

Impact of factors specific to forced migration on German language acquisition: Family constellation, health status and housing situation

Baier, Andreea; Tissot, Anna; Rother, Nina

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Impact of factors specific to forced migration on German language acquisition

Family constellation, health status and housing situation

by Andreea Baier, Anna Tissot and Nina Rother

AT A GLANCE

- Using the 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys and qualitative interviews as a basis, this brief analysis will present findings on the socio-economic structure, family constellation, health status and housing situation of refugees. The emphasis lies on the question of how these factors are linked to refugees' acquisition of the German language.
- Quantitative results show the greater the level of formal education, the better their self-assessed command of German. The qualitative interviews indicate further that a lack of experience in an educational system and of "learning how to learn", as well as the absence of literacy, complicate language acquisition.
- Most refugees live with their nuclear family in Germany. If refugees live apart from their family, they tend to self-assess a weaker command of German. As hinted at in the qualitative interviews, one approach to explaining this is that these refugees are worried about relatives abroad and are therefore often distracted during language classes.
- With regard to health, the physical wellbeing of refugees is better, on average, than of the overall population in Germany, whereas their psychological wellbeing is slightly worse than average. The latter is associated with a greater likelihood of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The analysis shows that a better health status is associated with a better self-assessed command of German.
- Refugees living in private accommodation are significantly more satisfied with their housing situation than those living in shared accommodation and exhibit a better command of German. The qualitative interviews point to a lack of opportunities to use German and insufficient space for privacy to study the language in shared accommodation, which has a negative impact on language acquisition.

Introduction

Questions as to the significance of refugees' initial situation are often at center stage in discussions about successful integration, for example the extent to which the group of refugees is especially vulnerable. Based on their experiences of forced migration, this group is more greatly affected by the conditions that are rather unfavourable for rapid integration. The level of education, but also psychological and physical complaints, trauma, and an unaccustomed housing situation after arrival or separation from family may influence the integration process (Schupp et al. 2018; Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften Leopoldina 2018; BAfF 2019). As the most important individual factors which may have a specific impact within the refugee context, they form the core of this brief analysis. Institutional factors which are more commonly subject to legal parameters (such as residence status, residence requirements or family reunification arrangements) play a minor role in the following analyses, even though they may have an impact on the housing situation and integration of refugees (Brücker 2020; Brücker et al. 2019). Acquisition of the host country's language is generally ascribed a pivotal role in successful integra-

tion (Esser 2006). Nevertheless, people who arrive in Germany seeking protection demonstrate barely any command of German upon arrival (Rother et al. 2018: 39). The question of language acquisition is therefore crucial for them and is consequently at center stage of this brief analysis. In the following, the essential, individual factors which may negatively influence language acquisition in this group will be systematised (Figure 1). Thus, the aim of this brief analysis is to explore which of the potential unfavourable conditions regarding family constellation, housing situation, health status and experience of trauma are present for refugees and to which the extent they play a role in the acquisition of the German language. Along with descriptive statements on the group under review, the quantitative analyses carried out on the basis of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey contain first bivariate assessments identifying potential factors regarding their influence on language acquisition. These are subsequently looked at closely using more in-depth qualitative interviews and analysed for their effect (Box 1 on the data basis).

Figure 1: Potential unfavourable conditions for refugees in the process of acquiring German



Source: Own diagram.

Box 1: DATA BASIS

The data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey from the first and second data collection phases in 2016 and 2017 has been used for the quantitative analyses. Individuals and members of their households who arrived in Germany in the years 2013 up to and including 2016 and those who applied for asylum, regardless of the result of their application, were interviewed within the scope of the survey and are described with the umbrella term “refugee” (for more information on the study, see Kroh et al. 2018).

There is information available on 4,465 adults for 2016, approximately 5,668 adults for 2017 and 4,321 adults for 2018. The overall sample comprises 7,950 refugees surveyed on at least one occasion. For the evaluation, 4,356 individuals were consulted for the survey year 2016 and 5,500 for 2017, of which 2,580 individuals had already been surveyed in 2016.

The survey programme is rather comprehensive (Kroh et al. 2017b), which in turn allows a comprehensive analysis of the refugees’ living circumstances. We were able to take into account a range of relevant characteristics, such as date of arrival, sex, age, country of origin, level of education and residence status.

As is customary and established in empirical social research surveys, this data is based on subjective self-assessments and evaluations, such as the re-

sponses on health status and command of German due to a lack of objective test data. In general, answering questions such as these requires reflexive and introspective ability on the part of all respondents. The data can be seen as sufficiently valid for as the self-assessments are mostly consistent with the responses of the interviewers.

