

## A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE KURDISH QUESTION WITH FOCUS ON THE DENIAL STRATEGIES

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how the denial of the Kurdish question operates in the Iraqi Kurds' and Arabs' personal experience narratives. To put it simply, this study explores the forms and functions of this denial in the personal experience narratives told by the Iraqi Kurds and Arabs within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Using open-ended interviews, forty personal experience narratives (20 by Kurds and 20 by Arabs) were elicited as the data sample for this study. This study follows a qualitative paradigm in analyzing the data sample. In view of that, van Dijk's (1992) model of denial has been used. The model consists of eight forms and four functions of denial. The application of van Dijk's model to the selected data has yielded some conclusions: The study's participants (Kurds and Arabs) have used different forms of denial in their personal experience narratives namely; disclaimers, transfer, mitigations, justification, excused, provocation (blaming the victim), and reversal. By using these forms of denial, Iraqi Arab speakers could present themselves positively and save their self-image at the same time. Conversely, Kurdish speakers sometimes used denial strategies as a "counter-attack" device to blame the other group (Iraqi Arabs) for denying their rights of having their own state. This study has also explored three functions of denial namely; individual, social, and cultural. The participants of both groups (Kurds and Arabs) rely on their individual, cultural, and social backgrounds to refer to their ideologies using denial strategies.

**KEYWORDS:** Critical discourse analysis, the Kurdish question, forms and functions of denial, racism.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

During the past decades, the denial of the Kurdish question has always been the foundational strategy of the state narratives in Iraq and the most urgent agenda concern for it. However, very little is known about how this denial operates in the personal experience narratives told by the Iraqi Kurds and Arabs on the Kurdish question. This paper deals with the forms and functions of denial in the personal experience narratives of both Kurds and Arabs in Iraq. This paper sheds light on how language is constructed as a mean of presenting one's self-image positively by using denial strategies.

#### 1.2 Aims of the study

This study aims to investigate how the denial of the Kurdish question operates in the Iraqi Kurds and Arabs' personal experience narratives. The current study also aims to explore how the participants rely on the forms of denial to express discriminatory views whilst presenting themselves positively or saving face. Moreover, it aims to examine the functions of the denial strategies used in the participants' personal experience narratives.

#### 1.3 Questions of the Study

To fulfil the current study's aims, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How are the participants able to express discriminatory views whilst presenting themselves positively or saving face through a range of discursive denial strategies?
2. What are the functions of the denial strategies used in the participants' personal experience narratives?

#### 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important for discourse analysts, language instructors, and students and those who are interested in the study of denial, CDA, forms and functions of denial, power relations, ideological constructions, or personal experience narratives because it sheds light on a significant social issue using CDA, specifically van Dijk's model of denial strategies. This paper will hopefully contribute to the development of the topic and its investigation within CDA as it provides insights into the ways in which denial is used in personal experience narratives and how it can be viewed as a source of power and an underpinning of ideological construction and distribution.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Text and Discourse

There long has been a debate about the definition of text and discourse or what constitutes each one of them. Regarding the concept of 'text', Halliday and Hassan (1976, p. 1) referred to it as any spoken or written piece that acts as a cohesive unit, regardless of its length. A text can therefore be spoken or written. For them, a text is a piece of language in use. Its definition is not determined by its length and is not a grammatical unit like a sentence or clause. Rather, a text is seen as a "semantic unit", a unit of meaning (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, pp. 1-2). So the structure of this semantic unit is determined by the context. In this regard, the authors defined text as any functional piece of language that functions as a whole in a given situation or context (pp. 293-294). By emphasizing on the role of context, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 46) pointed out that a text is anything that can be moved from one context to another, such as a letter, a book, an email, or another piece of art, with the intention of being used in other contexts. Consequently, it is frequently hard to fully understand a text without taking into account the context in which it is employed. Similarly, Richards et al. (1985, p. 292) argued that a text can be viewed from the perspective of either its form or/and function, such as notifying, providing instruction, performing an activity, so on. In order to be classified as a text, a text must meet a number of requirements that set it apart from other linguistic units. That is, a text is viewed as an instance of communication that follows seven characteristics of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, p. 3). Hence, textuality particularly refers to the characteristics that identify a group of sentences as a text (Tehrani & Yeganeh, 1999).

Cohesion is defined as the interconnectedness of the "surface text's" elements, such as the words (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, p. 3). In other words, cohesion refers to the syntactic constructions of the text. On the contrary, Cohesion, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 10), is a semantic notion that relates to the relationships between meanings in a text. Coherence refers to the arrangement of ideas and connections that underlies the text's surface (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, p. 4). Intentionality discusses the purpose of the text's author/ speaker. Acceptability is when a text is

accepted by its target readers/ listeners (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). In other words, intentionality and acceptability serve as a representation of the writer's and reader's attitudes towards the texts. Informativity relates to the level of expectation and understanding about the existence of a text (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). Situationality emphasizes the connection between the text and the context in which it is set (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). Alternatively said, it takes into account the context in which the text is constructed and conveyed in return. Intertextuality focuses on how a text depends on another for the text to be completely understood (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). However, a text will be regarded as non-text if any one of the aforementioned characteristics is not met.

The aforementioned definitions of the term 'text' make it challenging to determine when to employ the terms 'text' and 'discourse'. Some writers agree on the similarity the words 'text' and 'discourse' hold, while some other writers view them as two distinct terms. Tannen (1983, p. 79) used the term 'discourse' to refer to everything larger than the sentence that makes up a 'text'. The two terms are also used interchangeably by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p. 7) when they claimed that the primary focus of linguistic research should be on either the 'text' or 'discourse.'

Different definitions of discourse have also been offered, each with a distinct meaning. This implies that as individuals engage in various spheres of social life, the overall meaning of the word 'discourse' changes in accordance with many surrounding contexts and their own belief systems (Wodak, 2009, p. 6). Discourse merely refers to the language being used (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 1). Thus, this language may be recognized by the circumstances surrounding its usage, including who is speaking it and how. Due to the fact that language connects our social and individual lives, it cannot ever remain "neutral" (Henry & Tator, 2002, p. 25). Some authors tackled the notion of discourse to include both written and spoken forms but some others and among them Stubbs (1983, p. 1) who contended that discourse is a linguistic construct of the language that is greater than a sentence, like spoken interactions or written texts. That is, both written and spoken texts frequently employ discourse (Wodak, 2009, p. 6) and discussing discourse is not just limited to written forms because visual representations are also part of

written and spoken language (Wodak, 2009, p. 6). Discourse, according to van Dijk (1990, p. 164), is a particular type of social contact that can be seen as a full-fledged communication event taking place in a social context. To sum up, discourse or text can be described as any piece of language in use. Both of them can be spoken or written, and can be of any length. The definitions of discourse and text that were previously demonstrated highlight the organization or the suprasentential nature of both discourse and text as well as the communicative role of language. Therefore, text and discourse do not occur by themselves, but they are created and accepted within the context of a larger sociocultural discourse. Social concepts like “gender, ethnicity, cultural diversity, ideology, and identity” are constructed and reconstructed in texts and examined using critical discourse analysis (Paltridge, 2012, p. 186).

## 2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

In recent years, critical discourse analysis has gained prominence as a critical approach to discourse analysis (DA) with a characteristic that is critical in nature. Critical discourse analysis (henceforth: CDA) is a type of discourse analysis that focuses on how discourse in the social and political context acts out, perpetuates, and opposes social power abuse, domination, and inequality (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Critical discourse analysis examines the connection between language and the power that is found in social and political hierarchies, where an individual in a high political or social position uses discourse to influence others, their surroundings, and their beliefs (Baker & Ellege, 2011).

Critical discourse analysis, as one of the DA's approaches, has different goals. According to Flowerdew (2008, p. 195), the primary goal of CDA is to expose underlying assumptions and refute those who assert authority over others and to study specific discursive contexts where dominance and inequality are prominent because it is primarily concerned with power relations (Sauntson, 2020, p. 2000). In critical discourse analysis, language only becomes powerful when it is used by individuals with influence (Wodak, 2002, p. 10). In line with this, Wodak (1997, p. 173), argued that CDA investigates the hidden and visible structural linkages of dominance, discrimination, power, and control represented in any language. She added that critical discourse analysis is typically used to study actual and frequently prolonged instances of social

interaction that take on some linguistic form. The critical method is unique in how it views the connections between analysis and the activities investigated, as well as the relationships between language and society (Wodak, 1997, p. 173).

When employing critical discourse analysis, a variety of linguistic analysis techniques are employed, and there are several formal linguistic aspects that may be concentrated on, including: lexical items, metaphors, evaluative language, intertextual references, grammatical and syntactic structures, etc. (Sauntson, 2020, p. 2000). Van Dijk (1992) provided a long list of discursive features that might be investigated using critical discourse analysis. The list covers local semantic moves such as disclaimers and other denials, which are believed to be investigated using critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2001). In other words, denial strategies are linguistic features that can be analyzed using critical discourse analysis. These denial strategies that are developed by van Dijk will be used in the current study to conduct the critical discourse analysis of the Kurdish question.

## 2.3 Power and Ideology

Power and ideology are two of the fundamental principles of CDA that relate to society. Power is present in interpersonal interactions, intertwined with knowledge, and ingrained in social relationships (Foucault, 1972, pp. 1-2). In CDA, power has the meaning of ‘control’ in which it refers to the capacity to force someone's will on others (Paltridge, 2012, p. 244). In other words, power is the uneven distribution and use of this capacity to impact and control others through language (Paltridge, 2012, p. 244). That is, the continuous connection between language and other social issues assures that language is intertwined with social power in a variety of ways, including the indexing of power, the expression of power, and its involvement in situations when power is being contested or challenged (Wodak, 2001, p. 11). The authors added that language does not have power on its own; rather, it acquires power through the usage of powerful individuals. So, power does not come from language, but language may be used to oppose power. Fairclough (1992, p.46) asserted that there are two different types of power in language; power in discourse and power behind discourse. Accordingly, power in discourse refers to the exercise of authority based on “lexical choices, and syntactic structures like imperative and directive speech acts” (p. 46). Power behind

discourse implies that social orders is created and maintained as a subtle consequence of power. Conversely, Weber (1982, p.28 as cited in Baker & Ellege, 2011) described power as having the meaning of 'resistance' by defining it as the possibility that one performer in a social connection will be able to fulfill his/her own will in the face of opposition, despite the facts on which that possibility depends. This definition showed how resistance arises when someone tries to influence or alter the thoughts and beliefs of other people in their or other social group. Moreover, Wodak (2001, p. 9) described power as having the meaning of 'domination' when he claimed that CDA researchers are concerned with the way discourse construct and reconstruct "social domination", that is to say the abuse of power by one group over others and the ability of dominated groups to fight such an abuse discursively. Van Dijk (1995, p. 21) pointed out that controlling discourse is the first primary forms of power, and mind control is the other primary means of reproducing dominance. Hegemony is a different way that power can be used to dominate. Hegemony works through persuasion and implicit beliefs that justify the use of power. Gramsci (1971, pp. 506-507) stated that hegemony takes place when a group's dominance is justified by its incorporation into the rules, laws, and practices of other groups. This kind of power could be manifested as sexism and racism.

