

Assyrian Language Maintenance and Erosion in U.S.: A World War I Immigrant Family Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This case study serves two primary purposes. Firstly, it substantiates the initial predictions concerning the maintenance and erosion of the Assyrian language across three generations in the United States. Secondly, it provides further evidence in line with the standard observations of many sociolinguists with regards to the survivability period of almost all ethnic [immigrant] languages (L1) in the United States. Sociolinguistic research on ethnic languages survival in the United States is replete with testimony to the effect that such languages suffer serious erosion once they come into direct real-life contact with English (L2). The erosion intensifies with the second and third generations. With the second generation, most of the speakers become bilingual in L1 and L2, while with the third generation, usually L2 (English) becomes so dominant in almost every aspect of life that it functionally replaces the ethnic language and becomes the L1.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In a previous publication,¹ concerning the destiny of the Assyrian [Neo-Aramaic] language², the following observations were made with regards to the

¹Edward Y. Odisho, "Bilingualism and multilingualism among Assyrians: a case of language erosion and demise," in *Semitica: Serta philologica Constantino Tsereteli dicata*, ed. R. Contini, F. Pennacchietto and M. Tosco (Torino: Silvio Zamorani Editore, 1993).

² The *Assyrian* language of today, also known as *Modern Aramaic* or *Neo-Aramaic* is linguistically traced back to *Old Aramaic* which was once the *lingua franca* of the greater Middle East and dominated the region from the 11th century B.C. with no real linguistic challenge until the advent of Islam in the 7th century A.D. Since the latter date, Aramaic has been dwindling in the number of its speakers and shrinking in its domain of occupancy. Nevertheless, because of its prominent historical, religious and civilizational roles, it has managed to survive until this very day. Currently, it is the native language of many of the Christian minorities [and some Jewish minorities] in the Middle East the majority of whom immigrated to the United States, Canada, Australia and several other European countries. For further details on this subject see George Lamsa, *New Testament origin* (Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1947); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *A wandering Aramean* (Scholars Press, 1961); Klaus Beyer, *The Aramaic language*

status of this language in the United States: "In the U.S., the descendants of the early wave of Assyrian immigrants (circa 1914) have already lost their language and are totally assimilated into the English-speaking mainstream society. In practical terms, no ethnic language other than English has been able to *survive healthily* in the U.S. after the 3rd or 4th generations. Not even the Germans, with millions of immigrants and with so much devotion to their *Sprache* and *Kultur*, have been able to resist almost entire assimilation. Consequently, the Assyrians, with a much smaller population scattered over the major cities in the U.S., can never constitute an exception to the rule of ethnic assimilation and language erosion and disappearance in the U.S." ³ Odisho further clarifies the conditions of language shift and disappearance in that those conditions are more applicable to the *communicative function* of language (i.e. the use of language for daily communication) than to the *symbolic use* of language (i.e. its use in churches, festivals and occasional meetings) which may take longer time to disappear.⁴ The significance of the latter distinction is repeatedly highlighted in Edwards' works where it is stated that the communicative-symbolic distinction is essential in any consideration of language shift and of ethnic characteristics which remain after the language shift has occurred. Of course, both communicative and symbolic aspects of language generally coexist, but it is possible for the latter to remain important in the absence of the former.⁵

It was in light of the above evidence and observations that Odisho concludes his paper with a pessimistic tone suggesting that "The survival of Aramaic requires some sort of geographical concentration of population, formal schooling or massive tutoring in the native language⁶ and continuation of literary publications.

(Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); Edward Y. Odisho, *The sound system of modern Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic)*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988); Sebastian Brock, "Three thousand years of Aramaic literature," *Aram* 1 (1989): 11-23; J. N. Postgate, "Ancient Assyria: A Multi-racial State" *Aram* 1 (1989): 1-10; and M. Dandamayev, "Assyrian traditions during Achaemenid times," in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th anniversary symposium on the Neo-Assyrian text corpus project*, ed. S. Parpola and R.M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian text corpus project, 1997).

