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# Contact phenomena in the verbal complex: the Walser connection in the Alpine area

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**Abstract:** In the context of the Alps – a broad region characterized by common geographical and cultural features – the isolation caused by the geographical setting makes it possible for conservative strategies to survive from the Middle Ages through present times. This isolation, however, does not exclude that conservative patterns evolve into innovative strategies. To illustrate this, we surveyed causative and progressive constructions in the historical German minority varieties on the southern side of the Alps. Greschòneytitsch, a particularly dynamic variety, shows the remarkable development of a causative particle, *tònz*, and the grammaticalization of an adverb, *eister*, into a marker of progressive aspect.

**Keywords:** causative constructions; grammaticalization; linguistic area; progressive constructions; Walser German

## 1 Introduction

In this paper, we will examine the possibility of finding out areal effects in the Alpine area by taking into account the verbal complex of the historical German minority varieties scattered on the southern side of the Alps towards Italy. These varieties are exposed to the influence of Romance varieties to a larger extent than their cognate ones on the northern side of the Alps. Besides, given their position in high altitude in the mountains they are characterized by a complex intertwining of isolation from and contact with both the German and the Romance domains. Moreover, they share similar extralinguistic conditions, viz. the sharp isolation from the lowlands and from the transalpine regions, a mountainous landscape featuring a typical alpine economy, and Romance-speaking surroundings. At any rate, each community is also different from the others because of the amount of contact they maintained with the German speaking areas as well as of the different

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Romance varieties they have been in contact with. In Section 2 below we will provide a more detailed survey of the German minorities considered in this paper.

It must be stressed that we are not trying to establish whether the phenomena considered may or may not be used as relevant traits for defining the Alps as a linguistic area. Rather, our aim is to examine the dynamics of diffusion – but also of retention – of linguistic traits within the Alpine area focusing on the age of the borrowed or calqued structures that we observe in recently harvested data. In this, we will follow what Campbell (1985) defines the historicist approach which allows to “separate real areal features, those due to diffusion, from historical accidents, which may be due to such factors as undiscovered genetic relationships, universals, onomatopoeia, parallel or independent development, sheer chance, etc.” (Campbell 1985: 32). In contrast, the circumstantialist approach consists in “merely catalogu[ing] the similarities found in some particular area, allowing these similarities to suggest diffusion, but without carrying out the research necessary to demonstrate the actual borrowing” (Campbell 1985: 32). In his mind, the approaches capture two different and contrasting attitudes toward research in areal linguistics, but “clearly the ‘historicist’ is to be preferred, particularly since even the circumstantialists imply that their L[inguistic] A[rea]s are the historical products of diffusion” (Campbell 1985: 48). As a matter of fact, the importance of the historicist approach is crucial in the domain of areal linguistics because it puts the definition of what is a linguistic area in a different perspective:

Every ‘linguistic area’, to the extent that the notion has any meaning at all, arises from an accumulation of individual cases of ‘localized diffusion’; it is the investigation of these specific instances of diffusion, and not the pursuit of defining properties for linguistic areas, that will increase our understanding and will explain the historical facts. (Campbell 2006: 18)

Following Campbell’s perspective on linguistic areas, our focus on a single language group (the German) inside the Alps characterized by the contact with another to some extent homogeneous language group (the Romance) is justified by the same need of a closer and more detailed account of ‘cases of localized diffusion’.

The issue of the historical layering of linguistic traits is particularly relevant for the Alps, an area which, despite constituting a natural boundary, has always been crossed by many routes connecting North and Central Europe to the Mediterranean. This permeable watershed has developed only in the last century into a stronger state border radically reorienting the dynamics of contact: while it used to serve as a North-South transalpine vector until the beginning of the 20th century, it broke with this tradition especially after the Second World War and developed a clear attraction for the southern lowlands. This general change of contact direction (in addition to modernization and urbanization) sharply affected economy and

demography leading to strong changes in the social make-up of the communities, to a higher rate of multilingualism – due to the progressive assimilation of allo-glottic enclaves – and eventually to language shift and obsolescence.

The paper is structured as follows: we will address the aforementioned issues in Sections 2 and in Section 2.2.2 with special reference to the Walser communities in Italy especially to the case of Gressoney. Beside Sections 3, which briefly discusses the data sources, the core part of the paper will consist of two case studies which involve the survey of how each of the German historical minority varieties in northern Italy express the causative construction (Section 4) and the progressive (Section 5) and a closer analysis of the data of the Walser community of Gressoney. These two constructions were chosen because they display either divergent strategies compared to Standard German or, in addition to divergence, they show the influence of strategies whose origin can be traced back to neighboring Romance varieties.

The survey of the different strategies found in each variety will show patterns of similarity across the area, while the scrutiny of the data from the variety of Gressoney will give us the opportunity to elaborate in a deeper way on the issues of diffusion and layering mentioned above.

## 2 Investigating areal phenomena between the *micro* and the *meso* level

In defining a linguistic area, one of the fundamental elements is the identification of the geographical region of interest. There is a number of geographical clues which help us identify the Alpine area, even if its precise borders are not always clearly traceable, especially where the mountains turn into hills, or where the plains wedge themselves between the slopes. However, concerning the geographic aspects of a linguistic area, the most relevant one from a methodological point of view is the *scale* of a postulated area. Muysken (2008: 4–5) defines three levels of scale which in his view are to be connected to possible features of the linguistic area. Leaving aside the *macro* level, which refers to larger areas of the world in a deep temporal perspective with vague or no contact scenarios and constitutes the object of studies such as Nichols (1992), we will concentrate onto the *meso* and the *micro* level.

The Alpine area is a geographical region comparable in size to the Caucasus, but smaller than, for example, the Balkans: it can nonetheless be defined as a linguistic area belonging to the *meso* level. Taking up Campbell's distinction discussed above, Muysken suggests that “the smaller the scale of the postulated

area, the easier it is to apply ... the historicist approach, which involves the actual documentation of what influences there were, and in which direction” while “[f]or large areas, the ‘circumstantialist’ approach, which simply catalogues similarities between languages, is probably the maximum attainable” (Muysken 2008: 4). Accordingly, Muysken proposes for *meso* areas a time depth of 200–1,000 years and the use of comparative data and historical testimonies as sources for a circumstantialist approach (Muysken 2008: 4). At a lower, *micro* level, where bilingual communities are involved, with a time depth restricted to 20–200 years and the main source of data coming from fieldwork, the historicist approach is feasible. The focus of this paper will be on German speaking minorities in northern Italy, with a focus on a specific Walser community – that of Gressoney in Aosta Valley –, thus in between the *meso* and the *micro* level. Following Muysken’s suggestion, we will adopt a circumstantialist approach for discussing the data relating to the different German-speaking minorities found in northern Italy. Accordingly, we will simply observe if similarities across the considered varieties emerge from the data without trying to explain them, while we will follow the historicist approach for the data specifically collected in Gressoney.

## 2.1 The *meso* level: the historical German minorities in northern Italy

As already mentioned above, the focus of this paper will be on German varieties spoken on the southern side of the Alps in the Italian territory. We will not take into consideration the German varieties of South Tyrol – though they may be a very stimulating field of analysis for contact linguistics as studies like Dal Negro and Ciccolone (2018) have shown. Instead, we will limit our attention to the so-called “historical German linguistic islands in Italy” (‘historische deutsche Sprachinseln in Italien’).<sup>1</sup> This choice is connected to the common history of these communities: they originated in the Middle Ages as German-speaking settlers coming from the northern side of the Alps colonized the more or less uninhabited highlands on the

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1 The label is taken from the name of an Italian committee, the *Einheitskomitee der historischen deutschen Sprachinseln in Italien/Comitato unitario delle isole linguistiche storiche tedesche in Italia* which since 2002 promotes and coordinates cultural activities of most (but unfortunately not all) German historical minorities in northern Italy. The birth of the committee follows the introduction of the Italian law 482/99 “Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche” (‘Regulations concerning the safeguard of historical linguistic minorities’), whose article 3 envisages the possibility for historical linguistic minority communities scattered over several territorial units to constitute coordinative bodies such as the *Einheitskomitee* does for (most of) the German ones.

southern side. The distance between the place of origin and the newfound settlements varies for each of them, so that some of the settlements constituted real islands in the Romance domain, while some other can be regarded as peninsulas – though in most cases even the latter are separated from the German domain by very high mountains, in some cases higher than 4,000 m above sea level. The different area of origins accounts for to the fact that the minorities belong to different German dialectal groups. In particular, the western minorities belong to the Alemannic while the eastern ones to the Bavarian dialectal group respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The dynamics of population movements in the Alps have been surveyed by Wildgen (2005) in general and with a particular look at the German colonization of the Cimbrian communities in Veneto. He recognizes as natural routes of movement across the Alps the North-South paths running along the rivers. Moreover, he considers as the primary way of colonization the one proceeding from the bottom of the main valleys upwards, while the residual colonization in altitude may be considered secondary:

Die Besiedlung der Hochtäler erfolgte meist durch langsames Vordringen von der Ebene in weniger fruchtbare Höhenlagen. In besonderen Fällen, wie bei der germanischsprachigen Besiedlung des Tales von Ljetzan, erfolgte sie aber über die Bergpässe im Norden. Dies kann als eine ungewöhnliche Form der Besiedlung betrachtet werden, die durch die Tatsache einer bereits vorhandenen Besiedlung der unteren Talregionen und die administrativ geförderte Umsiedlung einer an die Bewirtschaftung schwieriger Bergzonen gewohnten Bevölkerung erklärbar ist.<sup>3</sup> (Wildgen 2005)

Wildgen further emphasizes that this kind of controlled colonization must be seen as something different from the natural migrations occurring in the Alps in pre-historic and in general pre-Roman times. The Cimbrian colonization of Ljetzan/Giazza under the influence of the bishop of Trento is in fact consistent with other medieval agricultural settlements by expressing a specific power relationship. We will see below that the same holds true for the whole Walser colonization.

