

Intercultural contact in the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Opatija/Abbazia in 1867-1914



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Historical Perspectives on Transnationalism and Intercultural Dialogue in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (TIDA)



- project funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (2014-2018)
- **aim:** to counterbalance the historiographical approach to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Croatia (emphasis on the national movement and problematic relations between national groups)
- **focus:** intercultural contact and its role in the formation of hybrid identities; national indifference

Austria-Hungary



Austria-Hungary

- migration (economic reasons, transferral of public sector employees)
- longer traditions of cultural contact in some regions (e.g. the Adriatic)
- cultural heterogeneity, mutual influences, cosmopolitanism, cultural hybrids

Multilingualism in private life



- multilingualism in Austria-Hungary
 - research has focused on language policy and institutions (education system, administration...)
 - lack of research on communication in private life
- intercultural relationships in the private family sphere played a great role in the formation of hybrid cultural identities
- lack of research on intimate intercultural relationships in a historical context

Wruss family letters

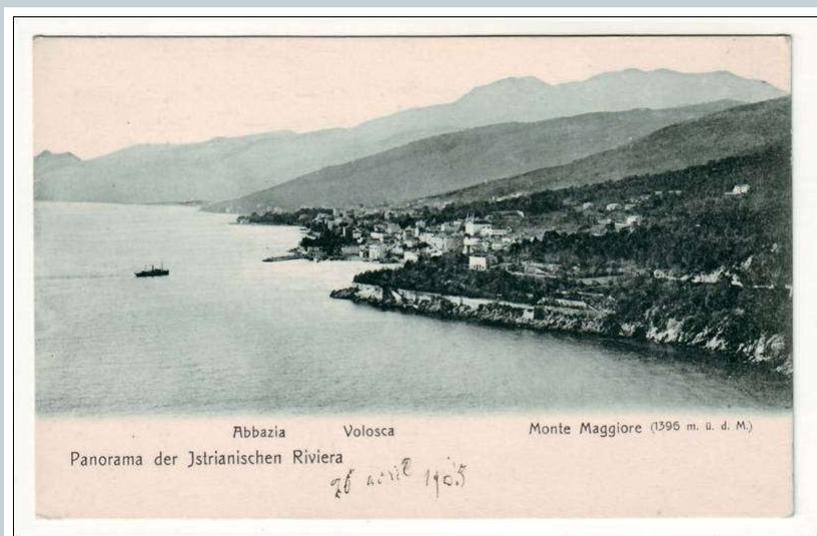


- State Archive in Rijeka, Wruss Family Collection
- correspondence between Rudolf Wruss and Emilie Uršič
- period: 1898/1901
- middle class
- Slovenian and Croatized Slovenian + participating in several “national” cultures
- 8 letters (1 E to R, 7 R to E)
- 3 languages: German, Italian, Slovenian

Rudolf Wruss



Opatija/Abbazia & Volosko/Volosca



Gurgos

www.delcampe.net

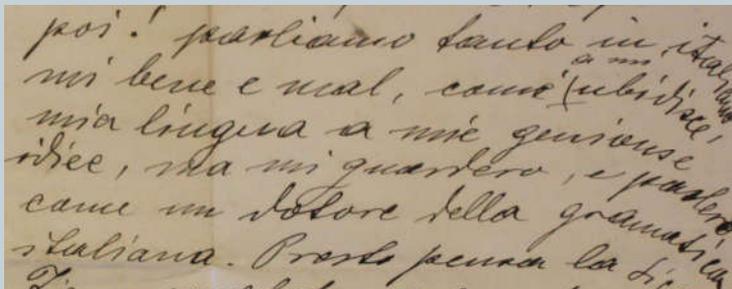
Wruss family letters: German

- Emilie – German not her 1st language
(Austrian riviera – many German-speaking visitors)
- Rudolf – bilingual Slovenian-German
- Rudolf's preferred language (easier to express emotion and compose lyrical passages)
- German is the prestige language in Slovenia at the time (education, work)

Wruss family letters: Italian

- Emilie - bilingual Croatian-Italian
- similar role of Italian in Istria and German in Slovenia
- sister writes to her in Italian – everyday communication
- Italian words used to address each other (*mein bel tessoro*, *mein angelo*)
- Rudolf switches to Italian:
 - when writing to someone else who doesn't speak German
 - when *mentioning* someone who he associates the Italian language with
 - for no apparent reason – because it is a language that Emilie uses regularly

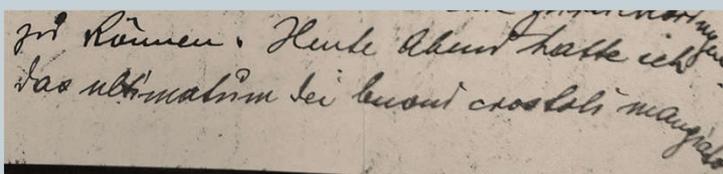
Italian: example



“Parliamo tanto in italiano, mi bene e mal, come a mi ubidisce mia lingua a mie geniouse idiee, ma mi guardero, e parlero come un dotore della gramatica italiana.”

