Transferring Information-Structural Patterns from Swedish to German

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1. Introduction

Much of the debate in L2 acquisition theory concerns the extent to which the native language (L1) plays a role in the acquisition of a second or foreign language. The present paper aims to contribute to this debate by presenting new empirical data from a closely related language pair, Swedish and German, for the domains of syntax (word order) and information structure.

Certain approaches assume that the L1 grammar plays no role at the initial state of L2 acquisition, but that learners make use of a universal base or "canonical" word order (SVX) (e.g. Clahsen & Muysken 1986, Pienemann 1998). L2 learners with different L1s acquiring the same L2 are thus predicted to show the same developmental sequence. For L2 German, the following well-known and allegedly universal path of grammatical development has been proposed:

(1)   Stage 1   words   Stage 4   verb separation ($SV_{finite}OV_{non\text{-}finite}$)
        Stage 2   SVX   Stage 5   inversion (XVS)
        Stage 3   Adv-SVX   Stage 6   V-end in subordinate clauses

However, whilst L1 Romance and L1 English speakers may exhibit the developmental sequence in (1) in their L2 German, L1 Turkish and L1 Korean learners of German do not: they start producing $OV_{nonfinite}$ right away (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, Vainikka & Young-Scholten 1994). Turkish and Korean are OV languages, Romance and English are VO, and thus the L1 grammar does appear to exert a crucial influence on the L2, such that L2ers with typologically different L1s acquiring the same L2 show different developmental sequences. Based on these findings, Schwartz & Sprouse (1994, 1996) developed a transfer model of L2 acquisition, according to which learners initially transfer their entire L1 syntax, lexical as well as functional categories, producing and processing L2 utterances through the L1 grammar. Only after this initial state may learners change their interlanguage syntax by abandoning L1 rules/constraints/parameter settings, acquiring new rules, constraints, and parameter settings, which may or may not be those of the target language, and eventually converge or not converge on a targetlike L2 grammar. Schwartz & Sprouse's model is well known, and its explicitness (full transfer) makes it easy to test against empirical data from beginning learners.

What about Swedish learners of German? Swedish is typologically, grammatically and lexically very close to German (with an estimated 80% of Swedish words being cognate with German). Syntactically, both Swedish and German adhere to the verb second (V2) constraint that requires the finite verb in declaratives to be the second constituent. In non-subject-initial main clauses, so-called 'inversion' of the subject and the verb (XVS) is required, and V3 is generally ungrammatical (for exceptions see Bohnacker 2005:45-51).[1] The position to the left of the finite verb is called the 'prefield' (German *Vorfeld*, cf. e.g. Drach 1937:17-18, Reis 1980, Dürscheid 1989), which is also nearly always

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[1] Here we concentrate on the linear order of constituents (SVX, V1 (= VSX), V2 (= XVS), V3 (= XSV, SXV)), since our findings do not hinge on any specific structural account. Generative grammars typically model V2 as a syntactic double-movement transformation: leftward movement of the finite verb to a functional head position on the left sentence periphery, and movement of a constituent into the specifier position of that functional projection, often identified as CP (e.g. Dürscheid 1989). Alternatively, the prefield constituent is assumed not to be moved but generated in that position.

the clause-initial position.[2] In principle, the prefield in Swedish and German may be occupied by almost any type of constituent, irrespective of syntactic category, complexity and semantic function; what is fixed is the verb in second position.

Full transfer approaches would predict that Swedish learners of German should master V2 right away. However, Håkansson, Pienemann & Sayehli (2002) have claimed that Swedes in fact violate V2 in their L2 German, following the sequence in (1). Having long taught German at schools and universities in Sweden, we wanted to investigate this issue empirically for ourselves. In Bohnacker (2005, 2006) we showed that Swedes learning German are in fact able to productively use V2 in oral narratives already after 4 months of exposure, and these findings will be summarised below. We will now also present written data from Swedish beginning learners of German, who again have little difficulty with V2. We interpret these results as indicative of transfer of the V2 property from L1 Swedish to L2 German at the initial state.

However, whilst learner productions may have targetlike word order (syntax), they are not necessarily adequate in the context they occur in. Rosén (2006) found that the very same Swedish learners of German that produce correct V2 clauses appear to be organising and structuring information in a way that disturbs German readers and listeners. In a pilot study, Rosén asked native speakers of German to assess advanced L2 productions, which they described as choppy, textually incoherent and simply as "it does not sound German". When asked to make the L2 texts sound more German, native speakers unpromptedly homed in on the beginning of sentences and consistently changed them in certain ways. Why would changing the beginnings of sentences make texts less choppy and more German? The prefield is especially important for communication as it anchors the clause in discourse. At the inter-sentential level, the prefield contributes to textual coherence by linking up with preceding discourse; at the intra-sentential level, it often establishes the topic (i.e. what is being talked about), followed by the comment. Moreover, the prefield typically contains given information, the theme, i.e., an element of low informational value. New information, the so-called rheme, is usually provided later, after the finite verb in V2 clauses. Alternatively, the prefield can also be used to focus or contrast constituents. By comparing native German and native Swedish corpora, we will point to quantitative and qualitative differences in the way these two V2 languages make use of the prefield. These language-specific differences, we believe, lie at the heart of why native Germans change the beginnings of sentences in L2 texts to make them "sound more German". An analysis of oral and written L2 productions from beginner to advanced level suggests that our learners have not fully acquired the German-specific linguistic means that have an impact on information structuring, but that they are largely applying Swedish information-structural patterns to German. We thus propose that L1 transfer is found not only in the domain of syntax, but also in the domain of information structure and information organisation, and that such L1 influence persists even at high L2 proficiency levels.

