



## Interactive and Conflict Strategies of Bilingual Teachers and Students in Iran's Monolingual Educational System

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 22 February 2023            Revised: 05 May 2023            Accepted: 05 June 2023            Online: 01 June 2024</p>	<p>The aim of research was to identify and determine interactive and conflict strategies of bilingual teachers and students in Iran's monolingual educational system through the analysis of their lived experiences. This was a qualitative study using phenomenological approach and research population included all the teachers and pupils of the primary schools in five selected cities of Kermanshah province selected through purposeful sampling method. The sample size of the research for teachers was fifteen (9 male and 6 female teachers of Grades 1-6) and for pupils including five classes (three boys' classes and two girls' classes of Grade 6) with an average of 31 students in each class (in total 155 students). To collect data, researchers used semi-structured interviews with teachers and group interviews with students, and for data analysis, Braun, &amp; Clarke thematic method was used. The first finding of the research indicates that the reaction of teachers and students about formal language can be divided into two groups of interactive and conflict strategies. In terms of nature, both types of strategies are based on the three principles of acceptance, submission and resistance. The second finding revealed that teachers simultaneously benefit from strategies based on positive and negative reinforcement to promote the Persian language in the classroom and school. The third finding shows that some teachers and pupils have defensive reactions against the "linguistic assimilation" policy of the formal education system. According to the findings, it is suggested to Iranian educational planners to increase the role of mother tongue in the learning process of bilingual students.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Bilingual Education            Formal Language            Lived Experiences            Monolingual Education            Mother Tongue            Primary Schools</p>	

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## **1. Introduction**

The land of Iran includes a range of ethnic groups, each of which has its own customs, culture and language. Except Persians - who constitute the majority of the population - other Iranian ethnic groups mainly live in the provinces closed to border areas. For this reason, ethnicity and the constructive interaction of ethnic groups with each other has always been one of the most important concerns of Iranian politicians and social planners to maintain territorial integrity and national cohesion (Qamari & Hassanzadeh, 2010; Ashraf, 2004; Rajaei, 2013). With the entry into the modern world and the formation of governments in a new form, one of the effective tools to maintain, strengthen and perpetuate the national identity is the formal education system. In this regard, learning the formal language is necessary to strengthen the cohesion of the national identity so that different ethnic groups - within the framework of a collective identity - can achieve mental space and common experiences and values. The educational system can affect the socialization process of the young generation through the curriculum and promotion of the formal language (Nejad Mohammad, Najjari & Suleimanzadeh, 2018; Maqsoodi, Khamijani Farahani & Jalali, 2022). For this reason, while ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity is evident in Iran's society, for more than a century, policymakers and educational system planners have used the policy of "Persian language as a formal language" to strengthen the unified national identity (Mohammadi, Asgarkhani & Mirabbasi, 2019; Davari, 2019).

Despite acknowledging the undeniable role of the official language in creating a common national identity, the question arises as to what is the duty of the political system - as well as the educational system - to reduce the negative consequences of the gap between the official language and the mother tongue of bilingual children. The initial response can be found in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Article 15 of second chapter of the Constitution indicated that "the official and common language and script of the people of Iran is Farsi". Documents, correspondence, official texts and textbooks must be in this language and script, but the use of local and ethnic languages in the press and mass media and the teaching of their literature in schools is free along with Farsi language" (Guardian Council, no date). Also it is possible to refer to the most important upstream document of Iran's educational system. The "Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) in chapter seven emphasizes to "empowering students living in deprived areas, villages, outskirts of cities, nomadic and bilingual areas with special needs, with an emphasis on creating diverse and high-quality educational opportunities (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2011).