“We speak Italian a lot, I speak well and badly, as my tongue obeys my genius ideas, but I will be careful and I will speak like a doctor of Italian grammar.”

Italian: example



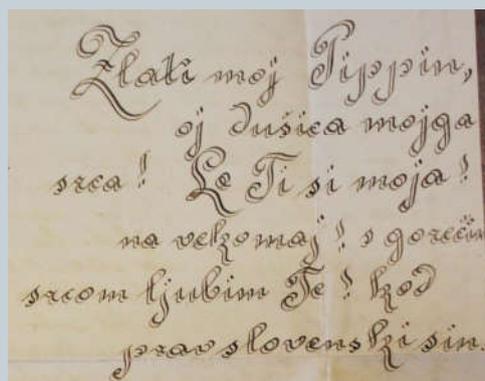
“Heute abend hatte ich das *ultimatum dei buoni crostoli mangiato*.”

- enjoys using Italian – the language of people dear to him
- use of Italian as an expression of affection
- development of an affectionate relationship toward the Italian language

Wruss family letters: Slovenian

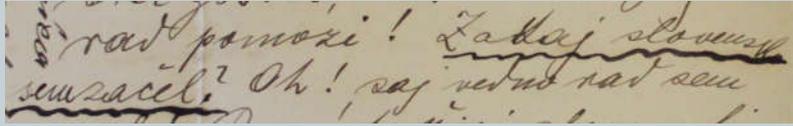
- Rudolf – 1st language (uses it with his mother)
- uses Slovenian words to address Emilie (*zlato, srček*) and to end letters (*z bogom*)
- Emilie – 1st language Croatian? (spoken in the family)
- only one letter in Slovenian (trilingual)

Slovenian: example



"My golden Pippin, oh soul of my heart! You are mine! forever! with a burning heart I love You! like a real slovenian son."

Slovenian: example



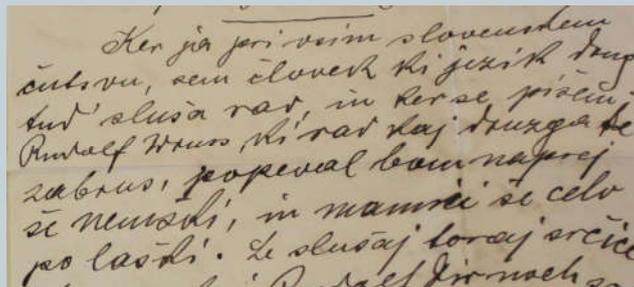
"Zakaj slovenski sem začel?" = "Why have I started writing in Slovenian?"

*"...slovenska mati te rodila, kaj rahlo na rokah te nosila,
in ko si rasel zdrav in čil, je tudi oče vesel še bil..."*

*"...a Slovenian mother gave birth to you, carried you in her arms,
and as you grew healthy and strong, your father was happy too..."*

- change of tone and style – folk literature, children’s rhymes
- emphasizes his Slovenian ethnicity
- patriotism + romantic love

Slovenian: example

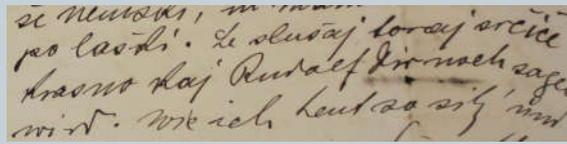


*"Ker ja pri vsim slovenskem čutstvu, sem človek ki jeziki drug tud' sluša rad,
in ker se pišem Rudolf Wruss, ki rad kaj drugga te zabrus, popeval bom
naprej še nemški, in mamici še celo po laški."*

*"Because I with all my Slovenian feelings, am a man who is glad to hear
other languages as well, and because I spell my name Rudolf Wruss, if
anyone would like it otherwise I'll send you flying, I will sing first in
German, and to my mother only in Slovenian."*

Slovenian: continued

- patriotic feelings + positive attitude toward other languages, preference for German over Slovenian
- use of a “national” language – not necessarily connected to national self-identification or political ideology
- spontaneous switch back to German – his “usual” language



“Le slušaj toraj srčice krasno kaj Rudolf dir noch sagen wird.”

“Listen now lovely sweetheart to what Rudolf will also say to you.”

Slovenian: continued

Why Slovenian?

- influence of the national movement
- association of patriotic and romantic feelings
- intense positive emotions
- marked language – expression of sincerity and emotion
- switching back to German – Slovenian mainly used as a spoken language and German for writing

Conclusion



- associating a language with particular people in one's family/social circle
- relationships with loved ones as a strong motivator for the use/learning of a language
- use of a particular language as a sign of affection
- development of an affectionate relationship toward a language as the result of an intercultural intimate relationship
- use of the 1st language in moments of intense emotion
- neither nationalist nor nationally indifferent

Topics for further research



- Austria-Hungary – research on language policy and use in the public sphere
 - reasons for using certain languages: prestige, social climbing, employment, national ideology
- the private sphere is missing!
- effect of intercultural intimate relationships on language attitudes
- interaction between the private and public sphere
- role of changing language attitudes in the dynamics of cultural exchange on a broader social scale

Thank you for your attention!

