the analysis of government and institutional documents. In doing so, it compares the way young migrants construct personal narratives about language, identity, and aspiration with institutional discourses, highlighting points of agreement and divergence. The findings suggest that language has significant symbolic as well as practical value for young immigrants, and that the experience of acquiring new languages and of being confronted with linguistic difference often informs the formulation of their personal identities and plans for the future.

**Word Count:** 14,824

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, my thanks go out to all of the participants in this project for sharing their experiences with me. Our conversations were enlightening, thought-provoking, and simply a lot of fun. It has been an honour and I wish you all the best in the future.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Uta Staiger, for her sound advice and guidance throughout the development this project. Finally, special thanks go to Mirela, Karen, and Natalie, who have helped me along the way as advisors, proofreaders, and moral support.

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## Introduction

Recollections like ‘at the start... I didn’t understand anything’ and ‘I learned [the language] and then it got easier’ echo the experiences of many individuals who have migrated from one linguistic space to another (Berger 2004: 151, 160). So too, do statements like ‘you’ve got to be proud of who you are and what you speak’ (Mills 2005: 267). Because of its dual role as a tool of communication and a marker of one’s cultural or national identity (Arel 2002), language becomes one of the most important mediums through which a migrant both experiences life in a new place and maintains a connection to the people and culture of their countries of origin. It is the lens through which memories of the past and aspirations for the future are filtered. The contact between linguistically-different populations as a result of migration has the potential to produce both social tensions and to creative hybrid ways of using and of self-identifying through language (Holt and Gubbins 2002).

For individuals who immigrate as children or teenagers, a move between linguistic settings may be experienced as an interruption, but it also holds the potential for the development of unique forms of multilingualism. They, unlike their adult counterparts, spend their formative years and experience linguistic socialisation in both the country of origin and of destination. It is now widely accepted that children have not yet achieved full fluency in their mother tongue when they enter school, and that first language (L1) learning continues at least until puberty (Klein 1986). Young migrants, thus, often face the challenge of continuing L1 acquisition in a context where it is not widely spoken, even as they are introduced to a second language (L2)—the dominant language in the destination society. A diverse body of research has focused on relative levels of fluency and linguistic variation in different migrant populations and age groups (e.g. Extra and Verhoeven 1993; Tran 2010). Considerably less has been written about the way young migrants experience language change, the affective or practical importance they attribute to different languages in their repertoires, or the role language plays in their plans for the future.

This dissertation aims to explore these themes in the context of a particular group of young migrants: individuals who moved from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Carinthia, Austria.

Networks of migration have long linked Austria and the Balkans. They stretch from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, through the labour recruitment policies of the post-World War II years, and into the 1990s when Austria received thousands of families fleeing war during the break-up of Yugoslavia (Feichtinger and Cohen 2014). In Carinthia, one of Austria's most rural states, individuals born in Bosnia-Herzegovina now make up the second-largest group of immigrants after those from Germany (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2014). Though many studies of immigration to Austria focus on the city of Vienna, Carinthia presents an interesting case study because of its population's and its infrastructure's relative unfamiliarity with immigration. The presence of a historical minority of Slovene speakers in the state's southern districts also means that issues of multilingualism, language rights, and education are often high-profile and emotionally charged (Busch and Doleschal 2008). It is in this setting that the young Bosnian Austrians involved in this project have grown up negotiating between cultures and languages. Though an examination of the way they reflect on their own multilingualism, I hope to shed light on the diversity of experiences and attitudes that are not always reflected within institutional narratives about language use among immigrant youth.

The study will begin with a review of the existing literature on the connections between language and migration, on child and teenage migrants' language acquisition and use, and on the dynamics of Balkan-Austrian migration. Next, the methodology of the study will be presented. Finally, the study's findings will be discussed in three empirical chapters that focus on the process of becoming multilingual, the construction of identity through language, and the role language plays in aspirations for the future.

## Literature Review

The diverse body of literature that draws connections between migration, multilingualism, identity, and language policy stems from a number of disciplines. Drawing primarily on the fields of sociology of language, human geography, educational theory, and political science, this chapter aims to provide context for my research on the experiences of young Bosnian Austrians in Carinthia. It is split into three sections: the first looks at the relationship between migration and linguistic diversity, while the second focuses on language learning and maintenance among young migrants. The third and final section gives a brief history of Balkan-Austrian migration and an overview of the contemporary linguistic situation in Carinthia.

### *Language in Migration*

In seeking to understand the role language plays in an individual's migration experience, Edwards (1985), Alba *et al.* (2002), and others usefully distinguish between two primary functions of language. On the one hand, language acts as an in-group medium for communication. Knowledge of a language—a shared, but ultimately arbitrary system of symbols, sounds, and meanings (Morris 1946)—allows its speakers to exchange information and construct collective narratives. On the other, language is one of a number of symbolic markers of identity used to delineate the boundaries between population groups. Along with religion and shared history, linguistic difference is often seen as demarcating the line between 'us' and 'them'. As Edwards (1985) notes, this symbolic function of language has considerable staying power, even if the actual number of speakers begins to dwindle. Individuals who self-identify as Irish or Jewish, for example, often express an emotional attachment to Irish Gaelic or Yiddish, respectively, whether or not they speak the language fluently or indeed at all (Edwards 1984; Shandler 2004). In narratives of migration, language's dual role as a means of communication and a symbolic 'emblem of groupness' can be seen in the struggle to make oneself understood in a new language and in the process of renegotiating one's identity in a new social and linguistic context (Edwards 1985: 17).



In the European context, language's role as a marker of identity is also bound up in the concept of the nation state. The 'one nation, one state, one language' model that grew out of the eighteenth-century German and French nationalist movements explicitly drew the link between language and nation, both as an identifying characteristic and a means of legitimizing political sovereignty (Edwards 1985; Beswick 2010). More recently, this logic of 'homogenize within, and heterogenize outwardly' can be seen in the Balkans, where a shared language, Serbo-Croatian, was imposed across linguistically diverse Yugoslavia (Bugarski 2001: 73). Following Yugoslavia's dissolution and the wars of the 1990s, the reassertion of national languages—Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian—and political battles over the use of minority languages in the successor states show the continued vitality of this thinking (Bugarski and Hawkesworth 2004). If, as Barker (1927: 173) asserts, 'a nation must be an idea as well as a fact before it can become a dynamic force', in many European nation-states language is a powerful part of that idea.

Yet despite its persistence in modern linguistic nationalism, the idea of 'one nation, one state, one language' is hardly an accurate description of contemporary Europe. The presence of long-standing regional minorities coupled with the more recent arrival of immigrant groups means that most European states are, and have long been, multilingual (Holt and Gubbins 2002). Though academic research increasingly acknowledges that most of the world's societies are not strictly monolingual (Pauwels 2011; Braunmüller and Gabriel 2012), in popular imagination and in political discourse, immigrant languages are often seen as an incursion into the linguistically-homogenous nation and a threat to national unity (Edwards 1985). As a number of observers have noted, the proliferation of language testing as a requirement for attaining citizenship further emphasises the idea of a monolingual society or, at the very least, a society in which one language holds a position of dominance (Hogan-Brun *et al.* 2009; Extra *et al.* 2011). To add to this mismatch between imagined monolingualism and societal multilingualism, European Union (EU) integration initiatives and the educational systems of many European states place great value on foreign language acquisition (Extra and Verhoeven 1993; Rindler Schjerve and Vetter 2012). As a result, many members of European majority language group possess a certain, if incomplete, knowledge of another language. These tend,

however, to be high-prestige languages like English, rather than those of immigrant minorities, which often carry a lower level of sociolinguistic prestige.

Policy approaches to minority languages vary considerably across Europe. Sue Wright (2007) notes in her comparative look at Regional and Minority Language (RML) rights in Europe, that documents like the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional and Minority Languages are reframing language rights, long considered to be negative rights, as positive ones. That is, while individuals previously had the right to speak the language of their choice in private without fear of persecution, states are now encouraged to enable RML speakers to receive education and interact with the state in their own language. This shift towards viewing the use of one's own language as a 'right' has, however, largely been reserved for recognised RMLs and has not been applied to immigrant languages (Extra and Gorter 2001). This can, perhaps, be explained by the fact that the 'expectation of linguistic integration has been widely shared both by native-born citizens and immigrants themselves' and thus 'has not historically been a major source of conflict' (Patten and Kymlicka 2003: 7). When legislation does concern itself with the linguistic life of immigrant groups, it is often through educational policy (Extra and Gorter 2001), a topic that will be more thoroughly discussed in the next section.

However, just as it is difficult to generalise about the diverse policies of European states, it is equally problematic to speak of the linguistic situation of immigrant groups as a single and uniform experience. There is considerable difference between diasporas, but also within them (Beswick 2010). Diasporic space, as Stuart Hall (1994) has argued, is one of creativity in which new cultural forms and ways of identifying are produced. This sense of productiveness is shared by many who study contact linguistics. When languages meet—often as a result of migration—new ways of using language(s) emerge (Weinreich 1968). Because the current project centres on individuals' experiences with language, rather than a linguistic analysis of their utterances, I will not venture too deeply into the great variety of forms that have been observed. Two common features should, however, be mentioned: lexical borrowing is a common occurrence, through which multilingual individuals incorporate words from one language into a conversation being held in another. Speakers may also choose to switch between languages within a single conversation, known as code-switching, while maintaining the syntax of the

language being spoken at any given time (Clyne 2003). These phenomena can be intentional or subconscious and occur for a number of reasons, including not finding a fitting word in one language, adding emphasis or style to a statement, or self-identifying oneself through the use of an in-group language or one recognised as prestigious (Weinreich 1968; Fishman 1972; Beswick 2010). Lexical borrowing and code-switching are used by different individuals to different extents, and can depend on both the social context and the topic at hand. Importantly, however, they represent some of the strategies that multilingual individuals employ to position themselves within the host country, within immigrant spaces, and in relation to the home country (Lo 1999).

While considerable research has been done on topics relating to mixed-language use by immigrant populations, far fewer academic studies have featured the reflections of migrants themselves. As Yasuko Kanno (2000) argues in her exploration of young bilingual Japanese expats' experiences with language, the use of personal narratives can be indispensable in trying to move past a basic understanding of identity that relies on labels and categories, and to see the diversity of factors that influence linguistic identity. This reasoning can be seen as part of a trend that Beswick (2010: 135) terms the 'individualization of diasporas'. Other examples include the work done by Grit Liebscher and Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain (2013) on how German-speaking migrants use language to construct 'German' spaces in Canada; Joan Mills (2005) on the gap between official and migrant narratives about diaspora language maintenance in the UK; and Li Wei and Zhu Hua (2013) on Chinese university students and their use of different varieties of Chinese and English within multilingual social networks. All three studies, as well as Kanno's (2000) research mentioned above, emphasise the diversity of experiences, attitudes, and meanings within their respective samples. Mill's conversations with Pakistani-British mothers and their children, for example, described the use of a number of mediums to maintain the heritage language, including the ever-increasing importance of the internet—something that has also been observed in the Bosnian-Austrian context (Halilovich 2013). The use of personal narratives, thus, becomes important for complicating simple accounts of linguistic integration versus isolation, language shift, and identity formation.

### *Focus on Child and Teenage Migrants*

Many studies concerned with the intersection of language and migration utilise the concept of ‘migrant generations’ to describe changes in language use. This is particularly true in studies of language shift—a speech community’s move away from one language, usually the heritage language, and towards primary use of the dominant national or regional language (Veltman 1983). Whether mourned as a loss of cultural identity or celebrated as an indicator of successful integration policies, language shift is commonly assumed to follow the three-generation model first proposed by Calvin Veltman (1983) and Joshua Fishman (1988). First-generation immigrants—i.e. those who have themselves migrated—are assumed to have a higher level of proficiency in and generally favour the heritage language, though they may begin to learn the language of the host country. Their children, the second generation, grow up fluent in the language of the host country and, to varying degrees, bilingual in their parents’ mother tongue. For members of third generation, the grandchildren of immigrants, the host-country language becomes the primary means of communication and only trace knowledge of the heritage language remains. This model has been widely applied in both the United States and Europe, though more recent studies emphasise a number of complicating factors, including exogenous marriage and the geographic distribution of speech communities that may extend or shorten this process (Alba *et al.* 2002; Kim and Min 2010; Medvedeva 2012). Thus, while ‘generation’ is a commonly chosen framework for studying acculturative processes like language shift that are navigated over time and within families, it should not be used uncritically.

