

# Dates and places as points of attachment for memorial contents in the ISW corpus: 1938 as a turning point

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## Abstract

Aim of the paper is the identification and subsequent analysis of crisis years in the narrative biographical interviews with German speaking Jews from the corpus ISW (*Emigrantendeutsch in Israel: Wiener in Jerusalem/ Migrant German in Israel: Viennese in Jerusalem*); also the possible “chronological landmarks” within a year will be tackled, investigating how a certain year – 1938 – represents in the life story of the narrators a turning point, as it clusters most traumatic events linked to the Shoah. The transcripts were analysed using the tool *Sketch Engine*. An alternation of corpus-driven and corpus-based steps characterizes this study, which uses a quantitative-qualitative approach (see Lemnitzer and Zinsmeister, 2015) and integrates also approaches from narrative analysis. The research questions that guide our investigation are as follows: Are there any special dates that recur as chronological landmarks of crisis situations (Leonardi 2023a)? Which are they? Do they recur in connection with special places? Which ones?

**Keywords:** Israelcorpus, Corpus-driven, Corpus-based, Places, Landmarks, Chronology

concludes with a summary and an outlook for further research (4).

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

We aim at investigating whether in the narrative biographical interviews from the corpus ISW (*Emigrantendeutsch in Israel: Wiener in Jerusalem/ Migrant German in Israel: Viennese in Jerusalem*), part of the so-called *Israelcorpus*, certain years stand out as crisis years, as the contents recalled to memory and verbalised concern political and social upheavals that had serious consequences on the lives of the persons interviewed and led to serious personal crises. Furthermore, we look for possible “chronological landmarks” for these crisis years (which events are recalled?) in order to examine the associated spatial constellations and their time-place interrelationships.

The transcripts were analysed using the tool *Sketch Engine*, in particular its *Concordance* tool for the analyses of the KWICs (Keywords-in-Context) and the text parts. An alternation of corpus-driven and corpus-based steps characterizes this study, which uses a quantitative-qualitative approach: the data were searched and extracted automatically, but also analysed and interpreted (see Lemnitzer and Zinsmeister, 2015).

The research questions that guide our analyses are as follows: Are there any special dates that recur as chronological landmarks of crisis situations (Leonardi 2023a)? Which are they? Do they recur in connection with special places? which ones?

After introducing the main aspects regarding the investigated corpus (2), visualizing the features which are most relevant for our analysis, the principal results of the analysis will be discussed (3). The paper

## 2. The so-called ‘Israelcorpus’ as an archive of life-stories and as an atlas

The so-called *Israelcorpus* is the result of long-term interview projects conducted by the German linguist Anne Betten and collaborators from 1989 until 2019 with German speaking Jews mainly in Israel (see Betten, 2023 for a survey on genesis of the project and archiving of the interviews and related materials). The whole *Israelcorpus* consists of three related corpora presently archived at the *Archiv für Gesprochenes Deutsch* (‘Archive for spoken German’<sup>2</sup>), which belongs to the program area *Oral Corpora* in the pragmatics department of the *Leibniz Institut für Deutsche Sprache* (‘Leibniz Institute for the German language’).

After Anne Betten changed from the University of Eichstätt, Germany, to the University of Salzburg, Austria, the recordings from the core corpus IS – *Emigrantendeutsch in Israel* ‘Emigrant German in Israel’ (188 recordings, cf. the corpus description in the DGD *Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch / Database for Spoken German*<sup>3</sup>) were subsequently supplemented with further recordings with former Austrians, which were mostly collected by students and staff of the Institute of German Studies at Salzburg University during an excursion to Israel in December 1998. These recordings (28) make up the corpus ISW – *Emigrantendeutsch in Israel: Wiener in Jerusalem*<sup>4</sup>, on which our analysis is based. A third corpus, ISZ – *Zweite Generation deutschsprachiger Migranten in Israel* ‘Second generation German-

<sup>1</sup> The two authors have been written the paper jointly. In particular, Carolina Flinz is responsible for §3, and Simona Leonardi for § 2. Introduction (§ 1) and Conclusions (§ 4) were written jointly.