2. Data
2.1. Oral data

Our oral L2 production data come from Swedish L1 teenagers learning German as a foreign language at secondary school in Sweden, and from Swedish L1 adults, taking evening classes in German as a foreign language for beginners. Data was elicited from all learners with the same narrative task, the telling of a monologue on a given topic (see Bohnacker 2005:56, 2006:15-18). The 23 teenagers were tested once, at the end of their third year of German. The adults, 6 old age pensioners, were tested twice, after 4 months, and again after 9 months. 3 adults did not know any language other than Swedish before taking up German, whilst the other 3, and the teenagers, had learnt English earlier at school.
- 6 L2 beginners (60- to 70-year-olds), 45 and 90 hours of classroom German, ca 17 500 words.
- 23 L2 intermediate (16-year-olds), ca 800 hours of classroom German, ca 12 500 words.

2.2. Written data

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[2] Coordinating conjunctions are disregarded here, as they are not treated as clausal constituents, but as linking words with no influence on word-order. Utterance-initial elements separated by a pause or intonation break, e.g. left-dislocated constituents, vocatives and interjections, are not considered to be part of the prefield.

Our written L2 data consist of texts produced by teenage and young adult Swedish learners of German, at secondary schools and universities in Sweden. The informants had all learnt English at school before taking up German. 245 L2 German compositions, comprising informal letters, essays and summaries, totalling ca 100 000 words, were collected between 1999 and 2005 (for details, see Rosén 2006:73-75).

- 55 L2 beginners (14-year-olds), ca 200 hours of classroom German.
- 55 L2 intermediate (17-year-olds), ca 830 hours of classroom German.
- 135 L2 advanced university student productions (20-25-year-olds), ca 6 years of German classes.

Our L1 control corpora consist of 150 compositions (informal letters, summaries) by native speakers of the same age groups as our L2 learners, i.e. 15-year-old pupils and 20-25-year-old university students:

- 80 native Swedish controls, ca 17 500 words.
- 70 native German controls, ca 28 500 words.

3. V2 results

Our learners produce subject-initial and non-subject-initial V2 declaratives already at beginner level. Let's first look at the oral data. Fig. 1 plots the percentages of SVX and non-subject-initial declaratives for the beginners. Informants who do not speak English fully adhere to the V2 constraint in their L2 German (Fig. 1, left); they produce 68% SVX (white bar) and 32% XVS (black bar), but no V3. Informants who do speak English partially adhere to the V2 constraint in their L3 German (Fig. 1, right), producing both targetlike XVS (black bar) and nontargetlike V3 (chequered black-and-white bar). This suggests that they too are transferring V2 from their L1, but that prior knowledge of a non-V2 language such as English has a "detrimental" effect. For individual results, raw figures and detailed discussion, see Bohnacker (2005:56-66, 2006:19-38). The V3 influence of English on the learners' German diminishes over time, as illustrated in Fig. 2: The intermediate learners produce 62% SVX and 33% targetlike XVS, but only 2% nontargetlike V3 after 3 years of German.[3]

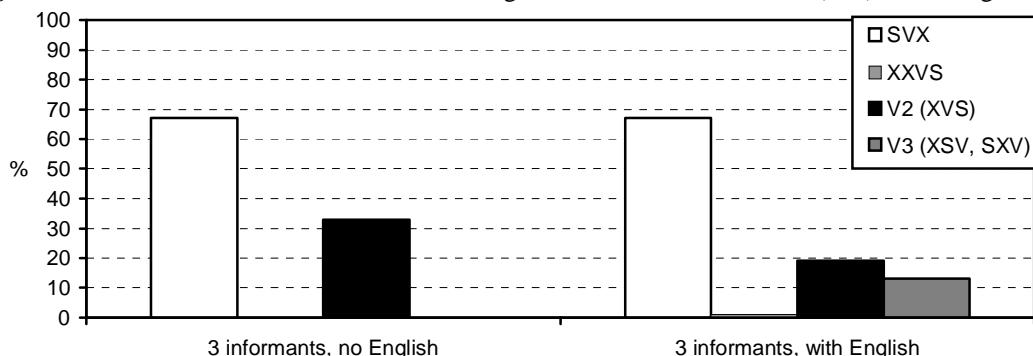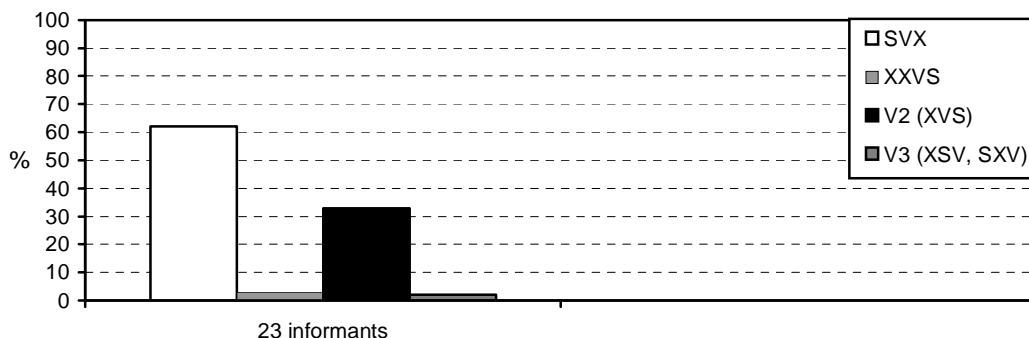**Figure 1.** Word orders in declarative clauses in beginners after 4 and 9 months (oral). Percentages**.**

Figure 2. Word orders in declaratives after 3 years of German (oral). Percentages.

