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## The Multilingual Nature of Cameroonians Living abroad: a curse or blessing in Language Attrition

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## ABSTRACT

The motivational factor of this paper stems from the diversity of voices, characters and personalities; I came to meet through telephone conversations of friends and relatives who have lived in Europe and America for quite some time. The multilingual landscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a product of continuing transnational and translocal mobility and exchange of people's information and products across physical and virtual boundaries. Knowledge of local and global international languages and cultures is necessary in order to gain access to a society's information, for the exchange of materials and to be able to communicate with people in our immediate social space and beyond. The problem that emanates from this paper is the claim that immigrants are cut off from Social Cognitive Casual Chains (SCCC) of the L1 community and no longer have support in stabilizing their L1 both in representations and practice.

This has resulted in the problem of remembering some words being “blocked” by a word from the other language and also unable to retrieve the native one. The attriter becomes hesitant and disfluent, using a lot of pauses like “erm” and “ulms”, repetition and self-correction in certain cases and collocation difficulties. Monika Schmid 2007 Language Attrition theoretical perspectives was used to guide this investigation for data collection and analysis. A mixed methodology was carried out for our data collection and the analysis was based on experimental (attriters living abroad) and controls living at home with the Bafut language as a case study. Results showed that attrition took place on the attriters living in the diaspora with the case of verbal fluency task that was investigated in some words like reptiles, wild animals, birds, insects and fruits. It was revealed that as a blessing, attriters will always have a nostalgic feeling of their L1 and as a curse, attriters may move to language shift and gradually to language loss due to long absence of L1. Migration takes a great deal of energy and courage, even under the most favourable of circumstances. No matter how great the benefits, prestige, income, new friends, there will always be costs: distance, estrangement, and occasional homesickness. Some of the worries that have been developed because of migration is language attrition.

**Keywords:** *Multilingual, Living abroad, Curse, Blessing, Language Attrition.*

## **1. Introduction and Background to the problem.**

The multilingual landscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a product of continuing transnational and translocal mobility and exchange of people’s information and products across physical and virtual boundaries. Knowledge of local and global international languages and cultures is necessary in order to gain access to a society’s information, for the exchange of materials and to be able to communicate with people in our immediate social space and beyond (Atoh 2020). The motivational factor of this paper stems from the diversity of voices, characters and personalities. I came to meet through telephone conversations of friends and relatives who have lived in Europe and America for quite some time. However, one thing began to stand out to me, the astonishing

range in their mother tongue, which has provoked attrition because of their long story in a foreign environment.

This paper therefore, anchors on the issue of language attrition affecting Cameroonians living abroad either negatively or positively. “Language attrition” describes the loss of, or changes to grammatical and other features of language as a result of declining use by speakers who have changed their linguistic environment and language habits (Monika Schmid 2011). In such a situation, the simplification clauses; some vocabulary items might fall into disuse and phonetic features may be restructured. These changes can be affected by factors in the speaker’s environment, and also by his or her attitudes and processes of identification.

Attrition can also be defined as the non-pathological decrease in proficiency in a language that had previously been acquired by individuals (Kopke and Schmid, 2004). This definition actually captures the meaning of the term as it is currently used in the field and the use of the word non-pathological illustrates that the decline in proficiency is caused not by illness nor by the deterioration of, or damage to the brain, but rather a change in one’s contact with the language(s) in question. The term language attrition then refers to the (total or partial) forgetting of a language by healthy speakers. This process of forgetting takes place in a setting where that language is used only rarely by immigrants, because the language of the country where they live has become the predominant medium of communication in everyday life.

The definition of attrition also makes it clear that the attrition phenomenon takes place in an individual rather than in groups or speech communities. The person undergoing attrition that is the attriter is typically bilingual or multilingual individuals whose L1 is being replaced by L2 or whose L2 is being replaced by L1 as the case may be. In such a situation, we may witness a kind of reversal of what we often observe in bilingualism, second language learners who do not use the L2 in exactly the way native speakers of the same language do. For example, immigrants often have a foreign accent, they may not apply all

grammatical rules consistently, and their vocabulary knowledge maybe less extensive than that of the native speaker. Many but probably not all of these phenomena are the outcome of the fact that the first or native language L1 exerts some degree of influence on L2, a phenomenon known as Cross-Linguistic Influence (CLI). If a situation where the second speaker is integrated into his or her new environment and uses the language on a daily basis, the L2 system may be extended, CLI may become less and less and eventually the L2 system may become native like or near native.

