# Structural interaction between German and Italian: adversative particles in South Tyrolean and Walser varieties

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Our proposal deals with two Upper German varieties spoken in Northern Italy: on one side the obsolescent Alemannic dialect group spoken in Piedmont and Aosta Valley (Walser), on the other side the large South Bavarian area of South Tyrol. These areas represent a considerably complex and varied field of study for both dialectology and contact linguistics. First of all, different diatopic varieties on both sides of the Germanic-Romance border are involved. Secondly, all of these Germanic and Romance languages and dialect groups establish very different sociolinguistic relationships, resulting in a variety of complex, multilayered speech community patterns and, consequently, a variety of language contact phenomena, different both in nature and in frequency.

As abundantly shown in previous studies, connective words are frequently involved in language contact phenomena, in the form of occasional borrowings, as recurring switching points in bilingual speech, or as loanwords that can be found in many languages all over the world. This significance and recurrence in language contact areas is surely related to the fact that connective words are usually multifunctional, displaying a variety of roles and distributional patterns both in pragmatic and structural terms.

Within the domain of connective words, those marking contrast have proven to rank very high on various borrowability scales cross-linguistically and within single languages. The fact that adversative values are further strengthened by the contrastive effect produced by code switching has been called for as a reasonable explanation (see for example Maschler 1997), but the picture is more complex than that and other explanatory points of view have been put forward (Matras 2009). All of them, however, remark the special status of contrast in contact linguistics. Moreover, adversative words, such as *ma* or *aber* 'but', seem to be treated differently in language contact according to the functions and structural position they assume within the utterance. For instance, adversative particles used as discourse markers are frequently transferred as single-item switches, while adversative conjunctions at the clause boundary seem to have a higher chance to trigger a complete switch to L2.

The variability within the different contact situations mentioned above represents an additional and crucial factor deeply affecting the nature of the observed contact phenomena, not only in terms of the extension and directionality of the switch but also in terms of the specific functions these items may assume according to different dialect varieties. The interplay of structural and pragmatic constraints on one side, and of sociolinguistic factors on the other, offers an ideal field for the investigation of variation in borrowing of connective words. In particular, our research project aims at investigating whether borrowed adversative particles specialize in specific functions and distributional patterns, and whether this specialization is a function of sociolinguistic factors such as bilingualism type and degree in speech communities and individuals.

These hypotheses will be tested against two datasets involving different contact situations:

1. a corpus of spoken Bavarian collected in South Tyrol, an officially bilingual (Italian-German) region in North-Eastern Italy, in which different degrees of individual and community bilingualism (and monolingualism) coexist (for this reason we will select data from two different speech communities);
2. a corpus of spoken Alemannic varieties collected in two Walser communities in North-Western Italy, in which the type and degree of contact between local German dialects and surrrounding Romance languages and dialects vary significantly.

Our analysis will consider distributional patterns of Italian *ma* and local equivalents of German *aber*, taking into account relevant linguistic factors, such as function of adversative particles, their occurrence in recurrent word combinations, their position within (or without) the sentence and the triggering of code switching. These distributional patterns will be correlated with sociolinguistic factors such as dimension of the speech community, its linguistic repertoire and the degree and type of bilingualism observed in our data.

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