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The acquisition of negation by L2 German

L1 Italian speaker

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Introduction

Learning a second language may represent a difficult step during learners' course of studies, especially when the target language (L2) exhibits syntactic structures different from the native language (L1). This thesis aims to identify which syntactic difficulties native Italian speakers face when learning German as a second language. The focus is on the difficulties students experience while translating small sentences including negative structures from Italian (L1) into German (L2). Data were collected through a translation test, which was administered to linguistic high school students attending the second and fourth years of study at Alvise Cornaro High School in Padua. By examining these challenges, this research seeks to contribute to field of second language acquisition (SLA) and improve our understanding of how our native language can influence L2 acquisition.

Native languages can affect the process of second language acquisition, since speakers rely on structures with which they are more confident. This is defined "syntactic transfer" (Selinker, 1972) and can be either positive or negative. Positive transfer occurs when the L1 and L2 share similar syntactic structures. For this reason, L2 acquisition can be facilitated. Conversely, when the two languages present different syntactic structures, the application of L1 rules can lead to errors in L2 production, generating an interference.

Italian and German note several differences not only in syntax but also in grammatical rules, especially as regards negation. For example, mainly Italian negative structures include the negative item *non* to negate verbs or *non* and other quantifiers, such as *nessuno* ("nobody"), *niente* ("nothing"), or *mai* ("never"), to negate nouns. Whereas, German speakers should choose between *kein* to negate nouns preceded by indefinite articles and *nicht* to negate verbs. Moreover, the Italian negative item *nessun** can be translated into German in two ways, *kein* in case it is treated as adjective or *niemand* if it is a pronoun. Finally, Italian accepts the presence of multiple negative items in the same sentence, while German does not. Understanding how these differences impact Italian

learners' translations into German can offer insights into common errors and area where instruction may be improved.

This thesis addresses five research question aimed at underlying specific syntactic challenges. The research questions analyse whether students correctly declined negative articles and pronouns, whether they accurately translated Italian negative items, and how effectively they placed negation within German sentence structures. Additionally, the thesis examines whether elements such as simple or complex direct object or the animacy of the complex direct object influence their performance. Finally, the study seeks to understand how Negative Concord (NC), which refers to the linguistic phenomenon where multiple negative elements coexist in a sentence to express a single negation (Giannakidou, 2020), affects German acquisition.

This study in organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the main SLA theories, underlying the difference between second language acquisition and second language learning (Krashen, 1981). Theories such as Chomsky's Universal Grammar, Krashen's Input Hypothesis or Selinker's idea of interlanguage are crucial to examine how syntactic transfer can influence L2 acquisition. Moreover, Chapter 1 provides an analysis of how negation is structured in both Italian and German, highlighting the principal differences between the two languages and the potential causes of common errors while translating into German. At the end of the chapter, the research questions are stated with a brief explanation.

Chapter 2 describes the experiment design, and how it was administered. The conditions included in the experiment are explained and details on participants selection are revealed. The translation test was divided into two parts, Experiment 1 (Exp.1) and Experiment 2 (Exp.2). The chapter includes the explanation of the structure of each part, providing even examples of how the tests figured.

Chapter 3 reports the results of Exp.1 and Exp.2, showing key findings and error patterns in participants' translations. In addition, the results achieved from second-year students are compared with the results of fourth-year students, as to draw attention to any academic growth and program effectiveness.

The last chapter, chapter 4 discusses these results by answering the research questions with details and comparisons of the results provided by the two cohorts, drawing conclusions on the syntactic difficulties encountered by participants.

In exploring these syntactic difficulties, this research aims to contribute to SLA studies by offering new insights into the transfer of negative structures from Italian to German. Identifying specific error patterns and their potential causes can allow the findings of this thesis to help informing more target teaching strategies, as a support to Italian learners mastering German negation.

Chapter 1: Literature review

The following chapter provides an overview of the existing literature on the syntactic challenges faced by native Italian speakers learning German, as a second language. By examining theories, studies and research, this chapter aims to contextualise the present study within the field of second language acquisition. Considering the limited research specifically addressing the acquisition of negation by native Italian speakers learning German, this review aims to highlight gaps in the existing literature and justify the need for a focused experimental investigation. Negation is a central concept in this research since it represents a difficult step within the field of German learning by native Italian speakers. This chapter presents different perspectives on how learners process and produce negative structures in non-native languages.

The review describes the main Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, initially analysing the differences between second language acquisition and second language learning. Afterward, important SLA theories, such as Contrastive Analysis (CA), Error Analysis (EA), Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) or Krashen's Input Hypothesis, are briefly discussed to introduce some important concepts related to second language acquisition processes. Concepts including syntactic transfer (Odlin, 1989), first language interference, and interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) are crucial to understand how learners acquire a second language.

Moreover, negation will be explained from a syntactic point of view, underlying the differences between the two languages considered, Italian and German. The discussion will also include studies on error analysis and pedagogical approaches to mitigate the difficulties that learners encounter.

The last part of this chapter includes the research questions that this experimental work investigates with a brief explanation of each one.

1.1 Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning

Second language learning is the process of acquiring a new language, named L2, other than one's native language. A native language, also known as mother tongue, first language or L1, is typically acquired from birth, during what is often referred to as the "critical period" in early childhood (Lennenberg, 1967). Natural acquisition of linguistic competence without the need for formal instruction is allowed during this period. Children are immersed in an environment where the native language is used for interaction with family members and others in the surrounding social context. This natural exposure let them to unconsciously absorb the language's structures, making it an integral part of their identity and worldview.

In contrast, a second language (L2) is learned after the foundational acquisition of the first language, either through subconscious acquisition or conscious learning, as distinguished by Krashen (1981), a renowned linguist and educational researcher. His theories emphasize the distinction between "acquisition" and "learning". According to his model, "acquisition" is a natural and subconscious process like how children pick up their first language. It happens naturally when the learner is exposed to the L2 in meaningful and communicative contexts, where the focus is on understanding and exchanging meaning rather than on formulating grammatically correct sentences. In this scenario, the learner gradually absorbs the linguistic structure of the L2 without explicit awareness of the rules governing the language.

On the other hand, second language "learning" is more conscious and structured process. This often involves explicit instruction and the systematic study of the grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic rules. Unlike acquisition, learning typically takes place in formal educational settings such as classrooms, where learners engage in study and practice. They are often tested on their grammatical knowledge and linguistic competencies, with the goal of internalizing the rules and structures of the L2. While acquisition is more intuitive, learning is methodological, with an emphasis on explicit knowledge and conscious awareness of language forms. Learners are encouraged to apply the rules they have studied trough practice and repetition, which can lead to gradual proficiency in the L2.

This distinction between language acquisition and language learning is crucial for understanding the focus of this study since the data collected originates from an educational setting in which the participants are native Italian speakers learning German as a second language[1]. Therefore, the study emphasizes the role of structured learning processes, rather than natural language acquisition, in shaping their proficiency in German.

Participants in this research are adolescents, specifically students aged 15 to 18. The cognitive, developmental, and educational characteristics of learners within this age group differ significantly from those of younger children, influencing both the methods of instruction and the learners' ability to internalize a second language. Consequently, the theoretical framework and literature review in this chapter are specifically focused on adolescent and adult language learners. For this reason, other categories such as early childhood learners or adults outside of formal education have been excluded in order to provide a more targeted analysis of this specific age group.

Compared to children or adults outside of formal educational context, adolescents studying a second language within such context tend to have more syntactic and grammatic competencies. This is due to their conscious awareness of the syntactic and grammatic structures of their native language, which they will be probably use to approach to L2 learning. By recognizing similarities between L1 and L2, learners will probably apply the rules they are confident with, instead of directly following L2 rules (Alexandrino, 2010). In this case, errors connected to the interference of L1 could be more notable. This is the focus of this study, since it aims to identify common error patterns caused by L1 interference during L2 acquisition.

1.2 Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a widely debated topic within linguistics. Over the past century, numerous linguists have developed various theories to explain the

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[1] Further details regarding the participants involved in this study will be presented in the following chapter.

process of second language acquisition. A brief historical overview is provided below, dividing these theories into two main periods: pre-1970s and post-1970s. The 1970s marked a transformative decade for Sla, with the emergence of influential models, such as Krashen's Monitor Model and Chomsky's Universal Grammar.

The following literature review will focus mainly on syntactic difficulties in learning a second language, as this represents the core of this study. Syntactic structures, which govern the arrangement of words and phrases in a sentence, vary in a wide way across languages. Every learner struggle with this obstacle, especially when the target language's syntax differs significantly from their native language (L1), as in the case of this research. As will be explained below, Italian and German present very different syntactic structures, above all when it comes to negative constructions.

1.2.1 Pre 1970s

a. Contrastive Analysis (CA)

"Contrastive Analysis", also called CA, is a theoretical framework that involves comparing the linguistic structures of two languages, determining similarities and difficulties (Saville-Troike, 2012). The languages involved are indeed a learner's native language (L1) and the target language (L2). Robert Lado opened his book "Linguistics Across Cultures" (1957) with an important statement:

> "The plan of the book rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student. In our view, the preparation of up-to-date pedagogical and experimental materials must be based on this kind of comparison." (p. vii)

This approach underlines the utility of recognizing the similarities and differences for a pedagogical goal: in this way, areas of errors can be anticipated, and the teaching method can be adapted to correct learners' performance. The Contrast Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) suggests that the greater the structural differences between languages, the more challenging second language acquisition will be. For instance, errors of misunderstanding can arise from the syntactic differences between German and Italian.

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Example (1) shows a native Italian speaker who would probably incorrectly translate the sentence into German, as German requires a different word order than Italian.

(1) a. Italian: Penso che non ci sia nessun problema. ("I think there is no problem.")

    b. German: Ich denke, dass es kein Problem gibt. ("I think there is no problem.")

An Italian L1 student might instead say "*Ich denke, dass es gibt kein Problem". This reflects a common error in verb placement within subordinate clauses, as German requires the verb to be positioned at the end of the clause. In this case, the native knowledge influences the translation process and, thus, the result. Italian structure is used as a reference to translate into German, but, in this case, this led to a mistranslation.

Uriel Weinreich in his book "Languages in Contact" (1953) described this phenomenon, defining it "transfer". This process occurs when speakers apply structures or elements they have internalized while acquiring their first language (L1) also during second language acquisition (L2). Odlin (1989) described transfer as "the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps) imperfectly acquired". Transfer can arise at various levels of language structure: phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and lexicon.

Transfer can be either positive (or facilitating) or negative (or interference) (Saville-Troike, 2012). As regard syntax, if the syntactic structures of L1 are not in competition with the ones of L2, it results in "positive transfer", facilitating L2 acquisition (Derakhshan and Karimi, 2015). For example, both English and Spanish typically follow the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order. This can help Spanish speakers learn English sentence structures more easily and vice versa. Example (2) is a clear representation:

(2) a. Spanish: Yo vivo en Madrid. ("I live in Madrid.")

    b. English: I live in Madrid.

Conversely, if the structures are different, L1 knowledge can obstruct L2 learning, leading to "negative transfer" or interference (Kotz, 2009). For instance, Japanese speakers learning English may encounter some difficulties related to the word order, since Japanese is an SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) language (Koda, 1993), whereas English, as stated above, is an SVO language. For this reason, Japanese speakers might probably use the same structure the have already internalized, probably translating "*I to the part went." instead of "I went to the park.", for example.

Interference refers therefore to the elements that negatively affect the correct use of another language, as it involves the unintentional intrusion of features from the speaker's L1 into the L2, resulting in non-native patterns in speech or writing. Linguists such as Zimmerman (2000) believe that L1 involvement primarily occurs during the initial stages of language production, particularly in the idea formation and planning phases. For example, a study by Kakar and Sarwari (2022) involving ten Afghans learning English found that participants often relied on their L1, Farsi Dari in their case, to help generate ideas due to greater confidence in that language. L1, therefore, is an essential support in building the confidence necessary to complete translation tasks. As learners' proficiency in L2 increases, however, they tend to rely less on their native language to generate ideas.

Contrastive Analysis presented some limitations, since it focused on idealized linguistic structures connected to L2 learners' performance, influence by their native language. All the theories included in this approach did not give an importance to the error committed by learners, in contrast to the Error Analysis proposed by Corder (1967).

b. *Error Analysis (EA)*

Error Analysis (EA) was the first approach within SLA studies, which included an analysis and description of errors and mistakes[2], committed by L2 learners. Corder believed that errors represent an insight of the process of language acquisition, and not only they are mere signs of failure. Errors should be treated as valuable data that reveal the "system" learners are developing, known as their interlanguage. Corder made a significant distinction between errors and mistakes. Errors are systematic and consistent

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[2] This distinction was suggested by Corder (Corder, 1967) and will be shortly explained.

inaccuracies in language use that occur due to a learner's lack of knowledge or understanding or L2 rules. This is an indication of a gap in a learner's interlanguage. On the other hand, mistakes are "errors of performance" (Corder, 1967), occasional lapses or slip-ups that learners make during language production, even though they have a certain proficiency level. For example, strong emotional states or lack of concentration can lead native speakers to commit mistakes.

The approach of EA can be useful for different reasons, or, in other words, for three main figures (Corder, 1967). First, the teacher can understand the proficiency level of learners. In this way, teachers can understand if their teaching method is productive or should be adapted. Secondly, EA is crucial for researchers, as they can obtain evidence of how language is acquired. And thirdly, learners themselves can benefit from this approach. Errors and mistakes are proof of their performance, so that they can test what they learned and improve their proficiency level.

"The Study of Second Language Acquisition" written by Rod Ellis (2008) is a crucial contribution as regards the procedure of Error Analysis. He outlined several steps in the EA process, as listed below:

1. Collection of a sample of leaner language. The first step involves gathering representative samples of learner language, which can include data collected from written text, spoken transcript, or authentic outputs.

2. Identification of errors. The next step includes the division into errors and mistakes, as mentioned before. Mistakes are excluded from the analysis.

3. Description of errors. Errors are classified based on linguistic criteria to reveal patterns and tendencies. Errors can be grouped according to language component (e.g., phonological, morphological, syntactic, or lexical), more specific linguistic elements, such as verb form, word order, articles (Saville-Troike, 2012) or using a "surface strategy taxonomy" (Ellis, 2008), such as omissions, additions and regularizations. Table 1 illustrates a part of the taxonomy with some examples taken from Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982).

Category	Description	Example
Omissions	The absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance.	She sleeping.
Additions	The presence of an item that must not appear in well-formed utterances.	We didn't went there.
Misinformations	The use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure.	The dog ated the chicken.
Misorderings	The incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.	What daddy is doing?

Table 1: A surface strategy taxonomy (Ellis, 2008)

4. Explanation of errors. This is one of the most informative steps, as it analyses the source of these errors. Interlingual (which means "between languages) factors can cause errors, which are the result of negative transfer or interference from L1. In the case of intralingual ("within language") factors, errors do not depend on cross-linguistic interference. They originate instead within the target language itself and independent of the learner's L1. They can be the consequence of insufficient knowledge of exceptions or irregularities in L2, for example. Figure 1 is a clear representation of the errors division according to Ellis.
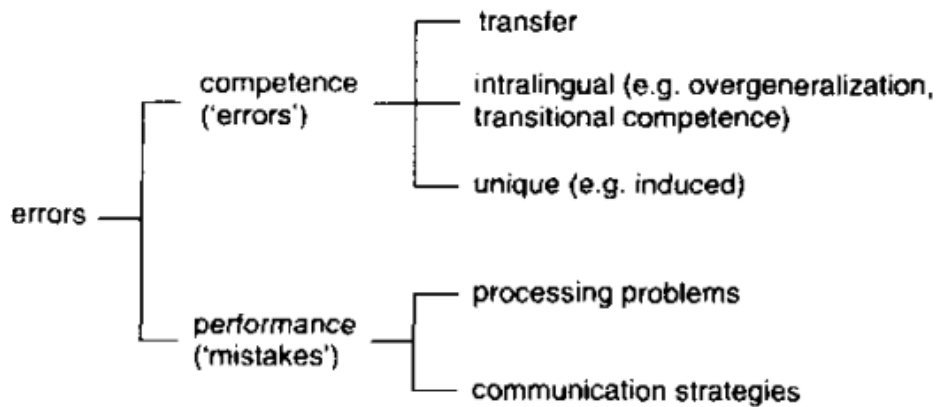

Figure 1: Psycholinguistic sources of errors (Ellis, 2008)

5. Evaluation of error. The last step in EA is evaluating the impact and seriousness of each error, which helps prioritize errors for correction in language instruction. Not all errors equally affect communication, and thus they can be classified based

on their potential impact. Global errors disrupt sentence meaning and impede overall comprehension. They are typically more serious because they affect the message's clarity. While, local errors do not obstruct understanding and may only slightly affect grammatical correctness, for this reason they are less urgent for immediate correction.

1.2.2 Post 1970s

Theoretical frameworks such as Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) or Krashen's Input Hypothesis were fundamental to SLA theories during the 1970s and 1980s.

a. *Chomsky's theory*

Noam Chomsky, an American theoretical linguistic, give us a definition for Universal Grammar, defining it as "the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages, not merely by accident buy by [biological] necessity" (Chomsky, 1975). In other words, the UG includes the idea that all human languages share a common underlying structure. This theory was an innovation compared to the already popular behaviourist approach to language acquisition, which emphasized imitation and reinforcement. He argues that humans are born with an innate, biological capacity for language, which explains why children acquire language in a rapid and consistent manner across different cultures and linguistic environments, despite being exposed to incomplete or grammatically incorrect linguistic input (Chomsky, 1981). This phenomenon was called "poverty of the stimulus" and underlines the incompleteness of the input children receive. Due to this, children must apply to develop the grammar rules while learning a language.

Moreover, Chomsky introduced the concept of "Language Acquisition Device" (LAD), a disposition that explains how human children acquire language so effortlessly. The LAD processes the linguistic input children receive and converts it into grammatical knowledge, or more generally, linguistic competences (Kadarisman, 2009). This procedure enables children to construct grammatically correct sentences even when they

have never heard certain sentence structures before, highlighting the innate nature of grammar acquisition.

Another Chomsky's significant contribution was the introduction of the "Principles and Parameters Theory" (Chomsky and Lasnik, 1993). This theory suggests that all languages are ruled by a set of universal principles, which are common to every language, while parameters change across languages. This variation explains the differences among languages, such as the word order, sentence structure, or the assignment of grammatical gender or number. Within the field of second language acquisition, learners face multiple difficulties when syntactic structures of L1 differ from the ones of L2, since they may struggle to reset the syntactic structures, which they have internalized from their native language.

Chomsky's theories are crucial for understanding his contribution to the field of linguistics. His idea of language acquisition has influences research on human cognition, as language provide insights into the deeper mechanism of thought and reasoning.

b. Krashen's theory

Stephen D. Krashen is another linguistic whose theories were considered an important enrichment to the studies regarding the field of linguistics. He proposes different theories about second language acquisition and learning[3], such as the natural order hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the Affective Filter hypothesis.

The "Natural hypothesis" includes the idea that learners acquire the rules of a language in a predictable sequence. Studies demonstrate that certain grammatical structures tend to be acquired earlier, while some others come later, both during first and second language acquisition. Children cultivate their grammatical awareness during the first language acquisition in a different way compared to their second language acquisition, but with some similarities (Krashen, 1982). A study conducted by Krashen in 1977 produced an average order of the child first language acquisition, as figure 2 illustrates.

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[3] These distinctions were proposed by Krashen himself and they were analysed in the section 1.1.
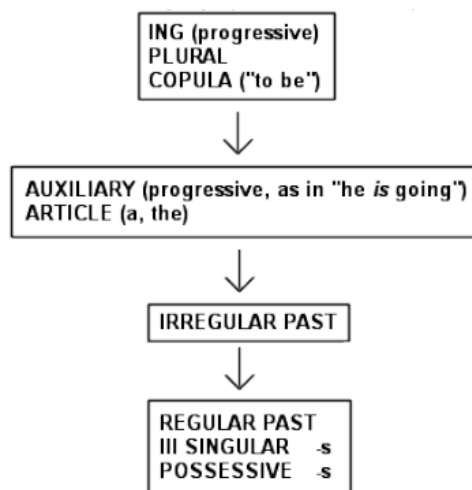
Figure 2: (Krashen, 1982; 13)

On the contrary, during the second language acquisition, the -ing form (ING), the plural (PLURAL), the irregular (IRREGULAR PAST) and regular past (REGULAR PAST), the third person singular (III SINGULAR -s) and the possessive (POSSESSIVE -s) are acquired earlier, while the AUXILIARY and COPULA are acquired later (Krashen, 1982).

Krashen considered the "Input hypothesis" the most important component of his second language acquisition theory, since it directly addresses the fundamental theoretical question of how language is acquired (Krashen, 1982). During a conference on language acquisition in the 80s, Krashen underlined that everyone acquires a language in only one way that is when we understand the message. What people say, what people show us is defined the "comprehensible input". The focus is on understanding meaning, rather than explicit grammar instructions. In other words, acquisition happens through meaningful interaction, not through explicit instruction in grammar or memorization of rules.

At the same conference, Krashen talked about the "Affective Filter hypothesis", according to which emotional factors can influence the language acquisition. He suggested that a learner's affective (emotional) state can create a metaphorical "filter" that blocks or allows input to be processed and acquired. More precisely, learners experiencing anxiety, low motivation, or self-doubt may have a high affective filter, which prevents them from fully processing the input they receive. On the contrary, if they are relaxed, motivated confident, their block can be overcome easily, and they will be more

open to input and more likely to acquire the language. Krashen suggested that anxiety must be minimized for optimal language acquisition.

Both the "Input theory" and the "Affective Filter hypothesis" fall within the field of language acquisition, as both underline the natural and subconscious procedure, which allows people to understand other languages different from the mother tongue, rather than the language learning.

Conversely, the "Monitor hypothesis" is focused on language learning, since it defines it as the Monitor, or editor (Krashen, 1982). While acquisition deals with the creation of an utterance and relates to the fluency shown by language speakers, learning changes the form of the utterance, after it is produced by the acquired system, as figure 3 illustrates.

Figure 3: (Krashen, 1982; 16)

Using the formal rules, or conscious learning, before or after the utterance is written or spoken, the Monitor modifies the output. It acts as a tool for self-correction or editing in real-time or retrospectively. The Monitor ensures that what is produced aligns with learned linguistic knowledge, such as correcting verb conjugations, word order, or other grammatical structures. This is applied when three necessary and not sufficient conditions meet. These are:

1. Time. Learners require sufficient time to practice their knowledge and produce correct language output. Spontaneous conversations can often be an obstacle to this process, as learners may hesitate to speak for fear of making mistakes.
2. Focus on form. Learners must be focused on form (i.e., the accuracy of the language) rather than on communication itself.

3. Know the rule. Learners must have learned the relevant grammatical rules. If a learner has not the sufficient knowledge, the Monitor will not useful.

Krashen divides learners based on how they employ the Monitor. He identifies three types (Krashen, 1982):

1. Monitor over-users are the ones that rely too heavily on the Monitor. They are constantly checking what they want to say or write. This can produce slow and unnatural conversations, during which the speaker often self-corrects in the middle of the utterances.

2. Monitor under-users are the ones who, on the contrary, avoid the Monitor, maybe because they have not the correct knowledge or they choose not to focus on accuracy. They trust in acquired language and prioritize communication over grammatical correctness.

3. The optimal Monitor user is the learner, who finds a balance between fluency and accuracy. When they can spend time in thinking carefully about the language, they find the Monitor appropriate. On the other hand, they can speak fluently in casual conversations, using learned rules.

c. Selinker's theory

Larry Selinker introduced the concept of interlanguage in 1972, focusing on the systematic and dynamic nature of language learners' progression toward target language competence. Interlanguage (IL hereinafter) is "a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language norm" (Selinker, 1972: 35). In other words, interlanguage refers to intermediate states (or interim grammars) (Saville-Troike, 2012) between learners' L1 and the target L2. It is not merely an imperfect form of the target language or a direct transfer of their L1, but instead it combines elements of both, forming a transitional grammar that is unique to each learner and constantly evolving. During L2 learning, learners acquire rules and patterns gradually, with the pace shaped by their aptitude, motivation and proficiency level. Learners form hypothesis about L2 and constantly refine these by testing, adjusting, and reorganizing rules within their developing interlanguage (IL) system. For this reason,

IL plays a crucial role for this reason, as it adapts to the improvements until it aligns with the target language. This process is called "Interlanguage Continuum", and it is figured below.
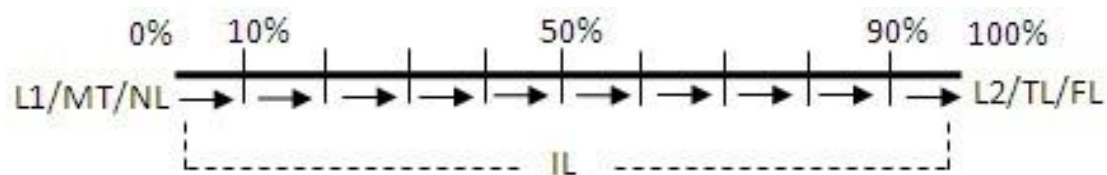

Figure 4: The IL continuum (Tanvir Shameem, 1992)

An interlanguage has different characteristics, as listed below (Saville-Troike, 2012).

