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# **Some Aspects of L2 Acquisition of German in Switzerland**



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## Abstract

Research has identified various factors that seem to support L2 acquisition in adults (e.g. duration of stay in an L2 country, amount and quality of input) and it is well known that adult learners can achieve very high competence in their L2s. However, in a multilingual environment or a diglossia situation where inconsistent input can be anticipated, the question arises as to whether L2 acquisition may be influenced by all the different languages that coexist in the same environment. This paper analyses L2 acquisition of Standard German in Switzerland, where different dialectal varieties of Swiss German exist in parallel to the standard variety. The objects of the analysis are interviews in Swiss Standard German in which participants were asked to describe their own language biographies.

Im vorliegenden Artikel werden einige Aspekte des Erlernens von Deutsch als Zweitsprache (L2) in einer mehrsprachigen Gemeinschaft untersucht. Die Lerner mit Erstsprachen (L1) wie z. B. Italienisch, Französisch, Englisch oder Spanisch leben im deutschsprachigen Teil der Schweiz, wo neben dem Schweizer Standarddeutsch verschiedene dialektale Varietäten des Schweizerdeutschen gesprochen werden. In dieser Umgebung stellt sich die Frage, ob nur aus der L1 oder auch aus dem Schweizerdeutschen Strukturen in die L2 transferiert werden.

# 1 Introduction

Switzerland is often chosen as a location to learn German. However, it is a fact that in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, Swiss Standard German (SSG) is mainly used in formal and official communication, whereas in daily life, dialectal varieties of Swiss German (SG) are spoken, which differ clearly from SSG. The impact of such diglossia situations on second-language (L2) learning has not yet been investigated in much detail.

Transfer from L1 to L2 in individual language learners has been well documented for L2 acquisition and learning (e.g. Edmondson & House 2000). In a multilingual community, transfer from other languages might also be possible, which can result in a new intermediate code for the individual speakers or groups of speakers concerned (Carroll 2001). The question of interest, in concrete terms, is whether (and if so, how and why) SG, as a dialectal variety of the learner's L2 and functioning as the main spoken variety within the community surrounding the learner, influences how speakers of other languages learn and use L2 SSG in Switzerland.

In this paper, we present an analysis of 19 interviews with speakers learning and/or using German as a second language in Switzerland. The data consists of transcribed spoken language; the topic of the interviews is the linguistic biography of the interviewee.

In the following subsections, we describe our hypothesis and present definitions of transfer, borrowing, L1 acquisition and L2 learning. In section 2, some distinguishing features of SSG and SG are presented. Section 3 describes the data collection and the participants of this study. In section 4, we focus on the data analysis and in section 5 we summarise and discuss the results.

## 1.1 Hypothesis

It is generally accepted that diglossia and multilingualism represent a normal or natural context for human beings – as Bossong (1994: 59) puts it: “Diglossie ist nicht von vornherein pathologisch, Mehrsprachigkeit ist für den Menschen durchaus etwas Natürliches”.

Nevertheless, where various languages and language varieties exist side by side, we can reasonably expect interactions and mutual influences between the languages. In our particular case, we expect transfer of structures and borrowing of lexical items from the L1 as well as from SG in the learning and use of SSG as an L2 in German-speaking Switzerland. This expectation is based on the various functions that SG performs in the Swiss community. Not only are SG dialects used for everyday communication between SG native speakers, but as Trabant

(2008: 217) notes it is also becoming increasingly accepted in more formal situations such as television programmes. Furthermore, this phenomenon can be observed in informal written communication, where many writers favour SG over SSG.

