

Swear Words in Southern Kurmanji – Types, Functions and Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

Swearing is a linguistic phenomenon that exists across all cultures and societies. The Kurdish culture is one of those cultures in which swear words and expressions are abundant. The current study examines the types, functions and instances of swear words and expressions and the attitudes Kurdish people of southern Kurdistan, whose dialect is southern Kurmanji, have towards this aspect of language. To collect data on swearing in Kurdish language, 208 participants answered a questionnaire and 80 of those participants partook in unstructured group interviews. Results indicate that Kurmanji speakers of southern Kurdistan use swear words primarily as a means of venting out anger. The participants swear mainly with acquaintances and friends targeting their character and intelligence. The participants believe that swearing is wrong but a necessary evil, i.e. they are reluctant to resort to this linguistic phenomenon under certain circumstances (e.g.: anger and frustration). Speakers seem to avoid taboo or sexual swear words or expressions presumably due to the religious and cultural background of the participants. In addition, the use of swear words and expressions tends to be age and social status related, i.e. speakers, when using swear words and expressions do so minding age and social status of the other. This study will hopefully provide some insight into and highlight the sociolinguistic and cultural significance of this language phenomenon among speakers of southern Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish and Kurdish speakers as a whole.

KEY WORDS: Swearing, Southern Kurmanji, Types, Functions, Attitudes.

1. INTRODUCTION ¹

Using swear words and expressions is a universal linguistic phenomenon that is present in every language. There are variations in the ways in which offensive language or swearing is expressed across different languages and cultures (Cf. Tanaka, 2014, and Matsumoto, Y., Yoo, S., Hirai, M., & Matsumoto, D., 2013), but one thing is certain and that is, almost everyone swears, including the Kurds. The Kurds, particularly from Duhok, have a famous proverb pertaining to how the Kurds perceive of harsh words and swear words, which is “literally: swear words go up to the heavens and fall down in the laps of the swearers; meaning: swear words are only harmful to the ones who swear”. The use of offensive language or swearing serves different roles i.e. expressing frustration, anger, emphasis, humor among many other reasons (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008), (Stapleton, K., McAllister, H. and Dodd, R., 2016).

Swearing is also of different types, there are swear words that are sexual in nature, those that are playful and those that are sinister and evil. This linguistic phenomenon of using swear words and expressions has been studied by linguists across the world and a good part of literature on linguistics has been dedicated to shed light on this subject area, as will be demonstrated in the literature review of this research paper. However, there has been very few if any research conducted on this phenomenon in Kurdish language, particularly, the Southern Kurmanji dialect that is spoken mostly in south-east Turkey and north-west of Kurdistan region, i.e. Duhok governorate, which is where the study population is from. This negligence is a costly one as an important socio-linguistic phenomenon is not well covered and understood. It is for this reason, among other reasons, this research is undertaken.

This research aims at finding the reasons why Kurmanji speakers of Kurdish use swear words and

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expressions. It also aims at finding the types of swear words Kurmanji speakers use when they swear and it also aims at determining the attitudes they have of this phenomenon. To meet these aims, the following research questions are raised:

1. What types of swear words and expressions do Kurmanji speakers use?
2. What are the reasons for which Kurmanji speakers use swear words and expressions?
3. What do Kurmanji speakers think of this phenomenon?

Although this is a small scale study, notwithstanding this, it is an attempt among other attempts that will perhaps bring this phenomenon to the attention of other linguists in Kurdistan region and outside of the region perhaps by comparative linguists and linguists who are interested in the Kurdish language and culture.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Andersson and Trudgill (1995) state that cursing is an expression that is culturally taboo or stigmatized; not literally perceived of and the speaker intends to express strong emotions or attitudes towards the person whom they are swearing at. Swearing evokes strong emotions and includes various attitudes, subject matters related to religion, sexuality, sanity, defecation and nationality are utilized when swearing (Hughes, 2006), and it is for these reasons also that, according to Yule (2014), swearing is avoided. Furthermore, Eckert (2000) reported that cursing is defining of social class and gender traits. He found that people of lower social classes cursed more often than those of higher social classes, additionally, males cursed more often than females regardless of the social classes they belonged to. Females, from the higher social classes, expressed aversion towards cursing. Psychologically however, Wardhaugh (2003) states that offensive language and profanity cause embarrassment, shame and anxiety to the person who is sworn at. He further states that the subject matter of swearing can be variable which includes, but not limited to, topics of sex, disease, secretions and excretions, bodily aspects, death, religion, etc. Jay (2000) states that swearing stems from underlying personality traits. For instance, swearing could indicate a person's tendency for violence or hostility, sexual anxiety or repressiveness and/or their religiosity. Context and how close someone is to the other are also important when determining the willingness to swear (Fägersten, 2000). O'Connor (2006) states that swearing entails personal penalization; is harmful for society and it could be punishable by law in certain contexts, e.g. on formal occasions. As per the Iraqi penal code, swearing is punishable by law (Cf. Ballo, 2012).

