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Lexical Change in Hewrami Dialect: A Sociolinguistic Analysis

A B S T R A C T

Language, as a system of communication, is dynamic and possesses the ability to respond to and adapt with diverse sociopolitical and technological developments. The Hewrami dialect of the Kurdish language, with its rich cultural and historical background, does not deviate from the phenomenon of lexical change due to these factors. This research paper is a sociolinguistic analysis, which adopts a qualitative approach to investigating the impact of sociocultural components such as region, religion, social class, age, literature, and political changes on the Hewrami vocabulary. Through a close study of everyday speech and Hewrami literary texts, this paper identifies how lexical items emerge in this dialect. Based on the findings, one conclusion that can be drawn is that both geographical distribution and education factors are highly impactful in the incorporation of foreign words from Sorani Kurdish and Arabic via the borrowing pattern.

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التغير المعجمي في اللهجة الهورامية: دراسة اجتماعية لغوية

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الملخص

تمتاز اللغة باعتبارها نظام تواصل بالديناميكية حيث تمتلك القدرة على الاستجابة والتكيف مع مختلف التطورات الاجتماعية والسياسية والتكنولوجية. اللهجة الهورامية والتي تعود الى اللغة الكردية، بخلفيتها الثقافية والتاريخية الغنية، لا تحيد عن ظاهرة التغير المعجمي والنتيجة بتأثير هذه العوامل. هذا البحث هو تحليل اجتماعي لغوي، حيث يتبنى نهجاً نوعياً للتحقيق في تأثير المكونات الاجتماعية والثقافية مثل المنطقة والدين والطبقة الاجتماعية والعمر والأدب والتغيرات السياسية على مفردات اللهجة الهورامية. من خلال دراسة دقيقة للغة المتداولة يومياً والنصوص الأدبية الهورامية، تتناول هذه الدراسة البحثية كيفية ظهور العناصر المعجمية في هذه اللهجة. وتلخص النتائج على أن كلاً من التوزيع الجغرافي

والتعليم عاملان مؤثران للغاية في دمج الكلمات الأجنبية، وخاصة من اللهجة السورانية الكردية واللغة العربية، من خلال أسلوب الاستعارة بين هذه اللغات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللهجة الهورامية ، تغير اللغة ، تغير المفردات ، العوامل الاجتماعية

1. Introduction

Language is a specific “sound-signalling system which seems to be genetically programmed to develop in humans” (Aitchison, 2010, p. 14). It is a dynamic and ever-changing system that constantly aligns with new situations and adapts to sociopolitical and technological advancement. Language change is inevitable, universal, continuous, and, to some extent, regular and systematic, as it occurs in every language due to the evolving needs of its users and their pursuit of more efficient expression (Halliday, 1985). However, the investigation and analysis of this process, both as a concept and within the field of linguistics, are often considered distinct from the general study of language.

Language change refers to the variation over time in a language's features, including phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and others. The Hewrami dialect of the Kurdish language, with its rich cultural and historical traditions, is not exempt from linguistic shifts. Throughout the ages, this dialect has gone through substantial lexical changes owing to various intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Although linguistic shift is a normal and constant process, the influence of sociopolitical factors on lexical changes has been a central focus of investigation over the past decades. In view of this, technology, globalization, regional dynamics, economic shifts, and sociopolitical progression act as catalysts and play pivotal roles in reshaping Hewrami lexemes.

Within the Hewrami speech community, the native language used across generational and demographic distinctions is not identical due to the increasing influence of other languages and dialects, particularly the Sorani dialect. As Hewrami native speakers engage with education, media, and other sectors where Sorani is the official language, they unconsciously borrow new words, resulting in an expanded lexicon. This leads to conflicts and misunderstandings between successive generations or among people from different regions. This issue raises the central research question of this study: ‘To what extent do social factors impact lexical change.’

The principal objective of this research paper is to analyze how social factors influence various aspects of linguistic change in the Hewrami dialect, with a particular focus on lexical items. It aims to examine different forms of loanword adoption and the emergence of new lexical entries by breaking down everyday speech and contemporary written texts.

Regarding the research methodology, this study adopts a qualitative approach, conducting an empirical sociolinguistic analysis. To implement this, two tools are employed: interviews and a Picture-Naming Task. Utilizing multiple tools ensures the accuracy of research data and provides diverse perspectives. Concerning the anticipated outcomes, the study posits that social factors are the primary drivers of lexical change in the Hewrami sub-group of the

Kurdish language. More specifically, factors such as region and education are particularly influential.