Particularly relevant to this project is the following critique from David Kertzer’s (1983) thorough analysis of the concept’s problematic use in sociological studies:

[I]mmigrants range in age from infancy to octagenarians. Does it make sense to lump these together as members of the same generation? The cultural imprint of foreign birth on the 80-year-old is entirely different from the imprint on the infant. (141)

Young migrants are an uneasy fit for the generational framework. As R.S. Oropesa and Nancy Landale (1997) demonstrate in a study of English proficiency among Latino Americans, if foreign-born children are grouped together with native-born individuals as part of the second

generation—a common practice (see e.g. Mills 2005; Midtbøen 2013)—the group’s level of fluent bilingualism and English monolingualism will be driven down. If, however, they are considered to be part of the first generation alongside older migrants, the group’s average level of English proficiency will rise as the young migrants enter host-country schools and experience linguistic socialisation in a way older first-generation migrants will not. In matters of language, perhaps more than any other aspect of acculturation, the experiences of child and youth migrants are undeniably unique. One emergent answer to this mismatch—and a concept that will be employed in this study—is the use the term ‘1.5 generation’ to describe this distinct group (Rumbaut and Ima 1988; Rumbaut 1994). It has gained considerable currency and is now used to in studies of young immigrants whose socialisation has occurred in both the countries of origin and of destination. However, though the ‘1.5 generation’ adds needed nuance to the existing framework, there is, as of yet, no consensus over the developmentally-significant age parameters for the category (Rumbaut 2004).

When language is the subject of migration research, this focus on age of arrival must be coupled with a careful consideration of a child’s linguistic development. Though most children are able to communicate freely in their first language (L1) by the time they enter school, it is now generally accepted that L1 learning continues roughly until puberty (Klein 1986). Some elements of language, most notably vocabulary, continue to develop throughout one’s life. Because ‘[f]irst language acquisition is intimately bound up with the child’s cognitive and social development’, it is through L1 learning that the child begins to understand and express temporal concepts of past, present, and future; and deictic terms that position the speaker, like ‘here’ and ‘there’ or ‘me’ and ‘you’ (Klein 1986: 4). Depending on the age at which a child begins learning a second language (L2)<sup>1</sup>, they may be faced with the challenge of learning the L2 equivalent of concepts they have not yet mastered in L1. Such steps in cognitive and linguistic development that are often dependent on an individual’s social and educational context, thus, inform attempts to define the 1.5 migrant generation.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that most linguistic studies distinguish between second language acquisition and foreign language acquisition. A second language is learned in a social context in which it is the primary means of social interaction and, in many cases, the official national or regional language. A foreign language is learned outside such a context, often in a school setting (Klein 1986). When speaking of child and teenage migrants learning the language of the host country, it is thus appropriate to talk of ‘second’ rather than ‘foreign’ language acquisition.

In the previous section, educational policy and practice were mentioned as some of the ways in which host country institutions most influence young migrants' language acquisition and maintenance. Though the role of the family and community organizations should not be discounted, particularly in the maintenance of the heritage language (Chinen and Tucker 2005; Guardado 2014), schooling plays an important role in a young person's linguistic development. Approaches to the education of immigrant minorities, it has been noted, can also be studied as indicators of a host society's views on immigrant assimilation versus integration. The 'extra-academic significance' of schools means that public debates about language of instruction and diversity in the classroom often stem as much from social ideologies as they do from educational theory (Edwards 1985: 180.)

The availability and nature of language programming for immigrant youth varies considerably between, and often within, countries. Along with societal views of multiculturalism, the size and relative heterogeneity of the immigrant population are often determining factors. While most school systems offer some form of second language assistance to help in the acquisition of the majority language—be it through the presence of classroom assistants, alternative or supplementary lessons—the field is more varied when it comes to the accommodation or support for heritage languages. The typology of bilingual education models set out by Joshua Fishman and John Lovas (1970) distinguishes between the following four educational approaches:

- *transitional bilingualism* that uses the heritage language as a stepping stone in the first few years of education until a child can follow the mainstream, monolingual lessons;
- *monoliterate bilingualism* that encourages the development of oral skills in both languages, but promotes writing and reading only in the majority language;
- *partial bilingualism* that aims to create full bilingualism, but only teaches a select number of classes in the heritage language; and
- *complete bilingualism* that seeks to promote advanced linguistic and cognitive functioning in both languages and teaches all subjects in both languages.

Though, as Edwards (1985: 132) notes, ideological arguments can be made for or against the promotion of full bilingualism of minority youth, from a cognitive developmental perspective,

an acceptance of transitional bilingualism that ‘start[s] from where children are’ can be incredibly effective in both smoothing and hastening the transition between heritage-language use at home and acquisition of the majority language at school.

The linguistic outcomes for immigrant youth that result from such educational approaches are as varied as the factors that determine them. Levels of L1 and L2 proficiency have been well documented in a variety of groups and range from complete to limited bilingualism. Research has also shown that children who grow up speaking more than one language have an advantage over monolingual children when it comes to learning a third language (Abu-Rabia and Sanitsky 2010)—something that has the potential to benefit young migrants in countries like Austria whose educational culture emphasises foreign language acquisition (Extra and Verhoeven 1993; Rindler Schjerve and Vetter 2012). What has received considerably less attention and is at the heart of this study is the resultant attitudes young migrants have towards their own multilingualism, as well as the ways they construct narratives about their own linguistic development.

#### *Case Study: Carinthia, Austria*

The idea of Austria as a ‘country of immigration’ (*Einwanderungsland*) is not one that carries much currency in either political or popular discourse. Yet, as social historians have noted, Vienna’s place at the heart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the forced migration of labour and prisoners during World War II, the arrival of Cold War refugees, and a series of guest-worker policies have contributed to a much more multicultural population than generally features in the Austrian national imaginary (Feichtinger and Cohen 2014; Bauer 2008; Mayer 2009). Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Austria’s economy experienced a postwar economic boom akin to West Germany’s *Wirtschaftswunder*, Austrian officials actively encouraged labour migration from Yugoslavia and other parts of Southern and Eastern Europe. At the height of the programme and before the international economic crisis of 1973–1974 forced Austrian employers to dismiss some of their foreign workforce, Yugoslavs made up 80% of the country’s guest-worker population (Feichtinger and Cohen 2014). As Stefanie Mayer

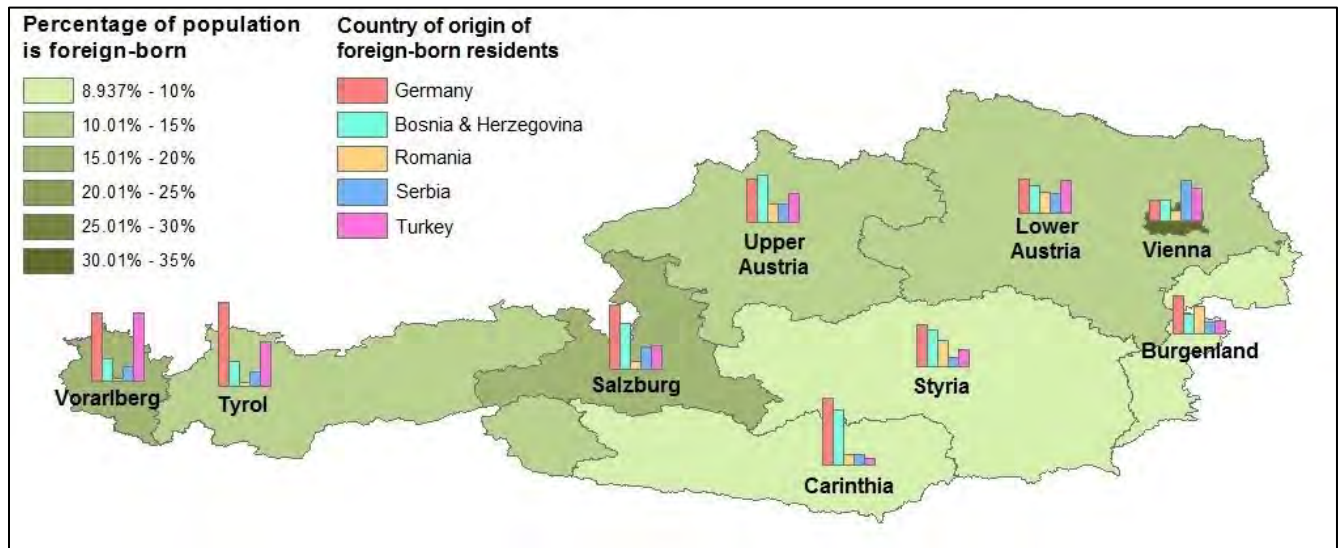
(2009) notes in her analysis of integrationist and exclusionary discourses in Austrian politics, guest workers were viewed as temporary labour rather than immigrants, per se, often ignoring the incentives that both employers and labourers had for extending these stays beyond their allotted term. Political debate during this time, therefore, centred on concerns about foreign competition for native-born labourers and rarely raised questions about the workers' integration, rights, or access to social goods. In short, immigration was treated as an economic rather than a social issue.

Though the end of the *Gastarbeiter* programmes initially reduced the number of foreign-born workers as planned, it also brought with it unintended consequences. As guest workers saw the cyclical migration path between their home countries and Austria cut, many extended their stays in Austria and some brought their families to join them (Bauer 2008). Following the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia in 1991, many Bosnians and Croatians fled north seeking asylum. The presence of established ethnic communities and its geographic proximity to the Balkans made Austria a common destination (Valenta and Strabac 2013). Despite restrictive asylum laws introduced in 1992 and 1993, approximately 85,000 Bosnians were accepted as 'de-facto refugees'—that is, they were not recognised as refugees in the sense of the 1951 Geneva Convention, but were given temporary residence, permission to work, and support on humanitarian grounds (Berger 2004; Valenta and Strabac 2013). If the chain-migration of family members following the decline of labour recruitment policies began to diversify the migrant population in terms of gender and age, the influx of refugees in the 1990s further increased the imperative that Austrian infrastructure adapt to the needs of young migrants.

The legacy of these historical periods of increased migration and Austria's position within the free-movement area of the European Union (EU) is reflected in the country's current demographics. Figure 1, below, shows the percentage of each Austrian state's population that was born abroad and the breakdown of each state's migrant population by the top five countries of origin. Each of the five sending countries, it should be noted, are either EU member states, as is the case with Germany and Romania, or countries with which Austria had favourable labour agreements in the past.



FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF AUSTRIA'S FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION



SOURCE: 2011 AUSTRIAN CENSUS DATA

Immigration's effect on Austria's linguistic landscape can be seen clearly in the country's school-age population. In the school year 2011/12, 19.3% of students in Austrian schools had another 'everyday language' (*Umgangssprache*) than German (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2014). The 2012 National Education Report—a nation-wide study published every three years—divides the country's evolving approach to the education of students with a first language other than German into four domains: support in learning German as a second language (*Deutschförderung/Deutsch als Zweitsprache*); heritage-language instruction (*muttersprachlicher Unterricht*); the recent introduction of 'extraordinary student' status for students whose knowledge of German in their first two years at school is not yet advanced enough for them to receive marks in some subjects (*außerordentliche SchülerInnen*); and the promotion of 'intercultural learning' as an educational principle (Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell 2012). The implementation of these programmes and principles vary greatly, however, across the country. Most studies that reflect on the dynamics and efficacy of these programmes draw on educational theory; surveys among educators; and quantitative educational outcomes including test scores, achievement of school-leaving qualifications, and entrance into higher education (Muhr and Biffli 2010; Woplatek 2010; Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell 2012). Far fewer make use of testimony from students themselves. The OECD-led PISA survey represents

an exception, mixing testing data with student survey results, though its primary focus is not language learning (PISA 2012).

Carinthia, the geographic focus of my research, is one of Austria's more rural states. As can be seen in Figure 1, above, it is also one of the states where foreign-born individuals make up a relatively low percentage of the overall population. Of the circa 10% of Carinthian residents that were born abroad, the two largest groups by far are those from Germany and from Bosnia-Herzegovina (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2014). Among research that focuses on the life experiences of young immigrants in Austria, two studies—both PhD projects—have particular relevance to my project because of their regional focus and their interview-based approach. In the *Die Sprache der Migrantenkinder* (2008), Sanela Pejić considers how 1.5 generation Croatian-speaking immigrants from Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina to Austria experience bilingualism. Though Jasmin Berger's project, *Leben mit zwei Kulturen: Identität jugendlicher ImmigrantInnen aus dem ehemaligen Jugoslawien* (2004) does not focus specifically on linguistic experience, the role of language in the experience of migration and identity formation is raised in several interviews. Despite the fact that the latter includes interviews with individuals from across Yugoslavia, its focus on Carinthia makes it an interesting point of comparison. With this study, I hope to contribute to this growing body of research that considers the dynamic place of young immigrants in Austria.

