Abstract: Walser German is an archaic variety of Alemannic still spoken in few isolated communities in the Italian Alps. These dialects are characterized by extreme variability, language contact and decay. Moreover, they have developed independently from one another, partly because of different sociolinguistic conditions and partly because lack of contact from one another. Today, this variety of linguistic outcomes and sociolinguistic contexts offers us wealth of linguistic material that can help us reconstruct the development of innovative syntactic structures in subordination and of a mixed system of complementizers.

Keywords: Walser German, subordination, complementizers, borrowing

1 Introduction

This paper deals with clause linking strategies in two Alemannic dialects spoken in the Italian region of Piedmont: the dialect of Formazza (Pomattertitsch, literally 'Formazza German') and the dialect of Rimella (Remmaljertittschu, literally 'Rimella German'). Both dialects belong to the so-called Highest Alemannic dialect group (Bohnenberger 1913), that is the most southern and alpine part of the larger Alemannic dialectological domain. In particular, they are closely related to the German dialects of the Wallis region in Switzerland. Together with other scattered dialects in Piedmont, Aosta Valley, Ticino, Graubünden, Liechtenstein and Vorarlberg, Pomattertitsch and Remmaljertittschu are part of the Walser dialect group, which is the result of farmers’ medieval migrations (which set off at the beginning of the 13th century) from West (Wallis) to East (Vorarlberg) and backwards. Until very recently, most of these settlements have retained a linguistic and cultural distinctiveness (Zinsli 1991 [1968]).
In these isolated (and today severely endangered) dialects, archaic features coexist with the effects of long-lasting and stratified language contact, as well as with a range of independent, and in some cases idiosyncratic changes. Another peculiar aspect of Walser dialects is their extremely high inter-dialect variation that makes them a good test site to verify extralinguistic (sociolinguistic, geographic, demographic, socio-economic) effects on language change.

The effects of language contact have been reported very frequently in the connectivity domain. They were recorded in a variety of contact situations all over the world. Such effects involve mainly direct borrowing of connective words, which might cause the corresponding syntactic structure to be carried over with them, thus resulting in different syntactic types to be added to the borrowing system.1 Besides, borrowed particles and conjunctions may undergo complex processes of grammatical integration into the borrowing language, as discussed in Stolz & Stolz (1996) on the basis of a large variety of Meso-American languages in contact with Spanish. A further possibility is calquing the full range of functions of a connective in the model language onto a function word that is already present in the system, with which bilingual speakers establish a direct correspondence. This is the case, for instance, of the Tariana (an Amazonian language) interrogative pronoun kwana that has extended its range of functions following the model of Portuguese que (Aikhenvald 2002: 184). This example raises the issue of sociolinguistically asymmetric situations in which one prestige standard language provides the written model in the processes of elaboration of minority languages, which in some cases fills a gap in the indigenous system. In particular, when practicing translation (for example in building a corpus of texts in small, endangered languages), the model may activate contact-induced grammaticalization phenomena, as well as global or selective copy of function words (cf. Heine & Kuteva 2005: 250–251).

However, other approaches point more specifically to bilinguals’ speech productions and to discourse-oriented phenomena. Among others, Maschler (1997) sees the use of borrowed or switched discourse markers and connective words as

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1 The borrowing (“global copy”) of complementizer ki from Persian into several Turkic languages is a well-known example. Together with its combinational pattern, it has also expanded some marginal syntactic patterns in Turkic languages (Johanson 2006). Native American languages in contact with Spanish also offer many interesting cases. Cf. for example Hill & Hill (1986: 293): “The Spanish particles de and que have been incorporated into Malinche Mexicano usage in so many environments, and are used at such high frequency, that they are important contributors in their own right to syntactic convergence with Spanish”. As for discourse markers, Salmons (1990) demonstrates how direct borrowing also influences the expansion of discourse and syntactic patterns along with the reduction of other patterns on the basis of the model language.
evidence of an enhancement of their contrastive potential provided by their outstanding diversity in discourse. In contrast, Matras (1998, 2009) claims that the investigation should start from considering bilinguals’ speech and the cognitive load required to keep two (or more) systems apart. Since connectivity is both a discursively demanding task and a domain that easily elapses linguistic awareness, it frequently happens that borders between separate language systems are lifted, thus leading to the adoption of function words and the creation of a fused inventory of connective forms and structures.

