

# Attitudes of the Serbian Community in Vienna towards Serbian and German Language and Culture

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Einstellungen von Mitgliedern der Serbischen Gemeinschaft  
in Wien zur Serbischen und Deutschen Sprache und Kultur

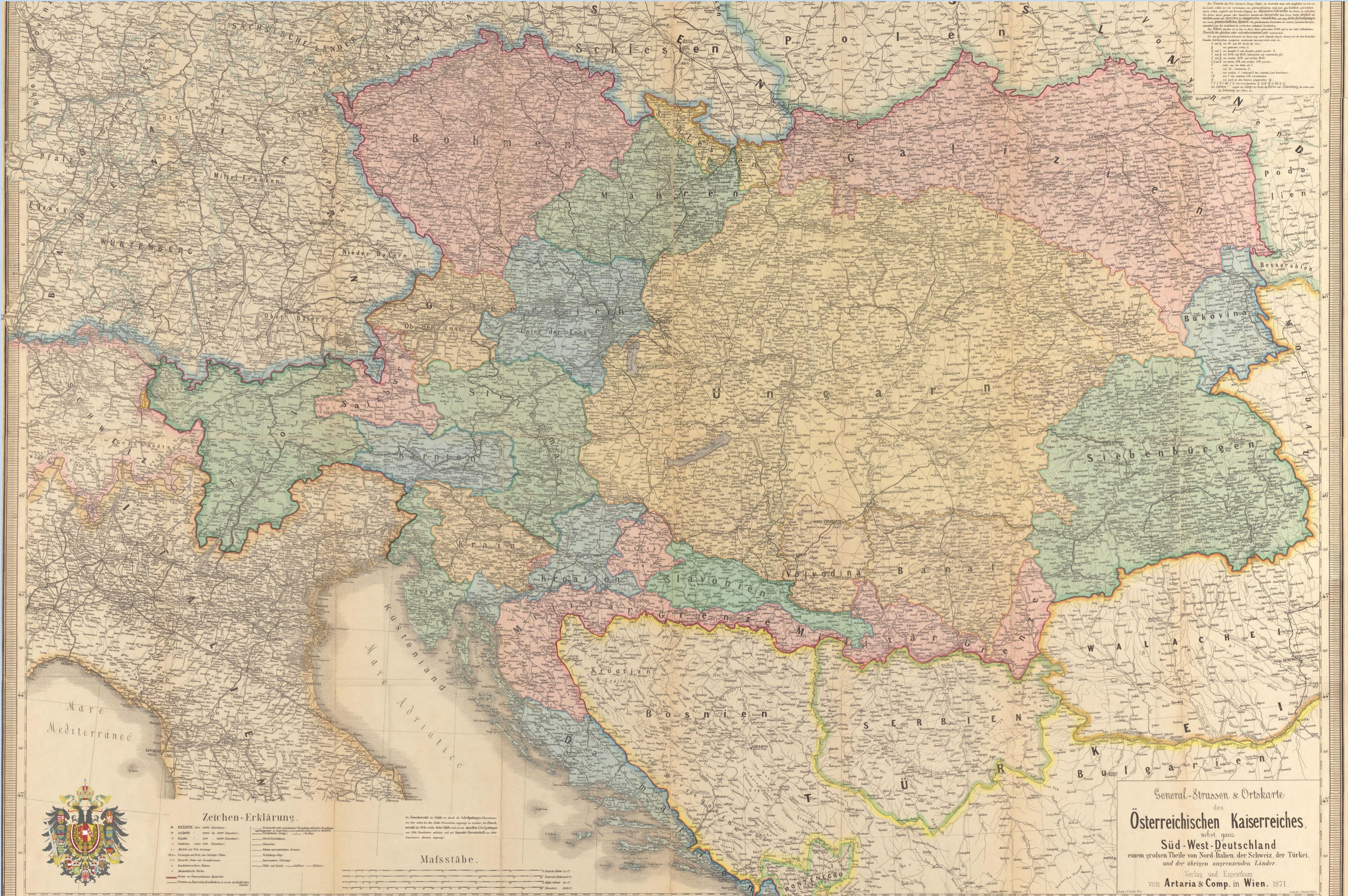


# The outline of this lesson:

- Serbian language: historical and contemporary preview
- Migrations from Serbia (and former Yugoslavian countries)
- Current situation: Serbs in Vienna
- Key terms in sociolinguistic research of this kind
- Quantitative research: instrument, participants, variables
- Qualitative research
- Some preliminary results
- Q&A



- Serbian language: historical and contemporary preview



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- Serbian language: historical and contemporary preview

