A Comparative Study on Syntactic Transfer in L2 and L3 school-aged English learners in Sweden

The acquisition of the English existential expletive subject

Carles Fuster Sansalvador
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Abstract
Various studies have indicated during the past decade that language transfer in L3 may not only stem from L1 but from L2 as well, and that it might sometimes even be stronger from L2, depending on certain factors that facilitate or inhibit transfer. This phenomenon of L2 as the main transfer source in L3 has often been referred to as the “L2 status factor” (Hammarberg, 2001). The L2 status factor hypothesis expects that the priorly acquired language which scores the highest in several transfer factors will adopt the role of ”external supplier language” (Hammarberg, 2001), i.e. it will be the main source of transfer providing L3 with linguistic features. Namely, the factors that have hitherto been proposed to condition transfer are: typology, psychotypology, proficiency, and psychoaffective factors. The aim of this investigation is to compare the transfer that two groups might exhibit with regard to the English existential expletive pronoun (there), in order to account to whether transfer in L3 might be stronger from L2 than from L1 in this syntactic context. One group consists of subjects with different L1s, L2 Swedish and L3 English; the other is formed by L1 Swedish and L2 English speakers. The informants are aged 13-14, speak the L1s and Swedish (nearly) fluently and English at a basic/intermediate level. Basing the study on the L2 status factor hypothesis, and taking several transfer factors into consideration when analyzing the collected written data, the results are discussed both from a general perspective (from aggregate group scores) and from a micro-perspective (by tracing individual differences). The results obtained suggest that transfer in L3 appears to be stronger from L2 than from L1 when evaluating the aggregate group scores, but only in some cases (and not in most) when examining the individuals separately.

Keywords
transfer, cross-linguistic, expletive, existential, there-construction, L1, L2, L3, L2-status, acquisition, foreign-language, SLA, second language, third language, micro-perspective, external supplier language, typology, psychotypology
1. Introduction

Plurilingualism has long been considered as frequent in the world’s societies as monolingualism, sometimes even as the default status in humans (De Bot, 1992). This consideration is already a valid enough reason to study the processes of foreign-language learning and of the multilingual mind.

In the research field of second language acquisition (SLA), earlier studies compared language learning between monolinguals and bilinguals and acknowledged i.a. that born-bilinguals from an early age develop a greater capacity to analyze structural language properties (Hakuta and Díaz, 1985). Such differences between monolinguals and bilinguals made it interesting to also study the acquisition of other languages than the mother tongue(s), and the research area of second- and foreign-language acquisition has widened considerably in the past decades, with multilingual considerations becoming more complex. To start with, the distinction between ”second” and ”third” language can be controversial: e.g., children may have a mother tongue (henceforth L1), learn several languages at school and later on a further one to such an extent that their L1 weakens (De Bot et al., 2005). Some researchers order a polyglot’s languages in terms of proficiency, others in time of acquisition, or even in settings of use (De Bot et al., 2005). In addition, the denominations of second language and foreign-language are neither uncontroversial. The present paper assumes the usual definition that a second language (L2) is spoken (nearly) fluently by the members of a society and needed for basic purposes such as employment or education (Saville-Troike, 2006). A foreign-language, on the other hand, is typically learned almost exclusively at school and for specific purposes, e.g. with international contacts, and not widely used in the learner’s immediate social context (Saville-Troike). In this sense, English is to an increasing extent nowadays considered as an L2 rather than a foreign-language in Sweden, due to its strong position academically and societally (Håkansson, 2003), a view adopted in this paper, too.

Another complex issue in SLA is how a multilingual is influenced by priorly acquired languages when learning a subsequent language. SLA studies have long been concerned with how L1 and L2 acquisition differ from each other and have acknowledged that L2 can be subject to interference from L1 (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Flege, 1987). For example, Piske et al. (2001) state that ”the more fully developed the L1 system is when L2 commences, the more strongly the L1 will influence the L2” (p.196). However, aspects of L3 acquisition (or further languages thereof) still constitute a more unexplored area that reaches far beyond that of L2, and cross-linguistic influence considerations need be further investigated. Questions that still remain unclear are, for instance, how the process of L3 acquisition differs from that of L2, which prior language(s) L3 is mostly influenced by, the influence extent of different variables (language backgrounds, gender, proficiency, motivation, etc), or whether influences in L3 stem equally from the same language in different language areas (in phonology, syntax, vocabulary, etc).

Whilst it has commonly been assumed that the process of L3 acquisition is similar, or even the same, to that of L2, some L3 acquisition studies have recently indicated that this assumption may not be valid and that interferences in L3 may not only come from

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Although some studies (most in the 1980s) distinguish between learning and acquisition in terms of consciousness and subconsciousness (Ortega, 2009), here they are used interchangeably.
L1 but also from L2 (e.g. Hammarberg, 2001; De Angelis & Selinker, 2001; Boëchat, 2008; and Green, 2000). Leading their attention toward the issue of cross-linguistic influences, researchers have identified a central variable: the L2. Among others, Hammarberg (2001) concludes that "knowledge of prior L2s can exert considerable influence on the learner’s L3" (p.43). The phenomenon of "activating" L2 production in L3 has been identified to depend on several factors (both language-based and learner-based) and described as a special cognitive mode by which L3 production may be characterized (De Angelis and Selinker, 2001). Although there are different terms referring to this phenomenon, perhaps the most intensively used today is the L2 status (Hammarberg, 2001; Boëchat, 2008). When the L2 is "activated" in L3 production more than is the L1, it might be said that the L2 has a "higher" or "predominant" status in L3 production. This "activation" is referred to as transfer, a key word in this paper. Saville-Troike (2006) describes transfer as the learner’s usage, whether conscious or subconscious, of inner grammar used in a language that s/he is acquiring. More specifically, it can be described as “the incorporation of features of any previously acquired language in the TL” (Odlin, 1989: 72). An example of transfer from one of the first studies on L3 acquisition is illustrated below; showing a subject with L1 Chinese, L2 English, and L3 German producing sentences where the frequency adverb appears preverbally as in English but not as in German or Chinese, where adverbials are postverbal.

(1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Er</th>
<th>immer</th>
<th>trainiert</th>
<th>auf</th>
<th>dem</th>
<th>Sportplatz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>trains</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>sport.place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Welge, 1987)

Here, the speaker was transferring the English rule of frequency adverbs placed preverbally to German, despite L1 Chinese and L3 German both placing frequency adverbs postverbally. This is also an example of the L2 status phenomenon, where features from L2 in L3 are transferred more strongly than from L1. Nevertheless, the reasons for the occurrence of the L2 status phenomenon are not yet completely clear, although various factors have been proposed to facilitate or inhibit transfer from L2. The probably most mentioned transfer factors are proficiency, the language knowledge a learner possesses; psychotypology, the learner’s perceived similarity between the languages (Gass and Selinker, 2008); and typology, the actual similarity between the languages (see section 2.1.2 for more details).

