

# The Croatian language in the expanding transnational space

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## Summary

*This contribution analyses dynamics of the Croatian language in the changing social environment and the expanding Australian-Croatian transnational social space. It is a language of communication and adaptation to a new home, a constitutive element of institutional completeness in the Croatian diaspora, and embedded in Australian cultural diversity. As a symbol of migrant identity it is also a medium of linkages and exchange, of communication flows between two spatially distant nodes, or homes. Australian-Croatian transnational social space has evolved out of countless linkages at the grass roots level over the past century. Dramatic social, political and technological changes replaced the impact of large scale migration to Australia with the enhanced flow of investment, tourism and return migration to Croatia. Such developments generate new perspectives for the Croatian language in transnational social spaces established from below, providing it with new dynamics of cultural and commercial exchange in addition to representation of identity in a culturally diverse society. Such developments provides perspectives for this embattled language as an important medium of communication in transnational space and as a companion language (alongside major global languages) to travellers and a culturally hybrid second generation in an ever expanding transcultural space.*

**Key words:** *migrants, Croatian language, communication, identity, second generation, hybridity, transnational social space, below, institutional completeness*

This discussion on the Croatian language within the scope of the expanding transnational social space is grounded in the dynamic migration process to and from Australia over the last century. The Australian-Croatian transnational social space is generated from below, out of diverse migrant grassroots activities (Guarnizo & Smith 2003: 3-6; Smith 2001: 4). This small European language struggled for survival from the very beginning of the recorded history as it encountered geographical obstacles, different cultural base and influences, territorial occupations, political and ideological pressures and migrations in diverse historical times. The nation and its language were

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surrounded and invaded by the major forces of the time, some of the regional, the other of a global significance. The consequences of so diverse structural influences are still felt in language, in Croatian society and among its migrants, too. Hence, the encounter with a language, culture, economic and political force of a global significance is not a novel experience for this small embattled language. Nevertheless, the Croatian language, its dialects, vernacular, official usage, scripts and literature persevered and regenerated under uneven historical conditions.

In this contribution an emphasis is made on the perspective of this rich cultural and language experience in conjunction with the major post-migration social changes. It is analysed within a framework defined by new proximities (Rosenau 2003) and a role of English languages as a major communication bridge. However, English like other great languages are not a panacea in all situations. Today, independent Croatia encounters new challenges. Croatia is not anymore a major migration source country, its population is aging and the shortage of labour is already experienced. On the other hand, some among the descendants of its own migrants identify with the ancestral place of origin. Concurrent social, cultural, political, communication and transport changes open opportunities that were neither feasible nor even imaginable at the height of the European migration to Australia. To this can be added how regular summer tourist flows, including from Australia, to the Croatian littoral area certainly adds new perspectives to this language as well.

New opportunities arise out of transnational social space that was generated by migrants through continuous exchange with a place of origin over many decades. Despite various hindrances and settlements hardships, Australian-Croatian transnational social space flourished over decades. It is framed by a power of symbolic representations and a sense of belonging appropriating dimensions beyond the expectations of its creators, social actors, migrants. Due to major political changes in 1990s` when Croatia gained its independence, migration generated transnational social space gained new perspectives through the institutional, administrative and political support. Within a globalisation process, new opportunities and challenges require responses beyond the capacity of migrants. As a medium of communication, Croatian language appropriates a novel significance to its primary role of culture transfer and identity maintenance. It is a language through which people with diverse social, settlement and life experiences communicate at different levels and for diverse purposes.

This contribution explores a role of the Croatian language as the communication medium within the expanding opportunities of a transnational social space that was generated by several generations of migrants and their descendants. The analysis is framed in two major segments starting with a brief theoretical overview of transnational social space created through migration process. It is followed with observations on ethnic resources as defining factors in the emergence and expansion of transnational social space. This discussion is followed by a brief presentation of migration patterns between these two distant destinations. The second segment concentrates on various forms of culture transfer with particular emphasis on language maintenance, and

changes in linkage patterns established between two spatially distant countries. It ends with discussion on the perspectives of the Croatian language in expanding transnational social environment and the challenges ahead.

## **Transnational social space**

Movements of people and the consequent transfer of their culture, including of language, into new place of settlement is a major factor behind the emergence of transnational social space. It differs from a transnational space generated from above, by diverse public, government, religious, business and media (Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 3). Migrants, individually or collectively, through their own activities generate diverse links between the place of settlement and the place of origin, creating “networks of international identifications encompassing ‘imagined’ and ‘encountered’ communities” (Anderson 1991: 4; Brah 1996: 93). Transnational social space established from *below* transcends spatial and political boundaries with diverse density and intensity, and is characterised by continuous flow of people, ideas, symbols, goods and services (Faist 2000: 240; Portes 1998: 47; Light and Gold 2001: 151). Such migrant activities impact on both country of origin and of settlement. In this process, languages reterritorialised (Deleuze and Guattari 1992: 141-145) by migration are a major medium of exchange, though their importance through intergenerational changes is being replaced by the host countries languages.

The development, existence and sustainability of transnational social space depend on people, their activities and established networks at home and in place of settlement. People arrive with their own cultural needs and desire to satisfy and maintain them irrespective of adverse circumstances. Because of cultural differences migrants experience scarcity of opportunities and places where they can satisfy their social needs. With their own, and often very scarce means, migrants create their own environment or habitus (Bourdieu 2000: 150) while adapting to and embedding in an “unknown” social environment.

