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## The Turkmen Language Survival in the City of Erbil: A Sociolinguistic Study

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### ABSTRACT

The main aim of the current study is to shed light on the current status of the Turkmen language in the city of Erbil. The main research questions for the current study are: Is the Turkmen language in any danger of extinction in Erbil? Does the Kurdistan Regional Government have any role in surviving the Turkmen language as an ethnic minority language in Erbil? The Turkmen language in Erbil is believed to be safe from extinction as Turkmen people use it in daily life without facing political or social issues. In order to obtain data, an open-ended survey is used involving 60 Turkmen teachers and instructors at Turkmen Atabag primary and secondary school for girls, Fuzuli primary and secondary coeducational school, Oghuzkhan primary and secondary school for boys, Gharibi high school for girls, Imaddadin high school for boys, and the Turkish Department at Salahaddin University/ College of Languages. For analysing the achieved data, the researcher used a mixed methods research approach, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher follows the work of Mühlhäusler (1992) as an adopted model. The current study concludes that the Turkmen language is not in any danger at all in the city of Erbil. Moreover, the Kurdistan Regional Government plays a great role in surviving the Turkmen language in the city of Erbil.

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**Keywords:** Turkmen language, Definitions of Minority Language, Ethnic Minority, and The Future of Minority Languages.

بقاء اللغة التركمانية في مدينة أربيل: دراسة لغوية اجتماعية

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## المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على الوضع الحالي للغة التركمانية في مدينة أربيل. ولذلك فقد طرحت هذه الدراسة مجموعة من الأسئلة البحثية: هل اللغة التركمانية معرضة لخطر الانقراض في أربيل؟ هل لحكومة إقليم كردستان أي دور في بقاء اللغة التركمانية كلغة أقلية عرقية في أربيل؟ من أجل الحصول على البيانات، فقد تم استخدام استبانة مفتوحة تشمل 60 معلماً ومدرساً تركمانياً في مدارس تركمانية، منها: مدرسة (أتاباج) الابتدائية والثانوية للبنات، ومدرسة (فضولي) الابتدائية والثانوية المختلطة، ومدرسة (أوغوزخان) الابتدائية والثانوية للبنين، ومدرسة (غريبي) الثانوية للبنات، ومدرسة (عماد الدين) الثانوية للبنين، إضافة إلى قسم اللغة التركية في جامعة صلاح الدين/ كلية اللغات. ولتحليل البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها، فقد استخدم الباحث طرق البحث المتنوعة التي تشمل كلاً من الأساليب الكمية والنوعية. وخُتمت هذه الدراسة بأن اللغة التركمانية ليست في أي خطر على الإطلاق في مدينة أربيل، بل إن حكومة إقليم كردستان تمثل دوراً كبيراً في بقاء هذه اللغة في مدينة أربيل.

**الكلمات الدالة:** اللغة التركمانية، تعريفات لغة الأقليات، الأقلية العرقية، ومستقبل لغات الأقليات.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Erbil, the capital of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, is predominantly Kurdish, and the dominant language in this city is Kurdish. The Turkmen of Erbil live alongside the Kurds as a minority in the city and have their own language, Turkmen. There is no doubt that ethnic minority languages are often influenced by dominant languages and threatened with extinction. Sometimes, under political influence, the dominant language of the majority is imposed on the language of the minorities, which slowly destroys the languages of the minority. Therefore, academic research should be conducted on minority languages to understand the current situation and to predict what will happen to such languages in the future, because language is widely recognized as a key part of the identity of nations. When a language disappears, the identity and culture of a nation

disappears. Therefore, it is essential that every language should survive and be kept alive. Whenever it is the case that the dominant language of the city or country is used together with the languages of ethnic minorities without problems, it means that all rights are guaranteed to everyone and to all ethnic groups in that city or country.