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<sup>2</sup> We have no space to pursue the interesting question whether the different historical German minorities display commonalities from the point of view of their contacts – besides the obvious fact of lying on the Germanic-Romance border. For a discussion, see the papers in Eller-Wildfeuer et al. (2018).

<sup>3</sup> [The colonization of the higher valleys usually took place through a slow penetration from the plains into less productive places in the highlands. In specific cases, like those of the German-speaking settlements of the Ljetzan valley, the settlement took place however by crossing the mountain passes in the North. This can be viewed as an unusual form of settlement which can be explained by the earlier presence of a settlement in the lower parts of the valley and by the migration – supported by the administration – of a population more used to the exploitation of hard mountain regions, our translation].

A last useful insight offered by Wildgen's (2005) survey concerns the emergence of an island-like setting in the Alps: this is explained as a joint effect of the geographical boundary constituted by the high mountain passes, on the one side, and of the boundary constituted by the lower (already existent and culturally different) settlements on the other. The consequence of this island-like setting is not, according to Wildgen, that the genetic and cultural exchange is completely excluded, but that it is indeed very slow, which makes the population in the island disconnected for a longer time from the wider area of movement of people and symbols. The end of the island-like setting took place, according to Wildgen, when the population of the main valley expanded toward the highlands.

From Wildgen's insights on population movements in the Alps we can assume at least three types of contact dynamics in the context of Alpine communities, rearranged here in order of importance:

- Type A    between adjacent valleys
- Type B    beyond the Alpine watershed, i.e. toward areas where German is spoken
- Type C    between the highlands and the plains, i.e. (in the context of the Germanic-Romance border) between German-speaking highlands and Romance-speaking plains

Historically, the Type A of contact used to be of higher importance, followed by Type B (common in some community, uncommon in other ones). The Type C is nowadays the norm, although it gained importance only toward present, especially after the First World War, and was strongly enhanced after the carriageable roads have been built. Type B contacts, where common, substantially stopped between the two World Wars and in the context of Fascism and of its nationalist policy.

## 2.2 The *micro* level: Gressoney within the Walser area

In the following paragraphs, the Walser communities and especially Gressoney will constitute the focus of a more historically grounded analysis. We will first sketch the fundamental social and historical aspects of the Walser communities, with particular attention to the ones lying in north-western Italy. This survey aims at defining what kinds of contact situations the different Walser communities may have taken part to.

### 2.2.1 Walser communities: social and historical aspects

We can roughly divide the history of the Walser communities in north-western Italy in four phases: (1) the foundation, (2) the age of seasonal migrations, (3) the years of Fascism, (4) the post-war years to present.

It is today quite clear and undisputed that the Walser communities are the result of a series of population movements originating from the uppermost, German-speaking part of the Rhone valley – a wide, high altitude valley called Goms, today part of the bilingual Swiss canton Valais – which took place from the beginning of the 13th through the 14th century, starting with the foundation of Formazza, whose existence is attested since 1210, and ending with the eastern settlements of Lichtenstein and Vorarlberg in Austria (see Rizzi 2002 for reference).<sup>4</sup>

The colonization of the upper parts of the valleys around Monte Rosa and of the Valle Antigorio was fostered by North-Italian noble families or monasteries, whose possessions reached high altitudes on both sides of the Alps. They invited the settlers of Goms, who spoke a variety of Highest Alemannic belonging to the West Upper German branch (cf. Russ 1990: 366–368). The latter were renowned to strive in high altitude by digging up previously unused soils to make them suitable for agriculture. The new settlers were granted self-administration and the use of the uninhabited areas in exchange of an annual tribute. Rizzi (2004) reconstructs the history of the western Walser settlements and shows how most of the various present-day communities originated in different, though adjacent valleys which were nonetheless ruled each by different North-Italian rulers. In many cases, also the area of origin of the settlers on the northern side of the Alps was different for each community. In single cases, a community might have emerged as a secondary settlement; for example, the community of Alagna apparently emerged due to the joint action of colonists coming from Gressoney and Macugnaga.

Unfortunately, we have no information about the language use of these settlers during the phase of foundation. We can nonetheless observe that each community might already at this point have its own peculiarities (different place of origin, different geographical and “political” environment which implies also different contact situations). Furthermore, we can imagine that lying in adjacent

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<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by one anonymous reviewer, there must have been “at least two different areas of origin within Valais” as shown e.g. by “the difference in the quality of the *i*-umlaut of OHG *ā* resulting in Walser German *schweer* in the Walser settlements South from Monte Rosa and in the easternmost Walser settlements in Grisons, Liechtenstein, and Vorarlberg vs. *schwäär* in Formazza, Bosco/Gurin and the Western Walser settlements in Grisons”. We refer the reader to Zinsli (2002) and SDS (I: 80) for further discussion.

valleys might have encouraged the closest communities to interact and maintain contacts with one another.

The second phase that we can identify in the history of the Walser communities in north-western Italy is that of the seasonal migrations outside the community itself: this phase extends roughly from the late 15th to the late 19th century. The seasonal emigration was probably due to different – i.e. climatic, demographic, economic – reasons. A worsening of the climate during those centuries is often proposed as the main cause of several changes in agricultural practices in the whole continent. However, it may also be the case that the communities grew to the point that the agro-pastoral economy was no longer sufficient to feed the population and the economic advantage of emigration became highly attractive.<sup>5</sup> Different communities directed their movements toward different areas, with some of them maintaining or enhancing contacts with German-speaking areas (Gressoney, Alagna, Macugnaga, Formazza), while other privileged contacts with Romance-speaking ones (Issime and Rimella). In this sense, exemplar is the strong contrast between the two communities of Gressoney and Issime: despite lying in the same valley (the Lys Valley), the two communities are characterized by two quite different varieties, whose divergence may also be partly due to a different origin in the Valais, but chiefly resides in the different sociolinguistic situation in which the two communities are immersed. While Gressoney has maintained during the centuries German customs, the use of literary German in the church and in schools and a preference for German-speaking areas as destination of migration, Issime lost most part of the ties to German-speaking areas, preferring the use of French in the church and as written language and directing migration rather toward French-speaking areas (French Switzerland, Savoy, France in general).<sup>6</sup> It must also be noted that the territory of Issime, which also lies at a lower altitude compared to that of Gressoney, was characterized by the coexistence of two linguistic groups, the German and the Franco-Provençal, that eventually split into two different monolingual municipalities by 1952, respectively Issime and Gaby (cf. Zürrer 2009: §56).

Between the Italian Unification (1861) and the First World War, emigration and exchanges with the German-speaking world came gradually to an end, while the process of stepwise Italianization of the communities started. The process of formation of the unified state as an Italian-speaking nation was gradual and also the German minorities in the Alps were involved in it as well as the rest of the

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the social and economic changes found in Walser communities and the Alps around the 15th century see Angster (2012: 162–164) and the references provided therein.