³ Odisho, "Bilingualism and Multilingualism," 198.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁵ John Edwards, "Ethnic Identity and Bilingual Education," in *Language ethnicity and intergroup relations*, ed. Howard Giles (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 262. also see, John Edwards, "Symbolic ethnicity and language," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 227.

⁶ For the last few years, the leadership of the **Assyrian Democratic Movement** which is part of the governmental coalition in the self-rule region in the North of Iraq has adopted and initiated instruction in content areas at both elementary and secondary levels in the Assyrian language. This is a very important step with far-reaching consequences for a realistic maintenance of language as communicative tool for generations to come.

If those conditions are not met and if the hegemony of the majority languages persists, as is the case nowadays, then Aramaic is destined to give way to English, Farsi, Arabic, Russian and Turkish, among others. An objective assessment of the whole situation of Aramaic tends to suggest that meeting the above conditions seems unlikely, if not impossible, in the foreseeable future."⁷

In the study of language maintenance and disappearance of ethnic minorities in the United States, especially those that *settle in urban areas and actively interact socio-economically with the mainstream society* there is a good body of evidence that the shift from one language to another is very rapid.⁸ It is often so rapid that by the third generation the native language (L1) is functionally non-existent and what is left of it is only occasionally and symbolically used.⁹ Fishman and Hofman,¹⁰ label the three generations as: **foreign born** (parents), **native of foreign** (their children) and **native of native** (their grandchildren). For the purpose of this study, perhaps a more convenient and linguistically neater labeling system would be the Japanese nomenclature for the three generations as *Issei*, *Nisei* and *Sansei*.¹¹ Occasionally, there will be a need to mention the fourth generation whose Japanese counterpart is *Yonsei*.

The above observations and conclusions regarding Aramaic are too radical to be readily acceptable without further probing and authentic field evidence concerning ethnic language and culture maintenance across generation. This paper is an attempt to discover whether such evidence is attestable. Since case studies tend to be a reliable source of this type of evidence, *the history of an immigrant Assyrian family of World War I is studied in pursuit of such evidence*. The family, which is now in its fourth generation, is known to the present writer

⁷ Odisho, "Bilingualism and Multilingualism," 199.

⁸ Francois Grosjean, *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 102; cf. Glazer (1966), 359-360., cited in Grosjean.

⁹ Ibid., 103-104; Kenji Hakuta, *Mirror of language: The debate on bilingualism* (New York: Basic Books Publishers, 1986), 166; and J. Milton Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of strength? Source of conflict* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 305.

¹⁰ J.A. Fishman, and J.E. Hofman, "Mother tongue and nativity in the American population," in *Language Loyalty in the United States*, ed. Joshua Fishman (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966).

¹¹ M. Osako, "Melting into All-American melting pot," in *Ethnic Chicago*, ed. M. Holli and Peter Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 517.

through his association with the youngest Nisei (henceforth known as D.2) for over ten years. Throughout this period, there have been long conversations with D2 concerning the cultural and linguistic history of his family. One such conversation has been retained on audiotape as a piece of evidence.

FAMILY HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

It is not exactly known when *Awrahim Shmuel*¹² > (*Abraham Samuels* d. 1976) of the village of Khanishan, Iran arrived in the United States; however, he was here just a few years before World War I. In 1922, he married *Shalim Mirza Ishaq* > (*Isaac* d. 1982) of the village of Guktapa, Iran. They had four children; three sons, D1--- (1924), P---- (1927) and D2---- (1936) and one daughter, E--- (1926-1995). D1---- is married and has two twin-daughters, Peggy and Paula Ann, only one of whom is married with no children. P---- is married and has two sons, M1---- and M2...., both of whom are married and have children. The first has three children: Jonathan, Jennifer and Daniel, while M2---- has two: Joshua and Bethany. D2---- is unmarried and E---, who passed away a few years ago, was also unmarried. It is, therefore, clear that Abraham and Shalim (**Issei**) had four children (**Nisei**) and four grandchildren (**Sansei**) before they passed away. Thus, with M1's and M2's children, (**Yonseis**), the family is in its fourth generation.

