ENDANGERMENT ABROAD:

EVIDENCE FROM NEO-ARAMAIC POLITENESS, METAPHORICITY AND IDIOMATICITY

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To the soul of my mother, with love.

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I also benefited greatly from Victor Kuperman's expertise in statistics, particularly his acumen to manipulate R software. Advice and comments offered by Catherine Anderson and

Abstract

This thesis examines Neo-Aramaic as an endangered language in the diaspora. It sheds some light on some linguistic and pragmatic aspects that have received little scholarly attention to date in Semitic literature, language endangerment and first language (L1) erosion in language contact studies. This thesis also draws attention to the fact that research on North Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) dialects needs to take into account that language (pragmatics) is an emergent phenomenon, especially in contract situations. Linguists need to shift gears and start empirical research that is derived from contextualized language use. In three studies, the thesis addresses the role that acculturation plays in molding L1 communicative competence and, in turn, macro-linguistic components of language, such as idioms, metaphors and politeness strategies.

Chapter 2 deals with animal-based metaphors as conceptual categories belonging to a rudimentary level of knowledge. We report evidence which shows that Neo-Aramaic-English bilinguals (NA-E) failed to provide interpretations of culturally distinct animal-based metaphors that align with the interpretations of older NA speakers. This finding indicates that the cognitive process of conceptualizing animal metaphors is motivated by the way NA-E bilinguals perceive the world around them in an environment where NA is considered the language of an ethnocultural group. This shift in the NA-E bilinguals' cognition represents a departure from the concerted conceptualizations of their L1 culture.

In chapter 3, we examined NA-E bilinguals' comprehension of two sets of decomposable and non-decomposable NA idioms obtained from older NA speakers and chosen on the basis of their high familiarity. NA-E bilinguals' performance showed a marked decline on both decomposable and nondecomposable task compared to Canadian-English monolingual speakers (CE). The evidence reported here shows a high degree of L1 erosion in figurative competence which is, to a large extent, dependent on cultural beliefs and conventions.

The study in chapter 4 documents the effect of acculturation on NA-E bilinguals' behavioural competencies in terms of separateness and connectedness politeness strategies. Chapter 4 foregrounds the idea that NA speakers represent a collectivist culture whereas CE speakers belong to individualistic cultures. The study shows that NA-E bilinguals diverge from the politeness patterns of their cultural group, but their shift is compatible with the individualistic cultural norms. It provides fresh evidence that cultural adaptation to the majority group shapes cultural cognition and thus prompts L1 speakers to approximate L2 cultural preferences.

Taken all together, the findings of this thesis demonstrate that language erosion is not limited to the structural aspects of language (morphosyntax and phonology), but it extends, in a regressive fashion, to include more advanced skills that are necessary to develop native-like proficiency. By and large, language atrophy is not necessarily caused by mere linguistic factors, but rather by a number of extralinguistic factors and culture is one of them.

Declaration of academic Achievements

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of my work. The work presented here is a 'sandwich' thesis. Three of the chapters (2-4) included in the thesis have been accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Two of them (3-4) have been published and the third one (2) is in press. The Thesis, does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe or violate any rights of others as I am the sole author and owner of the copyright in my thesis. I designed, collected and analysed the data gathered for the three studies. However, I, in all fairness, benefited from my supervisor's (John Colarusso) insightful comments. Also, discussions with my supervisory Committee members Magda Stroinska and George Thomas about pragmatics and sociolinguistic were very fruitful.

Chapter 2 (in press) Language attrition in bicultural bilinguals: Evidence from Neo-Aramaic animal metaphors. *Journal of Languages and Culture*, 8(8), 95-109. (2017).

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Chapter 4 'The effect of culture learning on Neo-Aramaic: Empirical evidence from politeness theory' appeared in *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 4(2), 47-78. (2017).

Additional achievements

I wrote another research article on Neo-Aramaic antonyms that has been accepted for publication in the journal of *Linguistic Discovery*. It was not be included in this thesis because it was theoretical rather than empirical in nature.

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Introduction

1.1 Is Neo-Aramaic on the verge of extinction?

It is widely believed that severe pressure, major upheavals, and successive incursions greatly influence language vitality and contribute to its obsolescence. Plainly, such circumstances inspire and promote intense angst and leave individuals to wallow in consternation. The literature is full of examples about how indigenous people in Australia and North America had to struggle, suffer and finally succumb to the tribulations of colonial powers which resulted in the loss of their native languages. In the Middle East, a similar tragic scenario was and continues to be experienced by Neo-Aramaic (NA) speakers in Mesopotamia. While ethnicity and race were behind language endangerment and death in many regions, religion was the main impetus behind the most turbulent times in NA's modern history. Modern NA, a descendant of older Eastern Aramaic dialects, comprises a number of dialects with a varying degree of mutual intelligibility due to: first; some distinct phonetic, lexical and morphosyntactic features; second; speaker's attitude and degree of motivation to understand other dialects. In Iraq, for example, these dialects are the vernacular of Iraqi Christians and hence the term the Iraqi *koine*. In the oriental literature, the term NENA (Northeast Neo-Aramaic) dialects is used by Semiticists to refer to modern NA. These dialects are spoken by Christians in northern Iraq, southeast Turkey, northeast Syria and western Iran. Here, we deal with two Iraqi Christian NA dialects spoken in Bartella and

Mangesh. Structural differences (e.g., lexical or phonological) stemming from dialectal variation will not affect the outcomes of our study. Jewish NA dialects are not covered in this study.

When we talk about minority or heritage languages, other immanent issues come to the fore, including but not limited to, language attrition, language endangerment, language loss, language moribundity, language death, language dormancy (for euphemistic purposes), language maintenance, bilingualism and second language acquisition (SLA). One of the catastrophic outcomes that globalization has brought about is the decline in the number of languages spoken on our planet. Krauss (1992) provided a gloomy picture evinced in his alarming calculations: "the number of languages which, at the rate things are going, will become extinct during the coming century is 3,000 of 6,000" (p. 6). In the same article, Krauss (1992) dramatized the facts about language endangerment by stating that "the coming century will see either the death or the doom of 90% of mankind's languages" (p.7).

It is worth noting that language death is not a new topic because a few linguists early on sensed the pressing need for documenting and revitalizing threatened languages (see Cust, 1899; Swadish, 1948). Language death, a phenomenon that has attracted scholarly attention only in the second half of the 20th century (see subsequent work by Dorian, 1973, 1977, 1978, 1981), has gained new momentum in the third millennium due to the rapid and constant advances in technology and radical changes in the geopolitical landscape of many regions. For some phoneticians, recording the sounds of dying languages for posterity is the main task of a linguist. Ladefoged (1992) stated that a Dahalo speaker was happy and proud that his son did not speak his own first language but learnt Swahili instead, "[the father] did not seem to regret it" (p.811). More than 25 years later, learning and using English by NA children is met with the highest form of approbation by many parents- English is a vehicle of betterment for their children.

Conspicuously, recording alone is not a panacea for endangered languages, some inter- and intrapersonal communicative activities, cultural cognition and communicative competence cannot be, even theoretically, recorded or tracked as efficiently and easily as language segments. The approach adopted in this thesis does not advocate such a parochial view toward endangered languages, but embraces the idea that language death is likely to result in losing an irretrievable portion of the human intellectual capacity and diminishing culturally agreed-upon values and norms.

Some linguistic factors are involved to some extent in language vitality and language shift, but cross-linguistic influence alone does not account for and cannot be held responsible for the imbalanced states of the languages in question which results from language contact. However, less immediately apparent extralinguistic factors: temporal (i.e. age at acquisition time), spatial (i.e. setting where acquisition occurs), economic, attitudinal, sociocultural, cognitive, and sociopolitical play a greater role. Therefore, the subsequent chapters will cast some light on such extralinguistic factors to document a few language aspects (idioms, metaphors and politeness) that are tightly bound with culture, cognition and environment. Such macro-linguistic aspects, we hope, are expected to help us know more about the process of learning and developing communicative competence among minority language speakers and effect of adopting the cultural patterns of the majority language. These aspects have been hardly touched upon in studies dealing with language endangerment and language attrition.

1.2 NA in home and diaspora: a double-bind situation

We will give a brief overview of NA's status quo in Iraq and then move to its standing in the diaspora to exhibit how the level of NA attrition and endangerment has accelerated in both

settings. Languages usually lose some of their structural complexity and become streamlined when they are more exposed to the influence of other languages- a situation not limited to the worldwide diaspora but extends to home as well. Under this assumption, it is permissible to say that the number of speakers, relative to other factors, may not have a great impact on language vitality. A monolingual community is not in danger of extinction due to lack or minimal contact with other languages. For example, the Pirahã language of Amazonia in Brazil has less than a thousand speakers but since the Pirahã people may not have the motivation to make contact with or learn Portuguese, the extant Pirahã is not at risk of loss in the near future (see Everett, 2005). In Iraq, some fifty years ago, NA was more localised and had fewer loan words than today because it did not have as much contact with Iraqi Arabic (IA), the official language, as it does these days. The majority of NA speakers in Nineveh plain (Northern Iraq) did not speak IA as fluently as today's speakers do.

Furthermore, NA is increasingly losing its status as the first language of communication among young speakers, who are still in their homeland, due to their heavy reliance on IA in their daily written and spoken interactions. NA speakers consistently learn IA at kindergartens, schools, colleges and universities in the middle and south of Iraq, because most of the curricula are written and taught in IA. In the north, Kurdish is the official language and NA speakers must learn it in order to pursue their academic and professional goals. Thus, hundreds of words, probably more, have been replaced by their IA equivalents. Ironically, NA has become more intelligible to IA native speakers than it was four or five decades ago. Because of the intensive use of IA on a daily basis, they excel in it at the expense of NA. Arabic has practically replaced NA as the first language in various daily interactions. Sadly, the young generation of NA speakers can be considered native IA speakers rather than NA because they read, write, and

communicate more efficiently in IA. Churches have tenaciously tried to maintain and revitalize the language by educating children but what is taught at churches is the liturgical Classical Syriac, which is different from NA.

As we shall see below, the young generation of NA diaspora does not seem to be motivated or inclined to employ their mother tongue in day-to-day interchanges which reflects their incapability of developing NA native-like skills. Speakers of immigrant languages are customarily divided into three groups and this division delineates the linguistic borders between each group. The first group (i.e. generation) is the parents who arrived first in the destination country, Canada, from their home country; the second group is the children who were born in their native country; children born in the destination country (i.e. grandchildren of the first group) are the third group. The first group learns the majority language but their first language remains dominant. The language environment takes its inevitable toll on the third group which usually excels in the majority language but flounder for words and expressions through conversations conducted in their first language. Our concern in this thesis is the second group which experiences and demonstrates ambivalent attitudes toward their first language.

Unsurprisingly, in Canada, for example, NA has ceded its standing to the powerful rival, namely, English; therefore, NA speakers do not have the chance to obtain any serious schooling in their mother tongue. English is the language of the media, government, education, and most importantly business. (i.e., it is the official language). At first glance, NA, anSemitic language, does not seem to be in danger in a contact situation where the competing language is typologically different, which may help in keeping transfer to a minimum in some structural aspects. For example, while English's concatenative morphology attaches morphemes sequentially, the NA morphology is basically nonconcatenative or discontinuous where the

consonantal root is modified according to certain phonological rules. Besides, the Canadian society, founded on multiculturalism, adopts an inclusive approach which promotes multilingualism. As part of their all-embracing policy toward immigrants, the federal government, in 1971, formed the Non-Official Languages Study Commission. After 6 years the Ontario government introduced the Heritage Languages Program to be administered by school boards. A society tolerant of linguistic differences and culture diversity must have been a boon for revitalizing NA. Unfortunately, a closer look at the current situation of NA forebodes the future of this language. Unlike other minority or heritage languages (e.g., Arabic, Mandarin, Hebrew, Spanish, etc.), NA is not a written language. Then, it can be claimed that Saturday School Program (a two-and-a- half-hour program) that is held once a week is not a suitable venue to learn NA. Also, the program teaches liturgical Classical Syriac which is quite distinct from the spoken NA vernacular, and focuses on hymns and prayers to prepare the children for their first communion. Apparently, the language environment of NA children has doomed their chances to learn the language of their parents.

1.3 NA speaker: bilingual or heritage speaker or both?

In this section, we explain what heritage language is, whether NA is a heritage language and why the term heritage was not employed here. The first things that come to our minds when we hear the term heritage are possessions or properties (abstract or concrete) transmitted from ancestors to posterity. In addition to language, the culture, traditions, and other folkloric material handed down from one generation to another are basic component of heritage and probably more important and valuable in many communities. In the previous section, we referred to the inception of the term heritage language in Canada for the purpose of teaching immigrant children. After two decades, American scholars adopted the term in the field of language policy

(Cummins, 2005, p.585). However, Cummins (2005) noted that in 1994 heritage language was dropped by Ontario policy makers and replaced with international language. When it comes to language, immigration, and demographic minority, terminology becomes a controversial issue among scholars working in the field of applied linguistics, language policy and education. Hornberger (2005) states that heritage language is a neutral term according to some language policy scholars such as Krashen (1998) and Tse (1997, 2001):

> [W]hile scholars and educators in the USA had relatively recently turned to the term heritage language (HL) as a neutral and inclusive alternative to the terms minority, indigenous, immigrant, ethnic, second, or foreign language, Australian policy and practice had for at least a decade been using the term community language (CL) to refer to this same range of language resources in their national context. (Hornberger, 2005, p.102)

More recently, Montrul (2016) counterbalances the image depicted by Hornberger (2005) and others by postulating that heritage language "is hardly neutral because it has sociopolitical connotations related to the distinction between majority and minority languages" (p13). In Iraq, Kurds, for example, were a demographic minority (4-5 millions) until 2003; Kurdish was not officially recognized and did not have a high social status. After 2003, Kurdish, while still spoken by an ethnolinguistic minority, became the second official language and language of education and the media. Consequently, minority and majority are relative terms and so is heritage language- the definition of these terms is closely tied to power and context. That said, NA, Mandarin, and Arabic are minority and heritage languages in Canada. Languages of ethnic or national groups, for example NA and Kurdish are minority and heritage languages in Iraq, whereas indigenous languages, such as Warlpiri in Australia, are also minority and heritage

languages. In other words, if the speakers of a language constitute a demographic minority, their language in that specific context will be considered a heritage language regardless of power, status, and sometimes officiality. In spite of this controversy, heritage language acquisition (Gollan, Starr & Ferreira, 2015; Lynch, 2003; O'Grady, Lee, & Lee, 2011), and heritage language education and teaching (Christian, 2008; Duff, 2008; Fishman, 2006; Kondo-Brown, 2010) have emerged as a nascent but thriving field of study. It is ironic that the term was first coined, used and dropped by Canada and then adopted by other scholars to establish a new subfield of knowledge.

As we showed earlier, other terms are also used or adopted by different countries or scholars to describe heritage language such as ethnic, ancestral, indigenous, minority, community, international, and immigrant language. To avoid all the unnecessary terminological issues the term heritage language has raised, we use first language (L1), minority language and native language to refer to NA, whereas English is the second language (L2), dominant or majority language. The use of heritage language/speaker in this thesis is therefore limited to the introduction. Apparently, there is a correlation between native language or L1 and second language (L2), and minority and majority language- they can coexist in contact situation and influence each other to varying degrees and in syntax, phonology and morphology. Because NA speakers learn English in a naturalistic situation before puberty, they are bilinguals by definition (henceforth NA-E bilinguals). In line with this perspective, Montrul (2016) conspicuously stated that "[i]n essence, this is a bilingual situation, and heritage speakers are bilingual individuals" (p.16). A reiterated version of her earlier definition is: "early bilinguals of minority language" (Montrul, 2008, p.161). Similarly, for Benmamoun, Montrul and Polinsky (2013) "heritage speakers [...] are bilingual speakers of an ethnic or immigrant minority language, whose first

language often does not reach native-like attainment in adulthood" (p.129). Another definition that has been quoted quite often in the literature is Valdés' (2000) which shows that heritage language speakers are basically 'sequential' (see below) bilinguals: "a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language" (p.1).

Theoretically speaking, every spoken language is a heritage language for its speakers because it represents their cultural norms, and tightly binds them with their histories. It can be claimed, then, that every bilingual individual is a heritage speaker (except simultaneous bilinguals), but the entailment that every heritage speaker is a bilingual individual does not hold. Since NA-E bilinguals are not simultaneous bilinguals, is it important to explicate the difference between simultaneous and sequential bilingualism. Simultaneous bilinguals demonstrate equal linguistic competence or balanced proficiency in different domains of the learned languages (speaking, listening, reading and writing) because they are exposed to both languages from birth (Meisel, 1989; Montrul, 2016). The two languages must have equal social and political status and be officially recognized (e.g., Arabic and Kurdish in the north of Iraq). Sequential bilinguals (e.g., NA-E bilinguals) exhibit signs of dominance and native-like mastery in one of the languages which is usually the majority language (Castilla, Restrepo & Perez-Leroux, 2009). Due to consecutive chronological order of learning the dominant language at approximately age 5, the home-language (i.e. heritage language) becomes the *weaker* language and the bilingual individual fails to attain native-like proficiency in it (for more about weaker language see Bonnesen 2009). Both sequential and simultaneous bilinguals share the same bicultural and bilingual milieu in their childhood and the only difference lies in the inception of exposure to this dyadic linguistic and cultural realm. This chronological order of exposure (language and culture)

results in attaining different levels of language proficiency depending on the quality of language used in interpersonal interchanges and contexts where one language is used more than the other. In a similar vein, Tarone (2010) states that "if learners are only exposed to one social setting, the language variety used in that setting is the only one they learn" (p.56). This exposure directly influences the process of linguistic and communicative competence development in both languages and plays a significant role is shaping the bilingual individual's cognition. Imbalance in acquisition is also evidenced by Grosjean's (1997, 2010) Complementarity Principle which fits well in this context but focuses only on the variation in bilingual's grammatical knowledge (morphosyntax, semantics, and phonology) and language proficiency (speaking, listening, reading and writing). Since simultaneous bilingualism (balanced) implies attaining a monolingual-like command of both languages in all aspects of grammatical knowledge and communicative competence, it is, more often than not, an onerous task to find bilinguals satisfying such stringent criteria. Anecdotal and empirical evidence from bilingualism research suggests that sequential (unbalanced) bilingualism is the norm. While it is a big challenge to attain a native-like command of both languages in all aspects of linguistic competence, the challenge of achieving excellent command of communicative or pragmatic competence in two languages remains even bigger.

1.4 Culture and cognition lead the shift

It has been widely argued that age of onset (AoA) of L2 acquisition determines and influences to a large extent the development and future stability of L1. Converging evidence has been accumulating from recent research in second language acquisition, heritage language and language attrition that extralinguistic factors are likely more implicated than other cross-

linguistic factors in bilinguals' L1 stumbling development. However, most of the research to date has neither tackled the untrodden areas we mentioned above nor adopted a cultural or cognitive approach to explore L1 instability, which may partially explain the variability in some of the reported results. Hulsen (2000) examined language use between and within three generations (see above) of Dutch immigrants in New Zealand by measuring the time of lexical retrieval and its accuracy in comprehension and production (cf. Ammerlaan, 1996; Pelc, 2001). She employed two psychological tasks: picture naming and picture-word matching. The results showed that while receptive skills were intact in first generation, other productive skills were considerably decreased. Less accuracy and slower retrieval time characterized the performance of second and, to a great degree, third generation speakers, particularly in the production task (i.e., picture naming task).

Unsworth (2013) pointed out that the amount of exposure is more important than age of onset in attaining knowledge of grammatical gender in Dutch. Polinsky (2004) investigated incomplete learners or heritage speakers of Russian (L2 English acquisition began at 4-5 years), and uninterrupted or monolingual speakers of Russian. She recorded reaction times for both groups for three classes of words: verbs, nouns and adjectives. The incomplete learners were also tested on a translation (from Russian into English) task of the same verbs, nouns, and adjectives used in the previous task. Incomplete learners of Russian differed significantly from uninterrupted speakers who were very balanced in their recalling of these categories. On the other hand, incomplete learners showed a bias toward verbs in both word recognition and translation task. In other words, the performance on verbs was the highest on all measures. Montrul and Foote (2014) did not find a similar verb bias neither in adult Spanish heritage speakers nor L2 learners of Spanish for words learned early in life. They concluded that lexical

access is not determined by age only but also language knowledge. In the same vein, Kupisch, Akpinar, and Stöhr (2013) found that German-French simultaneous bilinguals who grew up in France and their peers who grew up in Germany did not differ in gender agreement which is the outcome of morpho-syntactic rules, but reported some errors in gender assignment which is governed by the lexicon. Kupisch, Belikova, Özçelik, Stangen and White (2017) examined knowledge of the definiteness effect in Turkish-German simultaneous bilinguals and their sequential bilinguals. Kupisch et al. (2017) found that age of acquisition was irrelevant to acceptability judgment tasks, bilinguals in both groups were able to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences as regards the definiteness effect with existential constructions in each language. Bylund (2009) argues that AoA of L2 (Swedish) acquisition affects L1 (Spanish) event conceptualization patterns. He found a positive correlation between age and L1 attrition- the older the subject when exposed to L2, the milder the attrition in adulthood. Bylund (2009) points out that L1 exposure and use can assist young bilingual speakers in maintaining their L1 event conceptualization patterns.

The preceding examples, in the paragraphs above, show how research has focused on age and neglected other extralinguistic factors that contribute greatly to L1 decline. These studies have also tackled aspects of grammatical knowledge, but neglected macro-linguistic constellations such as idioms, metaphors and politeness theory. Macro-linguistic knowledge is not cumulative in nature like microlinguistic competence which is based on previously acquired bits and pieces of language. For example, a learner of English has to learn discrete lexical items and then glue these parts (i.e., nouns, adjectives and verbs) together to form meaningful sentences. Before this stage is achieved, the learner acquires segments and later starts stringing them together to form larger chunks of sounds according to phonological rules of English. The

learning process begins with phonetics and phonology and ends with syntax and semantics- the grammatical knowledge is acquired in a piecemeal fashion. On the other hand, macro-linguistic knowledge does not necessarily follow such a fragmentary and sequential order of acquisition. The acquisition of idioms, metaphors, or politeness strategies does not follow the hierarchical structure of language acquisition. These fully-fleshed out configurations derive their meaning from the cultural and cognitive adaptations the members of a speech community acquire and pass over from one generation to another. Knowing the grammatical information about the component parts of an idiom, such as *kick the bucket* does not usually provide a vital clue to guess its overall meaning. Moreover, having previous knowledge about *kick the bucket* will not necessarily lead the language learner to felicitously interpret other similar expressions: *buy the farm*, *cash in chips*, *bite the dust* or *shuffle off this mortal coil*.

Living in a culturally diverse society is one of the distinguishing features of our modern life in many parts of the world. Therefore, bi- or multiculturalism goes hand in hand with the currently predominant bi- or multilingualism which is the likely outcome of a cultural contact situation. In normal situations, culture, with all its components, is transmitted from one generation to another. Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) described various modes of cultural transmission as means to maintain their values, language, rituals, skills, etc. First, 'vertical cultural transmission' is the direct transmission from parents to their descendants; second, learning from peers is 'horizontal transmission'; third, 'oblique transmission' is learning from adults in the familial and ambient environment or at schools. NA immigrant youth fail to establish a strong vertical transmission with their parents making some of the transmitted parts fuzzy and leading to the loss of others. NA attrition and loss are the by-products of the high level of horizontal and oblique cultural transmission experienced by NA second and third generations.

Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) introduced the term acculturation to describe the cultural contact in which individuals from autonomous cultures affect each other (see Berry, 2011). Accordingly, speakers of NA diaspora are in cultural contact with members of a different culture. Such contact influences, to a varying degree the psychological, cultural and behavioural profiles of individuals belonging to both cultures (i.e., minority and majority ethnocultural groups). In a cultural contact situation, NA speakers acquire different behaviours, language, experiences, and values by various mechanisms such as learning (oblique transmission) or imitating (horizontal transmission). As such, acculturation is an intercultural process that impinges on some language components of the minority ethnocultural group. Acculturation has a great effect on language components (e.g., idioms, metaphors, jokes, etc.) which derive their meaning and existence from the culture and histories of the minority group in question. On the other hand, lack of enculturation (i.e., intracultural contact) widens the gap in the communicative and sociopragmatic competence of NA speakers and ultimately results in 'shedding' the NA culture. Berry (1992) defines culture shedding as "the gradual process of losing some features of ones [*sic*] culture (such as attitudes, beliefs, and values), as well as some behavioral competencies (such as language knowledge and use)" (p. 547).

In addition to the established link between language and culture, empirical evidence suggests that language is inseparably bound up with the ambient environment. Mace and Pagel (1995) reported that language-culture diversity and species diversity increase near the equator but deceases when one moves toward the poles. They found a correlation between habitat diversity and "diversity in language–cultural groups" (p. 120). In a similar vein, recent sociocognitive research buttresses the idea that cognition and environment are directly correlated. More specifically, and contrary to the mainstream view (i.e., Chomskyan linguistics,

language is innate, cognition is rule-governed, and there exists a language acquisition device), cognitive representations, including language, are not decontextualized but influenced by environment and depend heavily on experience. Rizzolatti and Craighero's (2004) discovery of mirror neurons emphasized the correlation between cognition, perception and performance. Human physiological plasticity is paralleled by brain malleability and both are motivated by cultural practices and environmental pressures. Just as the adaptable human body reacts to constantly and dynamically changing conditions in various biological ways, so too does the brain's neural plasticity react by moulding cognitive and conceptual representations. From a sociocognitive point of view "cognition is a node in an ecological network comprising mind-body-world— it is part of a *relationship*" (Atkinson, 2011, p.143). Related to this network is Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors we live* by (1980) where they argued for the idea that cognition is embodied. According to this theory, metaphors influence cognitive processes and representations, the individual's experience is closely tied with these (conceptual) metaphors, and individual's biological body plays a central role in the process of formulating both metaphors and experience. The implication of above assumptions is that the NA speaker is motivated, by the agency of his adaptive and embodied cognition, to interact with the environmental situation and cultural changes, which ultimately results in acquiring and internalizing conceptualizations, linguistic components of language, and real-world experiences.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

In Chapter 2, I provide a comparison between animal metaphors, a subtype of conceptual metaphors, in NA and CA. This chapter measures NA-E bilinguals' production ability by asking them to guess the meaning of 24 nominal animal metaphors. They are asked to provide

adjectives that best describe the human characteristics implied in each animal metaphor. I also asked them to determine the gender that fits each metaphor and give frequency rating on a six-point scale. Chapter 3 deals with idioms as a means to measure to what extent intergenerational transmission of linguistic competence and cultural conventions are interrupted. Here, NA-E bilinguals are asked to interpret a set of 36 nondecomposable and decomposable idioms. Chapter 4 focuses on politeness theory in NA and how culture learning impacts NA. I analyzed aspects of politeness theory (i.e., reaction to social favours and violations). I used acceptability judgment task to test NA-E bilinguals on 20 conversational scenarios. Chapter 5 summarizes the research presented in this thesis and outlines topics for future research.

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2 Language Attrition in Bicultural Bilinguals: Evidence from Neo-Aramaic Animal Metaphors[1]

Abstract

Animal-based metaphors are ubiquitous in natural languages with distinct cross-cultural implications. In our study, these mostly conventional or dead metaphors, so to speak, are used as a tool to measure language erosion and cultural integration. We assumed that both Neo-Aramaic-English bicultural bilinguals (NA-E) and Canadian-English speakers (CE) have both the linguistic and cultural capacity necessary to establish concerted conceptualizations and culturally agreed upon connection between the target and source domain of these metaphors. This assumption was based on the fact that animal names are one of the main categories of language vocabulary that native speakers learn during the early stages of their linguistic development. We selected widely known animal metaphors- 13 had identical meanings in both NA and CE and 11 had culturally distinct meanings. The results showed no significant difference between the two groups as to the meaning of identical metaphors and animal gender associations. However, we found a significant statistical difference in the good and poor match of the culturally distinct metaphors. Animal gender associations did not show any significant difference. The use of frequency scale did not show any significant difference except for the answers 'always' with distinct metaphors.

2.1 Introduction

In this study we target a figurative aspect of a minority language (i.e. Neo-Aramaic) and the role of host culture in language erosion. It is widely known that the Canadian society is made up of a large number of ethnicities which resulted in developing a mosaic cultural system. More often than not, individuals belonging to distinct ethnicities and having various linguistic and cultural backgrounds are encouraged by the general inclusive atmosphere to retain their cultural and linguistic identity. However, it is unclear whether such kind of cultural pluralism strengthens or weakens the first language of the minority group in question. Therefore, we assume that the hegemonic culture puts increasingly potential pressure on certain aspects of language which creates a state of disequilibrium between minority and majority language. In language-centered cultures minority group members usually put emphasis on their first language. That said, apart from language there might exist other cultural aspects that would greatly contribute to and clearly delineate the boundaries of existence, identification and future continuity of the minority group.

When two languages are in contact situation, it is customary to borrow or transfer (non)linguistic forms and components from source language (L1) to target language (L2) (e.g. Aikhenvald, 2003; James, 1980; Heine & Kuteva, 2005; Lado, 1957; Muysken, 2000; Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Thomason, 2001). On the microlinguistic level, lexical, phonetic, and phonological transfers or borrowings from L1 to L2 usually causes difficulties for second language learners. However, research in first and second language acquisition proved that high-frequency linguistic structures are acquired faster and earlier (Ellis, 2002; Goodman, Dale & Li,

2008). In fact, the high frequency of these structures facilitates the process of borrowing or transferring from one language to another (Pagel, Atkinson & Meade, 2007). It is disappointing to admit that high-frequency facilitation hypothesis fails to explain how animal metaphors, which are characterized by low frequency, are transferred in contact situation from L2 to L1.