**Dark green - East Slavic languages**

**Light green - West Slavic languages**

**Black - South Slavic languages**

**Serbian language:**

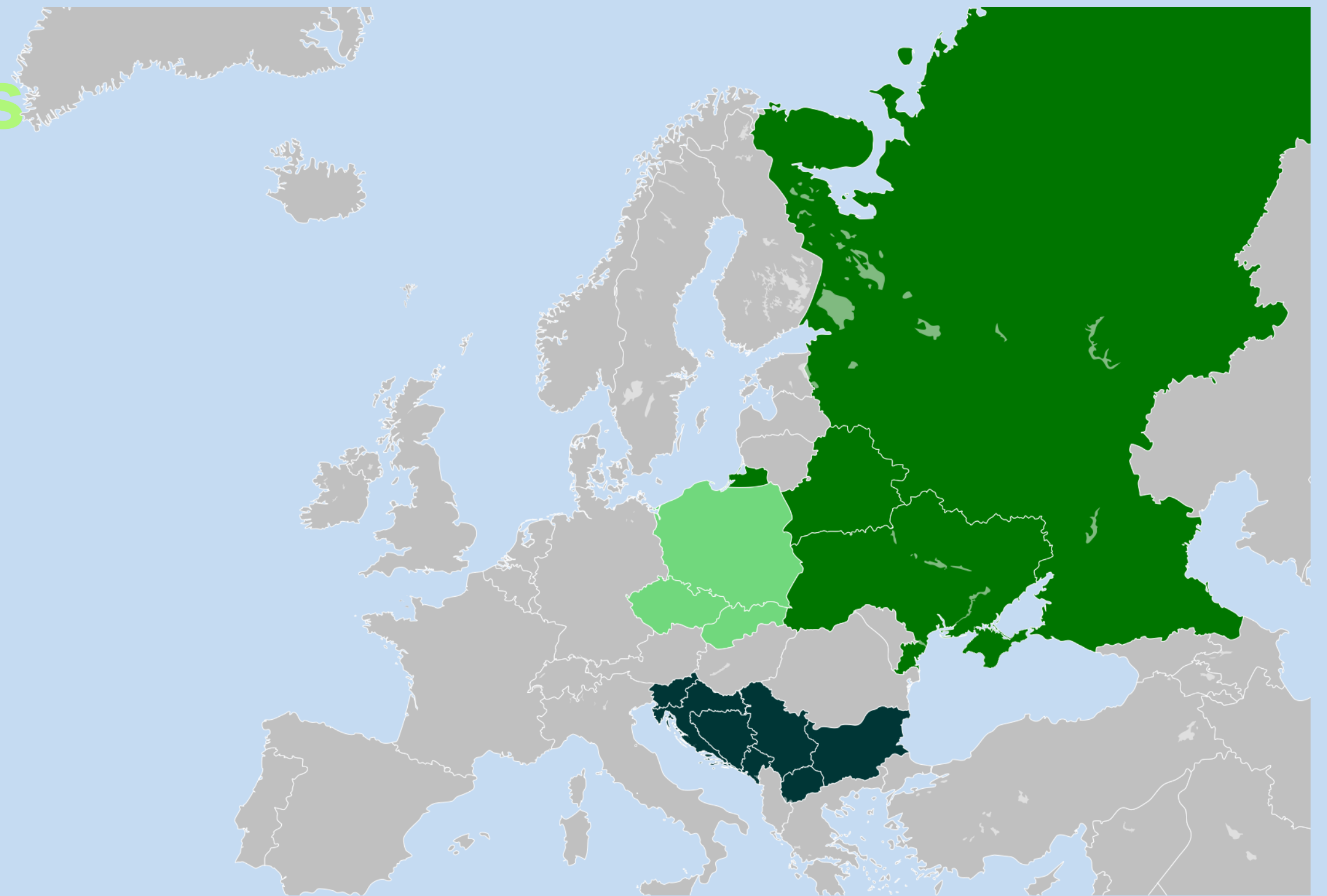
**Indo-European**

**Balto-Slavic**

**Slavic**

**South Slavic**

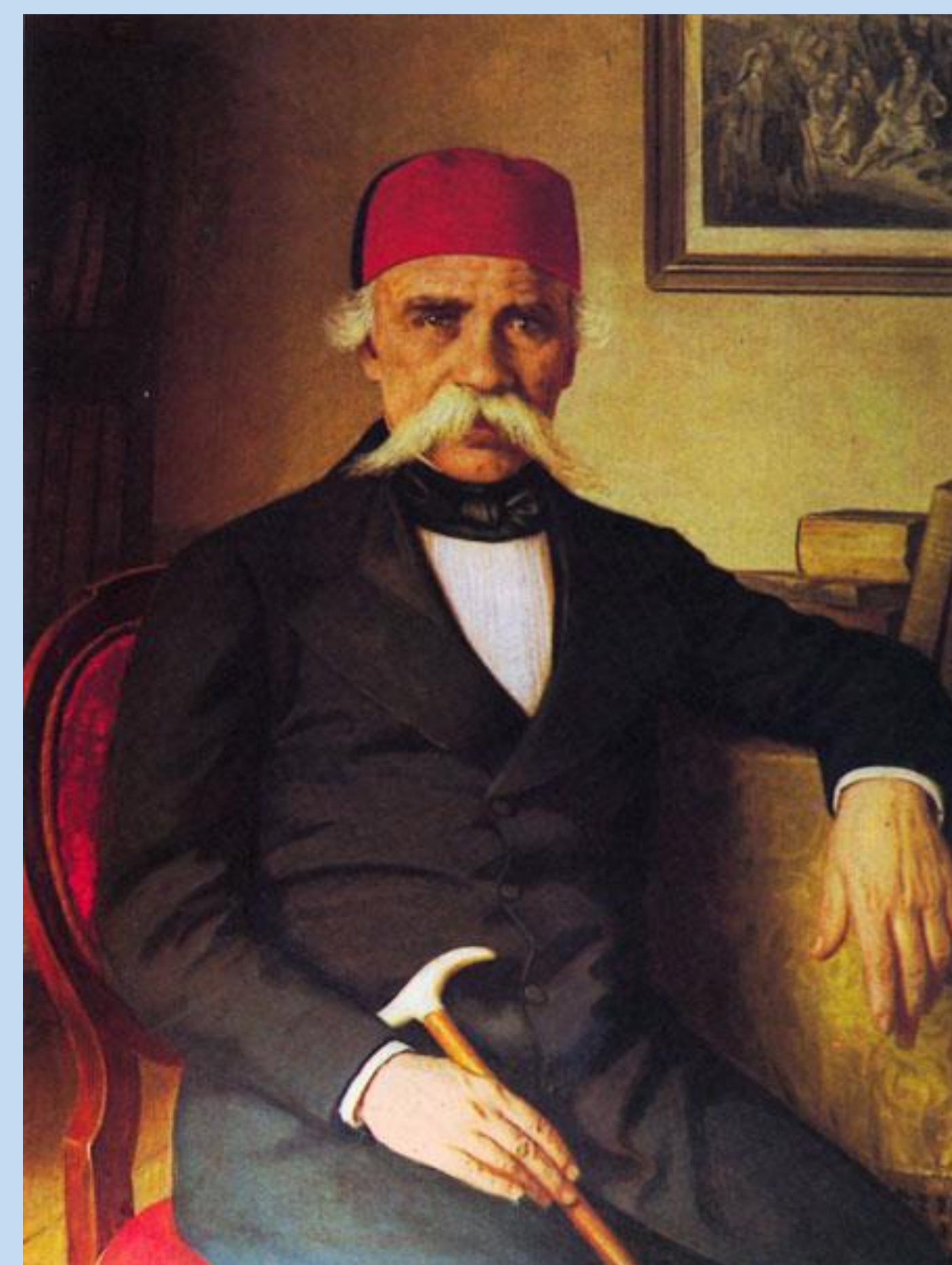
**western South Slavic language**



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- Serbian language: historical and contemporary preview
  - The contemporary Serbian language:
- Based on the spoken vernacular of the early 19th century
- “Speak as you write and write as it is spoken” (Adelung)
- Its first dictionary and grammar (1818) published in Vienna using the reformed, simplified alphabet (1)
- Referred to as the Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian (former Yugoslavia), or BKS (Austria nowadays)

(1) Radić 2018; Stojanović 2022

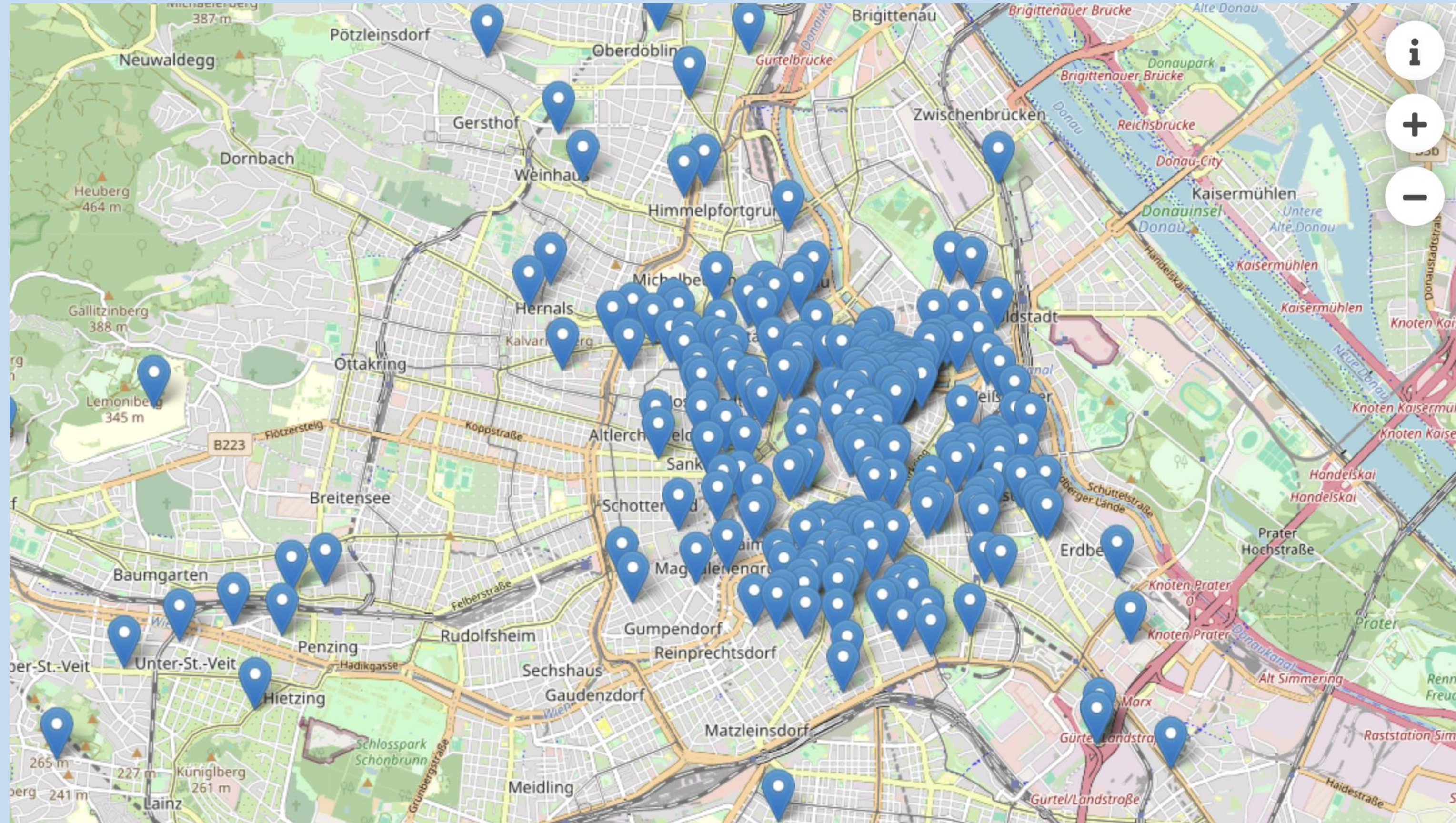


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- Migrations from Serbia (and former Yugoslavian countries)