Through migration and re-territorialisation of cultures, diverse nodes of transnational social space are established generating new opportunities across space within the global communication revolution that is identified by changes in the nature, intensity and density of communication flows (Castells 1991: 167, 350). Changes in social environment also had major impact on the nature and dynamics of transnational social space. Trips to and from Australia to Europe now take a day or two, not weeks, an important factor in comparison to much closer European migration destination countries. Telephone and internet replaced letters, while TV programs are being transmitted globally. Australia accepted multicultural policy, opened doors to non-European migrants, and incorporated into mainstream many aspects of the culture brought by diverse Southern European and other migrants, while Croatia became an independent state. A rare Croatian migrant arrives in Australia these days, while the return migration is accompanied by the flow of investment and tourists now.

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The new interactive social space being created is transcending not only cultural, spatial and political boundaries, but also the effects and established patterns of human movement. Although intergenerational changes create certain limitations to the configuration of a transnational social space, it also generates new opportunities that did not exist until recently. The aspirations of the second or “new” generations differ from their parents, as they seek new opportunities for themselves. A coming mid-century would see new opportunities and challenges emerging within a transnational social space inherited from former, the older migrant generations. Inevitably, it will have effects on both countries, ancestral and their home country.

Many ethnic groups mobilise their resources to satisfy their collectively perceived communal needs during settlement. Members of a group combine material resources with human, cultural and bonding social capital to appropriate needed critical resources. Migrants` willingness to contribute to a collective good is a function of diverse factors, including the experienced settlement constraints, level of communication ability, dependency, the availability of close substitutes, unknown alternatives, the cost of leaving a group, and the strength of personal ties (Hechter 1987: 47). The creation of collective goods is further qualified by collective homogeneity, the intensity of the felt need, and the degree of commitment and compliance (Frank 1997: 240). The experience of many migrant groups confirms claims raised by Simmel (1964: 9) and Olson (1971: 28) that small homogeneous groups can more easily find motivation to respond, define aims and apply available resources in comparison to large or latent groups. According to Rex (1994: 3-12) a sense of identity and belonging, as a major ethnic resource, provides an advantage in forming community infrastructure over “mainstream” community groups and social movements.

Migrant appropriated communal places are in focus of life experience outside of work to many migrants, and a major channel of communication. The process of collective appropriation of symbolically and functionally defined communal places by migrants arriving in search of better life informs about the complexity of settlement in new environment and of the establishment of new roots. Such communal mobilisation effects community life over a longer time and generates communal space with dynamic local and transnational relations that are mutually interlocked and constitutive in a communicative process (Smith 2001: 92). These places facilitate continuous communication among social actors, migrants, with the outside world, enable cultural maintenance and anchor intensive exchange with the place of origin. Such places ease communication difficulties and facilitate social exchange with the outside world. The appropriated migrant communal places are major symbolic, material and in particular communication nodes of a transnational social space. Their importance is emphasised by the endeavours of at least 450 ethnic collectives that have appropriated their spiritual and secular homes in Sydney only during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lalich 2004).

## Ethnic resources

The sense of ethnic origin as a key individual and group identifier is a major ethnic resource. It is enhanced by settlement experience, as a consequence of `social pressures`, inclusion in the group and the feeling of exclusion from the social structures of the host society (Olson 1971: 39; Breton et al 1977: 197; Cohen 1974: xv; Marger 1997: 43). As a dynamic category of ascription and identification, ethnicity establishes a field of communication and interaction (Barth 1969: 9-16), and the development of diverse forms of social relationships and social organisations (Coleman 1990: 43-44, 300). The sense of ethnicity is powerful resource, compounded by migration and settlement experience, tradition, feeling of solidarity, and migrant organisational capacity (Light & Gold 2000: 105).

Within the context of the settlement process, social capital (Bourdieu 1993: 32-35; Coleman 1990: 302; Putnam 1993: 167) is enhanced through the intensified interaction of networks, mutual trust and solidarity within the norms transferred in a new environment (Morawska 1990: 210; Portes 1995: 15; Light and Gold 2000: 95). Social capital as a key local ethnic resource, and in particular its *bonding* capacity is instrumental in the development not only of ethnic communal space, but it is also a strong formative force behind the formation of transnational social space. Furthermore, its *bridging* capacity which is considered as a “transmission belt” (Faist 2000: 289) impacts on building of links with the rest of the society and of the transnational ones across spatial distances.

The key aspect of ethnic resource is culture with which migrants arrive and in most instances strive to maintain it despite hindrances and difficulties in transferring it to the next generation (Rex 1973: 27; Alba 1990: 84). Culture as a symbolic expression of identity and a form of capital (Geertz 1973: 17; Bourdieu 2000: 242; Eisenstadt 1992: 64, 83) is a dynamic phenomenon characterised by fluidity, spatiality and generation of new forms reflecting settlement experience which is a factor of a time and place of migration (Weber 1978: 390, 394; Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 37; Smith 2001: 111). The endeavour of ethnic groups to maintain transferred culture is characterised not only by the establishment of regular links with the place of origin, but also by the appearance of various secular and religious subsystems as ethnicity and therefore transferred culture does not necessarily imply homogeneity (Anderson 1991: 4; Smelser 1992: 9). Cultural pluralism impacts on perceived needs, aims, organisational forms and subsequent endeavours conducive for its retention and adaptation to local circumstances. Transfer of culture is fragmented and made through regional or local affiliations, like in the case of many Southern European regional and island associations, including two island social clubs established by Croatian migrants from Cres and Korcula in Sydney.

