

## The Influence of English on the Kurdish Language and Cultural Identity in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: A Mixed-Methods Study

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### **Abstract:**

The increasing dominance of English as a global language has raised concerns about its influence on local languages and cultures, particularly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. While English proficiency is often viewed as essential for academic and professional success, its widespread use has led to significant linguistic and cultural shifts **and** how these linguistic and cultural changes impact English Language Teaching (ELT) practices and educational policies. This study investigates the attitudes of Kurdish university students and instructors toward the English language and its influence on the Kurdish language and cultural identity. Data were gathered utilizing a mixed-methods approach, employing semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, involving 100 students from various academic disciplines and 15 university instructors. Findings indicate that while Kurdish students and educators hold positive attitudes toward English due to its perceived utility in academic and professional contexts, its pervasive use has resulted in increased lexical borrowing and a diminished emphasis on Kurdish language development. The findings reveal **disconnect between current ELT classroom practices and policy-level aspirations for bilingual competence**. This shows a clear need for teaching methods that use both languages and for training teachers to apply them.

The study underscores the need for balanced language policies that promote bilingual proficiency while safeguarding the Kurdish language as a vital component of cultural identity. These findings highlight the importance of implementing well-planned language policies, fostering cultural awareness, and strengthening the presence of Kurdish in academic and professional settings to ensure linguistic and cultural preservation alongside the benefits of bilingualism.

**Keywords:** English language teaching, Kurdish language, English Dominance, language attitudes, cultural identity.

**الملخص:**

أثارت الهيمنة المتزايدة للغة الإنجليزية كلغة عالمية مخاوف بشأن تأثيرها على اللغات والثقافات المحلية، لا سيما في إقليم كردستان العراق. وبينما يُنظر إلى إقان اللغة الإنجليزية غالباً على أنه أساسى للنجاح الأكاديمي والمهنى، إلا أن استخدامها الواسع أدى إلى تحولات لغوية وثقافية كبيرة، و تؤثر هذه التغيرات اللغوية والثقافية على ممارسات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية والسياسات التعليمية. تبحث هذه الدراسة في مواقف طلاب ومعلمي الجامعات من الكورد تجاه اللغة الإنجليزية وتأثيرها على اللغة والهوية الثقافية الكردية .

جمعت البيانات باستخدام نهج متعدد الأساليب، باستخدام مقابلات شبه منظمة واستبيانات، شملت 100 طالب من مختلف التخصصات الأكاديمية و 15 أستاداً جامعياً. تشير النتائج إلى أنه على الرغم من أن الطلاب والمعلمين الكورد يحملون مواقف إيجابية تجاه اللغة الإنجليزية نظراً لفائدة المتضورة في السياسات الأكاديمية والمهنية، إلا أن استخدامها الواسع أدى إلى زيادة الاقتراب المعجمي وتراجع التركيز على تطوير اللغة الكردية. تكشف النتائج عن فجوة بين ممارسات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية الحالية في الفصول الدراسية وتطبعات السياسات المتعلقة بالكفاءة ثنائية اللغة. يُظهر هذا حاجةً واضحةً لأساليب تدريس تستخدم اللغتين، ولتدريب المعلمين على تطبيقها. و تؤكد الدراسة على الحاجة إلى سياساتٍ لغويةٍ متوازنةٍ تُعزز الكفاءة اللغوية، مع الحفاظ على اللغة الكردية كمكونٍ أساسٍ للهوية الثقافية. و تُبرز هذه النتائج أهميةً تنفيذ سياساتٍ لغويةٍ مُحكمةٍ التخطيط، وتعزيز الوعي القافي، وترسيخ حضور اللغة الكردية في الأوساط الأكاديمية والمهنية، لضمان الحفاظ على التراث اللغوي والثقافي، إلى جانب فوائد ثنائية اللغة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، اللغة الكردية، هيمنة اللغة الإنجليزية، مواقف اللغة، الهوية الثقافية.