<sup>2</sup> [https://agd.ids-mannheim.de/index\\_en.shtml](https://agd.ids-mannheim.de/index_en.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> PID = <<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C3A7-393A-8A01-3>>

<sup>4</sup> PID = <<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C42A-423C-292401-D>>

speaking Migrants in Israel<sup>5</sup> comprehends 100 interviews with second-generation individuals, mostly children of the interviewees from the corpora IS and ISW.

The three corpora can be accessed via the platform *Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch*<sup>6</sup>, after a free, one-time registration. Most of the interviews were recorded on audiotapes, which were subsequently digitalized by the IDS – only the most recent interviews were recorded digitally on minidisc and later on iPhone/iPad. The audio interviews, which are freely accessible online via the DGD-platform for research purposes, are currently stored as WAV-files. Whereas many of the interviews from the IS-corpus are not yet fully transcribed, literal transcripts of all the narrative interviews from the ISW-corpus are available via the DGD-platform, both as PDF files and as aligned text-to-speech FLN-files.

While the initial project aimed at investigating language maintenance/shift and sociolinguistic issues (cf. Betten 1995; Betten & Du-nour 2000), it was soon clear that the life stories collected in the course of the project could be analysed from various research approaches. As a matter of fact, the interviews from the three corpora have been so far analysed from several perspectives<sup>7</sup>, which include for example, corpus-analytical and mixed-methods studies (cf. e.g. Ruppenhofer, Rehbein and Flinz, 2020; Flinz and Ruppenhofer, 2021; Flinz and Leonardi 2023a; Flinz and Leonardi 2023b; Pellegrino, 2023), conversation-analytical, and narratological studies on language, acculturation and identity (cf., e.g., the contributions collected in Leonardi, Thüne and Betten, 2016, and in Leonardi et al., 2023), as well as oral history studies (see especially the publications by the historian Patrick Farges, e.g. Farges, 2018 and 2020).

As narrative biographical interviews, the recordings from the *Israelcorpus* are life stories (Rosenthal, 1995); the narrative structuring of the life story stresses those events that mark discontinuities (both negative and positive) by lending these turning points retrospectively a special significance as essential constituents of the plot, which is made up of various narrative threads (cf. e.g. Polkinghorne, 1998). Although the narration of traumatic and extreme experiences was not originally at the centre of the Israel project, which, as mentioned above, focussed on questions of language maintenance/shift, the interviews of the *Israelcorpus* often address crucial experiences that caused identity breaks and reorientations and that often correspond to traumatic experiences. These were mostly based on the drastic political and social changes of the 1930s (in some cases even earlier, see Betten, 1995; Leonardi, 2016), which were associated with anti-Semitic measures and attacks. Perhaps even more traumatic

were the further consequences of such early anti-Semitic incidents – at best flight and emigration, at worst deportation and imprisonment in concentration camps. The latter affected the interviewees themselves relatively seldom (but see e.g. Leonardi, 2016; Koesters Gensini, 2023; Schwitalla, 2023 for analysis of lager testimonies), as most of them emigrated before 1939, however, some of those who were still able to emigrate had also been imprisoned in camps, mostly in the wake of the pogrom of November, 9th-10th, 1938 (so-called “Reichskristallnacht”).

Furthermore, in the process of storytelling, the speakers do not narrate their own life story detached from other life stories, but usually intertwine it into a broader, intergenerational family history that spans generations. As a result, the migration routes of previous generations (e.g. Betten and Leonardi, 2023; Pellegrino 2023a; Pellegrino 2023b) as well as the flight routes (cf. Haßlauer 2016; Schwitalla, 2016) or – as far as is known – the various stages of the expulsion or deportation and murder of other family members – including parents, grandparents, and siblings – who were unable to emigrate are often outlined (see e.g. Betten, 2008; Thüne 2016; Betten and Leonardi, 2023). In a nutshell, the so-called *Israel corpus* can be seen not only as an archive of life stories and of shoah testimonies, but also as an atlas of intergenerational Jewish migration routes.

