

## **Diglossia: A Mixed-Mode Survey Analysis on the Use of Formal and Informal Speech among Sorani Kurdish Speakers**

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**Abstract:** The article covers both the original and expanded definitions of diglossia. The main point of discussion is the concept itself including its features and several examples paired with a relevant survey conducted to determine the existence of diglossia among Sorani Kurdish speakers in Erbil. The survey has investigated the occurrence of diglossia in terms of the use of high and low variety of Sorani Kurdish based on different social situations. The article concludes that Sorani Kurdish speakers use formal Sorani for formal settings and informal Sorani for informal situations.

**Keywords:** Diglossia, High Variety, Low Variety, Kurdish Language, Sorani Kurdish, Kurdi Peti, Mixed-Mode Survey

### **1. Introduction**

Language has been studied for centuries, however, language in relation to social behaviour has been investigated for a few decades when the field of linguistics introduced its sub-discipline sociolinguistics. ‘Sociolinguistics is the study of our everyday lives – how language works in our casual conversations and the media we are exposed to, and the presence of societal norms, policies, and laws which address language’ (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014, p. 1). Sociolinguists focus on phenomena such as, language varieties, speech communities, colloquialism, vernaculars, dialects, the functions of different language varieties within societies and diglossia. The latter is interested in why the speech type of two visitors that are discussing a certain topic in an open market differs from a conversation between a visitor and an employee in the municipal building of a certain city. This research offers a clear view on diglossia and analyses a mixed-mode survey (online and paper-based) conducted in the capital city of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil, to measure the diglossic atmosphere among the target population of the survey.

#### **1.1 The Problem**

The Kurdish language has always carried a strategic importance for both local and international scholars because of different conditions, stretching from political to cultural ones, or even due to the uniqueness of

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the language itself. Today, in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Kurdish language has received a considerable amount of attention in terms of the main branches of linguistics, thus, phonologically, morphologically and syntactically speaking. For that reason, the focus has resulted in both Kurdish and English sources. However, from a sociolinguistic standpoint, less awareness has been spread with regard to the way Kurdish speakers use their speech based on different social settings. The lack of sources related to formal and informal speech among Kurdish speakers in Iraqi Kurdistan makes the present research an essential piece of work that attempts to shed light on the sociolinguistic area of diglossia among the target community of the survey of this research. With that in mind, the following two essential questions arise that are needed to be answered in this research.

1. Does diglossia exist among the target population of the survey?
2. Do specific social settings influence the choice of the use of high or low variety of the Sorani Kurdish dialect among the survey's speech community?

### **1.2 The Aims of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to introduce and investigate a sociolinguistic phenomenon called diglossia. The research aims to give a clear overview of the mentioned sociolinguistic discipline to the reader. The study also strives to examine the scale of the presence of diglossia among the participants of the survey conducted in Erbil. The last goal of the present research is to study whether or not diglossia exists among the speech community of the survey and whether or not particular social situations affect the use of formal and informal speech of the Sorani Kurdish dialect speakers of the survey.

### **1.3 The Hypotheses**

In the light of the above-noted research questions, and so to answer the questions, it could be hypothesized that:

1. In general, diglossia is present among the target speech community.
2. Social settings do affect the use of formal and/or informal variety of the Sorani Kurdish dialect.

### **1.4 The Scope of the Research**

This research, which is conducted in Iraqi Kurdistan's capital city Erbil, examines the outcome of a mixed-mode survey that is designed to measure the diglossic situation among the target population of its survey. In addition, it also covers a detailed explanation of the sociolinguistics aspect of diglossia. The target population of the research consists of Kurdish speakers from Erbil that have filled out either a paper-based type of questionnaire or the online-based edition of it. The research has had a total duration of six months, from March 2021 to August 2021. The topics that are discussed in the study are all central subjects that are connected to the main title of the research. The geographical location where the study has been conducted is the political and economic capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, namely, Erbil.

### **1.5 The Significance of the Research**

This study is significant for institutions that pay serious attention to the Kurdish language and its sociolinguistic and/or diglossic status. The research is also significant for both researchers and neutral

readers that are interested in the field of sociolinguistics in general and diglossia in particular. Third, the research could act as a piece of work that motivates both dependent and independent researchers to seek for further ideas concerning the study in question. Lastly, the study plays a vital role in filling up one of the large amount of gaps within the area of diglossia in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

### **1.6 The Organization of the Research**

The structure of the research is as follows, chapter one presents the introduction by including important topics such as, the problem, the purpose of the research, the hypotheses, the scope and the significance of the research. Chapter two shares the literature review of the research by introducing essentials notions related to diglossia such as its characteristics and functions, and it highlights diglossic examples from different countries and nations paired with an overview of the Kurdish language and its current situation since the survey of this research is conducted in Erbil where the majority of its population use the Sorani Kurdish dialect as their mother-tongue. Chapter three deals with the methodology of the research which includes topics such as, participants, instruments, procedure, data collection and analysis, and the analysis. The results, discussion and limitations, particularly on the survey, is included in chapter four. Finally, the research arrives at chapter five which consists of the conclusions and further research of the study followed by the reference list.

## **2. Literature Review**

This part, which is divided into sub-sections, provides an overview of the basic notions of diglossia which is one of the key concepts within the field of sociolinguistic.

