

Attitudes of Kurdish Parents Towards their Children's Bilingualism with reference to the Cultural and National Identity of Private School Students in Erbil

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the sociolinguistic attitudes of Kurdish parents from Erbil towards their children's bilingualism in those private schools where English is the main language of the school. Studies have shown that the attitude of the learners towards second language learning has an impact on their mother language development. In such a context, children's increased use of English compared to their limited use of their native language has become a prevalent phenomenon. As a consequence, despite the fact that Kurdish is the first language of the children and even the region, children have created their own speech communities in which their social engagement with classmates and teachers is in English inside and outside of school.

This study attempts to explore the reasons behind the motivations of those parents in choosing English medium schools and their attitudes towards the educational experiences of their children. By virtue of parents playing a crucial role not only in having influence on the academic progress of their children but also in changing the attitudes of their children towards the importance of the first language, it is also important to examine the parents' attitudes towards educational systems and language learning of their children as a whole. The last question examines whether preferring learning a second language over a mother tongue does not put the Kurdish language in danger in the future, and how the role of government may be considered in this regard.

KEYWORDS: Attitude, Bilingualism, Identity, Culture, Foreign Identity

1. INTRODUCTION

East (2016) states that the main purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to speak that language, and for learners, speaking is an essential skill in the language learning process in order to become a fluent speaker. This shows that when the learner is able to use the foreign language to communicate well, they get used to speaking the target language more often, and, as a result, the first language might be affected by the foreign language.

Therefore, expanding and growing the needs of both teaching and learning a foreign language throughout the world has been discussed in many studies. Moreover, Butler (2015) acknowledges that learning a foreign language is presumed to be the key to success in today's globalised world because there is a rapid increase in terms of mobility among the countries for different reasons such as education, employment, tourism, and social factors. This has encouraged most of the education policymakers of the countries to put learning English class in school curriculum and even reduce the start age of learning English language in schools and even to kindergartens. In most of the countries where the first language is not English, the language of choice to teach and learn is English. This choice of language is driven from the needs of the non-native speakers of English language in order to provide a better career and education opportunity through learning and speaking English language proficiently. For those countries where the first language is English,

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the language choice is different, for instance, in Canada the first language is English therefore the second language choice is French because it is the second official language of the country. While in the USA, the case is different due to the range of different foreign languages, the foreign language is taught based on the idea that to what extend teaching and learning the foreign language provides opportunities for students. Thus, in the English-speaking countries, different language programmes are taught while in other countries, English is increasingly being preferred to be taught as a foreign language.

Despite the role of the school programmes, when it comes to language acquisition process, the role of parents is essential in their children's language progression. Many researchers claim that attaining literacy and learning the language process is not solely about what is taught in school but also how parents help and support in this learning development process (Gunning 2007, Luo and Song 2014, Siregar 2017, Çakıroğlu 2018, Ismail & et. al 2020). Since children are the future of any country, they contribute to the country's progress. Therefore, children should be benefited from the right of survival, protection, development and participation so that they can relish and utilize it for holistic development in a conducive and propitious environment. Accordingly, to improve children's confidence and active input in learning an effectual communication and social skill is needed. This means that having a good level of mother tongue skill provides the opportunity to have an active social and learning skill. Parents have a crucial role in encouraging their children to develop their relationship in school and outside of the school. Based on Hudelson (2008); Maccabi et. al. (2013) & Siregar (2017), it is the duty of parents to create a good learning environment and offer the best support for their children's language development in multilingual context and immersion programs. This argument has proven that not only school environment is important to enhance the learning process of children but also home practice along with school practice is indispensable for the case of minority languages. Even though Kurdish language in Kurdistan is not the case of minority language but the dominant language of the region, mostly children in private schools prefer not only to communicate and interact in English but also have created their own community where English is the dominant spoken language. This excessive use of English has a long-term threat on Kurdish language and might have effect on the identity of the next generation. This is because the excessive of use English will influence in some perspectives such as

pronunciation and intonation, word choice, as well as sentence structure (Noor 2007).

Many parents believe that, since around the world children are taught to learn English, it is also possible for them to teach English to their children. Based on this, arguably, some children around the world grow up exposed to multiple languages from an early age, but this is because those children are born in a multilingual society or their parents have different native languages for instance if a Japanese mother and a French father live in the UK, the children are born in a multilingual family thus, they automatically learn three languages and English is an essential to communicate with their parents. Accordingly, migration, international mobility and globalization have increased the opportunity of learning more languages from early ages. In terms of Kurdish language, this is not a valid argument as Kurdish is the dominant language of the society, and English is formally considered foreign language. Therefore, the parents of the children are Kurdish and the language use in the society and family should be Kurdish.

Moreover, Wang (2014) states that learning a foreign language could impact the first language of the learner in various ways like phonology, morphosyntax and semantics system. This will cause that when the learner of the English language speaks Kurdish language, foreign language influence will usually be noticed. Therefore, it is essential that the parents before they think about the language development of their children, they take a serious consideration on the identity of their children in the future as well as to understand the motivations and attitudes and encouragement of their children to use the mother tongue more often to communicate with one another. Based on Faridy & Syaodih (2017), due to the number of population movements and current globalisation factors, the use of the mother tongue has been diminished. This means that the more people use a foreign or second language, the more damage to the mother tongue results.

Before discussing the impact of Kurdish language by the excessive use of English language in the English medium schools. Moreover, why parents are so keen to encourage their children to learn English language and use it more frequently, as well as its effect on the children's identity in the future, it is essential to investigate and evaluate the enthusiasm behind the factors why English has become the dominant language of the children to a point that even many parents disregard Kurdish language and support their children to shift completely to English.

Sanika and Witt (2019) believe that the popularity of English language worldwide has led to a rapid increase in the number of English learners. Moreover, they claim that social and economic aspirations of the parents play an important role in the motivation of their children to learn English language. Unfortunately, many parents believe that learning English as second language will give a high social and economic status in the society. Moreover, parents see English language as it positions their children's identity with power, social status, and privilege position to their children. In addition, Sanika and Witt (2019) state that bilingualism may lead to arrogance, this is because English use reveals their social positioning. Therefore, this could reveal to a phenomenon in which has been termed as 'linguicism'. From Sanika and Witt (2019)'s statement, we can understand that in an English medium school children could become more schooled than their parents. Consequently, intergenerational clashes may occur in communication between children and parents or other people in their family especially those who do not speak English, this results in a diminishing the traditional values of the families.

