SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A MULTILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT: DISPLACED UKRAINIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING GERMAN IN SWITZERLAND

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Abstract. Drawing on international pedagogical discourse on multilingual learning contexts, extensive research on second language acquisition and learning, and our previous research on Ukrainian refugee perspectives on primary school in German-speaking Switzerland, the author examines experiences of learning German as a second language by displaced Ukrainian children in Swiss primary schools. The longitudinal study allowed for the exploration of dynamics of German language acquisition by displaced children in conditions of full immersion in the target language environment and the identification of factors influencing their second language learning and performance. The exploratory study was carried out within the framework of a qualitative methodology with data collection through semi-structured interviews, narrative inquiry, and participant observations as research tools. Data analysis revealed that the effects of the second language learning environment are the strongest compared to other learner-external factors and vary within the research period. Placed in regular Swiss classes to ensure their non-segregated mainstream education in the host country, displaced children are exposed to two languages at school – Standard German (the official language of school) and the Swiss dialect, which is spoken by the local Swiss population in the German-speaking part of Switzerland and, correspondingly, by the local school community. Although perceived in the early stages of inclusion as a major hindrance to meaningful learning and communication with peers, over time, the diglossic school setting has proven to be a path to displaced learners' sociolinguistic competence and integration in the local school. Also, the learning of German by displaced children in conditions of full immersion is greatly influenced by the availability of structured forms of learning, exposure to interactional activities with native speakers in informal settings, and the target language socialization contexts.

Keywords: German as a second language, second language learning environment, diglossic school, immersive learning, displaced Ukrainian children.

1. INTRODUCTION

What began as an exploratory study of displaced Ukrainian children's perspectives on primary school in Switzerland and the factors influencing their integration into the educational setting of their host country school evolved into a longitudinal observation of the dynamics of children's learning of German as a second language in conditions of full immersion in the target language environment[1]. The research covered in this paper was guided by three questions: 1) What factors influence the learning of

German as a second language by displaced Ukrainian children in a Swiss primary school? 2) What effects does immersive learning have on German language development in displaced primary school children? and 3) How does a diglossic learning context impact second language development in displaced children?

The study was conducted in German-speaking Switzerland where *Swiss German*[2] (*Schweizerdeutsch*) is spoken along with *Swiss Standard German*, the variety of Standard German used in Switzerland. Although Swiss German is the native language in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, Swiss students are taught Swiss Standard German at school from the age of six. Swiss German is the everyday spoken language for the majority of the local population, including the school population (both students and teachers) of all local cantonal primary schools in the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland. The participants of our research project were observed in the situation of *'German-Swiss diglossia'*[3] at school (Werlen, 2001; Hauser & Schiesser, 2024), since the spoken language in local Swiss schools is mainly Swiss German, whereas the written language and the official language of instruction is the Swiss variety of Standard German[4].

The studied group of displaced learners is characterized by the following set of features: 1) rare cases of previous experience of learning German as a foreign language among displaced children; those who studied German prior to displacement studied *Standard High German (Standard German or High German)*[5] in a Ukrainian school as part of the primary school curriculum; 2) frequent cases of learning English as a foreign language prior to displacement, which enabled displaced learners to use English as a lingua franca at the initial stage of their inclusion in Swiss primary schools; 3) the factor of forced displacement of Ukrainian learners resulting in a high degree of uncertainty about their future status, life prospects, and duration of placement in the host country, and hence, low motivation for second language learning in the early stages of inclusion in Swiss schools.

Since this paper focuses on the *context* of second language learning as one of the most significant learner-external factors, we will discuss 1) the effects of exposure of displaced learners to the two school languages as the main factor determining the outcomes of second language (henceforth L2) learning in the initial stages of their inclusion in Swiss primary school; 2) the dynamics of L2 perception by displaced learners in the context of German-Swiss diglossia encountered in and outside school; 3) the effects of full immersion in the target language environment that provided learners with multiple opportunities for developing knowledge of L2 through both instructed classroom learning and uninstructed learning or learning 'in the wild'; 4) the effects of support structures for second language learning, and 5) the role of the diglossic learning environment in developing learners' sociolinguistic competence.

The following two observations are of direct relevance to the object of this study. First, full and long-term immersion in the target language environment enabled displaced learners to access two independent means of developing L2 knowledge: through what Krashen (1982) called *acquisition* and through *learning* (more on *the acquisition-learning hypothesis* by Krashen in Gass, 2020). The data collected within our research offer empirical evidence of both the learners' subconscious acquisition of German through picking up the language spoken by their Swiss peers outside the classroom setting and their conscious and meaningful learning of the target language rules via the regular exposure to structured learning in the classroom. In our study we use both terms – acquisition and learning – in accordance with their definitions given by Krashen (1982).

Second, the acquisition and learning of German by displaced children in conditions of full immersion in

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[2] *Swiss German* is any of the Alemannic dialects spoken in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

[3] *Diglossia* is where two dialects or languages are used by a single language community.

[4] In the given research, it is this variety of German (Swiss Standard German) that is referred to by the author as German and L2 (German as a second language).

[5] *Standardhochdeutsch* or *Hochdeutsch* (Germ.).

the target language environment imply that a second language is learned "when it is spoken in the surrounding social environment" and second language learners "need to participate in diverse speech communities and communicative contexts immediately, which reflect considerable linguistic variation" (Abrams, 2020, p.3). Since much of what we will discuss in this paper relates to L2 learners' ability to function effectively in the target language, we will use both terms – L2 learners and L2 users – to refer to the participants of our study.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on second language acquisition and learning. Contemporary research on second language acquisition and learning is approached from varied perspectives (Atkinson, 2011, 2013; Lantolf & Thorn, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2009; McKinney & Norton, 2008; Kasper, 2006; etc.). In our study, we rely on the *sociocultural theory* of second language acquisition (Lantolf, 2011; Lantolf & Thorn, 2006; Lantolf, Thorn, & Poehner, 2020; Aimin, 2013; Hall & Walsh, 2002) and the *language socialization approach* (Duff & Talmy, 2011; Duff & Hornberger, 2008; Ellis, 2009). The research also aligns with the sociocognitive and ecological accounts of learning afforded by the sociocognitive theory (Atkinson, 2011, 2013).

Sociocultural theory considers learning to be prompted by the social environment as a result of goal-directed intellectual and practical activities (Hall & Walsh, 2002), and language is viewed as one of the semiotic tools whose primary role is to shape and reflect cultural practices, which are rooted in sociocultural and historical contexts (Muto, 2011, as cited in Abrams, 2020, p.33). Sociocultural theory views L2 learning as a process of increasing autonomy, first directed by another, perhaps an expert, then by the self (di Donato, 1994, as cited in Abrams, 2020) and as that which requires social interaction, ideally with native speakers (Aimin, 2013). A sociocultural approach "considers language, and by extension second language acquisition, as contextually situated; it is concerned with situated language as it relates to internal processes, with mediation being the key concept in the process of learning" (Gass et al., 2020, p.334). Within the sociocultural framework, language learning relies on the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), i.e., "the activity in which instruction (socialization at home and formal teaching at school) and development are interrelated" (Lantolf, 2011, p.29) and is achieved through collaborative mediation.

The latter is fully acknowledged by the *language socialization approach* that frames the development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence through interaction with others who are more knowledgeable or proficient (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Language socialization research "looks at interactional or sociolinguistic *routines* that become part of language learners' and users' communicative repertoires" and "conceives of language as one of a multitude of in-flux, contested, and ever-changing *social practices* that in part constitute particular dynamic communities of practice" (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p.96). L2 socialization shares "an ecological perspective of learning-in-context (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008), and a concomitant analysis of learning through praxis – that is, through observation, participation, and performance – in the everyday activities of communities of language users (Bourdieu, 1991)" (as cited in Duff & Talmy, 2011, p.96).

Sociocognitive theory also recognizes the integrative function of cognition, social relationships, and broader social context (Atkinson, 2011, 2013). Learning is viewed as both cognitive and social in nature (Kasper, 2006; Toth & Davin, 2016). Although sociocognitive approaches to learning give cognition a central place, they reconceptualize it as fundamentally continuous with the world (Atkinson, 2011, p.149). Drawing on this assertion, Atkinson formulates five implications for learning: 1) learning becomes dynamic adaptivity to – or alignment with – the environment; 2) if cognition extends into the world, so must learning; 3) learning primarily involves the *thickening* of mind – world relations rather than their progressive attenuation; 4) learning enables action in, more than (abstract) knowledge of – the world; and 5) we learn *through* environmental action (ibid.).

At the same time, researchers acknowledge that "exposure to a language alone is not enough" (McManus, 2022, p.3), and "certain cognitive mechanisms used by humans to learn and use language are needed to support the learning of a language" (ibid.). These cognitive mechanisms include rich memory storage, analogy, categorization, and cross-modal association (ibid., p.4).

The role of cognitive mechanisms as well as of metalinguistic explanation is particularly important in the appropriation of the language input by L2 learners with no prior knowledge of the target language placed in conditions of full immersion. In our earlier paper (Abramicheva, 2024), we addressed crosslinguistic influence in displaced children's second language learning (including, *inter alia*, the effects of prior language(s) learning experience on L2 learning, the factor of learners' understanding of the similarities and differences between their L1 and L2, the L1 instruction factor in addressing learning difficulties and facilitating L2 meaningful learning, etc.). In the present study, the issue of the type, size, and effects of the input[6] encountered by immersive learners in the host country educational setting will be discussed, along with the role of L2 explicit instruction and metalinguistic explanation to support nonlinguistic content learning. On account of this, we also refer to some research findings relating to instructional effects in L2 learning.

According to McManus (2022), "the effectiveness of explicit information for improving L2 abilities appears related to the complexity of the target feature as well as the experience of the learner" (McManus, 2022, p. 86). Researchers suggest that explicit information about language can play an important role in L2 development (Lantolf & Zhang, 2017), "especially when accompanied with opportunities for meaningful language use" (DeKeyser, 2017, as cited in McManus, 2022), or when the linguistic input/linguistic target features the learners are exposed to are functionally complex, e.g., due to multiple form-meaning mappings (McManus, 2022, p. 87). The main benefit of explicit instruction is seen in 'learning with awareness' (McManus, 2022), since it "seeks to improve L2 performance with instructional techniques designed to promote awareness and conscious noticing of/attention to the target feature" (ibid., p.87) and draws learners' attention to the source of the learning difficulty (ibid., p. 89) in order to reduce the possible negative effects of crosslinguistic influence.