<sup>6</sup> See Zürrer (2009: §38–§44) for a more detailed discussion of the contrast between Gressoney and Issime and the evolution of emigration in Gressoney.



population. It should not be forgotten that Italian at that time was chiefly a written language while most of the population (up to the 80%) was illiterate (cf. Marazzini 2002: 393–395) and did not speak Italian but one of the many Romance dialects and varieties spoken on the Italian territory. The years between the two world wars almost correspond to the years of the fascist regime (1922–1943), whose nationalistic and authoritarian policy was aimed at imposing Italian as the only language in all domains, both written and spoken. In the realm of education, this policy was inaugurated by the Royal Decree of the 1st October 1923, which established Italian as the language of education in the school (Klein 1986: 72). The effect of this was to relegate any German variety (and more generally any variety except Italian) in use until that moment in Walser communities to the spoken usage in private domains. At the same time, this act officially established the presence of the Italian language in the everyday life of the individuals living in a linguistic minority. While the evidence for widespread bi- or multilingualism was rare until this moment – with the exception of Issime where the presence of French is well documented already in the early 19th century (Zürcher 2009: § 51) – in the period of time following the Italian Unification and chiefly in the fascist era we are allowed to assume a widespread knowledge of another language beyond the local variety of German (or at most the literary form of High German) for most Walser varieties in north-western Italy.<sup>7</sup>

After 1945, the Italian society undergoes social and cultural changes which affect the structure of social networks even in remote villages. Walser minorities are involved on the one hand in processes of demographic loss and depopulation to the point that some of them disappear (e.g. Salecchio is no longer inhabited). On the other hand, the marriage with people coming from outside the community becomes more and more frequent. The joint effect of depopulation and heterogamy lowered considerably the number of active speakers of the Walser varieties despite the new breed of Walser cultural associations, which, starting from the late Sixties, caused the emergence of a new and previously unknown sense of Walser identity beyond the sense of belonging to the local community.<sup>8</sup> Today in most of the

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7 It must be noted that since the second half of the 16th century French and Italian were the official languages of the Duchy of Savoy of which the Walser communities in north-western Italy used to be part. French was the official language in the regions western of the Alps and Italian in the regions eastern to them, with Aosta valley and Susa valley as the only exceptions. This implies that even in Gressoney French – and not Italian – was the official language of administration until the Unification (1861).

8 Concerning the new sense of Walser identity, older speakers in Gressoney report as an anecdote that, before the Swiss researchers of the *Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz* came to visit the villages telling the local German-speaking inhabitants that they were “Walser”, they only thought to be *titsch* (the endonym, cognate to *deutsch* ‘German’).

communities only among older people is possible to find active speakers of the local variety and intergenerational transmission is almost if not completely interrupted.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.2.2 Multilingualism in the Walser communities: a critical and historical account

To approach the issue of multilingualism in the Walser communities, it is convenient to first revise the conclusions reached by Zürrer (2009) and Angster (2014) about the respective linguistic repertoires found there.

In Tables 1 and 2 we report the linguistic repertoires reconstructed in Zürrer (2009) for Gressoney and Issime.

As shown in Table 1, the situation of Gressoney in the 19th century portrays a typical German diglossic community, very similar to what could be found in any German-speaking village north of the Alps, especially in Germany proper, with the local dialect serving as low variety and the German written language as high variety. In Issime Zürrer reconstructs a rather different situation. Here, the German written language is unknown while French serves as a high variety for the Franco-Provençal dialect, which is used as low variety beside the German dialect

**Table 1:** Linguistic uses in Gressoney and Issime in the 19th century (Zürrer 2009: §52).

Gressoney	H variety	German written language	
	L variety	German dialect	
Issime	H variety	∅	French written language
	L variety	German dialect	Franco-Provençal dialect

**Table 2:** Linguistic uses in Gressoney and Issime around 19th century (Zürrer 2009: §62).

Gressoney	H variety	German written language	∅ (> Italian written language)	
	L variety	German dialect	Piedmontese	
Issime	H variety	∅	French written language	∅ (> Italian written language)
	L variety	German dialect	Franco-Provençal dialect	Piedmontese

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of census figures and depopulation of Walser communities s. Angster (2012: 166). Angster (2014: 114–119) compares the results of Giacalone Ramat (1979) and of the unpublished master thesis Squinabol (2008) about the linguistic behaviors in the community of Gressoney in the second half of the Seventies and at the beginning of the 21st century respectively.

especially with people of the other linguistic group sharing the territory of the municipality. This profiles an asymmetric diglossic situation in which the German dialect lacks a corresponding (written) high variety.

At the turn of the century both repertoires are enriched by the addition of Piedmontese as low variety and only gradually of Italian as high variety, as shown by Table 2. The importance of Piedmontese is connected to the intensification of trade with the Italian lowlands due to the construction of the carriageable road. This variety precedes the use of Italian as a spoken language and reaches even Gressoney, in which the knowledge of Franco-Provençal appears to be infrequent (Zürer 2009: §61).

Beside the spoken languages, it may be useful to take into account the written high varieties which were in use in the same geographical context at the time, to give an idea of the other languages that may be part of the linguistic repertoire at least of some of the individual speakers of Gressoney. In Table 3 for roughly the last three historical periods defined in Section 2.2 above we combine the speakers' native competence found in Gressoney with the linguistic repertoires used in schools and institutions as reconstructed by Angster (2014).

The evolution of the linguistic repertoires in schools sketched in Table 3 is reconstructed by Angster (2014) on the basis of what is possible to know about the subjects of study in schools in Gressoney in the last two centuries and takes also into account the status of the different languages in each time period (i.e. if a language was an official language or not). The table shows the gradual process of Italianization, in which in the period preceding the Unification (1861) Italian constitutes a foreign language, being neither a subject of study, nor an official language of the administration. At the same time, French used to be the language of the administration (as in the rest of the Aosta Valley) until the Unification and was reintroduced as an official language beside Italian after the Second World

**Table 3:** Evolution of the repertoire of the languages studied at school in Gressoney (from Angster 2014, with adaptations).

	Native	Languages studied at school		
	L1	<i>Dachsprache</i>	L2(s)	Foreign language(s)
Before 1861	<i>Titsch</i>	<i>Höchtitsch/Guettitsch</i>	French	Italian
1919–1943	<i>Titsch</i>	∅ ( <i>Höchtitsch/Guettitsch</i> )	Italian	(French, German)
1946–...	<i>Titsch</i>	∅	French, Italian	German
Today	Italian, ( <i>Titsch</i> )	Italian	French	English, German
		Walser German (?)		

War. On the other hand, German (dubbed by the speakers as *Hòchtitsch* ‘High German’ or *Guettitsch* ‘good German’ in diglossic Gressoney) becomes a foreign language: as for French, its study was completely forbidden in elementary schools during the fascist era. After 1945 German is present in the school programs, but as an optional subject while French is obligatory and English becomes more and more a preferred option due to its growing importance in everyday life. Finally, *Titsch* hardly competes in recent times with the pressure of Italian. Moreover, its recent function in the realm of the new Walser identity as a written variety is rather that of a heritage language entrusted with the ancestral culture of the community.

To conclude, spread multilingualism in Walser communities is probably a recent and quite unstable phenomenon. If we exclude the case of Issime, where a complex interaction of French and Walser German is found profiling a linguistic repertoire which was already very rich in the 19th century, the other communities must have been basically monolingual until recently. Concerning Gressoney, an incipient multilingualism must have appeared at latest at the beginning of the 20th century, while spread multilingualism combined with a still strong sense of belonging to a tight community of German speakers must have lasted between the fascist era and the first decades in the second half of the 20th century. Toward present the process of Italianization is turning Gressoney into an Italian monolingual community, with French as a high variety beside Italian, although some classes of *Titsch* are regularly offered in the school where however only few children have it as part of their native repertoire.

### 3 Data sources

Before turning to the analysis of causative and progressive constructions in the German historical minority varieties of northern Italy we briefly summarize in this paragraph the data sources which we considered throughout this paper.

Concerning the general comparison of the German historical minority varieties of northern Italy we considered a small parallel corpus of translations (Geyer et al. 2014), which allowed us to compare Walser varieties with Cimbrian, Mochoeno and Carinthian varieties spoken in Italy.

The variety on which we focused, i.e. Greschòneytitsch (shortly: *Titsch*), spoken in Gressoney in the Aosta Valley, is represented along with four other Walser varieties, respectively of Issime, Rimella, Formazza and Alagna (cf. Geyer et al. 2014). For the sake of this analysis, however, we could rely upon a wider range

of data sources for this variety, most of which have been collected and digitalized in the realm of ArchiWals and CLiMALp projects and are available for consultation.<sup>10</sup> The Archive resulting from these projects, beyond Titsch, also covers the other four varieties considered. It consists of two components: (1) a lexicon which basically results from the digitalization of the extant dictionaries (e.g. WKZ); (2) a corpus which is coindexed with the lexicon and is meant to enrich it with a large amount of fresh entries. To date, the lexicon contains about 11,700 lexemes for Gressoney, 5,700 lexemes for Issime, 5,200 lexemes for Formazza, 3,300 for Rimella, 660 for Alagna.