Concerning its significance, this research could contribute to the sociolinguistic discipline by providing insights into the process of linguistic change, particularly within the context of the Hewrami dialect, which has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Moreover, it emphasizes the notable correlation between language, culture, and society. Additionally, it sheds light on the ways in which Hewrami native speakers adapt to language changes in this developed and globalized era.

The scope of this study is confined to examining linguistic changes within the Kurdish language, focusing specifically on the Hewrami dialect. Furthermore, it concentrates exclusively on Hewrami-speaking areas within the Iraqi Kurdistan region. As the researcher is a native Sorani speaker residing in this region, this positioning facilitates data collection. However, accessing the necessary information for this research article in the Hewrami region of Iran is a challenging endeavour.

In relation to the structure, this research paper is organized as follows: After an introduction that provides an overview of the study, the paper reviews relevant literature, describing key concepts and vital issues that lay the groundwork for the analysis, such as language change, lexical change, and the Hewrami dialect in terms of demography and distribution. Subsequently, previous related studies are examined to identify research gaps. Following this, the research methodology and data collection approaches are addressed. Thereafter, the analysis and discussion of vocabulary shifts are presented, highlighting social factors and interpreting the findings. Finally, the study concludes by summarizing the insights drawn from the findings.

2. Literature review

This section discusses the relevant literature on language change, scrutinizing issues closely related to the present study. It paves the way for an in-depth analysis and discussion of lexical change in the Hewrami dialect in light of social factors. Particular emphasis is placed on topics of paramount importance to this paper.

2.1 Language Change

It is evident in the discipline of linguistics that scholars and linguists (such as Sapir, 1921; Bloch & Trager, 1942; Saussure, 1959; Chomsky, 1957; Crystal, 1992; Aitchison, 1999) have long investigated the concept of language in all its aspects, developing various theories to describe, analyze, and explain how language works. One of the major contributions made by these theoreticians lies in the belief that possessing complex language is the main criterion that distinguishes the sophisticated human communication system from the basic ones utilized by animals. Despite examining language from different angles, the main perception that linguists unanimously agree on is that language is dynamic and constantly changing. This phenomenon is called language change, which influences the whole linguistic scope, including shifts in phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic,

and other aspects (Aitchison, 2013). In this regard, the linguistic aspect scrutinized to conduct this research is located within the lexicon, known as lexical change.

According to Aitchison (2013), language change is similar to the rotation of the Earth; it is a very slow process. Under this view, the speakers of a language do not mostly notice this gradual change, "since the sounds and syntax in particular give a superficial impression of being static" (Aitchison, 1999, p. 151). From this perspective, it is extremely hard to find that two successive generations of the same language speak exactly the same. To support this point, one glance at the great works of literature dating back to Shakespeare's era shows that the English language, to a large extent, has changed over this period. Additionally, language change is an intrinsic, unavoidable, and continuous process, involving interlaced sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors, which can hardly be separated from one another.

Scholars interested in this linguistic area intend above all to investigate how and why language changes. However, identifying the exact motives behind language change is challenging. Outwardly, various factors are considered to mainly contribute to this phenomenon, which can mainly be categorized into external and internal ones. Concerning the former, they fundamentally represent non-linguistic elements, such as geography and social prestige, while the latter pertain to the organizational principles of natural languages, such as ease of articulation, analogy, language contact (Aitchison, 1999).

To close this survey, although, as mentioned before, all aspects of language are influenced by language change, close attention will be paid to the lexical change, as it is central to the analysis of the present study. The compelling reason why the lexical change aspect, in particular, is selected for this investigation is that, according to Labov (2010) and Crystal (2003), it is perhaps the most apparent area of linguistic change.

2.2 Lexical Change

Lexical change is a distinctive feature of linguistic shift in vibrant languages. It is primarily associated with the changes of the word bank that the speakers of any language use (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2007). Even though the lexicon of each language includes an enormous number of vocabularies, new lexical items are continually introduced to it. To be more precise, every language's stock of vocabulary undergoes shift in either one of two processes: 'word gain' or 'word loss'.