## 1.2 Transfer and borrowing

In our understanding of the term ‘transfer’, we follow Bussmann<sup>1</sup> (2008: 748) but differentiate between ‘transfer’ and ‘borrowing’. The term ‘transfer’ denotes the transfer of morphological or syntactic structures from language A to language B (see also Steinhauer 2006). If a transferred structure is similar in language A and language B, then we speak of ‘positive transfer’ (Bussmann 2008: 748), which cannot be observed easily except in longitudinal studies. If a structure transferred from language A does not exist or is not correct in language B, then this is referred to as ‘negative transfer’ because it results in incorrect language production in language B. In contrast to Bussmann (2008: 748), we do not focus solely on transfer from L1 to L2 but also consider the possibility of transfer between other languages of the speaker’s repertoire. As far as SG and SSG are concerned, there is considerable potential for negative transfer from SG to SSG, as there are important morphological and syntactic differences between the two (see also Dürscheid & Hefti (2006: 131 ff.), further discussed in section 2). The term ‘borrowing’ is used here to denote the transfer of lexical items between languages. Transfer and borrowing are distinguished from each other because the organisation of the lexicon and the processing of lexical items differ from the organisation or processing of morphological or syntactic structures (cf. Levelt 1989). Furthermore, in multilingual communities, borrowing often follows conventionalised rules (cf. Romaine 1995). Carroll (2001: 84), using the term ‘lexical transfer’, says that it may well be “the major ‘bootstrapping’ procedure” in L2 learning.

## 1.3 L1 acquisition and L2 learning

Meisel (2009: 6) defines a language as an L2 “if the onset of acquisition happens at age 10 or later” and stresses that successive L2 acquisition differs in many aspects from simultaneous acquisition of two or more first languages.

In this paper, we therefore differentiate between the acquisition and the learning of a language, with learning being used to refer to adult L2 acquisition in the sense used by Meisel (2009). As many researchers suppose, acquisition of one or more first languages is supported by a biologically determined developmental

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<sup>1</sup> Bussmann (2008: 301) herself remarks that terminology in the field is confusing.

structure, e.g. the Language Acquisition Device (Chomsky 1965), a Bioprogramme (Bickerton 1984), or the Language-Making Capacity (Slobin 1985). As to the question whether the above-mentioned biological structure becomes inaccessible in the course of development, which may be the cause for substantial differences between L1 acquisition and L2 learning, Meisel (2009: 6) remarks that “opposing answers are given in reply to this question”.

However, it is clear that in the learning of languages as L2 (or L3 etc.) at a stage when L1 is already acquired, the underlying mechanisms are different from those involved in the acquisition of L1. During the first phase, L1 is acquired only with the help of spoken input. Production in L1 up to the age of 4 or 5 consists of speech only in most cases. Later on, one or more L2s are learned via L1 (instruction, explanations) and mostly with the help of spoken and written input. Therefore, we distinguish here between L1 acquisition and L2 learning, but we do not claim that differences in the acquisition or learning process have to result in differences in the competence in a given language.

## 2 Differences between SSG and SG

This section describes some of the most important differences between SG and SSG, although a systematic comparison or even a complete contrastive analysis of all varieties involved cannot be presented here.

In German-speaking Switzerland, SG varieties exist in parallel to SSG, and they are described as being very different from SSG (e.g. Bossong 1994). SSG is distinguished from the Standard German (“Hochdeutsch”) spoken in Germany by a number of differences. Scharloth (2006: 82) therefore characterises SSG as a Swiss-specific standard variety of German:

“Die Varianten des Sprachgebrauchs in der Schweiz sind demnach nicht mehr Abweichungen von einer einheitlich imaginierten Norm des Standarddeutschen, sondern bilden als Ensemble eine nationale Varietät.”

SSG and Standard German differ on a phonological, lexical and morpho-syntactic level (Dürscheid & Hefti 2006: 131). The morpho-syntactic differences are presented by Dürscheid & Hefti (2006) based on a paper by Kaiser (1969/70, cited in Dürscheid & Hefti 2006: 131). Before we focus on the distinguishing characteristics of SG in section 2.2, we will first devote section 2.1 to some special features of SSG. This is done because in the analysis of negative transfer from SG in SSG utterances of L2 German speakers, the differences between SSG and Standard German must be kept in mind, as certain structures that may at first look like negative transfer could in fact be acceptable in SSG. We will only present a selection of the differences here but consider them in more detail in the analysis.