Furthermore, we carried out 21 qualitative interviews within the scope of the research project “Evaluation of Integration Courses” (EvIk) using various techniques: problem-focused interviews with participants supported by interpreters and expert interviews with representatives of course providers and teachers (for more information, Tissot et al. 2019: 17 et al.).¹

The qualitative data material reflects the perceptions, experiences, actions, considerations and evaluations of various respondent groups with a view to the integration courses. The resulting characteristics, categories and cases, all examples of individual experiences of the integration course, permit “moderatum generalisations” (Williams 2000).

¹ The references in the citations and other parts of the text contain the following abbreviations along with interview and paragraph numbers: TN stands for interviews with participants, TR for interviews with representatives of providers and LK for interviews with teachers.

Socio-economic structure

The available research results show that socio-economic variables in all groups of individuals who experienced migration are fundamental for language acquisition. Along with age, the level of education in particular turns out to be an important explanatory variable on the individual level (Chiswick/Miller 2001; Esser 2006; Scheible/Rother 2017).

In terms of the level of education brought along, it becomes apparent that the percentage of individuals without or with only little education at a primary school level and without a school-leaving certificate is strongly represented among the refugees, with just under 39 % (Brenzel/Kosyakova 2018: 26). 23 % of the respondents have a school-leaving certificate which may be equated with that of a lower secondary school. On average, refugees thus have worse conditions at their disposal than other migrant groups, for exam-

ple compared to the group of Polish and Romanian migrants as stated by Babka von Gostomski (2016). In addition, the analyses based on the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey reveal a gender gap. 19 % of the women and 12 % of the men, did not attend any school at all; 44 % of the women compared to 38 % of the men did not attain any school-leaving certificate (Brenzel/Kosyakova 2018: 26). This may be attributed to gender differences concerning the access to education in the country of origin. The average level of education is highest for refugees from the former Soviet Union, Syria and other states in North Africa and the Middle East and lowest for refugees from Eritrea and Afghanistan. When interpreting these differences, it is important to consider the different school systems, limited participation opportunities (as for minorities or females) as well as educational paths interrupted by war and forced migration. At 14 %, the proportion of individuals who are primarily and functionally illiterate and who have no adequate written language skills in

languages with Latin or non-Latin script is accordingly high. Along with the group of individuals who are primarily and functionally illiterate, a further 51 % of refugees are literate, but not in a language which uses the Latin alphabet (Scheible 2018: 4).

These more unfavourable starting conditions are of significance for studying German: bivariate analyses of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP data show a clear link between the level of education and the level of self-assessed German skills² to the extent that a higher level of education is accompanied by better German skills (Figure 2). Here, too, differences between men and women are also revealed: Female refugees declare worse German skills than male refugees, but this can largely be attributed to their caring for (young) children at home, which leaves less time for language acquisition. By using multivariate models which control for several influencing factors, Tissot et al. (2019) demonstrate that the probability of women with (young) children at home attending an integration course decreases by 35 percentage points. It is unsurprising that literacy levels

also have an effect on studying German: primarily and functionally illiterate individuals demonstrate worse German skills by more than one point on the scale than literate refugees who have been embedded in educational institutions in their past (Tissot et al. 2019: 42).