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[3] Grey bars indicate a fourth, infrequent, word order type, XXVS, where the finite verb is preceded by two constituents, but followed by the subject. Bohnacker (2005:57, 62-63, 2006:22-23) traces these cases back to L1 influence from Swedish, where XXVS word order is regularly found, especially in colloquial spoken registers.

In our written L2 data, word order distribution is very similar. For reasons of space, we will only present the results from our least advanced group, the 54 beginners (Fig. 3). These 14-year-olds produce 81% (796/984) subject-initial (white bar) and 19% (188/984) non-subject-initial declaratives. Crucially, 153/188 of these non-subject-initial clauses are XVS, i.e. targetlike V2 at the initial state (black bar). The group is homogeneous in that every learner produces both targetlike XVS clauses and between 0-3 instances of nontargetlike XSVO. For more details see Bohnacker & Rosén 2007.

Figure 3. Word orders in declaratives, L2 beginners (written). Percentages.
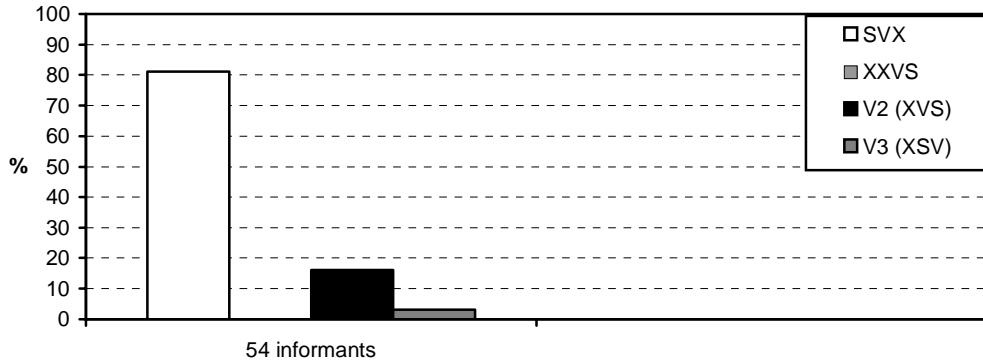
In earlier studies, L2ers whose L1 is non-V2 were reported to acquire V2 late (e.g. Clahsen & Muysken 1986, Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, Vainikka & Young-Scholten 1994, 1996, Pienemann 1998:118-130). Also Håkansson, Pienemann & Sayehli (2002), in a study of Swedish teenagers learning German as an L3 (after English), report that their learners were not able to produce any XVS at first. However, their elicitation method and the small-sized database do not enable us to draw strong conclusions concerning V2 (as discussed in Bohnacker 2005:54-55). By contrast, as shown in Figs. 1-3, our Swedish learners of German master V2 early on, and they do so already at the initial state – unless English interferes. This lends support to full transfer models of L2 acquisition (e.g. Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996). Many generative syntax models invoke functional projections high up in the clause (e.g. CP) in order to capture the V2 phenomenon. Therefore, our learners' V2 utterances can be taken as evidence for functional structure in early interlanguage syntax and for the existence of CP at the initial state (*contra* earlier claims by e.g. Vainikka & Young-Scholten 1994, 1996, Platzack 2001).

4. Language-specific ways of using the prefield

Since *in principle* virtually any constituent can be placed in the prefield of German and Swedish V2 declaratives (e.g. Zifonun et al. 1997:1576-1644),[4] the two languages are often – tacitly or explicitly – assumed to behave alike concerning the frequency and function of prefield constituents. However, a survey of existing single-language corpora suggests that subject-initial clauses are considerably more frequent in Swedish than in German, especially so if genre is kept constant, whereas object-initial clauses are less frequent than in German. For German newspapers e.g., Fabricius-Hansen & Solfjeld (1994) report 54% subject-initial and nearly 7% object-initial main clauses (Table 1). For Swedish by contrast, Westman (1974:155-159) finds 66% subject-initial and only 2% object-initial main clauses in a corpus of newspaper articles and other non-fiction texts from textbooks and brochures issued by the authorities (Table 2). Other corpora show very similar distributions, cf. Bohnacker & Rosén (2007).

Table 1. Constituents in the prefield in written German (Fabricius-Hansen & Solfjeld (1994:101-102)

Subjects & expletives	Objects	Adverbials	Other constituents
54.0%	6.6%	36.8%	2.5%
532/984	65/984	362/984	25/984

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[4] These constituents vary in category and complexity – they can be phrasal or clausal, argumental or non-argumental, phonologically heavy or light (including unstressed object pronouns), and with almost any semantic function (some modal particles excluded), though subjects predominate in both languages.