### 2.1 Some features of SSG

#### 2.1.1 SSG Lexicon

The SSG lexicon contains many words that either do not exist in Standard German or are used with a different meaning. Many come from SG dialects and French, e.g. “Nastuch” (from SG) instead of “Taschentuch” (handkerchief) (Siebenhaar & Wylser 1997: 39) or “Velo” (from French) instead of “Fahrrad” (bicycle) (Ammon et al. 2004: 825). According to Ammon et al. (2004: XLI), it is currently not possible to decide accurately which words belong exclusively to SG and which of them belong to SSG.

### 2.1.2 SSG Morphology

Regarding inflection, SSG is distinguished from Standard German by differences in case marking, number, gender and inflection of verbs. Rash (2002: 141) shows differences in case between SSG and Standard German: “wegen dir” instead of “deinetwegen” (because of you); “während dem ganzen Tag” instead of genitive “während des ganzen Tages” (during the whole day).

Two opposing tendencies can be identified with regard to case marking (Dürscheid & Hefti 2006: 134): on the one hand, there is an affinity for using explicit case forms, but on the other hand, one can observe a reduction of case inflections. According to Dürscheid & Hefti (2006: 134), this phenomenon is triggered by SG, which, similarly to English, makes no difference between “ein” (a, nominative) and “einen” (a, accusative). The decrease in case marking concerns not only the article, but also nouns, e.g. “Fahrkarten nur am Automat” instead of “am Automaten” (“-en” = case marking) (Tickets only at the ticket machine).

Regarding gender, some SSG terms also differ from Standard German, e.g. “der” instead of “das Drittel” (the third), “der” instead of “die Couch” (the couch) and “der” instead of “das Prozent” (the percentage) (Dürscheid & Hefti 2006: 133). According to Dürscheid & Hefti (2006: 133), nouns that have been borrowed from English often possess a different gender in SSG than they do in Standard German, which is not surprising because the gender of these nouns is not obvious.

### 2.1.3 SSG Syntax

Regarding sentence structures, Dürscheid & Hefti (2006) mention differences between SSG and Standard German, such as in the case of topicalisation (Vorfeldbesetzung) (Dürscheid & Hefti 2006: 143) or in the case of subordinate clauses with verb-first (V1) order (Dürscheid & Hefti 2006: 140). Another conspicuous phenomenon is the “dass-structure” (see example 1), which, according to Dürscheid & Hefti (2006: 144), is not only used in SSG but also in the language community of southern Germany.

Example 1: “Dass” constructions in SSG

<b>Standard German</b>	<b>“ich weiss nicht, warum er nicht kommt”</b>
<b>SSG</b>	<b>“ich weiss nicht, warum dass er nicht kommt”</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>“I don’t know why that he doesn’t come”</b>

## 2.2 Some features of SG

According to Haas (2000: 75), SG and SSG differ in all linguistic areas, whereas Siebenhaar & Wyler (1997: 39) find that they have many similarities. As Ammon et al. (2004: XL) explain, it is often difficult to differentiate very clearly between dialects and the standard variety because of their mutual interference.

The differences and similarities vary depending on the respective dialect, a fact that cannot be discussed in this paper. Neither will phonetic and phonological distinctions be taken into account. Some distinguishing lexical, morphological and syntactic characteristics of SG are described in the following.

### 2.2.1 SG Lexicon

SG uses many borrowed words of French origin, such as “Perron” (French: per-ron) instead of “Bahnsteig” (station platform) (Ammon et al. 2004: 566) or “Portmonee” (French: portemonnaie) instead of “Geldbeutel” (wallet) (Siebenhaar & Wyler 1997: 39). Many such words are also used in Swiss Standard German and thereby represent one of the important features distinguishing it, as mentioned above, from Standard German.