The notion of ideology is directly related to the issues of power and dominance because these notions are usually intertwined in critical discourse analysis studies (Muhammed & Flaifel, 2015, p. 4). Ideology is viewed by Wodak (2001, p. 10) as a crucial component of upholding and establishing uneven power relations in CDA. Many academics have defined ideology in various ways. Ideology is defined as the collection of opinions, beliefs, and objectives that a person or a group of people hold (Baker & Ellege, 2011, p. 57). Ideology therefore serves as the foundation for how people and social groupings perceive their surroundings and how they are governed and constrained by them. Ideology is also defined by Rahimi & Sahragard (2007, p. 13) as a complicated and puzzling phenomenon. The authors claimed that there are two possible views on it. First, ideology, according to a traditional critical theory approach, is the term used to describe the belief systems that are imposed on a population by powerful social and political figures in order to create a society with uneven power dynamics. Second, strong

systems and organizations have the ability to create and mold ideologies because of their influence over cognition. To put it briefly, van Dijk (1998, p. 8) asserted that ideologies are the foundation of the social representations that group members share. Therefore, ideologies can affect how something is perceived and decided to be true or false. Additionally, he believed that ideologies create connections between society and discourse, and that discourse is vital for the reproduction of ideologies of various groups like racism.

## 2.4 Racism

Racism is frequently used interchangeably with discrimination (including differences in treatment or a lack of equality), prejudice (including partial sentiments or impact), bigotry (including fanaticism or aversion), and stereotyping (including partial ideas and convictions, false generalization) (Salter et al., 2018, p. 150). This method indirectly conceptualizes racism as a collection of fundamental "social-psychological processes" that underlie people's psychologies (Salter et al., 2018, p. 150). Muhammed and Flaifel (2015, p. 4) defined racism, from an ideology standpoint, as an untrue belief system that asserts the notion that people can be disliked based on their racial or ethnic background, skin color, or religious views. Along the lines of ideological perspectives, van Dijk (2008, p. 103) described racism as a sophisticated social structure that involves racial or ethnic dominance and equality as a byproduct. Accordingly, a social subsystem and a cognitive subsystem make up a racism system. On the one hand, the social subsystem is made up of relationships between dominating groups, organizations, and institutions that abuse their authority at the global level (macro level of analysis) and discriminatory social practices that occur at the local level (micro level of analysis) (van Dijk, 2008, p. 103). The cognitive subsystem, on the other hand, deals with social practices since they too have a conceptual foundation made up of biased paradigms of ethnic occurrences and interactions, which are themselves grounded in racial preconceptions and ideologies (van Dijk, 2008, p. 103). The author added that prejudices and ideas of an ethnic nature are not inherent and do not emerge naturally from interethnic interactions. In other words, they are obtained and learned, and this typically occurs through text and spoken interaction. He also pointed out that since such racist mental images are frequently articulated,

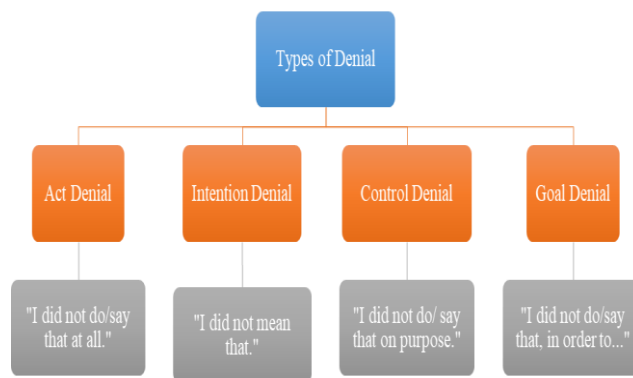
justified, and legitimized in discourse, they can be repeated and disseminated among members of the dominant group. Cognitively speaking, Malki (2021, p. 93) claimed that racism includes not only the set of convictions that a person or ethnic group uses as justifications for their discriminatory actions against others but also the mental frameworks that separate “the self” and “the other.”

A key factor in the perpetuation of modern racism is discourse, and one of its features is denial (van Dijk, 2008). Denial of racism was one of the topics that van Dijk (2008, 1992) was interested in investigating the discourse of ethnic groups.

### 2.5 Van Dijk's Model of Denial Strategies

Van Dijk's framework, which employs a discourse analytical approach, is a part of a complex socio-cognitive and socio-political framework. Van Dijk's framework of the denial of racism is tackled within a larger research framework for investigating certain problems like prejudice and discrimination in white people's discourse about minorities. This model of denial strategies (1992) focused on how racism is reproduced through discourse. Denial is related to the belief of racism, which starts with a denial of racism and ends with an appeal to that impression.

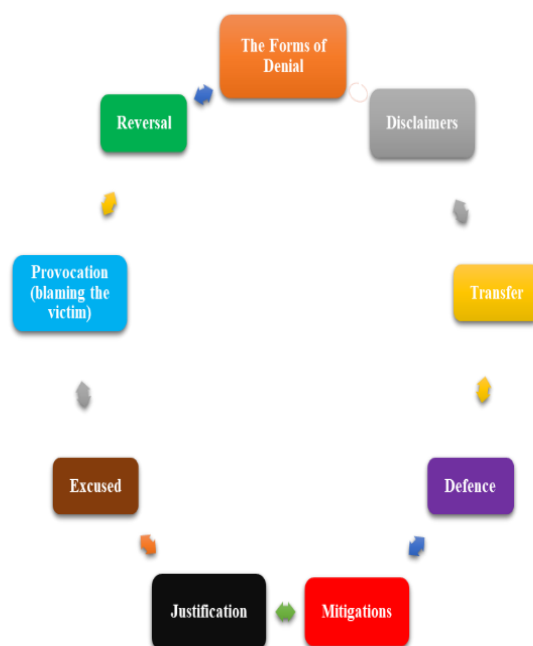
Although racism and discrimination are prohibited by law in most of the European countries, van Dijk thought that denial still exists in the discourse about ethnic issues (van Dijk, 2008). The overarching concept behind this model is that racial and ethnic prejudices are frequently obtained and shared through daily interactions and institutional official writing and speech. This kind of discourse helps to legitimize, express, disseminate, hide, or deny such anti-ethnic beliefs and attitudes (van Dijk, 2008). van Dijk (1992) proposed some discursive strategies for investigating denial forms and their cognitive and social functions. Discursive denials, according to van Dijk, are crucial for maintaining positive in-group presentation in a situation where overt racism is viewed as socially undesirable. Such denial strategies are employed with the understanding that it is socially inappropriate to publicly proclaim racist ideas, and the same is true for the denials of the Kurdish question. van Dijk (1992, p.92) identified four different types of self-denial. Simply, denial in any of these types allows the speaker to portray the “other” in a negative way without negatively impacting one's own image. The following figure (1) shows the denial types with examples.



**Fig. (1):-** The types of denial that are proposed by van Dijk (1992)

There are various forms of denial; each occurs in a context differently and has its own emotional, cognitive, social, cultural, and political purposes (van Dijk, 1992). Accordingly, van Dijk (1992) proposed some forms (or strategies) of denials of

racism which are shown in figure (2): (1) Disclaimers; (2) Transfer; (3) Defence; (4) Mitigations; (5) Justification; (6) Excused; (7) Provocation (blaming the victim); (8) Reversal.



**Fig.e (2):** The Forms of Denial that are proposed by van Dijk (1992)

The first strategy is “disclaimers” which generally entails that the speakers who deny being racist are usually implying that they follow the general group norm against racism, and such disclaimers indicate that no one in the group is racist (van Dijk, 1992). They are usually distinguished by an explicit contradiction among the arguer’s claims, which are linked by conjunctive clauses (usually preceded by “but”). Disclaimers generally offer a positive-self presentation in one of the clauses in order to lessen the impact of the following negative clause (Fritz, 2019). In other words, a speaker usually employs disclaimers to save face before following up with a negative statement mostly introduced by the conjunction “but.” According to Blakemore (2002, p. 103) the marker “but” can imply the meaning of contradiction and the denial of an assumption.

The second strategy is “transfer” in which the speaker employs language in such a way that the sentiments stated are transferred to the “other” rather than to “himself/herself.” For instance, “I have nothing against them, but you know my customers don’t like to deal with black personnel...” (van Dijk, 1992, p. 91). This type of denial uses a third party to justify their ideas, behaviors, attitudes, or actions (Fritz, 2019).

The third denial strategy is “defence.” van Dijk (1992, p.91) stated that denials are part of this strategy, which assumes allegations, whether explicit or implicit, such as, “I did not intend it that way....” That is, this strategy indicates that it

was unintended for something to be perceived because the speaker is denying any kind of negative action or attitude.

The fourth strategy is “mitigations.” Van Dijk (1992, p.92) categorized this strategy into three classes, such as “minimizing, downtoning, and euphemisms” in order to describe the speaker’s negative attitudes and actions. For example, “I did not threaten him, but gave him friendly advice,” (van Dijk, 1992, p.92). Furthermore, if the speaker of racism violates the social norm, he/she will use the mitigation types to characterize his/her bad action or attitude (Fritz, 2019).

The fifth strategy is “justification.” van Dijk (1992) stated that the speaker of racism usually justifies their actions, attitudes, or opinions by speaking truthfully about what has already happened. As he argued, the speaker who uses justification is not denying his/her act, but rather he/she explicitly justifies it as a positive act, not a negative one. This strategy is mainly found in the press, newspapers, and television because they sometimes focus on crimes perpetrated by immigrants or anybody belonging to the out-group, rather than in-group crimes (Fritz, 2019).

The sixth strategy is “excused.” Cody and McLaughlin (1988) believed that negative acts and behaviors can be admitted and yet be excused at the same time. Hence, van Dijk (1992) continued saying that sometimes the speakers are excused because they blame either the circumstances or other people.

The seventh strategy is “provocation or blaming the victim.” Van Dijk (1992) noted that this strategy is used by the government or some political institutions to argue that a discriminated group’s tendency for crime and lack of opportunity happens because they are unable to comply with the country’s regulations. According to Sauntson (2020), the speaker who uses this strategy usually asserts that the subject of his/her prejudice has done something to cause or provoke the negative attitude.

