

# Out of Europe: agency and biographicity and discourses of ethnic-cultural belonging, inclusion and exclusion.<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The demands laid on the individual by increasingly fragmented life-wide learning imperatives lead to constant pressure on adults of 'migratory background' to display agency and take up a position vis-à-vis cultural-ethnic 'belonging', while around them an integration/assimilation debate continues to rage in German public discourse. The focus of this paper will therefore be the experiences of transition and transformation in learning biographies which are often experienced as self-'translation'. The paper will address agency, inclusion/exclusion in the learning biographies of young adults who straddle the precarious identity of German-Turk/Turk-German. I use here talk elicited in the learning biography of a student of Turkish origin. The assertion of agency-in-diversity is given voice in uneven ways. The extracts allow us to listen closely to the workings of agency in the subjective, shared experience related in auto/biographical narratives.*

**Keywords:** self-translation; biographicity; the discursive-narrative interview; agency-in-diversity

## Setting the scene: successful integration and opting-out

A phenomenon which can be traced through debates in Germany since at least the end of the 1970s, continues to be of central importance: the criteria for 'successful integration' of people with 'migrant backgrounds' in a country which boasts 15 million such individuals in a total population of 80 million, or 18.9% (Kiss & Lederer, 2013, p. 10). The commercially successful racism of minor public figures<sup>2</sup> regularly dominates the German bestseller lists (see Pirincci, 2014; Sarrazin, 2010), and on the more immediately active side, the militancy of racist and neo-nazi groups range from popular protests against the building of mosques to the organised violence of underground nazi cells.<sup>3</sup> In the lead up to, and in the wake of, the 2014 European Elections<sup>4</sup>, the new 'invasion' feared is no longer the short-lived vision of the mass-migration spurred by the Arabellion in 2011 - which showed the highest number of immigrants since 1995 (BAMF, 2014, p. 14) - but the real drama of the boats before Lampedusa, and the spectre of waves of 'economic refugees' (Bade, 2013). Bade comments:

The arrival of a youthful migrant elite of good-to-highly-qualified immigrants from the crisis states of Southern Europe [...] was until recently welcomed as an enhancement of the labour force shrinking as a result of Germany's demographic crisis. Now, however, the old fear of European East-West migration and extra-European South-North migration has come back to haunt us (Bade, 2013)<sup>5</sup>.

At the same time, Germany's newspapers (Lemmer, 2012; Thumann, 2010) have devoted space to the 'returners' – the Turks 'returning' to the homeland they were not born in, Turkey, after struggling for years with the experience of being foreign 'InländerInnen' – something like 'national foreigners', if we seek to translate this peculiarly German idea. Thoroughly 'German' Turks leaving Germany, partly as frustration at ongoing discrimination, partly as a response to the current crisis, the papers underline, already outnumber those arriving (see the graphics for emigration by Bundesland in Kiss & Lederer, 2013, p. 26). The arcane obsession with the 'judeo-christian' roots of European culture – the 'Leitkultur'<sup>6</sup> – best expressed perhaps in citizenship tests, or protests over mosques and headscarves – distracts attention from the discrimination and exclusion of adults often in possession of 'key qualifications' so dear to the 'enterprise culture'. While one report makes a strong argument that these 'returners' turning their backs on Germany represent a social, political and economic population simply ignored and 'under-used' (Woellert, Kröhnert, Sippel, & Klingholz, 2009), criticism has been levelled at the report for foregrounding the idea of 'German-Turks' as 'integration refusers' (Integrationsverweigerer), for ethnicizing the discussion and drawing a distorted picture of the supposed options followed by younger migrants, particularly Turks (Werth, 2009). The ambivalence of the position of second and third-generation migrants is suggested by the results of a study carried out some years ago by the University of Würzburg ('Frient II 2006-2008') according to which young adults of Turkish background are in fact the protagonists of a new 'culturally-aware integration' (kulturbewußte Integration) despite the structural obstacles placed in their way by the three-tiered German school system, for example (Goddard, 2009).

These obstacles are indeed considerable, however. Thus, the 2010 Migration Report of the German government pointed out that the education system loses adolescents and young adults with migrant backgrounds at each level of the system. While every 11th pupil (8.9%) in primary school has a non-German passport, only every 24th (4.2%) apprentice does, and only every 40th university student (2.5%) has a different passport (Autorengruppe, 2012; BBMF, 2010, p. 138). These figures may be rendered less easy to decipher in the future when the proposed 'loosening' of dual-nationality regulations in Germany make 'nationality' a more fluid phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

Social status and social capital differences are reflected in recently published empirical data. University students with a migrant background – in particular 'BildungsinländerInnen' (i.e. members of the 'historical' migrant populations in the education system: Turks above all, Italians, Greeks, Spanish, ex-Yugoslavs) and those of them who have opted for German naturalisation – belong more frequently to socially disadvantaged strata of society than other students, including 'new' migrants (e.g. on international study courses) (BBMF, 2010, p. 141).

