The Role of Tribal Affiliation in Shaping Language Use and Identity Among Southern Iraqi Community

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Abstract. *The tribal belonging in southern Iraq is a strong determinant of social organization, relations between people, as well as forming identity. Despite the fact that tribes are also well researched on the anthropology and political sociology field, they have not received much sociolinguistic attention on how they have contributed towards the development of linguistic activities and identity. The paper will discuss how tribal identification affects the language use, dialects, and identity performance among the communities in Basra, Maysan, and Dhi Qar. A mixed ethnographic and variationist sociolinguistic methodology was used, where sociolinguistic interviews, participant observation and language attitude questionnaires were used to collect data on 72 participants of six leading tribes. The results indicate that tribal belonging is an important determinant of phonological, lexical and pragmatic aspects of speech and that speakers are being sensible in their application of the aspects as their identity, solidarity and social differentiation markers. The paper reveals that tribal speech is a symbolic source of identity negotiation and adds to the general debate of language, social identity and community in sociolinguistics.*

Key words: *tribal identity, Iraqi Arabic, sociolinguistics, language variation, identity, southern Iraq.*

1. Introduction

Language is not only the communication of meaning but it is identity also. In the cultures where kinship and tribalism structure society, language can be a strong symbol of membership. Tribal systems in the south part of Iraq still govern social networks, marriage, conflict resolution as well as organizing communities. However, the language consequences of such structure are not sufficiently studied. This paper will contend that tribal belonging in southern Iraq determines not only the social relations but language behavior and performance of identity as well. Membership of tribes influences the language of individuals, what they retain and repress as well as the way language is tactically used to mark on membership, loyalty, esteem, or distinctiveness in the communities and outside the communities. In the normal communication speakers stabilize on phonological, lexical and pragmatic hints, which indicate the tribal origin, social stratification and positioning. These pointers are not just the by-products of tradition but they remain in the bargain of identity. Moreover, the sphere of language use happens to be one of the points where modernity and tradition collide. Despite the situation of urbanization, education, and digital communication, there is an urgent need to have speakers maintain the familiar speech patterns that are likely to confirm their bloodlines and other social connections. As a result of this, speakers are likely to vary depending on situations - they carry tribal markers with which they engage in intra-group communication, but in formal, educational, or inter-tribal communication, these markers are softened. The code-switching of that kind is an indicator of the perception of language as a form of social capital and as the means of managing multiple identity requirements. The study has identified the above patterns of functionalism of language through the patterns because rather than being a neutral medium, it is a socially charged

practice through which individuals exercise, bargain and reassert their places in tribal and other structures of society. This would be an interesting avenue of inquiry into the sociolinguistic fact of the south of Iraq and it would contribute to a broader discourse on language, identity and social organisation in kinship societies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language and Social Identity

The Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) considers group membership as the most significant in shaping the self-concept development and the theory argues that an individual determines who he/she is according to social categories he/she belongs to. These categories whether of ethnicity, religion, class or kinship are not abstract names but lived belonging which is the perception, behavior and interaction. In such a system, the identity is relative and comparative: not only the identity, but also the difference in comparison with other people defines it by people themselves. It is a dynamic identification and differentiation process that is imprinted in the everyday communicative practices. This sociolinguistic approach is projected into recognition of the fact that linguistic variation is not only accidental and purely structural (Eckert, 2000). The difference in accent, vocabulary, intonation and pragmatic options is all taken by the listeners as indicators of social status. Speech styles therefore become symbolic resources which speakers use to demonstrate their allegiance to specific groups, make a claim of belonging or dissociate themselves with other ones. Language is not simply a means of interaction but it is a set of socially charged characteristics which carry indexical meanings, which are bound to identity (Bourdieu: 1991).

The concept of communities of practice by Eckert further streamlines this realization because it reiterates the point that identity is created through the process of engaging in a shared activity and social practices. In these societies, the linguistic standards emerge that account for the shared values and pasts. The norms are acquired, preserved and negotiated in the course of interaction and hence, language can be used as an indicator of in-group solidarity and out-group distinction. It can be concluded that speakers are not passive receivers of linguistic forms but agents, who choose and use features that are consistent with their social positions. Notably, there is no a fixed connection between language and identity. Orators keep on varying their speech according to the situation, recipients and social objectives. Such stylistic versatility shows that there was knowledge that linguistic options are socially relevant. People can underline some features of speech in order to enhance the sense of belongingness in a group or downplay them to explore wider social locations. These transformations show the strategic nature of the language use as the identity management tool. The linguistic action, in the prism of the Social Identity Theory, can be imagined as the part of the bigger process where people engage in their negotiation of belonging, status and differentiation. Speech is visible form of an invisible division of the society, the way people position themselves in the complex social order. This perception provides effective backdrop to the analysis of the role of some social constructions, which include the tribal affiliations, in defining the language use and identity performance patterns in some social cultural configurations.