**پوخته:**

زیادیوونی بالاًدھستی زمانی ئینگلیزی وەک زمانیکی فرەئاخیوەری جیهانی، ھەروەھا کاریگەرییەکانی لەسەر زمان و کولتوورە خۆجیبەکان له ھەرمی کوردستانی عێراقیدا نیگەرانی لێکەوتووەتەوە. ھەرچەنەد زمانی ئینگلیزی وەک زمانیکی بەنھەرتی بۆ سەرکەوتی ئەکادیمی و پیشەبی سپیر دەکریت بەلام بەکارهیانی بەو بەرپلاوییە، بۇوەتە ھۆی گورانکارییەکی بەرچاوی زمانھوانی و کولتووری. ھاوکات ئەم گورانکارییە زمانھوانی و کولتوورییانە، کاریگەرییان لەسەر پەمیرەوکردنی بواری فیزکاری زمانی ئینگلیزی و سیاستەکانی پەروردەبی ھەبی. ئەم تویزینەوە بەدوادچوون بۆ تیپرووانینی خویندکاران و چەند مامۆستایەکی زانکۆ دەکات، له بەرامبەر ئەم بالاًدھستییە زمانی ئینگلیزی و کاریگەرییەکەی لەسەر زمان و شوناسى کولتوورى کوردى. ھاوکات بە کەلک وەرگەرتن له میتۆدى تیکەلاؤ، له ریگەی پەرسیارنامە و چاوپېکەوتەن لەکەل سەد خویندکاری زانکۆ له بەشە ئەکادیمییە جیاوازەکان و پانزە مامۆستای زانکۆ، داتاکان گۆکراونەتەوە. ئەنجامەکانیش ئەمە دەردهخەن ھەرچەنەد زمانی ئینگلیزی بۆ سوود له چوارچنەوە بوارە ئەکادیمی و پیشەبیکاندا بەھایەکی زورى ھەبی بەلام زور بەکارهیانی، بۇوەتە ھۆی زیادیوونی قەرزکردنی وشە و کەمبۇونەوە گەنگیدان بە پەنپەندا زمانی کوردى. لێکەوتەکانیش کاریگەری گەنگیان ھەبی لەسەر فیزکردنی زمان و دۆخى ھەنۇوکەی ھەروەھائەمۇ خواتى و خولیايانە بۆ سیاستى زمان دەخوازىریت. ئەمەش شیوازیکى گونجاوی فیزکردن بۆ مامۆستایان و فیزکارانی زمان دەکاتە پیویستى بۆ ئەمە ھەردوو زمانەکە بەکاربەتىن له راھینان و فیزکردندا. تویزینەوەکە جەخت لەسەر پیویستى سیاستى زمانی ھاوسنگ دەکاتەمۇ، كە تووانى دوو زمانەبى بەرەپېشەو بەریت، له ھەمان کاتىشدا زمانی کوردى وەک بەشیک له پىکەتەی ژیان و شوناسى کولتوورى بپاریزیت. ئەنجامى تویزینەوەکە تىشك دەخاتەسەر گەنگى جىبەجىكىردنى ئەم سیاستە زمانیبى باش پلانى بۆ دارېزراوە، بە لەپەرچاوگەرتى پەنپەندا ھۆشپارى کولتوورى و بەھەند وەرگەرتى ھەبۇونی زمانی کوردى له چوارچنەوە ئەکادیمی و پیشەبی بۆ دەستەبەرکردنی پاراستى زمان و کولتوور شانبەشانى سوودەکانى و مەگەر خستى فەرە زمانى.

**کلیله وشە:** فیزکردنی زمانی ئینگلیزی، زمانی کوردى، بالاًدھستى ئینگلیزی، ھەلۋىستى زمان، ناسنامەی کولتوورى.

## 1. Introduction

The English language has emerged as a global lingua franca, influencing various domains such as education, technology, commerce, and media (Amin & Gholami, 2022). Its widespread adoption has been driven by historical factors, including British and American imperialism, and more recently, by globalization and digital platforms (Crystal, 2003; King, 2022). In non-English-speaking countries, English has become the dominant language of academic discourse, research publications, and higher education instruction (Karabay & Durrani, 2024). This trend has created a global demand for English proficiency, often seen as essential for academic and professional success (Rose, 2019).

