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How Saudi migrants' metapragmatic judgments of Arabic L1 nonverbal greetings change after intense and prolonged exposure to English[1]

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of spending more than three years in an English environment on Saudi migrants' metapragmatic judgments of Arabic L1 nonverbal greetings and their personality traits. Participants are 437 adults comprising three groups: Saudi L2 speakers of English in the UK, Saudis in Saudi Arabia, and British L1 speakers of English in the UK. They observed and rated an audiovisual stimulus illustrating Saudi L1 nonverbal greeting behaviours of handshake and cheek-to-cheek kiss. Statistical analyses revealed that appropriateness ratings by Saudi migrants in the UK diverged from those by Saudis in Saudi Arabia and approximated those of English L1 users in the UK. Moreover, appropriateness ratings by Saudi migrants were differently associated with personality profiles, which differed for three traits between the two Saudi groups. These findings suggest change in L1 metapragmatic judgements as well as personality as a result of prolonged and intense exposure to an L2. The results are interpreted in the light of Cook's (2012) concept of multicompetence.

Keywords*: Metapragmatic awareness, nonverbal greetings, personality, Arabic, English*

1. Introduction

When L2 learners become actual L2 users in real-life interactions, they face both expected and unexpected pragmatic challenges. Furthermore, they may experience occasional cross-linguistic pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic failure. While the origin of pragmalinguistic

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failure is linguistic, as it is "caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force" (Thomas, 1983, p. 109), sociopragmatic failure results from "different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour" (p. 109). What may be less obvious is that L2 users also face non-linguistic obstacles, namely uncertainty about haptics (touch) and proxemics (interpersonal distance) in the L2 culture (Hall, 1966). Dewaele (2016), for example, reported such difficulties after moving from Brussels to London, where he was told off by British interlocutors for wanting to shake hands too often with colleagues, as Belgians do. After 20 years of acculturation to British norms, at a reception in his home country, he suddenly remembered Belgian haptic rules for social interaction:

> I shook hands with everybody, remembering how fond Belgians are of this. Colleagues touched my arm, and ladies insisted on giving me a peck. I realized I had forgotten about all that, and that my current behaviour and reactions were typically British (p. 140).

Having adopted the British custom of standing at one arm-length from one's interlocutor, he suddenly experienced a sense of unease at a reception in Brussels: "My interlocutors were standing much too close for comfort" (p. 140). By looking at the phenomenon of L2 influence on L1 and that of subtle L1 attrition and reverse transfer, Dewaele (2016) added:

> Holding on to one's L1 sociocultural and sociopragmatic norms in a new cultural and linguistic environment could be compared to holding on to a fistful of fine white North Sea sand in the sea breeze. No matter how tight the fist, the sand will escape. (p. 139)

The question that arises is whether immigrants can keep the sociocultural and sociopragmatic norms of the L1 intact after three or more years of residence in the L2 environment. The present study will focus on this question by considering L2 users' perceptions of appropriateness of L1 nonverbal greeting behaviours. In addition, we will investigate whether the personality profiles of Saudi immigrants had shifted away from that of their compatriots in Saudi Arabia and whether the immigrants' personality traits were linked with their perceptions of appropriateness of L1 nonverbal greeting behaviours.

2. Literature review

2.1 Transfer

L2 users sometimes attempt to compensate for their lack of knowledge by transferring some features of their L1 to their L2, which can lead to communication breakdowns. The process of carrying over some L1 features, in particular when these features are not compatible with the L2, could be explained in terms of pragmatic negative transfer or pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983). Kasper (1992) argued that pragmatic transfer occurs when L1 pragmatic knowledge affects L2 pragmatic knowledge. However, Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) argued that transfer could be bidirectional, that is, the L1 could influence the L2 but the L2 could also influence the L1. This view reflects the integrated and holistic view of bilingualism (Grosjean, 1989) and Cook's (2003) multicompetence perspective. Cook argued that all languages are interconnected in the mind of the bilingual and that learning an L2 could also affect the learner's L1. In other words, "As well as the first language influencing the second, the second language influences the first" (Cook, 2003, p. 1). The influence of the L2 on the L1 is described as "reverse transfer" (Cook, 2003, p. 1). According to Cook (2012), multicompetence is neither particularly a psychological concept nor particularly sociological. Multicompetence, therefore, focuses on the whole mind of the multilingual not simply their first language or their second. One interesting aspect of research in this perspective is that learning and using an L2 can have consequences that are not necessarily linguistic: "Acquiring another language alters the L2 user's mind in ways that go beyond the actual knowledge of language itself" (Cook, 2002, p. 7).