According to Tosi (2007, p. 118), language survival means keeping a language alive, ensuring its continued use, and preventing it from facing extinction. Furthermore, language survival encompasses the efforts and attempts of a society to prevent a language from dying and to sustain the number of speakers. So, it is worth noting that generally too few academic studies have been carried out on the status on the minority languages in the city of Erbil. Therefore, more academic studies should be carried out on the minority languages in Erbil. To ascertain the current status of the Turkmen language in Erbil, this study depends on the work of Mühlhäusler (1992), who stated that there are several key factors crucial for a language's survival and vitality: "number of speakers, relationship with other languages, patterns of transmission, speakers' attitude, domains of use, and institutional support."

### **1.1 THE PROBLEM**

There is no doubt that, as an ethnic minority, the Turkmen in Erbil live very peacefully with the Kurds and other ethnic minorities. They have their own language, Turkmen. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been insufficient academic research into the current status of the Turkmen language in Erbil to determine whether or not this language is staying alive without any problems, or is in danger of extinction now or in the future. In the opinion of the researcher, the languages of both the majority and the minority groups should be investigated academically to prevent any issues that lead to the erosion of these languages. This is because language is considered a key part of the identity of a nation.

### **1.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE**

The significance of the current study can be summarized as follows:

- 1- It provides information about what the minority language and the ethnic minority under consideration are.
- 2- It provides valuable information about how to protect the languages of ethnic minorities from danger or extinction.

### **1.3 THE LIMITS**

The study is limited to the following:

- 1- The current status of the Turkmen language in the city of Erbil.
- 2- The views of teachers of Turkman at some primary, secondary and high Turkmen schools in Erbil, and instructors at the Turkish Department in the College of Languages at Salahaddin University during the academic year 2023-2024.

#### **1.4 THE AIMS**

This research has two main aims. First, it focuses on the Turkmen language in Erbil to determine whether or not this language is at risk of extinction. Second, it highlights the crucial steps that can be taken to preserve a language and keep it alive.

#### **1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study aims to address the following questions:

- 1- Is the Turkmen language in any danger of extinction in Erbil?
- 2- Does the Kurdistan Regional Government have any role to play in ensuring the survival of the Turkmen language as an ethnic minority language?

#### **1.6 THE HYPOTHESES**

This research study hypothesizes that:

- 1- The Turkmen language is not in danger of extinction in Erbil.
- 2- The Kurdistan Regional Government has a role to play in ensuring the survival of the Turkmen language as an ethnic minority language.

### **2. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1 THE ORIGON AND THE LANGUAGE OF TURKEMEN**

Demirci (1991, p. 6) and Al-Abassy (2009) point out that, originally, the Turkmen came to Iraq from Central Asia because of the political situation. This migration of Turkmen happened in three consecutive waves. The first was during the “Amawis period, and the second during the Abbasids period. The third was during the Ottoman Empire”.

Regarding the Turkmen language, Askari and Sharif (1995, p.29) state that Turkmen are the generation of “Oguzh Khan”, who speak Turkmen which is a branch of the Oghuz language. Similarly, Jorgensen (2016) confirms that the main sources of Turkmen, Turkish, Azerbaijani and Qashqai languages was the Ughuz language. This indicates that Turkmen is an independent language.

#### **2.2 Turkmen Residence in Erbil**

Al-Arbili (2020, p. 447) says that, in general, the arrival and settlement of the Turkmen in Erbil were for two reasons. First, Erbil was an important commercial centre. Second, the security situation in Erbil was stable because, at that time, Sultan Muzaffar was ruler of the city. This was very important for Turkmen. They wished to live in the city under his rule because they were close to him in terms of ethnicity, religion and language.

#### **2.3 DEFINITIONS OF MINORITY LANGUAGE**

Qamry (2006, p.12) believes that languages spoken by small numbers of individuals in any region and country are considered minority languages because there is another language spoken by a larger group of people in that region or country. According to

Grenoble and Singerman (2014, p.1), a language is considered a minority language when it is spoken by less than 50% of the population in a region or country.

#### **2.4 ETHNIC MINORITY**

According to Capotorti (1979, p. 7), ethnic minorities are a group of people who are smaller in number than another group of people of a different ethnicity who live together in the same area without problems. Each of these groups has preserved customs, language, and culture. Petkova (2019) defines an ethnic minority by saying that ethnic minorities are people who differ from the majority population of the same region or country in terms of their family names, personal behaviour, and numbers.