## 2.1 The corpus ISW

The main features of the corpus ISW are summarized in the following table (1):

Recordings	28
Recordings (hrs)	51h 22m 26s 68
Genres	27 narrative interviews 1 reading
Speakers	24 13 men 11 women
Language	German
Transcriptions	27 (all the narrative interviews)
Collection period	1998-2011
Place of collection	Jerusalem, IL (25) Salzburg, A (2) Wien, A (1)
Interviewees' birth year	1915–1929

Table 1: Main features of the corpus ISW

Three recordings are interviews with couples (Mirjam and Aaron Alexander<sup>8</sup>, Shaul and Hanna Baumann<sup>9</sup>,

<sup>5</sup> PID = <<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C453-CEDC-B601-2>>.

<sup>6</sup> <<https://dgd.ids-mannheim.de/>>.

<sup>7</sup> For a continually updated bibliography on the whole *Israelcorpus* cf. <<https://www.zotero.org/groups/2219390/israelkorpus/library>>.

<sup>8</sup> ISW\_E\_00001 (PID = <http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C42A-C81C-2701-A>).

<sup>9</sup> ISW\_E\_00002 (PID = <http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C42C-B15C-2A01-B>).

and Chava and Jeshajahu Karniel<sup>10</sup><sup>11</sup>. Three speakers gave several interviews during the project: there are three recordings featuring Gerda Hoffer, the first is a narrative biographical interview like the other interviews of the corpus (1998)<sup>12</sup>, the second a reading<sup>13</sup>, also recorded in 1998, on the occasion of a public meeting during the excursion of the Institute of German Studies from the University of Salzburg, the third is an interview gathered by Michaela Metz in in 2010<sup>14</sup> in the course of a special project on childhood memories (on Metz' collection see Häußinger 2023). The journalist Ari Rath was interviewed five times, four times by Anne Betten between 1998 and 2000<sup>15</sup>, and one time by Michaela Metz in 2010<sup>16</sup>; Jeanette Goldstein, finally, was interviewed during the 1998-excursion<sup>17</sup> and in 2010 by Michaela Metz<sup>18</sup>.

The year of birth of the interviewees is shown in Figure 1, which reveals also that the corpus ISW is generationally quite homogeneous, since most of the speakers (17 out of 24) were born between 1920 and 1929.

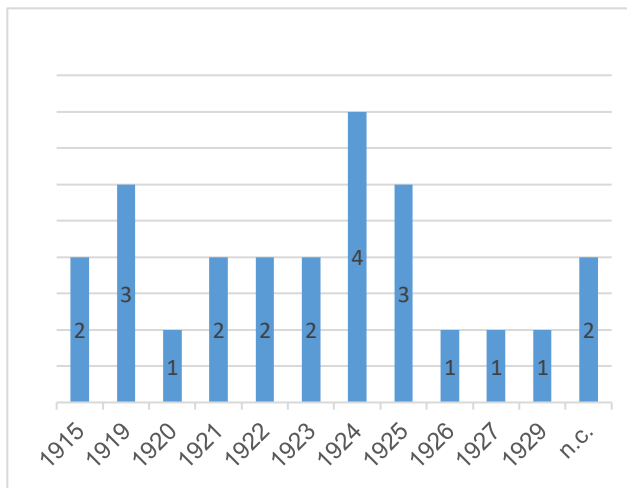


Figure 1: Interviewees' birth years

Figure (2) illustrates the year of the emigration from Vienna<sup>19</sup>, and the year of immigration to Mandate Palestine / Israel – two datasets are shown, as the

year of emigration in many cases does not coincide with the immigration year to Mandate Palestine / Israel; 4 persons immigrated to Mandate Palestine / Israel only after WW2. The year 1939 is both the year which features the highest number of emigrations (11) and the highest number of immigrations (12); this cluster lends the year 1939 a special relevance. The only other significant year is 1938, but only in relation to the value 'emigration' (8), whereas the number of immigrations stands at merely 2.