In order to study transfer, studies have focused on different language features. The most intensively studied feature has probably been word order (Odlin, 1989); along with nouns, articles, adverbs, numerals, prepositions, conjunctions, and subject-verb concord. Köhlmyr (2001) offers an overview of the typical grammatical errors sixteen-years-old Swedes commit, mentioning the grammatical subjects it and there and the pronounal so, which do not seem to have been studied with regard to transfer in plurilingual scenarios yet. As she notes, it and there both correspond to Swedish det in their function as grammatical subjects (or "dummy subjects"). Köhlmyr states that the subject there

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2 TL stands for "target language".
created most difficulties for the learners: often, *there* was substituted by *it*; sometimes, structures with grammatical subjects were avoided altogether. On this topic, Fisher (1985) has earlier on investigated subject-verb concord in English among Swedish university students, also finding various problems related to grammatical subject *there*. One of the difficulties with concord was related to the syntactical context of the subject and to the expectation of the logical subject, as in *I hope there are some more money* (Fisher, 1985) (NB *pengar*, Swedish for *money*, usually appears with the plural affix *-ar*). However, it has not yet been compared whether subjects who are studying English but have another L1 than Swedish and Swedish as an L2 would exhibit as many difficulties as did Köhlmry’s (L1 Swedish) subjects.

Finally, the importance of cross-linguistic transfer studies is that they can provide with insights about the roles a polyglot’s languages play when acquiring further languages. In turn, a better understanding of the roles which an L1 and L2 play when acquiring an L3 may contribute to relevant applications for a future overall theory of language acquisition in linguistics and psycho- and neurolinguistics, as well as to language teaching theories.

### 1.1 Aim and research questions

This research project intends to compare the transfer that two groups of eight subjects (table 1) with different language backgrounds might exhibit with regard to the grammatical subject *there*: will these participants present the same types of transfer pattern? Specifically, the research questions are:

- May transfer from L2 Swedish to L3 English be stronger than from L1x to L3 English, at least in this specific syntactic context?
- What differences can be identified in the transfer behaviour in L3 English between the L2 Swedish participants regarding their production, or lack thereof, of the subject *there*, and what factors might be contributing to these possible differences?

#### Table 1. The subjects’ language backgrounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGES</th>
<th>GROUP 1 (8 subjects)</th>
<th>GROUP 2 (8 subjects)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>Danish, Polish, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Amharic, Arabic</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the participants have the constant variables of being aged 13-14, studying at 8th grade of middle school in Stockholm, speaking Swedish (nearly) fluently and of having a basic/intermediate proficiency level in English (A1-A2)³. The independent variable is that of having different L1s, illustrated in table 1.

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³ Proficiency levels roughly based on the *Common European Framework for References of Languages.*
Here, an important issue that must be addressed is that, as usually in investigations, the participants’ languages have been classified as "L1", "L2" and "L3". Nevertheless, in the same way that the definitions of monolingualism versus bilingualism are controversial, there is contrasting evidence in SLA and in the field of bilingualism and a debate on how a multilingual’s languages should be ordered. Researchers usually order them in terms of time of acquisition or in terms of proficiency; and in the case that the speaker has acquired several languages from birth, they can even be ordered in terms of settings of use (De Bot et al., 2005). In this study, the participants’ languages have been ordered in terms of time of acquisition. This choice does not only depend on the observation that some informants were not "completely" fluent in Swedish in what is often referred to as in a "native-like" manner, and on the participants themselves reporting other languages as their L1s. Also, the choice depends on recent claims that age effects may be present in additional languages as early as age two (Ortega, 2009). A problem today is that there is no clear-cut answer and there is a debate concerning what should be considered "early bilingualism", versus "bilingualism", versus "multilingualism", at the same time that an exact definition of what "full" command in a language is does not exist and a strict definition of bilingualism is therefore neither possible (De Bot et al., 2005). For example Flege et al. (1995) found very early L2 users not achieving the "native-like" pronunciation assumed of pre-adolescent speakers learning additional languages. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003) state that there exist important morphosyntactic differences in the written and spoken performance of extremely young L2 staters. Furthermore, Sebastián-Gallés et al. (2005) presented results indicating that the speakers who had learnt Spanish from birth and Catalan later than from birth but nonetheless earlier than by age four scored "less well” on a lexical decision task containing Catalan words, than those informants who had learnt both Spanish and Catalan simultaneously from birth. Thus, suchlike results contradict other SLA claims for age effects in L2 acquisition, which have been produced assuming a much later biological window, around age six or even up to 15 (Ortega, 2009). As Ortega (2009) discusses, "if age effects do set in as extremely early in life as age two, the long-held assumption that an early start guarantees complete L2 acquisition loses much of its power. Moving the onset of age effects into the very first years of life also blurs the traditional distinction between L2 and bilingual learners” (p. 25). Considering these discussions and that the subjects spoke a primary language different than Swedish during their first year of life, in this thesis their languages have been ordered in terms of acquisition, disregarding for a moment the level of proficiency or the "native-(un)likeness” of each subject in each of his/her languages.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Previous research on transfer in L3

Firstly, it must be mentioned that transfer can be either positive or negative. Positive transfer does not lead to ungrammaticalities, i.e. the transferred feature is shared between the two languages. On the other hand, the so-called errors of commission, which usually lead to inappropriate usage of the target language (TL) (Ortega, 2009), characterize negative transfer. However, sometimes negative transfer occurs in the form of avoidance, or errors of omission, which do not lead to noticeable ungrammaticalities (Ortega, 2009). In example (1), for instance, the speaker transferred the English rule that
frequency adverbs are preverbal to German, where they are postverbal, thus resulting in an ungrammaticality in German, i.e. resulting in negative transfer. Moreover, when transfer in the TL disappears as the learner’s proficiency increases, it may be said that it was a feature of the learner’s interim-language. Selinker (1972) coined this concept as a sort of ”in-between language” or ”interlanguage” containing linguistic features both from the L2 and the L1, of which the latter are temporary and typical of language development (Håkansson, 2003). Kohn (1986) states that ”transfer is one of the major factors shaping the learner’s interlanguage competence and performance” (p.21).

As previously mentioned, several studies have recently suggested that the knowledge of an L2 is relevant in L3 acquisition, and that the L2 status phenomenon occurs when transfer is predominant from L2 rather than from L1. ”The L2 status” phenomenon (Hammarberg, 2001) has also been referred to as the foreign language effect (Meisel, 1983) and the talk foreign mode (De Angelis & Selinker, 2001). Although it cannot be denied that transfer in L3 can stem from L1, it cannot either be assumed that L1 therefore is the only transfer source in L3, nor that it is the main transfer source in every situation. Various studies have indeed proposed that transfer sources from L2 in L3 could be more dominant than those from L1 (e.g. Cenoz and Jessner, 2000; Hammarberg, 2001). Several factors have been discussed to influence transfer in L3 production: typology, recency4, proficiency, L2 status and psychoaffective factors (Williams and Hammarberg, 1998; Lightbown and Spada, 2006; Hammarberg, 2001; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Ortega, 2009). Regarding these factors, Hammarberg (2001) concludes that the [learner’s] language that best meets these conditions will probably be activated as a supplier, i.e. the priorly acquired language that has the highest scores in each of the mentioned factors will be the main language from which transfer stems in L3 production. In a similar fashion, Green (2000) mentions that there are separable mental subsystems mediating comprehension and production of languages which underlie different languages, and suggests that multilinguals may tend to choose a mental ”base language” which is the most active of all their non-native languages, and which is the main source of transfer.

However, exactly what role each of the previously acquired languages plays in L3 acquisition or whether any of them plays a major role is unclear, and there is still no consensus either in whether transfer acts as a communicative strategy to overcome the lack of proficiency in L3 or whether it is a source of involuntary ”errors”.