2 Sociolinguistic and historical background

Walser dialects (still or once) spoken in North-Western Italy are very good examples of extreme language contact situations. A few relevant aspects will be summoned here in order to contextualize the following discussion.

Walser settlements have never built a compact unit (be it cultural or linguistic) and they have very rarely maintained any sort of contact with one another in the course of their migratory history. This means that Walser constitutes a typically scattered linguistic minority entailing varying degrees of continuity with either German-speaking Wallis or Italo/Gallo-Romance neighbors. Hence, Walser dialects are extremely different from one another, as well as from Swiss German dialects. For centuries their use has been limited to inner-village communication. However, their usage has been relegated to in-group or family-bound communication as soon as social homogeneity has started to collapse.

Speakers of Walser dialects generally have no command of Standard German, (apart from rare cases). Although in the past German writing may have been widespread among some colonies, its practice was abandoned in the course of the 19th century and Walser varieties in Italy are de facto ‘roofless dialects’ (dachlose Außenmundarten, see Kloss 1987).

Walser dialects are unquestionably bound to die, like many other minority languages in Europe and in the world. What makes the case of Walser particularly interesting is the variety of paths leading to the same end (language shift) yet departing from similar linguistic conditions (i.e. Alemannic dialects in contact with Romance varieties). In addition, the two Walser varieties selected for the present study appear sufficiently different from each other (see also Dal Negro 2011a for a more detailed account). The linguistic island of Formazza started shifting to Italian in the 1950s; it kept its village population constant but lost part of its ethnic and speech community. Conversely, during the same time lapse Rimella has experienced a dramatic population reduction, due to very difficult life conditions. However, in Rimella the speech community and the village population
overlap entirely. The Rimella small speech community settled in the midst of Valsesia was surrounded by Piedmontese dialects and it soon detached itself from the German-speaking area north of the Alps. Consequently, it quickly developed a mixed code that integrated much Piedmontese into its original Alemannic variety. On its part, Formazza kept strong relations with higher Wallis valleys until relatively recently. In contrast, it retained scarce and superficial contacts with neighboring (Italo-Romance) populations, mainly due to Formazza strategic role in commercial transalpine exchanges. Once the Alemannic tradition had been abandoned, the local population has abruptly shifted to the new prestige language that is Italian. This process has been taking place over the last two-three generations.

In terms of UNESCO language vitality and endangerment scales (Brenzinger et al. 2003), Walser dialects in Italy can be classified as either “definitely endangered”\(^2\) or “severely endangered”.\(^3\)

### 3 Language contact, variation and change

Contemporary Walser dialects display extreme linguistic variation, which is not unusual in small, endangered languages (cf. Dorian 2010). This is due to the combination of three factors. Firstly, the disruption of speech communities has caused a loosening of sociolinguistic and linguistic norms, thus leading to a full range of idiosyncrasies at the level of small “communities of practice”, or even at the individual level. Secondly, the lack of use has diminished chances of fully acquiring the mother tongue; therefore, speakers with very different degrees of language competences coexist in the same speech community. Finally, the impact of contact languages (Italian and, at least in the case of Rimella, Piedmontese) has markedly increased the number of variants available to the speakers, both in terms of direct loans (“matter” borrowing, according to Matras & Sakel 2007) and in terms of structural borrowing (or “pattern”, Matras & Sakel 2007). To cope with variation and with reduced linguistic competences, a corpus-based approach involving a probabilistic analysis would be most suitable but not always feasible (see Dal Negro 2011a for a tentative analysis on the two dialects under investigation here).

In this paper, the analysis is based exclusively on an existing repertoire of spoken productions collected at the beginning of this century (year 2000) and

\(^2\) “Children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home”.

\(^3\) “Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves”.
reported in Dal Negro (2006). The data consist of 60 hours of free occurring speech uttered by native speakers talking to one another about various topics. All conversations have been almost entirely transcribed. Since Dal Negro (2006) aimed to document an endangered language, speakers were asked to deploy consistently their Walser dialect during their conversations, and avoid using Italian or Piedmontese as much as possible. As a result, recorded data roughly correspond to what Clyne (2003: 189) would define as “intended monolingualism”. Hence, most contact phenomena documented here should be accounted for as part of Walser German and not as instances of language alternation. In addition, and only in the case of Formazza, more structured interviews and translation tasks with younger (and less fluent) speakers will be considered.