- Systematicity: IL is a structured system governed by its own set of rules, which are consistent but not identical to those of either the native language (L1) or the target language (L2). These rules are applied systematically, even if they do not always align with native norms.
- Variability: interlanguage can vary depending on factors such as the context, the task difficulty, or the learners' confidence. For instance, a learner may use different form or structures depending on whether they are speaking formally or informally, or if they feel pressured.
- Dynamicity: IL is not static, it always evolves, meaning that learners frequently revise and restructure their IL based on new knowledge or experience in L2.
- Fossilization: certain errors may become fixed, or "fossilized", within the learner's system. Despite additional exposure or practice, some non-native features remain resistant to change, leading to a plateau in language proficiency.

In conclusion, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories provide a framework for understanding the complexities of learning a second language. Pre-1970s theories focused on comparison between languages, as in the case of Contrastive Analysis (CA), or on analysis the errors committed by speakers, as in the case of Error Analysis (EA).

CA offered foundational perspectives on the role of L1 interference, especially highlighting transfer between languages. Since this study deals with Italian as L1 and German as L2, and these are languages with many syntactic differences, as it will be explained in the following part, emphasis is put on how native Italian speakers can be influenced while learning German. Meanwhile, EA focused more on considering errors and their nature, in order to understand why they are committed and how they can be avoided, as signs of learners' evolving linguistic competence.

Moreover, the theoretical contributions of Chomsky, Krashen, and Selinker further developed the field by introducing frameworks that enlarged SLA research and pedagogy. The idea that innate, biological mechanisms drive language acquisition is the fundamental of Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG). Chomsky suggested that linguistic competences arise from natural, universal principles inherent across languages. Krashen's input and affective theories highlight the importance of comprehensible input and emotional factors, distinguishing subconscious language acquisition from conscious language learning. With his works, the importance of meaningful interaction and low affective barriers are underscored, especially in naturalistic settings. At the end, Selinker's concept of interlanguage provides a dynamic perspective, emphasizing learners' progression through a transitional linguistic system that incorporates elements of both L1 and L2. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive understanding of SLA, addressing the cognitive, environmental, and emotional factors that shape individual learner progress.

1.3 Negation

Building on these theoretical foundations, a key syntactic challenge in second language acquisition is the formation and use of negation. Negation, a fundamental linguistic structure, varies considerably across languages, often resulting in difficulties for learners when the syntactic rules differ between their L1 an L2. For Italian speakers learning German, the structural contrasts in negation present notable challenges. While Italian and German both possess rules for negation, the syntactic placement and structure differ, leading to potential areas of negative transfer and learner errors. This section will

explore these contrasts, examining the syntactic nuances of negation in Italian and German and analysing how these differences impact native Italian speakers learning German.

1.3.1 Definition

In linguistics, negation refers to a grammatical operation used to reverse the truth value of a proposition, transforming affirmative statements into their opposite or negative forms. Essentially, negation marks a clause or sentence as *not true*. This concept is foundational in language as it allows speakers to deny or contradict statements, generating negation, which is often represented in formal semantics by the logical operator "¬" (Horn, 1989). Negation can be expressed through various linguistic elements, including negative particles (such as "nicht" in German or "non" in Italian), affixes, words, and syntactic structures.

Negation is considered "the first and most basic operator" (Horn, 1989), playing a crucial role in logic, language development, and pragmatics. Negation is universally attested across languages, though it varies in its grammatical forms and complexities. For example, in English, negation is often expressed by inserting "not" (abbreviated with "n't") after the auxiliary verb (e.g. "No, this *is not* the case") (Tagliani, Vender, Melloni, 2022). Meanwhile, in Italian, negation typically uses the particle "non" placed before the verb (e.g., "*Non* viene", which means "She is not coming").

Moreover, negation can be distinguished in sentential or constituent negation (Klima, 1964). In "Negation in English", Klima defines sentential negation as the negation of an entire sentence, typically involving elements like "not" or "no" to negate the proposition. For example, in "She is *not* coming.", the entire statement about her coming is negated. Payne (1985) described four strategies used by speakers to express negation. Every language used at least one oh this method, and some even more than one (Zanuttini, 2008).

The first strategy includes using a negative marker with the characteristics of a verb taking a sentential complement to negate the clause, as assumed in example (3) taken from the Tongan language.

(3) Na'e 'ikai [ke 'allu 'a Siale]

    aspNegAsp-go AbsoluteCHarlie.

    "Charlie didn't go."

This is a case of "negative verb" that is a combination of a negative marker and an aspect marker.

Another strategy is that of negating a clause via negative marker which appears in the form of a "particle", an element which can be invariant (e.g. Russian *ne*), or can exhibit sensitivity to mood, for example in Hungarian *ne/nem*), tense or aspect.

According to the third strategy, negation is stablished using a negative marker, which has the properties of a finite auxiliary (respecting person, number, tense, aspect, or mood affixes) and a lexical verb in a non-finite participial form.

The last strategy works for a prefix, a suffix, or an infix, as in the case of the Turkish *-me-* that precedes the affixes expressing tense, mood, person and number[4].

On the other hands, constituent negation applies only to a specific part or constituent of a sentence rather than to the entire proposition. For instance, in "She arrived *not yesterday* but today", only "yesterday" is negated, and the rest of the sentence remains positive. Klima (1964) pointed out that constituent negation does not affect the overall truth value of the sentence in the same way as sentential negation, and it often coexists within affirmative or negative contexts.

Bloom (1970) analysed negative meanings, as a result of the examination of children language acquisition. She identified three main categories:

1. Rejection. Children use this type of negation to refuse or reject something. For example, "I don't want the cookie".

2. Non-existence. This type of negation is used by children to negate the existence of an expected item or event. For instance, a child might say "No cookie" where there is no cookie in sight.

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[4] All these examples regarding the different strategies negating the clause are taken form Zanuttini (2008).

3. Denial. This involves children contradicting or denying a statement. If someone mistakenly assumes something, a child might say, "No, not mine".

Negation is also central in studies of language acquisition. Klima and Bellugi (1966) showed that children acquire negation in stages, typically beginning with simple negative words and later developing more complex syntactic negations as they improve their grammatical proficiency level. Rejection, for example, is the first negative meaning that children acquire, while non-existence is acquired later (Bloom, 1970). This area is of particular interest in second language acquisition research, as learners often transfer negation patterns from their first language into their L2, which can result in syntactic errors (Odlin, 1989).

1.3.2 Negative Concord (NC)

Negative Concord (NC) is a linguistic phenomenon in which multiple negative exponents are used in a sentence, and they collectively express a single negation (Giannakidou, 2020). As in the following example:

(4) a. Gianni *(non) ha visto niente.   Italian

      Gianni NEG have.1SG seen n-thing

    "Gianni hasn't seen anything."

   b. *(No) he did res.   Catalan

     NEG have.1SG said n-thing

    "I didn't say anything."

   c. He didn't say nothing.   English: Double negation

In the previous examples, one instance of negation is represented by the negative marker, while the second is identified as the so-called "n-word". Laka (1990) used the term due to the presence of the negative marking "n". For our discussion, we will refer to this category as "negative concord items" (NCIs).

Italian and Catalan are "negative concord languages", whereas English is not, because the combination of negation *n't* and *nothing* create an incorrect sentence and

results in double negation. Other "negative concord languages" are French, Hungarian, Serbian/Croatian, Greek, and Japanese.

Two varieties of negative concord are identified (Giannakidou, 1997): strict and non-strict.

a. Strict Negative Concord (NC)

Strict Negative Concord (NC) languages require the presence of the negative marker and the NCIs all the time, to express negation. The negative marker should be included, even though two NCIs are present. Greek, Albanian, Hungarian, Japanese, and Korean are strict NC languages. In this type of languages, the interaction between negative items operates on the principle of agreement in negative polarity. This means that various negative markers within a single sentence are not treated as independent entities but rather as mutually reinforcing elements that collectively express a singular negative notion. Consequently, even in instances where multiple negation markers are present, the overall negation remains non-cumulative (Laka, 1990). This phenomenon can be understood through Zeijlstra's analysis (2004), which supports the idea that the presence of multiple negative markers does not intensify the negation but instead reflects a structural agreement among them, leading to a unified interpretation of negation. Example (5) is taken from Polish[5], a strict NC language.

(5) a. *(*Nie*) zniszczyłem niczyjej *książki*

　　　 not destroyed-1.SG.MSC n-person's book

　　　 "I didn't destroy anybody's book."

　　b. *Nikt* *(*nie*) dał Marysi *książki*

　　　 n-person-NOM not gave Mary-DAT book-GEN

　　　 "Nobody gave Mary a/the book."

---

[5] Examples taken from Przpiórkowski and Kupść (1999: 213 and 215)

b. *Non-strict Negative Concord (NC)*

Non-strict NC languages allow, but do not require, the use of multiple negative elements to express a single negation. This mean that while negative concord can appear, it is not structurally enforced across all contexts. "In non-strict concord, an NCI can appear in preverbal position with negative meaning without negation: a preverbal NCI can also licence a postverbal one, again without negation" (Giannakidou, 1997).

(6) a. Ieri nessuno ha telefonato.

yesterday n-person has called.

"Yesterday nobody called."

b.*Gianni ha telefonato nessuno.

John has called n-person

(7) Ieri nessuno ha parlato con nessuno.

yesterday n-person.body has talked with n-person.

"Yesterday nobody talked with anybody."

Example (7) shows a characteristic of non-strict NC patterns, that is the appearance of the NCI *nessuno* preverbally without negation.

On the other hands, postverbal NCIs occur with preverbal negative element (an NCI or a negative marker), as described in the following example (8).

(8) a. Ieri nessuno non ha telefonato.

yesterday n-perso NEG has called.

"It is not the case that yesterday nobody called."

b. Ieri non ha telefonato nessuno.

yesterday NEG has called n-person.

"Yesterday nobody called."

With preverbal NCI and negation, the result is a double negation. That means that the NCI should be considered negatively, when put in preverbal position.

In the following subchapter, negative constructions in Italian and German will be briefly explained, with the aim of underlying the main syntactic differences between the two languages. As a Romance language, Italian evolved from Latin and generally follows a flexible Subject-Verb-Object order, adapting word order according to discourse requirements and context. German, however, is a Germanic language and adheres to stricter syntactic rules, such as Verb-Second (V2) order in main clauses and Subject-Object- Verb (SOV) in subordinate clauses (Comrie, 1987; Fortson, 2010).

These differences underscore the syntactic challenges faced by Italian speakers learning German, especially in negative constructions. Understanding these contrasts is essential for the error analysis in Chapter 3, where the goal will be to determine the nature of syntactic transfer errors and the specific ways in which Italian may influence the acquisition of negation in German (Crystal, 2010; Haspelmath, 1997).

1.3.3 Negation in Italian

In Italian, the most common form of negation includes the use of the preverbal particle *non* (meaning "not") placed before the finite verb. This rule applies for sentential and constituent negation (Bernini, 2000), negating verbs with different tenses and moods, as indicated in examples (9) and (10).

(9) a. Positive: Parlo italiano. ("I speak Italian.")

    Negative: *Non* parlo italiano. ("I don't speak Italian)(

(10) b. Positive: Andrò al cinema. ("I will go to the cinema")

     Negative: *Non* andrò al cinema. ("I will not go to the cinema.")

Other negative words are used in Italian, such as the indefinites *nessuno* ("no one"), *niente* or *nulla* ("nothing") and *mai* ("never"), the holophrasic negator *no* ("no"), the post-verbal particle *mica* ("not at all") for emphatic negation, a set of negative focus particles

with the same meaning, which are *neanche, neppure* and *nemmeno* ("neither") and the coordinating conjunction *nè … nè* ("neither … nor"). These elements, named n-words, can occur with *non*, intensifying the negation.

(11) a. *Nessuno* è arrivato. ("Nobody came")

     b. *Non* è arrivato *nessuno*. ("Nobody came")

Example (11b) represents an intensified negation, with respect to (11a), but both have the same meaning in English, as they are translated in the same way.

As stated before, *non* can be combined with finite verbs, but in some cases, it is also placed before the infinitive form. This structure is used in various syntactic contexts, such as negative imperatives or expressions with infinitives.

(12) a. È meglio *non* parlare. ("It's better not to speak.")

     b. Per *non* disturbare. ("To not disturb.")

Furthermore, negation in imperative can vary depending on the level of formality. In informal contexts, *non* is placed before the infinitive verb, while formal commands follow the standard negation rule.

(13) a. *Non* parlare! ("Do not speak!")   Informal

     b. *Non* parli! ("Do not speak!")   Formal

As regards compound tenses, the negative item *non* precedes the auxiliary verb and not the finite verb, as example (14) illustrates.

(14) a. *Non* ho visto il film. ("I haven't seen the movie")

     b. *Non* è arrivato. ("He didn't come")

The same rule is followed even in the case of conditional and subjunctive negation. The verb conjugated to the subjunctive comes after the adverb *non*.

(15) a. Spero che *non* piova. ("I hope it does not rain.")

b. Vorrei che *non* fosse così. ("I would like it not be like this.")

Emphatic negation can be constructed by using the preverbal particle *non* and the postverbal particle *mica*, such as in example (16b). This structure is used as a response that rejects any suggestion of the speaker being "stupid" (Bernini, 2000).

(16) a. Tu hai capito?

you have -2.SG understood

"Did you understand?"

b. Certo che ho capito. *Non* sono *mica* stupida, io.

surely that have-1.SG understood NEG am NEG stupid-F.SG I

"Surely I did, I'm not stupid!"

No and its positive counterpart *sì* ("yes") can replace an entire clause in replies, both in the case of main and subordinate clauses, to reply to any type of utterance. Example (17a) illustrates a replacement of a main clause, while example (17b) of a subordinate clause.

(17) Vieni?

come-2.SG

a. *No*. [= Non vengo]

no NEG come-1.SG

"No, I'm not."

b. Ho detto di *no*. [= Ho detto che non vengo]

have-1.SG said of no have-1.SG said that NEG come-1.SG

"I told you I'm not."

Other negative items – indefinites, focus particles, and conjunctions – can appear together in the same clause. When these are post-verbal, they must co-occur with preverbal *non*; otherwise, in preverbal position, *non* can be omitted, as provided in example (18).

(18) a. *Non* ha detto *niente né* a Giovanni *né* a Maria.

    NEG has said nothing neither to John nor to Mary

    "He said nothing either to John or to Mary."

  b. *Nessuno* [Ø] ha detto *niente neanche* a me.

    nobody has said nothing neither to me

    "Nobody said anything to me either."[6]

In summary, Italian offers a rich system for expressing negation, with a variety of forms such as the preverbal *non* for basic clause negation, the emphatic *mica*, and holophrastic negator *no*. This repertoire allows for expressing negation, ranging from simple clause negation to more complex forms involving multiple negative elements. Understanding these mechanisms sets a foundation for examining how negation is structured in the L2 of this study, which is German. By comparing these systems, we can better appreciate the specific challenges and potential areas of syntactic transfer learners may encounter in the process of acquiring negation in L2.

1.3.4 Negation in German

Sentence negation in German is expressed by the negation particle *nicht*, which means "not" in English. The general rule states that the negator *nicht* precedes the non-finite verb or the predicative complement (Dimroth, 2010). Since German is a V2 language, in declarative main clauses the verb occupies the second position and the non-finite verb concludes the sentence, occupying the final position, whereas in subordinate clauses, both the finite and non-finite verbs are in clause-final position. In both cases, the

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[6] Examples (16), (17) and (18) were taken from Bernini (2000).

negative item *nicht* precedes the non-finite verb. Example (19a) contains a main negative clause, while (19b) a subordinate negative clause.

(19) a. Heute hat er *nicht* gearbeitet.

today has he not worked

"He hasn't worked today."

b. … dass er heute *nicht* gearbeitet hat.

… that he today not worked has.

"… that he hasn't worked today."

Nicht appears to the left of the predicate complement, in predicative clauses, as figured in the following example.

(20) Die Äpfel sind *nicht* billig. ("The apples are not cheap.")

Nicht may also appear at the end of a sentence, where the finite lexical verb occupies the second position and there is no auxiliary verb.

(21) Ich kenne ihn *nicht*.

I know him not.

"I don't know him". [7]

Moreover, *nicht* is used to negate nouns preceded by a definitive article (22a) or a possessive pronoun (22b), and it is put before them.

(22) a. Er hat *nicht* das Essen bezahlt, sondern die Getränke.

"He hasn't paid the food, but for the drinks."

b. Ich habe *nicht* deine Adresse, sondern ihre

"I don't have your address, but theirs."

---

[7] Examples (19), (20), and (21) are taken from Dimroth (2010).

Nicht may also serve to negate names and proper nouns (23a), pronouns (23b), adjectives (23c), adverbs (23d), and prepositions with indicators of place, time, and manner (23e).

(23) a. Das ist *nicht* Udos Auto, sondern Susis. ("This is not Udo's car, but Susi's")

    b. Ich habe *nicht* dich gerufen, sondern Petra. ("I haven't called you, I called Petra.")

    c. Das ist *nicht* fair! ("This is not fair!")

    d. Sie geht *nicht* gerne schwimmen. ("She doesn't like swimming.")

    e. Wir wohnen *nicht* in Berlin. ("We don't live in Berlin.")[8]

The indefinite article *kein* negates nouns that are preceded by an indefinite article or no article at all. *Kein* declines to match the case, gender, and number of the noun it modifies, as shown in following examples.

(24) a. Ich habe *keine* Zeit. ("I have no time.")

    b. Sie hat *keinen* Hund. ("She has no dog")

    c. Wir haben *kein* Problem. ("We habe no problem")

Kein is the negation of the indefinite article *ein* ("a/an") and is generally used to indicate the nonexistence or absence of something in nominal contexts. Whereas *nicht* negates actions, states or specific phrases.

The indefinite pronoun *niemand*, which means "nobody", must be declined according to the role that plays in the sentence. *Niemand* for the nominative case, *niemanden* for accusative and *niemandem* for dative.

(25) Ich habe *niemanden* angetroffen. ("I haven't met nobody.")[9]

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[8]   These   examples   were   found   on   the   website   "Lingolia   Deutsch": https://deutsch.lingolia.com/en/grammar/sentence-structure/negation

[9] Examples from Duden (2009).

Another negative pronoun is *nichts*, which means "nothing". In simple main clauses with an SVO structure where *nichts* serves as the direct object of the verb, it typically follows the verb directly (Duden, 2016), as in example (26a). When a sentence includes an auxiliary verb (e.g. "haben" or "sein") and a past participle and other complements, *nichts* is usually place after the main verb, as in example (26b).

(26) a. Ich verstehe *nichts*. ("I don't understand")
　　　 b. Ich habe *nichts* von ihm gehört. ("I have heard nothing from him.")

When *nichts* is used in sentences containing modal verbs, such as *können* ("can"), *müssen* ("must") or *sollen* ("should"), it is place immediately before the main verb at the end of the clause, since the modal verbs occupied the second position (Helbig & Buscha, 2001), as shown in example (27).

(27) Ich kann dir *nichts* sagen. ("I cannot say anything to you.")

In subordinate clauses – often introduced by conjunctions like *weil* ("because") or *dass* ("that") – the verb typically appears at the end of the clause (Zifonun, Hoffmann, and Strecker, 1997). In these clauses, *nichts* still functions as the direct object of the verb but appears before the verb at the end of the clause, like in example (28).

(28) Ich spreche nie, weil ich *nichts* verstehen. ("I never speak, because I understand nothing.")

For stylistic emphasis, *nichts* can sometimes be move at the beginning of the clause. This usage is less common in everyday German but is sometimes employed for rhetorical effect, especially to emphasize the totality of negation. When *nichts* take the first position, the main verb and the subject are inverted, conforming to the Verb-Second (V2) rule of German main clauses, as described in example (29).

(29) *Nichts* habe ich verstanden. ("Nothing did I understand.")

In this structure, the placement of *nichts* at the beginning emphasize that *nothing* was understood. This fronting is generally reserved for literary of formal context, as it places particular emphasis on the negated element (Eisenberg, 2004).

Negation in German follows strict rules and assumes different forms, according to the sentence type or the element that should be negated. In the following section, the main differences between the negation in Italian and the negation in German will be analysed.

1.3.5 Structural differences between Italian and German

The study of negation in Italian and negation in German presents significant differences in syntactic structures, grammatical cases, Negative Concord (NC), and lexicon, which all impact language acquisition. For native Italian speakers, who are learning German as a second language, these structural distinctions frequently lead to errors as the native language can influence L2 learning and Italian structures may be directly transferred into German (Hawkins, Towell, 2001). This section explores these primary differences and their consequences in the context of second language acquisition.

a. *Grammatical cases and negation*

Unlike Italian, German relies on a four-case system: nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive. Each case affects the declination of the negative article *kein*, since it should be declined according to the case and gender of the noun that will negate. Table 2 represents how *kein* should be declined.

	Nominativ	**Accusativ**	**Dativ**	**Genitiv**
Maskulinum	keine	keinen	keinem	keines
Feminin	keine	keine	keiner	keiner
Neutrum	kein	kein	keinem	keines
Plural	keine	keine	keinen	keiner

Table 2: Kein Deklination[10]

Italian present a nominative-accusative alignment system, where case distinctions are limited to subject and object roles. German, on the other hand, employs a more intricate nominative-accusative-dative system, requiring learners to master a wider range of case forms and their corresponding syntactic functions. For example, a native Italian speaker would say *Nessun uomo è qui.* ("No man is here.") or *Non vedo nessun uomo.* ("I see no man."), whereas a German speaker would use *kein* in the first case and *keinen* in the second.

Furthermore, *niemand* follows the same rule, as it becomes *niemanden* if it plays the role of a direct object (accusative), or *niemandem* if it is an indirect object (dative).

These examples highlight the Italian lack of the case-marked variations present in German. Italian speakers learning German often use fixed forms, leading to errors like omitting the necessary declension or placing negation incorrectly (Zorzi, 2008).

b. *Negative syntactic structures*

Negation structures in Italian and German differ fundamentally in both syntax and negation markers. These differences pose challenges for Italian speakers, especially because Italian negation is simpler in terms of syntactic placement and marker choice compared to German.

In Italian, negation is straightforward and typically involves the particle *non* placed directly before the verb. This structure remains relatively consistent regardless of sentence complexity, as in example (30).

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[10] Data in this table is derived from the Duden entry on *kein* (Duden, "Kein", https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/kein, accessed 29 October 2024.

(30) *Non* vedo il libro. ("I don't see the book.")

By contrast, German has a more complex system where the placement of *nicht* ("not") varies depending on what part of the sentence is being negated. For example, *nicht* is positioned:

1. Before adjectives and adverbs when they are the target of negation.
2. Before prepositional phrases when negating the phrase.
3. At the end of the sentence when negating the entire sentence meaning.[11]

This flexible positioning can be difficult for Italian speakers, who may instinctively place *nicht* directly before the verb, as in Italian, even when it does not conform to German syntax (Hawkins, Towell, 2001; Helbig, Buscha, 2001).

Another key difference is that Italian primarily uses the verb-based *non*, while German distinguishes between *nicht* ("not") and *kein* ("no/none"). In German, *kein* is used to negate nouns that are indefinite or lack a specific article, functioning similarly to *nessuno* or *alcun* in Italian. While *nicht* negates verbs, adjective, or specific parts of the sentence and cannot replace *kein*. Italian does not require this distinction since *non* serves all negation functions. Thus, Italian learners of German may mistakenly use *nicht* where *kein* is required, such as saying *Ich habe nicht Geld* instead of *Ich habe kein Geld* (Hopp, 2005). This confusion results from a structural difference between the two languages and can significantly impact clarity and grammatical accuracy.

Finally, Italian negation structures also do not adjust for German-specific rules regarding verb placement in main clauses (verb-second) and subordinate clauses (verb-final). For instance, in subordinate clauses, German requires *nicht* to appear before the verb at the end, as in the following example.

(31) Ich glaube, dass er *nicht* kommt. ("I believe that he is not coming.")

Conversely, in Italian the negation stays in front of the main verb regardless of clause type:

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[11] For further information, read the section 1.3.4 "Negation in German".