In sum, several researchers seem to be similarly examining the reasons for the occurrence of the same phenomenon: that of polyglots choosing (consciously or not) a previously acquired language (which may be L2) as the prominent language influencing production in L3. Moreover, researchers agree that multiple factors contribute to language transfer (e.g. Meisel, De Angelis and Selinker, Gass and Selinker, Hammarberg, Cenoz & Jessner, Green), and none of them in isolation has been argued to play a more significant role than the other.

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4 Henceforth the term frequency (of use) will substitute that of recency. The reason for this is that recency has a connotation of how recently, i.e. how long ago, a person last spoke a language, whereas frequency focuses on how frequently a subject uses a language. Because the subjects in this study are school-aged, it seems rather unlikely that they might have stopped using a language many years ago, but they may speak it more or less frequently.
2.1.2 Factors influencing transfer

Here, the aforementioned factors that have been proposed to facilitate or inhibit transfer are described. When analyzing the performance in English of the two test groups, these factors will need to be accounted for, as they might explain the reasons for differences in the behaviour regarding the use, or lack thereof, of the subject *there*.

- **Typology**: the linguistic similarity between languages. Researchers seem to be in consensus that the stronger the similarities between the languages, the higher the chances that learners assume that the structures are the same (Gass and Selinker, 2008), and thus the higher the probability of language transfer (Hammarberg, 2001; Williams and Hammarberg, 1998). Note that genealogy is not the only aspect for similarity, as sometimes languages loan great amounts of features from other language families, becoming very different in appearance from their sister languages.

- **Psychotypology**: Kellerman (1979; cited in Ortega, 2009) introduced the term *transferability* to refer to the function of a learner’s intuition (conscious or subconscious) about how transferrable a language feature is. Lately the term *psychotypology* has been used instead, referring to the learner’s perception of the distance between languages (De Angelis, 2007), which may not necessarily correspond to the actual typological distance. Thus, psychotypology depends on how much linguistically aware the learner is to notice the similarity between L1 and TL features. Perceived "language-specific" features are less likely to be transferred than those perceived as more "language-universal" (Ortega, 2009). This means that the closer two languages are perceived, the higher the likelihood of transfer between them.

- **Proficiency**: the level of competence and performance in language. The proficiency factor is important because when learners do not know certain areas of the TL, the manner in which they solve the language problem can lead to ungrammaticalities (Gass and Selinker, 2008). Most researchers agree that negative transfer occurs more frequently at lower levels of proficiency in the TL (Odlin, 1989).

- **Frequency of use**: the more often a language is used, the "fresher" the linguistic information available in the brain is, and thus the higher its probability to be activated in L3 production. For instance Grosjean (2001), mentions that L2 phonology may remain active in the process of L3 speech because of its recency and intensity of use.

- **L2 status**: refers to the "status" that L2 has in the speaker’s "mental group of languages". Described as the activation of L2 production in L3 interlanguage (Williams and Hammarberg, 1998), Hammarberg (2001) later on further explains that the speaker may "desire" to suppress the L1 into a [mental] group of "non-foreign languages" and to use a prior L2 (rather than L1) as a strategy to approach the L3. Thus, according to the L2 status factor hypothesis, the L2 will be a stronger source of transfer than the L1, because the learning processes of L2 and L3 are cognitively more similar to each other than to the process of L1. In other words, the fact that both the L2 and the L3 have the same status of "foreign" languages renders the L2 more probable to be activated than L1, which has a "non-foreign" status, in early L3. When this occurs, the L2 has taken on the "external supplier role", providing the interlanguage with linguistic features in
L3 production; a role that decreases as proficiency in L3 increases (Hammarberg, 2001).

2.2. Existential clauses and expletives typologically and in the Swedish language

Expletive subjects refer to those subjects which do not add any semantical meaning to the sentence but merely fill a syntactic gap which the language in question does not allow to remain empty (Vikner, 1995; Hartamann, 2008). They occur in different sentences such as weather sentences (it is raining) or in extrapositions (it was obvious that…). However, for reasons of limited space and time, this thesis will only focus on expletive subjects in the existential construction of there, which introduces that something exists (there are people here).

Haspelmath et al. (2001) define the existential as a sentence with a theme argument associated with a location argument and which is indefinite. Yet the world’s languages exhibit a wide variation in the existential construction: some have be or have copulae, others a pro-form (e.g. French il y, lit. "he LOC3"); and in other languages such as Japanese, the subject of the existential is a locative phrase (3). Roughly, the analysis of the existential sentences which have been studied hitherto may be divided into two groups: an existential with an expletive in subject position (2), and an existential and a predicate locative sentence which are treated as derivationally related, as in example (3) (Haspelmath et al., 2001):

(2) **There is a pterodactyl in her barn** (Haspelmath et al., 2001)

(3) **A pterodactyl is in her barn** (Haspelmath et al., 2001)

Most existentials in the Germanic languages have not locative pro-forms, as Japanese does, but use a non-locative expletive pronoun in initial position, which functions as grammatical subject (e.g. Swedish det "it" or German es ”it”), as shown in (4), and thus appear to have rather unlocative structures (Vikner, 1995). However, a few Germanic languages have lexically locative existential pro-forms which are, exceptionally, in subject position: English there, Danish der and Dutch er ("there"). Nevertheless this is not the case in Swedish, where pronoun det corresponds to both it and there in English, as illustrated in (4) and (5). Note in (4) that both verbs in det finns and det är often correspond to there is/are, even if they can have slightly different nuances depending on the context.

(4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Det</th>
<th>finns / är</th>
<th>tre</th>
<th>hus</th>
<th>på</th>
<th>denna</th>
<th>gata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>find-PRES.PASS / be-PRES</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>houses</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"**There** are three houses in this street"

5 LOC stands for locative, PASS for passive voice, PRES for present tense.
"It is cold in here"

2.2.1 The existential constructions in the participants’ languages

Table 2 illustrates a brief analysis of the existential constructions in each language, based on a careful analysis of grammar references.