Psycholinguistic research has established that bilinguals or multilinguals process language in a way which is fundamentally different from that of monolinguals in that corresponding lexical items in all language systems are always active to some degree, no matter, which language is being used or accessed (Van Hell and Dijkstra 2002). It has also been established that bilinguals or multilinguals have “in-between” way of processing sentences and of structuring their phonetic space (Hernandez, Bates and Avila 1994). What is usually assumed in this case is that a number of necessary conditions have to be satisfied in order for L1 attrition to set in: emigration, extensive use of L2 in daily life, extremely reduced use of L1 in daily life plus a fairly long time span. Such a view of L1 attrition is compatible with recent views on overall multilingual language competence, which challenge traditional assumptions that traffic between language systems is normally one way. As Cook (2003) points out, it is probably the case that with the acquisition of an L2, any point in an individual’s life time, the L1 system is also fundamentally and irrevocably changed.

The neuro-linguist Paradis (2007; 125) puts this point succinctly; “attrition is the result of long term lack of stimulation”. He has developed a framework called Activation Threshold Hypothesis (ATH), which is very useful for language attrition research. The ATH is based on the fact that, while at some level, our brain probably retains and preserves most things that we have once known, it is easier to retrieve some of them from memory than others. We all know the phenomenon

that we simply cannot recall a name or a word, even though we know that we know it and this is referred to as the tip of the tongue state. This is because accessing something that is stored in memory needs a certain amount of neural impulses. The more the frequently the item has been used before, the less effort is needed to activate it again. However, if something is not access for a long time, the amount of energy that is necessary to access it again slowly goes up, that is, the Activation Threshold increases. A bilingual who speaks his or her second language everyday but has not used the first for a long time, therefore, has words and structures that belong to the L2, which are highly active and easy to access, but the corresponding bits of the L1 may have a very high Activation Threshold. This is why the L2 can often get in the way when a speaker attempts to use the L1. As Seliger and Vago (1991) posit that attrition will only begin to manifest itself in individuals who are highly advanced in and these L2 speakers have not used their first language for a long time. There is the tendency that as soon as a speaker becomes bilingual, there will be some degree of traffic from L2 or L1, that is, sounds, words and grammatical structures.

Therefore, attrition is not so much a linguistic phenomenon but a linguistic circumstance, and an attriter is someone for whom the language of the environment is different from the language she or he grew up with. Attriters not only know a second language and use it on a highly frequent or daily basis, they also experience a significance reduction in input use in their L1: the move to a different linguistic environment often isolates them to degree from other speakers of their native language. This lack of exposure may lead to changes which are not due to CLI, but to the fact that memories and knowledge become more difficult to access if they have not been used for a long time.

From this background, given above on language attrition and adopting Sperber and Hisclifeld's(2006) view, the problem that emanates from this paper is the claim that immigrants are cut off from Social Cognitive Casual Chains (SCCC) of the L1 community and no longer have support in stabilizing their L1 both in representations and

practice. This has resulted in the problem of remembering some words being “blocked” by a word from the other language and also unable to retrieve the native one. The attriter becomes hesitant and disfluent, using a lot of pauses like “erm” and “ulms”, repetition and self-correction in certain cases and collocation difficulties. At times, attriters develop foreign accent and have come to feel like foreigners in their own mother tongue. In this wise, language attrition is deeply upsetting, making attriters to often feel that they are alone, unique and somehow deviant from their community. The questions this paper seeks to answer are: What are the factors that can help immigrants to maintain linguistic norms on which L1 competence is based? Is L1 attrition seen as a logical consequence of integration into L2 community or is it felt as the loss of some aspect of an immigrant’s personality? Even if attrition as a process is based on brain mechanism and cognitive processes, external factors are not most likely to play a major role in determining whether there will be attrition, and to what extent, and what type of attrition will occur. Nevertheless, the predictions arising from these thoughts on the type of language use as a function of the cultural context of the immigrants are that, attrition may be either more performance oriented or more competence oriented (Kopke 2004).