### **2.1 Understanding Diglossia**

Diglossia has received considerable attention in the literature over the years (Ferguson, 1959). The term is originally Greek for ‘two tongues’, thus, the ability to speak two languages. Stepkowska (2012) claims that the word diglossia was first introduced by the American Linguist Charles Ferguson, in his article, in 1959. According to Hornberger and Lee McKay (2010, p. 119), Ferguson explains that diglossia refers to a linguistic situation whereby two genetically connected varieties of a given community’s language, one is considered as the high (H) or standard variety while the other one is seen as the low (L) or nonstandard variety. The varieties could refer to different dialects within the same language whereby apart from the primary dialect, there is another dialect(s) that is phonologically and grammatically different (Ball, 2005, p. 57). The (H) variety is mainly experienced with more esteem if compared to the (L) variety. The (H) is labelled as formal and appears in both written and spoken form while the (L) is declared as informal and occurs only in spoken form (Gvozdanović, Árokay, & Miyajima, 2014). ‘The situations in which the high variety in diglossia is appropriate are clear instances of formal or non-casual contexts. The high variety is traditionally used in religious sermons, in parliamentary debates and political speeches, in university lectures, and in news broadcasts, as well as in other communicative settings. These are all occasions characterized by dominant central foci where positional identities are invoked by individuals specifically licensed by the community: priests and mullahs, professors, politicians, and government bureaucrats, broadcasters, and so forth’ (Biber & Finegan, 1994, p. 296). Having that said, it means that the high variety of a particular language shows a clear dominant attitude in terms of formality when it comes to religion,

politics, education, media and other social domains. On the other hand, Bassiouney (2020) points out that the low variety is the one that is merely used during informal everyday conversations. It is worth mentioning that, generally speaking, the (H) dialect of a certain diglossic society is considered more prestigious, superior and respected, while the (L) variant is counted inferior and sometimes even rejected by some speakers (Simanjuntak, Pujiono, & Haidir, 2019). Romaine (2001) states that the low variety of a community is typically acquired at home as a mother tongue. As shown in Figure 1, the usage of (H) and (L) are listed in the form of a table.

Situation	Use
1. Sermon in church or in mosque	H
2. Talk in parliament, political speech	H
3. Lecture in University	H
4. News broadcast	H
5. Editorial in newspaper	H
6. Poem	H
7. Order to worker, servant and artisan	L
8. Personal letter	L
9. Conversation with family and colleague	L
10. Radio drama	L
11. Political cartoon comment	L
12. Folk literature	L

Figure 1: The usage of (H) and (L) variety in everyday situations

Note: Figure 1 was produced by F. M. Simanjuntak, M. Pujiono and H. Haidir, in their journal article, in 2019, which lists the high and low variety during daily situations.

Besides the explanation above and apart from Romaine’s list on the uses of diglossia, in her book, *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction*, Saviile-Troike (2002, p. 45) outlines the crucial differences between the (H) and (L) variety:

1. There is a specialization of function for (H) and (L).
2. (H) has a higher level of prestige than (L), and is considered superior.
3. There is a literary heritage in (H), but not in (L).
4. There are different circumstances of acquisition; children learn (L) at home, and (H) in school.
5. The (H) variety is standardized, with a tradition of grammatical study and established norms and orthography.
6. The grammar of the (H) variety is more complex, more highly inflected.
7. (H) and (L) varieties share the bulk of their vocabularies, but there is some complementary distribution of terms.
8. The phonology of (H) and (L) is a single complex system.

## 2.2 Diglossic Bilingualism

While diglossia was originally meant to symbolise the coexistence of dialects within the same language, it has been broadened to the involvement of different languages (Ball, 2005). Unlike the classic

explanation of diglossia, in the 1960s Fishman and Fasold extended diglossia by noting that the (H) and (L) functions also appear in communities where unrelated languages are present. That is to say, languages that are linguistically sufficiently unrelated may still be in a diglossic relationship in terms of high and low variety (Bell, 2013, p. 111). In line with the earlier mentioned dialectical characterization of diglossia, in his book, *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, Coulmas argues that in diglossic situations where two distinct languages are present, the (H) variety is the language of the local power elite. In such a case, the high variety language is most clearly the used language of the powerful section of the society, however power is interpreted (1998).

Interestingly, Mesthrie (2001, p. 18) labels the occurrence of two different languages as diglossic bilingualism. Bilingualism refers to the ability of a speaker or a group of speakers to speak two languages (Llamas, Mullany, & Stockwell, 2007). From a sociolinguistic perspective, bilingualism often happens because of different social reasons. Yule explains that, in general, bilingualism tends to be a characteristic of a minority group in which, on an individual basis, a specific member of a community group grows up in one linguistic community that mainly uses one language, but adopt another language to take part in the larger dominant language, for whatever reason (2010).

### **2.3 Diglossic Multilingualism**

The term diglossia may not only cover sub-varieties of one language but rather two or even more than two different languages in the same speech community. Dorian (2002) expresses that in many parts of the world more than two speech varieties coexist in a single multilingual arena. Yet, prestige and power have divided them into high and low language based on regional, social and economic hierarchies. In her book, *Language in Society*, Romaine adds that in a multilingual community usually one language or variety receives a specialized function as it is often used for particular purposes. The language that is recognized publicly is known as the high language or high variety while the other language(s) is termed as low language or low variety (2001, p. 46). For Ball (2005, p. 44) multilingualism is a global condition that appears in a large range of different countries. Multilingual environments have mainly derived from factors such as mobility and contact. The mentioned factors most probably refer to the process of immigration in which the latter brings varieties together and into contact with the receiving society. Another scenario behind multilingualism may refer to political union among speech communities.