2.2 L2 influence on L1 pragmatic competence

The presence of an L2 can change the interpretation of L1 pragmatic cues (Paradis, 2007). L2 patterns seep into judgments of appropriateness of L1 patterns in particular situations. This is a phenomenon immigrants are familiar with when they briefly return to their home country and realise that they are pragmatically out of tune. Kecskes (2015) argues that the change of L1 pragmatic competence under the influence of the newly emerging language or exposure to a new culture is a dynamic process which primarily implies modifications, adjustments, and additions to the existing L1 pragmatic competence. However, he believes that sociopragmatic norms and conventions concerning appropriateness developed through the L1 are very influential and difficult to change. Exposure to and immersion into the new culture are not enough to change them. An advanced L2 speaker cannot be expected "simply to abandon his/her own cultural world" (Barro, Byram, Grimm, Morgan and Roberts, 1993, p. 56). Adamson (1988) pointed out that L2 users are often reluctant to accept and share

the values, beliefs and presuppositions of an L2 community even if they have been living there for a long period of time and can speak the language quite well (Kecskes, 2015). Bearing this in mind, Pavlenko (2000) suggests that the process of L2 influencing L1 may take place in diverse processes, including borrowing, convergence, shift from L1 to L2 values, restructuring transfer, and attrition or loss of L1.

A majority of studies on pragmatic transfer deal with the effect of the L1 on the L2 rather than the other way round. Exceptions are studies on bi-directional influence in: compliments (Valdés and Pino, 1981; Cao, 2016), requests (Cenoz, 2003; Sadighi, Chahardahcherik, Delfariyan and Feyzbar, 2018); and refusals and request (Tavakoli and Shirinbakhsh, 2013). Cenoz (2003), for instance, investigated the influence of English L2 on request behaviours of 69 Spanish L1 speakers divided into two groups according to proficiency in English. Data were obtained via a discourse completion test (DCT) which contained request situations. Results revealed that fluent English learners formulated requests in L2 English and L1 Spanish using similar number of alerters, preparatory strategies, syntactic downgraders and mitigating supportives. Cenoz speculates that: "The use of similar pragmalinguistic elements to formulate requests in the two languages could be due to the transfer from the first language (Spanish) into English" (p. 76). She also found an influence of L2 English on L1 Spanish production, with the fluent English L2 users using their interlocutor's name more frequently, using more indirect strategies, more syntactic and lexical downgraders and more mitigating supportives.

More recently, Sadighi et al. (2018) investigated the influence of English L2 on request strategies by 10 L1 Persian preschool children. Data were collected by using pre- and post-tests of 10 conversations involving polite request strategies in English. Then, they were instructed to perform the same role plays in their Persian L1 in order to compare their responses. Findings indicated that L1 pragmatic production changed after learning the L2, supporting Cook's (2003) claim that the L2 affects the L1.

2.3 Metapragmatic awareness

L2 users' competence does not solely consist of the ability to produce and comprehend language and speech acts. It also includes the ability to focus on communication itself, where the effects of language use become objects of discourse (Silverstein, 1993). This meta-ability to reflect, interpret, comment, and explicate language use in speech events is known as 'metapragmatic awareness' (McConachy, 2018).

Metapragmatic judgments of apology were the focus of an empirical study conducted by Song, Eslami, and Galindo (2018) on 181 Chinese and American students at an American university. Through a mixed methods design, the study aimed to identify specific verbal and

nonverbal cues correlated with participants' evaluations of apology strategies displayed in a video posted by Netflix. The founder of Netflix 'Hastings' sent an apologetic email to the customers for service payment increase. The video showed the apology made by Hastings, including verbal and nonverbal cues. Statistical analyses revealed no significant differences between Chinese and American students' evaluations of verbal strategies used by Hasting to apologize. For the nonverbal aspects, participants believed that Hastings' facial expressions, i.e. smiling, and a relaxed posture, were both inappropriate because such behaviours decreased the sincerity of the apology. Culture played a role, as Chinese participants emphasised the importance of formal settings, professional dress, and bowing while Americans concentrated on eye contact and body posture. This study confirmed the importance of L2 learners' interpretations of aspects of communication to develop awareness of cultural values and norms, which, in turn, enhance communicative and interactional competences.

Scholars have called for more research on metapragmatic awareness of L2 learners because: (i) it boosts pragmatic socialisation in the L2 (Blum-Kulka, 1990; DuFon, 1999; Kasper, 2001); (ii) it indicates L2 users' understanding of L2 communicative and pragmatic norms; and (iii) it helps to raise intercultural awareness of L2 learners (McConachy, 2013, 2018; Thomas, 1983). The present study answers this call by investigating the influence of an L2 on L1 metapragmatic judgments of nonverbal greetings, bringing in the cultural/linguistic profile and the personality of participants.