Despite the emphasis of the upstream documents, it must be acknowledged that Iran's monolingual educational system - due to ignoring the mother tongue of non-Persian-speaking learners - always finds an obstacle against its effective communication with students. Usually, non-Persian speaking students are deprived of the necessary ability to understand the content of words and sentences in the early years of training (Hemti, Dehghan & Karani, 2022; Habibzadeh, Staki and Ghanbari Panah, 2022; Heydari, 2021). At the same time, these students have other language abilities that are not exposed to the attention of the formal education system due to their lack of conformity with the limited and one-dimensional standards of language learning. Therefore, the difference between the official language of education and the child's mother tongue makes them unable to make a proper connection between their lived experiences - result of the family environment and surrounding society - with school experiences.

In this situation, the difficulty of learning the formal language is added to the difficulty of learning the curriculum because for the child, language learning and literacy occur simultaneously. Therefore, bilingual children do not learn in equal conditions with their Persian-speaking classmates (Ezadi, 2012; Kalantari, Ramezani & Khedevi, 2018; Isanejad & Alidadi, 2017). By examining the effect of preschool education on the academic progress and social adjustment of Azeri bilingual primary school students in Khodabande city, Asareeh, Ahmadi & Abbaspour (2012) showed that between the first grade bilingual students participating in preschool education with students without this experience is a significant difference in "academic progress and social adaptation" variables. It seems that children whose mother tongue is other than Farsi enter a different world when they enter school. In other words, they experience living in an intermediate space, a space that fluctuates between ethnic identity and national identity (Mohammadi, Shekari & Madani, 2017).

A look at the studies conducted at the international level shows that the issue of bilingualism and education is the concern of researchers of many countries and always one of the challenges of the educational systems. For example, Cañado (2023) in the research " Inclusion and diversity in bilingual education: a European comparative study " examined the diversity in bilingual education programs in 59 secondary schools in six European countries of Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. According to him, bilingual education has become an all-encompassing reality for everyone, while attention must be paid to the main educational problems and needs. Shi, Huang & Lu (2022) in the research " Meeting the bilingual learning needs of Tibetan minority students in Qinghai Province: A multiple perspective investigation into problems and solutions " showed that the students experienced significant difficulties in both spoken and written Chinese,

which made them unable to understand lectures, answer questions, interact with peers, and communicate with friends outside of class. Dorner, & Cervantes-Soon (2020) by examining equality for students who learn English in bilingual education emphasize that demographic changes and transnational communication have increased the awareness and desire to teach multilingualism in school programs around the world. Hu & Gao (2020) investigated appropriation of resources by bilingual students for self-regulated learning of science and showed that they use vocabulary and assessment criteria to negotiate their respective roles with teachers, classmates, family members, tutors and friends. López Montero & Chaves & Alvarado (2014) in the research "Social Factors Involved in Second Language Learning" concluded that social, economic and cultural capitals are effective in learning a second language. The research results of Wu, Tsang& Ming (2014) on a sample of 812 Chinese children showed how social capital and family support affect children's academic success. Allah Karmi (2017) has investigated the effect of mother tongue in creating a constructivist learning environment in Nigerian schools. The findings show that the mother tongue - as a language of training - will cause better access to education and learning. Vela (2015) has examined the effect of the language of instruction on the learning of Filipino students. The results showed that students who are taught in English have a lower score in learning science than students who are taught in Filipino. O'Bryon (2014) examined the challenges and complexities of evaluating bilingual students and realized that immigration, low socio-economic status and acculturation process can complicate the process of evaluating the performance of bilingual students. Hughes, Im, Kwok, Cham & West (2014) in the study "Transition of Latino Students to Middle School: The Role of Bilingual Education and School Ethnic Context" showed that transition to middle school generally decreased school belonging and behavioral engagement. Students will be transferred during the course. Ricablanca (2014) compared the academic achievement and learning of students who were taught in the mother tongue with students who were taught in the official language (English). The findings showed that the students of the experimental group - who were taught in the mother tongue - had better performance in both variables of academic progress and learning math lessons, and the difference between them and control group was significant. Bachore (2014) examined the views of students, teachers and parents about the mother tongue and its use in learning environments. His findings show that most of the parents and almost half of the students have a negative attitude about the mother tongue.