Table 2. Typology of the languages with regard to their existential constructions (interrogative constructions excluded).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGES</th>
<th>LOCATIVE EXPLETIVE</th>
<th>UNLOCATIVE EXPLETIVE</th>
<th>EXISTENTIAL AND PREDICATIVE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong> (West Germanic) (Grzegorek, 1980)</td>
<td>there + be + NP + (locative or time)</td>
<td>(locative or time) + there + be + NP</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Swedish</strong> (North Germanic) (Gast &amp; Haas, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Det + vara/finnas + NP + (locative or time)</td>
<td>(locative or time) + vara/finnas + (det) + NP * (Det - &quot;it&quot;, vara - &quot;be&quot; copula, finnas - &quot;find.PASS&quot;)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Danish</strong> (North Germanic) (Gast and Haas, 2011)</td>
<td>Der + være/findes + NP + (locative or time)</td>
<td>(locative or time) + være/findes + (der) + NP * (Der - &quot;there&quot;, være - &quot;be&quot; copula, findes - &quot;find.PASS&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polish</strong> (West Slavic) (Grzegorek, 1980)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(locative or time) + być (or a lexical function) + NP</td>
<td></td>
<td>Na peronie bylo wiele starych kobiet. Lit. &quot;On platform were many old women&quot; &quot;There were many old women on the platform&quot; (Grzegorek, 1980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LANGUAGES</td>
<td>LOCATIVE EXPLETIVE</td>
<td>UNLOCATIVE EXPLETIVE</td>
<td>EXISTENTIAL AND PREDICATIVE</td>
<td>EXAMPLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Bulgarian**<br>(South Slavic)<br>(Mladenova, 2007) | | | NP + *imati* + (locative or time)<br>*imati* + NP + (locative or time)<br>**(imati - "have" copula)* | *Glad*ĭ veliki ima tamo.<br>Lit. "hunger great has there"
"There is a great famine there" (Demina, 1971; cited in Mladenova, 2007) |
| **Serbo-Croatian**<br>(South Slavic)<br>(Creissels, 2014) | | | as in Bulgarian, *imati* copula. | *Ima jedna cura u sokaku mome.*
Lit. "has one girl in street"
"There is a girl in my street" (title of a song, cited in Creissels 2014) |
| **Literary Arabic**<br>(Arabic)<br>(Al-Kulaib, 2010) | | | *fii* + NP + (locative or time) | *Ma-fii*-š kitab
Lit. "not-there-not book"
"There is no book" (Egyptian Arabic)
(Eid, 1993; cited in Al-Kulaib, 2010) |
| **Egyptian (spoken) Arabic**<br>(Arabic)<br>(Eid, 1993; cited in Al-Kulaib, 2010) | | | *fii* + NP + (locative or time)<br>* (fii - verbal "there" copula) In Literary Arabic, *fii* (non-deictic "there") can be considered an expletive existential verb (rather than expletive subject). In Egyptian Arabic, Eid (1993) also argues that *fii* behaves like verbs, as verbal negation *mu*Š is hosted within it in negative sentences, as in the example here. | |
Table 2 shows that all of the languages involved in this study except Swedish, Danish, and English, form the existential construction through an existential and a predicate which are derivationally related. Swedish uses an "unlocative" expletive pronoun (det) and Danish and English a locative one (der/there). Note that (spoken) Egyptian Arabic was included in the analyses because an L1 Arabic informant uses Standard Arabic to write but speaks the Egyptian dialect.

What these analyses confirm is that none of the L1s from group 1 uses the same syntactic existential construction than L2 Swedish. That is, if variable 1 (L1X) and 2 (L2 Swedish) are clearly distinguished, then it will be easier to identify which of them influences variable 3 (L3 English).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 The subjects

Apart from the information on the subjects mentioned in section 1.1, it must be explained that the reasons for choosing schoolchildren is related to previous claims (e.g. in Hammarberg, 2001) that transfer decreases as proficiency in the TL increases. Thus, I needed to find subjects who had not achieved a high proficiency in English but who were old enough to translate a 125-words text and answer several questionnaires (see section 3.2); a profile that fitted middle-school students. Furthermore, eighth grade was specifically chosen because the first school from whom I received a participation confirmation reported that most of their multilingual pupils were at this grade. Thereafter, I asked several schools whether they had any polyglot eighth graders who wanted to participate. Table 3 illustrates each subject and her/his L1 (NB the subjects’ names here are fictional).
The questionnaire and the other data elicitation tools are available in the appendices.

6 The questionnaire and the other data elicitation tools are available in the appendices.
In the final part of this method, the participants were asked to translate a 125-words text from English into Swedish. This text was adapted from two reading comprehensions texts from an English book for fifth graders and another for eighth graders, into a simpler text. It contained three instances of the det är-structure and three of the det finns-structure.

The possible risk of the translation task was that the subjects might notice that it intended to elicit their performance on the existential construction (affecting their "natural" performance), which is the reason why there appeared only three instances of each verb used in the Swedish construction (vara and finnas).

The choice for written data in this investigation is partly due to reasons of space and time limitations. In addition, when investigating "general" transfer in a TL, naturalistic techniques can be used. For instance in a written free production task or in a conversation, transfer may be observed in different language areas (lexical "inventions", language shifts, etc.). Nevertheless, if transfer in a certain feature is to be studied, as in this case (the subject there), naturalistic production would dubiously provide with sufficient instances of the feature to be able to observe any tendencies - consider how many times there would "naturally" be used in a 125-words conversation - and it would suppose more difficulties in having the subjects to use there each six times and in similar sentences. Furthermore, in naturalistic production, subjects can easily avoid using the concrete feature if it is not fully acquired (Ortega, 2009).

On the contrary, prompted techniques tend to generate enough instances of a particular syntactical feature (Gass and Mackey, 2007) in tasks that need not be so thorough. A "disadvantage" of a written task is that the subjects have more time to self-repair. However, if high amounts of transfer are nonetheless exhibited, they are more veritable than those exhibited, for instance, in speech, which could be argued to be slips of the tongue due to the natural spontaneity and velocity of speech.

Lastly, before analyzing the data, several participants who had translated only a couple of sentences in the translation task were excluded. A few other had only translated some sentences or parts of sentences, but these subjects were included because they had nonetheless translated all the corresponding constructions of the there-structure. The remaining in group 1 were eight participants. In order to have the same amount of subjects in group 2, eight participants were randomly chosen.

The data was manually analyzed by aggregating group scores and tracing individual differences, as well as by illustrating their language backgrounds and psychotypologies visually. The choice of tracing individual differences is that whilst it has been pointed out that there are enormous differences between learners (e.g. De Bot et al., 2005), the micro-level description of the individual’s performance is not always accounted for (Freeman, 2006) in SLA.

4. Results

Here, the empirical results of this investigation are presented in two subchapters: one for the aggregate group scores and the other for the individual scores and differences. In the subsection for the individual results, the analyses are first with regard to the
performance of the grammatical subject *there*, and then these are discussed in relation to the influencing transfer factors.

### 4.1 Aggregate group scores

The exhibited translations were categorized into a total of four patterns (diagrams 1, 2, 3):

1. The pronoun *det* appropriately translated with *there*. Subject-verb concord ungrammaticalities were often exhibited (e.g. *there is many banks*). However, because the scope of this paper concentrates on the grammatical subject alone and due to space limitations, those results regarding verb forms were excluded.

2. The negatively transferred pronoun *it*, e.g.:

   **ORIGINAL SENTENCE:**
   
   Det finns många banker och affärshyttnader... (TL: "There are many banks and business buildings...").

   **TRANSLATION BY SANDRA, L1 SWEDISH:**
   
   It's many banks and business buildings...

3. The pronoun in the existential construction was omitted, e.g.:

   **ORIGINAL SENTENCE:**
   
   ..., men det är en man som jobbar på den restaurangen ... ("... but there is a man who works at that restaurant...")

   **TRANSLATION BY OLGA, L1 POLISH:**
   
   ..., but is a man who works at that resturant ...

4. The existential construction was changed to other grammatical structures, e.g:

   **ORIGINAL SENTENCE:**
   
   ..., som vet var det finns butiker... ("...who knows where there are cloth stores...")

   **TRANSLATION BY LUCIA, L1 SWEDISH:**
   
   ... that knows where to find cloths stores...
Diagram 1 illustrates the scores of the two groups in each of the above mentioned exhibited translation patterns of the Swedish existential construction into English. The number 48 on the y-axis refers to the 48 possible translations for each group. From diagram 1, no great differences between the two test groups are observed in any translation pattern:

1. Group 1 exhibits only one more hit with *there* (24/48) than group 2.
2. Group 2 transfers the pronoun *it* (18/48) more often than group 1, as might be expected due to the fact of group 2 having L1 Swedish, but nonetheless the difference was only of three more hits.
3. Subject omissions were more frequent in group 1 (3/48) (as expected due to the L1s' typologies), but nonetheless uncommon in both groups (in group 2 with 1/48).
4. Both groups managed exactly as many times to overcome the difficulties of the existential construction by changing it to other constructions which are grammatical (6/48).