- The 18-19<sup>th</sup> century migrations: the political and intellectual elite
- Land der Berge, Land am Strome
- The first half of the 20th century: the gap (1)



<https://orthodoxes-wien.oeaw.ac.at/portal/>



- Migrations from Serbia (and former Yugoslavian countries)

## The second half of the 20th century:

- 50s and early 60s - minor political migrations from the communist regime
- From 1966 onwards - major economical migrations: The Agreement on the Regulation of the Employment of Yugoslav Workers in Austria was signed between Yugoslavia and Austria
- From 1966 onwards: firstly educated, urban young men
- Later less educated, rural young men, followed by their families
- Croatia and Bosnia wars in the 90s (1)
- Visa liberalisation for Serbia in 2010





- Current situation: Serbs in Vienna

## Methodology issues

- 207,000 members in 2010 (Stanković et al. 2010)
- 121,916 members in 2023 (Statistik Austria 2023)
- Nowadays: mostly students, economic migrants (1)







- the ability to use two languages effectively
- a group's ability to maintain and protect its existence in time as a collective entity with a distinctive identity and language
- conceptualizations, thoughts or feelings towards language
- when speakers of different languages interact with each other, influencing and changing their languages in that process
- (not) preserving the mother tongue in the context of a regionally and socially more powerful language
- alternating between two or more varieties in conversation



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- conceptualizations, thoughts or feelings towards language



# Language maintenance and shift

- “used to describe a situation in which a speaker, a group of speakers, or a speech community continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life despite competition with the dominant or majority language to become the main/sole language in these spheres“ (Pauwels 2004: 719)
- the process when the “speech community (gradually) gives up or loses the use of its language and/or of many functions of the language and shifts to the use of another language for most, if not all its communicative and other cultural, symbolic needs“, and it is „usually signaled by a period of transitional (unstable) bilingualism in which the competing languages are used side by side in a community, with one language progressively intruding into all spheres of the other language“ (Pauwels 2004: 720)



# Code-switching

**Alternating between two or more varieties in conversation**

- Kako su ti **kinda?** Jesu li **gezund?**
- How are your kids? Are they healthy?
- Deca su se **špilala** u **kindergartenu.**
- The children were playing in the kindergarten.
- Za **Lebenslauf** i **Bewerbung** javite se Aleksandri.
- For the CV and application contact Alexandra.



# Data elicitation: how much and why

## Triangulation:

- quantitative (questionnaire, N=300),
- quantitative (semi-structured interviews, N=30),
- two focus groups (N=8-10)



Primary techniques

- participant observation
- fieldnotes, documents



Supplementary techniques

- pilot study (testing questionnaire, interviews, expert view)



# **Research hypothesis**

**The process of language shift is mainly slow, lasting at least 4 generations, and is unavoidable unless prevented.**

- Age: older participants will be more prone to language maintenance
- Gender: female participants will be more prone to language maintenance
- Education level: extremely high and low education level may lead to language maintenance
- (not) born in Austria: participants born or raised in Austria will be more prone to language shift
- Immigrant generation (1-4)
- The decision to return to the homeland



# Quantitative research: methodology

- Methodology developed on the guidelines by:
- the previous research on the Serbian language in the diaspora (1),
- the research manual The language attrition test battery (2),
- similar questionnaires (3), and the
- ELDIA EuLaViBar Toolkit (4),
- having in mind the modern proposed methodological models (5)

(1) Eg. Pavlović 1990, 2012; Lukić-Krstanović 1992; Blagojević, 2006; Prelić 2008; Vuletić Đurić 2016; Savić 2019

(2) Schmid 2005

(3) Eg. Schmid & Dusseldorp 2010

(4) European Language Vitality Barometer, Djerf et al. 2013

(5) Kircher & Zipp 2022



# Quantitative research: instrument

- Instrument – newly designed questionnaire:

closed-type answers

mainly 5-degree semantic differential scale

yes/no questions

multiple-choice questions

conducted online and in paper



<https://forms.gle/qXCGVe4VMrXUp2pc6>



Den größten Teil des Tages

SerbischDeutsch

spreche ich

schreibe ich

lese ich

Bevorzugt

SerbischDeutsch

spreche ich

schreibe ich

lese ich

Es fällt mir leichter, in dieser Sprache:

SerbischDeutsch

zu sprechen

zu schreiben

zu lesen

Gesprochenes zu verstehen

Serbische Sprache:

KeineSehr schlechtSchlechtMittelmäßigGutAls Mutters...

ich sprache

ich schreibe

ich lese

ich verstehe

Deutsch sprache:

KeineSehr schlechtSchlechtMittelmäßigGutAls Mutters...

ich sprache

ich schreibe

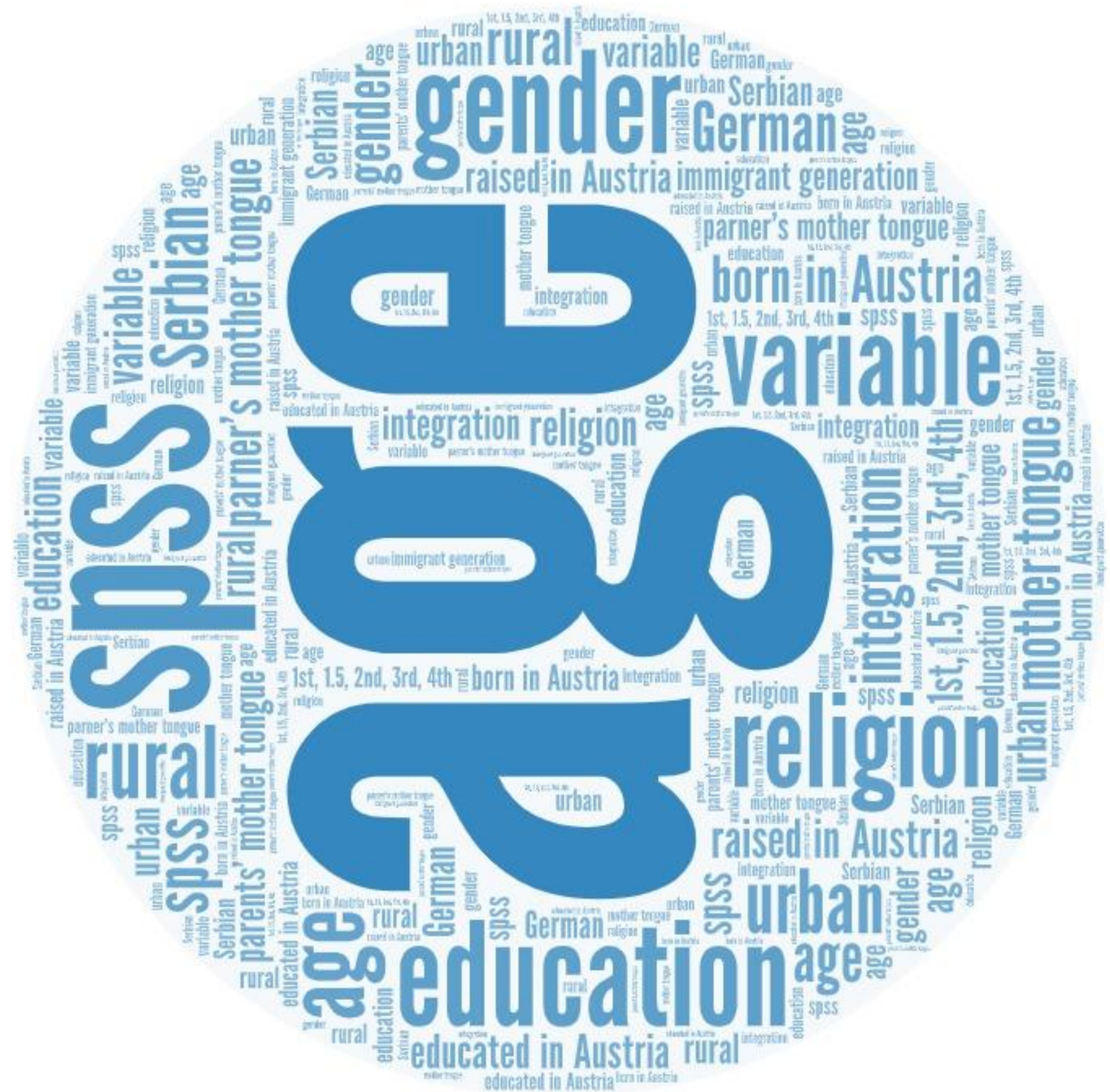
ich lese

ich verstehe



# Quantitative research: variables

- Age
- Gender
- Education level
- Mother tongue
- Parents' and partner's mother tongue
- Born and raised in Austria or not
- Immigrant generation (1st, 1.5, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4th)
- The return to the homeland
- Urban / rural
- Religion