The results of previous studies by Iranian researchers show that children's bilingualism has a negative effect on their academic performance (Rahimabadi, 2013; Vahidi, 2010). Also, it creates psychological frustration, aggression, anxiety, fear and isolation in a person (Kazemi, 2007) or it

results in consequences such as failure and dropping out of school, severe academic failure and reading & writing problems (Asareeh, 2017). In addition, bilingual students struggle with the following problems and challenges: Confusion and difficulty in understanding and applying textbook materials (Qadri et al., 2017), psychological, social and linguistic problems (Allah Karmi, 2017), poor reading ability and unfavorable academic progress (Adib, Sharifi, & Mahmoudi, 2015), low academic self-efficacy, difficulty in understanding the meaning of words and expressing content, and difficulty in understanding the teacher's words to establish mutual communication (Iraqi & Hatami, 2011), and lack of motivation & self-confidence and alienation from oneself (Al-Moradi & Saif-Allahi, 2011). These challenges and difficulties are doubled when the child's living environment is combined with diversity in other social areas. In fact, in some regions of Iran - in addition to linguistic diversity-, ethnic, cultural, religious, racial and economic diversity also exacerbates the negative effects of the monolingual education system. Kermanshah Province in the west of Iran is a concrete example of this situation. Demographic data shows that this province is one of the most interesting provinces from the point of view of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, economic and of course linguistic differences. The main issue is to what extent the differences between the formal language and mother tongue - considering the diversity of other social areas - affect the learning process of children.

To answer this basic question, one of the first steps is to examine the lived experiences of teachers and students - as the first ones who face this issue directly. What kind of reactions do these two groups show when facing the consequences of the difference between the official language and the mother tongue? We call these reactions strategies. The strategy is a set of actions and reactions of students and teachers to reduce the negative effects of the difference between the mother tongue and the language of formal education. These strategies can be divided into two groups: Interaction and conflict. The first group is interactive strategies that try to reduce the pressure caused by the difference between the official language and the mother tongue, while the second group, through confrontation, shows the negative reactions of teachers and students. Therefore, the main goal of current research is to identify and determine interactive and conflict strategies according to the lived experience of primary school teachers and students.

## **2. Research Method**

The present research method is interpretive phenomenology. The target group in this research includes teachers and bilingual students in primary schools in Kermanshah province. Purposive sampling method was used to select the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the

first step, the researchers chose five cities that have more ethnic and linguistic diversity compared to other cities in Kermanshah province (Kermanshah, Sahne, Sarpol Zahab, Ravansar and Kasre-Shirin). After determining the selected cities, in the second step, a list of the names of all the schools was prepared and a primary school was selected randomly in each city (three boys' schools and two girls' schools). In the third step, only one class (Grade 6) from each school was re-selected in a simple random method and three teachers were selected in the same way from each school. Thus, the sample size of the research for teachers was fifteen (including nine male and six female teachers in different grades from the first to the sixth) and for students including five classes (three boys' and two girls' classes of the Grade 6) with an average of 31 students (total 155 students). In order to collect data in the current research, due to the existence of two sample groups i.e. teachers and students - semi-structured interviews (for teachers) and group interviews of informal and open dialogue type (for students) were used. For data analysis, thematic analysis method - Braun & Clarke (2006) including six steps of getting to know the data, generating primary codes, searching for categories, reviewing categories, defining & naming categories and preparing Report for data analysis was used.

#### 4. Findings

To analyze the interview, the researchers tried to identify the hidden concepts by reviewing the data sets collected from the teachers and students and naming the concepts without any restrictions. In the first stage of coding, initial codes were selected based on the words used and expressed by the participants. Table 1 shows an example of open, central and selective codes.