#### **2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION ON LANGUAGE SURVIVAL**

Ridanpää (2018, p. 187) demonstrates that academic investigations play a strong role in saving languages because language is strongly linked to the identity, educational principles, and sovereignty of ethnic minority groups. So far, there is no consensus as to whether recent academic developments have had a positive or a negative impact on language revival or preservation. Based on Ridanpää's view, it is believed that academic research should always be conducted on the language of the majority groups in general, and the language of ethnic minorities in particular, to understand the current situation of these languages, and what the future holds for these languages.

#### **2.6 THE FUTURE OF THE MINORITY LANGUAGE**

According to Austin and Sallabank (2011, p.1), languages with more than fifty million speakers are never in danger of extinction, but since World War II thousands of minority languages have been in danger of being lost because these languages are mostly spoken by older minority people, with their younger people using the dominant language for communication purposes. This means that speakers of ethnic minority languages are declining. Economic, political, social and educational sectors have a major impact on the extinction of ethnic minority languages.

#### **2.7 THE WORRINESS OF THE EXTINCTION OF MINORITY LANGUAGE**

We often hear people ask why we should worry about losing a language. To answer this question, Hinton (2001, p. 5) argues that whenever a language ceases to be used, a significant part of human knowledge is lost to the whole world. Regarding the importance of preserving languages, Grenoble and Whaley (2006, pp. 19-20) point out that there are three very important points that make with regard to preserving languages. First, language is a cultural treasure. Second, cultural diversity is fostered by language diversity. Third, the protection of minority languages relates to the protection of minority rights.

#### **2.8 THE STEPS OF KEEPING ANY LANGUAGE ALIVE**

There are many different views with regard to preserving and helping a language survive. However, as for the reasons for the survival of a language, this study relies on

Mühlhäusler's view. According to Mühlhäusler (1992, p.163), there are some steps that are essential for any language to survive.

#### 1- Number of speakers

According to Nettle and Romaine (2000, p. 5), native speakers of any language should always communicate in their mother tongue. If this happens, a minority group can keep its language alive. Moreover, all languages should have enough speakers to ensure the survival of their languages. Otherwise, their language may face extinction or gradually fade out in the future.

#### 2- Relationship with other languages

Mühlhäusler (1992, p.174) states that the future of any language depends on good relationships with other languages, especially in the same place, because such a relationship allows the different languages to borrow words from each other during conversation, even if the borrowed words are few in number. This will enrich both languages.

#### 3- Patterns of transmission

According to Grenoble and Whaley (2006, p. 18), in order for a language to survive, parents must communicate with their children in their mother tongue at home. This is because this is an important factor in helping their children learn their mother tongue. When this happens, their mother tongue is passed on from one generation to the next. If the number of speakers of the mother tongue decreases, generation by generation, the mother tongue will slowly fade away.

#### 4- Speakers' attitude

Nur et al. (2021, p. 111) note that there are two types of attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue: a positive attitude and a negative attitude. Positive attitude means that the speakers of the minority languages are proud of their language. On the other hand, a negative attitude indicates that speakers of the minority language are not proud of their language in terms of their nation identity. This means that they may be ashamed to use their own language.

#### 5- Domains of use

Shalom (2015, pp. 105-106) points out that, in order for ethnic minority languages around the world to be protected from extinction, there are three very important domains for language preservation: the home, education and the media.

