

**The Standardization of Kurmanji Saru  
Dialect: Obstacles and Worldview**

**توحيد القياسي للهجة الكرمانجية: العقبات  
والنظرة العالمية**

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اللغة الكردية هي لغة هندو أوروبية واللهجة الكرمانجية هي اللهجة الأكثر انتشارًا في اللغة الكردية. لقد أجريت دراسة استقصائية في حرم جامعة فالبارايسو في ولاية إنديانا بالولايات المتحدة الأمريكية كبيئة دولية. يتم عرض النتائج في ثلاثة أقسام. يستعرض القسم الأول سياسات الحكومات تجاه اللهجة الكرمانجية. يستعرض القسم الثاني موقف الناس من هذه اللهجة في الدول المجاورة. يستعرض القسم الثالث استطلاعًا تم إجراؤه في حرم جامعة فالبارايسو سأسخدم ثلاثة أسئلة لتوجيه هذا البحث. ما هو موقف الناس وإيمانهم تجاه هذه اللهجة؟ كيف يتم تمثيلها في وسائل الإعلام؟ ولماذا ليست اللغة القياسية؟ لقد بحثت في أحدث المقالات والصحف والأخبار والبرامج التلفزيونية والمسلسلات التي تتناول اللهجات الكردية واللغات الكردية. و اشير أيضًا الى أن اللهجة الكرمانجية ليست اللغة القياسية لأجزاء كردستان الأربعة. و أستعرض أحدث دليل على التمييز ضد الأكراد في الإعلام والمجتمع. الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة القياسية لهجة موقف سياسة ، تمثيل

## Abstract

Kurdish is an Indo-European language and Kurmanji dialect is the most widely spoken dialect of Kurdish Language. I have done a survey on the campus of Valparaiso University in Indiana USA as an international environment. The results are presented in three sections. The first section reviews Policies of the governments toward the Kurmanji dialect. The second section reviews the attitude of people towards this dialect in neighbor countries. The third section reviews a survey that has been done on the Valparaiso University's campus. I will use three questions to guide this research. What are the people's attitude and belief toward this dialect? How it is represented in the media? And why it is not the standard Language? I have researched the most recent articles, newspapers, news, TV shows and series that deals with Kurds and Kurdish language dialects. I also argue that the Kurmanji dialect is not the standard language of the four parts of Kurdistan. I review the most recent evidence of discrimination against Kurds in the media and in the society. Key Words: Standard language, dialect, attitude, policy, representation

- 1. Introduction: Kurdi dialects** Kurdish is an Indo-European language ("Ethnologue report for Indo-European"). Kurdish dialects belong to northeastern subdivision of Indo-Iranic language (Jadranka (EDT) Gvozdanovic). Kurdish language is spoken in the Kurdistan which is situated in four different countries including Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. It has many dialects but the most widely spoken are Kurmanji saru or Kurmanji with approximately eighteen million speakers and Kurmanji xuaru or Sorani with nearly two million speakers. These two are the two dominant dialect with the latter being considered the second official language in the republic of, Iraq and the standard form of written and spoken Kurdish in the Kurdistan of Iraq. I will attempt to argue why despite its popularity and its huge community of speech the Kurmanji is not the standard language of the Kurdistans? Is it because of the ways the speakers of this dialect are represented in the foreign medias, the cultural and political oppressions, and the lack of institution and constitution. All these will be explored in this research.

## 2. Methodology

**2.1. Research questions and data collection** I will use three questions to guide this research. (a) What are the people's attitude and belief toward this dialect, (b) How it is represented in the media, (c) and why it is not the standard Language? To gather evidence that addressed those three questions, I have researched the most recent articles, newspapers, news, TV shows and series that deals with Kurds and Kurdish language dialects from the last century till today. Most of the evidences are in the form of documented records. I have also done a survey on the campus of Valparaiso University in Valparaiso Indiana USA. I have asked two questions in my survey with providing a multiple choice answers. **The survey:**

Have you ever heard of Kurmanji Saru dialect?

It is a Language.

Never Heard of It.

It is not a Dialect.

Do you believe that a Language that has about 18 million speakers, should be the standard Language?

Yes.