With regards to studies in this area, a body of research

has been dedicated to this area across the world. For example, Baudin and Paramasivam (2014) conducted a study on the swearing habits of 51 female college students in Malaysia using a questionnaire and interviews. In the study, they found that the participants used swear words and expressions on a regular basis. The participants reported using swear words pertaining to scatology and sexual references. The participants also reported that they used swear words when venting out strong emotions like anger and frustration in addition to showing solidarity to someone. Moreover, the participants stated that they only swear with their female friends, and rarely if ever with male friends, strangers, or parents and teachers. In another study conducted by Setiawan and Fatimatuazzahroh (2018) who collected data via observing written and spoken conversations in addition to interviews with 10 Indonesian males with regards to their swearing patterns and the reasons why they swear. The researchers found that the participants swore for a number of reasons, namely, expressing strong emotions, intending abuse, emphatic swearing, idiomatic, etc. The most prominent types of swearing, however, were expressing strong emotions and intending abuse. It is noteworthy that the researchers suggested that swearing is context reliant. They also found that the participants swore in the presence of other males and avoided swearing with other groups. Notwithstanding all of this, these two studies had major drawbacks. For one, the studies are polarized to one of the genders, and as Setiawan and Fatimatuazzahroh (2018) suggested in their study, a person's gender does affect the tendency to swear or not. Furthermore, in both studies the number of participants was small, particularly with Setiawan and Fatimatuazzahroh's (2018) study that only collected data from 10 participants. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized. Another drawback, particularly in Setiawan and Fatimatuazzahroh's (2018) study, is the data collection methods that have been utilized. The methods are not clear, although at first glance this does not seem to be the case, however, the data collection methods had been utilized incorrectly.

Shankar and Zarei (2019) investigated the causes of profanity in high school students' conversations in addition to the effect of profanity on the students' communication skills. To meet this end, 100 participants answered a questionnaire. The results indicate that teenagers, at high school level, swear in the presence of friends, this factor was the reason why Malaysian high school teenagers use profanity. Upon further investigation, as to why the participants used profanity in their speech, the participants reported a sense of domination over the course of a conversation. When asked how they have learnt swear words and expressions, participants reported that they learnt swearing from music videos they have watched, parents,

movies and social media.

In the context of the Middle East, few studies have been conducted, and it is why this area appears to be neglected or not studied extensively by linguists. Salih and Raoof (2022) used the corpus of the English language for swear words and compared the swear words with Arabic swear words which they collected from language experts of the Iraqi Arabic. They studied specifically human qualities swear words. They concluded that a number of factors, including age, gender, social and economic status in addition to the relationship of the speaker to the listener, all play a role in the communicative act of swearing. While it is true that the researchers in this study pinned down the reasons why a speaker of the Iraqi dialect of Arabic might swear, however, the researchers relied on language experts' opinion on this. While the contribution of the language experts is important when explaining this linguistic phenomenon, it does not capture the natural instances of speakers using profanity in their speech. The opinions could at best be described as hypotheses, which require investigation.

In comparison to Salih and Raoof's (2022) study, Al-Dilaimy and Omar (2018) conducted a sociolinguistic study on the use of taboo in Iraqi Arabic relying on natural instances in which taboos occur. They used interviews, which they dubbed the "ethnographic approach", to study this area. In this approach, the data comes from spontaneous conversations in natural settings. The participants were males, whose ages ranged from 16 to 70, from the Dilaimy tribe, a well renowned tribe from Al-Anbar governorate in Iraq. AL-Dilaimy and Omar (2018) stated that the use of taboos is context dependent and is used for different reasons, but anger was the main factor. With regards to the nature of taboo, it involved references to sexual activities; sexual organs in addition to taboo that is intended to demean the intelligence of the addressed and taboo that does not carry nefarious intentions: what can be inferred as joking. One of the minor issues with the study above is the reliance on one tribe, among thousands, to study taboos in Iraqi Arabic. Moreover, it is not clear how many participants partook in this study and hence it is difficult to gauge how generalizing the results of this study could be.

As to the Kurdish people, it should be noted that the Kurdish people both socially and culturally are influenced by religion. Vali, A. (2011) believes that religion plays an important role in the lives of Kurds and Islamic themes have dominated all forms of literature and Kurdish writings. Furthermore, in an article, Ibrahim (2016) suggests that using vulgar language is frowned upon in Kurdish society and that the people who swear are often viewed as uneducated, less mature and less civilized. As for studies in Kurdistan region and Kurdish

language, particularly the southern Kurmanji dialect, in relation to swearing, there is extremely limited data, if there is any. Hence, this study will hopefully identify the gaps in the literature and pave the way for future research.

Although it is difficult to hypothesize about this sociolinguistic phenomenon in Kurmanji as there is very little if any literature on this topic in Kurdish language. However, judging from previous literature mentioned in this section, the following hypotheses can be put forward in relation to types and functions of swearing in Kurmanji and the attitudes Kurmanji speakers have towards this phenomenon:

1. Due to their cultural background, Kurmanji speakers use swear words that are not sever in nature, i.e. those that are not related to sex.
2. Kurmanji speakers, as with speakers from other languages mentioned in the literature review, mainly use swear words to express anger and when they are angry.
3. Kurmanji speaker, due to religion and culture, believe that using swear words or expressions is wrong.

3. METHODOLOGY

Participants

Data was collected from 208 participants, who live in the city of Duhok, north-west of Kurdistan region of Iraq. The participants were of different ages and they all spoke the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish. In addition, they were all educated and of different educational backgrounds. It is important to point out that only 80 of the participants took part in the group interviews, as some declined to take part in the interviews because those participants were short on time. However, all participants took part in answering the questionnaire.

