

اللغة الإنجليزية كمؤشر على الحداثة والمستوى التعليمي لدى طلاب جامعة رابارين

م.د. خوناو سلئمان بيروت 1

م.د. دانا إبراهيم أحمد 2

م.م. أفين كمال علي 3

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية الأساسية، جامعة رابارين، إقليم كردستان، العراق

khunaw.sulaiman@uor.edu.krd danablbas@uor.edu.krd avin.231223018@uor.edu.krd

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كيفية اقتباس البحث

بيروت ، خوناو سلئمان ، دانا إبراهيم أحمد ، أفين كمال علي ، اللغة الإنجليزية كمؤشر على الحداثة والمستوى التعليمي لدى طلاب جامعة رابارين، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، تشرين الأول 2026، المجلد: 16، العدد: 10.

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English as a Marker of Modernity and Educational Status among Students at the University of Raparin

Dr. Khunaw Sulaiman Pirot¹ Dr. Dana Ibrahim Ahmed² Aveen Kamal Ali³

Department of English Language, Faculty of Basic Education, University of Raparin, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

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ملخص

تناول هذه الدراسة تصورات طلاب جامعة رابرين تجاه اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها رمزاً للتعليم والحداثة. وتركز على التوتر القائم بين تبني اللغة الإنجليزية والحفاظ على الهوية الثقافية الكردية في جامعة رابارين، سعياً إلى سد فجوة بحثية ميدانية تتعلق بكيفية نظر طلبة الجامعات الكرد إلى اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها رمزاً للحداثة والمكانة التعليمية. وتحقيقاً لذلك، وُزِع استبيان مكون من 16 فقرة على 80 طالباً من طلبة مرحلة البكالوريوس، واستُخدمت الإحصاءات الوصفية في تحليل البيانات.

أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب يولون اللغة الإنجليزية أهمية كبيرة في تحقيق النجاح الأكاديمي، ومواكبة التطور التكنولوجي، والوصول إلى الشبكات الدولية. ومع ذلك، أظهرت النتائج ارتباطاً متوسطاً بين إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية وتحسن المكانة الاجتماعية، مع تسجيل نسبة ملحوظة من الإجابات المحايدة.

كما كشفت النتائج عن وجود نوع من التعارض بين الهوية الكردية وتبني اللغة الإنجليزية؛ إذ يرى عدد قليل من الطلاب أن اللغة الإنجليزية تسهم في تقدم البلاد، في حين يجد كثير منهم صعوبة في التناوب بين اللغتين الكردية والإنجليزية. علاوة على ذلك، يتفق عدد كبير من المشاركين على أن إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية أكثر أهمية من إتقان اللغة الكردية في الحصول على فرص العمل، في حين أعرب بعضهم عن مخاوف من أن يؤدي الإفراط في استخدام الإنجليزية إلى إضعاف الهوية الكردية.

وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الطلاب يتعاملون مع بيئة لغوية معقدة، تظل فيها اللغة الكردية العلامة الأساسية للهوية، في حين تتيح اللغة الإنجليزية الوصول إلى الموارد الأكاديمية والعالمية. وفي ضوء ذلك، توصي الدراسة بتقديم تعليم للغة الإنجليزية يراعي السياق الثقافي، إلى جانب اعتماد سياسات لغوية متوازنة.

Abstract

This study investigates how University of Raparin students view English as a sign of education and modernity. The contradictions between English adoption and Kurdish cultural identity maintenance at the University of Raparin are the focus of this study, which fills the empirical research gap on how Kurdish university students view English as a sign of modernity and educational standing. Thus, 80 undergraduate students are given a 16-item questionnaire. Descriptive statistics are used to analyze the data. The results show that students place a high importance on English for academic success, technology, and access to international networks. Nonetheless, there are moderate correlations between improved social standing and English skill, with a sizable number of indifferent answers. There are conflicts between Kurdish identity and English adoption: few students think English language advances the country, while many find it difficult to switch between Kurdish and English. Furthermore, a sizable portion concur that proficiency in English is more crucial for a job opportunity than Kurdish, although some are concerned that using English excessively could undermine Kurdish identity. According to the study's findings, students must negotiate a challenging language environment where Kurdish stays the dominant identity marker, and English provides access to academic and worldwide resources. Ultimately, culturally relevant English instruction and balanced language policies are among the recommendations.

Authors' Bio

Khunaw Sulaiman Beirut is an English teacher at the College of Basic Education at the University of Raparin, holding a PhD in English



Language and Linguistics from Salahadin University. She has been teaching since October 1989, with research interests in pure and applied linguistics, and sign language. Her M.A. thesis is entitled inflectional suffixes in English and Kurdish. The title of Ph.D. is The Role of Discourse Analysis in Sign Language. She has published articles on sign language structure, including American Sign Language (ASL) and Kurdish Sign Language (ZAK).

