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Language Use and Attitudes among the Kurds of Baghdad

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Abstract

Several studies have dealt with the Kurdish minorities in different regions far and wide, but few studies have focused on the Kurds of Baghdad, Iraq, especially after the 2005 Constitution which supported the Kurdish language. This study aims at investigating the contexts wherein the Kurdish language is used by the Kurds of Baghdad and their attitudes towards their ethnic language (Kurdish) to see if the official status that has been accorded to it is mirrored in society. To do so, a sample of 100 respondents selected from the Kurdish community living in Baghdad took part in a questionnaire and pilot interviews. The study shows that home and family are the most common contexts within which the Kurds use the Kurdish language. Results also show that Arabic and Kurdish are used side by side within the neighborhood, workplace, and education institutions contexts. As for attitudes towards Kurdish, the participants have displayed positive attitudes towards their ethnic language and felt proud of it as a unifying symbol of the Kurdish nation. This study concludes that the new official status that has been given to Kurdish for over fifteen years has not been in force yet and suggests directions for future research on language policy in Iraq.

Keywords: Language Use, Language Attitudes, Kurds, Kurdish, Iraq.

1. Introduction

Contemporary Iraq was always viewed, though mistakenly, as a monolingual country with Arabic as the official language of the country despite its linguistically diverse composition. This view, perhaps, resulted from the 1929 monarchical constitution of Iraq which declared Arabic as the only official language of the country. Iraq is currently one of the multilingual countries in the Middle East, housing newly-declared official languages such as Arabic, Kurdish along with some other institutionally recognized minority languages such as Turkmen, Syriac, and Armenian. Additionally, Iraq is home to many other officially unrecognized languages such as Mandaic and Kurmanji. From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, Iraq is an attractive ecology to sociolinguistic research, especially due to the recent political changes the country has witnessed since 2003, characterized by a new constitution in 2005. In addition to

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the post-2003 fights among militias and other extremist groups, which resulted in mass migration and displacement and thus changed the demographics of the country, political changes are considered an influential factor responsible for changing the scene in Iraq. From a wider perspective, Hoffman (1991, 186) argues that political conditions among other factors most likely lead a community to change one set of linguistic tools for another. Correspondingly, Fishman (1966) argues that the change or stability in habitual language use, which is affected by the political conditions, determines whether a language would be maintained or otherwise.

After the emergence of the state of Iraq post-World War I, the Iraqi government pledged to institutionally support the Kurdish language, yet no serious steps were taken in this regard (Hannum 1996). Following was the declaration of the monarchical constitution of 1929 which more or less supported the view of Iraq as a monolingual country where Arabic is the only de jure language of the country, neglected other deeply-rooted languages of Iraq. The political atmosphere in Iraq has dramatically changed in recent years. There was a change in the state from being viewed a monolingual country to recognizing minority languages. Minority language recognition in the new Iraqi constitution is enforced in different aspects of the lives of the Iraqis. According to Article 4 of the 2005 constitution of Iraq, the official status is accorded to both Arabic and Kurdish, which means that these two languages are used in education, media, and government offices and documents. Yet, language rights of speakers of other Iraqi non-official languages such as Turkmen, Syriac, and Armenian are guaranteed as per Article 4 of the Constitution.

Article Four

> The Arabic language and the Kurdish language are the two official languages of Iraq. The right of Iraqis to educate their children in their mother tongues, such as Turkmen, Syriac, and Armenian, in government educational institutions in accordance with educational guidelines, or in any other language in private educational institutions, is guaranteed.

Although Kurdish has a long history in the country (and the region as well), it has recently become an official language of the country due to the numerical power of the Kurds (around 5 million out of around 38 million Iraqis) as the second-largest ethnic group after the Arab majority (World Bank, 2020). In addition to the political recognition of the Kurds whereby they can autonomously govern their territories, the Constitution guarantees their right of using their mother tongue outside their regions in Kurdistan. Based on this, the current study helps gauge the influence of the new status of the Kurdish language on members of the Kurdish community in the Capital city of Iraq, Baghdad. The realization of having access to speakers of the Kurdish language in public spaces, particularly education and official channels suggests that members of the Kurdish community are now more comfortable to socialize and be socialized with in Kurdish.

Government and institutional support is a key issue in creating a linguistically tolerant environment for minority languages. A good example of how institutional support minority languages comes from the New Zealand context. New Zealand's native language, Te Reo Māori. was given the status of New

Zealand's official language after being marginalized for a long time (The Royal Society of New Zealand 2013). The Māori language was marginalized for a long time but then received institutional support and included in education, media, and government offices (Seals & Olsen-Reeder 2017). This serious step, in turn, opened up space for devoting more official and societal efforts to other languages (Nofal 2020). Thus, the significance of this study lies in the need for seeing whether the new status accorded to Kurdish is practically translated in terms of language use among members of the Kurdish community in Baghdad. Despite the limitations of the current study in terms of sampling, time, and resources, this study is beneficial to Iraqi policymakers, linguists, and community members to (re)assess the implications of the enforcement of language rights in the country.

Moreover, linguists devote their efforts to advocate sociolinguistically disadvantaged languages that are more vulnerable in contexts similar to that of Iraq. One language highly affected by such contexts is the Kurdish language. Researchers have focused on the Kurdish communities and their languages in various contexts. For example, in less permitting contexts like Iran, different studies have examined language use and attitudes towards Kurdish (e.g. Rezaei & Bahrami 2019; Sheyholislami 2015). Also, in Turkey there has been a focus on language shift and attrition among the Kurds (e.g. Çelebi, Verkuyten & Smyrnioti 2016). However, in more welcoming contexts like Jordan, studies have shown language and cultural shifts among the Kurds (e.g. Al-Khatib & Al-Ali 2010). Regarding Iraq, researchers have investigated a range of minority languages such as the Sabean Mandaeans (Dweik, Nofal & Al-Obaidi 2019), Chaldo-Assyrians (Al-Obaidi 2013), Turkmen (Al-Rahal 2014), and the Kurds of Mosul (Sallo 2004; Abdulsalam 2014). Yet, there is a scarcity of research focusing on the Kurdish language situation in Iraq with a special focus on the institutional support the language should have gained as per the 2005 constitution. This study is an attempt to respond to this issue by examining language use and attitudes within the Kurdish community in Baghdad in light of the newly declared constitution whereby Kurdish is an official language. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Kurdish community members towards Kurdish?
2. To what extent do members of the Kurdish community use Kurdish in Baghdad?