Data Collection Methods

Collecting data on the area being investigated was conducted mainly through a questionnaire and unstructured group interviews. The questionnaire was produced on Google Forms and was sent to the participants via telephone and the internet. The questionnaire investigated 5 facets of the problem, that is, the focus of this study, mainly, the settings in which swearing occurs, the nature of swearing words and phrases, the reasons/functions of swearing, frequency of swearing and attitudes towards swearing. The questionnaire was available in English and in Kurdish for convenience. The questions in the questionnaire were as follows:

Questionnaire on "Swear Words in Southern Kurmanji – Types, Functions and Attitudes"

Choose the appropriate answer(s) below:

- How often do you swear?
 - Rarely Occasionally Often Always
 - What are the contexts in which you swear?
- (Select those that apply)
- With parents
 - With children
 - With friends
 - With strangers
 - With colleagues
 - With superiors
 - What swear words/phrases do you use (Select those that apply)
 - Insulting intelligence
 - Insulting the character
 - Humorous swearing, i.e. swearing for fun.
 - Auxiliary swearing, i.e. this fu*king computer is a piece of sh*t.
 - Scatological swearing
 - Sexual references
 - Why do you swear? (Select those that apply)
 - I swear to vent out my frustration.
 - I swear when I am in pain.
 - I swear to humiliate the other.
 - I swear to destroy the character of the other.
 - I swear because I cannot physically harm the other, so I attack verbally, i.e. swearing.
 - I swear when I want to release my anger.
 - I swear when I am joking.
 - I swear to make sexual references.
 - I swear when I want to show the importance of something.
 - I swear to express disbelief/ shock.
 - What is your opinion about swearing?
 - Swearing is extremely inappropriate. No one should swear.
 - Swearing is not appropriate, but sometimes one has no choice but to swear.
 - Swearing is bad, but I don't mind using it.
 - Swearing is fine, and I always use it.
- As for the interviews, as stated before, the group interviews were unstructured in order to mitigate the sensitivity of the topic and not put the participants in an embarrassing situation. The duration of the interviews was short ranging from ten minutes to fifteen minutes maximum. The following questions were asked during the group interviews:
- When did you start using swear words and expressions?
 - How did you learn swear words and expressions?
 - How do you feel when you swear?
 - Why do some people resort to blaspheming?
 - Is blaspheming a novel phenomenon in the

southern Kurmanji speaking society?

Reliability and Validity

To make sure that the questionnaire and interview are reliable and have validity, the face validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by a group of experts (see appendix A) specialized in the area of study through an evaluation form (see appendix B). The contributions of the experts were then taken into consideration and modifications were made if necessary. Next, the questionnaire and interview questions were put to a pilot test on a subset of the study's population. After the pilot study, the internal consistency of the items on the questionnaire and interview was checked. Using statistics to meet this end, Cronbach's Alpha (CA)'s metrics were used to check for the internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha (CA)' values for the items on the questionnaire and interview were (≤ 0.70), which indicate that the questions on the questionnaire and interview are reliable and may be used to collect data on the area of study.

Data Analysis Methods:

Data was analyzed using the inbuilt add on from Google Forms. Google Forms provided neat analysis with info-graphics and charts and it came in handy when this study was conducted. The gathered data was submitted unto the statistical analysis program SPSS (SPSS, 2019), in order to analyze the data statistically. Frequency procedure and Chi-square test were performed to compare the observed versus expected proportions among the studied groups within each category. The pie charts, as percentages of the studied categories, were achieved using the same previous program.

Ethical Considerations:

Because this topic is sensitive, all precautions, ranging from not collecting any personal information to giving the participants the liberty not to partake in the study or withdraw from the study, were strictly followed. Every audio recording that was made during the interviews were produced with the knowledge of the interviewed and the participants were promised to have all of the recordings deleted once this research paper is published.

4.RESULTS

After data were collected, Google Forms automatically produced the results below for the questionnaire in the form of frequency and percentage. In addition, SPSS data analysis program was used to perform a chi-square test to see statistical significance. First a contingency table was created to enter the responses of the participants to the

questionnaire. Next, the expected frequencies were calculated for each category and finally, chi-square was performed with an assumed significance level of ≤ 0.005 :

Frequency of Swearing

(Table 1) shows the percentages and cumulative percentages of the frequency of swearing. It could be noticed from the mentioned table, that the percentages of the frequency ranged from 13.1 % for Always up to 39.6 % for occasionally/sometimes, such difference, also reflect high variation among the groups (answer/s of the participants). Moreover, the Chi-square test showed a highly significant difference ($p < 0.01$) among the responding groups (See Table 2); this mean that for the frequency of swearing, there is a significant difference among the four groups. (Figure 1) illustrates the percentages of the different answering groups.

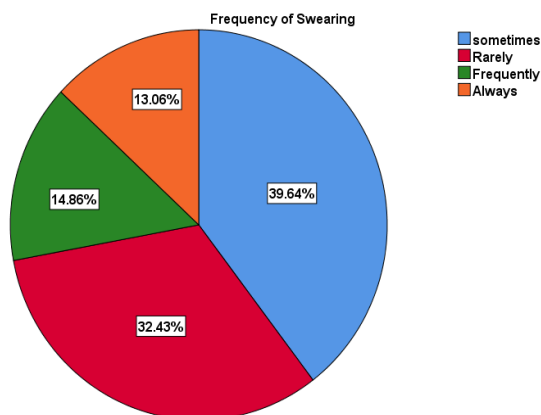


Figure 1. How often the participants swear.