Little empirical work has been done on the influence of L2 on L1 in childhood bilingualism. Wong-Fillmore (1991) showed evidence from interviews with parents and stated that "as immigrant children learn English, the patterns of language use change in their homes, and the younger they are when they learn English, the greater the effect" (p. 341). Pavlenko (1999, 2000) and Pavlenko and Jarvis (2000) dealt with L2 influence on L1-based concepts in post-puberty or late bilingualism, where L2 learners borrow L1 lexical item to express specific concepts or refer to new objects that do not exist in their cultural cognition (for contact neologism see Otheguy & Garcia, 1993). In our study, we investigate a transfer that occurs on the macro-linguistic level where bilingual speakers successfully transfer L2 sociopragmatic knowledge to their L1. We assume that NA-E bilinguals stop being an *active part* of the NA cultural and linguistic realm (i.e., L1) by eschewing the dynamic process of formalizing and expressing the concerted conceptualizations of the cultural group to which they belong. We use animal metaphors to examine the effect of this conceptual transfer on language erosion. The study sheds some light on language attrition that is caused by 'reverse' or 'backward' transfer from L2 to L1 (Cook 2003). Succinctly, it is not a semantic transfer that deals with the lexical meaning of words, but rather a conceptual transfer that is essentially based on speaker's world knowledge and experience drawn from cultural interaction so to speak.

In this paragraph, we describe the structure of the article. In section 1, we give a brief account of metaphor and its status in various academic disciplines such as philosophy,

psychology, sociology and cognitive linguistics. Section 2 is a brief overview of the ongoing debate over the connection between humans and animals and the scientific evidence provided by biology and zoology. Section 3 talks about the role of culture in reshaping or rerouting the social cognition of a minority group which would finally culminate in linguistic alienation. Section 4 is dedicated to explaining the cross-cultural significance of PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS conceptual metaphor. We discuss the methodology adopted in this paper in section 5. The results of the study are analyzed in section 6. Then, we discuss the results and draw our conclusion in sections 7 and 8 respectively.

2.1.1 Metaphor: a multidisciplinary perspective

In *Poetics*, Aristotle (350 B.C.E) describes metaphor as "strange...unusual, different from the normal idiom... and the mark of the genius". This said, most investigators attest that metaphor is both a ubiquitous phenomenon and intransigent problem in language. In line with this, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claimed that metaphor is not only 'pervasive' in our daily interactions but also in our 'thought' and 'action'. They claimed that "[o]ur ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p.3). In other words, people conceive the social world through conceptual metaphors, which enable them to understand abstract or target concepts using knowledge of dissimilar, typically more concrete or source concepts. Lakoff (1993) further claimed that "... the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another" (p. 203). For Gibbs (1994) "...human cognition is fundamentally shaped by various poetic or figurative processes" (p.1).

In the field of social cognition, some researchers have emphasized that metaphor is top-down knowledge and placed little emphasis on the constraints that shape metaphor from the bottom up. According to Landau et al. (2010) "people are able to use pieces of knowledge about the source concept as a structural framework for reasoning about, interpreting, and evaluating information related to target concept" (p. 1046). To summarize, metaphor is a vital part of our conceptual network which we draw heavily on to construe and extract abstract concepts from concrete ones. It is worth noting that according to the semantic model (within the generative grammar framework) of Katz and Fodor (1963), figurative language, including metaphor, was labelled deviant and semantically unacceptable.

2.1.2 The basis of animal metaphor

A considerable number of people conjecture that humans and animals are two different species. Moreover, a sizable number of that population also considers humans superior and more important than animals, because humans are apparently privileged to drive cars, wear fancy suits, live in skyscrapers, own businesses, read, and write, etc. Nonhuman animals, so to speak, are not entitled able to indulge in such human activities. If we consider the list of things that humans can do, we discern that millions of people do not have the capability to access or execute what is considered germane, and probably unique, to humans such as literacy. Thus, a deeper inspection would reveal that in fact humans and animals share a significant number of faculties and even some emotions.

Contrary to Descartes (1637/1988) and Davidson (1985), extensive research has been carried out to prove that animals do not lack mental ability. Some researchers have shown that many animals are able to think, even if they do not possess the versatility that characterizes

human consciousness. They have 'perceptual consciousnesses' or a basic version of the human consciousness. Natsoulas (1983, p.29) described it as "the state or facility of being mentally conscious or aware of everything." Savage-Rumbaugh et al. (1998) used Yerkes Laboratory keyboard system to show that chimpanzees can communicate conscious thoughts and emotions. According to Seeley (2003), even worker bees possess this kind of perceptual consciousness. Roberts (1996) defends the idea that both humans and animals experience fear but differently "...we and the small dog have emotions both of which can be called fear, they are nevertheless different emotions, with different diagnostic and therapeutic implications" (p.155). Some zoologists like Dawkins (1993) adopted a Darwinian approach to link humans and animals in a chain or ring of species. Dawkins claims that our speciesist and discontinuous mind obfuscates the fact that "a fetus can be "half human" or "a hundredth human". "Human", to the discontinuous mind, is an absolute concept. There can be no half measures. And from this flows much evil" (p.37, quotes original). According to Dawkins, the chimpanzee who lived in Africa five and seven million years ago is our cousin.

On the other hand, the *New Scientist*, in its editorial of 13 February 1999, conspicuously vindicated the idea that genetic comparison does not justify the claim that gorillas or chimpanzees and humans are virtually identical.

Unfortunately, it has become fashionable to stress that chimpanzees and humans must have staggeringly similar psychologies because they share 98.4% of their DNA. But this misses the point: genomes are not like cake recipes... A creature that shares 98.4% of its DNA with human is not 98.4% human, any more than a fish that shares, say, 40% of its DNA with us is 40% human...Take DNA as your measure of sentience and moral worth

and the chemical connectedness of life ensures that you soon end up extending honorary

personhood to the rat and haddock. (p.3)

Marks (2002) rejected the idea of comparing genes and pointed out that "[a]ll humans

have a pair of large chromosomes (#2) that no chimpanzee has. It is a correlate, not a cause, of

humanness..." (p.245). However, there has been a consensus among researchers that linguistic

competence (mental grammar) and abstract thought are the two faculties that make *homo*, and

homo sapiens in particular, unique.

2.1.3 Acculturation and cognitive patterns

Motivated by the conventional usage, predictability and allegedly universal nature of animal

metaphors, Black (1962), without any empirical evidence, labelled them 'dead' more than fifty

years ago. According to research in cognitive linguistics, conventionality, predictability and

universality stem from the idea that figurative conceptualizations are grounded in embodied

human experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987). On the one hand, cross-cultural

studies of metaphor showed that conceptualizations could differ cross linguistically because the

same animal may be represented by different images[2], and one concept can be associated with

two different animals (Ansah, 2011; Kövecses, 2000; Talebinejad & Dastjerdi, 2005). On the

other hand, like other types of metaphor, conceptualizations of animal-based metaphors are

shared, however *not* necessarily equally shared by all the members of a cultural group, because

they are governed by individual experiences and predilections. Succinctly, these members share

cultural cognition that delineates, delimits and determines whether their participation in the

cognitive process of conceptualization as members of the cultural group is profound or

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[2] For our experimental purposes, either meaning was considered a good match.

superficial. Therefore, the Neo-Aramaic[3] linguistic identity stands out when the NA-E bilingual thoroughly engages in the intergenerational conceptualization process. However, this identity peters out when the intergenerational transmission of cultural conceptualizations is not consummately marshalled due to spontaneous cultural assimilation or '*acculturation*' (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). We agree with Berry (1990) that acculturation exert a considerable amount of pressure on one group, viz., NA-E bilinguals, more than the other.

In the same vein, some animal metaphors come to acquire novel senses and connotations even among the members of the same speech community. Owl, for example, in one Neo-Aramaic variety is used to describe someone who is considered a jinx and whose presence portends a bad omen. However, in another variety, owl connotes physical ugliness or obtuseness. Raccoon, for example is usually associated with thieves or robbery, but among the youth, this sense has been replaced by the image of a girl who wears a lot of black eyeliner. However, one cannot just turn a blind eye to the cognitive and social influence that metaphor in general and animal metaphor in particular have in the way we dissect the world around us.

2.1.4 PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor

It is important to give a brief account of the Neo-Aramaic distinct animal metaphors, as we assume the identical ones have relatively straightforward meanings before proceeding to the experimental part. In our account, we allude to the fact that Neo-Aramaic animal-based metaphors provide a balanced, non-stereotypical image of both men and women, unlike the image represented by the English culture where woman is often viewed and represented as

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[3] NA refers to a group of language varieties that are descendants of Middle Aramaic. NA dialects of the North-Eastern NA (also known as NENA) are spoken in northern Iraq, northwestern Iran and southeastern Turkey. The study attempts to shed light on Christian dialects spoken in two towns (Bartella & Mangesh) in the north of Iraq.

inferior to man (cf. Hines, 1999; Nilsen, 1996; López-Rodriguez, 2009, 2016). As a matter of consistency, we will simply follow the order used in survey format in Appx. §1.

1. According to Neo-Aramaic culture, somebody who goes to bed early can be seen as a *chicken*. This image is derived from the direct contact and experience with this domestic animal, according to the nature and style of living in a rural areas. Morphologically, the name of the animal[4] is inherently marked for feminine gender, but metaphorical use grants it permission to be freely used with male referents. The English sense, which is, 'timid' or 'coward', of this metaphorical expression is completely different from the Neo-Aramaic one.

2. Contrary to the English cultural beliefs, Neo-Aramaic *owl* is loaded with negative connotations. Unlike the wise English *owl*, it is a symbol of jinx, obtuseness and homeliness, probably due to its nocturnal nature. In fact, members of this cultural group presume that there is a strong correlation between a bringer of bad luck and obtuseness. Morphological marking for masculine and feminine is present in metaphorical use, but, in some Neo-Aramaic dialects, speakers borrow the feminine Arabic form and use it neutrally.

3. In English, *Bear* is a big and strong animal, and is usually associated with aggressive behaviour, but for Neo-Aramaic speakers, *bear* signifies feeble-mindedness. Feminine and masculine gender markers are used interchangeably without interrupting the metaphorical sense. In some contexts, *bear* can offensively refer to a fat female.

4. The *sheep* image in Neo-Aramaic is widely known as a symbol of innocence and amicability with positive connotations that are, however, restricted to males. The metaphorical image related

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[4] Mammal-bird distinction is irrelevant to our work; therefore, we will use animal as a hypernym.

to *sheep* in the sense of innocence is not very common in Canadian culture, because it has another, more dominant sense that refers to a timid or dependent individual.

5. In Neo-Aramaic, a woman with numerous offspring is a *rabbit*. It carries a slightly negative connotation and is uniquely used to describe women with multiple successive births. It is only slightly negative, because having many children in the family was, in fact, a source of strength in the past.

6. *Louse* has negative connotations as it refers to a weak person with no initiatives. *Louse* is a feminine noun, but can also be used to describe a masculine referent. On the other hand, Canadians use *louse* to describe a boorish person.

7. *Gorilla* is another animal-based metaphor that represents distinct images in the two languages. When a man is hairy, he can be described as a *gorilla*. It can also be used to refer to a noisy male or female in spite of being a feminine-marked noun. In English, *gorilla* carries both negative and positive connotations; first, it is used derogatively to refer to a large black male; second, the others sense implies a positive description of man's muscular, toned up physique.

8. The image of *cat* in Neo-Aramaic, like Arabic, is based on the myth that cats have seven lives. In this sense, it is similar to the English *cat* which has nine lives. It is interesting that neo-Aramaic, unlike English, has stretched this mythical sense and employed it metaphorically; therefore, it is quite common to hear something like "s/he is a *cat*, s/he cheated death on several occasions." The context determines whether the metaphor has commendatory or derogatory implications.

9. The metaphorical image of *pig* evokes two contradictory senses. In some Neo-Aramaic dialects, *pork* is not prohibited; therefore, *pig* does not imply any negative connotations. The

animal is jocularly associated with strong, healthy and sometimes spry old people. This positive image is not arbitrarily constructed, as it originates from the fact that *pig* is not domesticated in this culture, which eliminates the English image of *pig*'s gluttony, untidiness and dirtiness associated with a pigsty. People are more familiar with wild boars which are hunted in the wilderness.

10. The *fish*'s image is directly linked with water. This metaphorical sense refers to people who take great pleasure in swimming, bathing, splashing, sprinkling, etc. *Fish* is a feminine noun in Neo-Aramaic but can be used with masculine nouns on par. The metaphorical sense, in English, differs dramatically from the Neo-Aramaic one. An inexperienced and fledgling person is a *fish*, which apparently has a negative connotation.

11. *Mule* carries another contradictory image in the two languages. *Mule* is known as a draft animal in both cultures. However, *mule* has kept its status as a strong, hard-working animal in Neo-Aramaic, but, in the Canadian culture, its metaphorical sense has shifted to become associated with stubbornness. Morphologically, *mule* is a masculine noun and thus its metaphorical use is restricted to men.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Experimental design and instruments

The experiment consisted of two parts which involved randomized surveys to enhance the statistical validity of our results- we bolded the distinct animal metaphors in (Appx. § 1) for convenience. The first part of the questionnaire was made up of 11 animal metaphors. These metaphors have distinct meanings in Neo-Aramaic and English. Chicken, for example, is

conceptualized as a weak creature in English which resonates with some human characteristics, whereas in the NA culture the conceptualization of this animal is different. In NA, early sleepers are usually referred to as chickens. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 13 identical[5] animal metaphors. Speakers from the cultures in question have equivalent conceptualizations of animals in question, for example, untrustworthy or slippery people are described in both cultures as snakes. We focused on animals that are quite familiar and usually metaphorically used in both cultures; therefore, animals, such as a raccoon, dolphin, panda, etc. were excluded. In addition to consulting metaphor dictionaries, we interviewed six native Canadian English speakers (aged +50) to confirm their interpretations and compare them with dictionary entries and to investigate the meaning of those that we could not find in dictionaries. There are no Neo-Aramaic dictionaries because Neo-Aramaic is only spoken. We interviewed seven Neo-Aramaic native speakers (aged +60) to verify the meaning of the metaphors we used in our on-line survey.

We used animal metaphors as a means to examine the effect of learning a second language (i.e. Canadian English) on core concepts in the first language (i.e., Neo-Aramaic). Our goal was to reveal the influence of cultural integration on native or primary language. This study dealt with the nominal use of animals in metaphors, for example, 'X is a pig' (Appx. § 1). Adjectival animal metaphors, for example 'shrewish', 'foxy', and 'mousy', etc. and verbal metaphors, such as 'X wanted to white ant Y' or 'X was horsing around with Y' were not tackled.

The survey consisted of three main questions. The first one required providing appropriate adjectives to describe the human characteristics that each animal metaphor implies. As expected, there was a wide range of adjectives associated with each metaphor. In order to

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[5] Henceforth, 'identical' and 'equivalent' will be used interchangeably.

tease apart these various adjectives, based on the established connotations of the selected animal metaphors, our analysis treated the adjectives as subordinates subsumed under the superordinate term (i.e. the animal). 'Scorpion' for example, subsumed 'sly', 'untrustworthy', 'sneaky' and 'wicked' which were treated as a 'good match' whereas other adjectives, such as 'fierce', 'strong', and 'withdrawn' were labelled as a 'poor match'. The second question was about gender identification- could the animal metaphor be used to refer to male, female or both. The third question dealt with frequency. We asked the participants to give a frequency rating for each metaphor by using a predesigned, descending scale that consisted of six options describing how frequently they used the expression: always, usually, sometimes, rarely, never, and I do not know this expression.

2.2.2 Subjects

Two groups participated in the study. The first one consisted of 30 NA-E bilinguals[6] who volunteered to take part in the study. We excluded three NA participants because they did not identify themselves as native NA speakers. The second group was made up of 30 CE monolingual speakers that were granted one credit in one of the courses upon signing up for the study. Uncompleted surveys were not included in our data. To ensure partial homogeneity among participants, participants in both groups aged between 20 and 28 in order to get relatively insightful response to our linguistic questions about animal metaphors. The data collected earlier from the older speakers were not used for statistical purposes. All the CE participants were undergraduate students at McMaster University during the time of conducting the survey- a few

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[6] NA-E bilinguals are immigrants who arrived in Canada when they were young children. Most of them have at least 10 years of natural exposure. They did not get any bilingual education at school.

NA-E bilinguals were McMaster alumni. Other NA-E bilingual speakers were recruited through the NA community network.

2.2.3 Procedure

The participants had to complete an on-line survey on animal metaphor (Appx. §1). The survey takes between 30-45 minutes to complete. However, participants were not obliged to answer all the questions in one session as they had the option to save their uncompleted survey and come back at a later time. The preamble statement gives a brief account about the survey and its objectives (Appx. § 2). Before taking the survey, the participants had to read the consent form and agree to participate (Appx. § 3). Then, they answered some demographic questions.

2.3 Results

The nonparametric equivalent of a two-independent samples t-test (i.e. the Wilcox rank-sum (two-tailed) test) was used in our statistical analysis. For the identical metaphors, (see Appx. § 1, bolded), the good match scores of NA-E bilinguals (Mdn 50) and CE speakers (Mdn60) did not differ significantly at .05 level as shown in the plot below (Fig.1), W= 86.5, p= 0.9, r= -0.02. Intriguingly, 50% of the good match scores lied between 70 and 37, which did not differ significantly from the scores of CE speakers whose scores were between 70 and 33. This suggests that NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers are equally cognizant about this kind of metaphors. The plot in Fig. 1 shows the convergence between both groups and their ability to create a kind of linkage between metaphors and human characteristics for metaphors shared by the two languages.

Fig. 1 NA-E and CE good match of culturally equivalent animal metaphors
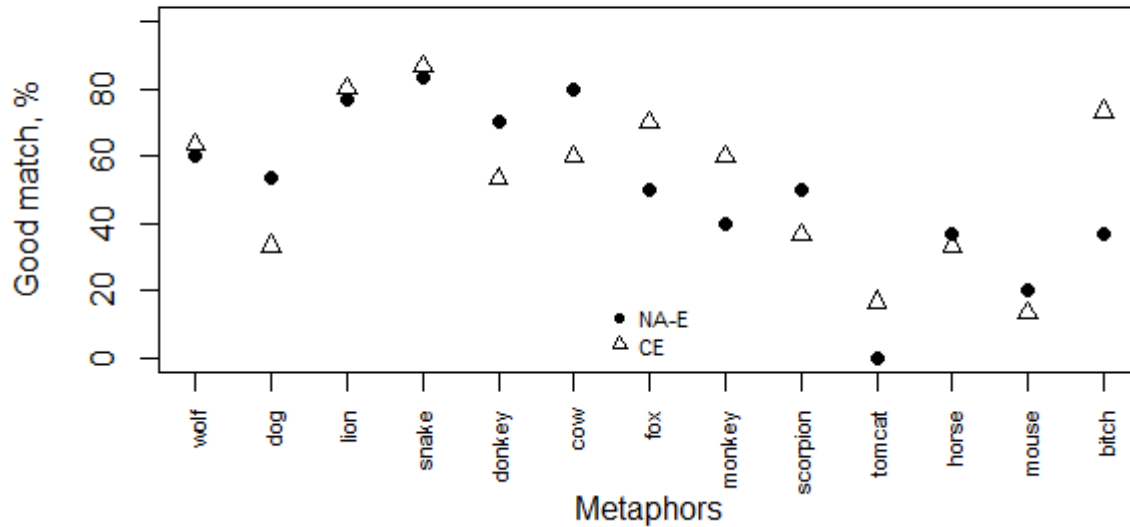
We did not find a significant difference between the poor and zero match scores of both groups, (M*dn*=27) for NA-E speakers did not differ significantly from (M*dn*=30) for CE speakers, *W*= 84, *p*= 1, *r*= -0.02. CE speakers demonstrated more consistency than NA-E bilinguals did in this condition; their *IQR* was 13 relative to their NA peers (*IQR* 20). Again, half of the scores were between 37 and 17 for NA-E bilinguals and between 33 and 20 for CE speakers. The spread of the data was very similar in case of their zero match (i.e. they refrained from giving any description), (M*dn*= 17) for NA-E bilinguals and (M*dn*=13) for CE speaker, *W*=77.5. *p*= 0.7, *r*= -0.07 as shown in (Fig. 2). These results indicate that the two groups not only did share the same cultural perspective regarding what these conventional metaphors meant but also demonstrated the same level of cultural leaning as to providing wrong meanings and refraining from or failing to provide any.

Fig. 2 NA-E and CE poor and zero match of culturally identical animal metaphors
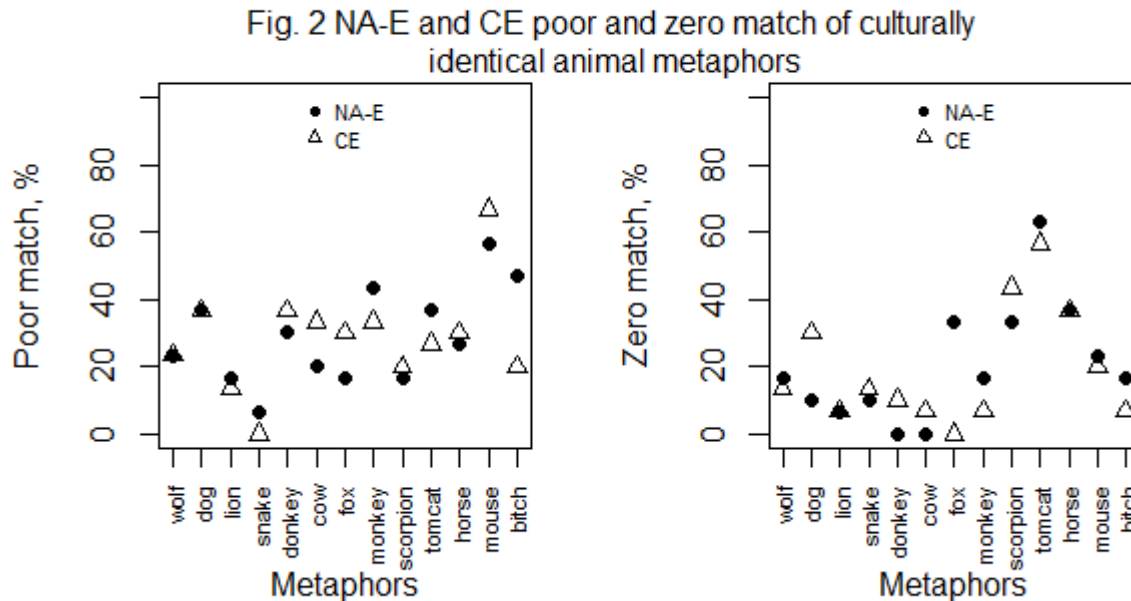
We noticed more convergence between both groups in associations of gender with these metaphors. It is an indication that both groups share the knowledge required to establish a correlation between the genders in two distinct domains: the animal (source domain) and the human (target domain). All the panels in Fig. 3 show an overlap suggesting that NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers do not differ significantly at .05 level. For correctly choosing the gender of the animal associated with the metaphorical sense, for both groups (Mdn=53), W= 94.5, p= 0.6, r= -0.07. However, mismatch scores of both groups were lower than their good match scores. NA-E bilinguals made more mistakes and thus scored higher (Mdn=30) than CE speakers (Mdn=23), W= 66.5, p=0.4, r= -0.2.

Both groups demonstrated a pattern in gender identification as they got high scores for matching up gender with the metaphor. However, their scores tapered off in the other two conditions. NA-E bilinguals showed more consistency than CE speakers did in choosing gender

that did not match up with the metaphor, because their *IQR* was 13 compared to 20 for CE

speakers.

We observed a similar tendency in their behaviour, as they failed to properly associate

either gender with the metaphors in question (zero gender match). Again, NA-E bilinguals

scored a bit higher than CE speakers did, suggesting that they did not know which gender should

be used in this condition. However, failure to provide gender did not differ significantly for NA-

E bilinguals (M*dn*=17) and CE speakers (M*dn*=13), *W*=76.5, *p*= 0.7, *r*= -0.08.

Fig. 3 Three levels of gender agreement with culturally identical animal metaphors
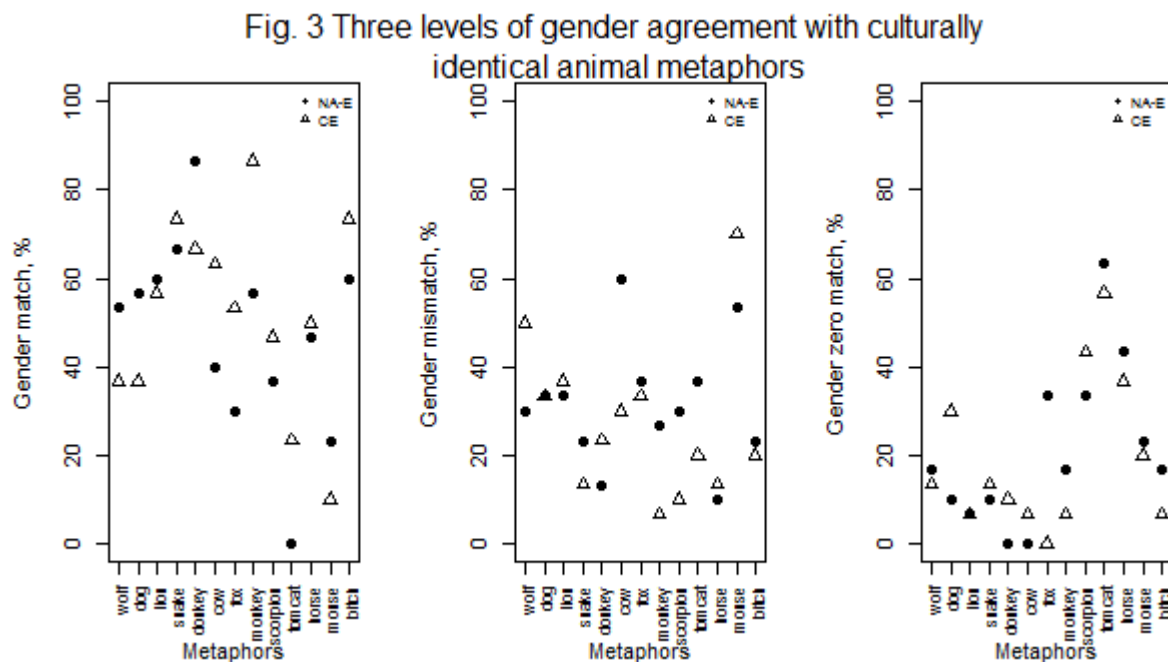
Distinct metaphors showed that there was a significant difference between NA-E

bilinguals and CE speakers at .05 level. The good match data in Fig. 4 shows that CE speakers

scored higher (M*dn*=47) than NA-E bilinguals (M*dn*=10), *W*=100.5, *p*= 0.01, *r*= -0.48. Half of

their scores were between 73 and 25 whereas the 50% of NA-E bilinguals scores were lower (22-

5). In other words, CE speaker were better than NA-E bilinguals at associating transferrable characteristics of the source domain with the target domain. We noticed that NA-E bilinguals had less variability (*IQR*=17) than CE speakers did (*IQR*= 50), which indicates more agreement or a general tendency within this group to provide less good matches. Fig. 4 shows the good match scores of both groups for each distinct metaphor.

Fig. 4 NA-E and CE good match of culturally distinct animal metaphors
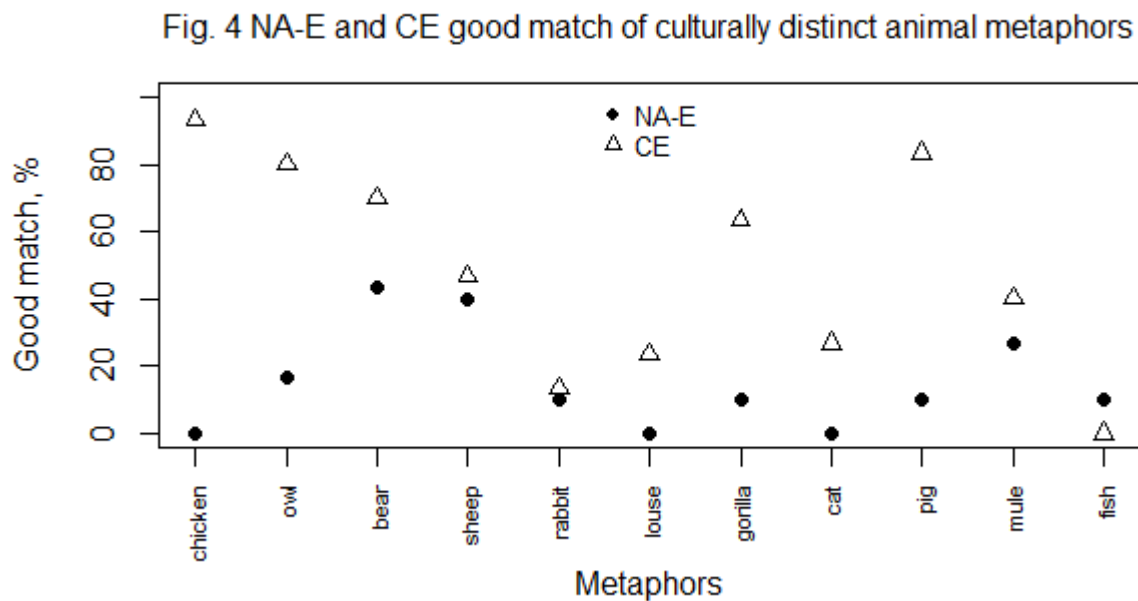
CE speakers were well informed about animal metaphors relative to NA-E bilinguals, which showed in their lower scores throughout the other two conditions (i.e. giving poor matches or providing none). NA-E bilinguals scored higher on poor match condition, we did find a significant difference between both groups as the left panel in Fig. 5 shows, NA-E bilinguals (M*dn*=43) and CE speakers (M*dn*=17), *W*= 21, *p*=0.01, *r*=-0.47. NA-E bilinguals preferred not to associate any description with this kind of metaphors more frequently than CE speakers did (see Fig. 5 right panel). Their (M*dn*=37) was higher than that of CE speakers (M*dn*=27), *W*= 47, *p*= 0.4, *r*= -0.16.