2.2 Variationist Sociolinguistics

The first input in the field of variationist sociolinguistics by Labov (1972) ensured that language variation is not a random noise in a machine but ordered in terms of social variables (class, age, gender and social mobility). Labov in his empirical studies such as in the work of the New York City department store and the study in Martha Vineyard demonstrated that speakers on the unconscious level adapt their pronunciation, and their speech patterns to express their social status and desire to be. The results of these works revealed that the linguistic elements may be employed to measure social stratification by the use of some of the elements of prestige and others of local identity or resistance to the existing rules. In this sense, language is the measurable value of how individuals place themselves in social inequalities. It was the attitude to methodological rigor which had made the input of Labov so revolutionary.. He demonstrated how the patterns of variation could be statistically tracked on the social structures by correlating quantitative linguistic data with the social categories. This brought sociolinguistics out of sheer descriptions of dialects to analytical descriptions

that directly relate language to the social fabric. Diversity was not viewed as any matter of not being a norm but rather as a valuable source of information about social organization and human interaction (Coupland and Jaworski: 2009).

This view was later broadened by Milroy and Milroy (1992) who focused more on the role of social networks and affiliations of the community. Instead of looking at large demographics such as class or gender, they showed that there is strong impact of dense and multiplexing social networks within communities on the linguistic behavior. Those who have deep-rooted networks are also likely to be more strict with the speech norms on the local level in comparison to people having loose or diverse social network. This learning illuminated the role of interpersonal interrelationships on a daily basis as opposed to social categories in isolation in that they are the ones that perpetuate and pass linguistic features down the line. The Milroys also came up with the concept that the linguistic differences can be used to show belonging to a group that is closely knit. Maintaining distinctive speech patterns in these communities also acts as a way of claiming the identity and repelling the extraneous interference. Language is thus not merely a manifestation of social structure, but a tool of keeping communities together and holding identity. Local identifications, the bond of neighborhoods and historical backgrounds are ingrained into speech forms that can be understood by the members of the insider community and interpreted by the outsiders (Holmes and Wilson: 2017) All of these contributions can help in the expansion of the knowledge on the relationship between language and social life. They shift the argument out of the high social variables and down to the personal small communities and the bonding of sociality. The linguistic variation is depicted to be strongly identified to the degree of social relations, the channel of interpersonal structure and the willingness to preserve the community affiliation This broadened framework is exceptionally pertinent in analyzing societies wherein community association is formed as a result of kinship and tribal belonging. Here the thick, multiplex networks that Milroy and Milroy have termed can be superimposed by familial and tribal network structures forming strong mechanisms of maintaining unique elements of the language. The correlation of language and social variables is a powerful theoretical concept because Labov applied it and the Milroys concentrated on social networks (Wardhaugh and Fuller :2015).

2.3 Arabic Dialectology and Social Structure

The sociolinguistic variation in Arabic has traditionally been viewed as an indicator of the movement of historical settlement patterns, mobility, and types of social organization in the Arab world. There is an established area of distinction between Bedouin, rural (fellahi) and urban (madani) Varieties, each of which is linked to the phonological, lexical and syntactic features that characterize forms of life and social interaction patterns (Holes, 2004). These varieties are not just nomenclatures of a geographical nature, but have profound social implications of nomadism, agriculture, trade, and city government. Dialects, therefore, serve to provide historical records of social history and identity. Bedouin types, such as, are frequently defined by the properties that can be dated back to the mobility of the nomadic tribal life and the organization of a system that is based on the kinship. The rural dialects, which were the result of the village life and agricultural settlement, retain various linguistic features that are characterized by the relative stability and interaction that is local. The urban dialects, on the other hand, are more prone to the features that are influenced by trade, administrative government and interactions with diverse populations. These differences have over time been enregistered in the minds of the speakers enabling the audience to distinguish the social background and regions affiliation based on the speech patterns only. Holes and other Arabic dialectology scholars have demonstrated that this kind of variation is both systematic and historical (2004). But much of this literature classifies dialects into broad socio-geographic categories without having seriously questioned the social mechanisms behind them. Bedouin, rural and urban categories tend to be descriptive dead-ends as opposed to being a point of access to a more detailed query into how micro-social linguistic behavior is being influenced by the issues of kinship, lineage and tribal organisation (Romaine : 2000).

