FITISPos
Formación e investigación en traducción e interpretación en los servicios públicos

Vol. 12. N.º 1 (2025), pp. 122-136
ISSN: 2341-3778

Recibido: 09/07/2024 Aceptado: 17/03/2025 Publicado: 04/04/2025

Interpreter provision and training of interpreters for languages of limited diffusion: an overview of the situation in Austria / Provisión y formación de intérpretes para lenguas de menor difusión: una visión general de la situación en Austria

Laura Andrea González Figueroa
University of Vienna, Austria
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9818-2723
laura.andrea.gonzalez.figueroa@univie.ac.at

Sonja Pöllabauer
University of Vienna, Austria
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8991-7207
sonja.poellabauer@univie.ac.at

Abstract: While qualified interpreters are available for some languages in asylum and migration settings, there is often a lack of appropriate services and interpreters offered for speakers of languages of limited diffusion (LLDs). As LLDs are highly contextual in nature, their situation might vary greatly from country to country, not to mention from year to year. It is therefore challenging to find up-to-date information about LLDs in some countries, especially since the topic has not been prominently featured in research. This contribution will first offer a brief review of literature on training and working with interpreters for LLDs, before presenting an overview of LLD interpreter provision and training in Austria up to 2023, providing a general rundown of the situation in the country. We present some key aspects of LLDs and outline the specific language constellations in the Austrian context. Additionally, we summarize the training options for interpreters in the country, highlighting those available to LLD speakers.

Keywords: Languages of limited diffusion (LLDs); Interpreter training; Interpreter provision

How to cite this article? / ¿Cómo citar este artículo?

González, L. A. & Pöllabauer, S. (2025). Interpreter provision and training of interpreters for languages of limited diffusion: an overview of the situation in Austria. *FITISPos International Journal, 12*(1), 122-136. https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2025.12.1.390

Resumen: En los ámbitos de asilo y migración es posible encontrar intérpretes calificados para algunas lenguas, pero esto no siempre es el caso cuando se trata de lenguas de difusión limitada (LLDs). Estas lenguas tienen una naturaleza altamente contextual y, por lo tanto, su situación es muy variable dependiendo del país e incluso el año. Asimismo, este tema no ha tenido gran prominencia en la investigación y, en consecuencia, a menudo es difícil encontrar información actualizada sobre la situación en algunos países. Este artículo incluye una breve revisión bibliográfica sobre la formación y el trabajo con intérpretes de LLDs, seguida de una descripción general de la situación en Austria hasta el año 2023, incluyendo opciones de formación disponibles y los servicios ofrecidos por intérpretes de LLDs. Presentamos aspectos claves de estas lenguas y esbozamos el contexto austriaco y las constelaciones lingüísticas específicas del mismo. Adicionalmente, resumimos las opciones de formación para intérpretes en el país y resaltamos aquellas disponibles para hablantes de LLDs.

Palabras clave: Lenguas de difusión limitada (LLDs); Formación de intérpretes; Prestación de servicios de interpretación

Information on author contribution: Some parts of the literature review undertaken for this paper were conducted within an EU project which is funded under AMIF: Developing an EU Web Portal for Video-Mediated Public Service Interpreting to Improve Access to Basic Services for Migrants and Refugees (EU-WebPSI), https://www.webpsi.eu, (see Singureanu *et al.*, 2023, p.51–53).

Acknowledgments and sources of funding: LAGF and SP devised the content of the paper and the outline. LAGF developed the theoretical framework, made the initial research, and wrote the first manuscript. SP reviewed the paper and completed it with more information and details. All authors discussed the final manuscript and contributed to its review.

1. Introduction

During the last couple of decades, the number of international migrants has increased steadily (Nergaard, 2021), and millions of people worldwide change their country of residence every year (Migration Data Portal, 2021; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2022). In Europe, providing access to public services and resources for immigrants and asylum seekers has been a challenging task, not only in terms of logistics, but also because of the staggering number of languages needed for appropriate communication. As immigrants hail from all around the world and speak an immense variety of languages, interpreting is therefore a key element of communication throughout the whole migration process (Nergaard, 2021).

However, not all languages are represented equally. Indeed, some languages are spoken more than others and often they are better covered by interpreting services or used in multilingual communication; this may be due to language ideological reasons, because particular languages are deemed to have a higher prestige or degree of usefulness and importance (Bermingham, 2021, see also Scheibelhofer *et al.*, 2021), and more formalized interpreter training may be available for these languages. Accordingly, speakers of less spoken languages, also known as languages of limited diffusion or languages of lesser diffusion (LLDs), may lack appropriate access to services and resources in many fields, including

interpreting services. However, it is difficult to generalize in terms of interpreter provision and training across countries, as LLDs are highly contextual and might vary depending on the specific constellation of every country.

This contribution presents an overview of LLDs in Austria, starting with a brief definition of LLDs and a review of literature on training and using interpreters for LLDs, followed by an exploration of the Austrian context and its language constellations. Additionally, the training options for interpreters in the country are summarized, giving special attention to those available to LLD speakers.