Fig. 5 NA-E and CE poor and zero match of culturally distinct animal metaphors
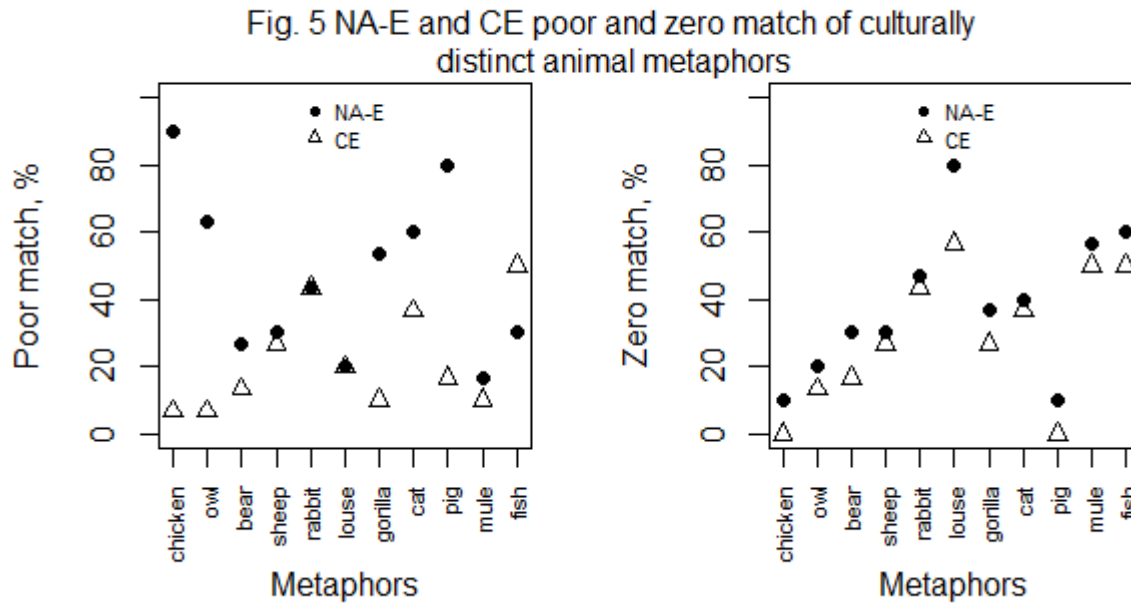
The low scores of NA-E bilinguals (Fig. 4) in distinct metaphor good match condition explain part of the variability in their geneder match for these metaphors (*IQR*= 42 compared with 28 for their Canadian peers). However, there was not a significant difference between NA-E blinguals (M*dn*= 40) and CE speakers (M*dn*= 50) as shown in Fig. 6, *W*= 75, *p*= 0.3, *r*= -0.2. Regarding gender mismatch NA-E bilinguals scored lower (M*dn*= 17) than CE speakers (M*dn*= 23) did, but they shared the same value of *IQR* (17), *W*= 69, *p*=0.6, *r*= -0.11.

NA-E blinguals did not opt for either of the gender choices more frequently than CE speakers. For the condition of gender zero match, they scored as high as in their gender match condition. However, there was not a significant difference between both groups at .05 level. For CE speakers median was (27) and for NA-E bilinguals (M*dn*=40), *W*= 43.5, *p*= 0.3, *r*=-0.2. The plots in Fig. 6 give a detailed description of gender associations.

Fig. 6 Three levels of gender agreement with culturally distinct animal metaphors
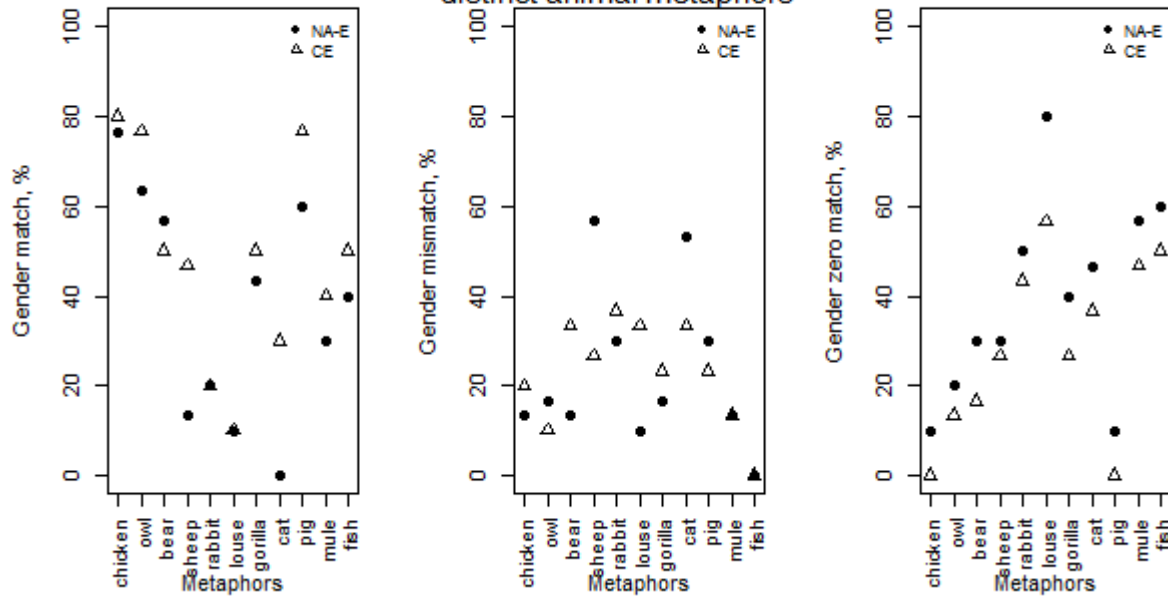
NA-E blinguals and CE speakers did not score high on the frequency scale. There was an ascending pattern that showed a shift towards higher scores as participants moved away from high frequency to low frequency options (Figs. 7&8). We did not find a significant difference between NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers on the frequency scale- all the *p*-values were above the significance level of .05. Statistical results obtained from Wilcoxon signed-rank test are summarised in Table 1.

Degree of Frequency Identical metaphors	W	p-value	r	Degree of Frequency Distinct metaphors	W	p-value	r
Alwyas	55	0.07	-0.326	Always	31.5	0.02	-0.422
Usually	50	0.07	-0.326	Usually	56	0.7	-0.054
Sometimes	80.5	0.8	-0.377	Sometimes	68	0.6	-0.091
Rarely	102	0.3	-0.165	Rarely	65.5	0.7	-0.061
Never	121.5	0.06	-0.348	Never	86	0.09	-0.309
None	76.5	0.7	-0.075	None	47	0.4	-0.162

Table 1 The significance obtained from Wilcoxon test for the frequency of identical & distinct metaphors

Fig. 7 Three levels of usage frequency with culturally identical animal metaphors
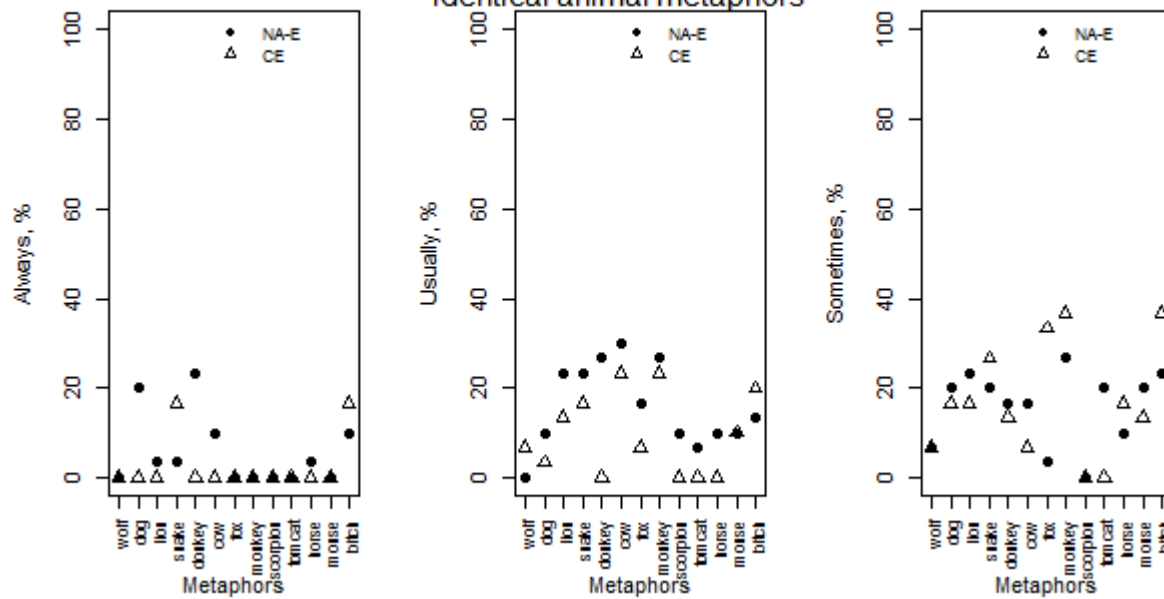
Fig. 8 Three levels of decreasing frequency with culturally identical animal metaphors
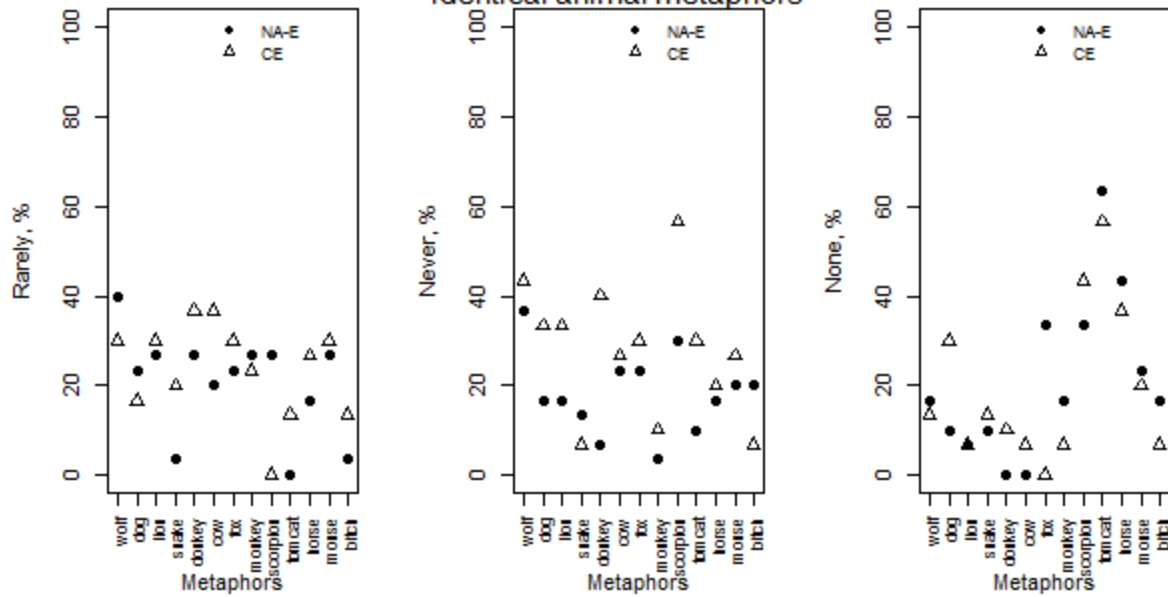
We noticed that the frequency patterns of distinct metaphors are similar to those associated with identical metaphors. The scores of NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers took an ascending trajectory towards the lower end of the frequency scale. NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers did not differ significantly in their ratings on the frequency scale (Figs. 9 &10). In spite of the fact that both groups scored considerably low , we found a significant difference in their ratings of 'always' as shown in Table 1. This can be attributed to their general tendency to score higher on 'usually' and 'sometimes'. Even with 'rarely' and 'never', NA-E blinguals seemed to score relatively lower than CE speakers.

Fig. 9 Three levels of usage frequency with culturally distinct animal metaphors
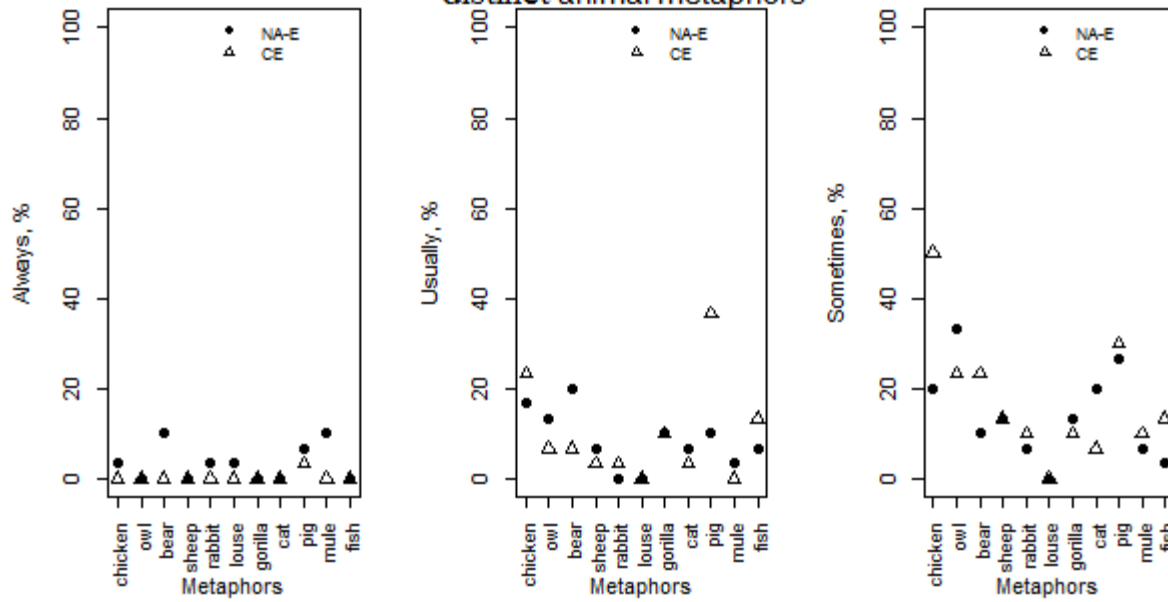
Fig.10Three levels of decreasing frequency with culturally distinct animal metaphors
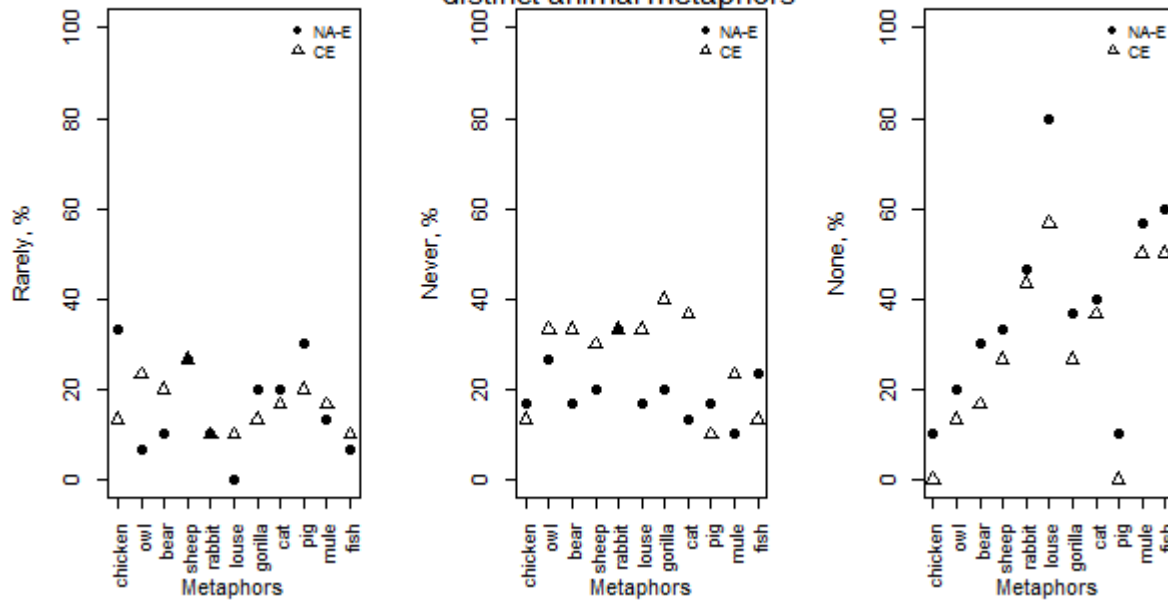
2.4 Discussion

This study presented in this article provides empirical evidence in support of the claim that the dominant culture of the majority group could influence the linguistic decisions of the minority group on the macro-linguistic level. First, we discuss the influence observed in the equivalent figurative meaning of a set of metaphors to show that NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals exhibit the same degree of pragmatic competence. The cultural cognition of a speech community is the main source and key element in shaping and developing its pragmatic competence. The influence of culture was evident in the first condition where NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals had similar conceptualizations of the culturally equivalent metaphors. In the same vein, NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals showed other signs of cultural convergence when they both could not associate the animal's name with its figurative meaning. In the second part of the condition, we looked at how good were the participants of both groups in associating gender with the connotative meaning of the animal's name. Again, both groups demonstrated a highly comparable level of sociopragmatic knowledge which points towards more awareness of such kind of figurative language use. As we pointed out in section 4 above, some animal metaphors have more than one figurative meaning associated with them and, consequently, require a shift in assigning gender. For example, *fox* has two distinct figurative meanings: clever or crafty and attractive or sexy. The former sense is freely associated with both male and female whereas the latter is restricted to females only. That said, we noticed that both groups were equally involved in the nitty-gritty of animal gender assignment for culturally equivalent animal-based metaphors.

Second, we traced the effect of cultural cognition on a set of culturally distinct animal-based metaphors. CE monolinguals outperformed NA-E bilinguals in this condition because NA-

E bilinguals were unable to guess at the figurative sense of the metaphors in question. NA-E bilinguals' conceptualization of these metaphors was motivated by the cognitive cultural patterns prevalent in Canada. Therefore, NA-E bilinguals' conceptualizations were not a matter of guesswork as such but rather a constellation of figurative computations derived from their adherence to the dominant cultural values. NA-E bilinguals were informed that they were chosen to participate as native NA speakers and that the survey was about the figurative meaning of NA animal metaphors. However, NA-E bilinguals failed to conceptualize the culturally distinct animal metaphors as native NA speakers. Instead, they were better than CE monolinguals in providing incorrect figurative meanings of the NA metaphors. The poor performance of NA-E bilinguals in this condition can be attributed to the fact their conceptualizations of these metaphors were solely based on the Canadian image of animals. Succinctly, it all boils down to one fact: NA-E bilinguals seem to have imbibed a set of cultural beliefs typical of the Canadian society which led to a shift in their cultural cognition patterns. Gender assignment for the culturally distinct metaphors and usage-frequency test for both sets of metaphors did not provide conclusive evidence that could further support our hypothesis. However, there was one exception to this generalization as regards the use of 'always' with the culturally distinct metaphors. By scrutinizing the data, we found out that four NA-E bilinguals (mean age 27) were responsible for this shift. We reason that the younger the individual the greater the effect of culture.

2.5 Conclusion

This paper considers the role that culture, as a source of our shared representations, may play in language attrition and cultural assimilation. The significant difference and low scores in the good match of distinct metaphors stem from the fact that NA-E bilinguals were motivated by their

profound participation and involvement in the cognitive process of conceptualizing animal-based metaphors through adopted acculturation patterns of CE. These patterns play an important role in their disengagement from their NA cultural cognition. NA-E bilinguals were not able to establish felicitous associations between target and source domain according to their culture, because they employed borrowed images and conceptualizations that are different from their NA-E cultural practices and beliefs. The hypothesis of adopted acculturation patterns also explains the poor performance of NA-E bilinguals in the other two conditions related to distinct metaphors (i.e. poor and zero match). The obtained statistical results bolster up the idea that the intergenerational process of transmitting the shared cultural cognition is interrupted and blurred by the adopted conceptualizations from the host culture (see diagram 1). A question that can be raised here is how these low frequency metaphors have made their way into the cultural cognition   of   NA-
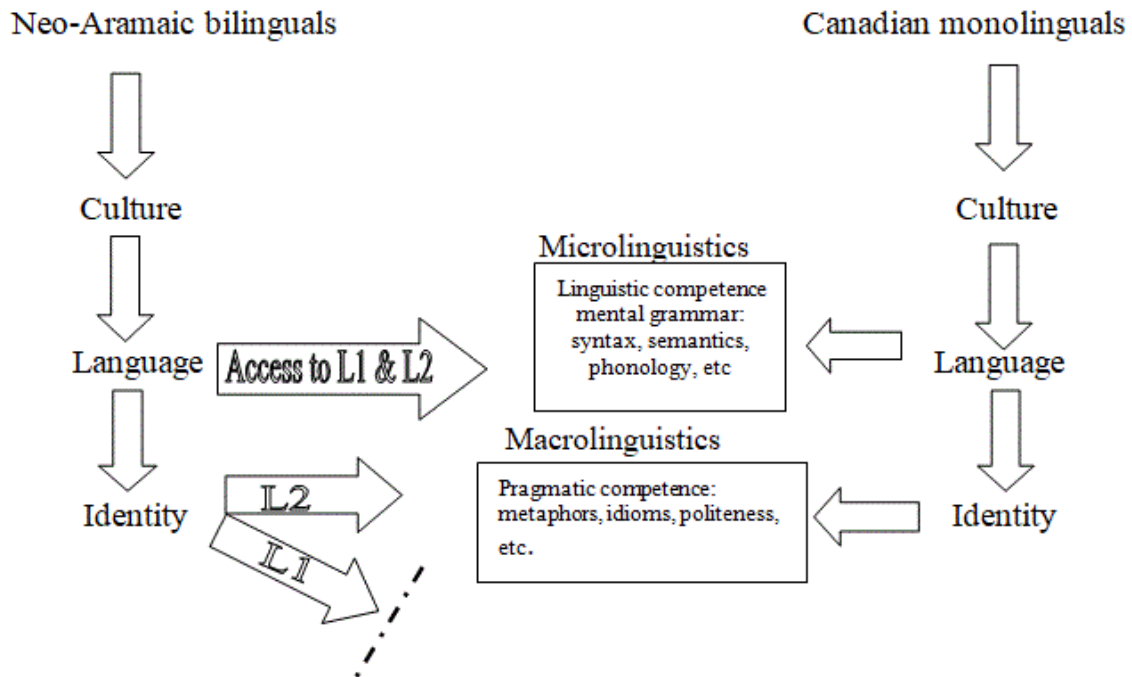
Diagram 1 NA-E bilinguals' and CE monolinguals' linguistic and pragmatic competence

E bilinguals.

Diagram 1 shows that language and identity are two separate components of culture and that identity has a mutable, inconstant nature; therefore, NA-E bilinguals opt for L2 identity that is represented by the macro-linguistic components that facilitate the process of getting unequivocal communicative messages across to the listener. Encouraged by the open and inclusive atmosphere in their host community, NA-E bilinguals opt for preserving their cultural identity outside the linguistic realm of their ancestors (see Edwards, 1984, 1985; Myhill, 2003). This prediction contradicts Fishman's (1991) opinion that language and cultural identity are crucially linked. Language, for NA-E, does not constitute an essential part of their identity; therefore, they choose not to use it in their everyday interactions. Other factors, such as tradition, religion, and endogamy determine the vitality of their identity.

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APPENDIX §1

Distinct and identical metaphors

What does this animal (e.g. wolf) refer to? This animal name may refer to human body-part, behaviour, or characteristic. You need to provide an appropriate adjective or description that best describes its meaning. In case you provide more than one adjective, you should be consistent; do not provide conflicting or incompatible adjectives. Use the first adjective or description that comes to your mind.

What human characteristics does this animal refer to? If you do not know type an X.

1- Person X is a WOLF.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
2- Person X is a DONKEY.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
3- Person X is a **CHICKEN.**	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
4- Person X is an **OWL**.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
5- Person X is a MOUSE.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
6- Person X is a COW.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
7- Person X is a SCORPION.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None

8- Person X is a HORSE.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
9- Person X is a MONKEY.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
10- Person X is a FOX.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
11- Person X is a DOG.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
12- Person X is a **BEAR**.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
13- Person X is a **LAMB**.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
14- Person X is a TOMCAT.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
15- Person X is a **RABBIT**.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
16- Person X is a **LOUSE**.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
17- Person X is a LION.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
18- Person X is a SNAKE.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
19- Person X is a **GORILLA**.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None
20- Person X is a **CAT**.	●Male	●Female	●Both	●Always ●Sometimes ●Never	● Usually ●Rarely ●None

21- Person X is a **PIG**.	●Male ●Female ●Both	●Always ● Usually ●Sometimes ●Rarely ●Never ●None
22- Person X is a **FISH**.	●Male ●Female ●Both	●Always ● Usually ●Sometimes ●Rarely ●Never ●None
23- Person X is a **MULE**.	●Male ●Female ●Both	●Always ● Usually ●Sometimes ●Rarely ●Never ●None
24- Person X is a BITCH.	●Male ●Female ●Both	●Always ● Usually ●Sometimes ●Rarely ●Never ●None

APPENDIX § 2

Preamble Statement

This survey is administered by [Ala Al-Kajela of McMaster University/ Department of Linguistics and Languages]. The purpose of the survey is to investigate animal metaphors in English and Neo-Aramaic. Information gathered during this survey will be written up as part of a dissertation. What we learn from this survey will help us understand the effect of learning a second language on the first language, how much native Neo-Aramaic speakers know about animal metaphors, and to what degree the non-native speakers achieve cultural integration. To learn more about the survey and the researcher's study, particularly in terms of any risks or harms associated with the survey, how confidentiality and anonymity will be handled, withdrawal procedures, incentives that are promised, how to obtain information about the survey's results, how to find helpful resources should the survey make you uncomfortable or upset etc., please read the accompanying letter of information. This survey should take

approximately [30-45] minutes to complete. People filling out this survey must be [native monolingual speakers of English or Neo-Aramaic bilinguals and 18 years of age or older].   This survey is part of a study that has been reviewed and cleared by the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB). The MREB protocol number associated with this survey is [2015-068]. You are free to complete this survey or not. If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is being conducted, please contact: McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat Telephone 1-(905) 525-9140 ext. 23142 C/o Research Office for Administration, Development and Support (ROADS) E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

APPENDIX § 3

CONSENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Ala Al-Kajela of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time. I agree to participate in the study.

Having read the above, I understand that by clicking the "Yes" button below, I agree to take part in this study under the terms and conditions outlined in the accompanied letter of information.

3   Idiomaticity as an Index of Language Attrition: Empirical Evidence from Neo-Aramaic[7]

Abstract

The present study hypothesizes that language loss, unlike language acquisition, is a top-down phenomenon. We posit that figurative language in L1, epitomized by idioms, erodes earlier and presumably faster than phonological patterns and lexical items when the linguistic environment is changed. Figurative language competence, as predicted by regression hypothesis, is more susceptible to attrition due to chronologically late acquisition compared to other language skills. Figurative language development is not constrained by the early cognitive development but is rather strengthened by effective use. This study examined the relationship between idiom comprehension and first language (L1) attrition in Neo-Aramaic-English (NA-E) bilinguals. 30 NA-E bilinguals and 30 Canadian English (CE) monolinguals were assessed across two tasks: first, to figuratively interpret nondecomposable and decomposable idioms; second, to rate their usage on a frequency scale. CE monolinguals outperformed NA-E bilinguals in interpreting both nondecomposable and decomposable idioms while NA-E bilinguals more often provided literal interpretations and were more often unfamiliar with the idioms. The usage-frequency test

suggests that the options made by NA-E bilinguals were determined by their literal interpretations. The results provide further support for the regression hypothesis which entails second language (L2) dominance.

KEYWORDS: Neo-Aramaic; idioms; language attrition; regression hypothesis

3.1 Introduction

The ubiquitous status of idioms as a linguistic and culture-motivated phenomenon has gained interdisciplinary attention from scholars. However, little is known about the relationship between idiomaticity and language attrition, since most of the scholarly attention has been focused on structural and lexical aspects of language. Three decades of assiduous research on language attrition, more often than not, have been limited to attrition in certain fields of language, such as syntax (de Bot, Gommans, & Rossing, 1991; Altenberg, 1991; Myers-Scotton, 2007; Tsimpli, Sorace, Heycock & Filiaci, 2004), morphology (Håknsson, 1995; Kaufman & Aronoff, 1991), lexical accessibility and lexical retrieval (Ammerlaan, 1996; Olshtain & Barzilay, 1991), and phonetic perception (Ventureyra, Pallier & Yoo, 2004). This limited scope could be partially attributed to the influence of the predominantly Chomskyan view which shoehorned idioms into a lexical category. Section (5) will sketch out the main points of the generative approach towards idioms. Apart from scarcity of research tackling attrition of figurative competence attrition, another line of research focused only on L2 attrition, such as attrition of Spanish by English L1 speakers (Bahrick, 1984), attrition of German by Turkish L1 speakers (Kuhberg, 1992), attrition of English by L1 Hebrew speakers (Olshtain, 1986), and (Berman and Olshtain, 1983), to mention but a few. In section 2, we talk about the 'regression hypothesis and its development as an offshoot of aphasiac studies. Section 3 is an overview of attrition in endangered languages.

Section 4 deals with attrition in NA as an endangered language and how attrition is a gradual, progressive process. In section 5, we comment on idiom treatment within the generative model and some analytical issues. Then, in section 6, we talk at some length about Nunberg and colleagues' (1994) notion of compositionality as a framework for idiom analysis. Sections 7 and 8 are dedicated to the methodology and results of the study. Respectively, our results are discussed in section 9 and then we wrap up with the conclusion in section 10.

3.1.1 Regression hypothesis

When it was first introduced into linguistics, Jakobson's (1971) 'regression hypothesis' was phonologically motivated. It later became one of the widely used models in language (both L1 and L2) attrition research (for an overview see de Bot & Weltens, 1991; Schmid, 2002; Schmid & Köpke, 2004). Jakobson (1971) pointed out that "[a]phasiac regression has proved to be a mirror of the child's acquisition of speech sounds; it shows the child's development in reverse" (p.40). He stated that this kind of regression was by no means limited to the acquisition of phonological patterns but a characteristic feature that could be found in other aspects of the 'grammatical system'. In line with this argument, the regression hypothesis predicts that language items/skills that are acquired/learned last are very likely to be lost first. In other words, items or skills learned first are usually primitive, easily stored, comprehended and rehearsed. On the contrary, items or skills learned last are complicated, advanced, difficult to store, more susceptible to misinterpretation, and scarcely rehearsed due to time constraint relative to early-learned items or skills. Clark (1972) found that children learn the general sense of a word first and then its specific sense. Consistent with this reasoning, 'markedness theory' (Lyons, 1977; Cruse, 2000) states that the unmarked member of a pair is usually positive, morphologically

unmarked, and more frequently encountered in a wide variety of contexts than its marked counterpart. By this logic, the marked member is an ideal candidate for attrition. Cruse (2000) expounded that the global properties of the default (i.e. unmarked) member reduce the processing effort required on the part of speaker and hearer.