In most Arab communities, especially in the Gulf and some of the Levant, studies have started to examine the ways of tribal histories to meet dialect preservation and transformation. Nevertheless, in the Iraqi case, particularly in the south where tribal membership continues to be among the main

organizing principles of the social life, we find relatively minimal sociolinguistic research that directly links the characteristics of the dialect to particular tribal identities. Although the differences of the dialects of Iraq are recorded in the studies of regional variation of Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar and so on, they are mostly considered as the variations of geography but not the reflection of complex tribal networks that organize the everyday interaction. This is a big gap since the tribal identity in southern Iraq is not a cultural residue in an abstract form but a social force that influences marriages, conflict resolutions, loyalties, and community memberships. These thick kinship networks can be compared to tight-knit social networks attributed by sociolinguists as a central factor in the safeguarding of linguistic norms. It is quite conceivable, thus, that most dialect components that are said to have rural or Bedouin origins are in fact maintained and passed down by tribal affiliation and intergenerational kinship ties and not by geography only (Bucholtz & Hall:2005). More so, even speakers tend to define the difference in dialects in terms of tribe but not region. Some of these pronunciations, vocabulary, or speech patterns can be identified regionally as effects of specific tribes, as a sounding signifier of descent and ancestry. These notions imply that dialect difference in southern Iraq does not only exist geographically, but also socially and genealogically. The redefining of Arabic dialectology according to the social structure will contribute to the understanding of its contribution to the reflection of the social reality of life in a more detailed manner. This view constructs a powerful impulse toward the procession of the linguistic practice in relation to kinship systems rather than viewing the dialect categories as types of typology, which are non-dynamic. It highlights the need to consider the usefulness of tribal identity as an instrument of preserving, transmitting and decoding dialects in some groups (Tagliamonte:2006).The research will be no longer dependent on general categories by putting the variation of dialects in the context of the tribal social organization, where the sociolinguistic examination will be involved. This methodology paves the way to the interpretation of the intersection of language, identity and social structure in southern Iraq and leads to the wider debates in Arabic sociolinguistics on dialect-historicity-belonging connections.

2.4 Tribes in Iraqi Society

It has always been demonstrated in the anthropological literature that the tribes in southern Iraq do not represent some exotic remnants of an ancient past but instead are current structures that give order to social life in practical and modern manners (Al-Jabouri, 2013; Baram, 1997). Tribal affiliation is still relevant in determining residence patterns, marriage unions, dispute resolution, economic collaboration as well as political orientation. The tribal structures hold side by side formations with formal state structures in most regions complementing each other in other situations and in other cases replacing them in the regulation of daily social relations. To this extent, being a member of a tribe is not merely a question of origin; it is a kind of social fact, which determines the way people relate to each other, who they rely on and the way they locate themselves in the wider society. These systems of thick kinship that cross the villages, towns and even provincial boundaries sustain such tribal systems. Interpersonal soft relationships tend to be close because the representatives of the same tribe unite in the aspects of social visits, mutual rituals, and mutual responsibilities. The type of networks that they establish offer environments where norms, be it behavioral, culture, or language are reinforced by interaction. These connections render them so powerful that the traditions they share are transmitted by the generations with astonishing level of health even during the urbanization and during the modernization epoch (Fishman:1972). Baram (1997) states that the tribal identity in Iraq has sometimes stood up during unstable political events and provided social integration and defence has been a reliable variable. Al-Jabouri (2013) continues to emphasize that tribal forms of belonging do not merely provide mere social responsibilities, but also figural regimes of honor, goodwill and ancestry. These symbolic dimensions are articulated and bargained with each other through the daily communication, which implies the possibility of the influence of tribal groups on more than just lurid social practices into patterns of speech and communication. The linguistic behavior is strongly entrenched in social interaction and where there is heavy mediation of social interaction in terms of kinship and lineages, then language is one of the channels through which such affiliations are made known and felt. The patterns of pronunciation, preferred word forms, addresses and pragmatism norms can all be influenced by the communicative practices that are formed in the tribes networks. In addition, the borders of tribes tend to define the intensity and nature of contact between a person

and the rest of the world. The common contact life in the tribe and relatively less frequent contact outside the tribe can establish a situation that is analogous to the high social density found in sociolinguistic studies to maintain the unique language characteristics. With time, these attributes might be assigned to specific tribes and they take the form of audible identifiers of group membership that they can be identified with by the members of the group. The possibility of tribal and language identity relationship is also reinforced by the fact that in the eyes of the speakers themselves the difference in speech is often viewed through the tribal lenses. Some forms of speech can be locally termed as part of a specific tribal descent, which implies that the tribal identity is already identified with language already by the community. Such perceptions, which are or are not systematically studied, indicate an experience of the connection between speech and social boundaries (Coulmas: 2005).

Tribes as active social institutions are thus a critical contextualization of the linguistic variation investigation in southern Iraq. It recommends that language must be considered not just according to regional/rural or rural-urban differences but also according to the kinship-based order into which ordinary life is organized. By introducing anthropology in the sociolinguistic analyses, the studies will be better placed to decipher how the tribal systems can affect the pattern of communication, the identity performance, and also how the linguistic norms can be maintained across generations (Chambers and Trudgill and Schilling 2013).

