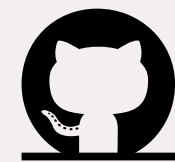

Applied Linguistics

LG 451/456 — Semester 2, 2021 (Jan-May 2022)

CLASS 5: LANGUAGE ATTRITION

Sakol Suethanapornkul



Outline: Week 5

- Recap: Bilingualism
- Introduction to language attrition
- Study synopsis: Ahn et al. (2017)
- Reading facilitation
- Final research-based project
- Looking ahead: Week 6

Recap: Bilingualism

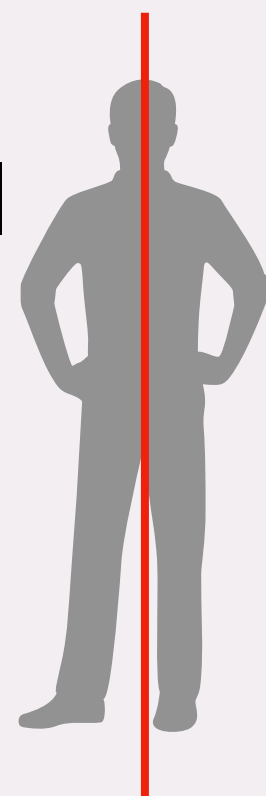
Defining bilingualism

François Grosjean (1946–) consistently advocates a **holistic view** of bilingualism



A fractional view

One half = monolingual



The other = monolingual

A holistic view

สวัสดี!

Hello!



A competent speaker-hearer

A unique linguistic profile

A complete whole

Defining bilingualism

François Grosjean (1946–) consistently advocates a **holistic view** of bilingualism



[A bilingual person] is *an integrated whole*, a unique and specific speaker-hearer, and *not the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals*. [A Bilingual speaker] has developed competencies...to the extent required by his or her needs and those of the environment. The bilingual uses the two languages—separately or together—*for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people*. Because the needs and uses of the two languages are usually quite different, the *bilingual is rarely equally or completely fluent in the two languages*.

Grosjean (2008, p. 14)

Effects of bilingualism

1. Bilingualism and language
 - Language interaction → “accented” speech & comprehension
2. Bilingualism and cognition
 - Co-activation of languages → executive control
 - Intelligence

Language attrition

Language attrition

Can you lose your native language?

By *Sophie Hardach* 8th June 2018

It's possible to forget your first language, even as an adult. But how, and why, this happens is complex and counter-intuitive.

Im sitting in my kitchen in London, trying to figure out a text message from my brother. He lives in our home country of Germany. We speak German to each other, a language that's rich in quirky words, but I've never heard this one before: fremdschämen. 'Stranger-ashamed'?

I'm too proud to ask him what it means. I know that eventually, I'll get it. Still, it's slightly painful to realise that after years of living abroad, my mother tongue can sometimes feel foreign.

Most long-term migrants know what it's like to be a slightly rusty native speaker. The process seems obvious: the longer you are away, the more your language suffers. But it's not quite so straightforward.

Source: BBC

OLD FRIEND

Even if you've forgotten the language you spoke as a child, it still stays with you



By **Aamna Mohdin**
Reporter

Published December 18, 2017 • This article is more than 2 years old.

Natasha Mumbi Nkonde tells me she's "haunted" by what she sounded like as a child. Nkonde, who was born in Zambia in 1984 and moved to the UK when she was six, remembers speaking two different languages—Bemba and Nyanja. Naturally, she was forced to switch to English once she migrated to Britain. But it wasn't until she returned to Zambia in 2008 (almost 20 years later) that she realized how much her first two languages had eroded away.

"My tongue couldn't get itself round the words. I'd be able to understand really clearly what people say to me, but couldn't formulate a sentence," says Nkonde, a black feminist working as regional organizer at [The Edge Fund](#) and co-founder of [The GLC Story](#).

Source: QUARTZ

Warm-up: Some facts about attrition?

Which of the following statements are true? Which ones are false?