2.4 Cultural variations in nonverbal greetings

Cultures regulate space and touch contact in their societies through greeting rituals. Watson (1970) classified 30 countries as either contact or noncontact cultures. Contact or high-contact cultures are those that facilitate physical touch and display wider conversational space during social interactions. McDaniel and Andersen (1998) endorsed this classification but called for more nuance by taking into account context and social relationships. They found that Japanese feel embarrassed when hugged or kissed while Americans prefer to wave, nod, or say a word in subsequent greetings (Eisenstein Ebsworth, Bodman and Carpenter, 1995). Matsumoto and colleagues (2016) point out that people living in the USA and Europe greet each other with a handshake and a smile, whereas interlocutors bow with their hands at their sides in East Asia. In the Middle East, where people physically touch more, interlocutors bow, embrace, shake hands, and kiss according to the relationship between them (Matsumoto et al., 2016; Feghali, 1997). With regard to nonverbal greetings of Saudi people, Hassanain (1994) explored greeting rituals in Saudi society and pointed out that in same-sex interactions, Saudis initiate nonverbal greetings with a firm handshake after the verbal greetings most of

the time followed by cheek kissing (even between men). Then an embrace is exchanged, in particular if interactants are close and meet after a long time of separation.

Nonverbal greeting behaviours in the L1 – just like verbal greetings – are also subject to L2 influence. Mori (1997), for example, is a Japanese woman who had lived in the US for 20 years. On a trip back to Japan, she noticed that at the start of an interaction she was somehow unwilling to engage in the complex calculation of her interlocutor's age, rank, gender and position that determine how deep her bow (*Ojigi*) should be when greeting, and the choice of appropriate pronouns, and the ritual formulas of politeness. On arrival in Japan, Mori feels as if she had landed "in a galaxy of the past, where I can never say what I feel or ask what I want to know" (p. 5). This suggests that Mori's knowledge of Japanese L1 was still unaltered despite extensive exposure to English L2, but that acculturation into American norms had created a reluctance to engage in behaviour judged appropriate in Japan.

2.5 Personality

Although the literature on personality in pragmatics is scarce, a number of scholars have linked personality traits and aspects of pragmatic competence.

Verhoeven and Vermeer (2002) investigated the effect of personality on pragmatic competence (including sociocultural routines and illocutionary force), which is part of communicative competence. Participants were 241 Dutch L1 and L2 children in The Netherlands. The authors used a Big Five personality traits questionnaire (with the dimensions extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience). They invited the children to participate in eight pragmatic tasks involving different role-playing situations and observed the routines of greeting, apologizing, and thanking as well as the illocutionary force. They found, in both the L1 and L2 children, a moderate positive correlation between the openness to experience and illocutionary force. A positive relationship was also found between the openness to experience and routines for the Dutch L1 group. They conclude that "further research along these lines is needed" (p. 373).

This call is repeated by Taguchi (2014), who points out that research on personality and pragmatic competence is justified because it encompasses knowledge about language, about conventions of language use, and about sociocultural norms. She argues that "personality could mediate learners' access to social interaction, it would be interesting to examine the relationship between personality traits and pragmatic competence" (p. 206). Taguchi (2014) investigated the effect of personality on the development of pragmatic competence (requests and opinions, in high- and low-imposition situations) among 48 Japanese EFL students. She used a "temperament sorter" based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator that distinguishes four personality dimensions: extraversion-introversion, feeling-

thinking, perceiving-judging, and sensing-intuition. The dependent variables were appropriateness and fluency. She found no effect for extraversion but did find a positive link between feeling-thinking and appropriateness.

Dewaele and Salomidou (2017) were interested in the pragmatic issues that arose between romantic partners who did not share an L1. They used an online questionnaire and written interviews to collect data from 429 participants who were in a cross-cultural relationship. Using a foreign language (LX) to express emotions was reported as being a pragmatic challenge, especially because of the lack of emotional resonance of the LX and the lack of calibration of LX emotion words and expressions. The speed and depth of this affective LX socialisation was linked, among other factors, to personality. The authors used the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) by van der Zee et al. (2013), which was shown to be empirically effective and reliable in providing accurate assessment of personality profiles in cross-cultural transitions (Wilson, Ward and Fischer, 2013). It consists of five factors: Cultural Empathy, which refers to the ability to empathise with cultural diversity; Flexibility, which refers to the ability to learn from new experiences and enjoying novelty and change; Social Initiative, which shares characteristics with Extraversion; Emotional Stability (with Neuroticism on the opposite pole) and Open-mindedness, which refers to an open, unprejudiced attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity. Previous research has shown that knowing more languages and having lived abroad is linked to higher scores on Open-mindedness and Social Initiative (Dewaele & Botes, 2020; Korzilius et al., 2011). Participants in Dewaele and Salomidou (2017) who scored higher on Social Initiative and Open-mindedness, and lower on Flexibility agreed more strongly that their LX had become their language of the heart. In a follow-up study on the same database, Dewaele (2018) found that three MPQ personality traits were linked to pragmatic challenges in communicating emotions with their partner. Participants with lower scores on Emotional Stability, Flexibility and Open-mindedness reported significantly more difficulties in communicating their emotions to their partner. Twelve participants also mentioned in the interviews how their own personality or that of their partner had an effect on their pragmatic skills. One finding that emerged from both studies was that for more than three quarters of participants the pragmatic difficulties were overcome after a couple of months. Another fifth of participants insisted that the pragmatic obstacle had remained.