Thus, these results seem to indicate that both groups have as many difficulties with the English expletive *there*, as group 1 used it 50% of the instances and group two 47.9%. In addition, the first pattern (translation with *there*) and the second (with *it*) are considerably more common than the latter two (subject omission and changed structure). This might indicate that all of the subjects are moving toward a higher proficiency level and have learned the correct construction with *there* to a certain extent. Furthermore, perhaps more relevant here is that group 1 (31.2%) is scoring almost as high as group 2 (37.5%) with regard to translations with the pronoun *it*, suggesting that transfer from L2 Swedish is higher than from the L1s in group 1.
Since an explanation shedding some light on these results could possibly be related to the two different verb forms used in the Swedish existential construction (är and finns), the aggregate group scores were also analyzed separately for each verb (diagrams 2, 3):

Diagram 2. Total scores of the *det är* structure translated with *there* or otherwise.

In diagram 2, the number 24 on the y-axis refers to the possible translations of the *det är*-structure for each group. The only difference between the two groups regarding translations from *det är* with the subject *there* was that group 2 had one more score (11/24), and translations with the subject *it* occurred as often in both groups (10/24).

Diagram 3. Total scores of the *det finns* structure translated with *there* or otherwise.

With the *det finns* structure (diagram 3), the differences between the two groups are slightly more frequent than in diagram 2. Group 1 seems to be somewhat more aware that *det finns* should not be translated with the pronoun *it*, as they score 3 times lower
than group 2 (8/24). Regarding the translations from *det finns* with *there*, group 1 used *there* only twice more than group 2 (12/24), and omitted the expletive subject twice (which group 2 never did).

To conclude, the results on the use or lack of use of the pronouns *there* and *it* might be summarized and compared as illustrated in table 4 below:

Table 4. Summary of the relevant results from diagrams 1, 2, and 3 regarding the translations from *det är* and *det finns* with the pronouns *there* and *it*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translations with</th>
<th>Diagram 1 (<em>det är</em> + <em>det finns</em>)</th>
<th>Diagram 2 (<em>det är</em>)</th>
<th>Diagram 3 (<em>det finns</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>there</em></td>
<td>Group 1: 50%</td>
<td>Group 1: 41.6%</td>
<td>Group 1: 58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2: 47.9%</td>
<td>Group 2: 45.8%</td>
<td>Group 2: 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>it</em></td>
<td>Group 1: 31.2%</td>
<td>Group 1: 41.6%</td>
<td>Group 1: 20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2: 37.5%</td>
<td>Group 2: 41.6%</td>
<td>Group 2: 33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 illustrates that the lack of any great performance differences between the two groups (diagram 1) cannot really be explained by the use of the verbs *är* (diagram 2) or *finns* (diagram 3) in the Swedish existential construction. Both groups scored almost as much when translating *det är* (diagram 2) with *there* and they scored exactly the same when translating with *it*. The greatest performance differences from these diagrams are observed in translations from *det finns* (diagram 3): group 1 seems to be slightly more aware that *det finns* should be translated with the pronoun *there*, where they score higher, and not with the pronoun *it*, where they score lower. Lastly, what these general results indicate is that group 1 often behaves like group 2 with regard to translations with *it*, suggesting that they transfer from L2 Swedish more than from L1x.

4.2 Individual scores

From the aggregate group results, it could be said that both groups behave very similarly. Although group 1 uses the pronoun "*it*" less than group 2, "*it*" is nevertheless used more often than other constructions that would correspond to the L1s’ structures (i.e. sentences with copula verbs without any expletive subject; see table 2). Thus, group 1 seems to be transferring the L2 Swedish structure with *det (it)* and relatively seldom other structures from the L1s. However, when tracing individual differences among group 1 (diagram 4), those results are no longer as clear, and significant individual differences are clearly observed:
Diagram 4. Individual scores from test group 1 for the appropriate translation of *det* with *there* and negatively transferred *it*.

Diagram 4 shows that three subjects use the pronoun *there* at least 50% of the times, and that three subjects use it less than 50% of the instances:
- Asia 3/6, Lia and Sanela 5/6, Brehan 6/6 (*there* at least 50%)
- Khalid 0/6, Olga 1/6, Viktor and Nuriya 2/6 (*there* less than 50%)

However, it is not as clear here that *most* subjects are negatively transferring the pronoun *it*, i.e. using the pronoun *it* in place of *there*. The amount of subjects negatively transferring the pronoun *it* more than 50% of the times is lower than the amount of those who in more than 50% of the times do not transfer the pronoun *it*, and than those who transferred *it* 50% of the times:
- Khalid negatively transferred the pronoun *it* (5/6) to an elevate extent
- Olga and Nuriya negatively transferred *it* (3/6) to a rather elevate extent but nonetheless not over 50% of the times
- Lia and Brehan never transferred the pronoun *it* (0/6).

In this sense, these results confirm that most subjects have difficulties with the *there*-construction, but the results also indicate that there are great individual performance differences when it comes to negatively transferring the pronoun *it*: whereas Khalid did
it 83.3%, Lia and Brehan did it 0% of the times. Also, although Olga and Nuriya transferred *it* exactly 50% of the times, which is a high score, it is unclear whether these scores are evident enough to claim that most subjects mainly transfer from L2 in L3. Therefore, in order to better understand these results, and to possibly arrive to a general conclusion on the individual results, it is worth relating them to the previously mentioned factors (subsection 2.1.2) which can facilitate or inhibit transfer. Note, however, that for reasons of space, and because the research question focuses on the topic of transfer between L2 Swedish and L3 English, individual differences within group 2 (L1 Swedish and L2 English) are not included in this paper.

4.2.1 Individual information on the influencing transfer factors

Figure 1 illustrates the answers from group 1 in the questionnaire on the psychotypology factor. I have visually placed each subject’s languages according to how similar they answered the languages were:

- When two languages are placed very closely but with a space in-between, the subjects reported that these languages were ”a little similar”.
- When they appear in different circles which are touching each other, the subjects reported the languages as ”quite similar”
- Two languages in the same circle refer to the answer of ”very much similar to each other”.
- Moreover, sometimes all the three languages appear very close to each other but one of them has been placed in a lower level, indicating that the language in the lower circle was perceived as ”quite similar” to the language in the circle which it is touching, but not similar to the language in the circle farther to the right (e.g. Nuriya thinks that Arabic and English are ”quite similar”, that Arabic is ”not at all similar” to Swedish, and that Swedish is ”quite similar” to English.

In addition, their perceived proficiency level in English appears between parenthesis. They all had approximately the same proficiency level (A1-A2), which usually corresponded to the level they considered themselves to have.
Thus, the similarities between the subjects’ psychotypologies might be summarized from figure 1 as:

- Subjects with a Slavic L1 perceive that their L1 is very different to both Swedish and English, but that Swedish and English are a little or quite similar to each other. Note, however, that this does not apply to L1 Bulgarian Lia, as she did not answer anything for Swedish and English. Also, note that I have counted, in this comment, Sanela as a subject with a Slavic L1; although she also has Arabic as L1, Bosnian is much more dominant (see table 5 below).

- The only subject with a Semitic L1 also perceived the three languages in the same manner as those with a Slavic L1 did.

- The only subject with a Germanic L1 perceived the three languages as very close: L1 Danish was perceived as very much similar to Swedish, and English as quite similar to both Danish and Swedish.