#### **2.3.1 Code-Switching**

Many studies that have been conducted on multilingual societies use the notion of code-switching. The term code has a neutral function which could refer to either a specific language or to a variety of a language. Bell (2013, p. 113) points out that code-switching often occurs in bilingual and multilingual communities. It appears when speakers switch between different codes in their verbal repertoire (speech) as this type of language choice often needs a good knowledge of two or more languages. Bell (2013, p. 114) reaffirms that code-switching is a routine behaviour that shows up in multilingual communities. Holmes (2012, p. 35) claims that people switch codes within a domain or social situation when there is a spontaneous change in a conversation. Diglossia and code-switching tend to have multiple similarities, yet, it is worth pointing out that there is a crucial difference between code-switching and diglossia. Payne (2008) explains that the

latter is more an intentional or conscious action while code-switching is perceived as a more subconscious change in speech.

#### **2.4 Diglossia in the Heart of Belgium**

Globally speaking, diglossia exists in many speech communities throughout the world. The list of diglossic nations is very long, extending from North and South America to Asia, from Europe to Africa and Australia. To substantiate the literature review, this section and the sections that follow will share examples of diglossia from different countries and language communities.

As the capital city of Belgium, the seat of the European Union and the home of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Brussels, is a divided city when it comes to language choice that is why Brussels is a good example to show how and why diglossia occurs. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014, pp. 377-378) discuss that Belgium contains two main language communities, namely, the French-speaking Walloons and the Flemish (a variety of Dutch). The Walloons are situated in the southern part of Belgium while the Flemish are settled in the northern part of the country. Brussels appears between the two mentioned regions which has steered the city to a bilingual one. However, because of the Belgian revolution, when Belgium became an independent kingdom in 1830, the new state became French-oriented and Flemish was banned from the government, law, army, universities and secondary schools. Besides that, the French-language domination was everywhere, the Flemings were able to gain a measure of linguistic and social equality in the twentieth century as they were and are still the majority group in the country. Yet, the past is still coloured by memories of discrimination based on language as the Belgians have tried to settle their languages on a territorial basis regarding Brussels as a bilingual city even that in reality the city has a clear French-dominant attitude. Spolsky (2004, p. 162) reports that the Belgian model of linguistic rights has solved most of its problems by, generally speaking, one area of the country should use Dutch and the other area should use French, leaving only one city, Brussels. From 1992, language conflict ended due to the agreement of federalism by giving each language separate institutions in many domains and making each region a sort of an independent area in terms of language. Having that said, because of its geographical situation, Brussels remained a city that contained a continuation in the sense of contact between the French and Dutch speakers.

Thus, the above-stated explanation about Brussel's language situation in conjunction with Ferguson's distinction of high form and low form, reveals that the city in question contains two different languages where the French is still experienced as the higher, more prestigious form being reserved in schools, businesses and mass media, and Dutch is seen as the lower one.

#### **2.5 Diglossia in Switzerland**

The second example is derived from the Standard German (H) and Swiss-German (L) in Switzerland. Switzerland is a divided country when it comes to language. The four national languages of the country are German, French, Italian and Romansh. According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), in 2019, the Swiss population was 62.1% native speakers of German, 22.8% French, 8.0% Italian, and 0.5% Romansh. Mesthrie (2001) mentions that the majority of German speakers in Switzerland actually use Swiss-German which differs from the Standard German of Germany. The Swiss-German variant which is

labelled as the (L) variety, is experienced as a first language by all members of the mentioned speech community and is always used in informal spoken situations. The Standard German, which is seen as the (H) variety, is usually acquired in institutional settings such as schools and is never used in informal conversations. Thus, the domain usage of the stated varieties differs where the Swiss-German is merely used during informal situations whereas, broadly speaking, the Standard German is only experienced in formal circumstances. Besides domain usage, the two varieties of German are also affected by the social evaluation of prestige, the (H) German receives overt social prestige while the (L) has a covert prestige (Mesthrie, 2001).

Holmes (2012, p. 27) shares a clear example of the Swiss version of diglossia by claiming that an average Swiss bank-teller has to know the two distinct varieties of German, one is the local Swiss-German, also called *Schwyzertütsch* which he or she uses in everyday interactions, and the other one is the Standard German which is learnt at school. The latter is usually understood very well but it is rarely used in ordinary speech. Standard German appears in newspapers, university lectures and TV news. Thus, the bank-teller switches his or her variety based on specific domains. At home, it will be the local Swiss-German variety while in formal settings it will be the Standard German variety.

## 2.6 Diglossia in the Arabian World

The third and last example of diglossia is taken from the Arabic language. The Arabic language is a language that is divided into different regional dialects. Versteegh (1997, p. 145) classifies the Arabic dialects as follows:

- Arabian Peninsula dialects, used in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf area.
- Mesopotamian dialects, spoken in Iraq.
- Syro-Lebanese dialects, spoken in Lebanon and Syria.
- Egyptian dialects, spoken in Egypt.
- Maghreb dialects, spoken in North Africa.