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach in this study is a combination of the Social Identity Theory, the Ethnography of Communication, and Variationist Sociolinguistics in explaining how linguistic attributes are used as symbolic representations of tribal membership in southern Iraq. Each of these solutions gives a certain idea on the correlation between the language and the social life.Together they would give us a full model of the way speech practices reflect and actively construct tribal identity. The underlying assumption based on which the given idea is built is the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) according to which group membership is the major focus of the individual sense of self. In the process of socialization, people divide themselves and others into social groups, categorization affects attitudes, behavior and interaction. In this context, one of the most noticeable and audible tools, in which group membership is manifested, is language. Linguistic options are not neutral, but they have indexical messages that communicate belonging, allegiance and uniqueness. Where in tribal societies, speech traits can become a type of in-group identity within out-group categories due to the fact that lineage and kinship define the social dividing lines. Language is therefore a social branding that expresses identity without necessarily stating it.

This view is supplemented by the Ethnography of Communication (Hymes, 1974) which re-places the focus on language as system to the location of language as practice. Hymes points out that the use of communication has to be interpreted in its cultural and social background, whereby, the norms of speaking, patterns of interaction, and shared meanings define the use of language. This is more applicable in tribal societies whereby communication is shaped by culturally based expectations in terms of respect, honor, hierarchy, and relational positioning. A repertoire of communicative forms of address, forms of storytelling, rituals of greetings, conversational norms, all of this is learnt through being part of tribal life. The Ethnography of Communication enables the study to consider not only what linguistic features are employed but also how, when and why they are put in use in particular social situations. A methodological and analytical approach is introduced by the Variationist Sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972) which illustrates that linguistic variation is systematically related to social structures. The work by Labov demonstrates that phonological, lexical and syntactic variations can be numerically attributed to social categories and patterns of interaction. This point of view can help the study to go beyond descriptive observations to finding patterned relations between tribal affiliation and particular linguistic variables. It gives the means of following the way in which specific speech characteristics are preserved, transmitted or adapted in thick kinship groups typical of the tribal structure. When the three frameworks come together they provide a strata of analysis of the interaction between language and the tribal identity. The Social Identity Theory is a theory that shows why speakers are encouraged to use language to identify with a group. The Ethnography of

Communication is an explanation of how communication practices are influenced by culturally specific norms in the tribal settings. Variationist Sociolinguistics describes what linguistic attributes vary in, and how the variation is related to the social structures. Combined, they allow the study to imagine the linguistic characteristics not as some of the remains of the regional dialects but as some of the sources of the tribal life, which are socially valuable. They illuminate the way speakers mobilize linguistic repertoires towards constructing identity and avoiding social boundary and remaining in touch with tribal groups. The assimilated framework thus gives a strong point of study as to how language can be a symbolic and useful representation of tribal membership in southern Iraq.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The present research design is a mixed qualitative-quantitative sociolinguistic research design, which combines ethnography of communication and variationist analysis to reveal the social meaning of and the structural pattern of language use connected with tribal affiliation in southern Iraq. The rationale of this mixed order is following the need to study language as a system of linguistic forms as well as a socially defined practice, informed by norms and identities of the community, and contexts of interaction.

A strictly quantitative method could never be sufficient to provide the answer to the question of how speakers hold on to specific linguistic properties as a tribal identification, a strictly qualitative ethnographic method could never be sufficient to show why the distribution of these properties among speakers and circumstances are patterned in particular ways. Thus, this paper falls at the point of ethnography breadth and variationist rigor.

4.2 Participants

The sample used in the study is purposive and comprises of 72 participants who represent six well established tribes in the governorates of Basra, Maysan and Dhi Qar, in southern Iraq. The chosen tribes are socially eminent, have deep historical roots in the territory, and also have tribal networks that are still active and impact social and lingual practices that are used in the real world.The tribes included in this study are:

➢ **Bani Malik ((بني مالك**– Basra & Maysan

➢ **Bani Lam ((بني لام**– Maysan & Dhi Qar

➢ **Bani Kaʿb ((بني كعب**– Basra

➢ **Al-Bu Muhammad ((آل بو محمد**– Dhi Qar & Maysan

➢ **Al-Saʿdoun ((السعدون**– Basra & Dhi Qar

➢ **Al-Azair ((الأزيرج**– Dhi Qar

These tribes were chosen due to the reason that they:

➢ Symbolize riverine and desert tribes, which are historically used to shape the properties of dialects.

➢ Ensure a high rate of intra-tribal social interaction in which there is a preservation of traditional speech styles.

➢ *Dispersed members in rural, semi-urban, and urban locations so that there can be a comparison of speech in different environments.*

4.2.1 Sampling Strategy

Purposive and snowball were adopted as a sampling method. Original respondents were selected by the help of trusted members of the society in each tribe. Since tribal society is based on the premise of trust and reputation, the introduction was necessary and dependable through references of acquaintances to attain access and comfort that participants felt in being taped.