Prior to reviewing previous research, it is useful to give an account of the Kurds of Iraq.

The Kurds of Iraq

The Kurds are one of the ethnic groups of people in the Middle East. Peralta (1997, 6) states that

> [t]he Kurdish community is interesting because they lack statehood, but are one of the largest ethnic groups in the Middle East. The fact that there has never been a nation-state of Kurdistan has several implications for the Kurdish people, not only politically but socioculturally as well.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Baghdad started to be a mixture of cultural and ethnic diversity. Although it is difficult to determine the period that Kurds appeared in Baghdad, there were economic, political, and migration factors that led Kurds to settle in Baghdad and establish their community (Salloum 2013).

The Kurds of Iraq can be divided into two groups (Al-Nefeis 2004). The first group lives in

Kurdistan (northern region of Iraq) and the regions that lay across southern Turkey and western part of Iran, and the second group, called Al Feylis, lives in the middle and southern regions of Iraq. Although the exact Kurds population number is not determined, yet their numbers are estimated at around 4.3 million distributed across Iraq (Izady 1992). Al-Feyli (2013) states that the population of the Kurds in Baghdad are about 60,000. Most of them are of Al-Feyli origin whose religious affiliations (following Shi'a Islam) differ from those who live in Kurdistan; besides, their ancestors originally lived near the Iraq-Iran border which is apart from the Kurdistan region (Öpengin 2012). Other Kurds of Baghdad are from different tribal origins that come from Kurdistan with Sunni Islam. Kurds are distributed in different areas in Baghdad majorly in Shari' Al-Kifah (A'kd Al-Akrad), Al-Eqari, Shari' Filistin, Jameela Aloula, Jameela Althaniya, Madinat Al-Sader, Al-Sha'ab, Al-Mashtel, Al-Kadhimiya, and others (Salloum 2013).

Although the Kurds are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims, they include Jews, Christians, Yazidis, and other sects (Poladian 2004). As for their language, Kurdish is claimed to be descended from a west Iranian language related to Persian and Pashto (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). Moreover, their dialects are diverse such as the Kurmanji dialect which is used in northern areas of the Kurdish region such as Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, and Lebanon, the Sorani dialect of central Kurdish areas such as Iran and Iraq, the Gorani dialect (aka Hawramani), and the Zazaki dialect (used in southern areas) which are mainly used in Iran and Iraq (Hassani & Medjedovic 2016). The most used Kurdish dialects in Iraq are the Sorani dialect (spoken in Erbil and Suleymani), and Badinani (spoken mainly in Dohuk and widely used in Mosul and some parts of Baghdad). In Baghdad, most Kurds use Luri Kurdish dialect which is from the Luristan area (Personal Communication 2020). The Kurds have various Kurdish broadcasting stations such as Zagros broadcast, Dohuk broadcast, Kurdistan broadcast, and Kurek broadcast. On the subject of Kurds' ethnic celebrations, Newroz is the most important Kurdish festival that is celebrated on the 21st of March every year. Moreover, Newroz is regarded as a symbol of Kurds' freedom from suppression (Personal Communication 2020).

Relative to political, social, and economic activities, the Kurds of Baghdad contribute to the formation of this society. Although the bulk of Kurds are highly educated working as teachers, engineers, artists, and poets, a considerable number of them have been working as employees, technicians, craftsmen, mechanics, photographers, and so on (Al-Khatib & Al-Ali 2010). The Kurds are well-known for their dexterities as technicians, handymen, and mechanics and run trades of iron, wood, fabrics, and ready-made garment. Plus, there are distinguished Kurdish figures who assume high political and intellectual positions in the country including Masoud Al-Barazani (the President of the Iraqi Council of State in 2004), Barham Salih (Prime Minister), Farouk Shwani (Minister of Justice), Fuad Hussein (Minister of Finance), and Bangin Rikani (Minister of Construction and Housing) (Personal Communication 2020).

2. Review of Literature

Language maintenance is a speech community's use of its first language in several contexts in a contact situation (Grenoble & Whaley 2006). In contrast, language shift occurs when members of a

community have either partially or completely shifted from their native language to the host language (Winfor, 2003). Thus, several theories and frameworks were suggested, to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of language maintenance and language shift (LMLS) and studying the mechanisms that govern societal norms and changes. For example, Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) proposed Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV) and defined it as the socio-structural factors that make a group behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations. According to Giles et al. (1977), this construct aimed at exploring and systematizing the role of socio-cultural factors on language maintenance, language shift, and language loss. Thus, a group with high values on these factors will have high ethnolinguistic vitality and tend to maintain its language and preserve its distinctive group characteristics. In reverse, a group with low values on these factors will end up with a low EV (Giles et al. 1977, 307), and eventually will tend to assimilate and may cease existence as a distinctive collective identity (Allard and Landry 1994).

According to Fishman (1966, 424) the study of LMLS as a field of inquiry involved the following three subdivisions, which became a guide for researchers in the field:

> 1. the habitual use of language at more than one point in time or space under conditions of intergroup contact,
> 2. the antecedent, concurrent or consequent psychological, social and cultural processes and their relationship to stability or change in habitual language use, and
> 3. the behavior toward language in the contact setting, including directed maintenance or shift efforts.