The dialects differ in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation that is why speakers of Arabic often have difficulties in understanding one another's dialect. For that reason, the sociolinguist Ferguson categorizes the Arabic language into two varieties, on the one hand, classical Arabic which is also known as *al-Fusha* has received the label (H), and on the other hand, all the regional Arabic dialects are seen as (L) varieties (1959, p. 234). Ball (2005, p. 57) states that classical Arabic (*al-Fusha*) is also named Standard Arabic. The latter, which is usually termed (H) or the high variety, is used for literature, education and formal modes of discourse. The high variety of Arabic is not used in ordinary, everyday conversations. On the contrary, there is also a range of local vernacular forms of Arabic (regional dialects) which are counted as (L) varieties. As stated above, the (L) varieties differ from each other in that a speaker of Moroccan Arabic would hardly understand a speaker from Iraq.

Ferguson (1959, pp. 235-244) gives diglossia the following characteristics:

- function
- prestige

- literary heritage
- acquisition
- standardization
- stability
- grammar
- lexicon
- phonology

In section one, the characteristics were listed in a very limited way that is why, for a better understanding of Ferguson's notion concerning the features of diglossia, the following is a detailed explanation of its characteristics mainly throughout the Arabic example.

### **2.6.1 Function**

The first characteristic is function. The two varieties of Arabic differ in their function in that one is used in one set of circumstances while the other one is used in an entirely different setting in which the circumstances are normally called domains. For example, the high variety is usually used in sermons and formal lectures, particularly in a parliament, political speeches, broadcasting the news on radio or television, writing poetry, fine literature and editorials in newspapers. Whereas the low variety is normally used in giving instructions to workers or household servants, in chit-chats among familiars, in ordinary popular programs on the radio, in political cartoons in newspapers and folk literature (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014, p. 94).

### **2.6.2 Prestige**

Speakers evaluate the two varieties of Arabic differently. Overt social prestige is normally linked to the (H) variety, whereas covert prestige is usually attached to the (L) variety (Mesthrie, 2001, p. 275). Bell (2013, p. 110) explains that the (H) variety is openly regarded as the good form of a language, while the (L) variety may be regarded, even by its speakers, as a lesser variety. The (H) variety is considered more educated, more beautiful and harmonious, more logical and better able to express important thoughts. Thus, if one thinks about Standard Arabic in opposition to Iraqi Arabic (as a regional dialect), usually Standard Arabic will be regarded as more superior than, for example, Iraqi Arabic because of the mentioned aspects.

### **2.6.3 Literary Heritage**

Literary heritage refers to the idea that, in Arabic, there is a large body of written literature (from the past) which is written in the (H) form and is, today, held in high esteem by the Arabic speaking community. Snow (2013) emphasizes that the (H) variety of Arabic is linked to have a literary heritage. The literary heritage of the (H) variety of Arabic has become the main source of (H)'s prestige and power. On the other hand, apart from Arabic, Coulmas (1998, p. 142) states that in most diglossic languages, the literature is all in (H) variety as no written uses of (L) exists.



#### **2.6.4 Acquisition**

The fourth feature, acquisition, deals with the question of when and where both (H) and (L) variety are acquired. The (L) variety is acquired first, at home. The (H) variety is learned at school (Coulmas, 1998, p. 142). Hamad (2014) underlines that learning the (H) variety is not an easy task because the speaker has to switch from the linguistic system which he or she has acquired first (which is the (L) variety) to a new linguistic system that differs immensely from his acquired variety in terms of grammar, lexicon and phonology.

#### **2.6.5 Standardization**

Another feature is called standardization. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014, p. 33) describe that standardization refers to the process by which a language has been codified in some way. The process of standardization usually consists of the establishment and development of grammar, spelling books, dictionaries and literature. In terms of Arabic, from the Maghreb region to the Middle East, there is only one Standard Arabic. The books that are written about the mentioned linguistic notions such as, grammar, phonology, morphology etc., are all written in Standard Arabic thus the (H) variety.

#### **2.6.6 Stability**

Diglossia is a stable language situation in that evidence in some cases has shown that it can last well over a thousand year. To put it in another way, It may change a little bit but it does not change in the sense that it disappears completely, rather, it develops into new versions (Ferguson, 1959). Moreover, the Arabic-speaking countries have shown that it is possible for two different varieties to continue and to exist side by side for centuries (Holmes, 2012, p. 32).

#### **2.6.7 Grammar**

According to grammar, the grammar of both (H) and (L) variety are entirely different from each other. In terms of Arabic, the grammar of Standard Arabic is more complex than the one of non-Standard Arabic/Arabic dialects. In the introductory chapter of the book *Diglossia and Language Contact: Language Variation and Change in North Africa*, Sayahi (2014, pp. 5-6) affirms that the (H) variety is fully described and dictionaries and grammar books are available for both its teaching and learning while the (L) variety maintains under-described. Furthermore, the grammar of the (L) variety is remarkably less complex if compared to the grammar of the (H) variety.

#### **2.6.8 Lexicon**

Porter (2000, p. 21) states that both varieties have a shared lexicon but the (H) variety has a broader one. Ferguson (1959, p. 242) clarifies that the size of the shared lexicon of both varieties is of course one that consists of variations in form and differences of use and meaning. He explains that the lexicon of the (H) variety includes technical terms and learned expressions that have no regular (L) equivalents because the subjects involved are rarely discussed in pure (L) variety and vice versa. For example, a certain word in Standard Arabic may never occur in ordinary conversation and a certain word in non-Standard Arabic may never appear in normal written Arabic.