These and many further factors determine – more than any tendency to create 'parallel-societies' – the ambivalence felt by many migrants, and in particular by many German/Turks, towards Germany, their future perspectives in this country and their own identity. The 2009 study carried out by the Foundation for Turkey Studies in Essen (Sauer, 2009) points out that individuals can very really identify with the cultures of both Germany and Turkey and they can move at will between the two cultural systems, as a result of an empirically observed bi-cultural transformation of identity (Sauer, 2009, p. 97). Simultaneously, however, the report argues that tendencies towards a 'return' to the native country never known, are the fruit of holiday impressions, second-hand information and outsider-views, as a result of which a "phantasmagorical" and idealized picture of Turkey is created (Sauer, 2009, p. 97).

Irrespective of these empirical studies of discrimination, of new emigration, of growing inter-ethnic communication, the pressure on migrant populations to assimilate is massive. Scenarios of mass exodus from Tunisia and Libya in the early months of 2011 and the visions of hundreds of thousands of additional job-seekers 'overrunning' Europe led swiftly to stiff

renunciations of solidarity. Ethnic belonging, and forced or self-chosen forms of marginalisation are hardly mitigated either by the provocative call from the Turkish premier Erdoğan on a visit to Germany in February 2011 to his “countrymen and –women” to ensure that children born into Turkish families be taught Turkish first before they are taught German.<sup>8</sup> More recently, in May 2014, Premier Erdogan spoke before a wildly enthusiastic rally again in Cologne. Welcomed, as one German newspaper put it “Wie ein Popstar” / Like a popstar (Tinc, 2014, p. 4), he offered more cautious, more ‘statesmanlike’ advice to his Turkish followers in Germany: “Don’t remain foreigners in this country, you are citizens of Germany ... learn the language and teach it to your children. But don’t let yourselves be assimilated ...” (Tinc, 2014).<sup>9</sup> Despite this pragmatic “Ja” to integration, the frame within which Erdoğan’s pro-Turkish call was expressed renders it an intended provocation and a heavy extra burden on trans- or bi-cultural German/Turks already forced to make choices and make their choices in full view of a hostile public.<sup>10</sup>

Turning to the room for manoeuvre that adults have, given the demands laid on the individual by late modernity’s increasingly fragmented life-wide learning imperatives (Ecarius, 1997), this paper will consider, then, what it can mean to be required to display agency against the background of the integration/assimilation debate in public discourse. To do this, experiences of transition and transformation which are often experienced as self-‘translation’ (Wierzbicka, 2003) are the focus of this paper. The paper will address agency, inclusion/exclusion in the learning biographies of young adults who straddle the precarious identity of German-Turk/Turk-German (for other examples of biographical research touching on the migrant experience see Koller, 2002; Riemann, 2003; Schütze, 2003).

### ‘Self-translation’ and ‘biographicity’

In the kind of interview extracts which are discussed below, one main interest is focused, with Alice Ludwig, on the speakers’ “presentations of self through language ... and the ways that categories of difference and identity are used in these”. This focus is primarily interested, then, Ludwig continues, “in the current self-positioning [of respondents] in a specific setting in time and place” (Ludwig, 2006, p. 251). The notion of a plurality of presentations of diversity that are developed in concrete contexts is important. Wierzbicka underlines, too, the concrete, physical aspect of movement between spaces of communication when she reminds us that “the voices of flesh and blood people crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries need also to be taken into account”, particularly in connection with the social and individual experiences of diversity. Citing Besemeres, she refers to the immigrant experience of “having to ‘translate oneself’ from one’s mother tongue into a foreign language and losing part of oneself in the process” (Besemeres 2002 cited in Wierzbicka, 2003, p. xvi). The immigrant, then, risks loss of herself in the process of translating herself from her ‘othered’ space to that of the dominant order of discourse. To which must be added, of course, that not only whoever crosses physical frontiers demarcating normality and diversity, determining nationality, religion, gendered self, drawing lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’, experiences and is forced to acknowledge the effects of othering discourses. The lines of demarcation intersect and cross through each individual self, intersecting now in one way, now in another. The intersecting lines of diversity and identity depend on the changing relationships of diversity, of ‘otherness’ across time, place and in relation to the subject’s discursive and embodied interaction with others.

A prerequisite for successful self-translation is having access to learning spaces within which biographical resources can be acquired and deployed, and which, in turn, determine how experience and common sense are interpreted. ‘Biographicity’, as Alheit (for example Alheit, 2006) has termed the deployment of such biographical resources, here stands for the drive or need (as well as the possibility) to draw on such resources of experience by exercising agency in the shaping of our lives. Gaston Pineau similarly underlines the essence

of “pouvoir-savoir vivre” (knowing/being able to live) and the difficulties involved for everyone in carrying forward the project of their lives. He states: “Chaque vivant est un cogito, mais aussi un artisan de lui-même, s’autoformant tant bien que mal” (Pineau, 1996, p. 78)<sup>11</sup>. The biographical method and the biographical interview offer a reliable view of the troubled spaces of transition in which the adults studied here are moving.<sup>12</sup> In an atmosphere of political cant and shrill populism this research field can provide a form of reflexive participation that educational institutions, too, would do well to emulate. A ‘biographisation’ of the work of the institutions (Alheit, 2006, p. 8) closely connected with the increasingly complex educational transitions of the young adults studied here would be a useful step towards liberating the learning options of many InländerInnen<sup>13</sup>, who are driven to seek new biographical shores in a kind of late modern limbo and who ‘juggle’ multiple versions of their personal life paths according to the requirements of diverse contexts of social life/interaction.