Considering the definition, the relevant literature has witnessed several scholarly perspectives in describing lexical change from different standpoints, in works done by Bloomfield (1933), Trudgill (1986), Crystal (2003), and Aitchison (2013). These viewpoints revolve around the same point as they perceive lexical change pertaining to the shifts in the lexicon of a language. On the other hand, lexical change is classified into three types, namely, *neologism*, *borrowing*, and *semantic change* (Aitchison, 2013). As far as neologism is concerned, it investigates new lexical items created owing to cultural change, scientific progress, and technological advancement. Regarding the borrowing type, vocabularies are loaned from other languages via commercial and cultural interaction. Finally, the semantic change addresses how lexical meanings change over the course of time (Aitchison, 2013)

In relation to the motives that lead to lexical change, the voice of reason usually addresses various significant factors such as language contact, innovation, social, cultural, economic, and political influences (McMahon, 1994; Hock & Joseph, 2009; Aitchison, 2013). These factors contribute to vocabulary shifts with two basic principles: the arrival of new words and the loss of existing lexemes. Additionally, as this linguistic area is profoundly connected with life, literature, culture, and society, sociolinguistic studies, including present one, are interested in underscoring it.

2.3 Hewrami Dialect in Kurdish Language

The Kurdish language refers to a variety of related dialects traditionally used by the Kurdish communities. It is part of the north-western sub-group of the Iranian languages, which, subsequently, is a branch of the Iranian subdivision of the Indo-European family (Salih, 2014). It is natively spoken by Kurds in Western Asia, with approximately 30 to 45 million native speakers in Southwest Asia, along with an additional one to two million living in the diaspora. Kurdish, or Kurđî, serves as the most widely used language across the four regions of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, which all together are considered as Greater Kurdistan by Kurds. Furthermore, although the categorization of Kurdish dialects is a controversial matter, Mackenzie (1961, p. 177) identifies three main groups known as the “Northern dialect (Kurmanji)”, the “Central dialect (Sorani)”, and the “Southern dialect (Hewrami or Gorani).” His classification is rational and convincing, as it logically prioritizes geographical areas when grouping the dialects.

Hewrami, known as Avromani, Awromani, Hawrami, or Horami, refers to one of the main groups belonging to the Gorani dialect, possessing distinct linguistic features in terms of phonology, morphology and grammar (Mackenzie, 1966; Mohammadirad, 2024). These linguistic aspects make it markedly different from other Kurdish dialects. From the perspective of sub-dialects, the major native subgroups of Hewrami are conventionally divided into five general categories: “Luhoni (**Luhûnî**)”, “Tekhti (**Textî**)”, “Basarani (**Bêsarani**)”, “Halabjayi (**Helebceyî**)”, and “Shaykhani (**Şeyxanî**)” (Bruinessen, 1989, pp. 139-51).

Etymologically, some linguists support a hypothesis putting forward that the name ‘Horami’ has a direct connection with the ‘Zoroastrian faith’. More specifically, it is believed that the name originally derives from ‘Ahura Mazda,’ the Avestan name for God.

2.4 Geographic Distribution and Demographics of the Hewrami Dialect

Topographically, according to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2021), the Hawraman region is characterized by a triangular mountainous area shared between Iraq and Iran. Pawe and Mariwan in Iran, and Halabja in Iraq, are the three key cities that form the vertices of this triangular zone. This territory features its unique culture, treasured customs, distinctive building design, and linguistic heritage (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2021).

Demographically, there may not be specific data pertaining to the whole population of Kurds speaking the Hewrami dialect as their mother tongue. As a result, determining the exact number of native speakers of this dialect is challenging due to several factors. Firstly, the

regional distribution divides the speakers between two countries: Iran and Iraq. Secondly, leaving their native lands and moving to cities leads to an inaccurate population count. Another reason is that a specific census has not been conducted yet to identify the speakers of that group. In that regard, it is difficult to figure out the total population of this group.

However, according to the specific data from the Directorate of Census in the Kurdistan region covering 2009 to 2021, which examined the demographics of the inhabitants' population in the cities, an approximate number of Hewrami speakers in the region is identified. In light of this process, the estimated number of native speakers of the Kurdish dialects has been analyzed based on the population of the areas in the Kurdistan Region, as illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1. *Population of the Kurdistan Region by Governorate*

Dialects	Population
Northern dialect (Kurmanji)	1637700
Central dialect (Sorani)	4103995
Hewrami or Gorani	252341
Luri	241604
Total	6389539

Hewrami is considered the most ancient, sustained, and primary dialect of Gorani (Mackenzie, 1966); therefore, Gorani is also known as Hewrami. Meanwhile, Bajelani, Sarli, and Shabaki belong to the same group. In that regard, the present paper emphasizes the Hewrami dialect in terms of linguistic change, particularly lexical change, rather than other subgroups.