Knowing the chronological order of development of figurative competence in children (Levorato & Cacciari, 1995; Cain, Towes & Knight, 2009), which usually follows phonetic, phonological and syntactic knowledge acquisition, we predict that access to idiomatic knowledge may be easily disrupted and eventually lost in L1 attrition scenarios. A similar effect was found in processing idioms: children found nondecomposable idioms difficult to understand. By the same token, adults took longer to process nondecomposable idioms compared to normally decomposable ones (Gibbs, Nayak, & Cutting, 1989; Gibbs & Nayak, 1991).

The analogy between language acquisition in children and language dissolution in adult aphasiac persons as suggested by Jakobson (1971), paved the way for other investigators (Caramazza and Zurif, 1978; Goodglass, 1978; Goodglass, Gleason, & Hyde, 1970) to utilize regression hypothesis in their work in order to gain better understanding of aphasia. Caramazza and Zurif's (1978) work succinctly stated that:

> Those aspects of language competence acquired last, or, more precisely, those that are most dependent on other linguistic developments, are likely to be the first to be disrupted consequent to brain damage; those aspects of language competence that are acquired earliest and thus 'independent' of later development are likely to be most resistant to effects of brain damage. (p. 145)

However, non-pathological language attrition is an incremental process whereas aphasia usually causes abrupt language loss after a stroke or brain injury (Jordens, de Bot and Trapman, 1989). This claim is tenable in spite of the fact that aphasia, in rare cases, may develop gradually due to a degenerative neurological disease or a slow-growing tumour. Jordens et al. (1989) make another claim that "local brain damage does not in general lead to global deterioration of cognitive and linguistic skills, but to specific deficits of part of the language system" (p. 180). Global aphasia' is, on the other hand, a severe impairment of cognitive abilities that greatly affects the patient's receptive and expressive skills ("Aphasia," 2015).

3.1.2 L1 attrition in an endangered language

It is important to point out that attrition in L1 functionality might be on a par with other structural aspects of L1 linguistic knowledge. We posit, in line with the regression hypothesis, that idiom acquisition is contingent on previously acquired linguistic knowledge; therefore, it is a corollary that such a skill is more susceptible to gradual erosion, and subsequently attrition, than autonomously acquired lexical items or phonemic segments. Although a considerable number of idiomatic expressions originate from old anecdotes stemming from culture-specific conventions, adult L1 native speaker usually has the linguistic ability to tease apart the literal and figurative meanings of the constituent parts of an idiom without knowing its historical roots. L1 native speakers' linguistic knowledge is not limited to their ability to efficiently producing and comprehending idioms in their communicative interactions, but extends to active participation as progenitors in the process of creating parts of the figurative repertoire, particularly idioms which are essential in acquiring native-like fluency.

L1 linguistic system (i.e. morphosyntactic and phonological rules) in young bilinguals is more amenable to attrition than it is in older bilinguals. Structural aspects of language are impervious to attrition in older bilinguals especially when L1 and L2 are typologically different. Further, most of the languages researched in the field of attrition are not endangered, as is the case with NA. Fishman (1971) introduced the 8-category Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) to describe the attrition process. NA fits in with Fishman's 7th category: the second generation knows the language but the process of transmitting to their children is troubled (see Lewis & Simons 2010). According to UNESCO's *Atlas of the world's languages in danger*, NA is categorized as a **definitely endangered** language: 'children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home'. We only partly agree with this overgeneralized designation, because it does not differentiate between immigrant and non-immigrant environments[8]. Therefore, we prefer to follow Van Els's (1986) typology of language attrition in terms of which language is lost and the environment in which it is lost (i.e. L1 loss by immigrants in L2 environment).

The traditional three-generation axiom predicts that the first generation of immigrants maintains L1 very well and learns L2 as a means of communication (Thomason, 2015). The second generation retains L1, learns L2 and becomes bilingual to varying degrees (balanced or dominant) depending on various factors that overlap and fluctuate intra- and interpersonally, such as the amount of use (input and output), attitude towards L1 and L2, level of proficiency in L1, and identity. However, we believe that maintaining equal levels of proficiency across various domains of language use, even by bilinguals who have polished skills in two languages, is a peculiar trend rather than a customary routine (see Fishman, 1972). Children born in L2

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[8] We are aware of the political unrest in that region, particularly in the north of Iraq. Although Iraqi Christian NA native land (Nineveh plain) is in turmoil, children still learn NA from their parents. Unfortunately, unlike Arabic and Kurdish, NA is not recognized as one of the official languages of Iraq. Home is the only place where NA is used for communication. UNESCO's definition applies to thousands of NA immigrants who have fled their fatherland. However, the gloomy situation portends major linguistic changes as thousands of NA natives obsess immigration.

environment (the third generation) are extensively exposed to L2 and thus highly inclined to lose their L1. Gonzo and Saltarelli's (1983) cascade model predicts that the third generation's L1 will never develop native-like proficiency, because they will most likely receive incomplete knowledge from their parents.

3.1.3 Justifying the study

NA is a group of language dialects that are descendants of Middle Aramaic. There are also Jewish NA dialects, but those are outside the scope of this study. North-eastern NA dialects (NENA) are spoken in northern Iraq, northwestern Iran and southeastern Turkey- the study is concerned with one of the NENA dialects. We selected NA-E bilinguals who came from the same geographical area to avoid any dialectological difference that might be an impediment to comprehension and thus negatively affecting the phenomenon under investigation. We tried to control for the linguistic background of our participants by targeting a homogeneous Iraqi group of Chaldean descent living in Canada, which facilitated the process of examining figurative aspects of idioms in this under-researched variety. It is intriguing to know that the variety under investigation is only spoken; its acquisition is solely contingent on oral transmission from the older generation. The only possible way to learn or acquire NA, as a native-born citizen in the homeland or a member of the diaspora, is through constant interpersonal communication with other native speakers. In other words, the NA learner cannot simply delve in a dictionary or a grammar book when s/he comes across a new word or an idiom that s/he did not hear before. Consequently, literacy and education, unlike oracy, have no significant role to play in learning or acquiring NA.

The study is motivated by the fact that most of the existing literature on NENA dialects is either descriptive or focused on Jewish dialects (see Cohen, 2012; Hoberman, 1988, 1989; Khan, 2004, 2008, 2009; Kroktoff, 1982 to name but a few). In all fairness, we admit that the recent work carried out by Coghill and Deutscher (2002), Doran & Khan (2012), and others has changed this trend.

We assume that NA-E adult bilinguals (L1 potential attriters) are not fully proficient L1 users, at least with regard to the level of their figurative language skills. They are prone to attrite their L1, and they hence become linguistically different from other native speakers of their language. For this reason, we describe the scenario of what happens to NA as 'language attrition' rather than 'language shift'. According to Lambert and Freed (1982), language attrition is:

> [T]he loss of any language or any portion of a language by an individual or a speech community. It may refer to the declining use of mother tongue skills by those in bilingual situations or among ethnic minorities in (some) language contact situations where one language, for political or social reasons, come to replace another. (p.1)

We believe this description is theoretically motivated, as NA-E bilinguals' language system seems to be simplistic relative to native speakers of their age. On the other hand, language shift can be defined as a group's tendency to abandon its L1 and embrace the language of the dominant group (Baker & Jones, 1998; Fishman, 1971; Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1985). Language attrition occurs as an ineluctable result of language shift. Hence, the correlation between language attrition and language shift can be subsumed under the hypernym 'language loss' (see de Bot and Weltens, 1995). For the purpose of this study, we do not intend to make a distinction between language attrition and language loss except that the former is characterized

by graduality and partiality, whereas the latter can be described as large-scale decline. Rather, we use language attrition, in its broad sense to cover both lost and defectively acquired portions of a language on the part of L1 speaker and on the part of the (endangered) language itself. In accordance with the three-generation axiom, Gonzo and Saltarelli (1983) stated that even first generation's L1 is susceptible to attrition over time, which results in a 'reduced' L1system. Consequently, the second generation's L1 undergoes further attrition and, by the same token, the third generation has to grapple with the most attrited form of L1. For Jaspaert, Kroon, and Van Hout (1986), the incomplete intergenerational transfer of language proficiency is rather an imperfect acquisition of some 'grammatical categories'. We maintain that the portion referred to can be described as lost for two reasons: first, the average age of our L1 NA speakers (27 years) qualifies them to be quite cognizant of the material under investigation (i.e. idioms); second, the idioms used in the study have a high usage frequency among native speakers. This phenomenon can be chalked up to L1 disuse and the great effect of the dominant language (L2) in contact situation.

The linguistic environment in which NA attriters find themselves offers them neither the opportunity to acquire and practice the figurative competence efficiently nor the social and cultural milieu conducive for developing their L1 in a systematic and consistent manner like other native speakers. Therefore, L1 attrition in this case is an intergenerational decline occurring at the group level rather than a single act of atrophy at the individual level which is more like the concern of the current L2 loss research. Since the main concern of our study is L1 attrition, it is important to note that language attrition and second language acquisition are two distinct fields of research (see Schmid and Köpke, 2007). We predict that the outcomes of this study are not mere instances of language change but a part of a consistent, progressive pattern that we already

noticed in two separate studies on NA animal metaphors and politeness theory (Al-Kajela, 2017). The intergenerational transmission of linguistic competence and cultural conventions is interrupted; hence, the advanced stages of language proficiency (i.e. the figurative and non-literal aspects of language) cannot be developed properly. For NA-E bilinguals, attaining this kind of knowledge is disturbed due to the lack of incessant qualitative and quantitative L1 use which is normally triggered by operationalized, efficient contact with native speakers (see Cook, 2003; Paradis, 2007). Such interruption is not likely to have a great effect on the phonological and morphosyntactic structures of L1; they are less susceptible to attrition. However, it is important to note that the NA-E bilinguals we refer to in this study are the second generation and still have to use their attenuated L1 in communicating with their parents or grandparents who usually have limited knowledge of the majority or dominant language. It has been noted that the use of L1 dwindles through adolescence and adulthood as the second generation becomes more involved in the institutional networks of the dominant group, which demand intensive and highly proficient use of L2 (see Pauwels, 2016).

3.1.4 Traditional approaches to idioms: a very long row to hoe

The following two sections are important adjuncts to the development of our work: idioms are by no means similar to lexical items that are stored in our mental lexicon, as suggested by generative grammar theory. We stated above that idioms are first out because they are last in and, accordingly, idiomatic expressions are likely to be more susceptible to attrition than individual lexical items. The claim that the meaning of an idiom is assigned holistically rather than being a feature of its individual components paved the way for the traditional linguistic view of generative grammar to treat idioms as lexical items characterized by syntactic inflexibility.

Undergoing transformations such as passivization, topicalization, quantification and ellipsis without affecting the figurative meaning of idioms was the principal criterion in support of the claim that idioms have no internal composition as stated by Chomsky (1980), Fraser (1970) and Katz (1973).

We start by reviewing Fraser's (1970) theoretical work and then shed some light on Chafe's (1968) treatment of idioms within generative semantics theory. Fraser's model was an extension of Katz and Postal's (1963) work, but more plausible than Weinreich's (1969) model. Fraser's (1970) transformational approach introduced a 'hierarchy of frozenness' based on the degree of tolerance idioms exhibit while undergoing transformations- idioms were categorized according to their syntactic flexibility. His seven degrees of frozenness ranged from the least frozen or 'unrestricted' idioms (level 6) such as *spill the beans* to completely frozen ones (level0) as *dip into one's pocket* (p.39-41). For Fraser (1970) an idiom is "a constituent or series of constituents for which the semantic interpretation is not a compositional function of the formatives of which it is composed" (p.2). One of the repercussions of this definition is that an idiom becomes unamenable to topicalization which belongs to level 6 of 'frozenness hierarchy'. More importantly, Fraser (1970) claimed that level 6 cannot be occupied by idioms, viz., transformations in level 6, such as topicalization, are "something impossible for an idiom" (p.19). This claim implicitly gave rise to the idea that generative grammar treats *all* idioms as a class of arbitrary associations between forms and meanings, which suffer from transformational deficiencies. This seems to go hand in hand with the generative view that the semantic interpretation of the whole is not a function of the semantic interpretation of the parts. Proponents of the standard transformational view used some notorious examples of the structure [V NP] to justify their stance that some transformations are blocked:

1- # *The bucket* was *kicked* by the old man. (passivization)

2- # *The breeze*, she *shot* last night. (topicalization)

3- # She *chewed* some *fat*, while the lecture was in progress. (quantification)

4- # She *played the field* when she was young, but did not play *it* any more. (ellipsis)

However, one cannot ignore the existence of a considerable number of [V NP] idioms that undergo transformations without affecting their figurative meaning. Besides, only *parts* of idioms (not the whole string) demonstrate syntactic flexibility. These *parts* can be structurally manipulated, which adds a subtle nuance to the original meaning as pointed out by Berman (1974), Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994) ,Vega Moreno (2007) and Wasow, Sag, and Nunberg (1983). The examples below show that individual parts of idioms can be modified, quantified, topicalized, anaphorized, deleted and passivized; they refute the traditional assumption that idioms are lexical items and cannot be internally modified:

5- Leave no *legal* stone unturned.

6- They promised to toe the *parliament* line and pass the bill into law.

7- He knew the senior officer who pulled *a few* strings for him to get that promotion.

8- His brief report has to hit *all* the high spots.

9- *That bandwagon* the voters would not climb on unless they receive official assurances.

10- *The straw* she clutched at did not solve her financial crisis.

11- I thought the line would be drawn at the foreign interference, but *it was* not.

12- A political pundit speculated that a bombshell would be dropped during the presidential inauguration, and *it was*.

13- My lawyers will be drummed out of the bar association, but *yours will not*.

14- The senior counsellor *was elbowed* out of the office because of political corruption.

In addition, the Chomskyan framework has dubbed idioms such as *by and large*, *trip the light fantastic*, *kingdom come*, etc. syntactically ill-formed, because they are, allegedly, not generated by the base component and thus should be treated and stored as any lexical item in the language. In this vein, Katz and Postal (1963) stated that an empirically adequate syntactic component should not generate such idioms because they are ungrammatical strings. However, they conjectured "that sentences containing such idioms can be generated by the device that gives a syntactic description of the semisentences of the language" (p.281). All in all, Katz and Postal's nebulous theory takes us back to square one where the semantic component *arbitrarily* offers two options: one is figurative and the other is literal.

Chafe (1968), a vehement opponent of Chomsky, criticized transformational grammar theory generally and the way it deals with idioms in particular. Instead of the traditional syntactic treatment of idioms, Chafe (1968) employed his theory of generative semantics to derive idioms and justify their ostensible syntactic deficiencies. In his model, he claimed that each semantic unit (i.e. an idiom) has its 'literalization' and 'symbolization' rule, the former converts semantic units into literal post-semantic arrangements (of other semantic units) whereas the latter coverts the post-semantic arrangements into phonetic units or sounds. Well-formed idioms such as *kick the bucket* have a possible semantic arrangement because they have a literal counterpart. On the other hand, ill-formed idioms such as 'trip the light fantastic' also have their latent rules, but their literalization rule does not produce possible post-semantic arrangements as they do not have literal counter parts. Regrettably, Chafe's model differed only procedurally from the Chomskyan syntactic set up, as they both, at the end of the day, agreed that an idiom like *kick the bucket* is a single semantic or syntactic unit, much like the lexical item 'die' and that idioms constitute a heterogeneous class of well- and ill-formed ones.

3.1.5 Compositionality and decompositionality: a change of pace

Since neither transformational grammar theory nor the generative semantic framework provided a satisfactory mechanism to deal with idioms as non-arbitrary and non-lexical items, we turn to another widely acknowledged model among linguists working in different fields of research (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991; Gibbs 1994; Gibbs & Nayak,1989; Gibbs, Nayak & Cutting, 1989; Titone & Connine, 1999). Nunberg (1978) made his mark on the study of idioms by suggesting that the syntactic flexibility and/or inflexibility of idioms is not a function of syntax or semantics, but rather a mapping established by the speakers of a language between these two levels. Nunberg proposed that idioms lie on a continuum of compositionality and each element of an idiom plays a role in its overall meaning. As a result, the syntactic behaviour of an idiom is claimed to be largely determined by its position on the proposed continuum and the assumptions motivated by the beliefs of language users about the contribution of each constituent. According to Nunberg, decompositionality is the speakers' ability to establish a link stemming from their beliefs between the individual parts of an idiom and the overall idiomatic meaning. Following in Nunberg's footsteps, Gibbs and Nayak's (1989) Idiom Decomposition Hypothesis demonstrates the correlation between decomposability and speaker's ability to establish a link between the constituent parts and the overall meaning of an idiom. To prove his theory, Nunberg compared the syntactic behaviour of two idioms roughly meaning *to die*: the traditional example *kick the bucket* with *give up the ghost*.

15- # Once the bucket has been kicked, there is nothing medical science can do.

16- Once the ghost has been given up, there is nothing medical science can do.

Nunberg suggested that language users' beliefs and intuitions play an important role in licensing the meaning of such strings, and offer a line of reasoning that best explains their syntactic peculiarity. It is claimed that the idiom in (16) is a two-place relation and the speaker can assign independent referents to the constituent parts of the idiom. People, guided by their beliefs about death, agree to associate *ghost* with person's spirit and *give up* with *yield* (Nunberg 1978; Nunberg et al. 1994; Vega Moreno 2007). By the same logic, (15) did not allow passivization because people could not assign idiomatic referents to the individual parts of the idiom. The idiom is characterized as a one-place relation in reference to person's biological state due to death.

To recapitulate, when the speaker is able to discern the relation between the constituent parts of an idiom and its idiomatic referents, then the idiom is normally decomposable. On the other hand, the idiom is nondecomposable when idiomatic referents cannot be assigned to its constituent parts. Contentious 'abnormally decomposable' idioms fall between these two poles on Nunberg's continuum. There has been some disagreement among investigators on this category. For example, Vega Moreno (2007) considers *spill the beans* a normally decomposable idiom and assigns idiomatic referents to its constituents: *spill* denotes 'divulge' and *beans* denotes 'concealed information'. For Gibbs et al. (1989) and Gibbs and Nayak (1989), *spill the beans* is conceived as an abnormally decomposable idiom. Gibbs and colleagues agree that the relation between *spill* and 'divulge' is direct and an idiomatic referent can be assigned successfully, but they reject the assumption that *beans* can be treated in the same manner. According to Gibbs et al., and Gibbs and Nayak (1989), the relation between *beans* and 'concealed information' is metaphorically motivated and does not license idiomatic referent assignment. It is worth noting that Gibbs and Nayak added another dimension to

decompositionality by introducing the concept of 'semantic field'. Constituent parts of decomposable idioms can be either 'paradigmatically' or 'syntagmatically' related because they belong to the same semantic field. When a semantic relation between the constituent parts cannot be established, the idiom is taken to be nondecomposable.

For the purposes of this study, we have employed Gibbs and Nayak's distinction between decompositional and non-decompositional idioms. For idioms to be considered nondecomposable, they should not have their constituent parts in the same semantic field. On the other hand, idioms were considered decomposable if they met the minimum requirement of syntagmatic or paradigmatic relation. This broad categorization is congruent with Nunberg's characterization.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Experimental design and instruments

An experiment was designed to measure the influence of second language acquisition (English) on the vitality of figurative expressions in the first language (Neo-Aramaic). Our study relied on 36 NA idiomatic expressions and their English equivalents. The idioms were divided into two groups: for convenience, the 13 nondecomposable idioms were followed by 23 decomposable ones (see appendix A). However, both groups of idioms were randomly ordered in the survey. We could not have an equal number of both types of idioms for two reasons; first, it was difficult to obtain equally familiar idioms in both languages; Second, it was an intricate task to procure idiomatic expressions with a high degree of matching (non-) decomposability. These idioms were elicited from 10 elderly native NA speakers through one-on-one interviews. From the collected data, we selected the 36 idioms with the highest level of frequency, which the elderly

native NA speakers rated on a six-point frequency scale. The subjects were asked to provide an interpretation of the idiomatic expression using plain English. In other words, the survey was an explanation task that would reveal some aspects of participants' L1 figurative knowledge. We also selected idiomatic expressions that are quite familiar in both cultures, because familiarity is a function of frequency. Familiar idioms are likely to be more frequently encountered and used in daily interactions than less or non-familiar idioms (Schweigert, 1986, 1991). It was quite a challenge to obtain idioms that share semantic and syntactic properties in two typologically and culturally different languages[9]. Therefore, the chosen English idioms were pragmatically equivalent; they conveyed similar, though not exact, idiomatic function to that of NA. We tried to provide English near equivalents that would be as familiar as the NA ones. For example, we used 'make a mountain out of a molehill' instead of 'all his geese are swans' as an equivalent for the NA idiom *g-mafir fille* 'he flies elephants', which is used to refer to someone who exaggerates. There were two versions of the survey: one was composed of 36 transliterations of NA idioms and the other was their corresponding English ones. In order to ensure that NA-E bilinguals comprehend and interpret the idioms by using their L1, the NA idioms were transliterated. This procedure guaranteed that the subjects are native NA speakers and helped minimize the influence of English. In addition, all the idiomatic expressions were out of context in order to avoid any prompting effects that context usually brings about.

The study examined the usage frequency of these idiomatic expressions; therefore, we constructed a descending frequency scale (Likert scale) to help subjects pick out options that best represent their usage tendency. The participants were asked to rate, on a six-point frequency scale, how often they use these idioms in their daily interactions. Our frequency scale consisted

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[9] Three native speakers holding MA in linguistics were asked to provide English equivalents for the NA idioms.

of these items: 'Always', 'Usually', 'Frequently', 'Rarely', 'Never', and 'I do not know this expression'. In data analysis, we compared participants' interpretations (idiomatic, literal, no interpretation) of each idiomatic expression among the conditions (decomposable and nondecomposable) to find out whether participants differed significantly in their comprehension of the idioms in question. We also compared participants' ratings on the frequency scale for both decomposable and nondecomposable idioms.

NA-E participants were asked to answer questions about their length of stay in the country of the dominant language. Subjects of the experimental group (NA-E) and control group (CE) had to answer another question about how often they use their L1 and/or L2 in their daily interactions. A six-item frequency scale was used for this question: 'Always', 'Usually', 'Frequently', 'Sometimes', 'Rarely', and 'Never'. For the control group (CE) this question was used as a filter to rule out answers of monolinguals who did not opt for 'Always' on the L1 usage-frequency scale.

3.2.2 Subjects

Two groups of participants took part in the experiment. There were 30 subjects in each group. The first group consisted of NA-E bilinguals (17 females) and the second group was comprised of CE speakers (21 females). Most NA-E bilinguals were either students or had graduated from McMaster University several years earlier, their ages were between 18-35 (mean age: 27), and the average of their exposure to English was 15 years. All of the CE monolingual speakers were undergraduate students at McMaster University and their ages ranged between 18 and 24 (mean age: 24.5). Only responses from subjects who were native speakers of NA and CE were considered in our data, other response from non-native participants were excluded. NA subjects

volunteered to participate whereas CE subjects received research credit in one of their linguistics classes upon participation.

3.2.3 Procedure

The study was in the form of an online survey. All the participants had to read and sign a consent form before accessing the survey. The preamble statement and letter of information gave an adequate description of the survey and its objectives. It was emphasized that the participants' task was to provide idiomatic rather than literal interpretation of the expressions in question. We informed the participants that these expressions have meanings that are distinct from the meaning of the constituting words when considered in isolation; therefore, the interpretation should reflect the meaning of the words as a whole rather than discrete units. Prior to answering the survey questions, participants familiarized themselves with an example that illustrated the difference between literal and idiomatic meanings. The example below, which did not appear in the experimental material, illustrates what the format of the survey looked like in the NA and English versions respectively:

Expression	Literal meaning	Idiomatic meaning
Ītheħ yārikhtāla	His hand is long	He is a thief
He has sticky fingers	His fingers stick to things	He is a thief

The survey was expected to take approximately (30-45) minutes. However, for their convenience, participants did not have to answer all the questions in one session. We collected some demographic information from both groups, such as the participant's age, length of residence in Canada, and native language or L1. There was also a question about how often they

use both their native language (L1) and L2 in daily interactions. NA-E bilinguals who did not identify themselves as native NA speakers were eliminated to avoid the possibility of not comprehending the idiom. Similarly, CE speakers whose first language was not English or who were bilinguals were also eliminated in order to block misinterpretations that L2 might invoke. The data were collected with confidentiality and anonymity.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Idiom comprehension test

To analyze our data we used R programming language for statistical computing (Field, Miles & Field, 2012). Our statistical results were based on Wilcox rank-sum test (i.e. a nonparametric test of two independent samples). We classified the participants' interpretations into three distinct categories as stated above. Each interpretation was considered and analyzed separately to determine to which category it belonged. For correctly interpreting the nondecomposable idiomatic expressions, the analysis yielded a significant difference between both groups at .05 level (Fig. 11). The number of idioms in Figure 11 and subsequent figures refers to the order in which they appeared in Appendix A. CE speakers scored significantly higher (Mdn=86.6) than NA-E bilinguals (Mdn= 36.6), W= 141, p=0.00, r= -.53.

Fig. 11 Figurative interpretation of nondecomposable idioms
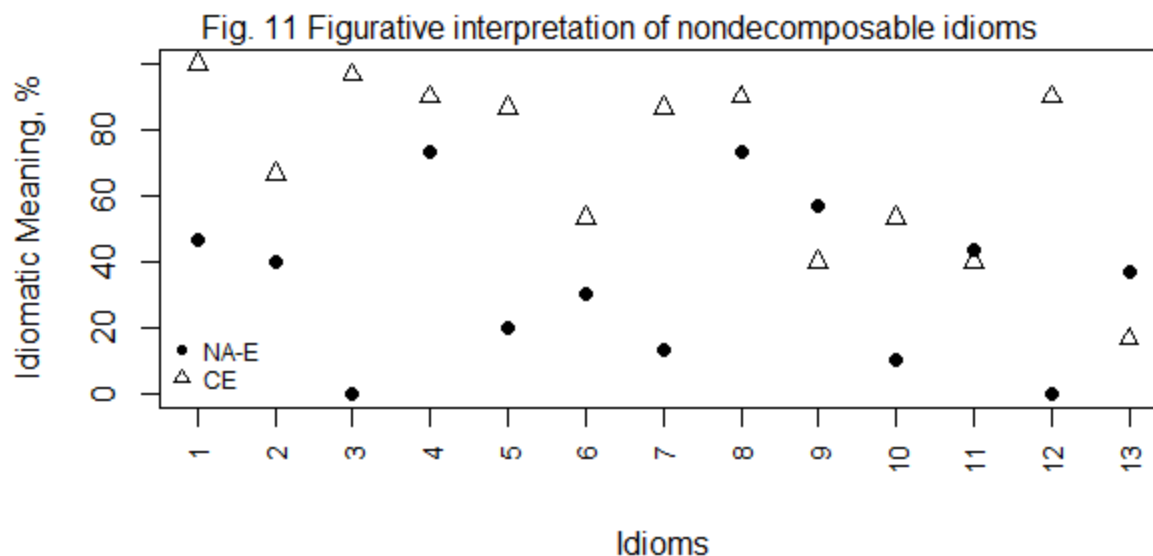
NA-E bilinguals exhibited incompetence in identifying the idiomaticity of the nondecomposable idioms, which explains their high scores in the following two conditions, viz., literal and no interpretation. For providing literal interpretations of nondecomposable idioms, NA-E bilinguals scored higher (Mdn=33.3) than CE speakers (Mdn=13.3), W= 37.5, p=.02, r=-.44 as shown in (Fig. 12). Apparently, NA-E bilinguals could not perceive the idiomatic meaning and were inclined to select the suboptimal, failsafe literal interpretation. Furthermore, CE speakers were consistent in providing either correct or incorrect interpretations, unlike NA-E bilinguals who showed more unfamiliarity with nondecomposable idiomatic expressions (Mdn=16.6), W= 36.5, p=.01, r= -.45 (see Fig. 13). Some NA-E bilinguals were quite unfamiliar with these idiomatic expressions; therefore, they labelled them as inexplicable.