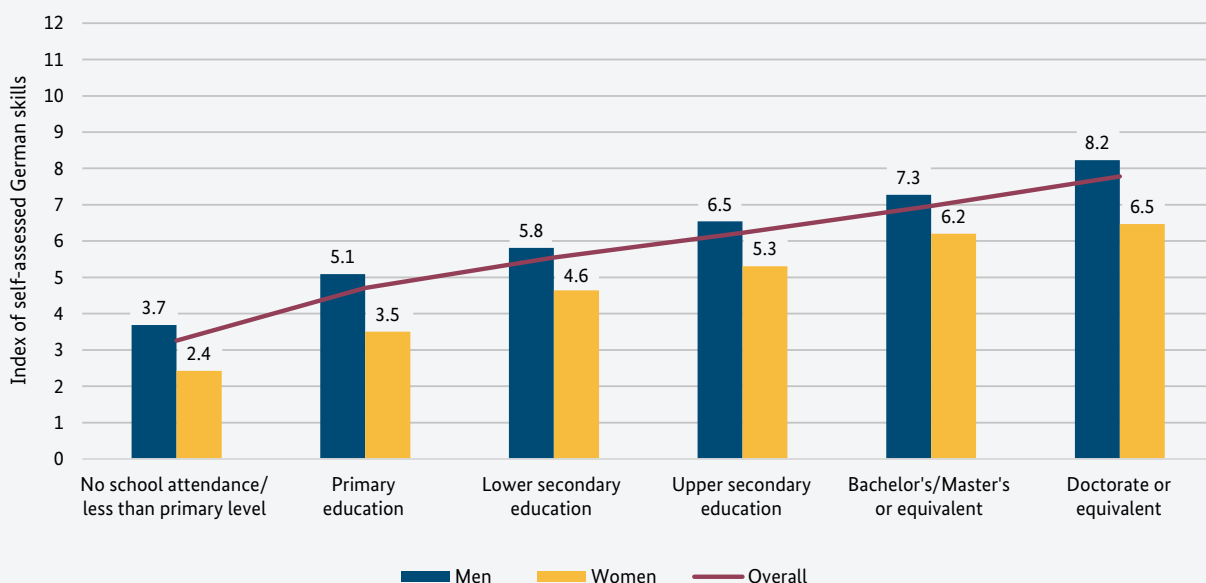
These results match the observations of teachers and other employees of integration course providers that participants find it easier to study German the more accustomed to studying they generally are. In the qualitative interviews reference was often made to the difficulties of participants who were not used to studying and who particularly attend the literacy courses. Participants unused to studying have, as one teacher described it, “not yet learned how to learn” (Interview 5, TR 1, 184) and are, as a result, the weakest learners in the integration course:

[Learning habits] are not the same for everyone. (...) We have also had [participants] who only attended school for two years (...) or maybe even one year or not at all. They struggle terribly. Although they may [already] be able to read and write, it is still difficult (Interview 5, TR 1, paragraphs 184-186).

² Language skills were measured using a summated index which summarises the self-assessed language skills of refugees over the three areas of speaking, reading and writing and can take up values between 0 and 12. We formed five categories (“Not at all” to “Very well”) on the basis of this summated index. The category “Not at all” therefore corresponds to an index value of 0, the category “Not very well” to an index value of 1 to 3, the category “Averagely” to an index value of 4 to 6, the category “Well” to an index value of 7 to 9 and the category “Very well” corresponds to an index value of 10 to 12. Self-assessed German skills are principally available for three points in time: when the respondent moved to Germany (as a retrospective question) as well as for the survey years of 2016 and 2017.

From the teachers’ perspective, one difficulty is that participants who are unused to studying are not necessarily familiar with the teaching methods, meaning that they “[are] not capable (...) of working independently, not even of understanding or following the simplest of-cloze texts or assignments” (Interview 7, LK 4, paragraphs 74-76). They therefore cannot deal

Figure 2: German skills according to level of education (mean values)



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP 2016 and 2017 Refugee Surveys, weighted.

with the tasks fast or well enough in class. Participants who have not yet had any experience of a school system and are possibly illiterate in their own languages of origin also lack knowledge and skills in other areas, as one teacher of a literacy course describes:

Yes, (...) people who did not attend ANY school (...) They are not only unable to read or write, there are lots of other things they can't do either. In my course we (...) also do basic education, such as arithmetic, and some of the [participants with no schooling] can't even do single-digit arithmetic. They have no geographical knowledge at all, either. Actually not going to school means much more than not being able to read and write (Interview 17, TR 4, 196-200).

Therefore, the qualitative analyses also show that acquisition of the German language takes longer for refugees unused to studying. It is often the case that literacy, at least in Latin script, as well as familiarity with a studying setting must be achieved first.

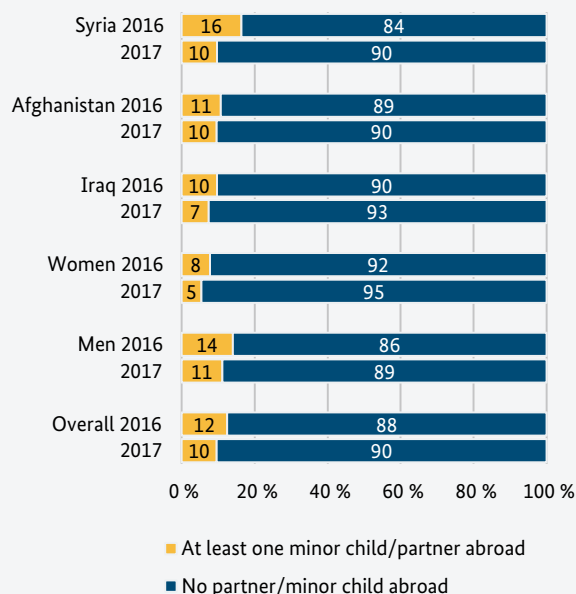
Family constellation

Along with further individual factors, the key to satisfaction with life in Germany, individual wellbeing and focussing on the process of arrival in a new country is the family constellation as well as the nuclear family's place of residence (Gambaro et al. 2018).