Regarding the home domain he believes that at home, parents should not only communicate in their mother tongue so that their children can learn the language, but should also tell and recite stories to their children in their mother tongue, as this has a special effect on preserving minority languages. Similarly, Clyne (2001, p. 367) states that grandparents have a much more important role than parents at home in preserving and passing on their native language to the next generation because when they speak their

native language, their descendants will converse in their native language one after another. Regarding the domain of education, schools play an important role in preserving ethnic minority languages. In the education sector, ethnic minority children should be taught in the official language of the country and in their mother tongue, which also has the benefit of helping them learn more than one language. Similarly, Tsunoda (2006, pp. 58-62) states that no one denies that the educational domain has a strong influence on preserving languages, but all the educational materials must be written in the mother tongue. Regarding the domain of media, all forms of media such as television, radio and newspapers have a very strong impact on the preservation of minority languages. Similarly, Fenyvesi (2015, pp. 126-127) agrees with Shalom by saying that media plays a key role in preserving minority languages, but he also makes the point that formal and informal forms of language are always used in media. Therefore, it is essential that minority languages be used in all forms of media.

#### 6- Institutional Support

According to Box (2019, p.1), institutional support is very important for any language that is in danger of extinction because if any language has official institutional support, it will survive and be protected from extinction. Therefore, it can be said that official institutional support for ethnic minority languages will have the same positive effect. Similarly, Grenoble and Whaley (2006, p. 28) believe that government support for minority languages is very important, and that such support shows the government's positive attitude towards minority rights. At the same time, it is important that the government provides good financial support for minority languages, and allows minority individuals to study in their mother tongue.

## **2.9 METHODES OF DATA COLLECTION**

### **2.9.1 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS**

To obtain the data from instructors and teachers about the Turkmen language survival in the city of Erbil, a 10 open-ended survey was used. To the data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied to analyse the participants' views accurately. Every participant was asked to provide submit written responses for every item on the survey, and also all participant were given sufficient time to share their views on each item. It is worth mentioning that all participants were Turkmen.

To analyse the obtained data, the Likert Scale was used. The Likert Scale offers all participants five choices to express their views about each item: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree = 5. To ensure the clarity of all the survey items, the researcher conducted a pilot study by seeking feedback from a group of knowledgeable instructors and teachers before asking the participants to respond. The survey's face validity was assessed three months after it was distributed to the pilot group by collecting their responses.

### **2.9.2 PARTICIPANTS**

To obtain the necessary data for the current study, 60 Turkmen teachers and instructors of both genders at Turkmen Atabag Primary and Secondary School for Girls, Fuzuli

Primary and Secondary Coeducational School, Oghuzkhan Primary and Secondary School for Boys, Gharibi High School for Girls, Imaddadin High School for Boys, and the Turkish Department at Salahaddin University/College of Languages. Adequate time was given for all participants to provide their views regarding all items. The ages of the participants varied between 27 and 55 years. Teachers of Turkmen at Turkmen schools and Turkmen instructors at the Turkish Department were asked to participate in the study, because they were able to express academic views on each item. Moreover, the study is about the Turkmen language. Therefore, the researcher wanted to obtain views about the Turkmen language through only Turkmen in the city of Erbil, not from other ethnic groups in the same city.

### **2.9.3 VALIDITY AND RELIEABILITY**

Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012, pp. 147-148) point out that the term ‘validity’ refers to the meaningfulness and correctness and the usefulness of the conclusion that a researcher arrives at. This means that in any academic study, the researcher must achieve good and meaningful results. To ensure that all items of the survey used in this study were appropriate and relevant to the main purpose of the study, a number of professors and assistant professors were asked to act as jury members (evaluators) to determine the validity of all the items used in the survey before data were collected. They expressed their views and made suggestions with regard to all the items. As a consequence, some changes were made to each item. Information with regard to the jury members (evaluators) is provided in Appendix (1). The term ‘reliability’ refers to the accuracy of data obtained in an academic study from one time to another. In other words, the researcher must obtain the same data on a particular topic when collecting it at two different times. Therefore, in this study, after obtaining data for the first time, the researcher asked the same participants to express their views on each item again three weeks later to determine whether or not the participants expressed the same views as the first time.

### **2.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data obtained was analysed using the SPSS 22 program to calculate the P-value, mean score, standard deviation and the percentage of participants’ views with regard to each item. To judge the degree of internal consistency between outcomes from two sets of attained data for the same survey items, Cronbach’s alpha was employed. According to the SPSS 22 program, Cronbach’s alpha value for all items of the survey was 0.82, which is greater than 0.60. Consequently, the internal consistency is accepted for all items. Kwak (2023, p. 89) states that the result is significant when the p-value result is equal or lower than 0.05.