3. Research questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

Q1: Do metapragmatic judgments of L1 nonverbal greetings by Saudi migrants change after residing in the UK for three years or more?

Q2: Is there a difference in the personality profiles of Saudi migrants and at-home Saudis?

Q2: Are personality traits, measured by the MPQ, linked to metapragmatic judgments of L1 nonverbal greetings by Saudi migrants in the UK?

4. Methods

A mixed methods research design was adopted to collect various types of data in order to provide a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone (Creswell 2014). More specifically, we used a sequential explanatory design, in which data were collected in two consecutive phases. Quantitative data is best suited to evaluations of the perceptions of participants, including metapragmatic judgments of speech acts (Chen, 1995; Takimoto, 2012). Qualitative methods help develop explanations of numeric patterns identified in the quantitative research, offering an in-depth examination of individuals in the study. A mixed methods approach helps researchers to explore perceptions in-depth, (Song et al., 2018). Quantitative data were collected first and analysed. The statistical findings informed the collection of qualitative data in the second phase of the study.

4.1 *Quantitative data*

4.1.1 *Participants*

A total of 437 adult participants took part in this study (Mean Age = 38.4 years, SD = 5.9; males = 222, females = 215). Participants resided either in Saudi Arabia or in the UK. They consisted of three groups, balanced in terms of age, gender, and education. Firstly, 106 L1 speakers of English who are British citizens and have never been in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, 67 Saudi L2 speakers of English living in Saudi Arabia without residence experience in the UK (hereafter 'at-home Saudis'). They were all bilingual in Arabic and English and responded to a question on which languages they spoke to confirm this. The members of this group had learned English in EFL classroom settings in Saudi Arabia and had not travelled to the UK. They had, therefore, little or no contact with British L1 English speakers. Half of this group were undergraduate students with an English major. Others were postgraduate students with various majors. There are also some lecturers, teachers, IT auditors, a dentist, an engineer, a computer technician, a training assistant and a pharmacist. Thirdly, 264 Saudi L2 speakers of English living in the UK with a range of residence between 3 to 13 years (M = 5.6, SD = 2.2) (hereafter 'Saudi migrants in the UK'), constituted the target group. The minimum amount of exposure was set at three years because L2 exposure is

likely to be significant by then (see Pavlenko and Jarvis, 2002). Around two thirds of the Saudi migrants in the UK are undergraduate or postgraduate students in UK universities. The remaining participants are teachers, doctors, dentists, lawyers, engineers, lecturers, journalists, accountants, pharmacists, nurses and TV directors.

4.1.2   *Instrument*

Data were collected through an online survey consisting of three parts. In the first part of the survey, participants were asked about their age, nationality, actual country of residence, length of residence in the UK, languages known, number of friends belonging to L1 and L2 cultures.

The second part consisted of the slightly adapted short form of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (van der Zee et al., 2013). It consists of 40 items with 5-point Likert scales that measured applicability from 1 (totally not applicable) to 5 (completely applicable). The five main dimensions measured by the MPQ are: Cultural Empathy, Open-mindedness, Flexibility, Social Initiative, and Emotional Stability. MPQ data was collected for Saudi participants only, i.e. at-home Saudis, and Saudi migrants in the UK. MPQ data for at-home Saudis was collected in order to provide baseline data against which the data collected from the main study group could be compared. Including the Saudi control group meant it was possible to establish the potential influence of living in the UK on the Saudi migrants' personality profiles.[2] The British L1 English-speaking control group did not fill out the MPQ.

In the third part, participants reported their perceptions of appropriateness of nonverbal greetings after watching a 35-second audiovisual videoclip which introduced the social relationship between the interactants. The videoclip allowed viewers to absorb the contextual information and hence decide on pragmatic appropriateness (cf. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998). In the stimulus video, two male interlocutors who are presented as close friends greet and talk to each other. They were asked to act as if they meet each other in a public setting.[3] The interaction showed a number of nonverbal greetings commonly practiced in Saudi society, starting with a handshake (see picture 1), followed by a mutual cheek-to-cheek kiss (see picture 2), in addition to embrace, proximity, and smiling. After watching the videoclip, participants were presented with full sentences on the appropriateness of the nonverbal greetings they had just seen (*1. 'The close friends shake each other's hands'*, and *2. 'The close friends kiss each other's cheeks'*). Participants judged appropriateness of such behaviour

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[2] The correlation analyses between MPQ values and dependent variables focused solely on Saudi migrants in the UK in order to answer research question 3.

