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# The Impact of Globalization on Iraqi Homosexuals' Discourse: A Critical Sociolinguistic Study

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# The Impact of Globalization on Iraqi Homosexuals' Discourse: A Critical Sociolinguistic Study

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of various 'critical' perspectives since the mid-1980s has been welcomed by some scholars and rejected by others (Pennycook, 2006: 784). Critical studies cover critical discourse analysis (CDA), critical applied linguistics, critical literacy, critical pedagogy, critical language awareness, critical pragmatics, and critical sociolinguistics. The term 'critical' is

traced back to the Frankfurt School of philosophy, especially critical theory, to cover several theoretical issues in philosophy, sociology, the humanities and social sciences. Critical theory has been influenced by philosophies such as structuralism and Marxism, and recently it has taken into account post-structuralism and postmodernism, although it is distinct from these schools because of its focus on political and social issues. The word 'critical' means a critique of society, particularly domination (Crawford and Rossiter<sup>55</sup> :2006 ,). Thus, 'critical' means putting the question of power and inequality at the center of inquiry. Critiquing ideology (systems of ideas and beliefs developed by class societies) is a core function of critical theory. The fundamental practices used in critical theory are ideology, hegemony, and the critical evaluation of culture. Such practices have been adopted in different social sciences like sociolinguistics and CDA.

Sociolinguistics and CDA are two interrelated fields. Both share an interest which is to establish a connection between language and society. They both see discourse as any connected piece of speech or writing in its social context. However, sociolinguistics concentrates on studying language variation, or more precisely, within speech communities. It studies the relationship between language and social factors such as class, ethnicity, race, age, and sex. CDA, on the other hand, is a way of acting discourse analysis from a critical perspective, focusing on concepts such as power, ideology, and domination. It is a kind of discourse-analytic research that originally studies the way in which the abuse of social power, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted through text and talk in the context of social and political discourse (van Dijk, 2003:352).

Recently, there has been a tendency to integrate those two fields, sociolinguistics and CDA, into one domain. Because some sociolinguistic phenomena, such as homosexuality and inequality, need to be investigated critically, the fields of sociolinguistics and CDA have been merged into a unification known as 'critical sociolinguistics'. As a result, this study sheds light on this integrated field for analyzing Iraqi homosexuals' discourse (henceforth IHD).

Because CSL is a young area in the sense that there is no specific model for analysis available, the current study suggests a model depending on the data analyzed.

In the beginning, the study will provide a comprehensive survey of the term 'critical sociolinguistics'; on the one hand, and homosexuality as a result of globalization and its impact on IHD, on the other.

## II. CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The notion of 'critical sociolinguistics' is first introduced by Mey (1985) and elaborated by others like Williams (1992), Heller (2001), Eades (2004), Blommaert (2010), and others. Such scholars notice that critical sociolinguistics is concerned linguistic inequalities and power. That is, it refers to the "processes by which systems of social inequality are created and sustained" (Tollefson, 2006: 43). Mey (1985: 342-3), who is the pioneer in this field, assumes:

Critical sociolinguistics seeks to recognize the political and economic distortions that our society imposes on us. It attempts to explain the differences between oppressed and oppressor language by pointing out that the different classes have unequal access to societal power. [...] sociolinguistics as a critical science bases itself on the assumption that the moving force of our society is capital's need to accumulate profits.

Mey's (1985) definition of CSL is deemed a radical trend from the mainstream of sociolinguistics, since it focuses on various issues such as distortions, impositions, oppressed and oppressors, class, and access. His definition also

emphasizes the assumption that science of capitalism is the driving force in society (Pennycook, 2001: 42). According to Mey (1985: 361), CSL It aims at removing the ideological spider webs and the diverse rubble that clutter our language store. Williams (1992: 243) refers to this field of study as the understanding of ideology, as a basis for sustained domination, which has been at the center of most language studies among contemporary Marxists, giving rise to what is called as critical sociolinguistics. Therefore, CSL deals with the use of sociolinguistic analytical means in the examination of "the specific role of language in the social construction of relations of difference and inequality" (Heller 2001: 120).