Table 1

Frequency table for "How often do the participants swear?"

Frequency of Swearing	Frequency of Swearing	
	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sometimes	39.6	39.6
Rarely	32.4	72.1
Frequently	14.9	86.9
Always	13.1	100.0
Total	100.0	

Table 2

Chi-square Test Statistics for Frequency of Swearing. Note: (*) indicates statistical significance.

Frequency of Swearing	
Chi-Square	45.71
df	3
Asymp. Sig. (p value)	0.0001*

Context of Swearing

(Table 3) shows the percentages and cumulative percentages of the context of swearing. It could be

observed from the aforementioned table, that the percentages of the reasons ranged from 0.8 % for (with elderly) up to 69.1 % for (with friends), such difference, also reflects high variation among the groups (answer/s of the participants). In addition, the Chi-square test showed a highly significant difference ($p < 0.01$) among the answering groups (Table 4); this means that there is a significant difference among the seven groups in relation to the context of swearing. (Figure 2) illustrates the exact percentages of the answering groups.

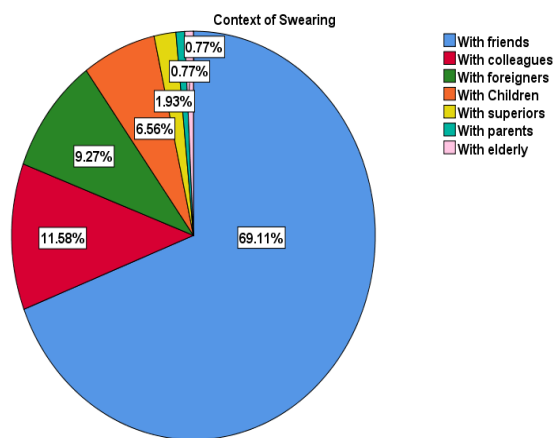


Figure 2. shows the settings during which participants swear.

Table 3

Frequency table for "The settings on which participants swear".

Context of Swearing	Context of Swearing	
	Percent	Cumulative Percent
With friends	69.1	69.1
With colleagues	11.6	80.7
With foreigners	9.3	90.0
With Children	6.6	96.5
With superiors	1.9	98.5
With parents	0.8	99.2
With elderly	0.8	100.0
Total	100.0	

Table 4

Chi-square Test Statistics for Context of Swearing. Note: (*) indicates statistical significance.

Context of Swearing	
Chi-Square	655.57
df	6
Asymp. Sig. (p value)	0.0001*

Type of Swearing

(Table 5) shows both the percentage and cumulative percentage of the Type of Swearing variable. It could be

noticed from the mentioned table that the percentages of the reasons ranged from 6.2 % for (Sexual) up to 25.4 % for (Personality related), such difference reflects high variation among the groups (answer/s of the participants). In other words, the Chi-square test appeared highly significant ($p < 0.01$) among the answering groups (Table 6); this mean that the type of swearing is really different among the six groups. Moreover, (Figure 3) illustrates the percentages of the answering groups.

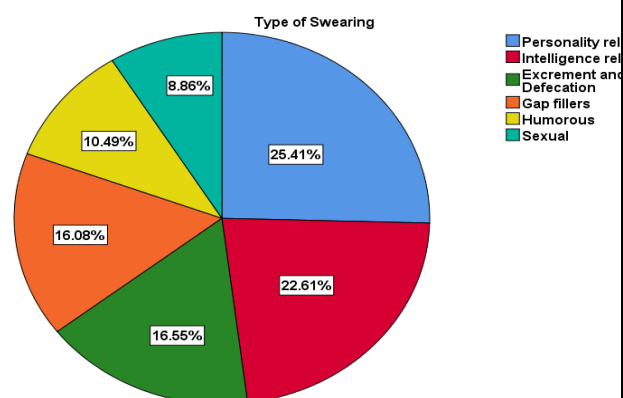


Figure 3. shows the types of swearing the participants resort to.

Table 5

Frequency table "The types of swearing participants used"

Type of Swearing	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Personality related	25.4	25.4
Intelligence related	22.6	48.0
Excrement and Defecation	16.6	64.6
Gap fillers	16.1	80.7
Humorous	10.5	91.1
Sexual	8.9	100.0
Total	100.0	

Table 6

Chi-square Test Statistics for Type of Swearing. Note: (*) indicates statistical significance.

Type of Swearing	
Chi-Square	54.37
df	5
Asymp. Sig. (p value)	0.0001*

Reason behind Swearing

(Table 7) shows both the percentage and cumulative percentage of the Reason/Reasons behind swearing. It

could be noticed from the mentioned table, that the percentages of the reasons ranged from 1.3 % for (Sexual purposes) up to 28.9 % for (Anger) as such, this difference reflects high variation among the groups (answer/s of the participants). As a result, the Chi-square test showed a highly significant difference ($p < 0.01$) among the answering groups (See Table 8). (Figure 4) illustrates the percentages of the answering groups.