2. Languages of limited diffusion

2.1 Definition

Languages can be categorized in multiple ways, depending on the particular aspects that are to be highlighted, for instance, their inherent structure or geographical location. Even so, some categories are not clearly defined and within the field of translation and interpreting studies, LLDs remain a rather unexplored topic. At a surface level, LLDs are languages with relatively few speakers, but it is important to highlight that LLD always refers to a specific context and location and cannot be easily generalized (Gentile, 1993; Giambruno, 2014a; Skaaden & Wadensjö, 2014; Salaets *et al.*, 2016a; Gany *et al.*, 2017). Any language might, therefore, be potentially considered an LLD under the right circumstances, even official languages, as the term is dependent on a specific context and will show different results in different locations and time periods (Mikkelson, 1999; Gany *et al.*, 2017; Whyatt & Pavlović, 2021).

Besides having few speakers within a specific context, however, there are other common characteristics that LLDs might share. For example, LLDs are rarely spoken by people outside of their communities and the languages are often oral languages without a standardized variety or established terminology (Driesen, 2016; Salaets *et al.*, 2016a; Zekhnini, 2016; Whyatt & Pavlović, 2021). As for the speakers themselves, they are often immigrants (both recent and long-established), Indigenous peoples, or refugees, and therefore in need of interpreting services. Yet these needs are rarely met, not only due to the number of speakers, but also because of a lack of available qualified interpreters, not to mention training options and eligible teachers (Mikkelson 1999; Giambruno 2014a; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Skaaden & Wadensjö, 2014; Driesen, 2016; Salaets *et al.*, 2016a; Salaets *et al.*, 2016b; Gany *et al.*, 2017).

Thus, a lack of interpreting services seems almost transversal to most LLDs, although it is worth highlighting that these characteristics are not strict requirements but rather broad criteria that *might* apply to any given language. Which criteria are deemed relevant will largely depend on the particular focus of research and, accordingly, there may be several potential lists of LLDs, even within one location. For the purpose of this contribution, the aforementioned criteria will be the guiding force in identifying LLDs in Austria, with the caveat that the examples given are not an exhaustive list and there might be even more languages that could fall under the same category. In any case, no matter what the exact languages, shedding light on the challenges and experiences of working with LLDs is an important step towards improving interpreting provision in the country.

2.2 Training and working with LLD interpreters

Due to the contextual nature of LLDs, it is difficult to reach comprehensive generalized conclusions about interpreters working with those languages, not only because of widely differing personal backgrounds these interpreters may have, but also due to different training experiences. As it happens, several training programs have tackled the task of training LLD interpreters throughout the years and have yielded interesting information regarding the specificities of LLD interpreter training and the trainees' particular needs.

To start with, LLD interpreters tend to form a heterogenous group, not only on the grounds of the languages they speak but also concerning their backgrounds, age, profession and education (Gentile, 1993; Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelson, 1999; Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Straker & Watts, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Rienzner, 2010; Hlavac *et al.*, 2012; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Kleinert *et al.*, 2019). Also, many of these interpreters have the same background as the communities for which they interpret, having been refugees or migrants themselves, and may have had interpreting experience previous to being formally trained, usually while helping their own communities (Sammons, 1993; Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Rienzner, 2010; Hlavac *et al.*, 2012; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Kleinert, 2016).

As for formal training, a smaller number of interpreting training programs have targeted LLD speakers, and it is important to mention that these programs differ as regards content, entrance requirements, teaching methods, and languages, as well as length and assessment methods (see for instance Sammons, 1993; Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelson, 1999; Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Straker & Watts, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Hlavac *et al.*, 2012; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Driesen, 2016; Kleinert, 2016; Gany *et al.*, 2017; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Kleinert *et al.*, 2019; Blasco Mayor, 2020). Just as relevant is the fact that every country is able to set its own requirements when it comes to interpreters, with some waving away minimum requirements to accommodate LLD speakers, whereas others resort to English as lingua franca or turn to relay interpreting as a way of circumventing the need of qualified interpreters in a specific language combination (Mikkelson, 1999; Slatyer, 2006; Apostolou, 2012; Giambruno, 2014b; Gany *et al.*, 2017).

Under these circumstances, LLD interpreters might have varying degrees of training, and it is not a given that they will understand their role in communication. Indeed, whereas some will have a clear understanding of the expectations and nuances of interpreting, others might not necessarily be aware of commonly accepted professional standards. As it happens, interpreters who also belong to the communities for which they interpret may face the challenge of having to deal with people they know, and they may struggle with having to avoid conflicts of interest and having to deal with issues of confidentiality and potential cultural taboos (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Rienzner, 2010; Hertog, 2016). On a similar note, they might feel under pressure from the community to advocate for them, instead of acting as neutral interpreters (Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Mikkelson, 1999; Kleinert *et al.*, 2019).

On this point, however, it is important to keep in mind that studies suggest that interpreting is not necessarily and not always a neutral interaction, considering it is common, particularly with a focus on LLDs, to interpret in contexts with power asymmetries skewing towards the dominant language (Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert, 2018; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Whyatt & Pavlović, 2021). Moreover, for many LLD speakers interpreting itself may be associated with

a colonial past and Eurocentric ideas and notions they might want to leave behind, not to mention that some consider interpreters untrustworthy from previous personal negative experiences (Rienzner, 2010; Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018). Similarly, some LLDs might carry social stigma and their speakers might feel their language is a source of shame, or alternatively, might be reluctant to communicate with an interpreter in their own language (Mikkelson, 1999; Gany *et al.*, 2017).