The scope of the study is restricted to the side of language change in the Kurdish language, particularly Hewrami dialect in the Kurdistan region. The researcher limits this area and takes just Hewrami areas belonging to the Kurdistan region since collecting data from other parts is not easy.

2.5 Previous Related Studies

Lexical change has been a central focus of sociolinguistic research. Scholars have explored factors influencing vocabulary evolution over time, emphasizing sociopolitical influences, globalization, cultural exchange, and technological advancement.

Viewed from this perspective, numerous seminal works and research explorations have addressed the phenomenon of lexical change across various languages from diverse viewpoints. Labov (1972) investigates the relationship between sociocultural factors and linguistic change, highlighting the roles that social factors such as class, age, and ethnicity play in shaping language variation and change in American English. In another study,

Trudgill (1986) examines how dialect contact resulting from migration and urbanization contributes to dialect levelling and vocabulary shifts in British English. Kosoff's study (2014) discusses the impact of identity and technological aspects on lexical changes, as illustrated by the use of code-switching on Twitter by Egyptian Arabic native speakers. Similarly, Li (2017) and Zhang (2018) explore the impact of social, technological, and regional factors on lexical shifts in the Chinese language, highlighting how new terms emerge in response to globalization, language contact, and social media.

Additionally, Guerrero's (2019) investigation provides a comprehensive analysis of Spanish lexical evolution in Latin American regions, addressing how language contact, particularly with English and other languages, has shaped the Spanish lexicon. In another study, Safiei et al. (2023) draw attention to the phonological and lexical variations in the Hewrami dialect of Paveh in Iran, with a special emphasis on the influence of sociocultural factors. They provide insights into the adaptability of phonological and lexical choices in this dialect due to social dynamics. In a similar manner, Ismayilli and Aliyev (2025) analyze the impact of socio-cultural exchanges on the development of Persian vocabulary over the past two centuries, discussing how Persian lexemes have adapted to significant historical events, such as the Arab invasion and the expansion of Islam.

To conclude the review of earlier related studies, the present paper differentiates itself from previous research for the following reasons. Firstly, the aforementioned works on lexical change have focused on various languages and contexts, including English, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and the Hewrami dialect of Kurdish, each emphasizing specific factors. However, the current research provides insights into how multiple social factors collectively drive shifts in lexical items within the Kurdish language, particularly in the Hewrami sub-group. Secondly, prior studies on the Hewrami dialect have devoted special attention to the in-depth investigation of linguistic transformations in the Hewrami region of Iran. In contrast, this article is exclusively concerned with the variant spoken in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Additionally, the political systems and official languages differ between these two areas. Thus, a persuasive argument can be made that this study is among the insightful endeavours, if not the first, to address the phenomenon of lexical change in the Iraqi Hewrami areas and to fill this gap.

3. Methodology

This research paper employs a qualitative methodology to examine linguistic change, focusing particularly on lexical shifts in the Hewrami dialect of the Kurdish language. As Labov (1972) and Eckert (2000) argue, qualitative approaches are essential for understanding how socio-cultural elements influence the language change phenomenon. Accordingly, this study explores how lexical items have shifted over time and centres on the social factors contributing to this transformation. Based on this framework, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What social factors influence lexical change in Hawrami?
2. To what extent do region, age, and education have impact on lexical change?
3. What are the fundamental lexical changes in the Hewrami dialect over decades?

Data Collection Method

To triangulate relevant data, this study adopts two different methods to investigate lexical change in the Hawrami dialect: semi-structured interviews and a Picture-Naming Task (PNT). The interviews function as an effective tool for scrutinizing the social factors that impact lexical change. They offer direct insights into how speakers use language, their perspectives, their interaction with other languages, and variations across age groups. In this matter, both structured and semi-structured questions are intended to reveal forms of vocabulary preservation, borrowing, and language change across various social contexts and age groups (see Appendix 1).