## **2. Literature review and Theoretical framework.**

The growing interest in language attrition over the past years cannot be explained solely on the basis of the fact that most of us are in one way or another affected by the phenomenon. Rather, the focus in attrition has become more and more theoretical since research in this domain has contributed to shed light on the dynamics of bilingual and multilingual language competence and processing (de Bot 2006). The attrition literature has documented the selected nature of language attrition. Seliger (1996) shows how different structures of the language are affected by loss to different extent. He says this for a variety of reasons, notably flexibility, and vocabulary has typically been regarded as one of the most vulnerable areas affected by language attrition. In this

write up, we would realize that most attriters fumble with words not knowing which to use in L1 or L2 in several areas. The issue here is that the mental lexicon of an attriter is affected by a process that is not so much due to L2 and L1 interacting, but to L1 items becoming inaccessible; for instance, a speaker may forget certain words or experience difficulties in retrieving them from the memory. This is because bilinguals have to store and manipulate a great deal of information that is very similar e.g words that mean (nearly) the same or sounds (nearly) the same in both language systems. In a case, when the speaker wants to retrieve a word from memory, similar items will compete with each other, and sometimes an item from the non-selected language is stronger with L2 words replacing those of L1 leading to attrition.

In support of the above view by Seliger (1996), Andersen (1982) says as far as attrition in the domain of syntax and morphology is concerned, over time, particularly in typologically related languages L2 rules replace more complex L1 rules if they serve the same syntactic function. In such a situation, grammar at times becomes erratic and conversation becomes dysfunctional at times because the tendency may be to carry over syntactic structures from L2 to L1 due to cross-linguistic creativity. This cross-linguistic creativity comes as a result of comparable speakers in terms of sex, age at emigrants, length of residence in the L2 country. In the same view, de Bot, Gommans and Rossing (1991) found out that length of time in the L2 environment had a linear effect on L1 attrition especially in the instance where there was very little contact with L1 speakers. In other situations, time and contact interacted to produce a non-linear on L1 attrition.

Watkins and Melde (2010) say, generation and language proficiency have been linked to immigrant adaptation in traditional and contemporary theories of assimilation. Straight-line assimilation theory predicts greater L2 proficiency over generations and so posits that later generation children have an educational advantage over earlier

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generation. Portes and Rumbaut (1990) earlier posit that empirically, there is a clear pattern of changing L1 and L2 use over generations, with a strong tendency for a decline in L1 use in tandem with increase L2 dominance in latter generations compared to earlier generations. Such a movement between generations explains patterns of language preference and proficiency, for language acquisition and L1 attrition. The term attrition in this sense is used to describe the intergenerational loss in language competence as well as performance.

In a multilingual context like Cameroon, which is having a multitude of ethnic languages, this paper sort out the Bafut language as the L1 and English as L2 as the language of the diaspora, used by the same participants who have a notion of the two languages. The migrant speakers often face the problem of reversal in the utility of the L1 in the new environment, the migrants use of the L1 is confined to interactions with the rather restricted circle of migrants from the home country. At the time the rate of the attrition process is largely determined by a multitude of factors that may be linguistic, sociolinguistic, cognitive or biological in nature.

The theory that will be used in this paper is Schmid (2007) language attrition theoretical perspectives. Schmid specified in this theory that it is unanimously recognized in linguistic science that the L1 is different in many ways from any language learned after in life. Her theory is based on the fact that, a methodological problem lies in the relative dearth of longitudinal studies, that is, if we do not know what someone knew before, how then do we know what they have forgotten? Language attrition in this sense is therefore postulated on the basis of comparisons between cross sectional data (different people in different groups) between generations, first and second generations and between immigrants and those who stayed in the country or region of origin. Thus, the migrant's attitude towards L1 and L2 is generally considered in the attrition literature to the operative extra-linguistic factor in shaping the migrant's language development.

### 3. Methodology

In this investigation, a mixed method was used to carry out the data collection. As far as quantitative data is concerned in this write up, tasks could be preferable when it comes to language attrition (Schmid 2011), these include: lexical task, grammaticality judgement task and free speech task. But all these tasks were not taken into consideration in this investigation given that a lot has to be done to put these tasks together and also the length of this paper could not accommodate all the tasks. The author of this paper decided to narrow the data to the lexical task. Lexical task is made up of Picture Naming Task (PNT) and Verbal Fluency Task (VFT) respectively. Again, both tasks could not be considered in this investigation because the picture naming task do not find any differences in naming time or in accuracy between attriters and controls. So, the data was still narrow down to verbal fluency task, which had to be explained in the later part of this investigation within the procedure which this data was collected. For qualitative data, a few questions were designed to be administered to both attriters and controls.