### **2.6.9 Phonology**

The last characteristic refers to the phonological situation of both varieties. Sayahi (2014, p. 6) highlights that at the phonological level, both varieties have a single phonological structure, however, it is worth saying that the (L) variety may show simplification and interference from other languages. That is to say, the (H) variety shows a basic phonological system while the (L) variety exists of a more complex one.

### **2.7 The Geography and Language Family of the Kurdish Language**

Based on the survey's aims, it would be relevant for the work to share certain essential information about the Kurdish language and other aspects that are linked to it. Amin (1979, p. 9) states that Kurdistan is a region that is situated in the heart of Asia Minor. This region starts from the mountainous region of the Black Sea towards the Anti-Taurus Mountains and the Iranian Plateau. Today Kurdistan is divided into different parts that are added to countries like Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria and the late Soviet Union. The Kurdish language belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family (Abdullah, 1980).

### **2.8 Number of Speakers and Dialects**

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the Kurdish language is after Persian and Pashto the third-largest Indo-Iranian language that has a number of different dialects. Kurdish is thought to be spoken by twenty to forty million people. There are three main dialect groups found in this language, Northern Kurdish, Central Kurdish and Southern Kurdish (Britannica, 2016). Thompson (2016) points out that Northern Kurdish is spoken by approximately 20 million Kurds in Turkey as well as in parts of Iraq, Iran and Syria. The worldwide population of speakers of Northern Kurdish is estimated to be around 20.2 million people. Central Kurdish, on the other hand, is spoken by 3.5 million people in Iraq and 3.2 million people in Iran. The total population of speakers of Central Kurdish is estimated at 6.8 million speakers. According to Southern Kurdish, this dialect is spoken by 3 million speakers in Iran and Iraq. However, Hassani (1998) argues that the majority of scholars differ in the categorization of the Kurdish language in that some of them refer to the language as Northern Kurdish (Northern Kurmanji), Central Kurdish (Central Kurmanji (Sorani)), Southern Kurdish, Gorani, and Zazaki. Hassani (1998) also states that the mentioned dialects contain several sub-dialects.

### **2.9 Its Situation in the Past and Present**

After the fall of the Ottomans, the division of Kurdistan made the linguistic situation in the Kurdish areas more complex. The establishment of Arab, Turkish and Persian states by the hands of Britain and its allies steered the Kurdish language towards an ownerless and hopeless situation. As McDowall (2004) has pointed out, in Turkey, the Kemalists banned the Kurdish language and erased Kurdish names in all official materials and replaced them with Turkish names. The Turks have also closed Kurdish clubs in Turkey which tried to improve education. The main objective of the Turks was to defeat Kurdish nationalism by spreading Turkish culture and language. On the other hand, Vali (2011, p. 4) argues that Iran's Constitution specifies the Persian language as the official language of the nation, administration and education, dictating over all the other local and regional languages, including Kurdish. Thus Persian was and is still the language of the sovereign, politics and power. The position of the Kurdish language in Syria is not better than its situation in Turkey and Iran. According to a report by Human Rights Watch (2009), the use

of the Kurdish language in Syria is restricted in public, in schools, and in the workplace, Kurdish-language publications are banned, and celebrations of Kurdish festivals such as Nowruz are prohibited. As for the Arab dominated state of Iraq, after its establishment in 1921, the Arab government prevented the development of the Kurdish language. However, on 2 February 1926, The League of Nations (today known as the United Nations) argued that the Kurdish language should be used as well as Arabic in the Iraqi Parliament and that laws should be published in Kurdish. Nevertheless, all the rights and claims of the Kurds were denied by the Iraqi government over and over again. Therefore, to prevent the employment of Kurdish officials in Kurdish areas, the Iraqi state started to rely on language rather than race. That is why the Iraqi government's aim was to employ Arab Kurdish speakers in Kurdish districts in order to fill important government posts. Obviously, the intentions of the Iraqi government were to neglect the implementation of the Kurdish language in governmental departments. For example, the language of the courts in Kurdish areas was Arabic, the judgments were documented in Arabic, and the laws and regulations were also in Arabic (Muheddin, 2017). All in all, each state has treated the Kurdish language through different policies from total prohibition (e. g. Turkey and Syria) to different degrees of tolerance (e. g. Iran, Turkey and Syria), and official recognition (e. g. Iraq (local level) in the past, (national level) present). All the different policies by the hands of the mentioned states towards the Kurdish language have created, linguistically speaking, one major challenge which is the lack of a common standard language, a unified writing system and mutual intelligibility among dialects which are often severely influenced by dominant state languages through sound system, vocabulary, grammar, idioms and other linguistic aspects (Taucher, Vogl, & Webinger, 2015, p. 30).

### **2.10 Kurdish in Iraqi Kurdistan**

When the southern part of Kurdistan became essentially independent of Saddam's regime after the 1991 uprising, the Secretary Council of the U.S. decided to create a Safe Haven by establishing a 'no-fly zone' in the north of Iraq following the second Gulf War. The Kurds used this opportunity to establish the first official Parliament of the Kurdistan Regional Government in 1992. However, unfortunately, Kurdistan Region was and is still not able to produce a permanent constitution, instead, it is covered by a series of run by laws, instructions and norms in which they are documented in a provisional constitution. The latter is a constitution that is intended to serve during a transitional period until a permanent constitution is adopted. The creation of an autonomous region by the Kurds opened the doors to not only free themselves politically, economically, culturally, ethnically but also linguistically. Despite the absence of a permanent constitution, the Kurds have focussed on the Kurdish language in their provisional constitution. Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (2014) reports that according to the Kurdistan Regional Government's provisional constitution, Part I (General Matters), Article 7, point i); Kurdish shall be the official language of the Kurdistan Region. ii); Official correspondence with the federal and regional authorities shall be in both Arabic and Kurdish. Additionally, law number (6) of the year (2014) of the formal languages in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq confirms that the Kurdish language must have a predominant role in the court, governmental institutions, education, economy, academia and so forth. Thus, in terms of formality, the Kurdish language is installed as the first language when dealing with formal domains such as in educational, political, media, and literary settings.