Even if an interpreter succeeds in overcoming all the difficulties outlined above, structural cultural differences may remain between some language pairs. They may extend beyond mere language differences and relate to the very structure of thought and expression, as some language pairs do not have overlapping core concepts in some areas (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Kleinert, 2018). Interpreters themselves might not be entirely aware of the context or the content they are working with and might struggle when explaining content for which there is no underlying concept or developed vocabulary in a specific language, particularly if these lack training in interpreting (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelson, 1999; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Salaets *et al.*, 2016a; Zekhnini, 2016; Kleinert, 2018).

With that in mind, there are certainly many hurdles to overcome in order to provide appropriate interpreting services for LLD speakers. The information gleaned from the training experiences reviewed above sheds some light on important factors to consider in a general sense, which will provide the background to our review of the situation of LLDs and interpretation and translation for LLDs in the Austrian context.

3. Languages in Austria

Before delving into LLDs in Austria, it is important to understand more about the languages spoken in the country and their respective status. To begin with, according to the website of the Parliament of the Republic of Austria (Parlament Österreich, n.d.), there are around 250 languages spoken in the country, with German being the most commonly spoken. German is also the official language throughout most of the country which still has a strong and politically enforced monolingual language regime (de Cillia, 2022). Nonetheless, there are several minority languages recognized by the state, namely Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Romani, Slovakian, Slovenian, and as the most recent, Austrian Sign Language. Three of these languages (Hungarian, Slovenian, and the so-called Burgenland[1] Croatian) have official status as well, although only in some municipalities and not on a national scale. These languages are surely a reminder of the history of Austria, as they are (mostly) aligned with the languages of neighbouring countries and are the same languages that have been spoken in the region for centuries (Parlament Österreich, n.d.; also see Wolf, 2012, for a review of interpreting and translation history in the Hapsburg era).

However, more recent historical events have also influenced which languages are spoken in the country, albeit with a non-official status[2]. According to the website of the Parliament (Parlament Österreich, n.d.), many of these languages arrived in Austria during the second half of the 20th century, brought by migrant workers who later became permanent residents. Besides the officially recognized languages mentioned above, the most spoken languages in the country by the time the information was gathered (2001) were Albanian, Arabic, English,

[1] Burgenland is the name of one of the easternmost Austrian federal states.

[2] For reasons of scope, we cannot discuss in detail which other languages may have been used as LLDs following different geopolitical events that led to larger numbers of refugees and migrants arriving in Austria over the last 70 years since WW2.

French, Italian, Persian (Farsi), Polish, Rumanian, Serbo-Croatian, and Turkish (Parlament Österreich, n.d.). More recent information regarding language use does not appear to be available, but it is possible to reach some conclusions by analysing migration trends and migration statistics.

According to the national census of 2021 (Statistik Austria, 2023), the country of Austria is home to close to 9 million people (p.40), of which 82.5% are Austrian citizens and 17.5% are non-Austrian (p.54). A closer look at the specific composition of the non-Austrian population reveals that most of them are citizens of other European countries, and only 17.5% of the non-Austrian population is composed of non-European citizens (p.58). This information gives us a first glimpse into the composition (and potential interpreting needs) in an Austrian context. For one, it is apparent that the vast majority of the population is Austrian or comes from a European state and only a small fraction is of non-European descent. With that in mind, it is not difficult to imagine that most European inhabitants speak one or several European languages, for which there are likely interpreting and translation resources at hand, for example, resources from different branches of the European Union or interpreting agencies in neighbouring countries. When considering the LLD criteria outlined in the previous section, especially pertaining to access to interpreting services, it seems then that LLDs are mostly spoken not by the European majority, but rather by the non-European population.

When it comes to their nationalities, the website of the Atlas of Migration (European Commission, n.d.) offers a broad overview of the demographical information of migrants coming to Austria in 2022. Starting with first-time applicants for resident permits (under Austria/Residence permits, n.d.), the top 10 countries of origin contribute to approximately 70% of all migrants: 30% from European countries and 40% from five non-European countries, namely Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, India, and Iraq (almost 22,000 people in total[3]). As for the remaining 30%, most countries of origin do not even reach 1% and there are only 13 countries with more than 1,000 migrants, with the highest being Syria with around 12,000 (22%). Considering these statistics, it seems that migrants contribute greatly to the high number of languages spoken in the country, and from an LLD perspective, their small numbers point towards a high likelihood of them being considered LLDs. Furthermore, even for the five non-European countries listed above, there is not one single dominant language that is spoken in these countries but several different languages that might be spoken by nationals of these countries.

As for asylum seekers (European Commission, under Austria/Asylum system, n.d.), there are nine non-European countries in the top 10, representing close to 90% of all asylum applicants. In descending order, the top-ranking countries in Austrian asylum statistics (2015–2022) are Syria, Afghanistan, India, Iraq, and Pakistan (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2023); other more prominent source countries are Tunisia, Morocco, Somalia, Egypt, and Bangladesh. The number of asylum seekers, though, is much higher than that of other migrants, with the number of applicants exceeding 100,000 in 2022 (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2023). Once again, migration seems to be a driving force behind speakers of other languages coming into the country, although it is not clear precisely which languages are used by applicants.