In the area of everyday life (e.g. everyday tasks, parts of the body, emotions), SG has a wealth of dialect words that do not exist in SSG; these are called “Idiotismen” (Haas 2000: 80), meaning that they are idiomatic for Swiss dialects. To take an example from Siebenhaar & Wyler (1997: 39), SG has a great variety of expressions for the verb ‘to work’ covering a range of nuances in meaning, including “schaffe” for SSG “arbeiten” (to work), “chrampf” and “chrüppel” for SSG “schwer arbeiten” (to work hard) and “schludere” for SSG “nachlässig arbeiten” (to work carelessly).

### 2.2.2 SG Morphology

With regard to inflection, SG only has two cases: the nominative-accusative and the dative (Siebenhaar & Wyler 1997: 37). As already mentioned, the distinction between nominative and accusative case markers in SSG does not appear in SG:

Example 2: Nominative and accusative case marking in SG and SSG

<b>SSG “der See”, nominative</b>	<b>SSG “den See”, accusative</b>
<b>SG<sup>2</sup> “de See”; nominative</b>	<b>SG “de See”, accusative</b>
<b>(the lake, nominative).</b>	<b>(the lake, accusative).</b>

To mark the genitive case, however, SG uses paraphrasing, such as “em Michael sys Huus” or “s Huus vom Michael” instead of “Michaels Haus” in SSG (Michael’s house, cf. Siebenhaar & Wyler 1997: 30).

<sup>2</sup> This example reflects the usage in the Zurich/northern regions of Switzerland.

Furthermore, SG has neither the imperfect nor the past perfect tense (Siebenhaar & Wyler 1997). It has only a perfect tense and uses a sort of double perfect marking, a tense marked by the perfect inflection and the particle “gsi” or “gha” (+ complete), instead of a past perfect tense:

Example 3: Superperfect in SG	
<b>SG</b>	“...ich bi ggange gsi”
<b>SSG</b>	“...ich war gegangen”
<b>English</b>	(I had gone, + marker for completeness)

### 2.2.3 SG Syntax

A typical feature of SG syntax is the use of relative clauses introduced by “wo” (where) regardless of the gender of the preceding substantive (Siebenhaar & Wyler 1997:38).

Example 4: Relative clauses in SG	
<b>SG</b>	“de Maa/d Frau/s Chind, wo näbe mir staat”
<b>SSG</b>	“der Mann/die Frau/das Kind, der/die/das neben mir steht”.
<b>English</b>	(the man/child/woman who is standing next to me

These examples show, as Siebenhaar & Wyler (1997: 38) conclude, that SG does not possess as many forms as SSG and is therefore simpler, as it only has to serve for the needs of oral communication:

“Die Beispiele von Abweichungen im Formensystem und in der Syntax zeigen, dass das Schweizerdeutsche als gesprochene Sprache über weniger Formen verfügt als die Hochsprache. Es ist die einfachere Sprachform, weil sie nur mündlichen Kommunikationsbedürfnissen genügen muss.” (Siebenhaar & Wyler 1997: 38)

We certainly agree that spoken and written language must always be distinguished from each other, but perhaps in the case of SG, there will be a change because of its growing importance in written texts (cf. section 1). Since the data for our analysis is collected via narrative interviews held in SSG, it has to be presumed that phenomena of spoken language will be found.

In the next section, we will present the data, the participants and some results of a quantitative analysis.

### 3 Data collection

As far as we know, L2 learning processes of Standard German in Switzerland have not been analysed in detail. It is also known that in many cases, speakers are not able to evaluate their own competence in a given L2 (e.g. because communication works even if they make mistakes or because they are too modest). The type of data collection presented in this paper allows an analysis of the participants' history of language acquisition and language learning and a simultaneous analysis of their L2 performance during the interview.