Fishman's subdivisions examine (1) where, when and with whom and for what topics language is used, i.e. language domains, (2) the social, political, cultural factors, influencing language use, and (3) attitudes towards languages. Fishman (1964) also suggested that such domains may include family, friendship, education, employment, workplace, worship place, and neighborhood among others.

Furthermore, other scholars highlighted the role of psychological operators including motivation (e.g. Gardner et al. 1985) attitude (e.g. Spolsky 1989; Baker 1992), and identity (e.g., Giles & Byrne 1982) in maintaining the ethnic language or otherwise. Language attitudes as a focus in this study can be defined as a set of values that are shaped by the benefits that individuals expect to gain in learning and using a language (Chambers 1999). Further, Myers-Scotton (2007) highlightd the central role of values within attitudes which may be the value for individuals or the value that is considered by the community. Variation in these attitudes towards languages results from the interaction of institutional dominant languages with minority group experiences and dispositions, which consequently led to apperceptions with a particular language or languages. Moreover, dominant languages compete with those of minorities particularly in the case of ethnic groups, for whom such situations compel them to choose between their ethnic group language and the dominant one. The result might be either identification with one of these languages or a combination of the two (Kulyk 2011). In such contexts, attitudes were also argued to have a crucial effect on language maintenance and loss (Jones 2012). Acknowledging the influence of attitudes on language planning and language maintenance had led to an increasing interest in language choice and

use which were governed by favourable attitudes towards the target language among members of the speech community. This went in agreement with Sadanand (1993, 124) who stressed that “attitudes towards the use of different languages are motivated by people's perception of the role of each language and the functions it performs in relation to each other."

The preservation of community languages could also be affected by the existence or the absence of governmental or non-governmental institutional support such as media, religious and educational organizations that encourage using the minority language. The existence of these institutions contributed (partially) to the maintenance of the community language and the lack of their existence might lead to language shift or loss. Institutional support is an essential part of many language maintenance theories and models (e.g. Giles et al 1977). Giles et al (1977) proposed a combination of three main factors that supported language preservation and one of the factors was institutional support. Institutions such as government, church, cultural organizations where a minority language was vitally used and the maintenance hence it occurred. In Iraq, Al-Itabi (2010) reported that the Kurdish language officially started to be included in education at the 4th and 5th stages of public secondary schools and there would be a plan to allow the Kurdish language to be taught at primary schools, with 40 public primary schools in Baghdad experimentally teaching Kurdish.

A large body of research investigated language use and attitudes of various ethnic group members in the Middle East and the world at large. All these endeavours, whether in the presence or absence of minority language policies, had reported “the existence of intergroup or interethnic differences in maintenance or shift rates” (Pauwels 2016, 100). Such a finding was illustrated by Dweik, Nofal, & Al-Obaidi (2019) who noted that while Assyrian Iraqis tended to maintain their language more than their Jordanian counterparts, British and New Zealander Arabs had more disposition to maintain Arabic than American Arabs. Following is a review of empirical research from different parts of the world with a special focus on minority languages of Iraq.

Dagamseh (2020) investigated Arabic language use and attitudes in Christchurch, New Zealand, focussing on Jordanian and Palestinian Arab New Zealanders. The research innovatively combined LMLS and language variation and change (LVC) in his work to examine (1) the relationship between language proficiency and the influence of generation (1st, 1.5 and 2nd) and length of residence (1-10 years, 11-20 years and 21-30 years), (2) the influence of generation and length of residence on language use in different domains (e.g., home, friendship and religion), and (3) the influence of generation and length of residence on the participants’ attitudes towards both Arabic and English. To do so, Dagamseh collected reported data from 99 participants who filled out a questionnaire, which was followed by recorded interviews with 20 participants. The study concluded that there was a gradual language shift from Arabic into English in all domains (home, friends and religion), most sharply in the friends domain, then religion and finally home domain among 1.5 and 2nd generations and 11-20 and 21-30 length of residence. Additionally, There was clear regression in Arabic literacy skills among 1.5 and 2nd generations and those who had been in NZ between 11-20 years. Yet, the study showed that the participants were very loyal and had positive attitudes towards their Arabic due to the intertwined

relationship between Arabic and the Islamic religion and culture.

In Ireland, Pecnikova & Slatinska (2018) examined the future of the Irish language and reflects the opinions of informants on the topic of language death and language maintenance by analyzing qualitative data from semi-structured individual interviews and focus-group discussions with a total of eighty participants. The study highlighted the importance of serious language policies in the language maintenance process. Particularly, using Irish in institutional settings played a huge role in activating the language in society. The relevance of this study lied in the similarity one might found between Irish and Kurdish in the sense that they were both indigenous language and had been recently declared de jure languages in their respective countries. Having the Irish experience in mind, we could measure where Kurdish stands in the Iraqi society.

In Canada, Dweik, Nofal, and Qawasmeh (2014) explored the status of Arabic among the Muslim Arabs in Vancouver. The study focused on how community members used both Arabic and English in a variety of domains as well as their attitudes towards these languages. Data were mobilized from seventy participants who responded to a language questionnaire. The study showed that the participants used both languages, Arabic and English, in their daily routines, each of which had its domains and circumstances. That is, Arabic was used in the interaction between family members and relatives, in religious activities, in Arabic schools, in the media, and outside workplaces. Yet, English was the dominant language at workplace. Attitudinal results showed that both languages are honored and respected. In addition to that, the study highlighted that while the participants' pride in their Arab identity, their language and culture was salient, English was viewed as a symbol of the Canadian identity and is considered a good instrument for achieving their educational and financial aspirations.

While the previously mentioned studies were conducted in contexts where minority language policies were relatively enforced and where members of minority language communities had language maintenance weekend school, multilingual services and facilities, in what follows we present a glimpse of what has been done in Middle East region where Iraq is located.