There is clear evidence in the history of Chicago or the larger Chicagoland area that most of its early immigrants and refugees settled first within the downtown area or the neighborhoods adjacent to it where most of the jobs were.¹³ So the **Samuels'** family was not an exception. In mid 1920s, the family moved to **Skokie** which was then only a remote and thinly populated agricultural area rather than the middle and upper-middle class affluent suburb that it is now. Spatially, it is more now like an extension of Chicago and no longer a remote village on its outskirts. Just before the end of World War II, the family moved to **Evanston** another suburb on the north borders of Chicago.

This historical sketch of the settlement of Samuels' family in Chicagoland indicates a very important trend that will, perhaps, shed some light on the speed with which the acculturation and the assimilation of the family progressed.

¹² The last name has been replaced and most of the first names are reduced to their first initials simply to conceal the identity of the individuals involved and maintain their privacy.

¹³ Irving Cutler, *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1982), 113.

With the above introductory remarks and the historical sketch of the family, the reader will be in a much better position to understand this case study especially with regards to language and culture retention and disappearance. The following linguistic and cultural components will serve as primary highlights.

PRESENT LINGUISTIC STATUS

Abraham and Shalim (Issei), have long passed away. Of the Nisei, only the three brothers, D1----, P---- and D2---- are alive and live separately. At home, they do not use the Assyrian language because there is no one in their respective families who knows it. Outside of the family, they use it only occasionally and intermittently. Occasionally because it is used when they meet each other or meet other relatives and Assyrian friends at a wedding, a funeral, an accidental meeting at a mall or shopping center or just have a telephone conversation. The above types of communication in the native language have an intermittent nature because they are usually initiated as a discourse in English that is soon interspersed with phrases, clauses or even fragmented sentences in Assyrian to match the occasion. At times, the brothers resort to Assyrian to conduct a brief private and confidential conversation or just to reminisce about the sayings and statements their parents or older relatives had used or made. Of the three brothers, the youngest one, D2---- who still occasionally intermingles with the Assyrians, seems to have better recognition and production skills in the native language than his brothers due to their greater communicative and social isolation from the Assyrian milieu. On the contrary, D2---- *had three major occasions for the renewal of his linguistic connection with the native language milieu* which is one of the main reasons implied in Romaine's key factors for language maintenance.¹⁴ In mid 1960s, some of his relatives arrived from Iran and settled in Chicago and he was in close contact with them. This experience lasted some ten years and was followed by a second one in early 1970s and lasted until mid 1980s when he intensified his relationship with a group of educated Assyrians for whom the Assyrian language was dominant. He maintained this connection up to early 1990s. On all those three occasions, which covered a long period of time, the subject had ample socio-cultural and authentic opportunity to enhance the level of his proficiency in the native language and culture. His recognition and production skills are presently at a very good level of proficiency. Except for occasional *code-switching* between English and Assyrian, his speech indicates a high level of linguistic competence in the native language. His mastery of basic phonology, morphology and syntax is quite satisfactory; his main difficulty reveals itself primarily in the form of a deficiency in the instantaneous recall of vocabulary. Because of this deficiency, his main

¹⁴ Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 40.

type code-switching is in the form of frequent 'lexical replacement' of English words whose Assyrian synonyms are not readily recalled by him. For instance, instead of saying:

/ i:c^ha a:na mumiddenwa /
' where I baptize was = where I was baptized '

he says:

/ i:c^ha a:na baptize wiyenwa /

in which he forgets 'mumidda' and replaces it with 'baptize'. The other form of code-switching is of the type Romaine labels as 'tag-switching' which involves the insertion of a tag in one language into an utterance which is otherwise entirely in the other language, e.g. *you know I mean.*¹⁵

As for D1's and P's children, the Sansei, the English language is absolutely dominant with hardly any traces of Assyrian even in the form of ceremonial phrases, clauses or fragmented sentences; however, occasional isolated words such as names of foods in the context of English discourse are likely. For the Sansei, unlike the Nisei, the language has lost even its ceremonial occasional role. When one no longer needs the immigrant language in order to be a member in good standing either of one's own family or of other intragroup institutions, then the immigrant language may linger on only for metaphorical reasons.¹⁶

Thus, practically and functionally, the Assyrian language for the Sansei is a very marginal fact of life and it is, consequently, being reduced to a mere page in their genealogical history in which *they still manifest some interest and identify with it. However, identification with a language and positive attitudes towards it do not guarantee its maintenance.*¹⁷

PRESENT CULTURAL STATUS

In assessing the extent of cultural maintenance and disappearance, the following components will be considered:

A- Names; B- Marriages; C- Religious and social connections;
D- Residence; and E- Food.