[3] The video may be viewed by following this link: https://youtu.be/nGUYsfaVEYg.

on a 5-point Likert-format scale: (1) inappropriate, (2) slightly inappropriate, (3) neutral, (4) slightly appropriate, and (5) appropriate. Perceptions of appropriateness were calculated by taking the mean of participants' ratings on the two nonverbal behaviours, i.e. handshake and cheek-to-cheek kiss. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities were satisfactory for the two nonverbal behaviours ($\alpha = .78$). A correlation matrix among dependent variables was used to substantiate the validity of the 5-point Likert scale on appropriateness of nonverbal greeting behaviours. Pearson correlation analyses indicated that the two dependent variables, i.e. metapragmatic judgments of appropriateness of handshake and appropriateness of cheek-to-cheek kiss, were significantly positively correlated ($p < 0.01$, 2-tailed). Since no clear evidence was found in the literature on gender differences in perceptions of appropriateness of nonverbal greetings, this variable was not considered in the current study.

Picture 1. Close friends' handshake

Picture 2. Close friends' cheek-to-cheek kiss

4.1.3 *Quantitative data collection and analysis*

The link to the Google Forms survey was spread on social media, public mailing lists and via emails to colleagues and acquaintances. This snowball sampling method allowed us to recruit participants with different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Participants took part voluntarily, without time limit and were informed that they could withdraw at any time. Ethical approval for the research design and instruments was obtained at the authors' research institution. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). As the data were not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$), we opted for non-parametric statistics; i.e. a Kruskal-Wallis test. The results showed skewness of -1.581 (SE =

.117) with a kurtosis of .962 (SE = .233) for handshake, and a skewness of -.850 (SE = .117) and a kurtosis of -.350 (SE = .233) for cheek-to-cheek kiss.

4.2   Qualitative data

Nine Saudi Arabic-English bilingual participants residing in the UK were interviewed in this study. The aim was to hear participants' voices and to elicit meta-pragmatic reflections on nonverbal greetings that could throw a light on the statistical findings. The four men and five women, aged between 32 and 48 ($M = 40$), had lived in the UK for between four and 15 years ($M = 9.5$). They included two teachers at a bilingual Arabic/English school in London, both BA degree holders, two lecturers, both MA degree holders, four PhD students at UK universities, and one PhD holder. Each participant was given an alias for the study. During the interviews, participants were all asked follow-up questions including these two:

1. *Do you think that your nonverbal greeting behaviours have changed since you arrived in the UK?*

2. *Do you think that a person's personality affects his/her greeting behaviours? If yes, how?*

5. Results

5.1 Quantitative analyses

A Kruskal-Wallis test was used in order to answer the first research question. It revealed that there was a significant difference between the at-home Saudis, Saudi migrants in the UK and British participants in the appropriateness ratings of nonverbal greetings, specifically cheek-to-cheek kiss of close friends but not for the handshake ($p > 0.05$) (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1. Differences in metapragmatic judgments of nonverbal greetings (NVGs) of close friends (Kruskal-Wallis test)

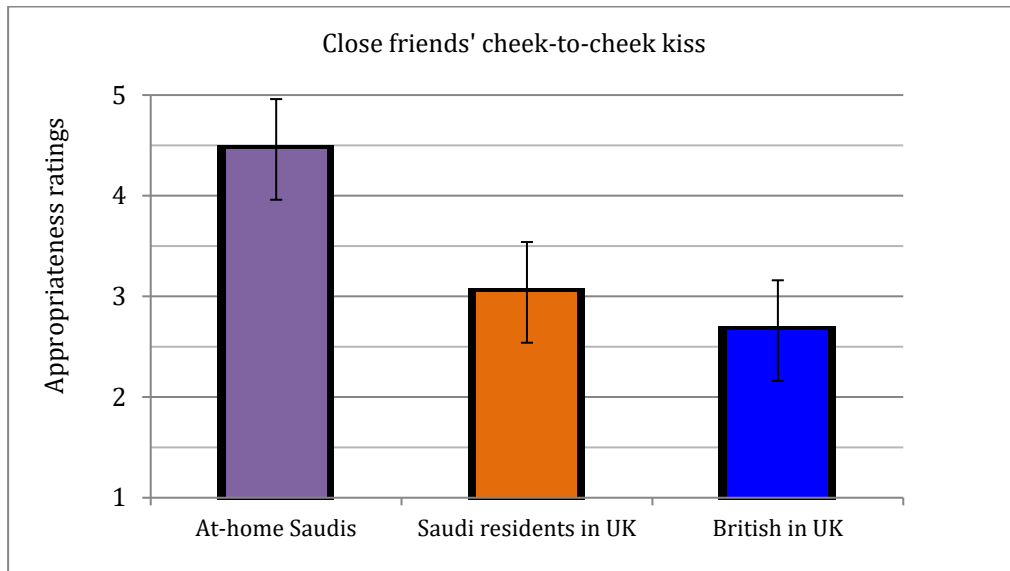| Close friends NVGs	Handshake	Cheek-to-cheek kiss
H	4.350	9.755
df	2	2
p	.114	.008

