

# 13<sup>th</sup> VESAL

INTERNATIONAL VISIBLE CONFERENCE ON  
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES & APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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February 20th-21st, 2023  
TISHK INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
ERBIL, KURDISTAN REGION, IRAQ

## Exchange of Ideas in Turning Challenges into Opportunities: Innovation through Collaboration

Edited by: Venera Ulker  
Soran Mustafa Kurdi  
Hewa Fouad Ali

VESAL

Conference Book of Proceedings



**TISHK INTERNATIONAL  
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February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Erbil, Iraq

**VESAL -2023**

**Book of Proceedings 2023**

The 13th International Visible Conference on Educational Studies and Applied Linguistics

**Feb 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

Erbil, Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq

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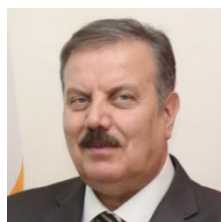
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## WELCOMING REMARKS



Asst. Prof. Dr. Idris Hadi Salih  
Head of Board of Trustees,  
Tishk International University

It is a pleasure and privilege to welcome you to this most innovative and forward-thinking venue where you will have time to consider and formulate what higher education will look like as emerging technologies, economy, and policies continue to catapult it into the future. In many ways one's career during this evolving information age seems more like a foot race. We have been challenged to remain relevant in our disciplines and at the same time are compelled to adopt and use current technologies. The changes have been both exciting and profound and have transformed the way we do business. We now have learning environments that include online classrooms, MOOCs, cellphone response systems, and countless other instructional technologies dramatically changing the way in which we interact and engage with our students and deliver education. As professors, administrators and public leaders, what do we need to be thinking about as the academy's core missions of teaching, research, and outreach move into the future? To discuss the core mission of education and language teaching and learning, Faculty of Education at Tishk International University and College of Education at Salahaddin University-Erbil jointly organizes International Visible Conference on Educational Studies and Applied Linguistics (VESAL), which is entering its 13th year of successful organization. The conference has already become a considerable brand and improving year by year. The aim of VESAL 2023 is designed to attract the research communities to promote connections between theory and practice and explore different perspectives on the application of research findings into different practices. I kindly welcome scholars coming from the international and local regions as well as experts, educators,

linguists, lecturers and senior lecturers to Erbil, Iraq. The Conference is aiming to open channels, and pave roads of academic collaboration and to bring experiences together with expertise for further innovative thoughts and more creative research. Dr. Idris Hadi is now the Head of Board of Trustees of Tishk International University since November 2016. Previously he worked as the first Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan Regional Government – Erbil from 2006 till November 1st 2009. Then he worked as the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs in the first elected government of Iraq – Bagdad between 2005-2006. Dr. Idris Hadi is a founding member of Human Rights organization in Kurdistan region and was elected as the president of the organization from 1991 till 1993. During this time, he has actively participated in conferences, workshops related to human rights, women rights, children rights and joint projects with international Human Rights Watch such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights organization of UN and other organizations. After that, Dr. Idris Hadi worked as the Minister of Transportation and Communication in the first cabinet of Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1992. Then he worked as the Minister of Transportation and Communication in the second cabinet of Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1993. Later, Dr. Idris Hadi worked as the Minister of Industry and Energy in the third cabinet of Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1996. Then he worked as the Minister of Municipalities and Tourism in the Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1998. Dr. Idris Hadi received his bachelor's degree in Sulaimani university/ Iraq in 1976 and his master's degree in Communication Engineering at Leningrad University in 1982, then he received his PhD Degree in Communication Engineering (Technical Science) at Leningrad university in 1985. Dr. Idris Hadi and his family live in Erbil-Iraq.

## **ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

The Organizing Committee of The International Visible Conference of Educational Studies and Applied Linguistics (VESAL 2023) is composed of distinguished academics who are experts in their fields. The Organizing Committee is responsible for nominating and vetting Keynote and Featured Speakers; developing the conference program, including workshops, panels, targeted sessions; undertaking event outreach and promotion; recommending and attracting future Organizing Committee members; working with Tishk International University to select PhD students and early career academics for Tishk International University-funded grants and scholarships for teaching profession as careers; and reviewing abstracts submitted to the conference.

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## **VESAL 2023 CONFERENCE THEME**

Asst. Prof. Dr. Saeed Omer Ibrahim, Dean of College of Education - Salahaddin University-Erbil, Iraq  
Dr. Venera Ulker, Head of English Language Teaching Department - Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq

“Exchange of Ideas in Turning Challenges into Opportunities: Innovation through Collaboration”

The world is changing with increasing speed – the way we communicate, find information and work has been massively transformed in the past decade. Education systems, however, are struggling to catch up with an overwhelming amount of information at students’ fingertips. There is a growing need for soft skills such as empathy and creativity; educators at every level are facing the challenge of reinventing the classroom and reshaping the very system itself. During the changing times the educators should rethink and rebuild the executive education that will help the learners to integrate global citizenship and social justice into their lives. A nation that effectively utilizes their resources is closely aligned with the thoughts, concepts, and culture of the individuals who make up the society and with the prudence, foresight, and sincere devotion of those in power. The administrators that are responsible for the level of care given to

individuals and their efforts toward becoming a social entity will be an indication of how closely aligned they are with the prophetic principle that “All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for those under your care” and that “being glad about making others happy instead of self-concerns. If the new generations’ minds are equipped with the sciences of their time and their hearts are not lit up with breezes from beyond and if they are provided with an ample education, with all their needs fulfilled and all opportunities available for them to succeed then they can look forward to a bright future. These future generations will be able to stand up to every kind of obstacle in the struggle of life, they will be able to overcome – material or spiritual – every kind of difficulty and will never give in to despair. All the hardships that we will have encountered along the way in providing our children with a better education will have been worth it.

## **CONFERENCE GUIDE**

### **REGISTRATION & ACCESS**

You will be able to pick up your registration pack and name card at the Conference Registration Desk. The Conference Registration Desk and Publications Desk will be situated in the following locations (Dedeman Hotel Erbil and Tishk International University) during the conference. When you register for the conference, you will pay the fee for the conference. If you have any questions or concerns, the Education Faculty staff will happily assist you.

### **Name Badges**

When you check in at the registration desk, you will receive a registration pack, which includes your name badge. Wearing your badge is required for entrance to the sessions. You must wear your badge at all times during the conference.

### **Certificates**

Certificates for the Participants will be delivered during the closing ceremony. A certificate for each Presenter will be delivered at the end of his or her presentations. Certificates for Session Chairs and Organizing Committee members will be delivered during the closing ceremony.

### **Lunch (Day 1: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023)**

VESAL 2023 is a highly anticipated event held over two days, with the first day dedicated to the speakers and organizing committee at Dedeman Hotel, where they will be treated to a lunch specially arranged for them. The Conference Lunch is a free-of-charge service provided by the conference.

### **Lunch (Day 2: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023)**

Lunch on the second day is included in the conference registration fee. Lunch will be provided at Tishk International University, which will serve different local dishes prepared by a talented team of chefs. Lunch service includes an unlimited drinks bar (non-alcoholic), coffee station, and dessert table. Please remember to bring your name badge with you, as this will act as your lunch ticket. Attendees can look forward to a productive and informative experience filled with engaging discussions, networking opportunities, and thought-provoking presentations.

## **PRESENTATION GUIDE**

### **Conference Abstracts**

The conference abstracts are accessible in hard copy format. The presentation sessions will commence after the opening ceremony on Tuesday morning and are typically arranged into concurrent sessions. Each concurrent session comprises four presentations, with two sets of four presentations scheduled for **Concurrent Session I and Concurrent Session II**, respectively. To ensure equal time allocation for each presentation, the session duration will be divided equally among the presenters. For optimal delivery and interaction, we recommend that an Oral Presentation should last no longer than **15 minutes**, with an additional **5 minutes** for **questions and answers**. Should there be any remaining time in the session, it may be utilized for further discussion.

### **Online presentations**

Online sessions will run throughout the program according to presenters' preferences and availability. Details and links to the presentations are available in the **extended program** shared on the VESAL website.

### **Equipment**

All rooms will be equipped with a computer and IWB pre-installed with PowerPoint and connected to an LCD projector. We advise you to use the computer provided by plugging in your USB flash drive. We recommend that you bring two copies of your presentation in case one fails and suggest sending yourself the presentation by email as a third and final precaution.

### **Session Chairs**

Session Chairs are asked to introduce themselves and other speakers (briefly) using the provided printouts of speaker bios, hand out the provided presentation certificates at the end of the session, and ensure that the session begins and ends on time and that the time is divided fairly between the presentations. Each presenter should have no more than **20 minutes** in which to present his or her paper and respond to any questions. The Session Chair is asked to assume this timekeeping role. Please follow the order in the program, and if for any reason a presenter fails to show up, please keep to the original time slots as delegates use the program to plan their attendance.

### **Certificates**

All presenters will receive a certificate of presentation from their Session Chair or a member of staff at the end of their session.

### **Publication**

Tishk International University  
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The VESAL Organizing committee would like to inform authors that all accepted papers, which meet the journals' requirements and guidelines, will undergo the journals' publication process. The manuscripts will be submitted to either **the Zanco Journal at Salahaddin University** or **the International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies at Tishk International University**. However, it is important to note that if the manuscripts do not meet the journals' requirements and guidelines, they will be published in **the VESAL book of proceedings**. The final decision on whether a paper will be submitted to a journal or published in the VESAL book of proceedings will be made by the editorial board of the conference. It is essential to emphasize that VESAL is not responsible for any rejection of a paper due to its failure to meet the requirements and guidelines of the journals.

### Conference Proceedings

The Conference Proceedings will be published with a DOI number after August 10, 2023, the deadline for full paper submission on the Tishk International University website and can be freely accessed as part of Faculty of Education's research archive. All authors may have their full paper published in the online Conference Proceedings

### A Polite Request to All Participants

Participants are requested to arrive in a timely fashion for all presentations, whether on their own or to those of other presenters. Presenters are reminded that the time slots should be divided fairly and equally between the number of presentations and that presentations should not overrun. Participants should refrain from talking amongst themselves and ensure that mobile phones are switched off or set to silent mode during presentations.

## VISION & MISSION

### VISION

In order to enable the knowledge and information accessible to everyone, Tishk International University in partnership with Salahaddin University-Erbil, holds its annual conference on Educational Sciences and Applied Linguistics. The International Visible Conference aims to gather researchers, practitioners, educators, and scholars with interests in any field of teaching at all levels from around the world. The VESAL 2023 conference is designed to attract the research communities to promote connections between theory and practice and explore different perspectives on the application of research findings into different practices. We kindly welcome scholars coming from the international and local regions as well as teachers and prospective teachers to Erbil,



Iraq. The VESAL 2023 conference aims to contribute to the region and educators through international experts and researchers. The VESAL 2023 conference plans to remain open to educational studies, language teaching and/or language-education related topics broadly defined, looking more closely into the current dynamics in the world between old and new trends, local and global tendencies, progressive and conservative views, stabilization and destabilization patterns, national and global



identities It is expected that VESAL 2023 conference will be a magnet for a significant number of front-ranking academics,

professionals and policy makers working in the broad areas of Educational Environment.

### **MISSION**

To develop highly-qualified individuals who will contribute to the future of the country by making utmost use of the knowledge gained in fields of science, technology and arts in the light of universal values; offer learning opportunities in the fields of research, education and service for the benefit of the wider community. Furthermore, our conference aims to foster a collaborative environment that encourages interdisciplinary research and dialogue between scholars, educators, and practitioners in applied linguistics and educational studies. By promoting innovative teaching methodologies and effective language acquisition strategies, we aspire to enhance the quality of education at all levels, nurturing a society that values both local traditions and global perspectives. Through insightful discussions and presentations, we seek to inspire actionable insights that bridge theory and practice.



**JOIN US TO HELP TURN THE TIDE IN EDUCATION**

## **SPECIAL THANKS - SESSION CHAIRS**

We, at the Tishk International University Faculty of Education and Colleges of Languages, Salahaddin University-Erbil, would like to recognize the Session Chairs for all of their hard work in coordinating his/her respective Concurrent Session. We know that it is difficult to stop Academicians from presenting the research they love.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Altun	Faculty of Education, Tishk International University
Dr. Aziza Kavlu	Faculty of Education, Tishk International University
Dr. Sami Hussein Hakeem Barzani	Faculty of Education, Tishk International University
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Thank you for ensuring that the sessions ran on time and smoothly.

## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Conference Agenda   Day 1   Dedeman Hotel in Erbil	
Hour	Event
08:30 – 9:30	Speaker Registration
9:30– 10:25	Opening Ceremony
9:30 - 9:35	National Anthem
9:35- 9:40	Introducing the Conference by <b>Dr. Venera Ulker</b> , Head of English Language Teaching Department, TIU
9:40- 9:50	Promotional Videos 1: SUE – 2: TIU
09:50 – 09:55	Speech of the KRG Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
09:55 – 10:05	Welcome Speech by <b>Asst. Prof. Dr. Kamaran Yunis</b> , President of Salahaddin University-Erbil, Iraq.
10:05 – 10:10	Welcome Speech by <b>Dr. Abdul Samad Salahuddin</b> , The President, Tishk International University
10:10 – 10:15	Welcome Speech by <b>Dr. Saeed Omer Ibrahim</b> , Dean of College of Education – Salahaddin University-Erbil, Iraq
10:15 – 10:20	Plaque Awarding/ Sponsor Speech
10:20 – 11:10	<b>Keynote Speech I: Prof. Dr. Sahail M. Asassfeh</b> , The Hashemite University, Jordan
11:10 - 12:15	<b>Panel Session: Turning Challenges into Opportunities: Education In KRI.</b>
12:15– 13:15	Lunch ( <b>Dedeman Hotel Erbil</b> , DINING HALL)
Conference Agenda   Day 2   TIU/Education Building/#302	
Hour	Event
08:30 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 10:10	Opening Ceremony
10:10 – 10:15	Sponsor Presentation
10:15 – 11:15	Keynote Speech II: <b>Prof. Dr. Himdad A. Muhammad</b> , Salahaddin University-Erbil, Iraq
11:15- 11:45	Coffee Break
11:45 – 13:00	I. Concurrent Session
13:15 – 14:15	Lunch (TIU, Main Building, DINING HALL)
14:15– 15:30	II. Concurrent Session
15:30 –16:00	Closing Ceremony-Conference Hall (302)

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20th | 10:20 – 11:10| Dedeman Hotel**

**The EduLing Dichotomy: Towards the Pursuit of Interconnectedness**



Prof. Dr. Sahail M. Asassfeh  
Dean of the Faculty of  
Educational Sciences, The  
Hashemite University, Jordan

Academic institutions have realized recently that disciplinarianism creates divisions within academic departments and faculties that impede our comprehensive understanding of phenomena in both sciences and humanities. Bringing this realization to an institution is a must, and transforming this realization into actual practice is quintessential to more context-specific progress. This logic applies to the relationship between language and education which needs to be viewed as complementary. This necessitates answering the question of how interconnectedness can best be achieved in EFL contexts at the level of both research and EFL teacher preparation programs. My presentation seeks to open a discussion in this realm.

**Keywords:** EduLing, Interconnectedness, language and education

## KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21st 10:15 – 11:15 | HALL 302**

### **Corpus Linguistics: Applications and Limitations in the Digital Era**



Prof. Dr. Himdad A. Muhammad  
Salahaddin University-Erbil, Iraq  
himdad.muhammad@su.edu.krd

This digital era is known for the excessive use and dependence on technology which has come into all walks of life and disciplines, including language study. A study of any linguistic phenomenon or issue based on a collected corpus of linguistic material via technology is usually referred to as corpus linguistics. Corpus-based study (CBS) or Corpus Linguistics (CL) is the study of language as expressed in corpora of real-world text. It is an empirical discipline based on the observation of actual data.

CL has been considered an operational framework in language study rather than an independent field of study. CBS aims to investigate specific linguistic constructs, the way they are found in various contexts and the functions each acquires. The current trends in corpus linguistics in the digital era prove the existence

of utilizing machine-readable texts as reliable resources, the raw material to depend on for studying specific linguistic issues and phenomena. CL has multiple applications in the language study field, yet it also has some limitations. This paper highlights the successes of CL/CBS in the EFL/ESL context and then the limitations will be presented along with step-by-step solutions. It also attempts to present other domains where CL could be beneficial.

**Keywords:** Corpus linguistics, digital era, EFL/ESL

## CONFERENCE PANEL SESSION

### PANEL SESSION

The VESAL 2023 conference is set to host a panel session on the 20th of February with the title “**Turning Challenges into Opportunities: Education in KRI**”. The panel session will feature a diverse group of panelists with extensive experience in the field of education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) as follows:

#### Panel session chair:

- **Prof. Dr. Kawa Abdulkareem Sherwani**

#### Panelists:

- **Prof. Dr. Sahail M. Asassfeh**, Dean of the Faculty of Educational Sciences at The Hashemite University in Jordan
- **Prof. Dr. Himdad A. Muhammad**, Lecturer at Salahaddin University-Erbil in Iraq
- **Dr. Karmand Abdulla Hamad**, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Soran University in Iraq
- **Mr. David Wafula Waswa**, Lecturer at Tishk International University in Erbil, Iraq

The panel session will focus on the challenges facing education in the KRI and how these challenges can be turned into opportunities. The panelists will discuss a range of issues, including the need for better teacher training, the importance of incorporating technology into the education system and how to address the current challenges.

The panelists will share their experiences and insights on how to address these challenges and improve the quality of education in the KRI. They will emphasize the importance of collaboration and partnership among universities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to bring about positive change.

Overall, the panel session is expected to provide a valuable platform for sharing knowledge and ideas on how to overcome the challenges facing education in the KRI. The panelists’ expertise and experience will offer valuable insights and strategies for turning challenges into opportunities and creating a brighter future for education in the region.

# ACCEPTED PAPERS

# Students' Opinions About English-Medium Instruction: A Case Study at Tishk International University

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## ABSTRACT

English-medium instruction (EMI) has recently become very popular all over the world. Especially the rapid spread of globalization and the increase in the need for communication have brought English to the forefront as the language of communication. In order to meet this need, educational institutions in many countries, especially at the university level, choose English as the medium language of education. Although this situation is quite attractive, it also renders some problems. English proficiency level of the students who would like to attend English-medium universities should be high enough to meet the requirements of the academic language of the courses, and it is quite different from daily English. It may yield some negative consequences for the students who do not have proficient level of English. In addition, there are some other difficulties. In this study, 670 students at Tishk International University in Erbil comprised study participants. In the study, it was intended to address the difficulties of English-medium instruction. According to the results obtained from the survey, the students have different difficulties with EMI. This study draws attention to the different dimensions of these difficulties. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in a mixed manner in the study.

**Keywords:** English-medium Instruction, Education, the Effects of EMI

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English-medium Instruction is one of the most popular topics in education in the modern age. There are some situations that always keep this issue on the agenda. Due to the increasing need for English in the globalizing world, many educational institutions and especially universities have adopted English as the language of education. Thus, they both responded to an issue needed by the society and gained prestige in this way. However, with the widespread use of EMI, some disadvantages have emerged. In particular, the fact that many students cannot learn with EMI as they learn in their mother tongue has emerged as a remarkable obstacle (Sukardi & Sopandi, 2011).

Communication, one of the basic needs of the modern world, has made EMI a necessity for many universities (Ibrahim, 2001). In addition, EMI for universities is a matter of prestige (Preece, 2022). Therefore, it is seen that many universities around the world have made the necessary changes. In addition, the demands of the society they live in to integrate from universities to the globalizing world force universities to EMI (Tran & Nguyen, 2018). In addition, the fact that the academic literature is mostly in English is also an attractive factor



(Brown, 2014). On the other hand, preparing textbooks in the mother tongue of the society they live in poses a separate challenge.

Despite all this, there are other rather problematic aspects of EMI. First of all, it is a difficult process to train instructors who will teach the course in English. In addition, it takes time for students to learn academic English to meet EMI's requirements. While creating the infrastructure of all these is a problem, the fact that students cannot fully understand the opposite as in their mother tongue is another problem aspect of the issue.