While most studies on migration to Austria focus on Vienna, I have selected Carinthia precisely because it does not fit the mould of the European multicultural metropolis. A second motivating factor is that debates about linguistic diversity in the state are not limited to the discussion of recent immigrant languages. Southern Carinthia is also home to one of Austria's autochthonous minorities: the Carinthian Slovenes. Following the end of World War I, the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and prolonged fighting in Southern Carinthia, a plebiscite was called to decide whether the area and its mixed population of German- and Slovene-speakers would become part of Austria or of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). A majority of 59.01% to 40.96% voted in favour of Austria (Valentin 2009). Slovenian—along with Czech, Croatian, Romani, Slovakian, and Hungarian—is a legally recognised autochthonous minority language in Austria (Haslinger

2010). According to the Ethnic Groups Act of 1976, the Carinthian Slovene population has the legal right to receive an education and to interact with the government in Slovene. Though as the *Ortstafelstreit*—a political dispute that stretched from the 1970s until 2011 over the erection of bilingual topographical signs in Southern Carinthia—demonstrates, the presence of a linguistic ‘other’ in Carinthia and the exercise of their political and cultural rights have not gone uncontested (Rasinger 2014).

A final feature to consider in any study of Carinthia’s linguistic landscape is the presence of a distinct regional dialect. Though linguistic variance seldom runs neatly along borders, Austrian dialects are generally associated with one of the country’s nine states (Martin 2000; Bellamy 2010), and many Austrians claim to be able to ‘immediately tell whether the speaker comes from Tyrol, Carinthia, Styria or Upper or Lower Austria’ (Wiesinger 1990: 445). While each dialect does exhibit a unique set of linguistic characteristics, this statement is perhaps just as telling of how the way sub-national identity in Austria is bound up with dialect usage. Despite the fact that Austrian Standard German—a standard distinct from the *Hochdeutsch* spoken in Germany—is officially the national language, much of daily life and business in Carinthia is conducted in Carinthian dialect or a Carinthian-tinted variety of the Austrian Standard (Bellamy 2010). Though considerable research has documented attitudes toward Austria’s many dialects and social perceptions of their speakers (Moosmüller 1991; Soukup 2009; Bellamy 2010), far less has been written about dialect use by immigrants. This project, thus, seeks to examine how young immigrants in Carinthia handle the dual challenge of mastering both the national standard that is overwhelmingly used in written communication and the regional dialect, as spoken by the majority of Carinthians. It also aims to explore the role of dialect use in the evolution of their linguistic identities.

## **Methodology**

This study is based on a phenomenological approach to the intersection of language and migration. In focusing on the linguistic experience of young Bosnian Austrians, it aims to understand ‘how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others’ (Patton 2002: 104). The diversity of experiences and attitudes they express will then be compared to the narratives about immigrant languages constructed by governmental and institutional sources.

I recognise that my research and interactions with interview participants are influenced by my position as a foreigner—I am neither Austrian nor Bosnian. In some cases, this may have encouraged participants to speak more frankly or to explain a point in more depth than they would have to an in-group individual; in others, it may have made interviewees more reserved. The fact that I, too, learned German as a second language and grappled with the Carinthian dialect, having moved there as an adult, provided a number of opportunities to discuss shared experiences. In short, I consider my status as an outsider to be neither a strong hindrance nor help, but am aware of its effect on my position within the project.

### *Data Collection*

The first and primary data source for this project is a set of in-depth interviews conducted with individuals who migrated from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Carinthia, Austria as children and teenagers. The narrative and self-reflective nature of semi-structured interviews make them ideal for the exploration of personal experience, future plans, and language-based identity formation (Kanno 2000; Longhurst 2010). Though the matched-guise technique is frequently used to gauge individuals’ attitudes towards different languages and dialects (e.g. Bellamy 2010), I decided against using it. As Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain (2013) point out, linguistic attitudes are constructed in interaction and observing them through conversation gives them context in a way matched-guise tests often do not.

During a three-week period of fieldwork in Austria, I interviewed individuals who had migrated from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Carinthia when they were between 6 and 16 years old, but who are now over 18.<sup>2</sup> This age range, borrowing from the concept of the 1.5 migrant generation, was chosen because such individuals would have received some level of schooling and socialisation in both countries (Oropesa and Landale 1997; Rumbaut 2004). A call for participants was shared with students at the University of Klagenfurt, but ultimately snowballing from existing contacts proved to be the most effective means of identifying potential interview partners.<sup>3</sup> While snowballing shares the limitations of other non-probability sampling methods—notably the lack of representativeness or generalizability—for this study, it proved advantageous. I was able to mitigate the danger of only sampling within one social network by beginning from four unacquainted starting points (Seale 2012). In addition, this method enabled me to interview individuals who may not otherwise have volunteered to participate in an academic study. My sample includes individuals from a range of professional and educational backgrounds, those who identify strongly as Bosnian and those who do not, those who are confident speaking a variety of languages and those who are more self-conscious about their linguistic abilities. Because of the limited time available in which to conduct fieldwork and following a number of promising conversations with individuals who had arrived before the age of 6, the age parameters of the sample were extended downward. Though this does not adhere strictly to some definitions of the 1.5 generation, I believe it has enriched my sample. Because this research is exploratory in nature and does not aim for generalizability, I view the use of snowballing and the expansion of the age parameters of the sample as a chance to include a greater variety of narratives.

In addition to varied age of arrival in Carinthia—the oldest being 14 and the youngest 1 year old—every effort was made to create a diverse sample in terms of gender, region of origin in Bosnia-Herzegovina and of settlement in Carinthia. Of the eight participants, three were women and five men. Two, Anel and Haris, are brothers. Several came from Bihać and Bosanska Krupa, but other places of origin included Brčko, Dobojo, and Zenica. Within Carinthia, participants grew up in both cities, like Villach and Klagenfurt, and towns, including Spittal an

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<sup>2</sup> See page 56 for the initial project proposal.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 for the Call for Participants and English translation.

der Drau and Velden. Table 1, below, provides further details on the interview participants and their proficiency in a variety of languages. Though concerns have been raised about the accuracy of such self-reported measures, previous research has shown them to be reliable and strongly correlated with actual linguistic ability (Fishman and Cooper 1969; Tran 2010).

TABLE 1: BOSNIAN AUSTRIAN INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Name <sup>4</sup>	Age at arrival in Carinthia	Languages spoken	Self-assessed level of proficiency (written/spoken)
Edin	1	Bosnian German English Spanish Italian	Basic (W)/Fluent (S) Fluent (W/S) Basic (W/S) Basic (W/S) Basic (W/S)
Goran	2.5	Serbian German English	--- (W)/Advanced (S) Fluent (W/S) Intermediate (W/S)
Emira	4	Bosnian German English French Russian	Fluent (W/S) Fluent (W/S) Advanced (W/S) Intermediate (W/S) Basic (W/S)
Anel	5	Bosnian German English	Intermediate (W)/Advanced (S) Advanced (W)/Advanced (S) Basic (W/S)
Lajla	6.5	Bosnian German Croatian/Serbian English Slovenian Italian Russian Spanish	Fluent (W/S) Fluent (W/S) Fluent (W/S) Fluent (W/S) Intermediate (W/S) Intermediate (W/S) Intermediate (W)/basic (S) Basic (W/S)
Naida	7	Bosnian German English	Intermediate (W)/Advanced (S) Fluent (W/S) Basic (W/S)
Haris	8	Bosnian German English	Fluent (W/S) Fluent (W/S) Basic (W/S)
Semir	14	Bosnian German	Fluent (W/S) Advanced (W/S)

<sup>4</sup> The names of all interviewees, Bosnian Austrians and educators alike, have been changed at the request of the participants.

The majority of these interviews were conducted in person in Carinthia. In two cases, interviews were conducted via Skype with individuals who were not able to meet with me during my time in Austria. Though online research methods bring with them a unique set of challenges—including questions of participant familiarity with or access to appropriate technology, differences between internet and conventional written language (Madge 2010)—I do not believe these present a problem in this case. Both individuals, in their mid-20s, expressed confidence in using Skype, and because the programme allows for video + audio communication, the conversational nature of the in-person interview was maintained.

Before beginning, all interviewees were provided with information about my research and their rights as project participants, and then asked to complete a short information sheet about themselves and the languages they speak.<sup>5</sup> All interviews were recorded, with permission from participants, using an electronic recording device. Each participant was asked whether they would prefer to conduct the interview in German or English, though they were encouraged to give examples from all of the languages they speak. Two interviewees, Emira and Lajla, chose English, while the rest chose German. Interviews in both languages proceeded largely according to a prepared set of questions,<sup>6</sup> though the semi-structured nature of the interview meant that participants were also able to guide the conversation to topics they felt were significant (Longhurst 2010).

In addition to the narratives of young Bosnian Austrians, I also conducted interviews with educators and gathered a body of documents for textual analysis. The purpose of this second set of sources was to gauge institutional and government narratives about young immigrants' language use in Austria and Carinthia in particular. Prior to my fieldwork, I contacted 43 Carinthian schools—including *Volkschulen* (primary schools) and *Neue Mittelschulen* (general lower secondary school)<sup>7</sup>—asking about their *Deutsch als Zweitsprache* (German as a second language) and *muttersprachlicher Unterricht* (heritage language instruction) offerings. Many responded with information and a few referred me to individual

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 2 for a copy of the Participant Understanding & Information Form, and English translation.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 3 for a copy of the interview schedule.

<sup>7</sup> A type of integrated secondary school that was introduced in 2008 and is currently in the process of replacing *Hauptschulen* in Austria.

teachers. I conducted interviews with five educators, listed in Table 2, who were based in three different cities: Klagenfurt, Villach, and Feldkirchen. The interviews were conducted in much the same way as those described above with young Bosnian Austrians, though the questions asked were tailored to explore the role each individual plays in their respective school.

TABLE 1: BOSNIAN AUSTRIAN INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Name	Position	School Type
<i>Vera</i>	Teacher of German as a second language	Comprehensive school
<i>Herbert</i>	Headmaster	Comprehensive school
<i>Franz</i>	Teacher and coordinator of international student exchange programme	Higher Technical Institute
<i>Almira</i>	Guest instructor for a Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian mother tongue course	Higher Technical Institute
<i>Mirna</i>	Former German as a second language teacher and current teacher of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian mother tongue instruction	Primary school

Documents for textual analysis were chosen from a variety of institutional stakeholders—the federal government, teachers conferences, school websites, and the Austrian Public Employment Service. As with the interviews conducted with young Bosnian Austrians, the conversations with educators and sample texts do not constitute a representative sampling, but give an indication of a range of narratives present in Austrian institutions.

### *Analysis*

Interviews with both Bosnian Austrians and with educators were transcribed in full, using the system of transcription codes outlined in Dunn (2005) to mark pauses, emphasis, laughter, and non-verbal cues. Transcription was done as soon as possible using the language(s) in which the interviews were conducted to preserve nuanced meaning and style during analysis, with excerpts translated for use in this text. Additional notes were made in a research diary immediately following each interview to record the general tone, my initial thoughts, and key themes (Longhurst 2010). Borrowing from narrative analysis and oral history methodologies,



analysis was done by hand, noting key or recurrent themes, as well as the ways in which participants constructed narratives about their own or their students' language use. I recognise that this research, as with many studies that ask individuals to reflect on past events, is affected by the limitations and quirks of the human memory (Yow 2005). However, because the primary aim of this study is to explore the way individuals perceive and create meaning out of personal experiences, I believe there is much value in the sociologist W.I. Thomas' observation that 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (1928: 572). Whether or not an interviewee's childhood language learning unfolded exactly as they now report, the way in which they remember and narrate it are indispensable for any attempt to understand the role language plays in their perception of self and of society.

The approach I have taken to textual analysis is largely the same. Rather than viewing the texts as 'facts' against which the 'stories' of individuals must be compared and reconciled, I see both as created within a social context for an audience—be it me or a ministry of government officials. Though they differ in form, both personal narratives and textual sources 'help to shape and produce social meanings and forms of knowledge' (Tonkiss 2012: 405).

## Empirical Chapters

### *Chapter 1: New Country, New Language(s)*

In this opening chapter, I will briefly discuss how the young Bosnian Austrians involved in this study characterise their migration to Austria. I will then look more closely at the way they narrate the process of acquiring German as a second language, of maintaining their heritage language, and of learning other foreign languages. These personal histories will be compared throughout to institutional and educator narratives about immigrant youth language acquisition.

Though I made no mention of year of arrival while recruiting interview partners, only that they must have arrived before the age of 16, I was struck by the similarity of their stories of coming to Austria. With one exception, all migrated in 1991 or 1992, having observed the fighting in neighbouring Croatia or following the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This was often a hastily made decision. Emira describes her parents' decision to move the family to Austria, recalling that they 'took anything we had on, this was it, and they packed us into the car and we drove here'.<sup>8</sup> Though Semir arrived in 1999, after the war had ended, his story shares another common feature with the other interviewees: Austria was chosen as a destination because a parent or other relative was already living there. For Lajla, immigration was not even the intended goal of her 1991 trip to Austria: 'we went up to visit [my dad] and then the shootings and the war started in my region, and so it ended up with us staying here'.<sup>9</sup> While some of the participants initially arrived in other parts of Austria, including the brothers Anel and Haris whose family briefly lived with an uncle in Vorarlberg, all eventually settled in Carinthia.