Based on the discussion, however, it is obvious that different countries might have different opinion on the importance of the English language to be taught from early age, they all have the same decision that English should be taught at the schools. Thus, it is essential to investigate the factors why parents are eager in supporting their children's bilingualism and their preference of English language on Kurdish. The increasing status and value of English language worldwide has increased the number of English learners rapidly. A study conducted by Gratton (2022) shows that English is the most popular language for children to be taught as a foreign language at school, in which 62% of the participants believe that English is the most important language to teach children in non-English language dominant schools while only 9% suggested that Spanish is the most important language to be taught, and 6.5% for French language. She also indicated that English language is spoken by approximately 1.35 billion of people around the world, that is 17% of the population of the world. Moreover, Yashima (2009) explains that since English has been highly valued internationally and has an international posture, people preferably learn English to get the opportunity to work abroad, travel, and communicate with people from other countries for business or political purposes. These could be reasonable justifications to encourage the Kurdish parents to send their children to English medium schools.

1.1 Attitude and Language Attitudes

Attitudes contain three elements in which is known as the 'ABC model'. Firstly, the affective component (feeling/emotion, which is neural) involves the person's feelings and emotions caused by an attitude object. Secondly, behavioural/conation components, (response/action which is readiness) directed by our attitude that has influences on how we behave/act. Thirdly, Cognitive component, (belief/evaluation which is mental) this component involves the beliefs and knowledge of the person about the attitude object (Bohner 2001, Jian 2014, McLeod 2018). One of the fundamental presumptions about the connections between both attitudes and behaviour is consistency, in a way that, the behaviour of a person is consistent with the attitude that they hold. This means, we often expect the person's behaviour act to be consistent with their attitudes. This principle is called consistency principle, as it reflects the idea that people are rational. They attempt to behave in a rational way continually and their behaviour have to be consistent with their attitudes (McLeod 2018). However, the principle of consistency may not be corresponded to one another, this is because people do not follow the principle all the time, they sometimes behave differently. For instance, we all obviously know that smoking causes cancer or long-term disease, but many people still smoke. This shows that sometimes both affective and cognitive components do not always match with behaviour. Attitudes illustrate the feeling of individual about someone or something and this has influence on their choices, therefore, attitude could be either positive or negative with all perspectives of individual's life. For this reason, attitude plays an important role in the field of education particularly in the process of learning languages.

Language attitude is defined as people's positive or negative attitude towards their own language and other languages. Language attitude could be about language variation, dialects, accents, and even new language learning (Baker 1992). Thus, these attitudes have influence language learning process particularly the attitude of parents to the process of language learning and language preference of their children because attitude of learners in learning a new language differ based on how they think and evaluate the target language. Even more, Jund (2010) discusses that learning foreign language impacts learner's attitude towards not only their mother language but also their cultural identity. Therefore, the attitude of the parents towards foreign language is essential in developing the proficiency level in the foreign language of their children. This is because parents play four roles in their

children's life such as: teacher, moral leader, advocate, and emotional supporter (Seifert and Hoffnung 1994). This assumption shows the important role of parents in children's lives as well as known as the first teacher of the children because they spend most times with their children at home.

Therefore, parents always have influence on children's development and education. The support parents give their children in term of education is called 'parent's involvement' (Epstein 2002). He believes that parent's involvement is the most powerful influence in the education of their children, this support is defined as active and continuous contribution and participation of parents in the education and life of their children. Gardner (1985) demonstrates that parents can have either active or passive influence on their children's foreign language learning process, when the parents have a positive attitude towards the target language, they assist their children to learn the language, whilst, if the parents have a negative attitude towards the foreign language, the people speaking the language or the community of the language, in such cases, the parents do not encourage and support their children to learn the language. To support this, a study conducted by Knezevic and Senjug Golub (2015) on the attitude of parents towards foreign language learning, the study showed that regarding socio demographic variables, the parents who have a higher education level have a positive attitude towards the foreign language learning, whilst those parents who have a lower education background have less positive attitude. This shows that, more highly educated parents are more informed about the importance of learning foreign language. Additionally, the learner's attitude towards foreign language learning is also important. If they have a positive attitude towards the target language, they put in more effort to learn it faster. However, if the children or learners have a negative attitude towards the language they are learning, the culture, the community, and even the setting where the process of learning takes place, do not encourage them to learn the foreign language.

In a study conducted by Griva and Chouvarda (2012) on parent's attitude towards learning foreign language, they selected 50 parents randomly for their study. They found out that most of the participated parents believed that for a better future for their children, it is better to learn two foreign languages so that the children can successfully communicate in the globalized world. Moreover, the majority of the

parents believed that the earlier is the better to learn foreign languages, whilst some parents believed that it is crucial children first learn their mother language perfectly before getting involved in learning another language. Moreover, Griva and Chouvarda (2012) discovered that the young parents are keen to send their children to English schools while the older parents preferred that their children need to learn the mother language first. In conclusion, based on the aforementioned discussion, many parents are believed that to provide a better future for children, learning foreign language is important. Moreover, they encourage and assist their children to learn foreign language particularly early age foreign language learning process is beneficial and has positive effect on the personality, social statuses, and the prospects of their children's future.

1.2 Bilingualism and identity

Bilingualism in its simplest form has been defined as knowing two languages and being more and less equally able in using the two languages. The definition seems easy at first, but when it is discussed in detail, it becomes far more complicated. This is because the classification of types of bilingualism and bilinguals have been acknowledged differently based on the level of frequency and efficiency. Based on this, there are bilinguals who are highly fluent in both languages they speak, whereas some other bilinguals speak one language fluently and other language less fluent, in another word, some bilinguals have dominant or preferred language that they are master at. Accordingly, before classifying the types of bilinguals, it is essential to consider the different degrees of bilingualism.