When it comes to situations where the L2 *input* the learners receive greatly exceeds their capacities for an *intake*, which we, in fact, discern in the target group of displaced children placed in the setting of fully immersive learning, exposure alone is not sufficient for successful learning, and sustained mediation and effective support structures are critical for L2 development.

Research on learning in multilingual contexts. The approaches that acknowledge the beneficial role of metalinguistic explanation in L2 development are consistent with the idea of continuity of language learning, especially in terms of L2 development in multilingual contexts. Continuity of language learning, according to Gogolin et al. (2011), encompasses, *inter alia*, plurilingual continuity[7] of language learning that implies that students' plurilingual skills and competences are taken into account and used for the extension and consolidation of their linguistic repertoire. Herzog-Punzenberger et al. in their *Report on multilingual education in the light of diversity* (2017), emphasize the positive effect of bilingual education on metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness largely attributed to explicit language instruction (Herzog-Punzenberger, 2017, p. 24). Relying on the research findings (Kim et al., 2015; Cummins, 1991, 2013; Bialystok, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2014, & others), the authors of the *Report* highlight positive transfer of knowledge and skills across languages enhanced by explicitly bridging the languages through bilingual education and provide vast evidence of the positive effect of bilingual education, in contrast to monolingual schooling, on L2 development, academic engagement and achievement in L2 (ibid.).

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[6] According to Corder (1967), *input* refers to what is available to the learner, the language one hears, whereas *intake* refers to what is actually internalized by the learner.

[7] Two other dimensions of continuity of language learning, discussed by Gogolin et al. (2011), are biographical continuity and plurilingual continuity.

By approaching the educational context of Swiss schools as *a multilingual learning environment*, we refer to the new learning paradigm that displaced Ukrainian children did not encounter before their displacement. A monolingual educational paradigm of their home country school implied easily accessible education in terms of both language acquisition and meaningful learning of nonlinguistic content. Children's exposure to a multilingual learning environment caused by their displacement implies 1) a drastically altered perception of the role of language(s) as an instrument for meaningful learning by displaced children and 2) exposure to multiple new languages the displaced learners are encountering in their host country, including those used by the Swiss diglossic school and diglossic population of German-speaking Switzerland, other languages taught/learned at Swiss school as foreign languages, the learners' home languages, and other languages spoken by heterogeneous (school) population that might be incidentally encountered by displaced children in a linguistically diverse host country.

Diglossia in Swiss schools. The language situation resulting from the coexistence of Swiss German and Swiss Standard German in German-speaking Switzerland remains a subject of academic and institutional discussion in Switzerland. Whether Switzerland is an instance of *diglossia* or *bilingualism*, or both, and how the language situation is perceived by the Swiss academic community and community of users of both languages (indigenous Swiss population) are addressed by linguistic research (Haas, 2004; Studler, 2017; Hägi & Scharloth, 2005). Although we adhere to the traditional concept of diglossia in Switzerland, introduced by Ferguson (1959), and rely on the findings of sociolinguistic research concerning the situation of Swiss-German diglossia in Swiss schools (Werlen, 2001; Hauser & Schiesser, 2024; Sieber & Sitta, 1986), in this paper, we use both terms to refer to the L2 learning context, acknowledging theoretical and practical functionality and implications of both terms. Still, a distinction is generally made between *diglossic* school population and *bilingual* instruction. Although research in the field of language pedagogy in German-speaking Switzerland considers *Swiss Standard German* and *Swiss German* as two varieties of the same language, in our paper, we refer to them as L2 and L3 correspondingly, reflecting the displaced learners' perception of the two languages encountered in Swiss diglossic schools and in the wider environment of their municipality, canton, and German-speaking Switzerland.

By exploring L2 acquisition and learning by displaced Ukrainian children in the Swiss school setting, we can add to the evidence on positive and negative effects of multiple contextual and learner factors on the development of both the 'basic interpersonal communication skills'(BICS) and 'cognitive academic language proficiency' (CALP)[8].

3. METHODOLOGY

Participants. The research was carried out across the Canton of Zug, where samples of 24 displaced Ukrainian parents and 26 children of primary school age[9] were obtained for the initial study (carried out in the fall-winter of 2022) by sending an information letter to municipal primary schools for distribution among parents as well as through parents' social networks. In determining the sample of prospective respondents for the second-year study (conducted a year later, in the fall-winter of 2023), we relied on the database of the fall-winter 2022 research and were guided by the necessity to ensure the variability of the sample for a longitudinal study and, at the same time, ensure that the sample included those children who were in regular Swiss classes at the time of both studies. The sample of 10 displaced Ukrainian primary school students drawn for the fall-winter 2023 study was varied in age (9 to 13, at the time of the second interviews); gender (5 girls and 5 boys); type of school attended in Ukraine (regular

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[8] These terms for two different types of language development were introduced by Cummins (1979).

[9] In Ukraine, primary school lasts 4 years and comprises grades 1 to 4 (ca. age 6-9), whereas in the Canton of Zug (this requires clarification, since there is no uniform correspondence between age and grade of primary school students across the different Swiss Cantons), primary school (*Primarschule*) lasts 6 years and comprises grades 1 to 6 (ca. age 6-11/12).

comprehensive, specializing in languages); type of the German language instruction in reception/integration class upon the displacement to Switzerland (bilingual, monolingual German, combined); German language competence prior to displacement (none to 4 years of learning German as a foreign language at school); English language competence prior to displacement (1 to 6 years of learning English as a foreign language at school); post-displacement involvement in extracurricular activities; availability of additional German training (in a DaZ class, in a Ukrainian school via online instruction, in individual tutorials with a bilingual teacher); parents' social and educational background; parents' expectations about children's education; extent of parents' involvement in the education process; parents' foreign language(s) proficiency as of the date of displacement; parents' experience of learning German upon displacement; and living arrangements in the host country (collectively shared accommodation, living separately, or staying with host families).

All the participants had started primary school in Ukraine where they had been learning at least one foreign language for a minimum 1 and maximum 6 years prior to displacement and transition to the Swiss education system. Only two students of the sample had been learning German as a foreign language, while the other eight had been learning English, in a Ukrainian primary school. This means that most of the participants started to learn German only upon their placement in a Swiss school.

At the time of the fall-winter 2023 study, all participants were placed in regular/mainstream Swiss classes in cantonal schools across the Canton of Zug, where they were assigned one Ukrainian student per class to ensure the complete immersion of the student in the environment of the target language and to exclude possible interference from their native language.

Methods. Our exploratory research was carried out within the framework of a qualitative methodology (Cohen et al., 2007; Gass et al., 2020). The database of our research integrates data collected across two research years. The first-year research data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with parents, narrative interviews with children, and classroom observations conducted in the fall-winter of 2022. By the time of the first round of data collection, the participants had spent 4 to 10 months in the host country. Some of the children had already been transferred to regular Swiss classes, while some were still in the process of transition from integrated to regular classes. (The detailed description of the first-year study design is in Abramicheva, 2023).

To address the objectives of the second-year research, several sub-studies were conducted: semi-structured interviews with primary school children, a parent survey (conducted prior to interviews with children), and participant observations in the classroom setting. In their interviews, participants were encouraged to share their experiences of learning and using the German language in and outside of school. The data obtained from the children's interviews enabled us to gain information about their perspectives on L2 learning and use after almost two years of study in a Swiss school, identify factors affecting learners' progress in L2, and dynamics of their motivation for L2 learning. The participants were asked a number of questions, such as: "Is it difficult for you to study in a Swiss school?", "Which of the school subjects is the most difficult for you?", "What is the most difficult thing about learning German?", "Which activity is the easiest/most difficult for you to do in German: reading, writing, listening, or speaking, and why?", "Which language is more important for studying in a Swiss school: German or Swiss?", "Which language is more important for communication with your classmates: German or Swiss?", "What can you do in German?", "Where else besides school do you use German?", "Do you communicate with your Swiss friends only at school or after school too?", "What language do you speak with your Swiss friends?", "What do you usually talk about with your Swiss classmates/friends?", "Do you understand Swiss?", "What helps you in learning the German language?", "If you do not understand the teacher's instruction, what do you do?", "How can you assess your progress in German?", etc. Classroom observations of children were carried out over three days each, at intervals of one to three weeks, which enabled the researcher to observe the children in different lessons, participating in different activities, performing different tasks in L2, and interacting with both teachers and peers. Peer interactions observed at school included both interactions in a formal classroom

setting (desk work, work in cooperative tandems, varied group activities including group tasks, playing games, class councils, etc.) and informal interactions during breaks. The post-observation inquiry was conducted with each participant to obtain additional information about their roles and contributions in L2 activities encountered in the classroom and L2/L3 interactions during breaks. A follow-up exchange with the classroom teacher was also added to navigate the researcher's observation activities and obtain the teacher's feedback on the displaced student's performance and progress in second language learning. The latter was necessary to provide the objective evaluation of the students' learning outcomes in L2 compared to their L2 performance a year earlier and validate the prior-to-observation interview data. Application of several data collection methods enabled us to measure both linguistic and nonlinguistic information related to second language acquisition by the target group. Additionally, the ethnographic component of our research greatly enriched the data collected and the findings made: fieldnotes generated from classroom observations of the participants (Duff & Talmy, 2011) provided fair description of classroom and peer interactions as dynamic social settings in which language is learned and used.

Given that the first and second rounds of interviews with children were conducted at a one-year interval, longitudinally collected data enabled us to monitor 1) dynamics of students' perception of the languages learned/encountered in a Swiss school, 2) changes in their self-assessment of the achievements they were making in the second language and their self-concept of language learning abilities, and 3) dynamics of their motivation for learning German during the first two years of their inclusion in Swiss primary schools.

Informed parental consent to interview children was obtained via letters of consent prior to all interviews. All observations of children in the classroom/school were carried out with the joint consent of school administration and teachers involved in classroom teaching. Children were interviewed in the presence of one or both parents and with their full consent. All participants were anonymized in the further data analysis and published materials.

The interviews were conducted in the participants' native language (Ukrainian), transcribed verbatim including nonlinguistic details of relevance to the utterances, and then translated by the author into English. All German or Swiss inclusions in the children's responses have been preserved in their original form.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Factors affecting L2 learning

Among the factors affecting SL acquisition and learning by displaced Ukrainian primary school children, we could identify learner-internal and learner-external factors. The learner-internal factors refer to age, language aptitude, child's language repertoire (prior to their placement in Swiss school), metalinguistic awareness & prior knowledge of the languages learned, learning strategies employed by individual learners, and motivation. A very strong internal factor seriously affecting learners' perspective on learning the new school language (as well as willingness to accept the new school culture) upon their displacement was that of psychological trauma caused by the war and forced displacement. High emotional stress and uncertainty about the duration of their placement in the host country school accounted for the learners' mixed, and sometimes apparently negative, emotional reactions to the new language and low motivation for learning it in the early stages of inclusion in Swiss school (Abramicheva, 2023).

