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Is it possible to forget your native language? Do we need to have contact with our mother tongue on an everyday basis to be able to use it forever? What aspects of language knowledge are most susceptible to language loss? What conditions facilitate the language loss? Are all people equally prone to the attrition process? These are some of the questions that underlie our research program. In a series of experiments, we will attempt to address how life abroad and immersion in a different language affects comprehension and production in our native language and whether a later re-exposure (e.g., due to a return to the speaker's home country) can result in regaining full L1 proficiency.

The goal of the current project is to better understand the bilingual mind and the impact of short- and long-term exposure. We will test native speakers of Polish who have knowledge of English and either reside in Poland (native language context) or in the UK (immersed in a second language). We will examine how long-term exposure to a second language impacts the ease with which the native language is used and examine the possible mechanisms of language attrition. Participants taking part in the experiments will be asked to name pictures in Polish and English, recognize translation equivalents, or read sentences. We will measure participants' accuracy and reaction time as well as register the electrical activity of the brain and eye movements during task completion. By combining different methodological approaches, we will be able to observe even subtle changes due to language exposure.

The outcomes of this and similar research projects should inform and shape both educational practice and language policy ( in Poland as well as in numerous countries where Polish is widely spoken). It will contribute to our understanding of the optimal circumstances that foster language maintenance in individuals living in multilingual environments.