# Exploring Language Attrition Through Processing: The Case of Mising Language in Assam

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**Abstract :** The Mising language, spoken by the Mising community in Assam, belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. This is one of the smaller languages of the region and is facing endangerment due to the dominance of the larger languages, like Assamese. The language is spoken in close in-group scenarios and is gradually losing ground to the dominant languages, partly also due to the education setup where schools use only dominant languages. While there are a number of factors for the current contemporary status of the language, and those can be studied using sociolinguistic tools, the current work aims to contribute to the understanding of language attrition through language processing in order to establish if the effect of second language dominance is more than mere 'usage' patterns and has an impact on cognitive strategies. When bilingualism spreads widely in society and results in a language shift, speakers perform people often do better in their second language (L2) than in their first language (L1) across a variety of task settings, in both comprehension and production tasks. This phenomenon was investigated in the case of Mising-Assamese bilinguals, using a picture naming task, in two districts of Jorhat and Tinsukia in Assam, where the relative dominance of L2 is slightly different. This explorative study aimed to investigate if the L2 dominance is visible in their performance and also if the pattern is different in the two different places, thus pointing to the degree of language loss in this case. The findings would have implications for native language education, as education in one's mother tongue can help reverse the effect of language attrition helping preserve the traditional knowledge system. The hypothesis was that due to the dominance of the L2, subjects' performance in the task would be better in Assamese than that of Mising. The experiment: Mising-Assamese bilingual participants (age ranges 21-31; N= 20 each from both districts) had to perform a picture naming task in which participants were shown pictures of familiar objects and asked to name them in four scenarios: (a) only in Mising; (b) only in Assamese; (c) a cued mix block: an auditory cue determines the language in which to name the object, and (d) non-cued mix block: participants are not given any specific language cues, but instructed to name the pictures in whichever language they feel most comfortable. The experiment was designed and executed using E-prime 3.0 and was conducted responses were recorded using the help of a Chronos response box and was recorded with the help of a recorder. Preliminary analysis reveals the presence of dominance of L2 over L1. The paper will present a comparison of the response latency, error analysis, and switch cost in L1 and L2 and explain the same from the perspective of language attrition.

**Keywords :** bilingualism, language attrition, language processing, Mising language.