Analyses of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP data show that, at about 10 % of all refugees, only a small proportion live apart from their nuclear family³ in Germany. Conversely, this also means that almost 90 % of the refugees have neither minor children nor partners living abroad or that they have no partner or children. Most often, family members of Syrian respondents live abroad. Further, it becomes evident that not only is the proportion of male refugees relatively high, at 74 %; but that male refugees are also more likely to live apart from their nuclear family than female refugees (14 % of men compared with 8 % of women 2016, Figure 3). More in-depth analyses show that these nuclear family members are most likely to live in the country of origin and that only in very few cases live in a third country.

Over the time period from 2016 to 2017, there is only a minor decrease of 2 % in the proportion of family members living abroad across all groups. The greatest change can be found among Syrian respondents, of whom 16 % lived apart from their nuclear family in 2016; which was only the case for 10 % in 2017. The

Figure 3: Place of residence of nuclear family (in per cent)



Source: 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys, weighted.

percentage of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq whose nuclear family lived abroad also decreased in 2017, albeit at a lower degree (Figure 3).

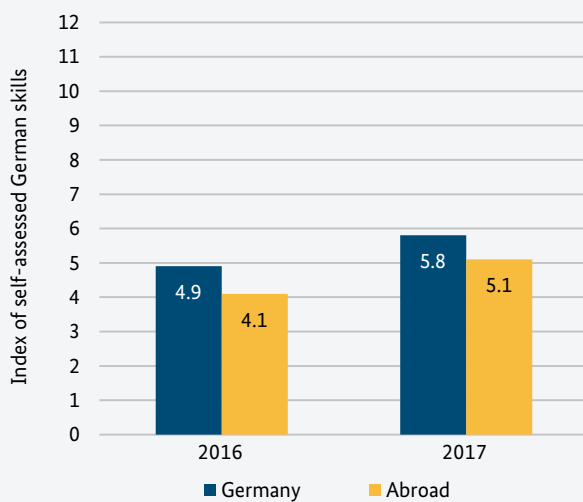
Initially, bivariate analyses of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP data on the role of family separation in refugees' acquisition of the German language produce a very weak negative statistical correlation ($r=-0.05$; $p<0.001$). This means that in 2016 and 2017, refugees with at least one family member abroad scored by 0.7 to 0.8 points lower regarding their German skills and therefore demonstrated slightly worse knowledge of the German language (Figure 4).⁴

The qualitative interviews carried out in integration courses provide initial explanatory approaches to this: Relatives who are left behind are a source of distress for the participants in question and the separation is perceived as a burden. This in turn negatively affects the ability to concentrate and therefore the process of language acquisition as a whole. For those who do not live with their nuclear family in Germany, care work and also contact with family sometimes takes place during classes, as one of the teachers interviewed reports:

³ Nuclear family includes spouses or partners and children.

⁴ Multivariate calculations with similar variables (Tissot et al. 2019: 131 et seq.) cannot confirm these bivariate correlations (presumably due to the insufficient variance in family situation and divergent operationalisation). Further analyses within the scope of the EvIk project will explore this issue in greater depth.

Figure 4: German skills by place of residence of nuclear family (mean values)



Source: 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys, weighted.

[The participants] have got internet access for WhatsApp, (...) so to stay in touch with their families. They cannot concentrate [on classes]. So if half the family is in Turkey or Greece and the people come here and are supposed to somehow learn perfectly, their minds aren't [clear] enough for that (Interview 7, LK 4, paragraph 92).

Conversely, however, it may be speculated that concentrating on language acquisition is simpler and more comprehensively possible if there is as little distraction as possible when living with other family members for instance. There are indications of this mechanism in the qualitative interviews, to the extent that female refugees living with a partner and children have less time available for studying due to childcare and household chores, which thus has a negative impact on their language acquisition (Tissot et al. 2019: 47 et seq.). In this sense, it appears that “family-related” distractions can also have a counter-productive impact on the acquisition of the German language, in addition to family separation.

Overall, the results suggest that only a small proportion of refugees in Germany were affected by nuclear family separation at the time of the survey in 2017. If this is the case, however, it appears that acquisition of German is impeded by a limited ability to concentrate due to concerns about the family (for similar results in the United Kingdom (UK), see also Beaton et al. 2018).