4 Subordination in Walser dialects

Two aspects appear particularly relevant in the study of subordination in Walser dialects under the perspective of contact-induced variation and change: a) the shift from an OV to a VO word order type and b) the borrowing or calquing of complementizers. Both topics, as well as their interconnection, will be dealt with, first in general, then more specifically as regards the expression of complement clauses introduced by the utterance predicate ‘to say’.

4.1 Formazza

In the speech of fluent traditional Walser speakers of Formazza, a number of complementizers require a verb final structure, as in Standard German; besides, and similarly to other Alemannic dialects, they function as basis for cliticization, particularly for subject clitics. This list includes subordinating conjunctions such as wen ‘if’, ob ‘whether’, das ‘that’, ep ‘before/rather’. It also comprises wh-words introducing embedded questions such as wen ‘when’, wa ‘where’, wé ‘how’, warum ‘why’, wär ‘who’, wälmu ‘whom’, wälsc ‘whose’ along with the uninflected relative particle wa. Besides, some other composite complementizers are

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4 This partly rules out an analysis of complementizers in code-mixed utterances (as in Berruto 2012). Most Italian or Italo-Romance complementizers considered here are to be regarded as instances of loanwords (or nonce loans) in Walser German.

5 However, this is not an exclusive option. See the following example extracted by an oral nursery rhyme, in which the direct object clitic is attached to the complementizer: so, wé=nä éch cher ‘so, as soon as I turn it’.
attested, such as *dana das* ‘after that’, *ep de* ‘before that’, *fer das* ‘so that’, *öi wen* ‘although’ (literally ‘also if’). This list does not include the causal conjunction *fägä* ‘because’ (etymologically related to the German preposition *wegen* ‘because of’), because it introduces a coordinate clause. Example (1) displays both phenomena mentioned here (verb final syntax and cliticization):

(1) *aber éch weiss nit ob=it de proppi t waret éscht.*

   but I know NEG if=it then really the truth is

   ‘But I don’t know if it is really the truth.’

In case of complex VPs (be it auxiliary+past participle or modal verb+infinitive) the finite verb form occupies the final position (2), thus confirming traditional descriptions of this Walser dialect (SDS III, 261). However, this quite rarely occurs in practice and it may be more common to find structures in which the auxiliary is immediately followed by the past participle (3) or by a sequence of constituents and past participle (4). It is worth noticing that in these fluent varieties all particles (included the negation *nit*) and clitic pronouns obligatorily precede the auxiliary, despite the fact that this might not occupy the final position (5). Obviously, this constant anticipation of the auxiliary is one of the paths that may eventually have led to the spread of verb-second structures in subordination (see example 6 for an extreme case in this sense).7

(2) *wa=sch de siw-o ggä hän.*

   REL=they the.PL.DAT pig-PL.DAT given have

   ‘[…] that they have given to the pigs.’

(3) *wen=mu mét schtein-u het kmürut.*

   when=one with stone-PL.DAT has built.walls

   ‘When one has built walls with stones.’

(4) *wen dü deheimä hescht féri wälsch zellt, chan-tscht nit äso.*

   if you at.home have always Italian spoken can-2.sg neg so

   ‘If you have always spoken Italian at home, you cannot [change] like that.’

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6 The latter is probably a calque on spoken Italian composite conjunction *anche se* ‘although’; this is further confirmed by the mixed form *anche wen*, attested in the data.

7 Cf. also Grewendorf & Poletto (2005: 119) for similar observations; they discuss the case of Plodarisch, another German minority dialect in Northern Italy.
(5) wen=esch=es nit gärä ksortä-s hän khäbä, schi hän
if=they=it NEG fondly cooked-sg.nt have had, they have
schi fél käsä äso.
er:acc much eaten so
‘If they didn’t like it [the meat] cooked, they ate it much like this.’

(6) i weis das wir he dö gnank tire khäbä.
I know that we have then not.even doors had
‘I know that we didn’t have even doors, then.’