### **Agency and biographical reflexivity**

A biographic approach, then, which examines agentic identity as a resource drawn upon to make sense of learning experiences and, more simply, as Pineau suggests, in order to survive in the world, (Pineau, 1996, p. 78) draws our attention as researchers and educational practitioners to what is taking place at the frontiers between lived life and reflected life (“frontières biocognitives” Pineau 1996: 78). ‘Doing being’ a ‘foreigner’, a woman, a man takes places at the level of the ‘everyday’, while biographical otherness, gender or class, for instance, must be conceived in a ‘lifetime’ sense. Biographical construction – for Pineau not the end or a blueprint but the point of departure of the recognition of the existential culture which biographical construction is (Pineau, 1996, p. 78) – is, then, a dialectical process involving the possession/embracing of society by the subject and the simultaneous “social constitution of the subject” (Dausien, 1999, pp. 237-238 citing Fischer-Rosenthal). The tension between (re-)production and transformation (e.g. gender or ethnic identity) clearly conditions the framework within which agency and action can be unfolded. Moving from the ‘everyday’ horizon of social conditioning and individual acts of responsibility for self, to the horizon of the life history, however, lays the foundations for biographical agency. In what is doubtless the most thorough treatment to date of biographical construction of gender (Dausien, 1996) Bettina Dausien argues that the construction of a biography should be understood as a “social demand on the individual ... to organise themselves, to accept responsibility for their acts” (Dausien, 1996, p. 573; see also Linde, 1993 for a similar formulation of ‘coherence’).<sup>14</sup> Understood in this way, the biographical construction is both an act and a reflective process. As life developments (‘Entwicklungsgeschichten’) continue in each new turn of the lived life, Dausien suggests, “new experiences are made which the subject is required to integrate in already existing self- and world-constructions, and as a result these are confirmed and stabilised (reproduction) or alternatively they must be ‘re-written’ (transformation)” (Dausien, 1996, p. 574).<sup>15</sup>

### **Agency and social interaction, agency and inscription**

The biography is, then, constructed over life-time horizons and draws upon resources of experience, laid down in ‘layers’ or ‘strata’ which represent ‘reserves of sense or meaning’ (Dausien, 1996, pp. 576-577). These reserves as a rule are present in over-abundance (‘Sinnüberschüsse’) and represent in their turn ‘unlived life’ or possibly ‘not-yet-lived-life’. Agentic choices are made in interaction between self and world, between the individual and collectives or others to deploy reserves of experience (or “biographical background

knowledge” as Alheit calls it, see Dausien 1996: 577) to establish spaces of autonomy and take some hold on the life being lived (Baudouin, 2010, pp. 462-463; Baudouin & Parson, 2010; see also Merrill & West, 2009, p. 59). The researcher, however, rarely observes significant moments of biographical agency. The research context provides in fact the ‘stage’ upon which biographical agency is related, re-written, contextualised and constructed. The act of constructing a biography is rehearsed in words which are embodied in interaction. The co-construction of an agentic biography – for example in the biographical narrative interview – adds description, interpretation and discursive meanings. This process must be seen as thoroughly social and interactive, as not only the production of background knowledge is based in the social, but the re-construction/re-com-position<sup>16</sup> in languaged form is shared and social. Dausien puts it thus:

Biographical background knowledge comprises certainties from the life-world which we draw upon implicitly when we act, take decisions, make plans or just tell our life story. It comprises orientations and prescriptions which we have adopted from others, but above all it is made up of layered experience which we have collected and connected up, but which is not at all clear to us. These experiences can be partly reconstructed as memories of concretely lived events, as, for example, when we narrate our biography in a particular situation (Dausien, 1996, p. 577)<sup>17</sup>

Given the inseparable connection between the teller and the told in the social construction of the biography – backward-looking to the socially constructed ‘sound and the fury’ of individual ‘background knowledge’ and forward-looking in the negotiation of shared meanings, decisions and intentions in interaction (Dausien, 1996, p. 577) it will perhaps be useful to address, however briefly, the role of interdiscursivity in interview talk before coming to examples of the talk itself.

### **The importance of inter-discursivity and levels of meaning**

A significant element of the development within the talk of respondents’ discourses of learning is that they are embedded in inter-discursive sequences. These discrete narrative units – themselves embedded within longer sequences of narration or suspended within brief turn-exchanges – act as interactive ‘wooden horses’ which transport “latent levels of personal meaning” (Chamberlayne, Bornat, & Wengraf, 2000, p. 9). Another, related, feature of meaning-making in the interview is that much ‘own’ discourse practice in interaction which reveals itself invariably as more or less serious rejection / opposition to discourse of the researcher, is generated in the ‘open theorizing’ associated with the deployment of the speech or thoughts of significant others. This turn to interdiscursivity is perhaps the single most significant characteristic of talk in the research interview. The turn to the embedded speech of self or others creates the possibility of own discourse production and, in addition, cements that discourse to a robust learning biography (Evans, 2004). These heteroglossic elements of the biographized narrative, together with a whole range of linguistic options deployed by respondents (Capps & Ochs, 1995) enhance the tell-ability of the narratives exchanged in the interaction and ‘ground’ the talk in ‘own’ contexts of doing being a self which are independent of, and therefore relatively resistant to, context and the force of the interview encounter.