The learner-external factors include L2 learning environment (diglossic school, full immersion scheme), the type of school setting (a regular Swiss class, monolingual integration class, L2 support class), the type of instruction and linguistic input received at school, language of instruction and teacher feedback (more on these in: Abramicheva, 2024), peer interactions and friendships for learning, access to extramural activities and out-of-school social interactions, and parental involvement.

The L2 learning environment considered by the author in this paper consists of 1) the diglossic

context of the German-speaking canton of placement in Switzerland, which provides displaced learners with access to authentic resources of both languages spoken by the local population and the local school community; 2) the L2 learning setting in which the learner is placed and the type of L2 instruction available; and 3) learners' individual post-displacement pathways to a regular Swiss school/classroom (time spent in reception / integration classes, reception class design and education scheme (Abramicheva, 2023), type of L2 support provided, access to social interactions beyond those at school, etc.

The unexpected transition of the young Ukrainian learners to the local schools of German-speaking Switzerland entailed their full immersion in the new linguistic landscape with the two languages – Swiss German and Swiss Standard German – spoken everywhere including all local schools[10] and the learners' exposure to the two nonnative (henceforth NN) languages of both instruction and communication at school instead of one (Standard German was the language most likely expected to be the language of school by many displaced families). The fact was much opposed by the young learners, since it implied much harder effort on their part to get access to meaningful learning and follow the mainstream curriculum determined for Swiss primary school. Moreover, in terms of language learning, the learners' transition to the new educational system meant an abrupt shift from foreign language learning practices in 'at-home' foreign language classrooms to full immersion in the target language environment that implied being not only learners of the language but its immediate users.
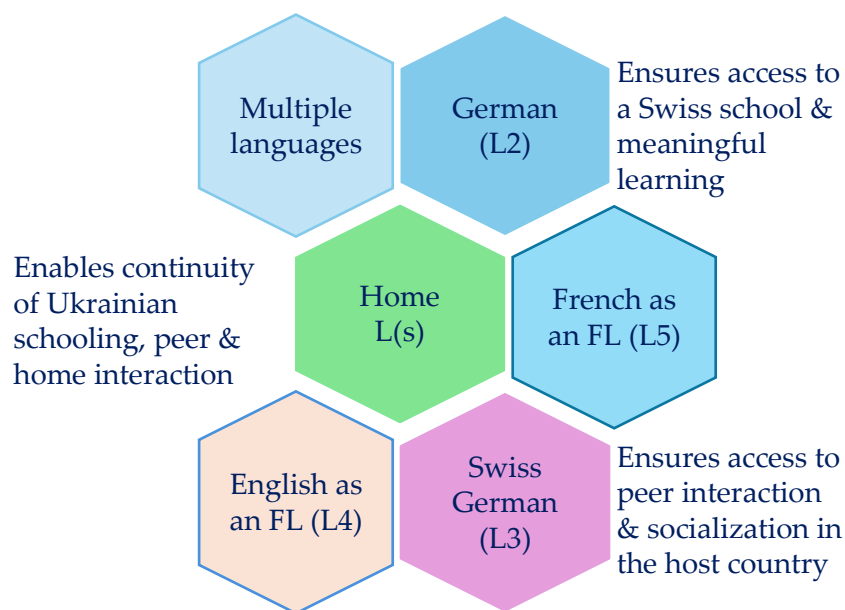

Fig.1. Displaced Ukrainian learners' exposure to multiple languages upon displacement
Source: author's development

Another noteworthy feature of language learning context encountered by displaced students in Swiss primary schools is their early exposure to multiple languages learned/taught at primary school (Fig.1). Along with German (L2) that ensures access to Swiss primary education in German-speaking Switzerland and the Swiss dialect (henceforth L3), which is the main language of peer communication in Swiss schools, displaced learners encounter two more languages – English and French – which the Swiss children begin to learn as foreign languages (henceforth FL) at primary school[11]. Displaced Ukrainian

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[10] Although international schools are another educational option in German-speaking Switzerland, they are not considered in this study, as they are not accessible to refugees under social assistance & are fee-based for all students. These schools are also bilingual, but with instruction in German and English.

[11] Because of its multilingual context with four official languages, foreign language learning has a longstanding tradition in Switzerland. In the early 2000s, a new national strategy prescribed the introduction of two foreign languages at primary school,

learners who would not experience such intense multilingual input at primary school in their home country are exposed, depending on their age, to three or four NN languages in a Swiss primary school.

A distinct shift towards language(s) learning and the focus on language as a prerequisite and tool for further acquisition of knowledge at school changed the perception of school in many students with a longer schooling experience in their home country. Realizing over time the differences between the two educational systems, older children recognized (not without the help of parents and teachers, and with varying degrees of acceptance of the fact) that the transition to a new school required different time management and more consciously invested efforts, the development of new competences and new learning strategies. Most children had a very hard time accepting the new reality, hence the continued stress and reluctance to attend school where they could neither learn nor communicate without knowledge of the target language (as reported by many parents in their first interviews). Displaced children took different paths to accept the host country school as a new reality and to change their perception of the language of schooling, as well as to understand how to adapt to a new system of tasks, requirements and approaches to language learning. In what follows, we will consider some of the factors that have considerably changed the attitude towards second language learning in many displaced children.

4.2. L2 learning context

Two school languages instead of one: a hindrance or an asset? At the initial stage of integration in the Swiss school, many displaced children reported they liked neither the school nor L2 learning because they did not understand the language of school, were excluded from context-related interactions and had great difficulties in communication with Swiss peers, which are all related to poor or absent L2 competence, both linguistic and communicative (Abramicheva, 2023).

The learners' exposure to the two languages of instruction in Swiss primary schools had a significant impact on their perception of both languages, as well as on access to schooling. The integrated data from the two studies (2022 & 2023) reveal that bilingual school input received at the initial stage of L2 learning had a number of serious effects on learners: it overstrained learners' cognitive capacities; impeded differentiation between the two languages (Standard German & Swiss German) and hence, slowed down effective learning of L2; interfered with meaningful learning and following the mainstream primary school curriculum; formed learners' low self-concept of L2 learning abilities, which reduced their motivation for both the learning of L2 and peer interaction.

On the one hand, the more language learning experience learners have, the more learner-based advantages they enjoy for learning an additional language, and the easier it is for them to achieve a higher language proficiency in that language. On the other hand, learning L2 and L3 simultaneously might lead to lower gains and more variability/destabilization in L2 proficiency than when learning only the L2 (Huang et al., 2022). Based on the argument of competing resources and the connectedness between the developing subsystems (de Bot & Larsen-Freeman, 2011), researchers of second language acquisition admit that learning L3 and L2 simultaneously may result in interactions between L2 and L3 systems or subsystems and hinder L2 learning (Huang et al., 2022).

The language learning context encountered by displaced Ukrainian learners in Swiss schools is complicated by the fact that none of the languages of instruction used in Swiss schools were learned by the children (in the vast majority of cases) prior to their displacement and none of them are genetically related to their native language(s)[12]. Moreover, when exposed to two new languages simultaneously,

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one at age 9, the second at age 11. At least one of them had to be a national language, the other could be English (Udry & Berthele, 2021; EDK, 2004; for the history of foreign language teaching in Switzerland see Giudici & Grizelj, 2016).

[12] Since Ukrainian-Russian diglossia characterizes many regions of Ukraine, the majority of its population are diglossic. The situation is similar to German-Swiss diglossia in German-speaking Switzerland, where every German-speaking Swiss is diglossic.

children receive explicit instruction in only one of them.

As the official language of school instruction, German is taught/learned in both DaZ (*Deutsch als Zweitsprache*)[13] and regular Swiss classes, whereas Swiss German, being the *de facto* second language of instruction and the language of communication in Swiss schools, is not taught in the classroom. Thus, hearing Swiss German everywhere in and outside school, displaced learners can only acquire it through implicit and uninstructed learning that occurs through interactions with peers (or, initially, through observation of Swiss peers/teachers interacting), interactions with host families, neighbors, sports coaches, or other Swiss-speaking locals.

The important role of explicit instruction and explicit knowledge in L2 development has been widely discussed by researchers of second language acquisition (McManus, 2022; DeKeyser, 2017; Lantolf & Zhang, 2017). However, "the effectiveness of a particular instruction will vary in a range of contexts and conditions because of factors like the complexity of the target feature, the experience the learner brings to the task of learning a new language, as well as what the learning context looks like" (DeKeyser & Botana, 2019 as cited by McManus, 2022, p. 85).

In relation to this study, we can say that the L2 learning context, with its inherent German-Swiss diglossia, reduced the effectiveness of L2 learning and increased the complexity of differentiating target features of L2 against the background of the constant interference of two languages (L2 and L3) in Swiss schools. Receiving L2 instruction in the classroom (ideally, in a highly supportive DaZ class), displaced children are limited in their opportunities for meaningful L2 use in interactions with Swiss peers in school, since a good part of the language input they can hear in school is in Swiss German.

In our previous publications (Abramicheva, 2024), we discussed the critical importance of L2 instruction in DaZ classes that was highly appreciated by displaced learners. This L2 support structure is designed to assist all children whose first language is not German in developing their German skills. In Table 1 we summarize the main aspects of a DaZ class as a support structure and the corresponding characteristics of a regular Swiss class that were reported by the interviewed learners and/or their parents.

It is in the DaZ classes that displaced learners receive explicit metalinguistic instruction for improving L2 development "through conscious noticing of/attention to the target feature" (McManus, 2022, p.87). Although reported by the respondents as very helpful in terms of L2 learning and increased metalinguistic awareness, the DaZ class instruction was reported insufficient by most learners to catch up with the mainstream language curriculum of a Swiss primary school. The effectiveness of explicit instruction provided in DaZ classes was moderated by a range of other contextual and learner factors, diglossic school context and constant L2/L3 interference that accompanied the process of learning being among the most salient learner-external factors.