Table 1. An example of open, axial and selective codes

Open code	Axial code	Selective code
Respect the choice of language Freedom in language choice Need to be free to choose the language	Right to choose a language / freedom to choose a language	Individual
Difficulty of learning Kurdish as a language Difference in accents in the Kurdish language Breadth of the Kurdish language Inadequacy of Kurdish language in terms of vocabulary Kurdish being weak as a language Limitation of Kurdish language in adults' linguistic interactions Kurdish as a humorous and non-serious language Suitability of Kurdish language for childhood period	Negative attitude towards mother tongue	

Speaking Farsi with strangers Made fun Speaking Kurdish for conversation Shame for not knowing Kurdish among friends Talking Kurdish to friends Being ashamed of talking Kurdish to teachers and strangers	Self & others	
I am Kurd, although I speak Farsi Ancestry is important I am Kurd You speak Kurdish; your mother told you a Kurdish story, so you are Kurd.	personal identity	
Talk to self in Kurdish Thinking Kurdish Explaining a difficult lesson to self in Kurdish Read exam questions in Kurdish to find solutions	Kurdi unconscious	

### *A) Teachers*

After analyzing the data from the interviews with the teachers, the interactive and conflict strategies of the teachers were determined separately.

#### *First) Interactive strategies*

To reduce the pressure caused by the difference between the formal language of education and the mother tongue of students, teachers have tried to use the following interactive strategies:

1. *Teaching in Kurdish language:* Considering that textbooks are written and printed in Farsi by the Ministry of Education throughout the country and are provided to schools, teachers consider changing the "language of instruction" as one of the strategies to compensate for students' problems. According to them, when the student does not understand the lesson because of the language difference, it is the teacher who rushes to help her/him by re-teaching the contents of the book in Kurdish language. In other words, whenever the content of the book is unfamiliar and strange to the students, the teacher appears in the role of "translator" and facilitates the teaching process as a bridge between the student and the content:

"A child who does not know Farsi, when she/he comes to school, I have to teach her/him the lesson in Kurdish once so that she/he gets to class and does not fall behind"  
(Interviewee no. 9).

2. *Class leadership*: According to teachers, one of the problems of teaching in a bilingual class is language mixing. The difficulty of this is due to the difference between the language of instruction and the mother tongue and the interference that happens to students and teachers due to the inconsistency between these two languages. In this case, teachers try to resolve the conflict between two languages by leading the class and also turning a "confusing situation into a funny and happy situation". One of the teachers explains this very well:

"For some time, I am teaching Farsi and mixing it up. I also say a Kurdish word. Well, I cut and mix. It will be very funny, the children will laugh, I will also laugh and miss the class. Or the children speak mixed Kurdish and Farsi and laugh, it disrupts the class. In this situation, it is difficult to assemble the class, it is not possible to be too dry and not let the children laugh, and it is not possible to keep the class with all these mistakes" (Interviewee no. 12).

3. *Use of indigenous literature*: Some teachers use the strategy of using indigenous literature to facilitate the teaching-learning process, so that they use Kurdish stories to strengthen Persian language learning:

"All children know the story of "*Titile Bibile*", if they read the story of "*Shengul and Mongol*" in Farsi, because that story is familiar to them, they will learn Persian words sooner" (Interviewee no. 1).

4. *Belief in the benefit of the educational system through teaching the mother tongue*: According to some teachers, teaching in the mother tongue is both for the benefit of the learners and the benefit of educational system:

"If I, as a teacher, teach children in my own language, then I can teach better. Children also learn better. Well, they are more successful in this way. In this way, the system itself also benefits. For example, I want to teach math to children, it's hard for them even now, if I want to teach in another language, it's even worse, I speak Kurdish to them" (Interviewee no. 1).

5. *Using environmental events in teaching*: One of the interactive strategies of teachers is to refer to events that students remember or are familiar with. For example, in teaching words such as accident, unfortunate, bitter, earthquake & nature, one of the teachers points to the use of an earthquake that recently occurred in that geographical area to facilitate learning:

"It is possible to bring the things that happen here in the book. For example, the earthquake incident that happened in Kermanshah, the same can be brought into the textbook. Eventually, I told that to the children; they learned these words much earlier" (Interviewee No. 13).