- The two subjects with L1 Arabic (excluding now Sanela with both L1 Bosnian and Arabic) thought that Arabic was a little or quite similar to English, but not at all similar to Swedish, which was in turn perceived as quite similar to English.

Lastly, in order to elicit information on how often the subjects used the three languages, they fulfilled the questionnaire gathering information on the factor of frequency and settings of use, summarized in table 5. The settings of use which they were asked about were: "at home", "in school", and "outside school and outside home, with other persons" (the latter context abbreviated in table 5 as "outside"). The words "everywhere", "elsewhere", and "anywhere" refer in table 5 to the three different settings of use together. For instance, Lia answered that Swedish was used "always" in
the three settings of use, summarized in table 5 as “Always everywhere”. Note that in the analyses I had to differentiate between the terms speak and hear, since Asia reported that she understood “everything” in Polish but usually spoke Swedish at home, despite her parents speaking Polish on a daily basis; and Viktor reported the same scenario but with Danish. Furthermore, the L1s and L2 Swedish which were ”always” used have been marked in red and underlined to illustrate that they appear to be the subject’s dominant languages. Note that L3 English has not been marked as a dominant language, even though some cases reported to speak it daily, because their proficiency level in it is not fluent and some of them spoke it daily in school in order to learn it.

Table 5. The frequency and the settings of use of group 1’s languages and the dominant language(s), marked in red.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2 SWEDISH</th>
<th>L3 ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olga (Pol)</td>
<td>Sometimes speaks at home and outside.</td>
<td>Always speaks everywhere.</td>
<td>Always speaks in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lia (Bul)</td>
<td>Seldom speaks anywhere.</td>
<td>Always speaks everywhere.</td>
<td>Sometimes speaks in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viktor (Dan)</td>
<td>Sometimes speaks at home. Always hears at home.</td>
<td>Always speaks everywhere.</td>
<td>Sometimes speaks in school and outside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalid (Ara)</td>
<td>Always speaks at home, sometimes in school and outside.</td>
<td>Sometimes speaks at home and always elsewhere.</td>
<td>Sometimes speaks anywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuriya (Ara)</td>
<td>Always speaks at home, sometimes outside, and seldom in school.</td>
<td>Always speaks in school, sometimes at home or elsewhere.</td>
<td>Sometimes speaks in school, but seldom elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important observation in table 5 is that L2 Swedish was in 5/8 cases a dominant language, i.e. most frequently used (everywhere). In 4/8 cases, the L1 was as dominant as the L2. These results could favour a stronger transfer from L2 than from L1. That is, if the L2 is so frequently used that it has become a dominant language, the linguistic information from L2 could be more ”available” in the brain, and thus the probability to be activated in L3 production might be higher. However, from diagram 4, it was unclear whether transfer from L2 as the main transfer source in L3 occurred in most subject cases. Let us therefore analyze, in the next subsection, the individual performance in group 1 by connecting it to all of the influencing factors simultaneously.
4.2.2 Discussion on the individual scores for "there" and "it" in relation to the individual information regarding the transfer factors

Since both the individual results on the translations with there and it (subsection 4.2) and those regarding the individual information on the influencing transfer factors (subsection 4.2.1) are rather inconclusive on their own, the picture might become clearer if they are analyzed together. Although I can only speculate on the explanations for the individual results, it is worth considering all of each subject’s influencing transfer factors together in order to see how different and complex the interaction between them is:

- **Asia**’s (L1 Polish) case is not totally supportive of the L2 status factor hypothesis. She translated correctly with the pronoun there 50% of the times, 16.6% with it, and 33.3% with other structures. Both Polish and Swedish were her dominant languages, and she perceived only Swedish and English as a little similar to each other. Since she did not perceive any language as very similar to each other, may she have learned that each of them has a different existential structure that she must simply learn separately, moving toward a higher proficiency in English?

- **Olga**’s (L1 Polish), on the other hand, seems to be supportive of the L2 status factor hypothesis. The pronoun it instead of there was used 50% of the instances, whereas there only 16.6%. Compared to Asia (merely because of their similar language backgrounds), Olga perceived Swedish and English as quite close to each other, and only Swedish (not Polish) was her dominant language. Thus, two variables here seem to be conditioning her stronger transfer from L2: that she uses L2 Swedish more frequently than L1 Polish and that she perceives L2 Swedish and L3 English as quite similar (not only "a little").

- **Lia** (L1 Bulgarian) is a salient case in that she translated the pronoun det correctly (i.e. with there) 83.3% of the times, and never as it. Thus, L2 Swedish can surely not be claimed to be Lia’s external supplier language. The reason for this is unclear: Lia has more or less the same proficiency level in English than the other subjects, and she did not answer to the questions eliciting information on the psychotypology factor. In addition, she reported that she seldom uses L1 Bulgarian, and that her dominant language is L2 Swedish instead. Thus, the case of Lia can hardly be explained by any transfer factor apart for possibly proficiency level: if she had a somewhat higher proficiency level in English, her transfer from L2 faded away. However, there could be other factors involved that have not been analyzed in this paper: motivation, intelligence, more explicit learning with regard to this construction, etc.

- Also **Khalid** (L1 Arabic) is salient in the sense that he negatively transferred the it-construction 83.3% and there 0% of the times. This case is very supportive of Hammarberg’s (2001) claim that transfer from L2 in L3 is stronger than from L1 when proficiency in L3 is low, since Khalid appears to have a lower proficiency, which he himself also perceived, than the rest of the subjects. Furthermore, Khalid clearly transfers from Swedish due to his psychotypology: since he perceives Arabic as very different to English and Swedish, but the latter two as quite similar to one
another, this perceived similarity between English and Swedish triggers the stronger transfer from L2 Swedish.

- In Viktor’s (L1 Danish) case, no stronger tendencies from any languages nor the L2 status factor hypothesis are observed. He uses both the pronoun *there*, the pronoun *it*, and other constructions each 33.3% of the times. Although Danish and English both use a locative expletive pronoun (*der* and *there* respectively), Viktor has difficulties with the *there*-construction. The fact that he exhibits the wrong subject-verb concord in the only two instances in which *there* was used suggests that he might be aware of his difficulties regarding the verb forms *is* and *are*, which in Danish correspond both to *er*, and therefore tends to avoid the *there*-structure. Moreover, his dominant languages are both Danish and Swedish, which he perceives as very much similar to one another, and both as quite similar to English. In this sense, Viktor’s behaviour is also affected by his psychotypology: compared to Khalid’s 83%, Viktor’s usage of *it* is only 33%, a score that might be related to his knowledge of Danish and his understanding that Danish and English use the same expletive pronoun.

- Nuriya’s (L1 Arabic) external supplier language seems to be L2 Swedish as well, since she exhibits the *it*-construction 50% of the times. This could have a similar explanation to Khalid’s case: Nuriya has a slightly higher proficiency level in English than Khalid; but she perceived Arabic as not at all similar to either Swedish or English, and English and Swedish as a little similar. Moreover, Khalid and Nuriya share the same L1 (Arabic), which might as well play a relevant role due to possible underlying additional syntactic aspects of the languages.