In Yemen, Dweik & Nofal (2015) conducted a study on language use and attitudes among the Indians in Yemen. The study showed that members of the Indian community used their ethnic languages in a range of contexts including different family members at home, the media, social setting, and emotional self-expression. Additionally, the study showed that the participants held positive attitudes towards their ethnic languages.

On the other hand, Ayyash (2014) conducted a study on language use and attitudes of the Assyrians in Bethlehem towards Syriac and Arabic. The data were collected using interviews with common figures in the Assyrian community and a sociolinguistic questionnaire. Results showed that the Assyrians used Syriac in very few settings and had high positive attitudes towards Arabic as they regard it as more helpful. Results also showed that the majority of the Assyrians asserted that in Palestine, where Arabic was the dominant language, their ethnic language could not be maintained, and it was almost lost. Correspondingly, Al-Refa'i (2013) investigated the language situation among the Assyrians of Jordan. The study showed although the Assyrians of Jordan had positive attitudes towards their languages, they

were witnessing a shift from their ethnic language, Syriac, towards the language of the majority, Arabic.

In Iraq, different ethnic groups and speech communities had been the focus of sociolinguistic research including Kurds (Sallo 2004; Abdulsalam 2014), Chaldo-Assyrians (Al-Obaidi 2013), Turkmen (Al-Rahal 2014), and the Sabean Mandaeans (Dweik et al., 2019). Sallo (2004) focused on the Kurdish students at Mosul University. The study explored some extra-linguistic variables ruling the choice and use of both Arabic and Kurdish such as topic, participants, situation, mood, and purpose. Results showed that language choice is a discipline phenomenon and was controlled by socio-economic, psycholinguistic as well as sociolinguistic factors. Results also displayed that Kurdish was more preferred over Arabic when dealing with personal, intimate issues as well as family issues and everyday activities. Arabic sounded to be restricted to the educational, scientific, technical, and religious domains. While Sallo's (2004) study was conducted prior to the new constitution, Abdulsalam (2014) investigated LMLS among the Kurds of Mosul at the time of the new Constitution. Results showed that the Kurds of Mosul had positive attitudes towards both Kurdish and Arabic and they had maintained their language, highlighting the role of family and home in language maintenance. Sallo's and Abdulsalam's studies were relevant to the current study as they had focused on the same group and under different political conditions (language status in particular), and in a different city. This will allow us to compare and contrast the two communities in light of the findings.

Having reviewed previous LMLS research, this study addresses an ethnic group that is under-researched. It is also a timely attempt to delve into the practicability of the institutional support that has been given to Kurdish in the new era of Kurdish linguistic rights.

3. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the study, data on language use and attitudes were collected mainly through a sociolinguistic questionnaire, with theoretical underpinnings in Fishman (1965, 1972, 1991) and previous research (Nofal 2011; Abdulsalam 2014; Dweik et al 2019). As for the interviews, data on historical and sociocultural information about the Kurdish community in Baghdad was collected from members of the Kurdish Culture Association through 10 questions, from the literature available at various libraries in Baghdad and online studies, papers, and articles relevant to the subject. The data obtained from these questions assisted in building a community profile and designing the sociolinguistic questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 100 Kurds who reside in Baghdad and consisted of three parts. The first part was designed to describe the participants' demographic information including gender, age, education, occupation, and mother's origin. The participants were between 20 and 60, males and females, white-collar and blue-collar professionals, and of various educational backgrounds. In the second part of the questionnaire, questions were designed to elicit the participants' attitudes towards Kurdish. As for questions in the third part, they aimed at scrutinizing the contexts in which the participants used their ethnic language (Kurdish) among their community in Baghdad. The interviews and questionnaire items were mainly in Arabic as per the participants' preference. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were tested by having professors from Al-Iraqia University check the

form and content of the questionnaire and a test-retest technique.

The findings of the current study are limited to the time, resources, instruments, and sample of the study. They cannot be generalized beyond this sample. However, the current study can be stimulating for further research focusing on the Kurds communities in other regions of Iraq namely the Kurds who live in Diyala and Babylon, and on the Kurds in other countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, Canada, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Moreover, this study gives room for more in-depth investigations at the micro-levels of analysis such as interaction within the family and the workplace, applying other sociolinguistic tools including discourse analysis. It also suggests the research on other levels such as public spaces, e.g. linguistic Landscape, be necessary to investigate the top-down language policies and practices in Iraq.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Language attitudes towards Kurdish

This section elicits the participants' attitudes towards Kurdish. The participants were asked to give their opinions and express their feelings toward Kurdish by expressing (dis)agreement with several statements, including the symbolic and historical value of Kurdish, its inclusion in education, and its future in Baghdad as shown in Figure 1. The results concerning language attitudes among the Kurds of Baghdad show that the respondents have positive attitudes towards the Kurdish language.

Figure 1 shows that the participants hold positive attitudes towards Kurdish. A large number of respondents, 68%, strongly agree with the statement that Kurdish is a symbol of Kurdish identity, and 31% agrees. Correspondingly, over half of them, 55%, consider Kurdish a national language. Yet, 20% disagrees with the statement and 25% shows uncertainty. Results also show the participants perceive Kurdish as representing a symbol of unity among Kurds as 42% strongly agrees, and 34% agrees with the statement. When asked about whether Kurdish is a reminder of the Kurdish history and heritage, the vast majority of the participants showed agreement with the statement as 41% and 55% strongly agrees and agrees with the statement respectively. Kurdish is also considered a source of pride. This is clear as 62% strongly agreed and 30% agreed with the statement.