Mesthrie et al. (2009: 310) confirm that one of the critical interests of CSL is analyzing samples of language to reveal the way language creates, sustains, and replicates fundamental inequalities in societies. In this case, it is much more open to sociological insights including social organization, inequality, power, and conflict.

CSL, for instance, is interested in why a speech community treats specific individuals from that community negatively? It is this type of equality around language, power, and society that CSL is interested in. Put differently, CSL relates to how social differences are constructed and how social and political issues are organized around us.

These differences (whether they are understood as national, ethnolinguistic, racial, gender, sexual or anything else) are related to the processes by which humans make and rationalize inequality (Heller et al., 2018: 1).

It can be said that one of the chief aspects of CSL is power. In terms of sociolinguistics, power is defined as how the dominant individuals can control the behavior of the other. Power is the fundamental concept in relation to inequality in which classes, status groups, and political parties are all included in the distribution of power.

Mesthrie et al. (2009: 312) state that "Successful rule involves the legitimisation and acceptance of power. This legitimisation involves the conversion of power to 'bases of authority'." Therefore, Althusser (the prominent theorist who has a

concern with the distribution of power) notes that behind power, there is ideology and the ideological processes occur within different institutions (such as the education system). CSL, therefore, considers such type of power as ideologically motivated to maintain inequality, going a stage further in following not just the representation of power in discourse but the power behind the discourse as well.

Among those ideological processes, equality and homosexuality as a result of globalization on a particular speech community are manifested within the realm of CSL. Thus, the following section will discuss these phenomena from a linguistic point of view.

### III. GLOBALIZATION, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND LANGUAGE

Globalization and language are two concepts that are interwoven, since globalization affects the way people use their language. The concept of globalization can generally be defined as the process of interaction among people, companies, and governments worldwide happening on the scale of all the nations. However, globalization is not only the overwhelming impact of the global economic and political processes, such as production, technology, consumption, trade, capital flow, and monetary interdependence (Burbules, 2000: 2), but also other forms of socio-cultural (negative or positive) practices like terrorism, racism, sectarianism as well as homosexuality. Thus, homosexuality is a result of globalization.

Scholars have said different things about the process of globalization. However, there is agreement that it is worldwide in scope. Water (1995: 3) defines globalization as a “social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.” For him, globalization manifests itself in three areas of social life: the economy, the polity, and culture. Fairclough (2006: 144) states that globalization cannot be understood without taking language and discourse into consideration.

Globalization is a discourse or group of discourses associated with diverse strategies, and transformations in physical reality of a community. The discursive or semiotic aspects of globalization and its physical aspects are dialectically interrelated (Fairclough, 2010: 412).

The phenomenon of globalization goes beyond national and linguistic boundaries targeting different social groups, including homosexual groups. Homosexuals are influenced by globalization, and this can be reflected in their language. Cameron and Kulick (2003: 74) state that homosexuals have a distinctive language.

Homosexual men are believed to talk like women, and lesbians speak like men. Therefore, homosexuals’ language has often been equated with gender-inappropriate or gender-deviant speech. In this case, gender plays an essential part in their expression. However, Cameron (2014: 91) argues that, not only gender, discourses, and practices through which gender difference, power, and subjectivity are articulated, have an influence on the linguistic behavior of homosexuals.

### IV. THE METHOD OF ANALYSIS

This study depends on the theoretical insights of CSL as a framework to analyze IHD. This is because this field enables us to explore, from a critical sociolinguistic perspective, the impact of social factors (like power, identity, gender, age, and ideology) on IHD. However, CSL is not viewed as a method of analysis in itself; it is a theoretical approach. As a result, the current research develops a model based on extremely the theoretical bases of CSL to break down IHD. The suggested model relies on two major social factors: power and identity, to see how they are manifested in IHD. They can elaborately be discussed in the following sections.

#### 4.1 Power

The term ‘power’ is defined as “the ability of people and institutions to control behaviors and material lives of others” (Fowler, 1985:61). Hodge and Kress (1988:3) claim that there is an unequal distribution of power in a society because there are inequalities in the distribution of power in

modern capitalist societies. Power can be classified according to class, status, and party. Classes are the distribution of economic power; status is defined as social power; and parties are groups aimed to gain power (Rahimi and Sahragard, 2007:16-17).