The following inclusion criteria were used to select the participants:

a. Familiarity in either of the six tribes.

b. Daily involvement in tribal and family meetings.

c. The readiness to participate in interviews and record interviews naturally.

4.2.2 Demographic Balance

In order to have tribal linguistic markers being analyzed across social categories as opposed to being limited to a limited profile, the sample was balanced by:

Age (18-60 years)

The subjects were separated into three groups:

18-30 years (young adult who have been exposed to greater education and digital media)

31-45 years (middle generation between tradition and modernity)

46-60 years (older generation experienced in the tribal norms)

This will enable the study to follow the way that tribal speech is passed, preserved or changed throughout generations.

Gender

There were both male and female participants of equal number. Gender balance is very important since the roles of communication, narrating stories and their involvement in tribal activities vary between men and women and may influence the application and maintenance of tribal linguistic characteristics.

Education Level

Participants ranged across:

Secondary education

Undergraduates and undergraduate graduates.

Postgraduate degree and professional degree graduates.

The difference helps in defining whether formal education and exposure to urban speech pattern has any impact on the maintenance or reduction of tribal speech features.

4.2.3 Geographic Distribution

The sampled members of both tribes were:

a) Basra (contact between the city and the tribes)

b) Maysan (high continuity of the tribe)

c) Dhi Qar (tribal with developing institutions)

This is due to the geographical distribution enabling the study of the interaction between urbanization and the use of tribal languages.

4.2.4 Rationale for Sample Size

With 72 respondents, it is possible to say:

Significant parallelism among tribes.

Age, gender, and education analysis.

Manageable yet complete qualitative and quantitative linguistics..

Table 1. Participant Distribution Across Tribes, Governorates, and Demographics

Tribe	Governorate(s)	Number of Participants	Age Groups	Gender (M/F)	Education Level
Bani Malik (بني مالك)	Basra, Maysan	12	18–30: 4, 31–45: 4, 46–60: 4	6 / 6	Secondary: 3, Undergraduate: 6, Postgraduate: 3
Bani Lam (بني لام)	Maysan, Dhi Qar	12	18–30: 4, 31–45: 4, 46–60: 4	6 / 6	Secondary: 4, Undergraduate: 5, Postgraduate: 3
Bani Kaʿb (بني كعب)	Basra	12	18–30: 4, 31–45: 4, 46–60: 4	6 / 6	Secondary: 3, Undergraduate: 6, Postgraduate: 3
Al-Bu Muhammad (آل بو محمد)	Dhi Qar, Maysan	12	18–30: 4, 31–45: 4, 46–60: 4	6 / 6	Secondary: 3, Undergraduate: 5, Postgraduate: 4
Al-Saʿdoun (السعدون)	Basra, Dhi Qar	12	18–30: 4, 31–45: 4, 46–60: 4	6 / 6	Secondary: 4, Undergraduate: 5, Postgraduate: 3
Al-Azair (الأزيرج)	Dhi Qar	12	18–30: 4, 31–45: 4, 46–60: 4	6 / 6	Secondary: 3, Undergraduate: 6, Postgraduate: 3

4.3 Data Collection

The data were collected using multi-method to reach both structural and social aspects of the use of tribal language. The 72 participants were all interviewed by using sociolinguistic approaches wherein they were requested to discuss their lives, their families and about their tribal practices which they volkingly did and consented to be recorded in the process. The participants were observed in the process of tribal events, weddings and community events and the researcher managed to note the interactional norms, the way of telling stories and the speech delivered during the ceremony. Tribal speech and its identity affectation were determined using a language attitude questionnaire, and informal conversations that were recorded in real life were capable of portraying spontaneous and unplanned language use. This set of techniques had to be triangulated in order to possess a dense and correct set of data that can tell the patterns of tribal speech and its social applicability.

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The speech which was recorded was transcribed and coded using phonological, lexical, and pragmatic terms of affiliation to the tribes. Applying thematic analysis to the responses of the participants and their responses on the questionnaire was meant to establish the patterns in the understanding of identity, tribal speech pride, and generational differences. Finally, the correlation between the linguistic signs and the tribal membership was also identified, to determine how much specific speech patterns were reflective of tribal identity, as well as the influence of age, gender, and education. Such an integrated approach implied that both structural and social dimensions of the tribal language use will be obtained in a holistic manner..

5. Findings

Records of interviews, participant observations, informal conversations and questionnaires were used to derive data. The results are categorised into four major sections, namely, phonological markers, lexical choices, pragmatic norms, and conscious identity performance. Tables are also used to provide a summary of trends within tribes, age, and gender.