Fig. 12 Literal interpretation of nondecomposable idioms

Fig. 13 Failure to interpret nondecomposable idioms
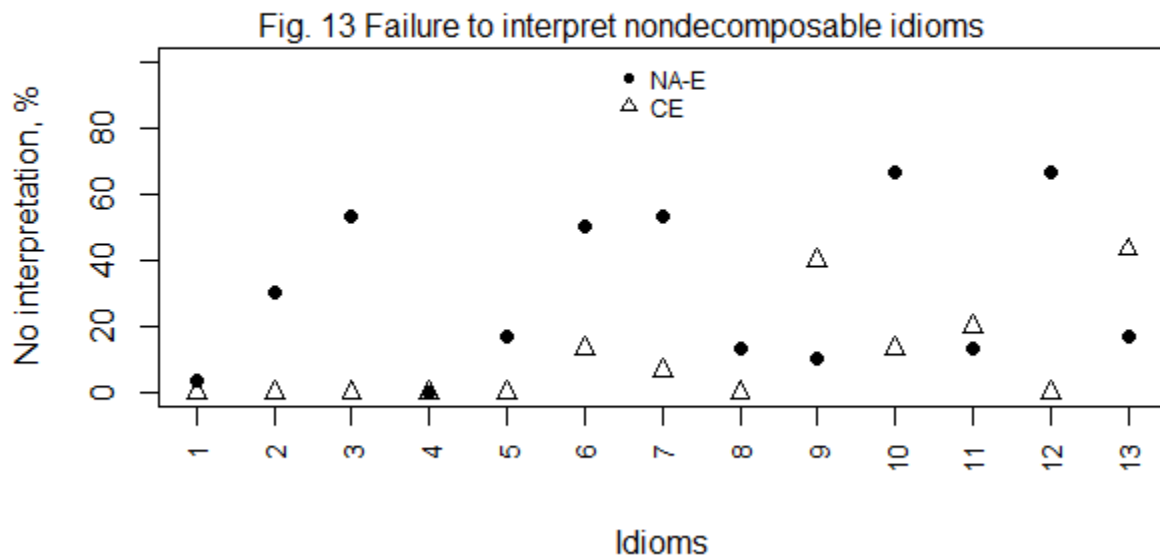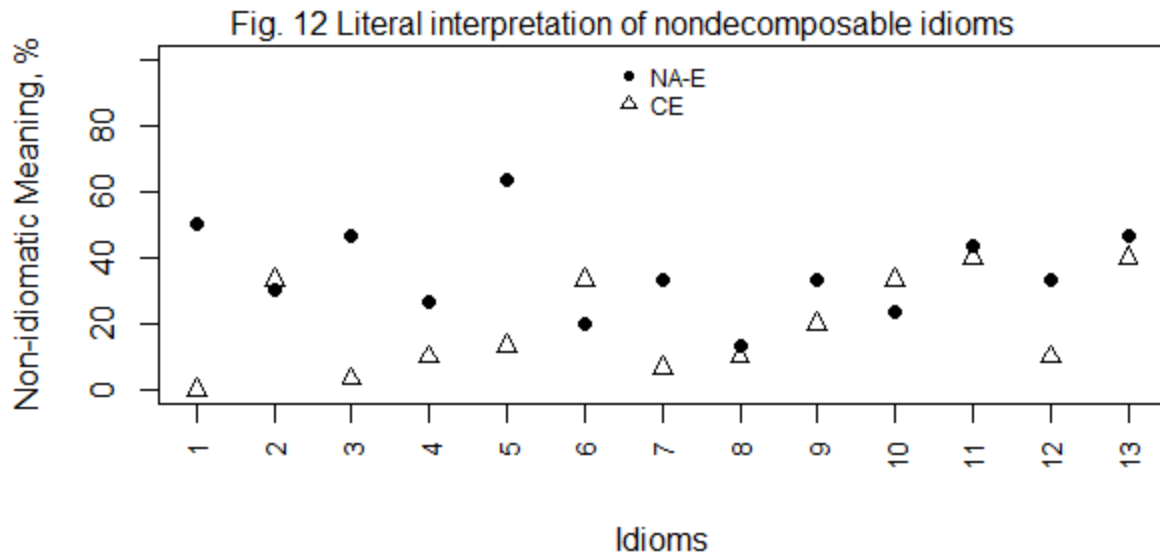
The two experimental groups demonstrated a similar pattern in their interpretation of decomposable idioms. NA-E bilinguals were not as successful as CE monolinguals in providing felicitous pragmatic interpretations of this kind of idioms (Fig. 14). It is clear that idiom

decomposability was a facilitating factor that resulted in 13.4% increase in NA-E bilinguals' figurative interpretations while CE monolinguals kept their scores constant at (M*dn*=86.6%). However, there was still a significant difference between both groups at .05 level, *W*= 436.6, *p*=.00, *r*=-.69.

Fig. 14 Figurative interpretation of decomposable idioms
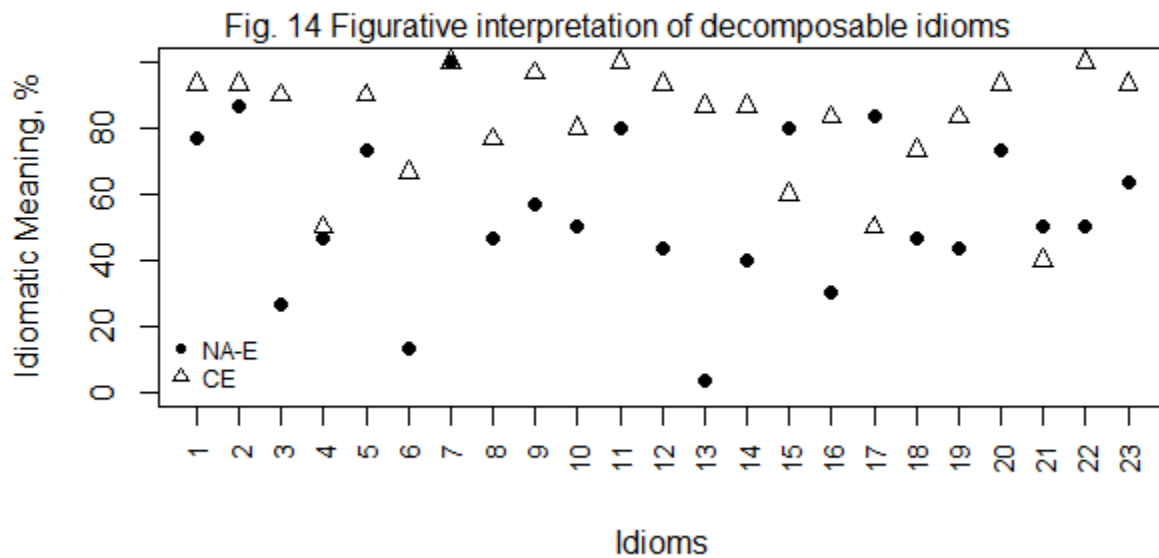
Again, decomposable idioms were responsible for a slight drop (6.7%) in NA-E bilinguals' literal interpretations, which is an index of performance improvement. In spite of the slight conversion between NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals as shown in (Fig. 15), there was still a statistically significant difference, *W*=114.5, *p*= .00, *r*=-.60.

Fig. 15 Literal interpretation of decomposable idioms
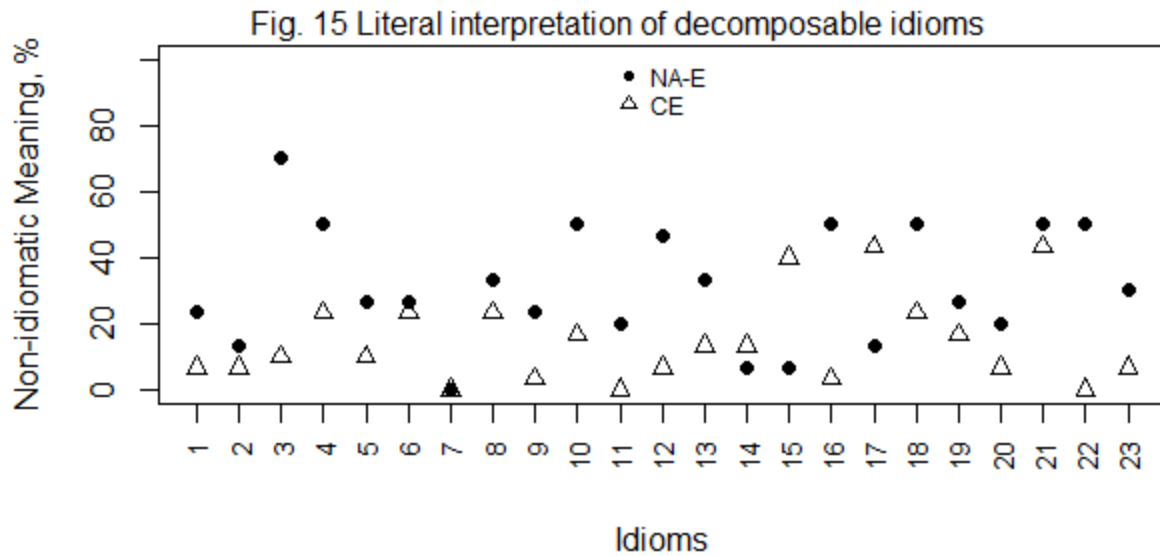
NA-E bilinguals were less familiar with some decomposable idiomatic expressions which explains their tendency to eschew giving any interpretation more frequently than CE monolinguals. It is worth noting that decomposable idioms were responsible for 3.3% drop in NA-E blinguals' scores unlike the invariable pattern demonstarted by CE monolinguals (Fig. 16). The Wilcoxon rank sum test showed a significant difference between both groups at .5 threshold, $W= 162$, $p= .01$, $r= -.44$.

Fig. 16 Failure to interpret decomposable idioms
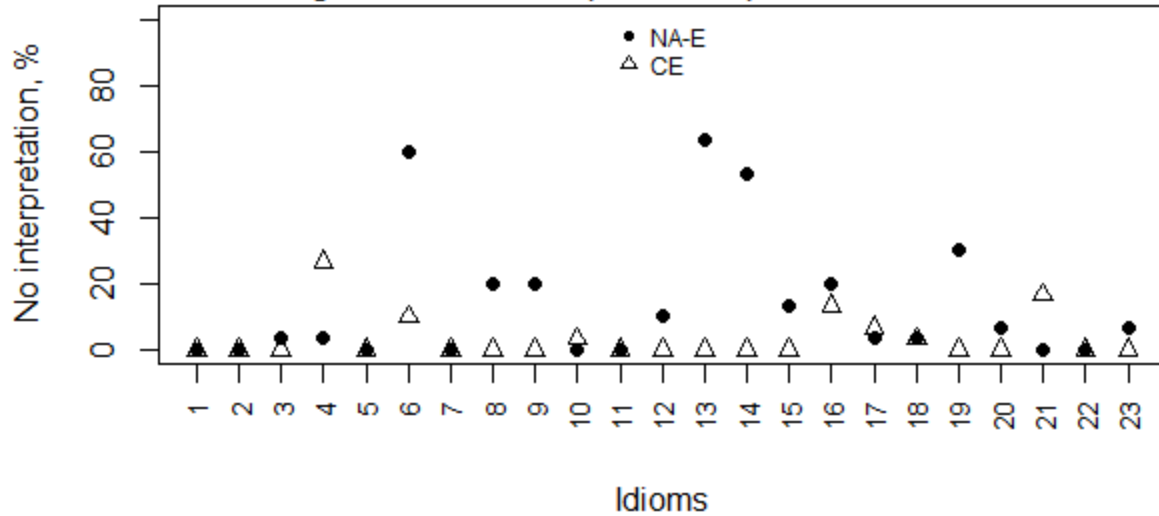
3.3.2 Usage-frequency test

On the scale of frequency, we observed a statistically significant difference in participants' tendency to use decomposable idiomatic expressions in their daily interactions. However, this difference was limited to 'always', 'never', and 'do not know'. For convenience, all the statistical results are summarized in Table 2. Both groups failed to demonstrate any considerable inclination to use this kind of idioms, hence the low scores on the scale of frequency. We found that NA-E bilinguals scored slightly higher (M*dn*= 6.6) than CE monolinguals (M*dn*=0), *W*= 149, *p*=.00, *r*= -.48. In line with the marginal use of 'always', CE monolinguals' employment of decomposable idioms was thin on the ground. They opted to use 'never' more frequently (M*dn*= 30) than NA-E bilinguals (M*dn*= 16.6), *W*= 391.5, *p*=.00, *r*= -.51. As indicated earlier, NA-E bilinguals did not know some of the idiomatic expressions, which was automatically reflected in their preferences on the frequency scale. In other words, not knowing an idiomatic expression

entails the exclusion of its usage altogether, hence the identical values to the previous 'no interpretation' condition (M*dn*=3.3), *W*= 162, *p*=.01, *r*=-.44.

Degree of Frequency Decomposable idioms	W	*p*-value	*r*	M*dn*% NA-E	M*dn*% CE
Always	149	.00	-.48	6.6	0
Usually	230	.2	-.24	10	10
Sometimes	246	.7	-.07	36.6	36.6
Rarely	343	.08	-.32	10	13.3
Never	391.5	.00	-.51	16.6	30
None	162	.01	-.44	3.3	0

Table 2 Levels of significance on usage-frequency scale for decomposable idioms

We observed more conversion in the usage of the nondecomposable idioms, which was characterized by a slight decrease in frequency. Both groups agreed to consider this kind of idioms less relevant to their daily interactions; therefore, we did not find a statistically significant difference in the participants' ratings for 'always', 'usually', 'sometimes' and 'rarely' (see Table 3). As we pointed out earlier, nondecomposable idioms were more unfamiliar to NA-E bilinguals than CE monolinguals and thus the significant difference for their 'none' ratings, *W*=36.5, *p*=.01, *r* =-.46. However, there was a statistically significant difference on the lower end of the frequency scale (i.e. 'never'), *W*=138.5, *p*=.01, *r*=-.51.

Degree of Frequency Nondecomposable idioms	W	p-value	r	Mdn% NA-E	Mdn% CE
Always	69	.4	-.16	3.3	0
Usually	68	.4	-.16	3.3	3.3
Sometimes	86.5	.9	-.02	30	20
Rarely	84.5	1	0	13.3	13.3
Never	138.5	.01	-.51	23.3	33
None	36.5	.01	-.46	16.6	0

Table 3 Levels of significance on usage-frequency scale for nondecomposable idioms

The experimental group was more inclined to use L2 in daily interactions instead of using L1. There was a significant difference between NA-E bilinguals' use of L1 and L2 ($p= .02$). NA-E bilinguals scored significantly higher for using L2 by their ratings for 'always' and 'usually' ($p=.05$, $p=.03$ respectively). Towards the lower end of the frequency scale, L1 showed high ratings only for 'frequently' which differed significantly from L2 ratings ($p=.00$). We did not find a significant difference for the other items of the scale.

3.4 Discussion

The study presented here provided empirical evidence in favour of the regression hypothesis and psycholinguistic research on idiom comprehension. We discussed the results of idiom interpretation task, then we talked about the implications of idiom usage-frequency test. It is likely that high-frequency L1 idioms were not significantly related to NA-E bilinguals' figurative interpretation; rather, idiom decomposability was more involved in NA-E bilinguals' idiomatic capability. For NA-E bilinguals, decomposability correlated with L1 idiom interpretability. We

point out that relying on frequency in idiom interpretation is a good indication of being in active contact with the L1 linguistic community. It is clear that NA-E bilinguals' interpretation mechanism was based mainly on semantic and syntactic cues collected from idiom constituent parts. We noticed that their performance improved on decomposable-idiom task compared to nondecomposable ones, but they were outperformed by the CE monolinguals. In line with Gibbs, Nayak, and Cutting (1989), and Gibbs and Nayak (1991), NA-E bilinguals found decomposable idioms more facile than nondecomposable ones, while frequency was held constant throughout both tasks. As such, NA-English bilinguals did not rely on the frequency of the L1 idiomatic expressions. Lack of reliance on idiom frequency or familiarity entails alienation of NA speakers from their linguistic and cultural environment. However, the highly familiar or high-frequency idioms did play an important role in CE monolinguals' ability to provide idiomatic interpretation in both decomposable and nondecomposable idiom interpretation task. Again, this could be explained by their constant performance in decomposable and nondecomposable idiom interpretation task.

The decline in NA-E bilinguals' idiomatic competence was also indicated in their tendency to provide literal instead of idiomatic interpretation for both decomposable and nondecomposable L1 idioms. The same pattern was noticed in their nescience of some idioms altogether, which marks a gap in their figurative language development, which distinguishes them from their monolingual peers who did not chalk up a single instance to lack of knowledge. As noted above, NA-E bilinguals failed to correctly interpret more nondecomposable idioms than decomposable ones. However, in both cases their scores were significantly different from CE monolinguals. These results are consistent with the idiom interpretation task and lend support to the regression hypothesis. Ignorance of high-familiarity L1 idioms or failure to provide

figurative interpretations of such idioms can be taken as an obvious sign of L1 erosion in contact situation.

At first glance, the results of usage-frequency test of decomposable idioms might seem contradictory. NA-E bilinguals were not able to interpret the idiomatic meaning correctly as often as their CE peers, but for decomposable idioms they opted to use the high-frequency term 'always' more often. First, NA-E bilinguals were motivated by the decomposability of the idioms which seemed to facilitate the process of interpretation and result in high-frequency item selection. In addition, a similar idiosyncratic behaviour was not observed when NA-E bilinguals were put on their mettle in the nondecomposable-idiom task due to its difficulty. Although a large proportion of idioms is characterized by colloquialism and informality, it is quite common to find them in the media and literary texts. However, people tend to frequently use them to add a flourish to their speech. They are, therefore, a characteristic feature pertaining to the unique idiolect of every single speaker. Idioms have always been a challenge for linguistic research. There is inconclusive evidence as to the frequency of English idioms (see Strässler 1982). A solid conclusion cannot be reached unless a precise delineation of 'frequency' has been agreed upon.

NA-E bilinguals' L2 leanings revealed that the second generation has stepped into an advanced stage of linguistic transition. Language-use preference played an important role in NA-E bilinguals' poor interpretation in both tasks. Using L2 received higher ratings for the high-frequency terms 'always' and 'usually' compared to a lower-frequency term 'frequently' for L1. That said, it seems that their linguistic competence (grammar, semantics, and phonology) is intact, because they were better than L1 (CE) speakers in providing literal interpretations in both

tasks. However, they were conspicuously incompetent in interpreting the figurative meaning of L1 idioms, a functional task that requires continuous use of L1.

3.5 Conclusion

The study lends support to the regression hypothesis in a language attrition situation. We noticed that a significant part of functional knowledge (i.e. idioms) acquired at later stages of language development is susceptible to progressive attrition before other more independent grammatical and semantic pieces of knowledge. This study points out that idiom mastery is an essential part of developing native-like fluency that requires a great deal of efficient language use. In language contact situation, L1 idiomatic knowledge becomes fuzzier due to the lack of consistent use and the strong effect of L2. Idiom is an amalgam of linguistic, cultural and historical elements, and only effective interaction with other L1 users can guarantee full access to and good command of this knowledge.

Apart from the need for a dynamic use of L1, developing native-like communicative competence requires acute awareness of the cultural patterns adopted by L1 speakers. In addition to L1 disuse, the poor performance of NA-E bilinguals reflects the effect of L2 (majority language) environment which precludes, to a certain extent, NA-E bilinguals from establishing the required interpersonal contact with other NA speakers to develop L1 idiomatic knowledge. Accordingly, the majority language has nudged NA (minority language) into a state of dormancy. Although the present study contributes to research on L1 attrition in contact situation, it has some limitations. Language attrition studies usually compare a group of bilinguals to native speakers of the same language. This was logistically impossible due to the turmoil in NA native land. Second, the English pragmatic equivalents were confined to the idioms collected

from native NA speakers. However, we have to admit that this was, to a certain extent, an advantage for NA-E speakers. Third, validating the results of this study will probably require a larger pool of participants and a larger amount of data.

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APPENDIX (A)

Neo-Aramaic idioms and their English pragmatic equivalents

#	Neo-Aramaic nondecomposable idioms (transliteration)	Literal meaning	English pragmatic equivalents
1.	makh shtetha d-māya	Like a drink (sip) of water	a piece of cake or plain sailing
2.	g-mafir fīle	He flies elephants	make a mountain out of a molehill
3.	kālū d-geṣa	A bride of plaster	someone who wears a poker face
4.	kim-lūshāle	She put him on	give someone the cold shoulder
5.	meka pliṭla shimsha	Where did the sun rise?	once in a blue moon
6.	puqāna 'lūya	High nose	nose in the air
7.	baqila plī'a palga	A fava bean split into two halves	spitting image of someone
8.	mistī qimla	My body hair stood up	to get goose bumps/pimples
9.	kimla pātheħ	His face has blackened/ sooted	have egg on your face
10.	afit min reshūkh	Let things pass over your head	give something a lick and a promise or give something a once-over- lightly
11.	nāthī hūla m-zamzūme/gazhgūzhe	My ear is buzzing	my ear is burning
12.	khula īwin qiṭya shurtheħ	Did I cut his umbilical cord!	know someone like the back of your hand
13.	īdhī hūla bi-khyāka	My hand is itchy	to have an itchy palm
#	Neo-Aramaic decomposable idioms (transliteration)	Literal meaning	English pragmatic equivalents

1.	hūwin flīsha	I am demolished or broken	run out of steam
2.	gma'wer resheħ b-kul mindī	He sticks his head in everything	a busybody who sticks his nose into everything
3.	hūle bi-fyāra	He is flying	on top of the world
4.	la-khalmit	Do not dream	build castles in the air or clouds
5.	drī enūkh illeħ	Put your eyes on it/him	keep an eye on someone or something
6.	la-kāre īdheħ	He does not hold his hand	someone lives beyond their means
7.	shqul rāħitūkh	Take your rest	make yourself at home
8.	kim-ma'weran gu libbid āra	He forced us into the heart of the ground	put someone on the spot
9.	chuchikka kimmamerī	The sparrow told me	a little bird told me
10.	la-machhit gyānūkh	Do not tire yourself /bother	save your breath
11.	shuqla benāthan	Leave it between us	Do not spill the beans
12.	palgit ħaqqūkh	Half of your right	serve someone right
13.	kim-deqīle ṭabi'	They slapped a stamp on him	to kick someone out
14.	resheħ raqq	His head is hard	he is set in his ways (headstrong)
15.	lak-khāshikh	He is useless/ not a worthy person	no use to man or beast
16.	qriṭlī ṣūbāthī bathraħ	I bit my fingers after it	finger licking good
17.	mindī dile b-libbeħ hūle l-lishāneħ	A thing that is in his heart is on his tongue	wear his heart on his sleeve
18.	fletle minnaħ	He evaded/escape it	get away with something (usually bad)
19.	maħketheħ la-kpesha tre'	His talk does not become two	a man or woman of their word

20.	sī m-qam reshī	Go away from my head	get lost
21.	eneħ kpintala	His eye is hungry	his eyes are bigger than his stomach
22.	pthūkh enūkh	Open you your eyes	watch out
23.	āmritta gilda w-garmme	She looks like skin and bones	all skin and bones

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The Effect of Culture Learning on Neo-Aramaic: Empirical Evidence from Politeness Theory[10]

Abstract

The current study investigates the universal notion of 'face' in interdependent cultures: Neo-Aramaic[11] (NA) and Iraqi Arabic (IA). The study sheds light on NA as an endangered language at home and in dispersion on a par and the fact that language change goes beyond grammar to affect human communication and language pragmatics. We first examine the impact of Arabic on NA by providing an account of the core strategies used to express thanks and apologies in IA[12] and NA. Then, the study shows how the NA in diaspora in Canada is under the hegemonic pressure of English. Our experiment shows that young NA-English bilinguals (NA-E) differ significantly from older NA speakers in their reaction to (im)politeness in daily interactions, but we have not found a significant difference between NA-E bilinguals and Canadian English monolinguals (CE). These results support our assumption that NA-E bilinguals have the potential (i.e. culture learning) to circumvent pragmatic failure at the expense of their mother tongue. The

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[11] NA refers to a group of language varieties that are descendants of Middle Aramaic. NA dialects of the North-Eastern NA (also known as NENA) are spoken in northern Iraq, northwestern Iran and southeastern Turkey. The study attempts to shed light on Christian dialects spoken in two towns in the north of Iraq, viz. Mangesh and Bartella. Dialectal variation (lexical or phonological) does not play a role in our investigation; therefore such instantiations are overlooked, for example, *smiqen ṣūryāṯ-eh* (Bartella dialect) and *smiqley paṯwāṯ-eḥ* (Mangesh dialect).

[12] Arabic is used in a narrow sense to refer to Iraqi Arabic. More specifically, we use the Baghdadi dialect, which is the variety used in the mainstream media.

results have also shown that culture plays an important role in language change that goes beyond grammar.

Keywords: Politeness; Neo-Aramaic, face; thanks; apologies; culture learning.

4.1 Introduction

The ubiquity of politeness is undeniable as it is at the heart of every community. However, speakers of different cultures express various levels of politeness relative to context, age, gender, social status, etc. Consequently, the dominating values and beliefs in a specific culture motivate certain conventionalized formulas (verbal and/or non-verbal) that may become prevalent, socially acceptable and polite in that culture but may appear bizarre or rude in another. In other words, different cultures assign different values and connotations to such formulaic expressions because, Goody (1978) states "... different societies select different basic signals to elaborate and institutionalize. These then become special strategic forms and are subject to *learning just as are other aspects of culture* [emphasis added]" (p.7). Therefore, intercultural communicators should be au fait with their conflicting interpersonal needs, which stem from the culture-specific values. However, this does not preclude, in any way, the fact that there are some shared and universally agreed-upon, polite formulas that interactants from various cultural backgrounds utilize in their day-to-day interactions.

There is compelling evidence in support of the claim that some aspects of politeness phenomena (e.g., face, thanks, apologies, compliments, etc.) are, in fact, a universal characteristic of human intricate, linguistic system of communication (see Ide, 1993; Watts, 1992). Wierzbicka (2003), a staunch supporter of this view, states that "The widely accepted

paradigms were those of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness, which affirmed "pan-cultural interpretability of politeness phenomenon" (1978, p. 288) and Grice's (1975) theory of conversation, which posited a number of universal conversational principles" (p.v). There are at least three viable reasons to vindicate this stance. Taking into consideration that teasing apart niceties and subtleties of the rules of daily interaction in any culture requires more practice to reach the degree of melding two distinct cultural perspectives (i.e., NA and CE) into one. First, second language learners usually do not face difficulty in 1) acquiring these formulaic expressions, 2) learning the difference between severe and mild conditions, and 3) realizing that the use of these expressions should be carried out with the utmost discretion. Second, Brown and Levinson's (1987) classification of politeness into two types (i.e. positive and negative) sheds light on the fact that cultures will necessarily be either positively or negatively oriented towards politeness (cf. Hwang et al., 2003; Leech, 2007; Park and Guan, 2009). This point will be elaborated in the subsequent section. Third, Goffman's (1967) notion of face (or public image) is claimed to be universal because interactants across cultures usually strive to maintain and enhance hearer and/or speaker's face.

The study is divided into two parts: the first part focuses on some theoretical aspects of linguistic politeness in independent and interdependent cultures. It also tackles the concept of face from an interdependent perspective. In section 1.1, we provide an overview of theoretical approaches to politeness and face, and how face and its components play an important role in IA and NA daily interchanges. In section 2, we elaborate on the difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures which influences and shapes the dynamics of politeness. We pinpoint some social and cultural factors in the process of formulating individualistic and collectivistic conceptualizations. Sections 3 and 3.1 explain how NA is under the incessant influence of IA

and CE. Then, thanks and apologies in NA and IA are discussed in section 4. The second part of

the study (sections 5, 6, and 7) is based on an empirical investigation of older NA speakers, NA-

E bilinguals and CE monolinguals' reaction to two sets of scenarios representing solidarity on the

one hand and social violations on the other. The methodology is summarised in section 5. In

sections 6 and 7, we analyze and then discuss the results of the study. The appendix consists of

two sections: section 1 is an overview of the study and its objectives, and section 2 includes

some demographical information about the participants and a consent form.

4.1.1 Face in connected and separate cultures

Goffman's (1967) work on face has inspired many linguists for decades. Building on Goffman's

concept of face, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) developed their politeness theory with the

concept of face at its core. Arundale (1999, 2006, 2009 and 2010) takes issue with Goffman's

view of face and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. In Arundale's Face Constituting

Theory (FCT), face is neither a psychological construct nor a reflection of one's public image or

social wants and desires; contrarily, face is an interactional and relational, not person-centered,

phenomenon that is conjointly co-constituted by two or more individuals. As such, Arundale

(2006) employs the dialectical relation between 'connection' with others and 'separation' from

them to conceptualize Brown and Levinson's dualism (two distinct components of face): positive

and negative face. Furthermore, Arundale (2006) rejects the assumption that interaction arises

between an independent encoder whose output must be interpreted by the independent decoder.

According to Arundale (2006, 2010), interactional achievement models maintain that

communication is a 'non-summative' process involving a single system of two or more

interdependent individuals (i.e. interacting dyads) unlike the model adopted by Brown and

Levinson where communication is a summative process arising from two distinct systems involving two independent individuals (i.e. monadic individuals). He expounds that "[e]ncoding/decoding models address only the unilateral effect of one person's utterance on another person, not reciprocal conditionality" (Arundale 2010, p. 2085). Although the current study is not intended to critique Arundale's theoretical model, it is important to note that Arundale's model of communication is "curiously abstract and neutral" (p. 2094) to cope with the concrete components of real life communication. In addition, the model is precisely designed to deal with a conversational sequence as it unfolds during real time; this instantaneous dynamicity does not cover the broad range of human communicative processes where face is involved in communication that can be removed in place and time. Besides, Arundale and Brown and Levinson's theoretical models of linguistic politeness are both subsumed under second-order politeness (politeness 2) which represent the analyst's external conceptualization of politeness. Our work takes the participants' actual uptake of communicative interaction to determine what is (im)polite- theorist's analysis and evaluation are not involved in first-order politeness (politeness 1) (Eelen, 2001; Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts et al., 1992).

It is important to elucidate the significance of this concept, which has gained a universal value as Scollon and Scollon (2000, p.48) stated that "there is no faceless communication" (for more on the cross-cultural significance of face see also Matsumoto, 1988; Swi, 1997; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). In physiognomical parlance, face can tell it all; physiognomy is the skill of analysing and discovering the makeup of personality and character from facial features. In his book *Christian Morals*, Browne (1716) claimed that it is possible to discern the inner qualities of personality from outward countenance:

SINCE the Brow speaks often true, since Eyes and Noses have Tongues, and the countenance proclaims the Heart and inclinations; Let observation so far instruct thee in Physiognomical lines... we often observe that Men do most act those Creatures, whose constitution, parts, & complexion do most predominate in their mixtures. This is a corner-stone [*sic*] in Physiognomy, & holds some Truth not only in particular Persons but also in whole Nations. There are therefore Provincial Faces, National Lips and Noses, which testify not only the Natures of those Countries, but of those which have them elsewhere. (Part 2, section 9)

In Semitic languages such as A and NA, face is a crucial factor in social exchanges; face is central to the human body because it includes the eyes, mouth, nose, cheeks, forehead and moustache or beard for men, all of which play an important role in body language. In other words, face is a complicated system, which controls our sight, language use, respiration, etc. Each organ has various, positive and/or negative connotations and a wide range of idiomatic uses associated with it. Below are some examples from IA, and, where applicable, their NA counterparts. Some of the IA and NA data come from fieldwork conducted by the author in Iraq between (2008 and 2010). Two techniques were used to collect data: discourse completion test and personal observations.

1a-'*iḥmarrat xdūd-a* (IA) 'his cheeks turned red' [13] → 'he blushed'

b- *smiqen ṣūryāṯ-eh* (NA)[14] 'his face turned red'

2a- *xašm-a ʿālī* (IA) 'his nose is high' → 'he has a big ego'

b- *puqan-eḥ ʿlūlyale* (NA) 'his nose is high'

3a-'*inʿaqada ḥājib-āh* (Standard Arabic) 'he knitted his brow' → 'he became angry'

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[13] For the sake of consistency, all the pronouns are masculine unless indicated otherwise.