Dana Ibrahim Ahmed holds a Ph.D. in English language in the United Kingdom (UK), and works as an English Language Lecturer at the University of Raparin, Ranya, Iraqi Kurdistan. His research interests include English language teaching, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis. He has experience in academic instruction and curriculum development at the university level.

Aveen Kamal Ali holds an M.A in Linguistics from the University of Raparin, College of Basic Education, Iraqi Kurdistan. She has translated six genres from English to Kurdish and (vice versa), including 101 American English Proverbs, Moral Stories, 40 Flowers, 40 English Proverbs, Life is a Journey, and Life with Allah. She is interested in linguistics, cross-cultural communication, and has expertise in multiple translation genres.

1. Introduction

English is known as a global lingua franca in most of the countries. It impacts educational sectors and community interactions (Crystal, 2019, p. 6). English is a symbolic source aligned with modernity, educational achievement, and intensified social status (Park, 2021, p. 450; Block, 2022, p. 87). In Kurdistan, Kurdish stays a vital symbol of culture (Sheyholislami, 2021, p. 55). However, English has become an impactful language in higher education; it is recognized as fundamental for academic attainment and elevated employment opportunities (Saeed, 2018, p. 318).

The aims of this study are examining students' perceptions of English as a marker of modernity and social status, investigating the role of English in academic attainment and employment opportunities, and exploring challenges between English adoption and Kurdish cultural identity. University of Raparin is chosen as an appropriate context for exploring university students' perceptions of English as a marker of modernity and educational status. For this purpose, the research is an attempt to find the suitable answers to the following 3 research questions:

1. How do University of Raparin students view English's contribution to academic performance, technology, and access to international networks?

2.To what extent university of Raparin students believe that knowing English equates to being modern, having higher status, and granting more self-confidence?

3.What are the conflicts between Kurdish identity and English adoption?

2. Literature Review

2.0. Introduction

This section is devoted to the study of English as a marker of modernity and educational status among students at the University of Raparin dealing with academic contexts. It encompasses literature through 3 main fields: the worldwide growth of English and its socio-cultural involvements, theoretical aspects for comprehending language as an emblematic principal, and the influential role of English in Kurdish academic circumstances.

2.1. The Worldwide Growth of English

The superiority of English as a global language is widely acknowledged nowadays. Crystal (2019, p. 6), states that its position as a worldwide lingua franca is an outcome of British colonialism history and American culture with economic components. However, this functional view usually contains the ideological corroboration of its development.

According to Phillipson (2019, p. 47), who shaped the Linguistic theory of Imperialism, asserts that the global prevalence of English is not an unbiased, normal process, whereas a vigorously eternalized ranking that obtains the force and hegemony of cultural English-speaking generations, mostly at the charge of district languages and civilization.

Simultaneously, Phillipson's thesis has been criticized; therefore, it folded the path for more fine distinction analyses. Pennycook (2021, p. 22) finds the intricate and contrary ways in which English is localized, adopted, and adapted. The process is called "The cultural politics of English as an international language." Thus, English language spreads culture globally is not single-direction, and community reasons are not only inactive receivers.

2.3 Language as an Emblematic Principal and Identity Marker

The work of French sociologist Bourdieu is crucial in comprehending why English is taken on as a status marker. Bourdieu (2020, p. 55) identified the "Linguistic Capital" and "the symbolic power of language" terms. He claims that language is not merely a mean for communication, whereas it could be a shape of "capital" that could be modified into social and economic benefits.

Expertise in a dominant language, like English, looks like a "symbolic capital" that validates the speaker as intellectual, modern, and competent. So, giving expertise access to obtain elevated expert and social status. In



the work of Darvin & Norton (2023, p. 10), on "investment" goes beyond the humble concept of "motivation", discussing that language learners expend in a language because they think it is going to enlarge their emblematic and material sources, which permit them to identify their means of self and social hierarchy.

Moreover, Block (2022, p. 87) investigates the intricate interaction between globalization and second language speaking, determining how speakers build "cosmopolitan identities" by entrance to international languages.

2.4 English in Kurdish Circumstance

English has its own significance in Kurdish community as well as in other communities in worldwide. In the Kurdistan region, such a particular community, English is characterized by an intricate interplay of both globalization and nation-constructing. Kurdish language is one of the vital symbols of cultural, ethnic identity, and political resilience, which is crucial to preserve after suppression history (Sheyholislami, 2021, p. 55). Whatever, this linguistic landscape has not been influenced by English like a former colonial language, whereas as a novel, universal, and chance prevalence. Kurdish university students realize English as an important, pragmatic mean for study success, having technology access, and ensuring higher-status opportunities to get a job, either locally or internationally (Saeed, 2018, p. 318).