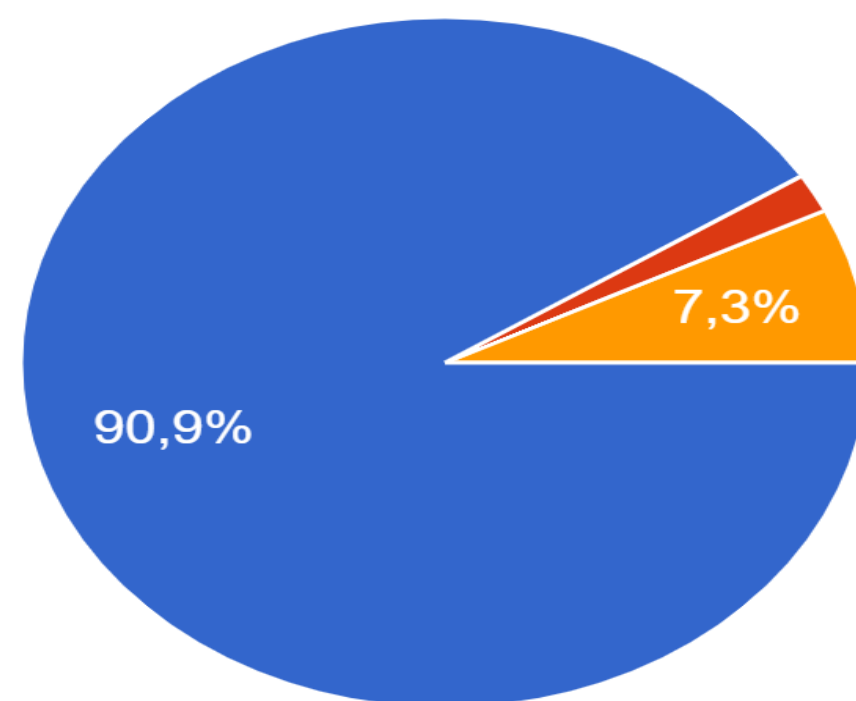




Kako sebe doživljavate?

55 одговора

How do you perceive yourself?



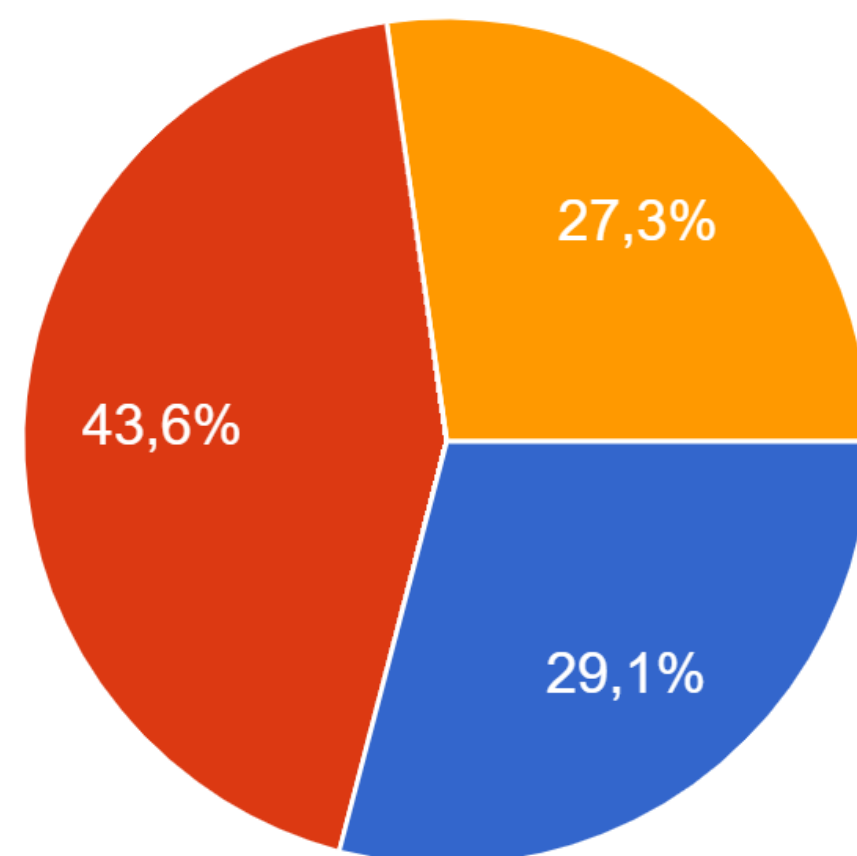
- Kao Srbina/Srpkinju
- Kao Austrijanca/Austrijanku
- Kao oba

As Serbian  
As Austrian  
As both

Da li smatrate da ste dobro integrirani u austrijsko društvo?

55 одговора

Do you believe you are well integrated into the Austrian society?



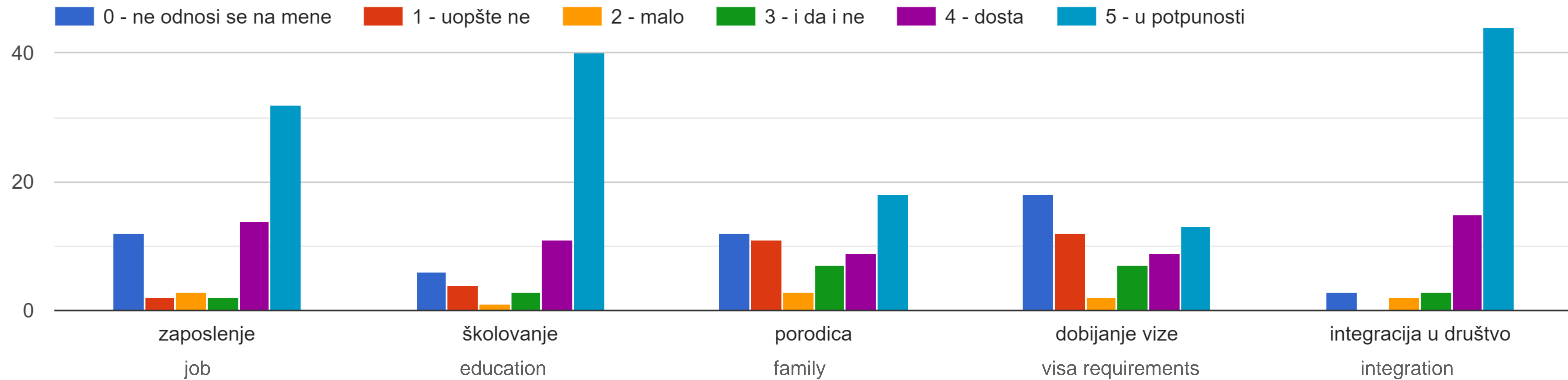
- U potpunosti sam integrisan(a)
- Prilično sam integrisan(a)
- Nedovoljno sam integrisan(a)
- Uopšte nisam integrisan(a)

I am completely integrated  
I am partially integrated  
I am not integrated enough  
I am not integrated at all



# What motivated me to learn German:

Na učenje nemačkog me je motivisalo:

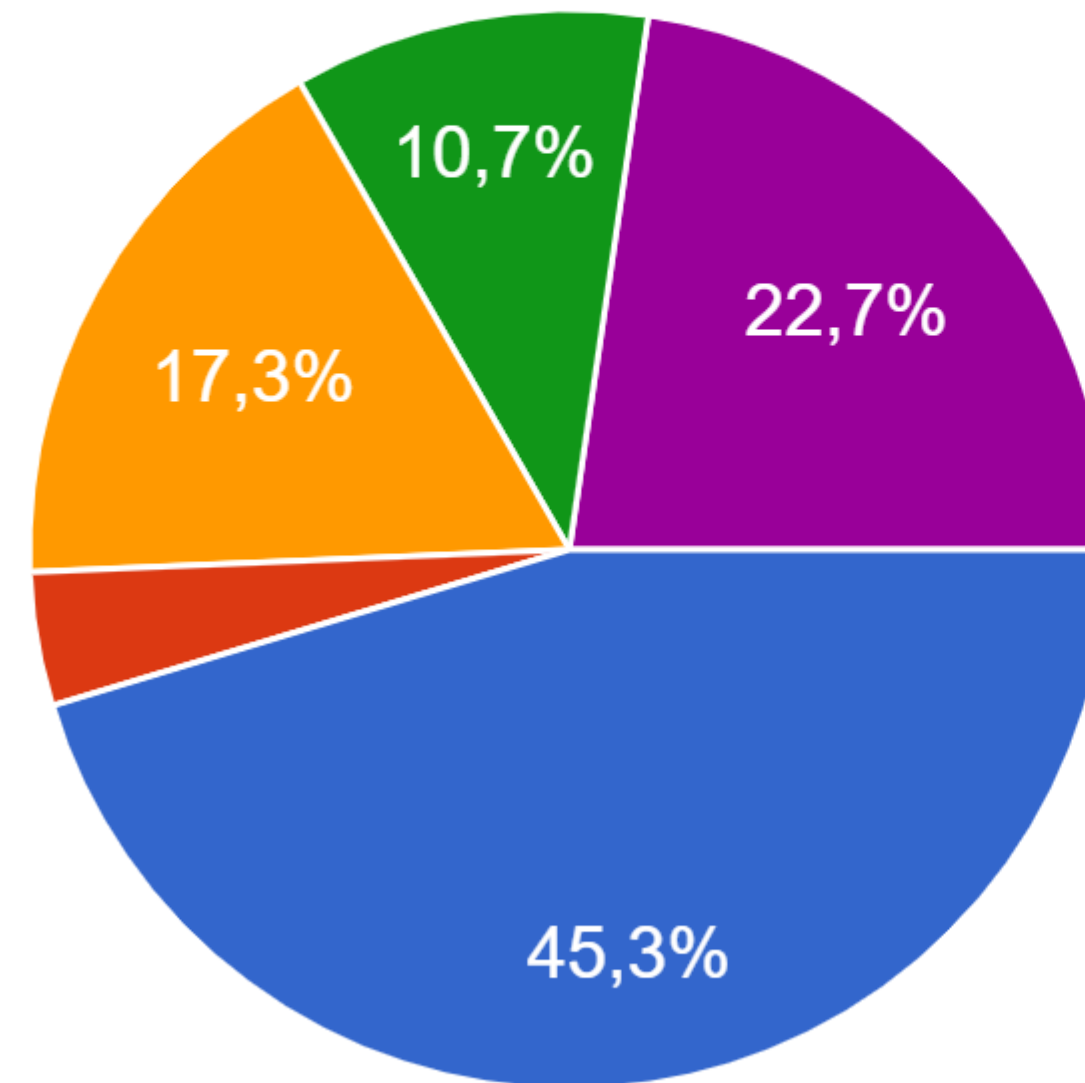




# Would you give your children Serbian or Austrian name?

Da li biste svojoj deci dali tradicionalno srpska, austrijska ili internacionalna imena?

75 одговора



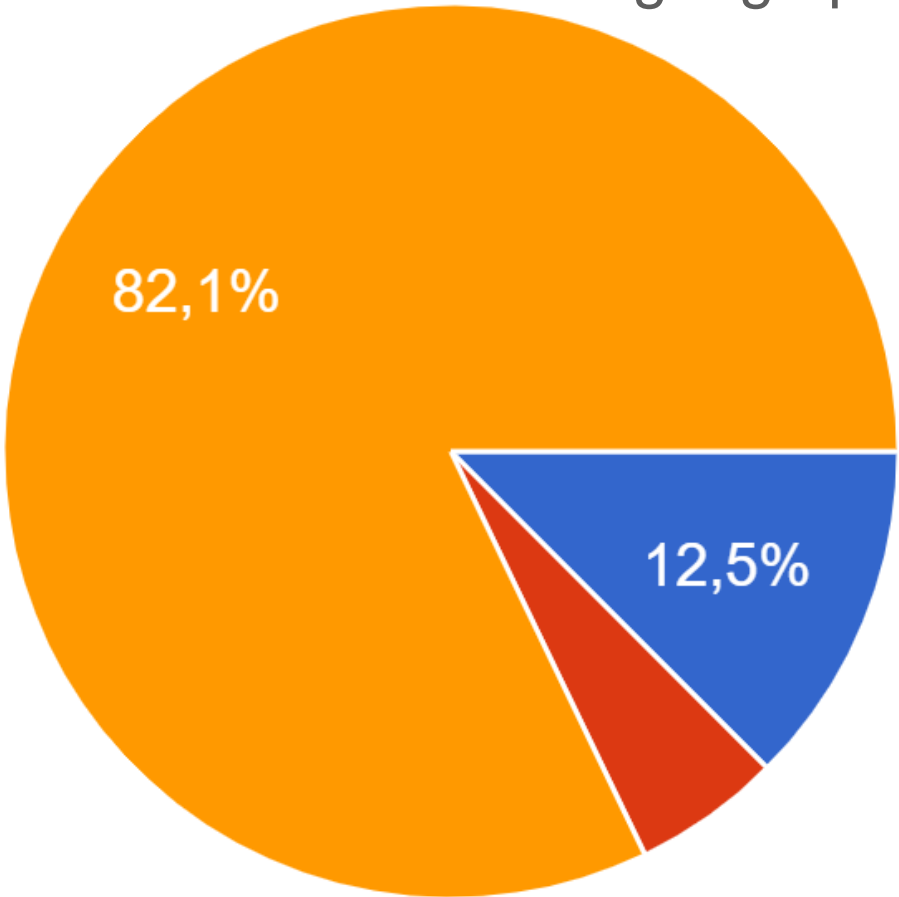
- Srpska (npr. Uroš, Milica)
- Imena česta u Srbiji i Austriji, ali na nemačkom jeziku (npr. Philipp, Katharina)
- Imena česta u Srbiji i Austriji, ali na srpskom jeziku (npr. Filip, Katarina)
- Imena koja se i na srpskom i nemačkom jeziku isto pišu (npr. Simona, Valentina)
- Kratka internacionalna imena (npr. Nina, Lena)



Da li smatrate da imate isti nivo znanja i srpskog i nemačkog jezika?

56 одговора

Do you believe you have the same level of language proficiency in both Serbian and German language?



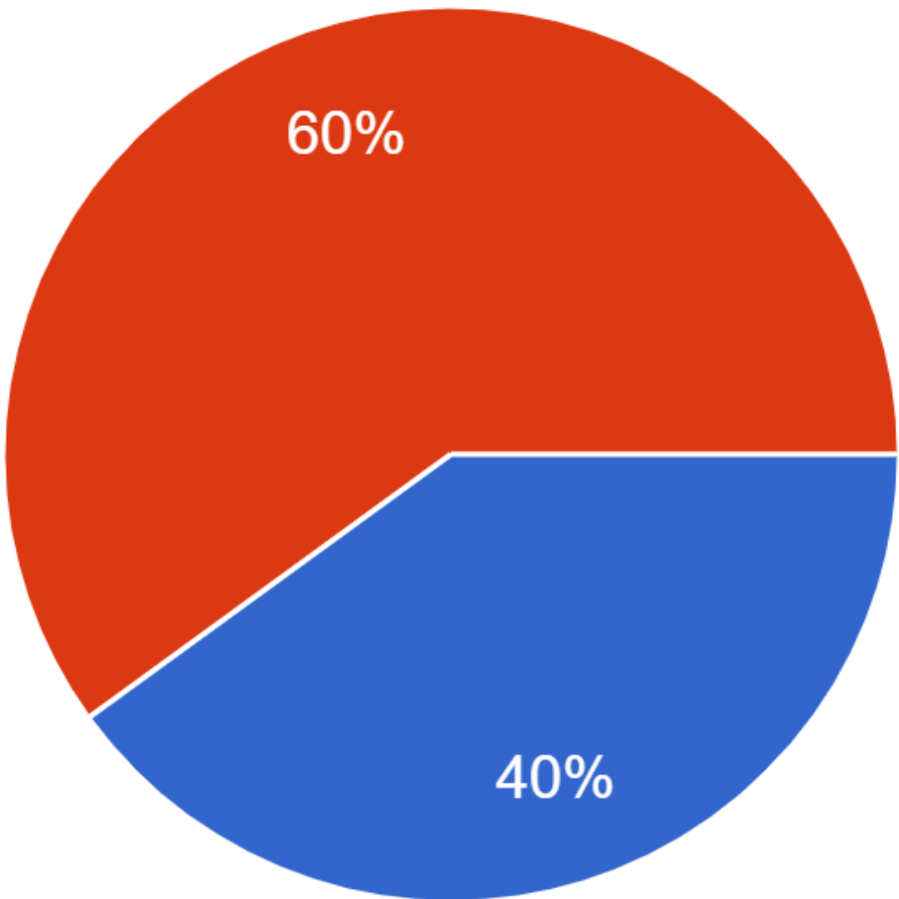
- da
- ne, imam viši nivo znanja nemačkog
- ne, imam viši nivo znanja srpskog

Yes  
No, my German is better  
No, my Serbian is better

Da li u govoru nekada mešate srpski i nemački jezik u istoj rečenici?