The sudden arrival of these and many other children and teenagers from the Balkans posed a challenge to the Austrian educational system in the school year 1992/93. All children between the ages of 6 and 15 currently residing in Austria, regardless of nationality or immigration status, are required to attend school (§ 1–3 Schulpflichtgesetz). Federal law also

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

specifies that the language of instruction will be German, except in the case of recognised linguistic minority schools—such as those that serve the Slovene-speaking community in Carinthia—and, under unique circumstances, at the request of the school’s headmaster and with permission of the local school authority (§ 16 Schulunterrichtsgesetz). The latter exception was used in 1992/93 by some schools in Vienna to set up special classes designed to meet the needs of the unusually high number of Bosnian refugee children that entered the city’s schools that year (BMBWK 2005). In Carinthia, where the number of young immigrants was lower, though still significant, arrangements were usually made on a case-by-case basis through ‘German for Students with a non-German Mother Tongue’ programming. The design of such programmes also became, as of the start of that year, a part of the mainstream regulation of public education in Austria and a new curriculum was issued, though its exact implementation across the country varied based on local circumstances (BMBWK 2005).

This ‘shock to the system’ went both ways. An initial language barrier was cited by many Bosnian Austrian interviewees as one of their first impressions of life in Austria. While most had a parent living in Austria before their immigration, only the oldest arrival, Semir, reported having learned any German before immigrating. For the majority, the first day of school marked the beginning of German acquisition. As Edin remembers it:

On the first day of school, my dad came with me. My father couldn’t speak German very well and neither could I. It was strange because [the teacher] asked me a lot of things in German, and I didn’t understand. She found it difficult too, I think. She was a bit shocked, because I couldn’t speak any German. For her it was also a challenge.<sup>10</sup>

This feeling of having surprised his new Carinthian school was shared by Lajla, who commented that ‘I think they were not prepared for that ... I think they were just happy that they survived the classes with the children that didn’t speak German’.<sup>11</sup> Despite this initial impression, the majority reported receiving additional instruction in German (*Deutsch Zusatzunterricht/Deutsch Förderunterricht*) during their first couple years or fondly mentioned particular teachers who had given them extra assistance. Others, often those who arrived in time to attend Kindergarten, transitioned straight away into what they termed the ‘normal’ classes. While

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

some recalled moments of frustration when '[the other kids] had words I hadn't learned yet,'<sup>12</sup> on the whole they regarded their acquisition of German as unproblematic and ultimately successful:

It happened pretty quickly. As a kid, when you're playing with German-speaking kids every day... It's automatic.<sup>13</sup>

I was one of the better students so I didn't have any problems. I didn't have to attend the *Förderunterricht*.<sup>14</sup>

From the first year at the *Hauptschule* on, I was in the top achievement group (*Leistungsgruppe*) for German. I had learned the spelling well and grammar, too.<sup>15</sup>

Mastering German was, thus, both a point of pride and the obvious, 'automatic' result of their situation. Even those who reported experiencing difficulties or needing to spend additional time after school practicing the language framed their stories as eventual successes. Now in their mid-20s and early 30s, most described themselves as speaking German fluently or with advanced proficiency. Four have attended university and most hold part- or full-time jobs for which they use German on a daily basis.<sup>16</sup>

In comparing their experiences with learning German to those of their parents, a distinction was drawn between what Klein (1986) calls 'guided' and 'spontaneous' language acquisition. Having entered school with little or no knowledge of German, these young immigrants' grasp of the language was both 'guided' by regular instruction and 'spontaneous' as they interacted with their peers and other German-speaking neighbours. For their parents, acquisition occurred in a much less structured way through 'spontaneous' interactions with co-workers and friends. Several interviewees also cited their entry into school and requests for help with homework as a factor that contributed to their parents' language learning. As Lajla saw it, it was a question of necessity: 'They were not *forced* to learn it to educate themselves further or make friends. They had their Bosnian friends or co-workers, and as a child you don't

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Haris, 9/7/2014.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Naida, 5/7/2014. In many Austrian schools, students are split into three 'achievement groups' (*Leistungsgruppen*) for the main subjects of German, mathematics, and foreign languages. Naida mentions that she was in the top *Leistungsgruppe* to emphasise how well she spoke German after only a few years in the country.

<sup>16</sup> See Table 1 in the Methodology section for more details on participants' self-evaluation of their level of German.

have many options.<sup>17</sup> In addition, all respondents said they noticed a difference between how they and their parents speak German, often noting that their parents have stronger accents or are not as comfortable with written German. Despite having immigrated at the same time, or in many cases after their parents, the young Bosnian Austrians' acquisition of German at a younger age and in the context of school led to very different results. These self-reported differences between sets of parents and children are in line with and highlight the importance of distinguishing between first and 1.5 generation migrants. As Oropesa and Landale (1997) emphasise, to group child and teenage migrants with their parents in the first generation would both skew statistics on language proficiency and ignore the unique nature of their migration experience.

Returning to Lajla's observation that learning German was more a necessity than an option for young migrants, this view can be seen as a reflection of much of Austrian educational policy. One of the primary aims conveyed in the *Hauptschule* curriculum for German is that

[t]he teaching of German must promote the linguistic and cultural socialisation of students for whom German is a second (third or fourth) language ... in order to lay the foundation for their academic and social integration' (cited in BMBWK 2005: 17)

Emphasis on attaining a high level of proficiency in the majority language is not unique to the Austrian context. It does, however, carry added weight for systems like Austria's in which students are streamed into schools with varying levels of prestige based on their abilities and their career aspirations (Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell 2012).

In conversations with Vera and Mirna, a current and former teacher of German as a Second Language in Carinthia, both expressed concern about the role German proficiency plays as one of the strongest, if not the main determining factor in such decisions. Because German as a Second Language is only offered across the board in primary schools and in lower general secondary schools (*Neue Mittelschulen*), immigrants who arrive as teenagers face a particular barrier to entry into higher-prestige schools like the *Gymnasien* that require proof of a high standard of German as a prerequisite to entry. As Mirna put it:

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

The problem is ... the knowledge is there, but the child hasn't developed in the language to a point where they can express in the same way a German-speaking student can. What are you evaluating? The knowledge or the verbalisation of that knowledge?<sup>18</sup>

Because most of the Bosnian Austrian participants in this study arrived before the age of 10, they were largely able to 'catch up' to their Austrian-born peers during primary school, and several went to lengths to explain that they did not feel like they had been disadvantaged by the Austrian school system. Semir, who arrived at the age of 14 and attended a polytechnic school in Carinthia, having learned basic German in Bosnia, reported receiving additional assistance from teachers at his polytechnic school and did not feel that his level of German significantly held him back. Though the time constraints of the present study made a larger sample impossible, further research with more individuals arriving post-primary school may yield a greater range of experiences and perspectives.

In addition to acting as a catalyst for German acquisition, migration and entry into the Austrian school system also had an impact on the way the young Bosnian Austrians in this study acquired their heritage language. No longer embedded in a society where it was widely used, heritage language development was shaped by a number of other influences. Though yearly visits to Bosnia-Herzegovina and watching Bosnian TV were mentioned by multiple participants, language use within the family was by far the most important factor:

I could speak it when I got to Austria, but they were keen on me not forgetting it. On *us* not forgetting it. Talking German at home with my parents was more or less forbidden.<sup>19</sup>

My father would always sit there and every time I said a sentence, he would say the right sentence. He still does it.<sup>20</sup>

I always say 'lače' for 'trousers', but it's 'hlače'. And when I'm being *lazy* about pronouncing things correctly I just say 'hey mom can you give me my "lače"?' [She says] 'You're saying it *wroong*! You can't say it like *that*! It's "hlače"! That's my mom. My mom is the teacher at home.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mirna, 9/7/2014.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

These statements reveal two important things about this type of language acquisition: even though they had lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina until a certain point in their childhood, many noted that their acquisition of the heritage language was incomplete and that they now make mistakes when speaking it. Secondly, the role of the parent-as-teacher becomes even more important than in conventional language acquisition because of the absence of a wider language context or formal instruction. For younger arrivals who never attended school in Bosnia-Herzegovina, this parental influence also played an important role in whether they learned to read and write. As Goran, who left the Serbian-speaking Republika Srpska when he was 2.5 years old, explained: 'Writing I can't do at all. I can only speak. I learned that at home, but otherwise I'm completely set to "German" [laughs]'.<sup>22</sup> Edin, similarly, never learned to write growing up, but chose to take introductory Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian courses at university and says he can now do 'the basics'.<sup>23</sup>

At some Austrian schools, elective heritage language instruction (*muttersprachlicher Unterricht*) is offered for students with a first language other than German. The roots of this programme are closely linked with Austria's history of labour migration. Though the Turkish and Yugoslav migrants of the 1960s and 1970s were primarily male *Gastarbeiter*, a number of children either accompanied their parents to Austria or were born there. It was then noticed, upon the family's return to their country of origin, that the Austrian-schooled children found it difficult to adjust to education in their heritage language. Following agreements between the Austrian government and those of Yugoslavia and Turkey, supplementary lessons in Turkish and Serbo-Croatian were held in Austrian schools for the first time in 1972 (Woplatek 2010). The aim of these early courses was not to encourage immigrant bilingualism within Austrian society. Heritage language instruction was viewed by the home countries as a way to ensure smooth reintegration and by Austria as a way to encourage remigration rather than settlement.

Over the course of the last 40 years, these goals have changed. As settlement rather than cyclical migration became the prevailing trend, three new narratives emerged to justify the continuation of the courses: The first, and most long-standing, is that 'a good knowledge of the heritage language can have a positive impact on the child's performance in German and

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Goran, 20/7/2014.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

other school subjects'. This assertion reflects the findings of linguistic and cognitive development research that suggest that children who have mastered certain concepts and competencies in their first language will have less trouble transferring those skills and building upon them in second and foreign languages (Klein 1986). While this narrative does not discount the learning of the heritage language for its own sake, it generally follows Fishman and Lovas' (1970) description of transitional bilingual education—strengthening of the heritage language in order improve acquisition of the majority language. The second goal urges schools to support 'multilingualism in order to give students a better change in the job market' (HTL Villach 2013). This fits into wider discourses about the value of foreign-language learning in plurilingual Europe, though, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, because immigrant languages are not often taught in higher schools the way more prestigious foreign languages like French and English are, immigrant youth face certain challenges in meeting this expectation. Finally, a third goal is the encouragement of 'bicultural and... individual personality development' through a strengthening of the heritage language (BMBWK 2005: 20). This focus on identity building has emerged more recently and is still less prevalent in Austrian educational policy literature than the other two.

Despite this shift in official narratives that seem to indicate a growing recognition of the role the heritage language plays in an individual's linguistic, personal, and professional development, a relatively small percentage of students receive such instruction. In the 2010/11 school year, only 9.8% of Carinthian students with a first language other than German attended heritage language classes—below the national average of 19.1% (Garnitschnig 2012). In talking to educators and administrators, several potential causes for this were identified. One teacher, Almira, thinks that for many of the families that arrived in the 1990s, societal pressure to integrate played a role:

The parents felt pressured when they got here to become integrated. ...they thought 'OK if I forget everything and ignore where we come from, then we'll be integrated more quickly. We will simply be Austrian quicker if we only speak German.' And they passed that on to the children. 'You must speak German'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Almira, 3/7/2014.



This observation underlines the understanding by many immigrants—and reflects the insistence of members of the German-speaking population—that ‘being Austrian’ means speaking the national language. Out of desire not to put their children at a disadvantage, some parents may not have registered their children for heritage language lessons. Uncertain funding also plays a role. Another teacher, Mirna recalls that Turkish instruction was cut in the early 2000s while Carinthia was under the leadership of the xenophobic governor Jörg Haider, ostensibly because of the budget shortage.<sup>25</sup> Though Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian instruction continues to be offered in the province, it is not available in all primary and lower secondary schools and varies from year to year, depending on how many students register.

A final challenge facing heritage language instruction in Carinthia has its roots in the language politics of the Balkans. When the program was initiated in the early 1970s, the language taught was Serbo-Croatian. As part of the 1990s nation building process in the Yugoslav successor states, what had been different varieties of a shared language were proclaimed to be separate national languages. In 1996, Austrian school authorities made the decision to continue teaching combined Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian heritage language instruction for students from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia in order to ‘prevent divisions from forming or resentments from developing between children from the former Yugoslavia who now live in Austria and are part of the same school classes’ (BMUK 1999: 7). Several educators commented that while this may have deterred a number of parents from registering their children when tensions were running high during and directly after the war, it is now less of a deterrent for most parents.