Inevitably, English language usually works in a complementary, not immediately ambitious, connection with Kurdish language. This is customarily linked with knowledge, selection of status, and sophistication, which simultaneously engages English language. It builds an attractive linguistic landscape where English demonstrates an aligned route to worldwide involvement, meanwhile Kurdish stays the primary national identity marker (Bassiouney, 2020, p. 114).

2.5 English as a Marker of Modernity and Educational Status among Students in the University Contexts

Speaking English works like a significant social marker at university contexts, representing modernity and enhancing the educational status of students. In most of non-Anglophone situations, eloquence in English is recognized not only like a linguistic talent but also as an incarnation of multicultural identity, accessible to worldwide financial awareness and scientific expertise. According to Bourdieu (2020, p. 55), the capital is theorized, and it becomes a shape of power symbol that layer students, usually combining English ability with mental capacity and later skillful tasks.

As a consequence, students who use English regularly relish increased social esteem and are recognized like more modern or multicultural people. Park (2021, p. 450) mentions that those who are less expert might encounter oppression, intensifying available socio-cultural shares enclosed by the educational domain.

English adoption in academic converse, after-school programs, and network communication, therefore, hardens its function like a key agenda of modern educational elitism and a doorkeeper to demonstrate modernity in growing circumstances (Erling, 2017, p. 124).

In today's local and global situations, English language expertise serves as a more powerful and most important educational status marker, indicating social hierarchy under linguistic means. The phenomenon of "Linguistic Capital", means high-prestige linguistic mastery is changed to social and economic beneficial (Bourdieu, 2020, pp. 43-65).

In most post-colonial communities and internalized economies, English becomes prevalent linguistic capital. Its attainment is vitally associated with access to prestigious educational institutions and a higher education background. English-medium instruction is valorized in educational systems, usually to the local detriment, constructing a sharp distribution between English-eloquent educated class compared with those educated in other languages (Ramanathan, 2020, p. 111).

In different global situations, empirical studies grant unique models and explorations that immediately notify the current study. In Turkey, Doğançay-Aktuna & Aşık, (2022, p. 30) conducted a study on the spread of English in connection to national identity. The study explored that whilst Turkish citizens obtained a forceful mean of cultural and linguistic identity. English was perceived as a "language of intelligence" and a significant means for socio-economic movement, constructing a diglossic circumstance where every single language took a different, non-intersecting reputation. It indicates an important movement in Kurdistan, where Kurdish is the marker of identity and English is the marker of modernity.

Rahman (2017, p. 180) finds how English works as a social classification marker in Pakistan. How eloquent in English-speaking constructs a "part" between the upper-class, who have an English-standard education, and the lower-class, who do not have. His study is important because it sheds light on the English functions as a marker of class that could be as forceful as its work as a local language.

Eventually, Al-Issa (2021, p. 12), in a Gulf situation, investigated the English language role in formatting the University students' identities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study's findings demonstrate that



students apply English to build educated, global, and cosmopolitan identities, in which they determinedly apply to distinct themselves. Whatever, English language is also a guide to strains with their identity of Arab-Islamic. This study is specifically related, as it echoes the interior question of this research, considering the discussion between a global identity (English) and a powerful interaction identity (Kurdish).

3. Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In order to find out how students at the University of Raparin perceive English as a symbol of modernity and educational standing, this chapter describes the research design, participants, sample, instrument, data collection, analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This study conducted a quantitative cross-sectional questionnaire design to explore University of Raparin students' perceptions of English as a marker of modernity and educational status.

3.2 Participants and Sample

The questionnaire sample comprised 80 undergraduate students from various faculties at the University of Raparin, and they have been selected randomly.

3.3 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire with 16 items was designed concerning the theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 2020; Saeed, 2018). The items covered 4 primary themes: English for language capital, identity conflicts, social and academic roles, and worldwide access. A five-point *Likert* scale was used to measure the responses.

3.4 Data Collection

During the 2025–2026 academic year, printed questionnaires were delivered in breaks. Participants gave their informed consent and were guaranteed anonymity.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Using Excel program, *bar charts* were used to display the percentages and frequencies that were computed (Figures 4.1- 4.8).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The University of Raparin provided ethical approval. Anonymity was preserved throughout, and participation was entirely voluntary.

