

will hopefully be taken up by the growing number of researchers working in CLIL, to whom I would warmly recommend this volume.

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doi:10.1016/j.system.2012.04.004

Language Attrition, Monika S. Schmid, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (2011). xviii + 277pp.

This is a very clever primer on first language attrition and on collecting and analysing data in language attrition research, complete with a useful glossary. At the same time, it is an immensely good read for anyone interested in language attrition (LA) – either first or second (or third or fourth). The theme of language attrition strikes a deep chord in most people and I have yet to encounter a student on the Applied Linguistics and SLA course at Oxford who is not engaged by the topic in a more personal way than SLA. Most of us have stories to tell about language forgetting, about our guilt or regret at losing or just not maintaining a previously learned language. In calling the book simply ‘Language Attrition’, Schmid encourages us to draw together both first and second language attrition. Her definition is broad and encompasses second as well as first languages as LA ‘refers to the (total or partial) forgetting of a language by a healthy speaker’ (p. 3).

Not only are we offered a primer, but also a compelling narrative involving two emigrants. In this respect, it is a book of two distinct halves. The first half tells us the stories of two emigrants of German-Jewish descent, Albert L. and Gertrud U., who both left Germany in the 1930s at the age of 13 and settled in Britain, in the case of Albert, and the United States, in the case of Gertrud. Both were interviewed as part of the Oral History project by the Holocaust Memorial Museum of their native city, Düsseldorf. Through their stories, their dialogues and memories, we are taken through the key factors in language attrition, chapter by chapter, in Parts I and II. In Parts III, IV and V, the focus shifts to how to conduct language attrition research, experimental design, coding and analysing the data collected.

Schmid engages us at an affective level from the beginning with references to first language loss being (in the words of Mma Ramotswa from the *No 1 Ladies Detective Agency*) like ‘forgetting your mother’ or ‘like losing part of your soul’ (p. 1). In the first chapter, the key question is asked which will form the detective story for the next seven chapters: Although Albert L. and Gertrud U. left Germany at the same age and within a few years of each other, what accounts for the subsequent differences in attrition nearly six decades later? Albert has retained a fairly fluent command of German, while Gertrud has great difficulty expressing herself in German.

In Chapter 2, Schmid shows us how an appreciation of the different forms of bilingualism and their potential impact on the L1 in terms of attrition is fundamental to LA research. Of course, without another competing language, there would be no LA in healthy adults. Here, as throughout the book, Schmid includes little gems of insight in boxed notes such as an observation that it is almost impossible to draw a line between attriters and non-attriters in migrants as

a migrant who performs worse than another migrant on one test may be just as good or better on another, or half an hour later, or on a different day.

The next three chapters take us through the phenomena which are usually found in the study of LA. In such a short text, it can hardly be a comprehensive account, but it is probably as complete an introduction to crosslinguistic factors in LA, the decline in the mental lexicon and how attrition manifests itself in the phonology and grammar of the attriter's language as a student of SLA or an informed general reader would want. Schmid rightly highlights that while a smaller lexicon or less readily accessible L1 lexicon is probably one of the first symptoms of LA, setting tests to capture and explain this decline has substantial practical problems — an issue she will attempt to address in the second half of the book.

In these chapters, she constantly refers to her main characters, Gertrud U. and Albert L., providing examples from their interviews to illustrate key points in LA research. As the characters develop, so do the themes of loss, decline, change and attrition. As we are taken deeper into LA research, so we are taken deeper into their personal backgrounds: the age at which they left, their experiences, their current levels of proficiency, which are so very different. Schmid brilliantly ties in her narrative to the whole literature of attrition factors and how the habits, attitudes and the linguistic behaviour of the speaker may influence how and to what extent attrition in its various guises may reveal itself. I will not give away the ending here. That would spoil it for readers. The clues are all there but still it comes, as in all good detective stories, as a moment of revelation, an 'ah, yes, of course!' moment. But more lasting than a detective story, it resonates with our affective side as language attriters ourselves. We remember, all too vividly perhaps, the deeply personal reasons why one language prospered while another withered.

It takes a little effort to switch to the second half of the book, Parts III, IV and V, in which Schmid leaves the narrative behind and focuses on training readers to be good LA researchers. As she says in the Introduction, these chapters provide readers with a number of tools that they can use to set up their own studies. This she does with a simple, down-to-earth clarity that should be a model for all of us involved in teaching applied linguistics and SLA courses.

Part III has only two chapters. Chapter 9 contains a very thorough breakdown of how to sample and select a test population, while Chapter 10 focuses on how to elicit the sort of data that we want to look at, helpfully stressing the differences between testing for L2 knowledge in SLA research and testing for signs of attrition in attriters who may have little explicit grammatical knowledge of the language in which they achieved native-speaker command.