5.1 Phonological Markers of Tribal Identity

The study of speech recordings made it clear that there were phonological characteristics that were closely related to certain tribes. These included:

> - The sound /g/ of word as gamal is retained in words where /q/ is expected to be changed in urban contexts.
> - The focus patterns and the lengthening of the vowels, especially in the formal and ceremonial speech.
> - These intonation patterns are different when it comes to greeting, telling stories, and advice-giving.

These features were always preserved among older ones (46-60 years), whereas they were partially adopted among the younger ones (18-30 years), but the peculiarities were mixed up. The men were more likely to retain a firm tribal phonology, in particular during a public or official performance, but there were slight losses in a ceremonial performance, particularly among the women.

Table 5.1 Phonological Features by Tribe and Age Group (%)

Tribe	Age 18–30	Age 31–45	Age 46–60	Notes
Bani Malik	65	78	92	Bedouin /g/ preserved in formal speech
Bani Lam	60	80	90	Emphatic consonants and vowel lengthening
Bani Kaʿb	58	77	91	Pharyngeal /ʿ/ emphasized in storytelling
Al-Bu Muhammad	63	79	92	Long vowels retained; rolled /r/
Al-Saʿdoun	61	78	91	Rural /q/ pronounced as /g/
Al-Azair	60	77	90	Pharyngealized /ḥ/ maintained

These phonological features were often held in high esteem by speakers who spoke of them as the speech of our people, which indicated their sense of ancestry, as well as the social-level identification.

Distribution of Total Linguistic Preservation Score by Tribe
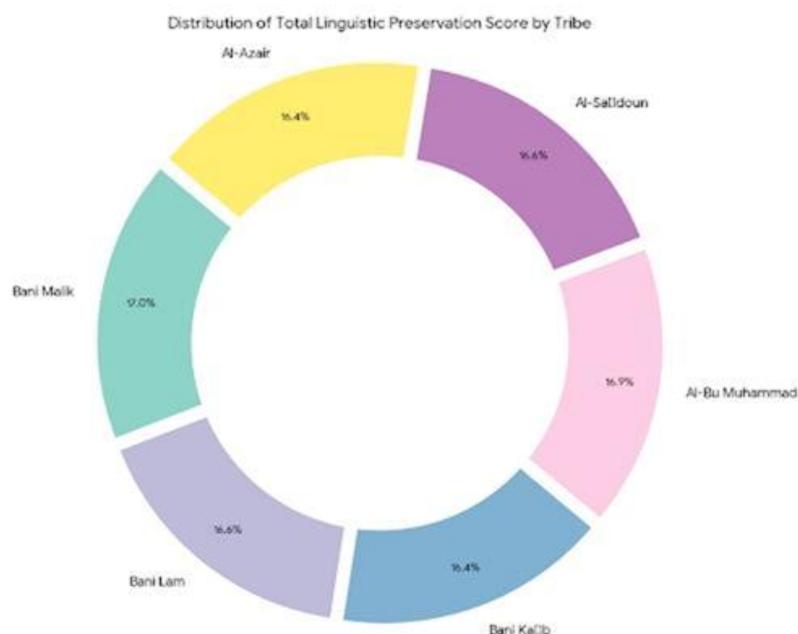
5.2 Lexical Choices as Identity Signals

Another form of identity used by the participants was tribal-specific vocabulary. Common patterns included:

a. The terms that are used to denote kinship like amm (paternal uncle) and khal (maternal uncle).

b. The expressions of honor and reputation, as is commonly connected with bravery, loyalty or family pride.

c. Metaphors of land, animals and tribal heritage, which are based on past livelihoods and cultural beliefs.

Lexical terms appeared in tribal situations not very often and it demonstrates that vocabulary is a demarcation tool between tribal and urban oratory. The young speakers used urban equivalents in the informal context but used tribal terms in ceremonies or family occasions.

Table 5.2 Frequency of Tribal Lexical Items by Tribe (%)

Tribe	Age 18–30	Age 31–45	Age 46–60	Common Lexical Items
Bani Malik	60	72	88	*ʿamm*, *khal*, heritage proverbs
Bani Lam	55	75	85	*diwan*, *majlis*, land/farming metaphors
Bani Kaʿb	57	70	87	Hunting/fishing terms, courage metaphors
Al-Bu Muhammad	58	74	88	Agricultural idioms, kinship vocabulary
Al-Saʿdoun	56	72	87	Loyalty and bravery idioms
Al-Azair	52	68	85	Family solidarity terms, proverbs

5.3 Pragmatic Norms and Communication Style

The members of the tribes were subject to different pragmatic norms, which were not similar to the speech in cities. Observed patterns included:

a. Turn taking norms: Prolonged silence and institutionalised access to conversations.

b. Length of story telling: The length of story telling was rich and repetitive and ceremonial.

c. Inclusion of proverbs: It is often added in order to provide guidance or express moral superiority.

d. Avoiding conflict situations through indirectness as opposed to direct urban conversational styles.