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the rise of English has had profound implications for the Kurdish language and culture. While English is viewed as a gateway to global opportunities, its increasing dominance has raised concerns about its impact on Kurdish linguistic practices and cultural identity. Despite the fact that Kurdish, an Indo-European language, has a rich heritage dating back over 3,000 years, English only developed about 1,500 years ago. Yet, Kurdish language faces challenges in maintaining its vitality amidst the growing influence of English (Kreyenbroek, 2005). Among younger generation, in particular, are increasingly integrating English into their daily communication, leading to lexical borrowing, code-switching, and a potential decline in Kurdish language proficiency (Ghafar & Mohamedamin, 2023).

**Within the field of English language teaching,, the growing preference for English as the sole medium of instruction (EMI) at tertiary level has shifted teacher roles from language educators to content facilitators, frequently without adequate pedagogical support (Macaro, 2018).**

This significant emphasis on the English language has led to numerous changes in the thinking of Kurdish students, such as neglecting developing their mother language (Kurdish), and looking at English culture as a superior.

Most of the previous research focus was on structural language changes, such as lexical borrowing, code-switching, and the role of English in media and education. However, limited attention has been given to the personal and academic attitudes of Kurdish students and educators toward English **and how those attitudes shape, and are shaped by, ELT methodologies and policies.** As English becomes increasingly dominant in academic and professional settings, and many students may perceive their mother tongue Kurdish as secondary or less valuable.

This study aims at investigating the attitudes of Kurdish university students and instructors toward the English language, focusing on its perceived utility in academic and professional settings and its impact on Kurdish linguistic and cultural identity. By exploring these dynamics, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on language preservation and the role of English in shaping cultural identities in societies. The study aimed to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Kurdish university students toward the influence of the English language on their mother tongue (Kurdish) and cultural identity, and how do these attitudes vary across different academic disciplines?

2. How do university instructors in the Kurdistan Region perceive the role of English in academic settings, and what are their views on its impact on students' linguistic practices and cultural identity?
3. What strategies can educators and policymakers implement to promote bilingual proficiency (Kurdish and English) while ensuring the preservation and development of the Kurdish language and culture identity.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Kurdish Language: Historical and Contemporary Context

The Kurdish language, with its roots in the Northwestern Iranian branch of the Indo-European family, has long been a cornerstone of Kurdish cultural and national identity (Kreyenbroek, 2005). However, its status has been shaped by political and social forces. During the 20th century, Arabization policies in Iraq sought to suppress Kurdish linguistic expression, marginalizing the language in favor of Arabic (Hassanpour, 1992). Despite these challenges, Kurdish persisted as a vital element of Kurdish identity. The establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 1992 marked a turning point, with Kurdish being recognized as the primary language of the region. This recognition was further solidified in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, which designated Kurdish as one of Iraq's two official languages alongside Arabic (Yıldız, 2004).

Despite its official status, Kurdish faces several challenges. The language is divided into multiple dialects, primarily Kurmanji and Sorani, which complicates efforts to standardize the language for educational and literary purposes (Haig & Matras, 2002). Additionally, the increasing prevalence of English in private and international schools has contributed to a decline in the use of Kurdish among younger generations (Sheyholislami, 2012). While initiatives such as Kurdish-language media and educational programs have sought to promote the language, further efforts are needed to ensure its preservation in the face of globalization (Jafar, 2016).

### 2.2 The Influence of English language on Kurdish Language and Culture

The influence of English on Kurdish language and culture has been a subject of growing scholarly interest. In the Kurdistan Region, English has become a lingua franca, particularly among speakers of different Kurdish dialects (Hassan & Hassan, 2019). The language's presence is evident in various domains, including media, education, and commerce. For instance, English terms are increasingly integrated into daily Kurdish communication, and English-medium schools have proliferated, often at the expense of Kurdish language development (Ghafar & Mohamedamin, 2023).

Studies have shown that while Kurdish students and educators generally hold positive attitudes toward English due to its perceived utility, this preference has led to concerns about the erosion of Kurdish linguistic practices. For example, Sedeeq (2023) found that the influence of English has contributed to a "broken native language" among younger Kurdish speakers, with many adopting English words and expressions in their daily communication. Similarly, Ghafar and Mohamedamin (2023) observed a rapid increase in the use of English terminology among Kurdish intellectuals, further highlighting the language's growing influence.