For the aim of the current research, the definition that was postulated by Baker (2001) is going to be considered. They postulated that bilingualism is the ability to speak two dissimilar languages/varieties in different contexts. Hence, bilingualism is defined into two kinds which are, additive and subtractive. Additive bilingualism occurs when the learner learns both second/foreign and mother languages concurrently without losing the mother language. Whilst the subtractive refers to the situation where the learner loses the first/mother language when learning the second/foreign language. Probably, in Kurdistan, subtractive type of bilingualism might be common among the students of English medium schools. Students at those schools sometimes lose the proficiency in both writing and speaking skills of Kurdish language. Consequently, when speaking Kurdish spontaneously they switch to English or use

both English and Kurdish structure when having Kurdish conversation with people around them, this process is called code switching (Barker 1972, Blom & Gumperz 1972).

Code switching occurs among bilingual speakers who speak two or more languages/varieties in a single conversation (Auer 1995, Muysken 2000, Eppler 2010, Ali 2019). Accordingly, code switching is a common phenomenon among students at the English medium schools and even when they speak with their parents. This is because one of the reasons for code switching could be lack of aptitude in the two languages involved in code switching.

Cultural identity is not easy to be defined as it is not strictly based on ethnicity because there are many people who identify themselves with multiple cultures, sometimes they do not speak the language of that community. Despite this, it is crucial to take concept of cultural identity into account in the process of learning language and investigating the influence of process of learning the target language on the cultural identity of the learner. Sociolinguistics and anthropologists are agreeing on the strong bond between language and cultural identity. They have shown that how people use language to form their identity in the societal bilingualism. Some researchers state that language does not always reflect one's cultural ethnicity, this is because there are many people who prefer or consider themselves as members of an ethnic community even though they don't even speak the language used in that community. Whilst some other researchers state that speakers who accept the identity of an ethnic group, they use the language proudly. Moreover, Goffman (1963) postulates that identity cannot be chosen but imposed, in another word, people do not choose their identity, but imposed by others in which could be family, surroundings or community. Additionally, Weedon (1987) posits that there is a bond connection between culture and identity, and they are expressed via language. This shows that, the hearer recognizes the identity of the interlocutor through the language used. Based on this postulate, when the Kurdish students in the English-medium schools speak in English among themselves, this might impact on their identity and people may develop different views of their identity.

2. METHODOLOGY

This article discusses the attitudes of Kurdish parents from the city of Erbil towards their children's bilingualism in the private schools where English is the main language of the school.

In Kurdistan Region there are two types of schools which are public and private schools. Both types are running under the direct supervision of the ministry of education. For the purpose of this study, English medium schools are chosen.

The chapter starts with a statement of the research questions and hypotheses, as well as the research design to attain the target objective of this study (§2.1), followed by participant metadata (§2.2).

2.1 Research design

The data collection designated to attain the target objectives of this study is a questionnaire in which the participants are asked questions regarding their linguistic and relevant non-linguistic backgrounds such as providing their socio-demographic data like (gender, age, level of education, type of school they graduated from, languages used at home). Furthermore, this study explores participants' attitudes toward their children's bilingualism and examines the motives behind sending their children to those schools. The design of the questionnaire is close-ended questionnaire to enable participants to tick the appropriate answers and asked to express their level of agreement/disagreement with the statements on a five-point Likert scale such as (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree).

This research method has been designed to answer the following questions.

Firstly, what are the reasons behind the motivation of the parents to choose English medium schools and their attitude towards the educational experience of their children? Secondly, does learning English language has impact on Kurdish language and cultural identity? The third research question is, what are the differences between public/government schools and English medium/private schools? The final research question is, what are the concerns over children's first language?

2.2 Participants

The sample chosen for the current study involves 80 participants (the Kurdish parents of the children who study in the English medium schools in Erbil) randomly. Ranging in age from 30-50 years. All the participated parents have taken part in the current study voluntarily. The motive for selecting this number of participants is that 80 participates could be an approximate sufficient sample size based on the existing literature and should be adequate to provide representative data (Chouali 2016; Bago 2018, Ali 2019). The following charts provide a summary of the background information of the participants.

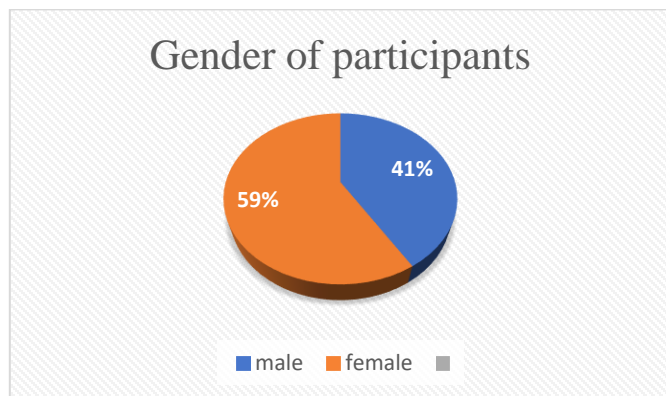


Chart 1. Gender distribution of the 80 participating parents

The above chart shows the participants' gender and illustrates that 59% of the participants were female while 41% were male.

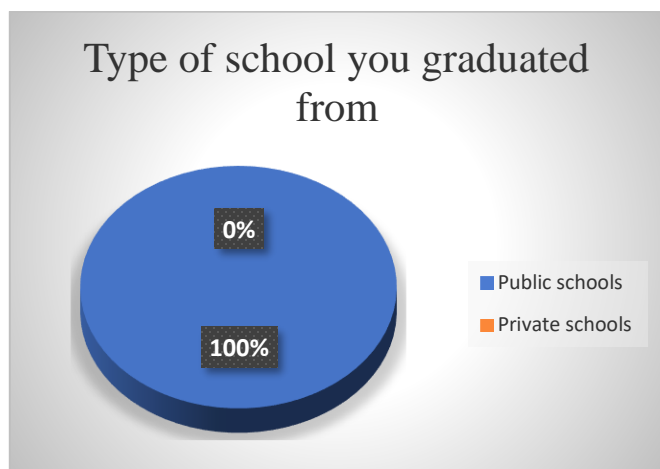


Chart 2. Shows the distribution of the participants' schooling

Chart 2 demonstrates the distribution of the school types that the participated parents attended. This chart shows that all the participants attended and graduated from public schools this is because during their student life only public schools were exist. Note that private schools started to open after 2012 based on the KRG government law No. 14 in 2012 for private schools and institutions.