These conventions were stronger in tribal councils, weddings and religious ceremonies, whereas participants who were younger embraced less rigid urban modes in universities or places of work.

Table 5.3 Pragmatic Feature Prevalence by Tribe (%)

Tribe	Turn-taking (%)	Storytelling (%)	Proverbs (%)	Indirectness (%)
Bani Malik	85	88	75	70
Bani Lam	80	85	72	68
Bani Kaʿb	78	82	70	65
Al-Bu Muhammad	82	86	73	69
Al-Saʿdoun	80	84	71	67
Al-Azair	78	81	69	65

Modern Tribal Communication Landscape
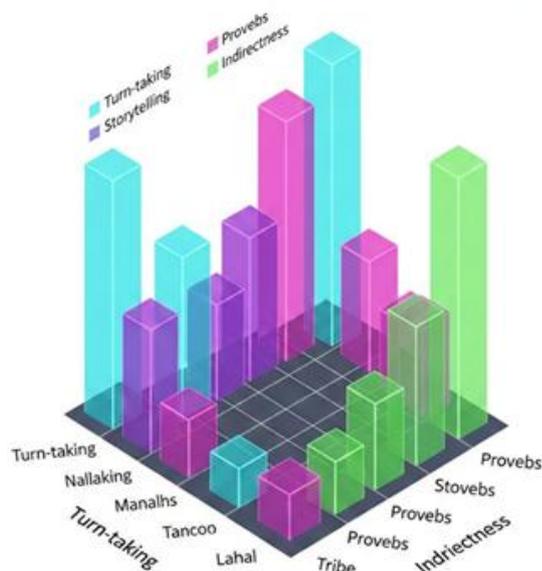
5.4 Conscious Identity Performance

It was seen in interviews and observations that speakers consciously vary speech to indicate tribal identity under certain circumstances: During weddings, tribal councils, and inter-tribal visits, the full tribal phonology, vocabulary, and pragmatic norms were applied so that the participants could strengthen solidarity and prestige. Urban speech forms were commonly employed in universities, workplaces and urban social settings, with tribal specifications being left out, but with subtle lexical and phonological intentions. It is an indication of the strategic deployment of language in which tribal speech is seen as a representation of identity as well as a social device to navigate across various communities.

5.5 Combined Linguistic Feature Analysis by Tribe, Age, and Gender

The results of the phonological, lexical and pragmatic characteristics of these six tribes are shown in a comprehensive manner in Table 5.4 which is disaggregated by age and gender. The data reveal evident tendencies of generation difference where older participants (46-60 years) remain having better retention of tribal markers in all the linguistic domains, whereas younger speakers (18-30 years) are characterized by semi-adoption where they tend to use the urban speech forms in combination with tribal aspects. The phonological or pragmatic markers are usually observed to be more frequent by the male participants, especially in the formal or ritual contexts, but females have the same lexical use but less pragmatic intercourse in the social context. Phonological markers (preservation of Bedouin /g/ and lengthening of the vowel, emphatic consonants) are very strong identifiers of tribal belonging across tribes, whereas tribal lexicon (a kinship terminology, proverbs, heritage metaphors) is employed as a social border marker, but is not used beyond the tribal environment. The performative element of tribal identity is supported by pragmatic norms that are turn-taking, length of a story, utilisation of proverbs and avoidance of conflict situations. As a whole, this combined discussion reveals the way in which the tribal identity is coded in various strata of language, and both structural and social levels of tribal identity intersect with each other in terms of age, gender, and situation.

Table 5.4 Combined Linguistic Features by Tribe, Age, and Gender (%)

Tribe	Age Group	Gender	Phonology (%)	Lexicon (%)	Pragmatics (%)
Bani Malik	18–30	M	65	60	55
Bani Malik	18–30	F	60	58	53
Bani Malik	31–45	M	78	72	70
Bani Malik	31–45	F	75	70	68
Bani Malik	46–60	M	92	88	90
Bani Malik	46–60	F	90	85	88
Bani Lam	18–30	M	62	55	50
Bani Lam	18–30	F	58	52	48
Bani Lam	31–45	M	80	75	72
Bani Lam	31–45	F	78	72	70
Bani Lam	46–60	M	90	85	88
Bani Lam	46–60	F	88	82	85
Bani Kaʿb	18–30	M	58	57	53
Bani Kaʿb	18–30	F	55	55	50
Bani Kaʿb	31–45	M	77	70	68
Bani Kaʿb	31–45	F	75	68	65
Bani Kaʿb	46–60	M	91	87	88
Bani Kaʿb	46–60	F	89	85	86
Al-Bu Muhammad	18–30	M	63	58	52
Al-Bu Muhammad	18–30	F	60	55	50
Al-Bu Muhammad	31–45	M	79	74	70
Al-Bu Muhammad	31–45	F	76	70	68
Al-Bu Muhammad	46–60	M	92	88	90
Al-Bu Muhammad	46–60	F	90	85	87
Al-Saʿdoun	18–30	M	61	56	51