The impact of English extends beyond linguistic practices to cultural identity. Many Kurdish students view English as a key to academic and professional success, often prioritizing it over their native language (Qadir & Omar, 2023). This trend has raised concerns about the marginalization of Kurdish culture, particularly among younger generations who may perceive English-speaking cultures as superior (Sedeq, 2023). As English continues to dominate academic and professional settings, there is a risk that Kurdish may be perceived as secondary or less valuable, further threatening its sustainability.

### **2.3 Language Attitudes and the Decline of Native Languages**

Research on language attitudes has highlighted the complex relationship between English proficiency and the decline of native languages. Studies by Herwiana and Laili (2021) and Qadir and Omar (2023) have shown that while students often view English positively due to its global utility, this enthusiasm can lead to a decline in the use and proficiency of their native languages. For example, Diah (2019) found that an overwhelming focus on English in educational settings can result in reduced engagement with the mother tongue, particularly in academic contexts.

Similarly, Ahmed (2015) noted that the increasing prominence of English in education can negatively impact students' proficiency in their native language, potentially affecting their performance in subjects taught in that language. These findings underscore the need for balanced language policies that promote bilingualism while safeguarding linguistic diversity (Cahapay, 2020). In the context of the Kurdistan Region, this balance is particularly crucial, as the preservation of Kurdish is essential for maintaining cultural identity in the face of globalization.

### **2.4 English Language Teaching Policies and Practices in the Kurdistan Region**

The Kurdistan Regional Government has endorsed ambitious plans for internationalisation, resulting in a rapid expansion of English-medium programmes (Hadi & Rashid, 2024). However, research by Ali and Hamad (2023) indicates that many instructors feel underprepared to teach content in English, citing lack of training in EMI pedagogy and limited institutional guidelines. Classroom observations by Karim (2024) show that teachers oscillate between strict English-only policies and spontaneous Kurdish code-switching to ensure comprehension—an instructional tension that mirrors broader ideological debates over language hierarchy.

Scholars such as Meier (2022) argue for a translanguaging approach that legitimizes the strategic use of Kurdish in ELT classrooms, positioning bilingual practices not as a deficiency but as a resource for language learning and identity affirmation. This pedagogical perspective is crucial for maintaining student engagement and safeguarding Kurdish linguistic capital while advancing English proficiency.

## **3. Methodology**

This research is devoted to studying the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism and focuses in particular on the role of English language as perceived by university students in the Kurdistan Region. This study is particularly relevant in the current global context, where the influence of English is pervasive. For that purpose, 100 students from Cihan University Sulaimaniya were randomly selected to complete a fifteen-question questionnaire and 15 English language instructors were interviewed. The qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed by content analysis.

Firstly, the transcriptions of interviews were examined carefully to search for the emerging topics. Then, emerging topics were listed. The quantitative data analyzed using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to assess the responses to these questions, with the answers coded as follows: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). They were then subjected to a thorough analysis using JMP-Pro version 17 and SPSS version 27, which included comprehensive descriptive statistics and a one-sample t-test. The results revealed the arithmetic averages calculated from the study, which will be interpreted to analyze the data as follows:

**Table 1:** Interpretation score of 5 points Likert scale measurements

Weighted Average	Frequency Levels	Interpretation Results
1.00 – 1.79	Strongly disagree	Very Ineffective
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree	Ineffective
2.60 – 3.39	Neutrally	Neutral
3.40 – 4.19	Agree	Effective
4.20 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Effective

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The questionnaire result

The first part of this study seeks to find out the attitude of Kurdish students toward the impact of English language on their mother tongue. First of all, all the item questions should be checked whether the data is appropriate to statistical analysis. For that reason, Cronbach's Alpha was used as below.