### **Grammars of agency and helplessness**

The management of one’s own development, a creeping imperative of the post/modern life-course, means self-imposed pressures to adapt to new knowledge demands, to fulfil own projects and desires for change. To examine the perceived urgency of such learning

experiences, I use here talk elicited in the learning biography of a student of Turkish origin (for fuller treatment of Laleh's learning biography see Evans, 2004). Over a period of more than a decade, I have collected interviews with students from Turkish immigrant families as well as students from Eastern Europe. The interviews are open-ended and centre on an opening question about the students' learning experiences seen in a biographical, life-course sense. The language of interview is English or German, and the interviews are recorded with a digital recording device. The aim is to transcribe each interview so that as nearly as possible the rhythm, pace, volume and "feel" of the language is captured in the (obviously only partly adequate) words written down. As much of the prosody and the 'action' in the interview interaction, is recorded, too (see Evans, 2004, 2008, 2013).

The assertion of agency-in-diversity is given voice in uneven ways. The extracts allow us to listen closely to the workings of agency in the subjective, shared experience related in auto/biographical narratives. The detail and the richness of the language of change becomes apparent through close analysis of change in the micro levels of talk. Language resources, their use in the co-construction of meaning and of the learning space itself, help to follow how learning and diversity of experience can be told. As Young insists, it is crucial to "return to the social disposition of stories, to their linguistic coding, their contexts of use, to see how they illuminate the way individuals construe their lives" (Young, 1999, p. 431). The 'grammars' of agency or helplessness that they employ in order to construct their narratives, represent the starting point for research 'grounded' in the language of biographicity (Capps & Ochs, 1995). It is in this polysemic context that the act of 'translating oneself', re-presenting oneself across gender/cultural/ethnic boundaries brings discursive agency into play within the biographization process.

### **Interview talk, translation and presentation of data**

Some brief words first to the methods adopted here. Presentation of the data and the findings presents some interesting hurdles to surmount. Making use of German-language interview talk and its translation into English involves dealing with the significance of radically different syntactical structures and embedded morphological problems, not to mention the problematic nature of exemplifying features of meaning and discourse by recourse to necessarily de-contextualised translations. Given the technical difficulties therefore of presenting German and English in a word-for-word type translation, as a rule translation is employed exclusively in order to provide access to the discussion of German language discourse phenomena. Any attempts to render in English the prosodic elements of discourse must be seen as wholly impressionistic. Analysis is always based on the original language of the talk.

### **Laleh: Moving through learning spaces<sup>18</sup>**

Laleh (born Ankara, Turkey in 1968) was in some ways emblematic of the first generation of German-raised (if not born) Turks who have been finding their place in German universities from the beginning of the 'nineties. The role of language, Turkish and German, and the role of family and teachers, were crucial for Laleh's educational agency. Even a cursory look through the transcript of Laleh's interview reveals her concentration on the role of her teachers. A further striking feature of Laleh's talk is the role she allocates to her family, and within this, to her mother in particular. These references are significant for the way in which Laleh constructs her learning biography. In fact, in Laleh's narratives we are continually referred back to authoritative figures in her life course. Gender/ethnicity account for Laleh's deployment of the family, of her mother, but also of crucial interventions in her learning

experience by teachers throughout her school career. She provides rich detail regarding the socio-economic milieu(s) in which she grew up, both in Ankara, in the Turkish village of her first school experiences as well as regarding the various stages of her schooling in Germany, during which parental aspirations and possibilities and the initiative of individual teachers made a significant difference to her learning process. Her family – and their educational options – prove to be central to her learning biography. Laleh’s discourses of learning are shaped by intercultural/interlingual experience, by an existence between cultures and languages, and as part of an initially patriarchal family structure broken down to a large extent by the very workings of Laleh’s education and educational chances. Her school life is chequered and partly emblematic for a Turk of her generation: born in Ankara and educated in Germany. She was obviously interested in rendering her story comprehensible. I learnt a lot from her.