Longitudinal design also known as pre-/post design which is the same group of people tested on at least two occasions typically before and after some event or treatment would have been good for this data. In the case of language attrition, this would involve investigating the proficiency of a sample of people before they emigrated (time A) and then again after the time span within which we assume that attrition has taken place and elapsed (time B). In theory, this looks like the best and cleanest way of establishing a point of reference, as it allows us to track the change in proficiency of individual speakers over time. In practice, however, such a setup is rife with difficulties. In order not to be laboured ourselves in longitudinal design of data collection, two groups of participants were set up, which were the experimental group attriters living in the diaspora and the control group speakers of the mother tongue living in the home country.

A control group is a sample established for the purpose of comparison: a population of speakers who are similar to experimental population in all aspects except the one which we assume would have caused the change we are looking for. For instance, all these factors were taken into consideration for the speakers (attriters and controls) who should have comparable background. In the case of this study, which the population of migrants is from Cameroon to diaspora having such a comparable background is not possible. Investigating migrants from virtually any country on the African continent it will be impossible to find participants who were not exposed to at least two or more languages from birth or childhood. Conducting research on speakers on such background is a bit complex and difficult but also interesting. Many African languages do not have a written tradition, which is already one of the complicating factors here, and this is the reason why verbal fluency task is preferable as a data for this investigation.

To sample out the population of attriters and controls, a purposive snowball sampling was used, and we came out with five (5) attriters (Experimental Group) and five speakers (Control Group) were chosen. For attriters, the length of residence in the diaspora ranges from fifteen (15) to twenty-five (25) years, and the controls have been permanently based in the home country. The attriters, which are the experimental group in the diaspora, left the home country between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Most of them understood most of the words before leaving the home country. Thus attrition occurs because of their long duration in contact with the home language though sparingly. As earlier mentioned above, the task for this investigation is the mental lexicon, which is discussed in this data as verbal fluency task. This is a task which is very simple to construct and administer, and requires no specialized equipment beyond a stopwatch and a recording device. Schmid (2007) states that stopwatch and recording device are instruments used in data collection of verbal fluency task in attrition. These instruments helped us to control the number of responses given within a certain time span (average across tasks). A mobile handset

telephone was also used as an instrument in all conversation in the collection of the data, which was set in a hand free during talking.

In this study, the participants of the experimental and control groups were given three (3) to five (5) minutes each in each case to name as many items as possible in the mother tongue (Bafut) as seen from the data below.

**Data for language Attrition in Bafut**

**Reptiles**

**Snakes**

Bafut	English
Tanɲəloo	Cobra
Mi'inə	Viper
No ɲgubə	Python
Akwɜɜni	Black mamba

**Lizards**

Madɜɜghə	Agama lizard
Neghəɲaghoo	Chameleon
Nkɔɲsi	Snake lizard
Fiɲkəfilɔɲsi	Wall gecko

**Frogs**

Findzoo	Toad
Nsakee	river frog
Ansoh	Frog
Asɔɲgəɲəkwi'ifɔ	Dart frog

**Others**

Kaa	Crab
Fibwe fi ɲgɔri	cat fish
Fibwe fi ɲga'a	Tilapia



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**Wild Animals**

Nsɛɛ	Elephant
Naangwe	Lion
Nfoŋ	Buffalo
Kunyamako	Boar/soar
Nɔɔ	Antelope
tswi	Deer
Nkaa	Monkey
Bu'u	Chimpanzee
Bu'umbɛɛ	Gorilla
Nkiabaŋ	Baboon
nəə	Squirrel
ndɔɔri	Grasscutter
nimaŋ	Bush cat

**Birds**

Akukuŋ	Owl
Maghoo	Crow
antjaŋə	Sparrow
tsɔ'ɔ	Partridge
nifii	Kite
bughəlimikuu	Dove
Bu'utəatii	Wood pecker
furifwaa	Duck
sarə	Weaver bird
tsɔwe	Sunbird