Health situation

Refugees may be subject to traumatic experiences and physical strains before, during and after forced migration. A total of 56 % of respondents, who provided information on this, reported negative experiences of forced migration (approx. 30 % did not wish to comment on this, which indicates an even higher level of stress; Brücker et al. 2019). More than half of them reported economic fraud and approximately 40 % reported incarceration and physical abuse. Women are exposed to particular risks when fleeing compared with men and are thus more likely to report sexual assaults and economic fraud (Sirries et al. 2016: 27).

Traumatic experiences and physical strain often result in psychological and physical health complaints later on.⁵ The more frequent the traumatic experiences and stress responses, such as witnessing war, violence, torture and political persecution, the stronger the refugees concerned will suffer from the complaints mentioned above.⁶ There are not only stress-related symptoms which appear in the case of massive stress responses. There is also a greater likelihood of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which restricts cognitive ability and may therefore impede language acquisition (Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften Leopoldina 2018; Schröder et al. 2018; Romiti et al. 2016; Brücker et al. 2019). It is safe to assume that both the physical and psychological condition of refugees play an important role in their participation in German society and thus also in language acquisition.

Subsequently, we will shed light on three aspects of refugee health status based on the IAB-BAMF-SOEP data: Physical and psychological wellbeing as well as the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD risk; Box 2).

The IAB-BAMF-SOEP data shows that the average physical wellbeing of refugees appears to be slightly better in comparison to the wellbeing of the overall population of Germany (54.6 to 50.0 on the summary measures); while their psychological wellbeing appears to be slightly worse (47.3 to 50.0). Male respondents report both better physical (average 55.8) and psychological wellbeing (average 48.1) than female (average 50.1 and 44.7). Physical wellbeing, but not psycholog-

⁵ Studies show that psychological complaints also manifest themselves physically, for example as sleep disorders, autoimmune diseases and pain (Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften Leopoldina 2018: 4, 9, 14).

⁶ Various clinical pictures may become apparent due to stress responses and life-threatening events, for example increased inflammatory markers, the feeling of being overwhelmed, depression, problems to focus and aggression.

ical wellbeing, decreases as refugees age. As normally a better state of health would be expected due to the younger average age of refugees compared with the overall population, it is safe to assume that traumatic experiences and distress in the country of origin and while fleeing may have impaired their state of health.

The analyses further demonstrate that worse psychological wellbeing is significantly linked with a greater risk of PTSD ($r=0.25$; 0.001). The individual PTSD risk depends heavily on sex and age, with a general mean value of 10.4. In comparison with male respondents, female respondents, except those from the youngest age group, show an increased risk of PTSD (Figure 5). Women therefore demonstrate earlier and greater vulnerability than men.

We can determine a link between family separation and health status: Refugees who have at least one family member living abroad demonstrate a slightly worse state of psychological wellbeing than refugees whose nuclear families live in Germany as well (45.4 and 47.7). In contrast, there are no statistically significant differences for physical wellbeing (53.5 and 54.8). It also appears that just under 44 % of the refugees in-

terviewed whose nuclear families were abroad demonstrate an increased risk of developing PTSD in comparison with 38 % of refugees whose nuclear families live in Germany (average PTSD index 12.7 to 10.2). This emphasizes that concerns about relatives living abroad can also become apparent in psychological wellbeing with an increased risk of PTSD.

As for the role of health status in the process of language acquisition, bivariate analyses of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP data demonstrate that better psychological and physical wellbeing are significantly linked with a better command of German (psychological: $r=0.10$ and physical: $r=0.16$; each $p<0.001$). An increased risk of PTSD is also accompanied by a worse command of German ($r=-0.17$; $p<0.001$). Multivariate analyses show that the effects of the various health dimensions are rectified but below significance (Tissot et al. 2019: 132).

In accordance with the results of the bivariate analysis, the teachers who were interviewed observed that some refugees are confronted with psychological problems and trauma. In the courses, this may manifest itself through apathy, for example:

BOX 2: MEASUREMENT OF HEALTH AND PTSD RISK IN THE IAB-BAMF-SOEP REFUGEE SURVEY

The two indicators of psychological and physical wellbeing result from two summated indices from a total of 12 individual questions, what is known as the SF-12 (Short Form Health Survey, Ware et al. 1996), as well as one additional individual question from the SF-36. SF-12 and SF-36 are measuring instruments relating to all diseases which record health-related quality of life and comprise four dimensions each (Radoschewski/Bellach 1999: 191 et seq.): Vitality, social functioning, emotional role function and psychological wellbeing (psychological wellbeing); general perception of health, physical functioning, role function and subjectively perceived physical pain (physical wellbeing). The summary measures for physical (coded from 11 to 77) and psychological (coded from 6 to 73) wellbeing are standardised in a way that a greater value corresponds to a greater wellbeing. The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys in 2016 and 2017 recorded psychological and physical health status once, for first-time respondents in both cases.