55 одговора

Do you mix Serbian and German language in the same sentence sometimes?

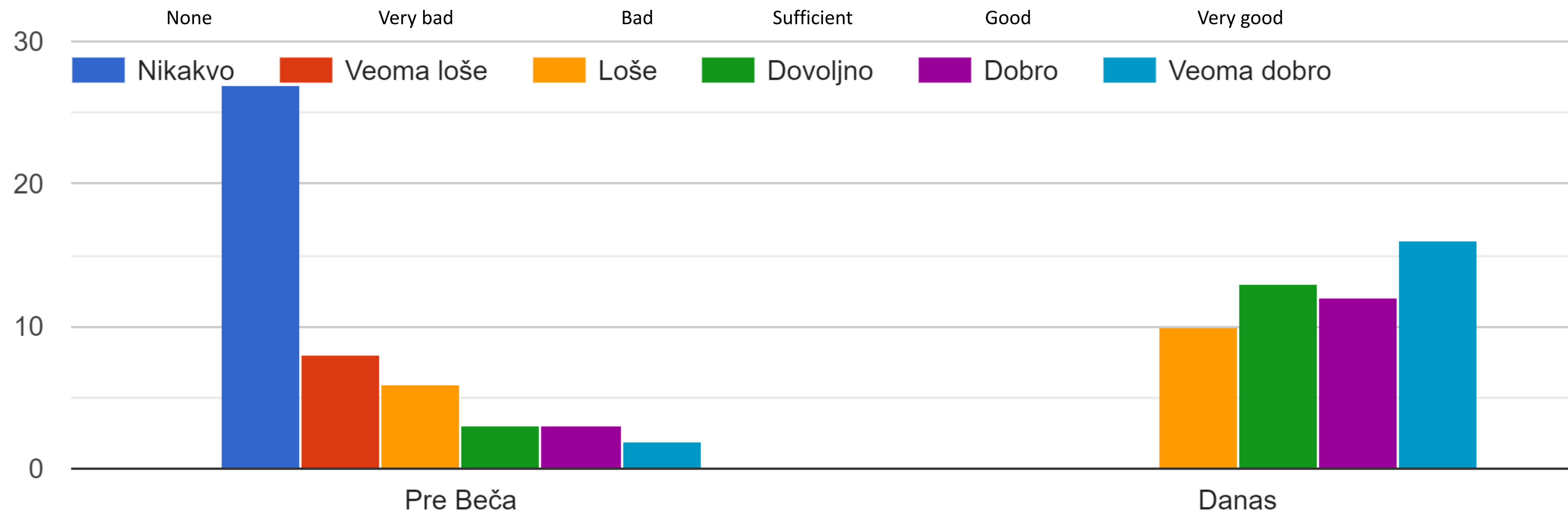


- Da Yes
- Ne No



How would you describe your German language proficiency?

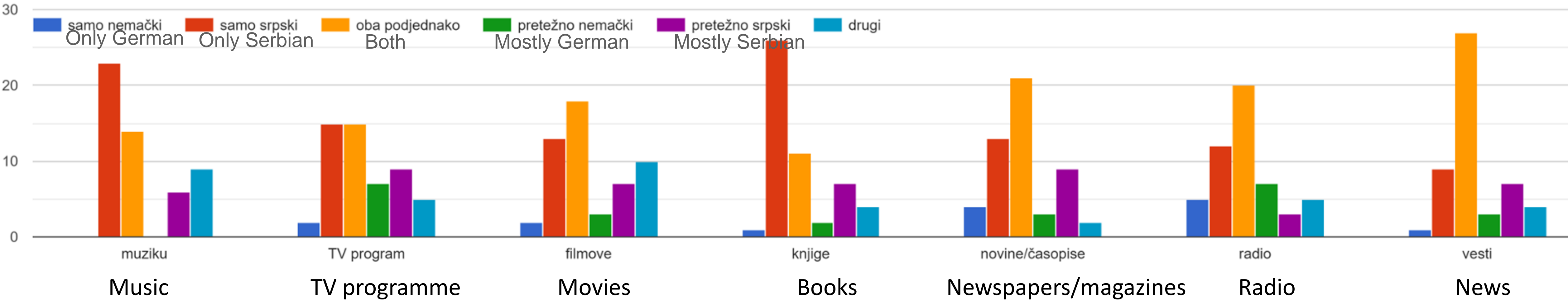
Ako niste rođeni u Austriji, kako biste ocenili svoje znanje nemačkog jezika?





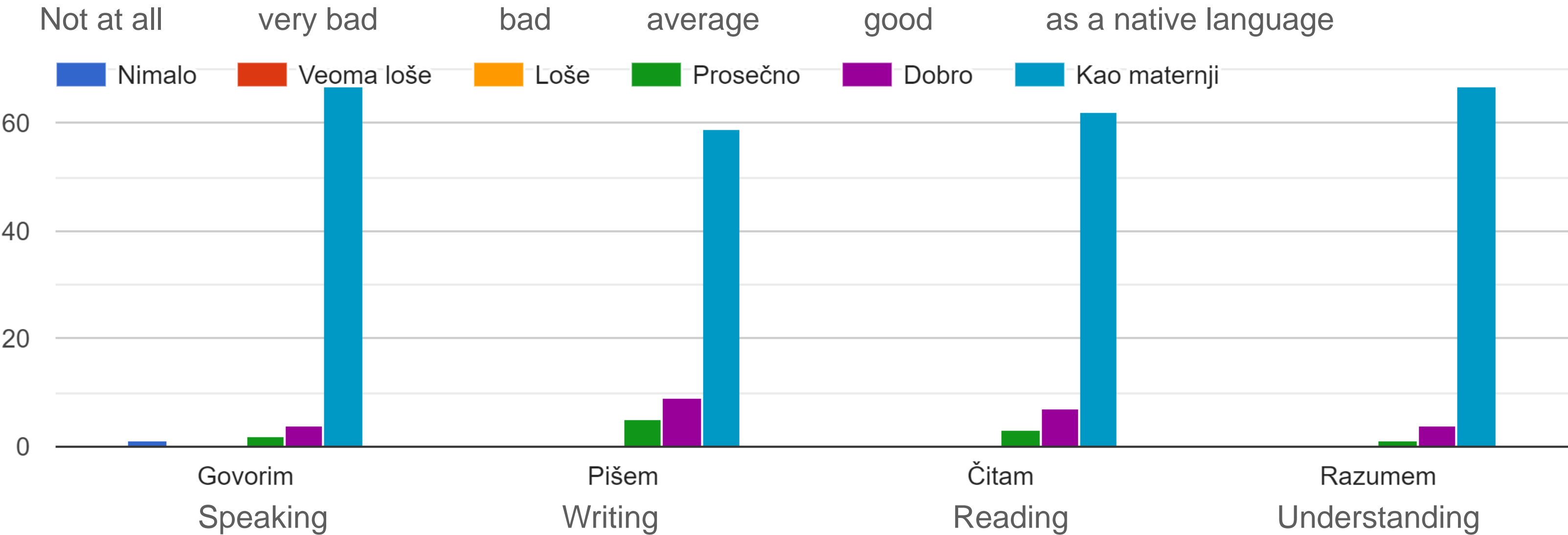
Na kom jeziku gledate, slušate ili čitate