It is an observable fact that discourse is not decisive in itself; rather, it gains its power from the way people use language. To make discourse powerful, IHD includes three different aspects of power, involving legitimation, liberalism concepts, and oppression

#### 4.1.1 Legitimation

Legitimation is a process whereby something comes to be legitimated according to the values of a specific society (Baker and Ellece, 2011: 68). Because power and legitimation are both successfully reflected within discourse, Berger and Luckmann (1966: 112 cited in van Leeuwen, 2008: 105) state that people can employ their language to legitimate their ideologies. Primary legitimacy exists as soon as a system of linguistic objectification of human experience is transferred.

According to IHD, legitimation can be classified into three categories: authoritative, biological, and cultural. Authoritative legitimation refers to the authority of government, law, organization, custom, and the like. The speaker used such type of legitimation attempts to utilize a kind of illustration by which a speaker makes their beliefs more conceivable and convincing through which they provide a law or custom employed in another country or society. The second kind of legitimation is 'biological legitimation'; and this is what so-called natural legitimation or divine law and it happens when a speaker gives biological and genuine reasons to legitimate their beliefs.

The last type of legitimation is 'cultural legitimation', which takes place when a speaker uses specific identifiable cultural models and norms representing a speech community to which they belong.

#### 4.1.2 Liberalism Concepts

Another form of power is the use of the concepts of liberalism. The concept 'liberalism' can be defined as a political and moral philosophy that concerns two foundational principles: individualism and liberty. The former means that the individual is at the heart of society, and the highest value social order is built around the individual. The latter states that individuals have to be allowed to fully realize their potential, and that the best way to do this is to give the individual as much liberty as possible (Chau, 2009: 1). These two main principles are the basis for the various elements of liberalism. Among these elements are individual rights (including civil liberties and human rights), democracy, internationalism, secularism, gender equality, racial equality, capitalism, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion. Most of these elements play a significant role in IHD.

#### 4.1.3 Oppression

Oppression is a kind of manipulation that is used to refer to an authoritarian power, controlling the behavior and beliefs of a specific group in a particular speech community. Moreover, this strategy targets particular groups of people for restrictions, ridicule, and marginalization.

Oppression can occur between girls and women, boys and men, people of color, religious communities, citizens in poverty, LGBT people, youth and children, and many others. Taylor (2016: 520-1) refers to oppression as a form of injustice that happens when a particular social group is subjugated while another group is privileged. Oppression is maintained through a variety of different mechanisms involving social norms, stereotypes, and institutional rules. A significant feature of it is committed by and affects social groups.

In IHD, oppression occurs according to four sub-strategies: victimization, minimization, in-group vs. out-group, and inequality. The term 'victimization' can be defined as the process of being victimized or becoming a victim. A victim is a person who suffers direct or threatened physical

or emotional harm due to an act done by someone else. This strategy is manifested in IHD by using words such as killing, murdering, threatening, harming, hurting, and many more. The second strategy is ‘minimization’ (also known as depreciation). It occurs when a social group reduces themselves to the least possible amount or degree. Members of a particular group tend to minimize their numbers and the activities they do to convey a message that they are a minority.

Moreover, depreciation is regarded as a strategy for influencing the emotion of others. This can be reflected linguistically through the use of quantifiers and modifying particles.

The third strategy is ‘In-group vs. Out-group’. The out-group members are portrayed as a negative group, and the in-group members are the victims of unfair treatment. Such terms are coined by van Dijk to refer to the way “that our good things are emphasized and our bad things deemphasized, and the opposite for the Others – whose bad things will be enhanced, and whose good things will be mitigated, hidden or forgotten” (Van Dijk, 2006: 126). This can explicitly be accomplished by the use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ to refer to in-group and ‘they’ and ‘them’ to out-group. Oddo (2011: 289) describes this strategy as an argumentative technique used to justify violence.

The last aspect of oppression is ‘inequality’ which occurs when two groups of a given society are discriminated. That is, one group is marginalized in comparison to another dominated group.