- Sanela (L1 Bosnian and Arabic) only uses the *it*-construction 16.3% and 83.3% of the instances the *there*-construction. A difference from Nuriya and Khalid, who also have L1 Arabic, is that Sanela’s only dominant language is Swedish (and not Arabic, as it is for Khalid and Nuriya). However, it would not be in line with the previous research to explain her low scores of L2 transfer by the argument that L2 is her dominant language. Moreover, her psychotypology of English and Swedish as very similar to each other but both very different to Arabic and Bosnian does not either explain her low scores of L2 transfer. Perhaps the fact that she has two L1s might be a significant factor. Recall (table 2) that Arabic uses the existential copula verb *fii*, Bosnian the *imati* copula (“have”) without any expletive subject, and Swedish the expletive subject *det*: if she has become aware these three languages use each a different syntax for the existential construction, she might have assumed that English must also have its own construction, which she has learned.

- Finally, Brehan (L1 Amharic) is also a salient case in that she uses the pronoun *there* 100% of the times. The factor of proficiency in English does not explain this, since she has approximately the same proficiency level as the other subjects. However, she can have nonetheless learned the specific *there*-structure. Frequency of use does not seem to be a good candidate for explaining her 100% score of *there* usage, since Brehan’s dominant languages are both Amharic and Swedish. Something that only Asia and Brehan exhibited in the factor of psychotypology is that they found none of the languages was ”a little” or ”quite” similar to another. Although there is not sufficient evidence, perhaps Brehan’s proficiency in English is increasing, and since
she does not perceive English as very similar to any of her languages, or due to learning strategies, she might have fully learned the English existential construction.

In sum, there seem to be three subjects who are completely not supportive of the L2 status factor hypothesis (Lia, Viktor and Brehan), two subjects who are somehow but not strongly supportive of this hypothesis (Asia and Sanela), and three subjects who are clearly more influenced by their L2 in L3 English (Olga, Khalid and Nuriya).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The intention of this investigation was to explore whether transfer in L3 might be stronger from L2 than from L1, in the syntactic context of the existential expletive subject (*there*). The performance in English regarding this syntactic construction has been compared between two groups of schoolchildren. Group 1 was composed by subjects of various L1s, L2 Swedish, and L3 English; the second group consisted of L1 Swedish and L2 English subjects. Both the aggregate group scores and especially the individual results from group 1 have been discussed in relation to the most frequently mentioned influencing transfer factors (e.g. in Hammarberg, 2001; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Odlin, 1989; Cenoz and Jessner, 2000; Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

As mentioned in the literature review, the L2 status factor hypothesis refers to the activation of L2 production in L3 (Williams & Hammarberg, 1998), or as a scenario where the speaker suppresses the L1 into a group of ”non-foreign languages” and instead uses the L2 as a strategy to approach the L3 (Hammarberg, 2001). When this occurs, the L2 thus takes on the role of ”external supplier language”, providing L3 with linguistic features from L2 (Hammarberg, 2001).

On basis of the aggregate group scores, no great differences in performance between the two test groups are observed. Both groups have clearly difficulties regarding the *there*-construction, both in using the pronoun *there* and in conjugating its verb properly, since they used the pronoun appropriately only 50% (group 1) and 47.5% (group 2) of the times. Most importantly, the general results indicate that the fact that group 1 exhibits high averages (31.2%) of the negatively transferred construction ”*it is*” instead of ”*there is/are*”, in the same fashion than does group 2 (37.5%), is supportive of the L2 status factor hypothesis. That is, instead of the English existential expletive subject (*there*), group 1 used the Swedish one (**det: it**) (31.2%) more frequently than structures from the L1s (6.2%) such as *be* or *have* copulae without any expletive subject or than other constructions (12.5%). Thus, although it cannot be neglected that there might have been influences from the L1s in L3, these were relatively lower than averages for the *it*-construction. Therefore, generally, it may be said that L2 Swedish had taken on the role of external supplier language in the production of group 1 in L3. The reasons for this are not crystal-clear in this study, but I speculated that the factors of typology and frequency of use seemed to be the most logical ones contributing to this kind of transfer:

- Typology because Swedish and English are closer to each other than to any of the L1s (which, moreover, all use a copula verb and no expletive subject); except to L1 Danish, which is generally more similar to Swedish, although English and Danish are
more similar to one another with regard to the expletive existential pronoun specifically (there and der).

- Frequency of use because for many of the subjects in group 1 Swedish was a dominant language, or the only dominant language in some cases. In addition, all the subjects use Swedish on a daily basis.

- Furthermore, the factor of proficiency level is probably playing a significant role here too. As Hammarberg (2001) suggested, transfer decreases as proficiency in L3 increases, and both test groups in this study still had a rather low proficiency in L3 English (A1/A2).

Nevertheless, when evaluating the individual performance of the subjects in group 1, the picture looks very different compared to the general results, and the L2 status factor hypothesis cannot be claimed to predominate, since only 3 of 8 subjects were completely supportive of the hypothesis. A possible explanation for these great individual differences and for L2 Swedish not adopting the external supplier language in more than half of the cases might have much to do with the proficiency factor. Although the proficiency in English of group 1 is still relatively low, none of the subjects is a completely beginner and all have studied the language in school for several years as well as constantly receive output from other sources such as media. Therefore, some of them might be developing toward a higher proficiency level (toward B1), which might be contributing to a gradual decrease of L2 transfer in L3, according to Hammarberg’s (2001) claim. Furthermore, in group 1 there were great individual differences regarding the there-structure even though all the informants had more or less the same proficiency level in English: while some participants translated det with there almost in all instances, others did it in almost none.

Although it must be mentioned that the scale of this study is too small to provide with claims regarding transfer in L3, the general results suggest that transfer from L2 in L3 can be stronger than from L1; which was the main question of this paper. The most important conclusion from the results may be that whilst the general results indicate that L2 transfer in L3 is stronger than from L1, the individual results indicate that L2 transfer in L3 can be stronger in some cases but rather not in most of them. Thus, from a ”macro”-perspective, it can be observed that both test groups behave very similarly and that group 1 is supportive of the L2 status hypothesis. However, the ”micro”-perspective in the individual scores indicates that over half of the subjects’ cases were not supportive of this hypothesis, as L2 had not adopted the external supplier language role (at least not to a strong extent). Therefore, in line with De Bot et al. (2005) and Freeman (2006), who claim that there are enormous individual differences and that the micro-level of the individual’s performance should be accounted for more often, these conclusions also suggest the micro-description of the participants’ performance be further taken into consideration in transfer studies. The results from such an individual description might provide with interesting insights on the variation in the complex system of cross-linguistic transfer, which could eventually be applied to overall theories in a macro-perspective in foreign-language acquisition research.

Apart from those conclusions, several questions arise, since it was unclear in various cases why L2 had or had not taken on the role of the external supplier language. Could
there be other variables facilitating or inhibiting transfer that have not yet been considered sufficiently in the research of this complex and dynamic system? For instance, variables that could play an important role are that of having several L1s (as in Sanela’s case), since born-bilinguals possibly develop an early stronger capacity to analyze the structural properties of languages (Hakuta and Diaz, 1985). This capacity might inhibit cross-linguistic transfer to a certain extent, if the speaker has a greater metalinguistic awareness that each language might have its own constructions. Also, a significant variable that can contribute to positive transfer is literacy/educational background (Odlin, 1989), which, besides, seems connected to the learner’s metalinguistic awareness. This variable is not commonly included as a transfer factor in SLA studies, probably because most such studies focus on the language production of teenagers or young adults. Other variables might be different learning styles, how many and what dominant languages the subject has, personality, language anxiety, personality, culture, personal experience with the language in question, etc. As De Bot et al. (2005) state, each of these factors affects the other in the dynamic process of language acquisition and all of them need be considered together.