- 1. Attrition is the reversal of acquisition
- 2. Attrition usually takes place within the first 10 years of emigration
- 3. Attrition does not set in until 10 years after emigration
- 4. Attrition is most severe where the two language systems have similarities
- 5. The more different the two systems are, the more severe the attrition
- 6. Attrition is most severe in cases where there's little or no contact with other speakers of the language

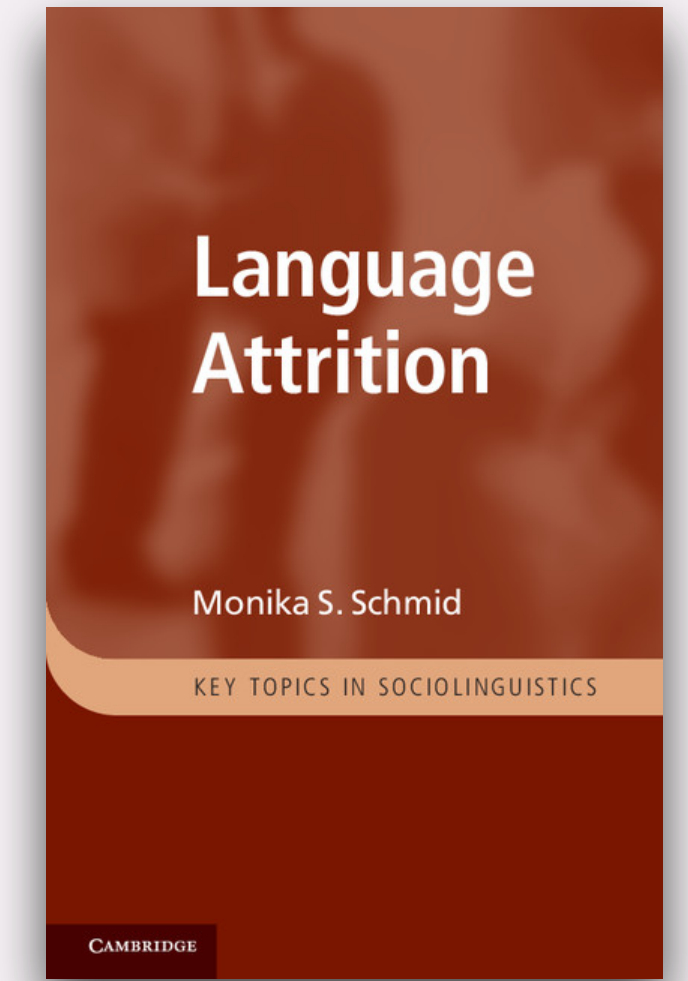
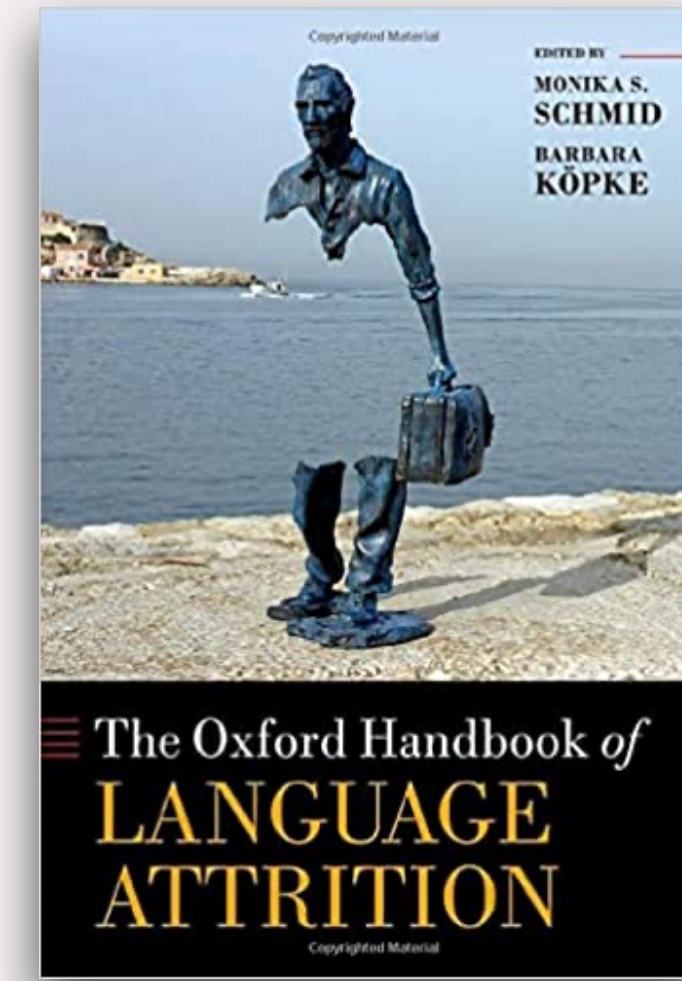
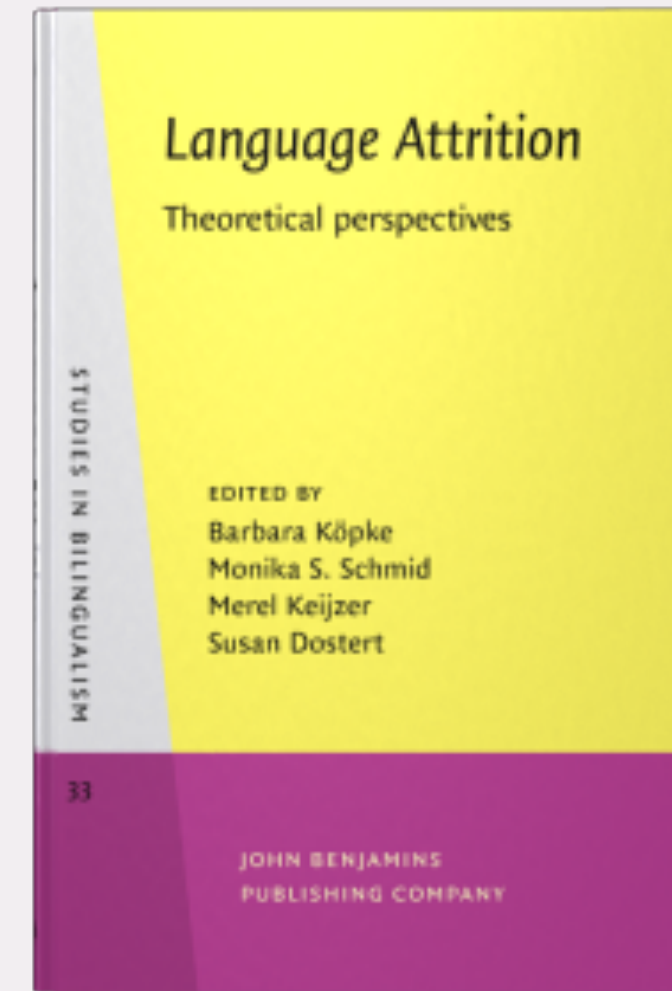
Language attrition