Table 2. Constituents in the prefield in written Swedish, based on Westman (1974:155)

Subjects & expletives	Objects	Adverbials	Other constituents
64.0%	2.3%	30.8%	3.0%
3575/5588	128/5588	1720/5588	165/5588

For Swedish, Jörgensen (1976) finds fewer subjects and more objects in the prefield the more colloquial the genre is (1976:101-105). He reports 60% subject-initial and 9% object-initial clauses in conversations and debates between academics, and 62% subject-initial and 14% object-initial clauses in informal interviews with labourers and employees. But even in colloquial speech, Swedish seems to have more subject-initial declaratives than German does, as a comparison with a 25 500-word corpus of colloquial spoken German shows: 51% subject-initial, 9% object-initial, 35% adverbial-initial, 4% other (Engel 1974:212). Second most frequent in both languages are adverbial-initial declaratives. Here, temporal adverbials often appear to predominate in Swedish. In German, the prefield is said to mostly host locational or temporal adverbials, as well as a range of other adjuncts. Least frequent in the two languages are object-initial declaratives, but objects in the prefield are much rarer in Swedish than in German, especially in the written modality.

In order to verify and further investigate these language-specific tendencies, we have collected new informal written L1 corpora from native Swedish and native German speakers matched for age, keeping the text type constant (Table 3). Clear differences emerge concerning the frequencies of constituent types in the prefield: Swedish has a stronger subject-initial preference (73%) than German (50%); objects are fronted more often in German (7%) than in Swedish (3%), and adverbials other than temporal and locational are fronted more frequently in German (18%) than in Swedish (6%). These differences are statistically significant (χ^2) for subjects and expletives (p<0.0001), objects (p=0.0001) and other adverbials (p<0.0001).[5] Table 3 shows the results for our 20-to-25-year-old informants (informal letters); the data collected from 15-to-16-year-olds in the form of informal letters and stories look very similar (see Rosén 2006:78-82).

Table 3. Constituents in the prefield, written L1 data (informal letters)[6]

	Subjects & expletives	Objects	Temporal & locational adverbials	Other adverbials	Other constituents
L1 Swedish adult controls	73 %	3 %	14 %	6 %	2 %
	388/535	14/535	77/535	30/535	10/535
L1 German adult controls	50 %	7 %	17 %	18 %	1 %
	587/1173	87/1173	199/1173	215/1173	13/1173

We also found more fine-grained qualitative differences between the two languages concerning prefield constituents and thematic progression. But before discussing these, let's compare the native speakers with our L2ers.

## 5. How Swedish learners of German make use of the prefield

The frequencies of constituents in the prefield in our L2 German data differ significantly from those of L1 German, but resemble those of L1 Swedish. Fig. 4 illustrates this for the text type of informal letters. Black bars show the percentage of non-subject-initial clauses out of all declaratives for L1 Swedish (22%) and for L1 German (42%). Compare this with the L2 productions (Fig. 4, white bars): For the L2 beginners, the prefield contains a constituent other than the subject only 15% of the time (85/569), for the intermediates, 20% (281/1413), and for the advanced learners, 29% (343/1175). Thus, non-subject-initial clauses become more common with increasing proficiency level in our learners, but even the most advanced group has not reached nativelike levels after 6 years of German.

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[5] The difference between Swedish and German for temporal and locational adverbials is not statistically significant.
[6] The figures in Table 3 do not add up to 100%. The remaining percent are 16 subordinate clauses for Swedish and 72 for German. The figures are an adaptation of Rosén (2006), who also included V1 clauses with elided prefield in her counts. Here we only consider V2 declaratives with an overt constituent in the prefield.

For an explanation, we will need to take a closer look at how Swedish and German use the prefield for structuring information.

Figure 4. Percentages of non-subject-initial declaratives in L2ers and L1 controls (letters)
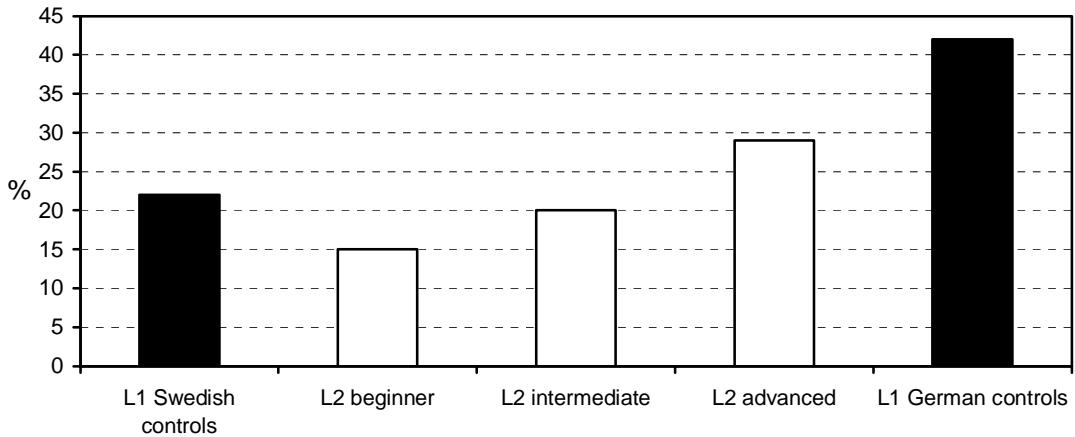
The *non*-subject-initial clauses of the learners can be broken down further by constituent type. This is done for the L2 beginners (oral) in Table 4, for the intermediates (oral) in Table 5, and for the age-matched intermediates (written) in Table 6. Their figures are strikingly similar.[7] Fronted arguments (objects) are rare (10%-12%) and largely take the form of object pronominal *das* 'it/that' (for an explanation, see next section). Adjuncts in the prefield are frequent (88%-90%), but mostly temporal, especially so in the oral narrative data (72%-75%, with a preponderance of *dann* 'then'). Locational adverbials are also found (16%-20%), whilst other adverbials (e.g. modal, speaker attitude and connective adverbs) in the prefield are less frequent, especially so in the oral data.