Additionally, the use of the “Picture-Naming Task” (PNT) or “Picture-Word Association Task” is indeed a valuable method for analyzing how speakers assign names to items and determining whether the original Hewrami vocabularies are used or replaced by borrowed lexical items from other dialects or languages (see Appendix 2). While the Picture-Naming Task (PNT) is rigorously applied in various linguistic fields like psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and language acquisition, to evaluate vocabulary finding, lexical selection, cognitive word mapping, and semantic access in different languages, it can also be utilized in a sociolinguistic context—lexical change, for instance.

Participants

To gain a broad range of relevant experiences for conducting the study, participants from different sociocultural and demographic backgrounds are targeted. From this standpoint, native Hewrami speakers from diverse age groups, social classes, regions, and educational levels are involved to gather comprehensive data. The primary objective of this stratified model is to capture a variety of linguistic experiences and variations significant for accurate analysis. A sample size of 50–60 participants is targeted to study lexical usage and speech patterns, aiming to identify the social factors influencing lexical shifts in this dialect.

4. Discussion and Analysis

This section investigates the main findings of the present study, pertaining to how the lexemes have changed in the Hewrami dialect. Through the analysis, the principal focus is on the social factors that play an important role in language shift, lexical change in particular. Although the significance of these factors may vary from person to person or from one context to another, there is wide agreement among linguists on some of them, such as geographical location, age, religion, social class, and level of education. In that perspective, the discussion and analysis are centred on comprehensively understanding how and through which specific influences vocabulary changes occur in the Hewrami dialect, as detailed below in the subsequent sections.

4.1 Geographical Location

Geographical distribution is one of the fundamental factors influencing language variation in all its aspects (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). When people live near each other, their languages

or dialects will definitely affect each other in terms of all types of language change. To support this, here are some examples of Hewrami vocabulary in Table 2 that have been altered due to the influence of the Sorani dialect:

Table 2. *Lexical Change Due to Geographical Location*

Tawella / Central Point	Hewrami Areas Overlapping with Sorani	Sorani	English
sirdî	peyje	peyje	Ladder
kardî	çeço	çeço	Knife
zerîf	jwan	jwan	Beautiful
millk	bax	bax	Orchard
mezlluxe	bermall	bermall	Prayer mat
sêr	têr	têr	Satiated

Evidence demonstrates that this variation occurs because native Hewrami speakers residing in villages and districts in proximity to Sorani-speaking areas, or within Sorani regions such as Halabja, Sharazur, and Khormal, have experienced significant lexical shifts, seemingly borrowed from the Sorani dialect. However, residents of Tawella, which is distant from the Sorani region and entirely surrounded by Hewrami-speaking areas, have maintained their original lexical usage.

Consequently, it can be argued that recent changes in circumstances have made this factor more influential than before, particularly given that the Hewraman region is geographically isolated by mountains and other natural boundaries. However, the increased mobility of Hewrami native speakers, both within the country and across borders, has introduced new linguistic influences, significantly contributing to linguistic change in the region. This argument is further supported by the statements of Trudgill (1986) and Milroy (1987), who claim that geographical distribution and mobility influence social networks, resulting in linguistic variation and dialect levelling.

4.2 Religion

It can be stated that human beings and religions coexist; in other words, neither exists without the other. The emergence of new religions introduces new terms and expressions, and their practice leads to the acquisition of new lexical items and syntactic structures. As a result, new vocabularies and expressions progressively enter everyday language usage, the majority of which originate from divine scriptures and holy books. In line with this view, a consensus among sociolinguistic scholars (e.g., Sapir, 1921; Fishman, 1991; Spolsky, 2004) has emerged, with all asserting that religious practices contribute to shaping language identity and linguistic shift over time, affecting the stock of vocabulary and even preserving at-risk languages.

Taking this perspective into account, Islam has been a particularly dominant religion, with people following its practices in the region for over one and a half millennia, creating a

considerable and lasting impact on the Kurdish language in general and the Hewrami dialect in particular. Therefore, a large number of religious and Arabic vocabulary items and expressions have entered this dialect. Among the terms borrowed from Arabic under Islamic influence, the study highlights the following notable examples in Table 3:

Table 3. *Lexical Change Due to Religion*

Hewrami	Arabic	English
swā xîr	sabāḥu al-ḥaīri	Good morning
zerîf	dherîf	Beautiful
mala	mulla	Mulla / Cleric
ḥedîs	ḥedîs	Hadith
efwî	efu	Forgiveness/Pardon
dîn	dîn	Religion
edl	edl	Justice
du'a	du'a	Supplication/Prayer

Additionally, this can be attributed to the fact that, as Arabic is the language of the Quran—the holy book of Islam—Kurdish clergymen conducting Friday sermons and teaching in religious schools adopted the Arabic language. Over time, the incorporation of many Arabic loanwords has become an integral part of the Hewrami dialect, reflecting in the everyday speech of laypeople.