### **2.11 Formal and Informal Varieties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq**

The two main dialects in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are the Northern Kurdish (Northern Kurmanji) and the Central Kurdish (Central Kurmanji) dialect. The Northern Kurdish is also known as Badini while the Central Kurdish is popularly known as Sorani. In his research on sub-dialectical differences in Sorani Kurdish, Malmasi (2016) claims that most Kurds located around Erbil, Sulaimaniyah and Kirkuk, in Iraq, use the Sorani dialect. Those who are located in the Badinan district use the Badini dialect. It is worth noting that Sorani includes different sub-dialects. Taucher et al. (2015, p. 34) divide the Sorani dialect into major sub-dialects such as the Babani (spoken in Sulaimaniyah and surrounding areas) and the Hawleri (spoken in Erbil, Rawanduz and thereabout). Further, Taucher et al. (2015, p. 34) inform that Sorani is the dominant medium in terms of publishing, broadcasting, schooling, and administration matters because it is the main variety used by the Kurdistan Regional Government. Interestingly, previously, the literary standard of Sorani was initially based on the Sulaimaniyah variety, but over the past several decades Standard Sorani has been upgraded by the Hawleri variety. It should be pointed out that, nowadays, the literary standard of Sorani is commonly known as Peti or Kurdi Peti among the Kurdish speakers. The Kurdi Peti or Standard Sorani which is considered as the formal form of Sorani, as opposed to informal Sorani, is the variety that appears in school materials, newspapers, academic writings, literary text etc. Informal Sorani is the variety that is used in ordinary conversations in the bazaar, among friends or in the home environment. Erbil, as the capital city of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and as the core of political rivalry and the financial centre of the region, the KRG's (Kurdistan Regional Government) laws and regulations are all documented in the Kurdi Peti/Standard Sorani variety. The President, Prime Minister and the leader of the Parliament constantly use the Kurdi Peti form of Sorani in formal situations. Discussions and debates that take place in the Kurdistan Regional Government's Parliament are generally processed through the formal form of Sorani thus Kurdi Peti. Academic and literary books, in the Sorani speakers' geographical areas of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, are on a large scale published in the Standard Sorani variety. Broadcasting such as both public and private radio stations and television channels are mainly covered by the Sorani Peti variety. Nevertheless, the explanation above does not necessarily mean that the Northern Kurdish (Badini) lacks the phenomenon of Kurdi Peti. In fact, also Badini includes formal and informal varieties based on different settings.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Participants**

In conducting the current research, 125 participants were involved with different variables (see Table 1). The participants differed in occupation, educational background, age, language, dialect and gender. However, more than 90% had the Sorani dialect as their first dialect. The data in this study was collected for a duration of eight weeks from three different domains, namely, through the social networking site Facebook, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Amazon Bookshop in Erbil. The table below shows a detailed data of the respondents.

Table 1: Participants of the study according to their variables

		Occupation							
	Unemployed	4 (3.2%)							
	Student	9 (7.2%)							
	Governmental official	76 (60.8%)							
	Private sector employee	24 (19.2%)							
	Entrepreneur	6 (4.8%)							
	Lecturer	1 (0.8%)							
	Engineer	1 (0.8%)							
	Lawyer	1 (0.8%)							
	Retiree	1 (0.8%)							
	Writer	1 (0.8%)							
	Peshmerga	1 (0.8%)							
		Educational stages							
	No education	0 (0%)							
	Primary	1 (0.8%)							
	Secondary education	20 (16%)							
	Institutional degree	12 (9.6%)							
	Bachelor's degree	43 (34.4%)							
	Master's degree	36 (28.8%)							
	Ph.D. degree	13 (10.4%)							
		Age							
	17 and below	3 (2.4%)							
	18-25	8 (6.4%)							
	26-35	48 (38.4%)							
	36-45	43 (43.4%)							
	46-55	12 (9.6%)							
	56-65	8 (6.4%)							
	66-75	3 (2.4%)							
	76 and above	0 (0%)							
		Language							
	Kurdish	125 (100%)							
	Arabic	99 (79.2%)							
	Turkmen	11 (8.8%)							
	Syriac	1 (0.8%)							
	Turkish	16 (12.8%)							
	Persian	17 (13.6%)							
	English	86 (68.8%)							
	Dutch	2 (1.6%)							
	German	2 (1.6%)							
	Latin	2 (1.6%)							
	Russian	2 (1.6%)							

Dialects			
Sorani	Badini	Gorani	Luri
113 (90.4%)	11 (8.8%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)
Male		Female	
109 (87.2%)		16 (12.8%)	