<b>Participants’ responses to item (1):</b>								
<b>“By using the Turkmen language, Turkmen native speakers play a crucial role in preserving their language.”</b>								
	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>P-value</b>

<b>Item 1</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	68.33%	31.67%	4.32	2.52	0.04
<b>Participants' responses to item (2):</b>								
<b>“The speakers of the dominant language in the city of Erbil respond positively to people speaking the Turkmen language.”</b>								
	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Item 2</b>	1.67%	8.33%	6.67%	38.33%	45%	4.17	3.76	0.02
<b>Participants' responses to item (3):</b>								
<b>“Within Turkmen families, the Turkmen language is passed down from one generation to the next without any language problems.”</b>								
	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Item 3</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	60%	40%	4.4	3.90	0.007
<b>Participants' responses to item (4):</b>								
<b>“Turkmen is the dominant language in Turkmen households and serves as the primary means of communication, despite the fact that Turkmen live in a society where the majority speak Kurdish.”</b>								
	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Item 4</b>	6.67%	23.33%	33.33%	21.67%	15%	3.15	2.84	0.01
<b>Participants' responses to item (5):</b>								
<b>“The Turkmen schools in Erbil play a significant role in preserving the Turkmen language.”</b>								
	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Item 5</b>	11.67%	50%	5%	25%	8.33%	2.77	2.51	0.02
<b>Participants' responses to item (6):</b>								
<b>“All forms of Turkmen media in Erbil have a positive impact on the preservation of the Turkmen language.”</b>								

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
<b>Item 6</b>	0.00%	5%	11.67%	48.33%	35%	4.13	3.69	0.008
<b>Participants' responses to item (7):</b> "The Kurdistan Regional Government always supports the Turkmen language."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
<b>Item 7</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	4.67	4.16	0.01
<b>Participants' responses to item (8):</b> "The Turkmen use the Turkmen language in all forms of their literature."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
<b>Item 8</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	41.67%	58.33%	4.58	4.08	0.005
<b>Participants' responses to item (9):</b> "In all their cultural activities such as <i>religious practices, sports events, music concerts and art exhibitions</i> , Turkmen use the Turkmen language."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
<b>Item 9</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	51.67%	48.33%	4.48	3.98	0.04
<b>Participants' responses to item (10):</b> "It is expected that the Turkmen language will develop in Erbil in the future."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
<b>Item 10</b>	18.33%	65%	11.67%	3.33%	1.67%	2.05	1.65	0.003

## **2.11 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

As far as item (1) is concerned, the mean score is (4.32), and the standard deviation is (2.52). For this item the P-value is (0.04). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05).

68.33% of the participants agree and 31.67% of them strongly agree with the statement. They point out that there is no doubt that speakers of the languages of all ethnic groups and minorities play a very important role in preserving their mother tongue. The Turkmen of Erbil, as a minority in Erbil, use Turkmen most of the time while speaking with each other. This is considered an important factor in preserving their native language. Furthermore, it should be noted that the use of the mother tongue in communication among individuals of the same ethnic group signifies that these individuals are loyal to their native language. When members of an ethnic group remain loyal in this way, it is likely that the language will survive. The results of the first item are in line with the study by Nettle and Romaine (2000).

As for item (2), the mean score is (4.17), and the standard deviation is (3.76). For this item the P-value is (0.02). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05).

38.33% of the participants agree and 45% of them strongly agree with the statement. They point out that in Erbil, when Turkmen speak their native language; no Kurdish individual has problems with this. This means that there is freedom for Turkmen to communicate in their own language in Erbil. Furthermore, Kurdish and Turkmen individuals swap many native words of one another's mother tongue and use them in their daily lives. This has led to the addition of new words in both Kurdish and Turkmen in Erbil. This is a sign of brotherhood and peaceful coexistence. It is obvious to everyone that Erbil has long been known as a city of coexistence. Some 6.67% of the participants are neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item due to having inadequate information. On the other hand, 8.33% of the participants disagree and 1.67% of them strongly disagree with the statement. They mention that they sometimes face criticism from some teenagers who speak the dominant language, suggesting that they

should not communicate in their native language in an outside context, as they are of the opinion that every ethnic group should speak the dominant language of the place in which they reside. This type of criticism can have a negative impact on ethnic groups. The results with regard to this item are in agreement with those of Mühlhäusler (1992).