**Insects**

antanəna'a	Dragonfly
Nuu	Bee
nibɔŋbɔŋə	Ant
aŋwinə	Green grasshopper
nighɛghɛ	prey mantis
firinwiŋnə	Lady bird

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Mbiee	Palm weevil
firindʒi	Fly
Nya	Mosquito
mefimfu' u	Cockroach

**Fruits**

mangorə	Mango
Bia	Pear
Adzoo	Plum
Angwabaŋ	Guava
manchiə	Pineapple
lamʒi	Orange
mbaŋkəbə	Cocoanut
Mfaloo	Monkey fruit
aŋəri	Garden egg
mɪntente	Barth fruit

Each group of items for example, reptiles (snakes, lizards, frogs etc), wild animals, birds, insects, and fruits, constitutes at least ten (10) words and above. The instruction given was as such: 'I would like to see how many animals you can name within three (3) to five (5) minutes in your mother tongue (Bafut)' and this exercise was done repeatedly to all the items mentioned, both to attriters and controls. A telephone conversation was used in both groups to collect data from the various participants. This method was suitable for this study because it economized time and also takes the participants off the scene from the investigator. With the help of the stopwatch and recording device the data was collected hitch free from ten participants five attriters and five controls.

To further clarify verbal fluency task, we have formal fluency, where the participants is asked to name words starting with a certain 'letter', and semantic verbal fluency where the items to be named belong to a certain category, such as animals, insects, fruits and so on. This

write up is dwelled on the latter. Both types are used frequently in research on lexical access of difficulties to the brain damage, aphasia, dementia etc, where they (aphasia, dementia) have been shown to be highly reliable indicators of early deterioration. But for language attrition research the semantic verbal fluency task has, so far, been the preferred option (Keijzer 2007). This task is easy to use in most studies to find significant differences between attriters and controls. Scores often do not correlate with other measures of lexical access like picture naming task and lexical diversity in free speech fluency.

#### 4. Results and Discussion.

The tools that were used in this investigation for the collection of data were task and interview. The verbal fluency task was single out from the pictures naming task. In all five items (reptiles, wild animals, birds, insects and fruits) constituted the data for attrition. This data was collected from each participant in the exercise. The analysis of this data was done statistically in tables showing the number of responses per “attriter” and “control” in each group of words. The second analyses which were interview was administered to selected attriters and controls. The analysis of the questions took the form of content analysis based on the information collected from the interviewees.

We stated from our methodology that we were using verbal fluency task, so the first group of VFT is on reptiles.

**Task “A”** Stated that ‘I would like to see how many reptiles you can name within three (3) to five (5) minutes in your mother tongue (Bafut)’.

**Table 1 (Table without description ?)**

Groups	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	Totals
Experimental	5	4	6	5	7	27
control	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	Totals
	9	8	5	8	9	39

Table 1 above shows the codes per group. A1 stands for Attriter 1, A2 for Attriter 2 etc. On the other hand, C1 stands for Control 1 and Control 2 etc, respectively. Attriter 1 was able to score five (5) types of reptiles in the mother tongue (Bafut) within five minutes, Attriter 2 four (4) A3 six (6), A4 five (5) and A5 seven (7) making a total of twenty-seven (27) responses for the group. On the other hand, the control group which is home based had as follow: C1 nine (9), C2 eight (8), C3 five (5), C4 eight (8) and C5 nine (9) giving a total of thirty-nine 39. From the data we presented in our methodology, no attriter or control could name up to ten (10) reptiles in the mother tongue (Bafut), within five minutes. But C1 and C5 came closed to ten (10) with nine (9) each, followed by C2 and C4 with eight (8) each and C3 was the least in this group with five (5). For the experimental group the highest was A5 with seven (7) followed by A3 with six (6) and A1 and A4 with five (5) each and the least in this group was A2 with four (4). The over-all total presented in both groups is twenty-seven (27) for the experimental group and thirty-nine (39) for the control group. Thus attrition has taken place and has affected migrants living in the diaspora as far as the Bafut language is concerned.

**Task “B”** ‘I would like to see how many wild animals you can name within three (3) to five (5) minutes in your mother tongue (Bafut)’.