The corpus is currently being uploaded into the archive and, as far as Titsch is concerned, includes 332 texts, for a total of 61,835 tokens. At present the corpus consists of written texts which have been published in several forms (church bulletins, cookbooks, ethnographical collections etc.) in the past 40 years. More ancient (as early as mid-19th century) and more varied sources (including poetry) are still in the course of acquisition. The corpus will be eventually enriched with new publications and with transcribed spoken data collected via fieldwork. In the rest of the paper the examples coming from the text corpus will be explicitly indicated. Furthermore, we will keep the original spelling in the examples drawn from the corpus, while for oral transcriptions and more generally in the text we will make use of what we recognize as the most current orthographic form established for Titsch as well as for the other varieties.

## 4 Causative constructions

In this section, we will restrict our analysis to causative constructions involving two verbs (or two clauses) and we will not pay attention to other valency-increasing strategies such as causative-inchoative alternations like Standard German *öffnen* ‘to open (transitive)’ ~ *sich öffnen* ‘to open (intransitive)’ or lexical pairs of causative and inchoative verbs like *kill* ~ *die*, Standard German *trinken* ‘to drink’ ~ *tränken* ‘to abbeverate’, etc.

In Standard German causative constructions are built using the verb *lassen* ‘to let’ which governs the bare infinitive of the verb expressing the action which is caused. The *lassen*-causative can be used for intentional as in (1a.), accidental (1b.) and permissive causation (1c.) (see Kulikov 2001 for the terms):

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Angster et al. (2017) and Gaeta et al. (2019) for details on the projects. The archive can be accessed at [www.climalp.org](http://www.climalp.org).

- (1) a. *Sophie lässt von einem Altwarenhändler*  
 Sophie lets from a.M.DAT second-hand.dealer  
*ihre Möbel wegtragen.*  
 her furniture take.away  
 ‘Sophie makes a second-hand dealer bear away her furniture.’
- b. *Sophie lässt oft ihre Kleidungen auf den Boden fallen.*  
 Sophie lets often her clothes on the.M.ACC floor fall  
 ‘Sophie often lets her clothes fall on the floor.’
- c. *Sophie lässt ihre Kinder alleine in Urlaub gehen.*  
 Sophie lets her children alone in holiday go  
 ‘Sophie allows her children to go in holiday alone.’

Notice in the Standard German examples in (2) below that the intentional causative value of *lassen* in (2a) contrasts with the accidental (2b) and the permissive (2c) value on the basis of a morphological distinction. In fact, only the former obligatorily displays the curious phenomenon of the so-called substitutive infinitive in which an infinitival form shows up in the place of the expected past participle commonly found with the perfect construction, which is an analytic tense formed by an inflected form of ‘have’ or ‘be’ followed by the past participle of the main verb (cf. Gaeta 2010, 2013 for discussion):

- (2) a. *Sophie hat von einem Altwarenhändler ihre Möbel*  
 Sophie has from a.M.DAT second-hand.dealer her furniture  
*wegtragen lassen/\*gelassen.*  
 bear.away let.INF/let.PST.PART  
 ‘Sophie had her furniture borne away by a second-hand dealer.’
- b. *Sophie hat oft ihre Kleidungen auf den Boden*  
 Sophie has often her clothes on the.M.ACC floor  
*fallen lassen/gelassen.*  
 fall let.INF/let.PST.PART  
 ‘Sophie has often let her clothes fall on the floor.’
- c. *Sophie hat ihre Kinder alleine in Urlaub gehen*  
 Sophie has her children alone in holiday go  
*lassen/gelassen.*  
 let.INF/let.PST.PART  
 ‘Sophie has allowed her children to go in holiday alone.’

In the accidental (2b) and in the permissive (2c) value the substitutive infinitive stands in free variation with the past participle with a clear preference of the former over the latter (cf. Bausewein 1991; Vogel 2009; Bader 2014).

#### 4.1 Causative strategies in German alpine varieties: ‘let’-, ‘make’- and ‘do’-causatives

The *lassen*-causative strategy is not unknown in the German minority varieties of northern Italy, but it appears to be limited to the accidental causation, as is shown in the examples in (3) below:

- (3) *Ho fatto cadere la scodella: [che sbadato!]*  
 ‘I let the bowl fall: [what a stupid!]’ [Geyer et al. 2014: 54]<sup>11</sup>
- |    |                 |                   |               |                    |          |
|----|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|
| a. | <i>Hen</i>      | <i>gloa</i>       | <i>vallen</i> | <i>da napf</i>     | [ISS]    |
|    | have.1PRS.IND   | let.PST.PART      | fall.INF      | the bowl           |          |
| b. | <i>Ich hon</i>  | <i>g’lo</i>       | <i>falli</i>  | <i>d’schissiu</i>  | [ALA]    |
|    | I have.1PRS.IND | let.PST.PART      | fall.INF      | the=bowl           |          |
| c. | <i>I hä</i>     | <i>t schëssla</i> | <i>la</i>     | <i>khiä</i>        | [FOR]    |
|    | I have.1PRS.IND | the bowl          | let.INF       | fall.INF           |          |
| d. | <i>I han</i>    | <i>galat</i>      | <i>valjan</i> | <i>de schuzzal</i> | [CIMB13] |
|    | I have.1PRS.IND | let.PST.PART      | fall.INF      | the bowl           |          |
| e. | <i>I on</i>     | <i>gelot</i>      | <i>voln</i>   | <i>’s nepfle</i>   | [SAU]    |
|    | I have.1PRS.IND | let.PST.PART      | fall.INF      | the bowl           |          |

Note that in almost all varieties the form of the past participle of ‘let’ is used in contrast to Standard German where both the past participle and the infinitive are found (cf. (1b) above), with the remarkable exception of Formazza where only the substitutive infinitive occurs, cf. (3c).<sup>12</sup> For intentional causation, however, a construction based on verbs meaning ‘do’ (4a) or ‘make’ (4b–d) is employed, while no variety makes use of a ‘let’-causative in this case:

<sup>11</sup> Upon citation of the examples taken from Geyer et al. (2014), we will always provide beside the translations in the relevant Walser German varieties the stimulus sentence in Italian. We will refer to the specific varieties using the abbreviations used in Geyer et al. (2014): GRE: Gressoney German; ISS: Issime German; ALA: Alagna German; RIM: Rimella German; FOR: Formazza German; CIMB7: Cimbrian of the Seven Communities; CIMB13: Cimbrian of the Thirteen Communities; Clu: Cimbrian of Lusern; MOC: Mocheno; SAP: Sappada German; SAU: Sauris German; TIM: Timau German.

<sup>12</sup> This is likely to be explained by the geographical proximity to Switzerland because in Swiss German the substitutive infinitive is also preferred by almost all speakers (cf. SI vol. 3, 1,393 and Glaser in press). We thank one anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

- (4) *Fai lavare i piatti a Luigi*  
 ‘Get the dishes washed by Luigi’ [Geyer et al. 2014: 55]
- a. *Tö dem Luis t blattulti z wäschä* [FOR]  
 do.IMP the.M.DAT Luis the dishes to wash.INF
- b. *Mach beschan de pjatan ime Luigi* [CIMB13]  
 make.IMP wash.INF the dishes the.M.DAT Luigi
- c. *Moch baschn de pjattn en Luigi* [MOC]  
 make.IMP wash.INF the dishes the.M.DAT Luigi
- d. *Moche obespieln in Vigi* [SAU]  
 make.IMP wash.[the.dishes.]INF the.M.DAT Vigi

This preference for the ‘do’/‘make’-causatives for expressing intentional causation in the German minorities of northern Italy is likely to be influenced by the Romance contact varieties including Italian, in which, on the one hand, a distinction between ‘do’ and ‘make’ is lacking (only *fare* ‘do, make’ exists as a verbal lexeme in the basic vocabulary) and, on the other hand, a competition between an intentional (but occasionally also permissive) *fare*-causative and an exclusively permissive ‘let’-causative is common using a verb like *lasciare* ‘to let’:

- (5) a. *Sofia fa / \*lascia portar via i mobili da*  
 Sophie makes / lets bear away the furniture from  
*un rigattiere.*  
 a second-hand.dealer  
 ‘Sophie makes a second-hand dealer bear away her furniture.’
- b. *Sofia fa / lascia spesso cadere i vestiti sul pavimento.*  
 Sophie makes / lets often fall the clothes on.the floor.  
 ‘Sophie often lets her clothes fall on the floor.’
- c. *Sofia fa / lascia andare in vacanza i figli*  
 Sophie makes / lets go in holiday the children  
*da soli.*  
 from alone.PL  
 ‘Sophie allows her children to go on holiday alone.’

Note that the variant of the sentence in (5a) using ‘let’ is grammatical only in the permissive meaning: ‘Sophie lets a second-hand dealer bear away her furniture’. In a similar way, the variant of the sentence in (5c) using ‘make’ can also be interpreted with an intentional or coercitive value although this interpretation presupposes a clear context pointing to that value. As for the variant of the sentence in (5b) using ‘make’, in such a context the intentional interpretation is quite implausible and is excluded also when ‘make’ is used.