The transfer of language, religious and various leisure practices are the most important aspects of culture transfer. But the retention of language and secular culture is a major problem among many migrant communities (Gans 1996: 426-430). Language as major identifier of ethnic identity (Padilla 1999: 116; Liebkind 1999: 144) can survive, but more often declines over the time during migration process (Grin 1999: 16); it is the first

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victim of intergenerational changes (Alba 1990: 119; Waters 1990: 116). Outside of the family life, language is supported by the transfer of religious and leisure practices through the establishment of various schools, tertiary language studies, childcare, social and sport clubs. Within the contemporary Australian context and policies, ethnic language maintenance is supported through the provision of translating services, financial support of ethnic day and Saturday language schools, language inclusion in school curricula, provision of radio and television programs in different languages (Jupp 2002: 83-94, 208-213; Lopez 2000: 271-272; Marginson 1997: 251-258). However, unlike the Greek migrants who established their own educational facilities in the post-war period, the continental European Roman Catholic migrants very often supported a Roman Catholic educational system established earlier by the Irish migrants. Such orientation had adverse impact on language maintenance, as language tuition in Saturday and evening schools have various language maintenance limitations. The independence of Croatia, and of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Croatian language is one of three constitutive languages had deep impact on its diaspora (Škvorc 2005: 31) as it secured the additional institutional support for language teaching and maintenance.

The transfer of religion has a deep cultural and psychological meaning, and is indicative of the establishment of new roots or “being at home” (Fenton 1988: 170; Yang 1999: 82, 91). Religious affiliation as an important mode of symbolic expression and of cultural reproduction (Warner 1998: 16; Fenton 1988: 117) often facilitates ethnic mobilisation for other purposes, like the development of childcare, schools and welfare institutions. Moreover, while other aspects of ethnicity often vanish, religion survives as an important manifestation of self-identifications (Herberg 1974: 77-8), and as the focal point of ethnic affiliation and organisational continuity. The transfer of various leisure patterns, including informal meetings and sports, has similar significance. However, their impact often dissipates within the intergenerational changes and if sustained appropriates different connotations.

## **Linkages between Croatia and Australia**

Croatian migrants were major source of communication between Croatia and Australia for many years. They introduced Australia to their families and neighbours at home. The Australian-Croatian transnational social space is generated out of migrant actions overcoming not only the spatial but for many decades many other hindrances, including ideological and administrative ones. It is a product of human labour with many new perspectives in a changing world. As a consequence of changes in the profile of migrants and communication modes, the patterns and dynamics of established linkages evolved over the time as well. The post-war migration originated from diverse parts of the country and included political migrants too, unlike the older one that was in general economic migration mostly from Dalmatia and other littoral regions.

## Migration to Australia

Migration from Croatia to Australia started already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century mostly after the Suez Canal was built, but it was insignificant in comparison to migration to Americas. According to the claim by Holjevac (1968: 33,51) there were some five hundred thousand Croatian migrants before the World War Two, but only one percent settled in Australia. According to Price (1963: 11) there were at least 5,020 Croatian settlers in 1947, a fivefold increase since 1921. This was the fourth largest group of continental European settlers in Australia at that stage.

Most of the continental Europe discovered Australia as a migration destination only after the post-World War Two arrival of refugees and displaced persons. Number of Croatians migrants in Australia increased quickly after the war, as around 10,500 Croatians arrived within the initial five year refugee program (Kunz 1988: 43; Drapac 2001: 246). Very soon chain migration revived too. The 2001 Census records 51,909 persons born in Croatia besides those born in Bosna and Hercegovina and other parts of former Yugoslavia. Accordingly, there were 105,747 persons of Croatian origin Australia wide, being at stage the eleventh largest among the non-English speaking background (DIMA/CRC 2003: 2,127). However, some authors, like Tkalcevic (1988: 222) and Drapac (2001: 246) claim that there is a much more likely a larger number of Croatians and their descendants in Australia. Nevertheless, the increase in numbers is very much indicative of post-war changes in the Australian demographic structure and of migration patterns. Among many other major immigration policy changes was the signing of immigration agreements with the European countries to attract migrants, including with former Yugoslavia in 1970 (Jupp 1991: 77) that significantly contributed to the increased number of migrants from that country.

Unlike the pre-war migrants who went inland and mostly to mining centres Boulder-Kalgoorlie and Broken Hill, cane-cutting in the northern Queensland and to Mildura, post-war settlers mostly settled in major coastal capital and industrial cities (Tkalcevic 1988: 75). Despite renewed chain migration, housing and employment opportunities there is no significant spatial concentration of Croatian settlers. For example, their largest concentrations in the Sydney metropolitan area are in the western suburbs of Fairfield, Blacktown and Liverpool in 2001, where nearly 8,000 Croatian speaking persons make up to three per cent of all settlers who use a language other than English at home<sup>2</sup> (CRC 2003). Such dispersed spatial settlement patterns inevitably hinders cultural and even more so the language maintenance.

The local demographic limits of the Australian-Croatian transnational social space are given with the following indicators on language usage. The 2001 census identifies 69,851 persons who speak Croatian language at home in different degrees, including 22,962 persons in Sydney (DIMA/CRC 2003:14, 128). In his analysis, Škvorc (2005: 28) underlines that even only a third of the first generation uses Croatian language regularly while another third uses it occasionally. Out of estimated 41,179 members of second generation, even fifty per cent have limited knowledge of the language. Such decrease in



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language comes as no surprise, as language use and maintenance decreases with the intergenerational changes in migration. However, Alba (1990: 79) claims that although fifty per cent of those who feel their ethnicity use a re-territorialised mother tongue to some degree, they do not consider it to be of the exclusive importance.