Two facts seem to ‘disturb’ this picture. Firstly, there is an incipient loss of another correlate of OV syntax, meaning the bracketing structure in main clauses, which requires past participles and infinitives in final position. Our data document many cases in which non argumental constituents are dislocated to the right (yet, see the dislocation of a direct object in 7).

(7) i hä kse z chappulti.
I have seen the.nt.sg little.chapel
‘I have seen the chapel.’

Secondly, there is a massive spread of VS constructions in which the subject is a clitic pronoun attached to the main verb, irrespectively of the existing sentence type. More generally, clitic pronouns are progressively changing from a syntactic type (as second position clitics), which is more or less similar to Alemannic and Bavarian, to a morphological type. By doing so, clitics selectively attach to a given lexical category that in this case are verbs (thus behaving like Italian and north Italian dialects). In contrast to examples (1), (2), (3) and (5), see (8) and (9) that show subject clitics attached to the main verb, which, in turn, immediately follows the complementizer.

(8) fägä mer chun nit z sé das sén=tsch kgangä
because me.dat comes NEG to mind that are=they gone
in america.
in America
‘Because it comes to my mind that they have gone to America.’

8 For an introduction, see Nübling (1992) who also discusses some cases of Alemannic dialects. For a recent account on clitic pronouns in the Cimbrian minority dialect and some comparisons with Walser dialects, see Kolmer (2012; cf. in particular 74–81).
In the speech of fluent speakers (irrespective of the attested syntactic type), the direct borrowing of complementizers is not attested in the data.9 Very few exceptions appear but they pertain to the domain of code-switching rather than borrowing. A borderline case is exemplified in (10), where the combination ‘main verb+complementizer’ seems to be borrowed as a single unit from Italian, thus functioning more as a composite discourse marker than as a code-switched sequence (as in some types recently discussed by Berruto 2012).

(10) *sai che schi machut=där z fértä.*

‘You know that she scares you.’

Other cases of borrowing or of nonce loans all involve the complementizer che, alone or in combination with other elements such as invece che ‘instead of’ (followed by an infinitive clause); however, these instances are very rare in the data.

Italian conjunctions may be found only in the (elicited) speech of semi-speakers and in particular in translation tasks. A translation task forces speakers to find strategies in order to express semantic-logical links (e.g. a conditional construct as in ex. 11), which is de facto unusual in their limited and mostly formulaic use of the language. Interestingly, the syntactic structure depending on the Italian complementizer se does not differ from the cases discussed above in which an autochthonous complementizer is followed by a VS sequence with subject clitic. The generalization that we can infer from the data is that speakers who have borrowed complementizers from Italian systematically present VS and VO structures as well, whereas the presence of VS and VO structures does not imply necessarily the borrowing of complementizers.

(11) *se bin=i il re, ich gse in en grüsse hüs.*

‘If I were the king, I would be in a big house (palace).’

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9 Whereas connective adverbials and conjunctions, such as però ‘however’, invece ‘instead’ and ma ‘but’ are widespread in discourse. Interestingly, the same phenomenon can be detected in other minority languages in Italy, notably all from diverse linguistic background such as Greek, Albanian or Slavic (see Stolz 2005).
Unfortunately, diachronic documentation for Walser dialects is almost absent, with very few exceptions dating back the first decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. Our observations are therefore based on these very limited sources. All available examples in the dialect of Formazza attest a typical verb final structure in subordination where the auxiliary occupies the final position and the subject immediately follows the conjunction (12), or attaches to if it is a clitic (13):

(12) Formazza Walser German [Gysling & Hotzenköcherle 1952: 42]

Ween er sche ggümnizierti ghäbe hät, isch
dem heer nid gööad chò.

‘After the priest had given her the Holy Communion, he didn’t feel well.’

(13) Formazza Walser German [Gysling & Hotzenköcherle 1952: 42]

Wen=s dam hëër nid schlächtx chò wëë,

wetti di lyt älli zäämë n=d löwwi cho.

‘If the priest hadn’t felt bad, all the people would have ended up in the avalanche.’

Examples such as (12) and (13), and the lack of other word-order variants in these traditional sources, confirm our hypothesis that alternative word-order patterns (in particular the loosening of an OV syntactic type and the spread of VS sequences) constitute recent phenomenon. These patterns have introduced significant variations in language use. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no cases of borrowed complementizers are attested in these texts.