In the case of item (3), the mean score is (4.4), and the standard deviation is (3.90). For this item the P-value is (0.007). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05). 60% of the participants agree and 40% of them strongly agree with the statement. They state that there is no difficulty with regard to the passing down of the Turkmen language from one generation to the next, as Turkmen members often communicate in their mother tongue, whether inside or outside the home. This facilitates the process of transmitting Turkmen from one generation to the next. Furthermore, this process is a significant factor in assisting the next generation in speaking their mother tongue fluently. Moreover, it strengthens the bonds between a particular generation and the generations both before and after them, as they all share the same language. The results of the current item are in line with those of the study by Grenoble and Whaley (2006).

As for item (4), the mean score is (3.15), and the standard deviation is (2.84). For this item the P-value is (0.01). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05). 21.67% of the participants agree and 15% of them strongly agree with the statement. They believe that Turkmen in Erbil often use their native language in their homes to exchange ideas and talk about their daily lives. The use of the native language among family members ensures that their language will always remain alive and will survive. Moreover, when Turkmen visit Turkmen relatives and friends, they consistently use the Turkmen language when conversing. This is another reason why Turkmen families use Turkmen as their primary means of communication at home. Some 33.33% of the participants are neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item due to having inadequate information. On the other hand, 23.33% of the participants disagree and 6.67 of them strongly disagree with the statement. They indicate that it is undeniable that the native language of the Turkmen is Turkmen. However it should not be forgotten that not all Turkmen families live in the same part of Erbil. They reside and

live in different parts of Erbil and speak both Turkmen and Kurdish at home to help their children learn Kurdish. This enables their children to communicate fluently and understand the children of their Kurdish neighbours whenever they go outside. The results of the current item are in agreement with those of the studies by Shalom (2015) and Clyne (2001).

As for item (5), the mean score is (2.77), and the standard deviation is (2.51). For this item the P-value is (0.02). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05). 25% of the participants agree and 8.33% of them strongly agree with the statement. They believe that it is undeniable that Turkish is used in Turkmen schools because the curriculum is in Turkish. However, teachers and pupils speak Turkmen during normal conversations, and when students have breaks in school, they are allowed to use Turkmen for conversation. Therefore, the education sector has its own influence in preserving Turkmen. Some 5% of the participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer. However, 50% of the participants disagree and 11.67% of them strongly disagree with the statement. They believe that nowadays the Turkmen education sector has no positive impact on the preservation of the Turkmen language because the curricula are prepared and written in Turkish. Therefore, teachers and pupils use Turkish when explaining subjects in schools on a daily basis. Therefore, it can be said that the Turkmen education sector has a full impact on teaching Turkish rather than preserving the Turkmen language. The results of the current item are not in agreement with those of the study by Tsunoda (2006) because, in Turkmen schools in Erbil, the language of the study is Turkish, not Turkmen.

As for item (6), the mean score is (4.13), and the standard deviation is (3.69). For this item the P-value is (0.008). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05). 48.33% of the participants agree and 35% of them strongly agree with the statement. They say all forms of media such as television, radio, newspapers and the Internet have a positive impact on the preservation of the Turkmen language because users in all forms of media mainly use Turkmen to communicate and to convey all their purposes. Some 11.67% of the participants are neutral and did not express a view with

regard to this particular item because of a lack of adequate information on the impact of media on language survival. However, 5% of the participants disagree with the statement. They believe that in all forms of Turkmen media, users use Turkish along with Turkmen. This leads many Turkmen listeners and viewers, especially children and teenagers, to become more familiar with Turkish than with their native Turkmen language. If this continues, all forms of Turkmen media will have a negative impact on the Turkmen language, and this negative impact will be more strongly felt in the future. The results of the current item are in agreement with the study by Fenyvesi (2015).