Dealing with any issue academically requires evaluating its advantages and disadvantages together. The hard part of EMI is that it has a lot of positive and negative aspects. Therefore, discussions on this subject continue in the literature. What kind of problems EMI produces has been the focus of this study.

### Research Questions

- 1-) What disadvantages does EMI have?
- 2-) At which points are these disadvantages more evident?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION**

In countries where English is not the main language, the teaching of academic courses through this language is called English-medium instruction (EMI) (Richards & Pun, 2023). In this context, an institution's adoption of English-medium instruction means that it presents academic subjects using English (Macaro et al., 2019). Despite the fact that the mother tongue of each country is not English, the fact that educational institutions give their education in English explains this concept.

EMI is spreading quite rapidly in the modern world because it has some benefits for both students, institutions and countries (Doiz et al., 2011). The fact that the common communicative language is English, especially in the globalizing world, has forced many institutions around the world to EMI (Reynolds, 2021). In addition, the fact that English has become a *lingo franca* has increased the popularity of EMI internationally (Fang, 2018).

The fact that the majority of the works produced in the academic world is in English, as well as the historical developments had an important effect on the acquisition of this feature of English (Gupta, 2006). Therefore, in addition to political reasons, academic and social reasons have also been influential in English gaining this position.

There are some reasons behind the prevalence of EMI in the modern context.

- 1-) The necessity of teaching English, which is the language of the global world, in the most effective way has forced many Institutions to EMI.
- 2-) English has become a common language for many multilingual societies.

3-) It has become a necessity to learn English effectively in order to compete with the modern world.

4-) In this way it was possible for students to acquire some global literacy skills to be educated in accordance with the requirements of the modern world.

5-) EMI has emerged as an important factor for institutions to gain prestige.

6-) The necessity of developing students' intercultural communication skills forced institutions to EMI (Galloway et al., 2017).

## **2.2 DISADVANTAGES OF EMI**

Despite all these positive aspects, EMI also has some negative aspects. First of all, there are very few teachers who will use English effectively in academic circles. In addition, the level of English proficiency expected from students is quite high and many students fail to achieve it. Moreover, students and teachers can easily switch to their mother tongue, as the mother tongue is easier to use in many regions. Since EMI requires a particularly advanced level of English, students' motivation and interest decrease over time and this becomes an extra burden for teachers and students. Furthermore, knowledge transfer does not occur as effectively as in the mother tongue and many subjects remain unlearned. Additionally, native speakers who teach especially in environments where EMI is implemented cannot respond to the needs of students. More importantly, EMI prevents the development of local culture and language according to the needs of the modern age (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011). Finally, it should be noted that EMI requires teachers to spend more time preparing for lessons (Byun et al., 2011). Moreover, in some cases, access to English materials becomes very difficult due to insufficient financial resources (Songbatumis, 2017).

## **2.3 EMI AROUND THE WORLD**

Universities in many countries of the world offer English-medium instruction. This includes many African countries. In some countries, it is even possible to encounter EMI at the primary and secondary school level (Briggs et al., 2018). However, EMI cannot find much place in pre-university education, especially with the effect of nationalist movements (Troudy, 2022). In addition, some countries that use English as a medium of instruction along with their mother tongue in education are discussing the harm that this may cause to their cultural development. In some African countries, English is already an official language and is used at all levels of education (Sibomana, 2015).

In addition, it is seen that EMI is widely used in many developing countries of the world. An important reason for this is the efforts of these countries to integrate into the world economy and the resulting needs. It is also obvious that developing countries need trained manpower. In this context, there is a particular need for employees who speak English and are integrated with the world (Chien & Chapman, 2014).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH MODEL**

This study was conducted on 670 students studying at Tishk International University. Quantitative and Qualitative research techniques were used together in the study. Students were asked questions in accordance with the Likert scale and their opinions about EMI were taken. Afterwards, these statistics were evaluated comparatively. Along with these questions, it was tried to understand the difficulties that the students encounter during the English courses. Also, with the foresight that they could not understand some subjects well due to the English instruction, they were asked for their opinions on this subject. In addition, the issue of the fact that the textbooks are in English and that many points in the books cannot be understood have been examined. Lastly, the psychological aspect of this issue was brought to the fore and students were asked whether they would feel more secure if the education was in their mother tongue.

#### **3.2 SAMPLING**

In this study, 670 students studying in different departments of the university were asked questions in accordance with the Likert scale. All of these students get education in their own faculties with English-medium instruction. In addition, all course materials of these students are in English. English Language Teaching (ELT) students were excluded from this study.

#### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION**

The data used in this study were collected with the Questionnaire created on the Google form. Afterwards, these data were evaluated comparatively. Thus, students' thoughts about EMI were revealed. The questions asked to the students here are generally considered as the main disadvantages of EMI in the relevant literature.

### **4. FINDINGS**

While getting the opinions of the students studying in different departments about EMI, first of all, the difficulties of learning the courses in English were examined. Accordingly, the students were asked how difficult it is to explain the course content in English and their answers were presented in statistics.

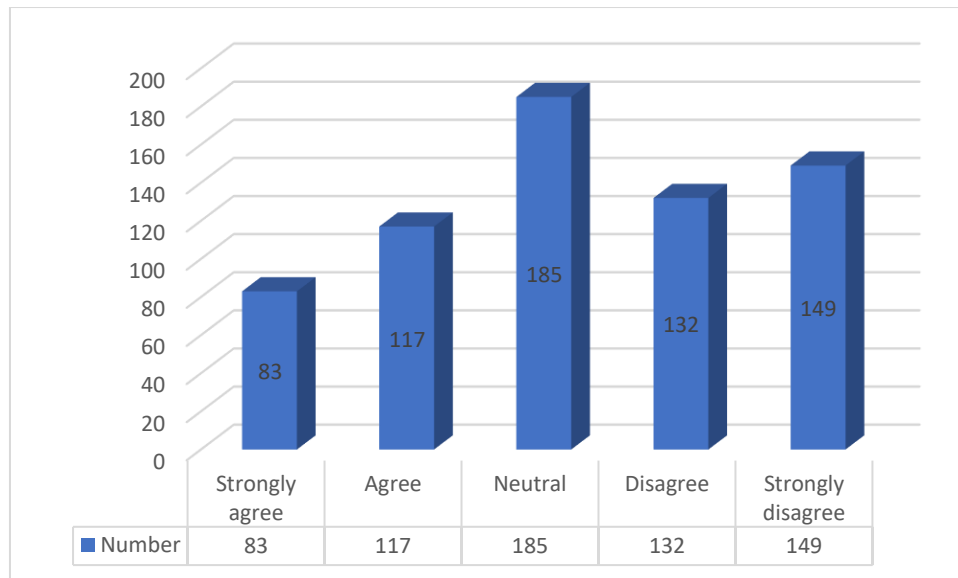


FIGURE 1-It is difficult for me to have lessons in English

Approximately 30% of the students stated that it is very difficult for them to have the courses in English. Although this situation statistically showed the minority among the total, the fact that 200 of 670 students answered in this way shows how difficult EMI is for these students. In addition, 28% of the students were undecided on this issue. This corresponds to a total of 185 students. Only 42% of the students stated that they did not experience difficulties in the lessons. This clearly illustrates the difficulties of EMI.

In addition to the fact that EMI is an important obstacle to learning the lessons effectively, one of the important issues that students complain about it is skipping some points in the lesson without understanding. Although students attend the lesson carefully, it is one of the important disadvantages of EMI that some points are passed without understanding. The statistics obtained by asking students about this situation are as follows.

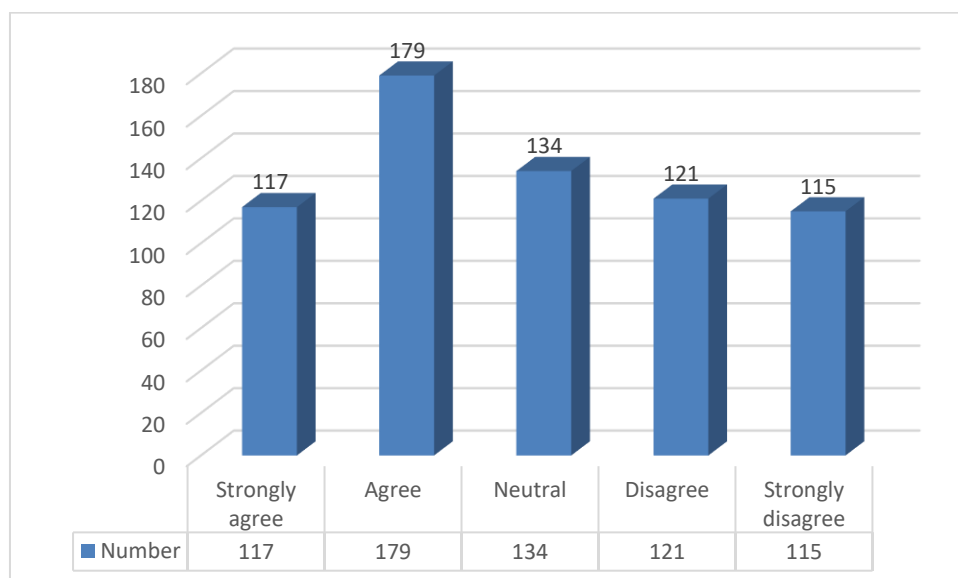


FIGURE 2-I can miss some points when the lessons are in English

Approximately 45% of the students stated that they passed through the course without understanding some of the subjects. This corresponds to a total of 296 students. In addition, 20% of the students were undecided on this issue. Only 35 percent of the students (236 students) stated that they did not have any problems in this regard. As this statistic shows, an important problematic aspect of EMI has emerged. According to this, a remarkable part of the students do not understand some of the subjects due to the education in English.

Textbooks are an important resource for students to use to understand the subject outside of the classroom. It is possible to learn the subjects that they cannot learn in the course from the course book. However, another problem arises at this point. The English level of the textbooks is quite advanced and there are many academic words that students do not understand. This is another challenge for students. The next question was asked to the students to observe how effective this situation was.

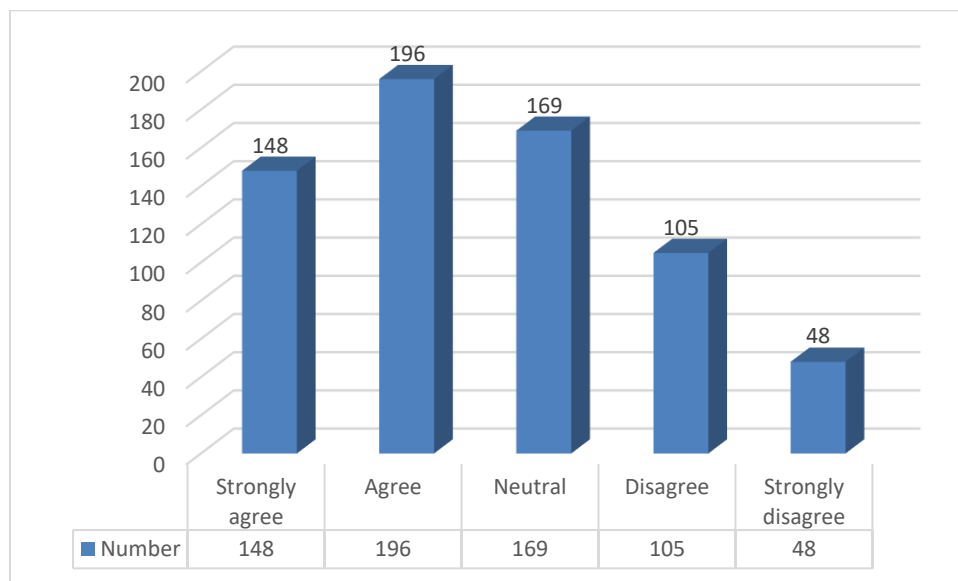


FIGURE 3-There are too many unknown words in our coursebooks

As can be seen, 51% of the students (344 students) stated that they had difficulties in this regard, while 25% were undecided. Only 23% of the students stated that they did not experience any difficulties in this regard. This statistic clearly shows what kind of difficulties the students face in terms of textbooks.

The psychological effects of EMI should also be emphasized. Although students continue their education in these institutions because they give importance to EMI in the reality of the global world, there are some psychological consequences of not being able to learn effectively in the process. In order to determine this situation, the students were asked how they would feel if the lessons were taught in their mother tongue.

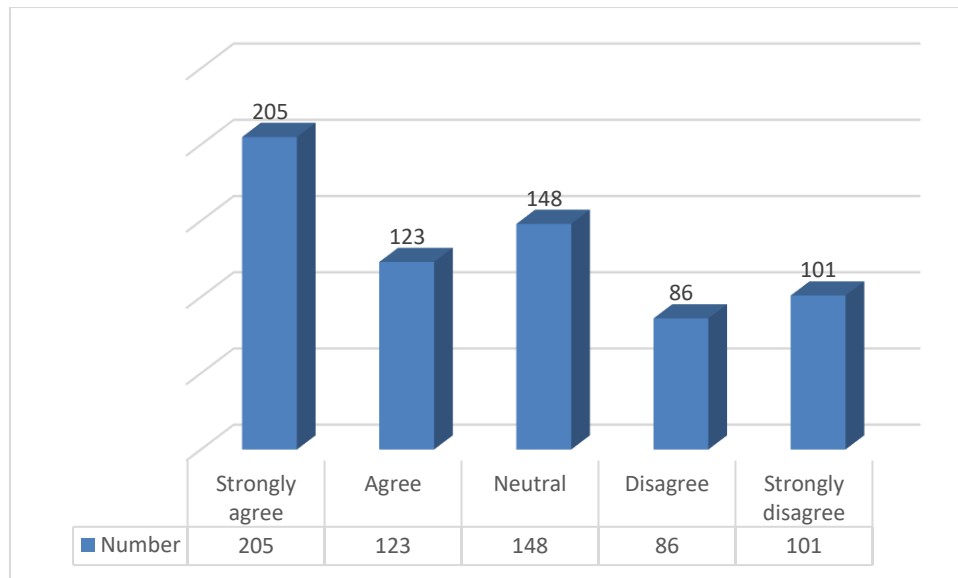


FIGURE 4-I would feel more secure in my mother tongue

Accordingly, 50% of the students (328 students) stated that they would feel more secure if the courses were given in their mother tongue. In addition, 22% of the students (148 students) were undecided on this issue. On the other hand, only 28% (187 students) of the total stated that EMI did not have any psychological effect.

## 5. DISCUSSION

There are important reasons why EMI has become widespread all over the world recently. Especially in the global world, the need for communication is more than ever, bringing English to the fore as a communication language. That's why many universities use EMI to both meet this need and gain a prestigious position (Galloway et al., 2017). However, some disadvantages have emerged over time. In addition to the difficulties that it brings to students and teachers, EMI, which significantly slows down the development of the local language at the academic level, imposes extra burdens on institutions, teachers and students (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011).

In this research, students' opinions on the subject were asked and the answers obtained were put into statistics. According to the results obtained, a significant portion of the students stated that EMI was quite difficult, and the English lessons brought some extra burdens on them. There are some reasons for this. First of all, students may not understand English as well as they understand in their mother tongue. It is quite difficult to say that active learning in their mother tongue occurs in the same way in English. Although this is not a problem for some high achievers, a significant portion of the students state that effective learning does not occur. In particular, the fact that students missed some topics during the lesson clearly shows the difficulties experienced by the students.

Textbooks, which are an important reference source, also appear as an important problem if students do not understand in the lesson. Although it is an important reference source for students, it is very difficult for students to understand because the content of the course book is prepared in a very academic and difficult English.

When we put all these together, it is important to emphasize what the psychological effects on students are. In this case, it should be noted that the result is remarkable. The majority of the students stated that they would feel more secure if they received this education in their mother tongue. This is important in that it points to the psychological difficulties that EMI brings to them.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The advantages of EMI for students and society have been widely expressed in the literature. However, the disadvantages that arise in the processes are also remarkable. Considering these disadvantages, some adjustments need to be made. First of all, it seems that some students do not understand the lessons effectively with EMI. In addition, this situation creates an important obstacle to the academic development of local languages. If other disadvantages in addition to these are taken into account, the necessity of incorporating local languages into the content of the education given with EMI arises. Among 670 students, a considerable number of them expressed their opinions in a way that indicates they do not have any difficulty with EMI. On the other hand, there are also many others who express their concerns and state that they somehow face up to difficulties. Therefore, it is important to adjust the curriculum by taking these students into account.

As for the limitations of this study, it was done at a private university only, and if it were applied in another setting like a state university, the results would be different. Some departments are attractive to students, and the best achievers choose to go to them while some others are not so popular. For that reason, if this study was done in more heterogenous settings, the results could be more clearly reflective of the real situation.

As for some implications, the students should be aware of their limits and choose their departments more wisely, especially about the EMI. It seems there are many others who are already satisfied with that kind of instruction. As for the others, they should know their limits and make choices accordingly. Another focus should be on instructors' attention to these students who have difficulty with EMI. If the instructors detect them on time, they may develop appropriate strategies for these students, or for some of them, they may offer some radical changes to other universities where EMI is not applied.

Moreover, the language of the textbooks can be simplified so as to make them comprehensible for students. Some textbooks do not serve for anything for the students because of their incomprehensible language. Another point is that the instructors may make the content easier for students. The last option is that the educational institutions take English preparatory classes more seriously to solve this problem before it occurs.

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# The Implementation of Action Research Among English Language Teachers in Kurdistan: Benefits, Challenges, And Perceptions

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## ABSTRACT

Action research can be regarded as a valuable tool for teachers to examine their teaching practices and achieve a deeper understanding of themselves, method of teaching, curriculum, classroom environment, and their students as teachers lack information about the concept of action research and solving teaching issues systematically. This study attempts to investigate the familiarity of English language teachers in Kurdistan with the concept of action research and its implementation. Besides, it focuses on the use, benefits, and limitations of action research from the teachers' perspective. A mixed method approach was utilized to collect data. To this end, for the quantitative method 142 participants (69 males and 73 females) filled out a questionnaire electronically. For the qualitative phase, 11 English language teachers were chosen to take part in a number of training sessions about the concept, procedures, and steps of implementing action research. They were later interviewed about their experiences with implementing action research in their own classes including challenges. The results indicated that English teachers in the context of Kurdistan were not familiar with the concept of action research, and if they were, they would not implement it in their teaching regularly. Additionally, the training course was perceived to be beneficial for the teachers to find a systematic tool to address issues they faced in their teaching experience. The results also identified many advantages behind the implementation of action research such as improving teacher professionalism, increasing students' class participation, increasing self-confidence and self-awareness, and applying a student-centered approach in teaching. However, a number of challenges were also found to hinder the teachers' implementation of action research such as limitation of time, large class sizes, individual differences, class design and the lack of support from parents or the teaching institution.