Tab. 1

Educational structures in L2 learning: DaZ vs. regular Swiss class

Description criteria	DaZ class	Regular Swiss class
Type of linguistic input	Intended for NNSs, remedial and supportive	Intended for NSs, challenging for NNSs
Language of instruction	German	German & Swiss German
Language of communication	German	Swiss German
Learning objectives	▪ Enhance L2 knowledge & skills ▪ Ensure access to meaningful	▪ Content-focused learning in a variety of subjects according to

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[13] German as a second language.

	learning ▪ Facilitate integration into regular Swiss classes	the Swiss primary school curriculum
Class size & structure	▪ Small groups of 3 to 8 international students ▪ All learners are NNSs	▪ Regular classes of ca. 20 students ▪ All learners speak German/Swiss/or both
Teacher role	▪ Teacher feedback is immediate ▪ Learning from errors prevents learning wrong information	▪ The teacher's linguistic feedback is insufficient for NNSs
Learning outcomes	▪ L2 meaningful learning ▪ Students perceive themselves as active learners & are aware of the progress they make ▪ Strengthening learners' motivation for L2 learning & self-efficacy beliefs	▪ Difficulties in coping with the German language curriculum ▪ A slower progress in L2 & losing motivation for L2 learning

Source: author's development

Recognizing the hierarchy and functions of the two languages. Placed in a diglossic school setting, many children for a long time were unable to integrate into the classroom and establish personal communication with Swiss peers. It took them time to differentiate between the two languages and recognize their hierarchy and social functions within the school.

Answering the question *"Which language is more important for studying in a Swiss school: German or Swiss?"*, students were unanimous about the priority of German. The explanations included the following: *"because the teacher speaks it"; "It is the official language, it is the language that people evaluate"; "because teachers are not allowed to teach in Swiss, only in German"; "because everything is taught in German"; "All our tests are in German"; "You won't study for long at school here [in a Swiss school] without German"; " To go to a Sekundar[schule], you need to have high grades in German and math"*, etc.

However, when describing their lessons in a regular Swiss classroom, many respondents say that teachers often switch to Swiss when explaining very complex things, making them more accessible to local students. Whenever the teacher's intervention is needed, it is made in Swiss, the majority learners' native language, which is fully justified by the goal of learning – to make things comprehensible to learners. Therefore, displaced learners who are insufficiently proficient in both the language of instruction (L2) and the language of mediation (L3) often need and seek access to meaningful learning through other available support tools, such as mediation provided in their home language (private tutor, parallel lessons in a Ukrainian school), various translation tools, parental assistance, friendships for learning, etc. For the same reason, learners who, in the opinion of their teachers, no longer need L2 mediation in the DaZ class, would choose to continue to receive L2 support in a DaZ class in the form of explicit instruction. Explicit language instruction cannot be excessive or superfluous in the conditions in which the observed children had to start learning a new language, i.e., in the conditions of unexpected transition to a new educational system and the need to ensure continuity of meaningful learning in a variety of subjects predetermined by the primary school curriculum.

(1) "It was better last year, when I studied in a Ukrainian class [DaZ class with Ukrainian learners], where there were five children and the teacher explained things well, sometimes she said something through a translator and showed us how it would be in Ukrainian. … Now it's a Swiss class, where no one is allowed to use a

translator." (S7:Age11:G6_Dec.2023)[14]

(2) I: What helps you learn German?

S: I don't know …. [hesitating over whether to answer] … *My tutor* [private bilingual teacher] *helps. Yes, we do all our homework together, we try to do it. She explains the grammar rules … and some words.*

I: And if you don't understand something in class, some rule, what then?

S: Yes, it happens. Sometimes I ask the teacher, sometimes the tutor, sometimes first the teacher, and then the tutor. (S10:Age13:G6_Dec.2023)

Teacher switching to Swiss German in the classroom is also associated with an emotional context, e.g., the mood of the teacher, which was also mentioned by some respondents.

(3) I: What is particularly difficult?

S: It is difficult when the teacher speaks in Swiss, she speaks very quickly and then it's incomprehensible. My friends speak slowly, but the teacher is difficult to understand.

I: And when does the teacher speak Swiss?

S: When she is angry … when the boys misbehave and don't listen to her … (S6:Age12:G6_Nov.2023)

Opinions on *which* language is more important for communication in a Swiss school, German or Swiss, fell into three categories. Students in group 1 (the largest in number) believe that it is Swiss, since even knowledge of German does not always mean access to peer communication. For many displaced learners, the Swiss dialect remains an obstacle to communication with local peers.

(4) I: Your classmates know you don't understand Swiss. Do they switch to German when you're around?

S: No, they don't. I understand a little bit, but I can't speak at all. When my classmates talk to one another, they always switch to Swiss. Sometimes some of them translate into German for me what they are talking about and what I need to do. (S7:Age11:G6_Nov.2023)

Group 2 of those interviewed think that both languages are important for communication:

(5) S: My classmates understand everything I say. I speak a mixture. I don't speak pure German. They also speak both languages. (S3:Age:9:G3_Nov.2023)

(6) S: I think, both. … During breaks, the boys speak more Swiss. I'm often with them during breaks, and they speak Swiss.

I: And the girls?

S: They speak German.

I: Do you know why?

S: Maybe because there is one girl from Germany who doesn't know Swiss. (S5:Age11:G5:Dec.2023)

The smallest in number, group 3, reported German to be quite sufficient for classroom / school / peer communication. These answers were given by the students who also reported that to interact with them, their Swiss peers usually switched from Swiss to German.

(7) S: German, because only the Swiss speak Swiss, and children from other countries speak German. And Swiss children say that it's not necessary to know Swiss. (S10:Age13:G6_Dec.2023)

(8) S: German. Everyone speaks German to me. They can speak Swiss, but everyone speaks German at school. … I don't understand Swiss German. I only learned German everywhere. [The student means all reception classes he had been placed in before the transition to a regular Swiss class]. *(S1:Age11:G6_Dec.2023)*

Displaced learners' increased awareness of the hierarchy and functions of the two languages used in school, as well as of the contexts of use of one or the other language by Swiss peers and teachers, contributed to the more accurate perception of these languages by displaced learners, facilitated both the identification of the socio-communicative contexts of use of each of the two languages within the school and the differentiation of the target features (lexical, grammatical, phonological) of the two languages, and shaped the communicative and learning behavior of the displaced children.

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[14] To ensure the confidentiality of personal information, all participants were anonymized for the data analysis and publications. The citation index contains only information about the child's age, primary school grade, and the year when the cited data were obtained. All interview fragments cited in this paper are translated by the author.

4.3.Dynamics of L2/L3 perceptions

Interviews conducted during the second year of our study revealed the dynamics of the displaced students' perception of L2 after almost two years of placement in Swiss schools. Although, at the very beginning of inclusion in the Swiss school, students perceived German as an unfamiliar, incomprehensible and very complex language (*de facto* a mixture of two languages spoken at school), and as an insurmountable obstacle on the way to meaningful learning (Abramicheva, 2023), often referred to in children's earlier narratives as "*their* language", by the end of the second year at Swiss school German has turned for most displaced children into 'the language *they can* speak and communicate in'.

(9) *"I don't know what to do. I don't understand... During a break children speak Swiss, and during classes they speak German. And I can't speak their language". (S8:Age10:G4_Nov. 2022)*

(10) "I communicate, I write. I can do everything. We have a WhatsApp group, and all our girls are there, and we text each other. And I'm in the school chat and chatting there. (S6:Age12:G6_Dec. 2023)

At the beginning of her placement in a regular Swiss class (eight months after displacement), eleven-year-old Sofia[15] did not understand that the German word '*Deutsch*' and the English equivalent '*German*' refer to the same German language she was learning at school. The student differentiated the languages she heard at school based on the dichotomies '*comprehensible – incomprehensible*' and 'learned through *explicit/implicit* instruction' and thus referred to the language taught in DaZ lessons, where she could understand some of the teacher's instruction, as German, while to the language she heard in other lessons (including the regular lessons of German) and in interactions with Swiss peers, which she could not understand, as Deutsch.

(11) *I: What subjects do you study at school?*

S: Math, drawing, German, and 'Deutschean'.[16]

I: Are German and 'Deutschean' different lessons?

S: German is an additional lesson in German for Ukrainian children. Our teacher also speaks our [the learner's home] language. I like it. They explain something to us there.

I: And what is 'Deutschean'?

S: 'Deutschean' is German for everyone. We don't understand anything there. They ask us to write German letters or draw something.

I: And what do Swiss children usually do in this lesson?

S: They write something … they have such a book … they write in it. They also read fairy tales and just listen. (S12:Age11:G4_Nov. 2022)

The student in (11) demonstrates awareness of the linguistic heterogeneity inherent in the L2 learning context but does not accurately perceive and/or identify the languages encountered at school. The student is unable to properly distinguish between the two languages and believes that she hears and learns German only in a DaZ class intended for NNSs. To refer to the mixture of the two languages that she hears in a regular Swiss classroom and does not comprehend, she uses a nonce word *Deutschean* (translated from the Ukrainian 'дойческа').

Excerpts 12 & 13 from two interviews with Max, conducted at a year interval, reveal changes in the student's perception of Swiss German (L3):

(12) *S: Swiss German is worse than slang!*

I: Why?

S: Because I don't understand it. I don't like it. I don't like the way it sounds. Indeed. I understand Hochdeutsch better. I started learning it well in the integration class. (S2:Age:12:G5_Nov. 2022)

(13) I: Is it more difficult for you to understand what the teacher is saying in Swiss?

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[15] Here and henceforth, all real names of respondents are replaced by placeholder names.

[16] The student's original morphology is preserved in translation to render authenticity of speech and perception.

S: Not much. I understand Swiss a little.

I: Do you understand Swiss German?

S: Yes. Not only when my classmates talk, but when other people talk, too.

I: Can you speak Swiss?

S: Not quite well, but if I have to answer, I will answer. (S2:Age:13:G6_Nov. 2023)

The student's negative perception of Swiss German in his first year in a Swiss school is associated with a lack of knowledge and poor comprehension of the dialect. The knowledge and skills in L3 that were acquired by the student in one year at school influenced both his perception of L3 and his self-concept of L3 learner/user abilities.

Displacement and transition to a different language speaking environment have a strong impact on the individual language repertoires of learners. Approaching the two-year mark of their stay in the host country and beginning to use their L2 skills in practice, displaced children begin to recognize the benefits of their knowledge of German and report learning German as the most useful achievement that Swiss school has provided them with. Many children confidently add German and, in rarer cases, Swiss German to their extended language repertoires.

(14) S: Sure, German. And Swiss. When I first arrived, I really didn't know German well. And here I learned to speak it. (S6:Age12:G6_Nov.2023)

The respondent in (14), who had experience of learning German as an FL at school prior to displacement, admits that she only learned to speak German in a Swiss school. The student's prior knowledge of German significantly facilitated her integration in the German-speaking learning environment and allowed access to meaningful learning (of both L2 and nonlinguistic content) upon displacement. The effects of prior knowledge of German on the language learning process upon transition to a Swiss school include, *inter alia*, learners' better differentiating between Standard German and Swiss German from the very beginning of their immersion in Swiss schools and, consequently, reduced interference between the two languages (Abramicheva, 2024).