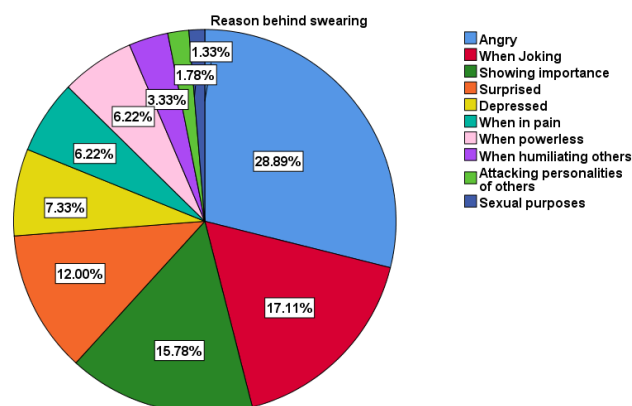


Figure 4. shows the reasons why the participants resort to swearing.

Table 7

Frequency table of Reason behind swearing

Reason behind swearing	Answers	Cumulative	
		Percent	Percent
Angry		28.9	28.9
When joking		17.1	46.0
Showing importance		15.8	61.8
Surprised		12.0	73.8
Depressed		7.3	81.1
When in pain		6.2	87.3
When powerless		6.2	93.6
When humiliating others		3.3	96.9
Attacking personalities of others		1.8	98.7
Sexual purposes		1.3	100.0
Total		100.0	

Table 8

Chi-square Test Statistics for Reason behind swearing. Note: (*) indicates statistical significance.

Reason behind swearing

Chi-Square value	300.40
df	9
Asymp. Sig. (p value)	0.0001*

Attitudes towards swearing

(Table 9) shows the percentage and cumulative percentage of the Attitudes towards swearing. It could be noticed from the mentioned table, that the percentages of the reasons ranged from 6.2 % for Wrong; fine up to 55.5 % for (Wrong; reluctant), such differences, also reflect high variation among the groups (answer/s of the participants). The Chi-square test appeared highly significantly different ($p < 0.01$) among the answering groups (See Table 10); this means that the Attitudes towards swearing is really different among the four groups. (Figure 5) illustrates the percentages of the answering groups.

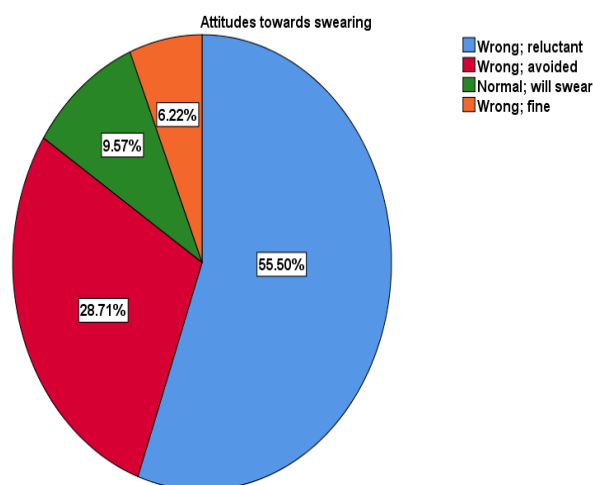


Figure 5. shows the participants' opinion on swearing.

Table 9
"The attitudes participants have of swearing".

		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Attitudes towards swearing	Wrong; reluctant	55.5	55.5
	Wrong; avoided	28.7	84.2
	Normal; will swear	9.6	93.8
	Wrong; fine	6.2	100.0
	Total	100.0	

Table 10

Chi-square Test Statistics for Frequency of Swearing. Note: (*) indicates statistical significance.

Attitudes towards swearing	
Chi-Square	128.32
df	3
Asymp. Sig. (p value)	0.0001*

As to the group interviews, whose main purpose was triangulation and adding more data to the questionnaire, all of the participants' answers to the questions were recorded using a voice recorder on an iPhone and the answers were noted down. The group interviews were unstructured to allow for a quick and facile discussion as the topic is sensitive. The group interviews were short often taking a maximum of 10 to 15 minutes. After the collection of the data pertaining to the interviews data coding was performed on the answers of the participants and the answers were categorized under separate themes/categories. The themes pertaining to the answers of the participants to the questions of the group interviews were as follows:

When did you learn Swearing?

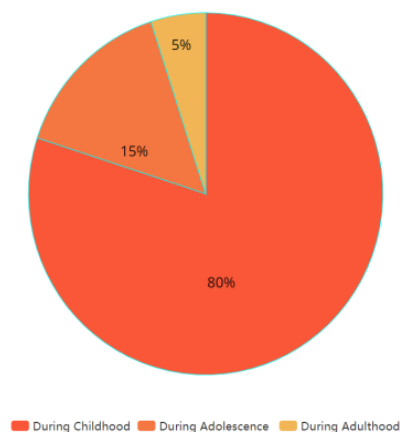


Figure 6. shows when the participants learned swearing.

The interview results showed (See figure 6) that the majority of participants (80%) reported that they learnt swearing during childhood. 15%, of the participants reported that it was during adolescence that they have learned swearing, while only 5% of participants reported that they learnt swear words and expressions during adulthood. The results indicate that there is a predominant trend towards childhood being the stage at which most of the participants of this study have first experiences with swearing. This distribution highlights a predominant trend toward childhood experiences among

the participants, suggesting that formative years may play a critical role in shaping the responses observed.

How did you learn to swear? Who Taught you?