The speech data analysed here was collected in interviews with 19 speakers of various L1 backgrounds learning and/or using Standard German as L2 and living in various different areas of the German part of Switzerland. The participants' L1s are English, Finnish, French, Italian, Slovakian and Spanish. The interviews were held in Standard German and were based on standardised questionnaires to collect information on language acquisition and biographical data (cf. Jekat 1999, Jekat forthcoming, Flury 2006)<sup>3</sup>. Participants were asked about the L1 of their parents or guardians, the languages spoken in their family as well as the languages spoken in the community where they grew up, and any circumstances in which one or more L1 and other languages were acquired or learned. The interviews were transcribed using a selection from the tag set defined by Burger (1997).

#### 3.1 Participants

Table 1 presents an overview of the participants. The tags are as follows:

Languages:

- DE = German
- EN = English
- FI = Finnish
- FR = French
- IT = Italian
- LA = Latin
- NL = Dutch
- SG = Swiss German
- SL = Slovak
- SP = Spanish

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<sup>3</sup> We wish to thank the participants of the course "Kommunikationswissenschaften 3" in the 2010/11 winter term at the ZHAW, and especially Anna Roesti, for their comments on the interviews.

- PO = Portuguese
- RU = Russian.

Gender:

- F = Female
- M = Male

ID	Age	Gen-der	L1	L2, L3 etc.	L1 Father	L1 Mother	Brought up in	Contact with German as L2 since age
1	28	F	EN	DE FR SP	EN	EN	Canada	24
2	68	F	EN	DE	EN	EN	UK	36
3	68	M	EN	DE FR	EN	EN	UK	18
4	27	F	FR	SP DE EN	FR DE	SP	French-speaking Switzerland	10
5	23	F	FR	DE EN	FR	FR	France	12
6	21	M	FR	DE EN	FR	FR	France	12
7	22	F	SP	DE FR EN IT	SP	SP	German-speaking Switzerland	kinder-garten
8	27	F	SP	DE EN	SP	SP	Colombia/Ecuador	22
9	29	F	SP	DE EN FR	SP	SP	Colombia	23
10	25	M	SL	IT FR EN DE	SL	SL	Slovakia/Italian-speaking Switzerland	16
11	25	F	IT	DE FR EN SP	IT	IT	German-speaking Switzerland	kinder-garten
12	22	M	IT	DE FR EN SP	IT	IT	German-speaking Switzerland	kinder-garten
13	20	F	FI	DE FR LA EN	NL	FI	German-speaking Switzerland	birth
14	25	F	IT	DE FR EN	IT	IT	German-speaking Switzerland	kinder-garten
15	24	F	IT DE	FR EN SP PO	IT	DE	Italian-speaking Switzerland	birth
16	36	M	IT	EN FR DE	IT	IT	Italy	Mid-twenties
17	23	F	IT	DE FR RU	IT	SG	Italian-speaking Switzerland	12

18	25	F	IT	EN DE FR RU	IT	IT	Italy	12
19	24	F	IT	DE EN FR	IT	IT	Italian-speaking Switzerland	12

Table 1: Overview of participants' biographical data (design of table taken from Guth and Zwicky, 2009: 26 f.)

During the analysis of the interviews, a phenomenon was observed that is described briefly in the following section: the triggering of transfer by the interviewer.

### 3.2 Interviewer triggers transfer

The interviewers themselves are speakers of SG and SSG and the interviews were held in SSG, but sometimes interviewers would switch to SG and, interestingly, in some cases this would trigger transfer from SG to SSG in the participant's utterances (cf. Guth & Zwicky 2009: 40):

Translation (literal)	Original utterance	Standard German
<b>Interviewer: What is the mother tongue <u>of</u> your mother?</b>	<b>Interviewer: "Was ist die Muttersprache <u>von</u> deiner Mutter?"</b>	<b>Was ist die Muttersprache deiner Mutter?</b>
<b>Participant: Finnish.</b>	<b>Participant: "Finnisch."</b>	
<b>Interviewer: And <u>of</u> your father?</b>	<b>Interviewer: "Und <u>von</u> deinem Vater?"</b>	<b>Und deines Vaters?</b>
<b>Participant: And <u>of</u> &lt;dative&gt; father &lt;uhm&gt; in fact Dutch</b>	<b>Participant: "Und <u>vom</u> Vater &lt;uhm&gt; eigentlich Holländisch"</b>	

Table 2: Interviewer triggers transfer from SG

Table 2 shows an interview excerpt in which the interviewer asks questions containing the dative structure "von deiner Mutter" and "von deinem Vater" instead of the Standard German genitive structure "deiner Mutter" and "deines Vaters", and the interviewee picks this up in the answer and says "vom Vater" (dative) instead of the Standard German "meines Vaters" (genitive).