### 3.2 Instruments

The research instrument for the data collection of the current research consisted of a questionnaire. The instrument was designed for a mixed-mode survey which included a paper-based and an online-based type of questionnaire. The researcher used this particular apparatus because it is one of the most practical and rapid ways to collect research data. The paper-based questionnaire was distributed at the reception section of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Amazon Bookshop situated on the Kirkuk Road in Erbil. The online version was designed via the survey administration software Google Forms and distributed on the most widely used social networking site Facebook. 200 samples of the questionnaire were developed by the researcher that contained a series of questions to gather information from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, part one requested demographic information while section two was made of 20 close-ended statements that were related to the use of high (formal) or low (informal) variety of the Sorani Kurdish dialect in different circumstances. The population that took part in the survey differed in terms of occupation, educational background, age, language and gender. The questionnaire was designed to elicit the respondent's choice in using either the high or low variety of the Sorani Kurdish dialect based on different types of social settings. The respondents were asked to classify their preferences on a 4-point Likert scale from 'always' to 'never'.

### 3.3 Procedure, Data Collection and the Analysis

The procedure for the participation of the respondents in the concurrent mixed-mode design was based on a non-random sampling. It took approximately six months to conduct the whole research and to distribute, collect and process the questionnaire samples. The distribution and collection of the samples required a duration of more than one month. The target question: 'on what scale do you use standardized Kurdish (formal Kurdish) during the below situations?' was constructed to measure the existence of diglossia in the Sorani Kurdish dialect in Erbil. The 4-point Likert scale of their replies on the questions consisted of: always, often, sometimes and never. Concerning the analysis process, the target question in the second section of the questionnaire was analysed based on 20 different situations and their Likert scale responses. For the data collection and analysis of the replies, it would be valuable to show a sample of the questionnaire which is given below.



ر اپرسی

بهمه به سستی نه جامدانی توئینه وه به کی زانستی له بواری زمانه وانی، ئامانجی ئەم فۆرمه دهستخستنی زانیارییه له سههه جۆری ئاخاوتنی دانیشتیوانی شاری ههولێر له رووی به کارهێنانی زمانی کوردی بهتی (زمانی فهری) بان به کارهێنانی زمانی ئاخاوتن (نافهری). بهو مه بهسته تکایه له رێ پرکردنه وهی چوارگۆشه کانه وه به راست و دروستی وهلامی پرسیاره کانی ئەم فۆرمه بدهوه.

<p>١. ته مه نت؟ (ته نهها بهک وهلام هه لێژیره)</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>١٧ یان به رهو خواره وه                  ٢٥-١٨                  ٣٥-٢٦                  ٤٥-٣٦                  ٥٥-٤٦                  ٦٥-٥٦                  ٧٥-٦٦                  ٧٦ یان به رهو سه ره وه</p>
<p>٢. ره گه زت؟</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>نێر                  مێ</p>
<p>٣. به رزترین ئاستی بروانامه ت؟</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>بێ بروانامه م                  بروانامه ی سه ره تاپی                  بروانامه ی ئاماده ی                  بروانامه ی په یمانگه                  بروانامه ی به که لۆریۆس                  بروانامه ی ماسته ر                  بروانامه ی دکتۆرا</p>
<p>٤. ئەو زمانه ی که دهیزانیت له رووی قسه کردن و تیگه یشتن؟</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>کوردی                  عه ره بی                  تورکی                  فارسی                  تورکمانی                  ئینگلیزی                  سریانی                  جۆری تر.....</p>
<p>٥. ئە گه ر زمانی دایکت کوردییه، شیوه زاری (دیالیکت) سه ره کیت دهستنی شان بکه (ته نهها بهک شیوه زار هه لێژیره)</p>	

سوڤانی (دیالیکتی کرمانجی ناوه راست) بادینی (دیالیکتی کرمانجی ژووروو) گۆرانی لوری				
۶. جۆری پیشهت؟				
بیکار (ژنی مان / پیاوی بیکار) قوتایی فه رمانبه ری حکومهت کارمه ندی که رتی تایبهت خاوه نکار (خاوه نی کۆمپانیا، دوکان، هتد) جۆریتر (خۆت بنووسه) .....				
۷. له کاتی ئەو رووداوانه ی خاوه وه کوردی په تی (کوردی فه رمی) تا چ ئاستیک به کار دینیت؟				
پرسیاره کان:	هه میشه	زۆریه ی جاره کان	هه ندی جار	هه رگیز
۱. له گه ل خزم و که سوکار؟				
۲. له گه ل براده ران؟				
۳. له کاتی ده رخستنی هه ستت؟				
۴. له کاتی بازارکردن؟				
۵. له کاتی تووره بوون؟				
۶. له کاتی گوته ی نوکته؟				
۷. له کاتی دوعا و نزارکردن؟				
۸. له کاتی وه رزشکردن؟				
۹. له ناو پۆل؟				
۱۰. له شوینه فه رمیه کان؟				
۱۱. له کاتی سه ردانکردنی فه رمانگه				
حکومیه کان و شوینه په روه ردیه کان؟				
۱۲. له کاتی گه شتکردن؟				
۱۳. له کاتی ناردنی نامه ی ئەله کترۆنی (email)؟				
۱۴. له کاتی گه فتوگۆکردن له نێو سۆشیا لمیدیا؟				
۱۵. له کاتی به شداریکردنی کۆنفه رانس؟				
۱۶. له کاتی گۆرانیگوتن؟				
نووسینه ده فی ئەده بی؟ له کاتی ۱۷.				
۱۸. له کاتی به شداریکردنی به رنامه ی ته له فیزیۆنی یان رادیۆ؟				
۱۹. له شوینی کارکردنت؟				
۲۰. له گه ل که سیتی بێگانه؟				

Below is the survey chart that shows the rates of the responses of the participants based on different social settings. The 'y' axis represents percentage, and the 'x' axis illustrates social situations, while the colored bars stand for the responses.