From the point of view of the choice between ‘do’ and ‘make’ as causative verbs the German varieties considered are clearly split in two groups in dependence of their dialectal affinity: on the West, Walser German varieties all display ‘do’-causatives, while toward East the Bavarian varieties select the ‘make’-causative strategy. It must be noted that in all German varieties cognates of both *tun* and *machen* are available, to the effect that the choice is not due to the absence of the competing verb.

Beside the different lexemes chosen by each group, a general difference between the ‘make’- and the ‘do’-causative constructions has to be observed: in the former case ‘make’ governs the bare infinitive of the caused event, while in the latter ‘do’ governs an infinitive introduced by the particle *zu*. Following the classification in Kulikov (2001: 886–887) the ‘make’-causative constructions are accordingly “syntactic causatives” while the ‘do’-causative constructions correspond to a “non-fused-causative”, or – in Dixon’s (2000) terms – one can speak respectively of “two verbs in one predicate” and of a “periphrastic causative”. In other words, the degree of syntactic cohesiveness or fusion of the ‘make’-causatives is expected to be higher than that of the ‘do’-causatives.

It must be added that while a causative construction with *machen* is also present in sub-standard varieties of German, the *tun* + *zu*-infinitive construction found in Walser varieties is nowadays completely unknown elsewhere, with the marginal exception of the archaizing expression (*kund und*) *zu wissen tun* ‘to make something known, lit. to do known and to know’. At any rate, the use of *tun* in causative constructions is attested in (late) Old High German and survived through Middle High German (Weiss 1956) until the Early New High German period, when it eventually faded away (Reichmann and Wegera 1993: 404–405). Since it also appears sparsely in Swiss German (SI vol. 13, 318–321), it is likely to assume that in Walser German the *tun* + *zu*-infinitive construction constitutes a survival of an elsewhere obsolescent construction.

After this overview guided by a circumstantialist approach to causative constructions in the Alpine area, we will focus now on the Walser area and on the specific case of Gressoney, adopting the more specific historicist approach.

## 4.2 The evolution of ‘do’-causatives in Titsch

We observed in 4.1 that in all varieties having a ‘do’-causatives – i.e. all Walser varieties – *tun* ‘do’ normally governs a *zu*-infinitive: this is true with two exceptions. On the one hand, the examples in the variety of Alagna, as the one in (6) below, display a bare infinitive instead of a *zu*-infinitive (see already Angster 2011: 80):

- (6) *Tua wasche d'blatti dam Luigi.*  
 do.IMP wash the=dishes the.M.DAT Luigi  
 'Make Luigi wash the dishes.'

However, older attestations (end of the 19th century) show that the 'do'-causative used to govern a *zu*-infinitive as well (cf. Giordani 1891: 101–102).

On the other hand, Titsch, i.e. the variety of Gressoney, diverges from the rest of the Walser varieties because the causative construction in the relevant examples involves the presence of an element *tònz*, which appears to be cognate with *tue*, i.e. the local verb for 'do', but does not actually correspond to any form of its paradigm. In particular, in neat contrast to the causative constructions found in the other Walser varieties in which the verb 'do' is regularly inflected, *tònz* is remarkably invariable.<sup>13</sup> This is shown by comparing (7) and (8) below.

- (7) a. *Tue de tälloré tònz wäsche vòn Luis!* [GRE]  
 do.IMP the dishes CAUS wash by Luis  
 'Get the dishes washed by Luis!'  
 b. *wäsch de tälloré!*  
 wash.IMP the dishes  
 'Wash the dishes!'  
 c. *tue de tälloré wäsche!*  
 do.IMP the dishes wash  
 'Wash the dishes!'  
 d. *Irene tuet de tälloré tònz wäsche von Luis.*  
 Irene does the dishes CAUS wash from Luis  
 'Irene makes Luis wash the dishes.'  
 e. *\*Irene wäscht de tälloré tònz von Luis*  
 Irene washes the dishes CAUS from Luis

In (7a) the causative construction is in the imperative; the latter in Titsch can be expressed by a synthetic form (7b), although it occurs – more frequently – in an analytic construction involving the verb 'do' which governs an infinitive and serves as an auxiliary carrying the finiteness features (7c). This 'do'-periphrasis is largely widespread in all southern German dialects since Middle High German time (cf. Paul 2007: 308, and Gaeta et al. 2019 for a survey on Walser German).

<sup>13</sup> In the examples below, issued as mentioned in Section 3 from different sources, along with *tònz*, other spelling variants are attested, e.g. *tuenz*. Despite the spelling fluctuations, the phonological form of the particle is stable and, as far as our fieldwork observations are concerned, it corresponds to [tʊnt̪s̪].

Note that in the causative construction with *tònz* the ‘do’-periphrasis is obligatory. This holds true not only for the imperative, but also for the present indicative as shown by (7d–e).<sup>14</sup>

In (8) the causative construction is combined with the perfect construction:

- (8) *débél häscht du dem Joseph d’stòrè tònz wéderhole*  
 while have.2SG you.SG the.DAT Joseph the=tale CAUS repeat  
 ‘while you were getting the story repeated by John’ [GRE]

Instead of the expected past participle of ‘do’ or possibly of a substitutive infinitive as we have seen it for Standard German (see (1a) above) and for Formazza (3b), respectively *toat* or *tue*, only the invariable element *tònz* is found accompanied by the infinitive of the embedded verb *wéderhole* ‘to repeat’.<sup>15</sup> This suggests to treat *tònz* as a causative particle, and in fact this is what we are arguing for here. However, given its clear phonological resemblance to the verb *tue* and the occurrence of a ‘do’-causative construction in all other Walser varieties as discussed above – see the example from the variety of Formazza in (4a) –, we will try to assess whether *tònz* might yet be considered a form of *tue*. That this is the null hypothesis is shown by its etymological origin. The particle clearly results from the ‘do’-causative construction attested elsewhere in Walser German as well as in older stages of German (cf. DWB, s.v.):

- (9) *dz er im das nit zů wissen het gethon.*  
 that he him this not to know.INF has done  
 ‘that he has not made him know this’

In this example going back to the early XVI c. the part of the verbal complex containing the non-finite verbs is interrupted by the finite auxiliary *het* mirroring the position of the verbal complex in subordinate clauses. If we abstract away from the finite auxiliary which typically occupies the left part of the sentence in main clauses, we might figure out the following diachronic scenario for the rise of the particle *tònz*:

- (10) i. (*er hat*) ... [(*ge*)*tun* [*zu wissen*]] ‘(he has) done to know’ >  
 ii. (*er hat*) ... [*tun zu*] *wissen* ‘(he has) [done to] know’ >  
 iii. (*er hat*) ... *tònz wissen* ‘(he has) CAUS know’

<sup>14</sup> For a survey of the ‘do’-periphrasis in Titsch, see Angster (2004–05, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Note that here the causee, i.e. the subject of the original clause (the one who is caused to do/undergo something), is expressed by a dative marking in contrast to the examples in (4) in which it makes use of the typical formula used for expressing the agent in the passive construction, namely a PP introduced by *võn* ‘from/of’. For reasons of space, we cannot discuss this issue here, but see Kulikov (2001: 889–891) for a general survey.

In the second stage, the particle *zu* which normally governs the infinitive is encliticized to ‘do’ at phase ii. which paves the way for its final blurring in the particle at phase iii. For convenience, we assumed as our starting point for the diachronic reconstruction in (10) the construction attested in (9) which contains the past participle *getun* which actually differs from the form *getan* attested in modern Standard German (and also from the forms *toan/toat* attested in Titsch). However, an alternative – and in fact more plausible – hypothesis already hinted at above is that in the construction giving rise to the Titsch particle *tònz* a substitutive infinitive occurs instead of the past participle, as is widely attested in the Walser varieties, for instance in the following example from the Valais (Visperterminen) going back to the early 20th c. (cf. SI, s.v.):

- (11) *Ši heind iro Stall tuen z’ flättigun.*  
 they have.3PL their stable do.INF to clean.INF  
 ‘They got their stable cleaned.’

Note that the substitutive infinitive was also found in other old German varieties displaying ‘do’-causatives, as in the following examples from the 17th c. (cf. Reichmann and Wegera 1993: 405):

- (12) *haben Wir ... Unsere Insiegel an diesen Abschied thun hencken*  
 have.1PL we our seal at this farewell do.INF put.INF  
 ‘We got our seal put on this farewell’

However, in these cases the substitutive infinitive does not normally co-occur with the particle *zu*, in contrast to what is observed in the Walser German varieties.