Of the young Bosnian Austrians in this study, only Haris reported having attended heritage language classes and even then, for only half a year. Several did not realise they were offered in Carinthia, or commented that the programme had become more popular after their time at school. Edin and Emira had younger relatives currently enrolled in heritage language classes and reflected positively on the programme:

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Mirna, 9/7/2014.

There they learn writing straight away and then they have an advantage. Then they know both. They can write and read Bosnian *and* German.<sup>26</sup>

I just speak Bosnian. Not because I studied it somewhere, but because I heard it. ... He studies it. He writes really well and he speaks really well. He makes no mistakes. I make mistakes when I speak Bosnian that I don't make in German.<sup>27</sup>

By comparing their educational experience with those of their younger relatives, they acknowledge both the gaps in their own knowledge of the heritage language and the role that classroom instruction has on the development of skills like writing.

Though many interview participants described certain aspects of their heritage language acquisition as imperfect—be it never having learned to write, inability to use complex grammatical structures, or the lack of technical vocabulary—all overwhelmingly saw growing up with more than one language in a positive light. It meant 'being able to communicate with more people in more places'<sup>28</sup> and 'it was a bonus, an extra language'.<sup>29</sup> A few also mentioned that they felt they had an advantage when it came to learning foreign languages as school:

Every new language I learned was easier for me than for those people who just had one language as their native language ... especially with Slavic languages, but not just them.<sup>30</sup>

Because the Austrian educational system places emphasis on learning foreign languages, this is indeed an advantage. As the author of an article in *Forum Schule*, a magazine published by the Carinthian State School Board, put it: 'no country can afford nowadays to raise its youth in only the national language' (Larcher 2003: 5). Though further linguistic research among immigrant students in Carinthia would be needed to draw a well-founded conclusion, these participants' statements echo Abu-Rabia and Sanitsky's (2010) findings regarding the effect of a bilingual childhood on later foreign language acquisition.

As this chapter has shown, a variety of social, familial, and educational influences shaped the linguistic development of this group of young Bosnian Austrians. The fact that

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Semir, 3/7/2014.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Haris, 9/7/2014.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

both official and personal narratives viewed the acquisition of German as essential and, for many of the interviewees, 'obvious' is in line with Patten and Kymlicka's (2003) observation that immigrants and the native-born population often share an expectation that immigrants will acquire the national language. Though some young migrants recalled having more difficulty with the language than others, their stories were ultimately framed as successful. Experiences with their first language after migration were much more varied. Despite the existence of heritage language instruction in some Carinthian schools, few had encountered it. The majority instead stressed the role their parents played in encouraging and correcting them in the absence of formal instruction. The policy arguments made in favour of heritage language education are nonetheless telling of the way immigrant students' language use is viewed by Austrian educators and policymakers. In the next chapter, language's role in the development of an individual's personal identity, a theme raised by advocates of heritage language education, will be explored in more depth.

## **Chapter 2: 'It's like there are two worlds, and I'm there in the middle'<sup>31</sup>**

While Chapter 1 focused on the process of language acquisition, this chapter looks at the intersection of language and identity. Building on the understanding that 'even the most private of identities is not imaginable as anything other than the product of a socialised consciousness and a social situation', it explores the way language shapes interpersonal interactions and how they, in turn, inform young migrants' understandings of themselves (Jenkins 1994: 218).

Linguists have long observed that most bi- and multilingual individuals do not use all of the languages they speak uniformly across all situations and with all audiences (Wei 2010). Many of the young Bosnian Austrians in this study commented on a pronounced divide between the public and private domains of their lives. Commonly, German was used at work or university, and the heritage language was used at home. In describing language use within the family, however, they often painted a more complex picture. Though parents were usually identified as the post-migration teachers of the heritage language, several participants noted that the roles were reversed when it came to their parents' use of German:

It's adorable when my dad gets back—he's one of the team leaders in the company—and he starts writing his reports on what they did and how the work went. And he will ask 'how do you write that?' and 'can you please spell that?'<sup>32</sup>

Recently my mom called me and asked 'how do you write "Fahrrad"?' She knows what a 'Fahrrad' is, but she doesn't know how you spell it. Like me. I can speak Bosnian, but if someone asks me 'how do you spell that?' I have to think about it. ... It's just like that for me, but reversed.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to this 'symbiosis', as Lajla termed it, some participants also described a change in language use over time and as a result of factors outside the home. For Edin's family, his parents' careers played an important role. Once both parents found jobs that required them to interact with the German-speaking public, more German was also spoken in the home. Thus, while the public–private divide may hold broadly true, the two domains also influence each other.

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

Interactions with siblings were similarly varied. In many cases, a shift over time was linked to entrance into the Austrian school system. The acquisition of German as a second language and its constant use in the classroom and with friends meant that their modes of social expression were evolving rapidly in German, while several felt that their heritage language had 'just stalled'.<sup>34</sup>

When my siblings started going to school and when they started speaking German ... you reach that point where it's easier to express yourself in German than in Bosnian.<sup>35</sup>

With my brother, I speak German because he started learning it back in kindergarten. We find it more amusing. Except for if we're swearing. Then it's in Bosnian.<sup>36</sup>

Because many of the participants' siblings were also part of the 1.5 generation or were born in Austria, the similarity of their socialisation often put them in a similar linguistic position. While many interviewees cited German use as much more common with their siblings than with their parents, there were exceptions here too. As in the above quote, swearing and the expression of emotion were frequently described as feeling more 'natural' in the heritage language. Emira, for example, explained that studying German in school made it easier to discuss technical topics or 'sound intelligent', but that 'when you try to express yourself, your emotions and feelings... it's quite hard for me in German. It hasn't got the words we Bosnians use.'<sup>37</sup> This sentiment echoes Jean-Marc Dewaele's (2010: 609) research findings that bilingual individuals more often swear in L1 because the words have a 'stronger emotional resonance'. Dewaele concludes that this can be linked to the nature of an individual's socialisation. For the Bosnian Austrians in this study, having spent their formative years in Bosnia-Herzegovina and, once reaching Austria, in a household in which the heritage language was dominant may explain this tendency.

Code-switching and lexical borrowing were also reported as being common features in many interviewees' speech, though it was often context-specific and opinions of such language mixing varied. Goran and Edin both describe code-switching between German and their heritage languages when speaking to their parents and did not consider it to be a problem;

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Naida, 5/7/2014.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

Effective communication was the most important thing. Others, like Emira, were discouraged from mixing: 'With my father, I speak Bosnian. He doesn't mix. He's really patriotic.'<sup>38</sup> Here, she links her father's linguistic preferences with his national pride, interpreting his aversion to code-switching as a reassertion of his identity as Bosnian within the German-dominant Austrian context. At school, 'picking and choosing'<sup>39</sup> was similarly discouraged. As educators explained, this was done out of concern for students' linguistic development in German and the heritage language, rather than the languages' patriotic connotations. Nevertheless, most participants described it as common practice, as this exchange with the brothers Anel and Haris shows:

LS: With [your brother] do you speak more German or Bosnian?

Anel: Always Bosnian.

LS: Do you ever mix the languages?

Anel: Yea, somewhat. No matter what conversation, a few German words always slip in and then you mix the whole thing. That really is a bad habit [laughs] but it's normal.

Haris: Everyone does that. That's just how bilingualism is.<sup>40</sup>

Though Anel has internalised the idea of lexical borrowing as a 'bad habit', he also views it as 'normal'. Agreeing with his brother, Haris goes on to describe language mixing as a fundamental feature of bilingualism. Rather than making him 'less Bosnian', he sees it as a linguistic habit that demonstrates his command of both languages.

Within the broader Austrian context, language often played a role in how the young Bosnian Austrians felt others saw them. Many noted two sides to Austria when it came to interacting with ethnic and linguistic minorities. On the one hand, most said that they felt 'very well received'.<sup>41</sup> Thinking back to the start of school in Austria, Edin recalled that the other students 'always supported me and tried to help me learn German', adding that 'I was never an outsider. I always tried my best to learn German'.<sup>42</sup> This experience was overwhelmingly a positive one. Though, as the second part of his statement indicates, learning to speak German was a necessary step to avoid being 'an outsider'. On the other hand, many interviewees also acknowledge the existence of discrimination against or at least an uneasiness toward minorities

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mirna, 9/7/2014.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Anel and Haris, 9/7/2014.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Haris, 9/7/2014.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

in Austria. As examples, several cited the long-fought battle of the Carinthian Slovenes to assert their linguistic rights and the campaign slogans of right-leaning political parties like the Freedom Party of Austria's (FPÖ) 1991 '*Wien darf nicht Chicago werden*' (Vienna must not become Chicago) or the more recent '*Deutsch statt "nix versteh'n"*' (German, not 'no understand'). Even having learned to speak accent-free German, Lajla commented that she sometimes felt treated differently 'because [she] was an "-iĉ" and not a "Müller"'.<sup>43</sup> In this, she saw a parallel with how some Carinthians view the state's Slovene-speaking minority: 'they have a similar problem to the one I do. They aren't really Slovenian and they aren't really Carinthian'. The construction of their identity in public discourse, like hers, is not entirely up to them and is instead imposed by the wider society that still sees them as a linguistic 'other'.

The comparison with the Slovene-speaking minority in Carinthia is an interesting one, though ultimately the Bosnian Austrian interviewees saw more differences than similarities with their own situation. The existence of Slovene-language programming on the Austrian national public service broadcaster (ORF - *Österreichischer Rundfunk und Fernsehen*) and of Slovene-language schools in Carinthia—including an advanced secondary school (*Gymnasium*)—signalled to them a degree of acceptance of the Carinthian Slovenes, if only after years of political conflict. On the whole, interview participants said they thought the government was doing enough to support immigrant languages and, while Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian could perhaps be offered as an elective foreign language in schools the way Italian and Russian are, the thought of a heritage language school akin to the Slovene Gymnasium was unreasonable.

Additionally, though a few interviewees said they could understand a bit of Slovenian because 'if you speak one Slavic language, it's not very difficult to understand another'<sup>44</sup>, none experienced the 'stepping stone' effect described by a Bosnian refugee in Busch and Doleschal (2008: 11) of 'finding a path to integration in Carinthia through Slovenian'. In fact, few described having much contact with Carinthian Slovenes and instead associated the Slovene language with Slovenia. While most agreed that Carinthia's shifting stance on the rights of the Slovene-speaking minority was a positive step towards accepting linguistic diversity, Emira

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

expressed disapproval of the state's bilingual policies. Her first reason for this was based on a comparison with the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

I don't like it that they want to have their language on those road signs and everything. We have it in Bosnia with Cyrillic and Latin. ... It just divides people.

She also expressed a more personal reason for her negative reaction. As a child, she and her family briefly lived in Slovenia and were forced to change the spelling of their name on official documents because

in Slovenia, you're not allowed to use a ć in your name even if you're from Bosnia or Serbia or Croatia. ... You speak Slovenian, the official language, and that's it. In Austria they try to have their second language, but they don't allow it for minorities in their country. That's not OK.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the fact that the Carinthian Slovenes are Austrian rather than Slovenian citizens, this negative experience with the Slovene government's unwillingness to accommodate Bosnian names is carried over in her feelings towards Slovene language rights in Carinthia.

Being able to speak German, thus, remained the most important way of interacting with and 'fitting in' to Carinthian society. For some interview participants, trouble with the language was a source of insecurity. One recalled being told by a teacher that she pronounced the letter 'R' wrong when speaking German, an incident that still makes her self-conscious and has informed her preference of foreign languages:

I really like speaking English the most because in English you don't have the 'Rrr' [Austrian R] that I can't say. That's how people immediately know that I'm not from Austria. ... I just feel safer when I speak English.<sup>46</sup>

Despite having arrived in Austria at the age of 4 and now holding Austrian citizenship, she considered her inability to pronounce the Austrian 'R' a clear sign to others that she wasn't Austrian after all.