**Keywords:** Action Research, Familiarity, Perceptions, Advantages, Limitations.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning are continuous processes that require continuous fine-tuning and improvement. This is also true to learning and teaching a second language (L2). In recent years, the process of teaching English has gone through some changes in the Kurdistan Region. The main problem is that in the last few years English language teachers in Kurdistan have been deprived of training courses and this is mainly due to political and economic crises. This study aims at investigating the concept of action research amongst English teachers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. First, it aims at finding out whether teachers are aware of the concept. Secondly, it investigates how teachers perceive implementing action research for the purpose of improving their teaching and to achieve a better learning outcome. Consequently, it aims to generate knowledge regarding making improvements in teacher training programmes and in the process of teaching and learning. The concept of action research in the field of ELT and teacher training is new in the Kurdistan Region; it has not yet been researched, debated, or even carefully considered, evident in the lack of literature produced locally. As such, this is a

pioneering study in which an empirical investigation is deployed. A number of English language teachers will be trained on the concept of action research, and then they will be asked to provide insight into their perceptions of the benefits, challenges, and weaknesses of this type of research in their own classes. In so doing, teachers will be encouraged to think critically and assess action research as a tool to increase their confidence about their teaching.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of action research is new for some teachers. They might, therefore, benefit from understanding the concept and the potential benefits behind using it. Action research is “processes in which researchers examine their educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research” (Duan & Ren, 2011, p. 498). On the other hand Mills’ definition which supports that action research is a systematic process:

Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by a teacher researcher to gather information about the way that their particular school operates how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes. (Mill, 2003, cited in Nasrollahi et al., 2012, p. 4)

Wallace (1998) also added the concept of reflective cycle in which action research is a reflection on professional development. Burns (2009) supported the idea of ‘reflective practice’ and ‘teacher as researcher’ in which “AR involves taking a self-reflective, critical and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching context” (p. 2). These definitions focus on the role of the teacher as a researcher in terms of collecting data, examining the methods and techniques they use for teaching with the aim of improving the process of learning and teaching, and gaining a positive outcome. Action research aims to find out the problem or any relating issues with the participants, who are usually students, teachers, principals and parents. To Burns (2016), “Action research is the process to bridge the gap between the ideal (the most effective ways of doing things) and the real (the actual ways of doing things) in the social situation” (p. 290). Moreover, Stringer’s (2014) definition states that action research is a typical approach which intervenes in classroom issues and enables teachers to improve students’ learning outcomes through strengthening their way of teaching. Furthermore, Gui-Xia (2016) defines action research as a process with several features. The most important of them is the reflective practice, which refers to focusing on a specific issue or problem that usually belongs to a specific teacher, student or school environment. All the steps are applied by the researchers in terms of designing, implementing and evaluating. The researcher finds action research as an effective tool that has a positive impact on students and teachers at the same time; it helps students have a positive learning outcome and provides improvement and enhancement for teachers which in turn lead to professional development. In general, action research empowers educators as professionals, as it enables them to change themselves and other teachers’ activities as well as achieving positive results (Dosemagen & Schwalbach, 2019). Teachers need to check for different techniques and methods to implement in their teaching, and examine whether these techniques improve their teaching or require modifications in order to gain a positive teaching outcome. John Elliot (2002) cited in (Naz, 2014, p. 8) suggests that action research is “concerned with everyday practical problems experienced by the teachers, rather than the theoretical problems, defined by pure teachers within a discipline of knowledge” (p. 8). Teachers are the major participants in this process because their work deals with the practical aspects rather than the theoretical underpinning of what they practice. Consequently,

it will lead to professional development, which is a central component of teacher improvement (Asmari, 2016). The detail of teachers' work will be discussed in the following chapters.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

This study has been guided through the following research questions:

- Are English language teachers aware of the concept of action research?
- Do English language teachers implement action research in their teaching regularly?
- How do English language teachers perceive the use, benefits, and limitations of action research?

### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following are the aims of the study:

- Investigating the concept of action research amongst English teachers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
- Finding out whether teachers are aware of the concept.
- Investigates how teachers perceive implementing action research for the purpose of improving their teaching and to achieve a better learning outcome.
- Generate knowledge in regard to making possible improvements in teacher training programmes and ultimately in the process of teaching and learning.
- Help teachers in developing an awareness of self-observation and self-improvement and the significance of implementing action research.
- Makes policy makers and educators realize that when teachers collect information to make changes and improvements as an ongoing learning process, action research can be a powerful asset to their teaching effectiveness and professional development (Asmari, 2016).

### **5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In recent years the process of teaching English has gone through some changes in the Kurdistan Region. Though changes were generally positive, changes might comprise the curriculum, techniques and methods of teaching, students' performance in class, etc., and as a result, teachers might face many difficulties. That is why; they need to be trained to address issues they face in teaching. The main problem is that in the last few years English language teachers in Kurdistan have been deprived of training courses and this is mainly due to political and economic crises.

In the absence of continuous development courses for in-service teachers, action research can be of much promise to help teachers to reflect back on what they do, better understand their classrooms and students, and reinforce teaching skills (Nasrollahi et al., 2012). Yet, classroom and action research is almost entirely absent in the curriculum of pre-service teachers' programmes, and even more for in-service teachers.

### **6. METHODOLOGY**

This study relied on the qualitative and quantitative research method, which is not based on personal preference but it was based on the need of the amount of the data required for this study. A quantitative method was used to find out whether English language teachers are

familiar with the concept of action research if yes, how do they implement it in their teaching practice regularly. For that, a questionnaire embracing two major sections given to a sample of English language teachers across schools and universities to find out the percentages of teachers who are familiar with the concept of action research and to what extent they implement it in their teaching practice.

In addition to quantitative method, it was essential to use qualitative method since qualitative method deals with “the observations and interpretations of people’s perception of different events, and it takes the snapshot of the people’s perception in a natural setting (Gentles et al., 2015 as cited in Mohajan, 2018, p. 2). The researcher’s aim behind using qualitative method was to recognize English language teachers’ perceptions and experiences towards the implementation of action research and to find out teacher’s deeper understanding of the training course, what advantages they found and what limitations they faced when they implemented action research.

For the quantitative data collection method, a questionnaire was distributed among English language teachers in the form of Google, and all the answers received electronically to find out the familiarity of English language teachers with the concept of action research and its implementation in their teaching practice and the data was analyzed via using SPSS program version 25. On the other hand for the qualitative data collection method, a training course was delivered for the participants face to face and online via Zoom Meeting platform to approach teachers with the concept of action research and its steps for the implementation. Different tools can be used in qualitative data collection method. An interview is the most widely used because it can be adapted for different purposes and in different contexts (Dörnyei, 2007). For this reason, interviews were conducted with the teachers who implemented action research in their teaching after the training. The purpose of the interview was to seek their perceptions on their experience in the implementation of action research, as an interview is primarily designed to collect data about participants’ viewpoints a phenomenon or experience. The data have been collected based on the participants’ interpretations of their experience. For the qualitative data analysis, all the data were coded and then transformed in to themes. For the population of this study random sampling was utilized and random participants were chosen, they were all in-service English language teachers, teaching students at different stages including primary, secondary and university. For the quantitative data collection method, 142 participants responded to the questionnaire. The teachers who participated in the qualitative data collection method were selected based on convenience sampling 10 teachers including primary, secondary, and university teachers.

## 7. TRAINING COURSE

Since English language teachers were not provided with enough training courses targeting action research from their previous training, the researcher with the help from her supervisor delivered a training course to the teachers. The source adapted for the content of the course was Burns’s (2010) book titled: *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners* in the form of Power Point presentations. Participants were provided with the source and the Power Point slides in case they needed them during the implementation, so they could go back to them.

TABLE 1.1 An overview of the participants in the quantitative data collection method

Gender	Years of teaching experience	
Male = 69	1-2	17 responses
Female = 73	3-5	8 responses
	6-9	28 responses

10-15	46 responses
16-20	20 responses
Above 20	23 responses

TABLE 1.2: An overview of the participants in the qualitative data collection method

Participants	Academic degree	Years of experience	Gender	Level of the students
Ramiyar	PhD.	13	Male	Undergraduate students
Fadi	PhD.	7	Male	Undergraduate students
Diya	PhD.	5	Female	Undergraduate students
Bareen	MA	8	Female	Undergraduate students
Saz	MA	9	Female	Undergraduate students
Nasreen	Bachelor	22	Female	Secondary
Dlovan	Bachelor	8	Male	Secondary
Safeen	Bachelor	11	Male	Secondary
Sardar	Bachelor	5	Male	Primary
Dana	Bachelor	5+	Male	Primary
Kawa	Bachelor	25	Male	Secondary

## 8. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Reference to Braun and Clarke (2006) all the codes were reviewed by the researcher for making sure they were connected to form a pattern, or in case any code was missing, they were checked the validity of the themes in reference to the data. All the questions were piloted to make sure that the questions had validity and reliability, although the interview questions did not have “tools” to test (Dörnyei, 2007). At first, three teachers were chosen for piloting their answers, and the interviews were conducted on 23rd February, 2021 in-person. Then, after editing some questions, since the questions did not target the research questions. Based on the last version of the interview questions, the teachers were re-interviewed on different dates on 9th, 10th, and 13th of March, 2021. The data of the first interview before piloting were excluded, and meanwhile the last version was used for the analysis.

## 9. DATA ANALYSIS

### 9.1 THE QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The First part of the quantitative data was provided in the form of pie-chart. The chart was used to present the percentage of English language teachers who were familiar with the concept of action research and those who were not. The numerical data is shown in the form of percentages in the charts. Furthermore, the second part is the questionnaire, which comprised 25 items, the answers transformed to Excel sheet for each item separately and then imported to the SPSS program, version 25 to draw out the statistics and to find out the mean and standard deviation. The reason behind using mean and standard deviation was that mean is commonly used to measure the central tendency and find average value of a group of numbers. It is the basis for comparing the ratings calculated from the answers of the items in the questionnaire. Standard deviations were used to measure the differences from the mean average (Sykes & Gani, 2016).

## 9.2 THE QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the qualitative data, a corpus of 17,624 words was transcribed. Ten interviews were transcribed for the analysis, and the interview of one participant was omitted because he did not implement action research and he could not provide the researcher with his experience for implementing action research. The transcription of the data was done verbatim, and by the researcher. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze all the interviews. To Braun and Clark (2006, p. 3), “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.”, and it is a beneficial method used to take participants’ perceptions. In addition, it is used to find out similarities and differences to find the core meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## 10. RESULTS

### 10.1 RESULTS FOR THE QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION METHOD

#### 10.1.1 FAMILIARITY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS WITH THE CONCEPT OF ACTION RESEARCH

The first part of the questionnaire aimed at examining whether English language teachers were familiar with the concept of action research, which was the first research question of this study. Below is the results collected from the questionnaire data:

Among 142 respondents, 84 (eighty-four) of them answered "Yes" to whether they were familiar with the concept of action research, which equals 59.2%. The number of the respondents who selected "No" to this question was 58 which equals 40.8%. As such, nearly half of the respondents were neither familiar with the general concept of action research nor its detailed contents. Those who answered "Yes" to this question, then completed the rest of the questionnaire which was 25 items to find out if they implement it in their teaching. See figure 1.3 for the result of the quantitative data:

TABLE 1.3: Participants’ response to the questionnaire

No.	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q1	Teachers must conduct research to solve their problems in the class.	4.27	0.700	84
Q2	In my view, research is the duty of "professional researchers".	3.89	0.944	84
Q3	Research is one of my prime duties as a teacher.	3.86	0.894	84
Q4	Action research is an important type of professional research.	4.21	0.622	84
Q5	A teacher should have necessary skills in order to perform research in her/his class.	4.46	0.648	84
Q6	Doing classroom research improves teaching and learning.	4.29	0.872	84
Q7	Performing classroom research needs familiarity with complex statistical concepts	3.69	0.821	84
Q8	Problems in the classroom can be solved through using	3.76	0.816	84

	action research.			
<b>Q9</b>	Research must necessarily include specific concept like variables, hypothesis, statistics, etc.	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.760</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q10</b>	Classroom research is impossible.	<b>3.68</b>	<b>0.946</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q11</b>	Some research procedures like creating control and experimental groups are not suitable for classrooms (because some students are deprived from certain methods and materials).	<b>2.68</b>	<b>0.907</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q12</b>	Conducting research involves specific research skills (familiarity with different research types, data, statistics, etc.)	<b>4.01</b>	<b>0.720</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q13</b>	Research should necessarily be conducted by experts.	<b>3.56</b>	<b>0.923</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q14</b>	Subjects investigated by professional researchers are not often related to the daily problems of language classrooms.	<b>2.51</b>	<b>0.951</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q15</b>	Subjects investigated by professional researchers are not often related to the students' real needs	<b>2.68</b>	<b>0.920</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q16</b>	The results of professional research are not beneficial to language teachers.	<b>3.55</b>	<b>1.057</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q17</b>	The language of professional research articles is highly specialized.	<b>3.69</b>	<b>0.806</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q18</b>	Even if professional research deals with classroom problems and students' needs, they are so specialized that are useless for language teachers.	<b>3.18</b>	<b>1.055</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q19</b>	A teacher can be a researcher by conducting action research in his/her classroom.	<b>3.89</b>	<b>0.878</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q20</b>	Classroom research helps teachers solve the problems of their class-rooms.	<b>4.04</b>	<b>0.768</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q21</b>	Action research is one of the duties of all teachers.	<b>3.67</b>	<b>0.855</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q22</b>	I regard action research as the best way to improve my professionalism.	<b>3.64</b>	<b>0.873</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q23</b>	Action research helps my students learn better.	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.760</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q24</b>	Whenever I encounter a problem in my classroom, I try to solve it through action research.	<b>3.52</b>	<b>0.857</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Q25</b>	Action research is the most practical method of research for teachers.	<b>3.80</b>	<b>0.788</b>	<b>84</b>

## 9.2 RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative interview was used for data collection from the teachers who participated in the training course which was specifically designed for this thesis, and that was to answer the research question presented in this study which was the perceptions of English language teachers about implementing action research, and any benefits and limitations they found after they implemented action research.



### **9.2.1 THEME ONE: MOST ENGLISH TEACHERS ARE NOT AWARE OF THE CONCEPT OF ACTION RESEARCH**

The teachers who took part in the training course on action research reported that they had become aware of the concept of action research after the training as they did not know of the concept before. Most of the teachers who participated in the training course were previously not aware of the idea of following a systematic method to identify and solve classroom problems.

In general, the English language teachers were not aware of the concept of action research. They had their own way of dealing with problems, but not through action research. After the training, the teachers learned how to address problems in their teaching through using action research principles. Also, they became interested in having a systematic tool for solving class problems.

### **9.2.1THEME TWO: TRAINING COURSE ON ACTION RESEARCH BENEFITS LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

The training course delivered for the purpose of this research provided teachers with sufficient knowledge about the concept of action research. Later and through implementing action research, the teachers learnt how to diagnose a problem, collect data about it, and then find remedies based on the collected data.

### **9.2.3 THEME THREE: IMPLEMENTING ACTION RESEARCH RAISED TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Action research implementation aimed to empower English language teachers with enough skills and knowledge for remedying classroom issues and problems systematically. However, they did not have any systematic tool for dealing with classroom issues, but after participating in the training course, they were trained how to deal with such problems.

### **9.2.4 THEME FOUR: IMPLEMENTING ACTION RESEARCH HAS MANY ADVANTAGES**

The English teachers who implemented action research found many advantages behind the implementation of action research such as motivation, increasing self-awareness, self-encouragement, and class participation. Basically, the implementation of action research helped them to motivate the students to be active participant in the class this resulted in the students' self-encouragement for participating the lesson since the most obvious issue was the lack of the students' class participation even though some were not aware. Action research is regarded as an important tool for controlling to remedy this issue in a systematic research-oriented manner.

### **9.2.5.1 THEME FIVE: TEACHERS FOUND IMPLEMENTING ACTION RESEARCH CHALLENGING IN SOME SITUATIONS**

Concerning the challenges that the teachers faced while they were implementing action research, two sub-themes emerged:

#### **9.2.5.2 CLASSROOM SIZE AND LACK OF TIME**

Teachers have limited time for delivering their lessons in reference to the lesson plan they have. They should finish the curriculum within the exact duration of time. The main problem that the teachers faced while they implemented action research was the limitation of time. Most of them reported that they could not implement action research properly within the specific duration of time.

#### **9.2.5.2 INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES**

Although action research is implemented to solve classroom problems, but implementing action research of limited use due to the individual differences in class because teachers could not adopt the same solution to the same group of students who were characterized by having different lifestyles, different levels of understanding and different personalities.

#### **9.2.6 THEME SIX: TEACHERS FOUND IMPLEMENTING ACTION RESEARCH IN SOME CONTEXTS OF LITTLE VALUE (LIMITED USE)**

The teachers faced limitations in implementing action research because of the class design. A teacher reported that after implementing action research. Thus, some internal issues affected the teachers to solve problems they faced in their classes. For example, the class design did not help the teachers practice what they had planned for, or sometimes parents were not supportive to help the teachers solve students' problems. Overall, the teachers' aim was to help students study and make progress, but when the surroundings were not helpful, the teachers might not have been able to implement action research thoroughly.

#### **9.2.7 THEME SEVEN: ACTION RESEARCH MIGHT ENCOURAGE TEACHER COLLABORATION**

The teachers who participated in the training course found the course detail along with their experiences necessary to be shared with their colleagues. University teachers were debating about the importance of action research implementation. They were able to work on many issues and problems they encountered in their academic life.

### **10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study has provided empirical data using qualitative and quantitative methods to answer a number of research questions about the familiarity with and perceptions of English language teachers about action research, its benefits and challenges during its implementation in the context of Kurdistan. It was concluded that English teachers are not familiar with the concept of action research, and even if they are familiar with it, they do not implement it in their teaching practice regularly. Data were collected from a number of teachers who were given specific training on action research, and they provided insight after experiencing its implementation. The study highlights the role of implementing action research in teachers'

professional development, and how action research might help teachers to become more aware and critical of their own teaching.

The results indicated that English language teachers do not have a systematic tool for addressing issues they face in their teaching. Although most of the respondents to the questionnaire stated their familiarity with the concept of action research and implementing it regularly in their teaching, the participants in the qualitative data were found to be unfamiliar; the analysis concluded that most teachers are not aware of the concept nor do they practice it in their daily work.

The analysis of the data also showed that the teachers who participated in a training course on action research and who were later asked to implement it, found the implementation of action research beneficial. They reported many advantages behind its implementation, such as improving teacher professionalism, increasing students' class participation, increasing self-confidence and self-awareness, and a move toward applying a student-centered approach. However, the teachers experienced a number of challenges such as the limitation of time, large class sizes, individual differences, the class design and the lack of support from parents or teaching institution.

Additionally, it was found that English language teachers in the context of Kurdistan are deprived of annual training courses for being updated on new methods and trends of teaching. From the perspective of English teachers who participated in this study, opening training courses regularly to update teachers including on action and classroom research will help them become better equipped to address issues they encounter. They will also be familiar with the most recent methods and techniques that teachers apply in other contexts and countries. This helps teachers to become more knowledgeable in their fields, and consequently this leads to a higher degree of teacher professionalism.

Reference to the results of this study, many recommendations has been made. The results of this study might benefit advisors and decision-makers at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education especially regarding to putting in place a study plan for providing continuous annual training courses for teachers. Also, opening continuous workshops, seminars and conferences might motivate teachers to enhance self-improvement and make progress in teaching and learning.

Overall, this study recommends that teachers implement action research on various challenges and issues, including those found in the curriculum and make recommendations to the Ministry for reform. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education might encourage teachers to participate in more training courses on action research and help by providing a suitable environment that suits their schedule. Another motive will be providing incentives to encourage teachers to participate. Besides, the Ministry of Education might focus on the role of supervisors to encourage teachers to implement action research in their teaching practice in a systematic manner. Finally, the results of this study suggested that it is possible for teachers to engage in action research, and that action research enhances students' learning and understanding. It is hoped that more research is conducted on this promising line of research which will help bring about a much-needed reform in the education system and teacher development.

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## The Significance of Non-Verbal Communication in Oral Translation

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to discover a different definition of interpretation and how non-verbal communication is a fundamental interpretation part. Therefore, an interpreter without a good knowledge of non-verbal communication cannot be a complete interpreter. The interpretation process is not only the process of meaning transference from one language to another; it is also the transference of the facial expression, tone of voice, eye contact etc.

The problem of this study is that most interpreters do not take non-verbal communication into consideration, and they do not have enough information about it. This will be proved through an incident happened while USA president Joe Biden delivered a speech in April this year for which all details of the reason illustrated clearly. The lack of knowledge about non-verbal communication can cause problems while interpreting or analyzing a speech of a president or a government official or speaker. It leads to misunderstanding and misinterpretation that might be embarrassing for the interpreter and the organization or the Media network they are working for.

Non-verbal communication can be used in different forms, each illustrating or replacing a specific part of verbal communication. It contains many more figures than anyone might think in the first place. So non-verbal signs/Communications play a significant role in the interpretation. It is the essential base in the interpretation process; interpreters have to concentrate on these elements to carry out a successful interpreting process and achieve great interpretation results.

The data of this study is mainly taken from books and articles about translation, Interpretation and Nonverbal Communication. The exemplification is primarily drawn from English sources, books and articles that have partly been opted out depending on self-experience. Therefore, it is analyzed through a questionnaire in which eighteen professional translators/interpreters are asked seven questions regarding the importance of Non-Verbal Communication in Oral Translation. In conclusion, the outcome of this manuscript reiterated that interpretation and Non-Verbal Communication complete each other; the latter cannot be perfect without the former.