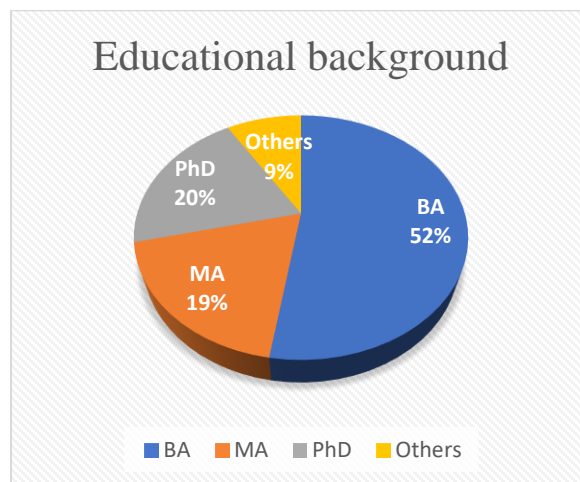


Chart 3. Distribution of participants' educational background.

The above chart illustrates the level of education achieved by the participating parents. The chart indicates that most of the participants have BA degree with total of 52%, 20% have a PhD degree, 19% had MA degree, whilst only 9% had other level of qualification.

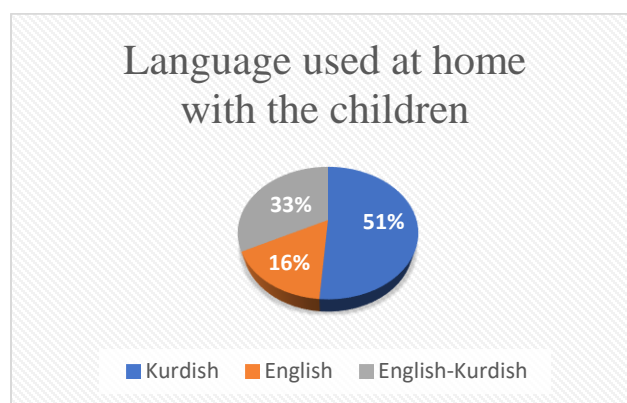


Chart 4. Distribution of the language used at home with their children.

Chart 4 indicates that 51% of the parents prefer to speak Kurdish with their children at home, 33% of the parents prefer to use both Kurdish and English when they have conversation with their children, and 16% of the parents use only English when they want to speak to their children.

3. RESULTS

The current section is intended to analysis and discuss the collected data for this study.

As was mentioned in (§2.1) the method that has been chosen for the present study is questionnaire and A Likert-type scale method to answer the questionnaire. To have as much information as possible about the non-linguistic background of the participants, the first section contains five questions about their non-linguistic background, focusing on information such as sex, age, educational level, the type of school they have graduated from, and the language they use at home. The second section is about 'parents' involvement' and contained five questions concentrating on expressing their level of agreement/disagreement with the statements on a five-point Likert scale as in (§2.1).

Question 1 Why parents send their children to English-medium schools.

Table 1. Parents' attitude towards bilingualism and private schools.

Parent's expectations	SA	A	N	D	SD
I have lost many opportunities in the past due to lack of efficiency in English	19 (24%)	27 (34%)	10 (12%)	14 (17%)	10 (13%)
In our community people who speak English are more respected	22 (27%)	25 (31%)	15 (19%)	11 (14%)	7 (9%)
Private schools help my children boost their knowledge than the public schools.	35 (44%)	26 (32%)	7 (9%)	8 (10%)	4 (5%)
The quality of public schools is deteriorating comparing to the private schools/ the private schools have better quality with high standards.	31 (39%)	37 (46%)	3 (4%)	7 (9%)	2 (2%)

Learning English helps my children to attain their goals	25 (31%)	34 (42%)	6 (8%)	10 (13%)	5 (6%)
Private schools help my children to expand not only their knowledge but also their worldview.	28 (35%)	32 (40%)	8 (10%)	8 (10%)	4 (5%)
Private schools not only teach my children English, but also prepare them for future careers	31 (39%)	30 (37%)	5 (6%)	10 (13%)	4 (5%)

The above table explains the attitude of the parents' various motivations for sending their children to the English medium schools. The result revealing that one of the parents' priorities are to pursue good educational opportunities for their children and have ambitions for the future careers, for which private schools prepare their children. The table clearly shows that the vast majority which is total (85%) of the participants agree on that deteriorating quality of the public schools is a crucial reason for sending their children to the private schools, whilst only 11% of the participants showed their disagreements, and 4% preferred to remain neutral. Another reason encourages the parents to send their children to private schools is the quality of the teaching and boosting future career. Briefly, 76% of the participants believe that private schools help enrich the knowledge of their children, and 73% postulate that through the private schools their children can achieve their goal. %75 of the participants assume that private schools help their children to have a better worldwide understanding. Moreover, 76% of the participants posit that to have a better future career for their children, choosing private schools is one of the most common motivations. Whilst 56% of the parents believe that they send their children to English medium schools is because they have lost many opportunities in the past due to lack of efficiency in English language. Finally, 58% agree on that unfortunately in our community people who speak English are more respected.

Question 2 The impact of learning English language on Kurdish language and cultural identity.