**Table 2 (Table without description ?)**

Groups	A 1	A 2	A 3	A 4	A 5	Totals
Experimental	7	6	8	6	9	36
Control	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	
	9	10	8	9	11	47

From table 2, A1 was able to name seven (7) wild animal in the mother tongue (Bafut), within five minutes, A2 six (6), A3 eight (8), A4 six (6) and A5 nine (9), which was the highest in this group and A4 with six (6)

in the group. A total of thirty-six (36) responses were collected from the five attriters in task 2 of naming wild animals. On the other hand, the control group had C1 with nine (9), C2 ten (10), C3 eight (8), C4 nine (9) and C5 eleven (11) making a total of (47) responses. In this group, the highest was C5 with eleven (11) responses with C2 (10) and C1 and C4 with nine (9) each and the least in the group was C3 with eight (8). From the results obtained in this task, it was clear that attrition took place and had an impact on the migrants as far as the mother tongue (Bafut) is concerned. Both attriters and controls improved in this task as compared to task "A" on reptiles.

**Task "C"** 'I would like to see how many birds you can name within three (3) to five (5) minutes in your mother tongue (Bafut)'.

**Table 3 (Table without description ?)**

Group	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	Totals
Experimental	7	6	5	8	5	31
Control	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	
	8	7	9	6	7	37

The naming item for verbal fluency in table 3 above are birds. In the naming process, A1 was able to score seven (7), A2 six (6), A3 five (5), A4 eight (8) and A5 five (5) giving a total thirty-one (31) responses collected from the five attriters. The control group on its part had responses as follows: C1 eight (8), C2 seven (7), C3 nine (9), C4 six (6) and C5 seven (7) making a total of thirty-seven (37). The results gotten from the table 3 have explored the probabilities of inferential statistics. This means that the differences in the two groups, that is attriters and controls had narrow scores, though the control did "better", however, the differences is very small and the number of attriters achieved a higher score than controls. Seven (7) and A4 scored eight (8) as against C4 with six (6).

**Task "D"** goes thus, "I would like to see how many insects you can name within three (3) to five (5) minutes in your mother tongue (Bafut)".

**Table 4 (Table descriptions ?)**

Groups	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	Totals
Experimental	8	7	6	7	8	36
Control	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	
	9	8	8	10	9	42

In table 4 above, A1 scored eight (8) responses and A2 seven (7), A3 six (6), A4 seven (7) and A5 eight (8) giving a total of thirty-six (36). The control group on the other hand, scored as follows; C1 nine (9), C2 eight (8), C3 eight (8), C4 ten (10) and C5 nine (9) making a total of 42 responses. In this, C4 scored the highest with ten (10) responses followed by C5 and C1 with nine (9) each respectively, and C2 and C3 with eight (8) responses each. In the experimental group A1 and A5 scored the highest with eight (8) each and A2 and A4 scored seven (7) each and the least in the group was A3 with six (6). The two groups had overall results as follows; attriters thirty-six (36) and controls forty-two (42). From the result obtained it was glaring that attrition has taken place to those in the diaspora.

**TASK "E"** "I would like to see how many fruits you can name within three (3) to five (5) minutes in your mother tongue (Bafut)".

**Table 5 (Table without description ?)**

Groups	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	Totals
Experimental	6	5	7	6	6	30
Control	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	
	8	7	8	6	7	36

From the results obtained from table 5 above A1 gave six (6) responses,

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A2 five (5), A3 seven (7), A4 six (6), and A5 six (6) making a total of 32 responses. The control group on the other hand had as responses C1 scored eight (8), C2 seven (7), C3 eight (8), C4 six (6) and C5 seven (7) making a total of thirty-six (36). As seen on table 3 the scored here are also narrow as in task "C", thirty-two (30) for attriters against thirty-six (36) for control. The over-all scores in the two groups emerged from C1 and C3 with eight each, and were seconded by C2, C5 and A3 with seven (7) each while C4, A1, A4 and A5 had six (6) responses each and the least of the two groups is A2 with five (5).

The over-all results from task "A" to "E" showed that attriters in task A twenty-seven (27) task "B" thirty-six (36), task "C" thirty-one (31), task "D" thirty-six (36) and task "E" thirty (30) making a total of one hundred and sixty (160) responses. The control had responses as follows: task "A" thirty-nine (39), task "B" forty-seven (47), task "C" thirty-seven (37), task "D" forty-two (42) and task "E" thirty-six (36) making a total of two hundred and one (201) responses. The over-all results showed that attrition had taken place on the attriters living in the diaspora this can be seen from the results obtained from the verbal fluency task curbed out in five group of words that is reptiles, wild, animals, birds, insects and fruits.