Migration and asylum statistics are based on applicants' nationalities and do not provide sound information on applicants' specific linguistic backgrounds or language use. They also fail to provide information about other foreign languages they might speak or proficiency

[3] Similar migration data can be found in statistics by European Union Agency for Asylum [EUAA] (n.d.), International Organization for Migration [IOM] (n.d.), or UNHCR (n.d.).

 ISSN: 2341-3778

in German (often a requisite for regular resident permits, also see de Cillia, 2022). Equally, citizenship alone does not necessarily correspond to country of origin or the language spoken in a source country, as applicants might have dual citizenship or might speak a minority language within their own country. Hence, LLDs can only be inferred and not established with certainty, adding to the fact that long-term residents might also be LLD speakers and might not be taken into account in newer statistics. Migration trends do, however, provide some insight into the demographics of the country and help in visualizing the potential needs that might arise. It is perhaps not a perfect tool for listing languages but it can provide some guidance and help identify those areas of the population with more acute interpreting needs.

4. Interpreter training and interpreter provision in Austria with a focus on LLD

4.1 Interpreter training

Aspiring interpreters in Austria have several options when it comes to training, albeit different programs will have a different emphasis; for example, conference interpreting or community interpreting, among others. University-based interpreter training is offered at the public universities in Graz (Universität Graz, n.d.), Innsbruck (Universität Innsbruck, n.d.), and Vienna (Universität Wien, n.d.), mostly with a traditional canon of European or world languages. Apart from conference interpreting, the universities in Graz and Vienna also offer specializations in dialogue interpreting, though only Graz offers non-European languages (in combination with German) that are currently (or were in the past) much needed in an asylum or a broader migration context, such as, for instance, Arabic or Turkish, and also Austrian Sign Language. For LLD, considering that LLD speakers will often be migrants or asylum seekers, available training options will most likely be found in the fields of community interpreting or legal interpreting. It is within those settings that LLD speakers will most likely need interpreting services, and programs that fall under these categories also include some languages not offered in conference interpreting programs, not to mention the fact that they tend to focus on skills and content extending beyond traditional conference interpreting. A good resource for information about such specific programs is a database that has been developed by the Platform Dialogdolmetschen.at (Plattform Dialogdolmetschen, n.d.), a cross-university network of researchers and interpreter educators with longtime experience in dialogue interpreting research and training. This specific database lists training programs for dialogue interpreting, including community and legal interpreting under this broader label, and allows users to filter results and access details about every program listed (Datenbank Dialogdolmetschen, n.d.; also see Pöllabauer *et al.*, 2021).

Focusing on LLDs, the programs that are listed in the database (Datenbank Dialogdolmetschen, n.d.) are offered either for specific language combinations or in a cross-language format with German as a language of instruction. The latter type of program is particularly well suited for LLDs as it circumvents the issue of having to find resources and suitable teachers for a specific LLD (Kadrić & Pöllabauer, 2023); on the flip-side, however, it places the burden on the interpreters themselves to find appropriate resources in their languages; trainees' language proficiency is also not always assessed before they are admitted into a particular program (Pöllabauer *et al.*, 2023). Also, there are hardly any scholarships and costs, which differ and are quite high with some courses, have to be borne by the participants themselves which makes it quite impossible for aspiring trainees if they do not have the financial backing. For some programs, the formal entrance criteria may also prevent future trainees from getting into the program (Pöllabauer, 2020; Pöllabauer *et al.*,

2023). In general, however, programs such as these do provide some coverage and training without the organizational difficulties associated with training for LLDs, seeing that they are not limited to LLDs but rather speakers of any language. This allows more flexibility in the organization and in practice, opens the door for languages that would not be covered otherwise, as the language-specific programs cover 'only' roughly 20 languages, many of which can hardly be considered LLDs in Austria, for instance, French or English. Additionally, and since there are no transparent ways of listing LLDs, this strategy also provides coverage independently of migration trends and demographical changes, provided applicants are proficient in German and can hone their skills autonomously.

As for the programs that are listed in the database (currently 24, including BA and MA programs at public universities with a specialization in dialogue interpreting), at the time of writing 16 of them are offered on a regular basis, and of these, the majority are offered in larger cities (Datenbank Dialogdolmetschen, n.d.; also see Pöllabauer, 2020, for details)[4]; this may also be a drawback for trainees living in rural areas, though recently the option of digital attendance seems to have increased for some training programs. In terms of content, three of them prepare the interpreters specifically for the exam needed to be a legal interpreter, though these are merely shorter weekend seminars, whereas the remainder of the courses focus on community interpreting in general, or on specific fields of community interpreting (for instance, asylum, police), or they adopt a focus on inclusive communication (for instance, speech-to-text interpreting); generally the duration of the courses differs, ranging between several semesters and several weeks or only days (for a more comprehensive review see Pöllabauer, 2020, and Pöllabauer *et al.*, 2023). To what degree LLD interpreters make use of this offer is hard to say, as there are no official statistics on the number of trainees or graduates who have completed such courses, but any of these programs principally has the potential to contribute to the training of LLD interpreters. Of course, language-specific courses will generally be more fruitful for the trainees' development as interpreters in terms of developing specific language-related techniques or terminology, but as a starting point, cross-language specific training measures can also convey some basic tenets of interpreting to the trainees and provide them with the tools and resources to continue to hone their skills by themselves.