When asked *what they can do in German*, displaced children reported quite a wide range of things and activities that indicate they acquired varying degrees of linguistic and communicative competence by the end of their second year at Swiss school. The list that follows contains multiple children's answers that reveal their varied functionality in L2 and the high frequency of social interactions in which children perform certain verbal actions:

(15) 'I can talk to a cashier if necessary.'

'I can buy tickets for a bus or train.'

'I can talk to a bus driver.'

'I can ask passers-by for directions.'

'I can write a greeting card.'

'I read books in German.'

'I talked with the dentist.'

'I talk with my friends and coach at the football club.'

'I go to visit my Swiss friends and talk with them.'

'I talk with my [Swiss] friends' parents and our neighbors.'

'In hospital, I translated for my mom and grandfather.'

'I can answer phone calls.'

'When I was at the doctor's, I talked to him.'

'When I sprained my finger and went to the doctor, I could answer all his questions.'

'I watch some children's programs on YouTube.'

'I talk with the administration of the hostel where we live.'

'I helped my mom fill out the form.'

'Several times I even tried to resolve conflicts when my friends were arguing.'

'I communicate with my gymnastics/football coach.'

'I communicated with everyone at the summer sports camp.'

'I translated for my mom at the museum.'

'I help my mother with her German homework when she asks.'

'I watch Tik-Tok in German.'

'I translated for my mom at the parents' meeting.'

'I speak [German] everywhere so that they [the local Swiss] understand me.'

The responses (15) obtained from children after their almost two-year immersion in the target language environment are markedly different from those given by the same children in the initial stages of their placement in Swiss schools when a '*can't-do*' attitude towards L2 learning dominated displaced learners' narratives. The learners' exposure to multiple contexts of socially necessitated interactions in L2 expanded their L2 practical experience and had a profound impact on their self-concept of their L2 learning abilities. Children's positive perception of L2 developed simultaneously with their growing awareness of the outcomes of L2 learning.

Making themselves understood by NSs of the language they are learning (*'I speak German everywhere so that they understand me')* and acknowledging the effects of L2/L3 learning, such as realizing that they can be efficient in some real-life situations (*buying tickets for a bus or train; translating for their mothers at the parents' meeting, etc.*), or can be entrusted with important tasks (*e.g., of translating for their family at the doctor's*) or be helpful in instructing others (family members, friends) in L2 are a great source of motivation for L2 (or both L2 and L3) learning and significant psychological factors impacting L2 perception and self-efficacy in displaced children.

At the beginning of L2 learning, displaced students spoke of their ability to understand what their teachers and peers were saying as a great achievement, and access to meaningful learning and communication with peers were their immediate goals (at least the goals that the students made explicit in their first-year interviews). After two years of learning, the 'geography' of the achievements that students chose to talk about go beyond the school context, and the achievements themselves are not limited to scholarly tasks and include things of a more practical nature.

Most of the responses (15) obtained from children provide strong evidence of the development of social/interactional skills or basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) in children. However, some of the responses (*"I helped my mom fill out the form"*, *"I read books in German"*, *'I translated for my mom at the museum"*, *etc.)* indicate that children increase their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) as well.

Interview data show that after almost two years at school, most children understand (although to varying degrees in various subjects) the teacher's instruction, realize *why* they need to learn L2 and, most importantly, how knowledge of L2 affects their lives. Knowing that they are capable of getting on with some practical tasks, no matter how small, with the help of the language they are learning, improves children's self-concept of abilities, or, rather, restores self-efficacy beliefs lost by many children due to an abrupt transition to the new learning context, and strengthens their motivation for L2 learning.

(16) S: When I had problems with my finger, we went to the doctor.

I: Who talked to the doctor?

S: I did.

I: What did you tell the doctor?

S: He asked me when this happened, and I told him.

I: How did you explain it all, don't you remember?

S: [easily switching to German] Ich hat Fussball gespalt[17] und mein Finger ist nach hinten gegangen [demonstrating her finger position].

[The child's mother confirmed that the daughter herself communicated with the doctor and when she [the mother] did not understand what the doctor was saying, she asked the daughter to translate for

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[17] In all quoted fragments produced by children in German we preserve the original grammar.

her]. *(S5:Age11:G5_Dec.2023)*

The opportunity and necessity to use a language in everyday life is a strong incentive to learn this language. The longer the displaced children remain in the L2 environment and the less they think about how soon they will return to their home country, the stronger this incentive becomes. Transformation in the child's perception of the language they are learning, perceiving it not as just another subject at school or another foreign language, the knowledge of which is desirable but not vital, but as a means of social viability and a tool for satisfying basic needs (not only educational, but also material, social, medical, information, etc.) has a strong impact on the L2 learning outcomes.

The transformation in perception of L2 is especially noticeable among older children, sixth graders, who have already realized that their further educational trajectory at secondary school depends on their knowledge of the school language:

(17) I: Why do you need German?

S: First of all, to talk. And also, I would like to learn German well for good grades, for everything good. … To achieve what I want. And good German is a must. … I think I'll go to a Sekundarschule[18], that is… I don't think so, but I'm sure that I'll go to the Sekundar. There are two levels there. If you have done well, you can go to the Sekundarschule and they will put you in class A, and if you have done a little worse, but still good enough for the Sekundarschule, there will be class B.

I: Which class are you aiming for?

S: I think for class A… My grades are very good. (S2:Age13:G6_Nov.2023)

4.4. Immersive learning. The pros and cons of full immersion

Effects of huge lexical input. Vast research on L2 education shows that students who are exposed to the language they are learning in an immersive environment, e.g., through study abroad programs, exhibit higher levels of fluency and narrative ability (Collentine, 2004; Yang, 2016), intuitive understanding of how the language works and why people say what they say in different real-life contexts. Full immersion in the target language environment encountered by displaced learners allows for both L2 learning and acquisition. On the one hand, they learn L2 through deliberate and structured school instruction, pursuing certain goals (to access provisional and/or further education, communicate with peers, etc.), on the other hand, they naturally absorb and internalize grammar, vocabulary, and cultural subtleties from the target language environment simply by living in it. The immersive learning in this case seems to be a perfect model that integrates the two means of language learning: conscious and targeted, through explicit classroom instruction and structured feedback, and natural and dynamic, based on everyday exposure to a genuine use of language.

The availability of explicit L2 instruction is certainly a big asset, and one of the variables contributing to the success of immersive learning is the quality and length of L2 mediation in classes like DaZ. However, even in a situation of long-term support in a DaZ class, meaningful learning and catching up with the primary school curriculum might require additional L2 mediation that would focus on the language to support the assimilation of nonlinguistic content.

The interviews of the first-year study showed that at the initial stage of placement in Swiss schools, German was the most difficult school subject for all displaced children. Without knowledge of L2, children could not access meaningful learning, which largely explained the set of favorite subjects – sports, mathematics, drawing – reported by most of the respondents at the time of their first interviews (Abramicheva, 2023). Sports and drawing required a minimum of L2 knowledge: children reported guessing what to do or simply watching what their peers were doing and following their example. Mathematics turned out to be easier, since most of the children had sufficient knowledge of math

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[18] *Sekundarschule* is one of the lower-secondary types of schools in the Canton of Zug, along with most demanding *Gymnasium* and least demanding *Realschule* and *Werkschule* (Oertig, 2012).

acquired in a Ukrainian school[19] prior to displacement and used this knowledge to make sense of the information they received in math classes in a Swiss school. It is important that the subject knowledge of math obtained earlier at school helped the children assimilate the language of math (German used in math) more effectively. All other school subjects were much more dependent on the learners' L2 proficiency and remained a hard endeavor for displaced kids for quite a long time.

A year later, almost all the children of the studied group reported NMG[20] lessons to be the most difficult. Here is how the kids explained *why*: *'there are difficult topics'*; they [respondents] *'lack the vocabulary knowledge to comprehend the material taught'*; there are *'large and difficult texts and everything is in German'*; *'there is a lot to learn and the most difficult thing is to memorize the words'*; *'interesting stuff, all sorts of experiments, but everything is in German, and it's hard to understand anything'*; *'there you have to learn everything and be able to talk about it'*. In fact, as the learners' responses showed, the difficulty still lay in the L2 factor, to be more precise, in the cognitive academic language proficiency, to which NMG lessons are strongly linked, and in the input size – the large number of still unfamiliar words that had to be learned in order to understand and assimilate the information received in the lessons. NMG is the lesson that covers various content areas, such as natural sciences, history, geography, society and the environment, i.e., a wide range of knowledge domains assuming comprehension of large volumes of vocabulary input. It is not German for classroom communication or German as a second language explained by the teacher in a DaZ class; it is content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in conditions of full and unexpected immersion in the L2 environment caused by the event of forced displacement.

For all displaced students, transfer to a regular Swiss class meant the beginning of fully immersive school where all instruction (in all subjects regardless of the complexity of individual subjects, especially sciences) is provided in the target language. Some parents of upper primary school children (particularly those with higher expectations about their children's education and/or who had no intention of staying in the host country once their home country was safe to return to) were seriously concerned about the outcomes of such immersive learning for their children. On the one hand, they understand that their children can acquire the L2 competences at a level that would never be possible if they were taught outside the target language environment. However, they doubt that their children can assimilate complex sciences-related content taught in L2 and, on their return home, will have to study more to approximate the level of knowledge of their Ukrainian peers who have been taught this content in their home language.

Both the lower and upper primary school students report a significant lack of L2 vocabulary, which is required for mastering the NMG program. A lexical gap is perceived by the students as the main hindrance to successful performance in L2 and NMG. Even the early grade primary school[21] curriculum incorporates a variety and quantity of lexical input that is impressive for a young L2 learner: in L2 the teacher explains how many beats are in a bar, talks about the methods the people of the Neolithic era used to build their homes or the style of painting that children will have to reproduce in an arts lesson, or explains another jigsaw cutting technique, etc. The upper grade primary schoolers are exposed to far more difficult content and terminology, when they study, e.g., the heating system in a building or electricity flow and a circuit diagram, the human circulatory system or the functioning of the hearing organs[22].

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[19] The math curriculum in Ukrainian primary school is far more engaging than the one determined for Swiss primary school (Abramicheva, 2023).

[20] NMG stands for *Natur-Mensch-Gesellschaft* (Germ.) (nature, people, society) and is an important part of the primary school curriculum. The aim is to give students a comprehensive understanding of the world around them.

[21] In this paper, we use 'the early grade schoolers' to refer to Grades 1-3 of the primary school, and 'the upper grade schoolers', for Grades 4-6.