Table 4. Constituents in the prefield of non-subject-initial declaratives, oral L2 beginner data, 6 adults, narrative task, 4 & 9 months

Argument	10% (37/381)	Adjunct	90% (344/381)	
Direct object	Other	Temporal	Locational	Other adverbial
100%	0%	72%	20%	8%
37/37 (all: *das*)		248/344 (incl. 146 *dann*)	69/344	27/344

Table 5. Constituents in the prefield of non-subject-initial declaratives, oral L2 intermediate data, 23 16-year-olds, narrative task, after 3 years

Argument	10% (39/386)	Adjunct	90% (347/386)	
Direct object	Other	Temporal	Locational	Other adverbial
95%	5%	75%	16%	10%
37/39 (incl. 22 *das*)	2/39	259/347	55/347	33/347

Table 6. Constituents in the prefield of non-subject-initial declaratives, written L2 intermediate data, 55 17-year-olds, letters, after 3 years

Argument	12% (35/295)	Adjunct	88% (260/295)	
Direct object	Other	Temporal & locational		Other adverbial
94%	6%	80%		20%
33/35 (incl. 16 *das*)	2/35	207/260		53/260

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[7] The results from oral L2 German are included precisely because the distribution in the prefield is so similar to that of our written L2 data. Despite the difference in modality, our oral and written data are of related genres. Both are informal and monological: monologue narratives on a given topic vs. "monological" letters and essays on a given topic. Ideally, however, the oral L2 data should also be compared with oral L1 control corpora elicited in the same fashion, something we are planning to do in the future.

Results from a rating and rewriting experiment bolster the differences we found concerning constituents in the prefield. Three groups of adult native speakers of German (university students, language teachers, and others (dentists and other professionals)), 58 in total, rated our written L2 data (see Rosén 2006:96-97, 102-138). Moreover, 20 of them, the 20-25-year-old university students, were asked to rewrite 20 advanced L2 texts produced by learners their own age, to "make them sound more German". Here, they unpromptedly made the following changes in the prefield (Table 7). Rewriting resulted in a reduction of clause-initial subjects and expletives from 68% to 55%, and in a doubling of the figures for objects and adverbials other than temporal and locational. Thus, the distribution of constituent types in the rewritten texts became very similar to the distribution independently found in the L1 German control corpus (Table 3). This strongly suggests that the differences between the groups cannot be dismissed as "stylistic variation" in the sense of idiosyncratic preferences of individuals, but that they are in fact consistent, *language-specific* differences.

Table 7. Constituents in the prefield, L2 German vs. L1 German rewritings[8]

	Subjects & expletives	Objects	Temporal & locational adverbials	Other adverbials
Advanced L2 German	68 % 366/538	3 % 17/538	16 % 88/538	8 % 42/538
Rewritten by natives	55 % 363/658	7 % 43/658	18 % 120/658	14 % 95/658

6. Different ways of organising and structuring information

Both Swedish and German have a tendency to start declaratives with a subject. Both languages also tend to let the subject, a grammatical category, coincide with the information-structural categories of theme, i.e. given information, and topic, i.e. what the sentence is about (e.g. Lambrecht 1994:Ch. 4). Both languages also have a tendency to place theme before rheme, i.e., given before new, and therefore a tendency to place the theme in clause-initial position (e.g. Ekerot 1979, Hoberg 1981:174-176).[9] However, corpus data further suggest that Swedish has a *stronger* tendency than German of starting the sentence with an element of low informational value. This can be achieved by filling the prefield with the theme, i.e. given information, or with an expletive subject (*det* 'it'), an element of no informational value (for examples, see below), or by leaving the prefield empty, as in V1 declaratives (which will not be discussed here). Swedish moreover seems to have a stronger tendency than German to start the sentence with a phonologically light element; at least this is the impression we get from our written control corpora (written Norwegian vs. German corpora point in the same direction, e.g. Fabricius-Hansen & Solfjeld 1994). One would need to investigate this more in depth for spoken corpora of the same genre. Whether it is the light phonological weight that promotes thematicity or vice versa, i.e. whether it is the phonology that influences information structure or the other way round, we don't know, but the two tendencies seem to go hand in hand.