**Table 2:** The value of the reliability coefficient for the internal consistency of each item question

Excluded Col	Cronbach's $\alpha$
The best English teacher is a native speaker..	0.9160
All children in my country ought to learn English from a young age	0.9223
Other languages should not be used in the classroom while learning English	0.9321
In schools in my country, English should be used as the language in which other subjects are taught and learned.	0.9106
My mother language (along with other languages I know) assisted me learn English	0.9338
In my country English should be used in other areas: in advertising, on television or radio	0.9115
English is impacting the words (vocabulary) and the grammar of my mother language in a negative way.	0.9453
When a new concept/invention emerges, a new term should be created in my native language rather than using or adopting the English word.	0.9148
Learning English widens your mind	0.9140
English has been very supportive to me in my career	0.9157
Todays, those who cannot speak English have little prospect of success	0.9169

Excluded Col	Cronbach's $\alpha$
English dominates and weakens other languages.	0.9332
In my country, we look up to American/British culture and that is the reason why English is infiltrating into my language+M1+N1	0.9221
English is an imperial language.	0.9204
The power of economy and military of the United States is the main reason for the rapid spread of the English language.	0.9234

Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alpha values that measure the reliability of the data set, such that the closer Cronbach's alpha is to one, the higher the internal consistency reliability. To know whether the data set is suitable for statistical analysis, the reliability coefficient for all data scales should be 0.70 or higher, which is considered acceptable (Mahmood et al., 2019). As the results show, the Cronbach's values for all individual scales were greater than 0.70, which ranged for all item questions between (0.9253 - 0.9106), indicating that the items have perfect internal consistency. In other words, the reliability coefficients for all study variables are acceptable, and the data are possible for statistical analysis and scientific research.

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for English Dominance in Kurdistan

Variables	Sections	Responses					Statistical Indicators		
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-values
	The best English teacher is a native speaker.	11	18	29	35	7	2.91	1.120	25.98
	All children in my country ought to learn English from a young age	35	31	22	7	5	3.84	1.135	33.85
	Other languages should not be used in the classroom while learning English	24	21	19	27	9	3.24	1.327	24.42
	In schools in my country, English should be used as the language in which other subjects are taught and learned.	9	20	27	35	9	2.85	1.123	25.39
	My native language (along with other languages I know) assisted me learn English	25	29	20	20	6	3.47	1.235	28.12
	In my country English should be used in other areas: in advertising, on television or radio	10	32	20	27	11	3.03	1.201	25.22
Variables	English is impacting the words (vocabulary) and the grammar of my mother language in a negative way.	18	38	20	18	6	3.44	1.157	29.72

When a new concept/invention emerges, a new term should be created in my native language rather than using or adopting the English word.	37	42	12	7	2	4.05	0.978	41.40	0.0001*
Learning English widens your mind.	40	45	9	5	1	4.18	0.869	48.10	0.0001*
English has been very supportive to me in my career.	35	39	21	3	2	4.02	0.932	43.14	0.0001*
Todays, those who cannot speak English have little prospect of success	30	40	14	12	4	3.80	1.119	33.95	0.0001*
English dominates and weakens other languages.	19	33	24	22	2	3.45	1.095	31.50	0.0001*
In my country, we look up to American/British culture and that is the reason why English is infiltrating into my language+M1+N1	32	40	16	9	3	3.89	1.053	36.94	0.0001*
English is an imperial language.	31	44	15	7	3	3.93	1.008	39.00	0.0001*
The power of economy and military of the United States is the main reason for the rapid spread of the English language.	22	38	28	10	2	3.68	0.994	37.03	0.0001*
Overall						3.59	1.167	119.03	0.0001*

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for all the phrases of English Dominance in Kurdistan, in which:

1. The overall weighted mean for all phrases related to English dominance in Kurdistan is 3.59, with a standard deviation of 0.1167. The small p-value of 0.0001 is less than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that students' responses to all questions reflect an effective level of agreement. In other words, this finding suggests that learners effectively concur with the assertion that English holds a dominant position in Kurdistan.
2. The mean scores of the questions "The most effective English teacher is a English native speaker.", "Other languages should not be used in the classroom while learning English.", "English should be used as the language of instruction in schools in my country." and "English should be used in other fields in my country: advertising, TV or radio." are 2.91, 3.24, 2.85 and 3.03 with standard deviations of 1.120, 1.327, 1.123 and 1.201, respectively. In addition, the p-values are lower than the significance level of 0.05, which indicates that the students' answers to these questions are at a neutral level of agreement. In other words, most students express a neutral view on including other languages in the classroom during English language education. They do not have a definite stance on whether a native speaker is the most effective English teacher. In addition, there is a general

consensus among students that English should not only be taught in educational institutions, but also integrated into various sectors within the country, such as advertising, television, and radio.