In a future study, it would be convenient to test the informants’ knowledge on the specific syntactic structure being examined, and not only general proficiency level. This could be done with a grammaticality judgement, asking the participants to correct the sentences which they consider ungrammatical (as to not risk that they judge something else than the structure the researcher aims at). Moreover, apart from including more subjects than this investigation did, I suggest that more factors that could condition transfer, such as the variables mentioned above, be considered in further studies, investigating this in different periods over time to evaluate the participants’ development. Lastly, although the method of comparing performance in L3 between speakers with different L1s was successful here in providing with insights about the factors influencing transfer, there are other language combinations that would be interesting to have in a future study. For instance, the performance in L3 English learners could be compared with another group of L3 English learners but with switched L1/L2 pairings. In that way, if the researcher could then observe a pattern of each group still transferring from their respective L2, it would be a greater evidence of the L2 status hypothesis.
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Appendix A: Consent form (group 1 & 2)

Stockholms universitet
Engelska institutionen
september 2014 - november 2014

Tillstånd från föräldrar för deltagande i språkundersökning

Det här projektet är en del av en uppsats i engelsk språkvetenskap vid Stockholms universitet. Syftet med projektet är att forska hur ungar lär sig en viss språklig struktur i engelska och huruvida modersmålet kan påverka inlärningen när det gäller denna struktur. Resultaten kommer att ge en bättre förståelse och insikt i hur ett andra språk förvärvas samt underlätta för hur vissa aspekter i ett språk kan läras ut i skolan på ett mer effektivt sätt.

Deltagandet är frivilligt och anonymt samt kan avbrytas när som helst.

Vad kommer deltagarna göra?

De kommer först få svara skriftligt på cirka tio korta frågor som tar upp följande aspekter:
- Vilka språk de talar.
- Välja i en 0-5-skala hur ofta de talar dessa i 1)hemmet, 2)skolan, 3)med vänner/ personer utanför skolan
- Välja i en 0-5-skala hur lika de tycker att dessa språk är jämfört med engelska
- Välja i en 0-5-skala hur mycket de känner att de förmår använda språken för att exempelvis beskriva vad som finns i ett rum eller tala om väderet.

Därefter kommer de i två olika tillfällen, det ena i september och det andra i oktober, få skriftligt översätta ett kort och enkelt stycke från svenska till engelska, som är anpassat till en någorlunda enklare nivå än den som de förväntas uppnå i aktuell årskurs.

Underskrift

Genom att skriva under nedan godkänner Du att ditt barn deltar i den här språkundersökningen. Skriver Du under, kan du när som helst ångra Ditt godkännande genom att skriva till den angivna mejladressen nedan.

__________________________
Deltagarens namn

__________________________    _________________
Förälders/vårdnadshavares namn och underskrift    Datum

__________________________    _________________
Forskarens namn och underskrift     Datum

Forskarens mejladress: krfsan@hotmail.com

Stockholms universitet
Engelska institutionen
LONDON

Det är ett känt område i London som ligger mellan Fleet Street och The Tower. Det finns många banker och affärsbyggnader i det här området.
Men mitt favorit område är mindre känt. Det heter West End, som ligger mellan Fleet Street och Hyde Park.

Häromdagen frågade jag en kvinna om det fanns några klädbutiker nära Hyde Park.

Hon sade:

Jag är inte säker. Jag brukar inte köpa kläder så ofta, men det är en man som jobbar på den restaurangen där borta som vet var det finns butiker.

På restaurangen förklarade mannen för mig:

Gå över gatan och vänd till vänster, så kommer du direkt att se en stor butik som heter C&A. Det är många olika kläder till bra priser där!
## Appendix C: Questionnaire on proficiency (group 1 & 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Kan du skriva en enkel text med väldigt enkla och vardagliga ord på engelska?</td>
<td>Väldigt bra 😊, Ganska bra 😊😊, Inte så bra än 😊😊😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exempel på uttryck: hoj, hur mår du?, jag bor i..., hur gammal är du?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Kan du kort presentera dig själv på engelska?</td>
<td>Väldigt bra 😊, Ganska bra 😊😊, Inte så bra än 😊😊😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exempel: Skriva om var du bor, är det du har i hemmet, folk som du känner, vad ditt telefonnummer är...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Kan du skriva en enkel text där du beskriver din familj på engelska?</td>
<td>Väldigt bra 😊, Ganska bra 😊😊, Inte så bra än 😊😊😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saker som du tex kan ta upp: Familjemedlemarna: deras namn, ålder, vad de gillar - Vilka hemssälls du brukar göra - Vilka maträttar du gillar eller ogillar - Vad de jobbar med</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Kan du skriva en text där du beskriver dina intressen på engelska?

Exempel:
- Tip, att du gillar
- Hur man spelar i en viss sport
- Tip av historier som du gillar att läsa i böcker eller se i filmen

Välj bra 😊
Ganska bra 😊
Inte så bra 😒

6. Kan du skriva en text om miljön i din skola eller hur skolan ser ut på engelska?

Exempel:
- Om några elever ofta träkar
- Vad de flesta gör under natten
- Om läsarna är roliga eller om de kan bli sura
- Var skolan ligger
- Vad du tycker om miljön

Välj bra 😊
Ganska bra 😊
Inte så bra 😒

7. Tror du att du kan klara dig på engelska i de flesta situationerna som du kan befinna dig i något engelskspråklande land såsom Sverige, USA eller England?

Exempel på situation:
- På en resan:
- Om du ska beställa något på restaurang
- Om du ska berätta om något som händer
- Om du ska förklara något

Välj bra 😊
Ganska bra 😊
Inte så bra 😒

Tack så mycket för Ditt deltagande! 😊
Appendix D: Questionnaire on frequency and psychotypology (group 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hur likt engelska tycker du att ditt/dina modersmål är?</th>
<th>Välj nedan den siffran som du tycker passar bäst:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modersmål nr. 1-</td>
<td>0 - inte alls likt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modersmål nr. 2-</td>
<td>1 - lite likt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modersmål nr. 3-</td>
<td>2 - ganska likt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 - mycket likt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Om ditt modersmål är ett annat språk än svenska.</th>
<th>Välj en sifra av samma 0-5-skala från förra frågan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hur likt svenska tycker du att ditt/dina modersmål är?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modersmål nr. 3-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hur lika varandra tycker du att svenska och engelska är?

- 0- inte alls lika varandra
- 1- lite lika varandra
- 2- ganska lika varandra
- 3- mycket lika varandra

Hur ofta talar du ditt/dina
modersmål:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varje dag</th>
<th>Ibland</th>
<th>Sällan</th>
</tr>
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Hur ofta talar du engelska:

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</tr>
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</table>

Hur ofta talar du svenska:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varje dag</th>
<th>Ibland</th>
<th>Sällan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix D: Questionnaire on frequency and psychotypology (group 2)

**Hur likt engelska tycker du att svenska är?**

Välj nedan den siffran som du tycker passar bäst:

- 0 - inte alls likt
- 1 - lite likt
- 2 - ganska likt
- 3 - mycket likt

**Hur lika varandra tycker du att svenska och engelska är?**

- 0- inte alls lika varandra
- 1-lite lika varandra
- 2- ganska lika varandra
- 3- mycket lika varandra

**Hur ofta talar du engelska:**

- hemma
- i skolan
- utanför skolan, med vänner eller andra personer

- Varje dag
- Ibland
- Sällan