[14] Arabic has a tremendous effect on NA; therefore, we do not provide examples that are lexical borrowings.

b- *wiḏle qarmīṭeḥ* (NA) 'he made his brow'

4a- *y-štughul b-ʿarag jbīna* (IA) 'he works by the sweat of his brow' → 'he works very hard'

b- *kim-šāghil b-deṯid bugīn-eh* (NA) 'he works by the sweat of his brow'

5a- *ʾauxuḏha min ha(ḏā) ʾiš-šārib* (IA) 'take it from this moustache' → 'I honestly or solemnly promise'

b- *šqulla mānī simbīlāle* (NA) 'take it from this moustache'

6a- *xarah b-šawārbak* (IA) 'shit be on your moustache' → 'an expression of censure and disgust'

b- *ʾixre b-simbīlāl-ux* (NA) 'shit be on your moustache'

4.1.2 Individualistic and interdependent perspectives on politeness

There is a gap in the cross-cultural research conducted on Arabic politeness because most of the available literature is descriptive in nature and tackles individual speech acts and politeness formulas. Al Zadjaly (2012) flatly pointed out that "[M]ost research on Muslim and/or Arabic politeness to date just blindly applies Brown & Levinson's (1987) face-saving model without taking into account current theories of face and politeness"(p.420). In support of this claim, we cite some of these studies. Al-Qahtani (2009) investigated the use of offers in Saudi Arabic. Al-Shboul et al. (2012) explored advice giving by Jordanian learners of English. Atawneh (1991) worked on requests by native and bilingual Egyptians. Bouchara (2012) talked about religious greetings in Moroccan Arabic. Bassiouney (2012) tackled interruption and floor control in Egyptian Arabic. Bataineh & Bataineh (2008) studied apologies in Jordanian Arabic. Nelson et al. (1993) examined compliments in Egyptian Arabic. Stevens (1993) studied refusals in Egyptian Arabic. The gap grows wider when we talk about politeness in NA because this area has not received any scholarly attention to date.

Brown and Levinson's seminal work built heavily on Goffman's (1967) notion of face and its usage in English folk term. We have already pointed out the importance of face in the Semitic culture, which meshes well with the concept of viewing face as a source of both honour and humiliation. Face is a semi-abstract construct that amalgamates merits with demerits. Brown and Levinson distinguish between two aspects of face: "**negative face**: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others; **positive face**: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (p. 62). In this paper, we take issue with Brown and Levinson's claim that all 'Model Persons' have both positive face and negative face. The point that we are raising here is that positive and negative face do not have the same significance cross-culturally. Our previous discussion provides evidence that in different cultures one aspect of face may be more salient than another, as shown in diagram 2. Technically, Brown and Levinson's positive-negative dichotomy does not support the presumption that members of a specific culture may exhibit various degrees of interdependence, congruence and solidarity in some situations and still being capable of demonstrating independence, divergence and dissociation in others. Brown and Levinson's dichotomous terms constitute a complementarity in which the presence of one implies the absence of the other. Therefore, we are going to adopt the terminology employed in relational communication, viz., connectedness and separateness instead of Brown and Levinson's positive and negative face, which underlie the concept of positive and negative politeness (see Arundale, 2006 and Baxter and Montgomery, 1996). Connectedness and separateness constitute "a functional opposition in that the total autonomy of parties precludes their relational connection, just as total connection between parties precludes their individual autonomy" (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996, p.9). As such, there is a reflexive link between the dialectical opposition of connectedness and separateness; therefore, connectedness may be

'voiced' as solidarity, interdependence, and convergence in different situations and different cultures but 'voiced' as distance, dissociation and independence in other situations or cultures (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996, p. 30, 89; Arundale, 2006, 2010).

In support of our assumption, previous work (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Park and Guan, 2009; Somech, 2000; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clark, 1985; Wu and Keysar, 2007) has already established the difference between two types of cultures. The independent culture prevails in individualistic communities where the independent self is more salient and its goals intersect with those of the in-group. There is more focus on autonomy, priority of personal objectives, and personal achievements and aspirations. On the other hand, the interdependent culture lays emphasis on accomplishing the in-group objectives and puts a strong focus on cooperation, integration and mutual interests. In collective societies, individuals have and strive to maintain stronger social ties with each other. These social and interpersonal bonds are nurtured outside the zone of formalities; the independent society is characterized by having weaker social ties because such ties are formed to comply with the social norms and formalities of the individualistic community. The use of teknonyms in the collective culture (e.g. father or mother of the child instead of a person's name) is an outstanding example of interconnectedness. It is the name of the eldest child, but this rule usually drops elder females in order to establish what the culture considers the positive connotation that has to do with manhood when a male child is born. Teknonyms are widely used in some interdependent cultures, such as NA and IA, and they are not associated with one geographical location rather than another or with one age group more than another. An interesting linguistic fact is that teknonyms can be used to address both men and women. They are also used to address bachelors by anticipating the names of their future offspring. Furthermore, a teknonym can be used as an emotional supportive technique to

address an infertile individual or old bachelor by using ʾ*abu ğāyib* 'Father of the absent one'. Even men in power are known to the public by their eldest children's names, for example, the Iraqi deposed president Saddam Hussein was usually addressed as ʾ*abu ʿaddaji* 'Uday's father'. However, teknonyms may carry negative or derogatory connotations when used to belittle someone, for example ʾ*abu ḏarṭah* 'Father of a fart'.

In individualistic cultures, individuals are raised to be self-dependent and independent members of the society early in their life; most children take the decision to move out when they can support themselves 'financially'. The financial factor plays a vital role in determining the length of stay under their parents' roof. Some parents ask kids as young as 18 years old with a stable financial resource to move out. Individualistic objectives and personal autonomy are pervasive cultural values triggered by the general atmosphere which dominates the society. Collectivists are completely at variance with this Western view. In Iraq, for example, kids usually do not move out because they are never asked to, even if they are financially stable. Even after getting married, kids are more than welcome to live with their parents except females who, according to tradition, must move to live with their husbands. However, young adults (both males and females) are not allowed to move out before getting married. Eventually, this kind of interdependence spreads across the whole society and passes over from one generation to another. How can this be linked to linguistic politeness? The across-the-board interconnectivity maintains face, builds strong ties, and blurs the borders among individuals when they interact. Connectedness with others promotes interpersonal communication and reduces the severity of potentially face-threatening acts. In section 5, thanking strategy 4 is a good example of connectedness in these cultures, because in example 2 the thanker is asking God to have mercy on the thankee's parents (not necessarily deceased) instead of thanking him/her directly. This

example may not make sense or may sound outlandish to Western ears where parents have a more marginal role in their children's personal life after moving out. In individualistic cultures, the independent individual is the center of interaction, hence thanking a person other than thankee would result in a pragmatic failure. There is a more convoluted way to say this in Iraqi slang: *raḥma ‘ala ḏāk ʾid-des ʾir-riḍa‘ta* 'may God have mercy on the breast that you suckled'. This example is of special interest as it is an amalgam of heterogonous components; a taboo word *des* 'breast' and God's mercy are implicitly referring to the thankee's mother as a symbol of fertility.

It is clear that in an interdependent culture, linguistic politeness is a function of these collective interpersonal relations. In diagram 2, we summarize the effect of individualistic and interdependent cultures on politeness as a scalar phenomenon. Unsurprisingly, Hofstede (1997) showed that independent cultures, represented by Western countries, scored very high on individualism index value, viz., USA 91, GB 89, and Canada 80, whereas the interdependent societies, such as Arab, scored much lower (38).
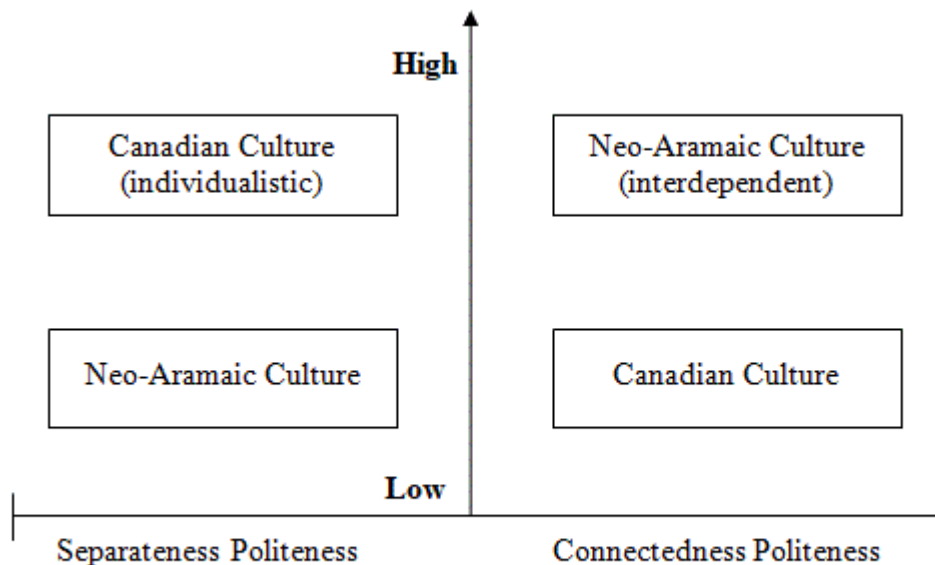
Diagram 2 A cross-cultural perspective of connectedness and separateness politeness

The distinction between connectedness and separateness politeness lends support to this line of argument. They are tailored to meet the interpersonal needs of the individuals in these two distinct cultures. Apart from the technicality issue discussed above, Brown and Levinson's "[p]ositive politeness is approach-based [...]: S considers H to be in important respects 'the same' as he, with in-group rights and duties and expectations of reciprocity" (p.70). Unlike positive politeness, negative politeness "is oriented mainly toward partially satisfying (redressing) H's negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination. Negative politeness, thus, is essentially avoidance-based..." (p.70). Brown and Levinson focused more on the individuality of interactants, their wants and territory, which deepens the gap between the individuals; they were driven by the Western values. Connectedness politeness or 'solidarity politeness', as Scollon and Scollon (1981, p.175) legitimately described it, meshes well with interdependent cultures' values and beliefs. Brown and Levinson's definitions sound superficially

viable, but, again, interactants cannot be viewed as two independent systems during communication. Moreover, Lakoff's (1975, p.65) rules of politeness:

1- Formality: keep aloof;

2- Deference: give options;

3- Camaraderie: show sympathy

should be reordered in order to meet the face requirements of a collective society (see diagram 2). Consequently, rule number (3) is ordered higher in the interdependent culture due to the established common ground among the individuals. Intuitively, separateness politeness and independent cultures are two sides of the same coin; they are both formal and seek to avoid interference with or impediment of the speaker's freedom.

4.1.3 NA speakers: sociocultural perspectives

NA speakers who participated in this study are descendants of Iraqi immigrant families that left Iraq in the early 1990s looking for a better life and religious freedom. Most of them came to Canada between the ages of 4-8 years. They use their mother tongue at home and in other social and religious ceremonies, as it is the main language of both parents who prefer to use NA for two reasons: 1) to preserve their native language and 2) because their English is not advanced to a degree that would allow them to engage in elaborate conversations. For the young generation, NA is, to some extent, the in-group language, however, outside their homes, English is the language of social interaction.

NA speakers are bilinguals who rely heavily on English in their day-to-day interactions. NA and English are for them two competing rivals for linguistic dominance, though on unequal terms. With English being the exclusive language of communication in the educational system,

job market, hospitals, media, etc., NA is fighting a losing battle. Succinctly, NA is a language of an ethnic minority that is being assimilated by the hegemonic English-speaking mainstream.

Exogamous marriages are not encouraged in this ethnic group; therefore, some males (rarely females) travel to Iraq to get married. Marriage partners do not have to be fluent English speakers to enter the country which is a linguistic advantage for NA. In fact, this conspicuous leaning towards endogamous marriages played an important role in keeping NA as a sporadic means of communication among the second-generation speakers. Children born to such couples, where the mother is brought from home, indulge in the 'fad' of learning NA in their early years- a process that fizzles out as soon as these children join kindergarten and mingle with their peers. The influence of the contact language (i.e. English) becomes greater when the children pursue their study and, later, their career in an English milieu.

Social and religious gatherings such as church services, weddings, baptisms, and funerals, and the close family bonds that tie the members of the NA community are not enough to maintain their language. Consequently, St. Thomas Chaldean Church, in cooperation with Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (HWCDSB), launched a Saturday school program to teach elementary students their mother tongue. Does this project work toward language maintenance? The program teaches Classical Syriac instead of NA. Teachers, some of them participated in our survey, are young and most of their instructional strategies are given in English. Accordingly, I would suggest that these children will grow up with a rusty mother tongue, particularly where continuous practice is required to instil and hone the communicative skills that are crucial in establishing mutual understanding, such as politeness, idioms, metaphors, humour, irony, etc. There is extensive literature on child language development, which provides ample evidence that children's linguistic (i.e. lexical, phonological, and

syntactic) repertoire starts to develop in early infancy. Apparently, NA speakers in this study have acquired lexical, phonological and syntactic knowledge of their mother tongue in their early childhood but other aspects of language which go beyond the literal meaning and require well-developed socio-pragmatic knowledge do not get the chance to develop systematically. Unlike syntax, semantics and phonology, these communicative aspects are characterized by rapid and constant changes which would eventually lead to language loss. Empirically speaking, children, at approximately age six and on, start comprehending and interpreting figurative language and formulaic communicative constructions that require various complex linguistic and cognitive skills. For more details about politeness acquisition see Axia and Baroni, 1985; Ervin-Tripp, Guo and Lampert, 1990; Gordon and Ervin-Tripp, 1984; Nippold, Leonard and Anastopoulos, 1982; on children's interpretation and comprehension of idioms see Ackerman, 1982; Hsieh and Hsu, 2009; Levorato and Cacciari, 1992, 1995, 2002; Levorato, Nesi, and Cacciari, 2004; on children's metaphor see Gardner, 1974, 1975; Gentner, 1977; Keil, 1986.

4.1.4 Thanks and apologies: indebtedness and regret

Thanks and apologies are expressive (Searle, 1976) illocutionary acts (Austin, 1962). The intention of the speaker is enunciating his/her gratitude and/or regret respectively; an illocutionary act is the force of the uttered words. The impact of the speaker's expression of gratefulness or repentance on the addressee is termed the perlocutionary or social effect. In other words, the interactional purpose is to assuage the H when performing apologies and to appreciate H's action when expressing gratitude. Searle (1976) noted that the illocutionary point of expressives is "to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content" (p.12). Norrick (1978) challenged Searle's view

that expressives express emotions, because emotions are often difficult to measure and they are a function of situation. Emotions are not the main factor in determining the social functions of expressives. Instead, he builds on Searle's argument that the speaker presupposes that the specified state of affairs is true, thus expressives are generally 'factual' (or sound sincere). Second, expressives are differentiated from each other by how they relate to the speaker. The speaker assigns a 'value judgement' to the recognized state of affairs. Consequently, expressing 'thanks' has a positive value (i.e. it is face enhancing) whereas 'apologies' have a negative value (i.e. are face threatening). Third, apparently thanks and apologies differ in assigning the thematic roles to the involved arguments. In apologies, the agent is the speaker and the patient is the addressee but the agent, in case of thanks, is the addressee and the speaker is the patient or recipient of the benefit (for similar claim see Bergman & Kasper, 1993).

Norrick (1978), further, propounds that "thanking is generally the most formulaic and least 'heartfelt' of expressive illocutionary acts... In English only 'thanks' and 'thank you' are common, although both occur with a wide range of intensifiers; the situation is much the same in other languages" (p. 9). We take issue with these claims and we provide evidence from IA and NA to support our stand.

4.1.5 Indebtedness

Expressing gratitude in these Semitic languages is more elaborate and does not rely heavily on intensification. Using 'thanks' or 'thank you' is not as common as in English because there exist various alternative strategies and each one of them is a function of various variables: age, sex, power, value of the favour, etc. There is a positive correlation between the employed strategy and the received favour. We can also deduce that sincerity increases as the value of the offered

favour or service increases. Here are some of the strategies[15] employed to express gratitude in IA and NA when identical equivalents are available.

　　　Strategy **1**: This strategy is used with small daily favours and represents the direct use of expressives, which makes it more formulaic and routinized than other strategies. Even within expressives, there is hierarchical importance stemming from the value of the favour offered.

1. *šukran* (IA) 'thanks'

2.a *'āškurak* (IA) 'I thank you'

b. *tāwit basīm-a* (NA) 'be sound' → 'stay healthy'

3a- *mamnūn* (IA) 'I am grateful'

b. *basīm-a rāba* [16] (NA) 'be extremely sound'

4. *'āni 'ājiz 'an 'iš-šukur* (IA) 'I do not know how much I should thank you' → I cannot thank you enough'

　　　Strategy **2**: In this strategy, the thanker wants to clearly manifest his or her indebtedness to the thankee. It may sound as if the thanker is exaggerating, but s/he tries to emphasize the high value of the received favour; therefore, the thanker makes a direct reference to the unforgettable, indescribable and beneficial action, which makes him/her sound more genuine.

1a. *'in šāḷḷa mā 'ānsa faḏl-ak* (IA) ' God willing, I will not forget your graciousness'

b. *kan 'āyn 'āla la-gnāšin faḏl-ux* (NA) ' God willing, I will not forget your graciousness'

2a. *'illī sawetā māynnisī* (IA) 'what you have done is unforgettable'

b. *mindī tkim muḏitle la-gmanše* (NA) 'what you have done is unforgettable'

3. *hal xidma ma-rāḥ 'ānsā-hā ṭūl 'umrī* (IA) 'I will not forget this favour all my life'

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[15] The strategies used throughout this paper are part of an unpublished MA thesis "Thanks and apologies in Iraqi Arabic with special reference to English" (1999).

[16] This expression is widely used by Assyrians but rarely employed by Syriac and Chaldean speakers who prefer using the Arabic version (*mamnūn*).

4a. *haḏa 'ad-den b-rugubtī w-ma rāḥ 'ānsā-h ṭūl 'umrī* (IA) 'This debt will remain on my neck for the rest of my life'

b. *'āḏa dena paqartīle w la-gnāšinne māqā dīyyn bixāyy* (NA) ' This debt will remain on my neck and I will not forget this debt as long as I am alive'

Strategy **3**: The recipient of the favour, service or gift tries to maximize the giver's beneficial action and makes him/her feel the importance of what s/he has done or given. It is worth noting that indebtedness is expressed indirectly in this strategy; the actual expression of gratitude has to be inferred. It stresses that the thanker has caused trouble that needed to be mitigated by the action of the thankee.

1a. *ta'abnāk-um wīyyā-na* (IA) 'we have caused you a lot of trouble'

b. *kım-mačhax-un minnan* (NA) 'we have caused you a lot of trouble'

2a. *leš 'itkalafit* (IA) 'why have you bothered/troubled yourself to do it?'

b. *qāī mučhel-ux rūx-ux* (NA) 'why have you troubled yourself?'

Strategy **4**: The thanker expresses his gratefulness by wishing for the giver's happiness, success and health. These wishes are more direct and effective when they take a supplicatory form by mentioning God explicitly. However, wishes can also be directed to the benefactor or his/her body parts.

1a. *xulf 'āḷḷa 'alek* (IA) 'may God repay you'

b. *'āla xālif 'il-ux* (NA) 'may God repay you'

2a. *raḥm 'āḷḷa wāldek* (IA) 'may God have mercy on your parents'

b. *'āla mḥāse nıšwāṯ-ux* (NA) 'may God have mercy on your parents'

3a. *'āḷḷa yzīd-a* (IA) 'may God plentify it (food)'

b. '*āla mazid-le* (NA) 'may God plentify it'

4a. *tislam* (IA) 'be safe and sound'

b. *tāwit basīm-a* [17] (NA) 'be sound'

5a. *t'īš* (IA) 'may you live a long life'

b. *xayyt or basma gyān-ūx* (NA) 'may you live a long life' or 'may your soul be sound'

6a. '*āšat 'īdak* (IA) 'long live your hand' [18]

4.1.6 Apology

The other type of speech act that we want to discuss here is apology. Norrick (1978) said that "acts of apologizing and forgiving are more basic and important to society than such acts as thanking and congratulating which by comparison are its pleasant by-product rather than functional principles" (p.8). This claim correlates with his previous assumption that thanks are formulaic and less heartfelt. Many studies focused on apologies because they are viewed as a result of a breach or violation of social norms, which creates a requisite for remedy and repair. This is somehow a superficial approach that is built on the assumption that apology is depicted as a scenario where there is a victim who needs remedy and a culprit to shoulder responsibility. Failure to meet the anticipated requirements of each one of them will definitely result in misunderstanding and a threat to face. In fact, thanks are as important as apologies and some languages use them interchangeably in some interactions- "In Japanese, many gratitude expressions can be replaced by apology expressions, but not all" (Coulmas, 1981, p.84). Expressing our sincere gratitude gives meaning to our existence as it shows our dependence on others; the expressed appreciation relieves the benefactor and reflects our recognition of the

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[17] It is not a coincidence that *basīma* (be sound) appears in strategy 1 and 4. Neo-Aramaic does not seem to have in its lexicon a word that identically corresponds to *thank you*.

[18] This expression corresponds to the British ' more power to your elbow!' It is used to praise the benefactor or approve of his action, which may have involved physical activity.

action. Emmons and McCullough (2003) examined the effect of thanking on the psychological and physical well-being in daily life. They conducted a study on undergraduate students who were assigned one of three different experimental conditions. One group kept daily journals of things they were grateful for; in second condition, another group was asked to keep journal about their hassles, whereas the third condition was a downward social comparison. Unlike the other two groups, the group which kept journals of gratitude demonstrated a significant increase in psychological and physical functions.

In what follows, we try to prove that cultural values and norms play a vital role in formulating apology strategies. In other words, in different cultures, it would be odd to expect to have the same apology strategies and the same hierarchical order because the severity of the offense and the importance of some contextual variables such as age, sex, power, etc. differ cross-culturally. We rarely hear public mea culpas offered by Iraqi officials (i.e. politicians, school headmasters, officers, etc.) even for severe offenses. Apology is a face-threatening act because the speaker has to regret or at least take responsibility for the wrong s/he has done. In a male-dominated culture, such as Iraq, the majority of the politicians are men who perceive apologizing as a weakness; it is a social system where males hold the primary power. Religion, both Islam and Christianity, confers power upon men but women are often considered subordinate to them. For example, Saddam's notorious apology to Kuwaitis for invading their country, burning oil wells, and killing innocent people was Machiavellian in its essence: "We **apologize to God** [emphasis added] for any act that has angered Him in the past, unbeknownst to us but considered our responsibility, and we apologize to you on this basis as well" (Saddam Hussein's apology, 2002). Saddam arrogantly implied that his apology was not out of weakness. First, in an attempt to evade the direct face-threat, Saddam did not read the letter but made one of

his ministers read it. Second, his apology did not state the offense clearly or take responsibility for his atrocious acts; it was a verbose speech about his pyrrhic victory. Politicians may not be a perfect representation of the population, but they are a reliable index of power and gender. A lack of apology is not limited to politics, but it extends to other governmental public services, such as educational institutions. In 2014, a primary school student passed away after going into a coma, because a month earlier a school principle had beaten him "with a metal rod" and did not apologize (Bassem, 2015).Consequently, we assume that teachers and other officials in general do not offer apologies. In this and many other incidents with varying degrees of severity, power obviates the need to express remorse and admit responsibility. However, making amends for a physical injury or psychological insult is a more common manoeuvre that perpetrators use to acknowledge responsibility implicitly. Succinctly, there is an inverse correlation between power and apology, as power increases, apologizing decreases. On the other hand, a considerable number of western politicians have had enough courage to express regret and apologize for offenses that have not necessarily been committed by them. In 1988, Ronald Regan apologized for the internment of Japanese and George Bush, in1992, issued another formal apology from the government. In 2015, British Prime Minister Tony Blair apologized for the war on Iraq due to inaccurate intelligence information about weapons of mass destruction. In 2008, Stephan Harper apologized for residential schools and the damage they caused to Canada's First Nations.

In accordance with the axiom: 'the customer is always right, business owners, in Iraq, are obliged to offer apologies to their customers. It is for the benefit of their business to give a high priority to customer satisfaction. It is axiomatic that businesses excel in providing services; therefore, admitting responsibility and offering apology is an important element in the business equation. On the other hand, people of higher professional status such as doctors, lawyers, and

professors, expect apologies from their patients, clients and students, when agreed-upon social norms of conduct are violated. For example, coming late to an appointment triggers the need for an apology to white-collar workers. High-status professional are not also expected to apologize for minor infringements such as coming late or making the apologizee (i.e. their clients) wait longer than expected. However, because of the power factor, these professionals reluctantly offer apologies when they fail to provide the expected high standard of service. They are motivated by the severity of the offense (see Hatfield, 2011 for power in Korean lexical apologies).

Strategy 1 below shows that the speaker is not the agent but apologizes for a violation that s/he has not been part of. This strategy lends more support to interdependent cultures where individuals partially or completely accept shouldering the blame for others. This is similar to Hatfield and Hann's (2011) 'group face' in modern Korean dramas, but, in the Iraqi culture, 'group face' is part of real-life situations. That said, expressions, like these two, can be morphologically modified to clarify this notion: *mukiml-ux ṣalman* (NA) 'you blackened our face' (you abashed us) and *muxwer-ux ṣalman* (NA) 'you whitened our face' (you dignified us). Some practices and social norms derive their strength and legitimacy from Islam, such as blood money, which is also common in Japan and Korea, where the family (including but not limited to father, brothers, uncles, etc.) of the offender pays out to the family of the victim, who can accordingly appeal to the court for clemency. In Iraq, according to Islam, there are various compensations paid out to recompense injuries other than murder, such as theft, physical damage, libel, etc. In these cases, the offender is usually not present during the negotiations over the compensation; therefore, the offender is not given the chance to express his/her remorse.

The discussion above supports our claim that a promise of forbearance is a highly face-threatening act and apologizers usually avoid using this strategy. Two interactional variables

play an important role in promising forbearance by the speaker: power and severity. The apologizer must be younger (i.e. a student, soldier, employee) than the apologizee to make a promise of forbearance. At the same time, the offense should be severe in order to exhort the apologizer to mull over the consequences and eventually decide whether to acknowledge responsibility. The apologizer weighs promising forbearance against the severe consequences of the offense. When the apologizer and apologizee are within the same age group, promise of forbearance is fulfilled by evading the direct responsibility for the offense. Here, the apologizer uses something along the lines of "this will not be repeated again" or "this will be the last time"- the apologizer resorts to a circuitous technique to mitigate the severity of the face-threatening act. The perpetrator tries to magnify the offense in order to divert the apologizee's attention away from the apologizer; the apologizer does not want to project him/herself as a volitional agent.

Cohen and Olshtain (1981, p.119), based on a study of Americans and Israelis, proposed four main apology strategies:

1. An expression of apology

a. An expression of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry")

b. An offer of apology (e.g., "I apologize")

c. A request for forgiveness (e.g., "Excuse me" or "Forgive me")

d. An expression of an excuse (not an overt apology but an excuse which serves as an apology)

2. An acknowledgment of responsibility

3. An offer of repair

4. A promise of forbearance (i.e., that it won't happen again)

They further claimed that their results 'suggest that these speakers of English as a foreign language utilized, for the most part, the same semantic formulas as native English speakers, when their proficiency permitted it. This finding is consistent with Fraser's claim (1979) that "these formulas are universal" (p. 130). Fraser (1978) made a similar claim for the universality of requesting strategies.

We agree with Fraser (1979) that these semantic formulas are universal; therefore, we are not presenting their A or NA equivalents. However, we suggest that there are culture-specific strategies used to mitigate an offensive action (verbal/non-verbal) in social interaction are:

Strategy 1: This strategy looks like Cohen and Olshtain's 'promise of forbearance', but the speaker is not the agent; the speaker apologizes for an offense that s/he has not committed. S/he takes on responsibility for a third party, which can be his/her son, younger brother, or a friend.

1a. *baʿad mā ysawī-ha* (IA) 'he will not do it again'

  b. *labiš kāwiḏla* (NA) 'he will not do it again'

Strategy 2: The apologizer uses a self-demeaning strategy to admit that he has perpetrated a foul deed that requires remedy. The apologizer directs the blame to him/herself explicitly or implicitly (by justifying and supporting the apologizee's reaction).

  1. *ʾānīl ǧalṭān* (IA) 'I am mistaken'→ 'I am the one to blame'

  2a. *ʾilḥaq ḥaqq-ak* (IA) 'the right is your right' → 'you are absolutely right'

  b. *ḥaqq-ux-le* (NA) 'it is your right'

Strategy 3: When the offense is not severe, the apologizer uses a strategy to mitigate his/her gaffe. It is a tacit apology because the apologizer explains his/her action instead of explicitly apologizing for it. It is not a fauxpology as the speaker uses first person pronoun to avoid circumlocution and clearly demonstrate that s/he takes full responsibility for the mistake.

1a. *ma liḥagt 'il-pāṣ* (IA) 'I did not catch the bus'

b. *la ṭp-elī pāṣ* (NA) 'I did not catch the bus'

In the second part of this paper, I shall argue that 'culture learning' enables NA-E bilinguals to avoid 'pragmatic failure' or 'cross-cultural communication breakdown' (Thomas, 1983), but at the same time threatens the existence of NA. Pragmatic failure occurs when non-native speakers misinterpret the pragmatic force of an utterance or wrongly apply non-native formulas to native contexts. As shown earlier, different cultures employ different strategies to meet the requirements of the context. Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) distinguished between pragmatic competence (having the skill to convey linguistic messages efficiently by understanding the contextual cues), and linguistic competence (having the main grammatical components of language, viz., semantics, syntax, morphology, etc.). Our main concern is the sociopragmatic misinterpretation of contexts that invoke culture-specific values and beliefs. However, we prefer to use sociocultural competence (Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Hymes, 1974) as we try to draw attention to how NA-E bilinguals conceptualize the sociocultural rules of politeness and how they react in contexts that may induce conflict with their cultural beliefs.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Experimental design and instruments

Ten native NA speakers, most of them fluent speakers of English (six males, aged +45) participated in the pilot study. They were unanimous in their judgments throughout both parts of the survey (Table 4 and 5). There was a consensus that the scenarios in Table 4 express social favours, achieve solidarity or induce social reciprocity. They clearly demonstrated a high propensity for connectedness politeness. We noticed a general agreement on considering the

situations in Table 5 as some kind of social violations that may require or motivate the use of lexical apology terms (i.e. 'I am sorry' or 'excuse me') except in scenarios 2 and 10.

