

# Pond, Wuta, Eewa, and Riefa – Lexical variation in Plautdietsch-English storytelling

Nora Vosburg, St. Olaf College

## Introduction

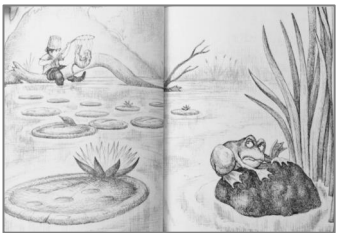
Lexical variation as norm; however, in minority language setting vocabulary accessibility in one's L1 likely susceptible to change and loss (effects of 'retrieval difficulties') (Ecke 2004; Schmid & Köpcke 2009)

### Research questions:

1. How does lexical variation relate to lexical semantics in a PD-ENG speech community of recent immigrants?
2. Does this lexical variation in Plautdietsch and English relate to length of exposure to English?

## Materials and Method

- Plautdietsch-English speakers in Kansas
- **Group 1: born in MX, to US after age 20, LOR in the US < 15 years**
- **Group 2: born in US or immigration before age 10, LOR in the US ≥ 15 years**



Data: nouns from storytelling from 2017; Classified into items with lower and higher lexical specificity

## Results

- General underspecification for both groups
- No variation for items of lower specificity
- Some variation for items of higher specificity

Group 1		Group 2		Group 1		Group 2	
Wotablaut	1	Lily pad	2	Pond	0	Pond	3
Blaut	4	Blaut	1	Brook	1		
Wotapaddel	1	--	2			River	1
grotet Blaut	1			Water	9	Water	2
--	4						

Observed lexical retrieval paths (albeit seldom), e.g.

- General term > Qualified general:  
Group 1: un dan sach er doa ne Pogg uh opp een **Blaut-grotet Blaut** saten  
Group 1: in the container- that glass container
- Wrong specification:  
Group 1: he climbs up a big -- **stone** (hesitates)
- Wrong specification with subsequent correct selection:  
Group 1: bee's **nest** > correct selection: bee **hive**

## References

**Cohen, Andrew.** 1986. Forgetting foreign-language vocabulary. Language attrition in progress, ed. by Bert Weltens & Kees de Bot, 143-158. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. **Ecke, Peter.** 2004. Language attrition and theories of forgetting: a cross-disciplinary review. International Journal of Bilingualism Vol. 8(3). 321-354. **Olshtain, Elite, and Margaret Barzilay.** 1991. Lexical retrieval difficulties in adult language attrition. First language attrition, ed. by Herbert W. Seliger and Robert M. Vago, 139-150. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## Discussion

- Tendencies across speakers show overall high proficiency of even specific semantic fields
- IF selection was "incorrect", then most frequently general term (2a)
- No group effects for lexical specificity
- Not systematically measured: other markers of retrieval difficulty for higher specificity items (length of pauses, hesitation, avoidance, abandonment, metalinguistic comments)

Many thanks to:

Time and stories from Mennonite people in Kansas (Copeland, Liberal, Meade, Montezuma, Sublette)  
Funding through the Penn State Liberal Arts External Incentive Award, Penn State Liberal Arts Research and Graduate Studies Office, and the Max Kade German-American Research Institute Summer Research Award

# Introduction

Lexical variation as norm; however, in minority language settings vocabulary accessibility in one's L1 is likely susceptible to change and (perceived) loss, often subsumed under effects of 'retrieval difficulties' (Ecke 2004; Schmid & Köpke 2009)

Study: Representation of lexical specificity in narrative data from a bilingual community in Kansas

Research questions:

1. How does lexical variation relate to lexical semantics in a Plautdietsch-English speech community of recent immigrants?
2. Does this type of lexical variation in Plautdietsch and English relate to length of exposure to English?

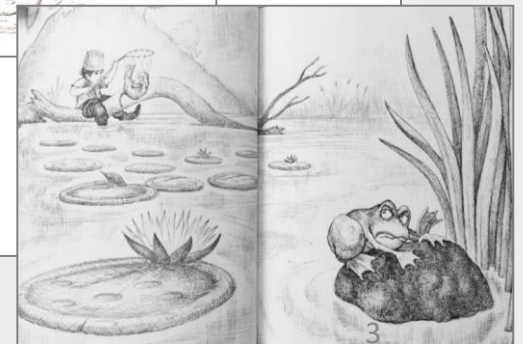
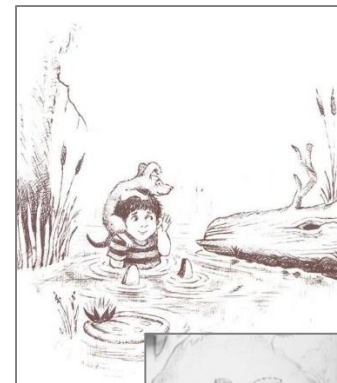
# Materials and Methods