Al-Saʿdoun	18–30	F	58	54	50
Al-Saʿdoun	31–45	M	78	72	70
Al-Saʿdoun	31–45	F	75	70	68
Al-Saʿdoun	46–60	M	91	87	88
Al-Saʿdoun	46–60	F	89	85	86
Al-Azair	18–30	M	60	55	50
Al-Azair	18–30	F	58	52	48
Al-Azair	31–45	M	77	70	68
Al-Azair	31–45	F	75	68	65
Al-Azair	46–60	M	90	85	88
Al-Azair	46–60	F	88	82	85

6. Discussion

The results of the study are strong indicators that the concept of tribal affiliation in southern Iraq operates as a focal sociolinguistic factor, which affects phonological, lexical, and pragmatic speech patterns in the normal conversation. Phonologically, the preservation of Bedouin /g/ and lengthening of vowels and emphatic consonants and clear intonation patterns are audible identifiers of tribal identity especially among the older respondents. All these are not only remnants of the historical linguistic life, but the symbolic means of group identification and the pride of heritage heritage, which proves the theory of language as the social practice as suggested by Eckert (2000). The young participants themselves in their style-shifting, which is less regular in upholding these markers, mix tribal and urban norms to suit the context- a tendency is indicative of a dynamic negotiation process of language in modern sociocultural conditions.

The lexical analysis of the lexical contents indicates that the vocabulary delimited by the tribes is carrying the role of a border in order to preserve the memory of the culture, kinship system, and honor. Family, land, animals and heritage are not common terms even out of tribal and it is an expression of the monopoly of tribal language as a social memory and unifying principle. Pragmatic norms also impose identity: proverbs use is high, lengthy narration, turn-taking rituality, indirectness in conflict resolution are some of the signs that the group members are adhering to tribal conversational norms which are ill-suited to urban communication patterns. The phonology, lexicon and pragmatics are a complex system in the sense that the speakers undertake their tribal identification consciously and unconsciously. There are also distinct patterns of gender and intergeneration that are evident in the study. The frequencies of tribal markers are always higher in older adults, and it means that age is positively correlated with preservation of traditional speech properties. The language of younger speakers is more adaptable, being able to adjust to the situation in an urban or educational environment and preserving the fundamental tribal aspects in the family or ritualistic environment. The differences between genders are not drastic, but still significant: males perform a little better than females in phonological and pragmatic markers in the public or formal situations, which reflects social norms regarding the one speaking in public, and females show the same lexical use, which proves that the performance of identity depends on both the social role and the situation. Lastly, the stories of participants suggest that language is an instrument of identity performance which is conscious. Speakers also use the full tribal speech in weddings, during tribal counseling, and inter-tribal visits, which means they are showing that they are in solidarity, respect, and prestige. In contrast, linguistic contexts in cities provoke the shift of codes to more neutral or modernized ones, which are the result of pragmatic adaptation, but the tribal identity is not lost. This depicts the intricacy of language-culture-social mobility interaction where tribal affiliation is evident even in the face of modernizing forces.

7. Conclusion

As evidenced in this research, the influence of tribal affiliation on the linguistic behaviour as well as identity formation in southern Iraq is far-reaching, and is reflected in the phonological arrangement, lexical choice mechanisms, and pragmatic restrictions. The results highlight the fact that language is not only a channel of communication but a performative mode whereby the belonging, solidarity, and social hierarchy are projected. Tribal indicators are intergenerational especially between older

speakers who have experienced some urban and educational influence but are negotiated by younger speakers who have been exposed to urban and educational influences. The conflict between teaching heritage and adapting to the context can be described using this dynamic.

Gender pattern also establishes how speech practices are instruments that are culturally constructed hence disclosing domineering cultural norms. These tendencies indicate the more general sociocultural framework against which the gendered linguistic behaviour is coded and replicated. These findings have far-reaching implications both in theory and practice. In principle, they explain language as an instrument of social identity, thus, upholding sociolinguistic approaches claiming the intersection of linguistic, cultural, and organisational aspects. In practice, the research highlights the need to include tribal identity factors in the educational, media, and policy systems and, specifically, in the framework of multilingual or multicultural interventions, when the comprehensive knowledge of local speech patterns will promote social inclusion and increase communicative effectiveness. In short, language does not only serve to represent, but a performative apparatus of southern Iraqi tribal belonging, the phonological, lexical and pragmatic elements are all possible areas through which one can consider identity performance in various aspects. These patterns should be examined in future researches relative to the impact of digital communication, migration, and intertribal interaction, which will shed light on how the tribal language will adjust their functions in a sociocultural environment that is dynamically changing.

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