The next section describes the data analysis and presents some examples.

## 4 Data analysis

Our hypothesis in 1.1 was that, due to the prominence of SG in the community surrounding the L2 German speakers, the participants in the interviews would show influences of SG when they spoke SSG. Therefore, the interview transcripts were analysed for phenomena of borrowing and transfer from SG to SSG. The instances of transfer were then classified as belonging to lexicon (=borrowing), morphology, syntax (=transfer) or non-classifiable. In this section, we will first show some examples of borrowing and transfer from SG to SSG found in the interviews, before turning to the quantitative analysis of these phenomena in the next section (cf. Table 3 below).

### 4.1 Examples of borrowing and transfer

As mentioned above, borrowing is defined as direct lexical transfer from L1 or other languages to L2. In our data, we did find borrowing and transfer from L1 or other languages, and even direct translations of words from L1 which do not exist in German, e.g. “Heimschule” (from L1 English: homeschool). However, we will not discuss L1 influences in this paper, as our focus lies on the influence of SG.

Example 5: Borrowing from SG to SSG (participant with L1 English):

“es war wie wenn man von Hochdeutsch in Baseldütsch kommt”

English: (it was like when you come from Standard German to Basel German)

In example 5, SG “Baseldütsch” is used instead of SSG “Baseldeutsch” (the dialect spoken in the Basel region).

Morphological transfer from L1 or other languages to L2 is defined as transfer of any morphological structure but, as already mentioned, it can only be easily observed in the case of negative transfer, when a structure that does not exist in L2 is transferred. The latter is the case in the following example:

Example 6: Morphological transfer from SG to SSG (participant with L1 English)

“nach ungefähr vielleicht vier Monet hat a Frau... ”

English: (after about perhaps four months, a woman...)

The word “Monet” displays SG morphology in that, on the one hand, there is no plural marking in the ending (correct SG plural: “Mönet” as opposed to SG singular: “Monet”).

In SSG, the plural form is “Monate” (as opposed to singular: “Monat”). It also displays SG morphology in that there is no dative marking in the noun: in SSG, the

preposition “nach” (after) demands a dative, which is marked in the plural (“Monaten”), whereas in SG there are never any case markings in nouns.

The other SG morphological feature in example 6 is the use of the SG indefinite article in “a Frau” instead of SSG “eine Frau” (a woman).

The same utterance contains syntactic transfer from SG to SSG:

Example 7: Syntactic transfer (Synt in table 3) from SG to SSG (L1 English)

“nach ungefähr vielleicht vier Monet hat a Frau mir eingeladen bei ihr zuhause”

SG “[...] het e Frou mi iglade bi ihre deheime”

English: ((after a few months) a woman invited me to her home)

The next section presents the quantitative analysis of borrowing and transfer in the interviews.

## 4.2 Transfer from SG to SSG in the participants

Table 3 shows the quantitative analysis of transfer for groups of speakers with different L1s. Only instances of borrowing or transfer from SG into SSG were counted, and not those from the participants’ L1s.