Speech community: Plautdietsch-English speakers in Kansas (L1 PD)

- Group 1 (n= 10): born in Mexico (with no or limited exposure to English), migrated to US after age 20, LoR in the US: 11-28 years
- Group 2 (n=5): born in Mexico, immigration at age 2-9, early exposure to English (entering school system, latest age 9), LoR in the US: 18-36 years

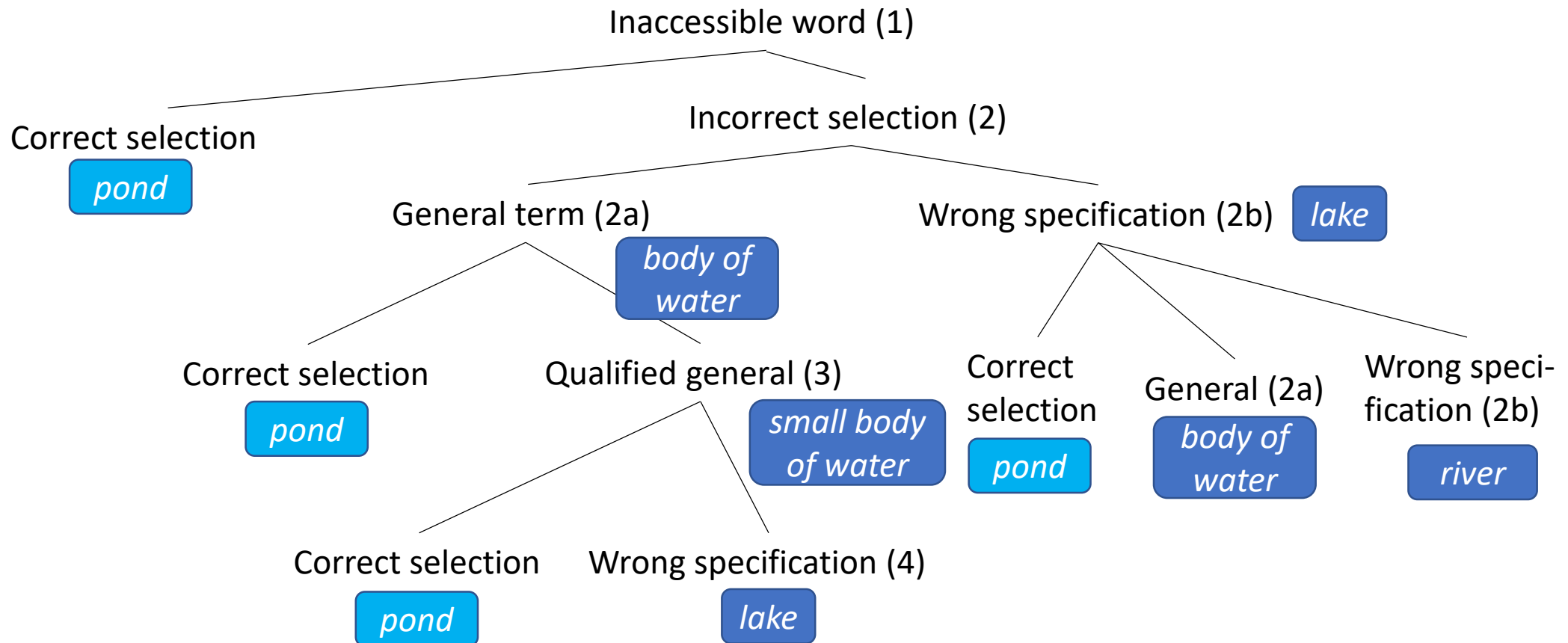
Data: storytelling from 2017 (PD n=7,311; ENG n=7,327)

- Extracted all nouns in Plautdietsch (n=1,145) and English (n=1,234)
- Classified into items with lower and higher lexical specificity (e.g. 'boy' vs. 'pond')
- Analyzed within Olshtain and Barzilay's (1991) hierarchical sequence of lexical retrieval options



# Lexical retrieval options in language attrition

Olshain & Barzilay (1991) observed overall pattern of access difficulty in long-term immersed English-Hebrew speakers in Israel:



# Results

Retrieval paths represented (albeit seldom), e.g.