Notably, this discrimination occurs because of sexual orientation, or degrading treatment that has a connection with a person’s homosexuality, bisexuality or heterosexuality. Therefore, homosexuals call for equality with others. This can linguistically be reflected via using simile and metaphor in terms of comparison and similarity.

## 4.2 Identity

Identity refers to the beliefs and personality of a specific social group. Linguistically, identity emphasizes the role of language reflected in the people’s social class, sex, and age. In other words, identity reveals the people’s social, national, and

ethnic groups to which they belong. For several decades now, sociolinguists have stated that providing each person with an individual and group identity is one of the most important functions of language (Trask and Stockwell, 2007: 112). IHD is characterized by different features. It includes slang and taboo, euphemism, and transsexuality.

### 4.2.1 Slang and Taboo

Slang is an informal language used by a particular social group for internal communication. Slangs originate in subcultures within a society to refer to everyday, non-standard words and phrases. Eble (1996: 11) defines slang as an inconstant group of colloquial expressions used by some speakers in a society to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society as a whole. Slang is traditionally regarded as a vulgar, offensive, and profane form of language. This is generally known as a linguistic taboo. Taboo is a word that indicates anything forbidden or avoids, verbal or non-verbal behavior.

### 4.2.2 Euphemism

Euphemism is the use of a word or expression as a synonym for another word that is avoided because of its taboo status or its negative ideological connotations (Trask and Stockwell, 2007: 89).

Members of a given society frequently use “to soften the impact of concepts with the potential to cause offense and social disapproval” (Hojati, 2012: 1). There are two strategies of euphemism that can be observed in IHD: ‘loaning’ (lexical replacement) and ‘omission’ (non-verbal). The former occurs when a speaker borrows a word from another language to be used as means of a form of euphemisms, and such words are called ‘loan’ words. Omission, on the other hand, happens when a speaker deletes particular offensive words from his/her speech due to their social negative denotations.

### 4.2.3 Transsexuality

The final aspect of power that can clearly observe in IHD is ‘transsexuality’. This term relates to

homosexuals who feel that they belong to the opposite sex because they want to be and function as members of the other sex, not only to appear as such (Benjamin, 1966: 13). This phenomenon can linguistically be reflected in the language they use,

using the lexical words like feel, belong, lean, and the like.

Pulling together, all aspects and strategies of CSL mentioned above which form the basis of this study to analyze IHD are schematically represented below:

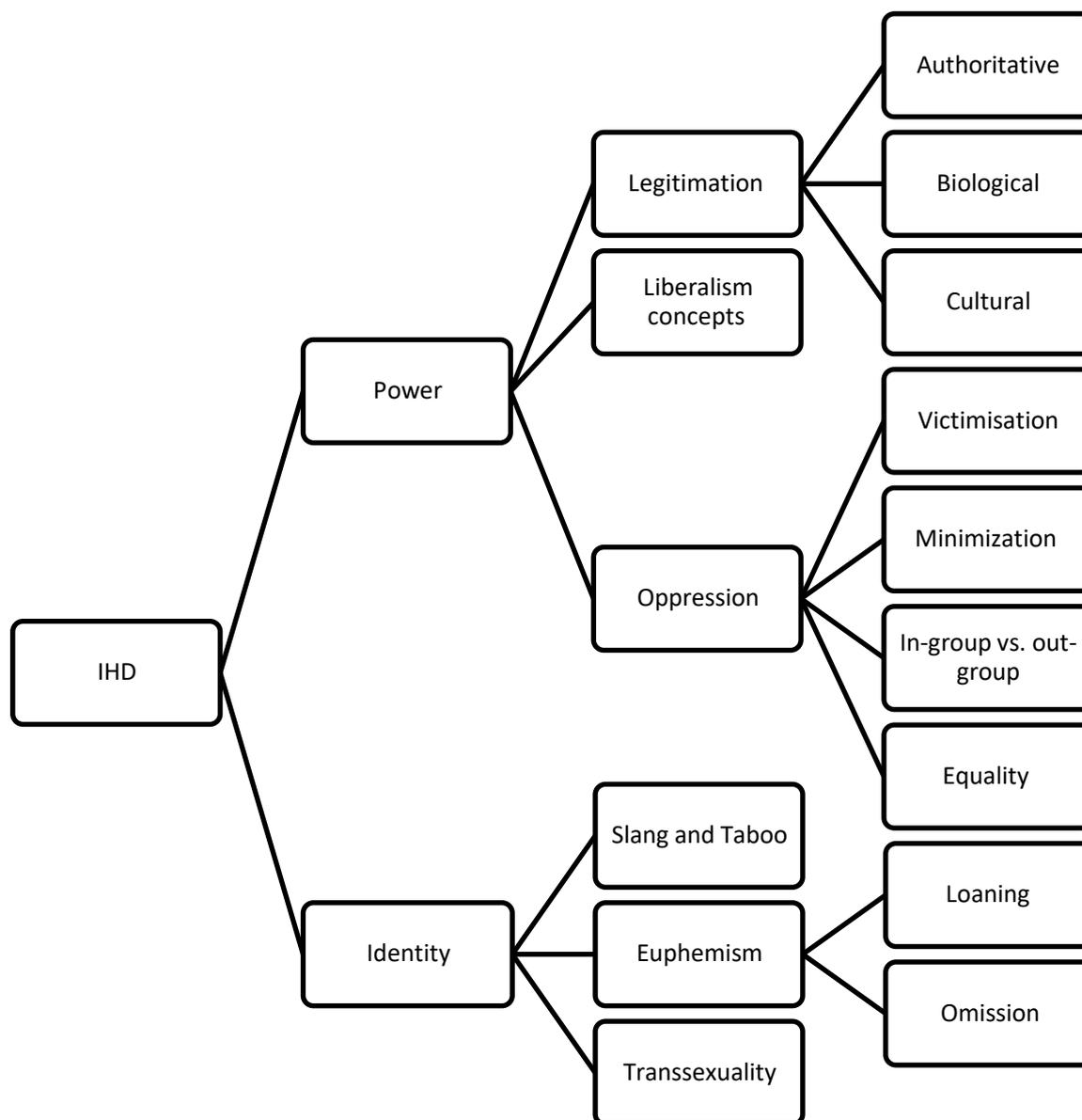


Figure 1: The Suggested Model for Critical Sociolinguistics

## V. DATA ANALYSIS

The data of analysis is extracted from YouTube on the 10th of April 2019. The audiovisual materials used for research in this study consist of totally eight videos (the actual online speeches are

compiled in appendix), dealing with homosexuality in a direct dialogue with many Iraqi homosexuals. To make them easy to refer to in the analysis, their speeches are transcribed, and divided into numbered sentences. The data is

analyzed in terms of different critical sociolinguistic aspects, as illustrated in Figure 1.

## VI. CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF IRAQI HOMOSEXUALS' DISCOURSE

### 6.1 Power

IHD is characterized by including different aspects of power. One of the features of IHD is 'legitimation' as a form of power whereby homosexuals (Gay and lesbian) tend to legitimate their actions to be accepted by others. They use 'authoritative legitimation' in different situations by providing various illustrations applied in many countries or societies. The following instances are illustrative:

1. gay هي ظاهرة عالمية معترف بها عالميا. دولة كندا تعتبر الدولة الاساس لل . gay

The phenomenon of gay is global in the sense that it is globally recognized. Canada is considered as the cornerstone of gay.

It seems observable that the speaker refers to Canada as an example to legitimate the phenomenon of homosexuality, since Canada has frequently been referred to as one of the most gay-friendly countries in the world. The speaker utilizes such a strategy to make his beliefs more convincing.

Another aspect of legitimation is 'biological legitimation'. This type is very prevalent in IHD, by which Iraqi homosexuals naturalize their belief to make it fact physically. Consider the following instances:

2. احنه انخلقنا من بداية جيناتنا هكذا.

That's precisely what we are at the beginning of our genes.

3. اني طفل في سن المراهقة وهذا الشيء موجود, ما مختلفة اني هذا حكم الرب حكم الطبيعة الي احنه بيه, هذا الشيء هرموني ماكو شي يغيرني.