Let's illustrate this first for the case of rhematic subjects. Swedish declaratives that contain a rhematic subject typically have an expletive subject, *det* 'it' in the prefield, as in (2). The proper subject (*många studenter* 'many students'*, mycket* 'much') occurs postverbally. Alternatively, an element encoding new information, like the rhematic subject *många studenter* or the locational adverbial *i Växjö*, could be placed in the prefield, as in (2'). Whilst such sentences are grammatical in Swedish, crucially, they are dispreferred and rarely occur in our control corpus.

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[8] The figures in Table 7 do not add up to 100%. The remaining percent are 25 subordinate clauses in the advanced L2 German, and 37 subordinate clauses in the native German rewritings.

[9] Theme here stands for what the speaker/writer assumes the listener/reader to know; it is given information in the sense that it has previously been explicitly mentioned or is inferable with recourse to the linguistic discourse or the discourse situation. Rheme stands for what the speaker assumes to be new information for the hearer, thus being of higher informational value. However, such a strict partitioning of the clause into theme and rheme is not without problems; often there is a cline from one to the other; moreover, clauses may contain several thematic elements, and some sentences contain none but are informationally all-new. (Cf. Daneš 1970, Beneš 1971, Lötscher 1984.)

(2)   a.   **Det** bor många studenter här.
               it   live many   students here
               'Lots of students live here./There're lots of students living here.'
     b.   **Det** händer mycket i Växjö.
               it happens much in Växjö
               'Lots of things are going on in Växjö./There's a lot going on in Växjö.'

(2')   a.   **Många studenter** bor här.   (dispreferred)
               many   students   live here
     b.   **I Växjö** händer mycket.   (dispreferred)
               in Växjö happens much

By contrast, German tends not to use an expletive subject here, but start the clause with a phonologically heavier, rhematic, element, as in (3). We could paraphrase (3) by using an expletive as in (3'), but such constructions are dispreferred in German.

(3)   a.   **Viele Studenten** wohnen hier.
               many students   live   here
               'Lots of students live here.'
     b.   **In Växjö** ist viel los.
               in Växjö is much on
               'Lots of things are going on in Växjö./There's a lot going on in Växjö.'

(3')   a.   **Es** wohnen viele Studenten hier.   (dispreferred)
               it live   many students here
     b.   **Es** ist viel los in Växjö.   (dispreferred)
               it is much on in Växjö

We therefore suggest that there are subtle differences between Swedish and German concerning the linguistic means used in referent introduction. These cross-linguistic differences are not categorical (grammatical/ungrammatical), but tendencies, and their mastery is an integral part of language competence. In contrast to the native German controls, our L2 learners rarely start their clauses with a rhematic element, but tend to produce expletive-initial clauses of the type in (3'), cf. (4). These are dispreferred in German, but correspond to the expletive-initial constructions preferred in Swedish.

(4)   Autobahn! **Es** ist nicht mehr eine gleich aggressive Stimmung auf Autobahn in Deutschland,
          motorway it is not   more a   same aggressive mood   on motorway in Germany
                  aber gewiss   ist es harter als z.B. in Schweden.
                  but certainly is it harder than e.g. in Sweden
          'Motorways. There isn't this aggressive mood on the motorways in Germany any more, but it's
          certainly tougher than in Sweden, for example.'   (advanced L2 summary)

Swedish has a range of constructions with an element of low informational content in the prefield, such as *det* (or a thematic, phonologically light element, see below). Consider for instance the presentational and cleft sentences in (5) and (6), which begin with expletive *det* and a copula verb. Rhematic (new) information, such as the proper subject and temporal or locational adverbials, is placed postverbally. German has corresponding constructions, but in naturalistic discourse these are less common; the preferred way of expressing (5) and (6) in German is *not* to start with an expletive, cf. (7) and (8).

(5)   **Det** {är/sitter} en lapp på dörren.
          it   is/sits   a paper on door-the
          'There's a note on the door.'

(6)   **Det** var i förra veckan   som en domare i Malmö fälldes   för samma brott.
          it   was in last week-the that a judge   in Malmö was-condemned for same   crime
          'Last week, a judge in Malmö was condemned for the same crime.'

(7)   a.   Ein Zettel {ist/hängt} an der Tür.   (preferred)
              a paper is/hangs on the door
     b.   Da   {ist/hängt} ein Zettel an der Tür.
              there.LOC   is/hangs a   paper on the door

(7')   **Es** {ist/hängt} ein Zettel an der Tür.   (dispreferred)
         it is/hangs a   paper on the door

(8)   Letzte Woche wurde ein Richter in Malmö für dieselbe Straftat verurteilt.   (preferred)
         last   week was a judge in Malmö for same   crime condemned

(8')   [??]***Es** war letzte Woche daß ein Richter in Malmö für dieselbe Straftat verurteilt   wurde.
         it was last   week that a judge in Malmö for same   crime condemned was
                                 (dispreferred)

These patterns were also confirmed when native speakers rewrote or commented upon the L2 texts, pointing out "zu viel *es* am Satzanfang" [too many *es* in clause-initial position], un-German *es*-constructions, and "zu viel *es gibt*" [too many *es gibt* 'it is/exists']. Native speakers prefer to use alternative ways of connecting sentences, for instance by fronting an adverbial, as in (9'), which is the rewritten version of the L2 sentence in (9), or by adding a connective adverb (see below).