4. Results

4.0 Introduction

The primary focus of this study is on English as a Marker of Modernity and Educational Status among Students at the University of Raparin. The

following data reveals students' perspectives on the private challenge of alternating between Kurdish and English contradict their viewpoints on whether English is associated with Kurdish progress.

Figure 4.1 illustrates a powerful agreement toward the benefit of English. 40% of respondents strongly agree that English providing access to networks, technology, and worldwide information, 15% of respondents are neutral, simultaneously merely a tiny part of participants 5% strongly disagree. Regarding the 2nd item, which claims that access to international culture, music, movies, and online communities, 25% of the participants strongly agree with the statement, and just 7.5% of respondents disagree. Moreover, 22.5% of participants stay neutral. It suggests that the great perspective is positive, a small fraction of the members stay undecided based on the extent to which English smooths global and cultural access.

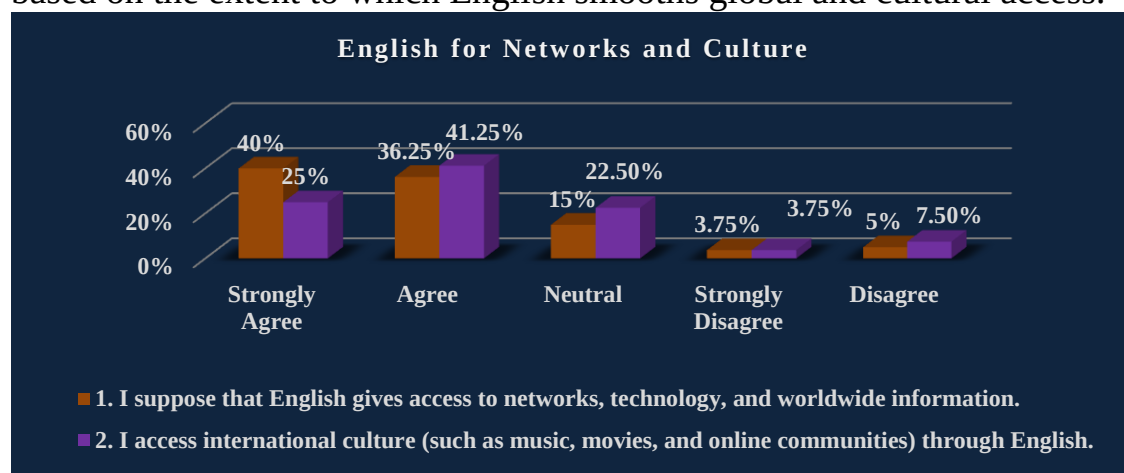


Figure 4.1 English for Networks and Culture

Figure 4.2 clarifies the significant recognition role of English in both the local and academic communities. 38.75% of the respondents strongly agree that English is needed for achieving academic goals, at the same time, a smaller segment, 7.5% of the participants, stay neutral, and 11.25% strongly disagree. Concerning speaking English in the Kurdish community, 23.75% strongly agree with this assertion. Hence, 18.75% of participants are neutral, and just 11.25% strongly disagree. As a result, the data shows that although the perceived need of English for academic aims is higher, there is an influential acknowledgement of its progressing dominance within the Kurdish society.