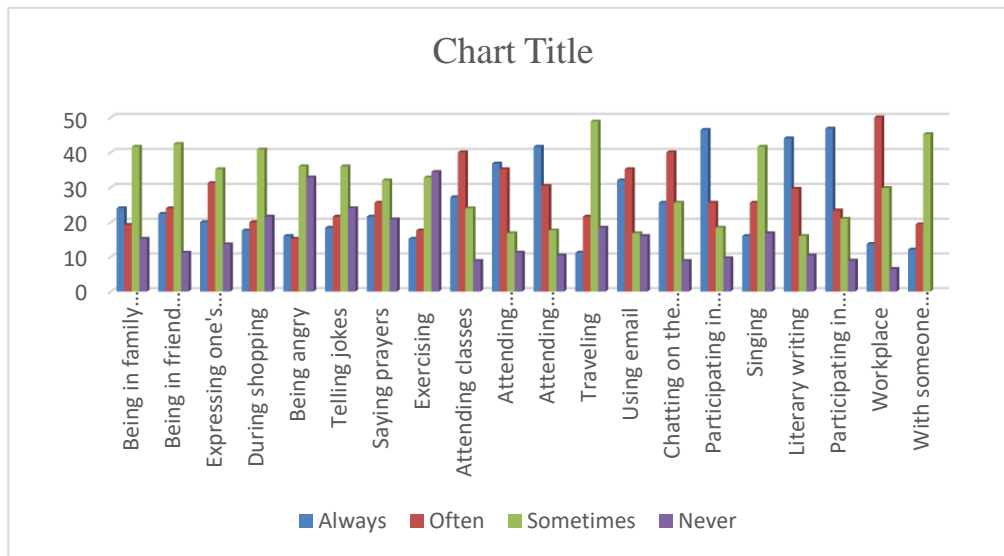


Figure 2: Survey response rate

## 4. Results, Discussion and Limitations

### 4.1 Results and Discussion

Figure 2 of the previous chapter presents the exact percentage of the use of formal Sorani Kurdish among the survey's participants in various settings. The chart proves that during unofficial situations the rate is low when it comes to the use of formal Sorani Kurdish (Kurdi Peti). For example, during informal situations such as, family and friends gathering, expressing feelings, shopping, being angry, telling jokes, saying prayers, exercising, travelling, singing and talking to someone unfamiliar, the participants do either 'never' or 'sometimes' use formal Sorani Kurdish instead of 'often' or 'always'. While, during formal situations such as, attending classes, attending official places, attending administrative and educational places, using email, chatting on the internet, participating in conferences, literary writing, participating in T.V. programs and at the workplace, the same respondents use more frequently formal Sorani Kurdish instead of 'sometimes' or 'never'. Referring to the literature review of the study, the stated section has shared that, in diglossia, formal settings require formal speech while informal settings require informal speech. The findings of the study confirm that the results match with the research questions and previous literature in the sense that diglossia is present among the target language community of the survey and that specific situations do affect the choice of high Sorani Kurdish or low Sorani Kurdish. In other words, the findings show that the respondents of the survey use high Sorani Kurdish during official situations while low Sorani Kurdish for unofficial settings.

### 4.2 Limitations

The researcher is aware that the current study may have several limitations. The first is the research outcomes of the collected survey information which has obviously a broad appearance instead of a detailed one. The researcher has chosen for a general overview of the results since the main aim of the research is to prove whether or not diglossia is present in the Sorani Kurdish dialect in Erbil. Future studies could

narrow its findings by focussing on the variables and their connection with linguistic issues in diglossia. The second limitation may be related to the sample size of the topic. The number of the target population is, of course, much higher than the number of the questionnaire samples. Thus, to generalize the results based on 125 respondents may be a limitation, but, that does not mean that the survey does not mirror the position of diglossia in Erbil in a general perspective.

## 5. Conclusions and Further Research

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to see if diglossia occurs among the participants of the survey and if social settings affect the choice of high and low variety among the same respondents. For that reason, the study analysed, discussed and elaborated diglossia theoretically. In addition, based on the findings of the survey, the study has arrived at the conclusion that diglossia occurs among the respondents and that social situations do affect the use of high and low variety in the Sorani dialect of the Kurdish language. The results of the survey have shown that situations that are connected to formality encourage the choice of the use of the Kurdi peti form of the Sorani Kurdish dialect which could be seen as the high variety of the stated dialect. While, on the other hand, situations that are related to informality encourage to choose an informal speech of the above-mentioned dialect which could be counted as the low variety.

### 5.2 Further Research

The study in general and the limitations of it point towards topics to be addressed in the future. The following are a few areas for future research.

- How do variables such as, age, gender, education, occupation and language affect the use of high and low variety in Sorani Kurdish?
- A similar study on the same topic through the usage of one of the above-mentioned variables.
- A comparable study on the same topic by enlarging the sample size of the research.
- An identical research on the language community in the Badinan district as a whole or specific area(s)/city(ies) in the stated region.
- A study on triglossia in the Kurdistan Region.
- A study on Polyglossia in the Kurdistan Region.

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