The eighth strategy is called “reversal.” This is the most extreme kind of denial and it is considered a “counter attack strategy” (van Dijk, 1992, p.94), for example, “we are not the racists, they are the real racists” (van Dijk, 1992, p.94). Likewise, Fritz (2019) considered this strategy as the strongest since the in-group is often attacked for being unjustly labeled as extremists and the responsibility for racism is flipped.

Moreover, positive self-presentation is fundamental to denying our bad side and their good side, and it demonstrates a tendency to denigrate the other while praising and glorifying one’s own history, heritage, and past (van Dijk, 2002). He added that positive self-presentation and face-keeping are not just for people, but also for institutions and organizations, and public discourse. In conversation, people act and speak in a way that their listeners construct a positive impression and avoid a negative impression of them (Arkin, 1981). Negative other-presentation is implied that when presenting oneself positively, out-groups are portrayed negatively (van Dijk, 1992). The author added that people always avoid a negative impression in any circumstance, but they are probably more concerned with avoiding a general negative judgment about their personality than with avoiding a negative judgment about a specific action or attitude in a specific situation. Both positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation imply group membership.

Denials do not only take various forms but also serve a variety of functions. Denials serve as a discursive and interactive function in individual interpersonal communication (van Dijk, 1991). Denials have the function of preventing the reader/ listener from any negative or bad inferences about the attitudes of the writer/speaker (van Dijk, 1992). In other words, the writer/speaker uses denials to avoid a bad impression whenever they talk/write about minorities. Denials also serve a social function in that they are intended to preserve the in-group’s

overall face (van Dijk, 1991). The author claimed that denials demonstrate unity and in-group affiliations, and they stand up for “us” when “us” are being attacked by “them”. In addition to drawing social lines and reinforcing social and ethnic identities, they also give their own group the image of being morally better (van Dijk, 1991). Nevertheless, denials have a socio-political purpose (van Dijk, 1991). Denials undermine the legitimacy of anti-racist investigations and are therefore a component of the politics of ethnic management since they weaken resistance (van Dijk, 1991). Moreover, denials have a cultural function especially when the norms and values of western countries are contrasted with those of other cultures (van Dijk, 1992).

Thus far, van Dijk has mainly concentrated on the denial of racism, but the forms and functions can be applied to denials of the Kurdish question as well. Also, the model is thought to be appropriate to analyze the data of the current study as most of its denial strategies are the characteristics of everyday conversation. Another rationale for using van Dijk’s model, according to Sauntson (2020), is that it offers a detailed classification system for investigating denials, which van Dijk claims are crucial rhetorical devices in circulating the ideologies of discrimination. Also, the researcher believes that van Dijk’s model of denial strategies is suitable for analyzing the antagonistic language used by ordinary Kurds and Arabs towards each other.

## **2.6 The Kurds and the Kurdish Question**

The origin of the Kurds has been viewed from a variety of perspectives by different writers. Historically, MacDonald (1991, p. 122) argued that Kurds were regarded as a non-Arab group and were not recognized as a distinct ethnic group in the Middle East. He added that Kurds were called “mountain Turks” (in Turkish: Dağ Türkleri) in Turkey, whereas in Iran, Kurds were considered Iranians. Conversely, Hojani (2013, p. 16) stated that most of the historians refer to Kurds as Arabs in the Middle East, and Persians in Iran but they were not even identified or mentioned in Turkey. Similarly, O’Leary (2002, p.17) referred to Kurds as “Iranian ethno-linguistic” people. In contrast to the aforementioned writers’ claims, the Kurds are considered to be the original residents of Kurdistan and they are not of Iranian descent neither do they share any ties with the Turks or the Arabs (Qanaty, 1973 as cited in Cojer, 1996, p.24). The Kurds are a historically significant

ethnic group who are connected to the Medes, a people group who lived in Zagros Mountain of Kurdistan (Cojer, 1996, p.26). Kurdistan means “the land of Kurds” which is made up of two parts. The first part, “Kurd,” which refer to the local population, while the second part, “istan,” means “the land of” (Cojer, 1996, pp. 23-24). Roy (2011) added that Kurds are considered the biggest stateless group in the world, with approximately 30 millions live in a territory that includes parts of Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Armenia. In line with Roy (2011), Manyuan (2017) noted that Kurds have a history that can be traced back to the third century BC because they are a long-established Middle Eastern ethnic group. The Middle Eastern Kurds are a unique Ethno-national group from the other inhabitants of the area and have deep historical, cultural, and interpersonal ties across national boundaries (Zanotti & Thomas, 2019).

With a specific reference to Iraqi Kurds, Kurds in Iraq make around 15–20% of the population and are the third-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, following Arabs and Persians (Roy, 2011). Most of the Iraqi Kurds are Sunni Muslims but there are other religious affiliations such as, Yazidis, Christians, Jews, so on (Yildiz, 2004, p. 8). These Iraqi Kurds have their own distinct language which is called “Kurdish”. Kurdish language is considered one of the western branches of Iranian languages and is a part of the Indo-European languages (Kim, 2010). Kurdish was considered to be a language of the minority in Iraq. It was in no way on par with Arabic in terms of status (Öpengin, 2015). Kurdish was not widely spoken; instead, Arabic predominated, and administrative and educational institutions utilized it.

The Kurds in Iraq have a long history of being denied, including their right to self-determination and fundamental rights. Muhammed (2020, p. 171) mentioned that Kurds have been in a state of uprising ever since the founding of the country in 1921, even though they have historically had greater cultural independence and a more established political standing than the Kurds in other surrounding states. The Iraqi Kurds, as an ethnic group, have fought for their own independence from the state (Cojer, 1996). Kurds were instead regarded as a minority group to whom their moral rights are routinely denied (Cojer, 1996). In other words, the suffering of the Kurds is directly correlated with the lack of a state. History has shown that Kurdish rights have consistently been denied by Iraqi governments,

and their response to the Kurds’ desire for their basic rights included genocide against the Kurds, as well as prosecution, kidnapping, torture, and other atrocities (Cojer, 1996). That is, Kurdish rebellions, violence, damage, mass punishment, and exodus were caused by the Iraqi regime’s refusal to address the Kurdish question (Ahmed, 2012, p. 3). Due to these realities, the Kurds felt compelled to fight for their question and win the fulfillment of its humanitarian fundamental rights.

The Kurdish question is hard to be defined or described in a sentence (Özhan & Ete, 2009). The Kurdish question encompasses the Kurds’ desire for self-determination, inability to have their own country, difficult integration into the community in which they live, and, finally, their demand for individual rights (Urrutia & Villaltas, 2012). According to Shlykov (2019, p. 519), the Kurdish question refers to the desire of the Kurdish people, who reside in four different regions, to establish their own state. The Kurdish question was characterized internationally by Bedir-Khan (1960, p. 1) as the Kurds’ claim to fair treatment, respect for their dignity, and not being sacrificed to any particular economic, political, or strategic goal. According to Muhammed (2020, p. 167), the Kurdish question is framed by the Kurd’s fight for independence and autonomy.

The Kurdish question is considered a big concern in the Middle East. To Magri (2016, p. 12), the Kurdish question is the most challenging issue in the Middle East because it is situated in the Middle East, which is already heavily entangled in crises and wars. This fact alone serves as the primary explanation for why so little attention has been given to the Kurdish question (Magri, 2016, p. 12). Similar to Magri, Torelli (2016, p. 18) believed that the Kurdish question is one of the most challenging and frequently underrated questions because the Kurds are considered as the largest stateless people in the Middle East, whose demands for autonomy or at least unrestricted independence have been consistently ignored for decades. Accordingly, the difficulty of the question lies in its population, which is primarily concentrated in four countries: Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Additionally, Kurds have various interests and agendas in each of the situations in which they live, and these differences frequently even clash with one another. As a result, it is not feasible to talk about just one Kurdistan, but rather a number of them (Kurdistan(s)) (Torelli, 2016, p. 18). The writer compared the Kurdish question to the Palestinian



one, despite the fact that it has far less symbolic and media coverage and is not seen as one of the factors contributing to the conflicts that, almost endemically, define the area, even though the Kurds have played a significant role in many of the events that have shaped the Middle East's recent history. Conversely, Temel (2021) described the Kurdish question as not only the Kurds' question but as an issue of global, worldwide humanism. The author claimed that all countries arose from a region, each predominantly residing in different areas; the same goes for the Kurds because they were the ancient or long-established hosts of the Middle East and Mesopotamia since the beginning of history. On the word of Amin (1999, as cited in Muhammed, 2020), the Kurdish question is an internally disputed dilemma that was created as a result of denying the Kurds' fundamental rights to nationhood, not as a result of a Western creation. The writer added that Kurds' disputes and revolutions will continue as long as the Kurds continue to be oppressed.

The Kurds have a long history of denial and only within its historical framework can the Kurdish question be understood (Muhammed, 2020, p. 168). The Kurdish question has changed through time into one of controlling the Kurds inside the borders of the states created by the nationalist objectives of Arabs, Turks, and Persians (Stansfield, 2006). The Kurdish state is still absent from the international political reality so far, despite the developments in the concept of the state, the right to self-determination, or the assertion of its right to manage its affairs within the borders of Iraqi politics (Al-Haims, 2013).

## 2.7 Previous Studies

The denial strategies have been investigated in different contexts and disciplines. The only two studies that will be mentioned in this section have applied the denial strategies developed by van Dijk (1992). These studies have provided a brief synopsis of what denial and its strategies are and how the strategies were carried out.

Within the political discourse context, Fouad (2019) explored the use of denial strategies in a presidential debate between two candidates in Egypt, namely, Abdel Moneim Abul Futouh and Amr Moussa. The researcher intended to show how language can be used in justification and how the forms of argumentative discourse, especially debate, are used to influence others, leading them to endorse the speaker's points of view and ideologies.

Fouad believed that political debate is a type of argumentative speech that deliberately and intentionally exploits denial to support one party while debasing or attacking the opponent's party, thus strengthening positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as well. The debate was divided into two sections, including 12 questions. Each candidate had two minutes to respond to each question, could ask the opponent one question, and could comment on the opponent's response at the end.

The researcher downloaded the video of the presidential debate from YouTube. Then, the video was transcribed into Arabic and translated into English for analytical purposes. After this, she examined the linguistic constructions associated with denial as a form of managing accusations that is capable of moving the audience into supporting the speaker's points of view and ideologies. The writer explored the denial strategies both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The results of Fouad's study revealed the similarities and differences both Abdel Moneim Abul Futouh and Amr Moussa shared in using denial strategies. Both of them depended largely on "act denial" as a primary means of rejecting allegations. Hence, Moussa differed from Abul Futouh by depending mostly on argumentum ad hominem. "Disclaimers" were considered the least recorded strategies found in the debate and were used by Moussa only once. Meanwhile, the result of the study also showed that categorization or polarization was used by both presidential candidates. Polarization is mostly heightened by using positive self-presentation / negative other-presentation, which creates notions of "us" and "them" for other groups.