Part IV, with four chapters, provides an introduction to the different tasks which Schmid and others have used in LA research. Chapter 11 covers lexical tasks, Chapter 12, grammatical judgement tasks, and Chapter 13, other grammatical tasks, including a good, though short, section on *C*-tests. Chapter 14 is concerned with how to gather free speech data: in other words, getting your subjects to talk, which Schmid considers essential. Not only can 'talk' provide insights which cannot be gathered by any other means, it is also what people normally and naturally use language for. As she says, such data come with their own sets of problems such as the time required to gather, transcribe and analyse the data. Anyone who has undertaken interview tasks as part of their SLA research will be nodding at the constant wise advice such as 'your eventual analysis will only be as good as the transcription it is based on' (p. 195).

Part V has four chapters, three of which deal with coding and analysing data, while the last chapter forms a conclusion to the book. Again, there is a refreshing sense of realism or lived experience in her writing. She talks about the 'two scary moments' in the course of any research: first, when you have carried out your field work and amassed questionnaires, tests and tapes, and second, when you have to begin your statistical analysis. Chapter 15 gives the practical example of using the CHILDES project as a model for transcribing and coding free speech; Chapter 16 takes the reader through basic coding and reporting of experimental data such as *C*-test scores. Very little knowledge of testing and statistics is assumed, yet she is able to lead the reader into using SPSS in only 16 pages with examples from her data on our old acquaintances, Albert L. and Gertrud U. This is followed by an equally practical chapter on interpreting data. I have rarely read such a clear and concise explanation of the *t*-test and how to use it.

Chapter 18, the Conclusion, is striking for the admission by Schmid that after she had tried to find predictor variables in her corpus of thirty-five speakers, such as use of German and age of departure, she was still at a loss. None of these factors appeared to make sense of her data. In the end, she says, you have to know your speakers and look in great detail at a few speakers who are key examples of a certain development. I think this is an important principle not only for LA research but also for SLA research, which is why I have recommended this book to all my students and to any colleagues who show interest when I tell them about Albert L. and Gertrud U.

What the author has succeeded in showing us is that good research is like a good detective story – you have a problem or question, you may have a hunch, you gather the evidence and look for clues, you analyse and test the evidence, you try to draw some conclusions. In addition, in order to succeed, you need good training in painstaking research/detective methods. While there is usually a lot of pain, frequent false trails and a great deal of frustration, in the end, there is also (one hopes) the thrill of revelation, resolution and insight.

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doi:10.1016/j.system.2012.04.005

Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of Research, Celeste Kinginger, Palgrave Macmillan, London (2009). 248 pp.

This book provides a thorough overview and thought-provoking critique of the existing research into language learning and study abroad. Although the epistemological lens through which Kinginger views this research has a clear impact on the conclusions she draws from their findings, the book offers a firm foundation of knowledge for researchers in this field.

The book is divided into six chapters, the first of which is divided into three sections. Section 1 defines ‘study abroad’ through a helpful differentiation of the construct from those of educational migration and linguistic tourism. The second section focuses on policy issues and demographic information pertaining to the three geographical areas which give rise to most study abroad learners (The U.S.A., the E.U. and Japan). Section 3 provides a useful overview of the book which highlights the chronological narrative adopted by the author. Kinginger likens this to unravelling the plot of a literary mystery and as a result of her approach the book is more reader-friendly and digestible than many existing critical reviews in the SLA literature.

Adhering to the chronological structure of the book, Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of research into the impact of study abroad on SLA. Focussing on two studies in particular (Carroll, 1967; Schumann and Schumann, 1977), Kinginger concludes that early research treated study abroad as equivalent to experimental treatment. That is, that time abroad was seen as a causal factor in itself, and thus the quality of the experience (and therefore the learning process undergone in that experience) was ignored. The author details studies post-1980 which measured holistic outcomes (e.g. ‘fluency’, ‘proficiency’, ‘listening comprehension’). She argues that more discrete areas of language proficiency better reflect the subtleties of the study abroad context because product-driven tools fail to capture the acquisition process observed in these studies. For example, with regard to proficiency as an outcome measure, Kinginger cites Freed (1990) and Milleret (1991) to critique the efficacy of the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) in their respective studies of study-abroad learners in France and Brazil. In both cases, the OPI lacked the sensitivity to measure growth, especially among higher levels.

In Chapter 3, Kinginger discusses research which has moved away from holistic outcomes towards the measurement of specific aspects of communicative competence such as strategic behaviour and discourse competence. For example, she cites Grieve (2007), a study which compared a group of L1 German learners of English on a study abroad experience in Australia with their at home (AH) counterparts in Germany in terms of acquisition of pragmatic markers of vagueness (e.g. hedges and approximators). Another study discussed by Kinginger which measures an explicit feature of communicative competence is that of Lafford (2004), who compares the communication strategies of learners of Spanish after a semester at home or abroad, using pre- and post-treatment role plays.

Whilst Kinginger concludes that the studies discussed in Chapter 3 as a whole result in greater external validity than those detailed in Chapter 2 (due to a broader spectrum of populations and contexts studied), and suggest that study abroad positively influences communicative competence in general, the author concedes that the findings highlight the significant impact of individual differences and even suggest that study abroad may have little effect in terms of