4.2 Interpreter provision

Considering the Austrian market, the interpreting profession is only officially regulated in the field of legal interpreting and the field of sign language interpreting. For this contribution, we only focus on spoken-language interpreting (see Grbić, 2023, for specifics of sign-language interpreting, including sign-language interpreter training, which is available also for Deaf interpreters, and interpreter provision).

The Austrian Association of Sworn and Court Certified Interpreters (Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher [ÖVGD]) represents the interests of legal interpreters and, in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Justice, it is also responsible for the certification process legal interpreters have to undergo (ÖVGD, n.d.a). This process includes an exam with both a translating and an interpreting assignment, and the main requirement for being allowed to take the exam is to have experience in interpreting and translating. For interpreters with a degree in translation studies in their working languages, the experience needed amounts to one year of experience in the previous three years; for other interpreters this requirement rises to

[4] The training landscape is dynamic, with frequent changes in the overall availability of courses.

three years out of the last five. After having passed the exam, certified legal interpreters are expected to work in court or extra-court legal settings, for instance in the asylum process or with government agencies, and are certified for an initial period of five years; certification can be renewed provided they have had continuous work in the field and have taken part in further training activities (ÖVGD, n.d.b).

Interestingly, the requirements for taking part in the exam provide some leeway for LLD speakers. On the one hand, interpreter training is not a prerequisite for being allowed to take the exam. Also, in addition, since 2021 it is possible for speakers of non-European languages to apply for a so-called "light" certificate (ÖVGD, n.d.c). Unlike with regular applications, interpreters do not need to prove written language skills, allowing interpreters with low writing skills to be certified and provide their services for a period of five years. Unlike the regular certification process, this option is not renewable, but interpreters are allowed to do a complementary exam and get the full certification at a later stage.

For LLDs, this degree of flexibility is often needed to provide services in some languages. Effectively, it gives interpreters the chance to improve their written language skills while simultaneously working, and it does not require a certain educational level but rather experience in the field. This approach is not without its shortcomings though, as it is not a given that every interpreter will be able to prove their experience, especially if they arrived in Austria only recently and under strenuous circumstances. Furthermore, the "light" certificate presupposes that interpreters will also work as translators at a later stage, which once again might not be the case for some languages. In addition, it also presupposes that interpreters are willing to improve and further hone their skills at a later stage, which may also not always be the case (Iannone, 2017).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these potential setbacks for LLD interpreters are mirrored both in the official and public register of court interpreters that is kept by the Ministry of Justice (JustizOnline, n.d.), and in the list of languages listed on the website of the Association of Court Interpreters covered by members of the association: out of the 51 languages listed on the website of the Court Interpreters Association, for instance, more than half of them are for European languages (ÖVGD, n.d.d). It is difficult to say whether this is due to lack of interest from LLD interpreters, or a sign that some languages do not need interpreting services. Nevertheless, the system in place does seem to align more closely with dominant languages and it is not difficult to imagine that some LLD speakers are unable to have a qualified and certified interpreter during important appointments, say their asylum process or a court procedure.

That is not to say that there are no interpreters outside the area of responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and the Austrian Association of Court Interpreters. In fact, as the profession is not regulated, outside of the typical court and extra-court legal settings any person can act as an interpreter, and from what is typically known about the Austrian community interpreting market this is still common practice in many fields (Ahamer, 2015; Pöllabauer, 2020; also see Pöllabauer *et al.*, 2023), and even for court proceedings, interpreters may be sworn in on an ad-hoc basis. In theory, this would allow for coverage in any language combination but clearly, there are no guarantees in terms of quality or professionalization. Moreover, it is not easy to say which languages are available for interpreting, seeing that there is no centralized list with contact information for all interpreters. There are, indeed, internal lists used by private and public organizations, but they are not always publicly accessible. In 2018, in addition, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior established a central Register of Interpreters for interpreters working for asylum or police procedures (Rechnungshof Österreich, 2020). This register replaced the different internal lists of interpreters that had previously been

used by asylum authorities and police departments. The register, however, is not publicly available, either, and no official information is available as to the number of LLDs included in the register. Since 2020, new candidates have been required to undergo a language-specific exam, which can be taken at different levels, to be included in the new Register of Interpreters. So far, these exams have been conducted for more than 70 languages (in combination with German), also including LLDs; in preparing the exam, the ministry also sought cooperation with language experts and the Austrian Association of Sworn and Court Certified Interpreters (Ministry of the Interior, personal communication, 2023).

In addition to the different lists of interpreters kept by different organizations, and the official registers mentioned, welfare organization and NGOs sometimes also have their own 'pools' of interpreters, including freelance and (a smaller number of) in-house interpreters – these are often organizations that can be assumed to have a higher need for linguistic support of speakers of LLDs; this, for instance, is also the case with the newly founded (2019) Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services which also has its own translation and interpreting service (Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen, n.d.), operating largely independently of the official registers of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior. No official statistics are available on the total numbers of interpreters, however, and it is to be expected that interpreters, including interpreters for LLDs, are listed concurrently in these available different lists and registers.