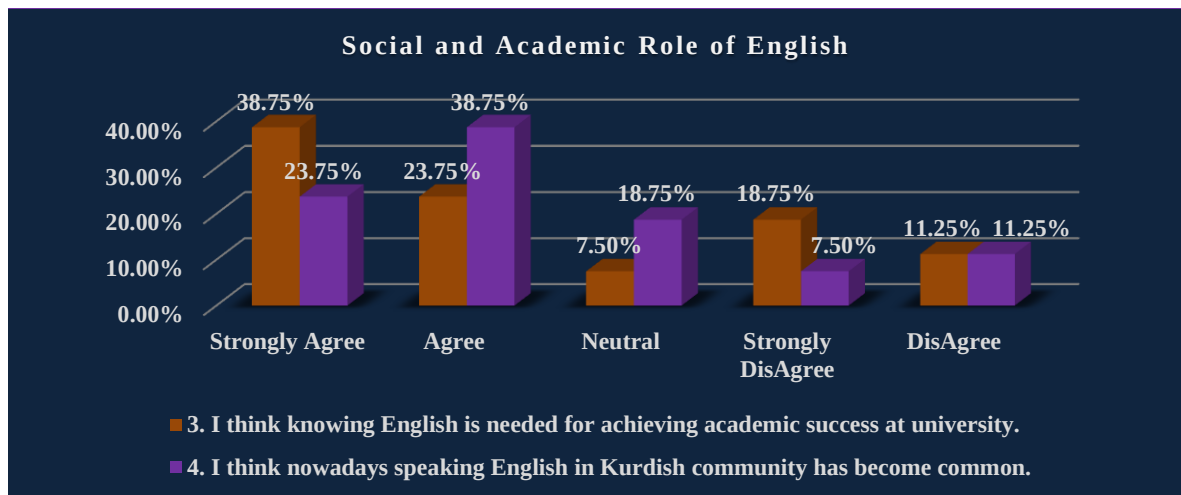


Figure 4.1 Social and Academic Role of English

Figure 4.3 explains contradicting perspectives on the special and national effect of English. 25% of participants strongly agree that transitioning between Kurdish and English is the major challenge. Meanwhile, 22.5% stay neutral, and 10% strongly disagree. Conversely, regarding item 6 related to the role of English in aiding Kurdish national advancement, merely 18.75% strongly agree with the statement. A notable range 26.5% are neutral, and a vital number of participants, including 12.5% strongly disagree that English contributes to national progress. The results determine that whilst a variability explores transitioning difficult, there is impactful skepticism concerning the wider national advantages of English use, especially for academic success.

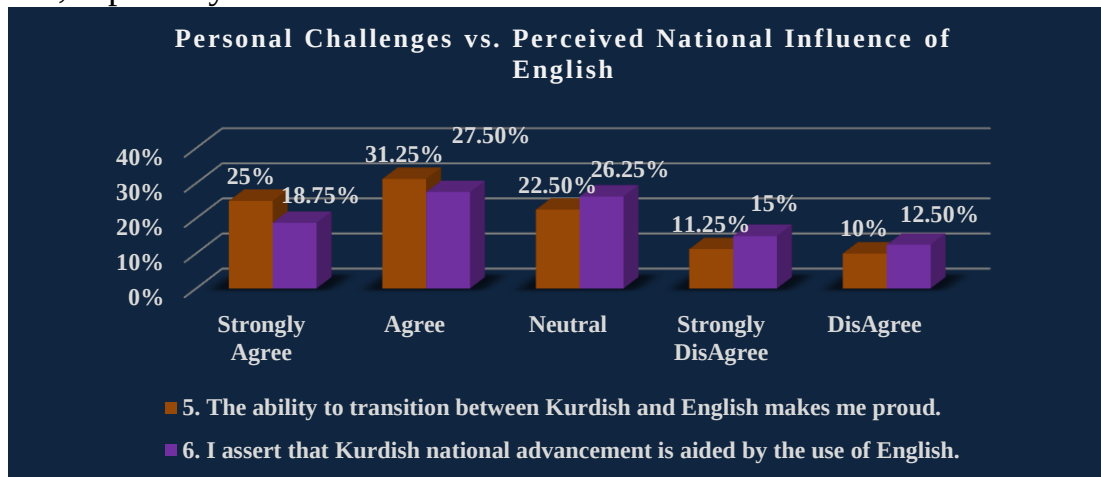


Figure 4.2 Personal Challenges vs. Perceived National Influence of English

Figure 4.4 explains English as "linguistic capital" that opens more opportunities at university, 28.75% of participants strongly agree, meanwhile 21.25% stay neutral, and 10% of members strongly disagree. On the other hand, regarding fluency in English being more crucial than

fluency in Kurdish for future employment, 36.25% of participants strongly agree, and 11.25% are neutral, the same segment 10% of participants strongly disagree.