**Keywords:** Oral Translation, Verbal, Non-Verbal Communications, Interpretations, Facial Expression, gestures, Eye Contact, Speech.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is very typical if we don't know about many aspects of non-verbal communication when we hear about this topic. What comes to mind immediately are body gestures or facial expressions. However, there are too many aspects. For this reason, chapter two begins with a definition of non-verbal communication, and chapter three illustrates these definitions with Types of Non-verbal communication. They also demonstrate the significance of non-verbal communication in daily life. In this paper, the task of the interpreter is coded in two steps: first, the transfer of

a message from the speaker to the interpreter and secondly, the transfer of this message from the interpreter to the audience.

Therefore, the work of interpretation is not only converting the source language meaning into the target language, but most importantly is to grasp the meaning of what is said verbally through the non-verbal communications such as gestures, facial expression, tone of voice, body posture that can convey more than the words uttered.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The data of this study is mainly taken from books and articles about translation, Interpretation and Nonverbal Communication. The exemplification is primarily drawn from English sources, books and articles that are partly been opted out depending on self-experience. Therefore, it is analyzed through a questionnaire in which fifteen professional translators are asked seven questions regarding the importance of Non-Verbal Communication in Oral Translation.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

(Bambaeero, F., & Shokrpour, N. 2017/ Non-Verbal Communication in Teaching) mentioned that if this skill is practiced by teachers, it will have a positive and profound effect on the students' mood. Non-verbal communication is highly reliable in the communication process.

(Magdalena & , Anthony. 2013/Non-verbal Signs). Mentioned that the essential functions of nonverbal discussion across the stages of research were identified as clarification, juxtaposition, discovery, confirmation, emphasis, illustration, elaboration, complementarity, corroboration.

(Chakravarty.D ,2015/Non-Verbal VS Verbal Communication) coaches say 93% of all interactions is non-verbal and only 7% is actual words.

(Burgoon,2014/Distinction between verbal and Non-Verbal Elements), The differences between the use of verbal elements and the use of non-verbal elements can be described as the difference between doing and communicating about doing.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. DEFINITION OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

It is a spoken Behavior and elements instead of from words themselves that convey meaning. Non-verbal communication signs contain pitch, speed, tone and volume of voice, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, and proximity to the audience, eye movements and contact, and dress and appearance.

Researchers believe that only five percent effect is produced by the spoken word, forty five percent by the tone, inflexion, and other elements of voice, and fifty percent by body language, movements, eye contact, etc. ([van Wyk et al., 2013](#))

Nonverbal Communication has been defined as communication without words. It includes apparent behaviors such as facial expressions, eyes, touching, and tones of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as dress, posture and spatial distance between two or more people. Everything communicates, including material objects, physical space, and time systems. Although verbal output can be turned off, nonverbal cannot even silence speaks. From this website (([Harper et al., 1978](#)))

[Non-verbal communication](#) is the indirect means of communication which usually includes some gestures and sign languages. Some signs are understood beyond mere words. There are signs and gestures that do tell us many things about a certain individual and what he/she is trying to communicate. See the below diagram ([Scala and McGrath, 1993](#)).

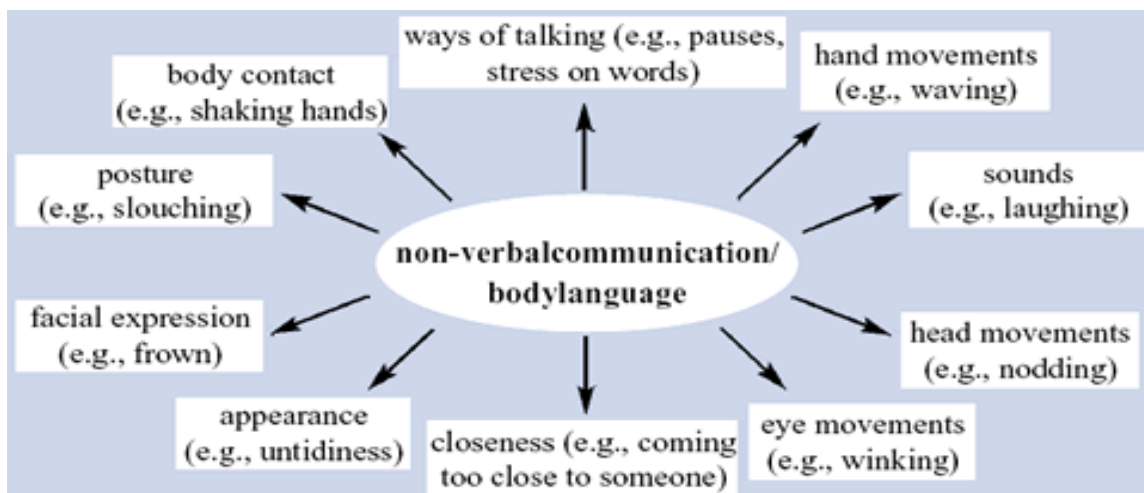


FIGURE 1

#### 1.1 DEFINITION OF INTERPRETATION

The process of explaining, reframing, or otherwise demonstrating your understanding of something is known as interpretation. An interpreter interprets one language into another and explains what someone is saying to someone who doesn't understand it. To analyze something, you must first comprehend the piece of music, writing, language, or idea and then explain it. A

machine can generate large amounts of data, but humans will need your interpretation to understand it. (Definition of Interpretation, 2011)

## 1.2 TYPES OF INTERPRETATION

Simultaneous interpreting: The interpreter listens to the speaker and renders the message in the target language simultaneously.

Consecutive Interpreting: When the interpreter speaks after the source-language speaker has finished speaking, it is known as consecutive interpreting.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. TYPES OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

#### 2.1 FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Facial expressions are responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication. Consider how much information can be conveyed with a smile or a frown. The look on a person's face is often the first thing we see, even before we hear what they have to say. While nonverbal communication and behavior can vary dramatically between cultures, the facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, and fear are similar throughout the world. (Zuckerman et al., 1981) See Example Below:

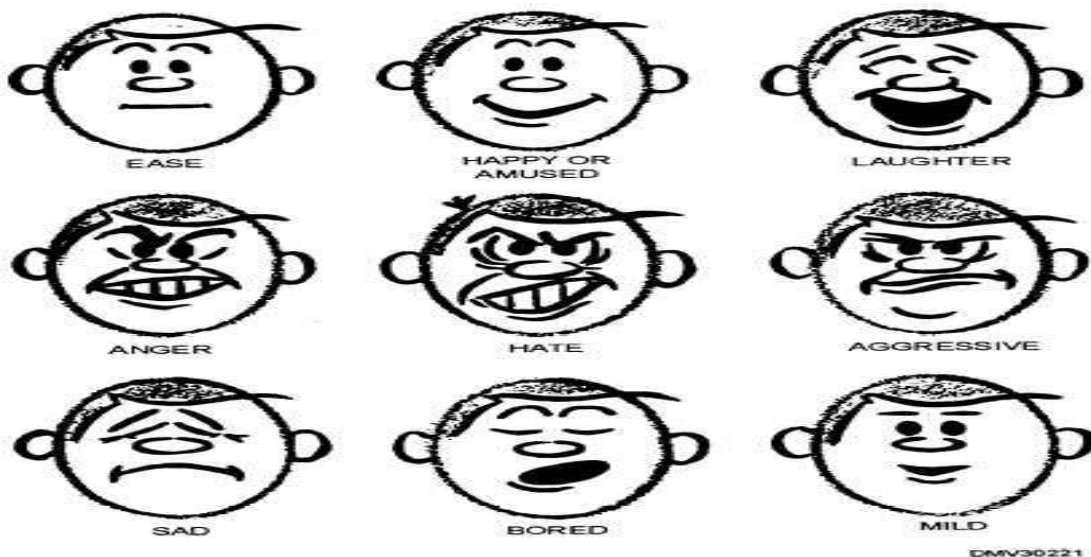


FIGURE 2

#### 2.2 GESTURES

Deliberate movements and signals are an important way to communicate meaning without words. Common gestures include waving, pointing, and using fingers to indicate numeric amounts. Other gestures are arbitrary and related to culture. In courtroom settings, lawyers have been known to utilize different nonverbal signals to attempt to sway juror opinions. An attorney might glance at his watch to suggest that the opposing lawyer's argument is tedious or



might even roll his eyes at the testimony offered by a witness in an attempt to undermine his or her credibility. These nonverbal signals are seen as being so powerful and influential that some judges even place limits on what type of nonverbal behaviors are allowed in the courtroom. And gestures differ from a country to another in accordance to the culture as shown below: (Zuckerman et al., 1981)

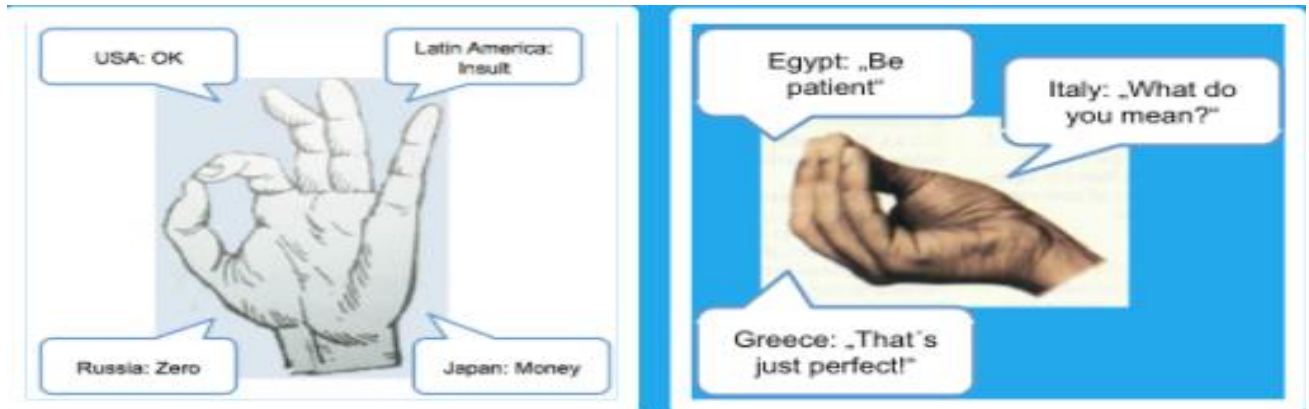


FIGURE 3

## 2.3 PARALINGUISTICS

Paralinguistics refers to vocal communication that is separate from actual language. This includes factors such as tone of voice, loudness, inflection, and pitch. Consider the powerful effect that tone of voice can have on the meaning of a sentence. When said in a strong tone of voice, listeners might interpret approval and enthusiasm. The same words said in a hesitant tone of voice might convey disapproval and a lack of interest. Consider all the different ways simply changing your tone of voice might change the meaning of a sentence. (Harper, R. G. 1978) A friend might ask you how you are doing, and you might respond with the standard "I'm fine," but how you actually say those words might reveal a tremendous amount of how you are really feeling. A cold tone of voice might suggest that you are actually not fine, but you don't wish to discuss it. A bright, happy tone of voice will reveal that you are actually doing quite well. A somber, downcast tone would indicate that you are the opposite of fine and that perhaps your friend should inquire further. (Zuckerman et al., 1981)

## 2.4 BODY LANGUAGE AND POSTURE

Posture and movement can also convey a great deal on information. Research on body language has grown significantly since the 1970's, but popular media have focused on the over-interpretation of defensive postures, arm-crossing, and leg-crossing, especially after publishing Julius Fast's book *Body Language*. While these nonverbal behaviors can indicate feelings and attitudes, research suggests that body language is far more subtle and less definitive than previously believed. (Zuckerman et al., 1981)



FIGURE 4

## 2.5 PROXEMICS

People often refer to their need for "personal space," which is also an important type of nonverbal communication. The amount of distance we need and the amount of space we perceive as belonging to us is influenced by a number of factors including social norms, cultural expectations, situational factors, personality characteristics, and level of familiarity. For example, the amount of personal space needed when having a casual conversation with another person usually varies between 18 inches to four feet. On the other hand, the personal distance needed when speaking to a crowd of people is around 10 to 12 feet. ([Zuckerman et al., 1981](#)).

## 2.6 EYE GAZE

The eyes play an important role in nonverbal communication and such things as looking, staring and blinking are important nonverbal behaviors. When people encounter people or things that they like, the rate of blinking increases and pupils dilate. Looking at another person can indicate a range of emotions including hostility, interest, and attraction. People also utilize eye gaze a means to determine if someone is being honest. Normal, steady eye contact is often taken as a sign that a person is telling the truth and is trustworthy. Shifty eyes and an inability to maintain eye contact, on the other hand, is frequently seen as an indicator that someone is lying or being deceptive. ([Zuckerman et al., 1981](#)).

## 2.7 HAPTICS

Communicating through touch is another important nonverbal behavior. There has been a substantial amount of research on the importance of touch in infancy and [early](#)

childhood. Harry Harlow's classic monkey study demonstrated how deprived touch and contact impedes development. Baby monkeys raised by wire mothers experienced permanent deficits in behavior and social interaction. Touch can be used to communicate affection, familiarity, sympathy, and other emotions. In her book *Interpersonal Communication: an everyday encounter*, author Julia Wood writes that touch is also often used as a way to communicate both status and power. Researchers have found that high-status individuals tend to invade other people's personal space with greater frequency and intensity than lower-status individuals. Sex differences also play a role in how people utilize touch to communicate meaning. Women tend to use touch to convey care, concern, and nurturance. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to use touch to assert power or control over others. (Zuckerman et al., 1981).

## **2.8 APPEARANCE**

Our choice of color, clothing, hairstyles, and other factors affecting appearance are also considered a means of nonverbal communication. Research on psychology has demonstrated that different colors can evoke different moods. Appearance can also alter physiological reactions, judgments, and interpretations. Just think of all the subtle judgments you quickly make about someone based on his or her appearance. These first impressions are important, which is why experts suggest that job seekers dress appropriately for interviews with potential employers. Researchers have found that appearance can play a role in how people are perceived and even how much they earn. One 1996 study found that attorneys who were rated as more attractive than their peers earned nearly fifteen percent more than those ranked as less attractive. Culture is an important influence on how appearances are judged.

## **2.9 ARTIFACTS**

Objects and images are also tools that can be used to communicate nonverbally. On an online forum, for example, you might select an avatar to represent your identity online and to communicate information about who you are and the things you like. People often spend a great deal of time developing a particular image and surrounding themselves with objects designed to convey information about the things that are important to them. Uniforms, for example, can be used to transmit a tremendous amount of information about a person. A soldier will don fatigues, a police officers will wear a uniform, and a doctor will wear a white lab coat. At a mere glance, these outfits tell people what a person does for a living. (Zuckerman et al., 1981)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.1 INTERPRETING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

It has been stated that non-verbal communication plays a role in every kind of discourse, and in professional interpretation, it is crucial as well. This chapter discusses the following problems: in what situations and to what extent can the professional interpreter make sense of non-verbal communication? Where exactly in the brain is this interpretation of non-verbal communication located? For this chapter, websites were studied, since they are often more recent than books. Similar to the act of translation, the act of interpretation is influenced by

many factors. This is why this chapter tries to give a different view by mentioning aspects from the fields of sociology, neurophysiology and psychology. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

### **3.1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF FACE-TO-FACE SITUATIONS**

Non-verbal communication does not only play a role in face-to-face situations. It is also important in mediated communication, for example, as this is the case for telephone interpreting, where the interpreter does not see the speaker. Non-verbal communication is also crucial for every other kind of professional interpreting where the speaker cannot be seen. (Buck, Ross., & VanLear, Arthur. 2002) It is important, because even in such situations the voice itself can express non-verbal paralinguistic messages. (Burgoon,& Woodall, 1996) Those messages, for example, are intonation, tone of voice, vocally produced noises or pause. Then again, it has to be considered that non-verbal, communicative acts might only be fully expressed and observed in face-to-face situations, where rhetorical sensitivity is accompanied by visually perceivable emotions. As a result, this chapter will mainly consider face-to-face situations. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

### **3.1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF A SHARED CULTURE**

The differences between the use of verbal elements and the use of non-verbal elements can be described as the difference between doing and communicating about doing. It is believed that non-verbal communication is continuous, while verbal communication is discontinuous. Furthermore, as we have seen, verbal activity never stands alone – it is always joined by non-verbal action. Non-verbal action can be dynamic and spontaneous, but usually it is patterned by the respective culture. (Burgoon,2014) A successful interpretation of non-verbal elements conveyed by the speaker requires the same understanding of the symbols shared between interpreter and speaker. That means, for the understanding and for the correct interpretation of an utterance and its simultaneously conveyed non-verbal elements, it is crucial that there is a shared knowledge of the rules and codes of non-verbal communication, which are embedded in the participants' culture. Therefore, if the participants have a shared understanding of non-verbal meanings, the interpreter can also predict the non-verbal action of the speaker. Predictability is extremely important for interpreters. That is, thanks to the interpreters' unconscious or conscious knowledge of the culturally determined non-verbal elements, they are able to predict what exactly is going to be said, or are able to detect the meaning in an early stage of the discourse. Thus, predictability of meaning in the field of interpretation is not only a result of the interpreter's general culture, but also a result of his ability to interpret non-verbal communication. ([Phutela, 2015](#)).

## **3.2 INTERPRETING NON-VERBAL ELEMENTS: NEUROPHYSIOLOGIC ASPECTS**

What is the biological explanation for the process of interpreting non-verbal elements, for the interpretation of gestures or other signs, as well as for the supposition that this process happens even before the act of interpreting utterances? It has been proved that emotional areas of the brain fire up even as cognitive areas fire up when discussing emotional topics. That means that the emotional areas of an interpreter's brain will work as well as the cognitive areas, when the

interpreter listens to an angry speaker who raises his voice. Of course, “good” interpreters should not show emotions and must remain impartial. The process of understanding non-verbal and verbal elements can be described as follows: Neural pathways bring information to the brain through the senses. Information entering through eyes or ears goes first to the thalamus, to the large part of the limbic system. (Blumer, 1969) The thalamus could be compared to a mail sorter. It decides to which parts of the brain to send the information. If the incoming information is emotional, the thalamus sends out two signals – the first to the amygdale and the second to the neo-cortex. As a result, the emotional brain, the limbic system, receives the information first. For the biological aspect of a species’ survival, here human beings, this point is very important: hypothetically, in the event of a crisis (attack of a wild animal, confrontation with an enemy etc.) the interpreter could react (flee or fight) before the thinking brain has even received the information and had a chance to weigh the options. Today, the interpreter must not fear to be confronted with such dangerous attacks or confrontations. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

### **3.3 THE TRANSFER OF NON-VERBAL ELEMENTS FROM THE INTERPRETER TO THE AUDIENCE**

As mentioned above, non-verbal communication is emotionally expressive as people from all cultures smile, cry, caress, or then repress their emotions through body or facial action. Many emotional expressions seem to be displayed universally. However, non-verbal behavior varies from culture to culture, which means it is specific to each culture and may be interpreted differently. (Argyle, Michael F., Alkema, F, & Gilmour, R. 1971). What reactions do these non-verbal elements evoke among an audience when being transferred by an interpreter? Referring to the examples of non-verbal communication listed in chapter 3, the following text deals with the transfer and reception of such elements with special regard to cultural characteristics.

#### **3.3.1 INTONATION**

Ideally, interpreters should recreate the same intended meaning of the speaker in target language. However, intonation is not always used correctly. For instance, the fact that simultaneous interpreters do not know how the speaker is going to proceed in his or her speech that may lead the interpreters’ intonation to indicate their state of expectation. In that case, the voice tends to go up at the end of a sentence. In many languages, a rising intonation is a sign of surprise or a question, but when being used systematically by the interpreter it becomes very difficult for the audience to listen and understand where sentences begin and end, or to distinguish what is affirmative and what is interrogative. Furthermore, interpreters should not emphasize words where there is no need for it. Especially in rather vacuous texts, the actual emptiness of the text is highlighted by stressing too many words and the interpreter will come across as a poor public speaker. ([Phutela, 2015](#)).