4.3 Age

Language variation across generations is an unavoidable process, reflecting sociocultural shifts and adaptations. Speakers from different age groups in every language utilize distinct lexical items instead of traditional and classic expressions. According to the relevant literature, notable sociolinguistic studies that view age as an influential factor in linguistic change include those by Cheshire (1982), Trudgill (1986), Labov (1966, 1994), and Eckert (1997, 2000), all of whom scrutinize language shifts from the perspective of age-based differences.

Viewed from that standpoint, the Hewrami dialect could not deviate from language variation in all its facets across generational differences. Hewrami speakers from different generational groups utilize distinct vocabularies and phrases due to factors such as education, media, technology, and global networking. In this respect, younger speakers' lexicons, incorporating new terms and words, differ from those of older generations, who prefer traditional vocabularies, as exemplified in Table 4:

Table 4. *Lexical Change Due to Age*

Younger Generation	Older Generation	English
nawqed	mi	Waist
nurgîrî	klawrochn	Mud hut window
duderî	penjere	Window
gulleberroje	tom	Sunflower
wer/xor	rojjiyar	Sun
qapuqaçax	hewerr	Tableware
jgar	yeher	Liver
spll	talle	Spleen
gurçîle	wllk	Kidney

The rationale behind this phenomenon is that modernization, globalization, and new lifestyles render lexical items and terms related to traditional customs and rural way of life less common, often leading to their disappearance.

4.4 Social Class

Social distinctions influence how people speak, shaping identity and language variation. In light of this, language differs from one social class to another due to diversity in cultural background, the level of schooling, and living environment. As noted by Labov (2001), an outstanding American linguist in the field of sociolinguistic variation, class serves as the framework of relationships among groups, with individuals categorized based on their education, occupation, and income. This division across classes under each factor leads to distinctions in their use of language.

The primary aspect to consider is that an individual's educational background brings about language shifts; what they acquire during their schooling is demonstrated in their linguistic usage, particularly in lexical choices. As it is apparent to all, the Hewrami dialect is not the official language of instruction in education throughout the region. However, the languages serving as the medium of instruction in education throughout the Hewrami region are the Sorani dialect of the Kurdish language in northeastern Iraq (Iraqi Kurdistan) and Persian in western Iran (Iranian Kurdistan). As per the data obtained for the study, the use of the Sorani dialect as the instructional means in schools affects lexical change in Hewrami as minor dialect. Furthermore, it leads the educated class of Hewrami speakers to increasingly borrow Sorani vocabulary and phrases, replacing traditional Hewrami words. In the long run, this undermines the dialect's lexicon and reflects changes in its vocabulary. To support this, here are some examples in Table 5:

Table 5. *Lexical Change Due to Educational Background*

Hewrami	Sorani	English
mamosa	mamosta	Teacher
tekinelocî	tekinelocî	Technology
zanist	zanist	Science
qellem	qellem	Pen
mîdiya	mîdiya	Media
daxwazî	daxwazî	Request
pêşniyar	pêşniyar	Suggestion / Recommendation
kompiyuter	kompiyuter	Computer
fîzîk	fîzîk	Physics

The underlying cause of this is that the educational process exposes native Hewrami-speaking learners to Sorani terminology. In this context, educational and workplace settings prioritize the Sorani dialect, leading to a higher frequency of loanwords in everyday use, as Sorani textbooks and materials introduce new vocabulary into Hewrami speech.

Secondly, economic status may influence the process of linguistic change. Prosperous and high-income individuals have increased opportunities for schooling, study and trading affairs, contributing to higher use of business and official language. From this perspective, wealthier native Hewrami-speaking communities are more likely to integrate global and urbanized vocabulary and expressions related to business and the economy, resulting in increased use of Sorani words and linguistic change in their dialect. This is because Sorani is both the official and dominant language for business affairs in the region, providing greater socioeconomic opportunities. To illustrate this point, the following examples are provided in Table 6:

Table 6. *Lexical Change Due to Economic Status*

Hewrami	Sorani	English
bazarr	bazarr	Market
qazanc	qazanc	Profit
ziyan	ziyan	Loss
sermaye	sermaye	Capital/Money
sermayedar	sermayedar	Investor

Another significant factor influencing language change in the Hewraman region is the role of clan families. Members of these clans may adopt specific terms to signify their social status, leading to shifts toward new lexical items. Consequently, some chieftain families may prioritize these terms, further influencing the dialect. The study encounters difficulty in gathering examples for this aspect of lexical change in that dialect, as the researcher could not find and contact them when the clan families reside in different areas and territories. Evidence for this claim is revealed in the following example: some chieftain families use the word ‘*babe*,’ meaning ‘father,’ while the majority of native speakers say ‘*tate*.’