No

2.2. I began my analysis by putting a criterion to choose the most influential and recent events in the last century and decade, and I created a data- base for doing so. Each evidence that met with the criteria had entered the database. (a) the title and authors, (b) year of publication, (c) the message or the purpose of the evidence, (d) and the conclusions and results . Certain and specific information about the evidence is noted in the database. **The Data-base:**

TV Chaneles	TV Series	Governments Policies	Turkish Newspapers
Stv	Tek Turkiye	Anfal (The misuse of religious powers by stating “Everyone can kill, rape, or rob Kurds, and there will be no repercussion”)	Vatan
Kanal D	Arka Sokaklar	Segregation, and up-rooting (in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey)	Hurriyet
Iraq Republic TV Channel	Doktorlar	Linguicide (Imposing the majority language in Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq)	Milliyet
Mbc	Kurtlar Vadisi	Breeding-out (Taking away Kurdish girls from their families raping them and selling them out to the gulf countries and forcing them to marry a foreign man)(Baas Regime’s recorded document after the fall of Baghdad 2003). According to Jimenez “Even worse, Kurds have had state sanctioned violence directed at them, such as Saddam Hussein’s Al-Anfal Campaign, where up to 200,000 Kurds were killed and/or went missing (McDowall 2004).	Sabah
	Sefkat Tepe	Genocide (the use of chemical weapons in the city of Halabja in Kurdistan of Iraq). According to Yale university press “Following the 1991 Kurdish uprising against Saddam Hussein's repressive rule, the Kurds captured literally tons of documents  from the files of the Iraqi security services. Like other dictators, Saddam apparently insisted that his minions record their crimes. As a result, the world now has conclusive evidence that in 1988 Iraq used chemical weapons on its own citizens, and very strong indications of an extermination campaign that may have cost the lives of at least 50,000 Kurds. Human Rights Watch has not only analyzed the captured documents but has conducted extensive interviews	Aksam

		with eyewitnesses, where possible matching their testimony with the written accounts from the archives. The result is a horrifying picture of Saddam's regime” (1995, 373pp).	
		Labeling Kurds as infidels and guerrillas on an international level	Cumhurriet
		Monolingualism	
		No Satlite Channels	
		No Internet connection	
		No Electricity	
		No Facilities	

### 3. Results

The results are presented in three sections. The first section reviews Policies of the governments toward this dialect. The second section reviews the attitude of people toward this dialect in neighbor countries. The third section reviews the survey that has been don on the Valparaiso Universities campus.

**3.1.1.** Kurmanji is not the standard language of the Kurdistan, because of Cultural and political oppressions. The evidences show that one point of cultural and political oppressions is the foreign governments policies toward the Kurds. According to the CIA fact book there are approximately 35 million Kurds spread around four Kurdistan, each in different countries. Kurdistan has been divided and separated during World War I and World War II (Cia Fact Book). These Four states Including Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran have oppressed the Kurds and ruled them with an Iron fist. The policy of turkey toward the Kurdish language (Kurmanji Saru dialect) was something called “linguicide,” or linguistic genocide. The Turkish government since 1923 oppressed the Kurds regarding them not even as minorities while they constitute 25% of the Turkey’s population (Sandra Mackey). The language was banned in public place like offices, schools, and work places. According to Houston “Kurdish was proscribed as a language of education” (23). The process was a long term process to breed-out or eradicate the Kurdish ethnicity. Egin states “When the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, the Turkish Kurds made up some eighteen percent of the population, but the new republic did not recognize its approximately 1.8 million Kurds as a distinct minority with its own culture, language, and traditions. The Turkish government considered the Kurds to be “Mountain Turks.” In an effort to assimilate and perhaps control the Kurds, the Turkish government launched a series of repressive policies intended to diminish the Kurds’ identity by various means, including banning their language among them” (66).The clear discrimination of other nations can be clearly noticed in the Turkey’s national anthem, which is called “Istiklal Marsi,” or “Milli Mars,” which mean independence anthem or national anthem. The last sentence of the anthem gives prestige to Turks while ignoring other nations. It states “Ne mutlu Turkum Digene” (Elif Ebrar BERK), It means how happy or admirable for one to say that he or she is a Turk. In Turkey the education system requires every student to memorize the national anthem, and to recite it in class in groups regardless of the nationality or the ethnicity of the student. In Turkish education system everyone should speak in Turkish and Kurdish people will not be allowed to have Kurdish names, because most of the Kurdish names include the letters Q, W, and X, and the sounds of these letters are absent in Turkish Language(Beşikçi). Kurdish was a forbidden language in turkey and anybody who spoke it was arrested immediately between 1980-1990 (Firat Baran). In Iraq and Syria during the Baas regime the government took the same policy as the Turkish government by not recognizing the Kurds and their rights. The Baas regime applied a method which was to linguicide the Kurds ethnicity and Kurdish language. This method consisted of uprooting and segregating the Kurdish families and replacing them by families from other ethnicities, hiring some of

the Kurds as government official for the purpose of steering a domestic war and to make Kurds to turn against each other, and changing the curriculum and office language into Arabic (Alsumaria News).