(32) Credo che *non* venga. ("I believe that he is not coming.")

Such structural differences can result in syntactic transfer errors, where learners misplace *nicht* or fail to use it in the expected order for German, often leaving it directly before the verb even in subordinate clauses, as is common in Italian (Zorzi, 2008).

c. *Negative Concord in Italian and German*

Negative Concord (NC) refers to a linguistic phenomenon where multiple negative elements appear in a sentence to convey a single negative meaning (see section 1.3.2 this chapter). Italian and German differ significantly in how they use or avoid NC, creating a potential area of difficulty for Italina speakers learning German.

In Italian multiple negative elements can coexist in the same sentence, strengthening the negative meaning without creating a double negation. For instance:

(33) *Non* ha mangiato *niente.*

not has eaten n-thing

"(S)he hasn't eaten anything."[12]

In this example, *non* is used with the additional negative word *niente* ("nothing") to reinforce the negation (Benincà, Poletto, 2004). Italian speakers use NC naturally, so they are likely to transfer this pattern when learning German (Bernini, Ramat, 1996).

In contrast, German does not allow NC. A sentence with multiple negative elements in German would not be acceptable, since only one negative element can express negation (Tottie, 1991). If multiple negative words like *nicht, niemand* or *nichts* are used together in the same clause, the sentence would create a positive or nonsensical meaning, which is avoided in standard German grammar (Helbug, Buscha, 2001; Hawkins, Towell, 2001).

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[12] Example taken from Muntañá (2008).

d. "Nessuno" and its German equivalents

The Italian pronoun *nessuno* serves as both a determiner ("none" or "any") and a pronoun ("no one" or "nobody"), but in German, the equivalent translation depends on the contexts. German differentiates *kein* as a determiner and *niemand* as a pronoun, making it necessary for learners to select the appropriate term based on syntactic role (Hopp, 2005). For instance:

(34) a. ITA: *Nessuno* è venuto. ("No one came.")

DEU: *Niemand* ist gekommen.

b. ITA: *Non* c'è *nessun* problema. ("There is no problem.")

DEU: Es gibt *kein* Problem.

The dual nature of *nessuno* creates difficulty for Italian learners, who might incorrectly use *niemand* instead of *kein* and vice versa. This can result in incorrect sentences like *Es gibt niemand Problem* instead of *Es gibt kein Problem* (34b), illustrating how reliance on native structures can interference with German negation (Thoma, 2010).

1.4 Research questions

1. Do participants decline the negative article *kein* and the negative pronoun *niemand* in the correct way?

As stated in section 1.3.5.a this chapter, German require *kein* and *niemand* to be declined according to the nouns they are negating, in the case of *kein*, or substituting, as in the case of *niemand*. The next chapter provides details regarding the two experiments, which were conducted for this research. Experiment 1 tested the translations of sentences including *kein* or *niemand* as negation of nouns working as direct objects, whereas Experiment 2 tested sentence translations containing the Italian negative element *nessun** followed by a noun, which plays both the role of a direct and indirect object. In this context, did participants use the right endings, following the German case-system rules?

2. Did participants translate the Italian negative item *nessun** in the correct way?

Since the Italian negative item *nessun** can be translated in different ways into German, depending on the context (see Section 1.3.5.d), did participants complete the translation task in the correct way or did they let their native language influence their performance?

3. Were the results influenced by the fact that *nessun** was treated as a simple element or a complex element? Moreover, were the results influenced by the fact that the noun following *nessun** was indicating something inanimate or inanimate?

Experiment 1 investigates the following conditions: *nessun** as a simple element (e.g. *Non ho visto nessuno.*) and as a complex element, being followed by a noun (e.g. *Non ho visto nessun film.* Or *Non ho visto nessuno studente.*)[13]. Moreover, *nessun** was followed by nouns indicating something inanimate (e.g. *Non ho amato nessuna* canzone.) or animate (e.g. *Non ho amato nessun ragazzo.*[14]). Did all these conditions influenced students' performance?

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[13] Further information will be provided in the next chapter.
[14] All the examples in this section were directly taken from Experiment 1 and Experiment 2, which were conducted by the undersigned for this research.

4. Does *nichts* occupy the right place in the sentence?

Since German follows stricter rules regarding the position of *nichst* (see section 1.3.4), did participants respect them?

5. Which was the role of Negative Concord while translating into German?

In opposition to German, Italian accepts NC. How does this variance affect the translation into German?

Chapter 2: Material and methods

The following research is based on empirical data that were collected through a controlled translation task administered in an Italian high school in Padua, called "Alvise Cornaro". The test was subjected to Italian students learning German as a second language, from the second and the fourth year of studying. The aim is to identify, categorize, and analyse the mistakes these learners make when translating small sentences containing negative constructions from Italian into German. The emphasis is placed on understanding the linguistic and cognitive processes behind these errors.

This chapter outlines the rationale for the research approach, the structure of the translation test, and how it is designed to address the research questions, which were explained in the previous chapter, in section 1.4. Moreover, this section describes the participants that were selected and participated to the translation test, giving details regarding their personal information and their educational background. All these details were gathered through an assessment questionnaire, that was fulfilled by the participants before completing the test. Section 2.3 explain the procedure followed to administer the test, pointing out in practical terms how the data were collected. At the end of the chapter, section 2.4 and 2.5 analyse the two parts of the test, Experiment 1 and Experiment 2.

2.1 Experiment design

2.1.1 Research questions

In section 1.4 in chapter 1 the research questions were formulated and briefly described. Here below, a quick list of the research questions is provided:

1. Do participants decline the negative article *kein* and the negative pronoun *niemand* in the correct way?
2. Did participants translate the Italian negative item *nessun** in the correct way?

3. Were the results influenced by the fact that *nessun** was treated as a simple element or a complex element? Moreover, were the results influenced by the fact that the noun following *nessun** was indicating something inanimate or inanimate?

4. Does *nicht* occupy the right place in the sentence?

5. Which was the role of Negative Concord while translating into German?

Questions number 1 and 3 were focused on the conditions that the translation test investigates. Due to the complexity of these conditions, it was necessary to divide the translation test into two separate experiments. The conditions involved were too numerous and intricate to be addressed simultaneously, thus this division was necessary to ensure a more focused and manageable examination of the research variables.

2.1.2 Conditions

The first experiment, referred to as Experiment 1, examines two variables within a 2x2 model: the complexity of the negative item and the animacy of the direct object. The first variable concerns the presence or absence of a noun following the negative items equivalent to the Italian negative elements *niente* or *nessuno*. In examples (1a) and (1b) the negative items are simple, while examples (1c) and (1d) illustrate complex negative items.

(1) a. Non ho toccato *niente*. ("I did not touch anything.")
    b. Non ho toccato *nessuno*. ("I didn't touch anyone.")
    c. Non ho toccato *nessun* bicchiere. ("I didn't touch any glass.")
    d. Non ho toccato *nessun* poliziotto. ("I didn't touch any policeman.")

The second variable relates to the animacy of the complex direct object. Animate objects being composed of biological matter, can initiate movement or change on their own, in accordance with biological principles. Inanimate objects, by contrast, consist of non-biological materials and require an external force to move. Example (2a) features an inanimate object, while (2b) contains an animate direct object.

(2) a. Non ho amato *nessuna* canzone. ("I didn't love any song.")

    b. Non ho amato *nessun* ragazzo. ("I didn't love any boy.")

The second part of the experiment, named Experiment 2, focuses on a single variable with a 2x1 model. The variable relates to the grammatical case of the noun following the negative item equivalent to the Italian negative element *nessun**. Both the direct object and the indirect object were considered, as illustrated by examples (3a) and (3b), respectively.

(3) a. Non ho chiamato *nessun* amico. ("I didn't call any friend.")

    b. Non l'ho regalato a *nessun* amico. ("I didn't give it to any friend.")

2.1.3 Test description

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the experiment aimed to identify the syntactic and grammatical errors made by Italian speakers when translating short sentences with negative constructions into German. A translation test was chosen for data collection for several reasons. Italian and German employ different syntactic structures and grammar rules for negation[15]. Due to this, a comparison between the two is the best way to underline these differences. Translating directly involves transferring meaning from Italian to German, thereby it exposes linguistic contrasts at multiple levels. A translation test can reveal how syntactic structures vary and how easily or accurately speakers can translate negation. Moreover, a translation test helps identify how native speakers of each language manage the differences in sentence structures and word order. In German, the negative item is placed in different positions of the sentence depending on what should be negated or on the type of negation (see section 1.3.4 in chapter 1), whereas in Italian, the negative item *non* generally precedes the verb (see section 1.3.3 in chapter 1). Furthermore, Italian is classified as a Negative Concord language, whereas German is not (see section 1.3.5.c in chapter 1 for further information) Consequently,

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[15] See section 1.3.3 in chapter 1 for an explanation of how negation is formed in Italian and section 1.3.4 for negation in German. For a comparison between Italian and German, see section 1.3.5.

certain syntactic structures in Italian cannot be translated literally into German, but they should be adapted to conform to German syntax. For these reasons, employing translation as a method for data collection was deemed to most effective approach for this experiment.

The responses were collected in handwritten form. This decision was made to maintain a natural and straightforward approach, mimicking typical high school tests. This also avoided issues related to typing errors or technical distractions that could arise from using computers or digital devices. The handwriting provided an additional layer of authenticity, ensuring that the responses reflected the student's natural translation abilities.

2.2 Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from the "Alvise Cornaro" Language High School, located in Padua, Italy. The sample comprised 57 native Italian-speaking students, ranging in age from 15 to 18 years. The test was designed for individuals with a B1/B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and thus, it was essential to ensure that participants fell within this proficiency range. In collaboration with the school's German language teacher, three classes were selected: one from the second year and the other two from the fourth year. We did not include the third-year class, due to its non-existence caused by insufficient enrolments. As a result, the second-year cohort consisted of 22 students, while the fourth-year cohort comprised 35 students.

Students had varied educational backgrounds, which contributed to differences in their German language proficiency. Table 1 below provides a detailed classification of the students based on the number of years they have been studying German, further highlighting the diversity in their language learning journeys. This distinction is crucial for the analysis of their errors, as it allows for an examination of how different types of mistakes correspond to their levels of preparation. Furthermore, a comparative analysis between the errors made by second-year and fourth-year students can provide valuable insights into their linguistic progress over time.

Years studying German	Number of participants
2	20
3	2
4	26
5	3
7	4

Table 1

The assessment questionnaire includes personal questions, questions related to participants' educational background and their relationship with the German language.

Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire with their age, gender and whether they have any language-related disorders. Age can influence second language learning, since youngest learners may be more adaptable due to cognitive flexibility, but older learners often benefit from more established metalinguistic awareness and strategies, research in SLA suggests (Alexandrino, 2010). Even gender can sometimes correlate with language performance, with social, psychological, or educational factors often contributing to differences (Labov, 1990; Holmes, 1993). As regard language-related disorders, it is essential to identify participants with any type of difficulty, to understand any challenges, they can face. Since conditions like dyslexia or specific language impairment (SLI) (Leonard, 2014) can impact morphosyntactic processing, a separate analysis should be conducted, to highlight how language acquisition varies.

In addition, participants were asked to define their L1 or mother tongue (see section 1.1 in Chapter 1), if they can speak any other language and what their proficiency level is. Since multilingual individuals often develop enhanced cognitive and metalinguistic abilities, their acquisition of another language may either be facilitated or not, depending on how their previous linguistic knowledge influence the process (for detail information on syntactic transfer, see section 1.2.1 in Chapter 1). Analysing the number of languages spoken might help determine if multilingualism correlates with specific error types or perhaps even confers an advantage in handling German negation, which is critical in SLA involving complex syntactic transfer.

The last question in the questionnaire regards participants' relationship with the German language and culture. I asked them if they have spent more than one week in Germany, and if they have any personal contacts in the country. Participants who have spent a significate time in Germany might have more exposure to authentic language contexts, which can reduce certain errors and enhance implicit understanding of negation structures. Research on immersion and language exposure has shown that learners with greater cultural and linguistic exposure to the target language generally perform better in terms of fluency and syntactic accuracy (Pérez-Vidal, 2014; Freed, 1995). Comparing participants with and without this experience can reveal the potential benefits of cultural immersion in overcoming transfer errors.

Participants are all native Italian speakers from Padua or its surrounding areas. They are between 15 and 18 years old, as they attend two different classes. Participants attending the second year are 15 or 16 years old, whereas participants attending the fourth year are 17 or 18 years old. 77% of the total number of participants were female students – which corresponds to 44 students – while the remainder, corresponding to 13 students, were male, as figured in the graph on the next page (Figure 1).
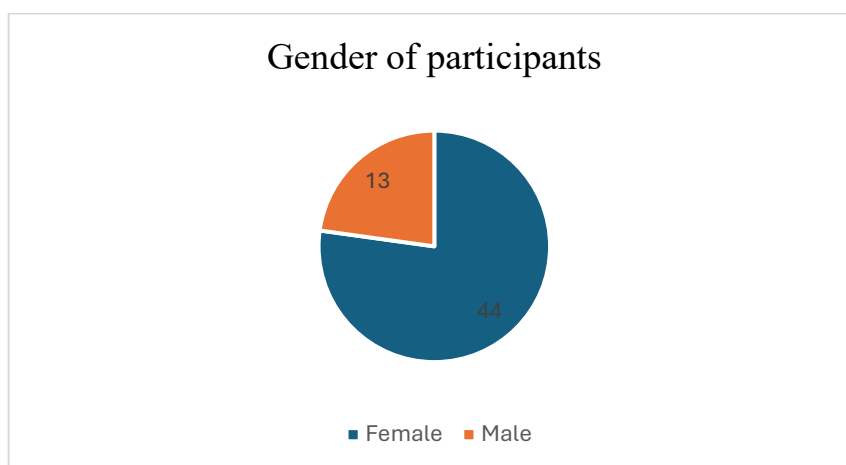
Figure 1

None of them has any language-related disorder. Only two participants admitted having some difficulties, one with "writing and speaking" and the other one with "terminology"[16].

Since participants attended a linguistic high school, they study a third language, in their case French or Spanish. 42 students study Spanish, whereas 15 of them study French.

As regards German proficiency level, 49% of the participants did not indicate the level, maybe because they were not conscious about it, or they simply forgot to complete all the questionnaire. Among the 29 participants who gave a response to the question, 47% of them considered themselves beginners (i.e. 27 students), while only 2 – which corresponds to 4% of the complex number – possess an intermediate level. Figure 2 is a clear representation of participants' proficiency level in German.
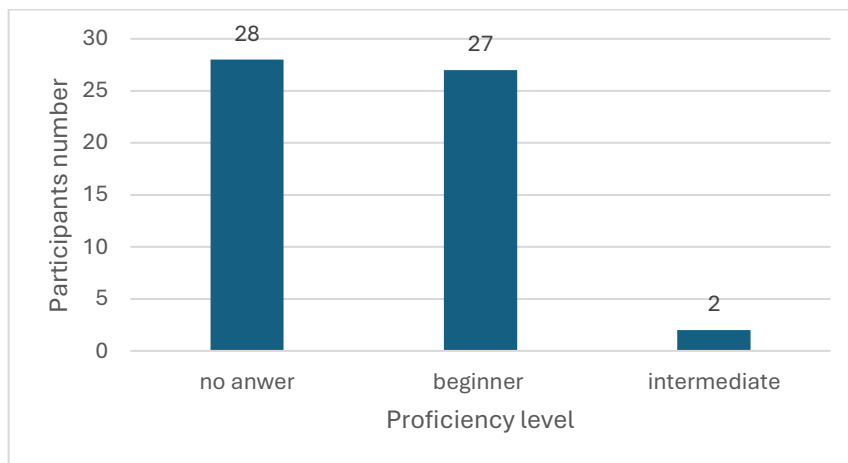
Figure 2: German proficiency level.

The final aspect considered in this analysis concerns if participants have any contact with native German speaker. Findings indicate that, except for two students, none of them has personal relationship with individuals from Germany. but two students. Of these two students, one has a friend in Germany, and another has an uncle residing there. The table in the next two pages (table 2) contains all the information previously described.

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[16] Definitions provided directly by participants number 19 and 20 respectively.

Participants	Age	Gender	Language-related disorder	Language proficiency					Years studying German	Contacts
				English	Spanish	French	Other	German		
1	17	F	no	advanced		intermediate		?	4	no
2	18	F	no	intermediate		intermediate		?	?	no
3	17	F	no	advanced	advanced			beginner	3	German uncle
4	17	F	no	?		?	Albanian	?	7	yes ?
5	17	F	no	intermediate		intermediate		?	4	no
6	17	F	no	intermediate		intermediate		?	4	no
7	17	F	no	intermediate		intermediate		beginner	4	no
8	18	M	no	advanced		beginner		?	3	no
9	18	M	no	advanced		intermediate		?	4	no
10	18	F	no	?		?		?	4	no
11	18	F	no	?		?		?	4	no
12	18	F	no	intermediate		advanced		?	4	no
13	18	F	no	intermediate		intermediate		beginner	4	no
14	17	F	no	intermediate		?		?	4	no
15	17	F	no	advanced		intermediate		?	4	no
16	18	F	no	?	?			?	4	no
17	17	M	no	advanced	intermediate			beginner	4	no
18	17	F	no	intermediate	intermediate			beginner	4	no
19	17	F	writing and speaking	intermediate	intermediate			beginner	4	no
20	17	F	terminology	intermediate	intermediate			?	4	no
21	17	F	no	intermediate	intermediate			?	4	no
22	18	F	no	intermediate	intermediate			beginner	4	no
23	18	F	no	?	?			?	4	no
24	17	F	no	intermediate	intermediate			beginner	4	no
25	18	F	no	intermediate	intermediate			intermediate	7	no
26	17	M	no	advanced	advanced		Greek	beginner	7	no

ID	Age	Gender							
27	17	F	no	?	?		?	5	no
28	17	M	no	intermediate	intermediate		?	4	no
29	17	M	no	advanced	intermediate		?	4	no
30	18	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	4	no
31	18	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		?	4	no
32	18	F	no	advanced	intermediate		beginner	4	no
33	18	M	no	advanced	advanced	beginner	beginner	5	no
34	17	F	no	?	?	Chinese	?	7	no
35	17	M	no	advanced	intermediate		intermediate	4	no
36	16	M	no	?	?		?	2	no
37	15	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	2	no
38	15	F	no	intermediate	inter/advanced		beginner	2	no
39	16	M	no	beginner	beginner		beginner ?		no
40	16	F	no	intermediate	beginner		?	2	no
41	15	F	no	intermediate	beginner		beginner	5	German friend
42	16	M	no	intermediate	intermediate		?	2	no
43	15	M	no	?	?		?	2	no
44	16	M	no	?			?	2	no
45	15	F	no	?	?		?	2	no
46	15	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	2	no
47	15	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	2	no
48	15	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	2	no
49	15	F	no	intermediate	beginner		beginner	2	no
50	16	F	no	intermediate	beginner		beginner	2	no
51	16	F	no	intermediate	beginner		beginner	2	no
52	15	F	no	?	?		?	2	no
53	16	F	no	?	?		beginner	2	no
54	15	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	2	no
55	15	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	2	no
56	16	F	no	intermediate	beginner		beginner	2	no
57	15	F	no	intermediate	intermediate		beginner	2	no

Table 2

2.3 Procedure

The data collection process is fundamental to ensure that the translation test results provide valid and reliable insights into the difficulties Italian native speakers experience when translating negation into German. This section outlines the steps taken to gather the data, including how the test was administered, how the responses were captures, and how ethical and practical considerations were addressed.

The test was administered to participants in a controlled setting to minimize external variables that could affect their performance. The procedure was designed to ensure that all participants had a similar experience during the test, allowing for consistent data collection. The test was conducted in a classroom setting within the high school "Alvise Cornaro", where the German teacher assisted with data collection by allowing me to test participants during her lessons. On 1st June 2024 I tested the second-year class, and on 4th June 2024 the two courses of the fourth year. Using a familiar environment helped reduce any anxiety or nervousness that could arise form testing in an unfamiliar or more formal setting, besides the fact that this was not possible otherwise. The classroom also provided a controlled environment, free from distractions that might interfere with the students' ability to focus on the task. To ensure consistency, all participants took the test at the same time, under the same condition. They were seated separately to prevent any form of collaboration or copying, and the German teacher and I were present to monitor the room. This setup ensured that the data collected reflected each students' ability and understanding of German negation, without external interference.

Participants were instructed to complete first the assessment questionnaire to provide personal information, and later to write their German translations directly on the test sheet next to each Italian sentence. They were given a time limit of 30 minutes to complete Experiment 1 and 20 minutes for Experiment 2. Experiment 2 was administered immediately after Experiment 1, following a 10-minute break. The time limits were chosen to provide sufficient time for thoughtful translation without allowing excessive time that might lead to second-guessing or overthinking, which could skew the natural error patterns the study aimed to identify.

Once the test was completed, the German teacher and I collected the test sheets from all participants. They used their names and surnames as signatures, but later I marked the tests with a unique identifier (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2) to ensure that individual responses could be tracked without revealing personal identities. This helped maintaining the anonymity of the participants while allowing for accurate data management.

To ensure that the data collection process was conducted ethically and responsibly, important measures were implemented. Prior to administering the test, informed consent was obtained from all participants' parents, since most participants were minor. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of the task, and how their data would be used. As already mentioned, each test was anonymized by assigning a number to their sheet, so that their privacy was protected. Moreover, it was made clear that participation had no impact on their academic evaluation and that they could ask questions if they did not know some vocabulary, since the focus is on syntax.

2.4 Experiment 1

Experiment 1 consisted of 16 negative sentences, complemented by 16 filler sentences. The same verb was used across different conditions, as shown in example (4); sometimes producing uncommon sentences for the source text, in this case Italian, like (5d).

(4) a. Non ho visto niente. ("I saw nothing.")

 b. Non ho visto nessuno. ("I saw nobody.")

 c. Non ho visto nessun film. ("I didn't see any film.")

 d. Non ho visto nessuno studente. ("I didn't see any student.")

(5) a. Non ho mangiato niente. ("I ate nothing.")

 b. Non ho mangiato nessuno. ("I ate nobody.")

 c. Non ho mangiato nessuna mela. ("I didn't eat any apple.")

d. Non ho mangiato nessun bambino. ("I didn't eat any children.")

This pattern was repeated 16 times, and through a process known as randomization, four lists of sentences were generated. The lists had different sentences, but every test has the same difficulty. This was applied to avoid students copying and not to make the experiment too complicated. Each list included filler sentences to obscure the primary focus of the experiment, making it less apparent to participants. This approach ensured that students completed the test without fixating on specific structure, allowing for more spontaneous and natural translations. Each experiment thus was composed of 32 sentences, which were presented following the assessment questionnaire for participant evaluation. An example illustrating the format of one list from Experiment 1 is provided in the next page.

Nome e cognome:

Età:

Genere:

Luogo di nascita:

Ha qualche disturbo specifico del linguaggio (ad esempio, un problema di lettura o scrittura)? Se sì, quali:

Lingua nativa:

Altre lingue parlate (indicare anche il livello – principiante, intermedio o avanzato):

Da quanti anni studia tedesco?

È mai stato/a in Germania per più di un mese o ha contatti con la Germania al di fuori dell'ambiente scolastico?

Traduca le seguenti frasi:

1. Non ho sentito niente.
2. Bevi il latte!
3. Non ho visto niente.
4. Laura è una studentessa.
5. Non ho toccato nessun poliziotto.
6. Mangia il pane!
7. Non ho mandato nessuna lettera.
8. Sofia conosce Viktor.
9. Non ho festeggiato nessuno.
10. Ugo è un dottore.
11. Non ho portato nessun gioco con me.
12. Mio papà è un architetto.
13. Non ho mostrato nessun vicino.

14. Hai mangiato un Bratwurst?

15. Non ho visitato nessuno.

16. Leggi il libro!

17. Non ho odiato niente.

18. Mia mamma conosce la mia amica.

19. Non ho capito niente.

20. Hai amato Hans?

21. Non ho trovato nessun libro.

22. Prendi i soldi!

23. Non ho perso nessuna scarpa.

24. Ho bevuto una birra.

25. Non ho dimenticato nessun parente.

26. Conosci il professore?

27. Non ho amato nessuno.

28. Mia sorella è una giornalista.

29. Non ho cercato nessuno.

30. Judith ama Jakob.

31. Non ho mangiato nessun bambino.

32. Hai comprato una macchina?

2.5 Experiment 2

Experiment 2 comprised 24 sentences arranged in a 2x1 design. The dependent variable in this part was the grammatical case of the element following the negative item. A consistent noun was used throughout, as illustrated in examples (6a) and (6b).