To wrap up this analysis with scholars' supporting viewpoints, Bourdieu (1991) and Labov (2001) identify socioeconomic distinctions as significant factors in linguistic change and variation.

4.5 Literature

Literature encompasses imaginative works, creative acts, and masterful use of language that mirror social, cultural, and historical aspects, conveying thoughts, emotions, and life experiences in a creative style (Wellek & Warren, 1949; Eagleton, 1996; Klarer, 2004; Duff, 2014). One of literary scholars' contributions lies in shaping humans' comprehension of literature by introducing various forms that express norms, values, and beliefs. These forms are categorized into prose, poetry, drama, and folktales (Frye, 2000; Todorov, 2000; Abrams, 2005). They serve as invaluable and powerful mediums not just for entertainment but also for engaging with culture and language. As a result, the literary forms introduce new lexical items, terms, expressions, and writing styles that, over time, lead to language change, although they are considered powerful means of preserving traditional language.

Building on this idea, a glance at the influential works of classical literature in the Hewrami dialect, dating back to the Mawlawi era, illustrates that this dialect has undergone significant changes in all its linguistic aspects over time. Regarding the scope of lexemes, some vocabulary from that period is no longer in use or is seldom used; however, other words have replaced them. As evidence, several notable examples demonstrate this linguistic change in the Hewrami dialect, as illustrated in Table 7:

Table 7. *Lexical Change Due to Literature*

Old Language	Current Language	English
meminun / teşekur	supas	Thanks
wellg	gella	Leaf
rejiya	reşitin	Kohl
wnare	razandinewe	Decorating / Adorning
ehwen	leserexo	Calm
newa	deng	Sound
teriz	şêwe / cor	Kind / Form
teriz	wek	Like / As
dho	fell	Trick

The analysis shows that the new words incorporated into the Hewrami dialect have been taken from Sorani, particularly its literature. This suggests that Sorani literature has a significant impact on Hewrami writers, owing to the dominance of Sorani as the official and educational language in the region. Furthermore, almost all native Hewrami-speaking writers are bidialectal, which encourages them to engage with Sorani literary works in their creative endeavours.

The validity of this discussion is supported by Bernstein (2000) and Wardhaugh (2010), who state that cultural and creative works—literature, for instance—play an important role as platforms for shaping linguistic patterns and social identity. Additionally, literature serves as a foundation for disseminating linguistic forms, bringing about changes in language by either preserving or innovating lexemes and structures.

4.6 Political Factors

Political factors are among the most significant contributors to language change. Political systems strategically adopt ideologies that influence all sectors of society, including language—a social aspect where political power asserts its dominance. In other words, political authorities determine which languages hold paramount significance over others in terms of adoption, promotion, or suppression. Consequently, the social prestige, usage, and policies of languages are shaped by the rise of political movements, as new political terminologies and expressions are incorporated into the lexicon.

On the basis of this premise, since the 1991 Kurdish uprising and the promotion of the Sorani dialect as the official language in political, legal, and administrative discourses, certain terminologies and lexical items have entered the Hewrami dialect. To put differently, state policies promoting Sorani in formal public affairs have led Hewrami native speakers to adopt Sorani terms in official contexts. Accordingly, these Sorani terms are now integral components of the Hewrami lexicon. To substantiate this, several instances underscore the phenomenon of linguistic change in the Hewrami dialect, as presented in Table 8:

Table 8. *Lexical Change Due to Political Factors*

	Hewrami	Sorani	English
In	şorrş	şorrş	Revolution, Uprising
	azadî	azadî	Freedom
	polîs	polîs	Police
	dadga	dadga	Court
	destur	destur	Constitution
	parêzga	parêzga	Governorate
	parêzgar	parêzgar	Governor
	hükumet	hükumet	Government
	komellga	komellga	Society

concluding the discussion on political influence in linguistic shifts, it is noticeable that the intricate relationship between political power and language renders this process unavoidable. Authorities often implement language policies that promote dominant languages while marginalizing others, especially minority languages. Scholarly discourses put forward a similar perspective, with Fishman (2001) and Romaine (2006) asserting that political power and decisions make vital contributions to language change by promoting language loss or linguistic diversity.

