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Slovaks in Czechia: L1 Attrition and L2 Acquisition in Two Mutually Intelligible Languages

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Abstract

The paper addresses both issues of first language (L1) attrition and second language (L2) acquisition in the context of two mutually intelligible languages from a psycholinguistic perspective. It summarises results of a study examining how native speakers of Slovak living long-term in Czechia process and produce Slovak and Czech cognates and noncognates. Two experimental sessions consisting of lexical decision task and picture naming task were conducted once with Slovak stimuli and once with Czech stimuli. The results showed that Slovak noncognates were processed and produced more slowly by Slovaks who use their L1 less, and their L2 more. Analogically, this subgroup processed and produced Czech noncognates relatively faster. Thus, the experiments give evidence of (a) L1 attrition (online processing difficulties), and (b) the shift towards L2 patterns depending on the amount of L1 and L2 use even in speakers of two very close and mutually intelligible languages.