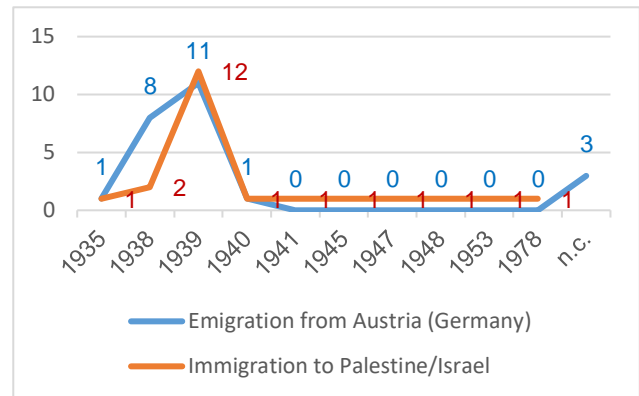


Figure 2: Emigration/Immigration year

Cross-referencing the data from Figure (1) with those from Figure (2) highlights that most speakers were minors at the time of emigration. Many of them could escape (or limit) Nazi persecutions thanks to special actions or programmes, as shown in Figure (3):

The Youth Aliyah (*Jugendaliya*) was a Zionist aid organisation set up by Recha Freier and Eva Michaelis-Stern<sup>20</sup> from 1933; it organised the group emigration of unaccompanied Jewish minors to Palestine. A small number of secondary school students was awarded a 'student certificate' to Mandate Palestine (Löw, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> ISW\_E\_00016 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C435-8C1C-5301-A>)

<sup>11</sup> Other couples gave separate interviews, see Paul Rudolf Beer (ISW\_E\_00003, <http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C42D-110C-2D01-A>) and Shoshana Beer (ISW\_E\_00004, <http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C42E-424C-3001-9>), as well as Erich Goldstein (ISW\_E\_00008, <http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C42F-EEBC-3C01-7>) and Jeanette Goldstein (ISW\_E\_00009, <http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C430-7A1C-3F01-A>). In these cases, both interviewees were from Vienna, while in the couple-interviews only one person was Viennese (i.e. Mirjam Alexander, Shaul Baumann, and Jeshajahu Karniel).

<sup>12</sup> ISW\_E\_00011 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C432-8B6C-4501-2>).

<sup>13</sup> ISW\_E\_00012 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C433-979C-4701-A>).

<sup>14</sup> ISW\_E\_00027 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C43A-3EAC-6E01-5>).

<sup>15</sup> ISW\_E\_00019 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C437-34DC-5B01-D>); ISW\_E\_00020 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C438-52EC-5D01-B>), ISW\_E\_00021 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C438-B62C-5F01-7>), ISW\_E\_00022 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C438-EACC-6101-4>).

<sup>16</sup> ISW\_E\_00028 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C43A-737C-7001-1>).

<sup>17</sup> ISW\_E\_00009 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C430-7A1C-3F01-A>).

<sup>18</sup> ISW\_E\_00026 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10932/00-0332-C43A-0A3C-6C01-7>).

<sup>19</sup> Or from Germany, which applies to spouses in the couple-interviews.

<sup>20</sup> Eva Michaelis-Stern's interview with Anne Betten, where also the Youth Aliyah actions are thematized, is archived in the corpus IS (IS\_E\_00087); cf. Michaelis and Stern Michaelis, 1989.