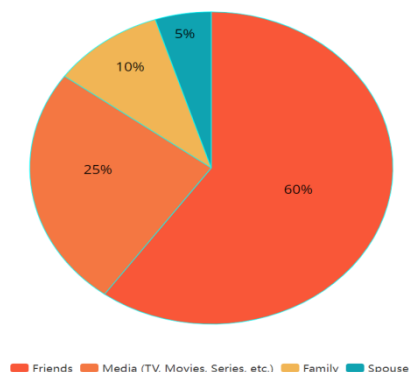


Figure 7. shows how the participants learned swearing.

(Figure 7) shows that the majority of participants (60%) reported that it is through friends they learnt swearing. 25% of the participants reported media to be the source where they learnt swearing from, while only 10% of participants reported family members being the ones they have learnt swearing from. A minority, 5%, reported that they have learnt swearing from their spouses. The results indicate that friends seem to be the first line of exposure to swearing.

How do you feel when swearing?

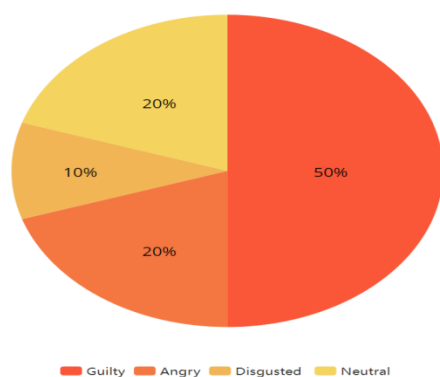


Figure 8. shows how the participants feel when they swear.

50% of participants as shown in (Figure 8) reported feeling guilty after swearing while 20% reported feeling angry and another 20% reported a sense of neutrality upon swearing. 10% of the participants reported being

disgusted at the instance of swearing. The results show that the majority of the participants have a looming sense of guiltiness upon swearing.

Why do people resort to blasphemy?

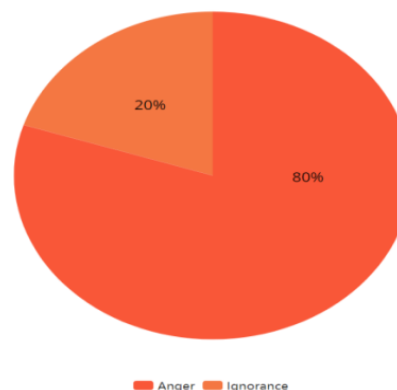


Figure 9. sheds light on as to why people resort to swear words that are blasphemous.

(Figure 9) shows that the majority of the participants (80%) believe that the use of blasphemous swear words and phrases stems mainly from anger, the remaining participants (20%) believe that ignorance is a factor in leading people to use blasphemous swear words and expressions. The results show clearly that anger is the main reason behind using blasphemous swear words and expressions.

5. DISCUSSION

Starting off with the results of this study that included 208 participants, 89 participants (39.64%), p -value: 0.001, used swear words occasionally and an additional 33 participants (32.4%) reported using swear words and expressions frequently. In other words, the participants from this selected demography have a tendency for using swear words and expressions. Despite what might appear as disregarding the cultural and religious implications, the participants do use swear words and expressions. However, most of the swearing that the participants use involve intelligence (ex: idiot, stupid, imbecile, etc.), reported by 97 participants (22.6%), p -value: 0.002, and personality (ex: nasty, dirty, savage, animal-like, etc.) reported by 109 participants (25.4%), p -value: 0.001. The least form of swearing the participants reported using are the swear words and expressions that are sexual in nature (ex: fuck, fuck your mom, fuck your sister, bitch, etc.) reported only by 38 participants (8.9%). This indicates that the participants do think about the consequences that accompany strong forms of swearing. This, in other

words indicates, unlike what Yule (2006) suggested as in swear words and expressions are generally avoided, that it's the strong forms of swear words and expressions that are avoided, on the other hand, other forms of swearing, especially the ones that insult intelligence and personality are commonly used. This is what was hypothesized earlier in the study and it may well be due to the participants' religiosity and cultural background, as suggested by Vali (2011), Ibrahim (2016) and Jay (2000) as to why people use or avoid certain types of swearing.

Using swear words and expressions is highly context related, as reported by 179 of the participants (69.1%), p -value: <0.001 , who said that they use swear words and expressions with friends. Similarly, Baudin and Paramasivam (2014) arrived at the same conclusion which in turn supports the notion that is proposed by Fägersten (2000), Setiawan and Fatimatuzzahroh (2018), Al-ilaimy and Omar (2018), Shankar and Nafiseh (2019) and Salih and Raoof (2022), i.e. it is the context and the relationship that binds two people that determine one's tendency to use swear words and expressions. Interestingly furthermore, it was friends, according to 48 (60%) of the interviewed participants, who taught them swear words and expressions. This could indicate the presence of a correlation here. An analogy like the following might be plausible: a person learns a swear word from a friend, then the person tests the boundaries of what forms of swearing is fine with their peers or friends, and hence establishes a swearing routine/pattern. This might be of interest to researchers who want to further study this aspect of Kurmanji Kurdish.