In contrast to Fouad's (2019) study, another study applied van Dijk's model of analyzing denial strategies (1992) in the field of sociology by Sauntson (2020), who analyzed the discursive strategies employed by the "anti-LGBTQ+ protest groups" in producing and reproducing denial and discrimination. She aimed to present different views within the context of United Kingdom schools about gender and sexuality. Several groups of people in the United Kingdom were opposed to the inclusion of positive education about "LGBTQ+ identities and relationships," and publically protested in Birmingham, UK (p.1996). Despite the fact that the majority of people supported the new guidelines, the demonstrations showed that there

were still some people in society who refused to learn about them democratically.

Discourse analysis was conducted by Sauntson on some of the protesters' publicly available videos, including press coverage of the events. There were two sets of data. The first set of data was composed of 15 videos downloaded from YouTube. The second set of data was composed of texts taken from two well-known websites of the "pro-LGBT+ inclusion groups" in the United Kingdom (p.1999).

Sauntson (2020) used van Dijk's (1992) denial strategies to analyze the discourse of discrimination in UK schools and to uncover the "anti-inclusion group" ideologies found in their language on inequality. Then, she contrasted the protest groups' speech to those of other groups who supported the "LGBTQ+ inclusion" in the "RSE."

The result of Sauntson's study showed that both groups' argumentative discourses were all about the constitution of "democracy" and "equality" in the discourse of "LGBTQ+ inclusion", implying that these ideas are vulnerable in the present British political environment (p.2014). The study also revealed the frequently used denial strategies. The anti-inclusion group used reverse charge; defence; disclaimer; justification; provocation; transfer; excused; and mitigation.

The aforementioned studies used van Dijk's (1992) model of denial strategies to analyze their data. The two studies explored different subjects both quantitatively and qualitatively and in different fields of study, including politics and sociology. Fouad (2019) explored the forms and the types of denial in her study whereas Sauntson (2020) just investigated the forms of denial. The two studies did not make any reference to the functions of denial or even analyzed them quantitatively and qualitatively. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been done so far on how the forms and the functions of the denial of the Kurdish question in the Iraqi Kurds' and Arabs' personal experience narrative, this study will be the first attempt to address this gap and explore the denial strategy in a new context. Also, this study will go further to explore the forms and functions of denial.

### 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Methodology

The methodology that is used to collect and analyze the data in the current study is the

qualitative method. The qualitative method was used in this research to gather the personal experience narratives of both Iraqi Kurds and Arabs and to examine the forms and functions of denial using van Dijk's (1992) model of denial strategies within the context of CDA. According to Herring (2004, p. 369), qualitative approaches can provide a greater depth and breadth of comprehension of a complicated, interconnected, ambiguous, or scalar phenomenon than quantitative approaches. Besides, Croker (2009, p. 9) argued that qualitative research involves gathering textual material and examining it using an interpretive framework. He added that qualitative research is important when analyzing a topic for which there is a dearth of literature since it is explanatory in nature and seeks to uncover new perspectives and ideologies, or even to innovate new speculations.

#### 3.2 Participants

The current study comprises 40 participants (20 Kurds and 20 Arabs) aged between 20 to 70 years old; both males and females. There are two rationales for the selection of these participants. First, although age is not taken as a variable in the present paper, the participants are chosen within this age range to include both generations who lived before and after the De Facto Kurdistan. More specifically, the young have lived after the De Facto Kurdistan and probably did not experience or witness the Kurds' conditions and lives during Saddam's regime, but the old might have witnessed how the Kurdish nationalist movement took place and developed in Iraq in the last 75 years, as well as the oppression that the Iraqi Kurds have suffered during Saddam's regime. Second, a small number of the participants are chosen because the study does not aim to overgeneralize the results. It is also worth noting that the participants are ordinary Arabs and Kurds no political positions. This study is the first attempt to analyze the Kurdish question linguistically in terms of denial strategies in the Iraqi context, so the small number of data will help to gain deeper perspectives on the Kurdish question.

#### 3.3 Data Collection

The data for this study was collected based on semi-structured interviews. Dörnyei (2007, p.136) identified the format of the semi-structured interview as "open-ended," allowing the participants to express new ideas during the interview. That is, the researcher (interviewer) provided the participants with guidance; she had a framework of themes that were expected to be

moved thematically back and forth between some events Kurds faced with Arabs in the past, their reflections on the present, and their opinions about the future. This type of interview helped in using personal narratives in order to understand the large-scale social and political issues. In the interview, both Iraqi Kurds and Arabs are asked the following questions:

**I.** Do you have any relationships with Kurds/Arabs in your personal life?

**II.** What do you think about the Kurdish/ Arab friends, relatives, and neighbors?

**III.** Have you had any negative experience with Kurds/Arabs?

**IV.** What do you think of the Kurdish question?

The duration of data collection was six months starting from September 2021 until February 2022. The Kurdish data was collected by the researcher herself in Duhok city. Conversely, the Arab data was collected by an Arab university student in two Iraqi provinces because the researcher's Kurdish identity prevented her from collecting the data. The two sets of data were recorded at the participants' leisure or lunch time. However, not all the participants had free time. It was therefore challenging to compile their narratives. The researcher used a recording device and made sure it was ready in advance to gather her data. She made sure that the participants of the two sets of data could see the recording device. Moreover, the recorded interviews with the Kurdish and Arab participants took place in different places, such as university, a café, a restaurant, or a private office or a house belonging to one of the participants.

### **3.4 Ethical Issues**

There were several ethical issues concerning the current study. Each participant formally acknowledged their agreement to participate in the study through a signed consent (a copy can be found in the Appendix). This consent form is designed by the researcher because each researcher is responsible for the ethical standards (Anderson, 1998, p. 26). This form was written in English, Kurdish, and Arabic. It included some explanation about the nature of the current study and its supervisor. Also, the participants were informed that if they no longer want to be part of this study after recording their personal narratives, then they can withdraw from the study whenever they want to. The consent form was written with the intention of assuring that the participants' involvement in the current study was entirely voluntary. The consent form included information about the study's confidentiality,

including the fact that their personal narratives would be kept only during the study's period of time and will be destroyed after that.

The participants received a thorough explanation of the study's goals orally and were informed that their responses would be kept private and utilized exclusively for the academic research's aims. Moreover, the participants were informed that the current study would maintain their anonymity by using pseudonyms names. Besides, individuals were not physically or mentally assaulted or mistreated while the research was being conducted.

It was crucial to get permission from the Kurdish and Arab participants before beginning with data collection. This is because the data in this study is connected to people's lives, much like in social research (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 63). The researcher was able to collect the data for this study only after receiving permission from the Iraqi Kurd and Arab participants.

### **3.5 Description of the Data**

The primary dataset consists of 40 audio-taped personal narratives. The total length of the 40 personal narratives is 3 hours and 9 minutes and 19 seconds. The length of the audio tracks varied between Kurds and Arabs, with the Kurdish data being 2 hours and 13 minutes and 14 seconds, whereas the Arabic data was 56 minutes and 5 seconds. However, the 40 personal narratives (20 stories told by Kurdish participants and 20 stories told by Iraqi Arab participants) range in length and have a common theme, which is the Kurdish question.

### **3.6 Transcription and Methods of analysis**

#### **3.6.1 Transcription**

To become familiar with the constructed personal experience narratives, the researcher transcribes all the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. Recordings, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 829) are public documents that are accessible to the academic community. She then reads and rereads the transcripts in order to prepare them for the analysis. The researcher was cautious to record the participants' exact phrases when transcribing their replies and their personal experience narratives in order to obtain reliable data. In other words, neither of the two sets of data was subjected to any attempt to rectify grammatical, vocabulary, or accent errors. Both sets of data were translated into English in order to make the information easier for readers of English to grasp.

#### **3.6.2 Methods of Analysis**

The current study is examined qualitatively in terms of data analysis. The qualitative analysis explored the denial strategies found in the personal experience narratives and brought them together with denial functions to examine how denial operates in the participants' narratives in this study. The denial strategies were examined thematically in the research. Accordingly, comprehensive and deep insights about the denial of the Kurdish question that is considered as a controversial and sophisticated issue in the Middle East will be gained. All of the 40 personal narratives were classified under van Dijk's (1992) framework of denial strategies including: (1) Disclaimers; (2) Transfer; (3) Defence; (4) Mitigations; (5) Justification; (6) Excused; (7) Provocation (blaming the victim); and (8) Reversal.

### 3.7 Data Analysis and Discussion

#### 3.7.1 Forms of Denial

##### 1. Disclaimers

Example (1) Arabic:

اها! اي شوف القضية الكردية هو يعني مثلاً يقولون حلم كل الأكراد أن يكون عندهم دولة يعني هذا الشيء من زمان من سنين طويلة أن هو يكون عندهم اي يقيمون دولة مستقلة.

هذا الشيء لازم نحن نؤمن ببنو ونعترف ببنو يقين إنه الأكراد عندهم قضية لازم يحدون مصيرهم بس هذا شيء يعز علينا نحن انو يفارقونا او نفارقهم.

English Translation:

*Listen! the Kurdish question is the dream of all Kurds to have their own country, and this has been their long-standing ambition to have an independent country.*

*And we must believe in this and admit that the Kurds have a question.*

*They want to be independent and have the right to self-determination,*

*but it saddens us to separate from one another.*

In this example, the speaker first shows tolerance for the cultural and social differences between Kurds and Arabs and how the Kurds have the right to achieve their dreams of independence, اها! اي شوف القضية الكردية هو يعني مثلاً يقولون حلم كل الأكراد أن يكون عندهم دولة يعني هذا الشيء من زمان من سنين However, the speaker soon after produced a negative assertion introduced by the conjunction “but” to reject the Kurdish separation from Iraq, نحن انو يفارقونا او نفارقهم شيء يعز علينا

Example (2) Kurdish:

ل سەر مستهوايی من بێ شەخسی ئەز دژی رەگەز پەرسێتی

مە

و عەسەریەتی مە. بەس وەک دیتێ هەندەک مەواقف ئەم د کەتێ

تێدا مە هەست

پێ دکر کو عەسەریەت بەرامبەر من وەک تاکەک کورد دهاوە  
بیکار نینان.

English Translation:

*Personally, I am against racism,*

*but in some situations,*

*I felt racism was being used against me as a Kurd.*

In this example, the typical meaning of the disclaimer is that “I am not racist but...” The focus of the disclaimer in this example is on the concept of tolerance towards issues related to ethnic differences. However, the speaker feels justified in rejecting other ethnic groups when they experience racism against Kurds.

##### 2. Transfer

This strategy is not found in the Arabic data.