However, the language retention is just one of the indicators of transnational social space as it is also identified through various everyday activities and much less visible, symbolic representation. Probably, the most significant one is the experience of sense of home, belonging to different places, being in-between, leading to the willingness to acquire second or dual citizenships by migrant descendants, even if they have little knowledge of both the language and the country of origin. The cultural and citizenship hybridity is a major new phenomenon (Papastergiadis 2000: 169-195; Werbner 1997: 1-26; Pieterse 2004: 52-55) of major significance in a transnational social space.

## Return migration

Many transnational links are established through migrants' return home not only for a visit, but for good too, consequently, human movement often appropriates a circular character (Castles 2003: xi). Return migration is comprehended as a return home by people who migrated either temporarily or permanently. The idea of return is integral to migration experience, identifying it as an *ideology*, *myth* and *illusion* of return (King 1986: 12-13). It was ascertained by Bovenkerk (1974: 21-25) that economic motives are not necessarily a major consideration in making decisions on return since various other reasons influence on such decisions. Nostalgia is of major influence in such considerations, alongside ideological, political, settlement stress, humanitarian, future outlook, and various other personal reasons. Also, it is emphasised by both Bovenkerk and King (1986: 17) that retirees do tend to return, but also do the economically more successful migrants.

Return migration was an integral part of the life experience of the pre-war Mediterranean migrants as males mostly migrated alone for a year or a season, returning home, and departing again to work overseas. It is claimed by Wyman (1993: 10-11) that around 40 % of migrants returned to Croatia from the USA between 1908 and 1923. Similarly, Price (1963: 93, 102) estimates that at least a third of all Mediterranean male migrants returned from Australia between the two wars, and even 45% to Yugoslavia. Also, Vesela Šegvić (1953: 8) indicated that between two world wars 7,946 persons migrated to Australia, but that 1,407 returned, however, she did not specify whether for good or temporarily. But World War Two changed many plans.

Return migration out of Australia to Croatia, or former Yugoslavia, and its effects are still little researched and some major events that occurred during the last century remain unknown to academics, professionals and general public in both countries. However, these events significantly impacted and still play a major role in the creation and maintenance of a transnational social space. These events include forced repatriation of approximately 570 Croatian World War One internees in 1919 (NAA NSW C440), voluntary



return of over one thousand Croatian migrants in 1948-49 (Alagich and Kosovich 2001: 235-9; Srhoy: 1998), return of retirees that doubled in size over ten years to nearly 1,303 by 2001 (Hugo, Rudd and Harris 2003: 23) besides other returns to independent Croatia to pursue political, educational and business careers at home. This data would have to be supplemented with a share of the growing number of Australian expatriates living overseas that includes a certain number taking up residence in Croatia, and not all are of the Croatian background.

Such diverse patterns of human movements add a new dimension to the comprehension and dynamics of Australian-Croatian transnational social space generating new perspectives to the Croatian language. Of particular importance are the movements among the second generation. These include the establishment of stronger ties and involvement with Croatia by some members of the second generation and a symbolic rediscovery of a place of origin by its other segment, and the acceptance of symbolic attachments through intermarriages and other forms of liaison. Among more immediate consequences that are to be found in taking up of the Croatian citizenship, is the increasing awareness of a possible path for a pursuit of professional careers within the potential opportunities with the prospective European Union membership. Croatia is being viewed as an attractive European destination. Through continuous human movements those two spatially distant countries became closer.

## **Generated patterns**

The continuous migration of a comparatively small number of Croatians to Australia generated and maintained Australian-Croatian transnational social space throughout the last century. Migration generated diverse activities like return visits, letters exchange, remittances, appropriation of communal nodes and creation of communication networks, fermented links between these two distant countries. Migrants' social background, place of origin, political circumstances, reasons and the time of migration, and settlement experiences affected migrant motives, interests, orientations and organisational forms, fragmenting Croatian migrant community. There was a discontinuity between migrants whose arrival was divided by the World War Two years; each generation had its own migration and settlement experience creating their own support systems and links with home. Moreover, there was even a further divide within the pre-war community, as its internationalist-oriented organisational system supported Stalin in his ideological fight with Tito. The post-war migrants had no such dilemmas and were foremost oriented towards affirmation of their own ethnicity, including the promotion of the Croatian language in new environment.

Nevertheless, both generations encountered similar problems in social environment that was not always friendly disposed towards the "others" (Price 1963: 273; Srhoy 1998: 68) However, conditions in Australia started to change during the 1970s` with the acceptance of cultural diversity, the promotion and application of multicultural policies (Jupp 2002: 21-40; Lopez 2000: 156-191). The war for independence broke down many

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intra-community barriers resulting in the enhanced acquaintance with the Croatian origin by a significant segment of migrants and their descendants (Drapac 2001: 247-249). These complex events gave new dimensions and dynamics to the firmly grounded transnational social space, which prospered despite spatial, social and political hindrances. The travels to and from both destinations had significantly impacted on the sense of belonging across generations, and together with the expanded communication flows enhanced the awareness of the attachment to both places. The established linkages are key factors supporting various everyday personal and collective needs and activities, culture transfer and maintenance, ideological orientations, career and business perspectives, and visits.