The challenge of speaking German in a way that leads to inclusion was not simply a matter of losing the lingering influence of the heritage language. As Rudolf de Cillia *et al.* (2013) note, German itself is a pluricentric language and the question becomes: what *kind* of German

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.



do you speak? When asked if they ever use the Carinthian dialect, many of the Bosnian Austrians in this study replied in dialect with a laughing '*siha red I karntnarisch*' (of course I speak Carinthian).<sup>47</sup> For Goran, Austrian Standard German was only used in certain situations:

I hardly ever speak 'normal' German. Maybe if ... someone from Germany were here I would think 'don't speak dialect. They won't understand you'. But with friends, I speak complete dialect.<sup>48</sup>

However, even though most of the Bosnian Austrians in this study said they use dialect and enjoy being able to speak 'like the neighbours',<sup>49</sup> others had more ambivalent feelings:

I try to speak mostly standard German, but Carinthian... sometimes you just don't have it under control.<sup>50</sup>

The German language, standard German, I like much more. It just sounds nicer. It's just *right* [laughs]. ...when I hear myself speak Carinthian in a video or something, I think 'oof' [embarrassed].<sup>51</sup>

This can be seen as an example of what Clyne (1995: 33) describes as a 'linguistic cringe'—a feeling of linguistic inferiority that has been observed among native-born Austrians as well, particularly in relation to the more internationally-recognised *Bundesdeutsch* of Germany (Kaiser 2006; Bellamy 2010). While accepting that dialect is a common feature in their own speech, these two participants expressed a preference for standard German. In the second example, Anel's preference was based on his belief that standard German sounds 'nicer' or is more correct. These judgments are framed in terms of the dialect's aesthetic qualities, rather than its social role as highlighted by individuals who saw dialect as a way of speaking like their friends or neighbours.

As with German acquisition more generally, many viewed their use of dialect as 'automatic' and the natural consequence of daily interaction with German-speaking Carinthians. In conversation with German as a Second Language teachers Mirna and Vera, however, both remarked on how challenging some students found the duality of German used

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Naida, 5/7/2014.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Goran, 20/7/2014.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Naida, 5/7/2014.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Anel, 9/7/2014.

in Carinthia. Unlike many Austrian students who learn the Carinthian variety of spoken German first and then Standard German in school, immigrant youth are often confronted with both at once. Emira, who arrived in Austria before starting school, cited another influence on her way of speaking German:

I grew up with German TV. Because of it 'ich habe bis zum neunzehnten Lebensjahr *nur* Hochdeutsch gesprochen, nicht Dialekt benutzt' [Exaggerated Standard German]. And I can remember, I was 12 or 11, sitting in the bus and children saying 'Piefke! Piefke!' I just sat there thinking 'I'm not!' ... If I correct them, I'll get 'Yugo! Yugo!'<sup>52</sup>

Because of the influence of German television programmes, she was mistaken for a 'Piefke'—a derogatory word in Austrian German for someone from Germany. This experience highlights the important role that dialect plays in Carinthia as a marker of 'us' versus 'them'. In an example of imposed identity, the children tease her not because of who she is, but because of who they perceive her to be based on her way of speaking.

The heritage language, too, played an important role in the way many of the Bosnian Austrians in this study described their own identity and in how they felt others saw them. Compared to their parents for whom 'being Bosnian' was never in question, some interviewees described an evolution in the way they felt towards both their first languages and, by association, their country of birth. Particularly among those who emigrated before starting school, difficulty with the heritage language led to mixed feelings about visiting relatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Lajla recalls that when she first visited after the war ended, having not been there for about 6 years, she had '*huge* problems talking to [her relatives]', attributing this to the fact that 'in Austria, when I had trouble telling my mom something, I would just switch to German. Down there I couldn't.'<sup>53</sup> Having gotten used to code-switching in Austria, visits to Bosnia-Herzegovina sometimes served as reminders of their incomplete command of their heritage languages, and nearly all described having to 'catch-up' with new slang or feeling like they couldn't contribute to conversations about technical or intellectual topics because 'the

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

specialized vocabulary is just missing'.<sup>54</sup> In subsequent trips, Lajla has also noticed that speaking differently carries a historical subtext for some people in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

Language ends up being part of the war, because the people that stayed there during the war speak differently than the ones who didn't stay. All languages evolve. So they hear you and you get 'where were you when there was a war? You ran away.'<sup>55</sup>

Though divergence between in-country and diaspora language use have been well documented (Beswick 2010; Knott 2010), the war that forced this group's departure and the atrocities endured in their absence adds emotional weight to these linguistic differences.

Growing up was described by several participants as a process of coming to terms with one's Bosnian side. This process had an effect on attitudes towards the heritage language and, for Emira, on how proficient she felt:

Since I started accepting myself more as a Bosnian, I started listening to music, to Bosnian music, which I didn't do before I was 18. So now it's easier for me to speak.<sup>56</sup>

When asked if they would want their children to learn the heritage language, almost all said yes. Goran, interestingly, said that whether or not his children learn Serbian, for him 'it would be more important that they learn English. With it, you can get further.'<sup>57</sup> This pragmatism was coupled with a general feeling of disconnection from his country of birth and a joking comment that he now travels to England more frequently than to the Balkans. While none of the interview participants said they could imagine returning to live in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the vast majority echoed Haris' statement that 'you have to know your roots and know where you came from. You have to respect that. And language is a part of it.'<sup>58</sup>

Language, thus, plays an important part in both how the multilingual Bosnian Austrians in this study identify with Austria and Bosnia-Herzegovina and how they feel they are perceived to (not) belong by others in those countries. The findings presented in this chapter suggest that language use is both context- and audience-specific, and changes considerably over time. In these young immigrants' descriptions of shifting language use, an evolution can also be seen in

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Lajla, 18/6/2014.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Goran, 20/7/2014.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Haris, 9/7/2014.

the way they position themselves in relation to the two cultures in which they grew up. The result was often, though not always, an increased acceptance of one's roots and pride in the heritage language, as well as an assertion of one's place within Carinthian society. However, reflections on questions of dialect use, accented speech, and interactions with 'those that stayed' in Bosnia-Herzegovina show the interplay between what Richard Jenkins (1994) describes as the 'internal definition' of oneself and the 'external definition' imposed on an individual or group by others. Despite personal comfort identifying with both cultures, negative reactions from others may lead to feelings like those expressed by Edin, that '[i]t's like there are two worlds, and I'm there in the middle'.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

### ***Chapter 3: Plans for the Future***

This final section takes up the narrative, mentioned in Chapter 1, of language skills as a career advantage. It will begin with a discussion of the way institutional discourses treats different languages, before then addressing the challenges some young immigrants face in reaping the benefits of their multilingualism. Finally, it will conclude with a look at how language features in the future plans of some of the Bosnian Austrians in this study.

Within economic and educational literature in Austria, different languages are ascribed different levels of labour market potential. As discussed in Chapter 1, the idea that Austrian students should learn foreign languages, particularly those of other European countries, now goes practically without saying. In a school board magazine article on multilingualism in Carinthian schools, one author comments that in ‘Carinthia, which sits at the intersection of Slavic, Romance, and Germanic cultures, people face a special task if they want to take part in the grand Project Europe’ (Larcher 2003: 5). Citing the state’s shared borders with Italy and Slovenia, students’ acquisition of other European languages is framed as the way to participate in the cultural and economic community of the European Union. This approach to foreign languages is an outward-looking one and emphasizes potential career opportunities across national borders.

By contrast, where immigrant youth are concerned, discussions about language often focus on the domestic market and stress the command of German as vital:

A good knowledge of the German language, spoken and written, is a requirement not only for academic success, but also for integration into one’s later professional life and into society. (Rennerschule 2014)

This statement, found on the German as a Second Language website of a Carinthian primary school, makes plain the expected long-term consequences of a failure to acquire the national language: exclusion from the job market and from Austrian society. In studies conducted by the Austrian Public Employment Office, ‘non-German mother tongue’ is often used as an indicator in studies of labour market disadvantage and youth unemployment (e.g. AMS 2006). Such analyses describe the ‘problems of having to catch up linguistically’ as a barrier to achieving

higher qualifications (AMS 2006: 311) and as a ‘competitive disadvantage in the market for apprenticeships’ (AMS 2008: 2). Thus, while other European languages are seen as an additional advantage and one that may serve students well in the wider European context, a solid command of German is characterised as the key to employment in Austria.

Though not yet widespread, there is also an increasing recognition of young immigrants’ heritage languages as a potential job-market resource. A Public Employment Office report on the tourism sector notes that:

‘Guests increasingly expect, particularly in larger hotels, the presence of staff members who can speak to them in their own language. This opens up interesting possibilities for individuals with a migration background who have a good command of both their mother tongue and German.’ (AMS 2010: 14)

Similar opportunities have been noted in other fields as well, though as in this example, it is usually coupled with an understanding that the individual’s German proficiency must also be at a high level. What has received less attention in such studies is the challenge faced by some young migrants who speak German fluently, but may only have a conversational command of their heritage language. Emira was one of several interview participants to comment on this, saying that ‘I know technical words in German and it’s easy for me to say something intelligent’, but that ‘in Bosnian the vocabulary is just missing’.<sup>60</sup> Thus, while studies of employment increasingly acknowledge that young immigrants could use their heritage language to distinguish themselves in the job market, the absence of heritage language classes at higher or vocational schools—as noted in Chapter 1—leaves many without the necessary professional proficiency to realise this expectation.

This contradiction has also been noted by individual educators in Carinthia. In a staff-led initiative at the Higher Technical Institute (*Höhere Technische Lehranstalt*) in Villach, Carinthia’s second largest city, a Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian heritage language class was offered for the first time in 2012. As one of the organisers explained, the programme was motivated by the experiences of previous students with international work placements:

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

[Our school] has a good relationship with companies in Sarajevo and we've sent students there, to a technical office for instance... That's when we noticed that these students don't have a good command of their own mother tongue. They were about on the level of a seven year old. They just couldn't form complex sentences.<sup>61</sup>

Following from this observation, the school requested and was granted funding by the Carinthian State School Board to hold an optional afternoon heritage language class for interested students. Though only a fraction of the approximately 150 students for whom Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian is a first language attended, those who did received a mix of language instruction and professional training in writing letters of applications, being interviewed, and understanding technical documents. The class' teacher, Almira, also tried to impress upon her students the idea of the heritage language as a potential career advantage, asking them to

imagine just how lucky you are to have been born there! Everyone wants to learn English, but not Serbo-Croatian. So if a great job needs someone who can speak Serbo-Croatian, many people would reconsider because it's a difficult language to learn. There, precisely, is your advantage!<sup>62</sup>

Still, while this class was well received and is being offered again this school year, it is the only programme of its kind currently available in Carinthian public schools.

Among the young Bosnian Austrians in this study, opinion was split over the prospect of using languages other than German in their professional lives. Several who currently hold jobs reported using exclusively Standard German or Carinthian dialect with colleagues. For them, the other languages they speak are a means of keeping in touch with family or, particularly in the case of English, an asset when traveling abroad. A number of other interviewees, however, saw potential opportunities to use the languages in their repertoire to pursue their career goals. The following four examples illustrate the diversity of their responses.

Emira, currently a student of business management at the University of Klagenfurt, said she would be interested in working for a multinational company that has locations in both Austria and the Balkans. Compared to someone who only grew up in Austria, she feels it would be easier for her to communicate with co-workers and that she would be able to 'connect

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Franz, 30/6/2014.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Almira, 3/7/2014.

differently' and 'understand their humour'.<sup>63</sup> This combination between linguistic skills and cultural background was also cited as an advantage by Edin. Now finishing a degree in pedagogy, he hopes to teach German courses for adult immigrants in Klagenfurt. As an immigrant himself, he believes he would be an ideal teacher because he 'can understand where they're coming from and how hard it is to learn another language, especially German.' The fact that he would have a shared first language with some of his students also meant that he would know 'where the weak points are and what needs extra practice.'<sup>64</sup>

For Haris and Lajla, their linguistic backgrounds were already an active part of their careers. Haris is a singer-songwriter and has worked with musicians from across the Balkans. When asked whether he has a preferred language for songwriting, he replied:

I write exclusively in Bosnian. I *could* write in English or German, but Bosnian always had more pull for me. The inspiration and the emotions... Even though I know German somewhat better, it's easier to write in Bosnian.<sup>65</sup>

This echoes the findings, discussed in Chapter 2, regarding the link between early socialisation and the feeling of being able to express emotions best in one's first language. Haris also noted that living in Carinthia works geographically to his advantage; He is close enough to Bosnia-Herzegovina that he can collaborate with artists there, but the size of the Bosnian diaspora in Austria means he often performs live shows in Carinthia too. Lajla, finally, has moved to Switzerland and works in online marketing. Citing the influence of English-speaking countries on the field, she says she and her colleagues constantly mix English words into German conversations. In an interesting variation on the experiences described by many interviewees of lacking technical vocabulary in their heritage language, Lajla says she now occasionally finds herself searching for German equivalents of words she uses much more frequently in English. In addition, she also speaks Italian with some of her co-workers and considers the flexibility of working in a multilingual environment to be fitting, given her multilingual upbringing.