4.2 Rimella

In Remmaljerittitschu the situation appears very different. As for word order, Remmaljerittitschu appears to be much simpler, since it is less subject to variation when compared to the situation described for the dialect of Formazza. No significant word order variation is attested between main and embedded clauses in the spoken data recorded around year 2000. In the greatest majority of cases the finite verb occupies the first position after the complementizer, and it is followed either by a clitic subject (14) or by a full NP (15). Much more rarely, the verb
follows a full NP subject, as in (16). Crucially, no other constituent, apart from NP
subjects, occupies the position between complementizer and finite verb. Finally,
clitic pronouns never attach to complementizers but only to finite verb forms,
thus qualifying as typical examples of verbal (en)clitics (Nübling 1992).

(14) \textit{ha=wer=s} tragut üsser en z kaval, \textit{wanj ha=wer hebet}
\textit{have=we=it} carried out in to Kaval \textit{when have=we} had
\textit{scorta}.
\textit{provisions}
\‘We carried it out to Kaval [placename] when we had provisions.’

(15) \textit{des malp des het gmacht di nonna.}
\textit{that flour REL} has made \textit{your grandma}
\‘That flour that your grandma made.’

(16) \textit{schu mi elte he gmacht buttalje varmjöt, nesch}
\textit{if my old.ones} have made bottle vermouth then
\textit{hent=sch trunh e sikkje varmjöt}.
\textit{have=they drank a little vermouth}
\‘If my old ones had made a bottle of vermouth, then they drank a little of
vermouth.’

As one can see from examples (14–16), not only the finite verb does occupy the
first or second position in subordinate clauses, but another important correlate of
OV syntax is also violated, that is the final position of past participles or infinitives.
The list of constituents that still allow to speak of a verbal bracketing is quite limited in today’s Remmalljertittschu and include temporal adverbs such as
with Italian and German modal and focus particles such as \textit{magari} ‘perhaps’, \textit{pro-
prio} ‘just’, \textit{öich} ‘also’, \textit{nuwa} ‘only’, some locative particles, and negation. See for
instance (17–18):\footnote{Incidentally, (18) also documents the sequence of modal verb and main verb in subordinate clauses.}

(17) \textit{anche schu hent=sch nuwa hebet dri-u al vier-u, schu}
\textit{even if have=they only} had three-F or four-F so
\textit{hest messu he der böch}.
\textit{have.2sg must have the billy.goat}
\‘Even if you only had three or four [goats] you had to have a billy-goat.’
Although this system shows a clear drift away from a typical Germanic OV syntax, it does not overlap perfectly with the syntax of Standard Italian or of neighboring Romance dialects either. Apart from clitics, which are always post-verbal, and the position of temporal adverbs and particles that never follow past participles or infinitives, in Remmaljertitschu indefinite objects may occupy (though this is not a rule) the position between auxiliary and past participle, which cannot occur in a VO language such as Italian (19):

\[(19)\] \[esch \ het \ njanfri \ hebet \ z \ psale.\]

she has nothing had to pay

‘She didn’t have anything to pay.’

Alongside word order, another central aspect differentiates subordination in these two Walser dialects, meaning the presence of borrowed complementizers. As discussed above, they are very rare in the dialect of Formazza whereas they constitute the majority in the dialect of Rimella, especially considering cases of composite complementizers such as \textit{anche schu} ‘even if’ (see 17). Besides the borrowing of coordinative conjunctions (\textit{ma} ‘but’) and a variety of connective adverbials (\textit{difatti} ‘actually’, \textit{invece} ‘instead’, \textit{comunque} ‘however’, etc.), this dialect has borrowed the causal conjunction \textit{parca} ‘because’ from local Piedmontese that has replaced all other possible competitors\(^{11}\) \((21–22)\). Besides, multifunctional \textit{ca} and \textit{che} (the latter from Standard Italian) have been borrowed as both relative pronoun and completive conjunction. In addition, they substitute a variety of composite conjunctions, all involving \textit{che} combined with a word expressing a temporal relation (\textit{prima che} ‘before that’, \textit{dopo che} ‘after that’, \textit{mentre che} ‘while that’) or with other adverbials such as \textit{ben che}, which attain a concessive meaning \((20)\). In short, \textit{che} has been borrowed as the prototypical (and

\[^{11}\text{One such causal conjunction, made of the combination of the interrogative adverbial \textit{uàrum} ‘why’ and the complementizer \textit{dafs} ‘that’, is attested in the 1830 translation of the “Prodigal Son” text (Schott 1842: 146): […] \textit{uàrum dafs} de\f{\textit{e}} \ din bríôder if g\textit{f}íd tüèd […] ‘because this brother of yours was dead’}.