5. Conclusions

The present study addresses the phenomenon of lexical change in the Hewrami dialect of Kurdish under the influence of sociocultural factors. One conclusion drawn from the findings is that the ever-changing nature of this dialect does not resist the evolution of its lexical inventory due to internal and external influences. As geographical, educational, literary, and sociopolitical factors continually play substantial roles in reshaping communication, Hewrami undergoes significant vocabulary shifts, with the degree of their impact varying from one community to another. In that angle, geographical location and education are among the most influential factors, as they provide numerous opportunities for language contact between native speakers of both Hewrami and Sorani dialects.

Additionally, the study has shown that lexical borrowing from other languages and dialects, especially from Sorani, is the most prominent type of vocabulary change in the Hewrami subgroup. Moreover, the growing interconnectedness, social co-existence, and structural similarities between these two dialects give this form of borrowing a central role in the process of lexical transformation, aligning with expectations. This concluding mark is echoed by Aitcheson (1992), who states that the level of expectation for vocabulary borrowing is very high when similarities are apparent between the neighbouring languages.

Moreover, there is a notable difference among Hewrami native interlocutors in their own diction, as they vary in personal, social, and educational background. In other words, the lexemes and expressions people use depend on location, age, sex, education level, social status, and some other factors. As a result, the style that they speak with leads to linguistic change, since it is not feasible to find two individuals adopting exactly the same style of speaking in terms of word choice and arranging vocabulary in sentences.

Finally, the study asserts that the dynamic and constant evolution of lexical items renders dictionaries akin to pyramids, containing numerous living words alongside many that have become mummified.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

1. Background Information (Demographic Data)

1. Can you please tell me your age?
 2. Where are you from? (Specify village/town/city)
 3. What is your highest level of education?
 4. What languages do you speak fluently? (Hawrami, Sorani Kurdish, Arabic, Persian, English, etc.)
 5. What language do you primarily use at home?
 6. What language do you use at work/school?
 7. Have you ever lived outside your region? If yes, where and for how long?
-

2. Language Use and Lexical Preferences

1. Do you think you speak the same Hawrami as your parents or grandparents? Why or why not?
 2. Are there any words your grandparents use that younger generations no longer understand? Can you give examples?
 3. When speaking Hawrami, do you sometimes switch to Sorani, Arabic, or Persian? If so, when and why?
 4. Do you feel comfortable using Hawrami in formal settings (e.g., workplace, school, government offices)? Why or why not?
 5. Can you name a few household or cultural objects? (e.g., tools, food, clothing). Do you think younger people use the same words, or do they use different words?
 6. If you had to name a modern object like a mobile phone, laptop, or internet in Hawrami, what word would you use? (Compare with older generations)
 7. Are there any traditional Hawrami words that are being replaced by Sorani dialect or other language words? Can you give examples?
 8. Do you prefer using the traditional Hawrami word or the borrowed word? Why?
 9. Do you think some Hawrami words are becoming ‘old-fashioned’? If yes, which ones?
 10. Are there any Hawrami words that young people don’t use anymore?
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3. Social and Cultural Influence on Lexical Change

1. In your opinion, what are the main reasons why the vocabulary of the Hawrami dialect is changing? (e.g., education, media, migration, social influences, technology)
 2. Do younger generations in your family speak Hawrami as fluently as older generations? Why or why not?
 3. What language do children in your family speak most often?
 4. Do you think people who speak more Sorani dialect tend to lose some Hawrami words? Why?
 5. Do you feel Hawrami is being influenced by Sorani, Arabic, or Persian? If yes, how?
 6. How do you feel about borrowing words from other languages into Hawrami? Is it a natural process, or do you think it harms the dialect?
 7. Do you think social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) affects how people speak Hawrami? If yes, how?
 8. Do you think younger generations should be encouraged to use more traditional Hawrami words? How can this be done?
-

Appendix 2: Picture-Naming Task

Can you please name the following pictures using the words you would normally use in your own dialect (Hawrami)?



