

Language attrition as a problem for LADO

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Introduction

The assumption which underlies LADO is that anyone who was born and grew up in a particular linguistic community will not only be a *native speaker*, but will remain a native speaker for his or her entire life. That assumption, however, is not without its problems, as I will illustrate. Language attrition is what happens to people who grew up as native speakers of a certain language but then move away from the environment where that language is spoken. It is indeed possible that speakers begin to use their native language in ways which are different from what a monolingual native speaker might do. I review empirical evidence from recent investigations of this particular phenomenon. The issue of language attrition, however, has not yet been invoked as a problem for language analysis to my knowledge. Given the findings presented, I believe that knowledge of this research is highly relevant in the context of language analysis, with real and serious implications for LADO – in particular since this tool is used to assess the origin of children (ten Thije, 2008) and also to re-evaluate the claims of asylum seekers who have in the past been granted asylum (de Munnik, 2008).