3. The mean scores for the phrases " All kids in my country (Kurdistan) ought to learn English from a young age ", " My mother language (along with other languages I know) assisted me learn English ", "English is impacting the words (vocabulary) and the grammar of my mother language in a negative way",, " When a new concept/invention emerges, a new term should be created in my native language rather than using or adopting the English word .", "Learning English broadens your mind.", "English has been very supportive to me in my career", " Todays, those who cannot speak English have little prospect of success.", " English dominates and weakens other languages..", "In my country, we look up to American/English culture, which is why English is infiltrating my language.", "English is an imperialistic language.", and "The power of economy and military of the United States is the main reason for the rapid spread of the English language." are 3.84, 3.47, 3.44, 4.05, 4.18, 4.02, 3.80, 3.45, 3.89, 3.93, and 3.68 with standard deviations of 1.135, 1.235, 1.157, 0.978, 0.869, 0.932, 1.119, 1.095, 1.053, 1.008, and 0.994, respectively.

Furthermore, their p-values are less than the significant level of 0.05, indicating that the students effectively believe in these questions. In other words, many students assert that their native language has facilitated their acquisition of English. However, they also express concerns that the influence of English adversely affects the vocabulary and grammar of their first language. Furthermore, they believe that when new concepts or inventions are introduced, it is preferable to develop corresponding terms in their native language rather than adopting terminology from English.

Despite these apprehensions, many students concur that learning English expands their intellectual horizons and has proven advantageous in their professional careers. They advocate for the early introduction of English language education for all children within the country. Additionally, many students hold a favorable view of American and British culture, contributing to English's growing integration into their linguistic practices. Furthermore, the United States' economic and military dominance is a primary factor in the swift proliferation of the English language. English not only prevails but also challenges the viability of other languages, leading some to characterize it as an imperialistic language. In the contemporary global landscape, individuals who do not possess proficiency in English often face limited opportunities for success.

#### **4.2 The interview result**

The second part of the study aimed to find out how attitudes and beliefs towards English and what should be done to protect and promote the first language (Kurdish). To this end, participants were asked to clarify this issue in semi-structured interviews. Content analysis of the data helped us to categorize the data into eight themes and ten sub-themes. As shown in the following Table 4.

**Table 4**

Themes	Sub-themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural diversity and development of academic skills</li> <li>• Connection and jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand your understanding of world cultures</li> <li>- Learn from a variety of modern resources</li> <li>- Create Global Connection</li> <li>- Increase your chances of job opportunities and advance your career</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destroying local language and culture</li> <li>• English as a language of instruction</li> <li>• English language has a positive impact on Self-confidence</li> <li>• Lack of preserving and promoting native language</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local language (Kurdish) is at risk of decline and potential endangerment</li> <li>- English has become the primary language in universities and schools.</li> <li>- English can enhance self-esteem between students and teachers</li> <li>- Many challenges faced while promoting the first language</li> <li>- Bilingual education programs</li> <li>- Cultural events, seminars and workshops</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.1 Cultural Diversity and Development of Academic skills

##### -Expand your understanding of world cultures

All participants mentioned the importance of cultural diversity and how because of their knowledge of English they developed their awareness of the differences between individuals based on their personal experiences and characteristics.

*Thanks to English I got to know many different people around the world.*

##### -Learn from a variety of modern sources

All participants mentioned developing their academic skills through the English language. They stated that it is an effective way to gain knowledge and stay informed in today's interconnected world. They also stated that modern resources in English cover a wide range of topics, from technology and science to politics and the arts. Engaging with these resources allows you to benefit from the expertise and insights of professionals and experts in various fields. Similarly, resources in English cover a wide range of topics, allowing you to explore areas that you may not have encountered in your native language. Furthermore, many educational platforms offer courses and lessons in English. Learning from these resources can help you gain new skills and knowledge in an organized and interactive way. The following quotes are examples

*Many articles with high impact factor are written in English instead of my language*

*Most popular TV channels are in English*

Many educational platforms provide information about different courses and tutorials in English instead of other languages. So, learning from these resources can help you learn new knowledge in an organized and interactive way.