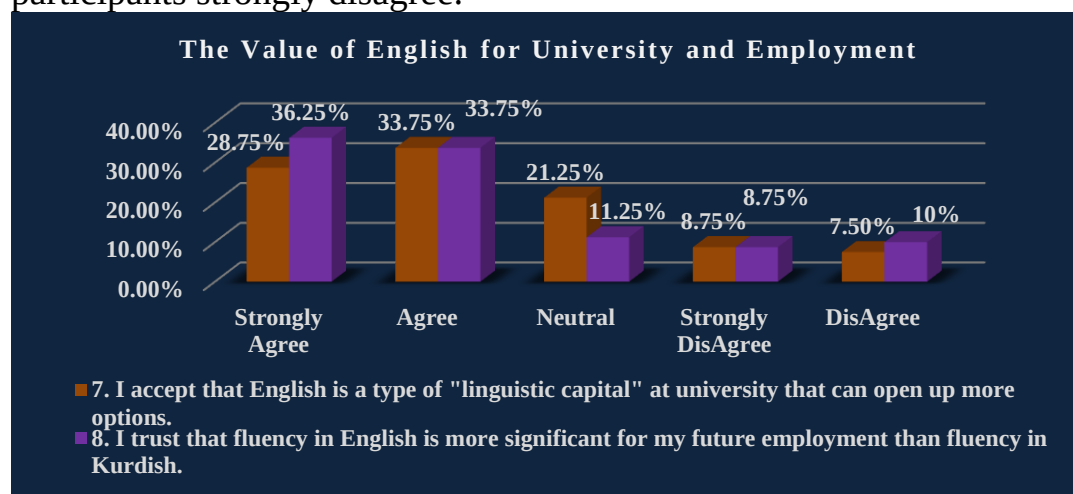


Figure 3.4 The Value of English for University and Employment

Figure 4.5 concerning the sense of increasing self-esteem and respect when speaking English accurately, 18.75% of the participants strongly agree with the assertion. Thus, a notable 28.75% stay neutral on whether English accuracy enhances their self-esteem and respect, while merely 6.25% of the respondents strongly disagree. Moreover, the assumption that students who can fluently speak English have a higher social status, 35% of the participants strongly agree with the observation. A remarkable segment of the participants 22.5% stay neutral, demonstrating the largest segment after those who agree. Meantime, 12.25% of the respondents strongly disagree with the idea that English fluency represents a higher social status.

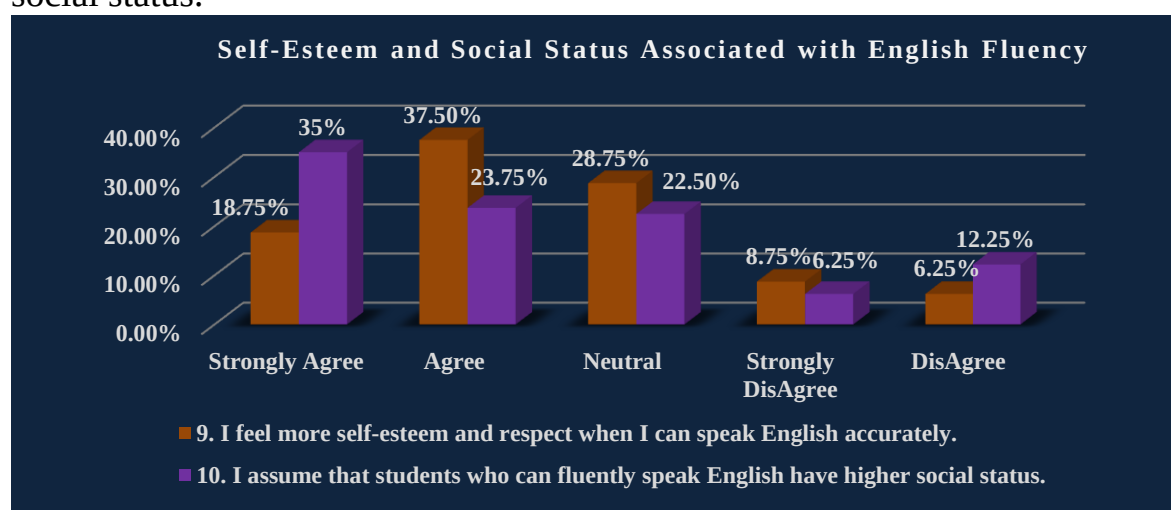


Figure 4.4 Self-Esteem and Social Status Associated with English Fluency



Figure 4.6 illustrates the belief that students who speak English appear more modern and cosmopolitan, 33.75% of the participants strongly agree, 16.25% of the participants are neutral, and 7.5% of the participants strongly disagree. In addition, regarding English being the language of educated and highly intelligent individuals, 30% of the participants strongly agree, 27.5% of the respondents remain neutral, and 7.5% of the participants strongly disagree.