All of the previous studies covered in this research focused mainly on the contexts with the highest response rate. However, the opposite could also be true as in having the least responses for a question might also be interpreted as the participants' avoidance of swearing in those contexts. The answers with the least responses in terms of the contexts in which the participants felt comfortable swearing were when they were with their parents: 2 participants (0.8%), and when they are with their superiors, i.e. teachers, managers, etc.: 5 participants (1.9%). This might further show the importance of context in determining the willingness to swear and it also shows the importance Kurdish people place on matters such as politeness (Cf. Vali, 2011 and Ibrahim, 2016) at least for the studied population. What is ironical about the results is that of the least responses the question which pertains to the contexts in which the participants felt were fine for swearing, swearing in the presence of children received a meager of 17 (6.6%) of the responses. However, during the interview, the majority of the participants, 64 (80%) reported that learning swear words and expressions takes place during childhood. This may indicate that children, when learning swear words and expressions, they do so

not from adults, but from fellow children. Aptly put, adults do not swear in the presence of children but children do with fellow peers. Nevertheless, the question that begs an answer is how then at such a young age do children learn swearing from other children when adults usually do not swear in their presence? Although 20 participants, (25%), stated media as a factor for learning swear words and expressions, yet, the mechanism by which children learn swearing is worth looking into in the future.

There are also psychological implications to the results of this study. The majority of the participants agree that swearing is highly inappropriate and it is often accompanied by negative connotations and emotions. 117 of the participants (55.5%), p -value: 0.001, believed that swearing is wrong, but there are situations when one has no choice expect using swear words and expressions. Although it is not clear as to why the participants believe that swearing is wrong, as no questions pertaining to religion or culture were included in the test and the rationale behind this is to see the participants' answers without the influence of other factors in mind. Nonetheless, one may deduce that the participants have these attitudes towards swearing due to certain reasons. One of the reasons for these attitudes is that the participants are Kurdish and in the Kurdish culture swearing is frowned upon. The second reason is because the majority of the Kurds are Muslims; so are the participants, and hence they have these attitudes towards this linguistic phenomenon (Cf. Vali, 2011 and Ibrahim, 2016). However, in further studies, researchers can test these hypotheses to reach more tangible answers.

Another important psychological aspect to using swear words and expressions found in this study is the main factor that a large number of the participants use swear words and expressions for, namely, anger. 130 participants, p -value: <0.001 on the chi-square test, reported using swear words and expressions due to anger or when they are angry. This is highly important as it ramifies into other areas of study. When the participants reported that using swear words and expressions is a wrong behavior, however, they are reluctant to use it, this reluctance seems to be the result of anger. Participants from the other studies, Baudin and Paramasivam (2014) and Al-dilaimy and Omar (2018), also reported anger to be the main factor that makes them resort to swearing. This is evinced in the very definition of swearing that was proposed by Andersson and Trudgill (1995) that suggests people use swear words and expressions when venting out/expressing strong emotions. This was also hypothesized to be the case based on the available literature.

Although previous research, e.g. Setiawan and Fatimatuzzahroh (2018), Al-dilaimy and Omar (2018), Shankar and Nafiseh (2019) and Salih and Raoof (2022),

did not focus on the aftermath of swearing, i.e. the feelings that the person who swears experiences, half of the interviewed participants, 50%, reported feelings of guilt associated with using swear words and expressions and a further 20% of those interviewed reported being disgusted and repulsed in the aftermath of swearing. This may suggest that the participants have negative attitudes associated with swearing which supports the notion mentioned earlier that swearing is wrong but one is reluctant sometimes to swear. This adds further to the psychological implications that accompany this linguistic phenomenon. Furthermore, as the majority of the participants reported anger as being the main reason for using swear words and expressions as mentioned earlier, then it follows consequently that this could in turn lead to a vicious cycle of guilt and disgust followed by venting out these feelings and translating them into swear words and expressions. One could further postulate that the participants, when angry, may resort to swearing with friends, including spouses as well. This postulation is made based on the fact that the majority of the participants reported swearing with friends. Although whether the participant is married or not was not controlled for because this would mean reducing the number of participants, however, spousal life shares a few similarities with that of the relationship friends have (Cf. Finkle, 2017). Hence, it is possible to suggest that swear words and expressions due to anger could occur in any relationship which could pose a threat to its longevity. Notwithstanding this, the effect of swearing on friendships or marital relationships can be studied and controlled for in a future study to reach more conclusive results and answers.

Since the definition proposed by Andersson and Trudgill (1995) in relation to swearing involves subject matters related to religion, the participants were asked if this is also the case in Kurdish language. The participants agreed that the phenomenon of swear words and expressions involving blasphemy exist in the southern Kurmanji that is spoken in Duhok, albeit, it is not very common. When the participants were further asked, in the interview, as to why people resort to blasphemy when using swear words and expressions, the majority, 64 participants (80%), suggested anger to be the reason that pushes people to blaspheme. This further demonstrates the significance of anger in pushing people to resort to extreme forms of swear words and expressions. In contrast to Al-dilaimy and Omar's (2018) study, whose study population shares similar religious background since the study was also conducted in Iraq, Al-dilaimy and Omar (2018) seem to have neglected this area when it could possibly exist. This presumed negligence could have been due to the sensitivity of the topic, which was also observed in this study. Other than asking about the

reasons why people resort to such extremes, no further questions were asked.