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semantically neuter) marker of subordination, apt to occur in a variety of combinational patterns.¹²

(20) **ben che** schje gschit junge eh!
    **although** be.1PL been young eh
    ‘Although we have been young, haven’t we?’

(21) **endschandre**, d alpu het schech salvart **parca** er
    us the pasture has **REFL** saved **because** we
    **haje** gwercht fi.
    have worked well
    ‘As for us, our alpine pasture was maintained because we have worked well.’

(22) **ge=me** dra vanj hent=sch gmacht der schteg en=du
    remember=me of.it when have=they made the bridge in=the
    Nidru. **Parca** z irdscha isch nid gschit schtega schôta,
    Nidru. **because** at first is **NEG** been bridges so
    ah na.
    ah no
    ‘I remember when they made the bridge in Nidru [placename], because before there were no bridges or things like that.’

Examples (21–22) fairly well document two different values of *perché* ‘because’ in Italian: firstly, as a semantic connective, linking two states of affairs with a causal relation (21) and secondly, as a pragmatic connective, linking two speech acts and expressing the reason for uttering the previous statement (22). Only the former, which corresponds to Standard German *weil* followed by subordinate word order, constitutes a dependent clause relationship, whereas the latter presents a looser clause combining strategy, corresponding to German *denn* or to *weil* followed by verb-second word order. However, in the dialect of Rimella all of these markers are followed by the same word order as main clauses. As already mentioned, this is not peculiar to clauses introduced by borrowed (i.e. Romance) complementizers, but by all complementizers. The result is that subordination and coordination cannot be distinguished from each other on the basis of either word order or borrowing (both coordinating and subordinating conjunctions are borrowed).

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¹² See, on the contrary, the situation in Cimbrian (Bidese et al., this volume) where in mixed complementizer compounds expressing temporal or concessive meaning the Italian loanwords play the role of the modifier (*Bestimmungswort*) whereas the head (*Grundwort*) is made up by the autochthonous conjunction *az* ‘that’: intiânto *az* (‘while’), *fin/sin az* (‘until’ and ‘as long as’), *dopo az* (‘after’), ânka *az* (‘although’).
As already remarked elsewhere (Dal Negro 2000, 2011a), the dialects of Formazza and Rimella can be placed at different stages of a continuum that drifts away from a typical OV syntax in main and dependent clauses and moves towards a VO type. Both dialects present many analogies with Italo-Romance varieties, as well as different degrees of borrowing in the complementizers’ domain. Since today’s data from Rimella do not show any significant variation in this language domain, it is difficult to establish whether the difference between the two dialects can be interpreted as representing two diachronic steps in the development of syntax in Walser German or two inherently and originally different dialects.

Despite the sparse diachronic documentation available, it seems that those approximately hundred years that separate the texts collected by Schott (1842) in the 1830s and those recorded in 1929 by Gysling & Hotzenköcherle (1952) have been crucial to the syntactic transformations of Remmaljertitschu. Unlike what is found in traditional texts from Formazza (see above 12–13), the translation into Rimella of the parable of the prodigal son elicited by Schott (1842) displays the following peculiarities: subject clitics still attach to the complementizer, complex verb forms present the (typical for German) OV bracketing, but the finite verb does not occupy the final position in subordinate clauses:

(23) Rimella Walser German [Schott 1842: 144]

derna=er hèd alls vėrtād, if=mo g’chomd ėn=grośę hunger.

after=he has all consumed, is=him come a=great famine

‘After he had consumed all his goods, there came a severe famine.’