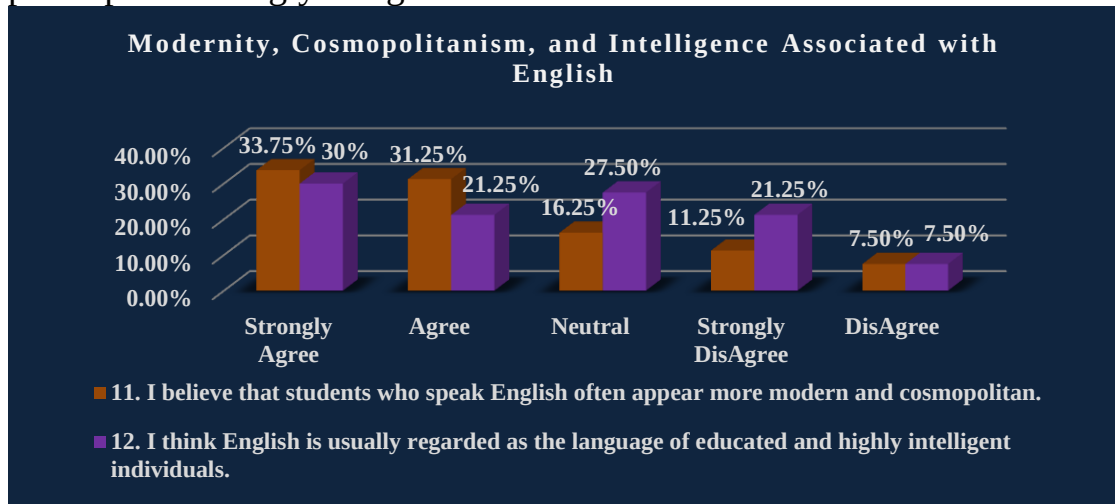


Figure 4.5 Modernity, Cosmopolitanism, and Intelligence Associated with English

Figure 4.7 explains the acceptance that using English terms in communication is a symbol of being cultured, 12.5% of the participants strongly agree, 30% of the respondents are neutral, and 13.75% of the members strongly disagree. However, for item 14, regarding the belief that students from richer households have an advantage when it comes to English, 12.5% of the respondents strongly agree, 31.25% of the participants remain neutral, and 12.5% of the members strongly disagree.

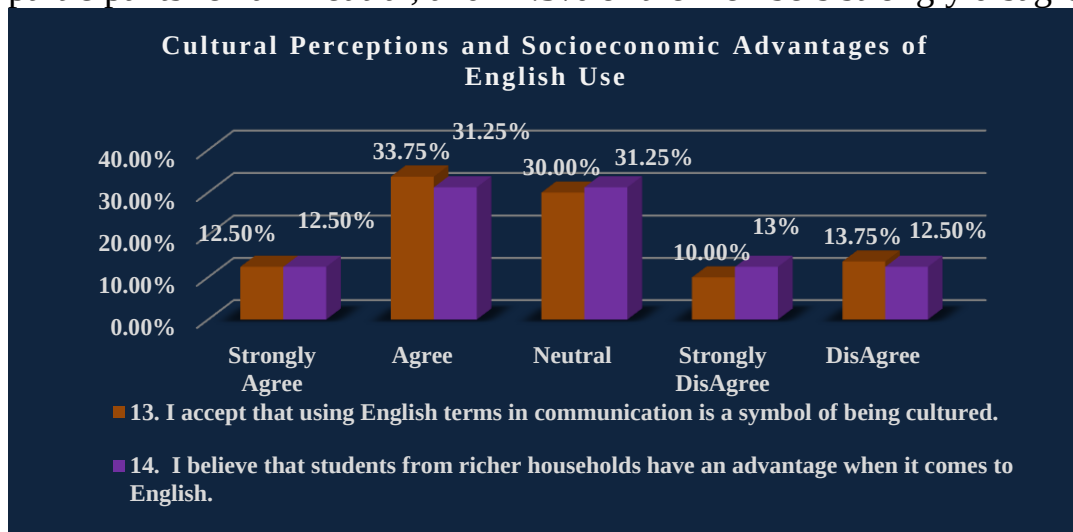


Figure 4.6 Cultural Perceptions and Socioeconomic Advantages of English Use

Figure 4.8 represents the concern that speaking English too much could ruin Kurdish identity and cultural interaction, 21.25% of the participants strongly agree, while 23.75% of the participants stay neutral, and 7.5% of the respondents strongly disagree. Eventually, for item 16 concerning the existence of a gap in English proficiency among university students, 22.5% of the respondents strongly agree, 23.75% of the participants remain neutral, and 15% strongly disagree.