Table 2. Parents' attitude towards bilingualism and language use

Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
Learning English language has somehow westernised my children	12 (15%)	14 (17%)	13 (16%)	22 (28%)	19 (24%)
Learning English language has influenced my children's identity	15 (18%)	19 (24%)	7 (9%)	19 (24%)	20 (25%)
Learning English has impacted my children to be affected by western mannerisms and culture.	21 (26%)	24 (30)	8 (10%)	13 (16%)	14 (18%)
I prefer my children to learn more about western culture than Kurdish culture	9 (12%)	13 (16%)	9 (11%)	29 (36%)	20 (25%)
Learning English has influenced my children's attitude towards Kurdish culture and tradition	19 (24%)	27 (34%)	10 (12%)	11 (14%)	13 (16%)
Society has become westernized and Kurdish language is not as valued anymore	23 (29%)	30 (37%)	7 (9%)	12 (15%)	8 (10%)
The government has played a negative role in undervaluing the Kurdish language	27 (34%)	35 (44%)	2 (2%)	9 (11%)	7 (9%)

Table 2 presents a summary about the attitude of the parents towards their children's bilingualism and language use. The results explain that parents believe that learning English at the early age might affect the attitude of their children towards westernization. Moreover, parents are more concerned about Kurdishness and identity loss, this will come from prioritizing English language over Kurdish language. 52% of the participants assert that learning English language has not Westernized their children, while 34% believed that their children have been affected by English language learning towards western manners and culture, also 16% of the participants remained neutral. Moreover, 49% believed that learning English language has not affected their children's identity with a slight difference 42% said it actually has affected their children's identity. The majority of the parents (61%) prefer that their children should learn more about Kurdish culture while only 28% wants their children to learn more about western culture, and 11% were not too much concerned about this. Even though the majority of the parents do not want their children prioritize western culture over Kurdish culture, but the data shows that 58% of the parents already know that their children' cultural identity have been affected by western culture through learning English language. Only 30% of the parents think that learning English language did not change the attitude of their children towards Kurdish culture and tradition. This means that, the parents agree on that if their children do not speak Kurdish regularly, they might lose their Kurdish identity because the more they practice English is the more their Kurdish language gets rotten. This comes from the unfortunate fact that society has become westernized and Kurdish language is not as valued anymore, as 66% of the parents assume that the society is more towards western and forgetting about the Kurdish language, culture, and tradition. While only 25% of the parents disagree with that and posit that still Kurdish culture is valued in the society. The factors behind that are the negative role of the government in this perspective, as the government has not step forward positively to promote Kurdish language and, as 78% of the participants believe that the government have played a negative role in undervaluing the Kurdish language while only 20% assume that the government played a positive role.

Question 3. The differences between public/government schools and English medium / private schools.

Table 3. Summary of the quality of public and private schools

Questions	SA	S	N	D	SD
The quality of public schools is deteriorating compared to the English medium schools.	31 (39%)	37 (46%)	3 (4%)	7 (9%)	2 (2%)
English medium schools have a better academic achievement	25 (31%)	27 (34%)	11 (14%)	10 (12%)	7 (9%)
Class sizes in English medium schools are usually smaller to compare to those in public schools	29 (36%)	37 (46%)	4 (5%)	6 (8%)	4 (5%)
English medium schools have a better reputation in society compared to public schools.	26 (32%)	34 (42%)	3 (4%)	11 (14%)	6 (8%)
English medium schools give more attention to students on a one-to-one basis than public schools.	27 (34%)	39 (49%)	2 (2%)	7 (9%)	5 (6%)

Table 3 summarises the quality of private schools versus public schools and the parents' motivation for choosing the private schools over public schools for their children. The most important reason to choose private schools is the English language and the low

quality of the public schools. 85% of the parents believe that the quality of the public schools is deteriorated and prefer their children to learn in a modern and convenient environment, this comes from their own experience when they attended public schools, they even believe that in their time public schools despite the fact that the quality of teaching style was basic due to the wars and economic crisis, compared to now the quality of the public schools is even worse as they hear this from friends who have children at public schools.

The parents believe that education is business nowadays. While only 11% of the parents disagree with that and 9% of them are staying neutral. Another highest motivation is that 83% of parents postulate that the English medium schools give more attention to the students on a one-to-one basis than the public schools. Only 15% of the parents did not agree with that and think public schools give attention to the students. Another key reason for choosing English medium schools is that 82% of the participants posit that the English medium schools provide a better environment to their students to learn because the class sizes in English medium schools are usually smaller to compare to those in public schools, whilst only 13% of the participants thought public schools can also provide a good learning/teaching environment of the students and the class sizes are fair.

Moreover, another motivation among the parents is that the reputation of the English medium schools has led them to choose those schools for their children, as 74% of the parents assume that English medium schools have a better reputation in society compared to public schools. Whilst only 22% of the parents believe that public schools also have a good reputation in the society. In addition, those parents agreed with the statement that private schools help my children to boost their knowledge than the public schools, are 73% while 21% students can also improve their knowledge in the public schools and 6% of the participants remained undecided. This is because the parents believe that the English medium schools do not rely on the drilling method of teaching. These have made their children to be more creative and self-learners. Further motivations for choosing English medium schools over public schools is that 65% of the parents suggested English medium schools have a better academic achievement for the previous reasons as well as their students work in group projects that involve critical thinking and creativity inspirations. While only 21% disagreed with that and 14% remained undecided.

Question 4 What are the concerns over children's first language?

Table 4. Summary of impact of lack of mother language proficiency

Questions	SA	S	N	D	SD
Lack of mother language (Kurdish) may isolate children from their society in the future	29 (32%)	27 (30%)	12 (14%)	12 (13%)	10 (11%)
I don't speak English, so I feel bad about not being able to understand my children when they ask for something in English	12 (15%)	15 (19%)	12 (15%)	19 (24%)	22 (27%)
Learning English language in early age can lead to a loss of the Kurdish language, and the inadequate mastery of Kurdish language makes it more difficult to learn a foreign language.	12 (15%)	17 (21%)	13 (16%)	20 (25%)	18 (23%)
My children's mastery in Kurdish language is deteriorating in vocabulary. This has made my children to be less sociable than their friends who have better Kurdish language skills.	15 (19%)	18 (22%)	14 (18%)	20 (25%)	13 (16%)
The loss of Kurdish language undermines my children's sense of identity and belongingness, which will uproot the community in the end.	17 (21%)	24 (30%)	16 (20%)	13 (16%)	10 (13%)

Table 4 explains a summary of the parents' attitude towards their children's mother language loss. Lack of mother language (Kurdish) may isolate children from their society in the future, so it is the main concern of the parents because in many of the private schools,

English language is taught especially in the English medium schools and only one Kurdish subject is taught. As a result, private school students experience some kind of subtractive bilingualism in which they might lose the proficiency of writing, reading, and speaking of Kurdish language, this leads them to switch from Kurdish to English while speaking with others or want to express themselves in Kurdish. As it can be seen in the table 62% of the parents fear that in future their children experience isolation due to lack or incompetence in Kurdish language. While 24% of the parents showed no concern about that and think the lack of mother language proficiency will not affect the future of their children. 14% of them remained neutral.