### *Second. Conflict Strategies*

Also, the analysis of the data shows that some teachers have tried to reduce the pressure caused by the difference between the official language of education and the mother tongue of the students by using conflict strategies - in dealing with the formal education system on the one hand and adjusting students' behaviors on the other hand. Some conflict strategies are:

*1. Emphasis on teaching only in Persian language:* some teachers consider Persian language to be the main factor of communication between different ethnic groups of Iran, and on this basis, they put a lot of emphasis on learning this language:

"When I came to the class in the first session, I said that no one has the right to speak in the local language in class. Speak in Persian. Then, the children were all convinced. But of course, because the atmosphere of our class is friendly, we are not too strict about this" (Interviewee No. 4).

*2. Belief in the necessity of teaching the Kurdish language simultaneously with the Persian language:* the interviews shows that some participants recommend legal recognition and the compulsion to learn the official language and the mother tongue as a realistic conflict strategy, although on the one hand, this request conflicts with the formal policies of the Ministry of Education and on the other hand, with the request of those who only like education through mother tongue language:

"Education should think about the mother tongue. Well, like Persian and English, they should start learning Kurdish from the basic classes, but unfortunately the Ministry of Education does not accept this" (Interviewee No. 3).

*3. Belief in the breadth of Kurdish language dialects:* Some participants state that the breadth and diversity of Kurdish language dialects is a fundamental challenge for accepting the mother tongue as the "formal language of instruction" because it hinders communication between people - due

to the lack of common words. For this reason, they are against the desire of students and parents to speak in their mother tongue, and believe that by the way, Persian language creates a communication role between students with different dialects because it is the only language that they all understand and can talk and write it:

"You think, for example, in the city of *Sarepol Zahab*, we have six types of students from different language groups, well, they all do not understand each other's speech and language, how should they communicate with each other?" .... This is where the Persian language comes in handy" (Interviewee No. 11).

### *B) Students*

The analysis of group and free interviews with students also shows that both groups adopted interactive and conflict strategies:

#### *First. Interactive strategies*

To reduce the pressure caused by the difference between the formal language of instruction and their mother tongue, students have tried to use the following interactive strategies:

*1. The teacher as a savior:* The students express how the teacher comes to their aid whenever they face problems due to lack of skill in the Persian language and unfamiliarity with the language of the book. It can be said that the teacher, like a savior, tries to eliminate the negative effect of formal language on students' learning. Most of the participants had the experience that they did not understand the meaning of the lesson or the teacher's question due to not knowing the Persian language. In these situations, they ask the teacher to tell the meaning of words and sentences in Kurdish so that they can first understand the meaning and then learn the content.

"Our teacher taught Farsi, some children did not understand at all. Well, he had to explain in Kurdish and repeat in Kurdish for them."

*2. Establishing an emotional relationship with the teacher:* In addition to being a communication tool, language is a powerful medium for transmitting human emotions. Establishing an emotional

connection with the teacher through the expression of Kurdish words and sentences is one of the students' strategies to solve language problems. When the teacher uses the Kurdish language, the students feel close and interested and listen to the lesson with enthusiasm. In this way, Kurdish language teachers become the "favorite teacher" of students. Also, the lack of mastery of the teachers in the native language creates an emotional distance between them and the students. One of the students describes his experience as follows:

"The teacher was saying something in Farsi or giving a lesson. I didn't understand. I couldn't ask him. I asked my friend. Sometimes, I said no, I just don't know. I went home and asked my sister. I said, "Oh, what does that mean?" and she explained it to me in Kurdish or she taught me Persian. Also, I am writing it from my friend's book. If I didn't know, I wouldn't learn it anymore."

*3. Family's emphasis on learning formal language:* Analysis of the participants' opinions shows that the priority and emphasis of some parents is on the child's use of the Persian language instead of mother tongue. Some parents recommend that their child get to know the official language of the school as soon as possible, a strategy that increases the impact of the Persian language in the learning process of students:

"My mom tells me to speak Farsi, she doesn't like me to speak Kurdish, but I speak Kurdish."; "I speak Persian at home "; my parents speak Kurdish to each other, but they speak Farsi to me."