Since I was a teen child, this phenomenon has existed. It is the will of God and the rules of nature. This is my hormone that cannot be changed.

4. وهذا الهرمون الي عندي يحفزني على هذا الشيء.

My hormone stimulates me to do that.

As noted, the speakers legitimate their beliefs physically by using expressions such as genes, the will of God, hormone, and so on. They want to say that they have biological differences that affect their sexual orientations. That is, they are subconsciously motivated to do that.

IHD also consists of another kind of legitimation which is culturally motivated, known as 'cultural legitimation', as shown in the following samples.

5. مره قابلت شخص في الشارع وساعدني فصارت علاقة اعجاب وبعدين تحولت الى حب, اذا هذا الشيء موجود بالمجتمع.

Once I met someone in the street, and he helped me. It became a kind of admiration, and then converted to love. Thus, this becomes real in society.

6. كثير بالشارع ينظرون لي اكثر ما ينظرون للبنات.

In the street, many people look at me more often than they do at girls.

The speakers attempt to use cultural legitimation in these sentences. They want to deliver a specific message that there are some people who begun to accept this idea. In other words, this phenomenon exists and is taken by many people.

IHD is also characterized by including different concepts of liberalism. Iraqi homosexuals frequently use liberalism concepts to justify their beliefs. Such concepts can be seen in the following instances:

7. احنه في زمن الديمقراطية والحرية وكل شخص اله حريته.

We are in a time of democracy and freedom, and every person is free.

8. كل شيء نفعله متعلق بالحرية والمساواة, بحرية الانسان وما متقيدين بأحد.

Everything we do is related to liberty, equality, and human freedom, and we are not accountable to anyone.

Such concepts are the result of globalization in the sense that globalization affects IHD. Using liberal doctrine, Iraqi homosexuals try to deliver

a clear message that they are intellectually bound and shackled by their culture.

Iraqi homosexuals think that they are socially and culturally oppressed. This oppression is crystal clear in their discourse via various strategies to do that. One of them is 'victimization', which occurs by victimizing a specific group of a speech community. Iraqi homosexuals believe that they are victimized by using expressions like killing, murdering, threatening, harming, hurting, and many more. The following instances are illustrative:

9. يتعرض ببلدنا المثليين للقتل والتهديد والاهانة من كل فئات المجتمع. وصلت مرحلة بيئة نتهدد ببيوتنا وبالشارع منكدر نطلع.

In our country, homosexuals get killed, threatened, and humiliated across all social strata. We'd come to the point where we are threatened inside our homes, and we can't go outside.

10. متأذي من الشارع ومن الناس, كثير من الاماكن ما اقدر اروح لها.

People hurt me in the street. I can't go to many places.

Another strategy employed in IHD is 'minimization' whereby Iraqi homosexuals attempt to minimize themselves by using some, little, a few, tens, hundreds, etc., as represented in instances below:

11. احنه بالعراق عدده قليل محد يحمينه ما عدنه احد او منظمة تحمينه

In Iraq, our numbers are a few. Therefore, there is no person or organization that can protect us.

12. احنه بالعراق موجودين مئات من المثليين

In Iraq, there are hundreds of homosexuals.

By using the strategy of minimization, they want to affect the emotion of others in their country. A further strategy of oppression used by Iraqi homosexuals is 'In-group vs. Out-group'. They implement this technique to show out-group members negatively and depict themselves as victims. The best-known example is frequently the use of pronouns we and us to refer to themselves.

This is an argumentative technique that used to justify their action.

Using similes such as like, as, and so on, Iraqi homosexuals advocate 'equality' with others because they feel marginalized and discriminated.

This can be demonstrated by the following instances:

13. الناس تعتبرنا مرضى نفسيين لكن احنه مو مرضى احنه بشر مثلكم.

People consider us psychopaths, but we are not. We are like you.

14. احب اظهر شخصيتي للعالم مثل الناس البقية.

I like showing my personality to all people, like anyone.