Besides the regular exchange of messages, letters and remittance, major features of a transnational space also include cognisance and strong connection with the events at the place of origin transcending ideological orientations and affiliations. At one moment it was about workers' rights and exploitation, war against fascism, at another national renaissance and struggle for the independence, and lately the social transition, career and business potentials together with the perspectives arising out of the prospective membership in European community. Although migration to Australia exceeded return migration, the latter one was always present and the situation at home influenced many to return and to participate in the events. Many returned to live in the retirement, but more recent experiences are indicative of the awareness of business potentials besides the tourist travels. Such living experiences are indicative of the potentials of transnational social space which evolved over the time irrespective of hindrances; spatial distance being just one.

Another major aspect of transnational development is materialised by cultural transfer that was symbolised with the establishment of tambouritza ensembles, folk dance and pop groups, football and bocce as favourite pastimes from the very early times of arrival (Kosovich 2001: 746-749; Smoje 2001: 241-243) to the establishment of regular church services (Hoško 1996: 71) and introduction of the Croatian language in school curricula (Drapac 2001: 247). Various folkdance groups and football clubs transcend intergenerational dynamics and even cross ethnic barriers. Lively cultural exchange with regular guests from Croatia impacts on popularity of the Croatian pop music that was best observed through recent successful series of Cro-pop festival organised by the Croatian Australian Studies Foundation. This grassroots established institution is a major force behind a successful twenty five year history of teaching and maintenance of this language at the tertiary level (Budak 2003: 373-375; Škvorc 2001: 174-176; Drapac 2001: 247).

The evolution of Australian-Croatian transnational social space depends also on the institutional involvement from above that supports grassroots developed dynamic transnational social space. In the second half of the century it was greatly supported by the direct involvement of Roman Catholic Church from Croatia in migrant lives that impacted on culture transfer and language maintenance as well. However, the new dynamics came with the Croatian independence which facilitated expansion of earlier generated linkages and germinated major institutional involvement in cultural life, including the provision of major institutional support for language tuition and maintenance.

## Major institutional developments

Local institutional developments had a major role in culture maintenance and intergenerational language transfer. The early efforts of language education of twenty two children in Boulder, Western Australia, were recorded back in 1948 (*Napredak* 15.01.1949). The pre-war settlements were small and spatially dispersed, and with settlers having limited education themselves to be able to establish conditions for organised language tuition. For the much larger post-war migration group, language education and maintenance was an important identity and political issue that was supported by the organised religious life. The undertaken activities effectively led to the successful promotion of the Croatian language as an independent de-hyphenated language (Hroh 1999: 324; Budak 1997: 25-33). This was followed by the acceptance of Croatian language in Australian state school systems and in community Saturday school programmes already by the mid-1960s (Brunning 1997: 107-8; Barišić 1997: 109; Vukić 1997: 111).

The most important step towards affirmation of the Croatian language was made in 1984 with its introduction at the tertiary education level at Macquarie University in Sydney. The major factor in its sustainability is in the steady interest for language study at the tertiary level. It survived until recently mostly on migrant generated sources (Budak 2008). A major breakthrough came with the funding support provided by the Croatian government over a longer period. Furthermore, diverse Macquarie University agreements with Croatian universities expand potentials of this language programme in contrast to some other small European languages whose teaching was terminated. One of the results of such developments is inauguration of a Croatian language summer course in Split, which is mostly attended by students from the Macquarie University.

Many social clubs established football clubs while some established folk dancing groups. Such activities facilitate transfer of cultural patterns and create communication bridges with the rest of society and the intergenerational ones. Continuous work of eighteen folk dance groups and of around forty football (soccer) clubs with an array of teams for different age and gender divisions are important in generating conditions for communication across generations and social space. Diverse community activities involve expanding symbolic attachment and overcoming limited language skills. Such activities, alongside family and other visits, make important communications channels that overcome cultural and linguistic barriers encountered through intergenerational changes.

Further important influences arise out of the Croatian independence, prospective European Union membership and its appearance as an attractive tourist destination, besides the Croatian international sports and cultural participation. Such developments underline the symbolic attachment not only of the migrants themselves, but very frequently of their descendants too. However, such symbolic attachment is often overshadowed by poor Croatian language skills of younger generations, although this problem is often overcome by the global significance of their own first education language, English. The

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continuous appearance of over 550 issues of a rich English language supplement *The New Generation* to the weekly Croatian Herald (*Hrvatski Vjesnik*) published in Melbourne by August 2009 is a telling example (Škvorc 2004: 163). Both the weekly and the supplement are now published by members of the second generation indicating the need for both languages for communication, not only between migrants and their descendants but also with the place of origin.

## **Croatian language in a transnational social space**

Through the perseverance of the Croatian migrants in Australia, the Croatian language was de-hyphenated from the Serbian language in spite of a penetrative Yugoslav propaganda, and became a part of a big family of languages on the continent. However, after the early success spanning nearly two decades, a continuous decrease in language enrolments at the primary and secondary level followed. Number of students in secondary schools halved from 400 in 1985 over the next two decades (Škvorc 2005: 195). As a consequence, only rare ones take it to the High School Certificate level. This development reflects various factors, including decrease in new migration, the aging, intergenerational changes, busy Saturday family and student sport schedules and insufficient motivations. Such decline follows experiences of many other migrant languages that are losing their fight with the host language in which migrant children are educated.

However, the continuous enrolment at the Croatian Studies Centre at Macquarie University since 1983 stands in sharp contrast to the primary and secondary education experience. The language education at the tertiary level as a major cultural initiative started with the community investment of 8,000 dollars in 1984 (Budak 2008). Community contribution towards further development of language studies increased to 700,000 dollars by 1988 and Croatian Studies Foundation of Australia was established to support this programme. Under given circumstances, the average annual enrolment of 104 students over the 1999 -2008 period in 18 courses (of which 5 can be studied in Croatia) correlates favourably to the average enrolment of 124 students in the initial 1983-1992 period. The third generation of Australian-Croatians is now enrolling as well as some mature professionals who ignored the Croatian language education earlier in their life, and even persons of a non-Croatian origin (Budak 2003: 368-371). Overall around 2,000 students enrolled one of the tertiary Croatian language courses during this period.