Example (3) Kurdish:

بخودێ ئەز شەخسی چ دگەل من نە هاتینە کەرن  
بەلێ دگەل زەلامێ من بێت هاتینە کەرن  
زەلامێ من پێشمەرگە بوو بە عەنی دگەل فەوجەکی بوو  
عەرمیان هەنگی بەلا خو ژ وان کوردێن د ناڤ وێ فەوجێ دا  
فەوجێ کر هەتا هەمیان فەوج هێلاتی و چووینە مالتین خو.

English Translation:

*Personally, I have not had any negative experiences,*

*but my husband has.*

*When he was a Peshmerga in the regiment, Arabs kept bothering him and other Kurds and they did not stop until all the Kurds left the regiment.*

In this example, the denial transferred the racist attitude to her husband, who suffered and was discharged from the regiment due to the Iraqi Arabs, عەرمیان هەنگی بەلا خو ژ وان کوردێن د ناڤ وێ فەوجێ دا “دا فەوجێ کر هەتا هەمیان فەوج هێلاتی و چووینە مالتین خو

##### 3. Defence

This strategy is not found in both sets of data, Arabic and Kurdish.

##### 4. Mitigations

Example (4) Arabic:

الانفصال، والله نحنا ما نطمح انه اهلنا واخوانا يفصلون عنا  
هاذي حقيقة.

English Translation:

*Separation, in fact, we do not aspire for our brothers and families to separate from us. This is a fact.*

The speaker in this example minimizes his negative assertion of rejecting Kurdish independence by utilizing the phrases “our families and our brothers, والله نحنا ما نطمح انه اهلنا واخوانا يفصلون عن هاذي حقيقة ا

Example (5) Kurdish:

ئەم نە تائخفتین ب لوغتە خو یا کوردی ئێی ژ ترسێت عەرەبا

نەمکو بێژن "هوسا و ئەفا دیسا چوون ناخفتنا خو یا کوردی دیساقا"،  
هەندەک نەعتین نەخوش دگوتن مە قیجا مە ب عەرەبی د ناخفت  
د گەل وان د گەل هەفا لان.

English Translation:

We were afraid to speak in our native language  
because of the Arabs;

lest they say "there they go again with their  
native language."

They were describing us with some negative  
attributes. Therefore, we conversed with them  
and friends in Arabic.

The mitigation strategy in this example  
functions to lessen the effect of the speaker's  
claim of being afraid of the Iraqi Arabs' harassment when they speak in their mother tongue, "Kurdish" by using the quantifier "some". This quantifier is used to mitigate the effect of the "negative attributes".

### 5. Justification

Example (6) Arabic:

الموقف من ناحية علاقة الصداقة اي صديق كان عندي هذا  
الصديق غدر بيه  
غدر بيه انه فضل الأكراد اللي همه من نفس جلدته عليه.  
لما أتني اطلب الفلوس الكردي يوكف ويا الكردي مايوكف  
وياه...  
كن صار موقف معين بهذا الاتجاه؟  
واني ابو الحق والكل يعرف انو أنى ابو الحق.  
بس لمن أنى اكون ابو الحق ما مهم بالنسبة له  
من كد ما اكون انو أنى عربي و هذالك كردي فوكف ويا الكردي  
عليه و...

English Translation:

Yes, in the situation with a friend, I had a  
friend who betrayed me.

He betrayed me because he preferred his  
Kurdish kin over me.

When I request money, a Kurd stands  
alongside another Kurd but not alongside me.

Did you have a specific situation in this  
regard, sir?

I am right, and everyone knows this.

This is not essential to him as much as I am  
Arab and the other is Kurdish; therefore, he sides  
with the Kurd against me.

This example indicates that appealing to the  
speaker's rights is a key means by which the  
speaker justifies his negative views of Kurdish  
independence. The speaker shows that he has the  
right to express his attitude as a legitimate  
defence by expressing his right to talk about his  
Kurdish friend, who does not agree to align with  
him against other Kurdish strangers and did not  
lend him money. The speaker implies that his  
friend should have defended him against the other

Kurdish person, with whom he has no  
relationship except that they are both Kurds.

Example (7) Kurdish:

مە گەلەك وەك دبیژین مەروە هەبوون ل بەغدا دژیان  
بەعنی خالەتەمان شیب كەسكى كریو کو عەرەبوو رەگەز وی  
عەرەبە و ل بەغدا دژیان  
تبیژنی کور خالەتیت من وکچ خالەتیت من وەکی د هاتن مالا مە  
دابیژن "نەم دی چینه شیمالی یان ژى دى چینه باکووری"  
وانا نه دگوت even کوردستان دگوتنی "شیمالی عیراقی"  
و دایمەن بابی من دا بیژیی " نه بیژن شیمالی عیراقی بیژن  
کوردستان"  
تبعتراف وەك دبیژن کو سەد ژ سەدی کو ئەفە کوردستانە یان  
ئەفە ئەقڵیمەکی جودایە دستوری خو بی هەمی پەرلەمانی خو بی  
هەمی  
دابیزن شیمالی عیراقی ئەف ناخفتە پیچەك بابی من عاجز دکر.

English Translation:

We had lots of relatives living in Baghdad.

My aunt got married to a man who was an  
Arab living in Baghdad.

When my cousins were coming to our house,  
they used to say, "We will go to the north."

They did not even say Kurdistan,  
they said "the north of Iraq",  
and my father had always told them, "Do not  
say the north of Iraq; say Kurdistan."

They could not admit 100% that this is  
Kurdistan or an independent region that has its  
own constitution and parliament.

Whenever they said "north of Iraq", my father  
would get upset.

In this example, considering the speaker's  
rights is the main way to justify his negative  
attitudes towards Iraqi Arabs. The speaker shows  
that it is his right as a legitimate defence as to  
express his opinion, rejecting his Arab relatives' views of denying the existence of Kurdistan by calling it "the north of Iraq", "ژى دى چینه باکووری".

### 6. Excused

Example (8) Arabic:

أنا يعني أحب الوحدة العراقية والشعب العراقي بشكل عام بكل  
طوائفه وأقلياته وقومياته  
فلمن اتناول موضوع من جانب عاطفي  
بصرامة بعز علياً انو ناحية أو قضاء في أقصى العراق جنوباً  
أو شمالاً تتفصل  
او تنعزل عنا لأنه هذا سيؤدي الى خسارة يعني شريحة مهمة في  
المجتمع العراقي  
وإحنا نحب هذه الشريحة بصرامة.

English Translation:

I love Iraq's unity and the Iraqi people as a  
whole, with all their diverse sects, minorities, and  
nationalities.

When I approach this subject emotionally,  
honestly, it is sad for me that a district or  
territory in the south or north of Iraq is separated

*or isolated, because this will lead to the loss of an important segment in Iraqi society, and we love all this segment.*

The speaker in this example employs linguistic expressions to establish his positive self-presentation by rationalizing his rejection of Kurdish independence as a result of Iraqi unity. The speaker here is prioritizing the unity of his country (Iraq) over the normal and natural right for Kurds to have their own state. In example 3, the speaker refers to Kurds as an important segment “شريحة مهمة” of Iraqi society, not realizing that they are a distinct ethnicity with their own language and culture.

Example (9) Kurdish:

وملك دېژى گملەك جاران ئەم قەبىل نەدىيىن  
 بەعنى ئەگەر مە خلاس كرېان ئەم خرىجېان ئەم قەبىل نەدىيىن .  
 گملەك جارا دا بەرى خودن كا ھىن شەكىفە نە  
 ئەم ل كولىژىن عەسكىرى قەبىل نەدىيىن شور تا قەبىل نەدىيىن  
 تەمىرائى قەبىل نەدىيىن  
 ئېلا ب واستە و  
 واستە ژى ئېلا عەربان كرېان ئەگەر ئىك برېان .  
 نە دۇيان كورد ئىنتىشاربىن فان كولىژا ژبەر ئىنقىلابىن عەسكىرى  
 ھەبىن  
 نەدۇيان كورد بچىن دناف فان شولاندا .

English Translation:

*At the same time, we were not accepted anywhere after graduation.*

*They would almost always look at our origins.*

*We were denied admission to the military, police, and aviation colleges.*

*Only through favoritism, and only Arabs had that privilege, if they chose to use it.*

*They did not want Kurds to take over these colleges because there were coups.*

*They did not want Kurds to be involved in these things.*

The speaker in this example expressed his negative attitude towards Iraqi academic institutions as racist because they prevented candidates of Kurdish nationality from being enrolled in the military, police, or aviation colleges and considered this an offensive act. At the same time, the speaker used linguistic expressions to excuse his stance, blaming Saddam's regime ideologies that Kurds were outsiders who could not control the situation and attempt military coups, and thus Kurds were denied admission to Iraqi military academies and colleges, "نه دڤيان کورد ئیئتشاریین فان کولێژا ژێر" "بێبۆلایین عەسکری هەمیان نەدڤیان کورد بچین نەفان فان شولاندا" "دایمەن ئەم حەسێب دکرین غێر تەشت"

7.Provocation (blaming the victim)

**Example (10) Arabic:**

جاي واحد يشارك معايا على معمل، أنا افتهم كردي لمن يحكي.  
المعانو ما عرفه  
فيقله تعال اتعلم منه الصنعة وطيرو بدفعة ونحنا نمسك الشغلة  
ما لتنا ...

يعنى يتعلم الصنعة ويشغلها بوحده؟

يعني يتعلم الصنعة ويشغلها بوحده ويعطيني الدفرة لي .  
 هاي الموقف لما منيح.

English Translation:

*Someone asked to be my business partner, and I understood Kurdish when he was speaking.*

*There was another person with him whom I did not know.*

*He told him, "Learn the craft from him, then get rid of him, and we will do the work."*

*Does that mean he wanted to learn the craft and then work alone?*

*He wanted to learn the craft, work alone, and then get rid of me.*

*That was a negative experience.*

The provocation raised in this example is about firing the Iraqi Arab employee from his job. It centers on two Kurdish men tricking an Iraqi Arab employee into working in his position. According to the speaker, the target of his prejudice acts in a certain way to cause him to have negative feelings about the other Kurd.