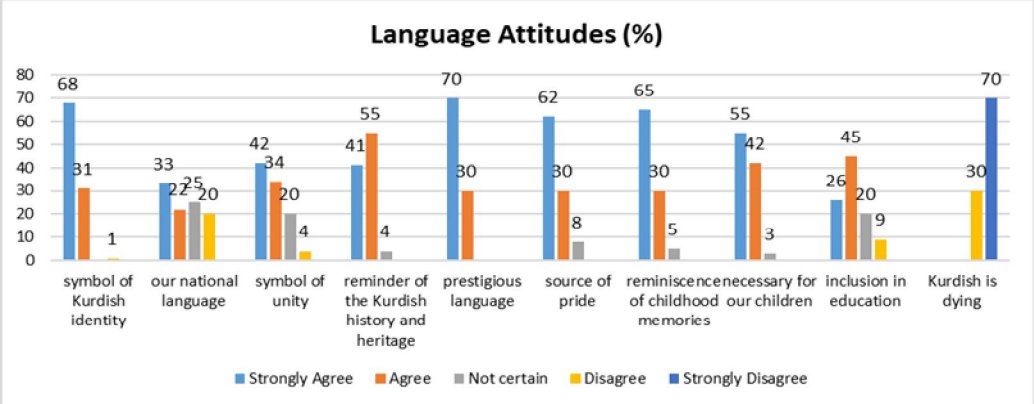

Figure 1: Attitudes towards Kurdish

Similarly, there seems to be a consensus among all participants to view Kurdish as the most beautiful and prestigious language. As shown in the figure, 70% strongly agrees with the statement that Kurdish is the most beautiful and prestigious language, and 30% agrees. Furthermore, the majority of participants perceive reminisce childhood memories when they speak or hear Kurdish. Sixty-five per cent of them strongly agree and 30% agree with the statement that Kurdish is a reminisce of the childhood memories. The participants are also asked to give their opinions about Kurdish and the future. When asked whether Kurdish is necessary for their children 55% strongly agree, 42% agree with the statement. Concerning the inclusion of Kurdish in formal education, although a substantial number of participants are in favor of the governmental decision to include Kurdish in public schools. Thus, 26% strongly agree, 45% agree with the statement that Kurdish should be included in formal education. However, 20% remain undecided and 9% disagree with the statement. Moreover, the participants believe that their ethnic language, Kurdish, will survive as all participants disagree with the statement that Kurdish is dying in Baghdad.

Overall, the participants have expressed positive attitudes towards Kurdish. To them, Kurdish has symbolic, historic and future values. Kurdish is a unifying language and a source of pride to members of the Kurdish community in Baghdad. It is also viewed as a reminder of the Kurdish heritage as well as childhood memories. These findings are in line with those of Sadanand (1993), and Dweik & Nofal (2015) who suggest that positive attitudes are motivated by how members of ethnic minorities perceive the role of the heritage language and the functions it performs. These findings also agree with Fishman (1991) who states that minorities in a community can initially strive only for control over their domesticity and then strive to go on from there, from a firm establishment of their ‘mini culture’ to a greater system of favorite corners of their modernity. Significantly, all of the respondents disagreed with the statement that implies that the Kurdish is dying in Baghdad, which is a sign that they consider the language is used in everyday conversations. These results resonate with the positive attitudes reported by Abdulsalam (2014) which contribute to the maintenance of Kurdish among the Kurds of Mosul.

In the following section, we examine the contexts in which Kurdish could be used within the Kurdish community in Baghdad to see whether such positive attitudes are conducive to language use or otherwise.

4.2 Kurdish language use

This section presents the findings related to Kurdish language use within the Kurdish community in Baghdad. The domains include the home, communication mediums, neighborhood, workplace, education institutions, and emotional self- expressions.

Language use within the home is considered one of the important signs of language maintenance (Fishman 1991). As shown in Figure 2, the participants are asked to report on the language(s) they use with different family members such as spouse, parents, children and other relatives. Figure 2 shows that the vast majority of the participants use the Kurdish language within the family. Almost all of them, 99%, indicate using Kurdish with their parents and grandparents, and 98% report speaking Kurdish with their spouses. Such results suggest that they practice internal marriages which in turn encourage language use in the home domain. Although 92% indicate using Kurdish with their, there seems to be an initial

encroachment of Arabic into the home domain as 7% report using Kurdish mostly with children. Regarding other family members such as uncles and aunts, 95% of the participants indicate using Kurdish with their other relatives. Only 5 of them use both Kurdish and Arabic with these relatives. The use of Kurdish within the family indicates that the Kurds of Baghdad are maintaining their ethnic language. The home proved to be a sacred domain and is one of the important factors in language maintenance (Holmes et al. 1993; Abdulsalam 2014; Dweik & Nofal 2015).

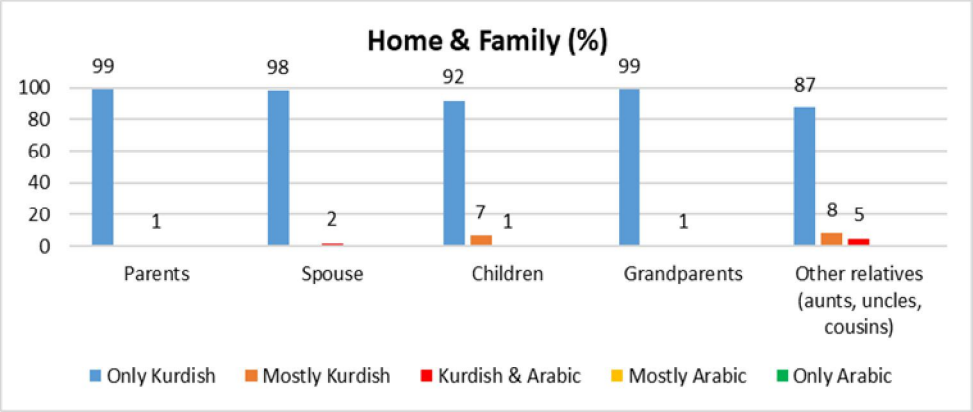

Figure 2: Language use within the family

Results of language use and the media, illustrated in Figure 3, show that Kurdish is not the only language used among members of the Kurdish community, as compared to the home domain. As shown in Figure 3, Arabic has an ascending trend in everyday interactions among family members over the phone and in device-mediated communication.