(6) a. Non ho visto nessun cameriere. ("I didn't see any waiter.")

   b. Non l'ho dato a nessun cameriere. ("I didn't give it to any waiter.")

In (6a), the noun "cameriere" functions as the direct object of the verb, while in (6b), it serves as the indirect object, acting as the recipient of the action.

Experiment 2 also included 12 filler sentences, like Experiment 1, and these were introduced for the same purpose as in the first part of the experiment. The patter exemplified in (6) was repeated 12 times, and for this phase, only two experimental lists were created. The next page contains an example of one of the formats.

Nome e cognome:

Traduca le seguenti frasi:

1. Non l'ho prestato a nessun avvocato.

2. Guarda il film!

3. Non ho trovato nessun genitore.

4. Laura parla il Tedesco.

5. Non ho incontrato nessun medico.

6. Ho visto il film.

7. Non l'ho venduto a nessuna madre.

8. Hai chiamato tua madre?

9. Non l'ho spedito a nessun venditore.

10. Hai visitato Berlino?

11. Non ho visto nessun cameriere.

12. Hai festeggiato il tuo compleanno?

13. Non ho informato nessun giornalista.

14. Ascolta la canzone!

15. Non l'ho regalato a nessun amico.

16. Dimentica tutto!

17. Non ho perso nessun cuoco.

18. Marco ha mangiato tutto.

19. Non l'ho spiegato a nessuna donna.

20. Mio zio ama il suo cane.

21. Non ho assunto nessuna insegnante.

22. Hai trovato casa?

23. Non l'ho lasciato a nessuna società.

24. Manda la mail!

Chapter 3: Results

3.1 Experiment 1

In this section, the results of Experiment 1 are illustrated. After the data collection phase was completed, the subsequent step involved the systematic evaluation and correction of the 912 total responses from the participants. Initially, all incorrect answers were identified and highlighted. These errors were then classified into distinct categories based on the nature of the mistake.

36% of the responses, which corresponds to 331, were correct, and the remainder 64% – equal to 581 – contained errors, including also blank responses or those that were incomplete. Figure 1 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the percentage of correct and incorrect answers, offering a clear representation of the overall performance observed in this phase of the experiment.

Figure 1

Errors were categorized according to their nature. Among these, 24% of the total errors, equal to 138, were either incomplete or consisted of entirely empty answers. In terms of error types, four categories were identified: errors related to grammatical case,

syntactic errors, issues involving negative concord, and errors resulting from the substitution of negative elements with another or the omission of negation altogether.

Errors related to grammatical case amount to 315 and reflect difficulties with the participants' ability to apply the correct case endings within the translated sentences, a challenge common when transitioning between languages with differing case systems. Here two examples.

(1) a. Ich habe *niemand* geliebt. (1)

    b. Ich habe *kein* Apfel gegessen. (2)[17]

Syntactic errors, on the other hand, highlight problems in structuring the sentence in a correct order of the components, such as in example (2).

(2) a. Ich kenne Mann *nicht*. (40)

    b. Ich habe gezeigen *nicht*. (44)[18]

Errors related to negative concord illustrate confusion with ensuring agreement between negative elements (for futher information, see section 1.3.2 in chapter 1).

(3) a. Ich habe *nicht keine* Song geliebt. (12)

    b. Ich vergesse *kein* Versprechen *nicht*. (52)

Finally, errors involving the substitution or omission of negative elements point out challenges in selecting or maintaining the correct negative form, suggesting either lexical gaps or difficulties – see example (4) – or conceptual transfer between languages – see example (5). Examples (4a) and (4b) were the translation for "Non ho capito niente", where the negative item *nichts* was substituted by *nie* (4a) and *nicht* (4b).

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[17] The number of participants will be shown in brackets in the following examples taken from Experiment 1.

[18] These examples can contain errors other than those considered in the explanation.

(4) a. Ich habe *nie* verstanden. (1)

    b. Ich habe *nicht* verstanden. (7)

(5) a. Ich habe *nieman* Versprechen verlassen. (45)

(5) is a clear example of syntactic transfer, since the Italian sentence "Non ho dimenticato nessuna promessa" was translated literally into German.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the errors and their categorization.
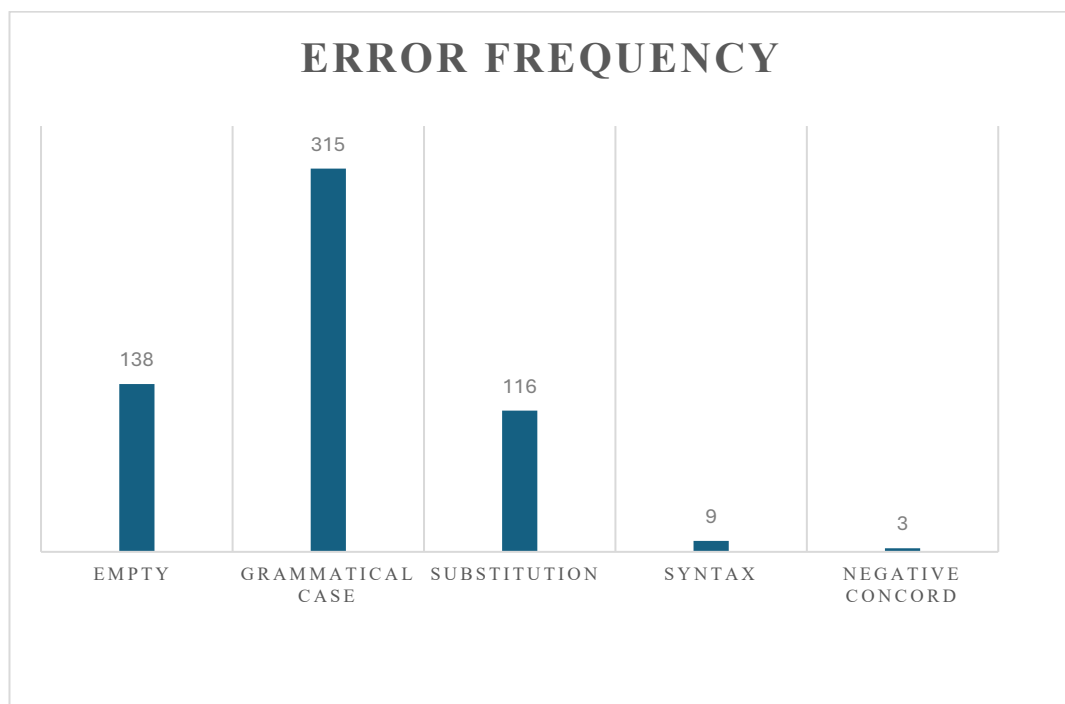
Figure 2

The primary types of errors examined in this study pertain to the substitution of negative elements and Negative Concord, both of which represent significant challenges for Italian learner of German.

The first category of errors analysed will be those related to the substitution of negative elements, where learners replaced the correct German negators with either other negative terms or entirely different elements. Such substitutions often arise due to interference from the learners' native language, Italian, where the rules governing

negation differ substantially from those in German. To illustrate these errors in greater detail, the diagrams below provide examples of how Italian learners misused or substituted various elements of German negation. For instance, figure 3 specifically focuses on the erroneous translation of the German negative term *niemand* (meaning "no one"), which directly corresponds to the Italian term *nessun** (e.g., *nessuno* for singular masculine, *nessuna* for singular feminine). This kind of errors amount to 40, and the analysis of them reveals how, in their attempts to translate this item, Italian students frequently replaced *niemand* with other negative expressions or incorrect alternatives.
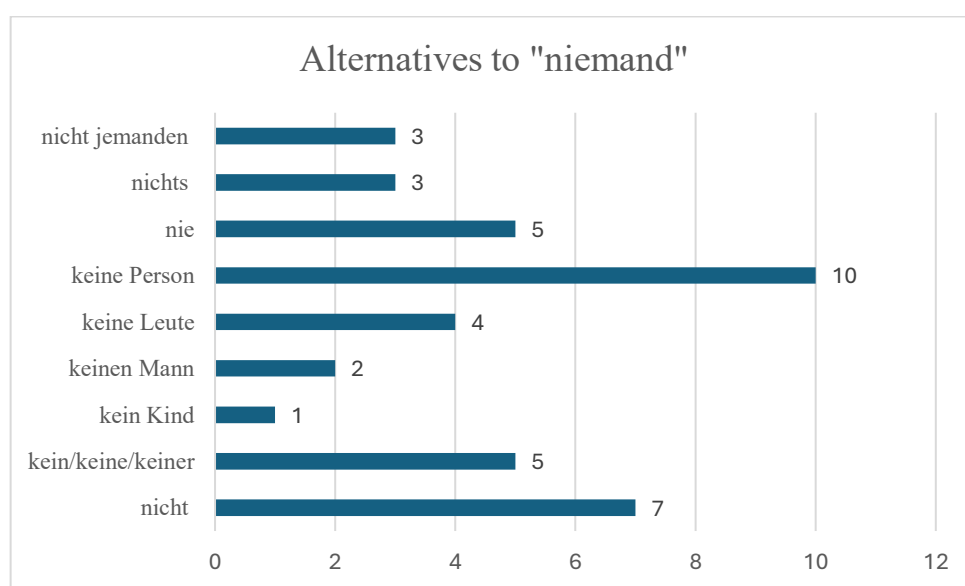
Figure 3

Examples for each replacing item will be provided in the following table (table 1).

PARTICIPANTS	SOURCE LANGUAGE	TARGET LANGUAGE	REPLACING ELEMENT
11	Non ho amato nessuno	Ich habe nicht jemanden verliebt	nicht jemanden
55	Non ho odiato nessuno	Ich habe nichts gehassen	nichts
15	Non ho festeggiato nessuno	Ich habe nie gefeiern	nie
47	Non ho festeggiato nessuno	Ich habe keine Person gefeiert	keine Person
57	Non ho cercato nessuno	Ich habe keine Leute gekaufen	keine Leute
8	Non ho toccato nessuno	Ich habe keinen Mann …	keinen Mann
25	Non ho cercato nessuno	Ich habe kein Kind gegessen	kein Kind

36	Non ho amato nessuno	Ich habe kein gelieben	kein/keine/keiner
46	Non ho capito nessuno	Ich habe nicht verstanden	nicht

Table 1

Figure 4 provides an analysis of how Italian learners translated the Italian structure *nessun** followed by a noun into German. In Italian, this structure commonly consists of the negative determiner *nessun** (e.g., *nessuno*, *nessuna*) combined with a noun, and it functions to negate the presence or existence of something. The equivalent construction in German would typically require the use of the negative indefinite article *kein* (e.g., *kein*, *keine*) followed by a noun.
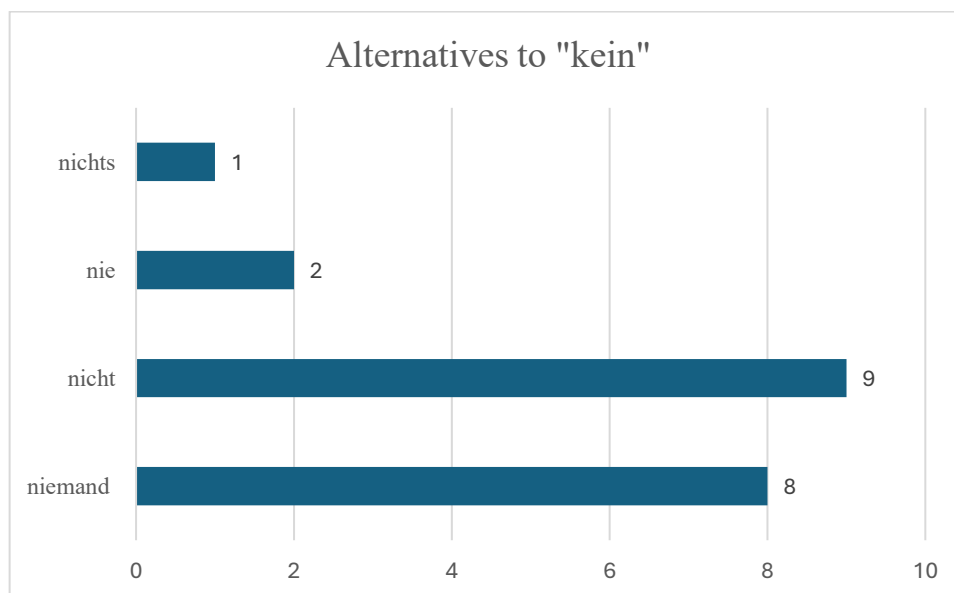
Figure 4

Data reveals that participants frequently deviated from the standard German construction. Instead of using the correct form *kein* plus a noun, learners often substituted with other negative elements. For example, the used *nicht* (meaning *not*), as shown in example (6), or *nichts* (meaning *nothing*) – example (7).

(6) Ich habe *nicht* Parent vermissen. (5)

(7) Ich habe *nichts* gehört. (25)[19]

Some participants replace *nicht* with the negative adverb *nie* (meaning *never*), or the negative pronoun *niemand* (meaning *no one*), as illustrated in examples (8) and (9) respectively.

(8) Ich habe *nie* Schue verlieren. (8)
(9) Ich habe *niemand* Fremden gehassen. (17)

These substitutions suggest a misunderstanding of the proper use of negators in German and reflect the influence of Italian negative structures, where a broader range of negative items can often appear in similar contexts without violating grammatical rules.

The final category of substitution errors examined in this study involves the German negative item *nichts* (meaning *nothing*), which was frequently mistranslated by Italian learners in a variety of ways. This negative pronoun is used in German to negate the existence of something or to express the absence of anything. However, the data reveals that learners often replaced *nichts* with other elements that either carry a similar meaning or reflect an incorrect understanding of German negation structures, like figure 5 illustrates.

---

[19] The source sentence was "Non ho mangiato nessun bambino". Participant 5 replaced the whole group composed by the negator and the negated element (*nessun bambino*) with *nichts*. Furthermore, the participant chose the wrong verb.
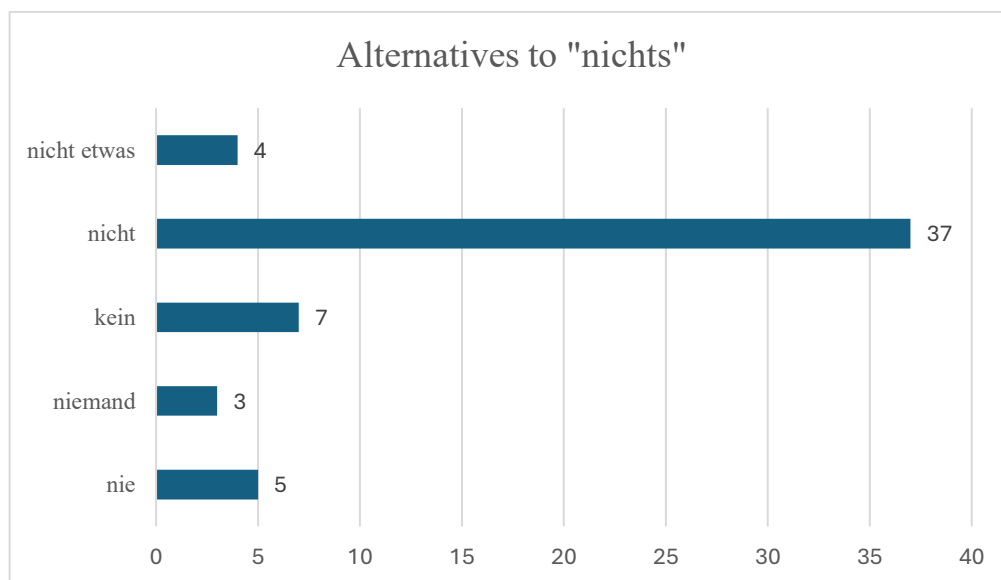
Figure 5

One common mistranslation was the use of *nicht etwas* (literally, "*not something*") as a substitute for *nichts* – example (10). While *nicht etwas* can approximate the meaning of *nothing*, it is grammatically incorrect in German, as the negation of an unspecified object is properly expressed by the single term *nichts*.

(10) Ich habe *nicht etwas* vergessen. (46)

Another frequent substitution error involved the use of *nicht* (meaning *not*) instead of *nichts*. For example, the sentence "Non ho visitato niente" was translated as example (11) presents.

(11) Ich habe *nicht* besichtigen. (45)

While in some instances this could be attributed to typing errors, it is still grammatically incorrect and reveals confusion between verbal and nominal negation in German. *Nicht* negates verbs or clauses, whereas *nichts* specifically negates the existence of an object or thing.

Moreover, participants sometimes used other negative elements such as *kein* (the negative indefinite article) – example (12) – *niemand* (meaning *no one*) – example (13) being the translation for "Non ho amato niente" – or *nie* (meaning *never*) – example (14).

(12) Ich habe *kein* gezeigen. (38)

(13) Ich habe *niemand* geliebt. (40)

(14) Ich habe *nie* verstanden. (1)

Each of these negators has a distinct grammatical function in German, and their misuse in place of *nichts* indicates that learners struggle to differentiate between these various forms of negation.

Another significant type error in this study involves Negative Concord (see section 1.3.2 in chapter 1). While Italian accepts NC structures, German follows a stricter rule that prohibits such constructions. This cross-linguistic difference frequently leads to errors when Italian learners attempt to translate negated sentences into German, often applying Italian negation rules too directly. A notable example of this issue can be observed in (15).

(15) a. *Non* ho amato *nessuna* canzone.   Italian

a'. Ich habe *nicht keine* Song geliebt. (12)   German

In this case, the Italian sentence admits the usage of two negative elements, which are *non* ("not") and *nessuno* ("nobody"). However, when translating directly into German, learners mistakenly include both *nicht* ("not") and *keine* in the sentence, resulting in the construction "Ich habe nicht keine Song geliebt." In German, the accumulation of negative items will conduct to cancelling the intended negative meaning. The correct German translation should use only *kein** as in "Ich habe keine Song geliebt," which conveys the same negation without redundancy.

Further examples demonstrate similar errors in translating NC structures from Italian into German. In the following examples, learners incorrectly place the negator

nicht at the end of the sentence, after the negated element, like example (16), or before the past participle, like example (17).

(16) a. *Non* ho dimenticato *nessuna* promessa. Italian

a'. Ich vergesse *kein* Versprechen *nicht*. (52) German

(17) a. *Non* ho trovato *nessun* professore. Italian

a'. Ich habe *keine* Lehrer *nicht* gefunden. (55) German

In both examples, learners again attempt to apply Italian negative patterns by using *icht* in conjunction with *kein(e)*, resulting in non-valid constructions. In example (16), the negator *nicht* is incorrectly placed at the end of the sentence after "kein Versprechen," while in example (17), *nicht* appears after "keine Lehrer." In each case, this placement not only creates a syntactic error but also violates the rule against NC in German, where a single negative element is sufficient. The correct versions of these sentences should omit *nicht* entirely, using only *kein(e)* to convey the negation.

2.1.1 Results by class

In this section, results are provided in a more detailed manner. The division into the two classes that completed the test is highlighted, as to conduct a comparison between the second and the fourth year.

Initially, figures 6 and 7 show the overall performance of the second year (figure 6) and the fourth year (figure 7).

Answers collected (second year)

76

276

■ incorrect answers   ■ correct answers
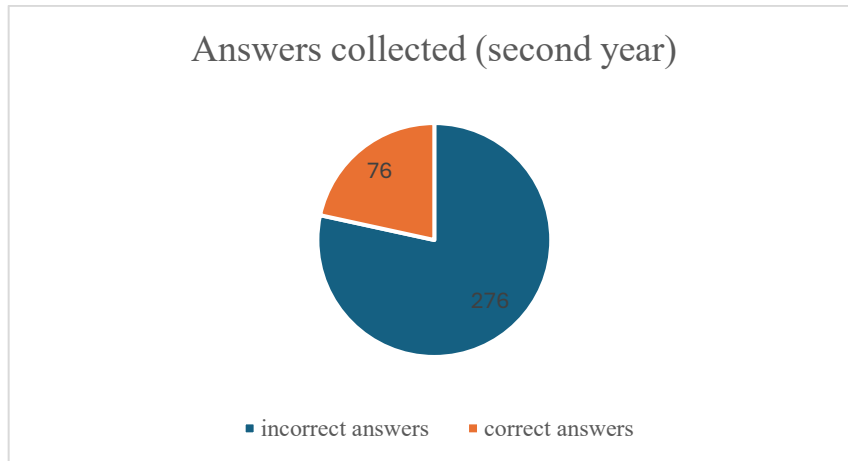
Figure 6

In the second year-class, a total of 352 responses were collected, of which 276 – or 78% – were incorrect. In contrast, the fourth-year students provided 255 correct responses (46%) and 305 incorrect responses (54%), as shown in figure 7, for a total of 560 responses.

Answers collected (fourth year)

255

305

■ incorrect answers   ■ correct answers
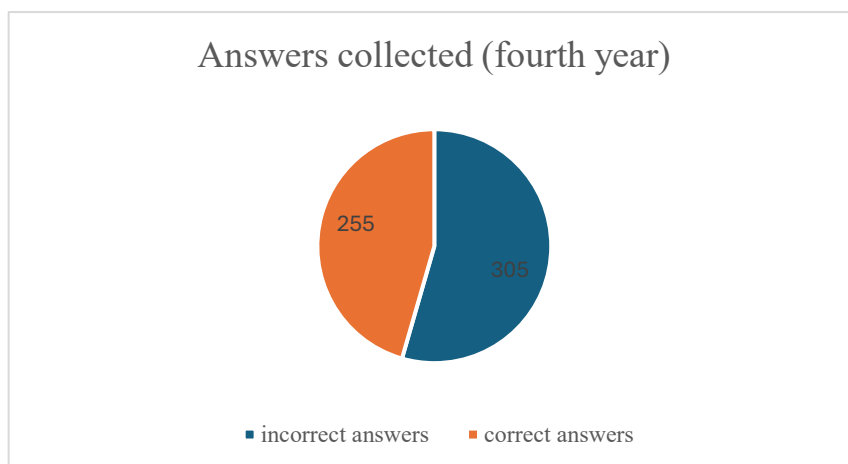
Figure 7

As mentioned in the section 3.1 in this chapter, errors were categorized according to their nature. Out of all answers, 138 were incomplete or empty responses, 315 sentences contained errors related to the grammatical case, and 9 errors related to syntax.

In 116 sentences, the negative item was replaced with other elements, either negative or not, and 3 answers presented errors connected to Negative Concord.