The second concern of the parents about their children's bilingualism was about the loss of Kurdish language undermines their children's sense of identity and belonging, which will uproot the community in the end. 51% of the parents are concerned about that the government must seriously act in this regard and issue an order to force the private schools to concern more about Kurdish language otherwise undermining Kurdish language will uproot the Kurdish society in the end. Despite this 29% of the parents are more concerned about the future career of their children and believe that English is more considered and important for the job opportunities worldwide as well as for being accepted to by international universities or high-quality local universities. Surprisingly the result revealed that 20% of the participants have a neutral stance towards the future of their children's loss of mother language and sense of identity and belongings. Moreover, 41% of the parents afraid of that their children's mastery in Kurdish language is deteriorating in vocabulary, this has made their children to be less sociable than their friends who have better Kurdish language skills. Vocabulary loss will lead children to switch to English language to compensate the lack of Kurdish vocabulary and this creates codeswitching from Kurdish to English, as some of the researchers believe that code switching might occur due to the lack of vocabulary or proficiency in both languages involved in the conversation (Myers-Scotton 1993). Surprisingly, equally the same percentage of the parents disagree with that and do not think that their children's proficiency in Kurdish language is deteriorating in vocabulary, and if their children is not sociable is not because of the shame of lack of proficiency in Kurdish but they actually want to learn and study more for a better future. Also, 18% of the parents preferred to remain neutral.

Furthermore, 36% of the participants assume that learning the English language in early age can lead to a loss of the Kurdish language, and the inadequate mastery of Kurdish language makes it more difficult to learn a foreign language. And 48% of the participants disagree with that and assume that learning second/foreign language have not a direct relationship with learning with the mastery of the mother language. 16% of the participants had a neutral stance. 51% of the parents disagree with that not being able to speak English fluently has created a barrier not being able to understand their children when they ask for something in English, whilst 24% of them are agree with that and they feel bad not being able to understand their children when they ask for something in English, whilst 15% of the parents remained undecided.

Question 5. What are the concerns over children's first language?

Table 5. summary of the concerns over children's first language?

Questions	SA	S	N	D	SD
Lack of recognition for Kurdish language means lack of respect for the culture as well	28 (35%)	31 (39%)	7 (9%)	9 (11%)	5 (6%)
Children's mother language is crucial to their identity. Maintaining mother language helps children value their heritage and identity which contributes to a positive self-concept	26 (33%)	24 (30%)	17 (21%)	9 (11%)	4 (5%)
My children's opinions have	14	17	12	27	20

changed about being Kurdish since they started learning English?	(16%)	(19%)	(13%)	(30%)	(22%)
My children feel a sense of loss because their bilingualism	8 (10%)	14 (17%)	19 (24%)	20 (25%)	19 (24%)
My children feel that by having more cultural identity make them feel like citizens of the world	19 (24%)	28 (35%)	14 (17%)	10 (13%)	9 (11%)

The table illustrates that parents do not have too much concern about their children's loss of Kurdish language or/and identity, as the table revealed that 74% of the participants agree on that lack of recognition for Kurdish language means lack of respect for the culture as well, but unfortunately the results from previous tables and current table show that parents' awareness is not satisfactory in this regard. 17% of the participants believed that lack of recognition for Kurdish language does not have anything to do with the culture as they have brought up their children with Kurdish culture and they have respect to Kurdish culture. 9% of the participants are unsure about the statement and think that as far as learning English language provide a good future career for their children, culture can be learned from home as the environment is Kurdish. Moreover, regarding the relationship between identity and language, the participated parents in the questionnaire reported that 59% of the parents discussed that there is no relationship between the foreign or second language learning and their children's culture or identity. They believe that their children feel that by having more cultural identity make them feel like citizens of the world.

Whilst 24% of the parents disagree with this statement and ironically 17% of the parents show no concern about that if their children will get affected by western

culture via English language, on the contrary, 74% of the parents stated that lack of recognition for Kurdish language means lack of respect for the culture as well, and 17% of them stated that lack of Kurdish language does not have anything to do with the culture and 9% of the parents remained undecided. Furthermore, 63% of the parents have concerned that children's mother language is crucial to their identity. Maintaining mother language helps children value their heritage and identity which contributes to a positive self-concept, and they believe that children would lose Kurdish identity steady if they don't have mastery in Kurdish language. While 11% disagree with that and they are not concern about identity loss and the culture influence of learning English on Kurdish language and culture. Unfortunately, 21% of the parents have no concern about the tie between language and culture maintenance. Despite the fact that parents are aware of important relationship between language and culture, the data revealed that 25% of the parents reported that their children's opinions have changed about being Kurdish since they started learning English, while 52% of the participants disagree with that and stated learning English language have not changed their opinion about being Kurdish and Kurdishness. Also, 13% of the participants have neutral stance.

Furthermore, for the statement of "My children feel a sense of loss because their bilingualism", 49% of the parents stated that they do not agree and assured that their children have not got lost because of their bilingualism but also have increased their awareness about world and how important is to be bilingual to learn more about other cultures. 27% of the parents agree with that and think that their children are confused about being bilinguals. 24% of the parents did not have any comment on this and believe that bilingualism will provide a chance for their children to decide about their own culture identity in the future.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section discusses the attained results in relation to the research questions. The first question addressed 'the reasons for sending children to English-medium schools' come up with result that parents' priorities is to seek good educational chances and provide fortunate future careers for their children, for this reason they have chosen the private schools for their children. Moreover, parents discussed that deteriorating quality of the public schools and ineffective teaching, and learning is major concern for sending their children to the private schools. Another reason encourages the parents to send their children to

private schools is the quality of the teaching and boosting future career as the parents believed that private schools support enhancing the knowledge of their children and through the private schools their children can attain their goal as well as have a better worldwide understanding.