In this regard, 44% of the participants report using Kurdish with their family members over the phone, while 39% use both Arabic and Kurdish. Yet, 17% indicate using Arabic when talking to family members over the phone. When asked about the language(s) used when texting family members, 38% indicate using only Kurdish, and 6% report using Mostly Kurdish. However, Arabic appears to be an active language in texting as 37% report using both Arabic and Kurdish, 13% use Arabic mostly, and 6% use only Arabic.

A surprising result is when the participants report their language use with their family members in family celebrations and gatherings. As shown in Figure 3, 36% report using only Kurdish and 8% indicate using mostly Kurdish in family meetings and gatherings. Notwithstanding, 38% of them use both Kurdish and Arabic, 13% and 5% use mostly Arabic and only Arabic respectively.

As for browsing the internet, using Arabic seems to dominate in this context, perhaps, because the Kurds of Baghdad have high Arabic literacy. over half of the participants, 51%, report using only Arabic when surfing the Net. Nineteen per cent use mostly Arabic and 17% use both Kurdish and Arabic. On the other hand, 7% and 6% report using only Kurdish and mostly Kurdish when browsing websites. Such results are more or less expected since publicly disseminated information on the internet are less likely to be available in the Kurdish language.

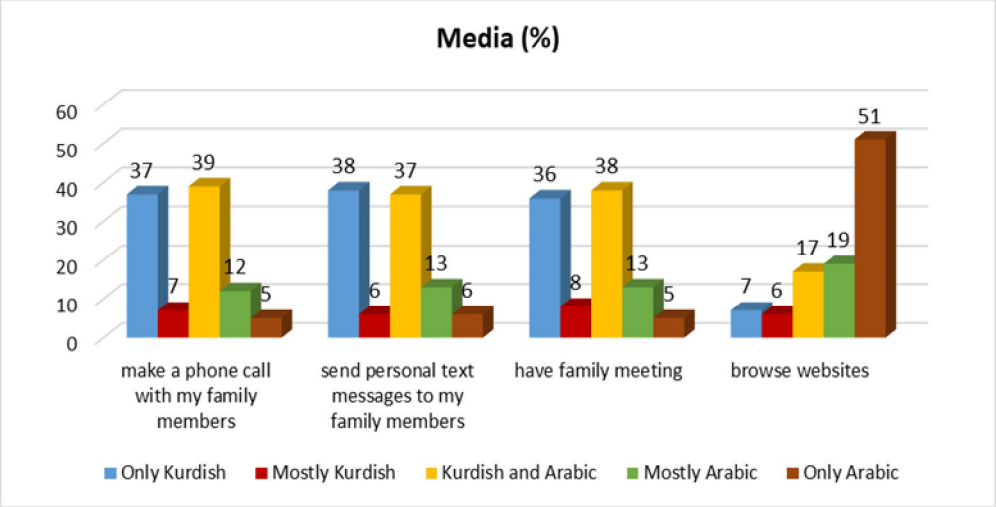

Figure 3: Language use in the media

All in all, Kurdish seems to be the dominant language in face-to-face interaction among family members while Arabic takes over when it comes to device-mediated interactions and on the internet. These findings resonate with those of Sallo (2004) who maintains that language choice is a discipline phenomenon and is controlled by socio-economic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors. Yet, this study adds the mode of communication as an influential factor for language choice. Additionally, while Sheyholislami (2015) suggests that technology and social media might be powerful tools to foster ethnic languages and can be used to connect members of the same community in distinct parts of the world and deepens their ethnic and linguistic congregation, the results reported in this study suggest that technology seems to frustrate using the ethnic language even among family members who habitually use their ethnic language in face-to-face conversations.

The participants are also asked to indicate the language(s) they use with neighbors, friends, and shopkeepers as shown in Figure 4. Generally speaking, the participants show a tendency to use Kurdish minimally in the neighborhood as compared to the home domain. Figure 4 shows the highest percentages are accorded to using only Arabic in the neighborhood. Thirty-seven per cent of the participants report using only Arabic with their neighbors, 30% with their friends, and almost half of them, 48%, with shopkeepers. Moreover, a good number of them report using both Kurdish and Arabic with neighbors (36%), friends (28%) and shopkeepers (23%), and 13% of them use Arabic mostly with neighbors, 32% with friends and 20% with shopkeepers.

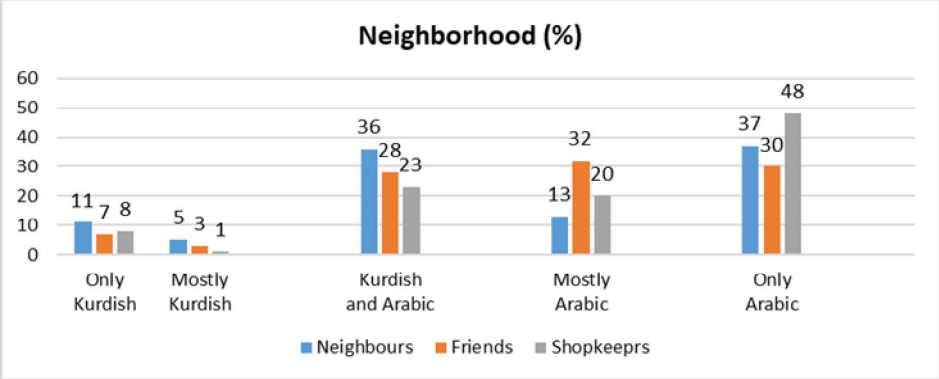

Figure 4: Language use in the neighborhood

Regarding using Kurdish, smaller numbers of participants report using only Kurdish with their neighbors (11%), their friends (7%), and shopkeepers (8%). Again, the numbers of the participants who indicate using mostly Kurdish drop with neighbors (5%), with friends (3%) and with shopkeepers (1%). Seemingly, the participants live in mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad and their social networks are expectedly extended beyond the Kurdish community. While these results are consistent with Abdulsalam's (2014) conclusion that Kurds of Mosul use Arabic to integrate in the Iraqi wider society, they are comparable with Sallo (2004) whose participants report using Kurdish rather than Arabic in shops such as cafes, restaurants and Groceries. This suggests that my participants use Kurdish and Arabic to identify themselves with their ethnic community and the wider society respectively as Kulyk (2011) suggested.