In the face of the diachronic development outlined in (10) above, one might figure out that the form *tònz* might still be part of the paradigm of *tue* as a sort of allomorphic variant used specifically in the causative construction. In the rest of this paragraph, we will shortly discuss this issue and argue for a bona fide grammaticalization of *tònz* as causative particle which cannot nowadays be considered as a part of the inflectional paradigm of *tue*.

One first observation refers to its alleged status within the paradigm. As shown by the example in (13), *tònz* has not to be treated merely as a past participle, because it can also be combined with a modal verb in a non-past context:

- (13) *an guet-e Mälchchue chan [dʒ]i-m*  
 a.F.SG.NOM good-F.SG.NOM milk-cow can.3SG his-M.SG.DAT  
*Meischter an guesse Gield-summo un besse*  
 master a.F.SG.NOM certain-F.SG.NOM amount.of.money and even  
*an Pokal alz Erennung tuenz guenne*  
 a.M.SG.DAT cup as souvenir CAUS win  
 ‘a good milk-cow can win its master (lit. cause its master to win) a certain amount of money and even a cup as souvenir’

This compatibility with non-past contexts does not surprise us in the light of its plausible origin as a substitutive infinitive, i.e. as a form which does not carry any past tense feature (cf. Gaeta 2010 for a further elaboration of this aspect regarding the general origin of the substitutive infinitive). This is further confirmed by cases in which *tònz* is accompanied by the auxiliary *tue* 'to do' carrying the finiteness markers as in (7a) above.

The example in (13) is issued from the ArchiWals archive, which is, as already mentioned in Section 3 above, a corpus of mostly written texts where complex syntactic structures are attested like the sentence in (13). Note that while the modal verb *chan* carrying the finiteness features is placed in the left part of the sentence after the subject,<sup>16</sup> the rest of the verbal complex containing the causative particle (here in the spelling form *tuenz*) immediately followed by the infinitive *guenne* 'to win' is placed towards the end of the sentence – forming the typical bracket structure also found in Standard German – after a number of non-verbal constituents that occupy what is called in the German tradition the middle field. This example raises at least two questions about the nature of *tònz*. First, we might wonder whether *tònz*, despite its invariability, has still to be considered as containing the particle *z(e)* – cognate of Standard German *zu*; and second whether *tònz* is part of the verbal complex normally found in the right branch of the sentence bracket after the middle field. The two questions are related insofar as the particle *ze* is expected to govern the infinitive and to be accordingly placed immediately in front of it.

As for the first question, note that *ze* never occurs in enclitic position while it commonly appears as a proclitic on the verb:

- (14) a. *Am Morge, we no de Maanod tued schiine, geit*  
 at.the morning when still the moon does shine goes  
*de Puur of d Matte far z meeche*  
 the farmer up the meadow for to mow  
 'In the morning when the moon is still shining the farmer stands up in order to mow the meadow'
- b. *sinn nunég kanget kät d'wéerchene fer wéder z'machò*  
 are newly gone given the-works for again to=make  
*d'gmein beliechtòn dòrch de Lys Wäg*  
 the-common lighting through the Lys street  
 'Recently new works were assigned in order to redo the common lighting through the Lys-street'

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<sup>16</sup> In this connection, we will not take stance on the issue whether Titsch is a true V2-language in which the finite verb occupies the second sentence position. What we do argue for, however, is that Titsch clearly displays a distant dislocation of the parts of the verbal complex, giving rise to the effect of the so-called sentence bracket.

The particle *fer* introducing the final clause cannot serve as host for the particle governing the infinitive in (14b): \**ferz wéder macho* ‘for.to again do’. In this light, also in (14a) the particle has to be placed in proclitic position: [*far* [*z méêche*]] instead of [[*far z*] *méêche*]. Note that the proclitic position of the particle *ze* is also found with verbs formed with a so-called separable prefix as shown by the example (15) in which a sequence of three such verbs displays the proclitic *ze*:

- (15) *éscht ém Gresshôney-Kulturzentrum der uftrag kiemet*  
 is in.the Gressoney-cultural.center the mandate COME.PST.PART  
*én éndschem land z’noafrege, z’ufschribe òn z’ufgé (registriere)*  
 in our.N.DAT land to=inquire, to=report and to=record register  
*alz as énz volchtheater anbelangt*  
 all.N what our.N folk.theater concerns  
 ‘the mandate has come to the cultural center of Gressoney to inquire, to report and to record (register) in our country everything concerning our folk theater’.

Note that this stands in neat contrast to Standard German where the particle *zu* is found in enclitic position and in fact inserted between the prefix and the verb stem (cf. the Standard German correspondents: [*nach*[*zu*] *fragen*], [*auf*[*zu*] *schreiben*] and [*auf*[*zu*] *nehmen*]), and this is the reason why they are called separable prefixes: cf. \*[*zu nachfragen*], \*[*zu aufschreiben*] and \*[*zu aufnehmen*]. The proclitic position of *ze* in Titsch has become a reliable test to distinguish cases of truly prefixed verbs from examples of adverbial modification as in (14b) above. With this evidence in our hands, we can now investigate the behavior of the particle *tònz*. With regard to its diachronic origin, the process of encliticization is no longer active while only a proclitic usage of *ze* is possible. We can observe this by comparing the usage of *tònz* governing a verb like *gsé* ‘to see’ (16a) and the occurrence of the same verb after *ze* within a verbal complex (16b):

- (16) a. *un [zwescho Liechte] heintsche verchleit, noa as Cherle*  
 and at.twilight have.3PL.REFL dressed after a tour.DIM  
*zä Noachpura (ver [z]e tuenz g’sé ob siggesch*  
 to neighbors for 3SG.REFL CAUS see.INF whether be.SUBJ.3PL  
*rächt verchleite), sintsch alle zieme uf dä*  
 right dressed.PST.PART are.3PL.they all.PL together on the  
*Setz kannet*  
 dancing.party gone  
 ‘and they dressed up at twilight, after a small tour by the neighbors (in order to show them whether they were dressed up rightly), they went all together to the dancing party’

- b. *Trotz allem éscht notte es schénz «dèng»*  
 despite all.DAT is however a beautiful.N.NOM thing  
*gsid z'gsé*  
 been to=see  
 'Despite all it was however a beautiful thing to see'

In other words, if in *tuenz* the particle *ze* were still recognizable, this would stand in clear contrast to its normal behavior as a proclitic found in *gsid z'gsé*. Similar conclusions also come from the analysis of combinations of *tònz* with other verbs, as in the following examples:

- (17) a. *Escht ou ufgschrébenz wétte hein d'wiber*  
 is also written.up.N.NOM how have.3PL the=women  
*duezòmoal gwésst en hushab, [mengs moal] ou*  
 at.that.time known a household.goods sometimes also  
*me wenégem, tuenz vorwerz goa*  
 with little.N.DAT CAUS forwards go  
 'It is also recorded how the women were once able to go ahead with the management of the house, sometimes also with very little'
- b. *Débel tieber aschloa wétte mét éndschem Schpaziergang*  
 while do.we plan how with our.M.DAT walk  
*vorwertz z'goa, chérébérentsch schrie*  
 forwards to=go, hear.we.us cry  
 'While we are planning how to go ahead with our walk, we hear someone crying to us'

In (17a) *tònz* precedes *vorwertz* and is therefore distant from the governed infinitive *goa*, while in the normal usage the proclitic *ze* follows the adverb (17b), also in accordance with what has been already pointed out above with regard to particle verbs (15). Note that – besides being listed as a unit in the lexicon – in the corpus a couple of examples point to the status of *vorwertzgoa* as a complex verb:

- (18) a. *Du häscht khät diné idéalé, din troume,*  
 you have.2SG had.PST.PART your ideals your dreams  
*òn fer di häscht nit khät de fërcht*  
 and for those have.2SG not had.PST.PART the fear  
*z'vorwertz goa*  
 to=forward go  
 'You had your ideals, your dreams, and for those you were not scared of going ahead'

- b. *Désche herbscht, chentemò séege, tuet vorwertzgoa*  
 this.M.NOM autumn could.one say does forward.go  
*em zeiché vòn d'chénnòzit*  
 in.N.DAT sign of the=childhood  
 'This autumn, one might say, will go ahead in the sign of the childhood'

In the two examples of *vorwertzgoa* in (18) found in the corpus, *ze* precedes both the particle *vorwertz* and the verb *goa* (18a) as in typical prefixed verbs (see (15) above) although they are written separately, while in (18b) a compound spelling is adopted. Thus, a certain variation is found here which requires further investigation. At any rate, the crucial point is that while in these cases a clear tendency towards the usage either as a prefixed verb or as adverbial modifier dominates, in the case of *tònz* no alternation is possible.