Figure 8 described the error divided into the two groups of participants, the second year in blue and the fourth year in orange. The percentage shown above the columns represent the percentage of the number of each category of errors out of the total number of responses collected per year, which were 352 for the second and 560 for the fourth year.
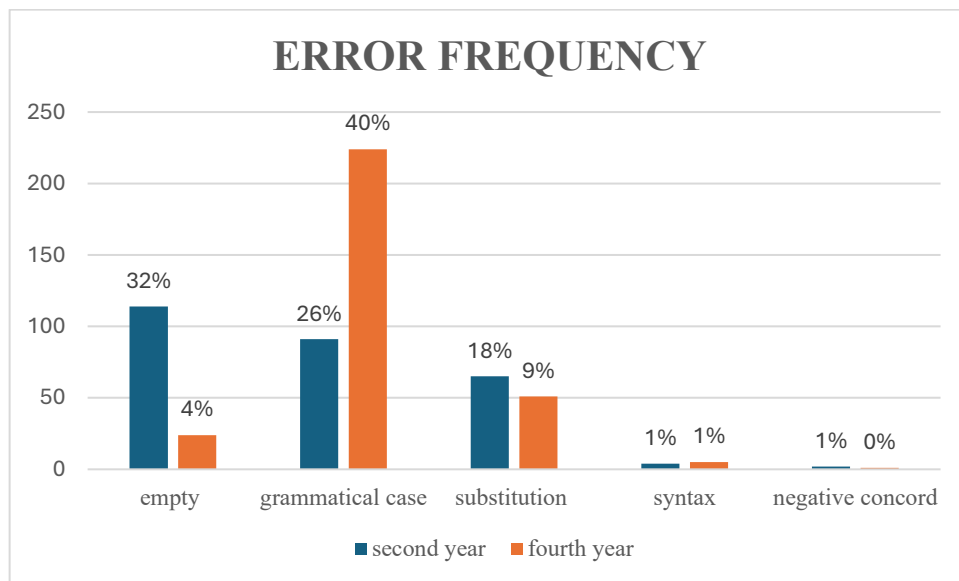
Figure 8

The following three figures are focused on the errors of substitution, which were considered more important than the other types of errors. Figure 9 shows which elements participants used instead of *niemand*. Some elements, such as *keine Leute*, *keine Person* or *nichts*, were used only by the second year, while only the fourth-year students selected *kein Kind, keinen Mann, nie* or *nicht jemanden* as an alternative to *niemand*. Only *nicht* and *kein*, *keine* or *keiner* were chosen by both classes.
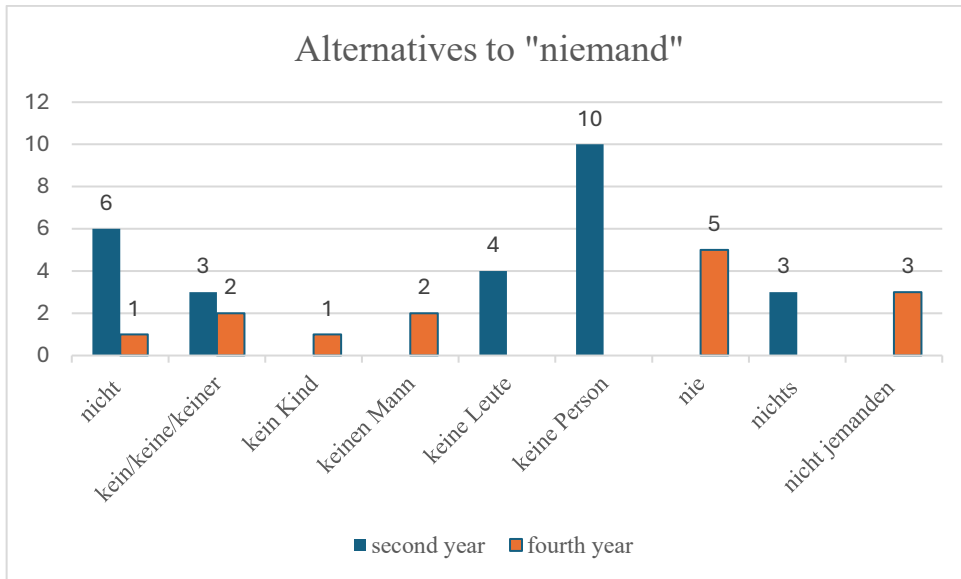
Figure 9

Figure 10 is a clear representation of the alternatives to *kein*. Students from the second year only employed *niemand* instead of *kein*, while the fourth year considered *nicht*, *nie* and *nichts*, in addition to *niemand*, as adapt choices.
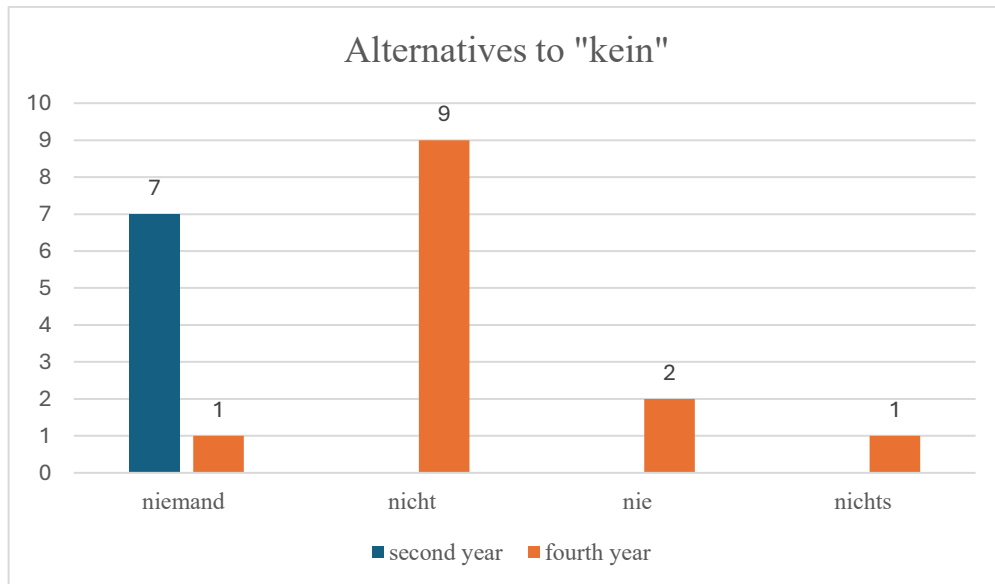
Figure 10

The last diagram of this section (figure 11) highlighted the alternatives to *nichts*. All the elements – apart from *nie,* which was used only by second-year participants, and *niemand*, which was used only by the fourth-year ones – were chosen by all participants.
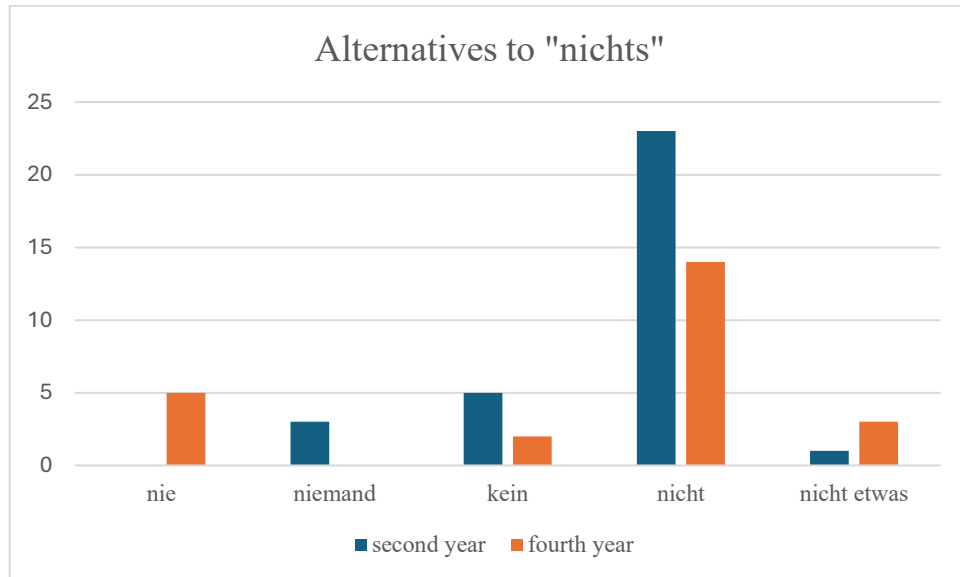
Figure 11

As regards errors related to Negative Concord, which amount to 3, 2 of them were committed by students of the second year and only 1 by a student attending the fourth year. The second-years students placed *nicht* before the negated item, while the fourth-year student placed *nicht* after the negated item, as illustrated respectively in examples (16) and (17) at page 65. Table 2 below is a representation of the distribution of these type of errors among the two cohorts.

	SECOND YEAR	FOURTH YEAR
BEFORE	0	1
AFTER	2	0

Table 2

2.2 Experiment 2

In this section, the results of Experiment 2 are presented. A total of 684 responses were collected, of which 70% were identified as incorrect, as indicated in figure 12. This percentage corresponds to 482 incorrect answers. This high error rate reflects the challenges participants faced in accurately translating the given sentences under the experimental conditions.

Figure 12

The errors observed in Experiment 2 were classified into the same categories used in the analysis of Experiment 1 to ensure consistency and comparability, as figure 13 shows. These categories include incomplete or entirely blank responses, errors related to grammatical case (see example (18)), syntactic mistakes (example (19)), issues involving negative concord (example (20)), and errors stemming from the substitution or omission of negative elements (example (21)). The following examples are the translation for "Non ho ascoltato nessuna madre".

(18) Ich habe *keinen* Mutter gehört. (42)

(19) Ich habe meine Mutter *nicht* gehört. (32)

(20) Ich habe *niemander* Mutter *nicht* gehört. (57)

(21) Ich habe *niemanden* Mutter gehört. (5)

The classification represented in figure 13 allows for a clearer understanding of the specific types of linguistic difficulties encountered by the participants.

ERROR FREQUENCY

Category	Frequency
EMPTY	164
GRAMMATICAL CASE	255
SUBSTITUTION	29
SYNTAX	9
NEGATIVE CONCORD	25
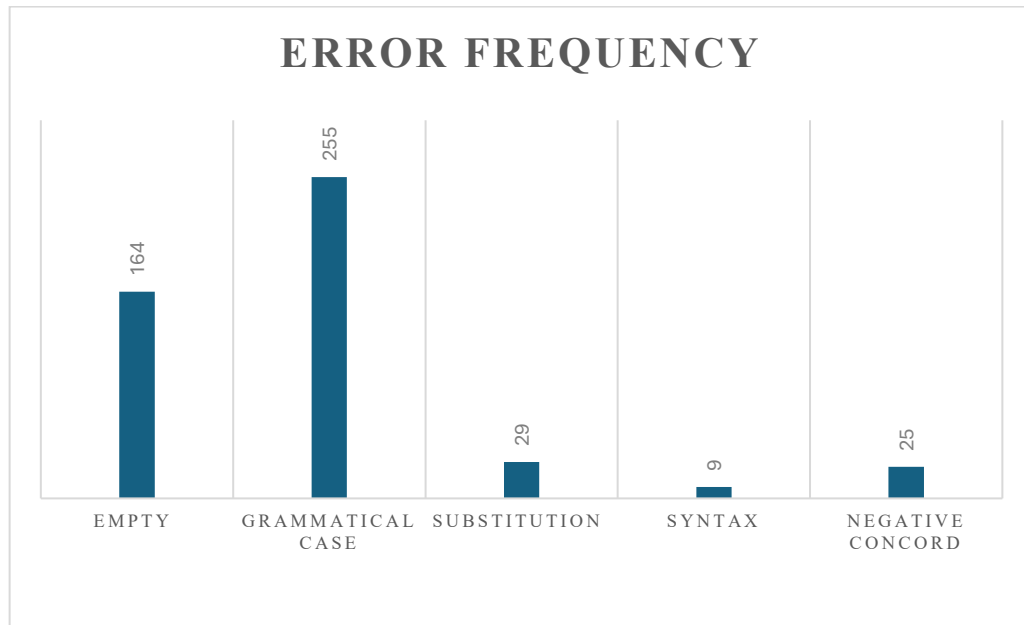
Figure 13

The breakdown of errors, as shown in figure 13, reveals patterns like those found in Experiment 1, suggesting recurring challenges with the same aspects of language. However, the increased error rate in Experiment 2 may indicate that the participants found the sentences more complex or that the negative constructions used in this part of the experiment presented additional difficulties. This comparison between the two experiments provides valuable insights into the areas where participants consistently struggled and helps highlight the linguistic features that require further exploration in future studies.

Excluding incomplete answers and errors related to grammatical cases or syntactic structure, the following figures highlight the elements that were substituted in place of the correct negative forms, as well as the errors involving negative concord.

The substitution errors can be classified into two main categories, depending on the role of the object in the sentence. The noun functioning as the negated element may serve either as a direct object or as an indirect object.

71

In the first category, where the negated noun is a direct object, participants mistranslated the Italian negative element *nessun** followed by a noun in 10 sentences (figure 14), by using the German negative pronoun *niemand* (which means *nobody*). This substitution is incorrect and the appropriate negator would have been *kein*, declined according to the gender, case, and number of the noun it accompanies. Here below, an example is shown:

(22) a. Non ho ascoltato nessuna madre.

a'. Ich habe es *niemanden* Frau umgearmt. (5)
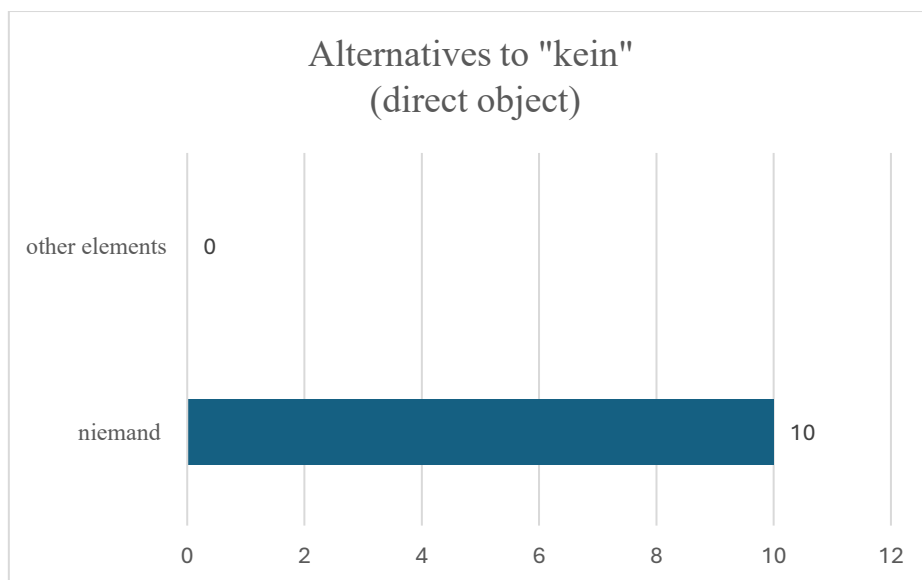
Figure 14

In the second category, where the noun functioning as the negative element serves as an indirect object, participants frequently substituted various elements in place of *kein*. As illustrated in figure 15, a significant 58% of these errors (11 responses) involved the use of *niemand* (meaning *nobody*), like example (23).

(23) a. Non l'ho raccontato a nessun giornalista.

a'. Ich habe es *niemanden* Journalist erzählt. (5)

This pattern suggests that the participants were engaging in a literal translation from Italian, reflecting a misunderstanding of the appropriate use of negation in German. The reliance on *niemand* in contexts where *kein* would be grammatically correct indicates a need for improved instruction on the distinctions between negative elements, particularly regarding their syntactic roles in both Italian and German.
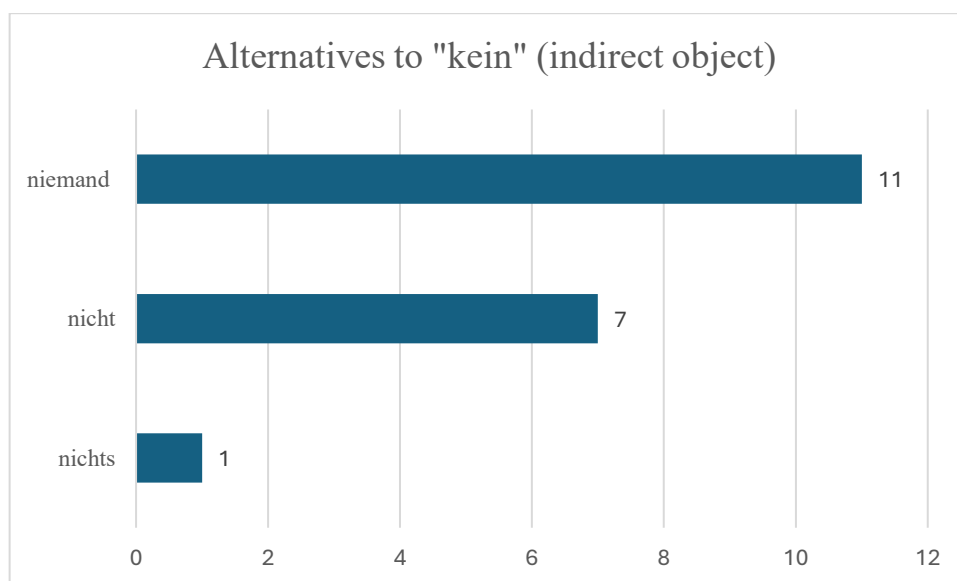
Figure 15

Instead of *kein*, 7 sentences included the use of *nicht* (example 24) and only once *kein* was replaced by *nichts* (example 25). Both examples are the translation of "Non l'ho regalato a nessu amico".

(24) Ich habe es *nicht* meinen Freund geschenkt. (23)
(25) Ich habe zu *nichts* Freund geschenkt. (55)

Regarding the errors associated with Negative Concord, it is noteworthy that 88% of these errors involve nouns functioning as indirect objects, which corresponds to 22 responses. In contrast, only 3 errors were committed with nouns serving as direct objects, as shown in figure 16.
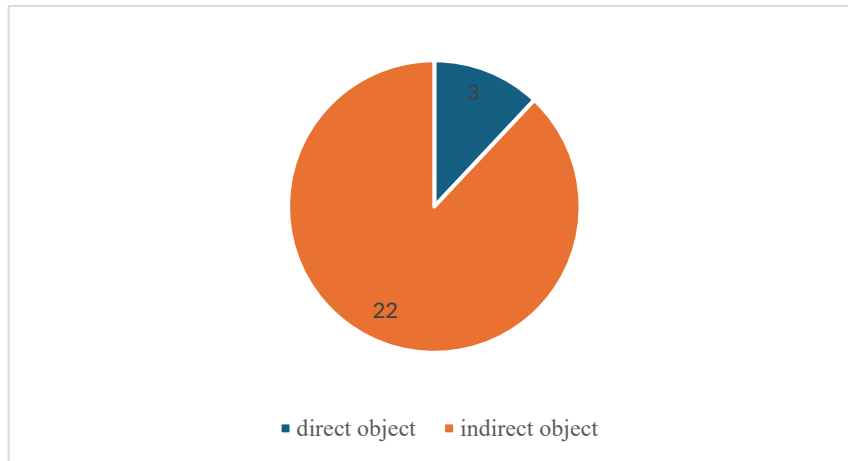
Figure 16

In the group of errors involving direct objects, participants demonstrated the tendency to place *nicht* after the negated element, as proved in example (26).

(26) a. Non ho ascoltato nessuna madre.

    a'. Ich habe *niemander* Mutter *nicht* gehört. (57)

While in second group including indirect objects, the errors are characterized by the placement of *nicht* both before and after the negative item. Specifically, 10 sentences featured *nicht* placed before the negated element, as illustrated in example 27. In contrast, 12 sentences contained *nicht* positioned after the negated item, which is exemplified in example 28. Figure 17 is a clear representation of the position of *nicht* with respect on the negated element.

(27) a. Non l'ho lasciato a nessuna società.

    a'. Ich habe es *nicht* keiner Firma gelässt. (23)

(28) a. Non l'ho scritto a nessun genitore.

    a'. Ich habe zu niemand […] *nicht* geschrieben. (57)
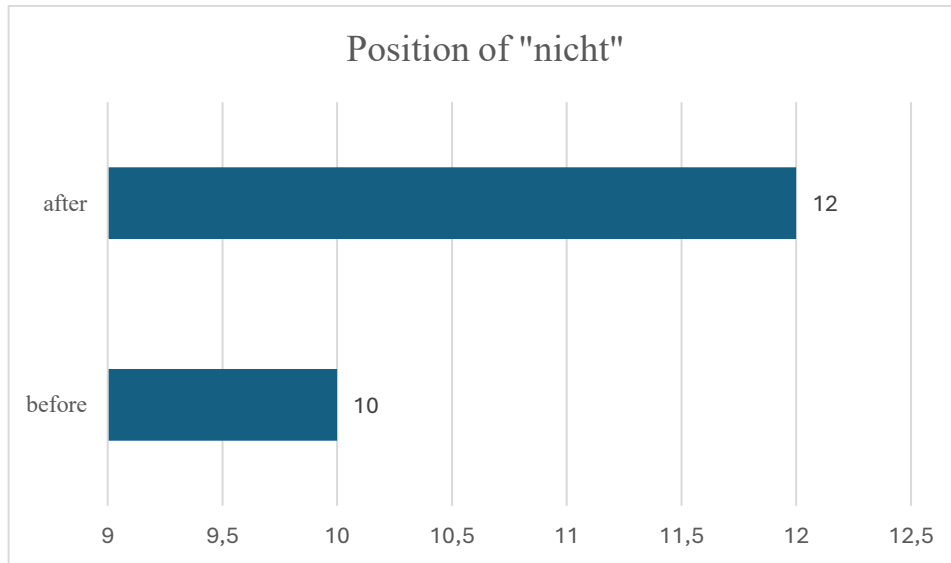
Figure 17

2.2.1 Results by class

Results are now presented according to the division into second and fourth year. Figure 18 shows the overall performance of the second-year participants, while figure 19 the performance of students attending the fourth year.
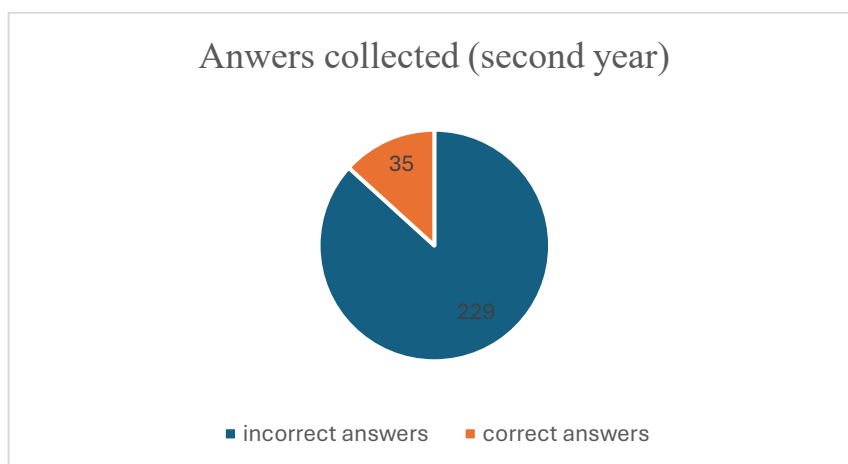
Figure 18

Figure 19

Evidence suggests that 87% of the responses of the second-year students were incorrect, while the percentage of errors committed by the fourth-year participants amount to 60%.

Figure 20 considers the categorization of the errors according to their nature, diving each group of errors into second year (blue columns) and fourth year (orange columns). 164 were incomplete or empty answers, 255 sentences contained grammatical errors, and 9 sentences included errors regarding the syntax. In addition, the errors related to NC were totally 25 and in 29 sentences, participants replaced the negative item with other elements. As in Experiment 1 (see figure 8), the percentage above the columns is calculated out of the total responses collected, 264 for the second year and 420 for the fourth.

ERROR FREQUENCY
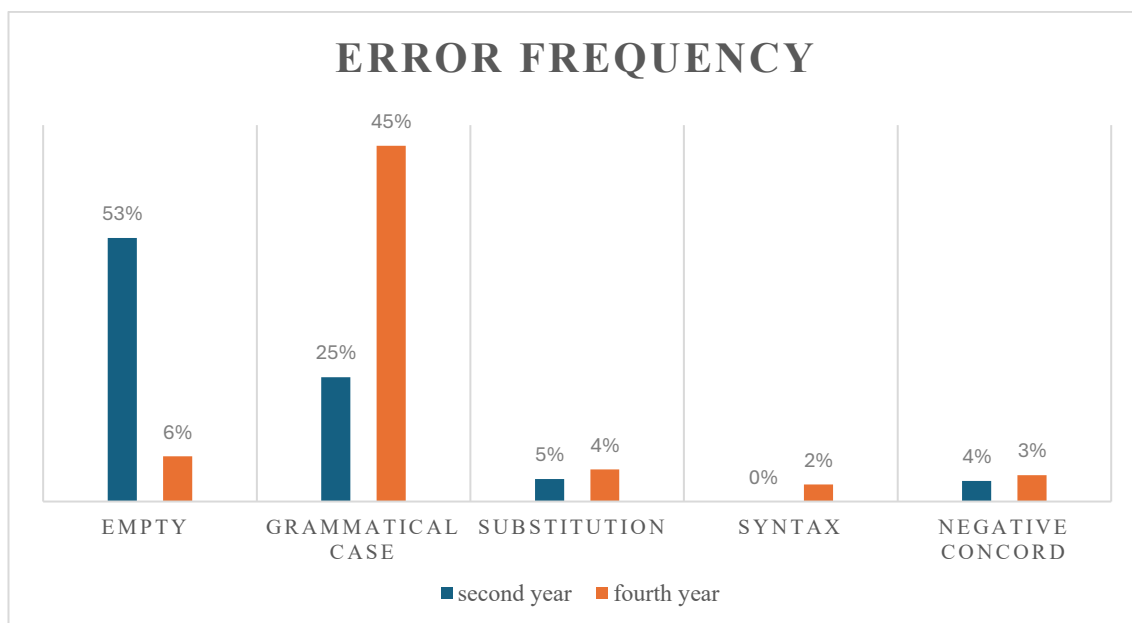
Figure 20

The next two diagrams illustrate the alternatives participants used instead of *kein*. Figure 21 considered the sentences containing negated nouns working as direct object, like example (29).

(29) Non ho consultato *nessun* avvocato.