#### **3.3.2 TONE OF VOICE**

The interpreters’ choice of the adequate tone of voice can give rise to serious problems. They can only be guided, in each case, by their tact and intuition. For example, an overreaction to being under pressure might manifest itself by an exaggerated attempt to sound calm. This can

lead to a monotonous interpretation that sounds totally bored or even supercilious and will probably fail to communicate, as it might be rather irritating for the audience. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

### **3.3.3 BODY POSTURE**

The simultaneous interpreters might not be able to reproduce the speaker's body postures (for example, due to the positioning of the booth) whereas interpreters that are visible to the audience may do so. However, one must consider that the audience usually looks at the speaker while listening to a simultaneous interpretation. In this case, there is a rather small need for the interpreter for transferring body gestures.

### **3.3.4 BODY GESTURES**

Body gestures can only be transferred if the interpreter is visible for the audience. Body gestures vary considerably according to cultural regions. A speaker, for example, agrees on a proposal - which is reproduced by the simultaneous interpreter - but shakes his or her head several times. This might be a sign of consent in the speaker's culture. However, a European audience will consider this gesture as a sign of refusal and is probably confused not knowing, which information might be correct – the positive one (by the interpreter) or the apparent negative one (visually). (Dolin, D, & Booth,1993) If the simultaneous interpreters could express themselves visually, they would support the verbal reproduction of consent by nodding their head. It is generally not recommended that interpreters imitate or exaggerate (striking) gestures as they run the risk to make fools of themselves.

### **3.3.5 FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND EYE MOVEMENT**

Likewise, body gestures, facial expressions and eye movement differ from culture to culture. A speaker from a far Eastern country may report on a rather depressing subject but at the same time may be smiling or even laughing. Consequently, a European audience will be puzzled by these apparent contradictions. Once again, simultaneous interpreters are limited in their opportunities of cultural transfer for they cannot communicate visually in their booth and clarify the situation.

### **3.3.6 PAUSE**

Appropriate pauses do add to the meaning of a speech and give interpreter's time to gather their thoughts in order to provide a better interpretation. However, some interpreters may feel under pressure to keep up a continuous flow of sound. The interpreters think the audience will become impatient and lose confidence in them because the hearers seem to be missing something. Indeed, there are some people who encourage this belief, who turn round and frown or make gestures indicating they feel their headphones are no longer working if they do not hear something for a few seconds. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

## **3.4 SUMMARY OF FINDING**

Depending on the questionnaire results arranged to ask eighteen professional interpreters seven questions that are covered below. Therefore, the vast misinterpretation made by (The Sun),

(Gravitas), (K24), and many other international journals was the best evidence to show that interpreters have poor knowledge about Nonverbal Communication and they do not take this point seriously. Furthermore, the president of the USA, Joe Biden delivered a speech on 17 April; then, at the end of the speech, he moved his hand towards the audience, waving at the backstage security officers to show him the way out. Regretfully, all the mentioned journals and media have misinterpreted his gesture, claiming that he shakes hands with thin air. It is worth noting that the interpreters in these international Journals or media are supposed to be more accurate than any other international and local journals. Professional interpreters need to study and grasp the meaning of the nonverbal communication of the presidents.

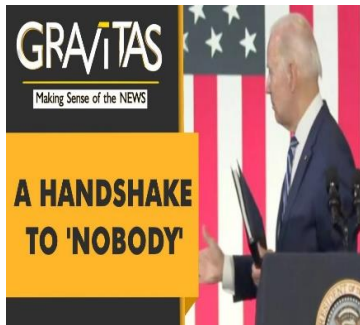


FIGURE 5



FIGURE 6

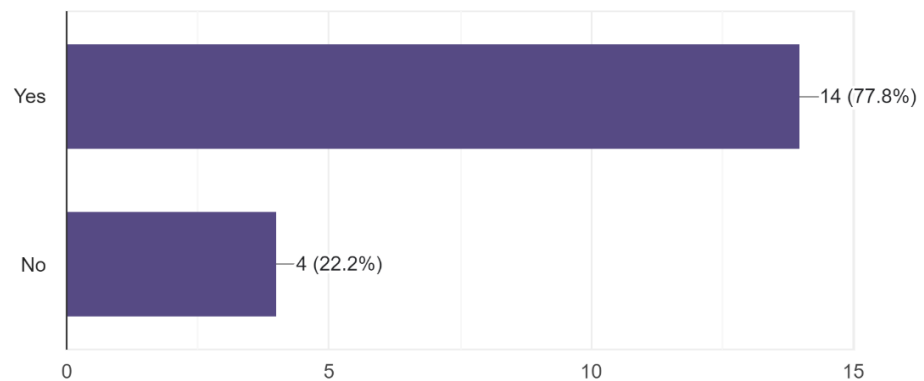


FIGURE 7

Below are the pie charts of the questionnaire results:

1-Non verbal communication has a noticeable impact on practical translation

18 responses



2-Translation/Interpretation is not only the transference of the meaning of SL into TL, but it is also the transference of the emotions ,feelings and nonverbal communication into the target language ?  
18 responses

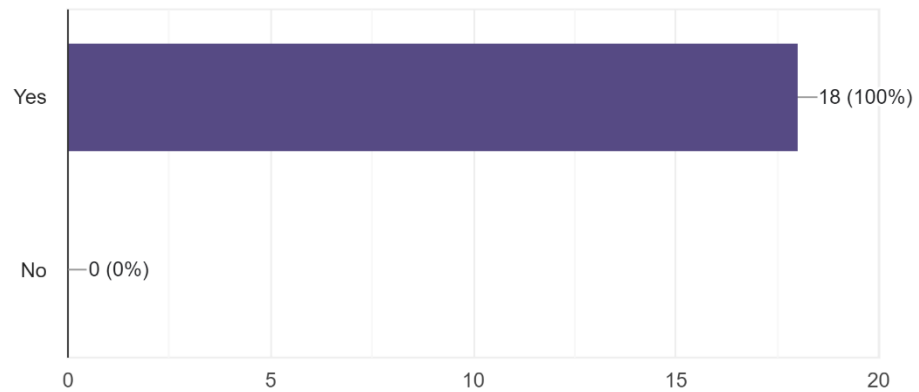


FIGURE 9

3-It is very important that practical translators grasp and translate what is not said  
18 responses

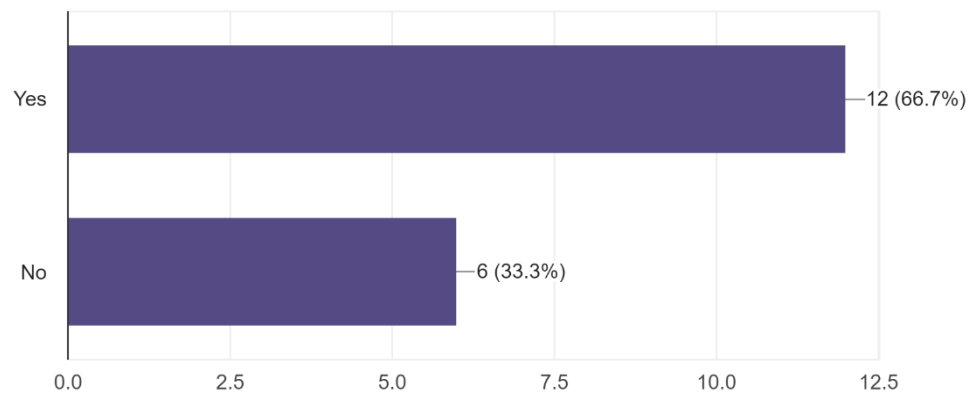


FIGURE 10



4-Is non-verbal communications important in practical translation

18 responses

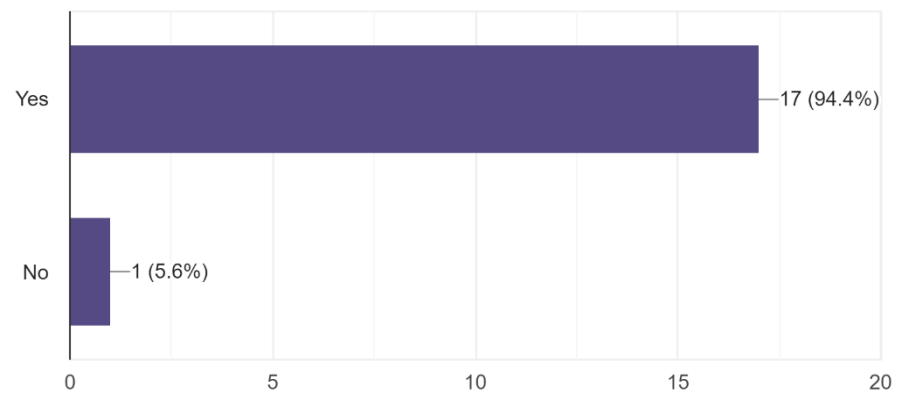


FIGURE 11

5-Non-Verbal communication help the translator to better understand the intention of what being said.

18 responses

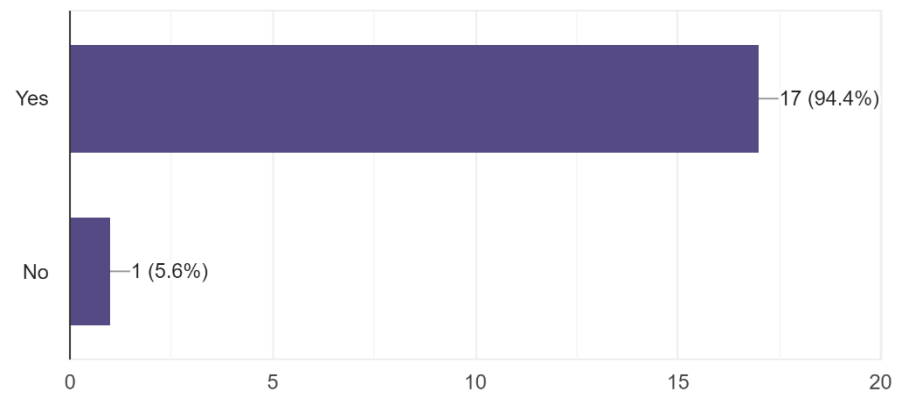


FIGURE 12

6-Do Interpreters consider the importance of non verbal communication in oral translation?

18 responses

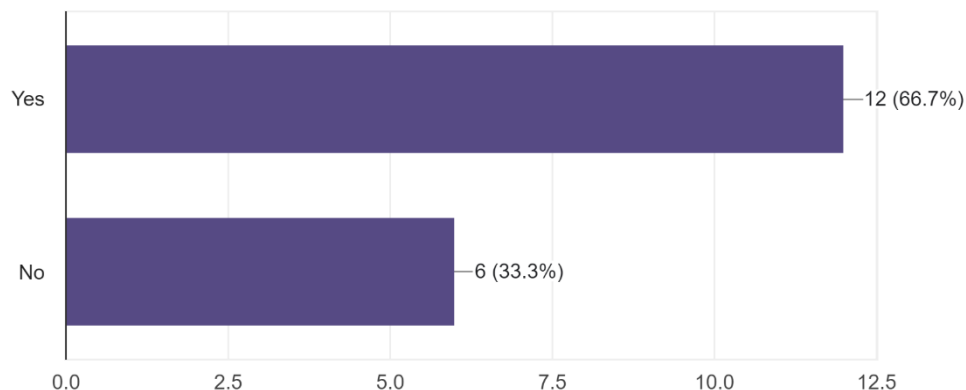


FIGURE 13

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Throughout this research, we have come across a substantial result that can reiterate that non-verbal communication is essential for interpreters. They are conveying and facilitating the understanding process and the meaning of what the speakers said in a more appropriate forum. Therefore, the interpretation process is not about converting the speaker's words; it is about understanding the content of the speech in terms of the speaker's feelings, emotions, non-verbal signs, and the meaning behind every sentence they state. Therefore, the suggested new definition of Interpretation is transferring the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs from the source language into the verbal and non-verbal signs in the target language. Non-verbal communication can be used in different forms, each illustrating or replacing a specific part of verbal communication. It contains many more figures than anyone might think in the first place. So non-verbal signs/Communications play a significant role in the interpretation. It is the essential base in the interpretation process; it's why interpreters have to concentrate on them to carry out a successful interpreting process and achieve great results.

#### 5. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study can serve the field of interpretation training.

The Ministry of Higher education in collaboration with interpretation professionals and college of languages can use these findings to outline proper principles of interpretation when it comes to the syllabus of future translation field.

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## Reflections of Social, Political and Educational Bigotry in “The Chaotic Class (Hababam Sinifi)”: A Comparative Cultural Review of the Novel and Its Film Adaptation

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### ABSTRACT

Modern Turkish Republic emphasizes the values about the young and the new. In the making of the new society, the government employed modern linguistic and cultural exercises such as linguistic simplification, nationalization and modernization. However, military intervention in politics and social life has been one of the major elements in hitching political, social and even literary culture. The novel *The Chaotic Class (Hababam Sinifi)* by Rifat Ilgaz is composed under such a shade of military and traditional censorship, which impacted the main ideas and even the structure of the novel. Ilgaz hoped to transcend the censorship by the aid of other means such as theatre and cinema. That’s why, his work is composed in a much more adaptive style to the visual industry. The novel howls with the cries of traditional and military oppression of conservative and militaristic hegemony over a must-renovate social and political system. Ilgaz conveys his discussion over a barely successful yet extremely talented set of students, young stereotypical characters, under the misconduct of regressive education system implemented harshly by the military dictatorship. In the making of its film, one of the greatest achievements was to transcend military oppression through adaptation of the novel. The director Ertem Egilmez produced the box office success film series, dwelling on a more social criticism over the classroom. In the process of adaptation, even though Ilgaz criticized Egilmez a lot, through the film series, Egilmez was successful in conveying the idea of cultural advancement and linguistic purification which had been a controversy until the new millennium. However, Egilmez employed a more socially and culturally critical reading and adaptation of Ilgaz. Thus, the Turkish film industry, Yesilcam, successfully executed its duty of transforming the society thanks to literary background of Turkish culture. This study elaborates on the connections between the film and the literary work in terms of language, social life and education.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, Hababam Sinifi, Modern Turkish Culture, The Chaotic class, Yesilcam

### INTRODUCTION

The *The Chaotic Class* by Rifat Ilgaz is a novel designated as a “goose that lays golden eggs” (Populer Tarih Dergisi, 2001). Ilgaz’s masterwork has been adapted to cinema and theatre many times as a search of exceeding the barrier of censorship. Indeed, Ilgaz sources his masterwork from his formal education and professional occupation as a Turkish Literature teacher. He fosters a critical approach to the system, which is a crime under the shadow of military oppression when all the Europe suffered from world wars until human right movements in the 1980s.

The film adaptation series by Yesilcam director Ertem Egilmez are the first works to exceed military censorship barrier in the second half of the 1970s. His adaptation mostly differs from the source text in the sense of what problem it addresses. Still, the film is a success in terms of box office harvest and victory over military censorship.

Accelerated by the foundation of the new republic, Turkish society have suffered a lot in modernizing all its ideology including political and social structure. However, military has had such a considerable impact on social and political life, and even education system, as Europe has been struggling with world wars and age of dictatorship while transition to real democracies. Turkey has not been exempted from the shadow of the terror of World War II despite evading the most destructive war in history of civilization.

Under the shadow of the terror of war and military oppression, Ilgaz has managed to publish his works regardless of his life on exile. The major dissemination of his work “The Chaotic Class” is achieved by Ertem Egilmez by adopting it to the cinema and showcasing the film successfully bypassing censorship barrier. While Egilmez does not address the same themes as in the novel, focusing more on a social criticism of 70s in his adaptation, Ilgaz adopts a literary critic position apart from dealing with social, cultural and educational problems in late 30s and 40s.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1 RIFAT ILGAZ**

Born as an Ottoman in 1911, Ilgaz became one of the first teachers of the new Turkish Republic. However, he never managed to be in good relations with the system. His critical stance against military oppression resulted in his life either on exile or in prison, which didn't prevent him from writing what he believed to be true, despite discouragement of his teachers (Skylife, 1993). He got his high school education in a teacher education school in Kastamonu, Turkey in 1930. After that, he enrolled in Gazi Education Institute Literature Department in 1938.

As a realist author, his works are influenced by expressionism. He discusses his literary point of view in his novels and poems from a critical approach. He becomes a realist poet during the years of World War II, which is based on his experience and formal education. His cultural and linguistic view is shaped by the foundation of the new republic and its modernization movements. He grew up as a supporter of the revolutions in the areas of linguistics and culture as well as politics and law.

### **1.2 SOCIAL REALISM**

According to Morson (1979), realism demonstrates writer's laments missing pre-revolutionary days when they have not been silenced so by government policies. Ilgaz also suggests that he is one of the first liberty generation after the declaration in 1908, which suggested the supremacy of constitution over Ottoman Royal Family. However, for him, the first years of the republican revolutions has not been painless. As the society has inherited obsolete ways from the old culture, Ilgaz perceives these exercises as an obstacle against progress.

Realism also suggests a pure language and description of reality as it is in vulgar and indecent ways (Kesim, 2015). For this reason, Ilgaz constantly refers to Symbolism and his preceding symbolist writers such as Ahmet Hasim in a skeptical way, since both movements contrasts obviously. As Ilgaz employs Realism in order to mirror the reality of social and educational problems under the shade of oppression, Symbolism escapes from reality and employs extensive usage of metaphors as the movement suggests that the reality has no artistic value (ibid.).

### 1.3 EXPRESSIONISM

Expressionism and Realism are different movements, yet, they have common grounds on reflection of reality as it is, both employing skepticism, insecurity and cultural unrest (Karaalioglu, 1980, qtd. from Kesim, 2015). Expressionism reflects the values of progressive youth and somehow anarchy since it is the natural result of political or parental oppression (Mitzman, 1977).

The novel *The Chaotic Class* fosters realist and expressionist aspects since it is firstly critical of youth education and military curriculum. Ilgaz aims to address the community resistant to change or, in other words, modernize. Also, teachers and management exercises too much power and authority over students, which is a result of the influence of military over culture and government. Ilgaz writes his novel challenging oppression and supremacy of elders with old thought patterns, resulting in his realist and expressionist work.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This study is a comparative cultural study between the both media: the novel and the film of Rifat Ilgaz's novel *The Chaotic Class*. The media is investigated through literary and culturally critical approach and the findings are compared in order to examine the process of adaptation and also the cultural reality of their own time.

## 3 FINDINGS

The novel and the film mainly examine different themes even though they have some similarities. Ilgaz shows his displeasure of the film versions by Egilmez (Populer Tarih, 2001) since Egilmez examines different themes according to his perception due to different time span. Egilmez also suffers from censorship, which makes it agreeable why the changes exist. In other words, Egilmez adapts Ilgaz's novel in his reality of 70s Turkey where military conflicts with people and activists from different world view.

### 3.1 NOVEL

Ilgaz's masterpiece does not conflict with republican ideas of progress and modernization, yet, he is highly critical of still prevailing traditions that belong to the old understanding of supremacy of elders. In this aspect, Ilgaz agrees with and extends the notion of the new "young" republic where the youth should build the new system and improve the republican values. The school management and teaching staff at Ilgaz's school are regressive and old fashioned. Old teachers favour old imperial tradition of education, and management oppresses the students for the sake of education. The managers fail to supply students who stay in dormitory with the proper material. Moreover, they don't even include students in decision making process inside school.

The students in Ilgaz's universe, on the other hand, are quite extraordinary. Ilgaz depicts the students, who are adapted from his experience at high school (Ozel, 1978), as smart and dexterous young members of society who suffer from oppression of elders and old thought system. He creates the classroom community as such a separate community that all the students individually foster various skill sets combined with the same world view, which Ilgaz suggests his discussion over. The students form such a society that they even have their own anthem in their own language. The students are fond of literature, theatre and sports, and those individuals

support the linguistic purification that occurred with republican revolutions. Ilgaz introduces his social and literary critic position over the classroom community.