Example (11) Kurdish:

بچيڪان احساس پي ڏکر کو ٻيري هنگي زولمڪ يال وان  
هاتيه کرن ل دميابين وان پسروردا وان يال مالن،  
د زانين بو نمونه نمز نیک ژ وان بيم من د زانی ”جیش شه عی  
“حبیه“

من د زانی عصر ب بین دهیت ته عدايي دکهن

من د زانی ته عداوت بابی من دکن

و بابی من خوه ژبهړ وان قه‌دشیریت

دی چیتہ ” جیش شہ عبی “ اجباریہ،

نہفہ من ل مہدرہسی ددیت نہز ہندی نہ

سهره‌تای نهر هندی وانا بووم،

پشتی هنگی ئەم هیدی هیدی مەزن بیه

مه جار جاراً سهره دانا میسل دکر،

و مخته مه سهر دانا میسل ذکر عمری من ۱۳ ین ۱۴ سالی بی  
نسل پول ۷ بیم ۸ بیم هتا ۹ ژی یه عنی بیری داکهتا بازاری  
به غدا

بہری سقوتہ بازاری بہ غذا گملہک سمینرہ دریکی دا ہمین ل  
سمر ریکا دھوکی و میسل

من گلهک مهوقفین گلهک نه خوش ددیتن

ههتا هندهک جار ان ئهز د ترسیام

یه‌عنی من ددیت زه‌لامین کوردان شەق د خاړن ل پێش جافین  
من،

سایقین کوستهران شہق د خارن ل بیش جاقین من،

من ددیت د گوهی وی رادگرت

و د گوتی و مړه تانکې خوه یی گازی فه که

ٲهوى ژى ٲانكى ځوه يى گازى ههمى ډرښت.

English Translation:

*Kids felt like they had been oppressed, their parents had been oppressed, and even their education was unfair.*

*I was one of those kids who knew what "People's Army" was and I knew that Arabs abused my father and that he was hiding from them because they would force him to join "People's Army".*

*I experienced this in school when I was at the age of an elementary school student.*

*After that, when I grew up and visited Mosul, I was about 13 or 14 years old.*

*I was in the 7th or 8th grade, maybe until the 9th grade.*

*Before the fall of Baghdad, there were so many checkpoints on the road between Duhok and Mosul, and I saw so many bad situations. I even got scared sometimes*

*because I witnessed Kurdish men being slapped in front of me.*

*They would grab their ears and tell them to open their fuel barrels and empty them entirely.*

The speaker in this example feels justified in expressing his prejudice towards Iraqi Arabs as oppressing and assaulting the Kurds because of the alleged provocations, behavior offenses, and stereotypically assigned actions of the Iraqi Arabs at the checkpoints between Duhok and Mosul before the collapse of Baghdad. The speaker defends his harsh measures against the Arabs by claiming that they are to blame for their harsh treatment towards the Kurdish lay people, forcing them to join the army, and offending people at checkpoints by slapping Kurdish men and drivers and spilling gas bottles on the ground.

#### 8. Reversal

Example (12) Arabic:

المواقف السلبية التي تصير وينا يعني مرة رحت أشتري سيارة قبل خمسة سنين تقريبا من الإقليم جان التعاون وبابة جاف ومقبل يبيعني اصلا . طيب ليش تعتقد أن هذا الموقف هو سلبي؟ لانه اجا بوقتها ولد كردي كويل كام تعامل وياه وحجي معاه عادي بس انا من جيت عليه ما قبل يحجي معاي اصلا وكال ما يبيع هاي السيارة .

English Translation:

*The negative experiences that I had—I mean, five years ago, I once went to buy a car in the region,*

*The owner was uncooperative and was not willing to sell me the car at all.*

*Well, why do you think this experience is negative?*

*Because at the same time a Kurd came, the owner talked to him normally.*

*But when I arrived, the owner refused to talk to me and said that he did not want to sell that car.*

The speaker in this example shows that Kurds are racist and discriminate against Iraqi Arabs because Kurds even reject selling goods to Arabs but to Kurds.

Example (13) Kurdish:

یه عنی تو دزانی دانیمن دا بیژن کورد ئەقەنه سەببی هندی کورد ئەقەنه  
دانیمن ومختی سقوت چلبوی سقوتا به خدا گوت ئەخلەبت  
کورد سەبب بون  
ومختی ئەمەل مەدرستیت وا دا بیژن "هەن کوردن هەن بو د هێه  
قیری  
" هەرزە یه عنی دهوکی بژین جهێ وه نهل قیری یه

English Translation:

*They always say that the Kurds are the reason behind everything happening.*

*They mostly blamed the Kurds for the fall of Baghdad.*

*When we were at their schools, they would say "You Kurds, what are you doing here?"*

*Go back to your land, go back to Duhok because you do not belong here."*

In this example, the speaker uses the reverse charge as a counter-attack strategy (van Dijk, 1992, p. 94) against Iraqi Arabs, accusing them of being racists who accuse Kurds of being responsible for the fall of Baghdad. The predominant focus of reverse charge in this example is on accusing Iraqi Arabs of being intolerant and demanding that Kurds leave the Iraqi Arab areas and live in Duhok (the Kurdish governorate).

#### 3.7.2 Functions of Denial

According to van Dijk (1991,1992), there are four functions of denial: individual, social, political and cultural.

##### 1. Individual Denials

Denial plays a discursive and interactive role (van Dijk, 1991) in every day conversations and interpersonal communications. According to Hartley (1993, p. 4), interpersonal communication is a face-to-face interaction between two people that reflects their personalities, social roles, and ties. That is, communication is related to situational and social contexts. Nevertheless, the purpose of using interpersonal denials is to prevent the reader/listener from making any negative or bad inferences about the attitudes of the

writer/speaker (van Dijk, 1991). Additionally, individuals, according to van Dijk, minimize, accuse, defend, and reverse in order to adhere to the social norms and legal restrictions that prohibit overt manifestations of racism. It has been noticed in the data of the current study that the Arab speakers deny, justify, excuse and mitigate in order to avoid giving any bad impression while talking about Kurdish people and their question. Iraqi Arab participants in the current study used denial strategies in their personal experience stories to protect their individuals' social self-image (van Dijk, 1992) following the moral norms of distancing from blatant racism displaying themselves as descent citizens (van Dijk, 1992). The following example clarifies the individual or interpersonal function of denial.

#### Example (14) Arabic:

اشتغلت شريك بقدر مكان ويا كردي وهذا الكردي يقول انت يعني  
مااشتغلت صح.  
وطبعا كان سوء إدارة من عنده لان جان هو المدير عليه فلمن  
أجى ديجي ويابي كالي  
” انت غلطت هيچ، غلطت هيچ، غلطت هيچ “  
و أني لا غلطت هنا ولا هنا ولا هنا هذا سوء إدارة منك  
لمن أجى كردي الاخ ليحكم بيناتنا حكم اله.

*I worked as a partner somewhere with a  
Kurdish person,  
and this person told me that I was not  
working correctly.  
Of course, that was poor management on his  
part  
because he was my manager. When I arrived  
at work, he told me,  
“You made this mistake, that mistake, and  
this mistake,”  
but I did not make any mistakes, and I  
informed him it was due to his poor  
management.*

*And when a Kurdish person came to judge  
between us, he stood by the Kurdish's side.*

The aforementioned participant is trying to present himself/herself positively by utilizing different denial strategies in order to prevent any negative perceptions. Also, the participant generally tends to present himself/herself positively and others negatively, as it is shown in the example. In contrast, to Iraqi Arab participants, and following van Dijk's claim, denial is not only used as a means of self-defense and maintaining a positive public image but serves to manage other goals, such as ideological or political (van Dijk, 1992, p. 880). Kurdish participants sometimes used denial strategies to attack against Iraqi Arabs.

#### Example (15) Kurdish:

وئك دپژێ مهنتهقا ومختی عهسكەر د هاتی ومختی شكهست  
به عنی مهنتهقامه یا كوردی دا بینی دا هین تهدمیركهن نه هیهیهكهن  
تشتین وان ههسی دیرن خانیبا دیرن  
مهسلهن دهوك سالا 90 خلكهك ل خانیافه نهسان ههسی برن ب  
تریا برن  
نه حكومهتی برن نه هالی هاتن برن نهگهر بیچكهك زممیر ههبان  
نه دیرن تشتین وانا  
دا بیزن نهقه ژێ خودان عهیلان بیت چوبین و دێ زقرن ل سهر  
جیهین خه وئهوانه مسموح كرن.  
ب سیارا وتریلا تشتین كوردان وتشتین مه چوون.

*Also when the army came defeated, they  
destroyed our Kurdish territories  
and stole from them. They took away  
everything from them even their houses.  
For example, people left their houses in Duhok  
in 1990.*

*They took everything away using trucks.*

*It was not the government who took them, it  
was civilians who came and took them away.*

*If Arabs had any conscience, they would not  
have taken their possessions*

*and would have thought to themselves, “These  
are also people with kids who left and will return  
to their homes again and will not accept this”.*

*They took away the Kurds' things via cars and  
trucks, and we lost our things.////////As it is  
obvious from the example, the Kurdish  
participant uses of denial strategies mostly aimed  
at attacking their Iraqi Arabs opponents as a way  
of defending their negative attitudes about Iraqi  
Arabs. The speaker personally commented on the  
negative act of stealing and destroying the  
Kurdish territories by Arabs civilians by saying  
that “If Arabs had any conscience, they would not  
have taken their possessions and would have  
thought, these are also people with kids who left  
and will return to their homes again and will not  
accept this.”*

#### 2.Social Function of Denial

Positive self-presentation and face- keeping are not only the characteristics of individuals but institutions, organizations and whole groups. Denial strategies are used to maintain the image (face) of the in-group as a whole (van Dijk, 1991). Denials show unity and intragroup ties, the author said, and they defend “us” when “us” are being attacked by “them”. They do not only create social divisions and strengthen social and ethnic identities, but they also promote the moral superiority of their own group (van Dijk, 1991). Both Iraqi Kurd and Arab participants in the present data used denials to show the intragroup ties that strengthened their social and ethnic identities and most importantly promoting the



moral superiority of their own groups. At the meso- or macro-level of social organization, a whole group or organizations may use such denial strategies (van Dijk, 1992, p. 95). Therefore, denials can come in the shape of an agreed-upon viewpoint of the ethnic situation.

The Kurdish group used denial strategies to show their in-group ties and strengthened their Kurdish ethnic identities and their superiority to the Iraqi Arab participants by sharing a unique view of being generous, friendly, and peaceful to the others in spite of the oppress and atrocities that they faced during the Saddam regime from the Iraqi Arabs.

Example (16) Kurdish:

گەلەك جارا ومختى ئىم دهنه ئيرى سياحى هاڤينا ئىز دىينىم  
كەرىيت من ئىقه نايىن  
بلەكس كىفا من دهنى ئىز دىيىم ئىموت هاڤين قەستا مە دكەن  
ئىس ئىمناھىيى  
ئەفە تىشەكى باشە بەس ئى رەمخەكەفە ناحىكە فە ئى كەرىيت  
من ئى قەدىن  
نەخوشى من ئى دىيى ئىستىئەزا گەلە ب كورد د كوردائىمەن كورد  
دانان كىم و ئىمان خو دانا بلىد  
خو من تىكەلەيا هەڤالا دكردا بىيىن كورد هوسانى نە كورد د  
عونسرى نە كورد بوخو تىشت دڤىن.