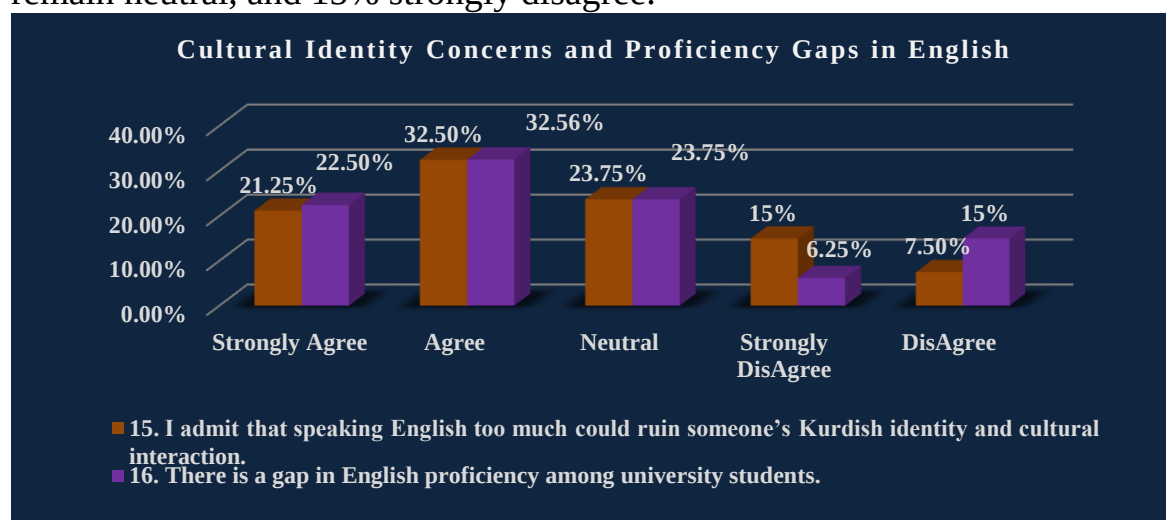


Figure 4.7 Cultural Identity Concerns and Proficiency Gaps in English

5. Discussion

The essential aims of this study are examining university of Raparin students' perceptions of English as a marker of modernity and social status, exploring the role of English in academic attainment and employment opportunities, and exploring challenges between English adoption and Kurdish cultural identity. Hence, 3 research questions were proposed to achieve these aims, and the answers to the research questions are provided below:

1.How do University of Raparin students view English's contribution to academic performance, technology, and access to international networks?

The respondents strongly assert that English is associated with global and academic access. Figure 4.1 shows 40% of the participants strongly agreed that English provides access to networks, technology, and international media. Figure 4.2 indicates 25% of the participants strongly agreed that English is necessary for academic purposes, and 38.75% of the respondents strongly agreed it carries weight in the Kurdish community. These findings align with Crystal's (2019, p. 6) statement on



English as a prestige lingua franca and Saeed's (2018, p. 318) on Kurdish students' views on English for academic achievement.

2.To what extent university of Raparin students believe that knowing English equates to being modern, having higher status, and granting more self-confidence?

There is a moderate correlation between social status standing and English. Figure 4.5 shows that merely 18.75% of the participants strongly agreed that English accuracy enhances self-esteem. 35% of the respondents assume that students who can fluently speak English have higher status. Likewise, Figure 4.6 clarifies that 35% of the participants strongly agreed that English speakers appear more modern. On the other hand, neutral impartial reactions to the idea of linguistic capital proposed by Bourdieu (1991, p. 55) are partially supported by 22.5% of the respondents who believe English is not a status symbol that is widely used.

3.What are the conflicts between Kurdish identity and English adoption?

Figure 4.3 explains 25% of the participants strongly agreed switching between Kurdish and English is challenging, yet only 11.25% of the participants agreed English helps local progress. Figure 4.4 identifies 36.25% of the respondents strongly agreed English fluency is more crucial than Kurdish for future employment, this result supports Ramanathan's (2020, p. 111) statement on the valuation of education in English. Figure 4.7 illustrates 12.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that using English terms signals being cultured, while 12.5% of the participants strongly agreed that there is a gap in English proficiency among university students. Figure 4.8 demonstrates that 21.25% of the respondents strongly agreed that students from richer families have advantage to English, and 22.5% of the participants strongly agreed that overuse of English may be detrimental to Kurdish identity which is consistent with Rahman's (2017, p. 180) analysis of English as a social classifier. To sum up, students perceive English for academic success, whereas they reveal indecisiveness on its role as a social status marker and local advantage, resolving conflicts between Kurdish identity and English adoption.

6. Conclusions

This research investigated University of Raparin students' views of English as an indicator of education and modernity. The findings reveal how University of Raparin students strongly perceive English for worldwide access and academic attainment, explaining its role as

dominate or linguistic capital. Although correlations between English and social status are a symbol of being more modern, with remarkable conflicts between Kurdish identity and English adoption. Hence, the respondents recognize private advantages from English while asserting skepticism on its local contribution.

Recommendations

The following points are recommendations for future studies.

1. Elevate language policies at university level that promote Kurdish instruction while encouraging English proficiency.
2. Include material that is culturally appropriate in English instruction.
3. Create courses with a focus on useful skills and critical English discourse in Kurdish community.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Suggestions for further studies are as follows.

1. Future studies could perform comparative studies on English language use among university students at other Kurdish universities.
2. Conduct qualitative research on conflicts between Kurdish identity and English adoption.
3. Examine the connections between English proficiency and socioeconomic background.

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English as a Marker of Modernity and Educational Status among Students at the University of Raparin

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