From the analysis gotten from the tables above, we discovered that some of the experimental group almost have the same level of responses with the control group. This is an indication that their stay in the diaspora is gradually affected. More so, before they (attriters) left the home country they understood and mastered most of these words. As a result of that a percentage rate was not defined on their ability of mastering the words that they have forgotten back at home. But as the result show, if they continue to stay longer in the diaspora the percentage of attrition will definitely increase as of this analysis.

In the methodological part of this write up, we did mention qualitative method, which were few questions designed for some attriters and controls. For the attriters, two questions were raised in relation to their long stay in the diaspora and how it has affected the

mother tongue, and which part of the language do they find difficulty when they want to express themselves in the mother tongue. For the controls, the question was raised on how versed are they when it comes to the mother and the challenges they faced back at home.

Those interviewed from attriters confessed that their long stay in the diaspora has affected their mother tongue (Bafut) tremendously. They said practice makes perfect, more often than not they use English in their daily transactions they can go for months at times without having a conversation for five (5) minutes using the mother tongue. In the aspect of which part of the language they are most affected, they said the vocabulary, because most often than not they code-mix when they have a conversation with the mother tongue and when the word in the mother tongue is not forthcoming, an English word is used to replace it. For the controls on the question how versed are they with the mother tongue and the challenges they encounter. Those that were interviewed showed a sense of confidence in the mastery of the mother tongue. However, they said that like any other language the Bafut language also has its own challenges. But they still have a better chance in the mastery of the language than attriters who have stayed long without using the language frequently.

Determining attrition in the area of lexicon lies in an analysis of hesitation pattern, given that at a normal rate, natural speech contains around four words per second (Hagoort and Brown 2000). An analysis of the increase of disfluency phenomenon in the process of language attrition therefore has considered carefully whether an increase can indeed be attributed to attrition, that is, to the loss or reduced accessibility of lexical items. One strategy for dealing with word-finding difficulties, which all speakers employ is to resort to disfluency marker. It is common to pause when one cannot locate a particular word or when one experiences a tip-of-tongue phenomenon, or to use a filled pause ("erm" "ehh").

From the topic of this investigation, it indicated that whether attrition was a curse or a blessing to those living abroad. The blessing as

well as the curse of language attrition studies is the intuitive appeal of the topic. It is a blessing because it makes attriters to have a nostalgic feeling of their L1. A blessing also, because it is usually easy to find speakers who are interested enough to invest their time in participating in language attrition research. It helps attriters to ease out a self-evaluation of their L1 or to know how much of the L2 has influenced their L1 as migrant. Thus, it is another area of linguistic science that linguists and non-linguists alike tend to find it fascinating. As a curse, attriters may move to language shift and gradually to language loss due to long absence of L1 in their daily activities. This may lead to loss of identity and as such attriters become strangers in their own L1 and such an experience is not good at all.

Attrition is felt most keenly where it is associated with loneliness or isolation. Although a migrant may be an active member of an L2 community in which she/he has a large circle of friends, there is always a sense of loss or nostalgia with respect to L1 community. Attrition can represent the tangible system of this disconnectedness and severance. Someone who has lived half way across the globe from their family and childhood friends may encounter an inexplicable feeling of estrangement when they meet them again after many years and this feeling is often shared by the ones who had stayed behind. The experience that can no longer interact as spontaneously and naturally in your L1 as before can serve as the point where such feelings can be concentrated. A familiarity that had been taken for granted has been lost, and to pin that loss on language can serve as a way to protect speakers from explanations that may be more threatening to identities.

Conclusively, we have to consider the possibility that attrition is also conditioned by internal and psychological factors such as identity, attitudes and emotions. Emigration is the disruptive event with far reaching implications. In some cases, it may be experienced as a positive occurrence, which brings more prestige and a better standard of living, while in others, it is an escape from persecution and violence demanding large personal and national sacrifices. These factors are very

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important for second language learning and may also have consequences for the process of attrition. Migration takes a great deal of energy and courage, even under the most favourable of circumstances. No matter how great the benefits, prestige, income, new friends, there will always be costs: distance, estrangement, and occasional homesickness. Some of the worries that have been developed because of migration is language attrition.

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