*I do not hate it when I see them coming here often as tourists;*

*I actually get happy to see them coming here for a peaceful trip.*

*This is a good thing, even though I might hate them. I have struggled with them.*

*They made fun of Kurds and they always belittled us and put themselves above us.*

*Even when I was with friends, they often said that Kurds are like this and that, they are racist and they only want everything for themselves.*

In contrast, Iraqi Arab participants' denial strategies took the following forms of shared opinion about the Kurdish ethnic group and its question.

Example (17) Arabic:

اها! اي شوف القضية الكردية هو يعني مثلاً يقولون حلم كل  
الأكراد أن يكون عندهم دولة  
يعني هذا الشيء من زمان من سنين طويلة أن هو يكون عندهم اي  
يقيمون دولة مستقلة.  
هذا الشيء لازم نحن نؤمن ببينو ونعترف ببينو يقين إنه الأكراد  
عندهم قضية  
لازم يحددون مصيرهم بس هذا شيء يعز علينا نحن انو يفارقونا  
او نفارقهم.

*Listen! The Kurdish question is the dream of all Kurds to have their own country,*

*and this has been their long-standing ambition to have an independent country.*

*And we must believe in this and admit that the Kurds have a cause.*

*They want to be independent and have the right to self-determination,*

*but it saddens us to separate from one another.*

The Iraqi participants used denial strategies in their everyday discourse to show that discrimination is not a structural feature of the Iraqi Arab society i.e. "institutional or systemic racism is denied" (van Dijk, 1992, p. 95). Although the denial of racism in the Iraqi Arab participants' stories has a role in reproducing racism in their everyday discourse, it still lessens the stress among Iraqi Arabs and Kurds and does not provoke forms of inequality and resistance to be taken seriously by the Kurdish ethnic group.

### 3. The Sociopolitical Function of Denial

The social functions of denial are associated to socio-political ones (van Dijk, 1991). As denials weaken resistance, they undermine the legitimacy of anti-racist investigations and are thus a part of the politics of ethnic management (van Dijk, 1991). The Iraqi Arab participants' utilization of denial strategies in their everyday stories concerning the Kurdish people and their question help controlling the long term political problems between Kurdish people and Iraqi Arabs and managing their relationships.

#### 4. Cultural Functions of Denials

Since the definition of racism involves different groups, cultures and cultural hegemony (van Dijk, 1992), denials have a cultural function especially when the norms and values of two cultures are contrasted (van Dijk, 1992). One of the cultural functions of denial is cultural tolerance. Although each group in the current study used denial strategies in their personal experience stories showing cultural tolerance towards each other, still this tolerance was restricted. So, the following examples demonstrate how Arabs and Kurds show cultural tolerance towards each other.

Example (18) Arabic:

لا ما عندي مشكلة لأنه هاي اتفاقيات ومن خلال ما قدموا من  
تضحيات ومن نضال  
إممكن أنه نحننا نكول هذا من ضمن استحقاقهم ولكن انا ارجع  
أكول مو على حساب الآخرين  
يعني عندما انا ابحث عن حقي مثل ما انا ما اقبل انو ينتزع  
حقي

*كذلك انا ما اقبل انو ينتزع حق الآخرين*

*أخذ حقي بس مو على حساب الآخرين.*

*I have no problem because there are agreements, and through their sacrifices and struggles,*

*we can say that they are entitled, but as I said once again not at the expense of others.*

*When I look for my rights, I refuse to accept that my rights be taken away,*

*and I also refuse to accept that the rights of others be taken away.*

*I may take my rights, but not at the expense of others.*

As it is obvious in the aforementioned example, the speaker presupposes the social and cultural differences between Kurds and Arabs and that Kurds merit having their own state. This is followed, however, by a negative assertion introduced by the conjunction “but” to reject this independence. The speaker then legitimizes his rejection of Kurdish independence by claiming that it must not be at the expense of others (Iraqi Arabs). The speaker shows intolerance by not considering who the Kurds are and what their question is. The participant lacks cultural tolerance, potentially as a result of having false beliefs or a sense of cultural superiority.

Example (19) Kurdish:

دممی ئەز د کەمپەکی دا بووم ل هۆلەندا دهمی ئەز شنی چۆیمه  
هۆلەندا د وێ کەمپی دا غورفا من دا ئێکی عەرب هەبوو دگەل  
من.

گوته من “چونکی تو ئیراکی دێ ئیک ئی ئیراکی دانینه گەل  
تە”

کورد نەبوون ئێکی عەرب ئینانه نک من  
من گوته ئی “ئەز عەربی نزانم” بەس گوتهوویی عیراقینه  
من ئی گوته “ما هەما ئەم عیراکی بەلکی ئەفە بە ع سی بیت  
”

ما هەما عەربە ئەم نە شین دگەل ئیک و دوو ئەم د غورفی دا  
بووین ج جارا ئەم دگەل ئیک و دوو نە د ناخفتین  
من ج مشکیلە دگەل نە بوون ئەوی ئی ج مشکیلە دگەل من  
نەبوون

بەس ومختی من جاب ددا ب کوردی یەعنی سەری وی د ئیشا.

*Yes, I did. When I was in one of the camps in the Netherlands, I had an Arab guy as my roommate. They told me, “since you are an Iraqi, we are going to put you with an Iraqi.”*

*There were no Kurds, so they brought one of the Arabs.*

*I told them, “I do not know how to speak Arabic.”*

*I added, “if he was an Iraqi, he could be a Baathist.”*

*We were in the same room, but we never talked to each other.*

*I did not have any problems with him and he did not have any problems with me,*

*but whenever I responded in Kurdish, he would get a headache.*

The above example implies the cultural difference as the main idea and, denial follows the

constrained tolerance of such cultural difference. The disclaimer rendered the speaker unable to express racist views. However, it justifies the speaker’s attitude. The speaker used the disclaimer with a stereotypical remark that implies racism: “but whenever I responded in Kurdish, he would get a headache”. **3.8**

### Discussion of the Findings

The present study’s findings support van Dijk (1992) in that the denial strategies are employed in discourse to positively save speakers’ social self-image while simultaneously achieving other objectives like ideological or political. The data sample of the present study contained various forms and functions of denial which conveyed hidden meanings and ideologies. The participants of both datasets (Kurdish and Arabic) have used disclaimers, mitigations, justification, excused, provocation (blaming the victim), and reversal. The analysis indicates that denial is an important device in everyday conversation because through its strategies one can interpret that denials are used in order to prevent the reader /listener from drawing any unfavorable conclusions about the speaker’s/writer’s attitudes as mentioned by van Dijk (1991).

In order to abide with the social norms, the participants mitigate, accuse, provoke and reverse. Iraqi Kurdish and Arab participants used disclaimers in their speeches to save face before following up with a negative statement as argued by Fritz (2019). As it is mentioned in the analysis of both datasets, “but” is used to precede the negative sentence that contradicts the positive one. So “but” (in Arabic: بس and in Kurdish: بەس) has the meaning of contradiction as referred to by Blakemore (2002). Disclaimers were only used by Arab participants when discussing the Kurdish question and their separation from Iraq. In the Arabic example (1) of disclaimer, the speaker used the pronoun “we” as a justification for the whole group discriminatory ideologies against others (them) as mentioned by Malki (2021). The polarization issue was also raised in the Arabic example (4) of mitigations when the speaker employed the pronoun “we” to justify his perspective. The use of the pronoun “we” can show the ideologies or the social representations that the whole group members share (van Dijk, 1998). So, the ideologies here related to the issues of power and dominant group. Hence, Kurdish participants used disclaimers when speaking about their negative experiences with Arabs. Transfer, as a second strategy of denial, was used only by Kurdish participants. It implied the

meaning of “I have not had any personal experiences with Arabs but my father/mother, husband/ wife, brother/sister had...”. This could be justified that Kurds have been in a constant revolt since the establishment of Iraq in 1921 as pointed out by Muhammed (2020). That is, Kurds were denied their fundamental rights and mercilessly murdered in atrocities by the Ba’ath regime of Saddam Hussein. Additionally, Kurds have been subjected to both political and cultural persecution as stated by Cojer (1996). Generations after generation were affected by these circumstances. Mitigations are also used by the participants to lessen the effect of the negative attitudes being expressed. The speakers of both datasets used some adverbs and phrases to decrease the impact of the unfavorable attitudes as it is obvious in the Arabic and Kurdish examples (4 and 5) of mitigations. Justification was used by both datasets speakers in a similar way. Kurdish and Arab participants justified the negative experiences they had with each other by referring back to some conditions, places, or individuals. Excused was used by Arab participants to save face as it was clear from the linguistic expressions in the Arabic example (8) of excused. By referring to Kurds as “sects” shows the racial preconception of the speaker because Iraqi Kurds are ethnic groups with a distinct language as said by Cojer (1996). In contrast, Kurds used some excuses, showing the reasons behind the negative attitudes they hold towards Iraqi Arabs. Kurds were not allowed to enroll in any official state activity, including sports, military, and universities because of their Kurdish identity and language as it is clear in the Kurdish example (9) of excused. Concerning the provocation (blaming the victim), this study agrees with Sauntson’s (2020) conclusion in that individuals use provocation to demonstrate how the target of their prejudice takes action to contribute to the expressed negative sentiment towards them. Kurdish participants used it to accuse not only the Iraqi Arabs but also the Iraqi governments. Provocation was utilized by the Kurdish participants to demonstrate their relationship with the oppressor as victims. That is, the provocation example showed the “social domination” or the abuse of power by one group over others as stated by Wodak (2001). Arab participants used it to assign blame on individual cases or specific instances. Regarding reversal, this study agrees with van Dijk (1992) and Sauntson’s (2020) who viewed this strategy as the most extreme kind of denial, had the meaning of

“they are the ones who are discriminating against us...”). In the Arabic example (12) of reversal, the Iraqi Arab speaker uses linguistic expressions to reverse charge to Kurds as being themselves racist and always discriminate against Arabs. In contrast, Kurdish speakers sometimes used it as a “counter attack” strategy. The data at hand showed that Kurds use these strategies to express their negative attitudes towards Arabs, and to express the Arab’s negative ethnic attitudes towards Kurds. Kurds used them to deny the Arab’s negative ethnic attitudes towards Kurds while Arab used them to legitimate or conceal their negative attitudes towards Kurds.

#### 4. Conclusion

The primary goal of this study was to examine how the denial of the Kurdish question works within the personal experience narratives of Iraqi Arabs and Kurds. The qualitative analysis of the data according to van Dijk’s (1992) model of denial strategies led to a number of conclusions about this data sample. The following conclusions answer the research questions:

**1.** How are the participants able to express discriminatory views whilst presenting themselves positively or saving face through a range of discursive denial strategies?