Our experiment was designed to examine older NA speakers' reaction to 20 conversational scenarios that require acceptability judgments. The scenarios or conditions were developed to show some degree of politeness in day-to-day interactions. Some of the scenarios did not involve immediate face-to-face interaction. The scenarios were designed to investigate participants' reactions to thanks or reciprocation (i.e. connectedness) on the one hand, and apologies or social violations (i.e. separateness) on the other. We tried to avoid using situations where the high indebtedness may have an influence on the speaker's choice, because we are not tracing speaker's reaction to favours or services of varying beneficial degrees. Similarly, we avoided grave offenses (serious offences and material damages have been excluded) that can culminate in readily induced responses. We tried to keep the offence low so that speakers do not feel obliged to choose one option rather than another. Some situations have an implied offence or social breach that requires remedy according to a preliminary questionnaire conducted among NA speakers who have more rigid beliefs about their culture than the young students do. Instead, we tried to keep the value of the action constant throughout the survey to eliminate any confounding factors that might have an effect on participant's judgments. The first ten conditions represent situations that are built on acknowledging solidarity whereas the other ten conditions are structured around small social violations of conventional manners. These conversational scenarios have been designed to assess the ability of NA-E bilinguals to adapt to the Canadian cultural norms in situations that require showing a certain degree of politeness.

We have examined NA-E bilinguals' responses to see if they reacted differently from older NA speakers. We predicted that there will be a significant difference in most of the conditions

between NA-E bilinguals and older NA speakers in spite of being members of the same linguistic community and sharing the same cultural values. According to this assumption, politeness is not necessarily a function of language. We, thus, assumed that NA-E bilinguals and their English-speaking peers may share a similar understanding of both sets of scenarios.

4.2.2 Subjects

Three groups volunteered to participate in the main study. The first group consisted of thirty CE monolinguals and thirty NA-E bilinguals made up the second group. Participants were students at McMaster University and belonged to the same age group (20-28). There were twelve CE monolingual males and fourteen NA-E bilingual males. The third group consisted of thirty older NA speakers (17 males and aged +55). Three of them did not speak English very well; therefore, we had to explain to them some of the conditions. Pilot study participants did not take part in this experiment.

4.2.3 Procedure

The researcher gave the participants a brief account about the survey and explained the objectives behind collecting this kind of data. Then, the researcher handed out the survey, which included a briefing about the objectives of the study and instructions for the convenience of the participants (Appx. § 1). The participants were given enough time to read through the questions of the survey (Table 4 and 5) and answer at their own pace. They were told that responses should be accurate and reflect personal attitudes toward politeness. We collected some demographic information about the participants (Appx. § 2). After answering all the questions, participants signed a consent form.

No.	Conversational Situations (scenarios)	Responses	
1.	In the elevator, you meet someone living with you in the same building. You say hi and start a conversation.	Yes	No
2.	At Wal-Mart, you said 'Thank you' to the cashier whose reply was 'Yep'. Do you consider that odd?	Yes	No
3.	Somebody saw you coming but he/she did not hold the door for you. Is his/her behavior odd?	Yes	No
4.	Somebody held the door open for you. You thanked him/her.	Yes	No
5.	While requesting some information, you thanked your colleague in advance in an email for their help. Would you send another email to say 'thank you' again?	Yes	No
6.	You hold the door for somebody (on his/her cell phone) who goes right through without saying anything. Is this behavior odd?	Yes	No
7.	You are working on an assignment, which is a kind of a questionnaire. You gave a copy to one of your colleagues to fill out, but he/she never brings it back. You consider this an odd behavior.	Yes	No
8.	You are rewarded for being an active member in a small class or group (10 persons). Accordingly, you sent an email thanking everybody for being helpful and cooperative, but only four responded. Is this a rude behavior?	Yes	No
9.	Somebody compliments you on your new hair-do, shirt, shoes, etc. You reply, 'We have the same elegant taste'.	Yes	No
10.	A friend wishes you a nice flight or trip. You reply, 'Thank you'.	Yes	No

Table 4: Conversational situations employing social favours and friendly gestures

No.	Conversational Situations (scenarios)	Responses	
1.	While on a full bus somebody steps on your foot, but he/she apologizes. Would you say something such as 'no worries' or 'that's ok'?	Yes	No
2.	While walking on a narrow sidewalk somebody passes by without saying 'excuse me'. Is this an odd behavior?	Yes	No
3.	Somebody interrupts your conversation without saying 'excuse me'. Is this behavior annoying?	Yes	No
4.	You do not say 'excuse me' after sneezing when there are people around you.	Yes	No
5.	You have an appointment with your family doctor at 10:00, but the secretary calls your name after 45 minutes. You consider this rude.	Yes	No
6.	You are getting off the bus from the front door while other passengers are trying to get on at the same time. Would you say 'I am sorry'?	Yes	No
7.	You are filling out a form for your health card at Service Ontario. You have to ask for a new form because you have made some mistakes on the first one. Would you say 'I am sorry'?	Yes	No
8.	In a restaurant, you spill some of your coffee on the table cover. Would you apologize to the waiter for this?	Yes	No
9.	A friend of yours requested your book that he/she does not an access to, but you forgot to bring it. Would you apologize?	Yes	No
10.	You realize that you have acted poorly towards your colleague or classmate. You would send him/her a text message or Facebook message saying 'you are sorry' instead of waiting until you meet him/her next week?	Yes	No

Table 5: Conversational situations employing mild social violations

4.3 Results

We used R programming language for statistical computing to analyse our data (Field et al., 2012). The Wilcoxon rank-sum test (two-tailed) showed that there was a significant difference at .05 threshold between older NA speakers (Mdn=28.5) and NA-E bilinguals (Mdn= 20), W= 7.5, p = 0.00, r = -0.68 (see Fig. 17). The analysis used an equal number of observations in each condition. The median is higher for older NA speakers, which tells us that they have scored higher. In other words, they were more inclined to connectedness politeness by agreeing that these situations establish some kind of solidarity through various ways ranging from starting a conversation to accepting compliments. 50% of their scores were between 28 and 22.5.The (IQR) did not overlap along the vertical axis, suggesting that NA-E bilinguals and older NA speakers differ significantly. There was more variability in NA-E bilinguals 'Yes' scores (IQR= 4.5) than the older NA speakers who demonstrated a high level of agreement with each other (IQR=1).

Fig. 17 Older NA speakers' and NA-E bilinguals' 'Yes' scores for social favours
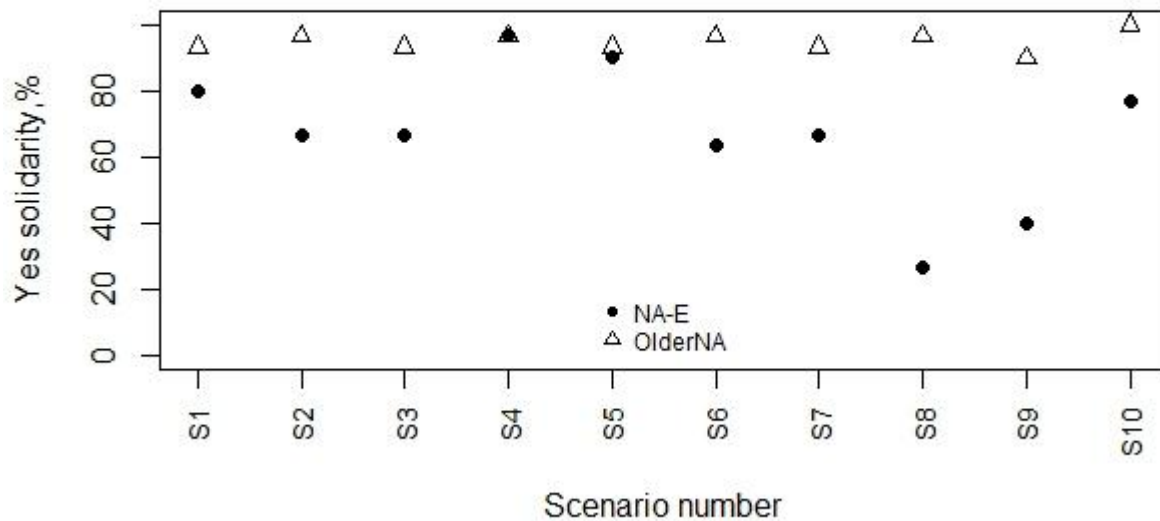
Situations that induced mild social violations and invoked remedy have also shown a significant difference at .05 level between older NA speakers (M*dn*= 26) and NA-E bilinguals (M*dn*= 17.5), *W*= 23, *p* = 0.04, *r* = -0.37 as shown in Fig. 18. Older NA speakers and NA-E bilinguals held quite different attitudes toward social violations. This highlights the fact that the majority of older NA speakers tend to agree that *most* of these scenarios have violated certain social norms and require remedy- they scored higher than NA-E bilinguals did. 50% of their scores lie between 28 and 22.5 whereas NA-E bilinguals have 50% of their scores between 21.75 and 16.25. Again, the difference between the upper and lower quartile is 5.5 for older NA speakers and NA-E bilinguals.

Fig. 18 Older NA speakers' and NA-E bilinguals' 'Yes' scores for social violations
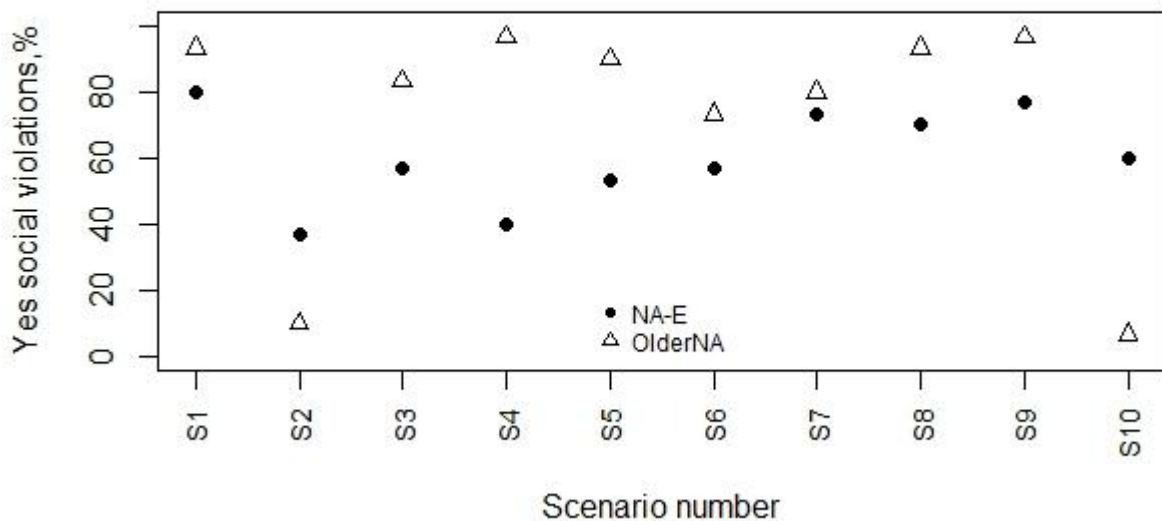
The Wilcoxon rank-sum test (two-tailed) revealed that solidarity-achieving scenarios (connectedness politeness) for NA-E bilinguals (M*dn*=20) did not differ significantly at .05 level from CE speakers (M*dn*=17.5), W= 41, *p* = 0.49, r = -0.12 as shown in Fig. 19. NA-E bilinguals

scored a bit higher and 50% of their scores are between 23.75 and 19.25. CE speakers showed

more variability because their 50% is between 23.5 and 13. There was more variability in the

scores of CE speakers compared to NA-E bilinguals- the IQR = 4.5 for NA-E was small relative

to IQR = 10.5 for the CE speakers.

Fig. 19 NA-E bilinguals' and CE monolinguals' 'Yes' scores for social favours
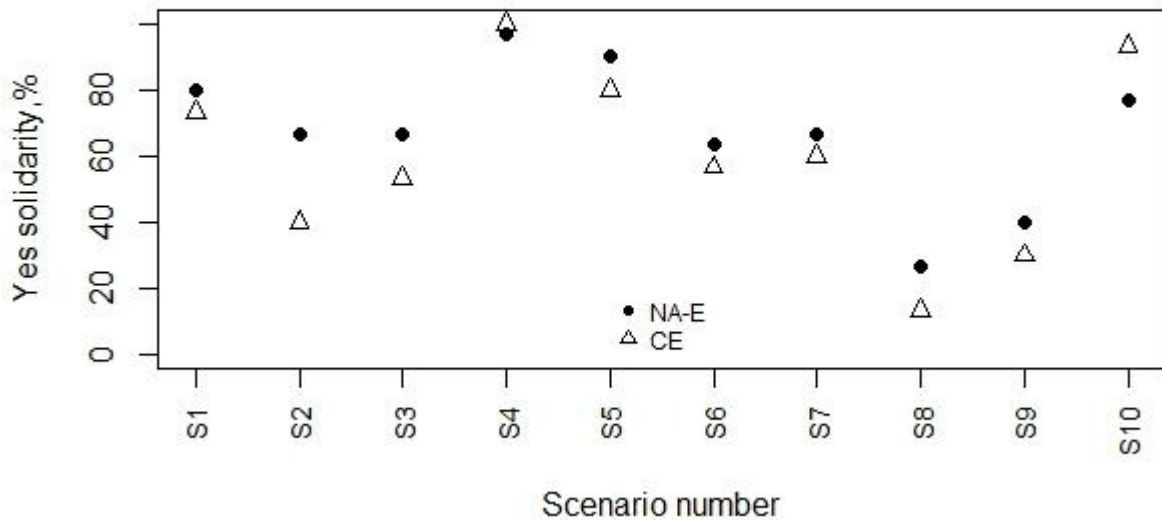
The plot in Fig. 20 shows that the two groups did not differ significantly in evaluating mild

social violations, $W = 47.5$, $p = 0.84$, $r = -0.034$. However, the range is slightly larger for NA-E

bilinguals than for CE speakers, which means if we take the bottom 25% of NA-E bilinguals

then there is more variability in their scores than the bottom 25% of CE speakers. The second

quartile has been slightly different: 17.5 for NA-E bilinguals and 18 for CE speakers.

We have also run a chi square test to determine which scenarios or conditions were

significantly different at .05 level for young NA-E bilingual and older NA monolinguals. For the

first set of conditions, we have found that scenarios 8 and 9 have low p-value= 0.00 and 0.0163.

The second set of conditions showed that three scenarios were significantly different. In scenario 4, the *p*- value was 0.01, *p*= 0.02 in scenario 10, and in scenario 2 the *p*-value was 0.0325.

Fig. 20 NA-E bilinguals' and CE monolinguals' 'Yes' scores for social violations
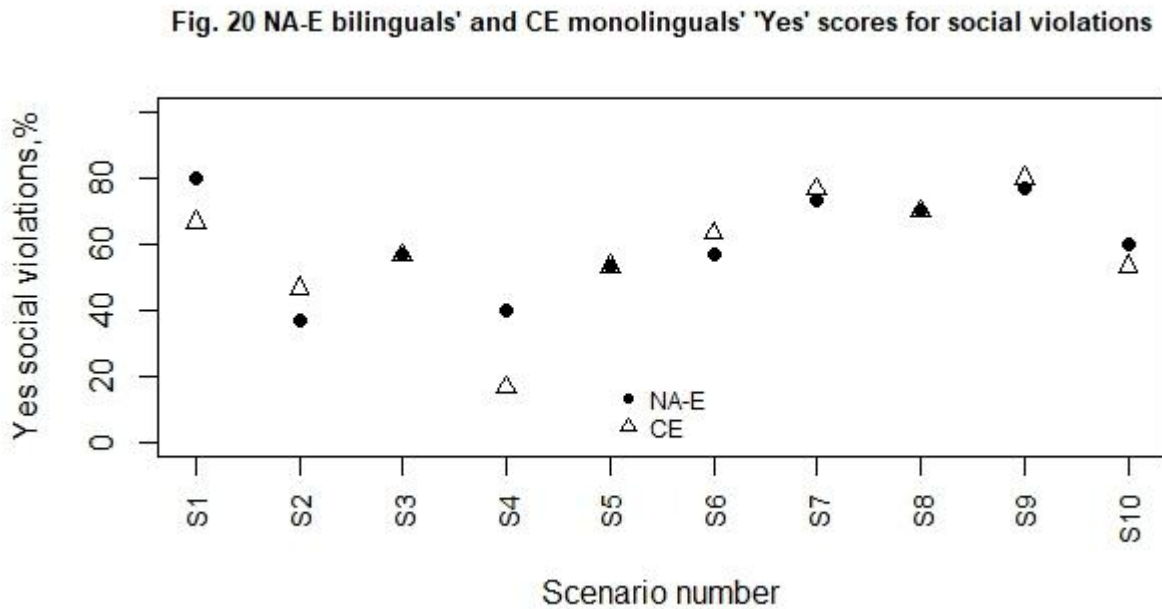
4.4 Discussion

The results showed that NA-E bilinguals differ significantly from older NA speakers in both connectedness and separateness politeness. Older NA speakers have high expectations of their classmates or colleagues; therefore, not receiving an email from the thankee (scenario 8) has been marked as rude- 96% of older NA speakers have considered it rude compared to 26% of the NA-E bilinguals and 13% of the CE speakers. The significant difference between older NA speakers and NA-E bilinguals is self-explanatory. Two factors play an important role in classifying classmates and colleagues as (close) friends and consequently expecting a reply from them is legitimately in line with connectedness politeness. The importance of the first factor stems from the fact that the majority of collective cultures have a homogeneous demographic combination. They usually have a common descent or ethnicity, which reveals other interrelated

elements such as religion, culture and language. These sociocultural factors, in addition to other biological factors such as skin, hair, and bone structure, etc., facilitate the process of communication and mutual understanding, and lay solid foundations for cooperation and interdependence. Second, relations and ties in interdependent cultures are not built on haphazard predictions; the general atmosphere in the educational institution, which is based on annual rather than semester system, strengthens them. Practically, classmates and colleagues see each other every day for years and take part in various personal, social and academic occasions. These two factors seem to motivate members of collective cultures to freely cross over the individualistic borders and go beyond the basics of formal relations. The convergence between NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers is a function of the consistent merging process into a culture that upholds separateness politeness as the mainstay of their daily interactions.

The same effect can be noticed in scenario 9 where 90% of the older NA speakers have agreed that reciprocating a compliment is the default in NA culture. Compliment reciprocation may vary depending on different factors, such as, the compliment giver and the object of the compliment. In an interdependent culture, such as NA, complimenting someone on a new piece of clothing or haircut they have been sporting obliges the compliment receiver to use something along the lines of *’en-ux biš xilyena* 'your eyes are nicer' or the reply in scenario 9. On the other hand, it was all right for NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers not to deflect a compliment with 40% and 30% respectively. According to individualistic cultural rituals, a compliment receiver, in a similar situation, is bound to take a certain course of action that is rarely adopted in NA, viz., to smile and thank the compliment giver. There are probably other forms of returning a compliment, but to downplay the compliment is the commonest in such cultures. It is worth noting that failing to efficiently reciprocate a compliment in NA or assuming that a '*thank you*'

will suffice is considered rude by the compliment receiver. This kind of reciprocity creates a kind of equilibrium, which is a corollary of connectedness politeness, between compliment giver and receiver.

For the second set of scenarios, we found three clear cases of divergence between older NA speakers and NA-E bilinguals. The first case is scenario 4 where 96% of older NA speakers have agreed that sneezing in public does not call for the unnecessary use of '*excuse me*', whereas 40% of NA-E bilinguals compared to only 16% of CE speakers have preferred not to say '*excuse me*' after sneezing. The chi square test did not show a significant difference between them, *p*= 0.0895. Why do older NA speakers behave in such a blunt manner, with brazen negligence of solidarity-achieving protocols? It is legitimate to intuit that this is not the case. It is just a situation that older NA speakers conceive of as a biological reflex that does not need to be mitigated by using one of the designated tools for expressing separateness politeness strategies. According to the NA culture, the strength and abruptness of this involuntary activity pressurize the sneezer to extol a deity by uttering the religiously motivated phrase *shtabaḥ shimm-ux rabbī* 'praise be to your name, my Lord'. Although the sneezer has rendered homage to a physically nonexistent third party (i.e. a deity), it is typical in NA to reciprocate the sneezer's exaltation with *raḥmeh*[19] (may God have mercy on you).

The second case is scenario 10. Here we thought that some older NA speakers might not be interested in electronic gadgets and, as a result, might not have access to phones or social media. Thus this condition could be confounded. Quite the reverse, they proved us wrong when some of them confirmed having Facebook and Twitter accounts. As members of a collective culture, 94% of older NA speakers preferred a face-to-face apology to text messages or other forms of social

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[19] If somebody sneezes during a debate, the sneezer himself or one of the debaters can use the sneeze as a confirmation that s/he is telling the truth: ʾāḍī p-shahāde (here comes the testimony).

media compared to 40% of NA-E bilinguals and 47% of CE speakers. Although it is a kind of face threatening act, older NA speakers still wanted to express their sincere apology in person. Scenario 10 reveals an interesting aspect of separateness politeness in NA. The older NA speakers thought sending a message is somehow rude and might add insult to injury, and eventually backfire on them. Again, this kind of reaction can be attributed to their inherent inclination towards achieving solidarity by being physically close to the offended party. It is very important for them to make it clear that their intention is to right the wrong and get the relationship back on track. Heartfelt apologies pave the way for gradual normalization of interpersonal exchanges. For NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers priority is given to the immediacy of the offence, which brings about the urge for apology through any possible channel.

In scenario 2, 90% of older NA speakers have agreed that passing by someone while walking on a narrow sidewalk without saying 'excuse me' is not odd. On the contrary, NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers have found it odd but with varying degrees. However, the difference between NA-E bilinguals (36%) and CE speakers (46%) was not statistically significant. It is important to keep in mind that this very specific setting excludes jostling and shoving. In this case, older NA speakers would avoid using separateness politeness signals such as 'excuse me', because, the sidewalk is a communal public property according to their interdependent makeup which moulds their perspective of the interactional milieu. Therefore, moving past other people in a narrow sidewalk does not warrant the use of an unnecessary 'excuse me'; conversely, the use of '*excuse me*' can be interpreted as an alien behaviour (i.e. being more formal) or a distraction.

We have noticed that not only NA-E bilinguals but also older NA speakers have adapted to separateness politeness patterns in some cases. A very clear case is scenario 6 (Table 2). 73% of older NA speakers found that getting off the bus from the front door while other passengers are

trying to get on sanctions the use of 'I am sorry'. Older NA speakers have spent most of their life in a country where interdependence and establishing rapport is considered the core of interactional machinery. Therefore, we predicted that older NA speakers would not envisage this as a violation of social conduct that can be attributed to some spatial and temporal factors. Buses in their home country are usually packed, people spend long times waiting, usually not in line, and most of the buses are not equipped with a back door. All these factors should make it hard for the passengers to conceive alighting from a bus as transformed into a violation. Nevertheless, the Canadian setting has brought about a major change into some of their basic conceptualizations of politeness in interactional milieu.

In scenario 5, older NA speakers have shown a high degree of cultural integration. Here we have again two contrastive images depicting two distinct cultures. The first image depicts their home country where the concept of family doctor is not recognized and elastic appointments are quite familiar. Consequently, cancellations without prior notice and waiting longer than expected time are the norm. With all these drawbacks in the services provided, neither doctors nor their secretaries acknowledge that a social breach has occurred. It is important to note that in collective cultures small gatherings, such as patients in a waiting room, usually result in phatic communion. These small talks often go beyond superficial exchanges about weather and time to discussions of various topics, such as religion, politics, and economy. In the same vein, 'how are you?' is usually not taken to be an empty question, thus replying with 'good' or 'good, thanks' is odd; a bona fide in-depth reciprocation is sought out. Contrary to individualistic cultures, the inquirer expects an answer loaded with content. That would be a breach of manners in the Canadian culture. The second image depicts the Canadian culture where designated family doctors and relatively more organized appointments are factors that considerably shorten the

time spent at clinics. That said, we could infer that older NA speakers at family doctor clinic either feel alienated because of the lack of solidarity or have successfully adapted from one culture to the other. They have scored 90% on scenario 5 whereas NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers both have scored 53%. It is interesting that older NA speakers have developed tolerance of cultural shift from connectedness to separateness politeness.

4.5 Conclusion

As a dominant language, IA has a huge, immediate impact on NA (i.e. a minority language) on various linguistic and cultural levels. The convergence of IA and NA in connectedness and separateness politeness which occur in particular niches paves the way for language shift and plays an important role in determining language vitality.

In situations of linguistic contact, it is normal for bilingual speakers to borrow from the lexicon and syntax of one language and employ in another. Borrowing lexical items and syntactic structures is supposed to be easier and faster than borrowing elements of pragmatic or communicative competence. Components of communicative competence such as metaphors, idioms, and politeness strategies are based on conceptualizations that are shaped by the ingrained social values in the collective minds of the members of a community. However, NA-E bilinguals proved that borrowing the components of pragmatic competence and putting them into day-to-day interpersonal use is on a par with lexical and syntactic borrowings. Borrowing lexical items or pragmatic components, is usually considered a source of linguistic richness. It is, also, a facilitating factor of communication among interactants with different linguistic backgrounds, but, for an endangered language, it is a side effect that nudges NA downhill.

Older NA speakers provided further evidence with probative value that language change is not bound by age, because they unexpectedly showed signs of cultural adaptation in particular

situations. This outcome supported our claim that politeness is not a function of language, but rather a result of interpersonal relations. It is also important to note that older NA speakers are not fluent in the language of the dominant culture (i.e. English) and do not use it to communicate with their family members. Therefore, it is easier to trace the effect of acculturation on younger NA speakers who demonstrated signs of a profound shift towards the pragmatic norms of the host culture. In other words, instead of adhering to the values of their interdependent culture, NA-E bilinguals took an individualistic approach to connectedness and separateness politeness.

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APPENDIX § 1

An overview of the study

What I am trying to discover?

In this study, I want to explore how students speaking a second language would react in specific daily situations compared to monolinguals. The situations may, explicitly or implicitly, imply the use of expressions such as *thank you*, *I am sorry*, *hi*, *etc*.

Instructions

Imagine yourself in the following daily interactions. Circle '**Yes**' if you agree or if the described prompt is what you would do, and '**No**' when you disagree. Try to be yourself; do not try to project an ideal image that does not reflect your genuine personality.

APPENDIX § 2

Focus group background and information sheet

Instructions

Please fill in this that will provide us with some basic background information about you.

1. I am a (check one):

[   ] Male

[   ] Female

2. I have lived in Canada for:

[   ] year(s)

3. I use English in my communication (check one):

[   ] always

[   ] usually

[   ] often/frequently

[   ] sometimes

[   ] seldom

[   ] never

4. I am a native speaker of English: Yes [   ]   No [   ]

5. I use Neo-Aramaic in my communication (check one):

[   ] always

[   ] usually

[   ] often/frequently

[   ] sometimes

[   ] seldom

[   ] never

6. I am a native speaker of Neo-Aramaic: Yes [   ]   No [   ]

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented about a study being conducted by Ala Al-Kajela of McMaster University.

- I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (optional):_____

5   Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, we summarize the main findings of the three studies presented in this thesis and their implications for future work. Our research goal was to shed some light on the status of Neo-Aramaic as an endangered language in the diaspora. This objective was tackled from three different, but intertwined, perspectives: (i) the effect of adapting to cultural values and beliefs pertinent to interdependent community on NA-E bilinguals' pragmatic reaction to connectedness and separateness politeness, (ii) acculturation influence on the cognitive process of conceptualizing identical and culturally distinct animal-based metaphors, (iii) the effect of language use on the development of figurative language represented by decomposable and non-decomposable idioms.

In our three studies on distinct macro-linguistic components of second generation NA speakers, we found striking evidence that these speakers display a dramatic decline in their communicative competence which is based largely on skills derived from culture, real-world experience, and environment. The evidence that emerged from these studies supports the idea that not only grammatical knowledge (phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics) is at risk of being eroded and lost in contact situations but also cognitive associations, as well as communicative or socio-pragmatic knowledge.

In this chapter, I first give a brief summary of the central argument of each of the preceding chapters and then proceed to provide a general conclusion of this thesis. The final section offers theoretical implications and further research directions for understanding culture and environment contributions to language loss.

5.1 Revelatory insights from metaphors, idioms, and politeness

Chapter 2, like the following two chapters of this thesis, approaches first language in contact environments and casts some light on the amount of erosion in language aspects that have received little attention from researchers working on language contact, attrition, shift and loss. We report on the influence of L2 on L1 in the domain of Conceptual Metaphors which constitute an important part of the cultural cognition of the members of a speech community. We investigated the socio-pragmatic knowledge of 30 NA-E bilinguals and 30 CE monolingual speakers about nominal animal metaphors. We believe that it was crucial to employ animal metaphors as a tool to measure first language erosion because children normally begin learning and perceiving animal images and their cultural connotations early in their language development. Animals can be easily specified in conceptual categories as they belong to *basic-level* objects (Rosch, 1978; Lakoff, 1987). The participants surveyed in this study were asked to interpret animal metaphors with both culturally distinct and identical or equivalent conceptualizations. In order to verify their interpretations, the participants were asked to make appropriate associations between each animal metaphor and the perceived gender of the referent— they were asked to specify whether the human characteristics associated with each animal metaphor would describe solely male, female or both types of referents. They were also asked to rate animal-based metaphors on a usage frequency scale.

Chapter 2 emphasizes the fact that a hegemonic culture directly influences the way a minority linguistic group conceptualizes PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS and all other animal-based metaphors. Unlike Grady's (1997) primary conceptual metaphors (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980;1999), for example MORE IS UP and KNOWING IS SEEING, which are claimed to be beyond the bound of cultural influence (Siqueira & Gibbs 2007), animal metaphors are derived from the cultural cognition that the members of a minority group share. In a monolingual community, the process of sharing is accomplished by the vertical cultural transmission of concerted conceptualizations from forefathers to their descendants. The key results of chapter 2 are summarized below.

Equivalent or identical cultural conceptualizations of animal metaphors in both languages, such as *wolf*, *lion*, and *fox* were quite familiar to NA-E bilinguals and CE monolingual speakers. Participants in both groups showed a good command of this type of metaphors by correctly providing interpretations typical of each animal metaphor. The convergent scores of both groups in this task could be attributed to the universal metaphorical images that some animal names concurrently and recurrently create cross-culturally. In line with these results, NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals demonstrated converging levels of performance regarding their metaphoric competence.