**3.1.2** Another point of cultural and political oppressions is the neighbor countries and nations' notion about the Kurd. Most of the Arabic world during Sadam's regime (The former dictator of Iraq) because of his propaganda thought of Kurds as infidels and by this justification it was right to uproot, slaughter, kill, and plunder the Kurds. During the 1960's many Kurd's including men, women, and children have been killed and executed by Saddam's Regime according to the Iraqi leaders and preachers baseless claim that the Kurds have no faith, therefore they should be murdered mercilessly (Taha Khalil). This notion made all the Islamic world and Arabic world to turn against the Kurds. That type of attitude was not good for the Kurdish language, According to Lambert (1967), attitudes consist of three components: the cognitive, affective and conative components (Annika Hohenthal). The cognitive component refers to an individual's belief structure, the affective to emotional reactions and the conative component comprehends the tendency to behave in a certain way towards the attitude (Annika Hohenthal). Another notion was associating Kurds with Israel which was totally baseless, It is true that a considerable number of the Jew population have lived in Kurdistan, but nothing more and nothing less that was all about it. This kind of attitude and way of thinking will cause a psychological depression for Kurdish speakers: Attitudes are crucial in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction: the status and importance of a language in society and within an individual derives largely from adopted or learnt attitudes. An attitude is individual, but it has origins in collective behaviour. Attitude is something an individual has which defines or promotes certain behaviours. Although an attitude is a hypothetical psychological construct, it touches the reality of language life. Baker stresses the importance of attitudes in the discussion of bilingualism. Attitudes are learned predispositions, not inherited, and are likely to be relatively stable; they have a tendency to persist. However, attitudes are affected by experience; thus, attitude change is an important notion in bilingualism. Attitudes vary from favourability to unfavourability. Attitudes are complex constructs; e.g. there may be both positive and negative feelings attached to, e.g. a language situation (Baker 1988:112- 115). Since, attitude can also be crucial in language decay, therefore what certain people did in Iraq including Kurds and Arabs, and in the neighbor countries added to linguicide and decay of the Kurdish Language by their policies and attitudes toward the Kurdish language and speakers.

**3.2.1** Kurmanji is not the standard language of the Kurdistan because of the ways the speakers of Kurmanji are represented in the foreign Medias. In Turkish media, the Kurds either not being mentioned, or represented as backward, uneducated, and barbaric nation and community. These features can be found in every aspect of media, and Turkish media's notion toward Kurd. Since there is an individual and a national depiction toward this speech community, therefore the issue is deeper than a mere distinction between the two nations. The issue includes social, cultural, and religious depiction. There is not such a thing as a positive Kurdish society representation in the newspaper and TV programs. What they are representing are news about elopement and terrorism. There is a Turkish national TV series entitled "Tek Turkiye," it means unified Turkey or united Turkey, contains a lot of baseless statement, depictions, and generalization of Kurd, Kurds, and Kurdish society. The TV series started in 2008, being broadcasted in Samanyolu TV (STV) on a national scale, and in a couple of years it has become an international TV series being broad casted on MBC the Largest Arabic media Corporation In the Arabic World and Middle East under the title "Al-arth al Tayba," it means the happy land (2009, Turkey TV Ratings). It was even translated into Kurdish and broadcasted in Kurdish local TVs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (an Independent region in the northern part of Iraq). What is special about this series is that it is about the struggle between Kurds and Turks, and it covers a lot of social issues of Kurdish society in that region like elopement and Kurds being uneducated and backward. The form of the critique is not suggestions or solutions, but it is a harsh depiction of that society. The most bizarre situation is like many patriotic Turkish series broadcasted on STV this series associate's Kurdish language as the language of terrorists and unbelievers. Most of the scenes while there is footage about terrorists they include Kurdish words, phrases, and sentences to the scenario for the role players to perform it during the video recording. Despite all the above they associate Kurdish songs with sad scenes and despicable murderous footages, mostly about killing and burning. For example Lori Lori song in Tek Turkiye series: Em koçeren Rîya durunBirîndarin birîn kurinTî u birçî li van çolanPîr u kalin jin u hurinLoî loî lorika minSebr u arama jîna Tu dihalê ber çave minÇare naye ji dasre minWekî deva çav sor kirinBî napalim erîş kirinBihar tarî u

reş kirin Cane şêrin hev par kirinKurem cane şêrin bihaErzan diçe iro wiha Ev mirina bi vî rengêGelek tale zor u zula (Tek Turkiye, Episode 43). It means: We the Exiles of far waysWe are injured, our injuries are deepHungry, and thirsty in these desertsWe are elder, women, and childrenLullaby, lullaby my Love (or kid) lullabyLullaby is my hope to liveYou are melting (dying) before my eyesI can not do anythingLike the giants who emits fire in their eyesThey attacked with chemicalsThey turned our spring into darknessThey divided your sweet lifeMy love (or my kid), this sweet life of yoursToday is being sold in cheap marketsThis kind of deathIs so hard, painful and sudden The footages are so sad and despicable; there are four corpses on the ground: one man and three women, people are running, and the town is on fire.