This programme started to receive from 1998 a significant long-term financial support from the Croatian authorities (Škvorc 2005: 196) which now contributes a significant share of its annual budget. The other partners in the project are the University itself and CSFA with the board members consisting mostly of the local born persons of the Croatian origin. Agreements with the Croatian universities and in particular with the University of Split, opens new opportunities within the domain of this rare institution that has a focus on the Croatian language outside Europe. The Croatian Studies Centre

at Macquarie University is the sole such institution at the Pacific, therefore a body of a particular national and cultural significance for both countries. Nevertheless, due to changing endogenous and exogenous circumstances, the sustainability of the Centre as a medium of communication and a place of education is still a very precarious one. However, dynamic language opportunities exist within a conducive social environment where the detrimental aspects of the aging first generation and a critical state of language maintenance are being countervailed by the assertiveness of heritage, new spatial and social proximities, and the expanding communication space.

## Challenges

It is apparent that the maintenance of Croatian language in Australia requires new approach beyond the scope of the aging first generation, as it could be affected by the changing patterns of social needs and opportunities. Its future depends on the intensity of the feeling of identity of second generation, therefore, on its symbolic significance at this significant spatial distance. However, it is also impacted by the bonding social capital generated within the second generation, and by its bridging aspect in relation to the ancestral home, but also by social and spatial mobility. Role of the Croatian language as a medium of translational communications capable of satisfying diverse personal, cultural and professional needs of the second generation will encounter decisive challenges in near future.

Current experiences of some other major European migrant languages provide important insights in the problems of language education and maintenance. The teaching and maintenance of the Italian language, a much larger and the most popular foreign language, recently encounters many difficulties in Australia, too. The Italian language is very popular even among persons of non-Italian background in Australia and has significantly encroached into English vernacular. However, Italian migrants did not create their own schools. Instead, they too relied mostly on the Roman-Catholic education system. The first and so far the only English-Italian bilingual primary school has opened in Sydney only six years ago, and still has problems in finding adequate premises. The school is organised at the premises of the key Italian cultural and welfare organisation, Co.As.It in Leichhardt suburb, as it is nearly impossible to find suitable school premises in the inner metropolitan suburbs where persons of the Italian origin mostly reside. However, the Italian language education has recently encountered another problem that underlines a need for a long-term planning and therefore investment if the language education is to continue successfully. The prevalent sentiment in Italian community is indicated as “...with the first generation dying out, there is a greater need than ever to maintain the Italian culture and language for future generations...” (Comastri 2009). However, the ambitious project in language education has received a major setback with the expected decrease in Italian government funding from \$1.5 million in 2008 by 60% in 2009, underlining the expectation how this will not only “put teachers out of jobs, but also decrease promotion of Italy”. Moreover, various other local policy initiatives tend to have adverse impact on language teaching, like the current positive emphasis on

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learning neighbouring Asian languages which unjustly takes attention away from the European languages.

The above example is indicative of the precariousness of a situation of a much smaller and lesser known Croatian language within diffused language education systems in Australia. The occasional financial injections through sporadic community fund-collections provide welcome but insufficient financial injections for any attempt at successful long-term planning of the Croatian Studies Centre and the Croatian language teaching and maintenance in Australia. If left alone to the Croatian community, irrespective of intergenerational changes, it would have to reignite the spirit from the earlier decades when it well understood the need to donate generously towards the language maintenance leading to the establishment of the Croatian Studies Centre. However, it is not a small task in a society which is not in general known to be very generous towards educational and art institutions in comparison to some other developed countries of the similar cultural background. Hence, the increasing significance of the exogenous factors in the future of the Croatian language in Australia, and probably elsewhere. Various Croatian institutions, and in particular government authorities, already have to appropriate a paramount role in securing teaching and maintenance of the Croatian language in this environment through various measures like securing long-term funding basis, education of teachers to teach the Croatian language as a foreign language, developments of teaching support programs, programs for motivating Croatian language studies, travel scholarships for successful students.

The sustainability of a continuous flow of students at higher levels and reinvigoration of the enrolment at lower levels of education is the biggest challenge facing Croatian language in this distant country. One of the continental languages that terminated at Macquarie University had solid financial support, but lapsed because of a lack of interested students. To prevent this happening within the process of intergenerational changes, diverse initiative and encouragements would have to be designed by the local persons and institutions of Croatian origin and from Croatia itself. Inevitably, the successful response to perceived challenges will very much depend on a reverse of the same question that the older generations asked: What can Croatia offer as a comparative advantage in relation to other places of attraction to the Australians, not only, of the Croatian origin? The future of the Croatian language abroad is a factor of social dynamics, patterns of communication needs, inclusion in a place of origin and in a host society, institutional linkages, policies, and communication across the translational social and cyber space. Diverse challenges would require responses at different structural levels. That would very likely impact the future significance of the Croatian language in Australian-Croatian transnational social space. In the long run Croatia could generate diverse benefits by fostering language education at diverse educational levels in Australia.