The scores of both groups were homogenous as regards their inability to correctly interpret animal metaphors and their tendency to refrain from giving any interpretation. These results were reflected in animal-gender association task. Put differently, knowing the human characteristics to which the animal metaphor refers, entails knowing whether the animal metaphor can be appropriately used to describe male or female or whether it has gender-neutral associations according to the conventions of the culture in question. For example *tomcat* and *rabbit* are gender-biased metaphors in both cultures, because the former is male-specific whereas

the latter is female-specific. NA-E bilinguals and CE speakers did not differ significantly in their metaphoric knowledge about animal-gender associations.

We shall now turn to the culturally distinct animal metaphors and then we comment on usage-frequency scores for both distinct and equivalent metaphors. There was a significant difference between both groups regarding their metaphoric interpretations of distinct metaphors. For example, *owl* and *chicken-* CE monolingual speakers scored higher than NA-E bilinguals in this task. In other words, CE speakers outperformed NA-E bilinguals in metaphoric competence as to distinct metaphors. Consequently, NA-E bilinguals' wrong interpretations considerably outnumbered those of CE monolingual speakers. It was, also, noted that both groups demonstrated a relatively similar level of reluctance to provide any interpretation for culturally distinct metaphors. As to animal-gender associations, NA-E bilinguals scored lower than CE speakers but the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. Similarly, NA-E bilinguals scored higher than CE speakers in both assigning wrong gender and no gender to the animal metaphor.

The usage-frequency scale for culturally identical metaphors showed low scores for both groups with a consistent ascending tendency toward the lower end of the frequency scale. NA-E bilinguals and CE monolingual speakers adopted a similar pattern of animal metaphor use in their daily interactions. A similar ascending trajectory in the scores of both groups was noticed in the usage-frequency scale of distinct metaphors. In spite of the low scores on the frequency scale which characterized the ratings of both groups, there was a statistically significant difference in their scores for *always*. The ascending pattern of ratings across the usage-frequency scale partially explains this difference. It can, also, be attributed to the high frequency of these metaphors in the cultural environment of their L1.

In chapter 3, we document the status quo of NA-E bilinguals' idiomatic competence in diaspora. Idioms, like CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS, are closely tied in with culture-specific conventions and concepts of a speech community. But, at the same time, traces of universal traits and shared roots can be easily found in a considerable number of them. For example, *cut the mustard*, *send someone to Coventry* and *shoot the breeze* do not make much sense in those cultures where such concepts and their connotations are not familiar and thus idiomaticity becomes imperceptible. On other hand, *two peas in a pod*, *dig in your heels*, *a stone's throw*, etc. share cross-culturally idiomatic interpretability, at least in NA and CE cultures. Accordingly, whether culture-specific or not, the nonliteral meaning of idioms seems to rely heavily on both general knowledge of the world and cultural beliefs, conventions and histories which constitute the main building blocks of these macro-linguistic expressions, and metaphors alike. Again, we used a macro-linguistic tool to measure the attrition and loss of some aspects of socio-pragmatic knowledge in NA-E bilinguals. We investigated erosion and loss that go beyond the structural and formal properties of language.

Two groups of NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals, with 30 subjects in each one, were surveyed on two distinct categories of decontextualized idioms: decomposable and non-decomposable idioms. Out-of-context idioms should not have a great impact on adults' idiom comprehension as compared to that of children, especially with high-frequency idioms. We opted for decontextualized idioms because several studies on children and adults reported inconsistent results regarding the effect of context on idiom comprehension (Laval, 2003; Prinz, 1983; Tomasello, 2000). In fact, context, even if carefully manipulated, is more likely to confuse the

individual surveyed as documented by Nippold and Martin (1989). The main findings of chapter 3 are outlined below:

To achieve the objectives of our study, NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals were asked to interpret and rate the given idioms on a usage-frequency scale. NA-E bilinguals failed to provide figurative interpretations of both decomposable and non-decomposable idioms. CE monolingual speakers scored higher in both conditions. NA-E bilinguals provided literal interpretations for decomposable and non-decomposable idioms more often than CE monolinguals. As for failing to provide felicitous figurative interpretations and for preferring to opt for no interpretation for both kinds of idioms, NA-E bilinguals scored higher than CE monolingual speakers. There was a significant statistical difference between both groups across all three tasks. Apart from the observed statistical differences, we also noted some improvement in NA-E bilinguals' interpretation of decomposable idioms. For a few decomposable and non-decomposable idioms NA-E bilinguals were able to outperform CE monolingual speakers.

Usage-frequency-task results for decomposable and nondecomposable idioms were consistent with results for idiom interpretation tasks. We reported only the significant findings; other insignificant results could be easily inferred. NA-E bilinguals' high scores on no-interpretation tasks of decomposable and non-decomposable idioms correlated with their high scores on the lower end of the usage-frequency scale (i.e., 'none'). On the other hand, CE monolingual speakers opted to use 'never' more frequently than NA-E bilinguals and thus scored higher on both decomposable and non-decomposable idioms. In both cases, a statistically significant difference was noticed between both groups of participants. NA-E bilinguals found decomposable idioms easier to interpret; therefore they opted to use 'always' more often than CE

monolinguals. Accordingly, NA-E bilinguals' ratings for 'always' resulted in a statistical difference between both groups.

Chapter 4 consists of two parts: the first part described our investigation of the effect of IA on NA and the second examined the influence of English on NA through two acceptability judgment tasks. We established a link between NA erosion in the country of origin and in the diaspora to provide empirical evidence that should back up our claim that NA is on its way to extinction. We used the universal concept of face, originally introduced by Goffman (1967) and later theoretically critiqued and developed by Arundale (1999, 2009, 2010), to show the impact of a majority language (i.e., IA) on minority language (i.e., NA). Since politeness and face are essentially social phenomena, it is central to a cross-cultural pragmatic research, like the one reported here, to highlight the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). Instead of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) dichotomous terms: positive and negative politeness, we adopted the dialectical opposition of connectedness and separateness politeness suggested by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) and Arundale (2006, 2010). Two expressive speech act strategies, viz., thanks and apologies were used to examine the effect of IA on NA cultural norms that shape and determine the language used to implement redressive actions when required. The following paragraph offers a recapitulation of the fundamental findings of the first part.

A discourse completion test was used to collect data for the first part which was based on theoretical assumptions. The data collected in Iraq showed that IA and NA speakers' cultural norms were reflected in their conceptualizations of the notion 'face' and strategy selection of gratitude and apology. It was found that the linguistic convention is to a large extent determined

by cultural norms and ambient environment. In other words, speakers of two different languages converged on face connotations and strategies employed to express indebtedness and regret. Expressing gratitude, for example, begins with the formulaic use of expressives as is the case with other cultures. As favours become dearer, the invoked strategies associated with them grow more heartfelt to show the highest degree of appreciation and indebtedness. Put differently, thanking strategies showed more culture specificity as other metalinguistic elements, such as God, saints, and body parts were invoked. However, a similar effect with apologies was not detected, because strategies that were completely made of lexical borrowings from IA were not documented. Intriguingly, most of NA thanking and apologizing strategies sounded like translations of their IA equivalents.

The second part of chapter 4 reported an experimental investigation following a pilot study conducted on 10 native NA speakers. The pilot played a central role in shaping and developing the scenarios of the survey. Part two aimed at ferreting out the influence of English on NA in scenarios or social exchanges motivated by connectedness and/ or separateness politeness. Before connectedness and separateness scenarios were fleshed out, we presented evidence in support of the theoretical distinction between NA collectivistic and CE individualistic cultural orientations (Mao, 1994; Yu, 2001). Connectedness task consisted of ten thanking or reciprocation scenarios and the circumstances that elicited them and ten separateness scenarios, including violation-induced apology. Situations invoked by grave offences or deep indebtedness were excluded from the survey to keep track of the subtle nuances in a coherent sequence of scenarios.

In order to measure the effect of the majority language on the minority language in communicative situations that require cultural and pragmatic knowledge, three groups of

participant were recruited and examined. Similar to previous studies presented in this theis, we had thirty NA-E bilinguals, thirty CE monolingual speakers, in addition to thirty older NA monolingual speakers. Older or first-generation NA speakers scored higher than second generation or young NA-E bilinguals on connectedness task and thus exhibited a statistical significant difference. Scenarios that induced mild social violations and invoked some sort of mitigation did also produce a significant statistical difference between older and young NA speakers. On the other hand, NA-E bilinguals and their CE peers scored similarly on both connectedness and separateness politeness tasks. Thus no significant difference was found between both groups.

In addition to the general downward trend in the scores of NA-E bilinguals in both tasks in relation to older NA speakers, we found that NA-E bilinguals reacted negatively toward two connectedness politeness scenarios. In scenarios 8 and 9, older NA speakers scored 96% and 90% whereas NA-E bilinguals scored 26% and 40% respectively. A similar tendency was observed with separateness politeness tasks. Only 10% of older NA speakers agreed that (scenario 2) passing by someone on a narrow sidewalk does not warrant the use of *excuse me*. NA-E bilinguals and CE monolingual speakers sanctioned the use of *excuse me* with 36% and 46% respectively. In scenario 4, 96% of older NA speakers relative to 40% of NA-E bilinguals did not approve of the use of *excuse me* after the involuntary act of sneezing. Offering apology by texting or through social media like Facebook was considered appropriate by 40% of NA-E bilinguals relative to only 6% of older NA speakers.

Unexpectedly, in two other scenarios of separateness politeness, older NA speakers scored higher than young NA-E bilinguals. In scenario 5, older NA speakers considered waiting longer than the expected time at doctor's clinic inappropriate or rude; they scored 90% in

comparison with NA-E bilinguals who scored 53%. Contrary to the cultural norms of a collectivistic culture, older NA speakers were convinced that getting off the bus from the front door should trigger *I am sorry*. NA-E bilinguals scored above the average by 7% whereas older NA speakers scored 73%. Generally, NA-E bilinguals differed significantly from the older NA speakers as to both connectedness and separateness politeness. On the other hand, they conformed to the cultural and social criteria of the majority group.

5.2 Conclusions: NA torn between two cultures

In this thesis, we tried to grapple with the vexed issue of language endangerment by addressing some questions related to cultural, pragmatic and cognitive adaptations. Macro-linguistic changes L1 encounters and its speakers experience in contact situations, leading to gradual attrition in their L1 communicative competence. The theoretical novelty of this work lies in pursuing two objectives. First, documenting some linguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of NA that have not been studied to date, albeit not a comprehensive representation. Pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects in a language contact situation have been generally underrated by researchers, particularly naturalistic L2 acquisition where bilinguals use their language in contextualized daily interactions and thus become bicultural bilinguals per say. Consequently, bicultural bilinguals, like NA-E bilinguals, sometimes develop native-like pragmatic competence in both L1 and L2 but they begin losing their command of their L1 pragmatic knowledge because of the intensive intercultural contact in adulthood. In all fairness, Stroinska (1998) conducted a genuine attempt to tackle an aspect of politeness theory address forms in bilingual children within an "*asymmetric system of pragmatic strategies*" (p.1). In the same vein, Yağmur (2004)

emphasized the need for a broader scope of research that goes beyond structural aspects of language:

> Future work should concentrate not only on syntactic, but also sociopragmatic aspects of language attrition. A fundamental language use perspective might contribute to our understanding of language attrition because of the emphasis on using language effectively and appropriately in different contexts. (p. 160)

Paradis (2007) drew attention to the significance of researching attrition of L1 pragmatic systems and conceptual components associated with L1 semantics (see Pavlenko 1998, 2000 on how acculturation and biculturalism affect conceptual representation).

Second, the data collected on NA metaphors, idioms, and politeness strategies were used to extrapolate present language trends to the potential future change of NA in the diaspora. Regrettably, much of the debate in L1 attrition literature has focused on the linguistic components of bilinguals' competence and the effect that (extra)linguistic factors, such as age, literacy, age of L2 onset and frequency of use, have on L1 linguistic knowledge represented by phonology, morphology, and syntax. A similar and parallel line of research (i.e., heritage language) has made great strides in the same direction, but most of the growing literature gave cultural effect and pragmatic components short shrift.

Failure of NA-E bilinguals to correctly interpret animal metaphors according to concepts derived from their L1 culture speaks to the fact of adopting and gradually entrenching new conceptual representations typical of the dominant culture. Animal-based metaphors contain basic-level objects and thus the concept of animal and its denotations and connotations are supposed to be internalized at an early stage of their L1 acquisition. In line with Pavlenko's

(1997) argument, NA-E bilinguals showed that concepts in bilingual's mind are not static as predicted by the traditional theory (Ervin & Osgood, 1954) but susceptible to dynamic changes. The human conceptual knowledge is shaped by the surrounding social and cultural environment, and world experiences. Therefore, NA-E bilinguals experience conceptual attrition when new connotations associated with an existing concept, all other denotations being constant, override previously learned ones, because the new connotations are more salient than the older ones in the dominant culture. Although not invoked when the figurative meaning is intended, the physical features of *owl* (i.e., feathers, beak, and talons) are immutable in both cultures. Concomitantly, there are two sets of abstract conceptual features predicated on culture-specific norms and associated with the same animal or *owl*; one fits the specifications of a collectivist culture and one conforms to the norms of an individualistic culture. In interactions and contexts where the L2 dominant culture prevails, NA-E bilinguals consider the collectivist conceptual representations or connotations of *owl* irrelevant to their efforts to leverage their L2 pragmatic performance. Succinctly, when conceptual features, both figurative and literal, of a specific animal in L1 overlap with identical conceptual features of the same animal in L2, NA-E bilinguals and CE monolinguals do not differ in their figurative interpretations- this was witnessed with identical animal metaphors. However, when some conceptual, universally recognized features of a specific animal in L1 (*owl*) overlap with some identical features, to the exclusion of culture-specific features, of the same animal in L2, different figurative interpretations are formulated by NA-E bilinguals and CE monolingual speakers; we believe that this motivated their figurative interpretations for culturally distinct animal metaphors.

Lexical representation of animal-based metaphors was constant in L1 and L2 where identical cultural specifications associated with animate objects were employed. The lexical

representation of the identical cultural specifications of animals was responsible for creating cultural conceptualizations that were either similar, for example *snake*, or distinct as shown above with *owl*. In the case of idioms, on the other hand, there was not a one-to-one correspondence between their lexical representations in L1 and L2. The constituent components of lexical representations of idioms are usually culture-specific. They are also language-specific as morphosyntactic and phonological features cannot be easily matched especially for typologically different languages. Except for some idioms, it was impossible to find idioms whose lexical representations convey equivalent idiomatic meaning in both languages. It is likely that the absence of a transparent pairing of L1 and L2 lexical representations of idioms complicated the interpretation task for NA-E bilinguals. The lexical representation of an idiom is closely tied with its conventionalized meaning which is derived from the cultural norms and histories of the members of a speech community. Therefore, NA-E bilinguals encountered difficulty and failed to provide correct figurative interpretations of nondecomposable idioms, because lexical representation of L1 idioms diverged from lexical representation of L2 idioms. However, in some cases, when lexical representations of L1 and L2 idioms converged on some elements belonging to the same semantic domain, NA-E bilinguals' interpretations were consistent with CE monolingual speakers' interpretations. The figurative interpretations derived from the convergence in semantic domain slightly ameliorated the performance of NA-E bilinguals in the non-decomposable idiom task. For example, *puqāna 'lūya* (literally 'high nose') is part of the same semantic domain as *nose in the air*, *nāthī hūla m-zamzūme/gazhgūzhe* ('my ear is buzzing') can be associated with *my ear is burning*, and *kimla pātheħ* ('his face has blackened') is congruous with *have egg on your face*. In these three examples, *nose*, *ear* and *face* belong to the same semantic domain (i.e., the human body) which makes up the kernel of the

lexical representation of the idioms in question. These cases have been taken as evidence supporting the claim that NA-E bilinguals are influenced by oblique cultural transmission which is the direct result of intercultural contact. It is worth noting that *khula īwin qiṭya shurtheħ* (did I cut his umbilical cord?) and *know someone like the back of your hand* have the human body involved, but NA-E bilinguals failed to interpret the L1 idiom correctly. This can be attributed to two different reasons: first, NA-E bilinguals are not familiar with this idiom due to lack of vertical cultural transmission; second, *umbilical cord* and *back of hand* are quite distinct and it is not clear whether *umbilical cord* can be considered a body part due to its impermanence.

In decomposable idiom interpretation task, NA-E bilinguals' figurative interpretations improved relative to their performance on the non-decomposable-idiom interpretation task. The idioms used in this task were highly familiar, which increases the frequency of their occurrence in day-to-day interactions, (Schweigert, 1986, 1991) as rated by older NA speakers. However, these idioms' high frequency did not improve NA-E bilinguals' ability to interpret them. In spite of the fact that the English idioms employed in this task were constrained and shaped by the data we collected from older NA speakers, CE monolingual speakers' figurative interpretations surpassed those of NA-E bilinguals. Furthermore, higher mean age of NA-E bilinguals in comparison to CE monolinguals was hardly propitious for eliciting more felicitous figurative interpretations. The sociopragmatic knowledge of NA-E bilinguals, as an ethnocultural group, seems to be greatly affected by the dominant culture and environment of the majority language. The improved performance of NA-E bilinguals cannot be attributed to the high frequency of idioms occurring in daily interactions according to ratings obtained from older NA speakers, but rather to the decomposability of idioms (Gibbs et al., 1989; Gibbs & Nayak, 1991). Figurative interpretations not based on familiarity and frequency but on constituent parts of idioms mark

their stagnant idiomatic competence and provide probative evidence that NA-E bilinguals are detached from the L1 culture and environment but closely connected with the culture of the dominant language. Not having a good command of the figurative interpretations of such idioms refers to the fact that this important chunk of NA-E bilinguals' idiomatic competence suffers from gradually diminishing use. Native speakers of any language, ceteris paribus, are supposed to be able not only to interpret decomposable idioms correctly but also generate novel ones. By and large, the results of the usage frequency scale accentuate the widening gap between older NA speakers and second-generation NA speakers. Contrary to the familiarity ratings of older NA speakers, idiom-usage preferences of young NA speakers were, more often than not, similar to those of CE monolingual speakers.

Thanking, expressing gratitude, complimenting, apologizing, showing regret and taking responsibility for doing something wrong (i.e., accountability) are all essential part of our daily interactions with other interlocutors. Monolinguals, bilinguals and multilingual speakers strive to achieve the communicative objectives of their conversation by trying to adopt the cultural norms of the people around them and comprehending the pragmatic system of the language(s) involved. We hypothesized that endeavours to circumvent pragmatic failure in a language contact situation lead to language disuse and attrition. Throughout this thesis we emphasized the fact that structural aspects (i.e., morphosyntax and phonology) of L2 are not likely to have a great effect on L1 status or existence; they do not constitute a menace to the survival of L1 the way that lack of enculturation does. Culture is a stock of values, beliefs, rituals, and language; all these components come into contact by dint of learning a new culture. Intrinsically, the contact is not between two languages in the first place but between two cultures: the first is individualistic and the second is collectivist (for discussion on two distinct cultures see Oyserman et al., 2002;

Singelis et al., 1995). These two distinct cultures have their own communicative mechanisms and politeness strategies that are shared by the members belonging to them. They share culture and mind. NA-E bilinguals are originally members of an interdependent culture, but evidence shows that they have adapted to the pragmatic and cultural norms of an individualistic culture. Adaptation to a new culture entails pragmalinguistic, cognitive and psychological changes to previously existing, imbibed experiential world knowledge. By adapting to the culture of the majority group, NA-E bilinguals showed that not only behavioural competencies are susceptible to change but also values, beliefs and attitudes. Most of the devised scenarios captured a significant change in NA-E bilinguals' reaction to and evaluation of both social favours (i.e., connectedness) and violations (i.e., separateness). While they were adopting the cultural norms of the majority group, NA-E bilinguals were shedding L1 cultural patterns and pragmatic systems. It is worth noting that older NA-E speakers have also unexpectedly demonstrated a shift in their conceptualizations of politeness in interactional atmosphere.

5.3 Implications of the study

The main aim of this study was to address the lack of research on pragmatic and communicative skills of NA speakers in a context where their L1 becomes less prestigious by dint of contact with a majority language. Being of empirical and exploratory nature, our study tackled important pragmatic and linguistic issues that research conducted on NENA dialects has not addressed to date, both in terms of L1 erosion and language endangerment. The significant contribution of this thesis is the novel investigation of functional, macro-linguistic aspects of an endangered language in a contact situation. To achieve this aim we have developed three tasks for NA in the diaspora. The tasks did not attempt to examine the grammatical system that L1

speakers develop as the existing theoretical approaches to language tend to emphasize. Instead, our work dealt with the sociocultural dimension of language by focusing on how NA speakers use and comprehend their L1 in a contact situation, and the mechanisms they employ to negotiate their roles in interpersonal interchanges through linguistic practices. The tasks depended on three novel sets of data which reflected fossilization and simplification of NA second-generation speakers. While various studies reported on the effect of various factors, for example age of L2 acquisition, level of proficiency in L2, amount of exposure and input, on L1 linguistic knowledge, we have foregrounded the importance of acculturation in shaping the pragmatic and communicative competence of NA-E bilingual speakers. Our study thus responds to the call made by Yağmur (2004), among others, who emphasized the need for examining language use in day-to-day interactions to enrich our understanding of language erosion.

In chapter 2 we argued that NA-E bilinguals do not have incomplete knowledge of animal-based metaphors due to their convergence with the dominant language speakers on the figurative interpretation of culturally equivalent metaphors. NA-E bilinguals' interpretations of culturally distinct animal-based metaphors exhibited disagreement with the standard concerted conceptualizations of their NA cultural norms. The cognitive process of conceptualizing animal-based metaphor was motivated by NA-E bilinguals' world knowledge and experience derived from the ambient environment where the culture of majority language prevailed. We provided solid evidence that while the effect of the lexical representation of distinct animal metaphors was neutralized, their figurative interpretations, which were associated with culture-specific connotations, were dynamic. According to L1 cultural cognition, NA-E bilinguals failed to establish felicitous associations between source and target domain of culturally distinct animal

metaphors, but they successfully transformed culturally agreed-upon figurative features from source to target domain in conformity with the dominant language.

How does this relate to language endangerment? Remarkably, NA-E bicultural bilinguals have shown that not only structural aspects of language are susceptible to attrition but also functional ones. Thus, every aspect of L1 language is at risk of being influenced by the language of the majority group, even L1 advanced skills and concerted conceptualizations are subject to disuse, gradual normalization and ultimately change. Chapter 2 findings corroborated Edwards' (1984, 1985) and Myhill's findings of language and identity but ran counter to Fishman's (1991) that language and cultural identity are crucially linked. Various macro- and sociolinguistic factors, for example language exposure and use, language prestige, and language environment have likely played an important role in motivating NA-E bilinguals to approximate the cultural norms, values and attitudes of the majority group to a large extent. As a result of this L2 cultural approximation, NA-E bilinguals have decided that their L1 is no longer a vital component of their linguistic identity, especially their pragmatic competence. The second generation of NA speakers have sought to offset this linguistic disadvantage by accentuating other sociocultural practices such as religion, traditions, and endogamy.

What makes idioms an intriguing topic in language endangerment research? Interpreting decomposable idioms posed a challenge to NA-E bilinguals, let alone the intractable problem of nondecomposable idioms. When we say NA-E bilinguals could not interpret idioms figuratively, we mean they could not comprehend the culturally established relation between the heterogeneous constituent components of an idiom. Comprehension is correlated with production and thus idle comprehension causes a drop in the quality and quantity of production. If idioms are not generated by the base component and they are mere lexical items stored in our mental

lexicon with all their syntactic peculiarities as claimed by generative grammar advocates (Chomsky, 1980; Fraser, 1970; Katz, 1973), then language user's cultural beliefs and world knowledge must perform an important role in licensing the meaning of idioms (Nunberg, 1978; Nunberg et al., 1994; Vega Moreno, 2007). Again, lexical items prove to be of little value to language users when they confront peculiar linguistic strings (i.e., idioms). In order to be able to comprehend an idiom, NA-E bilinguals must be equipped with analytical tools acquired through direct contact with other members of their cultural group (i.e., enculturation) in a piecemeal fashion. To develop native-like proficiency in idiom comprehension or figurative competence, so to speak, NA-E bilinguals have to get involved in a constant vertical cultural transmission. It is worth noting that enculturation in a language contact situation may not contribute to the improvement of idiom-interpretation capability of L1 speakers. On the contrary, enculturation is likely to have a negative role in this case because L1 peers, as we have argued in this thesis, have the same skill weakness in figurative language comprehension.

While the previous two tasks on animal-based metaphors and idioms dealt with NA-E bilinguals' comprehension, the politeness task examined their reaction to dynamic everyday life interactions. We captured striking similarities between IA and NA in terms of how *face* is conceptualized and the strategies used to express gratitude and apology. It was very clear that IA and NA speakers share in many respects the same cultural cognition and environment, although they use two distinct languages. This comparative part was important to show the great influence of IA on NA and to emphasize the results of this contact which are evident in the great number of unnecessary linguistic and cultural borrowings. This unidirectional influence resulted in irreversible change to NA linguistic system. The comparison lent support to the idea that NA and IA can be regarded as embracing the ideology of collectivist culture.

In today's world of bilingualism and multilingualism, wherever there is a minority language there is a majority language. A related point to consider here is that the relationship that brings them together is not a symbiotic one, as it is disadvantageous to NA at least from a linguistic perspective. This imbalanced relationship of minority and majority group will be reflected on NA-E bilinguals' behavioral competence in day-to-day situational interchanges. We developed a test composed of twenty scenarios to check NA-E bilinguals' reaction against older NA speakers and CE monolinguals. The first ten scenarios represented connectedness politeness and the other ten represented separateness politeness, the former corresponds to interdependent cultures and the latter to individualistic ones. Normally, NA-E bilinguals' reactions should be compatible with those of older NA speakers but incompatible with CE monolingual speakers. This prediction is built on the fact the NA-E bilinguals grow up with their parents and actively participate in religious ceremonies, for example baptisms, funerals, consecrations and Masses, and social occasions, such as weddings, bachelor parties, bridal showers, etc. Knowing that NA culture does not encourage exogamy, we deduce that NA is a closed community which is typical of an ethnocultural minority group. Contrary to these hard facts, NA-E bilinguals' reactions to both connectedness and separateness politeness did not align with those of older NA speakers but it did align with CE monolingual speakers' reactions. Apparently, culture and environment of the dominant group play a prominent role in shaping the cultural cognition of NA-E bilinguals (i.e., members of a minority group). Such kind of adaptation to the cultural norms and beliefs of the dominant group is not motivated by language but it influences NA-E bilinguals' language preferences. Such major cultural adaptation was not limited to NA-E bilinguals but its effect extended to older NA speakers in some scenarios. It all boils down to the fact that culture affects and shapes cognition and they both manipulate the language system. It is clear then that language

may not be directly threatened by another language as much as it is by the culture of the language in question.

5.4 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

One of the main limitations of this study is that the size of the collected data was relatively small in two separate tasks. The number of culturally distinct and equivalent animal-based metaphors was particularly small. However, metaphor selection was, to a large extent, based on older NA speakers' familiarity with the figurative meaning of such metaphors. The number of older NA speakers recruited for this task may have affected the total number of metaphors. The sample could have been enriched by adding other animal-based metaphors to the task such as *rooster*, *turkey*, *goat*, *mosquito*, *bee*, *eagle*, *frog*, *crow*, etc. We also noticed that the number of nondecomposable idioms in the interpretation task was small. Again, working on a more comprehensive list of nondecomposable or even decomposable idioms has to take into account idiom familiarity and its equivalent availability, and carefully manipulate such potential confounding factors. Looking at a wider range of metaphors and idioms would be an interesting topic for future research to consider. In the same vein, research on other macro-linguistic skills that require pragmatic awareness in contact situations is, to my knowledge, scarce, for example humour, irony, complements, requests, gambits, etc. Therefore, conducting research in such untrodden areas will be very valuable in two respects: it will reveal cognitive, pragmatic, psychological and linguistic patterns that speakers of NENA dialects adopt in the diaspora. Such research will work toward documenting various aspects of an endangered language. There is in fact a pressing need to refine and further elaborate the novel findings of our study.

Another limitation was the younger speakers of NA who showed marked reluctance to participate in the study. We thought that an online survey that guaranteed keeping direct contact with the investigator to a minimum would help NA participants to overcome the discomfort of talking about their L1 skills. Their reluctance was so obvious in answering a question regarding whether or not they were interested in knowing the results of the research; 80% of them did not want to know about the results. Furthermore, the statistics of two of the studies showed that more than a hundred potential participants visited or skimmed through some of the survey questions but only thirty-five of them completed the survey successfully. We also noticed that the time span required to complete the survey was considerably longer for NA-E bilinguals in comparison to CE monolingual speakers.

It will be intriguing to investigate both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge of second-generation NA speakers who did not get any schooling or university education in L2 as the sample we targeted in this thesis. Previous studies showed that grammatical proficiency in L2 correlates negatively with L1, for example, lexical retrieval task in Dyirbal (Schmidt,1985), number and gender agreement in Egyptian and Palestinian L1 Arabic speakers (Albirini, Benmamoun, & Saadah, 2011), case marking in Hindi (Montrul, Bhatt, & Bhatia, 2012). Since NA has not been studied in such a context, it is important for future research to investigate the linguistic proficiency of NA speakers in L2 to see to what extent it affects the grammatical aspects of NA (i.e., phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics). Because of the political unrest in that region, particularly in the north of Iraq, it was not logistically possible to compare second-generation NA speakers with their native peers in the country of origin. Although Iraqi Christian NA native land (Nineveh plain) is in turmoil, children still learn NA from their parents. Therefore, it will be very profitable to examine NA children's language development in their

country of origin and their peers in the diaspora. Unfortunately, unlike Arabic and Kurdish, NA is not recognized as an official language in Iraq. Home is the only place where NA is used for communication. This makes it quite a grueling task to design a language revitalization program because all intended texts to be taught will have to be phonemically transcribed and translated; transliteration would be more feasible if NA had an orthographic system such as Syriac. A more arduous task would be to convince children or young adults to read or listen to folkloric stories recited in NA. It is important to note that Khan and collaborators have been working on a database project to document the endangered dialects of NENA, but such an attempt aims at preserving rather than revitalizing NA (NENA database project, 2004).

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