Concerning the first research question of this study, denial strategies are used as portals that, through their different forms, different hidden meaning and ideologies can be conveyed. The participants of the present study (Iraqi Arabs and Kurds) have used different forms of denial in their personal experience narratives. In order to present their ideologies concerning the Kurdish question and the negative experiences that they have with each other, speakers utilized disclaimers, transfer, mitigations, justification, excused, provocation (blaming the victim), and reversal. By using these forms of denial, Iraqi Arabs speakers could present themselves positively and save their self-image at the same time. Conversely, Kurdish speakers sometimes used denial strategies as a “counter-attack” device to blame the other group for the suffering and atrocities that they faced during the Ba’ath regime and for denying their fundamental rights.

**2.** What are the functions of the denial strategies used in the participants’ personal experience narratives?

Regarding the second research question, this study has explored three functions of denial namely, individual, social, and cultural. Both Iraqi Kurd and Arab participants rely on their individual, cultural, and social backgrounds and

they refer to their ideologies using denial strategies. In the present study, denial sometimes functioned as a self- defence mechanism for Arab participants whereas denial in some other cases functioned as a “counter attack” for Kurdish participants.

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## ppendix



Consent form to participate in MA thesis  
*A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Kurdish Question in the Personal*

*Experience Narratives in Iraq*

### Dear participants,

I am a master's student in the English Department/ College of Languages at University of Duhok. I am conducting my master thesis on *A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Kurdish Question in the Personal Experience Narratives in Iraq* under the supervision of Asst. Prof. Dr. Hallat Rajab Ebrahim ([hallat78@googlemail.com](mailto:hallat78@googlemail.com)) from the English Department/ College of Languages at University of Duhok.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I would like to record some personal experience narratives. If you have the interest to tell your personal narratives and would be willing to participate in my master research, we will gather at your leisure or lunch time to record them. Some of the data I record will be anonymized, so that your name and references to places that might be used to identify you will be removed. Confidentiality will be maintained by using a pseudonym instead of your name when transcribing the interview. Your participation, however, will be of considerable benefit for educational purposes.

The anonymized examples of the personal narratives will only be in this project (MA thesis), and the data will be kept only for the length of this project and then destroyed. If you decide that you no longer want to be part of this project, after recording your personal experience narratives of, then please let me know.

If you are happy to participate in this project, please sign the attached consent form.  
Thank you very much in advance for your help,

Donya Abdullah Ali  
MA Student  
Department of English  
College of Languages  
University of Duhok



Consent form to participate in MA thesis

*A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Kurdish Question in the Personal*

*Experience Narratives in Iraq*

أعزائي المشاركون،  
أنا طالبة ماجستير في جامعة دهوك /كلية اللغات/ قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. أعد رسالتي الماجستير في **تحليل الخطاب النقدي للقضية الكردية في سرديات التجربة الشخصية في العراق** تحت إشراف الأستاذ الدكتورة هلات رجب ابراهيم (hallat78@googlemail.com) من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/ كلية اللغات في جامعة دهوك .  
مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة طوعية تماما وأود أن أسجل بعض روايات الخبرة الشخصية. إذا كان لديك مصلحة في سرد رواياتك الشخصية وستكون على استعداد للمشاركة في بحثي الرئيسي ، فسوف نجتمع في وقت فراغك أو وقت الغداء لتسجيلها.  
سيتم إخفاء هوية بعض البيانات التي أسجلها ، بحيث تتم إزالة اسمك ومراجعك إلى الأماكن التي يمكن استخدامها لتحديد هويتك. سيتم الحفاظ على السرية باستخدام اسم مستعار بدلا من اسمك عند تدوين المقابلة. ومع ذلك ، ستكون مشاركتك ذات فائدة كبيرة للأغراض التعليمية .  
الأمثلة المجهولة من الروايات الشخصية ستكون فقط في هذا المشروع (لأطروحة الماجستير) ، وسيتم الاحتفاظ بالبيانات فقط لطول هذا المشروع ثم سيتم تدميرها. إذا قررت/ي أنك لم تعد تريد أن تكون جزءا من هذا المشروع ، بعد تسجيل روايات تجربتك الشخصية ، فيرجى إبلاغي بذلك.

إذا كنت سعيدا بالمشاركة في هذا المشروع ، فيرجى التوقيع على نموذج الموافقة المرفق.  
شكرا جزيلا لكم مقدما على مساعدتكم،

دنيا عبد الله علي  
طالبة ماجستير  
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية  
كلية اللغات  
جامعة دهوك

### *Experience Narratives in Iraq*

دنیا عبدالله علی  
خویندکارا ماسته ری  
بهشی زمانی نینگیزی  
کولیزا زمانان  
زانکویا دهوک



### **Consent form**

I agree to record my personal experience narratives in either Kurdish or Arabic for Donya Abdullah Ali. I understand that any narrative I record will be anonymized and will be stored separately from this document as part of the MA research carried out by Donya Abdullah Ali and supervised by Asst. Prof. Dr. Hallat Rajab Ebrahim /Department of English / University of Duhok.

I understand that if I want to withdraw my contribution from the project at any stage, I can do so. I also understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study.

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**Name of Participant**

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**Age**

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**Gender**

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**Signature of Participant**

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**Date: Day/month/year**

## تحليل الخطاب النقدي للقضية الكردية مع التركيز على استراتيجيات الإنكار

## الخلاصة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية إنكار القضية الكردية في روايات التجربة الشخصية للأكراد والعرب العراقيين. ببساطة، تستكشف هذه الدراسة أشكال ووظائف هذا الإنكار في روايات التجربة الشخصية التي يرويها الأكراد والعرب العراقيون في إطار تحليل الخطاب النقدي. باستخدام مقابلات مفتوحة، تم استخلاص أربعين رواية تجربة شخصية (20 من قبل الأكراد و 20 من قبل العرب) كعينة بيانات لهذه الدراسة. تتبع هذه الدراسة نموذجاً نوعياً في تحليل عينة البيانات. في ضوء ذلك، تم استخدام نموذج فان ديك (1992) للإنكار. يتكون النموذج من ثمانية أشكال وأربع وظائف للإنكار. لقد أسفر تطبيق نموذج فان ديك على البيانات المختارة عن بعض الاستنتاجات، استخدم المشاركون في الدراسة (الأكراد والعرب) أشكالاً مختلفة من الإنكار في روايات تجربتهم الشخصية وهي إخلاء المسؤولية، والنقل، والتخفيف، والتبرير، والعذر، والاستفزاز (إلقاء اللوم على الضحية)، والتراجع. باستخدام هذه الأشكال من الإنكار، تمكن المتحدثين العرب العراقيين بتقديم أنفسهم بشكل إيجابي وحفظ صورتهم الذاتية في نفس الوقت. على العكس من ذلك، استخدم المتحدثون الأكراد أحياناً استراتيجيات الإنكار كأداة "هجوم مضاد" لإلقاء اللوم على المجموعة الأخرى (عرب العراق) لإنكارهم حقوقهم في إقامة دولتهم الخاصة. استكشفت هذه الدراسة أيضاً ثلاث وظائف للإنكار وهي الفردية والاجتماعية والثقافية. اعتمد المشاركون من كلا المجموعتين (الأكراد والعرب) على خلفياتهم الفردية والثقافية والاجتماعية للإشارة إلى أيديولوجياتهم باستخدام استراتيجيات الإنكار.

**الكلمات الدالة:** تحليل الخطاب النقدي، القضية الكردية، أشكال ووظائف الإنكار، العنصرية.

## شرۆڤه کرنا گوتارا ره خههیی بو کیشا کوردی ب گرنگیدان ب ستراتیژییه تین ئینکاری

## پۆخته

ئارمانجا ئەفە ئە کولینێ ئاشکرا کرنا ئەوێ چەندێ یە کا چاوا پرسگریکا کیشا کوردی د ئەگیرانا ئەزموونا کەسی یا کورد و عەرەبێن ئیرا قیداً دەیتە ئینکار کرن. ب سادەیی ئەف ئە کولینە دچوارچوونی شرۆڤه کرنا گوتارا ره خههیییدا فورم و ئه رکین ئەف ئە ئینکاری د ئەگیرانا ئەزموونا کەسیدا ئاشکرا دکەت. ب ریکا ب کارهینانا چاڤێکە ڤه تین ئە کوری چل ئە گیرانین ئەزموونا کەسی (20 ین کورد و 20 ین عەرەب) بووینە کەرەستێ ئەف ئە کولین. ئەف ئە کولینە مودیلە کێ چەوایی دشرۆڤه کرنا نموونە یاندا پەیره و دکەت. ل بەر رۆنا هیا ئەف ئە کولین مودیلێ ئینکاری یی ڤان دایک (1992) هاتیە بکارهینان. مودیل ژههشت فورم و چوار ئه رکین ئینکاری پیکدهیت. دهرئه نجامی پراکتیزه کرنا مودیلی ڤان دایک ی ل سەر داتایین هاتینە هەلبژارتن دیاربوو کو بەشداربووین ئە کولینێ یین کورد و عەرەب د ئەگیرانا ئەزموونا خۆ یا کەسیدا فورمێن جو دایین ئینکاری بکارهینانە کو ئەو ژێ: ره تکرنا بهرپرسیاری، هه گوهاستن، کیمکرن، ههجهت، بههانه، ئیستیفزاز (تاوانبار کرنا قوریانی) و پاشه چوون. ئاخفتنکەرین عەرەبێن ئیرا قی شیان ب ریکا بکارهینانا ئەف ئە کولینە هەلبژارتن دیاربوو کو بەشداربووین ئە کولینێ نیشابدهن و دهه مان دهه مای وینه یی خۆ ئی بپاریزن. لئ بەروڤا ئی ئاخفتنکەرین کورد هندهک جارن ستراتیژییه تین ئینکاری وهکو ئامرازه کێ (به رهنگار بوون) بکارهینانیه داکو کومین دی (عه ره بێن ئیرا قی) تاوانبار بکەن کو ئەوان ئەو ژ مافێ دهوله تبوون بێ بهر کرین. هه رهه سا ئەف ئە کولینە سێ ئه رکین ئینکاری: تاکه کەسی، جفاکی، وره وه نه بیری ئاشکرا دکەت. بهشداربووین هه ره دوو گروپین (کورد و عەرەب) پشت بهستن ل سەر پاشخانه یا خۆ یا تاکه کەسی وره وه نه بیری وجفاکی کر بوو داکو ئامازێ ب ئایدیولوژیایی خۆ بکەن ب ریکا بکارهینانا ستراتیژییه تین ئینکاری .

**په یه تین سه رین:** شرۆڤه کرنا گوتارا ره خههیی، کیشا کوردی، فورم و ئه رکین ئینکاری، ره گه زپه رستی