In contrast, figure 22, shows the elements replacing *kein* in sentences where it preceded nouns working as indirect objects, as illustrated in example (30).
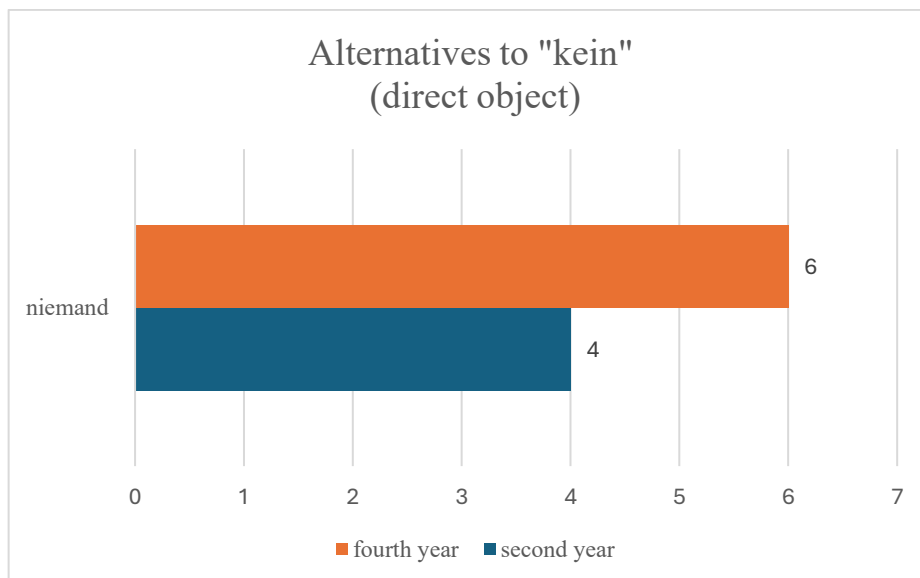
(30) Non l'ho prestato a *nessun* avvocato.

Figure 21

Both the second and the fourth year chose *niemand* as an alternative to *kein*. Examples (31a) and (31b) are the translation for the sentence "Non ho consultato nessun avvvocato" proposed respectively by a second-year student and a fourth-year student.

(31) a. Ich habe *niemand* Rechhtsanwalt gekonsultiert. (40)

 b. Ich habe *niemanden* Advokat consultieren. (5)

In sentences were the negated element plays the role of indirect object, *kein* was replaced by *nichts* – only by students attending the second year – *nicht* or *niemand* by students of both years, as presented in figure 22.
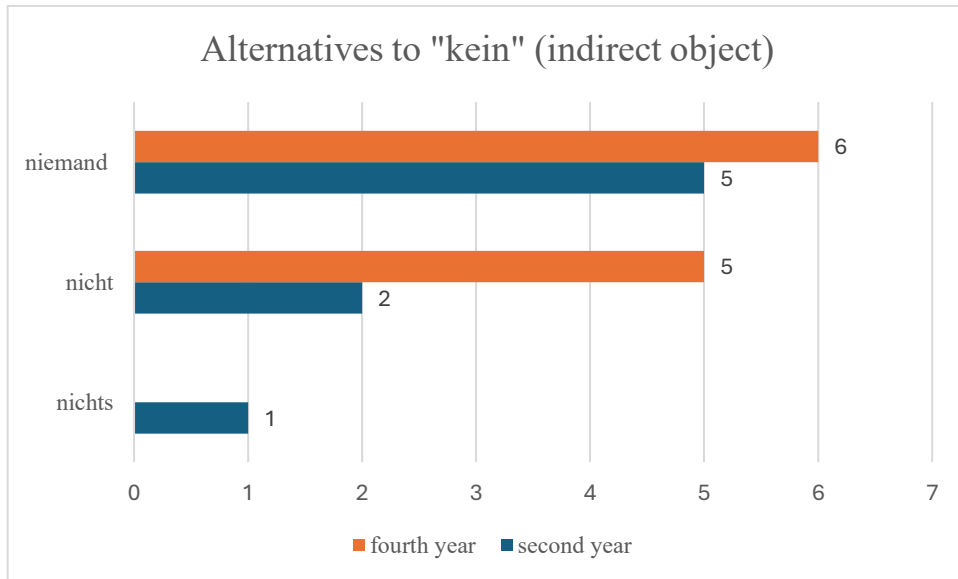
Figure 22

In the last part of this chapter, errors connected to NC will be presented. The fourth-year participants encountered challenges only with sentences where the negated element plays the role of indirect object. In contrast, students from the second year faced problems with both the direct and indirect object, shown in figure 23.
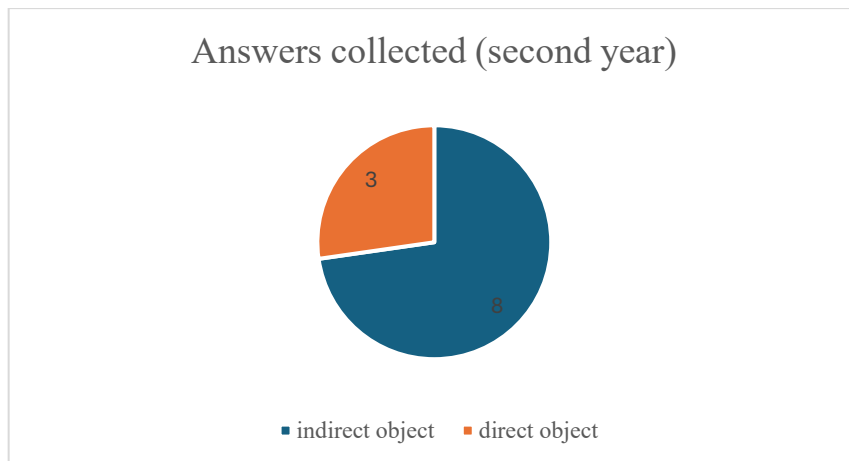

Figure 23

This type of errors includes the presence of *nicht* and another negative item, such as *niemand* or *kein*. *Nicht* was placed after the negated item, as presented in examples

(32a) and (33a), or before the negative element, as in examples (32b) and (33b). Both examples include the source sentence. Participants number 12 and 30 attend the second-year class, while 26 and 57 are students attending the fourth year.

(32) "Non l'ho mostrato a nessun medico"
    a. Ich habe zu niemanden Arzt *nicht* gezeigen. (57)
    b. Ich habe *nicht* es keine Arzt gezeigt. (12)

(33) "Non l'ho prestato a nessun avvocato."
    a. Ich habe das zu keinem Advokat *nicht* geliehen. (30)
    b. Ich habe *nicht* keinem Rechstanwalt geleihen. (46)

Figure 24 shows how the participants of the two cohorts manage to distribute *nicht* in the translated sentence.
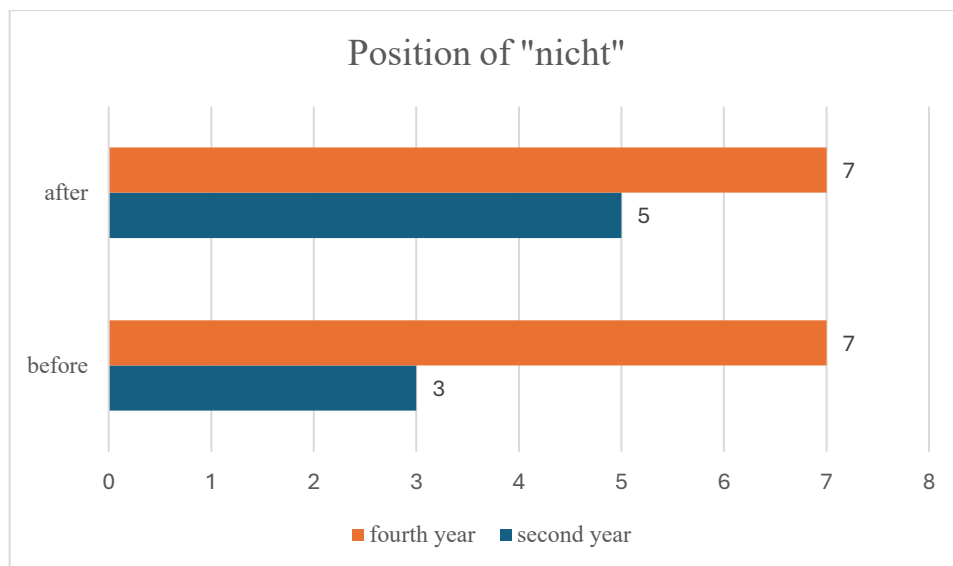

Figure 24

Chapter 4: Discussion

The last chapter includes the discussion of the data collected and the comparison between the results gained from the students attending the second year and the ones attending the fourth year to address the research questions posed in this study (see section 1.4 in chapter 1 for details). This discussion aims to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the results, highlighting the specific syntactic difficulties that native Italian speakers encounter when learning negation in German. By focusing on each research question, this analysis will explore students' use of the negative article *kein* and the negative pronoun *niemand*, how they manage the translation of the Italian negative pronoun or adjective *nessun**, in the different types of sentences included in the translation test. Moreover, students' placement of *nichts* within sentences and the role of Negative Concord in their translations will be examined.

The discussion of each research question will first consider the data collectively, which means that all the responses from both groups of students are taken into consideration. Afterwards, the results provided from the second year and the results of the fourth year are compared, as to underline any improvements or developmental patterns.

This approach allows a detailed analysis of the general performance and common errors observed, as well as specific analysis of the two classes' performance. Having categorized errors based on their nature (see section 3.1 in chapter 3) is crucial to examine the influence of Italian negative structures during the acquisition of negation in German. This analysis will be instrumental in identifying the causes of these errors. Moreover, comparing the results of the two cohorts may be evidence of a potential progress in syntactic understanding as the result of increased proficiency in German, which may reduce syntactic interference from the native language.

Through these two levels of analysis, this chapter will address each research question in detail, offering insights into the specific challenges faced by native Italian speakers in learning German negation.

Q1: Do participants decline the negative article *kein* and the negative pronoun *niemand* in the correct way?

The error analysis suggests that approximately the 50% of the errors were related to grammatical case. In Experiment 1, 54% of the incorrect sentences, which corresponds to 315 over 581, while in Experiment 2, 53% of the incorrect responses (255 over 482) contain declension errors, as shown in figure 1.
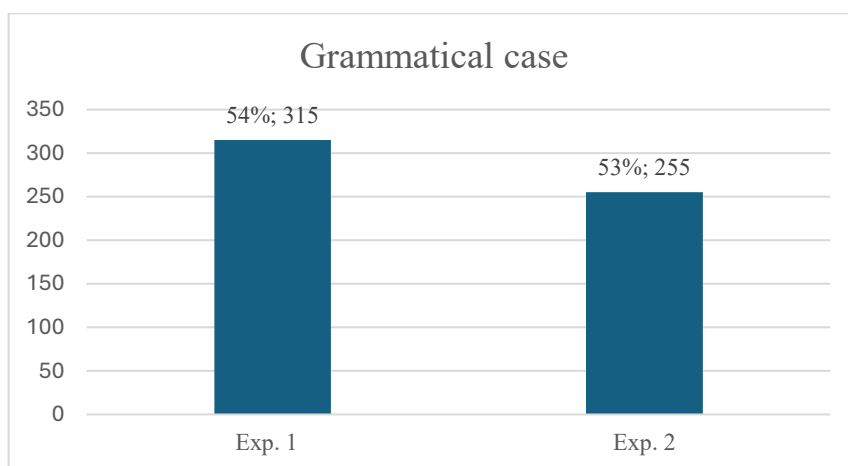

Figure 1

Declension errors found in Experiment 1 are related to sentences that both include the negative pronoun *niemand* and the negative article *kein*. In 124 sentences students have not declined *kein* in the correct way, as illustrated in example (1), where the right answer would have been "Ich habe *keinen* Mann/Mensch verstanden".

(1) a. Non ho capito nessun uomo. ("I didn't understand any man.")

    a'. Ich habe *kein* Mann verstanden. (13)

    a". Ich habe *kein* Mensch verstanden. (32)

Moreover, in 191 sentences, participants encountered difficulties with the endings of the negative pronoun *niemand*. In example (2), *niemand* plays the role of the direct object, and for this reason it should become *niemanden*.

(2) a. Non ho cercato nessuno. ("I looked for nobody.")

　　a'. Ich habe *niemand* gesucht. (5)

Experiment 2 only includes sentences with the pattern "*nessun* + a noun*", which it is translated as "*kein* + noun*" into German. This pattern served both as direct and indirect object. This means that in the first case, accusative endings should be used (*kein* becomes *keinen* for male nouns, *keine* for female and *kein* for neutrum), and in the second case, dative endings (*keinem* for male and neutrum and *keiner* for female). Example (3) includes direct objects, while example (4) indirect objects.

(3) a. Non ho ascoltato nessuna madre. ("I didn't listen to any mother.")

　　a'. Ich habe *kein* Mutter gehören.[20] (36)

　　a". Ich habe *keinen* Mutter gehört. (42).

(4) a. Non l'ho offerto a nessuna insegnante. ("I didn't offer it to any teacher.")

　　a'. Ich habe *keinen* Lehrerin geboten. (27)

　　a". Ich habe *kein* Lehrer angebot. (26)

Figure 2 is a clear representation of the distribution of such errors.

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[20] As it has already been declared in the previous chapters, examples may contain more errors than the ones considered in the analysis.
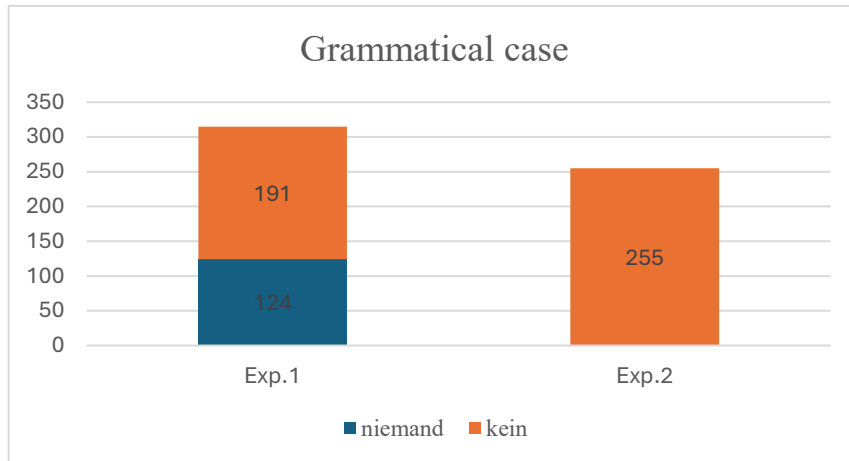
Figure 2

In proportion to the total number of answers collected, which depends on the total number of students in each year (35 fourth-year students and 22 second-year students), the second year made fewer grammar mistakes than the fourth year, both in Experiment 1 and in Experiment 2.

In Exp. 1, declension errors amount to the 40% of the total answers collected for the fourth year (560), and the 26% of the 352 responses collected for the second year, as illustrated in figures 3.
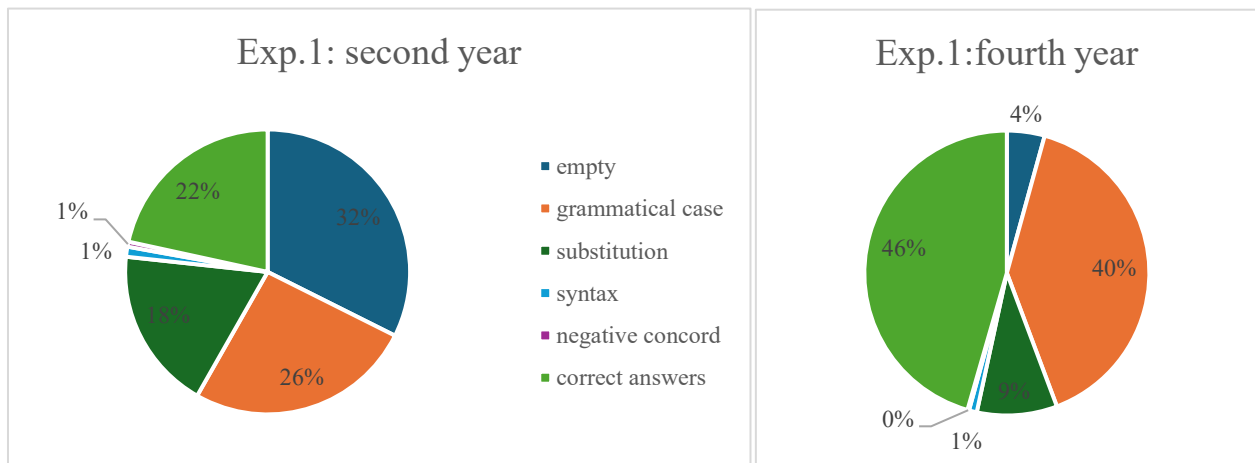

Figure 3

In Exp. 2, the 45% of the total answers collected (420) was represented by the declension errors committed by students attending the fourth year and the 25% of the 264 responses from second-years students, as shown in figure 4.
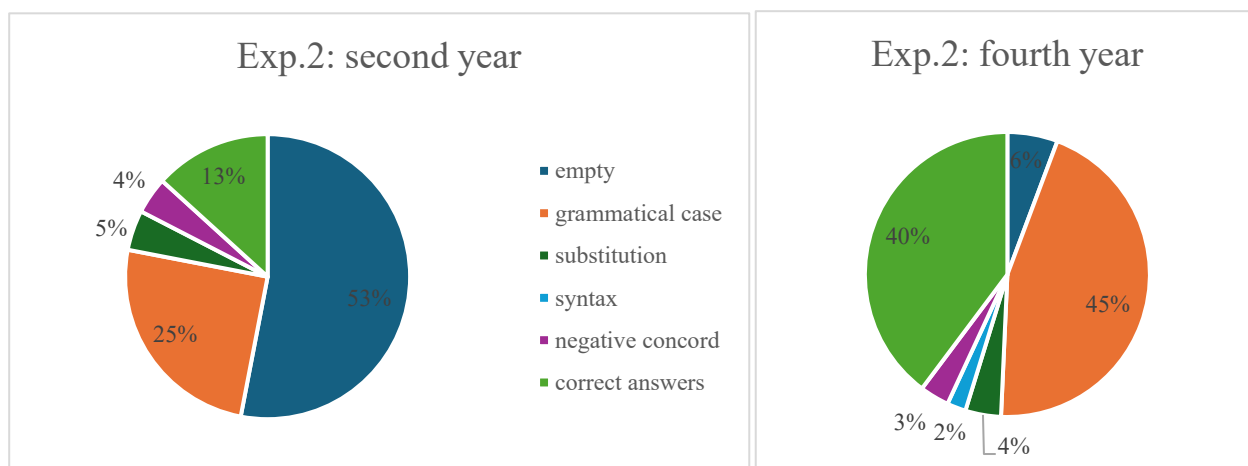

Figure 2

These percentages are clear evidence that an increase in proficiency level does not necessarily lead to the consolidation of simple patters, such as grammatical errors or errors connected to articles or pronouns endings. Maybe students attending the fourth year may focus on difficult challenges more than students attending the second year, who will be probably more comfortable with simpler constructions. In addition, after several years of studying, students may have developed certain habitual errors that have become fossilized in their interlanguage (Selinker, 1972, see section 1.2.2.c in chapter 1 for details). These persistent errors can sometimes increase with years of study if not specifically addressed in instruction.

Differences between Italian and German as regards the case-system may be the cause of these errors (see section 1.3.5.a in chapter 1). In Italian, nouns and articles are not inflected for case. Italian uses a fixed word order (typically Subject-Verb-Object) and prepositions to indicate syntactic roles. For example, Italian marks the indirect object with prepositions like "a" (which means "to" in English and "zu" or "auf" in German) rather than changing the article or noun itself. Therefore, adjusting articles and pronouns based on case, gender, and number does not exist in Italian. In contrast, since German has four

grammatical cases – nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive – different endings for articles, adjectives, and pronouns are required.

For Italian speakers, learning to apply these endings accurately represents a significant leap because they have no direct linguistic equivalent to draw from in Italian. Participants, for instance, translated dative structures using preposition, such as "zu" or "auf", which corresponds to the Italian "a", as shown in examples (5) and (6), as clear evidence of negative transfer or interference (Saville-Troike, 2012).

(5) a. Non l'ho lasciato a nessuna società. ("I didn't leave to any company.")

a'. Ich habe es *zu keine* Firma gelassen. (18)

(6) a. Non l'ho raccontato a nessun giornalista. ("I didn't tell any journalist.")

a'. Ich habe *an kein* Journalist erzählt. (26)

In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), negative transfer occurs when learners apply rules from their native language (L1) to the target language (L2), resulting in errors. Italian speakers often apply Italian syntax directly to German, leading them to omit necessary case inflections with *kein* and *niemand*. According to SLA theories, especially those on interlanguage (see section 1.2.2.c in chapter 1), learners go through developmental stages where they might adopt simplified or incorrect versions of L2 structures as they work towards full proficiency (Selinker, 1972). Errors like those in examples (1) or (2) occur because Italian speakers default to the accusative form, failing to adjust for case due to negative transfer from L1.

The German case system adds a significant cognitive load, as Italian learners must simultaneously process case requirements, verb placements, and word order rules. Learning all these aspects requires time, and, especially for case system rules, a high level of memorization is crucial. Research in SLA supports the notion that case making is particularly challenging for learners from languages without case inflection. Hawkins (2001) discusses this as a "processing bottleneck", suggesting that language learners have limited cognitive resources for simultaneously processing various linguistic rules,

especially in real-time language production or comprehension. When faced with syntactically complex tasks, like German case making, learners struggle to manage the multiple layers of information, such as selecting the correct case, ensuring agreement, and maintaining correct word order.

Q2: Did participants translate the Italian negative item *nessun** in the correct way?

The Italian negative item *nessun** works as a pronoun or adjective, depending on whether it is followed by a noun. On the other hand, German requires learners to choose between *kein* if it works as an adjective and *niemand* in the case it works as a pronoun (see section 1.3.5.d for further information).

Considering all the responses collected including *nessun** both as a pronoun or adjective, the negative item was translated correctly in 198 over 684 sentences in Exp.1 and 202 over 684 in Exp.2. 318 sentences in Exp.1 and 271 in Exp.2 can also be considered correct, since participants chose the right translation for *nessun** both committed some other mistakes, including grammar errors or errors related to syntax or Negative Concord. Only in 63 sentences in Exp.1 and 47 in Exp.2, *nessun** was replaced by other elements, while 105 sentences were empty or incomplete in Exp.1 and 164 in Exp.2. Figures 5 and 6 provide clear representations of what just declared, with the percentage of each category.
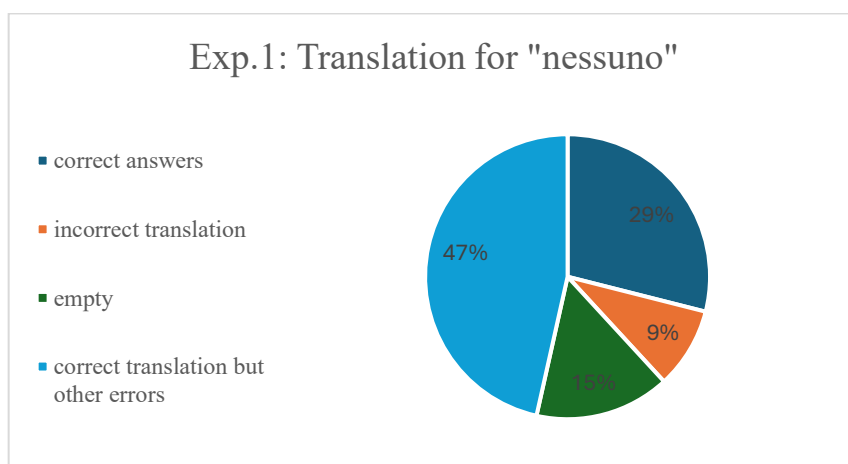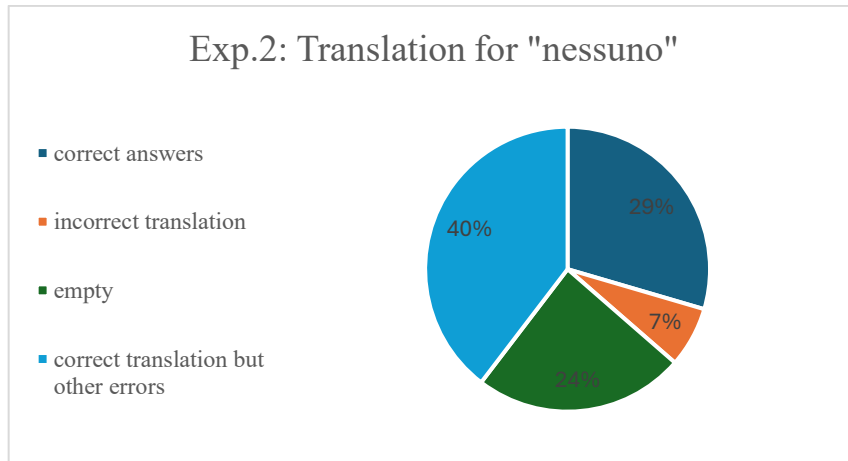

Figure 3

Figure 4

Generally, in both experiments, the sum of the percentage of the correct responses and the responses with the correct translation for *nessun** but with other errors is higher than the sum of incorrect and empty or incomplete responses.