#### **4.2.2 Connection and jobs**

##### **- Create Global Connectivity**

Participants pointed out the importance of connecting English to reality because it involves starting communication with someone who uses English as a medium of communication. The participating teachers, on the other hand, declared that English can make a big difference in their educational life as well as for their students. Students can make global connections using English. One participant explained that the influence of English began to appear after the political changes in the region in 1990. Our region was under siege by the central government, so people had to direct their sources of knowledge towards English-speaking countries.

*One of my plans was to start my own business. So I got to talk to a lot of foreign people, English really helped me to get to know a lot of experienced people.*

*I think after this huge political change that happened in Iraq, English has become mandatory in our lives. It has also become the medium of education in all university departments.*

*English makes the world hear our voice*

##### **-Increase your chances of job opportunities and advance your career**

Another imperative thing that happened in the Kurdistan Region is that due to the great request for English, many English language centers, schools and English institutions were established by traders and rich people. Thus, they created many job opportunities for English teachers.

Similarly, people's interest in the importance of English has increased recently in the way that all students prefer to be admitted to English schools or take English courses in order to develop their four skills. The following quotes are examples.

*Because of my knowledge of English, I got many job opportunities.*

*English helped me to be able to work in many big companies*

#### **4.2.3 Destroying local language and culture**

##### **- Local language (Kurdish) is at risk of decline and potential endangermen**

According to the participants, English has become the dominant language for business, education and communication in this region. Therefore, there is a risk of language shift. Especially among the younger generations who see English as a means of economic and social advancement. They also pointed out the Kurdish language and traditions that are sometimes overlooked. This can feel like a loss of our unique Kurdish culture. Similarly, many young people have started listening to English music and neglecting listening to Kurdish songs especially after the globalization process. The effect is most evident among artists and media professionals who feel proud of using English words while communicating in Kurdish. The effect is also evident among university students who study in English

such as medicine or engineering. Another prominent issue in this region is the lack of job opportunities due to the lack of proficiency in English. Therefore, individuals may be more inclined to prioritize learning and using English.

*I think English is more in demand than Kurdish because English is a language spoken in more than 86 countries in the world.*

*Because I can't speak English I can find a job*

#### **4.2.4 English language as a language of instruction**

##### **- English has become the primary language in universities and schools.**

All participants pointed out that there are many private schools in Kurdistan that teach students in English, and therefore students are unable to learn or improve their mother tongue effectively. Although tuition fees in private schools range from \$1,000 to \$10,000, many families send their children to these private schools. However, most participants complained that English does not pay much attention to the Kurdish language. For example, one of the participating trainers stated that English creates a competitive position for universities in a way that makes it possible to evaluate students based on their level of English language skills rather than their mother tongue. Similarly, another participant shared his opinion that the English-only classroom policies in some countries, including the Kurdistan Region, marginalize their mother tongues.

*I thought that speaking excellent English would make it easier for students to study abroad or find more job opportunities.*

*Our graduates will be evaluated on the basis of their English language skills, not their mother tongue.*

#### **4.2.5 English language has a positive Impact on Self-Esteem**

##### **- English language can enhance self-esteem between students and teachers**

Many of the participating teachers noted that they and/or their students believed that learning and mastering English could enhance an individual's confidence in their communication abilities.

However, the majority of participants disagreed with neglecting a student's first language as it could have an impact on the student's improvement and forgetting their culture. They assumed that language choices in education could affect students' self-esteem by favoring English over their native languages, which could lead to feelings of inadequacy.

Hence, based on the answer to the question, it is clear that the use of English is about to become dominant among students and teachers in this region. Students and teachers who are not skillful in English may face obstacles expressing themselves efficiently in an English-speaking setting. This may lead to feelings of low self-esteem.

*Unfortunately, in cultures with relatively low education, speaking English gives you pride even when you are outside of teaching hours.*

*The current circumstances require knowledge of English to gain self-esteem and self-confidence in this region.*

#### **4.2.6 Lack of preserving and promoting native language**

##### **-Many challenges faced while promoting the first language**

Most of the participants stated that enhancing their mother tongue is very difficult, especially in the current times. This does not mean that they do not want to, but the current circumstances in the region require it, and as mentioned earlier, the priority is given to English. Therefore, the participants in this study claimed that they sometimes faced difficulties with their children while communicating in their mother tongue as well. This problem is because they study in a private school and that is why they feel bored while speaking in their mother tongue.