Ilgaz also criticizes the militarist curriculum. Students are under strict instruction of militaristic exercises as well as knowledge. The diverse and multi-cultured classroom community suffers from traditional way of education which Ilgaz suggests as exercises from middle ages scholastic thought by militarized curriculum (Ilgaz, 2015). He implies that militarized education agrees with the exercises from medrese background, encouraging students to memorize and even cheat in exams. Moreover, militarized education system is the most considerable threat against multicultural classroom and diversity.

### **3.1.1 THEMES**

#### **3.1.1.1 ELDERS AND MILITARISM**

Teachers of the Chaotic Class are old people exercising the methods of “medrese” education. Indeed, time does not favour them because they have been trained in imperial system. However, they find it difficult to keep up with republican system. Moreover, they cannot connect with the new generation. For example, the vice principal Kel Mahmut fails to enforce school rules because his institution fails to meet the need of students to create their own unique identities. Education system then does not glorify diverse community, which reflects early nationalist thought of modern times. The system takes students as students to shape disregarding their background, abilities and needs. Ilgaz supports his stance by referring to banishment of football and other sports in physical education lessons and replacing with military education, march order and military commands. For instance, the teacher Badi Ekrem exercises his power over the classroom not as a teacher but as a commander in order to impress his girlfriend. The class is, indeed, aware of the situation and finds new ways to invent humour out of his situation. The dog, Tekkulak, plays with the students marching to the place of Badi’s girlfriend, Macide, in a disorganized way. When they arrive, Badi commands march in order to attract Macide’s attention, yet, only Tekkulak obeys the command. The class is entertained by this situation. By this way, Ilgaz satirizes the way of military parades and show-offs and mixing social life with militaristic exercises for the sake of creating a soldier nation. In this way, he emphasizes the importance of civil government and social democracy many times in his novel, satirizing elderly and military intervention in culture and politics.

Ilgaz does not separate military and elders when it comes to political interference. That is, the nameless school principals and Kel Mahmut along with teachers do not follow decisions made by students in democratic and systematical ways. He imposes not to put his decisions into voting poll. Palamut Recep, who is a good theatrical performer and speaker, has to retreat from class representation by the force of Kel Mahmut’s arbitrary decision due to misconduct of school infirmary. Also, Ilgaz implies elder’s interference to democracy by pointing out teacher’s inability to manage the classroom and blame the representative every time they fail. The new class representative and the true leader of classroom in every prank and decision they make, Tulum Hayri, concludes elder’s incompetence and hypocrisy when the class prepares a prank to the assistant teacher, Sansar Behcet, who oversteps his position with the relief of being the authority. Sansar steps into the classroom turning out the doorway as a trap for himself, a bucket of water cleansing him very well from top to bottom. Of course, he tries to scoundrel the class representative, Tulum Hayri, trying to find out who is behind this vile. Hayri teaches a better lesson than the assistant “Do you now realize that we have a representative? Sir, I am neither a leader nor a representative when you enter the classroom.”. Ilgaz challenges the idea of elders as leaders of the community through the mis-exercises of power of teachers and managers, which is an inherited “medrese” tradition.



The classroom also suffers from military traditions along with the old. Ilgaz criticizes the use of military education of the youth by making his characters urinate on the machine gun that military teacher introduces the classroom. In his introduction, the teacher, or commander, prefers to use the old term for coolant in Turkish “muberrit” instead of “sogutucu”, which is highly representative of military and its bigotry in old traditions. The students are intelligent enough to understand the meaning, yet confused by the impracticality of the knowledge. They prefer a more entertaining and useful way to cool down the machine gun by urinating on it instead of proper way of stuffing with the grass, which irritates Inek Saban since grass makes it a funny joke by his classmates referring to cows’ food and his nickname “Inek (cow)”, however, the other way ridicules the seriousness of the commander and military.

Ilgaz criticizes the military not only for its bigotry and old-fashion but also for its disregard of diversity and reality of social life. Indeed, military and social life are different, yet, in modern times especially between 30’s and 50’s after World War II, military interferes with social life because of the security issues and worries. However, its interference stops the progress of culture, diversity and democracy. In the novel, the commander chooses a sergeant parallel to class representative, Colak Hamdi in the shooting range. This order lacking collective decision making fails the commander and his practices. Colak has got a high self-esteem to shoot the target in bulls eye. Yet, the commander misinstructs him to use right hand while Hamdi is left-handed. After failing the first attempt, Hamdi takes permission to realize himself and use his left hand, which results in a perfect score for him. This way Ilgaz shows the superiority of diversity and personal decision making over command chain of military within education system.

### **3.1.1.2 EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Ilgaz criticizes the early education system of the young republic which inherited from the obsolete, arbitrary and highly traditional Medrese system. In the novel, teachers instruct students to memorize the book, which lacks practical information. For example, Kel Mahmut gives each point to Tulum Hayri every time he mentions about what is covered in the previous class, yet he lacks the critical information about the Siege of Vienna. The vice principal and history teacher, Kel Mahmut, concludes the problem: You didn’t even open the book once. However, the issue is that, the exam is not systematically prepared, time, place and subject arbitrarily chosen by the ultimate authority in the classroom, the teacher. That concludes how the obsolete education system lacks the proper elements of assessment and evaluation, such as exam preparation processes, committees and proper questions that evaluate students’ cognitive process and progress. According to Dogan (2017), the exam questions lacking critical aspect may result in students’ misconception of the exam questions. Moreover, such questions lack clear implementation of what behaviour or knowledge is being assessed. Indeed, the novel, along with the film, is full of scenes that teachers implement exams as a way of punishment, and the expectation is only to conform to teacher’s will in the classroom. As a result, Ilgaz points the gap in education system which lacks the proper system, units and exercises of exam preparation.

Another problem within the system is that the school and the students are divided considerably and the communication among students, parents, teachers and school management does not exist in its healthy form. Ilgaz indicates in the novel that without the fear of inspection, indeed by civil government, especially dormitory students lack proper supplies, uniforms, and classroom materials. Moreover, parents are not introduced in the novel, indicating that they have no participation in the education of the youth. Yet, Ilgaz emphasizes the faith in civil government and especially its inspection mechanism in order to regulate the

workflow at school (Toprakçı & Bozkurt, 2021). That is, Ilgaz blames military intervention in civil government on the issues of education system.

### 3.1.1.3 LANGUAGE

The new nationalist movement of the republic, supported scholarly by Ilgaz, requires a new pure language in order to form a national identity and the sense of democracy. Pure and simple language is necessary for both politicians and public in order to communicate well in democratic system. That's why, linguistic purification and simplification has been an important policy of young Turkish Republic since it is a newborn unitarian nation state (Yaşar, 2016). Education of the new language with the new alphabet, again, starts with the youth. Ilgaz almost always emphasizes the importance of simple language through his novel. Yet, the irony in his novel is that the teachers are from the old mindset and they do not completely comprehend the necessity of the common, simple language. Teachers prefer old vocabulary and terms when they instruct students in many subjects even though the new terms are introduced. What's more, even literature teachers are more inclined to instruct students with the old language which belongs to the elite of Ottoman Empire.

Ilgaz defends his literary critic position by referring to the contrast between the students and teachers, especially literature teachers Piyale Ihsan and Susak Cafer. The former is fond of symbolism and its representative in literature, Ahmet Hasim, while the latter favours Classical Literature "Divan". Ilgaz as a realist poet and novelist is binary opposite of symbolism, and due to his pure language preference, he is also critical of old literature which is not intelligible for ordinary people. The students, on the other hand, are very well aware of realist literature. By this classroom, Ilgaz introduces his literary criticism on symbolism and impressionism. He defends the position of pure language intelligible for ordinary people and the themes should include everyday problems of ordinary people. Additionally, as he suffers from exile and military oppression, his work fosters realist and expressionist aspects where his discussion is conveyed through referential events to the real life by a simple language. By this way, Ilgaz achieves a pure language and reflects his and society's struggle whereas symbolism and impressionism simply suggest art for art's sake and art as a personal endeavour.

### 3.1.2 CHARACTERIZATION

The characterization of the novel *The Chaotic Class* by Rifat Ilgaz creates a distinct contrast between old and new or young, democratic and anti-democratic, oppressive and liberitarian, retrogressive and progressive. These matters are the problems of the young Turkish Republic, too. Ilgaz creates a dexterous group of multi coloured students and contrasts them with old minded and one dimensional teaching and administration staff, except from the vice principal Kel Mahmut, who will develop through the plot as the new principal exercises more power over his subordinates.

Kel Mahmut, firstly, is a vice principal who is responsible for students' academic and social development. In the beginning, he is a strict manager who threatens students with disciplinary action all the time. He appears to be an enemy of democracy as he does not acknowledge collective participation of decision making inside and outside the class. He even interferes with students' social life, prohibiting their interaction with ladies outside. Even, he discourages other students to get into an interaction with the chaotic class.

Tulum Hayri appears to be the main character of the novel. He is a good rhetorician, a good poem reciter, physically and theatrically skilled student who becomes a representative of class. As he assists Ilgaz to convey his ideas on linguistic simplification, Tulum, in this aspect,

also shares the same values with the rest of the class. He is, moreover, a dexterous person and a good plan-maker. He shines with his ability with words and humour.

Ilgaz creates Colak Hamdi and Karga Bekir in order to emphasize cultural diversity in the class. However, these characters, especially Karga Bekir, resists to participate in the larger community and they preserve their local identity too much by referring their birthplaces and the superiority of culture they bring. They are representative of Anatolian people who resists to the making of an umbrella identity (Sezer, 1993). Colak, in this aspect, is more outgoing than Karga. Colak ridicules the new fashion style of “Istanbul” which represents the new yet he is eager to attend in decision making process in the class. Karga, on the other hand, forms a subgroup in the class with his fellow people from the city of Sivas and they separately make decisions among themselves. By these characters, Ilgaz criticizes cultural regression and social exclusion to the new republic values and the new nation.

### **3.2 FILM ADAPTATIONS BY EGILMEZ**

Egilmez firstly aims to exceed the censorship barrier which Ilgaz suffered a lot and resulted in publishing the novel with another pen name “Stepne” in the magazine “Dolmus” (Peksen, 1989). The fear of military intervention especially in 70’s worries Egilmez so much that he does not only adapt plot and characters into cinema but also politics. That’s why, Egilmez’s work also fosters highly cultural value since he examines power dynamics among state, military and society.

#### **3.2.1 THEMES**

##### **3.2.1.1 LIBERALIZATION AND SECTORIZATION OF EDUCATION**

Egilmez criticizes liberalization as it brings economic worries inside education system turning it into a sector. The investment of school managers should bring income by restricting quality of education of the youth and also reducing the expenses of personnel salaries. The students of the Chaos Class by Egilmez are wealthy or well-off students whose parents are irresponsible. On the other hand, the teachers are struggling in big city life of Istanbul. Egilmez sounds the complaints of teachers losing their respectability due to liberal policies (Yıldız, et al., 2013). So, the teachers old in age and mindset fail to meet academic success of the students who are adults in high school. Thus, the sectorization of education system results in underperformance of students and teachers.

Egilmez reflects the failure of liberalization through knowledge competitions, too. He creates the students cheating not only in exams, but also in competitions with the other “competitor” schools. However, unlike Ilgaz’s classroom community, Egilmez creates literary incompetent students who loses against public schools. In this way, Egilmez emphasizes the importance of public schools for everyone and equal opportunity by glorifying his own social and political world view.

All in all, Egilmez points out the failure of students due to sectorization of education system. As a wiser educator than his novel counterpart, Kel Mahmut warns the principal many times against his greed for money as the principal refers to the school as “the shop”. Kel Mahmut is an idealist teacher grown with republican values. He concludes his view of education “I am not a merchant”.

### 3.2.2 CHARACTERIZATION

Unlike Ilgaz's characters, Egilmez uses the characters with the same names and nicknames yet lacking the depth contrary to novel counterparts. The students are not individuals, but they are stereotypical characters who refer to the community in urban context. Still, the search for privilege by nicknames and titles continue during 70's yet starting to lose its importance in the metropolitan city of Istanbul which is a melting pot for indigenous Anatolian sub-cultures. That's why, Egilmez adapts characters and their names with nicknames in order to reflect the social reality of modernizing society in Istanbul.

The students make fun of Inek Saban's accent since he does not employ Istanbul accent. Inek is the representative of average Anatolian villager, thus others make fun of him with jokes and pranks generally lacking humour. This shows the hegemony of metropolitan culture over outbacks of Turkey. Egilmez does not examine his character trait as inferior one, on the contrary, he creates the legendary Inek Saban who is empathetical character who will mark his name and character in Yesilcam history. That is, as an industrial standard, Egilmez empathizes with Anatolian people and their struggle in big city life.

Since the worry is to reach everyone in the back corners of Turkey, Egilmez utilizes a simple and comprehensible language for ordinary people. That's why, the students also employ a pure language. Also, their names and nicknames perfectly reflect the Turkish society and personality of the time. The students, who are the representatives of the whole society, are still struggling with modernization.

Teachers in the film fits precisely with the ones in the novel. They are backward people with old mindset. They prefer to use old terms and instruction of old literature which results in miscommunication with students and their academic failure. They are not only professionally incompetent, but also physically incompetent just like their novel counterparts. Egilmez extends the discussion over teacher education views with obsolete methodology in the novel to his time and introduces the idea of incompetent salaries, too.

Lastly, Kel Mahmut differs from every character in film and even in novel in order to convey Egilmez's thesis. He is an idealist teacher full of republican values(Yıldız, et al., 2013). He is just and he even sacrifices his students' success to the fairness. The principal decides to attend to knowledge competition with Chaos Class again since they are the winners of last year. The principal is not clear to be aware of whether he is aware of their cheating in the last competition, yet, it is clear that principal only wants to win to advertise and highlight his "shop". Kel Mahmut shows a wise and just attitude in the second knowledge competition.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Both Ilgaz and Egilmez reflect the reality of their time including social struggles. Both media suffer from military oppression for different reasons. They both value the civil government, and they actually suggest their solutions with civil government. The film utilizes the minister of education to make a social change inside classroom whereas the novel emphasizes the importance of civil government by the aid of inspectors from the ministry solving students' problems and ensuring their welfare.

Both media are critical of education system. Ilgaz focuses more on regression and oppression while Egilmez addresses the problem as the sectorization of education system and thus degeneration. Indeed, 70's still suffers from obsolete techniques and traditions. In this way, Egilmez supports the cultural views of Ilgaz on youth, youth education and getting rid of the old medrese understanding in education system. Both puts their hopes on the same idea, the civil government and its revolutionary values.

While the novel criticizes the military oppression and its effects on education system, the film avoids such a topic because of the fear of military during 70's. Luckily, such abstention helps the film evade censorship and finally show the social reality in big cities as well as in outbacks of Turkey, proving a box office success.

Egilmez dilates Ilgaz's linguistic stance only vaguely as he is primarily worried about the censorship. The students from the film do not comprehend thoroughly the obsolete terms and vocabulary, even making fun of old literature, however, Egilmez is not as to-the-point as Ilgaz in this subject. Ilgaz's characters are linguistically competent students who want change. It is even more understandable when comparing their time and reality respectively, since the utilization of pure language was a government policy in Ilgaz's time, yet, the opposite was Egilmez's reality. Still, Egilmez agrees with Ilgaz in the usage of pure and simple language as the whole film industry depends itself on the values, themes and stories of Anatolian people. So, the film utilizes a simple language and builds its sense of humour on it like Ilgaz.

The novel makes it possible to employ nicknames. Actually, in Turkish Culture, nicknames and birthplaces define one's identity, or that is how people identify one another. In Ilgaz's work, the setting of time coincides with late 30's when people start to use surnames after the banishment of nicknames and titles in order to establish equalitarian citizenship idea. However, the public is slowly adapting to the new law, hence, preferring nicknames in most cases in social interaction whereas surnames are utilized in a formal atmosphere such as exam papers and introducing to the government officials. Since the film adapts the names and nicknames of characters as they are, it is highly indicative that Anatolian people do not change much in time until 70's in terms of the use of nicknames and titles. Also, the use of nicknames, titles and pronouns demonstrate that people from Anatolian outbacks still search for privilege and they fail to adapt to modern, urbanized city life and metropolitan culture. This matter is apparent almost every Yesilcam production.

As Egilmez differs in characterization from Ilgaz because of the nature of a social critical work, Egilmez takes classroom as a backward society in order to reflect the problems emerging with the new liberal movement and its heavy load on proletarian ordinary people who includes mostly villagers from Anatolian outbacks in the metropolitan city of Istanbul. The novel introduces a communitarian classroom where all the members are unique and talented individuals with their own identities, but the film provides a collectivist community where the students are all from the same background and socio-economical status. In this way, Egilmez criticizes the emerging problems with westernization, degeneration and liberalization and takes a leftist stance. Thus, it is obvious that Ilgaz is critical of education system and obsolete ways whereas Egilmez points out the social and political problems of 70's Turkey. Lastly and most importantly, Ilgaz's class is made of talented set of diverse students while Egilmez's includes rich, lazy, irresponsible and one dimensional adults as students.

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# "I'm a Woman Phenomenally": Black Women Empowerment in Selected Poems of Maya Angelou

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## ABSTRACT

As an African American female writer, Maya Angelou depicts the strength and power of black women and protests the misconceptions and the prejudice of the white. Black women are perceived by the white to be less smart and attractive than the white. Although, Angelou resists the mistaken stereotypes regarding black women to be ugly and weak. In her poems, Angelou presents strong and confident black women who can stand for their rights and be, at least, as equal as to the white women. She is a great defender and supporter of women's rights. The fact that she is a black woman makes the study deeper as her poems present an oppressed woman and a subjugated black person who disallows the inequalities and stands up for her rights. Thus, this paper, through a multiracial-feminist theory, attempts to scrutinize Angelou's "Still I Rise" and "Phenomenal Woman" which reflect the empowerment of black women.

**Keywords:** Black women, Empowerment, Maya Angelou, *Phenomenal Woman*, *Still I Rise*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Until women achieve their basic rights all over the world, gender and racial issues are going to be heated debates. Although women of most of the countries are freer than others in the developing countries, they are still struggling and fighting their battles of gender and racial inequalities. Feminism is a broader term than it has been perceived by the common people. Feminists work to achieve social justice for women. This reestablishment can be in all aspects, physically, psychologically, economically, politically and ultimately socially. The feminists attempt to build a society where both men and women are equally treated.

In this study, one of the leading poets, activists and feminists is tackled, Maya Angelou. One of the factors which makes the choice of Angelou unique is that she has personally suffered from gender imbalances in her life. Besides, female figures permeate her poems. She acknowledges that women should not be the mere object of child production; they should rather be useful and effective beings though she values women's full-time job as a mother. Angelou gives voice to the demands of those who have been voiceless for so long. Black American women want to be freed of all sufferings and subjugation, as evidenced by Angelou's term "to rise" (Suhadi, 2016).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have studied Maya Angelou's poetry from various angles. The suffering of black women and their being discriminated are two of the common topics that have been tackled (Munawaroh and Paturohmah 53). Other researchers such as Sylvania Krisna and Liliek Soelistyo Krisna have emphasized on black empowerment in Angelou's selected poems but they have presented black power as "the way to survive in the society" (2013, 94). My focus, nevertheless, is on the concept of black women's empowerment as a racial empowerment.

Regarding the methodology, multiracial-feminist theory is a smart choice as Angelou's poems portray black women's empowerment and the stereotypes of the black women which are forced upon by the white. The paper begins with an overview of multiracial-feminist views and a summary of Maya Angelou's style. Then, two poems of Maya Angelou are tackled, "Still I Rise" and "Phenomenal Woman". The image of female figures in her poems is portrayed. The last part of the study is the conclusion that sums up the main findings of the study followed by the works cited.

### **3. AN OVERVIEW OF MULTIRACIAL-FEMINIST VIEWS**

Multiracial feminism, which originated in the 1970s and was driven by women of color from America, relates justice for women directly to the desire to consider how race works as a powerhouse related to gender inequality and other forms of repression. The notion that all women have the same backgrounds, multiracial feminism leads the discourse on racism, colonialism, imperialism and sexism, which problematize modern feminism's principle of gender unity. In the theory of gender oppression, multiracial feminists centralize ethnic stratification. Multiracial feminists, also known as feminists from the Third World, recognize that the cultures, genders and nations are fluid, thereby create transnational, cultural and multicultural alliances based on a collective struggle against the oppression of race, class and gender (Zinn and Dill, 1996).