*Laleh: ‘Just send her along’*

*Extract 1*

|    |      |                                  |                               |
|----|------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Lal: | und uhm so ich habe dann in der  | and uhm so I did a year of    |
| 2  |      | Tuerkei damals ein Jahr noch im  | school still in Turkey still  |
| 3  |      | Dorf als wir noch fuer ein Jahr  | in the village we were in the |
| 4  |      | im Dorf waren (1.0) habe ich     | village for a year (1.0) a    |
| 5  |      | noch ein Jahr Schule gemacht     | bit of (1.0) reading and      |
| 6  |      | (1.0) so ein bisschen Lesen und  | writing I learnt I wasn’t     |
| 7  |      | Schreiben schon gelernt aber ich | officially in the school the  |
| 8  |      | war nicht offiziell in der       | teacher just said <ESp> oh    |
| 9  |      | Schule der Lehrer hat einfach    | just send her along           |
| 10 | →ESp | gesagt <ESp> ach schicken Sie    |                               |
| 11 |      | sie mal                          |                               |

Here, at the outset of her narratives, the authoritative voice of the village teacher is invoked in the form of ‘embedded speech’ (→ESp). Her father learnt to read and write in the army, her mother at the age of 36 in Germany. In Germany, till she was finished at the primary school, Laleh was in an all-Turkish class. She felt her own success in German in relation to her friends:

*Laleh: environmental influences – learning german*

*Extract 2*

|    |        |                                  |   |
|----|--------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1  | Lal:   | und da kamen wir dann Anfang 75  | and we came then at the                   |
| 2  |        | habe ich dann wurde ich dann     | beginning of 75 then I then               |
| 3  |        | hier eingeschult uhm das         | I was sent to school here                 |
| 4  |        | Besondere ist bis zur 4 Klasse   | uhm the point is till the 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| 5  |        | war ich in einer tuerkischen     | class I was in a turkish                  |
| 6  |        | Klasse waren alle Tuerken        | class everyone was turkish                |
| 7  | RE:    | Mhmm                             | mhmm                                      |
| 8  | Lal:   | uhm und die bis zur 3 Klasse     | uhm they till the 3rd class               |
| 9  |        | hatte ich eine tuerkische        | I had a turkish teacher so                |
| 10 |        | Lehrerin also wir hatten ja      | in between we had one or two              |
| 11 |        | zwischen durch ein zwei Faecher: | subjects: in german we had                |
| 12 |        | Deutsch Deutsch hatte wir und    | german and there was                      |
| 13 |        | da war noch Erdkunde oder        | geography too or something                |
| 14 |        | irgendwas hatten wir auch        | we had mathematics too or                 |
| 15 |        | Mathematik oder so andere        | something other things were               |
| 16 |        | Sachen wurden uns auf tuerkisch  | taught to us in turkish                   |
| 17 |        | beigebracht weil dieser Vorort   | because this part of                      |
| 18 |        | von Dinslaken der hatte 80%      | Dinslaken it had 80% turks                |
| 19 |        | Tuerken wir sind praktisch so    | we were basically brought up              |
| 20 |        | dort aufgezogen uhm              | there uhm grew up there so                |
| 21 |        | aufgewachsen so und irgendwann   | sometime or other uhm just a              |
| 22 |        | uhm ein moment was war das?      | moment what was that?                     |
| 23 | SLE →1 | Anfang der 80igen sind wir       | beginning of the 80s we                   |
| 24 |        | umgezogen von da es war eine     | moved away from there it was              |

25 deutsche Gegend und das hat a german area and that made  
 26 meine Entwicklung mitgemacht my development and then I  
 27 und dann hatte ich nun deutsche had german friends then (.)  
 28 Freunde (.) vorher hatte ich before I had also had one  
 29 zwar auch eine die hat mir auch she had for me that was also  
 30 deswegen hatte ich auch so a reason why I had a (.)  
 31 einen (.) Vorsprung was die start as far as the german  
 32 deutsche Sprache anging weil language was concerned  
 33 (.) ich konnte mich mit ihr because (.) I was able to  
 34 unterhalten mit den anderen talk to her with the others  
 35 habe ich mich natuerlich in I spoke turkish of course  
 36 Tuerkisch unterhalten deswegen that's why it wasn't so good  
 37 ging das mit der deutschen with german  
 Sprache nicht so gut

38 RE: Mhmm mhmm  
 39 →2 Lal: in der uhm die meisten meiner in the uhm most of my girl  
 40 Freundinnen die konnten nicht friends they couldn't really  
 41 mal richtig deutsch obwohl sie speak german well although  
 42 vielleicht hier geboren waren perhaps they were born here

Laleh's account here is largely chronological, marked by complicatory and evaluatory details (subjects, teacher, language, concentration of Turkish immigrant population) which enrich the account with Laleh's personal analysis of her background and progress as she sees it. An important serious life event (given as SLE in the extract) – moving to a 'German' neighbourhood – is produced at →1 (SLE) and the central role of language in her learning biography is thus accounted for (26-37). At →2, Laleh enacts a self-repair and shifts from generalization about the effects on her German language skills to anecdotal evidence (her girl-friends) which can be taken as contextualization of her previous remarks and as such as a strong knowledge claim: she, who was born and schooled in Turkey, overtook her Turkish girl-friends who were born in Germany (39-42). The centrality in her narrative of the physical spaces in which her learning took place and by which it was so obviously conditioned, hindered, helped, is striking. Laleh foregrounds the momentous crossing from what was as good as a Turkish ghetto – and she the child of a Kurdish-speaking family which learnt to use Turkish within the first mainstream language community they migrated into in Ankara – to a German locality and the learning consequences this unlocked. The risk factor involved is clearly acknowledged.