Figure 1: Mean appropriateness ratings of close friends' cheek-to-cheek kiss by the three groups of participants

Figure 1 displays the differences between the three groups in their perceptions of appropriateness of the cheek-to-cheek kiss between two close male friends. The appropriateness rating is the highest for the at-home Saudi group ($M = 4.49$, $SD = .892$), followed by the Saudi migrants in the UK ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.08$), with British participants giving the lowest score ($M = 2.52$, $SD = .039$). Mann-Whitney post hoc tests revealed statistically significant differences in metapragmatic judgments of the cheek-to-cheek kiss between Saudis in the UK and British citizens in the UK [$U = 11811$, $Z = - 3.138$, $p < .025$], and between Saudis in the UK and at-home Saudis [$U = 12494$, $Z = -1.852$, $p < .025$]. This result suggests that exposure to British culture caused the Saudi migrants to deviate from their fellow Saudis at home in their evaluation of one specific L1 nonverbal greeting behaviour, namely close friends' cheek-to-cheek kiss.

An independent samples t-test was carried out to answer the second research question, namely the difference in personality profile of at-home Saudis and the Saudis in the UK. A statistically significant difference emerged between the two groups in three traits. Saudis in the UK scored higher on Cultural Empathy and Open-mindedness than Saudis living in Saudi Arabia. Surprisingly, Saudis living in Saudi Arabia scored higher on Flexibility. There were no significant differences between the two groups for Social Initiative or Emotional Stability (see Table 2).

Table 2. Pairwise t-tests for personality profiles of the two Saudi groups

MPQ	At-home Saudis		Saudi migrants in the UK			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Cultural Empathy	27.21	9.46	29.64	6.65	19.995	**.012**
Open-mindedness	25.38	8.27	28.86	6.54	8.885	**.031**
Flexibility	24.98	7.98	21.08	6.21	8.180	**.028**
Social Initiative	25.00	4.64	26.08	4.47	.193	.661
Emotional Stability	25.52	5.56	24.28	5.31	1.186	.271

Spearman correlation analyses were carried out to answer the third research question, namely the potential relationship between personality traits and Saudi migrants' metapragmatic judgments of nonverbal greetings. Scores on Cultural Empathy and Open-mindedness were found to be significantly positively associated with appropriateness of handshake by Saudi migrants in UK. However, a negative relationship emerged between Open-mindedness and Saudi migrants' appropriateness judgments of cheek-to-cheek kiss between close male friends. There were no relationships between Flexibility, Social Initiative, Emotional Stability scores and appropriateness judgments of other behaviours (see Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation analysis between Personality traits and appropriateness judgments of nonverbal greetings by Saudi migrants in the UK (Spearman Rho)

Close friends NVGs	Handshake	Cheek-to-cheek kiss
Cultural Empathy	.145*	.091
Open-mindedness	.150*	-.069*
Flexibility	.009	.125
Social Initiative	.003	-.095
Emotional Stability	-.092	-.013

*$p < .05$

5.2 Qualitative analyses

The nine participants talked about the changes in their nonverbal greetings after years of living in the UK. First, they were asked about possible change in their L1 nonverbal greeting behaviours over years of residence in the L2 UK culture. They reported stumbling across unexpected cultural differences in nonverbal greetings and explained how they had to adapt to the British greeting style. The majority of participants felt that they no longer wanted to use some nonverbal greetings that they used back in Saudi Arabia. Sol (female, 35) said that she no longer used a handshake in the way that she did before.

Sol (female, 35): "I feel like I lost the handshake even if I go back home. I meet my aunts and sisters who try to shake hands and I suddenly give a hug. This change becomes a habit. I mean I do the same here and there."

Sol recognises that her change in behaviour is not a temporary one. Amal (female, 41) stated that she needs to actively suppress Saudi nonverbal greetings in some situations: "in some interactions I have to avoid Saudi nonverbal greetings", feeling uncomfortable with them because of the cultural difference between Saudi Arabia and the UK.