5. Conclusion

In a general sense, Austria is not immune to the same difficulties other countries face regarding LLDs. The languages themselves are hard to identify and they are in constant flux, so the numbers of speakers of LLDs and their concrete interpreting demands are difficult to assess. Also, there are no comprehensive lists of available and qualified interpreters; rather interpreters are included, often presumably concurrently, in different registers and (in-house) lists, and the inclusion and quality criteria for being added to such lists and registers vary. Migration trends and demographic statistics do offer some insight into the potential interpreting needs of the country, but they are not all-encompassing and are missing a language component to truly be a good indicator of the language(s) spoken by the population.

As for training itself, Austria faces the same organizational issues that are common when dealing with LLDs, and there are not many language-specific and comprehensive courses for training speakers of LLDs as interpreters. Austrian institutions seem to be aware of the need to train interpreters and work with trained interpreters to a certain degree. They also offer some likely options to aspiring interpreters, and there is also some flexibility in the certification of legal interpreters. We do, however, see the need for further cooperation and improvement, both among authorities and training providers, to fully provide fair and equal access to public services to speakers of LLDs, also including the generic use of qualified interpreters. European projects such as TraiLLD (see Balogh *et al.*, 2016) and EU-WebPSI (EU-WebPSI, 2023) will hopefully contribute to raising awareness to this topic and the need for training interpreters for LLDs.

References

Ahamer, V. (2015). „Sie wird zum Hofer gehen und Regale putzen." Dolmetschen als Variable von sprachlicher Identität und Bildungsgerechtigkeit. In A. Wegner & İ. Dirim (Eds.), *Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildungsgerechtigkeit* (pp. 184-197). Barbara Budrich.

Apostolou, F. (2012). Interpreting services for immigrants: a new reality in Greece. *The Interpreters' Newsletter, 17*, 213-222.

Balogh, K., Salaets, H., & Van Schoor, D. (Eds.). (2016). *TraiLLD – Training in languages of lesser diffusion: Training of legal interpreters in LLDs*. Lannoo Campus.

Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen. (n.d.). Interpretation and translation services. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.bbu.gv.at/en/what-we-do#translation

Bermingham, N. (2021). Language ideologies and transnational migration: A study of Cape Verdeans in Galicia. *Languages, 6*(99). https://doi.org/10.3390/languages6020099

Blasco Mayor, M. J. (2020). Legal translator and interpreter training in languages of lesser diffusion in Spain. In E. N. Ng & I. H. Crezee (Eds.), *Interpreting in legal and healthcare settings: Perspectives on research and training* (pp. 133-163). John Benjamins.

Bundesministerium für Inneres. (2023). Asylstatistik 2022. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.bmi.gv.at/301/Statistiken/

Datenbank Dialogdolmetschen. (n.d.). Datenbank: Übersicht über Qualifizierungs- und Sensibilisierungsmaßnahmen für Dialogdolmetschen. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://dialogdolmetschendatenbank.at/

de Cillia, R. (2022). Die Rolle der deutschen Staatssprache in der diskursiven Konstruktion österreichischer Identitäten. In V. Ahamer, A. Hrubesch, & G. Ganglbauer (Eds.), *Ausgesprochen? Noch lange nicht! Eine Festschrift für Thomas Fritz* (pp. 86-96). Edition Volkshochschule.

Driesen, C. (2016). The tandem method for training legal interpreters and translators. In K. Balogh, H. Salaets, & D. Van Schoor (Eds.), *TraiLLD – Training in languages of lesser diffusion: Training of legal interpreters in LLDs* (pp. 80-88). Lannoo Campus.

Dubslaff, F., & Martinsen, B. (2003). Community interpreting in Denmark: Results of a survey. In L. Brunette, G. Bastin, I. Hemlin, & H. Clarke (Eds.), *The critical link 3: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 113-125). John Benjamins.

European Union Agency for Asylum [EUAA]. (n.d.). Data analysis and research. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-knowledge/data-analysis-and-research

European Commission. (n.d.). Atlas of migration. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://migration-demography-tools.jrc.ec.europa.eu/atlas-migration/country-profiles?selection=AUT#LEG_MIG

EU-WebPSI. (2023). Developing an EU web portal for video-mediated public service interpreting to improve access to basic service for migrants and refugees. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.webpsi.eu

Gany, F., González, C. J., Schutzman, E. Z., & Pelto, D. J. (2017). Engaging the community to develop solutions for languages of lesser diffusion. In E. A. Jacobs & L. C. Diamond (Eds.), *Providing health care in the context of language barriers: International perspectives* (pp. 149-169). Multilingual Matters.

Gentile, A. (1993). Community interpreting and languages of limited diffusion. In C. Picken (Ed.), *XIII FIT World Congress. Translation – the vital link, 6–13 August 1993, Brighton. Proceedings, Vol. 2* (pp. 253-262). Institute of Translation and Interpreting.

Giambruno, C. (2014a). Dealing with languages of lesser diffusion. In C. Giambruno (Ed.), *Assessing legal interpreter quality testing and certification: The Qualitas project* (pp. 93-107). Universidad de Alicante.