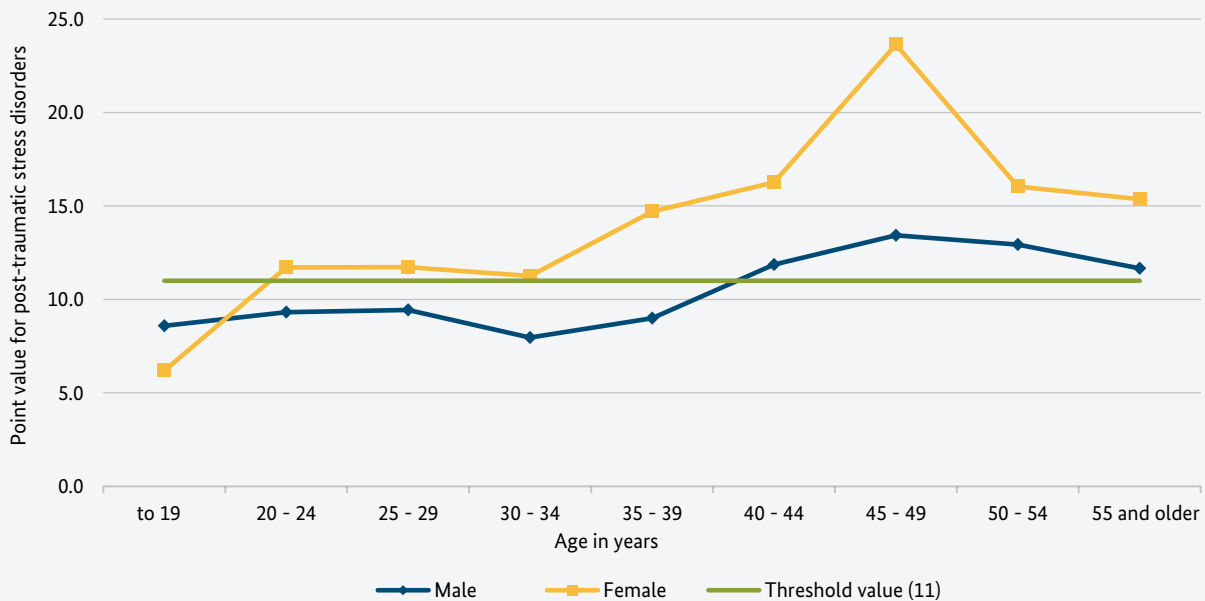
The PTSD risk is measured using the Refugee Health Screener, which comprises 13 individual ques-

tions measuring the degree of emotional distress (RHS-15). If the summated index, which goes up to 52, reaches a threshold value of 11, it is assumed that an individual is so emotionally distressed that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may develop in the long term (Hollifield et al. 2013, 2016). The PTSD risk was only recorded for refugees who were repeatedly interviewed in the 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey.

In order to guarantee adequate comparability, the results regarding the health indicators only refer to refugees who took part both in the first wave in 2016 and again in the second wave of 2017 ($n=2,618$).

When interpreting the results, it is important to note that there may be cultural differences in the perception and reporting of disease symptoms which affect the responses to corresponding items. A validation of the questions' functional equivalence across various countries of origin is pending.

Figure 5: PTSD risk by age and sex



Source: 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys, weighted.

I have students attending the course who just stare into space. They don't even react when calling their name (Interview 3, LK 2, paragraph 188).

If health restrictions are in evidence, this can possibly hinder participants from taking part in classes in a concentrated manner and has ultimately a negative impact on the learning progress.

Well I believe that many refugees face the problem of actually often still having a psychological problem. That is actually something I have noticed and that the participants often naturally have a harder time [in class] for that reason (Interview 4, LK 3, paragraph 242).

The situation then presents itself as a challenge for teachers as well:

Well, he told me that he had watched his brother's execution and started to cry and everything. I understand all of that (...) But I don't know what to do with [him] in class at all (Interview 3, LK 2, paragraph 192).

Not unlike the factor of family separation relating to forced migration, it also appears that, with regard to health status, there are vulnerable groups for whom language acquisition is impeded despite good physical wellbeing.

