**Teaching, Testing and Translation Team**
**Research Seminar Series**

University of Cyprus
Department of English Studies

## "Language Attrition: Mysteries of Bilingual Minds"

### Thursday, 16th of November 2023, 17:00, Microsoft Teams

## Prof Elena Schmitt
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**Abstract:** Language attrition has transformed significantly over the past three decades, evolving from a niche area of study into a prominent subfield within bilingualism research. This transformation has been driven by a profound shift in our understanding of attrition, transcending its initial association with first-generation bilingual immigrants. Emerging research suggests that the very essence of bilingual acquisition itself introduces changes to one's native language (L1). Schmid and Köpke (2019) propose that language attrition is an inherent consequence of the dynamic interaction between languages, impacting both the native language (L1) and the second language (L2) (Baladzhaeva, 2021). Attrition's effects are evident across language production, processing, and comprehension, influenced by the presence of another language in the mind. This presentation will provide an overview of the contemporary theoretical and methodological innovations within the domain of language attrition studies. It will highlight the changes in data collection techniques and tools, researched languages and language combinations, emerging theoretical frameworks, and data analysis methodologies. Furthermore, we will bridge the divide between language attrition studies and heritage language (HL) research (Van Dousen-Scholl, 2014). Drawing parallels between these two areas of inquiry, the presentation will highlight the similarities in the patterns of linguistic change observed in both attrition and HL studies among second-generation immigrant speakers (e.g., Polinsky, 2018). The lecture will conclude with a discussion of an inductive longitudinal case study of a Russian heritage language speaker whose lexical diversity and overall syntactic complexity in the HL remain intact after four years of disuse (Schmid & Jarvis, 2014). In summary, this presentation offers a glimpse into the evolving study of language attrition and its connection to heritage languages.

**Bio:** Elena Schmitt is a Professor of Applied Linguistics and TESOL in the Department of World Languages and Literatures at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, CT. She received a Ph.D in Linguistics from the University of South Carolina. Elena's research interests include first language attrition, heritage language studies, bilingualism, and language teacher training. Her recent publications appeared in the International Journal of Bilingualism, Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, and Linguistic Encyclopedia of Slavic Languages.

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