- 2a General term > 3 Qualified general:

Group 1: *un dan sach er doa ne Pogg uh opp een Blaut- grotet Blaut saten*  
and then he saw a dog there sitting uh on top of a leaf- a big leaf

Group 1: *in the container- that glass container*

- 2b Wrong specification:

Group 1: *bee's nest* > correct selection: *beehive*

- 2b Wrong specification:

Group 1: *he climbs up a big -- stone* [hesitates]

# Results

- General underspecification for both groups > task effect?
- Items of lower lexical specificity: no variation
  - Plautdietsch examples: *Ama* (bucket), *Boom* (tree), *Steen* (rock), *Jung* (boy)
  - English examples: *boy*, *dog*, *window*, *hole*
- Items of higher lexical specificity: small group differences
  - Examples: WOTABLAUT (lily pad)

Group 1		Group 2	
Wotablaut	1	Lily pad	2
Blaut	4	Blaut	1
Wotapaddel	1	--	2
grotet Blaut	1		
--	4		

## POND

Group 1		Group 2	
Pond	0	Pond	3
Brook	1		
		River	1
Water	9	Water	2

# Discussion

- Tendencies across speakers show overall high proficiency of even specific semantic fields
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ECKE, PETER. 2004. Language attrition and theories of forgetting: a cross-disciplinary review. *International Journal of Bilingualism* Vol. 8(3). 321-354

OLSHTAIN, ELITE, and MARGARET BARZILAY. 1991. Lexical retrieval difficulties in adult language attrition. *First language attrition*, ed. by Herbert W. Seliger and Robert M. Vago, 139-150. New York: Cambridge University Press.

SCHMID, MONIKA, and BARBARA KÖPKE. 2009. L1 attrition and the mental lexicon. *The bilingual mental lexicon. Interdisciplinary approaches*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko, 209-238. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters.