*4. Education through both languages:* A number of participants prefer the school to teach in both Kurdish and Persian languages. According to their statements, laws such as the necessity of learning Persian in school as a second language, respecting the choice of language, and teaching in Kurdish in the first years can be approved. Students consider the mother tongue as equal to the Persian language and believe that the mother tongue should be the language of education along with the Persian language - at least in the early years:

"The school should be both Kurdish and Persian so that the children learn to speak Farsi with strangers."; "Farsi should be taught to all children. There should be a teacher who will teach the children Kurdish first, and then they will gradually learn Persian as well."

### *Second. Conflict strategies*

Also, data analysis reveals that some students have tried to use conflict strategies to reduce the pressure caused by the difference between the formal language of teaching and their mother tongue. Some conflict strategies are:

1. *Silence and isolation*: Students' unfamiliarity with the Persian language can limit the communication of students with the teacher and other peers, so that they avoid establishing relationships with others through the mechanism of isolation:

"At the beginning, many of pupils do not know Farsi at all; they do not understand and do not know how to ask the teacher. They cannot talk to others, they stay silent. Well, little by little, everyone understands that this child does not understand Persian, that's why he is recluse" (Interviewee No. 6).

2. *Interference*: Many participants believe that one of the main language challenges for bilingual students and their teachers is language interference. Despite the undesired nature of language interference, students sometimes consider it a suitable coercive tool to escape from their awkward situation. They tell memories of the interference of Persian and mother tongue:

"Well, hey, I have to explain in Farsi, and then Kurdish. Or I confuse, I am explaining the lesson in Farsi, and there is a Kurdish word in it" (Interviewee No. 11).

"I speak Kurdish at home and with my friends, now I want to speak Farsi at school, so I mix it up and in the middle of speaking Farsi, I speak Kurdish" (interviewee 5).

3. *Negative attitude towards the mother tongue*: most of the students consider the Kurdish language as a language that is only suitable for childhood and because it is weak in terms of vocabulary, it is difficult to learn and cannot be used as an effective language in adulthood period. This negative attitude towards the mother tongue can be heard from the words of one of the students:

"Farsi will be more useful for us when we grow up, Kurdish is only good for children, you must know Farsi when you grow up."

4. *Change of role to self and others:* Students participating in the interview consider language as the determining criterion of their relationship with others. According to them, the one who speaks in Kurdish is an insider (familiar) and the one who speaks in Persian is a stranger or someone else. They use the words stranger and insider in a context that is completely dependent on language and as if language acts as a window for interaction between these two worlds. Where there is a need for communication and intimacy and a strong presence of oneself, the self is valuable; and whenever communication with others and learning play a greater role, there is no avoiding resorting to a foreign language. Also, students constantly find themselves in the role of insider and other in an intermediate space. They are strangers in school and in the environment of family and friends, a kinsman. If they speak Persian at home and among friends, they will quickly become strangers. One of the students expresses this issue as follows:

"Me, if I go to *Kehriz village*, my mother says to speak Kurdish. I speak Kurdish with my family and friends, we are all Kurd. If I don't know Kurdish, I can't speak with them, I feel ashamed. But you can't talk Kurdish to strangers and in school anymore, you have to speak Farsi."

5. *Negative view of Persian language as an obstacle to education:* According to some participants, Persian language is an obstacle to learning. What comes from their lived experience in the school informs that the language of instruction is a barrier between the student and learning, because they must learn the language of instruction before understands the content of the book. This issue is considered a serious problem for bilingual students in the first years of entering school (Grade 1 & 2). They declared that not knowing Farsi would make them hate school, shame the teacher, copy from classmate's paper, and take the time of their sister, brother and classmate as helpers. The students' statements show this problem in the school:

"Sometimes the teacher said something, I didn't understand. I don't understand much now (with mischievousness), I understand, but I can't speak Farsi."