To see whether the status accorded to Kurdish by the 2005 constitution is practically translated, it is useful to examine language use at the workplace. Thus, we focus on a range of interlocutors at the workplace including managers, co-workers, and customers as well as language use in official work meetings, as shown in Figure 5.

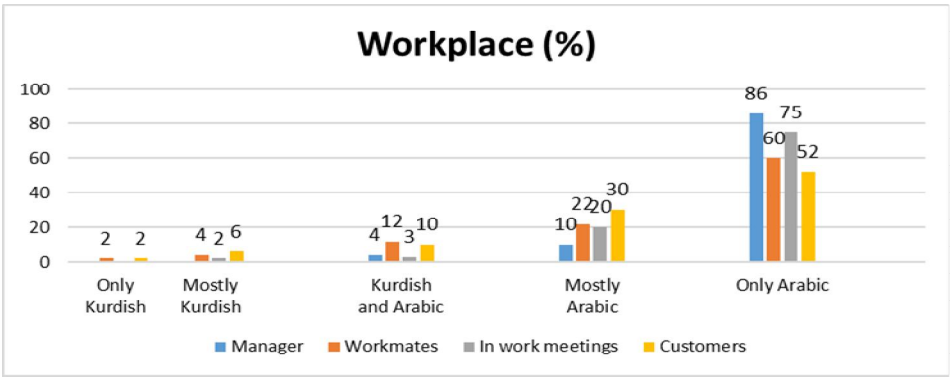

Figure 5: Language use at the workplace

Remarkably, Figure 5 shows that Kurdish is used minimally with different interlocutors at the workplace. The majority of participants report using only Arabic when interacting with their managers (86%), workmates (60%), with customers (52%), and in official work meetings (75%). This can also be seen as a good start for Kurdish to be used side by side with Arabic as an average of about 10% of the respondents indicate using both languages at the workplace.

Figure 5 also shows that fewer participants report using Kurdish at the workplace. This could be ascribed to having Kurdish speaking co-workers and customers. This indicates that the Kurds work in different jobs with different people, and they are integrated into the work domain where Arabic is the dominant language. Such results are comparable to those reported by Al-Obaidi (2013) who maintain that members of the Chaldo-Assyrian community in Baghdad use Neo-Aramaic side by side with Arabic at the workplace. Yet, these results confirm the conclusions of Abdulsalam (2014) which find that Kurdish language use in Mosul is influenced by dominant languages and Arabic is the main language of communication at the workplace, with little use of Kurdish.

Language use in educational institutions, mainly university and school, echoes the extent to which language is active in formal settings, which are supposedly permitting under the new Iraqi constitution. Thus, it is useful to see whether members of the Kurdish community in Baghdad use Kurdish when discussing educational and general topics and when interacting with teachers.

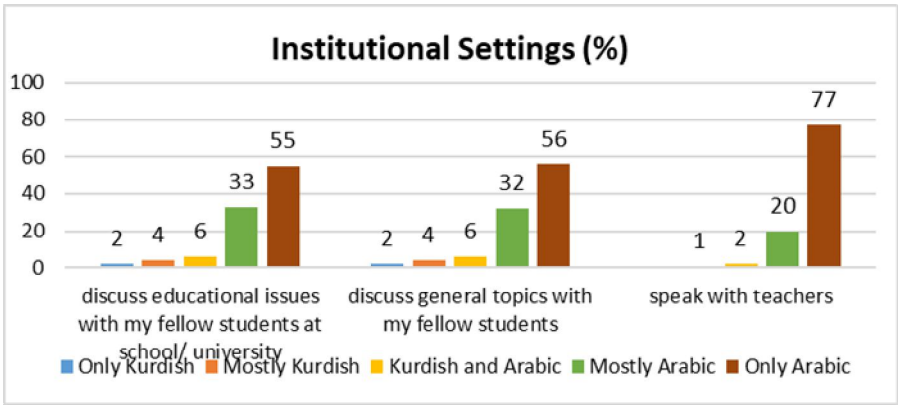

Figure 6: Language use in educational institutions

Figure 6 presents the participants' responses regarding language use in institutions. Generally speaking, the Figure shows that Arabic is widely used in institutional settings. To begin with engaging in daily conversations with teachers, the overwhelming majority report using Arabic when addressing their teachers. Over three-quarters of the participants, 77%, and 20% indicate using only Arabic and mostly Arabic respectively. The remainder participants, 3%, who reported using only Kurdish or both languages might be those who have Kurdish speaking teachers. As for discussing educational and general topics, we can see a slight increase in the numbers of participants who report using Kurdish with their fellow students. Thus, 2% use only Kurdish, 4% mostly Kurdish and 6% report using both Arabic and Kurdish. Such a result is pretty much expected since members of the Kurdish community in Baghdad get enrolled in public schools where the majority of teachers speak Arabic. These results resonate Abdulsalam's (2014) and Al-Rahal's (2014) findings that Arabic is the dominant language in educational institutions.