## Perspectives

Unlike the experience of some other smaller continental European languages at the Macquarie University, the number of students enrolled at the Croatian language was sustained despite intergenerational changes. This achievement grounds perspectives for this language as an important medium of communication in transnational social space. It is appropriating the role of a *companion* or second language to a major global language to a culturally hybrid second generation and other travellers in the ever expanding communication space. The effects of dramatic social, political, communication and technological changes replaced in significance the large scale migration from Croatia to Australia. These developments are further accompanied by the flow of investment, tourism and even return migration to Croatia. Such developments generate new perspectives for the Croatian language in this transnational social space established from below, providing it with new dynamics. The significance of the Croatian language as a medium of exchange in transnational social space gradually diminishes through decline in the numbers of its speakers due to decrease in migration and ageing. Nevertheless, it appropriates a new role and significance in this dynamic social environment alongside the English language spoken by the second generation.

The fortunes of the Croatian language appropriate additional perspectives through applications in cultural and commercial exchange in addition to the representation of identity in a culturally diverse society. In a historical sense there is nothing new for a language that had to survive encroachment by other languages, and as like any other migrant language, it faces a perilous future. Nevertheless, the aging migrants leave behind a symbolic cognisance of their heritage, origin, place of birth, and also some words and idioms. With exceptions, such inheritance leaves a mark on the second generation. It comes as no surprise that a well known footballer of the Croatian descent, Tony Popovic, declares in the *The Sun Herald*, "...My family is from there and I enjoy the history of the place...old and new...But I admit I am *biased*...". Many belonging to this generation probably will not change a place of residence, but the symbolic attachment will define to many their favourite travel destination, in this case, Dubrovnik and Croatia. Helped with strong feelings of such symbolic attachment, the appropriation of the Croatian words is within reach, as it will confirm the feeling of being at home whilst making a visit or pursuing some other life opportunities.

However, the English (or, some other language in a migration destination country) language is a major medium of communication of the second generation born and educated outside of the place of origin. The language of their ancestors is their second language used to a smaller or larger degree, and either more or less successfully within home or some other familiar environment. But, for all other purposes, even in everyday communication with peers of the same cultural background it remains the second language which is used sporadically. Some words, idioms and phrases are used for the further identification through which bonds and links are being established and strengthened, while creating a communication bridge with relatives in the ancestral



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place. It is noted by Alba (1990: 84) that a knowledge and occasional use of several words inherited from their migrant parents as a base of symbolic representation serves as a discrimination divide and identification within the wider community. Like many other migrant languages, Croatian language too appropriates a role of a companion language to the mainstream languages in a place of settlement. Words inherited from parents are important representation of symbolic affiliation, although instructions in junior folk-dance groups and football teams are inevitably given in English. Similarly, many participants at the Cro-pop festival sang in Croatian, but were later interviewed in a much more intimate English language. Interviews start with Croatian words, than inevitably continue in English.

Like any other travellers, visitors to Croatia of Croatian origin would be even more tempted to learn additional words, phrases, to initiate conversation and generate a sense of mutuality in the ancestral place. Croatia as a typical European country with a small birth rate can find its own economic and demographic interest in attracting attention of the *next generations* of the Croatian descent beyond symbolic identification, acceptance of dual citizenship, and the support for its national sports teams. It is a complex process that is outside of the scope of migrants who generated such potent communication opportunity, but its exploit would require the additional ingenuity by all concerned parties.

Even the fortunes of the Greek language education which is supported through three Greek day schools, besides the childcare and community schools in Sydney encounters various problems, and not only generated through spatial and social mobility in Sydney and Australian society. Although this development begun as a community initiative, the Greek authorities are to a large degree involved in attracting children to learn the Greek language (Giorgas 2008: 62-63). The Greek government is strongly involved in the language maintenance outside the country through creation of diverse stimuli for language learning and support of language education, including visits to Greece and the reception by the president of the Republic for the best language students. The future of the Greek language outside the country is not left only to parents, teachers and students.

Most certainly, a broadly conceived language education and maintenance system offers more opportunities than the Saturday schools system that competes with school sports and family obligations, and the sporadic enrolment at the secondary level. Similarly, the staffing and financing of the Croatian Studies Centre, alongside the desired expansion of the programme towards a research of this little researched community, requires an additional effort of all stakeholders. Inevitably it is a matter of a broader cultural interest that goes beyond the heritage awareness as it could impact on sustainability of other ties between the two countries to the benefit of both. The prospective social and economic changes in Croatia would benefit from the proactive policy of language education and maintenance of its own language abroad reaching beyond the current generation of policy makers, teachers and students.

## Concluding remarks

An attempt is made to analyse the significance and perspectives of the Croatian language as a mode of communication in Australian-Croatian transnational social space that was generated through migrant endeavours despite many hindrances. The major premise about its potential is based upon the development of new proximities and enhanced communication flows in a compressed world (Harvey 2001: 123-124). The question is being asked about its survival in new environment despite many indicators of expressed feelings of attachment to the place of origin of their parents and efforts made towards the language maintenance. The claim is made that Croatian language will appropriate a role of a companion language to the global English language in Australian-Croatian transnational social space to Croatian migrants descendants. However, its position will ultimately depend very much on continuous interests for it among new generations of students and the long term institutional support. A new approach is expected, not from the aging migrants, but from their descendants and from the exogenous forces. Besides the prospective further changes in Croatia, and in particular within the European community, it is expected that this language could appropriate a new role for *new generations*. However, to remain an important channel of communications within the Australian Croatian transnational social space under changed conditions, the language education and maintenance over a longer period would depend on various forms of motivations, encouragement and financial support from the Croatian authorities needed to overcome internal community difficulties.