A- NAMES:

¹⁵ Ibid., 122.

¹⁶J.A. Fishman, "Language Maintenance," in *Harvard encyclopedia of American ethnic groups*, ed. S. Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 630.

¹⁷ Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 43.

Names are part of the identity of people all over the world; they are also a distinctive feature of their culture.¹⁸ Hanks and Hodges¹⁹ see a person's name as a badge of cultural identity. If one takes this component as a yardstick for measuring the extent of acculturation, then the family is entirely acculturated; in fact, onomastically, the Samuels' are entirely assimilated into the mainstream. In one way or another, the name of the male Issei changed from *Awraham Shmuel* to *Abraham Samuels*. Notice it is not just "Samuel", but "Samuels" which means that whoever made the change knew what name changing meant and the way to do it in an American fashion. Within the family, there are several other instances of the Issei having their Assyrian-Aramaic names changed and Americanized; thus, Eliyya > Eli, Shimshun > Samson, Khisqiyyel > Ezekiel, Youkhannan > John and Khanna > Hanna. What is interesting in this regard is the fact that the female Issei's name "*Shalim Ishaq*" remained unchanged partially. Her documents indicate that her name had been either "Shalim Ishaq" or "*Shalim Isaac*". One can envisage two rationales for the native name retention in this case. Firstly, the name does not sound, both structurally and culturally, too exotic to be a target for cultural 'stinging' or embarrassment. Secondly, the name of an unworking (grand)mother with minimum social interaction with the mainstream and with no likelihood of her children carrying her name as a surname is too hidden or remote of an attribute to interfere with the acculturation process of the family as a whole. If she had been working or actively involved in mainstream community affairs, it would have been likely for her maiden name to change to "*Salem Isaac*" and her marriage name to either "*Shalim Samuels*" or "*Salem Samuels*" the latter being the most extreme example of acculturation; however, none of those really materialized.

As for the names of the Sansei and Yonsei, they are exclusively Anglo-Saxon. What is even more interesting is the use of the middle names within the family unlike the tradition in the native culture where naming follows the *three-generational pattern*, i.e. *person's name + father's name + grandfather's name*. This explains the difficulty the Nisei had in understanding why their mother had the masculine name "**Mirza**" between her first name "**Shalim**" and her last name "**Ishaq**". Obviously, according to the Assyrian naming tradition, "**Mirza**" was "Shalim's" father and "Ishaq" was her grandfather. Still within the realm of the

¹⁸ Edward Y. Odisho, "A comparative Study of Petnames in English and Assyrian," in *Humanism, culture, and language in the Near East: Studies in honor of Georg Krotkoff*, ed. A. Afsaruddin & A. Mathias Zahniser (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 319-333.

¹⁹ P. Hanks, and F. Hodges, *A dictionary of first names* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1990).

middle names, the Nisei were given or had selected middle names which are too Anglo-Saxon to be in any way related to the native culture and tradition. For instance, D1's middle name is "**Lloyd George**", P's is "**Walter**" and D2's is "**Kenneth**".

B- MARRIAGES:

This cultural component deals with the intra/intermarriages in Samuels' family. The general acculturation or assimilation trend is that the more open a certain ethnic group is to other ethnic groups, the greater the intermarriages and the less the openness the greater the intramarriages. Family life is the primary social unit in society, and as families mix, so do other institutions. In other words, common intermarriage is the ultimate form of ethnic assimilation.²⁰ There are several conditions that seem to influence the intermarriage rate; for instance, higher education, mobility and income encourage intermarriages.²¹ Perhaps, it is because of the applicability of all the above conditions to the Nisei and Sansei of the Samuels' family that has led all their marriages to be absolutely outside the native ethnic group (Assyrian). Actually, the intermarriages are exclusively with ethnic groups with European descent such as German, Austrian and Scandinavian.

C- RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Although historically, the Assyrians belong to the Church of the East and are commonly known as *Nestorians*, the Christian missionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries who visited the Assyrian homeland in the mountains of Hakkari [Turkey] and the Plains of Urmi [Iran] converted a large percentage of the Nestorians into other Christian denominations such as Roman Catholics and Protestants.²² To relate those facts to the Samuels' family, one has to know that *Awrahim Shmuel* was not an ardent church-goer, therefore, there is not enough evidence to definitively identify his religious affiliation; however, if his two brothers' association with the Church of the East were to be taken into consideration, then he would most likely be a Nestorian unlike his wife who was Pentecostal and used to attend her church every now and then. The Nisei and Sansei of the family have no connections, whatsoever, maintained with the

²⁰ L. Dinnerstein, and D. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: A history of immigration and assimilation* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1975), 146; S. Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 40.

²¹ Dinnerstein, and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans*, 148.

²² For details see E. Y. Odisho, *The sound system of modern Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1988).

Church of the East. Presently, the religious orientation of the family is closely in line with the Protestant denomination.

Socially, their intermingling with the Assyrian community is limited to within the family and the nearest relatives. There are several Assyrian social clubs throughout Chicagoland, but the family has hardly any association with them even occasionally. The only exception is the youngest Nisei (D2----) who, as pointed out above, through his connection with some educated Assyrians maintained some interaction with the Assyrian community and rejuvenated his native language proficiency.

D- RESIDENCE

This component is essentially related to *social and geographic mobility of the family*. Generally speaking, as the descendants of the immigrants improve their incomes, jobs, and education, they move to the new neighborhoods in the cities and the mushrooming suburbs.²³ Although the Issei of this family moved to Skokie as early as 1920s, Skokie was then only a rural village not the affluent suburb that it is now. So in reality, they moved to Skokie, and later to Evanston, not because of affluence, but because of convenience. They were simply lower income people who happened to find reasonable accommodation in non-urban areas. However, the Nisei and Sansei, who are all in suburban areas unlike the Issei, moved to the suburbs due to improvement in their socio-economic and educational status; they all now maintain a middle, upper middle and high socio-economic ranking in society.

E- FOOD

All in all, the Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei are practically part and parcel of mainstream America when it comes to food and other dietary habits. Nevertheless, if there is any cultural component that can relate them, including the Yonsei, presently to their native culture and ethnic ancestry, it is the food. All the generations still enjoy eating most of the Assyrian ethnic foods such as,

dolma: 'vine leaves and/or other vegetables stuffed with rice, ground meat, chopped onion and parsley with spices';

²³ Dinnerstein, and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans*, 146; and Fishman, "Language Maintenance," 630.

bushala: 'soup made of diluted yogurt and a combination of chopped spinach/chard/celery';

kipte: 'large meat balls containing granulated rice and thyme/oregano';

rizza-shirwa: 'rice and stew';

mashi: 'pinto beans';

tuyati: 'shish kebab of meat, liver, kidney'

when available; in fact, they still cook some at home. In this case study, there are two very interesting aspects of the place of food in the maintenance of the native culture across generations. Firstly, the wives of Nisei and Sansei who are non-Assyrian and as ethnically remote from the Assyrians as Germans, Austrians and Scandinavians are, know how to prepare the above food varieties and enjoy eating them within their families. Secondly, even the Yonsei know the names of some of those food varieties and at times ask their mothers to cook some for them. In fact, there is evidence that a Yonsei asks his mother to fix him some *dolma* whenever he is sick. Thus, the observation of certain customs and the preparation of special foods *are all part of ethnicity which may long survive the loss of language in its communicative sense*. It is not surprising that there remain these manifestations of difference, which do not interfere with life in an English-speaking environment.²⁴