## 6.2 Identity

Since homosexuality is a social phenomenon that affects the identity of specific individuals, IHD and homosexual identity has been characterized by using colloquial language. Slang and taboo are both widely spread throughout the Iraqi homosexuals. It has been observed that the use of taboos is more apparent in IHD. They primarily exchange the following taboo expressions: *aldawruh* (menstrual cycle), *jirawa* (gays), *yartah wayay* (he feels comfortable with him when having sex), *muxanath* (effeminacy), and many other expressions that are rejected by Iraqi society.

To avoid their negative ideological connotations, IHD is distinguished by frequently using euphemisms. However, Iraqi homosexuals only use this strategy when they refer to themselves.

For instance, they use English words rather than Arabic ones to show a polite and euphemistic shape of communication. This is so because they know that such phrases are not accepted by their society. This is again a form of globalization that affects how the way they use their language. For instance, they replace Arabic words (like *مثلي الجنس* or *لوطي*) with English words (like a gay), as follow (see also example 1):

15. قابلت شخص حبيته وهو طلع gay

I loved a man who was gay.

Additionally, Iraqi homosexuals tend to omit words like gay, homosexual, etc., since such terms

are offensive and not accepted by society. Instead, they use the pronoun we without reference to the name of the group that they belong to. Consider the following example:

16. احنه ناس مسالمين لا انه غرض بجه سياسية ولا نتدخل باي معالم او حضارة. أكثر الشغلات الي نمر بيه احنه بسبب الضغوطات الي واجهنا ها من المجتمع. ماكو فد متنفس انه ماكو حياة نختارها.

We are peaceful people. We do not interfere in political affairs or civilization. The suffering that we are going through is due to the pressures we face from society. There is no luxury and way of life that we choose.

Another feature of IHD is transsexuality. Iraqi homosexuals believe that they belong to the opposite sex through expressions like I feel, I belong, I like to be, I lean, and so on. Consider the following instances:

17. اميل للولد بتصرفاتي.

I lean males in my behavior.

18. اول ما بديت من مرحلة الطفولة حسيت انه اني ولد مو انثى.

Since my childhood, I have felt that I am male and not female.

Here, Iraqi homosexuals adopt another sex other than their own. They have specific gender, but they act in a way that matches another gender.

This change can influence Iraqi homosexuals' gender identity, and therefore, their social identity and the language they employ. In terms of identity, the study can conclude that gender is not something people have, but something people do.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The term CSL interests in inequality of language, power, and society, in the sense that it sustains inequality. It is also concerned with discrimination of individual speakers within a specific speech community. This discrimination can explicitly be seen in IHD the study dealt with.

The study develops a model that fall under the umbrella of CSL. This model classified the aspects of IHD into two significant parts: aspects of power and aspects of identity. The former emphasizes how power is manifested in IHD, while the latter

deals with how social factors affect Iraqi homosexuals' identity.

Under analysis, the study revealed that Iraqi homosexuals tend to legitimate their actions to be accepted by others through using various kinds of legitimation: authoritative, biological, and cultural legitimation. They also frequently use liberalism concepts to justify their beliefs. Iraqi homosexuals regard themselves as an oppressed social group. This oppression is reflected in the language they use. As a result, they utilize victimization strategies, minimization, In-group vs. out-group, and inequality.

Iraqi homosexuals' identity reflects their social class, sex, and age. Obviously, the use of taboos is prominent through their language. They further use the strategy of euphemism, primarily when they refer to themselves. Finally, Iraqi homosexuals consider themselves transsexual. In other words, they believe that they belong to the opposite sex. This can be reflected in the language they use and their word selection.

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### Appendix

#### Iraqi homosexuals' speeches

1. <https://youtu.be/9F3WRPqLQGY>
2. <https://youtu.be/83nJyDSZUDU>
3. <https://youtu.be/ESrAieLo2Sc>
4. <https://youtu.be/34AgBonnLEQ>
5. [https://youtu.be/Qn0oxI\\_4vBc](https://youtu.be/Qn0oxI_4vBc)
6. <https://youtu.be/c9nQbxh6Kss>
7. <https://youtu.be/c9nQbxh6Kss>  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=R33Ih87OhjQ&feature=youtu.be>