(9)   Es ist in dem königlichen Zimmern, wo   den Besuchern die Motive aus Mittelalterem
         it is in the royal   rooms   where the visitors   the motives from mediaeval
             Märchen begegnen, dass viele von den Wände deckt.
             sagas   meet   that many of the walls covers
         'In the royal rooms visitors will see motives from mediaeval sagas, which cover many of the
         walls.'   (advanced L2 summary)

(9')   In den königlichen Zimmern begegnen den Besuchern Motive aus mittelalterlichen Märchen.
         in the royal   rooms   meet   the visitors motives from mediaeval   sagas
                                (rewritten by native speaker)

    The tendency to start Swedish sentences with an element of low informational value – which also often happens to be phonologically light – manifests itself in the case of fronted objects as well. Recall that object-initial declaratives, though generally uncommon, are more frequent in German (7%) than in Swedish (3%, Table 3). In our corpora, Swedish native speakers typically front objects that are themes (given information), mostly in the form of the definite inanimate pronoun *det* ('it/that'). Such thematic *det* is much more frequent than the German equivalent (*das/es*) in our native German controls: *det* makes up 82% of all fronted object pronouns, but *das* only 24% (Rosén 2006:99-102).[10] Our L2ers rarely produce an object in the prefield, but when they do, they predominantly front pronominal *das* (80%), and this *das* is always thematic, as illustrated in (10)-(12). The native raters of our L2 texts comment on such *das*: "zu viele Sätze fangen mit *das* an" [too many sentences start with *das*].

(10)   Nach Weihnachten sind wir vielleicht wieder nach Schweiz   fahren. **Das** finde ich Spaß.
         after christmas   are we perhaps again to   Switzerland go   that find I fun
         'After Christmas we might go to Switzerland again. That'd be fun I think.'
                                 (beginner L2 letter)

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[10] We are not claiming that this distribution will hold across all genres, but we believe that it is typical of informal written texts produced by young people in the 2000s (and probably also a feature of colloquial spoken Swedish). Jörgensen (1976:101-102) found fronted objects in colloquial genres recorded in 1968, 14% in informal interviews, 9% in conversations and debates between academics, vs. only 1.6% in radio news that consisted of read-aloud formal writing. Interestingly, his examples of fronted objects in colloquial speech mostly are pronominal *det* (1976:110-113), whilst such object *det* is rare in the formal written texts studied by Westman (1974:158-159).

(11)   Vielleicht kommen wir eines Tages nach Haus   aber **das** glaube ich nicht.
          maybe   come   we one day   to   home but that think   I   not
          'Maybe we'll come back home one day, but I don't think so.'   (intermediate L2 essay)

(12)   Ab und zu   machen wir auch Sachen zusammen, **das** muss man.
          now and then make   we too things together   that must you
          'Now and then we do things together, you have to.'   (advanced L2 essay)

Note however that fronted object *das* as produced by our L2 learners is not ungrammatical in native German, it is simply less common in our control corpus. So what do Germans do?

    German native speakers appear to front a wider range of objects, both lexical and pronominal (e.g. *mir* 'me', *ihn* 'him'). And they make use of so-called 'pronominal adverbs' (*Pronominaladverbien*, proadverbials) for reference maintenance. Pronominal adverbs are thematic elements that are compounded of a locational adverb (typically, *da* 'there') and a preposition. Some examples are *dazu* 'there-to/with that', *darauf* 'there-on/on that', *daran* 'there-on/on that', *damit* 'there-with/with that', *davon* 'there-of/about that', *darum* 'there-around/about that', *dafür* 'there-for/for that', *danach* 'there-after/after that'. Their morphological complexity makes pronominal adverbs informationally more specific than simple thematic *das/det* 'it/that' or *da/där* 'there'. (Some pronominal adverbs also exist in Swedish but are restricted to archaic expressions and formal registers. None were found in our native Swedish corpus.) Pronominal adverbs maintain a referent in spatial, temporal and other terms, and are thus a means to establish textual coherence. In (13) for example, the rhematic information of the first clause, *segeln zu lernen* 'learning how to sail', is turned via *damit* 'with that' into the theme of the second clause. Similarly, in (14), *dazu* links up with *schöne Ecken* 'nice spots' in the preceding clause.

(13)   Außerdem habe ich vor segeln zu lernen, aber **damit**   werde ich wohl   bis zum
          moreover have I PRT sailing to learn   but there-with will   I   probably till to-the
                   Sommer warten.
                   summer wait
          'Moreover, I would like to learn how to sail, but I'll probably wait with that till the summer.'
                                                       (native German)

(14)   Man muß sich hier schöne Ecken suchen. **Dazu**   gehört ganz sicher das Hindenburgufer.
          one   must self here nice   corners seek   there-to belongs quite certain the Hindenburgufer
          'You have to go and find yourself some nice spots. One of those would most certainly be the
          Hindenburgufer …'   (native German)

Whilst our native German controls use such pronominal adverbs in the prefield in their writing (11%), none of our L2ers do so at beginner (0%) or intermediate level (0%), and even at advanced level, pronominal adverbs in the prefield remain rare (4%). Pronominal adverbs in the prefield are exceedingly rare in our oral L2 data too. The 6 beginners do not use them at all (0%), and the 23 intermediates only produce 1 clause-initial pronominal adverb, and a total of 4 pronominal adverbs in the entire corpus of 12 500 words. Therefore, the differences between the native controls and the L2 learners are presumably not only due to L1 influence on information structure, but also to a vocabulary deficit: Learners can only place a pronominal adverb in the prefield if they have in fact learnt the relevant lexical item. Since our beginning and many of our intermediate learners are not using pronominal adverbs in other, postverbal, positions, it may be surmised that they have not yet added these items to their lexicons, although in order to determine this for certain, a larger database would be needed for each individual learner. For those L2ers who do use pronominal adverbs but rarely do so in clause-initial position we believe that the overall principle of information organisation that warrants their use is not yet fully established in the learner variety. (For a proposal along similar lines, see Carroll et al. (2000), who compared picture descriptions by very advanced learners of German (L1 English, L1 Spanish) with those by German natives.)