*Given this huge demand for English, I am confused about whether I should send my children to such schools. Because the spread of English as a common language has led to the belief that learners need to acquire English language skills rather than knowledge of their mother tongue.*

#### **4.2.7 Education**

##### **- Bilingual education programs**

In order to save the mother tongue of Kurdish students, the participants in this study suggest changing the education system to a bilingual education system that teaches students in Kurdish and English at the same time. The primary objective of bilingual education is proficiency and literacy in both Kurdish and English.

The participants suggest some methods to do this such as implementing the multilingual approach that teaches students in multiple languages. Encouraging students to maintain their first languages and improve their skills while learning a second language. This can help students maintain their ethnic identities and enhance their overall language proficiency. While teaching English to my students, I always remind them how rich the Kurdish language is as well.

#### **4.2.8 Events**

##### **- Cultural events, seminars and workshops**

Participants mentioned some methods and examples of mother tongue revitalization initiatives include holding workshops, seminars, cultural events and language programmes on the issue. These initiatives show that our language can flourish if it is properly supported.

*I think there is a need to hold seminars and workshops I think there is a need to hold seminars and workshops to preserve cultural heritage, enhance the sense of identity and ensure that traditional knowledge and culture are passed on to future generations.*

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics between global English and Kurdish language and culture in the Kurdistan Region. The findings reveal a nuanced picture, in which English is recognized for its useful value and global importance, while concerns persist about its potential impact on Kurdish linguistic and cultural identity.

The study's findings are consistent with existing literature on the impact of English dominance on local languages and cultures. Archango and Arpasic (2016) highlight the tensions between the global spread of English and the maintenance of linguistic diversity, particularly in educational contexts. They emphasize the role of language classrooms as sites of negotiation of identities, as learners navigate their relationship with both their mother tongue and dominant English.

This is consistent with the findings of this study, as students acknowledge the benefits of English while expressing concerns about its potential to erode the Kurdish language and culture.

Many studies have explored the influence of English on other languages and cultures, and the results of this study are consistent with many of these studies. For example, a study by Khawaji (2023) in Saudi Arabia found that English is viewed as a tool for global communication but does not necessarily align with students' cultural identities. This is similar to the findings of the current study, where students recognize the importance of the English language but also express concerns about its impact on Kurdish culture.

The implications of the findings of this study for Kurdish language and culture are important. The perceived threat of English to Kurdish language and culture highlights the need for proactive measures to preserve and promote Kurdish linguistic and cultural heritage. This includes promoting Kurdish language education, supporting Kurdish literature and media, and promoting the use of the Kurdish language in various areas of public life.

There are some limitations in this study that should be recognized. The sample size was relatively small and limited to university students in one location. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to the entire population of the Kurdistan Region. In addition, the study relied on self-reported data, which can be subject to social desirability bias. Future research should consider using a larger, more diverse sample, as well as a mixed-methods approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between global English and Kurdish language and culture in the Kurdistan Region. The results indicate that although English is recognized for its utilitarian value, concerns remain about its potential impact on Kurdish linguistic and cultural identity. This highlights the need to take proactive measures to preserve and promote the Kurdish language and culture in the face of English domination.

## 6. Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between Global English and Kurdish language and culture in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The findings reveal a nuanced perspective among university students, who recognize the instrumental value of English for global communication and career advancement while simultaneously expressing concerns about its potential negative impact on Kurdish linguistic and cultural identity. This duality underscores the need for a balanced approach that promotes English proficiency without compromising the vitality of the Kurdish language and cultural heritage.

The study highlights the importance of proactive measures to preserve and strengthen Kurdish language and culture. These measures could include enhancing Kurdish language education at all levels, supporting Kurdish literature, media, and arts, and promoting the use of Kurdish in various public domains. Policymakers and educators in the Kurdistan Region can utilize these findings to develop strategies that foster sustainable linguistic diversity and cultural preservation. Further research employing mixed-methods approaches and encompassing a larger, more diverse sample would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this complex dynamic and inform more effective language planning and cultural preservation efforts. Ultimately, fostering an environment where both English and Kurdish can thrive is essential for empowering individuals in the Kurdistan Region to navigate an increasingly interconnected world while maintaining their unique cultural identity.

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