Adil also reported avoiding Saudi L1 nonverbal greetings. After living in the UK, he sees the cheek-to-cheek kiss as a female behaviour and not something that males should engage in, without risking being perceived as homosexuals.

Adil (male, 39): "When I got here, I really avoided greeting any Saudi like what I used to do in Saudi Arabia, I mean cheek-to-cheek kiss, because I thought people might see this behaviour inappropriate. I think kissing is for women not men."

Then, the relationship between nonverbal greetings and personality traits was discussed with the participants. They identified some traits in particular as relevant to nonverbal greetings: sociability and extraversion.

Amal (female, 41): "Sociable people are always happy to have physical touch in order to express feelings, acceptance of other people, etc. unlike shy and introvert people. We should respect preferences of both types of personalities."

Amal did not use the word extravert but spoke of sociable people. She stated that she believed sociable people were more likely to use physical touch as part of nonverbal greetings. She also thought they were more likely to be able to accept physical greetings from others and talk about how they felt about them. Adil also talked about the link between personality and the nonverbal greetings used. They both stated that they believed more sociable people were likely to use touch greetings more often in greetings.

Adil (male, 39): "I agree that personality traits affect nonverbal greeting behaviours. For example, a shy person finds it more difficult to greet people than a sociable person."

Sol felt that personality can change over time, and that people can behave differently with some people than others.

Sol (female, 35): "Extraverts and introverts act differently. That is why some people shake hands while others do not and prefer to stand away, smile, and greet verbally only. However, over time I think personality, as well as behaviours, changes when interacting with others. Again I think personality traits have a big role in your behaviours."

6. Discussion

This study explored the influence of English L2 on metapragmatic judgments of Arabic L1 nonverbal greetings by relatively long-term Saudi migrants in the UK compared to at-home

Saudis and English L1 speakers in the UK. The results reveal a shift away from Saudi L1 norms in appropriateness judgments of nonverbal greetings among Saudi migrants in the UK.

The first research question focused on the impact of residence in the UK on appropriateness judgments of handshake and cheek-to-cheek kiss between men. The ratings of the Saudi migrants who had been in the UK for 3 years or more were situated between the ratings of the two monocultural groups: at-home Saudis, and British citizens in the UK. In other words, they find themselves in a 'third place' between both cultures (Kramsch, 2009). This intermediate position could shift further away from the Saudi norm towards the British norm with longer exposure to British culture. Similarly, we assume that it could revert back to the Saudi L1 norm after resettling in Saudi Arabia. It shows that the Saudi migrants in the UK have accommodated towards local norms that do not violate L1 norms. In other words, these Saudis have adapted to the interactional demands of the situation (McConachy, 2013). More importantly, the choice of interaction strategies seems to reflect a heightened awareness of the interactional practices informed by both cultures. Pragmatic perceptions of appropriateness developed through L1 culture have deep roots (Kecskes, 2015). Exposure to and immersion into the new culture are not enough to change, or abandon L1 cultural norms (Barro et al., 1993). The Saudis living in the UK had knowledge of social situations, relationships and appropriate behaviour that transcended their own experience of growing up in Saudi Arabia. They were able to use their intercultural understanding to interpret situations in another culture, while still being mindful of their L1 norms.

The interviewees' metapragmatic observations supported the quantitative findings. They stated that they had a preference for minimal physical contact in cheek-to-cheek kisses. This demonstrates a change in their L1 norms (Pavlenko, 2000). The change to Saudi assessments of the appropriateness of L1 nonverbal greetings may have been a gradual one, resulting from simply using or observing specific greeting behaviours less often, making them seem less appropriate over time (Dewaele, 2016). They had also become aware that cheek-to-cheek kissing between men might be interpreted differently in the UK than in Saudi Arabia, namely that it could signal sexual orientation.

The second research question dealt with differences in the personality profiles of at-home Saudis and Saudis migrants in the UK. Significant differences emerged, with the Saudis migrants in the UK scoring significantly higher on Cultural Empathy and Open-mindedness but lower on Flexibility, which partially confirm the findings in previous studies (Dewaele and Botes, 2020; Korzilius et al. 2011). It is unclear why the Saudi migrants scored lower on Flexibility than their compatriots at home.

The third research question focused on the influence of personality traits on metapragmatic judgments of L1 nonverbal greetings by Saudis migrants in the UK. Results

showed that Cultural Empathy and Open-mindedness were significantly linked with appropriateness judgments of close male friends' handshake by Saudi migrants in the UK. This suggests that having an appreciation and consideration of the differences and similarities of another culture in comparison to one's own affects perceptions of appropriateness. Handshake is integral to interpersonal communication in Saudi society (Feghali, 1997; Hassanaine, 1994), as well as among British citizens in the UK, in particular in introductory meetings (Dewaele, 2016; Matsumoto, et al., 2016). Based on cultural similarities in handshake, Saudis abroad considered this behaviour as being unproblematic. One possible explanation is that Cultural Empathy boosts awareness and familiarity with L2 nonverbal practices, indicating that the Saudi participants in the UK had developed sensitivity and intercultural competence (Wilson et al., 2013).