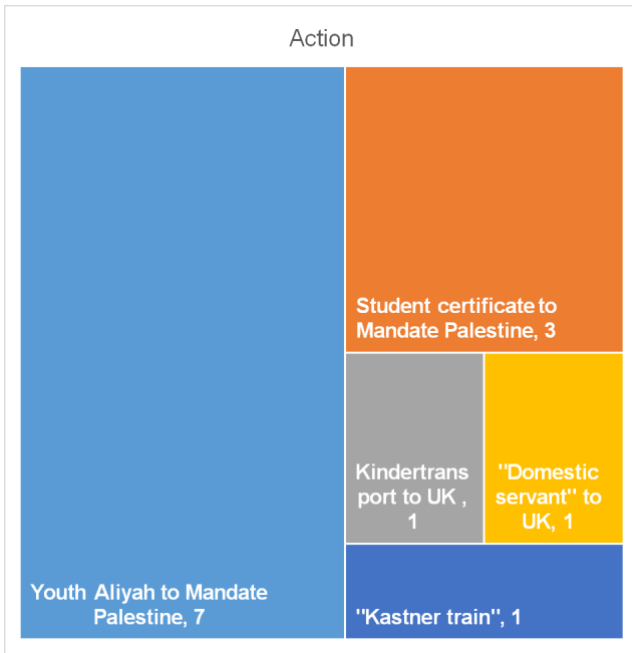


Figure 3: Rescue actions and programmes

While the Kindertransport was the most famous rescue action of persecuted children from Germany, Austria and other Nazi-annexed areas to the UK, older teens and young adults could emigrate to the UK on so-called 'domestic permits', in order to work as domestic servant<sup>21</sup>. "Kastner train" is the name given to an action which rescued over 1,600 Jews – 273 children – from Hungary during World War 2. The action was organized by the Hungarian-Jewish lawyer and journalist Rudolf Kastner (Rezső Kasztner), who negotiated with the SS officer Adolf Eichmann (Bauer 1994).

The corpus ISW gives thus insight to several actions which helped Jewish children and teens flee from Austria, which corresponds to different settings and migration routes; their narratives picture them.

### 3. Years in the corpus

In order to identify the crisis years in the corpus, we used an approach characterised by a number of steps, both quantitative and qualitative. Firstly, the interviews from the ISW corpus (27) were uploaded into another tool, *Sketch Engine*. We thus rebuilt a corpus with the following features:

We subsequently extracted all the numbers<sup>22</sup> in the corpus (6,820, or 14,355.66 pmt). The relevant occurrences were then filtered by means of the feature

<sup>21</sup> Cf. <<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/history-and-heritage/london-metropolitan-archives/collections/jewish-refugees-and-the-british-nursing-profession>>.

<sup>22</sup> The extraction process was carried out using the *Sketch Engine Concordance* tool. By means of the CQL search option [tag="CARD"], all numbers in the corpus were identified.

Frequency according to the word forms of the numbers: 522 items were identified.

Tokens	Words
475.074	367.701

Table 2: Tokens and words in the corpus ISW

By means of a careful qualitative analysis, all irrelevant items (*zwei*, 5, *CM* etc.) were removed until the number of items was reduced to 30 (659 occurrences).

Word	Frequency	Relative %
1	98	122.09
2	53	111.56
3	38	79.99
4	37	77.88
5	35	73.67
6	33	69.46
7	33	69.46
8	31	65.25
9	24	50.52
10	22	46.31
11	22	46.31
12	20	42.10
13	19	39.99
14	19	39.99
15	18	37.89
16	17	35.78
17	16	33.68
18	16	33.68
19	14	29.47
20	14	29.47
21	14	29.47
22	13	27.36
23	12	25.26
24	12	25.26
25	12	25.26
26	12	25.26
27	12	25.26
28	12	25.26
29	11	23.15
30	10	21.05

Figure 4: Items/occurrences (Screenshot from the automatic extraction with *Sketch Engine*)<sup>23</sup>

The occurrences were then downloaded and analysed in detail. The not relevant items were excluded.