Monika S. Schmid



Barbara Köpke



<https://languageattrition.org>

Defining language attrition

Language attrition is about the **loss*** of language **skills**. For most people, this often evokes extreme emotional responses:

To lose your own language was like forgetting your mother, and as sad, in a way. We must not lose Setswana, she thought, even if we speak a great deal of English these days, because that would be like losing part of one's soul.

The Full Cupboard of Life, cited in Schmid (2011, p. 1)

Defining language attrition

Defining language attrition turns out to be extremely difficult!

*[Attrition is defined as] the non-pathological **decrease in a language** that had previously been acquired by an individual. Attrition would hence reflect a situation whereby a speaker is losing proficiency in a language he or she previously mastered, not due to any brain degeneration or an age-related cognitive impairment but as a result of “a change in linguistic behavior due to a severance of the contact with the community in which the language is spoken” (Schmid, 2008, p.10).*

Gallo et al. (2021)

Defining language attrition

Whole-class

Questions:

- In your own words, what is language attrition?
- How is language attrition different from language death? From aphasia?

Defining language attrition

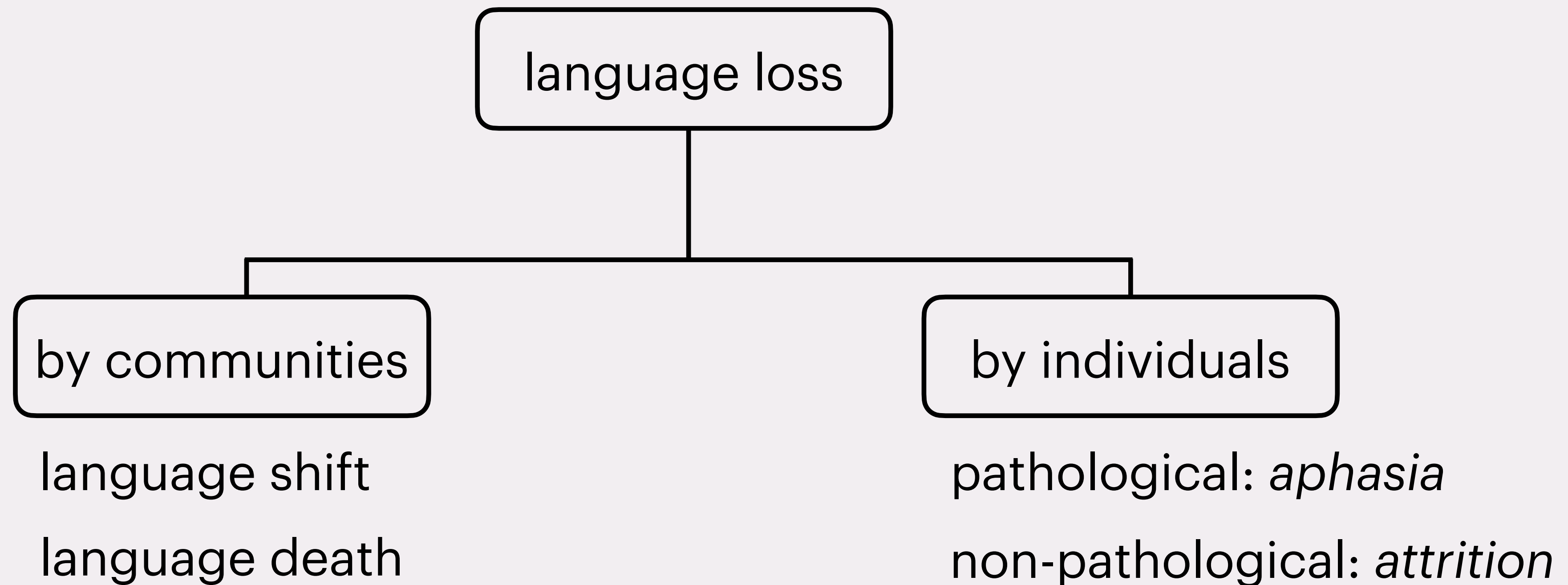
In short, language attrition is:

In other words, attrition:



Defining language attrition

Schematically, language loss can be divided into:



What to expect when you are attriting

Source: Schmid (n.d.). First language attrition and professional reimmersion

You may produce:

- sentences that go badly wrong
- very disfluent speech (pauses, hesitations, etc.)
- borrowings and switches
- inappropriate language (request-making, politeness)
- a more or less pronounced foreign accent

Fluency

Source: Schmid (n.d.). First language attrition and professional reimmersion

- All naturalistic spoken speech has disfluencies
 - pauses, hesitation markers [*erm*], fillers [*well, like, you know*]
- Not all of these are indicative of problems of retrieval or speech production
 - disfluencies can structure messages
- Attriters use more hesitations, some of them in places where competent speakers don't
 - attriters appear less confident (and, therefore, less competent)