As for item (7), the mean score is (4.67), and the standard deviation is (4.16). For this item the P-value is (0.01). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05). 33.33% of the participants agree and 66.67% of them strongly agree with the statement. They say there is no doubt that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) strongly supports the Turkmen language in Erbil. It is worth mentioning that the KRG, through its relevant institutions, does not create any obstacles to the use of Turkmen. For example, the KRG provides the Turkmen of Erbil excellent freedom when it comes to using Turkmen in everyday life, in all forms of Turkmen media, and in all institutions. Furthermore, the KRG always supports the issue of any books in Turkmen. The results of the current item are in line with the results of the study by Box (2019).

As for item (8), the mean score is (4.58), and the standard deviation is (4.08). For this item the P-value is (0.05). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05. 41.67% of the participants agree and 58.33% of them strongly agree with the statement. They point out that the Turkmen of Erbil use Turkish in all forms of literature such as novels, stories, short stories and poetry. Moreover, Turkmen use only the Turkmen language when reading and conveying the message of any literary masterpiece. This means that all forms of Turkmen literature have a positive impact on the preservation of the Turkmen language.

As for item (9), the mean score is (4.48), and the standard deviation is 3.98. For this item the P-value is (0.04). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05).

51.67% of the participants agree and 48.33% of them strongly agree with the statement. They state that the Turkmen use the Turkmen language in all their cultural activities. The reason is that only Turkmen participate in activities related to the Turkmen ethnic group. Therefore, only Turkmen is used during their conversations.

As for item (10), the mean score is (2.05), and the standard deviation is (1.65). For this item the P-value is (0.003). Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than (0.05). 3.33% of the participants agree and 1.67% of them strongly agree with the statement. They point out that it can be said that the Turkmen language in Erbil will develop somewhat in the future, but the rate of development is very small and therefore it is not noticeable. For example, incidence of marriage between Kurds and Turkmen in Erbil is common. When a Kurdish girl marries a Turkmen boy, she slowly learns Turkmen, and when a Turkmen girl marries a Kurdish boy, their children learn Turkmen through their mothers, despite learning Kurdish through their father. This means that the Turkmen language is developing, albeit slowly. Some 11.67% of the participants did not provide any views with regard to this item due to not having enough information. However, 65% of the participants disagree and 18.33 of them strongly disagree with the current statement. They state that it cannot be said that the Turkmen language will develop in Erbil in the future. But of course it remains a living language because Turkmen individuals always communicate with each other in their native language, and the Turkmen language is passed down from one generation to the next. Participants say there are several reasons why the Turkmen language will not develop in Erbil in the future. First, Turkmen are considered a minority in Erbil. As a result their language is a minority language in the city. Second, Kurdish is the dominant language in Erbil because it is the official language of Kurds and of government institutions. Third, all people who come to Erbil from other Iraqi cities and settle in Erbil learn Kurdish. Fourth, those people from other countries who come to work in Erbil learn Kurdish. Therefore, it cannot be said that the Turkmen language will develop in the future, because the development of the Kurdish language in Erbil is felt day-by-day.

Generally speaking, after analysing the data obtained in this study, it is clear that the language of the Turkmen in Erbil is not in danger of extinction at all. This is due to

several reasons. First, individuals of the Turkmen ethnic group use the Turkmen language while conversing with each other. Second, the Turkmen language is transmitted from one generation of Turkmen to the next because it is the language of communication in all forms of Turkmen media and cultural activities. Third, and most importantly, the Kurdistan Regional Government has been granting the Turkmen ethnic group complete freedom to use their native language in their daily lives everywhere. Fourth, the speakers of the dominant language in Erbil have no negative views towards Turkmen individuals when they conversing with each other in the Turkmen language. It is worth noting that the above-mentioned factors will always be very strong and positive reasons when it comes to helping all languages, especially the languages of a minority ethnic group, to survive.