**3.2.2** Regarding their TV news and newspapers, both are in an offensive mode toward Kurds and Kurdish Leaders. The anchormen and news articles and headlines are depicting them as despicable and arrogant. For example most of the headlines and articles in Turkish media including social Medias are about the Kurdish arrogance, and this happens when a Kurdish leader or spokesman makes a statement about Kurdish rights and Kurdish political boundaries. The statement that the Kurdistan regional government president made in Germany's Die Zeit newspaper was depicted as arrogance by Hurriyet and Milliyet which are the two major newspapers in Turkey. The statement was "We would not let the Turks have one millimeter of the city of Kirkuk," he said. "This would mean not only our soldiers but our women, the old, and the young would fight" (Hurriet daily news). The headline of the most articles and TV news was "Barzanini Kustahligi," which means Barzany's impudent or impertinent rather than arrogance. This kind of depiction from local and national TVs has a negative impact on Kurdish speaking society as a leader represents the whole nation, so the depiction of the leader will be the depiction of the whole nation. Since what the Kurdish president said was the consensus of the most Kurds, therefor the Turkish media regardless of ethics in media depicts most of the Kurds as Prudent.

**3.3.** The survey has been done on 50 Valparaiso university students (40 students from the Middle East, and 10 from the USA), their ages ranging from 20 to 28. 35 of the participant which makes 75% of the whole participants who were from the middle east have not even heard of the language, while their resonse for the second question was yes. The remaining participants' answer for the first question was the same, but their answer for the second question was that they could not decide. Only two of the participants who were from the USA answered that it is a language, and that it should be a standard language.

**3.4.Summary**Table one shows how many newspapers, TV series, shows, and news in Turkey involved in providing evidence. From the table we can see more evidence can be found within TV news and newspapers, and in the second table it shows the degree of discriminative and pejorative language and behavior toward the Kurds and their Language.

**Table 1**Number of the participated documents

TV News	26 major channel
Newspaper article	10 Major Gazette
Online media	?
TV series	3 of the most popular TV series in the middle east

Medias	Pejorative Language	Discriminative Language
TV news	Yes	Yes
Newspaper article	Yes	Yes
Online media	Yes	Yes
TV Series	No	Yes

This information is based on the information that has been recorded in those Medias data bases. Despite the limited information and sources, we can draw a conclusion of what the situation is like toward that certain language.

**4. Conclusion and Discussion: “Changing Attitudes: what has been done?”** In the last couple of decades many things have been changed for Kurds in a positive way. According to Logan “Iraqi Kurdistan was spared from most of the significant fighting, as U.S.- led invasion forces achieved rapid success in taking down Saddam Hussein’s regime by April 9, 2003. An initial government, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), was established by the United States in Baghdad. Under the CPA it appeared that the Kurdish majority in Iraq’s north would be on equal terms with their Arab countrymen” (168). So, the Iraqi Kurds now on “equal” terms with Arabs. This type of equality will provide many opportunities for Kurds in defining their standard language. Everything is getting better for Kurds regarding the Policies: Middle Eastern geo-politics, which has worked for so long against the Kurds, is now working for them. The sectarian fragmentation of Syria and Iraq has created new space for a nation that is mostly Sunni Muslim, but moderate and secular. Suddenly the Kurds are being courted by all sides. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki this month sent a delegation to Irbil to propose that the Kurds return the parliament deputies and ministers they withdrew from the national government last year. Barzani's government declined but agreed to send a delegation to Baghdad for negotiations (Washington post). This sudden turn of events show that the Kurds are now in a good position to standardize their widely spoken dialect, which is called Kurmanji saru. While in Turkey We are at a point today when the guns will fall silent and ideas will speak. Since, the gun fight has come to an end in turkey it is time for the Kurds to speak up and claim their linguistic rights. The Turkey government had established a satellite channel for Kurds. The Channel is called (TRT6) (BBC Monitoring Europe). All of these events are in favor of the Kurds, and now it is up to their scholars and linguists to unite this large nation under one standard Language. Any claim of delay will be irrelevant, because now is the right time. During all the past centuries Kurds were never been this autonomous and free. So, it is expected that all the Kurds will be united linguistically with an effort of standardizing the Kurdish Language.

**Regrences:** Alsumaria News. Web. 23 April 2013

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