ID	Number of turns in interview	Borr	Morph	Synt	Total
<b>Participants with English as L1</b>					
1	172	2	0	0	2
2	55	41 tokens/ 22 types	6	18	65
3	111	3	0	7	10
<b>Participants with French as L1</b>					
4	119	3	0	1	4
5	87	1	5	2	8
6	110	1	0	0	1
<b>Participants with Italian as L1</b>					
11	88	2	1	3	6
12	127	12	2	1	15
14	42	4	0	2	6
15	47	2	5	1	8
16	72	2	0	1	3
17	141	20	3	1	24
18	245	0	0	0	0
19	219	15	4	2	21
<b>Participant with Slovak as L1</b>					
10	111	47 tokens/ 6 types	3	2	52
<b>Participant with Finnish as L1</b>					
13	116	80 tokens/ 14 types	4	4	88
<b>Participants with Spanish as L1</b>					
7	142	2	1	1	4
8	192	0	2	4	6
9	220	2	1	0	3

Table 3: Quantitative analysis of borrowing and transfer

In the following section, we will discuss these quantitative results in relation to the participants' language biographies.

### 4.3 Discussion

First of all, table 3 shows that all interviewed subjects except one (no. 18) show borrowing and/or transfer from SG to SSG. Moreover, the L1 does not seem to have any influence on the occurrence or the amount of negative transfer from SG to SSG. In other words, speakers of the same L1 show different numbers of borrowing and transfer incidences in their L2 SSG, even if the relation between number of turns and number of borrowing/transfer incidences is included in the analysis.

Participants 2, 10, and 13 display the most instances of borrowing from SG. However, the large number of borrowings of participants 10 and 13 must be put into perspective: they both use the same discourse particle "aso" repeatedly, which is why in their statistics the number of types is distinguished from the number of tokens. In contrast to this, participant 2, who also displays many borrowings from SG, uses a broader variety of types than participants 10 and 13.

Morphological and syntactic transfer from SG to SSG is rarer, but nonetheless existent: the participants (except no. 1, 6 and 18) display between 0 and 6 (on average 1.9) cases of morphological transfer and between 0 and 18 (on average 2.6) cases of syntactic transfer per interview.

The results of participants 2 and 3, an English couple that has been living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland for more than 30 years, are especially striking. While the woman (participant 2) shows 41 borrowings and 18 occurrences of morphological transfer in a short interview with only 55 utterances, her husband (participant 3) displays only 3 borrowings and 7 cases of syntactic transfer in an interview with 111 utterances. A cause of this could be that participant 2, as a housewife, is exposed to SG as a language of daily life more often than her husband. The observation that a higher intensity of SG input might trigger more borrowing and transfer into SSG may also apply to participants 10 and 13. As table 1 shows, participant 13 grew up in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, whereas participant 10 first came into contact with German in the Swiss Army, where SG might be spoken more often than SSG. Participant 18 seems to confirm these findings by showing the opposite pattern: at the time of the interview, participant 18 has only lived in Switzerland for a very short period, so the lack of intense input of SG might explain that this participant shows no borrowing or transfer at all.

## 5 Conclusions

First of all, the results of our quantitative analysis of the interviews show, as expected, that SG, which is spoken in daily life everywhere in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, influences the performance in SSG of learners or speakers of German as a second language. Nevertheless, correlations between biography and performance in L2 as well as language constellation (i.e. circumstances of acquisition and learning L1 and L2, L3 etc.) are very difficult to explore.

Carroll's (2001) claim, mentioned in section 1.2, that borrowing is a major strategy in L2 acquisition is supported by our results, as much more borrowing than morphological or syntactic transfer appears in our data.

Secondly, all participants except no. 18 display transfer and/or borrowing from SG.

Thirdly, as already discussed, the data of the English couple (participants 2 and 3) shows that duration of stay in an L2 country cannot be isolated as a central condition for L2 learning. This finding was also made by Steinmann (2009), who showed that a speaker who had been living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland for 1.5 years had a higher level of competence in L2 German than another speaker who had lived there for 42 years.

Finally, we would like to point out in particular that the participants who show borrowing and/or transfer from SG to SSG relatively frequently, as they confirm themselves, use SG more frequently than SSG, or are more often in contact with SG-speaking people. Therefore, a detailed differentiation between duration of stay in an L2 country and intensity of input from L2 appears important for future research.

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