## **2.12 CONCLUSIONS**

The current study has considered *The Turkmen Language Survival in the city of Erbil: A Sociolinguistic Study*. The following conclusions are drawn from the results of the study:

1- The Turkmen language of the Turkmen in Erbil is not in danger of extinction because the Turkmen of the city freely use their mother tongue among themselves and everywhere in the city without any problems. Furthermore, the Turkmen language is passed down from one generation to the next without any language problems in Turkmen families. Moreover, Kurds in Erbil do not cause any problems for Turkmen in using their mother tongue. In this case, this is the answer to the first research question. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the first hypothesis of this study is verified.

2- The Kurdistan Regional Government plays an important role in surviving the Turkmen language of the Turkmen in Erbil because it has been granting them complete freedom to use their mother tongue in all forms of media, literature, and in all government institutions. Therefore, this is the response to the second research question. Furthermore, it is worth stating that the second hypothesis of this research is verified.

## **2.13 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher recommends the following:

1- Carrying out more academic studies on the Turkmen language in Erbil and other cities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

2- Carrying out some academic studies on other minority languages in Erbil such Armenian and Assyrian.

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**APPENDIXES**

**Appendix (1) The list of Jury members.**

No.	Name	Qualification	Academic Status	Specialization	University
1	Dr. Suhaila Hameed Majeed.	PhD	Professor.	Linguistics.	Salahaddin
2	Dr. Abbas Fadhil Lutfi.	PhD	Professor.	Linguistics.	Salahaddin
3	Dr. Wryia I. Ali.	PhD	Asst. Prof.	English language & linguistics.	Salahaddin
4	Dr. Lanja Abdulrazzaq Al-Dabbagh.	PhD	Asst. Prof.	English language & linguistics.	Salahaddin
5	Dr. Wuria Ahmed Ameen.	PhD	Asst. Prof.	English language & linguistics.	Garmian

**APPENDIXIS (2)**

Dear Respondent,

My name is Sangar Othman Ibrahim; this survey is for an academic study entitled “The Turkmen Language Survival in the City of Erbil: A Sociolinguistic Study”. You are kindly required to participate in the survey by selecting a choice for every item and provide your views. I assure you that your name and the details you enter will be kept private and anonymous. Also, you are free to withdraw whenever you want. “By answering 'YES' to the question below, you confirm that you have understood this and consent to participate in the research under the confidentiality conditions stated”.

**Do you consent to taking part in this research? YES/ NO**

**Name:**

**Place of Work:**

**Gender:** Male                      Female.

Please circle the response that most accurately reflects your opinion for each of the following statements, where 1= Strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 4= Agree (A), and 5= Strongly Agree (SA). Moreover, provide the reasons for your choice of every item.

No.	Items	How you feel about the statement				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
1	“By using the Turkmen language, Turkmen native speakers play a crucial role in preserving their language.”					

	.....					
<b>2</b>	“The speakers of the dominant language in the city of Erbil respond positively to people speaking the Turkmen language.”					
<b>3</b>	“Within Turkmen families, the Turkmen language is passed down from one generation to the next without any language problems.” .....					
<b>4</b>	“Turkmen is the dominant language in Turkmen households and serves as the primary means of communication, despite the fact that Turkmen live in a society where the majority speak Kurdish.” .....					
<b>5</b>	“The Turkmen schools in Erbil play a significant role in preserving the Turkmen language.” .....					
<b>6</b>	“All forms of Turkmen media in Erbil have a positive impact on the preservation of the Turkmen language.” .....					
<b>7</b>	“The Kurdistan Regional Government always supports the Turkmen language.” .....					
<b>8</b>	“The Turkmen use the Turkmen language in all forms of their literature.” .....					
<b>9</b>	“In all their cultural activities such as <i>religious practices, sports events, music concerts</i> and <i>art exhibitions</i> , Turkmen use the Turkmen language.” .....					
<b>10</b>	“It is expected that the Turkmen language will develop in Erbil in the future.”.....					