



Developmental Perspectives on Transfer

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Research Questions

- How do learner-general developmental stages interact with a language-specific factor, transfer, in L3 acquisition?
- What is the preferred source language of transfer in an L3 acquisition scenario; L1 or L2?
- How does spontaneous speech data relate to elicited imitation data?

Conclusion

- L1 or L2 transfer did not modify the developmental stages for German L3 word order acquisition in neither spontaneous nor imitated production
- Evidence that **SVX > Tp** and ***XSV > XVS**
- Elicited imitation data overestimated the learner's proficiency as related to spontaneous data: Learners imitate structures that they cannot yet produce but are on the verge of acquiring

Background

Developmental stages German word order acquisition

1. SVX: Canonical word order

**Lena kann treffen Mama morgen*
Lena can meet mom tomorrow

2. *XSV: Topicalized position (Tp)

**Morgen Lena kann treffen Mama*
Tomorrow Lena can meet mom

3. XVS: Subject-verb inversion

Morgen kann Lena Mama treffen.
Tomorrow can Lena mom meet

Three transfer hypotheses

1. **Initial L1 Transfer Hypotheses**¹
L1 syntax shapes the initial state of L3 syntax

2. **Initial L2 Transfer Hypotheses**^{2,3}
L2 transfer blocks L1 transfer irrespectively of the languages typological similarity; "foreign language effect"

3. **Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis**^{4,5}
assumes that a learner's present state of development constrains the transferability of structures

Languages

Swedish L1, English L2 and German L3

Similarities and Differences

	1 SVX	2 XSV	3 XVS
Swedish	+	-	+
English	+	+	-
German	+	-	+

Method

Participants

School Year	n	Age	German months of instruction		English months of instruction	
			T1	T2	T1	T2
6	12	12	4	9	31	36
7	16	13	13	18	40	45
8	17	14	22	27	49	54
9	16	15	31	36	58	63
Control	18	13	-	-	36	-

Task 1: Elicited Imitation

1. Participant listens to a prerecorded model sentence.

"Dann kann Henrik die Jacke waschen"

2. Is presented with a random number between 5 and 17 and counts from it five steps backwards.

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3. Repeats the model sentence to the best of her ability.

Dann Henrik kann Jacke waschen

Elicited Imitation Rationale

- Sentences beyond certain lengths cannot be parroted from short-term memory and are reconstructed
- Reconstruction reflects speaker's syntactic preferences and is shaped by previously acquired knowledge
- Analysis: Comparison of success with which different sentence types are repeated

Model Sentences:

Testing **L1 transfer**:

6 model sent. for XVS

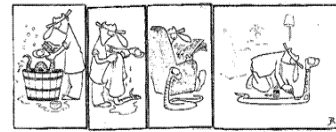
6 model sent. for *XSV

Testing **L2 transfer**:

6 model sent. for SVX

6 model sent. for XSV / XVS

Task 2: Picture-based story telling



Task 3: Unstructured Interview

Was ist dein Lieblingsbuch? Wovon handelt es?
'What is your favorite book? What is it about?'

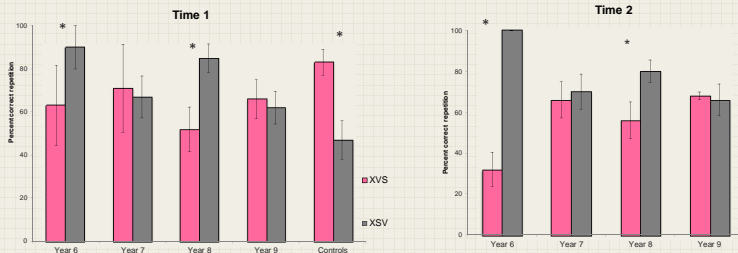
Predictions

- If initial **L1 transfer** then learners should correctly imitate and produce more **XVS** than ***XSV** sentences, because L1 displays **XVS** word order
- If initial **L2 transfer** then beginners should imitate and produce **SVX** and **XSV/XVS** equally well, because both structures are common in their L2

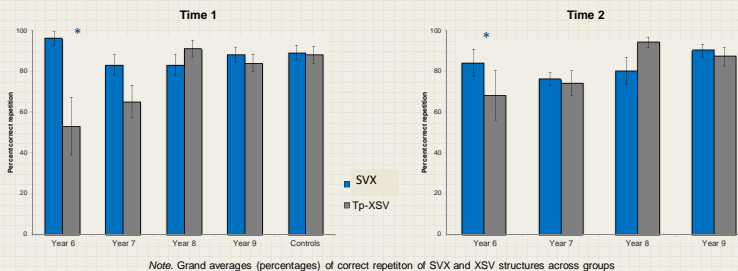
Results

Elicited Imitation Results (EI)

L1 Transfer:



L2 Transfer:



Spontaneous Speech Results (SS)

Storytelling and Interview in German L3

Year	Utt	XSV	XVS
6	2	100%	-
7	31	97%	3%
8	21	100%	-
9	29	79%	21%
Total	83	92%	8%

Note. Column Utt shows the number of scoreable utterances. The XSV and XVS columns indicate the percentage of utterances that each structure was produced

Storytelling in German L3 and Swedish L1

Year	Utt	SVX	Tp
6	32	94%	6%
7	62	65%	35%
8	48	71%	29%
9	61	77%	23%
Total	203	74%	26%

Note. Column Utt shows the number of scoreable utterances. Tp = topicalized sentences

EI and SS Results

Implicational Scale

Year	ID	German		
		XVS repetition	XSV repetition	SVX repetition
9	Karsten	100	67	100
7	Jakob	50	100	100
9	Eva	33	100	100
8	Markus	100	67	100
6	Jacqueline	100	50	100
9	Melanie	100	33	67
7	Lara	100	50	67
7	Curt	100	33	83
8	Ralf	83	33	75
7	Cassie	75	33	83
7	Mats	83	50	100
9	Natascha	83	80	100
9	Jim	67	67	80
9	Justus	50	80	67
7	Claudia	75	100	100
9	Sabina	40	80	67
8	Hans	67	83	100
8	Cecilia	17	100	100
7	Rudolf	80	100	80
8	Jens	40	100	50
7	David	0	100	100
8	Chris	0	100	67
9	Linda	0	100	100
6	Ingrid	50	100	100
6	Mikael	0	100	100
6	Max	0	0	n.a.
6	Sofie	0	0	100
6	Tanja	0	0	100

Note. Structures to the right of the separation line were produced by the learner in the spontaneous speech tasks. Numbers indicate the percentage of correct repetition in the EI task. Note that no participant spontaneously produced a structure that s/he could not repeat correctly at least some of the time.

References

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