In which language do you watch, listen or read:

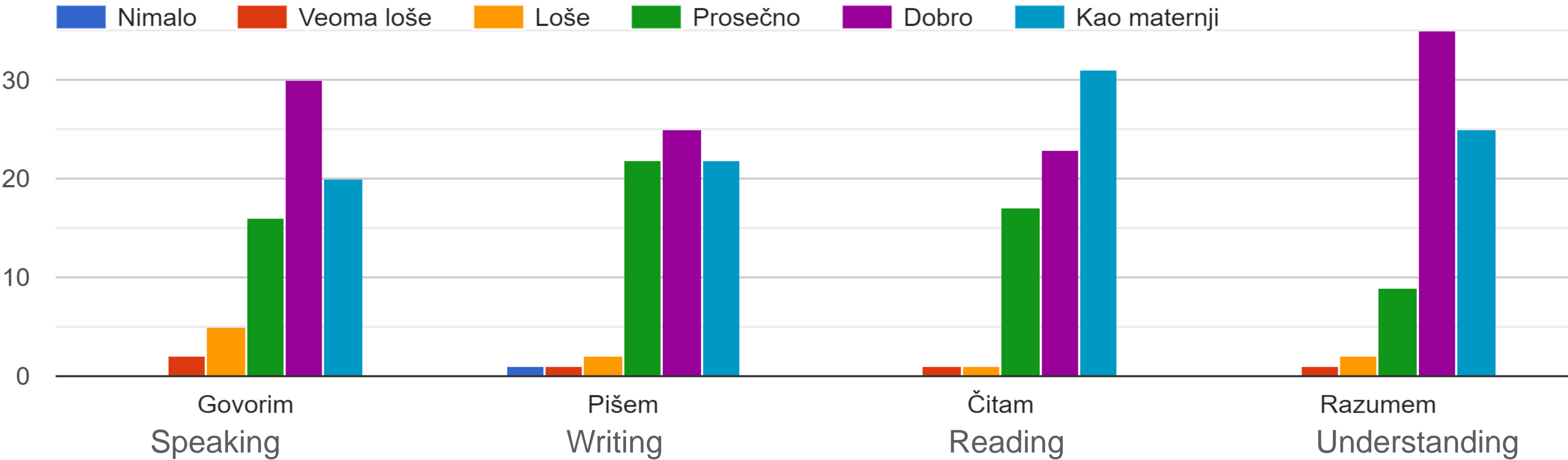




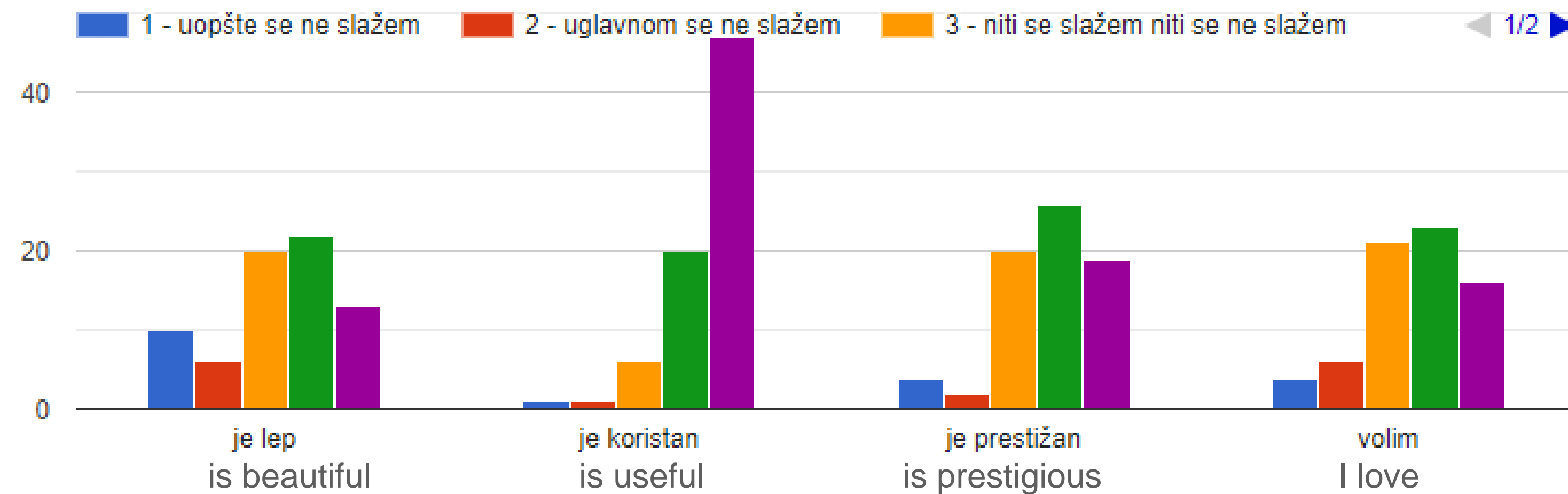
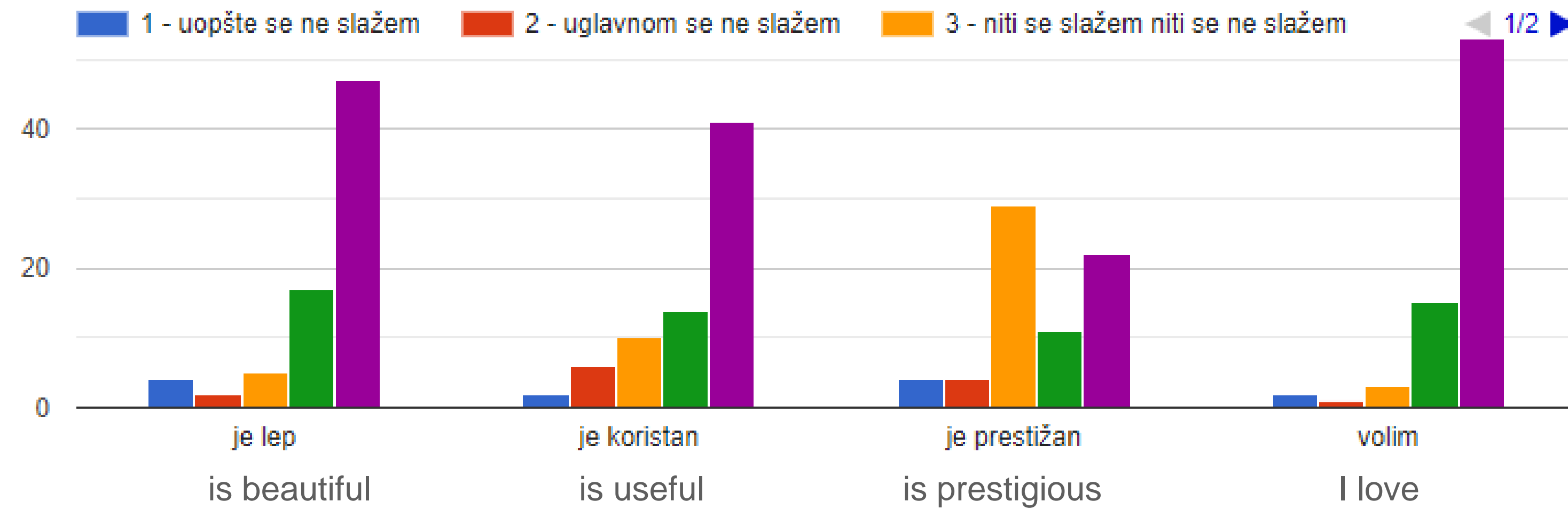
Srpski jezik: Serbian language



German language  
Nemački jezik:



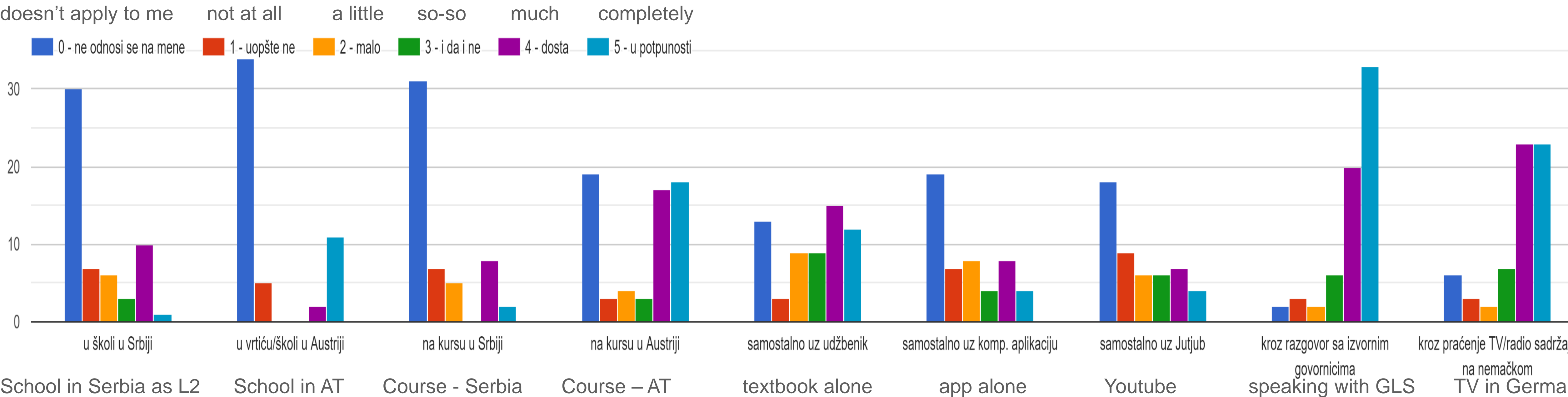






# I learned German through:

Mom znanju nemačkog jezika je doprinelo učenje:





# The dynamics of language shift: gradual

usually following the 5-scale Haugen’s (1972) model  $A > Ab > AB > aB > B$

	Generation					
	1	1.5	2	3	4	5*
Mother tongue	S	S	Sg	SG	sG	(s)G*
Language of education	S(g)	S or G or both	G(s)	G	G	G*
Bilingualism	Sg, SG	SG	SG	sG	(s)G	(s)G*
Intergenerational transmission to the next generation	S(g)	S(G)	(S,s)G	(s)G	(s)G	G*
Code-switching matrix language	S	S(g)	SG	SG	(s)G	G*



# Qualitative sociolinguistic semi-structured interviews

- M55/1: „Things are not black and white, we are all different. There is the first generation young couple that speak only English and German in the house, while some 3rd generation members will insist on speaking Serbian themselves. It is not only age and education, but loving your own culture.“
- M62/1: „I am trying to teach my grandchildren Serbian. My daughter-in-law is Austrian, if I don't teach them, they will never know who they are.“
- F66/1: „Son, it is easy for you now, you have internet and speak English. We were working too hard, leaving our children at their grandparents, ten of us lived in the small apartment, we had no time for either culture. At home we spoke the only language we knew.“
- F70/1: „I didn't know a single word of German when I came here. I was learning it with my eyes and ears. My boss pushed me to learn German. If you don't speak German, you will stay in the *keller*, you can only go to the next floor if you learn it. I invested a lot in teaching my children German.“



- F48/1: „Firstly, I was teaching my children Serbian, and later, they were teaching me German.“
- M19/1.5: „My father says that I think in German because I put verb at the end of the sentence. He finds it very annoying, but that is how I talk. It is either like that or I'll speak German to him, and he hates it.“
- F39/2: „At home, we only spoke Serbian. My dad would say *don't schwab it* (Serb. *nemoj da mi švabiš*) if I spoke German. I guess that is why I speak both languages equally“
- F22/2: „I don't have many Serbian friends, so I don't use Serbian too much, only with my mom and grandma, she lives in Serbia.“
- M28/3: „My Serbian is horrible. I learned from my parents who didn't speak it properly themselves. I speak German with my siblings and Serbian only when someone doesn't know German“



# Factors that promote language **maintenance**

- a group's high levels of ethnolinguistic vitality
- community size and cohesion
- positive attitudinal factors towards language maintenance
- high intergenerational transference of language skills
- favorable demographic trends with consistent inflows of new migrants

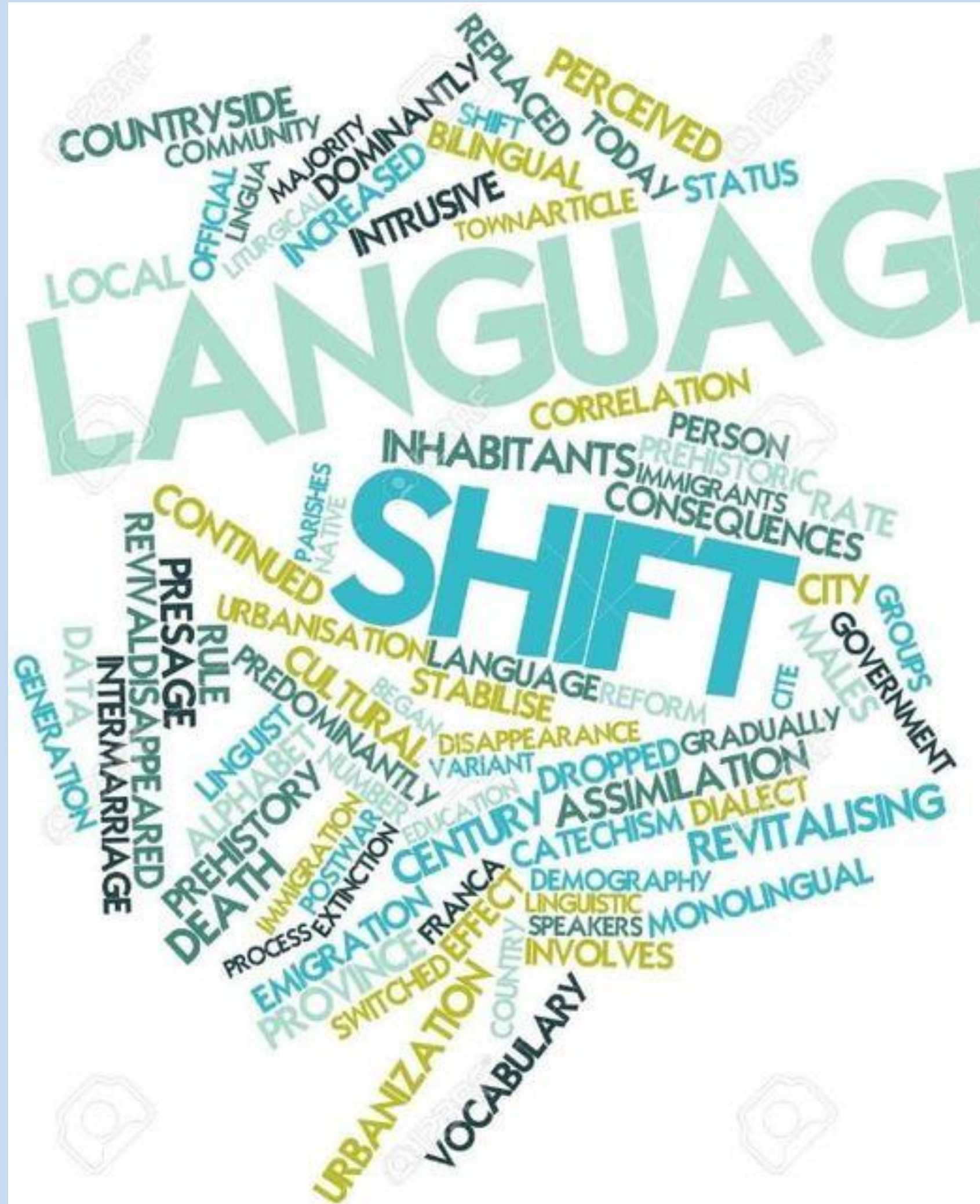


# Factors that promote language **maintenance**

- endogamous marriages
- geographical proximity
- language seen as a cultural capital
- other Slavic language speakers in Vienna
- social networks, media, clubs
- desire to live in Serbia again
- cultural contents: music, literature, media, movies



# Factors that promote language shift



- employment
- education in German only
- a strong desire to integrate
- perceived prestige
- lack of intergenerational transmission
- negative language attitudes



**Thank you for  
your attention!**

**Q&A**



**SCAN ME**



**KEEP  
CALM AND**

**THINK OF  
LANGUAGES FROM  
DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES!**

**Feel free to contact me via [sanja.subotic@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:sanja.subotic@oeaw.ac.at)**