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## Hrvatski jezik u dinamičnom transnacionalnom prostoru

### Sažetak

*U ovom prilogu se analiziraju promjene s kojima se hrvatski jezik susreće unutar dinamičnog australsko-hrvatskog transnacionalnog društvenog prostora i svjetskog društvenog okruženja. Hrvatski jezik se, proživjevši mnoge unutarnje i vanjske izazove i utjecaje, poput mnogih drugih kontinentalnih europskih jezika, proširio po udaljenim prostranstvima obilježenim dominantnim svjetskim jezicima. Generacije iseljenika samoinicijativno su ga održavale s promjenjivim uspjesima. Jezik iseljenih je simbol njihova identiteta, sredstvo komuniciranja, održavanja i intergeneracijskog prijenosa kulture, ali i prilagođavanja životu u novoj sredini. Hrvatski jezik je kao osnovno sredstvo komuniciranja najvažniji element hrvatske doseljeničke institucionalne cjelovitosti čiji je sadržaj ugrađen i u temelje australskog multikulturalizma. Osnovno je sredstvo uspostavljanja i održavanja kontinuiteta raznih obiteljskih i drugih spona, razmjene i komunikacijskog protoka između dvaju prostorno udaljenih lokaliteta, odnosno domova. Poput mnogih drugih posljedica iseljavanja, australsko-hrvatski transnacionalni društveni prostor proizašao je i razvijao se najvećim dijelom iz bezbrojnih spona uspostavljenih tijekom prošlog stoljeća od strane samih iseljenika. Stvaran odozdo, često bez značajnije vanjske institucionalne podrške, ovaj transnacionalni prostor se i nadalje kontinuirano održava kroz bezbrojne svakodnevne aktivnosti samih iseljenika i njihovih obitelji, uključujući i potomke. Uspješnosti tog procesa umnogome pridonose i razni oblici institucionalne organiziranosti samih iseljenika, uključujući i javni prostor izgrađen njihovim radom, ljubavlju i investicijama. To se kod hrvatskih iseljenika najviše odnosi na mnogobrojne vjerske i svjetovne organizacije poput društvenih i sportskih klubova. Izgradnja impresivnog javnog prostora stvorila je podlogu za kontinuirano održavanje raznih društvenih aktivnosti, prijenosa i očuvanja raznih oblika kulture, ali i osiguravanja uvjeta za jezičnu poduku. Na taj način su osigurani minimalni uvjeti za intergeneracijski prijenos kulture i jezika i za održavanje kontinuiteta transnacionalnog društvenog prostora. Mnoge nove aktivnosti i sadržaji su proizašli iz proširene razmjene i komunikacijskih protoka poslije iščezavanja raznih društvenih, političkih i komunikacijskih prepreka tijekom posljednjih dvaju desetljeća. Dramatične promjene od povjesnog i civilizacijskog značaja zamijenile su raniji proces masovnog iseljavanja u Australiju. Pojavili su se novi sadržaji i oblici državne i društvene podrške iz zemlje matice u ranije uspostavljenom transnacionalnom društvenom prostoru a kroz diplomatska predstavništva, investicije u jezično obrazovnje i razmjenu informacija. Umjesto iseljavanja, dolazi do intenziviranja investiranja i turističkih posjeta iz Australije, i to ne samo osoba hrvatskog podrijetla.*



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Sve značajnija je i povratna migracija. Takve promjene kretanja ljudi i nove mogućnosti komuniciranja otvaraju i nove perspektive hrvatskom jeziku, dajući novu dinamičnost transnacionalnom društvenom prostoru stvorenom odozdo. Hrvatski jezik se susreće s novim perspektivama kroz intenzivniju kulturnu razmjenu i daljnje produbljavanje komunikacijskog protoka, što daje novu kvalitetu njegovoj ranijoj ulozi etničkog identificiranja. Interes za hrvatski jezik u Australiji postoji usprkos neizbježnim generacijskim promjenama. Za razliku od jezika nekih manjih europskih etničkih zajednica koji su se prestali podučavati na Sveučilištu Macquarie, upis studenata hrvatskog jezika tijekom posljednjeg desetljeća nije bitnije posustao, a ima i mnogo povoljniji trend kretanja u odnosu na poduku hrvatskog jezika na nižoj obrazovnoj razini. Ovakav razvojni put, društvena i komunikacijska kretanja te zabilježeni interes za poznavanjem osnova jezika temelj je mogućih razmatranja o perspektivama hrvatskog jezika kao integralnog sredstva komuniciranja u transnacionalnom društvenom prostoru. Za mnoge predstavnike kulturološki hibridne nove generacije s ograničenim poznavanjem hrvatskog jezika, isti je i dalje važan način identificiranja unutar društvenog sustava obilježenog kulturnim razlikama. Kod posjeta zemlji podrijetla predaka, nekoliko naučenih riječi je osnovno sredstvo identificiranja i početnog komuniciranja, jednako kao i drugim dobronamjernim putnicima koji žele bolje upoznati sredinu koju posjećuju. Promatrajući iz perspektive reteritorijaliziranog jezika, nameću se razmišljanja o hrvatskom jeziku kao jeziku-sputniku globalnim jezicima od posebne koristi hibridnoj novoj generaciji, njihovim težnjama i ambicijama unutar transnacionalnog društvenog prostora koji se stalno razvija i poprima nove oblike i sadržaje.

**Ključne riječi:** iseljenici, hrvatski jezik, identitet, komuniciranje, druga generacija, hibridnost, transnacionalni društveni prostor, odozdo, institucionalna cjelovitost