Open-mindedness of Saudis in the UK was positively linked to judgments of appropriateness of handshake of close friends. Open-mindedness has been found to predict willingness to engage in new behaviours (Wilson et al., 2013), to have less prejudice when interpreting events and situations and to minimise resistance to the norms of the new environment (Kim, 2008). These Saudis in the UK had no problem with this L1 behaviour (handshake between two men) since they are common in the British culture (Matsumoto et al., 2016). It fits with the finding in Dewaele and Salomidou (2017) and in Dewaele (2018) that highly open-minded multilinguals were more likely to overcome difficulties in the use of the LX in the communication of emotion with their partner and in adopting their partner's L1 as their language of the heart. However, higher levels of Open-mindedness correspond to lower ratings of appropriateness for cheek-to-cheek kiss of close male friends. One possible explanation is that Saudi migrants in the UK adopt cultural norms of the host environment, and hence, they were able to recognise peculiar behaviours not belonging to the new culture, namely, cheek-to-cheek kiss between males. This result is in agreement with those of Verhoeven and Vermeer (2002) who found that L2 learners with higher scores on openness to experience, which is similar to Open-mindedness in the MPQ (Basow and Gaugler, 2017), had a great desire to belong to and be identified with the target language speaking peers. For the present study, Open-mindedness facilitates the process of coping of Saudis abroad, and they adjusted their perception of cheek-to-cheek kiss between males. This finding also support Kim's (2001) view that highly openminded individuals are more likely to adopt new norms.

Flexibility, Social Initiative, and Emotional Stability were not linked to metapragmatic judgments of L1 nonverbal greetings by Saudi migrants in the UK. It is not clear why this is the case, as Dewaele and Salomidou (2017) and Dewaele (2018) reported that these three

personality traits were linked to a pragmatic advantage in using the LX to communicate emotions.

The participants who took part in the interviews agreed that there was a clear link between extraversion and nonverbal greetings. Social Initiative is synonymous with extraversion and sociability in the Big Five model (Basow and Gaugler, 2017, p. 40). The interviewees made comments around the importance of extraversion and how this affects the willingness of people to undertake touch greetings. They frequently compared introverts and extraverts and their nonverbal greetings behaviours. They tended to say that introverts use non-touch nonverbal greetings such as smiles and nods, whereas extraverts are more likely to touch their interlocutor. They commented that introverts might find it hard to connect with others and therefore struggle to adapt to a new culture (Kim, 2008; Dewaele, 2018). Introverts might also find it hard to develop rapport with others and therefore struggle not to lose face in a new community (Wilson et al., 2013). One possible explanation for the frequent mention of extraversion is that it is the best known personality trait in the Big Five models, and that the interviewees might have been less familiar with the other four traits (Basow and Gaugler, 2017).

The present study is not without limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the survey means the data provide only a snapshot in time. To fully understand the nature of changing perceptions of appropriateness of L1 nonverbal behaviours, longitudinal designs are necessary. Such designs could focus on a wider range of individual differences such as L2 proficiency and socio-psychological variables such as identity and cultural affiliation. We obviously wish we had a larger sample. Secondly, we acknowledge that the relationship between multicultural personality traits and nonverbal greetings is not straightforward. In line with personality literature, findings on personality traits are far less conclusive when they are analysed separately, because they do not have equal effects (Taguchi and Roever, 2017). Moreover, variation in scores on personality traits could be interpreted as reflecting a shift in attitudes, feelings, and behaviours in response to changing situations or contexts (Dewaele and Botes, 2020).

7. Conclusion

The present study offers fresh evidence of multicompetence (Cook, 2012) in a previously unexplored domain, namely metapragmatic judgments of nonverbal greetings. Our Saudi migrants' L1 judgments of appropriateness did not remain unaffected by constant exposure to English greetings between friends. They shifted away from the full agreement with the Arabic predilection for cheek-to-cheek kisses between males (but not for handshakes) towards the

English norm. How fast and how far participants moved away from their L1 norms depended partly on their personality profile, which itself shifted as a result of migration and intense and prolonged exposure to an L2. As Dewaele (2016) reported in his auto-ethnographic account about his accommodation to British haptic rules, migrants may not be aware that their L1 norms have shifted until they return to their home country, and realise that they stand out in a once familiar setting. Alternatively, they may still have the L1 pragmatic knowledge but feel reticent about using it (Mori, 1997). Further research is needed to explore how L2 acculturation and personality reshape metapragmatic judgments about L1 nonverbal behaviour.

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