Fluency

GU: wir hatten einen ähm # äh äh refrigerator äh
(we had an_{MASC} ahm#ah ah refrigerator ah)

I: Kühlschranks_{MASC}
(refrigerator)

GU: Kühlschrank, elektrischen
(refrigerator, electric_{MASC})

Vocabulary

Source: Schmid (n.d.). First language attrition and professional reimmersion

- Attriters tend to overuse more frequent words and underuse rarer ('more sophisticated') ones
 - use of cognates (false friends such as *embarazada* and *embarrass*)
 - but this depends on L1-L2 pairs
- A broad vocabulary is often used to 'dazzle' and create an impression of expertise
 - attriters appear less 'intelligent'

Factors affecting L1 attrition

- Individual attitude toward L1
 - German Jewish refugees abandoning German (Schmid, 2002)
- Exposure to L1 in a non-L1 environment
 - Frequency of L1 use associated with better retention (Schmid & Köpke, 2017)
- L2 exposure (and L2-L1 interaction)
 - L1 attrition = “collateral damage” due to transfer

Attrition and applied linguistics

- Some relevance:
 - English-only classrooms; suppressing indigenous/native languages
 - Communication rifts between generations
 - Language death (in some indigenous languages)
 - Language revitalization

Synopsis: Ahn et al. (2017)

Study synopsis

- A one-page summary of an empirical study (#page is in fact arbitrary)
- A good synopsis can help you:
 - see the underlying structure of a research report
 - deepen your understanding of the material
 - articulate in your own words researchers' key ideas

Reading facilitation

Reading facilitation

- I will provide an introduction to a topic (approx. 20 minutes):
 - What is X? What is X about?
 - What is the relationship between X and applied linguistics?
 - Where can I learn more about X?

Reading facilitation

- Each group takes charge by (1 to 1:15 hours):
 - giving a presentation summarizing key points from a chapter
 - asking 3-5 discussion questions during your presentation
 - providing your own answer(s) + connecting them to the chapter
 - leading hands-on “data” activities/analyses
 - data from one empirical study cited in the chapter/external source
 - activities illustrating key points in the chapter

Reading facilitation

Chapter Outline

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Language as Action and the Role of Context in the Interpretation of Meaning
- 5.3 Indirectness: Avoiding Saying Directly What You Mean
- 5.4 From Expressed to Implied Meanings
- 5.5 (Im)Politeness: Language Use in the Management of Rapport and Interpersonal Relationships
- 5.6 Language in *Interaction*: The Study of Conversation or Talk-in-Interaction
- 5.7 Summary

Chapter Outline

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 What is the Field of Intercultural Communication Concerned With?
- 6.3 What Are the Key Factors Behind Mis- or Non-understanding in Intercultural Communication?
- 6.4 What Are Culture-specific Ways of Communication?
- 6.5 What Does 'Interculturality' Mean in Multilingual and Multicultural Communicative Contexts?
- 6.6 How to Develop Intercultural Communicative Competence?
- 6.7 Summary

Final project

It's time to start thinking about your project!

Installment I: Provisional plan (10%)

- In Installment I, you are expected to submit a rough sketch of your research project. This should include:
 - a provisional title of your project
 - an overarching research question
 - a background to your project (e.g., what has been done thus far on your chosen topic, what you plan to focus on) (~ 2 paragraphs maximum)
 - a list of references in APA format (4 references per group member)

Next week...

- **Topic:** Research Method #1
 - What is quantitative research?
 - How do I go about doing such research in AL?
- **Reading:**
 - Wong et al. (2018) *A CL application for SL pedagogy*
 - Submit a synopsis of this study at end of class

References

- Gallo, F. et al. (2021). First language attrition: What it is, what it isn't, and what it can be. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2021.686388
- Grosjean, F. (2008). *Studying Bilinguals*. Oxford University Press.
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