[22] The examples cited here are a random selection from those recorded by the author during classroom observations.

(18) I: What lesson is the most difficult for you?

S: NMG.

I: Why?

S: Because there are a lot of words … sentences, for example, when I do something in a notebook, I understand almost nothing in German … and there are completely incomprehensible tasks that are confusing …

I: And is there anything you like?

S: I like chemistry, I like doing experiments, but I don't understand anything there … I don't understand the words …

I: Do you ask the teacher for help?

S: The teacher says to ask my classmates … I ask them and they usually explain something to me as best they can … I understand a little, but not well. (S7:Age11:G6_Nov.2023)

Engaged and sustained learning of multiple content domains particularly relates to 1) the child's comprehension of the thematic vocabulary and 2) the size of vocabulary input. In a regular, non-immersive, content-based learning context, sufficient attention is paid to the development of specific vocabulary. In CLIL methodology, the language teacher supports the content teacher by introducing vocabulary and functional language related to a given subject. In conditions of immersive learning that displaced children encounter in a regular Swiss classroom (with no parallel L1 instruction by the subject teacher), they do not receive any targeted language instruction, e.g., in sciences or history, and cope with a substantial vocabulary input on their own, often without having an effective strategy for dealing with hundreds of new words from multiple content areas. Many students reported using translation into L1 (not in the classroom, where it is not allowed, but at home) to catch on and make sense of what was taught in a lesson and to connect the new input to the previously encountered vocabulary. Thus, the processing of a huge lexical input was often limited to the child's translation of individual words or sentences and excluded awareness of lexical associations, word formation, collocations, etc. which can only be achieved through explicit instruction (at least in the observed learning context and for the observed age group of learners).

(19) S: It's much easier now than at the beginning. For some reason I couldn't remember words that well then. We learned actions [verbs denoting actions] and I couldn't remember them very well.

I: And now?

S: It's better now. It was just hard for me to learn new words. I would remember a couple of words, but not others. Actually, I heard them too, but I just couldn't remember them. (S3:Age9:G3_Nov. 2023)

The lexicon is thought to be the most important language component for L2 learners and "language learning is largely lexical learning" (Chomsky, 1989, as cited by Gass et al., 2020). The lexicon is the driving force in sentence production, i.e., in encoding or sentence generation" (Levelt, 1989, as cited by Gass et al., 2020) and is prerequisite for comprehension. Researchers admit that both breadth ('the number of words for which the learner has at least some knowledge or meaning') and depth ('how well a learner knows individual words or how well words are organized in the learner's mental lexicon') of knowledge play a role in comprehension (Gass et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2011; Stæhr, 2009). Since immersive learning is largely about oral and written comprehension (according to what our respondents report), we might expand on Laufer's conclusion that for L2 readers "the threshold for reading comprehension is, to a large extent, lexical" (Laufer, 1997, p.21) by saying that, for displaced L2 learners, the threshold for immersive learning is, to a large extent, lexical, too. Unless words can be isolated from the speech stream, and unless lexical information can be used to interpret the utterances, the input will not be comprehended (Gass et al., 2020, p.233). Given that comprehension of the input depends to a large extent on lexical skills and the lexical input is huge, successful immersive learning largely depends on effective processing of this huge lexical input by individual learners. Discussing study abroad contexts, Gass et al. mention the effects of a learner's predeparture proficiency or 'a particular threshold of proficiency' which the learner must have in order to maximize the potential of study abroad programs (Gass et al., 2020, p. 490). Our research data show that low or no pre-displacement proficiency

threshold in L2 was a major obstacle for displaced children in both learning the target language and meaningful learning *in* the target language in the initial stages of their immersion in a Swiss school.

Although all the interviewed students report their progress in L2 by the end of their second year at Swiss school, most of them still admit that their lexicon is insufficient to understand a lot of things they are taught at school. What the students say about NMG lessons helps to estimate 'where they are in L2 learning' and if they are ready to comprehend the vast content-based instruction. The students' level of comprehension of content, such as what is taught in NMG lessons, can be categorized into low, medium, and sufficient, and designated according to the students' most recurrent judgements: *'I don't understand much of the staff'* (low level), *'There is a lot to learn and you need to remember new words, but that's okay'* (medium), *'I like NMG. I learn new things there'* (sufficient). The latter category pertains to the group of students who actively use L2 as a learning tool and are ready for and excited about 'learning to use language through the development of content' (Coyle et al., 2010).

Effects of listening and interaction. When asked (in the second-year interviews) which activity they liked best – reading, writing, listening or speaking – many children reported that they liked listening and communicating best (see fragment 20), and emphasized the importance of the time when they began to hear (implying *'comprehend'*) what others were saying.

(20) S: Most of all I like to communicate and listen.

   I: Why?

   S: I just talk to my friends a lot … listen to my teacher, my friends. It's easier for me to listen than to talk. I understand more … I understand more when they talk and less when I talk. (S4:Age10:G3_Nov.2023)

(21) I: What do you like most?

   S: Listening and talking. I like listening and talking. I like talking to other children, to my friends. At school, many children speak a mixture [of German and Swiss]. They can say something in German and something in Swiss. I remember what they are saying and then say it too. (S3:Age9:G3_Nov.2023)

Learners' recognition of individual words in the speech of others was perceived by many of them as acknowledgment of the progress they had made in L2 and, therefore, had a great impact on their perception of the target language. Recognition of individual words in the speech of others indicated progressive development of receptive knowledge of L2 (or both L2 and L3) vocabulary in children. 'Hearing meanings' was so noticeable and important to children that some of them admitted that it had a strong impact on their motivation to learn and communicate in L2.

The first-year study showed that although the students could rarely remember and/or reproduce (when they were asked in the interviews) much of the massive L2 input they received every day in the classroom, they would often respond to the teacher's instruction/questions quite naturally and appropriately in context-related situations (which we could notice during participant observations both in lessons and during breaks).

(22) T: Möchtest du, dass ich deine Arbeit jetzt korrigiere, oder spatter?

   [Would you like me to correct your work now or later?]

   S: Ну, як хочете. [in Ukrainian]

   [Well, as you wish.]

   T: [addressing her comment to the researcher]: You see, they don't understand. (S11:Age10:G3:Integration class_Dec.2022)

The ten-year-old student's response in (22) shows that the student fully comprehended what the teacher asked. We observed the student's immediate response that was appropriate in terms of the communicative intention of the teacher, although given in the student's L1. The teacher's subsequent reaction suggested her disappointment at the student's misunderstanding. Several comments can be made about this teacher-student interaction. First, the student's appropriate response is a sign that L2 receptive skills are being developed and practiced (since the meaning is properly decoded and an appropriate response is produced in L1). Second, it's very difficult for the teacher to dynamically assess the student's knowledge and skills and adjust their further input/instruction if a common language is

missing (a typical situation observed in monolingual Ukrainian classes taught by Swiss teachers, where practices of translanguaging between L1 and L2 (similar to that in (22)) were quite frequent, although often not only uninformative, but also misleading for the teacher in mediating the students' L2 development).

The 2022 interviews revealed that many children were already at a level where receptive skills were being utilized but productive skills were not yet fully developed, leaving learners feeling like 'they understand when they hear, but not when they need to speak or write'.

(23) S: Yes, I understand a lot already.

I: In German lessons?

S: In all lessons. In all lessons, everything is in German. Only dictations kill me. You hear everything, but you just can't write it down. (S2:Age12:G5_Nov.2022)

(24) I: Do you understand German?

S: It's difficult for me. I can't answer the question quickly. Once, I was riding my bike, and I met a classmate, and he asked me, 'Was machst du?' And I couldn't answer. I know what he asked, I know this phrase, I understood it, just not right away. (S10:Age12:G6_Dec. 2022)

Along with listening and/or hearing, children reported interaction with peers both while cooperatively learning in the classroom and in everyday social encounters out of the classroom to be an important part of their language development. "When learners have the opportunity to use new lexical items in a communicative context, words are retained (in the short and long term) to a greater extent than when learners are only exposed to input" (Gass et al., 2020, p.252). Interaction, among its other functions in L2 development, is particularly important in terms of incidental vocabulary learning, i.e., "when learners are focused on comprehending meaning rather than on the explicit goal of learning new words" (Gass et al., 2020, p. 250). Children who report interactions as learning activities have recognized their true value in immersion settings. The role of interactions in vocabulary development is particularly enhanced when explicit/targeted vocabulary learning is not provided or limited to the time spent in the L2 support structure (DaZ class, for example).

(25) S: In class I communicate with a girl, M. We communicate a lot during breaks.

I: In what language?

S: In German. And by gestures. We talk and eat together. I understand that she offers [me] to try her food. I say 'Ja'. Well, I try it, then I offer her my food. … When we talk, I can learn different words from her.

(S8:Age10:G4_Dec.2022)

(26) S: I like learning something with my friend. My friend knows more words than I do, but I can explain grammar to him. And he can explain different words to me. (S2:Age 13:G:6_Dec.2023)

Effects of 'learning in the wild'. Another advantage of the total immersion in L2 environment is accessibility of "diverse linguistic, experiential, and situational contexts" out in the world (Thorne, Hellermann, & Jakonnen, 2021, p.108), i.e., the target language encounters that are commonly referred to as 'learning in the wild' or incidental language learning. Incidental learning is understood, according to Lompscher (1999), as "learning in various activity modes (play, everyday communication, etc.) without any special learning goal" (as cited in Jensen, 2019). In the given section, we discuss the effects of displaced learners' experiences of interactive engagement with L2/L3 in the wild, where their language activities are directed towards other goals than learning.

The growing engagement of displaced Ukrainian children in L2/L3 activities outside school is well illustrated by the responses cited in (15). Children who reported a greater variety and frequency of socially driven engagements in L2/L3 outside school correlate with those who have a more positive perspective on learning L2 and L3 and seek to learn/speak both languages to become part of the social and cultural environment where these languages are used.

Language learning in the wild takes on particular significance in the context of learning L3 (Swiss German), which, as already noted, is not taught at school. In fact, a displaced child can acquire the Swiss dialect only through oral communication, without receiving targeted instruction or constructive

feedback, and only by way of regular and purposeful encounters with Swiss speaking locals. Interviews with children show that in most cases, their purposeful encounters with L3 are driven socially and related to intrinsic motivation, while encounters with L2 are always more or less related to extrinsic motivation as well.