All of this leads to the second issue raised above relating to the place of *tònz* within the verbal complex. As a matter of fact, in Titsch clitic elements can occur between the proclitic *z(e)* and the infinitive. In our data we found examples of the sequence of *z(e)* and the infinitive being interrupted by a clitic pronoun as in (19a) and by the negation as in (19b):

- (19) a. *d'fremdò chéemén géelt usgä fer z'nensch gsé*  
 the=foreigners come.3PL money spend for to=us see  
 'The foreigners come to spend money in order to see us'
- b. *De gardechass hämmo en zitlang glotzt*  
 the gamekeeper has.3SG.DAT a while posted.PST.PART  
*on schliessléch hätter Hans ertappt, zem réchter*  
 und finally has.he Hans catch.PST.PART to.the judge  
*gfiert mét der achlag z'ni hä z'jagdgesetz*  
 led with the complaint to=not have.INF the=game.law  
*reschpektiert*  
 respected.PST.PART  
 'The gamekeeper was posted for a while and he finally caught and conducted Hans to the judge with the complaint to have not respected the game law'

In contrast to this quite restricted set of possibilities, we will see below in (20a–b) that the particle *tònz* may be separated from the caused verb by different sorts of phrases showing that the *-z* in *tònz* no longer behaves as an ordinary *z(e)*-infinitive. This leads us to discuss the second problem, i.e. whether *tònz* syntactically belongs to the verbal complex. While it is not yet clear to us how the linearization of the constituents in the sentence has to be analyzed in detail, we believe it safe to conclude that the non-finite forms of the verbal complex in Titsch group together



both in main and in subordinate clauses and normally follow the finite verb. This does not mean that the non-finite verbal complex has to occupy the right edge of the sentence. In fact, it can be followed by other constituents as shown by several examples discussed above (see for instance (14b) and (18a–b), etc.). At any rate, the non-finite verbal complex is likely to constitute a unitary syntactic constituent which is normally not interrupted by full-fledged syntactic phrases.

Since *tònz* clearly goes back to a non-finite form, we expect it to group together with the other non-finite forms of the verbal complex. However, the examples in (20) below clearly show that this is not the case:

- (20) a. *Menge holzra hein z'têtsche mét dem*  
 many woodmen have.3PL the=log with the.M/N.SG.DAT  
 «sapi» òf de schni tuenz de béerg embré schliffe  
 sappie on the snow CAUS the mountain downwards slide  
 'Many woodmen dragged the log on the snow down the mountain' (lit. 'have caused to slide downwards')
- b. *hät désche lérer de chénn tuenz de téscha*  
 have.3SG this.M.SG teacher the child(ren) CAUS the tables  
*z'obroscht de stòtz troage*  
 on.top.of the slope bring  
 'that teacher asked the child(ren) to carry the tables uphill' (lit. 'has caused the child(ren) to carry')

In both (20a) and (20b) the particle *tònz* and the infinitive are interrupted by one or more syntactic phrases. At any rate, although this distance contrasts with the normal behavior of non-finite verbal complexes, in the rest of the examples found in the corpus *tònz* immediately precedes the caused infinitive. In conclusion, the evidence suggests that *tònz* has to be considered as a causative particle rather than a non-finite verb form insofar as (i) no inflectional features are likely to be assumed, (ii) the original particle *ze* seems to be completely blurred and (iii) its syntactic position seems to be quite free although a certain persistence of its original position in front of the governed infinitive is observed.

Summarizing, on the one hand the causative constructions observed in the German minority languages of northern Italy are not radically different from the ones available in German varieties on the northern side of the Alps while they also pattern following their dialectal affinity. On the other hand, they appear to have been subject to the influence of the neighboring Romance varieties as far as the functional breakdown of 'do'- or 'make'-causatives (expressing intentional causation) in contrast to 'let'-causatives (limited to the permissive causation) is concerned. The fact that 'do'- and 'make'-causatives are not unknown in dialects or in non-standard varieties of German may be a case of contact-induced

maintenance of older, now obsolescent strategies. This is also suggested by the fact that the western, Alemannic varieties and the eastern, Bavarian ones are polarized around a ‘do’- and a ‘make’-causative strategy respectively. In particular, we have shown in Section 2.2 how the different Walser communities have been isolated from one another along their history and this strongly suggest that the *tun* + *zu*-infinitive type attested in Walser varieties must have been maintained during the centuries. In this context, Titsch displays an interesting development of the causative construction attested in other Walser varieties into a causative participle.

## 5 Progressive constructions

In this section, we turn our attention to the progressive constructions found in the German minority varieties of northern Italy. In contrast to Romance languages, it is well known that in Standard German no fully grammaticalized construction is present for expressing the progressive aspect (see Ebert 2000 for overview and discussion). A number of possibilities nonetheless occurs, exemplified in (21).

- (21) a. *Er ist beim Schlafen.*  
           he is by.DET.N.SG.DAT sleep.INF  
       b. *Er ist am Schlafen.*  
           he is at.DET.N.SG.DAT sleep.INF  
       c. *Er ist dabei, zu schlafen.*  
           he is there.by to sleep.INF  
       d. *Er schläft gerade.*  
           he sleeps currently  
           ‘He is sleeping.’

These strategies exemplify a general type in which a copula is accompanied by a prepositional phrase with a stative-locative meaning (21a–b), possibly displaying a dislocated *zu*-infinitive which is referred to by means of an anaphoric particle (21c), and a second type in which the verb is modified by a temporal adverb (21d). The usage of the different strategies listed in (21) depends on several factors of different nature – sociolinguistic, diatopic, stylistic – whose discussion goes far beyond the scope of the present paper.

What is relevant for us is that – similar to what we have seen above for the causative constructions – none of the strategies found in Standard German finds an exact correspondence in what we attest in the data from the German minority varieties of northern Italy issued from Geyer et al. (2014).

## 5.1 Progressive constructions in the German Alpine varieties

In spite of the absence of any exact correspondence of the different strategies listed in (21) for Standard German, constructions resembling the first general type (copula and locative expression) are found in the German minority varieties of northern Italy as well, as can be gathered from the examples in (22a–c) and in (23) below:

(22) [*Quell'uomo va in paese quasi ogni giorno, anche quando piove.*] *Infatti guarda: sta arrivando!*

‘[That man goes to the village almost every day, even when it rains.]

Look, indeed: he is coming!’ [Geyer et al. 2014: 97]

a. *Ont schau der ist noch za kemmen!* [MOC]

and look.IMP that is after to come.INF

‘And see that he is coming!’

b. *Äbägrat lög: är észcht z wäg z chon* [FOR]

indeed look.IMP he is to way to come.INF

‘Indeed look: he is coming!’ (lit. ‘he is on the way to come’)

c. *In baarot, lukh: ar ist naach khemman!* [CIMB7]

in truth look.IMP he is after come.INF

‘In fact, look: he is coming!’

(23) *Sta dormendo?*

‘Is he sleeping?’ [Geyer et al. 2014: 53]

*Er ist hinder schlofe?* [ALA]

he is behind sleep.INF

‘Is he sleeping?’

The subtype with the *zu*-infinitive (see (21c) above) – however without any anaphoric particle – is found in the Bavarian variety of Mocheno and in the Walser variety of Formazza, as shown respectively in (22a–b), while in the constructions found in Cimbrian and in Alagna – respectively a Bavarian and a Walser variety – the infinitive accompanying the locative expression is not governed by any particle, see respectively (22c) and (23). Interestingly, these three similar strategies are scattered all over the Alpine area, from Cimbrian and Mocheno in the East to the Walser variety of Alagna and Formazza in the West. This is a first noteworthy difference compared to causative constructions: if the latter show a pattern of convergence among dialectally and geographically closer varieties, progressive constructions are far more varied and a convergence of different varieties is harder to find.

As far as the specific locative expressions selected are concerned, the constructions mirror progressive periphrases attested in several sub-standard varieties of North-Italian from Piedmont to Veneto, like the widespread *essere dietro a* + infinitive (lit. ‘be behind to’) or that specifically found in Piedmontese *essere appresso a* + infinitive (lit. ‘be behind (and close) to’) – see (22a), (22c) and (23) – and *essere in cammino a* + infinitive (lit. ‘be on way to’) which clearly underlies the construction found in Formazza reported in (22b) above.<sup>17</sup>

The examples in (22) and (23) show how the realm of causative constructions in the German minority varieties of northern Italy is strongly influenced by the contact with Romance varieties, although it is not easy to understand whether this influence comes from a truly dialectal expression or rather from a dialect-based regional variety of Italian, and probably this issue is not particularly relevant from a general point of view.<sup>18</sup>

The strategies resembling the second type identified in (21d) above (full verb and temporal adverb) are exemplified in (24):

- (24) [*Quell’uomo va in paese quasi ogni giorno, anche quando piove.*] *Infatti guarda: sta arrivando!*  
 ‘[That man goes to the village almost every day, even when it rains.]  
 Look, indeed: he is coming!’ [Geyer et al. 2014: 97]
- a. *Schaube: ar khent hieze!* [SAU]  
 look.IMP he come.3SG now  
 ‘Look: he is coming (now)!’
- b. *Äbe lòg: tuet=er eister chéeme!* [GRE]  
 but look.IMP do.3SG=he PROG come.INF  
 ‘But look: he is coming!’