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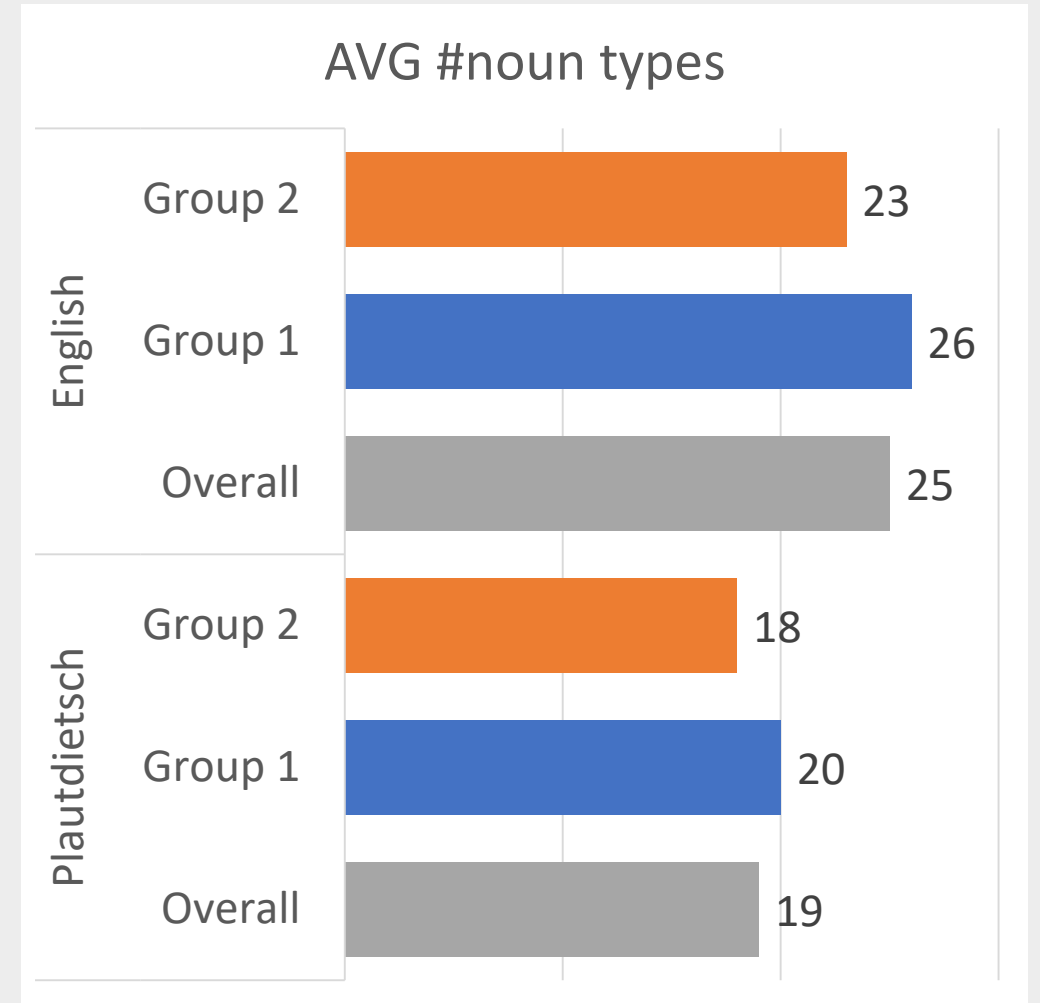
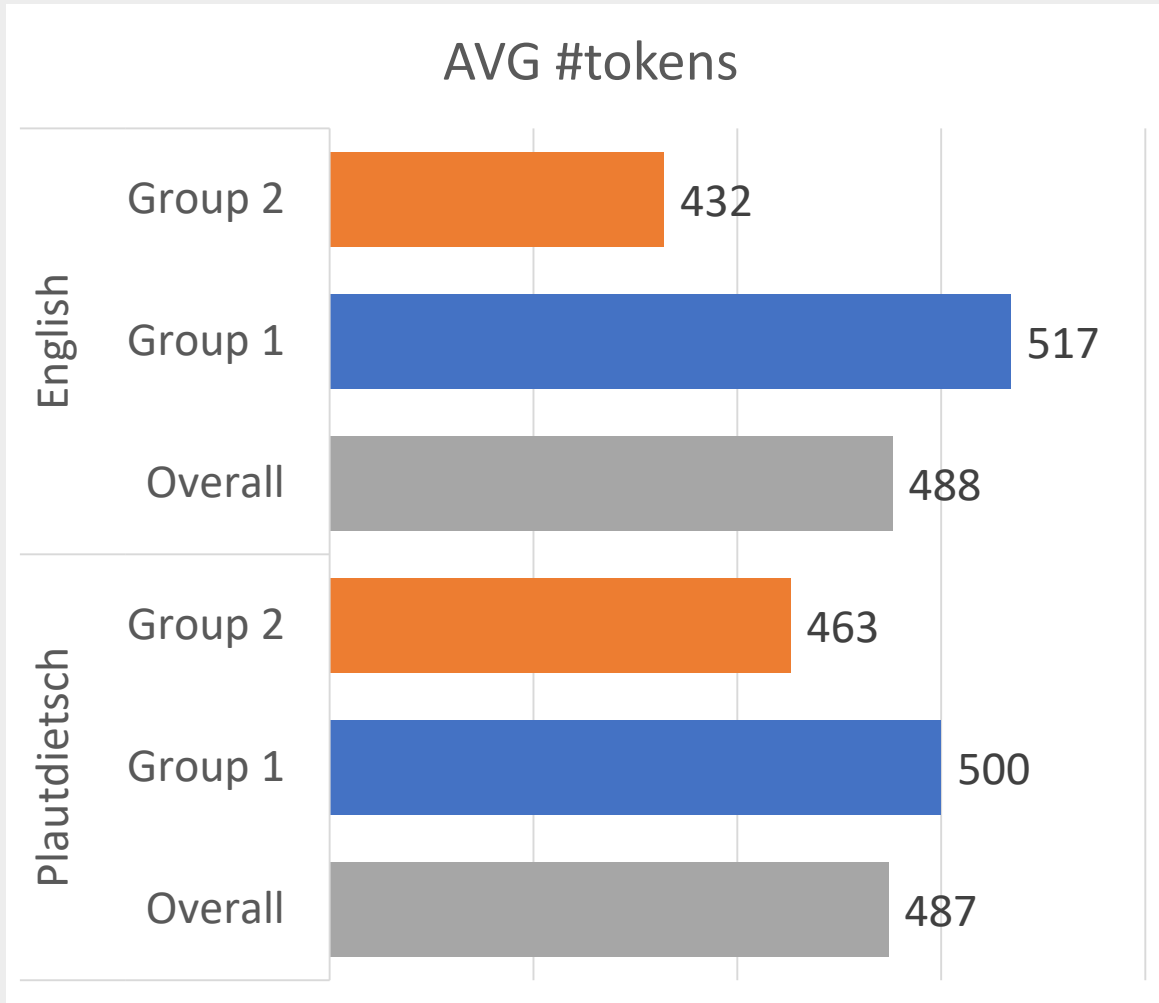
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Thank you for listening/reading!



# Results



# Other Results

- Not many instances of calques, but if, then ENG → PD, in both groups:

hee moakt sien Mind up (Group 2) // soo hee haud something en sien Mind (Group 1)

- Code-Switching only in PD stories: un hupst dee hupst de Pogg uhm von - I don't know how to say that in English in German a lily pad - hupst dee doarauf (Group 2)
- Paraphrase: doa haud hee sien - sien Städ wua hee jleicht to feschen (=SEE)