Moving from the last chapter's focus on the role language plays in the interpersonal formation of identities, this chapter has shown the variety of ways in which multilingualism

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Emira, 10/7/2014.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Edin, 15/8/2014.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Haris, 9/7/2014.



informs young immigrants' career choices and aspirations. In an examination of educational literature and economic studies, three separate narratives emerged about the job-market potential of different languages. The gradual recognition of young immigrants' heritage languages as an economic resource mirrors, to a certain extent, the shift in scholarly literature towards a view of diaspora culture as creative and dynamic, rather than a simple look back towards one's 'homeland' (Hall 1994). Though some of the Bosnian Austrians in this study use exclusively German in the workplace, the four cases discussed at the end of the chapter show the diversity of ways in which multilingualism may factor into young migrants' plans for the future.

## Conclusion

This paper has explored some of the many ways in which language shapes the life experiences of young Bosnian Austrians and how they narrate their past and their aspirations for the future through the lens of language. Building upon previous research (Oropesa and Landale 1997), these findings reaffirm the importance of recognising the experience of child and teenage immigrants—the 1.5 generation—as distinct from the adult first generation and from the native-born second generation.

Above all, this research highlights the dynamic and shifting nature of linguistic practices among young immigrants. The acquisition of German as a second language, of learning foreign languages, and of coming to terms with one's heritage language were narrated as flexible and ongoing processes. In institutional narratives, too, a pronounced shift can be observed. Building upon Woplatek (2010) observations regarding the link between Austria's history of immigration and policies concerning language education, the budding recognition of immigrant students' heritage languages as an economic resource can also be seen as a small step towards accepting that their presence is not something to be suppressed in favour of German monolingual homogeneity. Though, as educators and immigrants noted, the absence of heritage language programming at higher-level schools and the practice of streaming students into schools with varying levels of prestige have a significant effect on immigrant students' abilities to fully enjoy the benefits of their multilingualism.

This narrative of change was also present in the way the Bosnian Austrians of this study described the role of language in their understanding of their own identities. Echoing the findings of Kanno (2000), language-based identity formation was both dialectical in nature and dependent on the linguistic context in which the young migrant found themselves. Experiences with the regional Carinthian dialect and trips to visit family in Bosnia-Herzegovina were described as moments in which the contact between language varieties and practices had the potential to create a sense of belonging or of otherness. As Edwards (1985) observed among other diaspora groups, these findings also suggest that the recognition of one's imperfect command of the heritage language does not negate the often strong emotional attachment felt

by its speakers. Many interviewees expressed an evolution of their feelings towards both the countries and the languages in which they grew up. For many, this led to an increased acceptance of a hybrid, 'in between' sense of belonging and an appreciation for the various advantages they attributed to their multilingual childhoods.

Though this research was exploratory in nature and cannot be seen as representative, it reveals a diversity of language experiences and attitudes among young Bosnian Austrians and suggests several potentially fruitful avenues for future research. Through further exploration of immigrant language practices like dialect use and code-switching as a tool for asserting one's national or multilingual identity, a more complete picture of the intersection of migration, youth, and language may emerge.

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## Initial Proposal

Submitted: 24 February 2014

### Working Title

*Growing up between languages: Multilingualism among young Bosnian immigrants in Carinthia, Austria*

### Aims and Objectives

Carinthia, one of Austria's most rural states, has experienced an increased level of immigration in recent decades. Of the circa 62,800 individuals now living in Carinthia who were either born abroad or hold a non-Austrian citizenship—approximately 11.3% of the state's population—the majority are from either Germany or Bosnia and Herzegovina (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2014). This trend has created new challenges for local infrastructure and migrants alike. One such challenge is ensuring that young, school-aged migrants learn German and are able to transition into the Carinthian school system. Debates about multilingualism, language rights, and education are long-running and often high-profile in Carinthia, whose southern districts are home to a historic population of Slovenian-speakers (Busch and Doleschal 2008). Moving into this area of contested linguistic diversity, young migrants must navigate between heritage and host country languages. It is this process that I aim to explore in my research.

This project is inspired by personal experience teaching at secondary schools in Carinthia, Austria. It seeks to create a better understanding of the ways in which young migrants experience linguistic plurality. It will do so by working with individuals who immigrated to Carinthia from Bosnia as children or young teenagers. The preliminary research aims are:

- To determine the factors that influence a young migrant's experience of learning the language(s) of the host country and maintaining heritage language(s).

- To investigate the ways young migrants use the languages and dialects in their repertoire.
- To examine the effects of national and regional policies governing language diversity/hegemony on language use in migrant communities.
- To assess the analytical value of the '1.5 generation' category when looking at issues of language, identity, and migration experience among young immigrants.

### Research Questions

1. How do young migrants experience the process of language acquisition as a result of migration?
  - a. What role do factors including family, school, private instruction, religious institutions, and social media play in L2 acquisition and L1 maintenance?
  - b. What challenges and opportunities do young migrants see in their multilingualism?
2. How does multilingualism play out in everyday life for young migrants?
  - a. Are there specific spatial or interpersonal contexts in which one of the languages an individual speaks predominates? If so, do languages share space or are they kept distinct?
  - b. What practical or emotional significance do speakers attribute to the languages and dialects in their repertoire?
3. What impact does national and regional language planning have on migrants' language use?
  - a. Do migrants view such policies as creating a space of linguistic tolerance and openness or of tension and hierarchy?
  - b. Do policies designed to protect or promoting historical minority languages have an impact on the way migrant communities use other minority languages?

### Literature Overview

For this project I will draw primarily on literature concerned with three broad themes: language acquisition and multilingualism, especially among young people and migrants; diaspora community language use; and national and regional languages policy.

Linguistic research has thoroughly explored the processes of second language acquisition (Klein 1986) and the creative potential of contact between different social or cultural groups (Winford 2003). In addition, sociolinguistics and the sociology of language provide a wide range of case studies centred around the way migrants and subsequent generations use language (Dailey-O’Cain & Liebscher 2011, Mills 2005, Kim & Min 2010). These often highlight strategies like code-switching and lexical borrowing, as well as factors such as spouse’s language, viability of home country visits, and religious institutions that influence the ways individuals experience and perform their cultural identities through language. However, with the exception of certain collaborative research project—like the UK-based ‘Diaspora, Migration and Identities’ that featured ‘language and linguistic change’ as one of its programmatic themes (Knott 2010, Beswick 2010)—there seems to be relatively little dialogue between linguists that work with migrant populations and scholars in migration studies.

Literature on language use in diaspora communities is often centred on generational differences within and between migrant groups. It has resulted in projects like TIES (The Integration of the European Second Generation) that focus largely on issues of identity and integration (Sürig and Wilmes 2011). Language, though often mentioned as contributing factors, is rarely the primary focus of such studies, which more often look at employment levels, educational attainment, or the acquisition of citizenship. However, given language’s power as a cultural and political tool for group formation (Wright 1995), it is a promising lens through which to investigate migration and cultural contact. A growing body of work in European political science looks at the politics of language, particularly as historical minority languages are recognised and, in some cases, promoted by national and international law (Wright 2007). As this trend unfolds, particular attention should be paid to the way policies and popular discourses distinguish between, conflate, or create tension between historical and migrant minority languages.

Issues of migration in Austria and in more rural spaces, finally, remain relatively understudied compared to the work done in larger European countries and in urban settings. This project seeks to build upon the above mentioned linguistic and political literatures to examine a particular case of language use in a linguistically unique context.

### Methodology

This project will employ both qualitative empirical research and secondary source analysis. In-depth interviews will be conducted with 15 to 20 individuals who migrated from Bosnia to Carinthia, Austria before the age of 16, but who are now at least 18 years old. It is expected that most will have migrated with or to join family during the 1990s or early 2000s, though diversity of migration experience is desirable. The primary aim of these semi-structured interviews will be to explore the variety of experiences young migrants have with language learning and use, while recognizing that the small sample size limits the generalizability of results. Interviews will be transcribed and coded both for statements relevant to the research questions and for themes emerging from the interviews themselves. A language log or other pre-interview activity may also be employed as a secondary method for gaining insight into daily language use.

The results of this primary, empirical method will be supplemented by and compared to a textual analysis of government statements, documents from the *Landesschulrat Kärnten* (Carinthian State School Board), and other public records that shed light on language planning and policy making in the region and Austria more broadly. Where possible and relevant, additional interviews may be held with teachers, members of the *Landesschulrat Kärnten*, or local government officials.

Several limitations of the study have already been identified: Though able to speak German fluently, I do not speak Bosnian, thus limiting the interview language to either German or English, depending on the interviewee's preference. Examples of lexical borrowing, code switching, and examples of the use of Bosnian in certain contexts are, however, invaluable for



the project and will be solicited. A second potential challenge is the fact that the data gathered in interviews will represent the interviewee’s perceptions, rather than a more objective record of their language use. However, as one of the central aims of the project is to better understand migrants’ subjective experiences with the language, this may work to the study’s advantage.

The ethics of the study have similarly been considered. Though participants will be asked to reflect on experiences they had as children and teenagers, all will be over 18 at the time of the interviews.

### Timetable

January – April	Review literature Arrange contacts Meet with supervisor
May	Give oral presentation Prepare interview schedule Hold pilot interview
Mid-June to Mid-July	Conduct Fieldwork
Early July to mid-August	Analyse data & write dissertation
Late August to Early September	Edit
8 September 2014	Submit dissertation

### Research rationale & potential outcomes

This study aims to complicate and add nuance to debates about migrants’ language acquisition and use. Across national contexts, language has been identified by both migrants and members of host communities as an important factor for integration, ‘feeling at home’, and making the best of opportunities in a new society. Yet while considerable research has sought to measure the relative language proficiency of migrants, fewer have focused on the migrants’ experience with language learning, use, and the effects of national or regional language planning.

In addition, while many studies focus on migrant language learners as a homogenous group—or distinguish only between the first and second generation—and are based in urban centres, this study will look at the unique experience of migrant children and teenagers that have grown up learning and speaking multiple languages in a less cosmopolitan space where issues of language rights are nevertheless already present. This study hopes to contribute empirical evidence to the thriving literature on question of language planning and migration-related linguistic change.

*Word count: 1,460*

### References & literature to explore

The following is a list of text I am either currently reading or plan to read:

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## Auto-Critique

Though the final project adhered relatively closely to the initial proposal in both theme and approach, several small modifications were made. As was explained in the methodology section, the parameters of my sample were extended from individuals who arrived between the ages of 6 and 16 to include anyone who had arrived before the age of 16. The original design focused on individuals who had attended at least one year of school in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and thus received a certain level of first language socialisation outside the home. While this sticks closer to the general definition of the 1.5 migrant generation, the time available to conduct fieldwork was limited and, in the end, I think my research is richer for having included the narratives of younger arrivals as well. Because of the adjustment, I was able to include a set of brothers as well as individuals from a greater variety of locations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The topics covered in this dissertation largely reflect those mentioned in my proposal.

Nonetheless, interview participants' responses to two particular issues surprised me. The first was in regard to the possible effect of national and regional language planning for Austria's autochthonous minorities on the way migrant communities use language (research question 3b). While I learned fairly early on during my review of the literature that regional minority languages and immigrant languages are treated as two separate matters in Austrian law—as they are in many countries—I was surprised at the low level of interest or even negativity on the part of the interviewees when I raised this topic. The opposite was true when I broached the subject of Carinthian dialect use. The playfulness and the great variety of views on the significance of speaking dialect versus Austrian Standard German by immigrants were fascinating and, given time, a topic I would be interested in expanding upon in the future.

Similarly, informal conversations with individuals who migrated from other countries to Carinthia as children and teenagers suggested that some of the experiences expressed by this group of Bosnian Austrians may be shared by other immigrant youth, particularly those from other Yugoslav successor states.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Call for Participants (+ English Translation)

LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY



Ich möchte Sie einladen an einem Forschungsprojekt teilzunehmen, welches die Verbindung zwischen Migration und Sprache untersucht. Als Teil meiner Masterarbeit an der University College London, möchte ich Personen interviewen, die im Alter von 6 bis 16 Jahren von Bosnien-Herzegowina nach Kärnten ausgewandert sind und jetzt älter als 18 Jahren sind.

#### Projekttitle

Growing up between Languages: Multilingualism among Young Bosnian Immigrants in Carinthia, Austria

Aufgewachsen zwischen Sprachen: Mehrsprachigkeit unter jungen Bosnischen ImmigrantInnen in Kärnten, Österreich

#### Kurzbeschreibung

In vielen Ländern wird die Sprachkenntnis, sowohl von ImmigrantInnen als auch von Einheimischen, als einer der wichtigsten Faktoren angesehen, um sich gut in die Gesellschaft integrieren zu können, sich zu Hause zu fühlen und die Möglichkeiten in der neuen „Wahlheimat“ voll ausschöpfen zu können. Für Personen die, als Kinder oder Jugendliche,

eingewandert sind, heißt das oft ihre Kindheit in zwei (oder noch mehreren) Ländern, Kulturen, und Schulsysteme zu verbringen und mehrere Sprachen und Dialekte zu lernen bzw. zu sprechen.