Regarding emotional self-expression (shown in Figure 7), 25% of the participants indicate using only Kurdish when they want to express their happiness, and 24% use mostly Kurdish. Yet, about one-third of them, 33%, indicate using both Kurdish and Arabic, and 18% use Arabic. Similarly, 23% report using only Kurdish and 25% mostly Kurdish when expressing anger and stress. However, 16% use Arabic and 32% use both languages to express these feelings. Furthermore, results show that 33% and 24% of the

participants indicate using Kurdish (only and mostly respectively) when they think or express their opinion, while 19% use Arabic and 34% use both languages.

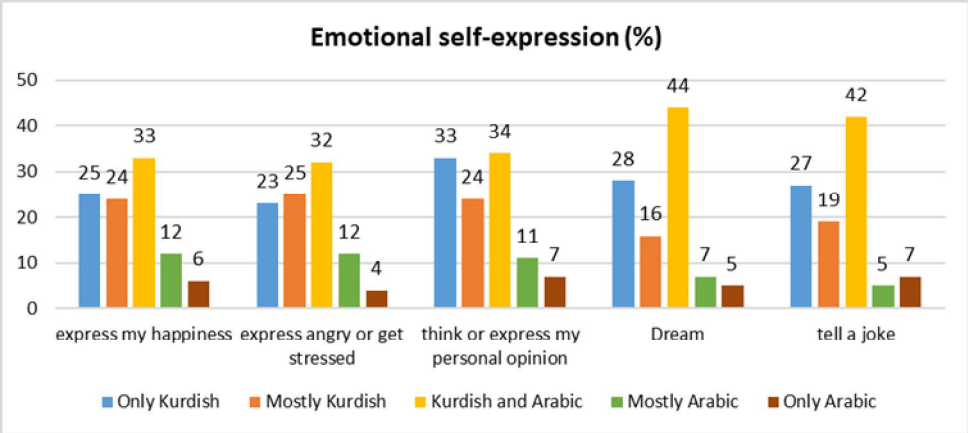

Figure 7: Language of emotional self-expression

When it comes to the language which the participants use when dreaming, Figure 7 shows that nearly a third of the participants use only Kurdish and another 18% use mostly Kurdish. Moreover, 44% state that they use both languages when dreaming and 12% use Arabic. Also, when telling a joke, 27% of them use only Kurdish and 19% use mostly Kurdish, while 42% use both languages and 12% use Arabic. These results suggest that Kurdish is an active language in the individuals' personal and emotional space. In this regard, Kloss (1966) posits that psychological operators are crucial in maintaining ethnic languages. Such results are in line with Abdusalam's (2014) finding that the Kurds of Mosul have reported using Kurdish and both Arabic and Kurdish when angry, in bad mood, and when dreaming.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, members of the Kurdish community in Baghdad who have participated in this study have shown positive attitudes towards their ethnic language. They consider Kurdish as an emblem of their ethnic identity, heritage, and history, and they use it because of the sense of belonging to the Kurdish community. The overall analysis of language use among the Kurds of Baghdad suggests that although they have succeeded to maintain their ethnic language despite the long-term contact with Arabic, Kurdish language use is restricted to the home and the family in face-to-face interactions. Yet, the study shows that language use among family members is highly influenced by the mode of communication as the participants have shown a tendency to use Arabic with their family members over the phone and in family gatherings. Furthermore, the study shows that Kurdish is used in the individuals' personal and emotional space, e.g. when expressing anger and dreaming. The participants have also consciously acknowledged the importance of Arabic as a lingua franca in the country especially when communicating with other Iraqis at work, in the neighborhood, in the media, and at educational institutions.

Overall, this study suggests that the new official status that has been accorded to the Kurdish language has not been in force yet. Although Kurdish is meant to be institutionally supported by the 2005 Constitution which grants the Kurds linguistic rights and encourages them to use the Kurdish language in

wider contexts, there is much work to do to help enhance using Kurdish in the Iraqi wider society. Despite the limitations of the current study in terms of methodology, time and resources, it opens the door to other efforts such as micro-analyses of language use within the family and examining the top-down language policy in Baghdad such as Kurdish language education and linguistic landscape.

الاستخدام اللغويّ والاتجاهات اللغويّة بين الأكراد في بغداد

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الملخص

تناولت العديد من الدراسات مواضيع الأقليات الكردية طولاً وعرضاً في مناطق مختلفة، لكن القليل من الدراسات ركزت على أكراد بغداد- العراق، وبخاصة بعد صدور دستور 2005 الذي دعم اللغة الكردية. إذ تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من السياقات التي يستخدم فيها أكراد بغداد اللغة الكردية ومواقفهم تجاه لغتهم العرقية (الكردية) لمعرفة ما إذا كانت المكانة الرسمية التي مُنحت لها تنعكس في المجتمع. للقيام بذلك ، شاركت عينة مكونة من 100 مشارك تم اختيارهم من المجتمع الكردي الذي يعيش في بغداد في استبانة ومقابلات تجريبية. تظهر الدراسة أن المنزل والأسرة هما السياقات الأكثر شيوعًا التي يستخدم فيها الأكراد اللغة الكردية. تظهر النتائج أيضًا أن اللغة العربية والكردية تُستخدم جنبًا إلى جنب في سياقات الأحياء وأماكن العمل والمؤسسات التعليمية. أما بالنسبة للمواقف تجاه الكردية، فقد أظهر المشاركون مواقف إيجابية تجاه لغتهم العرقية وشعروا بالفخر بها كرمز موحد للأمة الكردية. خلصت هذه الدراسة إلى أن الوضع الرسمي الجديد الذي مُنح للغة للكردية لأكثر من عشر سنوات لم يتم تطبيقه بعد وتقترح بالاتجاه نحو قيام بحث مستقبلي حول السياسة اللغوية في العراق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستخدام اللغويّ، الاتجاهات اللغويّة، الأكراد، اللغة الكرديّة، العراق.

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