"For example, many times *Mardin* speaks wrongly. For example, the teacher asks him about even numbers, but his tongue doesn't roll. At the beginning, I didn't like school, it wasn't good, and I messed up."

6. *Emphasis on education only in Kurdish language:* Some students believe that they should be educated in their mother tongue in school. They emphasize the coordination of the school with the

Kurdish language and point to the need for textbooks to be Kurdish, and they prefer to have the right to choose the language. They clearly consider the existence of a Kurdish school to be necessary:

"Its better if the school is Kurdish, Kurdish is easier, it's better for us, well, it's our own language, and the school should also be Kurdish."; "Let's learn Farsi too, but if it's a Kurdish school, it's fine, we're Kurdish."; I wish there was a Kurdish school. Everything should be Kurdish at home, the teacher and we should speak Kurdish, the book should be Kurdish too."

*7. Belief in language imposition:* Some interviewees believe that teaching in Persian language in school will force non-Persian speaking students to abandon their mother tongue and speak Persian language:

"I learned Farsi in school, first grade. Well, when the teacher speaks Farsi and teaches, one learns and has to speak Farsi."; "Ma'am, for example, my friend did not know Farsi at all. When she came to school, she gradually learned to speak Farsi."

"Kurdish books will not be published because school books are all Persian, they won't publish Kurdish books if we want."; "I don't know what to do for Kurdish children who wanted Kurdish books. The government won't do it."

### *C) Comparison of Strategies*

Data analysis shows that teachers benefit from five interactive strategies and three conflict strategies in the bilingual educational environment of their classes. Also, students benefit from four interactive strategies and seven conflict strategies. In this way, it is clear that students' conflicting reactions about the official language and mother tongue are more than the teachers' conflicting reaction. In addition, data analysis shows the relationship between teachers' strategies and students' strategies (Table 2).

Table 2: Relationship between teachers and students strategies

Teacher strategy	Type	Student strategy	Type
Teaching by Kurdish language	Interactive	Teacher as a savior / Negative view of Persian language / Emphasis on education through only mother tongue	interactive/conflict
Class leadership	Interactive	Teaching through two languages/interference	Interactive
Using native literature	Interactive	Education through two languages	Interactive
Using environmental events	Interactive	Education through two languages	Interactive
Emphasis on teaching only in Persian language	Conflict	Family's emphasis on Persian language learning / linguistic imposition	Interactive
Belief in the benefit of the educational system through teaching/learning the mother tongue	Interactive	Negative view of Persian language/emphasis on education through only mother tongue	Conflict
Believing in the necessity of teaching Kurdish language	Conflict	Teaching through two languages/interference	Interactive
Believing in the breadth of Kurdish dialects	Conflict	Negative attitude towards mother tongue	Conflict

The data in the table shows that the strategies are related to each other. For example, the teacher's interactive strategy under the title "teaching through Kurdish language " is related to two interactive strategies and a conflict strategy of the student at the same time. Also, the data in the table shows that the strategies chosen by the teachers are generally a reaction against the strategies of the learners. In addition, the family also interferes in the student's learning process sometimes along with and sometimes against the formal language. For example, the conflicting strategy of the teacher under the title of "emphasis on teaching only in Persian language" is placed in front of the interactive strategy of the student, which is "emphasis of the family on learning Persian language". Meanwhile, only the strategy of "changing the role to oneself and the other" - which is among the students' conflict strategies - is not directly related to other strategies. For this reason, it is not written in the table 2.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The difference between the language of instruction and the mother tongue of the learners is one of the common challenges of the educational systems. Linguistic diversity combined with racial and ethnic differences cannot be eliminated, although the emergence of phenomena such as the establishment of universal education systems, media (especially television) and immigration have caused the mixing of many races and ethnicities and weaker languages are declining. Iran is a country with ethnic diversity in a sensitive geopolitical situation like the Middle East. For this reason, Iranian politicians and educational planners are trying to increase national identity and social cohesion through the adoption of single educational policies - such as a single formal language - for all regions of the country. Nevertheless, the realization of social cohesion and national identity does not necessarily mean the negation of indigenous identities. For this reason, the aim of the present study was to identify and determine the strategies of bilingual teachers and students in the monolingual education system of Iran by analyzing their lived experiences in one of the provinces closed to the Iraqi border (Kermanshah).