Despite this, some parents were not satisfied with the medium of the private schools, but they did not have another option. Moreover, parents postulated in the past they have lost many opportunities due to lack of proficiency in English language, this made them to think that English medium school is going to be a better choice for their children for a better future career also those who speak English are well-respected in the community. Studies showed that how parents' social and economic motivation reflect on their children in learning second/foreign languages. In a study, Toukoma (2000) states that those families who have higher socio-economic classes their children can have high levels of conceptual skills motivated in both English and the mother language. Whilst children from lower socio-economic backgrounds whose parents tend to have many challenges in life, their mother language might tend to deteriorate, in return the second/foreign language tends to develop. In this current study, this could be vice versa as some public schools despite the lower quality compared to private schools, but the education is in Kurdish. Therefore, those children from higher socio-economic communities that their parents are faced with challenge of lack of time because they work long hours and are not spending time properly with their children, semi bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism might tend to develop among their children especially if their school education is in English.

The second research question addressed 'the impact of learning English language on Kurdish language and cultural identity'. The results illustrate that some parents are actually concerned about the impact of English language on their children's behaviour and have westernized their children for example their children started to reject some of the old tradition and do not behave the way their parents do. Moreover, their children started up dressing like western young people and practice what they see from the movies or shows. While some parents believed that their children only learn English and being with English native speakers help the students to improve their English fast and reported that English has not westernized their children on the contrary their children have maintained their Kurdish culture. The fear of some of the parents is that their children gradually replace the Kurdish language and its cultural identity with English

mannerism and culture. Some of the parents didn't only relate this to the English school mediums, but also believed that society has become westernized and Kurdish language is not as valued anymore. Some of the parents relate this to the negative effect of the social media and TVs as they show many programs that are not adequate to the Kurdish convention and culture. The vast majority of the parents agree with that, unfortunately government have played a negative role in undervaluing the Kurdish language, not only in the education sector but also all the sector especially tourism sector and business as no one can get an even basic job without not knowing English and Arabic languages.

The third research question addressed 'the differences between public/government schools and English medium / private schools. The results indicate that the majority of the parents agree with the statement that the quality of public schools is deteriorating compared to the English medium schools. Also believed that the government have responsibilities to regulate the education system and reduce the increasing social segregation between public and private schools. In addition, parents postulated that English medium schools have a better academic achievement, and private schools provide a friendly environment for their students where different activities are being conducted to enthusiast their student to study better and harder. Through these various academic programs, students have been enabled to boost their knowledge. Despite this, the data revealed that another factor that encourage parents sending their children to private schools is the reputation of those schools in society, in particular in urban areas where parents have various options and choices between different type of schools. The data exposed that parent from socially higher strata would like to register their children in private schools rather than public schools. There could be several factors motivating parents decide to think private schools is the best option for their children, such as special educational profile and the belief that private schools promise a better future. Moreover, another motivation could be social distinction, like conscious separation from other social groups.

The fourth research question addressed, 'concerning over children's first language'. The data revealed statistically significant variations in both negative and positive attitudes towards this research question. The data revealed that the parents have different idea that lack of Kurdish language might isolate their children from society in future. Based on the collected date, it's due to the process of globalization and the necessitating of a global language like English, and when globalization reduces the cultural diversity, it is possible in future geographical borders become less

important in the one's eyes and can define themselves with different identity they want or like to be. However, many parents believed that lack of Kurdish language will have negative impact on their children in future and isolate them socially from their friends and families as they might get ridiculed for not knowing their mother tongue. Also, some parents were not very concerned about the significance of mother language in communication and negative impact of lack of mother language. In addition, the data showed that parents are worried that loss of Kurdish language undermines their children's sense of identity and belonging, which will uproot the community in the end. It is discussed that if mother languages do not transfer to children or another language dominates, that language will be endangered, and children start to lose their cultural identity and choose another identity. Moreover, the data showed that the parents were worried that their children's mastery in Kurdish language is deteriorating in vocabulary. This has made their children to be less sociable than their friends who have better Kurdish language skills. The linguists seek for preservation of the language components such as vocabulary, grammar, sounds and the tradition, moreover, teaching children the language at home and school (Dastgoshadeh and Jalalizadeh 2011). In such case, Saneka (2014) suggests that active collaboration is essential between home (parents) and schools especially if the teachers do not speak mother language (Kurdish) particularly for the early age of the children. But in the current study, the result showed that many parents motivate and encourage their children to use English as home language even though their own English proficiency is limited.

Although some parents reported that their children have gained mastered in vocabulary as they speak with them in Kurdish at home and helping them to find Kurdish meaning for those English vocabulary that their children use while speaking. This will help children to boost their Kurdish language because using one language make the communication much easier and less misunderstanding as well as overcome any obstacles that they experience at home or in the society. The parents believed that if their children lose their mother language, they will certainly lose some aspects of their cultural identity. As a result, this will cause that the children break their social ties with family members, friends, and other people in the society, this will have negative influence on both of their physical and mental health.

The fifth research question discussed the concerns over children's first language researchers assumed that an educational policy prioritizing English as a foreign language over the mother language would negatively impact identity, diminishing children's sense of

identity or causing a loss of identity (Bourdieu 1991). In this regard, the data showed that the parents agree with that children's mother language is crucial to their identity. Maintaining mother language helps children value their heritage and identity which contributes to a positive self-concept. The majority of the parents agreed with that lack of recognition for Kurdish language means lack of respect for the culture as well. Many parents doubt and criticize the government's dedication for not providing an appropriate standard for the education system. This could be another reason that there is a high tendency of the parents to distrust the public schools and choose private schools for their children. Bourn (2009) posits that students who venture their location for education and behave like mobile actor consider themselves as global citizen. Moreover, Gomez (2017) argues that students consider English language learning as essential way to adjust and adapt to life. The data also illustrated that parents are afraid that their children will think that having a more cultural identity will make them feel like citizens of the world. This has caused them to get confused because knowing about two or more different cultural backgrounds make them think they live or belong two or more different worlds. This creates confusion and isolation for the children as when they communicate with their family who speak Kurdish, they feel like they do not feel more comfortable and believe that they do not pretty fit in, therefore, they try to communicate and mingle with their friend circle who speak English. Then they all have the same feeling that they have created a wishful imagine or imagining culture that they are not belong to, this will create a confusion cultural identity for them. The majority of the parents agree with that and feel that their children have chosen more cultural identity to make them feel like citizen of the world. The data showed that some parents said their children have changed their opinion about being Kurdish since they started learning English, however, some other parents argued that learning English has not impacted on their children's opinion about Kurdishness because they only communicate in Kurdish and follow up all the Kurdish culture so that their children will increase their knowledge about Kurdish culture.