In the following we present the main results of the analysis of the items (= the years) with a frequency > 10. There corresponds to 23 items (23 years), whose occurrences are represented in Figure 5:

The graphs in Figure 5 shows that the most frequently occurring year is 1938 (transcribed in the forms *achtundreißig*, 38, 1938) and it is also a very interesting year, as it clearly marks a contrast between the before and the after, so that "the break" is evident (1, 2)

<sup>23</sup> The screenshot from *Sketch Engine* shows that year dates in the transcriptions are written in various forms: in figures, both in full and abbreviated, and in words. For our analysis, all graphic variants were taken into account.

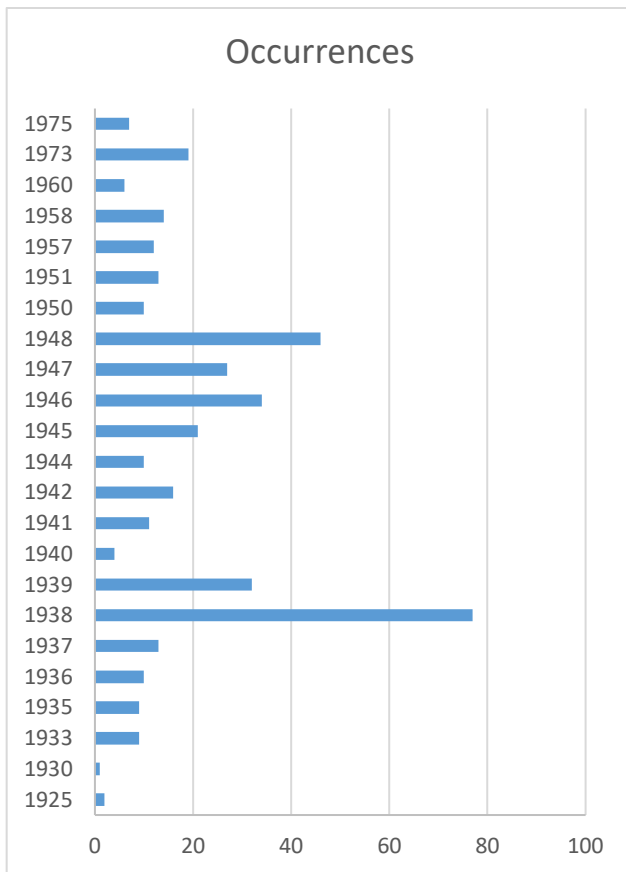


Figure 5: Years mentioned / occurrences

- (1) SB: [...] Der Hass war tief, tief drinnen und der kam dann raus mit + (h) + dem Anschluss.  
 IR: Das war achtunddreißig?  
 SB: Das war achtunddreißig. (ISW\_00004)  
 (The hatred was deep, deep inside and it came out with + (h) + the connection. IR: That was thirty-eight? SB: That was thirty-eight)

- (2) [...] aber das wirklich das war das erste Mal, + dass da son Schlag in die Familie kam.  
 VL: Das war achtunddreißig.  
 MH: Das war achtunddreißig (ISW\_00010)  
 (But that was really the first time + that there was a blow to the family. VL: That was thirty-eight. MH: That was thirty-eight)

1938 marks the turning point. The previous situation is recalled as almost “idyllic” compared to the aftermath (3), although acts of antisemitism did occur

- (3) der Gedanke war nicht so, man hat immer in Österreich hat man / + Das war doch dreiunddreißig bis achtunddreißig, sozusagen fünf Jahre hat man ge/ gelebt in einem / in einer Idylle doch sozusagen. (ISW\_00015) (The idea wasn't that, you always lived in Austria / + That was thirty-three to thirty-eight, five years, so to speak, you lived in an / idyll, so to speak)

- (4) [...] man wurde schon mal angepöbelt, ja ja, das das kam schon + kam schon vor. ++  
 IK: Schon vor achtunddreißig, oder?  
 MH: Vor achtunddreißig, ja, ja, + das passierte schon. Und man war die die die Eltern waren sehr bewusst, man soll nicht laut sein, man soll nicht auffallen. (ISW\_00010) (you have been mobbed before, yes yes, that has happened + has happened before. ++ IK: Even before thirty-eight, right? MH: Before thirty-eight, yes, yes, + that did happen. And the parents were very aware that you shouldn't be loud, you shouldn't stand out.)