Housing situation

Participation in society is also influenced by housing situation. A lack of privacy, an isolated physical location or even a lack of security in one's living environment may, for instance, contribute to psycho-social distress for inhabitants (Schröder et al. 2018; Aumüller et al. 2015). In addition, a lack of areas for relaxation and retreat may mean that the language acquisition process, which also involves acquiring basic principles and consolidating studying content at home, may progress less swiftly. It is therefore assumed that, as an individual influencing factor, habitation in shared accommodation leads to delayed integration and complicates acquisition of the German language for refugees.

In the 2016 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey just under 42 % of respondents stated that they lived in shared accommodation; 58 % in private accommodation. However, the percentage of refugees in shared accommodation was still at 38 % in 2017, with 62 % living in private accommodation. The moderate decrease in the number of refugees in shared accommodation was the result of the target of placing refugees with protection status in private accommodation swiftly, and also of the legal parameters. Asylum seekers are initially obliged to live in the reception centre responsible for their reception (Section 47 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act and Section 53 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act), but this obligation ends when protection status has been accorded, after 24 months have passed at the most (for a detailed overview of the legal parameters: Baier/Siebert 2018: 3). Meanwhile, the legal param-

eters are also reflected in the results: It appears that just under 74 % of refugees with protection status lived in private accommodation in the years 2016 and 2017, while refugees still going through the proceedings were predominantly living in shared accommodation (2016: 56 %; 2017: 62 %).

As part of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey, refugees were also asked about satisfaction with their respective housing situation in 2016 and 2017. This reveals that the respondents were, on average, generally less satisfied with their housing situation in 2017 compared with the survey in 2016 (6.0 to 6.3 on a scale from 0 “completely unsatisfied” to 10 “completely satisfied”; Figure 6).

Significant differences in satisfaction can be seen depending on the type of accommodation: With a value of approximately 7, refugees in private accommodation were significantly more satisfied than refugees in shared accommodation in both years (2016: 5.2; 2017: 4.4). Differences specific to types of accommodation also arise in questions as to satisfaction regarding specific areas: In both points of time of the survey, refugees in private accommodation were considerably more satisfied with noise levels and privacy than those living in shared accommodation.

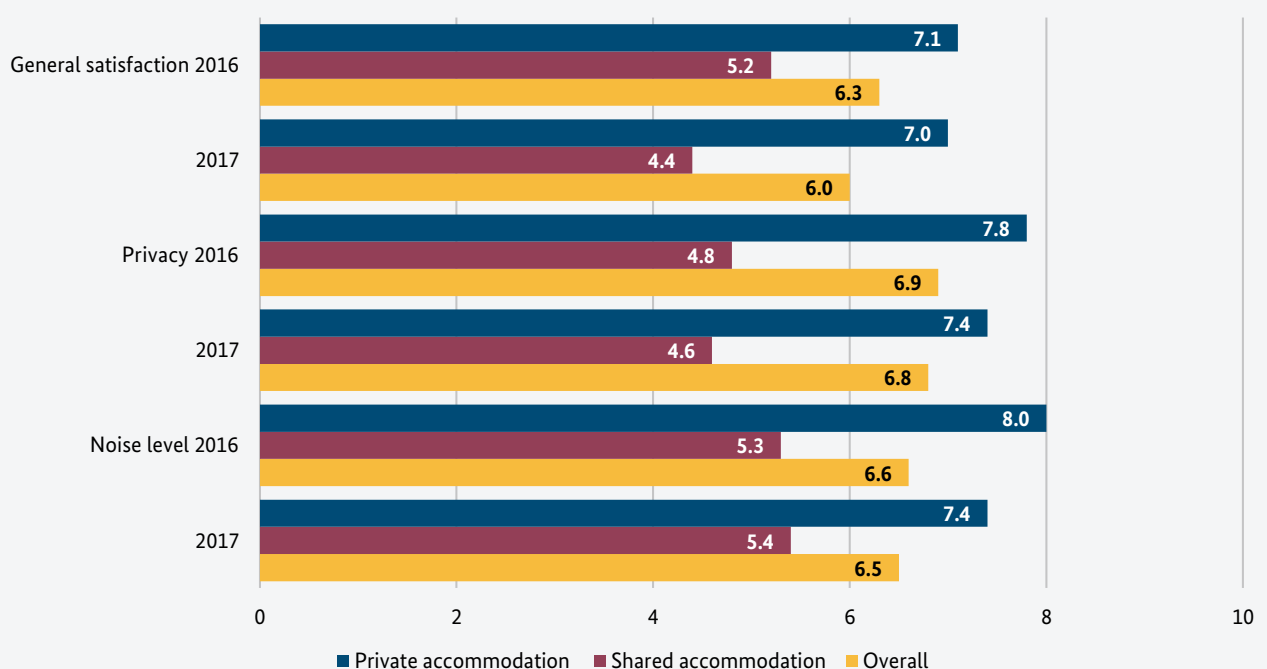
The analysis of the role of housing situation in language acquisition shows that accommodation represents a relevant factor: There is a weak to medium

positive correlation between living in private accommodation and having better German skills ($r=0.14$; <0.001). Multivariate models which control for the interaction between housing situation and other relevant factors, such as intensity of contact with Germans, prove an even stronger pure effect of accommodation and therefore confirm the bivariate correlations (Tissot et al. 2019: 132).