*Laleh: 'He didn't get round to it'*

She went to the vocational secondary school (Hauptschule) and not the (Upper) Secondary (Realschule). Once again we hear the voice of a significant other, and once again it is the teacher (→ESp 1).

### Extract 3

1 Lal: weil mein Lehrer mein because my teacher my father  
 2 Vater kam nicht mich auf didn't get round to  
 3 die Realschule anzumelden registering me for the  
 4 ging irgendwie nicht Realschule it wasn't possible  
 for some reason

5 RE: wieso? keine Information? How come? no information?  
 6 Lal: uhm der kam irgendwie dazu uhm he just didn't get round  
 7 nicht der Lehrer hat gesagt to it the teacher said <ESp>go  
 8 ESp →1 <ESp>du kannst dich ruhig on you can register for the  
 9 auf die Realschule anmelden Upper Secondary it was like  
 10 das war so damals die that then that the primary  
 11 Grundschullehrer haben school teachers pushed the  
 12 SLE →2 irgendwie die Eltern dazu parents sort of  
 13 bewegt

Teachers thus exerted pressure to move her up to the comprehensive school and family differences and cultural influences come to the fore here: the father is consistently present as

an obstacle to assimilation and learning, albeit rather more passive than active, while the mother emerges increasingly in Laleh's learning biography as a force for progress and improvement. The influence of the teachers in moving the parents to put Laleh in another school is recorded at →2. Laleh's description is intentionally biographized and evaluated as a further serious life event (SLE).

*Laleh: "you're too good for this school"*

*Extract 4*

|    |     |      |                                  |                             |
|----|-----|------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1  |     | Lal: | meine Mutter die hat erstmal     | at first my mother went     |
| 2  |     | →1   | auch da mitgemacht aber meine    | along with this but my      |
| 3  |     |      | Mutter war immer dafuer dass wir | mother was always for       |
| 4  |     |      | Maedchen was also uns            | letting us girls improve    |
| 5  |     |      | bildungsmaessig uhm hocharbeiten | ourselves education-wise    |
| 6  |     |      | das hat man gemerkt als wir uhm  | that got clear when a year  |
| 7  |     |      | ich war ein Jahr auf der         | later in the Hauptschule    |
| 8  |     |      | Hauptschule die Lehrerin hat     | the teacher my teacher said |
| 9  |     |      | dann auch gesagt meine Lehrerin  | <ESp>you're too good for    |
| 10 | Esp | →2   | sagte <ESpB>du bist zu schade    | this school change over to  |
| 11 |     |      | fuer diese Schule wechsel sie    | the comprehensive <EspE>    |
| 12 |     |      | auf die Realschule um<EspE> und  | and I changed over then I   |
| 13 |     |      | ich bin dann rueber ich habe     | had to persuade my parents  |
| 14 |     |      | meine Eltern ueberreden muessen  | my father was against it at |
| 15 |     |      | mein Vater war erstmal nicht     | first but the teacher she   |
| 16 |     |      | dafuer da hat die Lehrerin noch  | spoke to him personally and |
| 17 |     |      | mit ihm persoendlich gesprochen  | he said <ESp>OK let her go  |
| 18 | Esp | →3   | da hat er gesagt <Esp>ok soll    | and I was in the Realschule |
| 19 |     |      | sie und dann war ich auf der     | but I had to repeat that    |
| 20 |     |      | Realschule da musste ich aber    | year that was ok by me it   |
| 21 |     |      | die eine Klasse wiederholen aber | did me a lot of good that   |
| 22 |     |      | war mir recht es hat mir sehr    | was the first time I was in |
| 23 |     |      | gut getan da kam ich zum ersten  | a German class (1.0)so and  |
| 24 |     |      | mal in eine deutsche Klasse      | there so then it was it was |
| 25 |     |      | (1.0) so und da so es ging dann  | it was I thank that teacher |
| 26 |     |      | auch es war es war ich danke     | that she sent me then to    |
| 27 | SLE | →4   | dieser Lehrerin dass sie damals  | the Realschule (.) because  |
| 28 |     |      | mich auf die Realschule          | I don't know how different  |
| 29 |     |      | geschickt hat weil ich weiss     | my life would have been if  |
| 30 |     |      | nicht wie mein Leben sich        | I had remained at the       |
| 31 |     |      | geaendert haette wenn ich auf    | secondary modern where 80   |
| 32 |     |      | der Hauptschule geblieben waere  | to 90 per cent were         |
| 33 |     |      | wo achtzig bis neunzig Prozent   | foreigners                  |
| 34 |     |      | noch Auslaender waren            |                             |