In contrast to declension errors, in this case, fourth-year students performed better than students attending the second year, both in Exp.1 and Exp.2, as illustrated in figures 7 and 8.
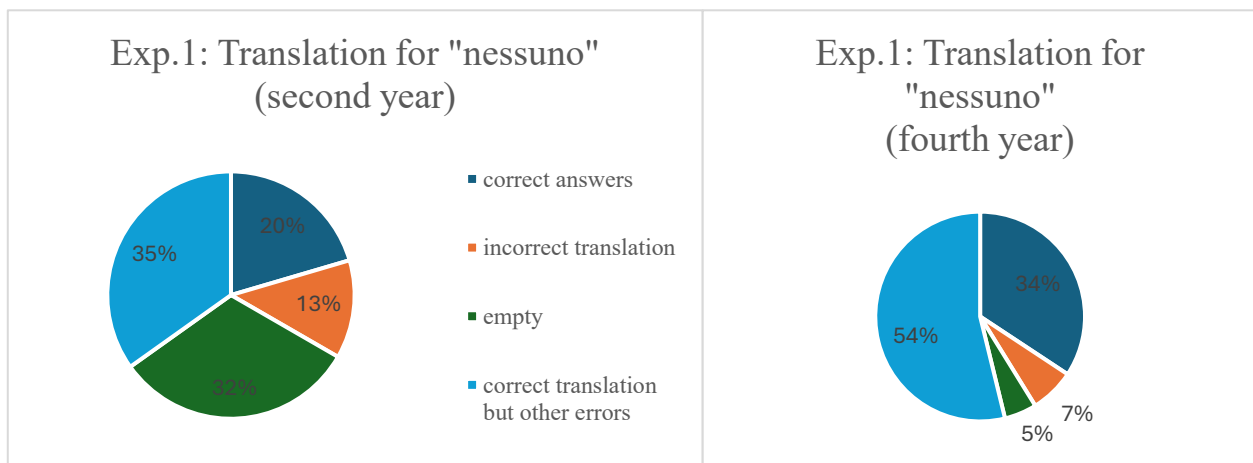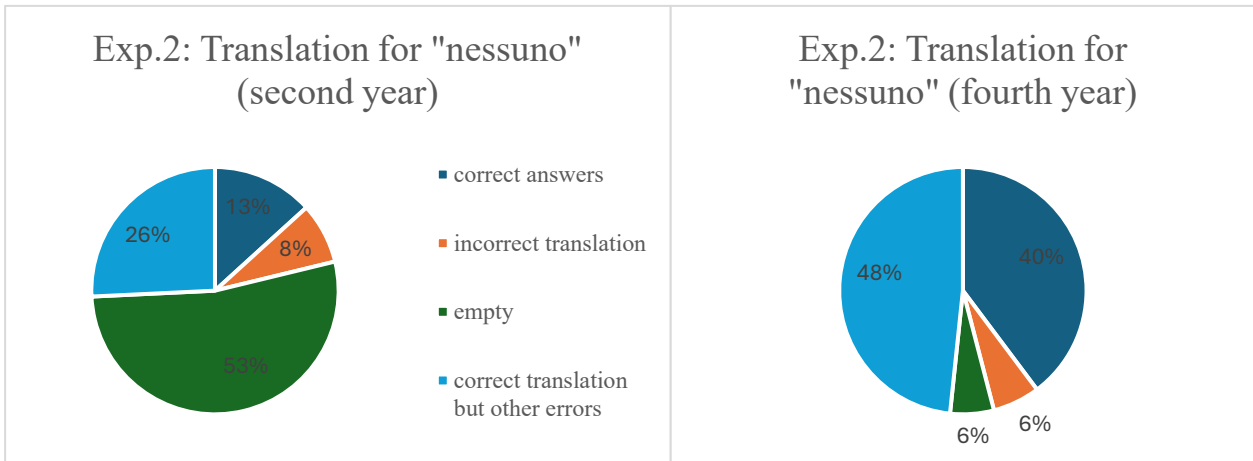

Figure 5

Figure 6

Q3: a. Were the results influenced by the fact that *nessun** was treated as a simple element or a complex element?

Research question 3a examines whether students' performance was influenced by whether *nessun** was treated as a simple or complex element (see section 2.1.2 in chapter 2). In Exp.1 *nessun** was treated as simple element working as a pronoun – see example (7) – and as a complex element, which means that it was an adjective followed by a noun – example (8).

(7) Non ho visitato *nessuno*. ("I visited nobody.")
(8) Non ho visitato *nessun* malato. ("I didn't visit any sick person.")

German has two equivalent forms for *nessun**, one working as negative pronoun (*niemand*) and another as negative adjective (*kein*) (see section 1.3.4 in chapter 1). The correct translation for *nessuno* as a simple element (example (7)) should be *niemanden* (the ending comes from the accusative case) and for *nessuno* as a complex element (example (8)) should be *keinen* (endings due to the accusative case and gender of "malato"). Since this distinction does not exist in Italian, it influenced student' performance, as figures 9 and 10 demonstrates.
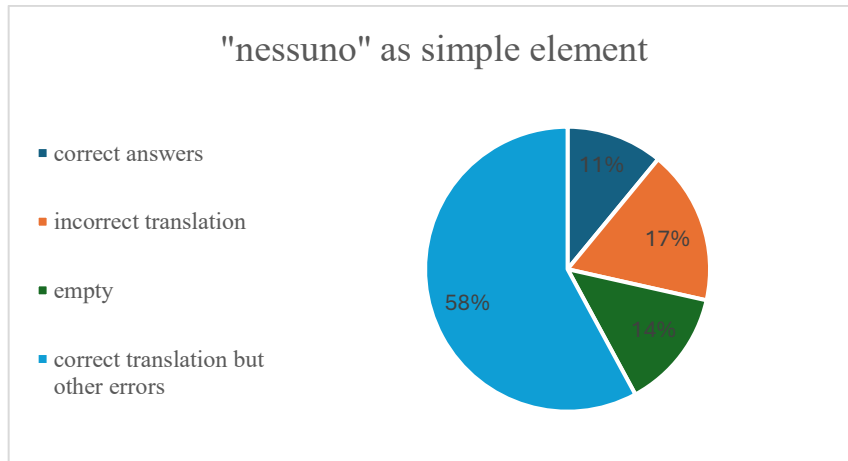
Figure 7

31% of the responses including *nessun** as a simple element contain incorrect translations or empty answers. In contrast, only the 21% of the sentences containing *nessun** as a complex element – which means *nessun** + noun – showed errors or were left blank (figure 10). Students found *niemand* more challenging to translate than *kein*, likely due to the additional grammatical demands of German's case system or because of their lack of knowledge of the pronoun.
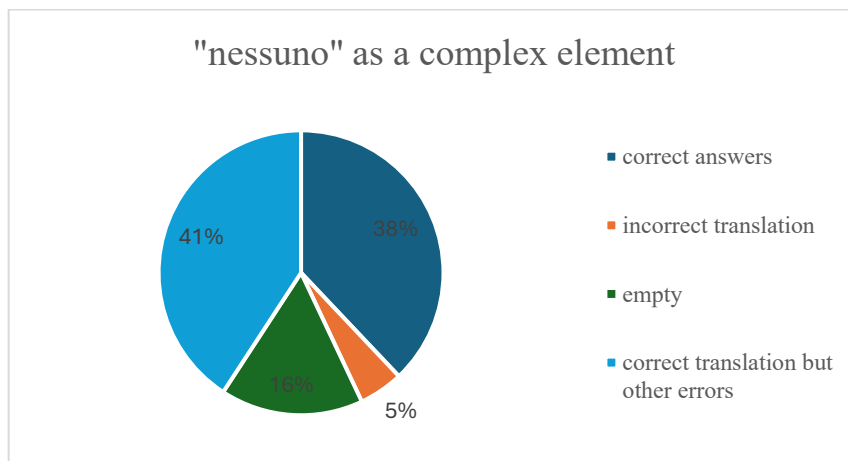

Figure 8

As already stated in the explanation of Q2, students attending the fourth year performed better than second-year students, both in the case of *nessun** as a simple and complex element, as illustrated in figures 11 and 12.
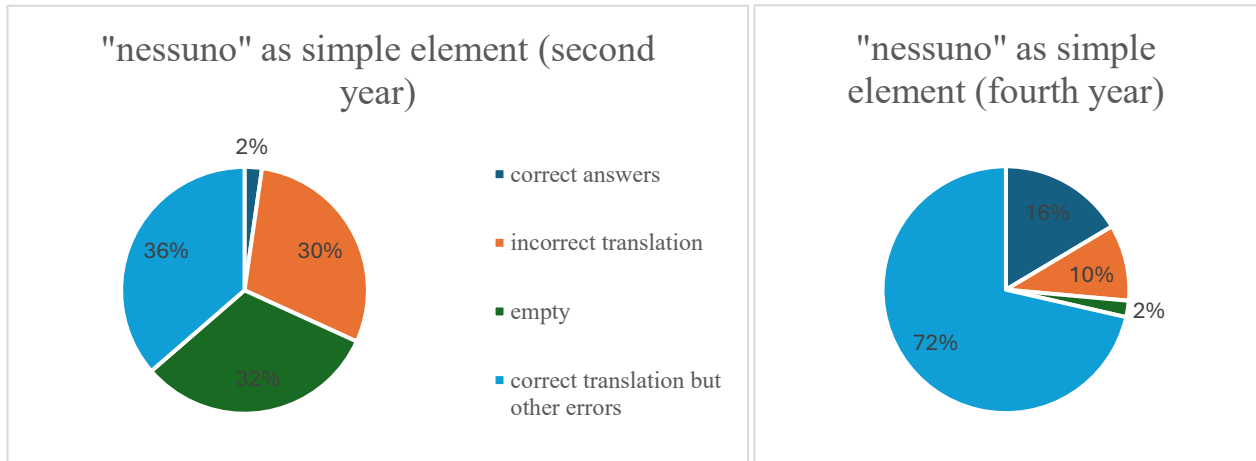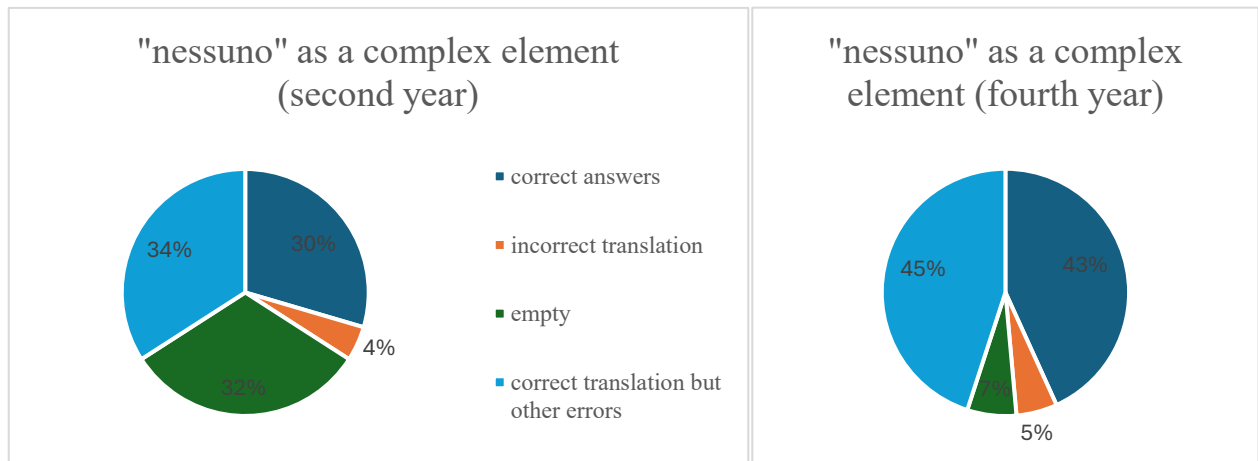

Figure 9

Figure 10

The second year did not translate or translate incorrectly *nessun** as a simple element in 62% of the responses, while *nessun** as a complex element in 36% of the responses collected. In contrast, fourth-year students did not translate or used incorrect translations of *nessun** as a simple and complex element only in 12% of the sentences.

In chapter 3, the results are presented with details and tables illustrating what alternatives student used instead of *niemand* (figure 3 at page 60 and *kein* (figure 4 at page 61).

Alternatives to *niemand* such as *keine Leute* and *keine Person* chosen by students attending the second year, or *kein Kind* and *keinen Mann* selected by fourth-year students may be evidence of L1 interference or negative transfer (Selinker, 1972). Students decided consciously or unconsciously to avoid the use of *niemand* by finding solutions that can be considered semantically equivalent. *Keine Leute* or *keine Person* mean "no people" and "no person", which is exactly the meaning of *nessuno* ("no one"). *Kein Kind* ("no child") and *keinen Mann* ("no man") can be considered loopholes due to the misunderstanding of the negative pronoun *niemand*. Moreover, learners might have mistakenly extended the use of *kein* – applied to negate nouns – to contexts where *niemand* would be correct. Research on interlanguage suggests that students frequently overgeneralize rules when faced with similar forms or functions (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Here, the semantic overlap between *kein* and *niemand* in expressing negation could lead learners to apply *kein* more broadly, resulting in phrases like *keine Leute* and *keine Person* instead of *niemand*.

One student used three times *nicht jemanden* instead of *niemand.* This choice may reflect an interference from English, since this form is like the English *not someone*, where *not* can negate someone directly. In German, however, this construction is not correct, as negating with *nicht* + indefinite pronoun (*jemanden*) does not fit German syntactic rules (Vogel, 2004). Students may have been influenced by English since it was participants' third language. According to Schwartz and Sprouse's (1996) Full Transfer/Full Access Model, learner initially transfer structures from other languages they know when learning a new language, and this can lead to cross-linguistic interference. Finally, according to Meisel (1997), learners of German as a second language go through specific stages in acquiring negative structures. At the beginning, they may encounter difficulties to distinguish between *nicht* and *kein* or *niemand*. Using *nicht jemanden* may therefore reflect an interlanguage stage where learners cannot master the correct use of negative pronouns.

b. Moreover, were the results influenced by the fact that the noun following *nessun** was indicating something inanimate or inanimate?

Research question 3b analyses whether students' performance was influenced by the animacy of the direct object. The noun following the negative item *nessun** working as an adjective could be animate, as in example (9), or inanimate, as in example (10) (see section 2.1.2 in chapter 2 for details).

(9) Non ho toccato *nessun* poliziotto. ("I didn't touch any police officer.")
(10) Non ho mandato *nessuna* lettera. ("I didn't send any letter.")

Evidence shows that 28% of the sentences including an animate object were translated incorrectly or left empty, while only the 15% of the sentences with inanimate objects were incorrect or empty, as illustrated in figures 13 and 14.
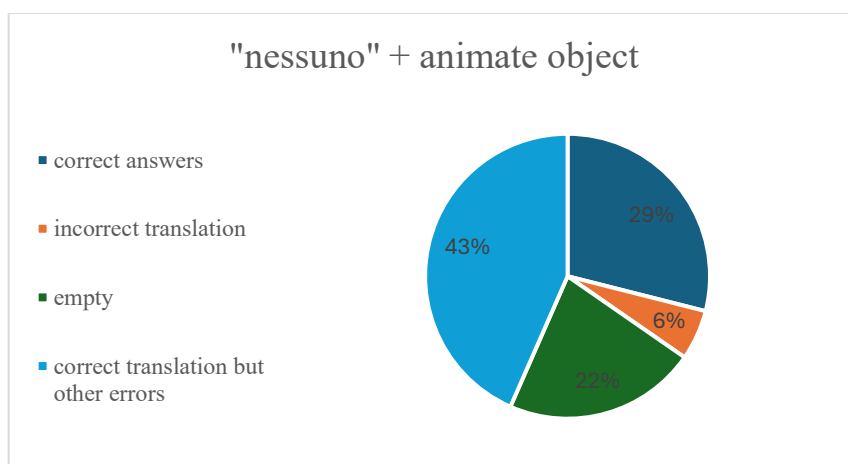
Figure 11
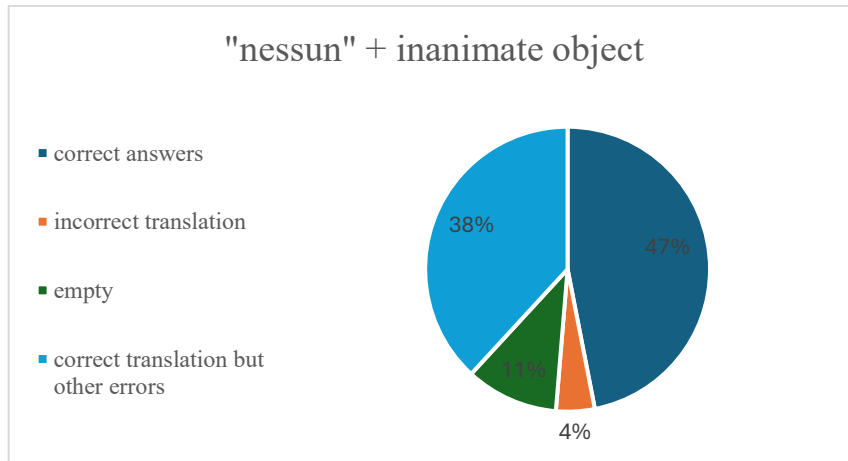
Figure 12

Generally, students faced more difficulties with sentences containing animate objects than sentences with inanimate objects. Students attending the second year performed worse than fourth year students. In 48% of the sentences with animate objects and 25% of the sentences including inanimate objects, second-year students translated *nessun** in the incorrect manner or left the sentence incomplete or empty. On the contrary, students attending the fourth year incorrectly translated 15% of the sentences with animate object and 9% of the ones with inanimate objects, as shown in figure 15 and 16.
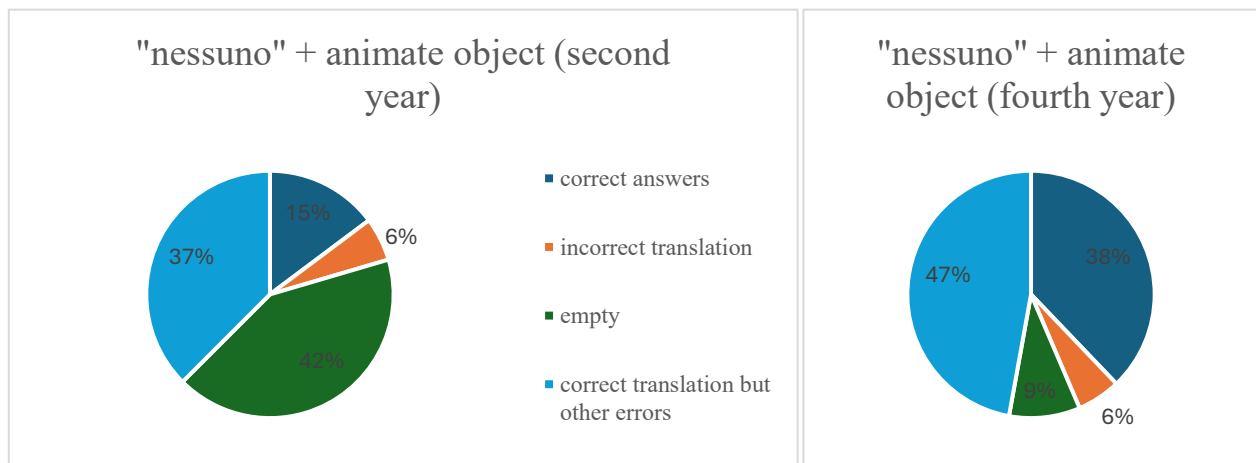
Figure 13
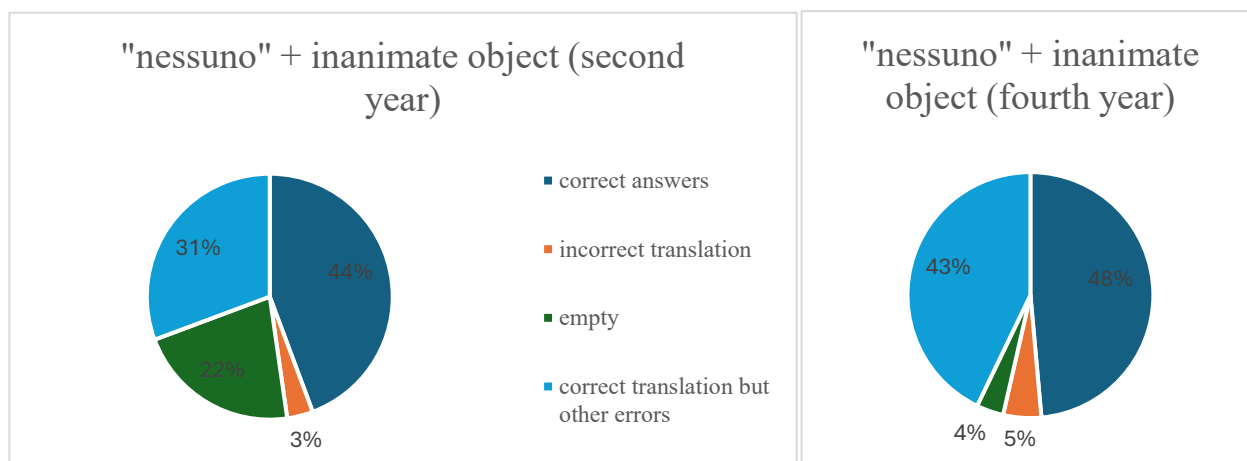
Figure 14

The sentences with an incorrect translation of the animate direct object were 13 and the same type of sentences but including the inanimate object amount to 10. In all these sentences, students did not translate the negative item *nessun**, as in example (11), or replaced it with other elements.

(11) a. Non ho capito nessun uomo. ("I didn't understand any man.")

a'. Ich kenne Mann *nicht*. (40)

In both types of sentences, including an animate or inanimate object, *kein* was replaced by *nicht* as in example (12), *niemand*, example (13), or by the structure indefinite article + *nicht*, example (14). The following examples include a sentence with animate object (a) and a sentence with inanimate object (b).

(12) a. Ich habe *nicht* Brief gescheickt. (5) ("I didn't send any letter.")

b. Ich habe *nicht* Parent vermissen. (5) ("I didn't forget any relatives.")

(13) a. Ich habe *nieman* Glass berühren. (45) ("I didn't touch any glass.")

b. Ich habe *niemand* Fremden gehassen. (17) ("I didn't hate any stranger.")

(14) a. Ich habe *ein* Lied *nicht* verloren. (18) ("I didn't love any song.")

b. Ich habe *eine* Schwester *nicht* verlasst. (18[21]) ("I didn't lose any sister.")

Only in one sentence with an animate object, the direct object was replaced by the negative item *nichts*, as proved in example (15), and in two sentences with inanimate objects, participant number 15 chose the negative adverb *nie* instead of *kein*, examples (16a) and (16b).

(15) Ich habe *nichts* gehört. (25) ("I didn't eat any child.")[22]

(16) a. Ich habe *nie* Schuhe verlieren. (15) ("I didn't lose any shoe.")

b. Ich habe *nie* ein Spiel mit mir gebrungen. (15) ("I didn't bring any games with me.")

Students may have used *niemand* as an alternative to *kein*, due its meaning. Since *niemand* means "nessun*" in Italian, they probably translated literally into German, transferring semantic meaning from their L1 to L2, committing an error of interference (Selinker, 1972).

The other errors may be connected to what Gass and Selinker (2008) call "avoidance strategies". Learners often sidestep grammatically challenging forms, leading to systematic errors in favour of simple structures. Since *kein* requires the appropriate case declension, students who are less familiar with German's case system, for example, may avoid *kein* and use other simpler forms, such as *nicht*, *nichts* or *nie*, which do not require case endings.

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[21] This type of structure was proposed twice by the same student, participant number 18.

[22] As it is notable from the source text, participant 25 chose the wrong verb in addition to the errors considered in this analysis.

Q4: Does *nichts* occupy the right place in the sentence?

Research Question 4 investigates whether participants positioned the negative pronoun *nichts* correctly in the sentence in Exp.1. This section specifically analyses four possible outcomes:

1. Correct translation and placement: students correctly translated *nichts* and positioned it appropriately in the sentence, as in example (17).

(17) a. Non ho mandato niente.

    a'. Ich habe *nichts* geschickt. (28) ("I sent nothing.")