The qualitative analyses can be consulted to explain these effects in situ. It becomes clear that living in shared accommodation combines several factors which are unfavourable to language acquisition. This involves not only less communication in German in such accommodations, as there are usually several refugees from the same country of origin living there, but also a lower degree of wellbeing which is primarily accompanied by the lack of private spaces. Fundamentally, the analysis of qualitative interviews reveals, as illustrated by the following quote, that cramped housing has a negative impact on studying:

[It] is bad because me and the whole family, [we live] in only one room. And my daughters are grown by now. (...) The family can't really take a rest in this accommodation because we are all in only one room. On that account, how should we concentrate on studying or the classes here? And all my neighbours in this accommodation are refugees like me and Arabs. How then can I communicate with Germans to learn German? (Interview 19, TN 11, Abs. 91).

Figure 6: Satisfaction with housing situation (mean values)



Source: 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys, weighted.

Further, the interviewed teachers and representatives of the integration course providers point in particular to how the search for accommodation results in absence from classes (Interview 22, TR 7; Interview 2, LK 1; Interview 7, LK 4), which also impairs language acquisition.

Overall, the results show that approximately 40 % of the refugees interviewed were or still are affected by a housing situation which was or is unfavourable to language acquisition. Along with the level of education, the housing situation thus quantitatively represents the most important factor specific to forced migration influencing language acquisition.

Conclusion

This brief analysis focused on the most important individual factors which are attributable to the context of forced migration and have a specific impact on refugees, possibly being of relevance with regard to acquisition of the German language. Acquisition of the language of the host country is of significance here as it is assigned a key role for successful integration in general. It can be demonstrated that the conditions regarding socio-economic structure, family constellation, health status and housing situation are less favourable for refugees in this process.

The socio-economic structure is characterised by a substantial number of refugees demonstrating a lower level of education, a higher incidence of illiteracy and therefore a greater number of individuals unused to the process of studying. The evaluations provided here have shown that a lower level of education goes hand in hand with lower German skills. A lower level of literacy also has a negative impact on the acquisition of the German language. Further specific factors which may apply to refugees, such as separation from nuclear family, being housed in shared accommodation, traumatic experiences and health impairment, may have a negative impact on language acquisition even though the effects described are of varying, and in the case of family separation and health status, moderate magnitude and a causal analysis is still pending.

The quantitative correlations established are also reinforced by the qualitative analyses, which in turn shed more light on the underlying mechanisms of the effects. Separation from nuclear family and health impairment in particular impede the ability to concentrate in class. Living in shared accommodation additionally complicates acquisition of the German language due to structurally unfavourable learning

conditions and time restrictions resulting from the search for private accommodation.

On an individual level, the unfavourable conditions for language acquisition specific to forced migration do not apply to all refugees in the same way or at the same frequency. Nevertheless, in principle, a substantial percentage of refugees are affected. It is when these unfavourable conditions exist and possibly accumulate, however, that they indeed have a significant effect – depending on constellation – on language acquisition and therefore also on the overall participation in society. In this sense, along with integration courses which are tailored to the respective specific requirements, it could be conducive to language acquisition to create parameters which take these less favourable conditions into account and make it easier for refugees to concentrate on language acquisition. This involves securing ordered living conditions as quickly as possible, such as private accommodation with better learning conditions and healthcare provision in the refugees' native language. Nonetheless, opportunities to study the language which go beyond language classes should also be expanded. This could include increasing possibilities of homework supervision.

LITERATURE

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AUTHORS:

Andreea Baier

was a Researcher at the Research Centre Migration, Integration and Asylum at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) until April 2020.

Andreea.Baier@bamf.bund.de

Dr. Anna Tissot

is a Researcher at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees Research Centre.

Anna.Tissot@bamf.bund.de

Dr. Nina Rother

is head of the research field "Integration and Social Cohesion" at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees Research Centre.

Nina.Rother@bamf.bund.de

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