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The observations and facts presented above strongly indicate that *this family* is an integral part of the mainstream society both linguistically and culturally. Linguistically, the Assyrian language is functionally very marginal for the Nisei and non-existent for the Sansei and Yonsei. The highest level in proficiency in Assyrian is demonstrated by the youngest Nisei who, nevertheless, when it comes to determining what his dominant [or even first] language is, he readily admits that it is English. Such an admission is not too unfamiliar for a linguist [such as the author] to accept since in speaking, this Nisei has an **accent** in the Assyrian language not in English. By any measure of language maintenance and erosion the loss of language in this family has taken place quite rapidly and the reasons for the rapid loss are many. Foremost of all is the early residence of the family. To move to the suburbs (Skokie and Evanston) as early as mid 1920s meant an almost total communicative isolation from the urban enclaves where the Assyrians settled. This isolation immediately led to linguistic and cultural discontinuities.²⁵ Conversely, the isolation also meant total immersion in the

²⁴ Edwards, "Ethnic Identity," 265.

²⁵ This does mean that there are no exceptions to the three-generational loss of the native language. Certain families and individuals may maintain the native language for much longer durations than others. The conditions for longer maintenance of native language

mainstream. If one further knows that the Nisei received good education which, in turn, enabled them to climb the socio-economic ladder higher and move further into the suburbia one may be in a better position to understand their speedy conversion. Such factors are of paramount significance in the processes of acculturation and assimilation, in general.²⁶ The Nisei were absorbing the language of the mainstream too rapidly to be able to retain the briskness of the native language which no longer seemed to serve a major communicative function. At the same time, they were being immersed in the mainstream culture so deeply and overwhelmingly that their native culture was gradually becoming more and more unfamiliar. One final accelerator of language erosion seems to be the exclusive intermarriage of the Nisei and Sansei with non-Assyrian ethnic groups. Such social practices immediately reduce the chances of using the native language.

Culturally, the assimilation of the family into the mainstream is almost as complete as its linguistic assimilation. What is left of the texture of the native language and culture are only thin threads which appear now and then in the background of the fabric of the mainstream American culture and the English language. In other words, the Assyrian language and culture have mere occasional and ceremonial occurrences in the life of the Nisei; however there are nominal and sporadic recurrences of isolated words mainly associated with food in the life of the Sansei. ***This situation of the Sansei should not be construed as a disenchantment with or total loss of interest of the Nisei and Sansei in their ancestral ethnic descent or identity.*** On the contrary, on several occasions, the Sansei ***have expressed desire to learn the language and to better know the history of their parents.*** For instance, one Sansei wondered why his parents did not afford him the opportunity to learn the native language to, at least, develop some limited proficiency in it. Another Sansei has already asked her father to document his family history in writing or on a audio/video tape so that she would be able to know herself better. These are legitimate questions and requests, but the teaching and the maintenance of the language of a small minority that floats like a tiny boat in the midst of the ocean of a highly dynamic and mobile majority is a very difficult task. There is no doubt, overall, that the most obvious and usual cause of language decline and death is an inadequate concentration of speakers ...and the most familiar process by which death occurs is lack of transmission of an original language from the parents to children.²⁷ This is what

are too elaborated to be dealt with here. The late educator Sarah Paz was born in the United States and died at the age of 88, but she was still a fluent and eloquent speaker of the Assyrian language.

²⁶ Fishman, "Language Maintenance," 630.

²⁷ John Edwards, *Language society and identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 50.

has happened in the case of this family and numerous other families with similar socio-economic, educational and historical conditions. Briefly, the acculturation and the linguistic assimilation of almost all ethnic groups entering the United States follows a highly systematic pattern of three-generation span; the Issei tend to be monolingual and monocultural in the native language and culture. With Nisei, the target language (English in this case) and the mainstream culture begin to dominate at the expense of native language and culture erosion and they, therefore, become bilingual and bicultural. As for the Sansei and Yonsei, the native language and culture are almost totally replaced by the language and culture of the mainstream society. It is particularly for the latter phenomenon that Fishman describes language shift in the U.S.A. as quintessentially **replacive** [leading to replacement of ethnic languages rather than their long-term survival]. He further qualifies his statement by stating that "English as a second language has become English as a first language and the latter, in turn, has become English as an only language".²⁸

²⁸ J.A. Fishman, *Language and ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective* (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1989), 405.