2. Correct translation but incorrect placement: students translated *nichts* correctly but place it in an incorrect position – see example (18).

(18) a. Non ho portato niente con me.

    a'. Ich habe mit mir *nichts* gebracht. (19) ("I brought nothing with me.")

3. Incorrect translation and placement: students neither translated *nichts* accurately nor positioned it correctly in the sentence (see example (19)).

(19) a. Non ho mostrato niente.

    a'. Ich habe gezeigen *nichts*. (44) ("I showed nothing.")

4. Omission or substitution: students omitted *nichts* entirely or replaced it with another element (see figure 5 at page 63), as in example (20).

(20) a. Non ho odiato niente.

    a'. Ich habe *nie* gehasst[23]. (22) ("I hated nothing.")

Figure 17 provides a clear representation of the four outcomes.

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[23] In this case, participant 22 used the negative adverb *nie*, instead of *nichst*.
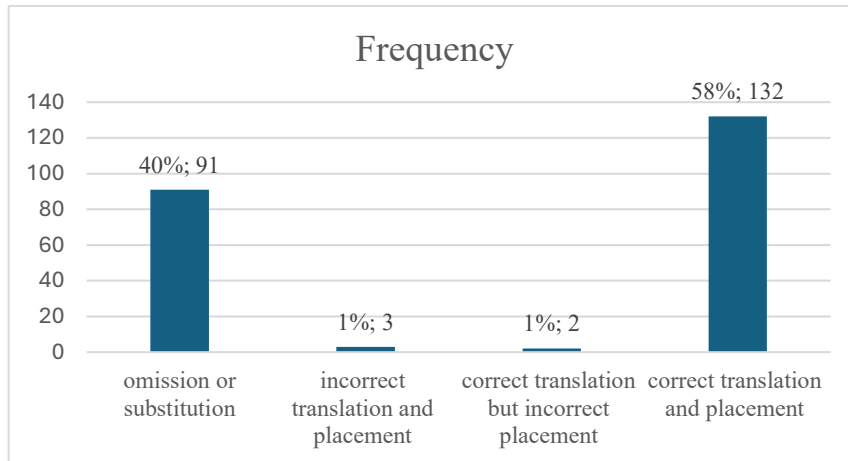
Figure 15

In conclusion, in 58% of the responses collected, students translated and positioned correctly the negative item *nichts* in the sentence. 110 over the 132 correct answers were submitted by students attending the fourth year, while second-year students provided only 22 correct responses over the 88 provided by the second year, as shown in figure 18.
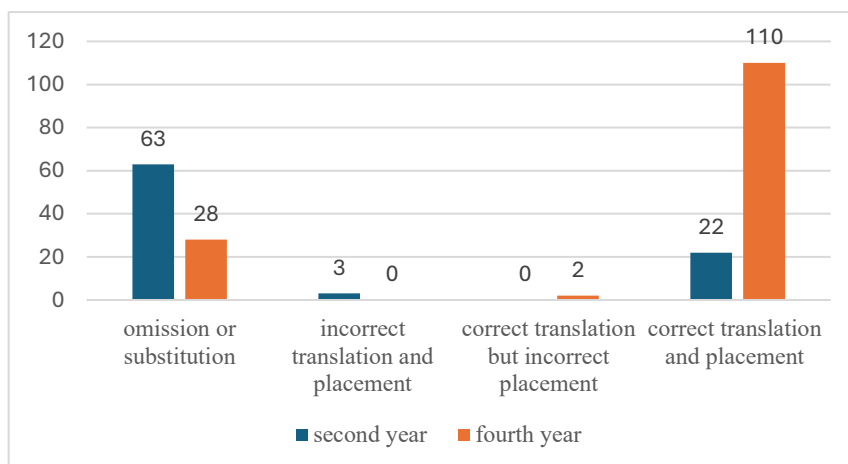
Figure 16

Two fourth-year students submitted sentences including the correct translation of the negative item, but they placed it incorrectly in the sentence. Both responses were translations of the Italian sentence "Non ho portato niente con me" (which means "I brought nothing with me.")

(21) Ich habe mit mich *nichts* gebraucht. (10)

Ich habe mit mir *nichts* gebracht. (19)

In both cases, *nichts* was introduced right before the past participle and not after the main verb. Moreover, the students selected an incorrect verb for "portare con me", overlooking the German verb "mitbringen", which means "to bring with me" and does not require an extra complement. This choice may have let them to place *nichts* in the incorrect position in the sentence.

Q5: Which was the role of Negative Concord while translating into German?

Research question 5 analyses the errors connected to Negative Concord (NC). 3 sentences over 581 incorrect responses in Exp.1 (see figure 2 at page 59) and 25 over 482 in Exp.2 (see figure 13 at page 71) contained errors connected to NC (see section 1.3.2 in chapter 1 for details). Students provided translations including two negative items, such as *niemand* and *nicht*, as in example (22), *kein* and *nicht*, example (23), or *nicht* and *kein*, as in example (24).

(22) a. Non ho visto nessun cameriere. ("I didn't see any waiter.")

a'. Ich habe *niemand* Angestellte gesehen *nicht*. (44)

(23) a. Non ho trovato nessun professore. ("I didn't find any professor.")

a'. Ich habe *keine* Lehrer *nicht* gefunden. (55)

(24) a. Non l'ho spiegato a nessuna donna. ("I didn't explain to any woman.")

a'. Ich habe es *nicht keiner* Frau erklärt. (23)

Figure 20 illustrates the distribution of the three patterns introduced in the previous examples.
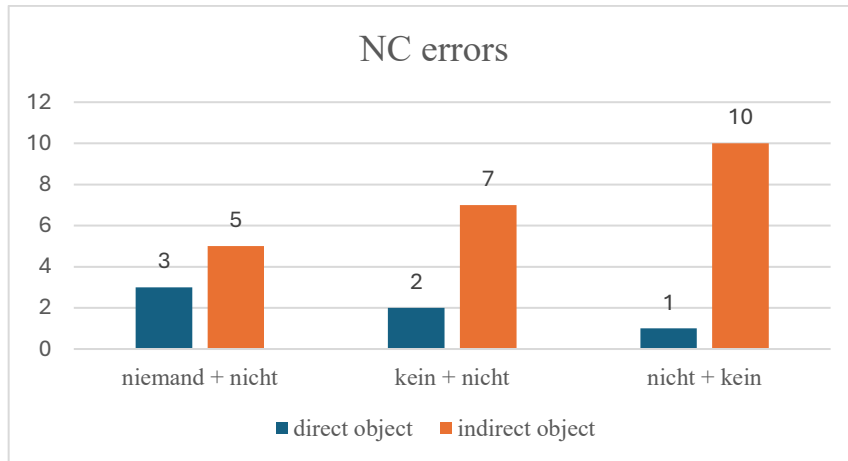
Figure 20

The diagram demonstrates that students committed more errors in sentences including indirect objects, as in example (25), than in the ones with direct objects, as in example (26).

(25) a. Non ho ascoltato nessuna madre. ("I didn't listen to any mother.")

   a'. Ich habe *niemander* Mutter *nicht* gehört. (57)

   b. Non ho dimenticato nessuna promessa. ("I didn't forget any promise.")

   b'. Ich vergesse *kein* Versprechen *nicht*. (52)

   c. Non ho amato nessuna canzone. (I didn't love any song.")

   c'. Ich habe *nicht keine* Song geliebt. (12)

(26) a. Non l'ho mostrato a nessun medico. ("I didn't show it to any doctor.")

   a'. Ich habe zu *niemanden* Arzt *nicht* geziegen. (57)

   b. Non l'ho prestato a nessun avvocato. ("I didn't lend to any lawyer.")

   b'. Ich habe an *kein* Rechtsanwalt *nicht* geliehen. (22)

   c. Non l'ho spedito a nessun venditore. ("I didn't send it to any seller.")

   c'. Ich habe es *nicht keinem* Kellner geschickt. (23)[24]

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[24] Every example includes a sentence with *niemand + nicht* (letter a), one with *kein + nicht* (b) and the last with *nicht + kein* (c).

The analysis of the students' performance based on their year of study reveals no significant difference in the number or errors related to NC between second-year and fourth-year students. Among the 28 sentences with NC-related errors, 13 were produced by second-year students and 15 by fourth year students, as illustrated in figure 21 and 22.
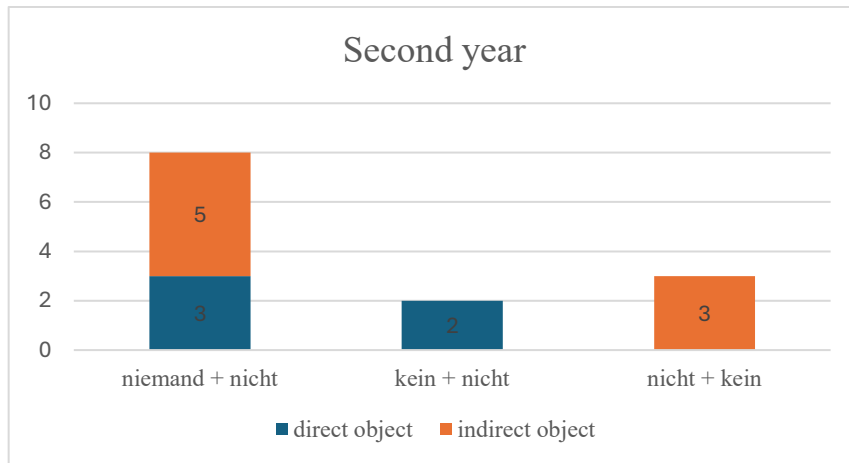
Figure 21
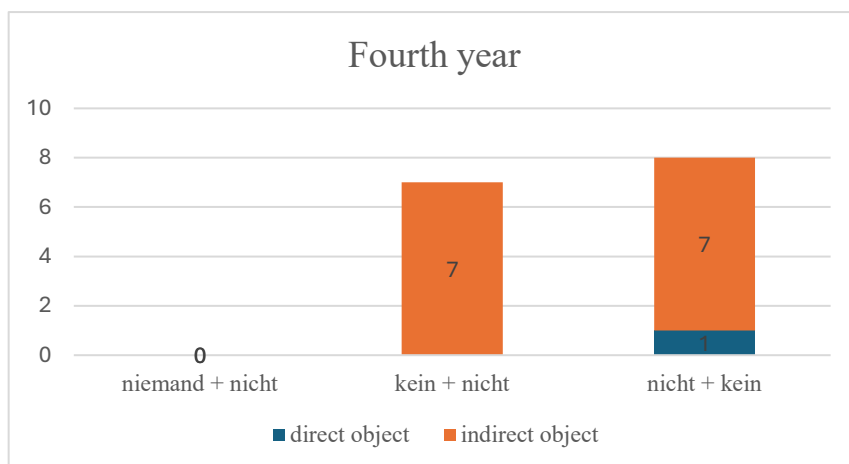
Figure 22

The main distinction observed is that second-year students exhibited challenges with both direct and indirect objects, while the fourth year struggled only with indirect objects (except one sentence). This difference may be attributable to the fourth-year students' improved ability to handle simple cases, such as nominative or accusative,

whereas second-year students experienced difficulties even with basic cases like the accusative.

The tendency for native Italian speakers to use more than one negative items in negative sentence may be evidence of negative transfer from Italian (Saville-Troike, 2012), where NC is common. While Italian accepts sentences involving multiple negative elements (e.g. "Non ho visto nessuno."), German does not. Negative clauses in German allows the use of a unique negative item (see section 1.3.4 in chapter 1). This syntactic difference may lead Italian students to apply the same structures they used in their native language, even in other languages, since they may rely on familiar structures, especially for complex structures like negation (Odlin, 1989; Selinker, 1972). For this reason, learners may overgeneralize the Italian rule for NC to German and include multiple negative elements, as shown in examples (25) and (26). Such interference is consistent with studies on syntactic transfer, which underlines that negative structures are particularly inclined to L1 influence, especially when L2 has contrasting rules (White, 1991; Tsimpli & Roussou, 1991).

Conclusion

The results collected throughout the translation test will be here summarized. Chapter 4 provides a deep discussion of the results by answering to each research question. The analysis of the results highlighted the main syntactic difficulties that participants encounter while translating small negative sentences into German. Participants found more challenging Exp.2 than Exp.1, since the percentage of the correct responses in Exp.1 amount to 36%, while the percentage in Exp.2 is equal to 30%.

Research question 1 (Q1) describes that approximately the 50% of the errors in both experiments is related to grammar, especially to the case-endings of the negative items *kein* and *niemand*. Students attending the fourth year performed worse than students attending the second year. The hypothesis is that they fossilized simple errors patterns, like case-endings, or maybe they were more focused on complex than on simple structures.

Research questions 2 and 3 (Q2 and Q3) investigates whether participants translated the Italian negative item *nessun** in the correct way and whether conditions, such as the complexity or animacy of the direct object, influenced their performance. Results show that students translated correctly *nessun** in approximately 70% of the responses in both Exp.1 and Exp.2. They experienced more difficulties with *nessun** treated as a simple element – which means that it played the role of a pronoun – than with *nessun** as an adjective or complex element. Moreover, students were slightly more confident with inanimate direct objects than with animate ones. Generally, fourth-year students performed better than second-year students.

The fourth research question (Q4) focuses on the translation and placement of the negative item *nichts* ("nothing"). Only the 58% of the sentences included a correct translation and placement of *nichts*. The responses that were considered incorrect contain sentences with no elements or other negative elements instead of *nichts* (40%), sentences with incorrect translation and placement (1%) and sentences with correct translation but

incorrect placement of *nichts* (1%). Similarly in this case, we observe that fourth year students provided more correct responses than the second year, maybe due to their proficiency level and capacity to handle with German syntax.

The last research question (Q5) assesses the role of Negative Concord while translating into German. 3 sentences over 581 incorrect responses in Exp.1 and 22 over 482 in Exp.2 incorporate multiple negative elements, representing errors in German syntax. While in Italian, the presence of multiple negative items is accepted (Giannakidou, 2020), German does not allow this type of structure.

Q5 and Q2/Q3 supply evidence of syntactic transfer from Italian (L1) while translating into German (L2). Moreover, even Q1 contribute to the theory according to which the native language can influence second language acquisition. In general, the results presented in chapter 3 and analysed in chapter 4 impart insights into how syntactic transfer can lead to specific error patterns, especially in language pairs with marked structural differences, like in this research. Errors in negation reflect learners' reliance on familiar Italian structures, confirming Selinker's concept of interlanguage (1972) and demonstrating the persistence of negative transfer when Italian and German syntactic patterns conflict.

Pedagogically, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of teaching strategies that tackle the specific challenges native Italian speakers face with German negation. For instance, school education can concentrate more on comparing directly Italian and German, exploring the main differences or similarities. In this way, teachers can help students to appreciate the charm of each language and maybe they can better internalize even the most challenging rules and structures. For example, exercises about the correct translation of the Italian negative item *nessun** into German, or exercises that focus on Negative Concord can be useful to reduce errors influence by Italian patterns.

While this research offers valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. Since it is focused on a single high school, the findings may not fully apply to learner of different ages or backgrounds. Future research might extend this investigation to learners at varying proficiency levels or even track learners' progress over time to observe any improvement or changes in error patterns and syntactic transfer

effects. Expanding the scope of research beyond negation to other complex syntactic features in German could also provide a more complete picture of how Italian learners face the different challenges.

In conclusion, this thesis highlights key syntactic issues faced by native Italian speakers when learning German negation and suggests errors-patterns, which often arise from reliance on familiar Italian structures. By identifying these patterns and examining their causes, this study aims to contribute to target teaching strategies that can help students to improve their knowledge regarding German syntax. The insights presented underscore the importance of addressing language-specific syntactic rules and could contribute to more effective, tailored language teaching approaches that enhance learners' fluency and accuracy in German.

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Appendix

In this section, all the sentences that were used in Experiment 1 and Experiment 2 are provided. Sentences are classified according to the conditions, simple and complex object, animate (ANIM.) or inanimate (INANIM.) complex object for Experiment 1 and direct or indirect object for Experiment 2. Moreover, here are attached also the sentences that were used as fillers, with the conditions they respected (imperative, interrogative, Subject-Verb-Object and copula). Every Italian sentence is introduced with its translation into German.

Experiment 1

CONDITION	SENTENCE	Target (DE)
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho visto niente	Ich habe nichts gesehen.
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho visto nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gesehen.
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho visto nessun film	Ich habe keinen Film gesehen.
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho visto nessuno studente	Ich habe keine Schüler gesehen.
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho toccato niente	Ich habe nichts berührt
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho toccato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden berührt
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho toccato nessun bicchiere	Ich habe kein Glas berührt
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho toccato nessun poliziotto	Ich habe keinen Polizisten berührt
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho trovato niente	Ich habe nichts gefunden
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho trovato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gefunden

COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho trovato nessun libro	Ich habe kein Buch gefunden
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho trovato nessun professore	Ich habe keinen Lehrer gefunden
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho amato niente	Ich habe nichts geliebt
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho amato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden geliebt
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho amato nessuna canzone	Ich habe kein Lied geliebt
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho amato nessun ragazzo	Ich habe keinen Jungen geliebt
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho sentito niente	Ich habe nichts gehört
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho sentito nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gehört
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho sentito nessun rumore	Ich habe kein Geräusch gehört
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho sentito nessun pianista	Ich habe keinen Klavierspieler gehört
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho mangiato niente	Ich habe nichts gegessen
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho mangiato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gegessen
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho mangiato nessuna mela	Ich habe keinen Apfel gegessen
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho mangiato nessun bambino	Ich habe kein Kind gegessen
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho perso niente	Ich habe nichts verloren
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho perso nessuno	Ich habe niemanden verloren
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho perso nessuna scarpa	Ich habe keinen Schuh verloren

COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho perso nessuna sorella	Ich habe keine Schwester verloren
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho cercato niente	Ich habe nichts gesucht
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho cercato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gesucht
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho cercato nessun ristorante	Ich habe kein Restaurant gesucht
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho cercato nessun impiegato	Ich habe keinen Angestellten gesucht
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho odiato niente	Ich habe nichts gehasst
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho odiato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gehasst
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho odiato nessun colore	Ich habe keine Farbe gehasst
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho odiato nessuno straniero	Ich habe keinen Ausländer gehasst
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho mostrato niente	Ich habe nichts gezeigt
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho mostrato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gezeigt
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho mostrato nessun interesse	Ich habe kein Interesse gezeigt
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho mostrato nessun vicino	Ich habe keine Nachbarn gezeigt
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho portato niente con me	Ich habe nichts mitgebracht
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho portato nessuno con me	Ich habe niemanden mitgebracht
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho portato nessun gioco con me	Ich habe kein Spiel mitgebracht

COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho portato nessun fidanzato con me	Ich habe keinen Freund mitgebracht
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho festeggiato niente	Ich habe nichts gefeiert
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho festeggiato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden gefeiert
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho festeggiato nessun compleanno	Ich habe keinen Geburtstag gefeiert
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho festeggiato nessun vincitore	Ich habe keinen Gewinner gefeiert
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho capito niente	Ich habe nichts verstanden
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho capito nessuno	Ich habe niemanden verstanden
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho capito nessuna religione	Ich habe keine Religion verstanden
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho capito nessun uomo	Ich habe keinen Mann verstanden
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho dimenticato niente	Ich habe nichst vergessen
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho dimenticato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden vergessen
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho dimenticato nessuna promessa	Ich habe kein Versprechen vergessen
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho dimenticato nessun parente	Ich habe keine Verwandten vergessen
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho mandato niente	Ich habe nichts geschickt
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho mandato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden geschickt
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho mandato nessuna lettera	Ich habe keinen Brief geschickt

COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho mandato nessun avvocato	Ich habe keinen Anwalt geschickt
SIMPLE + INANIM.	Non ho visitato niente	Ich habe nichts besucht
SIMPLE + ANIM.	Non ho visitato nessuno	Ich habe niemanden besucht
COMPLEX + INANIM.	Non ho visitato nessuna città	Ich habe keine Stadt besucht
COMPLEX + ANIM.	Non ho visitato nessun malato	Ich habe keinen Kranken besucht

Fillers

CONDITION	# 1 Sentence	# 1 Target (DE)
Imperative	Mangia il pane!	Iss das Brot!
Interrogative	Hai amato Hans?	Hast du Hans geliebt?
SVO	Sofia conosce Viktor	Sofia kennt Viktor
Copula	Mio papà è un architetto	Mein Vater ist Architekt
Imperative	Prendi i soldi!	Nimm das Geld!
Interrogative	Hai mangiato un Bratwurst?	Hast du eine Bratwurst gegessen?
SVO	Mia mamma conosce la mia amica	Meine Mutter kennt meine Freundin
Copula	Mia sorella è una giornalista	Mein Schwester ist Journalistin
Imperative	Bevi il latte!	Trink die Milch!
Interrogative	Conosci il professore?	Kennst du den Lehrer?
SVO	Judith ama Jakob	Judith liebt Jakob
Copula	Laura è una studentessa	Laura ist eine Studentin
Imperative	Leggi il libro!	Lies das Buch!

Interrogative	Hai comprato una macchina?	Hast du ein Auto gekauft?
SVO	Ho bevuto una birra	Ich habe ein Bier getrunken
Copula	Ugo è un dottore	Ugo ist Arzt

Experiment 2

CONDITION	SENTENCE	Target (DE)
DIRECT	Non ho visto nessun cameriere	Ich habe keinen Kellner gesehen
INDIRECT	Non l'ho dato a nessun cameriere	Ich habe es keinem Kellner gegeben
DIRECT	Non ho chiamato nessun amico	Ich habe keine Freunde angerufen
INDIRECT	Non l'ho regalato a nessun amico	Ich habe es keinem Freund geschenkt
DIRECT	Non ho trovato nessun genitore	Ich habe keine Eltern gefunden
INDIRECT	Non l'ho scritto a nessun genitore	Ich habe keinen Eltern geschrieben
DIRECT	Non ho ascoltato nessuna madre	Ich habe keine Mutter gehört
INDIRECT	Non l'ho venduto a nessuna madre	Ich habe es keiner Mutter verkauft
DIRECT	Non ho informato nessun giornalista	Ich habe keinen Journalisten informiert
INDIRECT	Non l'ho raccontato a nessun giornalista	Ich habe es keinem Journalisten erzählt
DIRECT	Non ho trovato nessun venditore	Ich habe keinen Verkäufer gefunden
INDIRECT	Non l'ho spedito a nessun venditore	Ich habe es keinem Verkäufer geschickt
DIRECT	Non ho incontrato nessun medico	Ich habe keinen Arzt getroffen

INDIRECT	Non l'ho mostrato a nessun medico	Ich habe es keinem Arzt gezeigt
DIRECT	Non ho abbracciato nessuna donna	Ich habe keine Frau umarmt
INDIRECT	Non l'ho spiegato a nessuna donna	Ich habe es keiner Frau erklärt
DIRECT	Non ho assunto nessuna insegnante	Ich habe keine Lehrerin angestellt
INDIRECT	Non l'ho offerto a nessuna insegnante	Ich habe es keiner Lehrerin angeboten
DIRECT	Non ho aperto nessuna società	Ich habe kein Unternehmen eröffnet
INDIRECT	Non l'ho lasciato a nessuna società	Ich habe es keinem Unternehmen gelassen
DIRECT	Non ho perso nessun cuoco	Ich habe keinen Koch verloren
INDIRECT	Non l'ho promesso a nessun cuoco	Ich habe es keinem Koch versprochen
DIRECT	Non ho consultato nessun avvocato	Ich habe keinen Rechtsanwalt konsultiert
INDIRECT	Non l'ho prestato a nessun avvocato	Ich habe es keinem Rechtsanwalt geliehen

Fillers

CONDITION	# 1 Sentence	# 1 Target (DE)
Imperative	Ascolta la canzone!	Hör das Lied!
Interrogative	Hai visitato Berlino?	Hast du Berlin besucht?
SVO	Laura parla il tedesco	Laura spricht Deutch
Imperative	Guarda il film!	Schau den Film!
Interrogative	Hai trovato casa?	Hast du ein Haus gefunden?

SVO	Mio zio ama il suo cane	Mein Onkel liebt seinen Hund
Imperative	Dimentica tutto!	Vergiss alles!
Interrogative	Hai chiamato tua madre?	Hast du deine Mutter angerufen?
SVO	Ho visto il film	Ich habe den Film gesehen
Imperative	Manda la mail!	Schick die E-Mail!
Interrogative	Hai festeggiato il tuo compleanno?	Hast du deinen Geburstag gefeiert?
SVO	Marco ha mangiato tutto	Marco hat alles gegessen