(27) *S: I want to know the language. I like learning languages. If I learn Swiss German and German, then I will speak four languages* [the student includes two home languages]. (S3:Age 9:G3_Nov.2023)

(28) *S: Almost all my teachers and classmates speak Swiss. During breaks they always speak Swiss. It's no longer a problem for me, though. I understand Swiss. I understand almost everything. And I can even say something. … I need the [Swiss] language to live here … to communicate with everyone.* (S6:Age12:G6_Nov.2023)

Children who report regular social encounters with L3 by the end of their second year in a Swiss school a) describe translanguaging practices, when they already understand L3 speakers, but still more often respond in L2; b) say that L3 no longer interferes with their communication with Swiss peers/friends/adults in everyday life, and c) admit that they enjoy feeling part of the group sharing the in-group language(s).

At the same time, by interactively engaging with/in a bilingual environment, children develop their sociolinguistic competence pertaining to the speaker's ability to employ the variable features of language according to social norms, specific language use contexts, the speaker's and other interlocutors' identities. According to Bachman (1990), sociolinguistic competence includes, *inter alia*, the learner's sensitivity to dialects and language varieties, sensitivity to natural and idiomatic expressions, cultural references and figures of speech. The following fragment demonstrates the child's sensitivity to language varieties and ability to distinguish and use both varieties in contextually appropriate ways:

(29) *I: What can you do in German?*

S: Hmm… I can talk to a cashier. Cashiers usually say "Ist es alles?" and I answer "Ja". And then they say how much it costs and say "Brauchen Sie Quittig … Quittung?"

I: Sorry, what do they say?

S: The Swiss word is 'Quittig', and the German word is 'Quittung'

I: And how do you respond?

S: "Nein, danke". Then they say "Tschüss", and I say "Ade". It's in Swiss. That's what they tell adults. (S5:Age11:G5_Nov.2023)

Through L2/L3 interactional encounters, immersive learners learn pragmatic inferencing, practice accurate pronunciation, get familiarized with a variety of contexts and grammatical constraints impacting the meaning of the words, and learn to repair breakdowns in communication, all of which would be difficult to achieve in the language learning setting that is isolated from the communities of the target language speakers. Full immersion makes it possible for learning to continue (or, in a sense, begin?) in the wild, in the everyday activities of communities of the target language users.

Interactive engagements with local peers are highly instrumental in developing immersive learners' comprehensive and productive skills. In real-world interactions in L2/L3, learners have to "move from semantic processing to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production" (Swain, 1985, as cited in Gass, 2020, p. 407) and are more likely to produce comprehensible output that implies that "learners are pushed in their production as a necessary part of making themselves understood" (ibid., p.408).

The children in (30) and (31) demonstrate the knowledge of the German word '*doch*' that arouses a lot of controversy among nonnative German users concerning its multiple meanings[23]. The student's appropriate response in (30), in which he uses '*doch*' in an interactive playful encounter with his Swiss

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[23] Possible meanings of '*doch*' include 'but', 'yet', 'after all', 'anyway', 'but then', 'if only'. The word can render contradiction to a negative statement/question ('Yes, I do'), confirmation of negation ('certainly, not!'), emphasis ('really', 'Do come'), etc. (collinsdictionary.com).

peers, evidences an effective production of language through speaking. The student in (31) tries to illustrate one of the meanings of '*doch*' that she already knows from her previous encounters with the word in authentic contexts. In both cases, the students reported using the word meaningfully over a period of time; likewise, in both cases, they reported regular interactional encounters with both target languages outside school.

(30) S1: (to S3): Du hast es falsch gesagt.

   S2: (to S1): Nei, doch! (S2:Age13:G6_Jan.2024)

(31) P: I often ask my daughter to explain the difference between some words, and she does! For example, the difference between 'stimmt' and 'doch'. It was so difficult for me to figure out when to say what.

   I: Could you explain the difference to me too? [addressing to the student]

   S: For example, if someone says, 'Nei, es stimmt nei' – 'That's not true', you can say 'Ja' or 'Doch', it's like 'I'm sure.' If you are sure, you say 'Doch' in response. (S5:Age11:G5_Nov.2023)

Comprehension of humor, using shared culture as a reference source, social engaging with L2/L3 rather than L1-speaking others, accommodating 'a nativelike way' of speaking a mixture of L2 and L3 and acquiring flexibility in switching between the two in social contexts (e.g., at school, sports camp, sports club, in a shop, etc.), creative and playful use of the target languages, maintaining communication despite having limitations in their L2 and L3 knowledge, expressing emotions in L2/L3 signify effective language(s) learning and increased communicative competence of the surveyed displaced learners.

(32) I: Do you communicate with your Swiss peers only in class?

   S: After school too. I get invited to all sorts of parties too. And I talk there. And my first Swiss friend … we often communicate with her too.

   I: What do you usually talk about with your Swiss friends?

   S: During breaks we talk about something new or tell jokes.

   I: Jokes?

   S: Well, actually, I have one friend … and we come up with what would happen if everything in the world were turned upside down, and we show it. I don't know why, but we like it. (S3:Age9:G3_Nov.2023)

The sociolinguistic competence acquired by displaced children through multiple social interactions with diglossic locals is of great importance for their positive perception of the languages learned and of themselves as users of these languages. "Language is presented in social contexts, and learners' ability to use language independently comes from related language experiences" (Abrams, 2020, p. 34). Displaced learners' exposure to multiple interaction contexts allows for the development of their language resources along with pragmatic competence, reduces psychological barriers to communicating in and outside school, makes them capable of entering and initiating interactions and of playing different communicative roles in accordance with the pursued social goals. The more displaced children interact with the local community in two languages, the more barrier-free the bilingual learning environment becomes for them.

Researchers note that learning in the wild can be a by-product of other experiences (Allaste et al., 2021; Johnson & Majewska, 2022), is embedded in activity that is meaningful for the learner and is likely to be motivated by a perceived need (Bourke et al., 2018), is often situation-dependent and linked to socialization (Johnson & Majewska, 2022), and often happens through activities that learners engage in to be part of different communities of practice (Jensen, 2019; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Our research data show that some of the displaced children were driven to use L2 and/or L3 by their strong wishes to engage in sports activities and in-group (class or school) social networks.

(33) P: My daughter started going to sports from the very beginning. We found a football club … she's very keen on football … she has many friends there. One of her classmates even decided to take up football because Maya does it. Sports help her communicate with her peers very much. In general, she is very sociable … this helps her learn German. Thanks to my daughter's communication in the football club, I also found company among the parents of the children who go to play football. I am so happy for Maya that she communicates so well in the club. (P:S5:Age10:G4_Nov.2022)

(34) S: We communicate a lot after school. On the phones with classmates, … chatting in our group. Also, I go to birthday parties often. I have a lot of friends here and we spend time together. I like communicating a lot. (S5:Age11:G5_Nov.2023)

(35) I: Where do you use German?

S: I play football. I communicate with the team and the coach. We go to competitions. … In the summer I was in a sports camp … and I communicated with everyone in German there.

I: How do you communicate with your team?

S: In German. I understand everything.

I: What do you usually tell them during the game?

S: Schiess! [hit]… Pass! [pass] … Geh allein! [run alone].

I: Do you like playing in the team?

S: Yes, it's cool. They think I'm the best scorer, that's what they said [smiling]. (S7:Age11:G6_Dec.2022)

Active use of social media in everyday life both accessing the content produced by others in L2 or actively participating in content production and interactions with peers, classmates, sports team members, etc. in L2/L3 is another effective way of informal language(s) learning. By communicating via social networks, displaced children explore a genuine use of language exercised by their peers, develop sensitivity to registers, to natural and idiomatic language used 'in the wild' that differs from the language they learn through formal classroom instruction. The children themselves "might be unaware that any kind of learning is happening" (Johnson & Majewska, 2022, p.26), although it does occur and is linked, as it is in most informal education practices, 'to socialization, values, norms, ethics and emotions' (ibid.).

(36) S: I often watch programs on YouTube in German. Different children's channels. I have one children's channel that I watch all the time. There's a game there, they play Minecraft. They show how they survive … they make their own videos and share them. And there's also a channel where they sing songs in German. They sing children's songs and there's also animation. I watch that channel too. (S3:Age9:G3_Nov.2023)

(37) S: … We have a WhatsApp group, and all our girls are there, and we text each other. And I'm in the school chat and chatting there. (S6:Age12:G6_Dec.2023)

Learning the target language in the wild, from the real world of its users, contributes much to the displaced learners' sociocultural competence, their 'knowledge about social groups and rules according to which these social groups interact at the societal and individual levels' (Byram & Wagner, 2018). Immersive language learning is perfect for this purpose since it allows L2 learners not only to grasp words and speech patterns but also understand the context in which those words and patterns come to use.

This study shows that displaced children's engagement in social interactions is related not so much to their linguistic competence (lexical, grammatical, or content knowledge), at least in the initial stages of their inclusion in a Swiss school setting, as to their willingness and need to communicate in a social group, hence the importance of a voluntary dimension both in informal social interactions and informal L2/L3 learning. Children with no/low intrinsic motivation for social interaction thereby limit their opportunities for informal L2 and/or L3 learning.

Access to authentic materials. In the context of immersive L2 learning, displaced students are exposed to a genuine use of language in and outside classroom, where "authentic communication is carried out by members of a linguistic or cultural community … in specific social contexts, where the focus is on content rather than the form'' (Abrams, 2020, p.71). In L2 learning, authentic materials can be highly motivating for students and are useful for providing "culturally and sociolinguistically contextualized language" (ibid., p. 72). Immersive L2 environment enables displaced learners to absorb a genuine language input not only in classrooms via selected by the teacher educational materials, but also through multiple L2 realia, such as authentic texts, real-life conversations that learners can either observe or be involved in directly or unintentionally, computer apps and games, cultural artefacts, all types of verbal signs in public spaces, announcements in public transport, elements of the cityscape,

including advertising billboards and shop signs, etc. Interest in exploring an authentic linguistic environment was reported by most of the children when asked if and how they use L2 opportunities in their everyday life. Among the most frequently reported authentic sources are various educational platforms, children's YouTube and other social media, where they can watch cartoons in L2, listen to authentic music, individually learn German, etc., authentic books they regularly borrow from the library, regular encounters with local peers, attending sporting, social, and cultural events, visiting museums, and occasional interactions with other adults (doctors, neighbors, etc.). Thus, placement in the L2 environment hugely expands the children's L2 learning opportunities, the main one being live communication. No pedagogically created setting in FL learning can compare with an authentic one ensured by immersive learning. Children who studied German as a foreign language in a Ukrainian school, where they received bilingual instruction, report that, although learning German is much more difficult in a Swiss school, it is only there that they can communicate in German and have learned to speak. The research data reveal that children who studied German prior to displacement and children with higher motivation to learn German value immersive learning opportunities more than others. Children who realize that L2 immersion enables them to encounter and learn the language that is really spoken, take full advantage of immersive learning and perceive difficulties as a stimulus rather than an obstacle.

