



# LUND UNIVERSITY

## The acquisition of Italian geminates by L1 German and Swedish speakers in production and perception

Einfeldt, Marieke; Kupisch, Tanja ; Tronnier, Mechtild

2017

*Document Version:*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Einfeldt, M., Kupisch, T., & Tronnier, M. (2017). *The acquisition of Italian geminates by L1 German and Swedish speakers in production and perception*. 68. Abstract from International Symposium on Monolingual and Bilingual Speech 2017 , Chania, Greece.

*Total number of authors:*

3

### General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00

## The acquisition of Italian geminates by L1 German and Swedish speakers in production and perception

Marieke Einfeldt<sup>1</sup>, Tanja Kupisch,<sup>1,2</sup> Mechtild Tronnier<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Konstanz, <sup>2</sup>The Arctic University of Norway, <sup>3</sup>University of Lund  
marieke.einfeldt@uni-konstanz.de, tanja.kupisch@uni-konstanz.de,  
mechtild.tronnier@ling.lu.se

Our study deals with L1 transfer into L2-Italian on the segmental level. Specifically, we investigate whether L1-Swedish speakers have an advantage over L1-German speakers when acquiring consonantal quantity distinctions in L2-Italian due to positive transfer from Swedish. All three languages, German, Swedish and Italian, have quantity distinctions in stressed syllables, but they play out differently. Italian distinguishes singletons from geminates in spelling and production, e.g., *pala* [pala] vs. *palla* [pal:a] (Schmid, 1999). A secondary cue to gemination is the preceding vowel. A vowel followed by a geminate is shorter than a vowel followed by a singleton (Pickett, Blumstein, & Burton, 1999). In German, gemination does not exist but vowel duration is distinctive. Vowels preceding single written consonants are longer than those preceding double written consonants, e.g., *rote* [ro:tə] vs. *Rotte* [rɔtə] (Truckenbrodt, 2014). Swedish shows complementary length, i.e., double written consonants are associated with longer consonants preceded by short vowels, while single written consonants are associated with shorter consonants preceded by long vowels, e.g., *rally* [ral:i] vs. *alibi* [a:li:bi] (Bruce, 2012). Unlike Italian speakers, speakers of Swedish are more inclined to rely on vowel length than on the length of the following consonant in the same (stressed) syllable when identifying words. In summary, the three languages show similarities in spelling but differences in pronunciation – a particular challenge for learners with formal instruction and exposure to written texts. However, the L1-Swedish speakers might have an advantage over the L1-German speakers in perceiving and producing Italian geminates because long consonants exist in their L1. We compare the production and perception of the geminate-singleton contrast in 20 intermediate-level L2-Italian speakers (10 L1-Swedish, 10 L1-German) as well as L1-Italian controls. The production task elicits words with similar VCV-patterns and spelling in the learners' L1s and L2s. Consonant and vowel length are measured. To test perception, a picture-based minimal-pair-decision task was carried out. The test items were five versions of words with intervocalic consonants, whose length was varied stepwise from singleton to geminate. Results show that L1-Swedish learners produce and perceive singleton-geminate contrasts in a more target-like way than L1-Germans, supporting positive L1-transfer.

**Keywords:** germination; structural similarity; Swedish; German; perception

### References

- Bruce, B. (2012). *Allmän och svensk prosodi*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Pickett, E., Blumstein, S., & Burton, M. W. (1999). *Effects of speaking rate on the singleton/geminate consonant contrast in Italian*. *Phonetica*, 56, 135-157.
- Schmid, S. (1999). *Fonetica e fonologia dell'italiano*. Turin: Paravia scriptorium.
- Truckenbrodt, H. (2014). Das Deutsche. In M. Krifka et al (Eds.), *Das mehrsprachige Klassenzimmer. Über die Muttersprachen unserer Schüler* (pp. 35-66) Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer VS.