Multiracial feminism most often refers to the feminisms of Black/African American, Latina/Chicana, Native American and Asian American women, but contains those of anti-racist white females and women of all colors, including East Indian, Arab, mixed-race, and colorless women. In certain cases, multiracial feminists have defined themselves as "color women," who are a comparatively new phenomenon to be described as a group of political, strategic and subjective identification. The expression "females of color" refers to the affinity and resemblance of their experience (Ritzer, 2007, 3117).

In the early 1970s, a number of feminist women of color in America started claiming the word "third-world women" to show a relationship with women of color all over the world and their contribution to postcolonial struggles. The phrase was used by Third World women as a deliberate relation to concerns not discussed by many white feminists. Black activists have challenged White upper-class or working women domination in the movement that has been incorrectly labeled as "Feminism" over consecutive generations. White women have typically been seen as the movement's spokespersons, which hide the reality of women in the Third World, African American community, and lower classes. (Chilla, 1991).

Women of color have engaged actively in the problems of women. Their expertise on feminist work have been neglected and largely undocumented. In other words, although black feminist greatly contributed to all the three waves of feminism, yet their contributions were overlooked by the white feminists. Multiracial feminism is a booming region centered on women's voices but with the writings of anti-racist, white, non-American, progressive, and energetic women. Understanding the intersections of oppression to encourage harmony between the various races, genders and nations is a key element of multiracial feminism (Thomson, 2002).

### **4. THE POET: MAYA ANGELOU**

The American poet, singer, memoirist, and civil rights activist Marguerite Annie Johnson (Maya Angelou) was born April 4, 1928 and died May 28, 2014. She has written seven autobiographies, three essay books, many poetry books and is recognized with a list of plays, movies and television shows spanning over 50 years. She won hundreds of awards and over 50



honorary certificates. In the late 1950s, she was a member of the Harlem Writers Guild, participated in the Civil Rights Movement, and worked as the Northern Director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Dr. Martin Luther King. She has performed a unique role in the hearts of readers all over the world. Joanne Braxton listed Maya Angelou as "America's most visible black women autobiographer" (1999, 4).

Maya Angelou faced so many struggles in her life starting from the day she was born. She talks about her life and the struggles she has been born into through her poems and books. When Angelou was three years old, her parents got divorced. Her father sent her and her brother to live with her grandmother in Stamps, like the one she describes in her autobiography "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings", "Our parents had decided to put an end to their disastrous marriage, and Father shipped us home to his mother. We lived with our grandmother and uncle in the back of the Store (it was always spoken of with a capital S), which she had owned for around twenty-five years" (Angelou, 1969, 3).

Her ability to tell stories is characterized by insight and laughter as she demonstrates to the reader with often difficult yet truthful frankness. Angelou's memoirs promote faith against suffering and show the human spirit's endurance. Through her writing skills, she is telling the story of her people. Although Angelou is keenly aware of the traumatic past of her community, which is a history of the elite or White America in which Black people have a very limited presence. Black-Americans rarely view themselves as they are, but rather through the eyes of White people, and as a result, they frequently experience the pull of two opposing cultures: the African culture to which they belong and the American culture toward which their goals are ideologically oriented (Lupton, 1990).

The poems of Angelou are a series of emotions and moods. They range from romantic joy to racial injustice, from pride of blackness and African ancestry to suffered slurs. Angelou is adopting the literary viewpoint of Countee Cullen that black writers have the right "to do, to publish, to create what we want, our only concern is that we do so well and with all our strength." Angelou indeed speaks out in many ways and with the best of words she can summon. Angelou's poetry is usually brief as Langston Hughes' style who believed a poem should be short and precise (Hagen, 1997, 118).

Maya Angelou's surroundings, condition and life did not collaborate with her being a creative writer, however, she improved her skills and proved herself to be a profound voice. She will not have life bested her, as she asserts, "All my work, my life, everything is about survival. All my work is meant to say, 'You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated'" (Braxton, 1999, 154). Her miserable life had become her inspiration to inspire and empower many women around the world, black women in particular.

Given the above clarifications, the female figures in the poetry of Angelou are worth a deep study to be conducted to show the ways in which she has sympathized, celebrated, supported, defended, and encouraged black women for their rights. The aim of this study is to show the ways in which the black female figures are presented in Angelou's poetry positively and powerfully. I am focusing on the qualities of strong black women in her selected poems and the ways she has demonstrated the voices of black women. Such voices are not merely to demonstrate the pain of the black women but to celebrate their strength and distinctiveness.

## **5. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN ANGELOU'S SELECTED POEMS**

As mentioned earlier, Maya Angelou's poetry is loaded with the portrayal of women, especially women of color. The African Americans are under numerous threats. Angelou is still concerned about the subjugation of Black women, who are frequently the targets of sexism and racism. Racism is the indiscriminate treatment of a group of people by another; in American society, Black people are seen as less cultured, uncouth, and inferior to White people,

who are seen as the pinnacle of civilization, supremacy, and beauty. The repressive ideology of sexism, on the other hand, denigrates women by placing them below the status of men. The foundation of sexism is gender bias, which either explicitly or secretly works to maintain the subordination of women. There are two of Maya Angelou's poems to be discussed in this study. The poems are "Still I Rise" and "Phenomenal Woman" that were both written during the second feminism wave, the 1960s.

### 5.1 "Still I Rise"

"Still I Rise" was published in 1978, and one of Maya Angelou's great poems. This poem is made up of nine stanzas. All stanzas are arranged in four lines except for the last two stanzas. It has a rhyme scheme of "abcb" (Bloom, 2001). "Still I Rise" is about black people living among the whites. This is often the case that a second wave of feminism tackles in the 1960s. At that period, the black women voiced their demands, as feminists claim that colored women are treated cruelly, harshly and disproportionately by all races (white and black) males and white females. In addition, they address them as uncivilized.

The "I" in "Still I Rise" is intended by Angelou herself to be a female. She talks not only of herself but also about her gender and race. Angelou's autobiographies and protest poetry extend that development to herself. Furthermore, Angelou implies that the black race is not only persistent but, in Sondra O Neale's words, "there will be the triumph of a desire of collective knowledge which the west cannot extinguish." The most militant poems of Angelou are contained in the second part of her first volume of poetry. In her moving address "To a freedom fighter," Angelou, again as a representative of all the black people, acknowledges a debt due to those who fought earlier fighting on civil rights. They have got "a bit more... the often sardonic expression of a black in the white-dominated world" (Hagen, 1997, 128).

"Still I Rise" begins with a challenge that the speaker states she would never give up and she will progress to her and other black women for better lives: "You may write me down in history/With your bitter, twisted lies/You may trod me in the very dirt/But still, like dust, I'll rise"(Angelou,1994, lines 1-4). The history of the black is loaded with inequality and suppression. Evidently, the white is the source of this discrimination. The introductory lines are striking descriptions of the confidence of the black.

The first pronoun the readers are introduced to is "you." Throughout reading the poem, the identity of the collective "you" becomes apparent. This tells us that no matter what happens. I (the speaker) will rise. Angelou conveys the message that men and women are equal and they have equal positions. She believes that women should enjoy social, legal, and intellectual equalities along with men. It is interesting how the speaker challenges all the people who want to deform the personalities and the essence of her by writing about her in history as "bitter, twisted lies." The challenge does not end here, it rather extends to physical torturing even if they "trod" her "in the very dirt," it would not be an obstacle for her to rise up. Feminist empowerment is profoundly significant as no obstacles can stop women from achieving their goals and reaching their destinations.

In the second stanza, the poet asks a rhetorical question and she answers in the same stanza. The speaker poses a question to the previously mentioned "you." The question is if the speaker's high spirit bothers "you." She also wonders why the addressed "you" is overwhelmed with gloomy feelings about her. She mentions the reason is her value as she walks like she has got "oil wells." This materialistic image symbolizes the power and strength of the speaker that she is as precious as "oil wells." This line signifies the life and prosperity of the poet and all the individuals that she exemplifies.

In the third stanza, she combines natural elements to describe her strength: "Just like moons and like suns, /With the certainty of tides,/Just like hopes springing high,/Still I'll rise"

(Angelou, 1994, lines 9-12). According to Clark, a simile is, "a sentence expressing a similarity of relations between things unlike in kind" (2010, 149). Angelou uses simile to compare her strength to the "moons, "suns." It can be noticed that there is only one moon and sun in the universe, but Angelou's power extends beyond natural powers and she has more than one moon and sun, this denotes her infinite power. She then reflects her confidence by comparing her self-reliance to "the certainty of tides." In line 11, she explicitly mentions the word "hopes" to show the certainty that she will "rise."

The fourth stanza is a combination of four questions which are again addressed to the inclusive "you." The speaker lists the wishes of the people who wanted to see her "broken", "bowed head", "lowered eyes", "shoulders falling down" and "soulful cries." She lists them in a form of questions. She predicts the wishes of the people to see her weak, passive, submissive and shattered. In the fifth stanza, she brings another example to symbolize her power that is "gold mines." She states that she is cheerful and "laughing."

She then repeats the same pattern of the first stanza to compose the sixth stanza. Maya Angelou is not a fantasized lady, she is a realistic lady. She foresees the harshness she may face as a woman, but she is not to be smashed. She depicts an impossible condition to break her down, no matter what might be done to her, she "will rise" and she proves to be indestructible. People may mock her, comment on her physicality and her life might be covered with the wrath she receives from others, but still she will stand up:" You may shoot me with your words, /You may cut me with your eyes, /You may kill me with your hatefulness,/But still, like air, I'll rise"(Angelou, 1994, lines 21-24).

She starts asking questions again in the seven stanzas but this time she describes her bodily and physical beauty as a means of her empowerment. Angelou wonders if her gender is bothering and comes as a "surprise" to the haters of the speaker. But the truth is, no matter how much hate she receives, she is still pursuing her skills "That I dance like I've got diamonds"(Angelou, line 27). This simile compares her strength and beauty to that of a "diamond." A diamond is highly treasured and wanted by almost everyone. That is why she describes herself as a unique being.

It is only in the eighth stanza, one before the last, the readers understand that the collective "I" of the speaker represents the voices of the female black women: "Out of the huts of history's shame/I rise/Up from a past that's rooted in pain/I rise/I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,/Welling and swelling I bear in the tide" (Angelou, 1994, lines 29-34). The black people and black women, in particular, were discriminated against throughout "history." They do not have a joyful "past." The black ancestors had gone through endless "pain." However, none of the stated miseries have obliged the black to surrender and to bow. She admits that she belongs to the black race "I'm a black ocean" (Angelou, 1994, line 33). It is from the ashes that she will "rise", it is from the anguish of the past that a stronger black woman will "rise."

Finally, Maya Angelou claims that she will become rebellious against the pain and oppression of black women. She is not determined to permit society to hate them. She does not allow agony to stop her from becoming all that she wants to become or fulfill her dreams. That is the reason why she repeats "I rise" continually in the final stanza. Maya Angelou describes a new beginning in which she will not be merely obsessed with what had happened in the past. She would rather leave it all behind "Leaving behind nights of terror and fear" (Angelou, line 35), and fight toward suffering and oppression "to a beautifully simple break of the day" (Angelou, 1994, line 37). She does not give up and she is a fighter that is why she repeats "I rise" five times.

Towards the end of the poem, the poet confirms what she has been trying to convey since the first stanza. One can anticipate the resistance she provides by insisting on "I Rise." Ultimately, "Still I Rise" introduces black women as leaders and challenges the structure of the society with relation to the black people. In her youth, Maya Angelou has not experienced love

but has been independent of her experiences. Not many would support the freedom of a woman as a teenager but Angelou remained strong in her beliefs. Although the brutal history of black women who were subjugated is clearly shown in "Still I Rise" but she also illustrates the society and defies the stereotypes that women cannot maintain a productive and independent life for themselves.

## 5.2 "Phenomenal Woman"

"Phenomenal Woman" was published in 1978. This poem has four stanzas. The poem concerns colored women who live with the whites. Maya Angelou tries to deliver a message to the reader through her poem to value themselves even if they are not physically celebrated as perfect and attractive. As political activism has grown since the 1960s, Black women have begun to become more aware of their rights as newly empowered women. Thus, black women started to convey their pain and delight, frustration and aspiration, in their own way.

According to the mentality of the white, black women do not fit into the standards of the white due to their skin complexions. Like women of other cultures, they are exceptional. Even though white women ask why the African American women are beautiful, the writer bravely suggests that African American women have inner beauty, which is their distinction. They are confident saying that they have a lovely black body and an interesting look. In other terms, among evaluating oneself, African Americans have positive values. During the time this poem was composed, more black people raised their voices because feminists believed that colored women are behaved harshly and brutally, as opposed to black and white males and white women and they are being treated for intolerance and prejudice.

Colored women in the U.S.A have been mistreated and have the same struggles and difficulties residing in the culture with gender and racial discriminations. Maya Angelou as a poet portrays a confident and great woman as a black. The reader recognizes that every line of the poem portrays Maya Angelou, as the voice of the black woman, as a self-possessed woman for being black and she is proud of her body. All stanzas begin with a description of the condition of the poet or how people are treating her.

Black writers of the late 20th century have written about the celebration of black skin. A good example of observation is "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou. By embracing her black beauty, Angelou challenges the conventional wisdom that only women with fair complexion are attractive. She refers to herself as a "phenomenal woman," yet she is a stunning woman regardless of whether the White confirms her attractiveness or not. The word "phenomenal" is defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* as "extraordinary", "outstanding" (Soukhanov et al, 1994). The title of Maya Angelou's poem indicates a positive and powerful notion. Only after reading the first stanza, it becomes clear what she means by the word phenomenal: "Pretty women wonder where my secret lies. /I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size/But when I start to tell them,/They think I'm telling lies" (Angelou, 1994, lines 1-4).

Maya Angelou who is also the speaker of the poem states that she is black and flawless. She is complete as well an extraordinary woman. In the first stanza, the poem begins by reflecting that the writer does not belong to the beautiful type of what the society demands. It can be inferred that the people who ask about the speaker's "secret" of beauty are white women since they are known to be more glamorous social status particularly in the former American society "pretty women." Then the narrator reacts to her wonder that she is confident in the way she moves her body, her manner of walking, her hips' movement and her smile. The irony lies in the fact that the white women question the speaker, yet they perceive her response as "lies." The speaker considers herself to be extraordinary astonishing.

She lists a number of her body characteristics including arms, hips, steps and lips. Angelou

contrasts the standard beauty of women to be slim, with small hips and thin lips. She presents an entirely different description of the appearance criterion and still, she seems to be splendid: "It's in the reach of my arms,/The span of my hips,/The stride of my step,/The curl of my lips" (Angelou, 1994, lines 6-9).

The above stanza shows the reader that even if she does not have a slim, good-looking and typical body who can wear a fashionable dress, she is confidently, strongly and courageously black. Her confidence and courage have made her a beautiful and phenomenal woman. The black women whose physical qualities were of, "dark skin, broad noses, full lips, and kinky hair," considered to be inferior and ugly (Collins, 2000, 89).

The speaker persists in the same spirit in the second stanza as well. The poet explains the reason that why people "swarm" like "bees" is that black women have lovely eyes, teeth, waist and feet. The metaphor "A hive of honey bees" (Angelou, line 20) and "I walk into a room/just as cool as you please" (Angelou, lines 14-15) demonstrate that African American women have a strong sense of self-confidence. While the white still look at them negatively, they always have confidence that people love and "swarm" around them. They can also move and do just as equable as the whites do. The phenomenal woman symbol further reflects the high confidence of African American people, since not all women are able to identify themselves as a phenomenal woman. However, African American women confidently depend on their unique features to be phenomenal.

In the third stanza, men's curiosities are shown why they like the type of woman as the narrator. It is because of her inner mystery that the writer addresses, which they cannot see. It is also due to her lovely "back...eyes...breast...clothing." Men endeavor to reach the beauty of black women, "They try so much/But they can't touch" (Angelou, 1994, lines 32-33). Maya Angelou shows that men try to understand why black women are self-assured to take these kinds of extreme actions, but that they do not understand the cause of the confidence. The metaphors of "the sun of my smile" (Angelou, 1994, line 39) and "it's the fire in my eyes" (Angelou, 1994, line 22) demonstrate that the women of African American realize what their powers are hidden and cannot be seen by superficial men. Black women realize that no matter what tough statements people might say to them, they always believe that they have something positive and that is their uniqueness.

She concludes the poem with more images of empowered black women who do not stoop to the white. They are strong and proud women whose "heads" are "not bowed." The fact that they do not stoop, reflects their self-importance. She lists more physical qualities to add to her strength, beauty and pride including her "heels...hair...palm...hair."

As a black woman, Maya Angelou describes her positive point of view. In the last stanza, the narrator says she does not want to be embarrassed, feel unconfident as the speaker discovers that all women are phenomenal and have their beauty. Once again, she says she is proud of her heels, her hair, her hand and her care. Through learning what each stanza implies, it is possible to know that this poem represents a woman who is proud of herself even if she is not viewed as attractive according to society. Angelou often sought to change the perception and concept of women's beauty in society, particularly in American society because being beautiful is not only seen from the physical appearance of women or the standard of beauty in society but tends to be extracted from one's inner goodness.

Interestingly, the poet acts as the narrator as she uses the pronoun "I" in all the last four lines of each stanza, she states, "I am a woman/ phenomenally. /Phenomenal woman, / that's me." However, "I" signifies "us," as a collective voice. In other words, Angelou not only hopes to share her experience but also, she is the representative of the voice of African American women in general.

One of the effective literary elements that the poet uses in both poems is repetition. The repetition of a line or few lines indicates emphasis on the idea in the repeated lines. As Cuddon

explains, "repetition is an essential unifying element in nearly all poetry and much prose. It may consist of sound, syllables and word, phrases, stanzas, metrical patterns, ideas, allusions and shapes" (2013, 602).

All the imageries of the poem show that African American women are appreciative and proud to have come into being as African American women with dark skins. She uses poetry to show how racism and sexism both work together to silence the voices of women of color. In addition to exposing how sexism and racism operate as repressive systems, Angelou's poetry also challenges them. Hence, they fight against oppression by recognizing their strength and extraordinariness, which can be appealing to others.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" and "Phenomenal Woman" give black women the inspiration of doing something different, to have a new understanding of thought, and to be assured that they will not be misunderstood, marginalized and that they will have a better life to live with gender equality. She, as her entire race, has gone through depression, discouragement and disappointment. However, in her poems, the message of revival, strength and empowerment are conveyed openly. The goal of Maya Angelou is not only to accomplish liberation from the oppressive world and become a writer but to extend equality to all kinds of people regardless of color and gender. Angelou fights against the misconceptions that black women are weak, dependent, and ugly. She rather describes the African American women to be strong, independent and beautiful.

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## A Postcolonial Reading to *My Father's Rifle: Childhood in Kurdistan*

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### ABSTRACT

The struggle for Kurdish identity extends from the Ottoman empire to modern nation-states. The creation of nation-states catalyzed the transition from “feudal nationalism” to *Kurdayeti*. Hiner Saleem’s autobiography, *My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan*, provides a firsthand perspective on the experiences of the marginalized Kurds in the Iraqi Kurdistan. It offers insights into their social, cultural, and political contexts and power dynamics. While Saleem’s work reflects the voice of an understated people, it also requires a postcolonial reading to fully appreciate its content and structure. This study provides a postcolonial reading to Saleem’s autobiography, arguing that the narrative tries to narrate the challenges that the Kurdish ethnicity faced to preserve their ethnic and national identity within the frame of Iraq.