However, the same text is rich of examples in which “light” constituents (in particular adverbs, particles and clitics) do precede the finite verb in embedded clauses, thus leaving some vestige of a verb final syntax. Interestingly, such word order has completely disappeared in today’s grammar. Example (24) includes an instance of a completive clause in which the object clitic (s ‘it’) and the temporal adverb namma ‘again’ (beside the subject pronoun er ‘he’) precede the finite verb hèd ‘has’:

(24) Rimella Walser German [Schott 1842: 146]

vor dër vreido dafs=er=s namnę hèd g’fih’d g’fęnd-s.

for the:DAT:F joy that=he=it again has seen safe-NT:SG

‘Out of joy that he has seen him safe again.’

In the 1929 texts, on the other hand, all (documented) subject clitics attach to the main verb, which immediately follows the complementizer. The main clause
Bracketing is maintained as far as pronouns and particles are concerned (25), but no clear examples are available in case of full NPs. The situation revealed by the 1929 texts resembles very much the one that can be observed in today's spoken language.

(25) Rimella Walser German [Gysling & Hotzenköcherle 1952: 26]

\[ \text{Wjöö } \text{schint}= \text{sch} \text{ chòòmèd a } \text{wëssù, } \text{wòs } \text{isch}= \text{mü}= \text{nå} \]

how are=they come to know what is=her=then

gscheed.

happened

'As soon as they got to know what had happened to her.'

Finally, in these older texts no occurrences of borrowed complementizers can be found; in particular, there are no instances of Romance che or ca 'that'.

4.3 Complement clauses with utterance predicates

As a case study for complement relations in language varieties characterized by intense contact, I have chosen complement clauses introduced by so called verba dicendi, in particular by local variants of the German verb sagen 'to say'. This choice is motivated at several levels. Firstly, dealing mainly with (oral) narrative texts makes reported speech one of the prevailing discursive structures, thus making a large amount of comparable examples available. Secondly, reported speech gives the speaker the opportunity to choose among a range of variants, involving either complement clauses or alternative strategies (in particular direct speech and asyndeton). Finally, reporting others' voices in a multilingual setting constitutes a typical locus to set in a bilingual speech mode, thus allowing contact phenomena to emerge.

As a matter of fact, the analysis of both dialects shows that the vast majority of cases of reported speech introduced by 'to say' involve direct speech, a discourse strategy which requires little syntactic embedding, while attaining effective communicative results. The boundaries of direct speech are often marked by code-switching, of either alternational (the whole quoting is in a different language, as in 26) or insertional type (only a borrowed discourse marker is inserted and functions like a turn-taking device, as in 27).

13 Very frequent instances of borrowed complementizers can be found in the texts collected some decades later (during the 1960s) by Bauen (1999 [1978]).
(26) Rimella Walser German

\[ \text{nesch } \text{het}=\text{sch}=\text{mer} \quad \text{gschait: } \text{perché } \text{piangi?} \]

then has=he=me.DAT said: why do you cry?

‘Afterwards she asked me: why do you cry?’

(27) Formazza Walser German

\[ \text{het } \text{kset } \text{dem } \text{möti: } \text{ma } \text{bring-ät}=\text{s } \text{hiä!} \]

has said the.DAT.SG.NT mum but bring-2pl=it hier

‘(He) told mum to bring it here.’

As for indirect speech, asyndeton is a syntactic strategy that is exploited particularly in Pomattertitsch: here, the embedded status of reported speech is marked by the use of the subjunctive mood (due to the lack of a complementizer), as it happens in modern Standard German (28).

(28) as \ hät \ gsät \ äs \ erwach-ä \ zäche \ minüt

it has said it awaken-SBJV.PRS.3SG ten minutes

vor=um zit.

before=the.M.SG.DAT time

‘He said that he would wake up ten minutes before the appointment.’

Again, the situation in Remmaljertittschu is quite different. There are some (rare) cases of asyndeton but, unlike Standard German and Pomattertitsch, the subjunctive form does not mark the embedded status (29). Nonetheless, this does not depend on a loss of subjunctive forms, because, as observed by Bauen (1999: 212), the subjunctive is still in use in marking non-factual modality in subordinate clauses introduced by verbs such as ‘to think’ or ‘to believe’, as it also occurs in Italian. Similarly, it is difficult to say whether in (30) the subjunctive mood is triggered by the verb in the main clause (\textit{paisaru} ‘I think’) or by the non-factual modality of the embedded clause\textsuperscript{14}, although not by its embedded status.