Giambruno, C. (2014b). The current state of affairs in the EU: Member states profiles. In C. Giambruno (Ed.), *Assessing legal interpreter quality testing and certification: The Qualitas project* (pp. 149-190). Universidad de Alicante.

Grbić, N. (2023). *Gebärdensprachdolmetschen als Beruf*. Transcript.

Hale, S., & Ozolins, U. (2014). Monolingual short courses for language-specific accreditation: Can they work? A Sydney experience. *Interpreter and Translator Trainer, 8*(2), 217-239.

Hertog, E. (2016). Professional responses to working with ad hoc interpreters. In K. Balogh, H. Salaets, & D. Van Schoor (Eds.), *TraiLLD – Training in languages of lesser diffusion: Training of legal interpreters in LLDs* (pp. 195-211). Lannoo Campus.

Hlavac, J., Orlando, M., & Tobias, S. (2012). Intake tests for a short interpreter-training course: Design, implementation, feedback. *International Journal of Interpreter Education, 4*(1), 21-45.

Iannone, E. (2017). Community interpreting – Professionalisation for lay interpreters: A new initiative for the training of community interpreters in Austria. In K. Holewik & A. Łyda (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary encounters: Dimensions of interpreting studies* (pp. 104-120). Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

International Organization for Migration [IOM]. (n.d.). Facts and figures. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.iom.int/data-and-research

JustizOnline. (n.d.). Allgemein beeidete und gerichtlich zertifizierte Dolmetscher:innen. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://justizonline.gv.at/jop/web/exl-suche/do

Kadrić, M., & Pöllabauer, S. (2023). Education and training of public service interpreter teachers. In L. Gavioli & C. Wadensjö (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of public service interpreting* (pp. 414-428). Routledge.

Kleinert, C. V. (2016). Didáctica para la formación de intérpretes en lenguas nacionales de México: Trabajar de manera multilingüe. *Entreculturas. Revista de traducción y comunicación intercultural, 1*(7-8), 599-623.

Kleinert, C. V. (2018). Reflexiones sobre la formación de intérpretes sociales para la interculturalidad. In B. Baronnet, J. Merçon, & G. Alatorre (Eds.), *Educación para la interculturalidad y la sustentabilidad; aportaciones reflexivas a la acción* (pp. 97-107). Elaleph.

Kleinert, C. V., & Stallaert, C. (2018). Una deuda histórica: formación de intérpretes para la justicia en Oaxaca. *Transfer, 13*(1-2), 13-29.

Kleinert, C. V., Núñez-Borja, C., & Stallaert, C. (2019). Buscando espacios para la formación de intérpretes para la justicia en lenguas indígenas en América Latina. *Mutatis Mutandis, 12*(1), 78-99.

Lai, M., & Mulayim, S. (2010). Training refugees to become interpreters for refugees. *Translation & Interpreting, 2*(1), 48-60.

Lai, M., & Mulayim, S. (2013). Training interpreters in rare and emerging languages: The problems of adjustment to a tertiary education setting. In C. Schäffner, K. Kredens, & Y. Fowler (Eds.), *Interpreting in a changing landscape: Selected papers from Critical Link 6* (pp. 287-303). John Benjamins.

Michael, S., & Cocchini, M. (1997). Training college students as community interpreters: An innovative model. In S. E. Carr, R. Roberts, A. Dufour, & D. Steyn (Eds.), *The critical link: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 237-248). John Benjamins.

Migration Data Portal. (2021, February 5). International migrant stocks. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-migrant-stocks

Mikkelson, H. (1999). Relay interpreting: A solution for languages of limited diffusion? *The Translator, 5*(2), 361-380.

Nergaard, S. (2021). *Translation and transmigration*. Routledge.

Niska, H. (2007). From helpers to professionals: Training of community interpreters in Sweden. In C. Wadensjö, B. Englund Dimitrova, & A. Nilsson (Eds.), *The critical link 4: Professionalisation of interpreting in the community* (pp. 297-310). John Benjamins.

Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher. (n.d.a). Allgemeines. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.gerichtsdolmetscher.at/Menu/OEVGD/Allgemeines

Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher. (n.d.b). Gerichtsdolmetscher. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.gerichtsdolmetscher.at/Menu/Nutzliche-Informationen/Gerichtsdolmetscher

Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher. (n.d.c). Zulassungsvoraussetzungen. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.gerichtsdolmetscher.at/Gerichtsdolmetscher/Zulassungsvoraussetzungen

Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher. (n.d.d). Gerichtsdolmetscher finden. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.gerichtsdolmetscher.at/Verzeichnis

Parlament Österreich. (n.d.). Sprachen in Österreich. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.demokratiewebstatt.at/angekommen-demokratie-und-sprache-ueben/sprachen-in-oesterreich

Penney, C., & Sammons, S. (1997). Training the community interpreter: The Nunavut Arctic College experience. The language and demographics of Nunavut. In S. E. Carr, R. Roberts, A. Dufour, & D. Steyn (Eds.), *The critical link: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 65-76). John Benjamins.