Das Ziel des Projektes ist es ein besseres Verständnis für die verschiedenen Erlebnisse mit dem Spracherwerb und der Sprachpflege, regionalen Mundarten und anderen linguistischen Einflüssen von bosnischen KärntnerInnen, zu erlangen.

#### Über die Forscherin

Lauren Shaw hat früher Englisch in Völkermarkt und Klagenfurt unterrichtet und wohnt jetzt in London wo sie ihre Masterarbeit an der UCL schreibt.

#### Was, wann und wo?

Ich bin vom 26 Juni bis 15 Juli 2014 in Kärnten. Ich treffe Sie gerne in der Stadt und im Café Ihrer wahl! Das Gespräch würde ungefähr 1 Stunde dauern.

#### Kontakt

Bitte schicken Sie mir eine Mail ([lauren.shaw.13@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:lauren.shaw.13@ucl.ac.uk)), wenn Sie Interesse haben und bitte teilen Sie diese Information mit FreundInnen und Bekannten. Vielen Dank im voraus!

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that seeks to examine the connection between migration and language. As part of my master's dissertation at University College London, I would like to interview individuals who immigrated from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Carinthia between the ages of 6 and 16 and who are now over 18.

**Project Title**

Growing up between Languages: Multilingualism among Young Bosnian Immigrants in Carinthia, Austria

**Abstract**

In many countries, language is seen by both immigrants and locals as important for an individual's ability to find a place in society, to feel at home, and to make the most of the possibilities in their 'adopted homeland'. For people who immigrate as children and youth, this often means spending childhood in two (or even more) countries, cultures, and school systems, learning and speaking a number of languages and dialects.

The aim of this project is to reach a better understanding of the diverse experiences had by Bosnian Carinthians with language learning and maintenance, regional dialects, and other linguistic influences.

**About the Researcher**

Lauren Shaw previously taught English in Völkermarkt and Klagenfurt and now lives in London, where she is writing her master's dissertation at UCL.

**What, when and where?**

I will be in Carinthia from 26 June to 15 July 2014 in Carinthia. I'm happy to meet you in the city and café of your choice! The conversation will last approximately 1 hour.

**Contact**

Please send me an email at [lauren.shaw.13@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:lauren.shaw.13@ucl.ac.uk), if you are interested and please pass this information sheet on to friends and acquaintances. Many thanks in advance!

**Appendix 2: Participant Understanding & Information Form (+ English Translation)**



**Aufgewachsen zwischen Sprachen:  
 Mehrsprachigkeit unter jungen Bosnischen ImmigrantInnen in Kärnten**  
*(Growing up between Languages: Multilingualism among Young Bosnian Immigrants in Carinthia, Austria)*

Bitte nehmen Sie sich einen Moment Zeit, die folgende Informationen zu lesen und das Blatt auszufüllen.

Ihre Erfahrung mit Sprachen ist eine wertvolle Informationsquelle. Die Teilnahme am Interview ist freiwillig und Sie müssen keine Frage beantworten, die Ihnen unangenehm ist. Alle Daten werden vertraulich behandelt und anonymisiert. Wenn Sie Fragen haben, antworte ich sie gerne. Vielen Dank im Voraus für Ihre Hilfe!

Vorname: \_\_\_\_\_ Alter: \_\_\_\_\_

Geburtsort: \_\_\_\_\_

Wie alt waren Sie als Sie nach Kaernten gekommen sind? \_\_\_\_\_

Welche Sprachen sprechen Sie? Wie würden Sie Ihre Sprachkenntnisse bewerten (gesprochen und geschrieben)?

	Grundkenntnisse (A1/A2)*		Mittelmäßige Kenntnisse (B1/B2)		Fortgeschrittene Kenntnisse (C1)		Fließend (C2)	
<i>z.B. Spanisch</i>			X			X		

\*Nach dem Gemeinsamen europäischen Referenzrahmen für Sprachen (GeRS)



**Growing up between Languages:  
Multilingualism among Young Bosnian Immigrants in Carinthia, Austria**

Please take a minute to read the following information and to fill out the sheet below.









Your experience with languages is a valuable source of information. Participation in this interview is voluntary and you don't need to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. All data will be treated as confidential and will be anonymised before use. If you have questions, I'm happy to answer them. Many thanks in advance for your help!

First name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

How old were you when you came to Carinthia? \_\_\_\_\_

Which languages do you speak? How would you evaluate your language skills (spoken and written)?

	Basic Knowledge (A1/A2)*		Intermediate Knowledge (B1/B2)		Advanced Knowledge (C1)		Fluency (C2)	
								
<i>E.g. Spanish</i>			X			X		

\*Following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)



### ***Appendix 3: Schedule for interviews with young Bosnian Austrians***

1. Where in Bosnia did you live before you came to Austria?
  - What was your first language growing up?
  - Did you attend school in Bosnia?
2. When did your family come to Austria?
  - How did you end up in Carinthia?
  - Did you know anyone in Austria before you arrived?
3. How did you learn German?
  - What was your first impression of the German language?
  - Did you speak any German before coming to Austria?
  - What was it like in school? Were there German as a Second Language classes, Mother Tongue instruction, or similar programmes at your school?
4. What do you think of the Carinthian dialect?
  - Would you say you speak more Kärntnerisch or High German?
  - When you first started learning German, could you tell the difference between the two?
5. Since coming to Austria, have you had any formal Bosnian language classes (in school or elsewhere)?
  - Is it important to you to be able to read, write, and speak Bosnian well?
  - What is it like to live in Carinthia and speak a language that isn't German?
  - Does speaking Bosnian in Bosnia and speaking it in Austria feel any different?
6. What other languages do you speak (learn in school, at university, etc.)?
  - Do you think learning languages in school was any different for you than it was for Austrian students who only grew up speaking German?
  - Which languages do you still use today?
7. Which languages do you use most often?
  - Are there certain topics or situations for which you always use a particular language? (E.g. With family or friends, religion, work, school and university, sports, etc.)
  - Do you or can you imagine working somewhere that requires you to use more than one language?

8. What language(s) do you speak with your family? (Parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.)
  - Do you always use the same language with each other?
  - Has that changed over time?
  - Did your parents also learn German after coming to Austria?
  - Do you notice a difference in the way you speak German and the way your parents do?
  - If you have children someday, is important for you that they learn your mother tongue?
9. Aside from different immigrant groups, Carinthia also has a linguistic minority – the Slovene-speaking Carinthians. Do you speak or understand any Slovenian?
  - Do you know any Carinthian Slovenes?
  - Are you familiar with/what do you think of the government programmes that support minority languages like Slovenian?
  - Would you like to see more programmes for immigrant languages, like Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (e.g. bilingual schools)?
  - Do you think there is a connection between how historic minority languages and immigrant languages are seen in Carinthia?
10. If someone were to ask you, would you describe yourself as Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Austrian, Carinthian, some mixture of the above or something else?
  - Are the languages you speak an important part of who you are?
  - Are there things that you or your family did growing up that you think are ‘typically Bosnian’ or ‘typically Austrian’?
11. Have you been back to Bosnia since you moved to Austria? How often?
  - Is the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian you hear in Bosnia the same as what you speak?
  - Can people tell, based on how you speak, that you didn’t spend your entire childhood there? If they do, how do they react?
  - Could you imagine moving back to Bosnia some day?
  - When you aren’t in Bosnia, do you have much contact to people there?
  - Do you like to read books/newspapers, watch TV/films, or listen to music from Bosnia?

Thanks so much for your time!

## **Appendix 4: Transcript Extract**

Interview with Lajla, 18 June 2014

### Transcription Key

// = overlapping talk

**Bold** = exclamation or emphasis

(.) (..) (...) = short, medium, and long pauses

(?) = unclear on recording

[Action] = non-verbal cues

### Transcript

LS: With your family, what language did you speak when you were growing up?

Lajla: Bosnian.

LS: With your parents **and** your siblings?

Lajla: Yea, but when my siblings started going to school and when they started speaking German (..) I mean, you reach that point where it's **easier** to express yourself in German than to express yourself in Bosnian. Especially if your whole surrounding is (.) um, German. And especially if you start attending higher schools because it was very common that (...) I mean, in my class at the *Handelsakademie* I just had one Serbian girl. That was it. In the other class there were (..) no, in my class it was a Croatian girl, no there were **two** Croatian girls in my class and in the other class was one Bosnian girl and one Serbian girl, and that's all in [thinks] 65 people?

[Brief conversation about my teaching at a *Handelsakademie*]

LS: So after you came to Austria did you have any formal instruction in Bosnian? Like did you have *muttersprachlicher Unterricht* at school or afternoon classes?

Lajla: No, no.

LS: So you just kept speaking it with your family then?

Lajla: It was (..) yea. We didn't have any special (..) you got *Förderunterricht* at school, like you got *Förderunterricht* for German, but that's something that Austrian people got too. I would say

fortunately I didn't have any problems. I was one of the better students so I didn't have any problems, I didn't **have to** attend the *Förderunterricht*. (..) Um, but there was this in-between stuff if you weren't (.) Because I'm a Muslim, I didn't attend the Christian religion classes. So I had, like, 'let's tell you more about Carinthia and Austria' class instead.

LS: But you didn't have any language classes for Bosnian?

Lajla: No.

LS: OK but you say you can write Bosnian. How did you learn that?

Lajla: Books and parents. My parents were always into (..) yea, they **like** where they come from and like where (..) How do you say? They like where their roots are. And they were always into teaching their children where are from and what they are. So they also taught us how to write, how to read. (...) Or like they would reading stuff to us. I mean, I had **huge** huge problems when it came to reading Bosnian until the age of 13 or 14.

LS: What kind of problems?

Lajla: I wasn't really (..) I mean, you just read German books in school, or English books. But no one really **considers** that there is other stuff too. So it was pretty much (...) I mean maybe nowadays it's different, I don't know. Nowadays there are lots of Bosnian culture clubs, also in Carinthia. I didn't have that. I didn't have like 'Oh, let's go there! And they will teach us...' and whatsoever. I didn't have that. So it was parents and books to learn the language (...) Same thing with Cyrillic. That was 'Oh yea, it's a part of the former Yugoslavia, so why not learn it?' That was just (..) that was interesting.

LS: Yea, so you found learning Cyrillic interesting. What was your feeling towards learning Bosnian? You said your parents were very keen on you learning it when you were little.

Lajla: //No, well, I **spoke** it. (..) I mean, I could **speak** it when I got to Austria, but they were keen on me not **forgetting** it. Or **us** not forgetting it. (...) And talking German at home with my parents was more or less forbidden. They didn't want us to. I mean it was (..) you can say a 'code' between my parents learning German with their children and their children learning Bosnian with them. It's a (...) how do you say it? I don't know the word.

LS: What's it in German?

Lajla: Na, um, 'Sybiose'.

LS: Ah, OK. 'Symbiosis'. It's basically the same.

Lajla: [Laughs] Oh, yea. Man. (...) That's more or less the way it went. I mean, it's still funny for me when my parent say something (...) I mean my mom never worked here, so she really just learned German from her children. And it's still adorable when my dad gets back—he's one of the team leaders in the company—and he starts writing his reports on what they did and how the work went. And he will ask 'how do you **write** that?' and 'can you please **spell** that?'

LS: Mhmm

Lajla: It's just lovely (..) And it's the same way they correct me when I say something (...) I always say 'lače' for 'trousers', but it's 'hlače'. And when I'm being **lazy** about pronouncing things correctly I just say 'hey mom can you give me my "lače"?' '**You're saying it wrooong!** You can't say it like **that!** It's "**hlače**"!'

LS: [Laughs]

Lajla: That's my mom. My mom is the teacher at home. She corrects **everything** that I say wrong. [Laughs] She corrects everything. And she's a bigger perfectionist than I am!

LS: She sounds like a good teacher. [Laughs] Are there things that you say slightly different than people in Bosnia would?

Lajla: Uh, you've got to consider the fact that the language (..) I mean every language evolves further. So the language in Bosnia is evolving while (...) the people in Austria and German and Switzerland, I would say, we created a **mix**. We just created a mix. And it's a mix where lots of things are a little German, a little English, and **lots** of stuff from Croatian and Serbian and Bosnian. So (..) I mean, my **basic** basic language is Bosnian, but there is still stuff you pick up. Like on my current volleyball team I have a **lot** of Croatian girls and two Serbian girls, so it gets mixed up. And when you pronounce stuff slightly different than they do in Bosnia, and mostly it's when you (..) when I'm at home in Bosnia and I start talking (..) I don't know why and I don't know how, because to me my Bosnian sounds correct (..) but after the first sentence they know that I don't live in Bosnia.