(29) \text{min aju } \text{het gschait er } \text{het}=\text{schu } \text{gmacht } \text{gruwe}.

my mum has said he has=them made rough

‘My mum said that her father made them [cookies] in a lumpy form.’

\textsuperscript{14} On the other hand, the role of the loanword \textit{che} as a trigger for subjunctive mood is to be ruled out because it occurs in a variety of contexts not requiring the subjunctive mood.
Finally, explicit complement clauses introduced by a complementizer are also well documented in both dialects. The form of this complementizer is again a relevant factor that sets the two dialects apart. In Pomattertitsch most of the cases present the form *das* (Standard German *dass* ‘that’, see 31), corresponding to the neuter singular form of the distal deictic (exactly like the English *that*). In Remmaljertittschu the usual complementizers *das* and *des*, corresponding respectively to the proximate ‘this’ and the distal ‘that’ neuter deictics, do not seem to occur in the context of reported speech. They are replaced by the borrowed conjunction *che* (32). Remarkably, *das* and *des* have also already extended their range of functions to include relative clauses, beside complement clauses, thus calquing the multifunctionality of the Italian *che* (see Dal Negro 2011b for a more detailed account on this topic). Yet, at the same time, the loanword *che* is also expanding its domain in the system, starting from indirect speech contexts and gaining ground over its competitors elsewhere.

Significantly, the only occurrence of *che* as a complementizer on its own in the data from Formazza is attested in a context of reported speech (33), which is uttered by a fluent (elderly) speaker. In this specific example, however, the degree of embedding is not very high since the complement clause introduced by *che* functions as a right dislocated direct object.

15 The subjunctive here does not mark subordination as such (since the complementizer is present) but rather the category of evidentiality: in this case the speaker distances herself from the statement that someone might have seen a wolf.

(30) **paisar-u che eswelz chen-t-et.**
think-1sg that someone come-SBJV.PST-3SG
‘I think that someone might come.’
(33) Formazza Walser German
\[ un \ da \ het\text{-}er\text{-}mär \ kset \ äso, \ dem \ choch, \ che \ er \]
and there has\text{-}he\text{-}me said so, the\text{-}DAT\text{-}M cook that he
\[ sille \ aper \ z \ ässä \ gä. \]
should\text{-}SBJV\text{-}PRIS down the eating give

‘And then he told me, the cook, that he should go downstairs to serve the meals.’

Reported speech therefore becomes the crossroads discourse domain in which several variants are at stake, and where the boundary between subordination and coordination is looser. Furthermore, the boundary between languages may turn out to be discursively meaningful and consequently trigger borrowing.

5 Conclusions

The two dialects of Walser German under investigation here are similar from many points of view, but differ in their sociolinguistic history, especially as regards contact with Italo-Romance varieties. Their contrastive analysis has proved to be a fruitful case study in the domain of complementizers and word-order developments.

Comparing the diachronic documentation available for both dialects leads to infer that the asymmetry between subordinate and non subordinate clauses is the first OV correlate to be lost, followed by a progressive reduction of bracketing both in main and subordinate clauses. A crucial factor accompanying the development of a VO word order in subordinate clauses seems to have been the typological change of clitic pronouns, from second position to verbal clitics, thus causing the spread of VS structures. These changes have probably taken place during the 19th century in the case of Rimella and almost one century later in the case of Formazza. In both cases they probably correspond sociolinguistically to a rapid increase in individual and community bilingualism. Whether it is code-switching that favors structural isomorphism or the other way round (which seems to be more likely on the basis of these dialects) is still to be demonstrated. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that an increased overlapping of syntactic structures must have provided more switching points and may have eventually triggered code-switching and code-mixing.

However, what our data clearly show is that in these two dialects the borrowing of complementizers has followed structural convergence and has been probably triggered by it as well as by code-mixing practices. In contrast, the diachronic documentation seems to rule out the hypothesis that innovative
(and convergent) word orders are triggered by the adoption of borrowed complementizers.

**Abbreviations**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>clitic boundary</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>morpheme boundary</td>
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<td>.</td>
<td>one-to-many correspondences</td>
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<td>ACC</td>
<td>accusative</td>
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<td>singular</td>
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**References**