Laleh manages the narrative skilfully so that the gender conflicts within the family and at school are marked linguistically by the greater space given to the references to the mother (→1 in lines 1 and 3) and by the economy of words spent on the father. While the embedded speech of teachers (→2) is given at length and with considerable rhetorical-prosodic precision (over lines 10-12) in which we can hear the teacher's voice talking to Laleh herself ('du bist zu schade...' / 'you're too good for...') and then presumably to her parents ('wechsel sie...' / 'change her...'), the father's (grudging?) acquiescence is taciturn, almost speechless (→3). We hear in fact the words 'ok soll sie' / 'ok let her (go)'. Laleh frames here another serious life event (given as →4 SLE), thanking the initiative of the teacher who insisted on furthering her education. Laleh can be heard to be constructing a consistent biography of growth. Once again, Laleh emphasises what is an 'escape' from the immigrant environment her mother was intent on helping her out of. Laleh's option is to assimilate via the language of the German majority. Access to this new learning space, the Realschule (as a result of which it was ultimately possible for her to progress to the Abitur necessary later in order to attend university) is heard in her narrative to be a significant, yet by no means inevitable, victory against obstacles within the family. The family, at the centre of which we hear of Laleh's

unschooled mother furthering her daughters consistently against the reluctant inactivity of the father to take up learning opportunities, is, alongside the schools Laleh attended, a space in which diversity is played out, protected and laid aside. The biographical space represented by one of the largest concentrations of Turkish immigrants/Gastarbeiter in the Federal Republic of Germany (Dinslaken in the Ruhr area) is overlaid and intersected by the space of the German classroom (lines 23-24). Laleh's agency-in-diversity from this point onwards, at the latest, becomes inextricably tied up with her learning biography, as her increasingly assimilated identity becomes a source of diversity within the family itself, and in the Turkish community she left behind (lines 33-34).

### **Conclusion: self and language, self and agency**

I have attempted to show that it is in the cracks and spaces, so to speak, where the inrush of interdiscursive elements is most sensed, that the otherness, and the space for agency, of Laleh is most keenly experienced. It is apparent, I hope, that the fractures at work in the lines of demarcation between culture of origin and immigration land, family and community, language and education, 'Turkish spaces' and 'German' spaces of learning and opportunity and the blurring of clean separations between these above all, are acutely hearable in Laleh's narratives (see here the discussion of 'Cleo' in Baudouin & Parson, 2010).

The 'othering effect' of German for Laleh can be a major source of 'hybridized' communication, which is double-edged (Duszak, 2002, pp. 219-220). It is legitimate to see "interactants as being involved in linguistic 'acts of identity' through which they claim or ascribe group membership" (Auer, 2005, p. 404) which in communities in transition – subject to processes of inclusion and exclusion - is important for the prestige, status and knowledge membership can bring. Equally, being unable to resource German to pursue social goals may result in marginalization. The agentic significance of the use of, and living and moving within, the language of the 'host' society is strikingly clear in Laleh's narrative.

There are demonstrably advantages within 'local' lifeworlds of close identification with 'hybridized' social discourses. Being able to move almost at will between social communities, or being able to act as interpreter and intermediary, can have learning and professional dividends. The associated lifestyles and choices to be made, are nevertheless ambiguous. Participation in diverse other-langauged discourse communities provides a space in which precious personal/professional freedoms can be lived out. But it is not enough to merely calculate the price or the possibilities of diversity as equal to being 'sandwiched' between 'German/European' and historically grown 'local' patriarchies, gender norms, family roles and individual identities. For the othering effects of globalizing processes, which are about "class, race/ethnic, and gender relations [and are] political and cultural, as well as economic" (Acker, 2004, p. 18) clearly open up not only significant learning opportunities and breaches in mainstream, frequently conservative discourses of social practice, but they also call forth resistance and rejection, resulting in social fragmentation and loss.

The Turkish student Laleh, then, is locked into learning processes which are deeply inscribed with gender/cultural/ethnic/political meanings. Empowerment and disempowerment are implicated in the workings of her learning experiences. The spaces in which she lives and learns and through which she moves while building relationships and careers are building-blocks of her diversity. Similarly, the language(s) that constitute(s) these spaces as knowable and accessible, and the times, individual rhythms and 'grammars' of experience that she develops in order to build her learning into her changing life are also building-blocks of the diversity that can be created and narrated in the biographic interview as an important expression of her agency.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A first version of this paper was presented at the ESREA Life History and Biography Research Network Conference “Human Agency and Biographical Transformations. Adult Education and Life Paths”, University of Geneva, March 3-6, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> I am referring here to “*Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*” [Germany abolishes itself: How we are putting our land at risk] (2010, Deutscher Verlagsanstalt, München) by the former Berlin Senator and publicist Thilo Sarrazin, and to “*Deutschland von Sinnen: Der irre Kult um Frauen, Homosexuelle und Zuwanderer*” [Germany out of its senses: the mad obsession with women, homosexuals and immigrants] by the erstwhile relatively respected author of minor detective novels, Akin Pirinçci (2014, Manuscriptum, Waltrop) who includes in his vilifications women and homosexuals as well as immigrants.