The critical events which took place in 1938 are often thematised, mentioning not only the name of the country (*Österreich/Austria*) and the capital (*Wien/Vienna*) – whence most of the speakers came from, but also places within it, such as the school, the classroom, streets, etc., i.e. key places where the interviewed people or their family members experienced antisemitic harassment, discrimination, and even violence, they were e.g. arrested and beaten. As a result, these places have taken on a symbolic value, because a linguistic and historical community endows them socially with networks of associations and meanings. These are then revealed in the verbalisation of memory content, as speakers embed the into the narration also the topological and chronological relationships between narrative figures on the one hand and places as well as times on the other. The latter thus become points of reference, or topological and chronological landmarks (s. Herman, 2001; Leonardi, 2023b).

As a matter of fact, connected to the mention of the year 1938 occur:

- ‘places of time’ (Brambilla, Flinz, and Luppi, 2023), such as Gestapo prisons, Gestapo headquarters, concentration camps;
- means of transport (Flinz, and Ruppenhofer, 2021), which enabled the rescue of the speakers, such as the train;
- organisations, such as the Youth Aliyah.

The fact that 1938 is a crisis year is also confirmed by the fact that it is a taboo year, which some speaker prefers not to talk about:

- (5) Naja, 1938 erzähle ich lieber nicht, das war nicht so schön. Ich würde sagen, vielleicht sind es die zwei schrecklichsten Eindrücke (ISW\_00011). (Well, I'd rather not tell you about 1938, that wasn't so nice. I'd say they were perhaps the two most terrible impressions)

#### 4. Conclusion and Further Research

The quantitative-qualitative analysis shows clearly that the year 1938 is a (negative) turning point in the life stories collected in the corpus ISW. It should be kept in mind that most of the speakers from the corpus were originally from Austria, and that in 1938, on March, 12<sup>th</sup>, Austria was annexed to Nazi-Germany (so-called *Anschluss*). This was a most traumatic event for most of the Austrian Jews. Furthermore, on November, 9<sup>th</sup> (in the night to November, 10<sup>th</sup>), 1938 Nazi Party's paramilitary forces carried out a pogrom against Jews and Jewish institutions all over the *Reich* (so-called *Reichskristallnacht*<sup>24</sup>). This was also a major trauma<sup>25</sup>.

Further research is needed to investigate which places or spaces are associated with the year 1938 (which 'places of the time'? which 'transport mean'?) and which finer chronological landmarks can be identified (whether '*Anschluss*', or *Reichskristallnacht*, or emigration, etc.). A similar research carried out with the interviews from the corpus IS, where most of the speakers were originally from Germany – and not from Austria as in the ISW – could reveal whether for German speakers the chronological landmarks are the same or whether differences exist. An additional point which requires further investigations regards finally how the various numbers were pronounced, which could be fruitfully explored thanks to the possibilities of modern speech and emotion recognition (SER).

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<sup>24</sup> Both terms are currently dispreferred, as they are considered Nazi-biased – as a matter of fact the interviewees use them, as they didn't follow the discussion about them, which took place in Germany and in Austria since 1988.

<sup>25</sup> In the aftermath of the November pogrom the British government agreed to accept additional Jewish refugees – but only as unaccompanied minors – the *Kindertransport* rescue action started within this framework.

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## 6. Language Resource References

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