The example in (24a) coming from the Carinthian (Bavarian) variety of Sauris displays the adverb *hieze* ‘now’ – cognate to Standard German *jetzt* and common in the German dialects – which stresses that the action is happening simultaneously to the moment of the utterance. However, there is no evidence for its possible grammaticalization in a progressive construction insofar as it does not display any semantic bleaching or increase in obligatoriness. In this regard, it resembles very much the Standard German example in (21d) containing the adverb *gerade* ‘just

<sup>17</sup> For a survey of the aspectual and sociolinguistic features of these and other verbal periphrases used in northern regional varieties of Italian, see Cerruti (2007). On the use of the periphrasis *zwäg sein* followed by the infinitive preceded by *z* in the variety of Formazza, see Dal Negro (2004: 95).

<sup>18</sup> As pointed out by one anonymous reviewer, the same construction is also found across other Swiss German dialects and most notably in Valais German. This makes the question of the exact path of transfer even more complex. At any rate, the question cannot be pursued here and must be left open for further research.

(now)'. Instead, the example (24b) coming from Titsch shows the use of the rather uncommon adverb *eister*. As suggested by the gloss, the adverb does not have a straightforward translation as it occurs only in sentences with a progressive reading. We will review in Section 5.2 below more closely the behavior of this adverb.

These examples raise the crucial question of whether and to what extent these strategies for expressing the progressive aspect are grammaticalized in the relevant varieties. On the one hand, the strategies in (22) and (23) could be more or less established calques of progressive periphrases commonly used by the speakers in the Romance varieties in which they are competent. In this view, the examples were representatives of a contact-induced replica grammaticalization, to adopt Heine and Kuteva's (2003: 539) terms where the label identifies "a grammaticalization process that is transferred from the model to the replica language". On the other, the use of an adverb might represent the attempt of the bilingual speaker to add a semantic nuance and increase the precision of the Titsch expression corresponding to the Romance one. In this second view, we might at most speak of a convenient improvised translation without any further provable link with any process of grammaticalization. We are not able in this paper to scrutinize further the issue of grammaticalization with regard to the whole set of varieties considered above.<sup>19</sup> Instead, we will focus now on Titsch to give a more detailed account of the progressive in this variety.

At any rate, from the viewpoint of the circumstantial approach it is important to stress that – in contrast to other progressive constructions found in areas in which German stands in contact with other languages – the Alpine progressive constructions display their own varied identities. In particular, no direct correspondence of the so-called Rhine progressive form is attested, i.e. the type in (21b) above, which appears to be one of the most frequent ways to express progressive value in several varieties of German (cf. Ebert 2000 for a discussion).

## 5.2 Progressive constructions in Greschòneytitsch: the adverb *eister*

If a speaker of Titsch is asked to explain the meaning of *eister*, the most likely answer will be "the same as Italian *stare facendo* ['to be doing']", while it would be very unlikely that the speaker replied by suggesting an adverb as translation.

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<sup>19</sup> However, see Dal Negro (2004: 95) for some more discussion relating to the varieties of Formazza, Rimella and Salecchio.

This notwithstanding, *eister* clearly serves as an adverb, as shown by the following examples:

- (25) a. *vòn de handwéerchene woa sinn mét dem*  
of the handicrafts that be.3PL with DET.M.SG.DAT  
*vorschrétt verschwòndet ol tien eister verschwénde*  
progress disappeared or do.3PL PROG disappear.INF  
‘about the handicrafts that has disappeared with the progress or are disappearing’
- b. «*Gras ässe nid òn more gein-e amòm zem*  
grass eat.1SG not and tomorrow go.1SG-1SG again to.the  
*hus*» *woa hät=z gsét dass dschi häm=mo*  
house as.soon.as has=it seen that they have=3SG.N.DAT  
*eister salad òf z’tällor gleit*  
PROG salad on the=dish put  
‘«I don’t eat grass and tomorrow I return back home» [says the master]  
as soon as he saw that they were serving him salad’

Note that the adverb is normally close to the finite verb and can also appear in past contexts adding an imperfective value to the perfect construction (25b). This adverb is cognate to adverbs like *eisster*, *eisser*, *eis’sdar*, etc., which are attested in Swiss varieties with the meaning ‘on and on, incessantly, always’ (cf. SI, s.v.). Formally, it clearly developed from *eins* ‘one’ with the addition of an element *-dar* which possibly corresponds to what is found in the intensified Standard German adverb *immerdar* ‘always’ and in the obsolete *aberdar* ‘again’. In this light, one cannot speak of a replica grammaticalization because no clear model is present in the contact varieties. At most, one might attempt to speak of a contact-induced ordinary grammaticalization in Heine and Kuteva’s (2003: 533) terms in which “some grammatical concept” is transferred “from the model language to the replica language”. At any rate, also the progressive construction confirms the particular position taken by Titsch as a dynamic variety in which several processes of grammaticalization are attested which follow their own ways and cannot be reduced to calquing.

## 6 Conclusion

Summarizing, several different conclusions are in order with regard to our working hypothesis of viewing the Alps as a linguistic area.

In this regard, we have not been able to put forward strong patterns of convergence concerning the whole stock of varieties. However, some piece of

evidence suggests that all varieties have indeed undergone similar contact-induced developments.

As far as causative constructions are concerned, on the one hand it has been shown how, despite convergence in causative strategies, namely ‘do’-causatives in Walser varieties and ‘make’-causatives in Bavarian ones clearly due to different dialectal affinity, the exclusively permissive use of ‘let’-causatives appears to be an effect of the areal diffusion of a pattern of competition among causative constructions commonly found in the Romance varieties of northern Italy and in Italian. On the other hand, the maintenance of the *tun* + *zu*-infinitive causative in the Walser area is likely to be a case of contact-induced maintenance of an elsewhere vanished strategy.

Concerning progressive constructions, convergence is even lower among the considered varieties. However, the strategies attested in the German historical linguistic minorities for conveying the progressive aspect are often issued from progressive constructions attested in the Romance varieties of northern Italy. This suggests a certain permeability of these varieties with regard to the diffusion of linguistic traits. The case of the progressive adverb *eister* found in Greschòneytitsch, despite developing from a native adverb, shows a higher degree of grammaticalization than any progressive strategy found in Standard German both in terms of semantic bleaching and of the absence of alternative strategies. In our eyes, this can be viewed as a consequence of the strict contact with the Romance languages where grammaticalized progressive strategies are largely widespread at any level of the diasystem, and in fact may be considered as a tentative areal feature of the Alpine Sprachbund. These conclusions need to be corroborated by more evidence coming from in-depth studies on the single varieties, especially with regard to the age and the degree of grammaticalization of the constructions we have pointed to.

A final point concerns Greschòneytitsch, where it has been shown that both the causative particle *tònz* – probably a unique example in the realm of German varieties – and the progressive adverb *eister* are highly grammaticalized and hence largely entrenched within the linguistic system. In this connection, one might wonder how ancient their development really is and to what extent this is connected with contact. As for the causative particle *tònz*, we find it already attested in its unverbated form in written texts dating back to the second half of the 20th century written by speakers born in the first decades of the century. Its absence – at least to the best of our knowledge – before the 20th century suggests that it might have developed during the slow but progressive process of isolation of Gressoney from the German-speaking areas towards the First World War. This also roughly

corresponds to the first period of time in which the community intensified Type C contacts – i.e. with the lowlands – hence turning from a diglossic German community to a multilingual repertoire with the inclusion of one or more Romance varieties. It is straightforward to argue that in the same period of time the adverb *eister* ‘continuously, without interruption’ started developing into a progressive marker, also because of the pressure of Romance varieties. In other words, the isolation from German-speaking areas was coupled with the increased pressure coming from the contact with newly introduced Romance varieties. On the other hand, this new pressure was not dramatically combined with the general depopulation of the community due to economic and social reasons. This peculiar state-of-affairs is probably the reason why Greschòneytitsch has undergone a partially different (and interesting!) development with regard to other close varieties like Issime or Rimella.

## Abbreviations

=	clitic boundary
-	morpheme boundary
.	one-to-many correspondences
1, 2, 3	first, second, third person
ACC	accusative
CAUS	causative
DAT	dative
DET	determiner
DIM	diminutive
F	feminine
IMP	imperative
IND	indicative
INF	infinitive
M	masculine
N	neuter
NOM	nominative
PART	participle
PL	plural
PROG	progressive
PRS	present
PST	past
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular
SUBJ	subjunctive



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