The first finding of the current research indicates that the reaction of teachers and students about the Persian language can be divided into two groups of interactive and conflict strategies. In terms of nature, both type of interactive and conflict strategies are based on the three principles of acceptance, submission and resistance. Acceptance means that both teachers and students acknowledge that the mastery of the Persian language over the mother tongue should be accepted as a social and educational reality. Surrender means that nothing can be done against the force and pressure of the official Persian language and it must be accepted and taught and learned. In this case, surrender means peaceful coexistence through the use of mechanisms such as speaking Kurdish in class, hiring a Kurdish teacher, and enlisting the help of parents, classmates, and siblings as translators. The principle of resistance is based on the struggle and negation of the formal language, in various ways, such as dropping out of school. The analysis of the interviews shows that the chosen strategy of the majority of teachers and students is acceptance and surrender, although there are no official statistics on the number of students who drop out of school due to weakness in learning the formal language. This finding is consistent with the results of López Montero, & Chaves, & Alvarado, 2014; Wu, Tsang, & Ming, 2014; Asareeh, Ahmadi & Abbaspour, 2012, who emphasize the role of social factors in the learning process of bilingual children.

The second finding of the research showed that teachers simultaneously benefit from positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement to promote the Persian language in the classroom and school, although there are also teachers who clearly mentioned the necessity of simultaneous

education in both Persian and Kurdish languages. Strategies such as simultaneous teaching in Persian and Kurdish and believing in the power of the Persian language - by establishing and facilitating the social communication of Kurds with different dialects - can be considered as the most common reactions of teachers in the bilingual environment of schools. This finding supports previous research (Afshari, Sadeghi & Hanareh, 2015; Shakrabaghani, 2012; Moaidfar and Darabi, 2011; Kalantari, Khedevi, Fathi Azar & Behnam, 2011). The third finding shows that both groups of teachers and students sometimes have defensive reactions against the "linguistic homogenization" policy of the formal education system. Adopting strategies such as silence and seclusion, negative attitude about the mother tongue or Persian language, and dividing people into two groups of self and other by students - which is one of the consequences of failure or academic decline - should not be deny by Iran's educational planners. This also support finding of Hemti, Dehghan & Karani, 2022; Shakralhi, Dehghani, Javadipour, Salehi & Nouri, 2021; Nejad Mohammad, Najjari & Suleimanzadeh, 2018 and Mohammadi, 2017; who mentioned the negative effects of the policy of "ignoring the role and importance of mother tongue in the learning process". According to the findings, the following are suggested to the social policy makers and educational planners of Iran:

- Change in the content of school textbooks with regard to taking into account the multi-layered identity of Iran by increasing the emphasis on local, indigenous and regional dimensions of identity and reducing the extreme emphasis on national identity.
- Change in the policy of monolingual education through writing textbooks in the mother tongue of different regions of the country, taking into account the acceptance of different ethnicities and languages of Iran (increasing positive imagery).
- Reducing cultural hegemony by assigning parts of each textbook to the learners' mother tongue
- Fundamental change in informal activities (extra-curricular and supplementary activities) taking into account modern concepts in the modern world such as cultural understanding, respect for the history, language and culture of societies, and understanding the necessity and importance of cultural diversity.
- Schools use artists, scientists, films, historical works, exhibitions and the development of technologies to positively introduce the mother tongue in order to increase the morale of bilingual students.
- Designing textbooks of local art and culture of each region at the same time as publishing official textbooks to better familiarize students with art, artistic personalities, cultural

heritage, geographical features, civilizational history and cultural commonalities with other regions of Iran.

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