Plattform Dialogdolmetschen. (n.d.). Plattform Dialogdolmetschen. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://dialogdolmetschen.at

Pöllabauer, S. (2020). Does it all boil down to money? The Herculean task of public service interpreter training – A quantitative analysis of training initiatives in Austria. In M. Štefková, K. Kerremans, & B. Bossaert (Eds.), *Training public service interpreters and translators: A European perspective* (pp. 31-57). Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave. https://researchportal.vub.be/en/publications/training-public-service-interpreters-and-translators-a-european-p

Pöllabauer, S., Bergunde, A., Grießner, F., & Sourdille, A.; with Bahadır-Berzig, S., Behr, M., Bodo, A.-M., Feyrer, C., Grbić, N., Hagenlocher, L., Kadrić, M., Oberhofer, M.,

Redl, K., Stachl-Peier, U. (2021). Dialogdolmetschen.at: Übersichtsdarstellung über Qualifizierungs- und Sensibilisierungsinitiativen im Bereich Dialogdolmetschen in Österreich (2001-2021). https://doi.org/10.25365/phaidra.297

Pöllabauer, S., Iacono, K., Pasch, H., Zwischenberger, M. B., & Sourdille, A. (2023). "If we're lucky, we recognise potential." A study of admission criteria and entrance screening practices in public service interpreter training. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2023.2278318

Rechnungshof Österreich. (2020, June). Dolmetsch- und Übersetzungsleistungen im Innenministerium und Justizministerium: Bericht des Rechnungshofes. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.parlament.gv.at/dokument/XXVII/III/140/imfname_802804.pdf

Rienzner, M. (2010). Migration, biografie & translation: MigrantInnen aus afrikanischen Ländern als DolmetscherInnen bei Gericht und Behörden in Österreich. *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien, 19*(10), 115-135.

Salaets, H., Balogh, K., & Van Schoor, D. (2016a). Languages of lesser diffusion (LLDs): The rationale behind the research project and definitions. In K. Balogh, H. Salaets, & D. Van Schoor (Eds.), *TraiLLD – Training in languages of lesser diffusion: Training of legal interpreters in LLDs* (pp. 17-32). Lannoo Campus.

Salaets, H., Balogh, K., & Van Schoor, D. (2016b). Introduction. In K. Balogh, H. Salaets, & D. Van Schoor (Eds.), *TraiLLD – Training in languages of lesser diffusion: Training of legal interpreters in LLDs* (pp. 11-15). Lannoo Campus.

Sammons, S. (1993). Challenges in minority language programming in Canada's eastern Arctic: The training of aboriginal language interpreter-translators. *Meta, 38*(1), 45-50.

Scheibelhofer, E., Holzinger, C., & Draxl, A.-K. (2021). Linguistic diversity as a challenge for street-level bureaucrats in a monolingually-oriented organisation. *Social Inclusion, 9*(1), 24-34.

Singureanu, D., Braun, S., Davitti, E., González Figueroa, L., Pöllabauer, S., Mazzanti, E., De Wilde, J., Maryns, K., Guaus, A., & Buysse, L. (2023). Research report: EU-WEBPSI: Baseline study and needs analysis for PSI, VMI and LLDI. https://www.webpsi.eu/deliverables/wp2-research/

Skaaden, H., & Wadensjö, C. (2014). Some considerations on the testing of interpreting skills. In C. Giambruno (Ed.), *Assessing legal interpreter quality testing and certification: The Qualitas project* (pp. 17-26). Universidad de Alicante.

Slatyer, H. (2006). Researching curriculum innovation in interpreter education: The case of initial training for novice interpreters in languages of limited diffusion. In C. B. Roy (Ed.), *New approaches to interpreter education* (pp. 47-66). Gallaudet University Press.

Statistik Austria. (2023). Zensus Volkszählung 2021: Ergebnisse zur Bevölkerung aus der Registerzählung. Bundesanstalt Statistik Österreich. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zensus-VZ-2021.pdf

Straker, J., & Watts, H. (2003). Fit for purpose? Interpreter training for students from refugee backgrounds. In L. Brunette, G. L. Bastin, I. Hemlin, & H. Clarke (Eds.), *The critical link 3: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 163-176). John Benjamins.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]. (2022). Global report 2022. UNHCR. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/reports-and-publications/unhcr-data

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]. (n.d.). Refugee data finder. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/

Universität Graz. (n.d.). Institut für Theoretische und Angewandte Translationswissenschaft. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://translationswissenschaft.uni-graz.at/de/

Universität Innsbruck. (n.d.). Institut für Translationswissenschaft. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://www.uibk.ac.at/translation/

Universität Wien. (n.d.). Zentrum für Translationswissenschaft. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from https://transvienna.univie.ac.at

Whyatt, B., & Pavlović, N. (2021). Translating languages of low diffusion: Current and future avenues. *Interpreter and Translator Trainer, 15*(2), 141-153.

Wolf, M. (2012). *Die vielsprachige Seele Kakaniens: Übersetzen und Dolmetschen in der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918*. Böhlau.

Zekhnini, A. (2016). Resources and materials for the legal interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion. In K. Balogh, H. Salaets, & D. Van Schoor (Eds.), *TraiLLD – Training in languages of lesser diffusion: Training of legal interpreters in LLDs* (pp. 117-142). Lannoo Campus.