There were few issues that were faced in this study. There was a lack of control over the gender variable; to address this it is advised that researchers in future studies confine themselves to one of the genders and then compare the results, in addition, a study in this area can include both genders to see if there are any significant differences concerning swearing based on gender. Also, the number of the participants was not very large, and hence generalizations cannot be made especially in relation to an area that has been neglected apparently. Additionally, new data collection methods should be utilized instead of questionnaires and group interviews, especially when eliciting attitude data. This is because attitudes are often positively self-reported in accordance with the accepted social norms with regards to a phenomenon that is negatively viewed by society members. This could lead to social desirability bias and therefore the data could only express one facet of the issue. As for suggestions for future research, it is advised to study the relationship between swearing and anger. The mechanism by which children learn swearing is also worth studying. Social studies majors can also study the impact swearing has on friendship and marital relationships and study the legal consequences. They can also study the influence that religion and culture exert on the willingness or avoidance of using swear words and the types of swear words. Psychologists and therapists may also use the present data to better understand patients who cope with anger by means of swearing and also use the data in this study to further shed light on the psychological implications of this phenomenon.

6. CONCLUSION

The research arrived at the following conclusions: participants use swear words and expressions occasionally and only when they are reluctant. This is because participants associate negative attitudes with swearing, i.e. they believe it is wrong but they are forced to swear in certain circumstances, particularly, when angry. The type of swear words and expressions that are used by the participants mainly involve insulting the intelligence and character of the others. Swearing is highly context based and it is with friends that the participants feel comfortable swearing. Furthermore, swear words and expressions are acquired during childhood and according to the participants, it is also childhood friends from whom one learns swearing. The main reason as to why the participants swear is anger and this seems to be the most prominent reason. Feelings of disgust and guilt are the emotions that the participants experience after swearing. Using swear words and expressions to blaspheme does exist in southern

Kurmanji, nonetheless, it is not common and is the result of anger. As a final note, this is a fresh area for research; further studies are encouraged.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

No.	Expert on the area of study	Specialization	Scientific Title	Place of Work
1	Dr. Hussain Ali Ahmed	TEFL	Professor	College of Languages/ Nawroz University
2	Dr. Idrees Ali Hassan	Applied Linguistics	Assistant Professor	College of Languages/ Nawroz University
3	Mr. Lazgeen Khedir Barany	Applied Linguistics	Assistant Professor	College of Administration/ Akre Polytechnic University

Appendix B

Ministry of Higher Education

College of Languages Department of English and Translation To the Members of the Jury

Dear Jury Member,

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for your invaluable feedback and kind collaboration. The title of this research paper is "Swear Words in Southern Kurmanji – Types, Functions and Attitudes." The participants of this study will be speakers of southern Kurmanji dialect that is commonly referred to as Bahdini. The Participants will be asked to answer a short questionnaire and then participate in an unstructured short interview.

We kindly request your review of the questionnaire statements, including its design and structure. Your feedback on their appropriateness for this study would be greatly appreciated. Furthermore, the interview questions are also provided at the end of this document, and we kindly request your assessment of their suitability for this study. Note: this study will be conducted on a small scale as studies in this area are rare and thus small steps are taken to research this area.

Thank you once again for your assistance.

The objectives of this study include:

1. Investigating the reasons why Kurmanji speakers of Kurdish use swear words and expressions.
2. Determining the types of swear words Kurmanji speakers use when they swear.
3. Determining the attitudes they have of this phenomenon.

Questionnaire

Dear Lecturer, this questionnaire is part of my research paper which is titled "Swear Words in Southern Kurmanji – Types, Functions and Attitudes" I will be grateful if you take some time (10-20 minutes) to complete the questionnaire parts as precisely as possible. The data and answers of this questionnaire are confidential and are anonymously used only for academic purposes. This questionnaire is primarily designed to investigate Kurmanji speakers' use of swear words in Kurmanji Kurdish looking specifically at the types of swear words, the function swear words serve in Kurmanji and finally attitudes Kurmanji speakers have of this phenomenon. Each question is designed to investigate an aspect of this linguistic phenomenon. More than one response can be selected for certain questions. Your collaboration is highly appreciated.

Part 1: The questionnaire

Choose the appropriate answer(s) for the questions below:

- How often do you swear?
- Rarely Occasionally Often Always
- What are the contexts in which you swear? (Select those that apply)

- With parents
- With children
- With friends
- With strangers
- With colleagues
- With superiors
- What swearing words/phrases do you use? (Select those that apply)
- Insulting intelligence
- Insulting the character
- Humorous swearing, i.e. swearing for fun.
- Auxiliary swearing, i.e. this fu*king computer is a piece of sh*t.
- Scatological swearing
- Sexual references
- Why do you swear? (Select those that apply)
- I swear to vent out my frustration.
- I swear when I am in pain.
- I swear to humiliate the other.
- I swear to destroy the character of the other.
- I swear because I cannot physically harm the other, so I attack verbally, i.e. swearing.
- I swear when I want to release my anger.
- I swear when I am joking.
- I swear to make sexual references.
- I swear when I want to show the importance of something.
- I swear to express disbelief/ shock.
- What is your opinion about swearing?
- Swearing is extremely inappropriate. No one should swear.
- Swearing is not appropriate, but sometimes one has no choice but to swear.
- Swearing is bad, but I don't mind using it.
- Swearing is fine, and I always use it.

Interview

Unstructured Interview Questions:

- When did you start using swear words and expressions?
- How did you learn swear words and expressions?
- How do you feel when you swear?
- Why do some people resort to blaspheming?
- Is blasphemy a novel phenomenon in the southern Kurmanji speaking society?