**Keywords:** Kurds, Kurdish national identity, postcolonial literature, autobiography, ethnic studies.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Brown et al. (2001), describes that one of primary causes of internal conflict within a country is ethnic demographics within a state. The authors argue that various internal problems are experienced when a country has diverse ethnic geographies. When a dominant ethnic group, in a country, forces its nationalist thought, ethnic conflict is expected. Thus, the minorities will experience discriminations in standards of living. The ethnic minorities will be prohibited from practicing their cultures, using their mother tongue, and having a peaceful living. These difference generates tensions and increases the potential for conflict between the ethnic minorities and the dominant group (Loomba, 2005 , pp. 165-166).

Throughout the modern history, the Iraqi Kurds have suffered and been maltreated at the hands of the successive Iraqi governments. Anfal campaign of the 1980s that aimed to “Arabize” the Kurdish region is an example of that. The campaign resulted in the deaths of thousands of Kurds and ruining many Kurdish villages (Middle East Watch, 1993).

In addition, the Iraqi government also implemented a number of policies to erase Kurdish culture and identity. For example, banning Kurdish language in schools and public institutions, and denying the Kurds from accessing to education and other resources (McDowall, 2004; Yildiz, 2007).

Focusing on Hiner Saleem’s (2006) autobiography, *My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan*, the study shows the discriminations that the Kurds experienced under the rule of the Iraqi government, as well as their struggle to preserve their ethnic identity, during the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century.

One of the theoretical subjects that appeared in autobiography in the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century was postcolonial or ethnic studies that analyzed the discourse of identity and cultural practices on minorities. Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom (1994)*, is an example of that. Postcolonial literary criticism and/or ethnic studies investigates the impact of colonialism on the ethnic minorities. The fields focus on the issues of power struggle, preserving identity, and cultural depiction.



An autobiography, as personal account, offers firsthand viewpoints on the experiences of the people on which it has been written. It can provide perceptions on the social, cultural, and political settings. *My father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan*, which was written at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is an effort in the field of autobiography to show the fight of the Kurds to preserve their ethnic identity. While Saleem narrates his life events and tells about a time in his coming-of-age life, he chronicles the history of the particular time in the life of the Kurdish people in Iraq.

*Saleem's autobiography* provide a childhood story of a child growing up in a small town in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region during the 1970s and 1980s. Saleem tells the struggles that his childhood community faced during the then Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. Saleem also highlights the importance of protecting the Kurdish identity in the period.

On the narrative, Lowder (2010) argues that the strength of Saleem's autobiography lies in its distinct contrast between the naivety of youth and the brutal and disturbing displays of government discrimination and oppression (pp.1). The discriminatory policies that the Iraqi regime implemented contributed to a climate of fear and repression that the felt in Saleem's autobiography.

## 2. THE EMPIRE WRITES BACK

The notion of post-colonialism (sometimes referred to as postcolonialism) addresses the impacts of European colonization on other cultures and societies. This term was initially employed by historians following World War II, such as in the context of the postcolonial states (Golden, 2015). Quayson (2020) indicates that the term is occasionally presented with a hyphen or left without one, both forms indicating the same realms of interest but adopted by different critics. The hyphenated variation (post-colonialism) originated with political scientists and economists to indicate the era post-colonialism, but around the late 1970s, literary critics and similar experts expanded it into a more comprehensive analysis of culture. On the other hand, the unhyphenated version (postcolonialism) is typically employed to differentiate it from its earlier form that referred solely to a specific timeframe. It signifies a inclination for literary critique and the examination of diverse discourses involving aspects like race, gender, diaspora, and more.

Postcolonialism, as a cultural analysis tool to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization, came to appear from the late 1970s. A widely recognized scholar within the postcolonial field is Edward Said (2022). Said (1935-2003) is an American-Palestinian professor in the fields of English, Comparative Literature, and a notable political activist. Quayson (2020) writes, "Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is considered as pivotal in the shaping of postcolonial studies." Quayson further says, "In *Orientalism*, Said argued for seeing a direct correlation between the knowledges that oriental scholars produced and how these were redeployed in the constitution of colonial rule."

Sawant (2012) argues that *Orientalism* (1978) led to the development of what came to be called "Colonialist Discourse Theory". The theory refers to an analytical framework used to study and dissect the language, narratives, ideologies, and power dynamics present in colonialist literature and texts. A book that examines how literature from former colonies engages with and responds to colonialism and colonial discourse is *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. In a review of the book, Fox (2014) write, "The book is a significant script in the reappropriation of the discourses, the re-turn to the presumptive center of the colonial 'repressed'" (p. 113). The book delves into the ways in which literature from former colonies challenges, transforms, and subverts the narratives established by colonial powers. It explores

the notion that postcolonial literatures provide a platform for previously marginalized voices to express their cultural identities and contest dominant colonial ideologies.

I am going to apply a postcolonial reading on Saleem's autobiography, where I point to these characteristics that serve as a postcolonial literature. I believe Saleem's work represents a previously marginalized voice, the Kurds, articulating cultural identities and challenging prevailing colonial or internal-colonial ideologies.

### 3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE KURDISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

The concept of national identity involves feeling a connection to and being a part of a specific nation. Smith (2010) lists several meanings for the term "nationalism" (pp. 5-6). However, Smith prefers those definitions that assume some measures of national feelings such as language, political movement, and an ideology. To him, these feelings play an important role in shaping an individual's beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Taylor and Spencer (2004) argue, "Identity is a work in progress, a negotiated space between ourselves and others; constantly being re-appraised and very much linked to the circulation of cultural meanings in a society" (pp. 4). So, identity is a constantly evolving and changing part of a person or group. Not only that, Taylor and Spencer also believe that identity is political. In that, identity is constantly being constructed and reconstructed and each construction echoes and reinforces power relations.

National identity often is used to justify the marginalization of certain groups within a state. This happens when a dominant national identity that emphasizes certain cultural or ethnic traits exclude or discriminate against those who do not fit the definition of what it means to be a member of the nation.

The Kurds have been dispersed across Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Even though they have some distinct markers of national identity, like as language, cultural traditions, and a shared homeland, the Kurds have suffered marginalization. The governing authorities of these countries have tried to deny the Kurdish rights and assimilate them into the dominant culture (Sherwani & Muhammed, 2020).

Edward, in his book *Orientalism* (1978), developed a concept called the "Other." According to Said, the West created an unfavorable and stereotypical portrayal of the East, which he labels as the "Orient." The image of the Orient as the "Other" has been used to justify the colonization and exploitation of Eastern societies and cultures. Said's concept has had a significant influence on the fields of postcolonial studies. Fitting Said's concept in the context of Iraq, the Saddam's regime was the dominant group and it always portrayed the Kurds as fundamentally different and inferior in Iraq. The image of the Kurds as the "Other" was used by the regime to justify marginalizing them. The marginalization took many forms, including economic, social, and political exclusion, as well as cultural and linguistic repression. It had serious consequences for the Kurds, including reduced access to education, employment, and other opportunities (Middle East Watch, 1993). In addition to that, Saddam Hussein took other radical measure against the Kurds, such as the "Arabization" campaign, aiming to forcibly erase the Kurdish language and culture. The campaign included measures such as the forced relocation of Kurds from their homes to other parts of Iraq, and ruining the villages (Middle East Watch, 1993).

The then Iraqi government took this measure to assimilate the Kurdish identity despite the fact that the Kurds had always considered themselves a distinct group, even before the existence of the nation-states in the region. Natali (2007) highlights, "Even though the Ottoman and Persian authorities distinguished minority populations according to religious affiliation: Muslim and non-Muslims, the Kurds have historically seen themselves as a distinct ethnic, tribal, or national group within the empires" (pp. xvii). That sense of distinctiveness is called

“feudal nationalism” by the Kurdish linguist Amir Hassanpour. Hassanpour, as cited by Bengio (2012), states that the Kurdish feudal nationalism was developed during the seventeenth century, which was a time when the Kurds were sandwiched between the wars waged between the Ottoman and Persian empires (pp. 4). The Kurdish identity was yet to be fully crystalized during this period.

It was only after the Ottoman Empire’s defeat in World War I that the call for Kurdish statehood gained prominence as the primary movement among Kurdish intellectuals (Bajalan, 2021). Following the fall of the Ottoman empire, and after signing the Treaty of Lausanne (1922-1923), which resulted in the formation of the nation-states in the region and the division of the Kurdish territories, feudal nationalism changed to *Kurdayeti*. This term is translated as “Kurdish Nationalism.” As Natali (2007) puts it, “the transition from an imperial to a state system helped reshape *Kurdayeti* because it created a new type of political space in which Kurdish identity could unfold” (pp. xvii). At the point of building the nation-states, the Kurdish struggle to preserve the ethnic identity began to appear. This is because many of the states that emerged in the Middle East during this time were artificially created and did not correspond to the historic or cultural boundaries of the region. Many of the nation-states developed strong national identities, despite their artificial origins. However, the process also marked by conflict and tension, as various groups, such as Kurds, within these states struggled to assert their rights and identities within the nation-state context.

Colonialism typically refers to the establishment of control and dominance by one country or group over another territory or people, often involving the occupation, administration, and exploitation of the colonized region for the benefit of the colonizer. However, Quayson argues, “Postcolonialism allows for a wide range of applications, designating a constant interplay and slippage between the sense of a historical transition, a socio-cultural location and an epochal configuration.” On this sense, when a minority group within a country with a majority rule facing domination and oppression, it shares some similarities with colonialism. It’s sometimes called “geo-focused internal colonialism,” which involves the domination and exploitation of one group by another within the same country (Pinderhughes, 2011). This could take the form of ethnic, racial, or religious minorities being subjected to unequal treatment, restricted access to resources, and limited political representation by a dominant majority group.

While these situations share some common themes with traditional colonialism, they occur within the boundaries of a single country and often involve historical, cultural, and social complexities that are distinct from the colonial relationships between different nations.

#### **4. SALEEM’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE KURDISH STRUGGLE TO PRESERVE NATIONAL IDENTITY**

Prior to the late 19th century, Ottoman rulers were unconcerned about their subject groups’ ethno-linguistic identities, such as Kurds, as far as they stayed quiet and paid taxes (Kelin, 2020). In 19th century, the Kurds’ relationship with the Ottoman administration and the level of the autonomy enjoyed by Kurdish-populated provinces changed throughout time. Overall, the partnership was mutually beneficial. So, a distinctive national feeling among the ethnic minorities was not as crystalized as it did later (Bajalan, 2021). In his narrative, Saleem recounts that his grandfather was born in Kurdistan, the Iraqi part, as a Kurd. During the Ottomans, Britons, and Turks, he had no issue being called an Ottoman, a British, or a Turk.

However, after the establishment of Iraq, Saleem’s father was bothered with having the new Iraqi identity. His grandfather’s sense of belonging, before and aftermath the World War I, marks the transitional period between the Kurdish feudal nationalism and the emergence of the new identity which was *Kurdayeti*. The new Iraqi identity that was thrust upon his

grandfather “remained an enigma to him, and to his dying breath. [H]e was never proud of being Iraqi” (pp. 4).

Abdallahman (2019) touches on the stage where Kurdish nationalism was being reconstructed after the creation of the nation-state. He states that ethnic struggle among the Kurds began to surface as a national struggle from the 1930s onwards. (pp. 8). However, he highlights that the language and culture of the dominant and powerful group were deemed valuable and significant, while the minority groups were compelled to adopt their new ways of understanding. (pp. 8). The dominant national identity in Iraq excluded and discriminated the Kurds as a minority group.

Hassanpour (as cited in Bengio, 2012) elaborates on *Kurdayeti*, stating that it started to form following the conclusion of first World War. By the sixties of the century, the modern nationalist concepts had evolved into a cohesive ideology (pp. 5). However, according to Vali (2003), Kurdish sense of nationalist ideology was a reaction to the negation of the Kurdish identity (pp. 105). Since the formation of the Iraqi as a nation-state, the Kurds have been in a continual struggle to preserve their identity, emphasizing ethnic distinctiveness. Said (1978) asserts that people obtain their identities through the means of opposing others. He elaborates that a crucial element of national identity is the practice of distinguishing between “us” and “them” (pp. 43). Within the Iraqi state, the Kurds have been treated as “them,” with the Arabs in power being “us.” As a result of this demarcation, the Kurds suffered discrimination and oppression.

Saleem’s autobiography, which covers two decades, the sixties through seventies in the twentieth century, is structured around the continuity of this conflict; the Kurdish emphasis on their national identity despite the denial by the Iraqi government. Lowder (2010) writes, “The Kurds seem to carry on and get themselves through the trials which they suffer by means of rhetorical promises encouraging their own cause” (pp. 2). The advent to power of the Baath regime in July 1968 brought happiness for the Kurds. Saleem, from listening to his father’s radio, recalls that the Iraqi regime talked about peace with the Kurds, “The two putsch leaders in Baghdad, Al-Bakr and Saddam, spoke of peace, and planes [to bombard the Kurdish towns and villages] stopped coming” (pp. 21). Bengio (2012) supports this claim, saying the Baath regime, in power, initiated direct negotiations with the Kurds, which were “set between September 1969 and March 1970” (pp. 40). Eventually, Saleem (2006) recalls, “It was Saddam who ended up traveling to the mountains” to negotiate with the Kurds. “Except for the independence of Kurdistan, [Saddam] accepted all the demands. Kurds and Arabs... were going to share everything like brothers!” (pp. 22). The negotiations lead to the 1970 March Declaration agreement. Regarding the agreement, Bengio writes that the agreement’s essence indicated a historic victory for the Kurdish nationalist movement. For the first time in the twentieth century, an Iraqi government acknowledged the Kurds’ right to territorial autonomy. (pp. 49). The agreement made the Kurds feel extremely happy. Saleem adds, “from then on, everyone had a smile on their lips. We were all carried away by the euphoria of peace” (pp. 22).

Hussain (2020) writes that the appearance of the nation-states in the middle east region, which was founded mostly on ethnicity, deprived Kurds of their rights, including the right to speak their mother tongue in public and to receive an education in their mother tongue. Despite the Iraq-Kurd agreement, the Kurds experienced discrimination by not having their language used in education. On his first day of school, Saleem “couldn’t understand a word; the teacher spoke Arabic” (pp. 27). Being over-optimistic, Saleem’s father told him, “Don’t worry, my son, before the end of the year, the teaching will be in Kurdish; the government promised us” (pp. 27). In addition to that, none of the TV channels broadcast a program in Kurdish. Saleem recalls that when his father bought a TV set, he was disappointed by not having any program

in his language, Kurdish. So, his fathers wondered if the Kurdish voice could ever be transmitted on the TV screen (pp. 36).

In 1974, the dream of having Kurdish territorial autonomy did not come true. As Saleem writes, rumors circulated that Iraq and Iran were on the verge of reaching an agreement, which would come at the Kurds' expense (pp. 49). The rumors turned into reality. The Iraqi government failed to implement the agreement and signed a new agreement with Iran, the 1975 Algiers Agreement, to end the Kurdish national movement. After this agreement, the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan deteriorated; The Iraqi regime launched an aggressive campaign against the Kurds and Kurdish fighters in the mountains. The Kurds were faced with two difficult choices, both with their own set of problems: seek shelter in Iran or surrender to the Iraqi government. The Kurdish leadership opted for the former. As a result, more than 100 thousand Kurdish refugees fled to the neighboring countries such as Iran and Turkey. Saleem's family was one of those who fled to Iran. What the Iraqi government did then was not a one-time knife-in-the-back due to getting a bigger catch from Iran, but it was more of the Iraqi government being a scorpion that could not resist its urge. Lowder (2010) expresses that fact in an obvious way:

*That fact has stood true since the end of World War I, when France and Great Britain shut Kurdish representatives out of peace settlements and continues to ring true to this very day: the Kurdish people have always lacked, and continue to be denied, their right to an international voice. This is because the international community struggles to see why the Kurdish people should be granted their own homeland. In addition, it seems that the countries in which Kurdish people live would prefer to be rid of them entirely and are in no way interested in granting them any measure of power or freedom. (pp. 95)*

In a single blow, the Kurdish nationalist movement crushed and the dream for territorial autonomy vanishes. With the absence of leadership, there was no central movement to lead the struggle in Iraq. Under the agreement between Iraq and Iran, the Kurdish refugees were to be granted amnesty and were allowed to return to Iraq. After several months, Kurdish families decide to return to Iraq. Upon returning, the returnees on the border are given a new identification stamped with the a'idouns (returnees) mark. Saleem states, "[a'idouns] were denied access to many jobs- at the university, in the government, in any sensitive position" (pp. 61). It is not only the returnees who experience inequalities in standards of living but all the Kurds because "the rule was applied to all Kurds" (pp. 61).

The clash between the two discourses, the Kurdish one and the Iraqi regime representing the Arab one, speak at the heart of Saleem's autobiography. After the movement's collapse, the Iraqi regime's aim for the Kurdish case was that the Kurdish national movement would not resurface again. In its quest to accomplish this, Bengio states, "the Baath regime targeted several interim goals: to destroy Kurdish national identity and assimilate the Kurds into Arab society and prevent Kurdish reorganization" (pp. 154). During the years of the agreement, Iraq continues to prevent the Kurds from holding sensitive governmental positions. In addition, it brings workers from other Arab countries to the region to replace the Kurdish workforce and force the Kurds to assimilate into Arab society. Saleem states, "Hundreds of thousands of workers from all the Arab countries moved into our region. They took the jobs that were vacated by the ousting of a'idouns and many other Kurds" (pp. 61). If a Kurd wanted to apply for a simple position, he had to be interviewed by someone from the regime's intelligence service. Then, it was decided whether he would be given the position, and the person was usually asked to sign up for the Baath Party. Saleem once went to apply for a projectionist position at a small theater in a nearby town. The interviewer asked him whether he belonged to any Kurdish political party, and he replied by saying that he was only a student, and in fear of being forced to sign up, he did not go back there again. Even at school, Saleem was summoned to the Baath Youth office several times to sign up for the Party Youth and be

committed to the party and its beliefs. (pp. 68). At the town libraries, the Kurdish books that did not adhere to the Baathist doctrine had to be sent to Bagdad to be destroyed (pp. 75).

In 1978, the Kurdish movement began reorganizing from its inferiority position. Kurdish men from town started to go to the mountain where the Kurdish fighters were headquartered. Saleem's older brother, Dilovan, and his friend, Jamil were two of those who sneaked out to the mountain to become Kurdish fighters. The movement starts to operate their radio station, The Voice of Kurdistan (pp. 68). Even Saleem and his cousin, Ramo, went to the mountain to join the Kurdish fighters. They stayed there for two weeks and were told that they were students and needed to go back to finish their studies because the Kurdish cause needed more educated persons than fighters. The Kurdish fighters asked, "if you are courageous, return to your town ... help us organize acts of sabotage" (pp. 80). Despite the regime's attempts to oppress the Kurdish national movement, the movement again rose and started another phase in its struggle to preserve its identity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

National identity is an evolving concept that is influenced by numerous social, cultural, and political factors (Eriksen, 2007). The emergence of the Kurdish national identity is an example of the challenges faced by marginalized minorities in asserting their identity within a nation-state framework. Despite having definite characteristics of national identity, the Iraqi Kurds have suffered from marginalization and discrimination by the Iraqi governments. The reason for the Kurdish marginalization is a dominant national identity that imposes specific cultural or ethnic characteristics that differ from them.

The struggle for Kurdish identity has been ongoing from the Ottoman empire to the present-day nation-states. The shift from feudal nationalism to *Kurdayeti* was imbued by the emergence of the nation-states in the Middle East. Nevertheless, this transition process has had conflict and tension. *My father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan* offers a actual perspective on the experiences of Kurdish people, and provides comprehensions into the social, cultural, and political backgrounds of that particular period of in the life of the Kurds.

The advent of postcolonial discourse can be ascribed to the inputs of several writers, such as Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiango, Edward Said, Ashcroft, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Aijaz Ahmad (Sawant, 2012). Sawant argues, "Their work explores the ways of representations, and modes of perception that are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonized people subservient to colonial rule" (p. 122).

In addition to the fact that Saleem's narrative has value in that it reflects the story of the Kurdish people whose voice is almost entirely absent in the literary research, the content and structure of the work necessitate a postcolonial reading. The narrative can be interpreted as an attempt to converse the voice of an oppressed minority. Through this types of reading, the book serves as tablet conveying the struggle of all minorities to preserve ethnic and national identity in the context of de/colonization.

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