    Apart from pronominal adverbs, there are many other adverbials that can be used in the prefield to improve textual cohesion, for instance sentence adverbs such as speaker-attitude *leider* 'unfortunately', *wahrscheinlich* 'probably', *vielleicht* 'perhaps', *natürlich* 'of course', and logical connectives such as *außerdem* 'moreover', *deshalb/deswegen/daher* 'therefore', *allerdings* 'however', *trotzdem*

'nevertheless'. These 'Other adverbials' are significantly more frequent in the prefield in native German (18%) than in native Swedish (6%, Table 3). It would be interesting to see whether this surprising difference could be verified for larger corpora and corpora of other text types, since the Swedish language has no shortage of logical connectives in general. It is possible though that German has such adverbials in the prefield, whilst Swedish places its connectors more often postverbally (and largely reserves the prefield for other thematic elements). We will not investigate this any further here, but simply point out that our L2ers underuse such adverbials in the prefield, as evinced by the fact that when advanced L2 texts were rewritten by native Germans, figures doubled from 7% to 14% (Table 7). Sometimes native speakers move a connective adverbial from postverbal position to the prefield, as in (15'), the rewritten version of (15), or simply add a logical connective. (See Bohnacker & Rosén 2007.)

(15)   Man weiß   jetzt, mehr als   früher, daß es nicht selbstklar   eine Familie zu haben ist.
         one   knows now   more than before that it not self-evident   a   family to have   is
             Ich finde **deswegen**, daß ...
             I   think therefore   that
         'Nowadays people know better than before that you don't just have a family as a matter of
         course. Therefore I think that …'   (advanced L2 essay)

(15')   […].   **Deswegen** finde ich, daß ...
             therefore   think I   that   (rewritten by native speaker)

Native raters also repeatedly characterise the L2 texts as un-German, criticising a lack of adverbials in clause-initial position: "Adverbiale am Satzanfang fehlen" [clauses should more often begin with an adverbial], "es gibt zu wenig kommentierende Wörter wie *leider, zum Glück* etc. am Satzanfang" [there are not enough commentary words like *leider* 'unfortunately', *zum Glück* 'fortunately', etc. in clause-initial position], "Noch mehr Übergänge mit *Deshalb, Daher, Da*… wären schön" [more links with *deshalb, daher, da* would be nice], "Der Gebrauch von *Dadurch, Deshalb* etc. würde den Text flüssiger machen" [using *dadurch, deshalb* etc. would improve textual coherence]. Our impression of the L2 texts is that cohesion-building adverbials are not only rare in the prefield, but also relatively rare in other clausal positions (though we have not quantified them there). Therefore, a lack of coherence is presumably not only attributable to L1 influence in the domain of information structure, but also due to lexical deficits, concerning both connective adverbials and pronominal adverbs.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we have pointed to some diverging tendencies in the way Swedish and German employ the prefield in V2 declaratives for structuring information and organising text. These cross-linguistic differences largely concern the linguistic means used in referent introduction and reference maintenance. On the basis of corpus data, we have suggested that Swedish has a stronger tendency than German to fill the prefield with a thematic subject or a phonologically light all-purpose element of low informational value (expletive *det* 'it', thematic pronominal object *det* 'it/that', etc.) to establish texual coherence. German also allows these options, but also places rhematic subjects, as well as phonologically heavier object and adverbial constituents in the prefield, including morphologically complex thematic pronominal adverbs and a range of connective and sentence adverbials.

We have tried to show that native speakers of Swedish learning German are able to master V2 early on, both in the oral and written modality. This supports models of L2 acquisition that assume full transfer of the L1 syntax at the initial state (e.g. Schwartz & Sprouse 1996).

However, even though V2 syntax is largely targetlike, our L2ers, at all proficiency levels, have a tendency to fill the prefield with elements that are somewhat different in form and function from that of native German speakers. Our L2ers overuse subject-initial and expletive-*es*-initial clauses and fronted thematic object *das*, structures that are typical of and frequent in their Swedish L1. They underuse typically German ways of introducing a sentence with objects other than pronominal *das*, with specific pronominal adverbs and a range of connective adverbials. The results indicate that our learners, both at lower and higher proficiency levels, have problems with the acquisition of the German-specific linguistic means that have an impact on information structuring. Some of these problems may be due to vocabulary deficits, but most of them can be traced back to the language-specific tendencies of

structuring information in Swedish, i.e. the learners' L1. We thus propose that L1 transfer is found not only in the domain of syntax, but also in the domain of information structure and information organisation, and that such L1 influence persists even at high L2 proficiency levels.

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