Overall, the study revealed that parents have positive attitude towards the private schools in Erbil, as it will promise a brilliant future career for their children and gaining more knowledge about world because of the school syllabus and classroom techniques have designed to engage students to involve in the process of learning, this various scientific and education activities stimulate students to learn fast. Friedrich Herbart (1898) who is known as one of the establishers

of scientific methods of education discusses that to have an effective teaching it is necessary to identify the interest of the learners and engage them with what they are to learn.

The loss of opportunity in the past and deteriorate the quality of the public schools compared to private schools is another main factor for parents to choose private schools for their children. Moreover, parents complained that the society is another motivation as those who speak English are more respected also have more chances for receiving job offers. Based on Ahmed (2015) students believe their mastery in English would provide a promising future career compared to those who do not speak English. Furthermore, Wongsu (2018) claims that in Thailand, English language proficiency plays a decisive role in current business settings and the environment of the workplace, as there are numerous companies recruit those applicants who have mastery in English language based on a test called Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). Furthermore, Pariwat (2020) in a study on motivation and attitudes towards English language learning, discussed that, 70% of the participants marked people respect them more if they speak English. his research found out that those who speak English are more respected in the society and they have better job opportunities compared to those who do not speak English. Similar to those studies conducted by (Ahmed 2015, Wongsu, 2018 and Pariwat 2020) the current study revealed that parents have positive attitude towards the private schools in Erbil, as it will promise a brilliant future career for their children and gaining more knowledge about world because of the school syllabus and classroom techniques have designed to engage students to involve in the process of learning, this various scientific and education activities stimulate students to learn fast.

Moreover, the parents' educational background plays an important role in their attitude towards English language and choosing private schools for their children. Chart 2. Shows that 91% of the parents have BA and higher university degree, they chose private schools over public school for a better future in all aspect of life for their children. As the data revealed that parents' attitude towards Kurdish language mastery is different among the parents, however, as the results from table 4 and 5 presented that majority of parents showed indifference towards their children's Kurdish language proficiency and cultural identity. This contrast with their awareness on how children's mother language is crucial to their identity and maintaining mother language helps children value their heritage and identity which contributes to a positive self-concept.

Chart 4 discussed that 51% of the parents prefer to speak Kurdish with their children at home, 33% of the parents prefer to use both Kurdish and English when they have conversation with their children, and 16% of the parents use only English when they want to speak to their children. According to the chart 4, 51% of the parents use Kurdish at home to communicate with their kids, whilst this result showed inadequacy with the results of table 4. Also, based on chart 1, 51% of the participants are female, this means mothers are more motivated to provide a better future and school environment for their children and also supporting their children by communicating with them in English or codeswitching between Kurdish and English at home to ameliorate their children's English effectively. Lambert and Taylor (1996) studied on Cuban mothers who live in America whose children studied in immersion programs, his study result found out that mothers are more concern about their children's language proficiency and stimulate their children to use more English than Spanish at home fully in English or by speaking both Spanish and English.

The study found out that, many of the children who study in private schools have lost or started to lose their Kurdish identity and have created a complete Western cultural imaginary due to the loss of sense of belongings to the Kurdish culture. According to Lakis (2010) cultural imaginary allows to imagine the social surroundings to see of ourselves and how we adjust into the world around us through the imagination that we have created for ourselves. This shows that cultural imaginary gives us the chance to practice the ways of living to make sense and have acceptability. It also permits us to have common understanding of how to communicate with one other and when we are doing so, to understand what we are up to (Taylor 2004).

Finally, Fillmore (1991) in a study postulated that learning second language means losing the first. In the study, Fillmore concentrated on the children's refugee families especially families from Southeast Asia in which the language and culture shifts resulted the breakdown of the families in term of cultural identity and customs. Fillmore (1991) discussed that parents support their children to learn English for the future career and its importance for their economic survival but not aware of that how learning second language at school plays a role in process of losing their cultural identity and customs. The participated in Fillmore's study reported that, they thought they can maintain the mother language without assist because the mother language is spoken at home, but when they realised that their children are losing their mother language was already too late to do anything about that.

Even though the context of the present study is not very comparable to Fillmore's study as English language is not main language spoken in Kurdistan, but the result is similar since both study shows how learning second/foreign language impacts the mother language and cultural identity negatively. Continuing using English over Kurdish language instantly as home language will enforce children frequently to give up Kurdish as native language even before they master English completely. It is not difficult for children to learn English, but this is obvious that second/ foreign language learning fall short of the language being learned. This raises up the concern of what if the children's effort fails to master English because as Selinker (1972) discusses those children end up with interlanguage fossilization in which when learning second language they keep taking rules from their mother language and incorrectly applying them to second/foreign language rather than with fully understanding versions of the second/foreign language. This sometimes might be because the children spend times speaking English with their friends who speak English or parents rather than with their teachers. Therefore, the English they speak and hear frequently is not the perfect version of standard spoken by their teachers.

In general, the results of this study showed that the English medium in schools has a negative impact on children's mother tongue and cultural identity, but this does not mean that English should be abandoned in the private school curriculum. It is obvious that children have the right to learn English, but the time is just not right; therefore, until their Kurdish as their mother tongue is stable, English should not be required to be learned to avoid any encounter with English. Therefore, a good collaboration and cooperation between the teachers and parents is necessary to reduce and avoid the damage the children receives from the possibility of interlanguage fossilization, also parents should be informed of the negative causes of not speaking with their children in Kurdish at home, teachers also should be warned of not encouraging the children to use English more frequently outside of the classroom or even not to encourage parents speaking in English with their children at home.

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