<sup>3</sup> The Forum NRW regularly organises vigils outside mosques and flashpoints of ‘citizen’ protest such as the notoriously degraded centres of residence of Bulgarian immigrants in Dortmund and Duisburg (see reports in <http://www.waz.de>). The NSU (National-Sozialistische Untergrund/National-Socialist Underground) is the object of an ongoing trial into the presumed nine murders of individuals of Turkish origin committed by the militant nazi terror cell between 2000 and 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The openly ‘anti-foreigner’ vote in Germany was only just over 1%, though three major parties (FDP, CDU, CSU) as well as the recently formed anti-EU protest party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) campaigned with varying degrees of hostility against new ‘waves’ of migrants, with over 40% of the AfD’s voters citing the “waves” of immigrants as the most important issue deciding their choice of party (see <http://www.tagesschau.de/europawahl/europawahl-analyse100.html> [03.06.2014],

<sup>5</sup> [Die Ankunft einer jungen Migrantenelite von gut- bis hochqualifizierten Zuwanderern aus den Krisenstaaten im Süden Europas [...] wurde vor kurzem noch gefeiert, als Bereicherung für das aus demographischen Gründen schrumpfenden Arbeitskräfteangebot in Deutschland. Jetzt aber geht wieder die Urangst vor der europäischen Ost-West-Migration und der außereuropäischen Süd-Nord-Wanderung um].

<sup>6</sup> Leitkultur [leading or dominant culture] was raised as a public discussion topic most notably by the leading Christian Democrat politician Friedrich Merz in 2000. Further definitions from similarly right-wing conservative standpoints agree on a Christian-Jewish heritage of European culture and contrast this with the “threat” from “uncontrolled” immigration. The originally one-sided discussion has in recent years been sharpened and focused by famous position statements by successive Federal Presidents in Germany – thus, President Christian Wulff’s (2010-2012) declaration that “Islam belongs to German culture” made in Bremen in 2010 – in a similar fashion to the controversy unleashed in April 2014 in the United Kingdom by the incumbent at 10 Downing Street about “our status as a Christian country” (Cameron, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Proposed legislation at the time of writing plans to ease the decision to hold 2 passports, rendering the pressure on individuals, particularly Turks, to ‘declare’ themselves by a certain age for the one or the other ‘homeland’, unnecessary (Zeit-Online.de, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> “Our children will of course learn Turkish. That is their native tongue and it is your most natural right to pass on your mother tongue to your children” [Selbstverständlich werden unsere Kinder Türkisch lernen. Das ist Ihre Muttersprache und es ist Ihr natürlichstes Recht, Ihre Muttersprache Ihren Kindern] in: [http://www.welt.de/debatte/article1660510/Das\\_sagte\\_Ministerpraesident\\_Erdogan\\_in\\_Koeln.html](http://www.welt.de/debatte/article1660510/Das_sagte_Ministerpraesident_Erdogan_in_Koeln.html)

<sup>9</sup> [“Bleibt nicht wie Fremde in diesem Land, ihr seid Staatsbürger Deutschlands ... lernt die Sprache und bringt sie euren Kindern bei. Aber assimiliert euch nicht ...”]

<sup>10</sup> The whole speech is documented in Welt-Online. See (Welt-Online, 2011)

<sup>11</sup> [“Every being is a cogito, but also an artisan of themselves, forming (educating) themselves both well and badly”]

<sup>12</sup> The paper discusses only one learning biography of a Turkish-German adult, that of Laleh. Others, collected over the last 10 years must, for lack of space, await another opportunity to be aired.

<sup>13</sup> I use the term ‘InländerInnen’ for the people of Turkish migration background spoken of here.

<sup>14</sup> [... Konstruktion einer Biographie als gesellschaftliche Anforderung an das Individuum ... sich zu organisieren, Verantwortung zu übernehmen für seine Handlungen ... ]

<sup>15</sup> [ ... in neuen Situationen werden neue Erfahrungen gemacht, die vom Subjekt in bestehende Selbst- und Weltkonstruktionen integriert werden müssen, womit diese bestätigt und stabilisiert (Reproduktion) oder aber ‘umgeschrieben’ (Transformation) werden müssen]

<sup>16</sup> I wish to draw attention through this idiosyncratic orthographic form to Laura Formenti’s provocative use of semantic de-constructions to draw out multiple meanings at work in key words (See Formenti, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> [Das biographische Hintergrundwissen beinhaltet also die lebensweltlichen gewißheiten auf die wir uns implizit beziehen, wenn wir handeln, Entscheidungen treffen, Pläne machen oder eben unsere Lebensgeschichte erzählen. Es beinhaltet Orientierungen und Präskripte, die wir von anderen übernommen haben, vor allem aber aufgeschichtete Erfahrungen, die wir gemacht und miteinander verknüpft haben, die uns keineswegs alle präsent

sind, aber zu Teilen als Erinnerungen an konkrete Erlebnisse rekonstruiert werden können, z.B. wenn wir in einer bestimmten Rahmensituation unsere Biographie erzählen].

<sup>18</sup> The following reduced markup is used in the interview transcript extracts produced here:

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| (.)    | Pauses (audible breaks in flow of speech)  |
| (1.0)  | Pause timed in seconds (to nearest second) |
| .hh    | In-breaths                                 |
| hh     | Out-breaths                                |
| °xxx°  | Quiet speech                               |
| +xxx++ | Rapid speech                               |
| xxx::  | Drawn-out utterance, drawl                 |
| ESp    | Embedded speech                            |

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