Effects of living arrangements. Researchers of second language acquisition in conditions of study abroad / immersion programs highlight the role of multiple background and/or contextual factors relevant to the immersive learners' challenges and frustrations as well as individual improvements, and cite, among others, learners' living arrangements, e.g., with a host family vs. a residence hall (Gass et al., 2020, pp. 489-490). Our research data are consistent with these findings and suggest better L2 comprehension and production in a group of children who are exposed to socialization[24] in a host family context. Families participating in our survey reported three types of living arrangement: collectively shared accommodation (hostels for refugees), living separately, and staying with host families. The latter has markedly positive effects on L2 learners (especially in cases where the relationship between the host and the hosted families are sustained and supportive) as it provides them with another authentic context (in addition to the school, classroom, and peer contexts) where they can gain "meaningful experience with knowledgeable others, in order to develop the interdependent cognitive and social processes necessary for successful L2 use" (Abrams, 2020, p. 34). Communication with a host family can be an effective source of social interaction, as can any artifact "that promotes interactive engagement with/in L2 environments" (Atkinson, 2013, p.8). Along with social interaction, a host family setting can serve as an invaluable source of the target language mediation, as reported by those children who live with host families:

(38) I: Where, besides school, do you speak German?

S: At home, with the [host] family we live with. And they help me with German, when I ask. For example, I asked them about 'das' and 'den' [forms of the articles], almost nothing was clear, and they said that yes, it's difficult. … They tell me a lot. (S3:Age9:G3_Nov.2023)

Displaced families' access to host family socialization contexts might have additional assets to immersive L2 learners. Given that parental involvement and mediation can greatly influence children's learning, and given that displaced parents, unlike their children, are less exposed to explicit L2 learning and social interactions, the displaced family's joint encounter of socializing with the host family is likely to be a favorable opportunity for implicit learning practices for both parents and children. Socialization teaches in-group members how to accomplish a wide range of social purposes through no articulated instruction but "through producing and reproducing communicative acts and practices that pass among individuals and groups" (Baumann, 2007, as cited in Abrams, 2020, p.15).

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[24] Socialization is understood as the process by which individuals adapt to and internalize the norms, values, customs, and behaviors of a shared social group (Perez-Felkner, 2013).

(39) We are very lucky with our hosts. They are so open and friendly. They help us integrate. They say, 'If you live with us, then you are part of our family, you celebrate holidays with us' … They have already invited us to join them on a trip for Christmas. … You know, this is a kind of cultural exchange we have… For example, I cook traditional Ukrainian dishes, and they cook and tell us about their cuisine. We communicate a lot with them. And we already know some Swiss and really want to start learning German. (P:S13:Age8:Grade2_Nov.2022)

(40) *P: Our host family help us a lot. They helped us find some sports activities for our daughter. … They communicate with the child only in German. They said that by doing so they would motivate her to learn the language. (P:S3:Age8:G2_Nov.2022)*

The host family thus performs an important function of guiding displaced families into the new cultural and language environment and socializing them in this environment. Furthermore, the variable of living with a host family influences displaced children's perceptions of the Swiss dialect, which they inevitably encounter in everyday communication with the local Swiss family. It should be noted that in cases where a displaced family lived (or continued communicating closely after their stay) with a host family, displaced children showed greater acceptance of L3 and fewer psychological barriers to socially interacting with others in both L2 and L3 compared to those living in refugee hostels.

A large body of research established that socialization practices shape how children learn, what they learn, and how quickly they learn. (HPL II[25], p. 24). Socialization in a host family facilitates the child's adjustment to a new sociocultural environment; shapes their perceptions of the languages they are exposed to in a host country; impacts the outcomes of L2/L3 learning; has positive psychological effects, e.g., reduces a psychological barrier to communicating in the classroom, which might arise, *inter alia*, due to the fear of making an error or the awkwardness of asking the teacher or peers to repeat something or explain something that displaced children have not encountered before.

(41) S: Well, the teacher explains something to us … what we need to do, and sometimes I don't want to ask him in front of all the kids.

I: Why? Are you embarrassed to ask?

S: Well, that's if it's unimportant, really unimportant. Well, I go to the teacher later and ask. If I don't understand something, and I don't understand it at school, then I ask our [host] family about it. (S3:Age9:G3_Nov.2023)

Given that L3 is not taught at school and can only be acquired in informal learning settings, host families and local peer groups become the main sources of L3 knowledge and are instrumental in sharing knowledge about the values, social norms, culture, and behaviors (both verbal and non-verbal) that displaced children have never experienced before.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that the effects of immersive L2 learning in conditions of a bilingual environment on displaced students vary significantly depending on a set of factors characteristic of individual learners, including variables relating to age, prior L2 proficiency (including breadth of the learner's lexicon), opportunities to use the target language outside class, and willingness to communicate for learning.

Immersive L2 learning, as well as integration in the target language environment on the whole, is more effective in the cases of younger learners whose primary school (or even pre-school) experience started in the host country and for whom L2 appropriation was less 'visible' in terms of complexity and structure of linguistic instruction and occurred more through social activities. Younger children acquire L2 through interactive tasks and games, where the emphasis is on communication and connection, where words and syntactic structures are picked up through context rather than explicitly taught. Older

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[25] The reference is made to A Consensus Study Report of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine: *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*. (2018). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

children more often report their conscious and targeted effort, the teacher's explicit instruction and navigation through learning, and extrinsic motivation as the key factors of their L2 development.

In the cases of upper grade primary students, immersion is more effective for L2 development of children with more L2 knowledge assimilated prior to immersion, with higher metalinguistic awareness and better organized regulatory skills (more on these factors in Abramicheva, 2024), and higher levels of motivation. Conversely, immersion is less effective in the cases of children with little or no prior knowledge in L2, poorer regulatory skills, and poor or absent motivation for L2 learning.

A diglossic school context in which displaced primary school students encounter learning German in German-speaking Switzerland hinders their progress in meaningful learning (of both German and nonlinguistic content), at least at the initial stage of placement in a regular Swiss school. Immersion in a monolingual environment of the target language could have more positive effects on the language learning outcomes and would spare the young learners the efforts they have to put into differentiating between the two languages spoken at school, which, according to the research data, a) was the main obstacle to their effective learning of L2, b) caused high emotional and psychological stress in many displaced students upon their transition to a regular Swiss class, and c) was to a great extent related to the individual learner's language aptitude and motivation to communicate for learning.

Despite the difficulties that children associate with immersive learning, such as a diglossic school with gross interference of L3 with meaningful learning of L2, no access to L1 instruction and/or content-integrated L2 mediation, a large amount of information for simultaneous assimilation, an 'all-at-once' exposure to L2 (and L3) features, difficulties with memorizing a massive quantity of new words, a lack of words to express themselves in content domains, etc., all of which affect the quality and progress of learning, immersion in the target language environment offers the very beneficial experience of developing sociolinguistic competence, independent and interactive self-expression, and purposeful use of the target language.

Given that displaced children receive explicit instruction in only one of the two languages that make up the diglossia in German-speaking Switzerland, they can develop sensitivity to language varieties only through conscious communicative effort both in and outside the classroom. Placement in regular Swiss classes (as opposed to monolingual integration classes), interactive engagements with the local peers, socialization in a host family context (if available), as well as multiple social interactions in the wild create settings in which displaced learners can gain meaningful experience necessary for successful L2 and/or L3 use.

The factors facilitating immersive L2 learning of displaced Ukrainian students in conditions of a diglossic Swiss school include two groups of factors: learner-related and environment-related factors. The learner-related factors include the learner's pre-displacement proficiency in the target language, their early and successful differentiating between the two school languages, recognizing the hierarchy and functions of the two languages, achieving and self-acknowledging the practical outcomes of L2/L3 learning, perceiving the new learning environment as a unique opportunity for *learning* and *using* the target language, increased engagement in social/sports or other activities outside school, willingness to communicate for learning. The external factors include extended targeted support in L2 learning in DaZ classes, access to authentic materials and multiple opportunities for 'learning in the wild', regular interactional encounters with the local peers, and accessibility of socialization in a host family.

The linguistic and social resources of full and lengthy immersion in the target language environment encountered by displaced learners have great potential for their L2 development and can be realized by the learners once they have access to meaningful instruction, target language use, and meaningful interaction in L2 to extend their knowledge and pursue their educational/life goals.

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Абрамічева Олена. Вивчення другої мови в багатомовному середовищі: досвід вивчення німецької мови учнями початкової школи, вимушено переміщеними з України до Швейцарії. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, **12** (1) (2025), 28-57.

Спираючись на міжнародний педагогічний дискурс щодо навчання в контексті багатомовності, чисельні роботи, присвячені опануванню та вивченню другої мови, а також на власне дослідження того, якою бачать систему початкової освіти німецькомовної Швейцарії біженці з України, автор аналізує досвід вивчення німецької як другої мови дітьми – переселенцями з України у швейцарській початковій школі. Завдяки лонгітюдному дослідженню вдалося прослідкувати динаміку засвоєння німецької мови дітьми-

переселенцями в умовах повного занурення в середовище цільової мови, а також визначити чинники, що впливають на успішність вивчення другої мови. Дослідження проведено в межах якісної методології зі збором даних за допомогою таких дослідницьких інструментів, як напівструктуроване та наративне інтерв'ю та спостереження за учасниками. Як продемонстрував аналіз даних, вплив середовища, в якому вивчається друга мова, є визначальним серед інших зовнішніх чинників, при цьому його роль є різною на різних етапах дослідження. Оскільки українські діти після переміщення навчаються у звичайних швейцарських класах для забезпечення інтегрованого базового навчання в країні переміщення, вони знаходяться в середовищі двох мов: стандартної німецької мови (офіційної мови навчання), а також швейцарського діалекту, яким розмовляє місцеве населення в німецькомовній частині Швейцарії, і, відповідно, місцева шкільна спільнота. Попри те, що на ранньому етапі двомовну школу учні-переселенці сприймають як таку, що заважає усвідомленому навчанню та спілкуванню з однолітками, з часом двомовне навчальне середовище виявляється важливим рушієм формування соціолінгвістичної компетентності й інтеграції в місцевій школі. Крім того, на вивчення німецької мови дітьми-переселенцями в умовах повного занурення суттєво впливають наявність структурованих форм навчання, залучення до інтерактивних видів діяльності за участі носіїв мови в неформальних умовах, а також наявні автентичні контексти, в яких відбувається соціалізація.

Ключові слова: німецька як друга мова, середовище вивчення другої мови, двомовна школа, імерсивне навчання, діти – переселенці з України.